Journal of Terrorism Research

Journal of Terrorism Research

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence

Contents

Articles

The Representation of Youth in the Islamic State's Propaganda Magazine Dabiq

by Agathe Christien

Abstract

The propaganda magazine of the terrorist group Islamic State (IS), entitled Dabiq, displays IS' utilization of different representations of youth to convert a new generation of jihadi fighters. This study analyzes why IS uses youth in its propaganda and what functions of discourse these representations serve. This article is a qualitative content analysis of the Dabiq magazines with direct reference to Henry Giroux's theory of the myth of childhood innocence, which portrays youths as passive victims. The evolution of representations of youth in Dabiq aligns with this myth, as the publications tend to give active and violent roles to youth in order to foster new social paradigms.

Keywords: *Islamic State; youth; children; terrorism; propaganda; Dabiq*

Introduction

The Islamic State's "media materials have steadily escalated the level of violence involving and being carried out by children, with this video being the most extreme level reached so far" affirmed Charles Lister from the Brookings Doha Center, referencing the Islamic State's video of a Kazakh boy executing two Russian spies. The Islamic State (IS), a terrorist group operating in Iraq and Syria that auto-proclaimed its caliphate in June 2014, has released various ranges of English-language propaganda pieces using children and youth in its communication strategy. This study examines the content and design of IS' propaganda to determine why IS uses youth in its propaganda and how the representations of youth provide information about the group Islamic State.

The instrumentalization of youth and children by the Islamic State in its propaganda pieces appears in mainstream media headlines and governmental coverage. The Islamic State's propaganda is described as "sophisticated" (Becker, 2014) and appealing to Western and North African youth, from jihadi brides to converted foreign fighters (Aly, 2015), who decide to join the Islamic State (Ali, 2015, 9). As the scholars Jean Pierre Filiu and Olivier Roy argued, IS attracts Tunisian and French youths at the periphery of the Middle East as they experience a generational crisis in their home country (Chambraud, 2015). Al Hayat Media Center, which is one of the media departments of the Islamic State, relays phenomena of Europeans joining IS in the digital magazine of the group, entitled *Dabiq*. In order to understand these phenomena of migration to the auto-proclaimed Islamic State, one must analyze the representation of youth in IS' English-language propaganda pieces for a Western audience.

This article analyzes how youth is portrayed and what functions of discourse this representation serves for the

group Islamic State. The hypothesis argues that IS' propaganda is innovative because it uses representations of youth and children to attract potential recruits from a Western audience and to establish its state-building project. This paper discusses this hypothesis through a qualitative content analysis of IS' magazine, entitled *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* offers a microcosm of all the representations of youth used by IS because it focuses on articles based on current events of the group, pictures taken from videos, *Mujatweets* (Becker, 2014), and other ideological propaganda pieces.

The use of youth and children as instruments of propaganda is not a characteristic specific to the Islamic State. Other non-state actors use these propaganda tools for victimization purposes. This article offers a critical analysis in Terrorism Studies about how the representation of youth in IS' propaganda is different from those used by other terrorist groups due to IS' political agenda of state building. This angle of analysis appears to be unstudied in the academic sphere and is only briefly mentioned by mainstream media.

Background: youth in the Islamic State's propaganda magazine Dabiq

Dabiq is the digital magazine series of the Islamic State. The magazine has offered long publications released by Al Hayat Media Center since July 2014 in French, German, English, Russian, and Arabic, each totaling approximately 50 pages. According to the magazine itself, the title *Dabiq* comes from a town in Northern Syria that is mentioned in a hadith as the place "where the Muslim and Christian armies will face each other" (Giles, 2014). The magazine emphasizes the Islamic State's news and "governance programs, ranging from Sharia courts to aid distribution and law enforcement" (Harleen, 2014, 3).

Dabiq in English aims to show IS' political, military, and religious programs to a Western audience. The magazine's vulgarization and explanation of the Islamic State's ideological concepts is important, since the target audience may not have any background knowledge of jihadi terms. *Dabiq*' editors use technological and media tools to offer a publication that is both pictorial and language-rich.

Moreover, *Dabiq* offers a microcosm of IS' propaganda pieces because the magazine is a condensed publication of IS' propaganda achievements, showing pictures from Al Hayat Media Center's violent videos, *Mujatweets*, and other types of videos. *Dabiq* can be considered a significant documentation of IS' propaganda strategy. The eight magazines released from July 2014 to May 2015 constitute the data set of this article. The topics of the *Dabiq* magazine, chosen by IS' media department, are primary concerns for a group that has "an holistic state building project" (Harleen, 2014, 2). Thus, the portrayal of youth in the magazine has significant functions in the engagement of the target audience.

Theoretical framework: representation of youth and children in the media

This article discusses theories of representation of youth and children in the media, especially in propaganda pieces. In this article, the term "children" refers to anyone from 0 to 12 years old and "youth" indicates anyone from 12 to 24 years old, as defined by Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Williard (Mazzarella, 2004, 228).

The qualitative content analysis of the representation of youth and children in *Dabiq* is based on the works of Henry Giroux, Mike Males, and Marina Warner, which discuss the myth of childhood innocence. Indeed, Henry Giroux stated that youth is a social construct imposed by adults (Giroux, 1996, 12). Adults consider that "both childhood and innocence reflect aspects of a natural state, one that is beyond the dictates of history, society, and politics" (Giroux, 2000, 2). Similarly, Marina Warner explains the myth of childhood innocence by stating that youths are "innocent because they are outside of society, pre-historical, pre-social

instinctual creatures of unreason, primitive kin to unspoiled nature" (Giroux, 2000, 5). However, as Giroux argued in *Stealing Innocence*, "childhood is not a natural state of innocence, it is a historical construct" (Giroux, 2000, 5). This myth perpetuates a dialectic relationship between how adults think about children and how children view themselves. In a globalized world dominated by capitalism and consumer society, this myth of childhood innocence has evolved: children are marketed as commodities instead of as mere objects (Giroux, 2000, 14). This myth of childhood innocence perpetuates the imbalance of power between adults and youths (Males, 1999).

The coding frame of this article highlights the extent to which IS portrays children and youth along the myth that marks children and youth as "innately pure and passive" (Giroux, 2000, 5). Moreover, Hartley argues that young people are powerless over their own image and that they are represented in ways that make them comparable to a "colonized people, perhaps the West's last colony in discursive terms" (Mazzarella, 2004, 233). Since the Islamic State advocates against Western values and anti-colonialism, it is interesting to analyze how IS portrays youth. Keeping Hartley's statement in mind, it appears that IS uses propaganda in an attempt to emancipate the "West's last colony."

Overall, this article analyzes whether Giroux and Males' theories of the myth of childhood innocence appear in the Islamic State's propaganda through passive roles, victimization tools and material commodity figures, or if the Islamic State has tried to implement its own paradigm for youths' roles and representation.

Methodology: Qualitative Content Analysis

Bernard Berelson defined content analysis as a "systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding" (as cited in Stemler, 2001). Content analysis is a relevant methodology for analysis of IS' representation of youth because its coding frames highlight the important concepts that the studied group also wants to highlight in its communication. The inferences made in this content analysis show IS' strategies, ideology, and relations of power, because discourse and society maintain a dialectic relationship in which discourse shapes and is shaped by society.

The content analysis is qualitative because youth and children are not the main themes of IS' propaganda. 165 inferences of nouns related to youth and children have been observed out of 155660 words in the eight *Dabiq* magazines. Thirteen pictures representing youths and children also constitute the data set in order to offer a visual content analysis.

The words "child" (7 inferences), "children" (65), "young" (21), "youth" (21), "boy" and "boys" (4), "girl" and "girls" (8), "son" and "sons" (45), "daughter" and "daughters" (4), and "lion cubs" and "lions" (5) have been coded in the *Dabiq* magazines. Emergent coding was the method chosen to establish categories following preliminary examination of the data (Stemler, 2001). First, the words were analyzed in context, and the counted nouns or adjectives were either direct objects or referred to the subject of their sentence. Nouns or adjectives were defined as "active" if they functioned as the subject of the sentence or if the following verb was in the active form. On the other hand, counted nouns or adjectives were defined as "passive" if they were indirect objects in the sentence or if the following verb was in the passive form.

Secondly, the coding of these nouns and adjectives linked them to one or more of ten overarching concepts: victimization tool, object and material commodity, slavery, showcase of IS' social and institutional rules, generational building, glorification of the group, out-group derogation, recruitment tool, threat the enemy, and youths as perpetrators of violence. The author and another undergraduate student at Georgetown

University have done this coding process in compliance with the reliability requirement of the coding (Weber, 1990, 12).

Concerning the visual content analysis, thirteen pictures have been analyzed based on the position of the image on the double-page, the color and contrast, the roles (active/passive) of youths in the picture, and youths' facial expressions and their placement within the picture (foreground/ background).

Qualitative Content Analysis Results and Discussion

The results of this qualitative and visual content analysis allow discussion of the initial hypothesis, which emphasized the use of youth and children as tools to fulfill IS' long-term political project of building a new society. The following chart offers an overview of the coding frames found in all references to youth in the *Dabiq* magazines.

Qualitative Content Analysis of The Representations of The Youth in The Dabiq Magazine

references coding frame	young (21)	youth (6)	child (7)	children (65)	boy/boys (4)	girl/girls (8)	son/sons (45)	daughter/ daughters (4)	Total (%)
Passive role	9	2	5	38	2	2	18	3	49,3
Active role	8	4	2	19	2	6	9	1	31,8
Victimization tool	1	0	1	20	1	0	4	0	16,8
Object / Material commodity	0	0	5	13	1	0	4	0	14,4
Slavery	0	0	4	5	6	5	0	0	12,5
Recruitment tool	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	4,4
Perpetrator of violence	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	4,4
Generation building	0	0	0	6	1	1	1	0	5,6
Showcase of IS' social and institutional rules	7	1	6	9	0	7	8	1	24,4
Threat the enemy	0	0	0	3	0	7	8	1	11,9
Glorification of the group	5	1	0	5	1	0	8	0	12,5
Out-group derogation	1	1	1	22	0	0	5	0	18,8
Not relevant	4	0	0	8	0	0	19	0	19,3

Table – Qualitative Content Analysis of the Representation of Youth in the Dabiq Magazines

The myth of childhood innocence

The content analysis of the *Dabiq* magazine confirms that the myth of childhood innocence is still the dominant aspect of the use of youth and children for the Islamic State. Indeed, children and youth have passive roles in half of the studied references (47,9% of the cases) while they have an active role in 33,9% of the cases (the other 18,8% of cases remain irrelevant). The representations of youth and children in passive roles, as weak or victimized, and as objects or commodities all align with the myth of childhood innocence.

1. Youth and children as victimization tools

Weakness or victimization appears in 16,4% of the references to youth and children. Children are represented as victims of the Western intervention against the Islamic State in order to raise sentiment and frustration within the target audience. Four pictures displayed in *Dabiq* show the heads of dead children, victims of bombings. The violent pictures are also included in the discourse through expressions such as "the US has killed women, children, and the elderly" (*Dabiq* Issue 3, 2014, 2) or "the massacres taking place in Gaza against the Muslim men, women, and children" (*Dabiq* Issue 2, 2014, 2). These two examples illustrate how Dabiq portrays children and youth as victims in order to influence its Western audience.

2. Youth and children as material commodities

The myth of childhood innocence is also fulfilled by the representation of youth and children as objects and material commodities in 13,9% of the references. Indeed, youth and children are seen as material commodities next to the words "wealth" and "weapons," such as in the sentence "they assist the Islamic State with their wealth, their sons, their men, their weapons" (*Dabiq* Issue 1, 2014, 6). Similarly, "Islamic State soldiers" possess children like objects that one can transport from one place to another in "a caravan of vehicles transporting the families (women and children) of Islamic State soldiers" (Dabiq Issue 4, 2014, 41). Youth and children are possessed by adults through pronouns or through the theme of slavery, which occurs in 11,5% of the total references.

3. Youth, children and slavery

The theme of slavery is mostly used to threaten the enemy's youth, as seen in references to the enslavement of girls from the Yazidi community. Six out of the eight references to the word "girl" have an immediate link to the theme of slavery and, more particularly, to the enslavement of girls. In seven cases this is to threaten the enemy, showing IS' social rules with regard to the captivation of its enemies. The materialization of girls is noticeable because they are seen as objects through slavery, and, in six cases out of eight, girls play an active role by "giving birth" or "buying their mother" (*Dabiq* Issue 4, 2014, 16). Similarly, the leitmotiv used by the Islamic State to threaten the enemy is to "sell [the] sons at the slave market" (*Dabiq* Issue 4, 2014, 7, 16, 36). The significant frequency of the theme of slavery highlights IS' social and institutional rules, which allow the enslavement of women and children.

A showcase of IS' social and institutional rules

The Islamic State uses the concept of childhood innocence and the enslavement of children to show its view of social and institutional rules and legitimize its long-term political project. The representation of youth and children highlights the way the group IS sees institutions such as education, justice court and health care. Few pictures and articles from *Dabiq* show adults, and the few who are shown are usually paternalistic men helping orphans and children that suffer from disease. There are also pictures of children smiling and reading an enlightened Koran (*Dabiq* Issue 7, 2015, 82). The Islamic State's discourse and visual contents representing youth show its ambitions to build a cohesive state through the imposition of social rules and institutions.

In-group celebration and out-group derogation

Active roles given to youth in *Dabiq* either refer to a common enemy, which represents an out-group derogation (18,2% of the studied references), or to the glorification of the group, which represents an in-group celebration (15,2% of the studied references). Concerning the concept of out-group derogation, the "sons" of the enemy or "the youth of the Jews" (*Dabiq* Issue 2, 2014, 21) always have an active role in order to legitimize the group's stance. Similarly, the celebration of the group invokes a representation of youths as heroes in spiritual or military terms, further legitimizing the activities of the group. The magazine also makes links between youth and the broader community of "the generous ummah", (*Dabiq* Issue 3, 2014, 4) which is the community of believers, in order to build a sentiment of imaginary community that transcends all other belongings.

Use of youth as a recruitment tool

Paradoxically, the qualitative content analysis highlights that the use of youth as a recruitment tool is not the most important framework of the representation of youth in *Dabiq*. Indeed, 4,2% of references to youth directly aim to recruit the Western target audience, fostering migrations to the Islamic State and urging Westerners to join the ranks of the Islamic State. However, recruitment tools in propaganda are also noticeable through representations of youth and children as perpetrators of violence or as ways to emphasize the building of a new society in the auto-proclaimed Islamic State.

1. Youth and children as perpetrators of violence

The content analysis of IS' discourse shows that the Islamic State displays youth and children as perpetrators of violence in 7,3% of the studied references. This finding could be seen as a minor result. However, this representation of youth and children can be observed in issues beginning with the fifth magazine, specifically in the issues 7 and 8 of *Dabiq*. This is a significant evolution that can also be observed in other videos released by Al Hayat Media Center in the same time period. Indeed, the Islamic State is creating more and more videos displaying youth and children as child-soldiers learning how to fight or killing their enemies, from the video of the Kazakh boy to the videos of schools of boys in military uniforms. This evolution is also noticeable in *Dabiq*, where the visual content analysis highlights that four out of thirteen pictures displaying youth and children show child-soldiers perpetrating violence. *Dabiq* Issue 8 features a full article entitled "Cubs of the Khilafah", in which young boys are killing IS' "enemies" (*Dabiq* Issue 8, 2015, 20-21). Indeed, there are five references to "lions" ("lion cubs", "young lions", "ashbal"), which are a metaphorical concept that emphasizes IS' goal of raising a generation of violent and impulsive individuals. This portrayal of young people having an active role in IS' violent enterprise showcases the group's views on education and the next generation of jihadists.

2. A long-term political goal to raise the next generation of jihadi fighters

The Islamic State has a clear political goal of a holistic state building project that would establish a global caliphate. IS has a different approach from other jihadi groups because it wants to implement a long-term political project that appears attractive to European youths as they experience a generational crisis. The qualitative content analysis of *Dabiq* shows that 8,5% of the references to youth and children foster generation building in the auto-proclaimed caliphate. As an example, some of the articles call the target

audience to "rush to the shade of the Islamic State with your parents, siblings, spouses, and children" (*Dabiq* Issue 2, 2014, 2). This goal of building a new society encompasses a range of other concepts that have been discussed previously, because generation building is intertwined with recruitment tools, glorification of the group and the showcase of IS' social and institutional rules in order to legitimize its long-term political project. This idea of sustainability can be illustrated by the leitmotiv "if we do not reach it that time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it" (*Dabiq* Issue 4, 2014, 7, 16, 36).

The idea of generation building is displayed in images of children swinging on a swing set after an article about the "hijrah" and "the path" to migrate to the Islamic State. Children are portrayed as innocent while pointing to "Allah," and the picture leads the viewer to believe that the children are enjoying their childhood (*Dabiq* Issue 1, 2014, 20).

Conclusion

The representation of youth and children in the magazine *Dabiq* gives a significant understanding of IS' propaganda and communication tools. Far from Al Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine, which focuses mostly on encouraging a Western audience to engage in lone-wolf attacks on the West, *Dabiq* tries to be the key reference for the Islamic State's policies and activities. The Islamic State uses youth to explain life in its auto-proclaimed caliphate, from its institutions (education and slavery) to its social policies (social care and healthcare). In order to recruit a Western target audience, IS displays children in ways that foster state building and glorify the group.

Though the Islamic State's portrayal of youth and children has mostly the same perspective of childhood innocence as other terrorist groups, a significant evolution is noticeable in the last two magazines. The Islamic State empowers youth with an increase in active roles, especially violent ones. This idea of youth as perpetrators of violence is a characteristic of the Islamic State, illustrating its new social paradigms and making it the main jihadi group that portrays children using violence themselves.

About the author: Agathe Christien *is an undergraduate exchange student at Georgetown University in Security Studies. She pursues a degree in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies at Sciences Po Lyon in France.*

Bibliography

Primary sources:

''The Return of Khilafah," *Dabiq* Issue 1, 1435 Ramadan, July 2014

''The Flood," *Dabiq* Issue 2, 1435 Ramadan, 2014

''A call to Hijrah", *Dabiq* Issue 3, Ramadan 1435, 2014

''The Failed Crusade," *Dabiq* Issue 4, Dhul-Hijjah 1435, 2014

''Remaining and Expanding," *Dabiq* Issue 5, 1436 Muharram, 2014

''Al-Qaidah of Waziristan," *Dabiq* Issue 6, 1436 Rabi' Al-Awwal, 2015

''From hypocrisy to apostasy," *Dabiq* Issue 7, 1436 Rabi' Al Akhir, 2015

''Shari'ah Alone will rule Africa,'' *Dabiq* Issue 8, 1436 Jumada Al-Akhirah, March 2015

Secondary Sources:

Ali Mah-Rukh, *ISIS and propaganda: how ISIS exploits women*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, 2015

Aly Anne, ''Jihadi Brides aren't oppressed. They join ISIS for the same reasons men do,'' March 2015, *The Guardian*, Retrieved December 20, 2015 from http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/04/jihadi-brides-arent-oppressed-they-join-isis-for-the-same-reasons-men-do

Becker Olivia, ''ISIS has a very sophisticated media department,'' July 12th 2014, *Vice News*. Retrieved May 3, 2015 from https://news.vice.com/article/isis-has-a-really-slick-and-sophisticated-media-department

Berelson Bernard, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952

Bloom Mia and Horgan John. ''The Rise of The Child Terrorist,'' *Foreign Affairs*, February 2015. Retrieved May 3, 2015 from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-02-09/rise-child-terrorist

Chambraud Cecile, ''Ma generation choisissait l'extreme gauche, eux le jihad,'' *Le Monde*, January 2015. Retrieved December 3, 2015 from http://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2015/01/09/daech-est-un-produit-de-notre-modernite_4552318_3210.html?xtmc=jean_pierre_filiu_daech&xtcr=1

Gambhir Harleen, ''Dabiq: The strategic messaging of the Islamic State,'' Institute for the Study of War, August 15 2014. Retrieved May 3, 2015 from https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Dabiq%20Backgrounder_Harleen%20Final.pdf

Giles Fraser, ''To Islamic State, Dabiq is important- but it's not the end of the world,'' *The Guardian*, October 2014. Retrieved May 3, 2015 from http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2014/oct/10/islamic-state-dabiq-important-not-end-of-the-world

Giroux Henry, S*tealing Innocence, Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture*, St Martin's Press, New York, 2000

Gotz Maya and Lemish Dafna, *Children and media in times of war and conflict*, Hampton Press, 2007

J. Marshall Beier, *The Militarization of Childhood*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

Mazzarella Sharon, ''Constructing Youth, Media, Youth, and the Politics of Representation,'' *A companion to Media Studies*, Blackwell, 2004, 228

Stemler, Steve, "An overview of content analysis," *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 2001, 7. Retrieved May 3, 2015 from http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=17

Weber Robert Philip, *Basic Content Analysis*, SAGE Publications, Inc, 2nd Edition, 1990

"Islamic State use kid in propaganda video targeting the next generation", *First Post*, January 14th 2015. Retrieved May 3, 2015 from http://www.firstpost.com/world/islamic-state-uses-kid-in-propaganda-video-targeting-next-generation-2051289.html

Examination of Blog Discussion about the Beheading of Two American Journalists by ISIS

by Chang Sup Park and David Magolis

Abstract

This study examines how Americans perceived the beheading of two American journalists, James Foley and Steven Sotloff, by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014. A content analysis of 980 comments from three representative political blogs of the United States (Townhall–conservative, DailyKos–liberal, and The Moderate Voice–moderate) finds that Americans had somewhat contrasting attitude toward the beheading. While many blog comments blamed the diplomatic failure of the United States toward the Arab world, they took an anti-Islamic stance and did not oppose military action against ISIS. The findings suggest that Americans' blog discourse about the beheading is characterized more by patriotism rather than by deliberation.

Keywords: beheading; ISIS; blogs; deliberation; patriotism; rationality

The beheading of American freelance journalists, James Foley and Steven Sotloff, by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014 has shocked Americans. ISIS posted the videos of the gruesome crime, which contain justifications for the action. With the beheading videos, ISIS drew tremendous and furious reaction from the American public. As seen in prior research on public reaction to terrorist attacks (e.g., Greenberg, 2002; Norris et al., 2003; Venkatraman, 2004), people tweeted and posted on Facebook their thoughts and feelings about the horrible brutality. Using social media including Facebook, Twitter and blogs, Americans actively expressed their emotions and opinions and engaged in discussions with others. Much of the reaction focused on the barbaric, savage, and evil nature of the displayed violence and the perpetrators.

The present study approaches the ISIS beheading of the two American journalists, focusing on how people perceived the atrocity and constructed their narratives via social media. Today social media have become an essential communication tool for both radicalized groups such as ISIS and ordinary individuals who seek information about terrorism and discuss about it. But prior research has focused mostly on the strategic use of social media by terrorists (e.g., Farwell, 2014, 2015; Ghajar-Khosravi, Kwantes, Derbentseva, & Huey, 2016; Huey, 2015; Picart, 2015; Weimann, 2015; Zech & Kelly, 2015), neglecting how people react to terrorism using social media. The analysis of people's engagement in communication via social media is important for three reasons. First, an enormous number of people generate and discuss about social and political issues through social media platforms on a constant basis (Ghajar-Khosravi, Kwantes, Derbentseva, & Huey, 2016; Park, 2015). Second, the public opinion on social media can directly influence a nation's security and foreign policies. Lastly, the examination of people's activities on social media can deepen our understanding about whether cyberspace can play a crucial role in motivating people to engage in rational and deliberative communication as cyberoptimists argue (Barber, 1998; Benkler, 2006).

The current study conducts a content analysis in three representative political blogs of the U.S. – *Townhall*

(conservative), *The Moderate Voice* (moderate), and *DailyKos* (liberal). The discourse about a national tragedy like the beheading is critical in understanding the political ramifications of a highly publicized political issue outside a nation. Also, it would be useful to evaluate the dominant current of emotional and perceptional reactions Americans showed to the beheading. To examine such research questions, the present study relies on the concept of deliberation, which refers to reasoned public discourse, dialogue, or conversation (Guttman & Thompson, 1996; Benhabib, 1996; Cohen, 1989; Habermas, 1989), under the assumption that deliberation is a key variable that explains the nature of the American public's discourse about terrorism.

Literature Review

Blogs and Deliberation

Since democratic theories took a deliberative turn a little more than two decades ago (Gutmann & Thompson, 2009), researchers from different backgrounds have applied the deliberative model to diverse areas from radical forms of democracy to more traditional models of representative democracy. Despite variations, the deliberative model of democracy highlights "the role of open discussion, the importance of citizen participation and the existence of a well-functioning public sphere" (Gimmler, 2001, p. 23). In other words, central to the deliberative model of democracy is the concept of the public sphere. A well-functioning public sphere requires the presence of rational-critical debate, which is essential to deliberation.

Ryfe (2002) defines deliberation as "advancement of claims, presentation of evidence, consideration of counterfactual data." Deliberation is "reflective, open to a wide range of evidence, respectful of different views. It is a rational process of weighing the available data, considering alternative possibilities, arguing about relevance and worthiness, and then choosing the best policy or person" (Walzer, 1997, pp. 1–2). Baoill (2004), based on Habermas' idea of the public sphere, argues that deliberative conversation should be inclusive, treat participants as equal, and uphold rational-critical debate.

Advocates of democratic deliberation have turned their attention to the Internet which presents unprecedented opportunities for democratic deliberation. This is partially because the Internet gives citizens almost unlimited access to information. By accessing the Internet, citizens can easily inform themselves on political issues (Jansen & Koop, 2005). Through the Internet, citizens can be better informed, which can translates into deliberation.

More important, the accessibility of the Internet means that online forums have the potential to engage enormous numbers of citizens in deliberative debate. If the public sphere of the 18th century within which citizens debated issues and formed opinions was bourgeois coffee shops and salons, cyberspace, which allows a huge number of citizens to engage in communication and deliberative processes, represents the public sphere of the 21st century. To the extent that deliberative democracy requires broad participation (Weeks, 2000), the Internet as an unprecedented communication medium may provide new opportunities for deliberation to take place.

Because blogs allow people to engage in knowledge sharing, reflection, and debate, they often attract a large and dedicated readership (Boulos et al., 2006). People are attracted to blogs because they offer relevant, immediate, and credible information as well as diverse perspectives about an issue (Johnson et al., 2007). In the blogosphere, conversations and discourses do not always follow media agendas (Johnson et al., 2007) and often bring up new agendas ignored or neglected by mainstream media. Blogs also provide people with a new

tool to express their voices. Blogging is "arguably the most significant media revolution since the arrival of television" because it allows people to "make arguments, fact-check them and rebut them in a seamless and endless conversation" (Sullivan, 2002, p. A4). In other words, the blogosphere allows for direct interactions and robust communication among users, which often results in involvement in deep discussions about social issues (Reese et al., 2007). In a nutshell, blogs have the potential to empower the public and enhance deliberative democracy by making it easier to engage in deliberation (Benkler, 2006; Woodley, 2008).

However, some scholars point to limitations in blog deliberation's extensibility to real-world political conversation. In assessing blogs for debate about the invasion of Iraq, Roberts-Miller (2004) found that blogs lacked true argumentation. The author found that many assertions surrounding the Iraq war were made without supporting evidence. He argued that the blog communication contributed to the strengthening of people's ideological orientations, and that as a result the public sphere became more fractured. Baoill (2004) also said that it is questionable the blog format has the potential to contribute to the public sphere. Blogging involves a heavy time commitment, which could be foreboding to citizens. Baoill concluded that blog discussions do not fulfill the ideal of rational debate.

Why have scholars obtained mixed results about the deliberative potential of blogs? One reason may be that little work has examined different dimensions of deliberation. For example, it is true that blogs expands the opportunity to meet diverse people, but it is not certain such encounters with different people necessarily lead to deliberation. Some blog users may be constrained by their emotion, as Hoggett (2002) pointed out that emotional tyranny exists in deliberative areas. Blog users' social or group identities are another obstacle (Ryfe, 2002). Some types of blog communication isolate participants from ideas that do not confirm to their position (Hargittai, Gallo, & Kane, 2008; Sunstein, 2001). This study revisits the deliberative nature of blog communication, by looking at diverse dimensions of deliberation.

Dimensions of Deliberation

Participants in deliberation are encouraged to speak intelligently, to be civil and polite (Papacharissi, 2004), to actively process arguments, and to show mutual respect, considerateness, and empathy to guide argumentation and decision-making (Fishkin, 1991, 1995; Gutmann & Thompson, 2009, 1996; Benhabib, 1996). The search for shared, common ground is important because it is closely associated with increased tolerance and understanding of others' viewpoints stressed (Gutmann & Thompson, 2009, 1996; Warren, 1996a). Warren (1996b) points out that deliberation should make participants more tolerant, selfless, public-minded, and self-reflective.

How then do we assess the extent to which blog users engage in deliberation? Sheer participation in blog communication is not enough to make the communication deliberative. We need to identify major characteristics that online discussion must contain in order to be considered deliberative. To date, most scholarly attention has been paid to the institutions that might facilitate deliberative communication online (Rosenberg, 2004). This study conceptualizes three major dimensions of deliberation (reciprocity, reflexivity, and empathy) and examines how those dimensions are interconnected one another.

The first dimension that needs to be considered for deliberation is the presence of *rational* debate. The ideal process of deliberation envisioned by Habermas (1984, 1987) must take the form of rational-critical debate and go through a process of defending and questioning the validity of claims and reasons. By doing so, deliberation enables a careful weighing of all pertinent information in conversation to permit an accurate analysis of the problem and a proper framing of solutions (Barber, 1984; Matthews, 1994). In short,

deliberative arguments must be rational-critical as opposed to being emotional (Benhabib, 1996), in order to enable a better argument to arise without non-rational coercive pressure.

Second, deliberative communication should be *reciprocal*. Schneider (1996) defines reciprocity as "the notion that people are engaged in conversation with each other" (p. 74). Reciprocity provides the opportunity to gain knowledge regarding the perspectives of others and the degree to which these opportunities are realized. Although an opinion is built upon careful contemplation, evidence, and supportive arguments, it does not necessarily become deliberative. In order to makes an opinion deliberative, the discussant also needs to grasp and take into consideration the opposing views of others. Essentially, reciprocity, which implies a mutual exchange of viewpoints, constitutes deliberation.

Another critical dimension of deliberation is *mutual understanding*. Simply recognizing, listening to, and receiving other participants' perspectives are not enough to achieve mutual understanding. Participants must move past the superficial level of reciprocity and achieve a deeper level of understanding (Price, Cappella, & Lilach, 2002). Habermas (1984), in his theory of communicative action, emphasized mutual understanding – awareness of what others think, coupled with some understanding of why others think the way they do. Whereas speaking highlights the strengths and individuality of an opinion, it is hearing that develops mutual understanding. Deliberation requires both. Deliberation is a "dual process of speaking and listening" (Park, 2000, p.5) and thereby forms a shared ground for understanding.

Chambers (2003) defined deliberation as "debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants" (p. 309). Here we should note that the very definition of deliberation includes openness to the arguments of others (presumably arguments with which the participant disagrees). Openness allows people to feel others' pain and unique experiences so that their decision takes others' viewpoints into consideration (Morrell, 2010). In other words, open minds are likely to result in mutual respect and inclusion. Cohen (1989), for example, emphasized the importance of respect for a pluralism of values among participants in democratic deliberative forums.

Following the literature and the above reasoning, this study conceptualizes mutual understanding as how much a blog user is open and generous to different viewpoints and, as a result, respects them. This study analyzes the blog comments on the recent beheading according to the three major dimensions of deliberation.

Research Context

In 2014, ISIS rose from one of many factions vying for power in Syria and Iraq to the forefront of violent struggle in the region. Beheading has emerged as one of the key strategies of ISIS and has served to distinguish its "brand" of violence from other terrorists.

ISIS attained notoriety when it released a gruesome video showing the beheading of American journalists James Foley. Four subsequent beheadings shocked and outraged audiences across the globe when ISIS murdered Steven Sotloff, David Haines, Alan Henning, and Abdul-Rahman Kassig. All five victims were held in prolonged captivity and each death was accompanied by a grisly, widely disseminated video. In each of the videos, a hooded figure and often the victim cite foreign aggression as the motivation for these actions. ISIS has warned the West about intervention and demanded the cessation of foreign bombing campaigns. In February 2015, ISIS provoked further global outrage when it killed Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh by

burning him alive. Later that month the ISIS beheaded 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians on a Libyan beach.

Although it is obvious that ISIS uses extreme violence including beheading as a goad against Western powers, it should be also pointed out that there are underlying factors fueling the rise of religious fundamentalism like ISIS. For example, the presence of foreign troops on the ground, U.S. and Western support for repressive regimes in the Middle East, and Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestine may have triggered the grievances of extremists of the region (Sprusansky, 2014).

Method

Population and Sample

This study was conducted based on the comments regarding James Foley and Steven Sotloff in three political blogs – Townhall (conservative), The Moderate Voice (moderate), and DailyKos (liberal). Using two keywords "James Foley" and "Steven Sotloff," we retrieved 122 posts and 3682 comments from Townhall, 36 posts and 1,240 comments from Daily Kos, and 44 posts and 281 comments from The Moderate Voice during August 19 to September 19, 2014. Some messages were eliminated because they were deemed irrelevant, although they were posted under pertinent titles or message headings. To make the analysis manageable, we randomly selected 15 comments from each threaded discussion posting. If the comments were less than 15 under a post, all comments were coded. This systematic random sampling yielded a dataset of 980 messages for a content analysis. Three hundred fifty five comments from Townhall, 160 comments from The Moderate Voice, and 465 comments from DailyKos were coded by two coders independently. The coding procedure followed the steps proposed by Krippendorff (2004).

Operationalization

Deliberation is a complex and abstract theoretical concept, which makes it difficult to translate into empirical indicators. On top of that, the theoretical dimensions of deliberation, more specifically rationality, reciprocity, and mutual understanding, are not mutually exclusive. Drawing on sporadic attempts to measure deliberation in literature, this study suggests its own operationalization for major variables of interest. The unit of analysis is each comment in the three blogs.

To assess *rationality*, the current study judged whether a blog comment contains persuasive reasoning or not and conducted a dichotomous coding. Persuasive reasoning becomes possible when an argument is centered on a solid logic and enough reasoning instead of emotions, prejudices or intuition. Only through such a process, a message can be accepted to both sides without causing conflict or misunderstanding. Therefore, this study assesses a blog comment to be rational when it contains a solid logic and enough reasoning. *Reciprocity* can be easily measured by observing whether a blog comment contains different viewpoints in it. If a blog comment does not contain others' opinion, thoughts, or viewpoints, the comment lacks reciprocity. Reciprocity was coded as: "1" for comments that simply express certain positions without providing any reasons; "2" for comments that give a one-sided opinion and offer reasons to support it; and "3" for comments that express considerations for different sides of the beheading issue.

Drawing on Chambers (2003), Cohen (1989) and Morrell (2010), this study operationalizes *mutual understanding* as the extent to which a blog comment is open and generous to different viewpoints and respects them. To measure mutual understanding three categories were created: attitude toward America's

international policy, attitude toward military action against ISIS, and attitude toward religion. The first two categories were coded following a binary distinction – "positive" or "negative." Attitude toward religion was coded as: "pro-Christian," "anti-Christian," "pro-Islam," "anti-Islam," and "respect for both Christianity and Islam."

Additionally, the present study coded media source mentioned in each comment: "traditional media" such as TV and newspapers; "online media" such as online news sites; "social media" such as Facebook and Twitter; or "none" which did not include any media source. Discrete emotions were also coded: "anger" for comments that express the feeling of being upset or irritated; "fear" when blog users feel threatened; or "sadness" when the comment contains sorrow or grief due to the loss of the two American journalists.

To assess intercoder reliability, 10 percent of posts for each day were randomly chosen. Using Holsti's coefficient of reliability formula, a coefficient of 91 percent was obtained on average. Codes were entered directly into Excel and pulled into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Results

In Townhall, 6.2% (22) of the comments included information from traditional media. Only one comment contained information from online news. Social media sources were cited in 7% (25) of the comments. Among the four types of emotions, anger (58.6%, 208) was dominant, followed by fear (3.9%, 14). Sadness and anxiety were not found at all.

In DailyKos, 6.5% (30) of the comments included information from traditional media. Ten comments contained information from online news. Social media sources were cited in 7.5% (35) of the comments. In terms of emotion, anger (46.2%, 215) was most dominant, followed by fear and sadness. In The Moderate Voice, 10.2% of the comments included information from traditional media. Social media sources were cited in 15.8% of the comments. In terms of emotion, anger (41.4%) was most dominant, followed by fear and sadness.

Most comments in the three blogs were unfavorable toward the U.S. government, and, at times, blamed the officials in government leadership positions. In Townhall, 207 comments (66.8%) were coded as opposing the government's handling of the beheading issue. In DailyKos, 33.5% were found to oppose the government's stance. In The Moderate Voice, 40.2% were coded to be negative toward the government. Only 3.1% of Townhall comments, 37.0% of DailyKos comments, and 14.8% of The Moderate Voice comments showed favorable evaluation toward the government action. A similar pattern was observed as to President Barak Obama. The proportion of negative evaluation of Obama's action was 58.6% (208) in Townhall, 26.7% (124) in DailyKos, and 30.8% (49) in The Moderate Voice.

Regarding *rationality*, the comments that are not based on any rationale accounted for 66.5% (236) in Townhall, 59.4% (95) in The Moderate Voice, and 56% (260) in DailyKos. In other words, a majority of comments in the three blogs lacked reasoning. One-sample chi-square tests reveal that rational comments are significantly more common than comments that are not rational in all the three blogs (x^2 (1, $N = 355$) = 38.56, $p < .001$ in Townhall; x^2 (1, $N = 160$) = 8.54, $p < .01$ in The Moderate Voice; x^2 (1, $N = 465$) = 6.51, $p < .05$ in DailyKos). A test where all the comments were added up yielded a similar result, x^2 (1, $N = 980$) = 41.64, $p < .001$.

With regard to *reciprocity*, the mean in Townhall is 1.45 (SD = .87). Comments that simply express a one-sided opinion without providing any reason constituted 122 (34.4%), and comments that give a one-sided

opinion with reasons supporting it explained 29.3% (104) of the total comments. Only 15 comments (4.2%) were found to contain different perspectives regarding the beheading. A chi-square test was run to compare the difference between one-sided comments (122 + 104 = 226) and comments with multiple viewpoints (15). The difference was statistically significant, x^2 (1, $N = 241$) = 184.73, $p < .001$.

In DailyKos, the mean of reciprocity is 1.53 (SD = .88). One-sided comments without reasoning made up 29% (135). Comments that gave a one-sided opinion with reasoning explained 28% (130) of the total comments. Only 75 comments (16.1%) were found to include different viewpoints. We conducted a chi-square test to compare the difference between one-sided comments (135 + 130 = 265) and comments with multiple viewpoints (75) and found a significant difference, x^2 (1, $N = 340$) = 106.18, $p < .001$.

In The Moderate Voice, the mean of reciprocity is 1.48 (SD = 1.03). One-sided comments without reasoning made up 30.7% (49). Comments that gave a one-sided opinion with reasoning explained 29.6% (47) of the total comments. Only 24 comments (15.0%) were found to include different viewpoints. A chi-square test was run to compare the difference between one-sided comments (49 + 47= 96) and comments with multiple viewpoints (24). The difference was significant, x^2 (1, $N = 120$) = 43.20, $p < .001$. A test where all the codes of reciprocity from the three blogs were added up yielded a similar result, x^2 (1, $N = 701$) = 319.16, $p < .001$.

	Townhall	The Moderate Voice	DailyKos	Sum
Appropriate	11	22	172	205
Not Appropriate	207	64	158	429
x^2	176.22	20.51 ($p < .001$)	.59 ($p = .441$)	79.14 ($p < .001$)
	(p < .001)			

Table 1: U.S government's handling of the beheading.

	Townhall	The Moderate Voice	DailyKos	Sum
Rational	119	65	205	389
Non-rational	236	95	260	591
x^2	38.56 ($p < .001$)	8.54 ($p < .001$)	6.51 ($p < .001$)	41.64 ($p < .001$)

Table 2: Rationality.

	Townhall	The Moderate Voice	DailyKos	Sum
Single Viewpoint	226	96	265	587
Multiple Viewpoints	15	24	75	114
x^2	184.73	43.20	106.18	319.16
	(p < .001)	(p < .001)	(p < .001)	(p < .001)

Table 3 : Reciprocity.

Regarding *mutual understanding*, the current study first compared the blog users' evaluation of the U.S. policy for the Middle East. In Townhall, 26.5% (94) of the comments contained criticism about the U.S. policy, while 27 comments (7.6%) agreed with the direction of the U.S. policy. The difference was significant,

x^2 (1, N = 121) = 37.10, p < .001.

In DailyKos, 25.0% (116) of the comments criticized the U.S. policy, while 30 comments blamed the U.S approach to the issues regarding the Middle East. A chi-square test revealed that the positive evaluation of the U.S. policy is significantly less observed than the negative evaluation of it, x^2 (1, N = 146) = 50.66, p < .001.

In The Moderate Voice, 30.8% (49) of the comments contained criticism about the U.S. policy, while 10 comments (6.3%) agreed with the direction of the U.S. policy. The difference was significant, x^2(1, N = 59) = 25.78, p < .001. A test where all the codes related to U.S. policy from the three blogs were added up yielded a similar result, x^2 (1, N = 326) = 113.08, p < .001.

Concerning military action, 110 comments (31%) from Townhall supported it while only 36 comments (10.1%) opposed it. The difference was significant, x^2 (1, N = 146) = 37.51, p < .001. In DailyKos, 102 comments (21.9%) supported and 98 comments (21.1%) opposed it. A chi-square test did not reveal any statistical difference, x^2 (1, N = 200) = .08, p = .777. In The Moderate Voice, 44 comments (27.6%) supported while only 15 comments (9.4%) opposed it. The difference was significant, x^2 (1, N = 59) = 14.25, p < .001. A test where all the codes related to military action were added up yielded a similar result, x^2 (1, N = 405) = 28.27, p < .001.

When it comes to religion, 117 comments in Townhall included anti-Islam messages. Only 36 comments showed a balanced attitude between Christianity and Islam. Interestingly, 25.4% (90) comments mentioned the term "terrorist." A chi-square test revealed that Anti-Islam comments were significantly more common than comments that respect both Christianity and Islam, x^2 (1, N = 153) = 42.88, p < .001.

In DailyKos, 102 comments included anti-Islam messages. Only 56 comments showed a balanced stance between Christianity and Islam. The difference was significant, x^2 (1, N = 158) = 13.39, p < .001. In The Moderate Voice, 58 comments included anti-Islam messages while only 18 comments showed a balanced stance between Christianity and Islam. The difference was significant, x^2 (1, N = 76) = 52.74, p < .001. A test where all the codes related to attitude toward religion were added up produced a similar result, x^2 (1, N = 387) = 72.06, p < .001.

	Townhall	The Moderate Voice	DailyKos	Sum
Critical	94	49	116	259
Agreeing	27	10	30	67
x^2	37.10	25.78 (p < .001)	50.66 (p < .001)	113.08
	(p < .001)			(p < .001)

Table 4 : Evaluation for the U.S. foreign policy (mutual understanding).

	Townhall	The Moderate Voice	DailyKos	Sum
Supportive	110	44	102	256
Opposing	36	15	98	149
x^2	37.51 ($p < .001$)	14.25 ($p < .001$)	.08 ($p = .777$)	28.27 ($p < .001$)

Table 5: Military intervention (mutual understanding).

	Townhall	The Moderate Voice	DailyKos	Sum
Balanced between Christianity and Islam	36	18	56	110
Anti-Islam	117	58	102	277
x^2	42.88 ($p < .001$)	52.74 ($p < .001$)	13.39 ($p < .001$)	72.06 ($p < .001$)

Table 6 : Attitude toward Religion (Mutual Understanding).

Discussion

Most Western media and authorities emphasized persistently the atrocity of the beheading of the two American journalists by ISIS. To date little research has systematically examined how people responded to such a horrible crime and what discussions they had about it. Therefore, it is meaningful to investigate what perceptions Western citizens had regarding the beheading and terrorism. This study collected 980 comments posted on three representative political blogs of the U.S. and analyzed the blog users' discourse about the beheading, focusing on the concept of deliberation.

Technology optimists view blogging technology as having the potential to engage citizens in unrestricted and deliberative discourse about political issues. The blog provides a much needed public sphere for people to express their views and speak their minds on an important issue like the beheading by ISIS. Blogs are particularly valuable because they offer an opportunity to discuss controversial and multi-faceted issues. But the findings of the current study point to somewhat non-deliberative nature of blog communication.

This study found that rational reasoning was not common in Americans' blog communication about the beheading. The majority of American blog users expressed their subjective thoughts and ungrounded opinions rather than engaging in deliberative communication based on deep reasoning. Many blog users also did not show a reciprocal attitude, failing to consider different viewpoints or ignoring them. Most comments were based on one-sided perspectives rather than on diverse perspectives. These results indicate that blogging technology itself does not guarantee or promote deliberation.

The lack of reciprocity and rationality suggests that blogs fail to offer a forum for deliberation as long as they concern terrorism. Roberts-Miller (2004) criticized that mostly consensual arguments in blog comments cannot facilitate rational debate. The current study shows that the deliberative nature of the blog comments has largely been lost, without encouraging citizens to engage in deliberation about important terrorism issues.

The current study also found that most blog users lacked mutual understanding in discussing the beheading.

It is surprising that many ordinary American citizens favored the idea of taking military action against ISIS. Particularly, among the comments posted in Townhall, the claim of supporting military action was three times more frequently observed than the voice of opposing military intervention. If U.S. political leaders considered seriously the public opinion of blog users when determining a national action about the beheading, it might have resulted in another military intervention to the Middle East. Also, a lot of blog users revealed anti-Islamic attitude, which indicates that many American blog users attempted to connect the cause of the beheading to the issue of violence by the people who believe in Islam rather than attributing the responsibility of the beheading to extreme Muslim terrorists.

Some excuses may be brought up regarding the above findings. First, we can interpret the findings in relation to Americans' realization that the Arab world consistently harmed the U.S. and its citizens. Americans are quite upset at the continuous terrorism by the Arab world. Because of that, many Americans view Islam to be related to terrorism. This is the same concern that has materialized in the days and months following 9/11. Many Americans saw 9/11 as a clash of civilizations: Islam vs. America. It appears that Americans believe it is the intrinsic nature of Islam that hurts the interests and safety of America.

However, it should be noted that the beheading is a political issue rather than a religious issue. Even though we admit that some sorts of action should be taken toward the anti-humanitarian crime, it is not certain whether the issue can be solved by taking military action against the Arab world in general or by developing a hostile perception toward the Islam as a religion. It's not true that the beheading is an issue that involves the whole Arab world or the Islam. Although it is an undeniable fact that many terrorists come from the Islam world, it does not make much sense to attribute the responsibility of the beheading to the people who believe in Islam.

Readers also should note the finding that a considerable number of American blog users had the understanding that the previous U.S. policy about the Arab world has something to do with the terrorism against American citizens. The findings of the current study reveal that the comments in the three blogs were mostly negative rather than positive toward the U.S. international policy. This outcome suggests that the blog communication about the beheading was not completely non-deliberative. Obviously many blog users had the perception that the beheading issue should be understood in relation to international, geopolitical, and historical context.

But unfortunately, such critical evaluation of the U.S. international policy did not result in reason-based, deliberative debate about the beheading. Many blog users consciously or unconsciously approached the issue with a hostile attitude toward Islam and with a belief in America's superior role in international affairs. Therefore, we cautiously speculate that the deliberative effort of American blog users was to some extent undermined by their patriotic pride and longstanding antagonism against Islam even though they knew that such an approach is not logical and not the best way to solve the problem. In this respect, the present study raises an important question to follow-up studies: In what ways are deliberation and patriotism interconnected?

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution to the study of deliberation. To date, most deliberation studies conceived deliberation as a one-dimensional concept. This approach may have produced mixed results about the deliberative potential of Internet-based media. This study conceptualized three dimensions of deliberation and applied the categorization to an analysis of the blog communication about ISIS beheading. The present study argues that the three dimensions of deliberation have enough usability to be applied to the study of people's engagement in online discussion about terrorism.

This study has some limitations. External validity is one concern. Blog users constitute a small percentage of the American public. Nonetheless, blogs are one of the popular media channels in the U.S. and reflect the grassroot sentiments of the American society regarding the beheading issue. Another shortcoming can be found from the generalizability of the findings. This study examined the comments on ISIS beheading only from American blogs. Future research should conduct comparative studies by looking at diverse countries' political blogs. Despite a few limitations, this study contributes to the study of terrorism by suggesting an innovative theoretical and methodological framework which can deepen the understanding of extremists' terrorism and blog users' reaction to it.

About the authors

Chang Sup Park *is an assistant professor of mass communications in Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.*

David Magolis *an associate professor of mass communications at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.*

References

Baoill, A. (2004). *Weblogs and the public sphere. Into the Blogsophere*. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/11299/172275.

Barber, B. R. (1984). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Benhabib, S. (1996). Toward a deliberative model of democratic legitimacy. In S. Benhabib (Ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (pp. 67–94). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*.New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Boulos, M. N. K., Maramba, I., & Wheeler, S. (2006). Wikis, blogs and podcasts: a new generation of Web-based tools for virtual collaborative clinical practice and education. *BioMed Central Medical Education*, 6, 41-49.

Chambers, S. (2003). Deliberative democratic theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6, 307–326. Cheong, M., & Lee, V. S. (2011). A microblogging-based approach to terrorism informatics:

Exploration and chronicling civilian sentiment and response to terrorism events via Twitter. *Information Systems Frontiers*, *13*(1), 45-59.

Cohen, J. (1989). Deliberative democracy and democratic legitimacy. In A. Hamlim & P. Pettit (Eds.), *The good polity* (pp. 17-34). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Neuman, W. R., & Robinson, J. P. (2001). Social implications of the Internet. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *27*, 307-336.

Farwell, J. P. (2014/2015). The Media Strategy of ISIS. *Survival*, *56*/6, 49–55.

Fishkin, J. S. (1991). *Democracy and deliberation: New directions for democratic reform*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Ghajar-Khosravi, S., Kwantes, P., Derbentseva, N., & Huey, L. (2016). Quantifying Salient Concepts Discussed in Social Media Content: A Case Study using Twitter Content Written by Radicalized Youth. *Journal of Terrorism Research*, *7*(2), 79-90.

Gimmler, A. (2001). Deliberative democracy, the public sphere and the Internet. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, *27*(4), 21–39.

Goodin, R. E. (2003). *Reflective democracy*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Goodin, R. E. (2000). Democratic deliberation within. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, *29*(1), 81–109. Greenberg, B. S. (2002). *Communication and terrorism: Public and media responses to 9/11*. Cresskill,NJ: Hampton Press.

Gutmann, A., & Thompson, D. F. (2009). *Why deliberative democracy*? Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gutmann, A., & Thompson, D. F. (1996). *Democracy and disagreement*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Habermas, J. (1994). Three normative models of democracy. *Constellations*, *1*(1), 1-10.

Habermas, J. (1989[1962]). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (trans T. Burger with F. Lawrence). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action*, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System (trans.T. McCarthy). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action*, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society (trans.T. McCarthy). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hargittai, E., Gallo, J., & Kane, M. (2008). Cross-ideological discussions among conservative and liberal bloggers. *Public Choice*, *134*(1/2), 67-86.

Hoggett, P., & Thompson, S. (2002). Toward a democracy of the emotions. *Constellations*, *9*(1), 106- 126.

Jansen, H. J., & Koop. R. (2005). Pundits, ideologues, and ranters: The British Columbia election online. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, *30*(4), 613-632.

Johnson, T. J., Kaye, B. K., Bichard, S. L., & Wong, W. J. (2007). Every blog has its day: Politically- interested Internet users' perceptions of blog credibility. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 100-122

Kim, J., Wyatt, R. O., & Katz, E. (1999). News, talk, opinion, participation: The part played by conversation in deliberative democracy. *Political Communication*, *16*(4), 361-385.

Mansbridge, J. (1983). *Beyond adversary democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Mathews D. (1997). *Politics for people: Finding a responsible public voice*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Mill, J. S. (1974). *On liberty*. London: Penguin. (Original work published 1859)

Morrell, M. E. (2010). *Empathy and democracy: Feeling, thinking, and deliberation*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Moy, P., & Gastil, J. (2006). Predicting deliberative conversation: The impact of discussion networks, media use, and political cognitions. *Political Communication*, *23*(4), 443-460.

Mummery, J., & Rodan, D. (2013). The role of blogging in public deliberation and democracy. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *2*(1), 22-39

Norris, P., Kern, M., Just, M. (2003). Framing terrorism. In Norris, P., Kern, M. and Just, M. (Eds.), *Framing

terrorism: The news media, the government, and the public (pp. 3–26). New York: Routledge.

Papacharissi, Z. (2004). Democracy online: Civility, politeness, and the democratic potential of online political discussion groups. *New Media & Society*, *6*(2), 259-284.

Park, C. S. (2015). Pathways to Expressive and Collective Participation: Usage Patterns, Political Efficacy, and Political Participation in Social Networking Sites. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *59*(4), 698-716.

Picart, C. (2015). "Jihad Cool/Jihad Chic": The Roles of the Internet and Imagined Relations in the Self-Radicalization of Colleen LaRose (Jihad Jane). *Societies*, *5*(2), 354-383.

Powell, K. A. (2011). Framing Islam: An analysis of US media coverage of terrorism since 9/11 *Communication Studies*, *62*(1), 90-112.

Price, V., & Cappella, J. N. (2002). Online deliberation and its influence: The electronic dialogue project in campaign 2000. *IT & Society*, *1*(1), 303-329.

Price, V., Cappella, J. N., & Nir, L. (2002). Does disagreement contribute to more deliberative opinion? *Political Communication*, *19*(1), 95-112.

Rawls, J. (1999). *A theory of justice*. Oxford, MA: Oxford University Press.

Rawls, A. W. (1996). Durkheim's Epistemology: The neglected argument. *American Journal of Sociology*, *102*(2), 430-482.

Reese, S. D., Rutigliano, L., Kideuk, H., & Jaekwan, J. (2007). Mapping the blogosphere: Professional and citizen-based media in the global news arena. *Journalism*, *8*(3), 235-261.

Rishel, N. M. (2011). Digitizing deliberation. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, *33*(3), 411-432.

Roberts-Miller, P. (2004). *Deliberate conflict: Argument, political theory, and composition classes*.Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Ryfe, D. M. (2002). The practice of deliberative democracy: A study of 16 deliberative organizations. *Political Communication*, *19*(3), 359–377.

Sprain, L., & Gastil, J. (2013). What does it mean to deliberate? An interpretive account of jurors' expressed deliberative rules and premises. *Communication Quarterly*, *61*(2), 151-171.

Sprusansky, D. (2014). Understanding ISIS. *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 2014 October, pp. 19-20. Retrieved from http://www.wrmea.org/2014-october/understanding-isis-frequently- asked-questions.html.

Sullivan, A. (2002). *A Blogger Manifesto: Why online weblogs are one future for journalism*. Retrieved from http://www.andrewsullivan.com/print.php?artnum = 20020224.

Sunstein, C. (2001). *Republic.com*. Princeton, MA: Princeton University Press.

Venkatraman, S. (2004). *Media in a terrorized world: Reflection in the wake of 9/11*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Walzer, M. (1997). *Deliberation, and what else*? Unpublished manuscript.

Warren, M. (1996). Deliberative democracy and authority. *American Political Science Review*, *90*(1), 46-60.

Weeks, E. C. (2000). The practice of deliberative democracy: Results from four large-scale trials. *Public Administration Review*, *60*(4), 360-372.

Weimann, G. (2015). *Terrorism in Cyberspace: The Next Generation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Woodley, D. (2008). New competencies in democratic communication? Blogs, agenda setting and political participation. *Public Choice*, *134*(1-2), 109–123.

Xenos, M. (2008). New mediated deliberation: Blog and press coverage of the Alito Nomination.*Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(2), 485-503.

Zech, S., & Kelly, Z. (2015). Off with their heads: the Islamic State and civilian beheadings. *Journal of Terrorism Research*, *6*(2), 83-93.

Terrorism or Clamor for Resource Control: An Analysis of Nigeria's Niger Delta Militants

by John Oghenero Tobor

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out whether the activities of the Niger Delta militants can be classified as acts of terrorism or a clamor for resource control. The engagement tactics of kidnappings, attacks on oil infrastructural facilities and the placement of bombs and other explosive devices in public places suggest to some observers that the Niger Delta militants should be considered terrorists. Using content analysis of relevant secondary data, with insights from the experiences and perceptions of the study participants, this paper examines the engagement tactics of the Niger Delta militants. The findings may be useful in contributing to the development of policies that address the Niger Delta crisis. Similarly, key stakeholders equipped with such vital information derived from the result findings may understand, appreciate, identify, and develop appropriate strategies and guidelines that can be used to address the reasons behind the Niger Delta conflicts. All of these may lead to improvement in the lives of the residents that inhabit the land. Findings of this study may also enable the multinational oil corporations to re-evaluate their strategies and mode of operations and come up with better ways to operate in a peaceful environment, and thus contribute steadfastly and uninterruptedly to the Nigerian economy. All these may invariably lead to positive social change. Much of the empirical evidence to be presented derives from my own research.

Keywords*: Crisis; conflicts; ex-militant;, Niger Delta; Nigeria; resource control; terrorism.*

Introduction

Several researchers defined the Niger Delta region to include nine states namely Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Abia, Cross River, Ondo, and Imo State (Badmus, 2010; Idowu, 2012; Odoemene, 2011; Okpo & Eze, 2012; Olankunle, 2010). Obi (2010) described the Niger Delta region as a vast coastal plain situated at the southernmost part of Nigeria where the River Niger drains into the Atlantic Ocean. Paki and Ebienfa (2011) referred to the region as one of the richest deltas in the world. The region covers about 70, 000 square kilometers of watery maze of intricate marshland, lagoons, tributaries, extensive fresh water swamps, rich fisheries deposits, and creeks (Obi, 2010; Odoemene, 2011; Okpara, 2012; Omotola, 2012). The region is made up of ecological zones that range from sandy coastal ridge barrier to lowland rainforest teeming with towering mangrove plants, marine life, bird, giant ferns, and the forests (Amadi & Abdullah, 2012; Obi, 2010). It is considered to be the largest wetland in Africa and one of the largest in the world (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011; Nte, Eke, & Anele, 2010; Obi, 2010; Ogbodo, 2010; Omotola, 2010; Paki & Ebienfa, 2011). Obi (2010) emphasized that the region provides a habitat for a vast biodiversity from its rich resource base. According to Omotola (2010), the region has natural gas reserves of about 163 trillion cubic feet and harbors crude oil reserves of 33 billion barrels. The region has a population of about 28.9

million people (Ogege, 2011; Okpara, 2012). Badmus (2010) described the Niger Delta region as a zone of demographic minorities comprised of different ethnic tribes that include the Urhobos, the Ijaws, Ibibios, Kalabari, Itshekiris, Efiks, Isoko, Nembe, Ndom, Andoni, and Ikwerre (Badmus, 2010; Okpo & Eze, 2012).

Ekpeyong and Dienye (2010) argued that the region became very important in Nigeria's economic, social, and political equations when oil was first discovered in commercial quantities in Olobiri in 1953. A majority of the researchers on Niger Delta agreed that oil is the predominant source of revenue for the Nigerian economy and accounts for over 90% of export earnings and about 80 % of federal revenues (Agbonifo, 2009; Badmus, 2010; Etemike, 2012; Obi, 2010; Okpara, 2012; Ogege, 2011). Agbonifo explained that the Niger Delta has about 11 multinational oil corporations that operate about 159 oil fields and 1,481 oil wells. Anele and Omoro (2012) asserted that oil revenue derived from the Niger Delta region accounts for more than 90% of Nigeria's wealth. In spite of the Niger Delta's dominant contribution to the national economy, the general state of the region reflects extreme poverty, underemployment, pollution, neglect, underdevelopment, and lack of proper and adequate infrastructure (Amadi & Abdullah, 2012; Obi, 2010).

Oil-related conflicts in the Niger Delta, Nigeria date back to the 1970s when Oil Producing Communities (OPCs) began agitations against Multinational oil corporations (MOC) over concerns about oil-induced environmental devastation, MOC reluctance to support community development, and inadequate compensation for damages to properties caused by the operational activities of the MOC. The failure of the Nigerian Government to adequately address the myriad grievances instigated several developments, resulting in the formation of militia groups that mobilized a violent struggle against the Nigerian State. The Niger Delta militants' use of violence as a strategy of engagement and method to communicate political objectives has raised concerns as to whether their activities fall under the heading of terrorism or quest for resource control. The meaning and applicability of such a term is highly debated because it elicits different meanings to different people, and at times different things to the same person in different contexts. While it can be viewed through the prisms of crime, politics, communication, religion and warfare, there have been many attempts to create a definition of terrorism that can be applied to various contexts.

Classic definitions of terrorism often include the use of violence to compel a government or society to act in a certain way. While the aforementioned classification could easily apply to the tactical behavior of the Niger Delta militants, the question is then whether it can be viewed as an act of terrorism or as an avenue to draw attention to their cries and clamor for resource control. The main objective of this article is to discuss the targeting behavior of the Niger Delta militants and determine whether it falls within the context of terrorism or quest for resource control. The struggles of the Niger Delta people can be appreciated through the lens of the political economy approach. Political economy falls within the broader critical theory perspective. Ekpeyong and Dienye (2010) utilized the political economy approach to effectively amplify the problems of the Niger Delta region. The approach posits that economic relations defines or reinforces the struggle for power, which ultimately results in conflicts. However, the continued denial of any effective political identity provided the motivation and impetus that gave rise to the crisis in the Niger Delta region. The problems of the Niger Delta can be associated with the aspirations of the indigenous people for effective representation in government that would translate to political, social, and economic emancipation.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research method. The study participants included 20 ex-militants from Urhobo origin. The Urhobos make up a sizeable and significant portion of the total population of the Niger

Delta region. Ekeh (2008) emphasized that the Urhobos are the most populated group in the Western Niger Delta region and fifth largest ethnic group in Nigeria. They live amongst other ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region and share similar social background. Participants in this study were not randomly selected, but rather they were chosen based on certain distinctive features. The 20 ex-militants chosen were all males and they cut across status, age, religious, and various professional backgrounds. For instance, some of the respondents include farmers, fishermen, activists, artisans, and traders. The number 20 was determined to be adequate for the reason that the fewer participants in this type of study, the more depth I was able to get from the interviews.

In order to address the issue of confidentiality, the participants are identified and designated with a letter P (for participant), and a corresponding number (for instance, P1, P2, P3, etc.) assigned to them in the order in which they were interviewed. Their ages ranged from 20 to 45 years. Ethical consideration was taken into account. For instance, the rights and responsibilities of the participants were explained to them in great detail as indicated by the Institutional Review Board guidelines and regulations. Participants were also advised that their participation is voluntary and that they could opt out of the study without giving any reason or cause. All the study participants were given an opportunity to review and sign the informed consent form. Twenty face-to-face interviews with the use of 23 open-ended questions were conducted in a 4-week period. The interviews were recorded on a Sony PCM-M10/B portable digital field audio recorder and subsequently stored on a laptop computer. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft word document. Prior permission was obtained before each recording. In order to ensure evidence of trustworthiness in the study, member checking was employed during and after the interview. The data collected were content-analyzed.

Triangulation is a validity strategy that was used to ensure credibility of this study. The use of an ethnographic research design reduced threats to validity and by employing multiple sources to collect data led to triangulation over an extended period of time. In order to address the issue of confirmability, reflexive bracketing was used to give meaning to the daily lived experiences of the study participants. Transcripts were returned to participants to verify accuracy and corroborate the data analyzed. This provided an opportunity for the participants to review and clarify any ambiguities, the meanings of their statements, views, and comments expressed during the interview process. The conceptual framework for Tobor (2014) was based on Oakley's (1989) concepts of community participation, while Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy provided the theoretical framework for the study.

Competing perspectives of terrorism

When one tries to define terrorism, one is astonished by the multiplicity of definitions already proposed by philosophers. They are so different that no consensus seems likely to be reached. Failure to produce a standard definition is because Nation-states, sub state organizations, scholars and non-state actors have often rejected definitions that undermine their modus operandi in any insurrectionary situation (Chase, 2013). The appellation of terrorism is appropriately and or inappropriately used by the constructor in any given circumstance to pursue set goals (Bongar, Brown, Beutler, Breckenridge, & Zimbardo, 2007). It is against this background that the formulation of an adequate definition seems impossible. However, what is generally agreed on is that the word terrorism has a very strong negative connotation. Some definitions of terrorism are in fact justifications or condemnations of certain forms of violence rather than adequate and exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it is indeed commonly agreed that terrorism pursues its aim

by creating a situation of fear and more precisely of terror in a group or in a population. This is why terrorism is widely seen as an extreme form of violence because it has a psychological impact much deeper than its physical consequences.

Nacos (2012) in tracing the origin and definition of the term terrorism gave an account of the 18th century French Revolution. Nacos described violent actions as tools of oppression engaged by those in state power to oppress, cow, minimize, and suppress oppositions during the reign of terror. However, by the middle of the 19th century the definition of terrorism seemed to have been extended to indicate the use of force by the seemingly oppressed class against those in power in order to challenge, stop or overturn the reign of terror (Nacos, 2012). The latter definition reflects the feud often between the reign of terror and fight-back as a defense mechanism of freedom-fighters. The semantics of constructing the aggressor as a freedom-fighter, militia, terrorists, and or government, becomes a function of propaganda and dialectic bias. The deployment of the instrumentality of violence could be used in furtherance of political, economic or social objectives (Chase, 2013; Nacos, 2012). According to Nacos (2010), the ambiguity about the definition of terrorism deserves attention because the choice of language may determine or influence how politically motivated violence is perceived inside and outside a targeted society. Rubenstein (1988) posited that terrorism portrays violent action of individuals or small groups, with implicit connotation of illegitimacy. Cooper (2001) defines terrorism as the intentional generation of massive fear by human beings for the purpose of securing or maintaining control over other human beings. This definition might not satisfy many who try to find a substantial one to sum all the phenomena.

Background to the study

Though the link between oil, deprivation and conflict in the Niger Delta has been extensively discussed in the literature, it is important to underscore some of the issues related to the Niger Delta context. The rising violence in Niger Delta, Nigeria is a function of the continuation of the struggle for resource control by any means necessary. It is therefore not a surprise to associate criminal tendencies that usually accompany such struggles. The literature reviewed (Agbonifo, 2009; Badmus, 2010; Bassey, 2012; Idowu, 2012; Ifedi & Anyu, 2011; Ogege, 2011; Okpo & Eze, 2012; Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012; Oluwaniyi, 2011;Tobor, 2016) indicated that while oil production is easily Nigeria's most crucial economic life-line and has been the major contributor to the nation's overall economic development over the decades, the oil bearing Niger Delta communities have basically remained persistently deprived of the benefits of oil resources. Instead of improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of the region, the discovery and exploitation of oil has led to worse living standards, lost income for the inhabitants as their main source of livelihood from fishing, carving, and dwindling agricultural sector was not replaced with employment in another industry (Agbonifo, 2009).

Researchers such as Akpan and Ering (2010), Bassey (2012), and Paki and Ebienfa (2011) argued that the root cause of the Niger Delta conflicts are legitimate; and they attribute political, social, developmental, and economic factors as reasons which engendered endemic poverty, marginalization, and gross environmental degradation. Amaraegbu (2011) summed up this view by pointing out that the Niger Delta conflict has escalated into a multidimensional resistance with varied strategic undertones. This in turn triggers widespread social discontent, sense of powerlessness, relative deprivation, and frustration on the part of the residents of the region (Amaraegbu, 2011). Agbonifo (2009) and Amaraegbu (2011) alleged that the connection between environmental degradation perception of injustice, dispossession, infrastructure

development issues, and political marginalization provides the context within which to understand the persistent conflicts in the region. Researchers on Niger Delta described the current state of the region in various forms. For example, Idowu (2012) described the region as the goose that lays the golden egg but the most environmentally fragile. Paki and Ebienfa (2011) referred to the region as one of the least developed parts of Nigeria. Nte et al. (2010) described it as one of the most insecure places in the world. According to Okpara (2012), the gas deposits and abundant oil, which should have been a blessing in the Niger Delta region, are now referred to as the oil curse. The gas flares produce constant brightness every day and night. Egbe (2012) maintained that the chemicals produced by the gas flares can cause heart problems, chest pain, breathing problems, bad odors, cancer, eye irritation, global climate change, induce asthma attack, increase death rate, and reduce ability to exercise.

Over the years, the Nigerian government has adopted several policies and implemented different developmental and poverty alleviation programs aimed at enhancing socioeconomic development, eradicating or alleviating poverty in the Niger Delta region (Amadi & Abdullah, 2012; Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012). While some of these government initiatives and development projects are laudable, they have however failed to achieve enduring peace in the region (Akpan et al, 2012; Oluduro & Oluduro, 2012). In support of this view, Nwagboso (2012) emphasized that in spite of these intervention strategies, the insecurity and conflicts in the region persisted. It is against this background that the late Nigerian President Musa Yar'Adua granted presidential amnesty to the Niger Delta militants on conditions that they renounce violence and give up their weapons during a stipulated period in 2009. The introduction of the amnesty initiative witnessed a temporary reduction but did not completely put an end to the crime rate and violence that is characteristic of the Niger Delta region.

The unanswered cries and agitations of the indigenous people to control their own natural resources is a significant root cause of the Niger Delta crisis. Demands by the people of the Niger Delta region dates back to the 1990s when the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1992 protested International Oil Companies (IOCs) operations and demanded justice from oil companies. MOSOP founded in 1990 had the mandate to campaign non-violently to promote democratic awareness, protect the environment, seek social, economic and physical development for the Niger Delta region, protect the cultural rights and practices of the Ogoni people, and seek appropriate rights of self-determination. On the contrary, the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) is a militant youth organization created in late 2003 by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. The group was involved in oil siphoning, attacking oil company infrastructure, demanded that international oil companies in the Niger Delta cease operating, and in September 2004, declared an "all-out war" against the Nigerian government. Asari Dokubo was arrested on charges of treason and was imprisoned at the federal security services headquarters in Abuja. Following his arrest in September 2006, the group fractured and some former NDPVF members formed the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). On June 14, 2007, partially in an effort to pacify Ijaw demands, the newly installed government of President Umaru Yar'Adua released Asari from prison. MEND first came to public attention in January 2006. MEND has kidnapped oil company employees, bombed oil company infrastructure and military cars. MEND are a loosely organized secretive group who demand increased local control of oil resources and the eventual expulsion of international oil companies from the Niger Delta.

The above background provided the impetus to the Niger Delta youths who were confronted with the reality of abject poverty and lost livelihoods that threatens the existence and survival of the Delta communities and consequently generated feelings and perceptions of social, economic, political, and cultural alienation, humiliation, hostility, frustration, and deprivation. These were critical factors that facilitated in the birth of

armed resistance and criminal activities in the Niger Delta. Nte, Eke, and Anele (2010) summed up the story of the Niger Delta and described it as a region that abounds with stories of conflicts based on invasions, nationalistic attacks, insurgency, and counter attacks for self-preservation.

The findings of the study

There is a difference between terrorism and other forms of political violence. While, this paper acknowledges that there are certain forms of violent resistance to perceived oppression, it also understands that demonstrating violent behavior might be illegal under certain national laws, and accepted under international humanitarian law. For instance, findings from Tobor (2014) suggest that the ex-militants do not identify themselves as terrorists but rather as freedom fighters who are engaged in a struggle to free their people from the perceived oppression of the government. When asked why he became a militant, P5 stated that 'I became a freedom fighter because of the need to do something to free my people from oppression." In answering the same question, P8 said, "I became a freedom fighter because I cannot stand by and watch my people suffer in silence." P3 expressed similar views stating, "Our people have oil and yet we do not have good roads, no hospital, no good water to drink and our people are suffering. This is why I became a freedom fighter." These responses confirm the assertion that the ex-militants do not consider themselves as terrorists but freedom fighters who are fighting for a just cause.

The issue of equity and justice in the distribution of oil revenue from the Niger Delta continues to drive the contextual discussion on the conflicts in the Niger Delta (Ojo, 2010). Understanding the politics of petro-economy and the intrigues that undergird revenue distribution and resource control is important in appreciating the development of the Niger Delta conflicts. Ako (2012) maintained that the underlying controversy over resource control was the conceptual ambiguity characterizing the Niger Delta conflict. Despite the violent and criminal features of the struggle, Akinola (2010) in his case for resource control stated that, what the Nigerian state construed as terrorism was nothing but the Niger Delta's clamor for their natural resources and resistance to perceived oppression. Tobor (2014) demonstrated that the ex-militants from Niger Delta were vociferous in their protest and rejected in totality marginalization, economic exploitation, social exclusion, bureaucratic corruption, lack of basic amenities, extreme forms of economic injustice, minimalism, and environmental pollution and degradation. For instance, P2 stated, "By nature we are a peaceful people, but we have been quiet for a long time and yet nothing has been done to develop our areas in spite of our oil." (p.145). Similarly, P14 said, "The Urhobos valuable belief systems include rights for their resources, social justice, and freedom from oppression." (p.145). P19 confirmed the similar thoughts as expressed by the above mentioned participants and stated that "The Urhobos believe in social justice, fairness, and their rights to their God given resources. They would do anything to fight for what rightfully belongs to them." (p. 146). According to P2, "Our farmlands and fishing ponds have been destroyed without any adequate compensation, we have cried out to the federal government for so long to no avail." (p.145). Tobor (2014) suggested that these concerns were the driving forces that fueled the crisis.

The literature reviewed is consistent with the findings. For instance, Inokoba and Imbua (2010) stated that the refusal of the Nigerian state to hearken to the yearnings, and aspirations of the Niger Delta people for equity in the distribution of oil and gas wealth to the area fueled the frustration, deep anger, desperation, restiveness, insurgency, militancy and conflicts in the Niger Delta. Deprivation theory is one competing theory of social movement that can be used to explain the phenomenon of militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. According to Anele and Omoro (2012), Marx, the foremost exponent of this theory, used it to explain how

the working class under the capitalist system of production was exploited. The relative deprivation theory is when people feel that they deserve more than what they have got. This may lead to frustration, which in turn leads to aggression. It often occurs when expectations are rising but are not met. Nwagboso (2012) explained that when expectations exceed actual achievement regardless of the attainment of absolute levels of economic consumption, frustration sets in, which turns to anger and violence. According to Omotola (2010), the end result of this theory is that human beings will always resort to violence to either protest or challenge the existing structure of deprivation and struggle for compensation, reparations, or redress (p. 39).

A majority of the study participants mentioned the strong belief in their rights as human beings, freedom from oppression, social justice, equality, fairness, and rights to their God given natural resources (Tobor, 2014). For instance, P20 stated, "I joined a militant group because of my strong belief in social justice, equality, and fairness. We have Warri Refinery, Kokori Flow Station and other oil installations in our land and yet our people continue to suffer." (p.144). Similarly, P2 said, "As a human being we have to fight to protect our rights. We have to fight for what belongs to us. We have been peaceful and yet nothing was done about our suffering." (Tobor, 2014, p. 145). Some of the participants said they had been peaceful in the past and yet nothing was done to ameliorate their sufferings, or address their concerns, they therefore had to resort to whatever means necessary to draw attention to their just cause (Tobor, 2014).

All the study participants maintained that peace and stability can be restored if the federal government and multinational oil corporations embark on genuine rapid development of the region, by providing modern infrastructural facilities including tarred roads, pipe borne water, hospitals, institutional facilities, employment opportunities, and award scholarships to residents of the region (Tobor, 2014). For instance, one of the participant stated "It is important that the multinational corporations operating in the region to empower the people and compensate them for destruction to their farmlands and properties" (p.148). The literature reviewed is consistent with these assertions. For instance, Akpan and Ering (2010) recommended that addressing economic, environmental, social, and political concerns of the Niger Delta people is a likely solution to the persistent crises.

Tobor (2014) indicated that a majority of the study participants advocated that resource control should be absolute, while the federating states including the Niger Delta contribute a fraction of their income for federal upkeep. This assertion is consistent with the Ijaw Youth Council Kaiama declaration stance on resource control (Ako, 2012). Other proponents such as Arowolo (2011) who advocated for proportional access to the revenues accruing from the Niger Delta explained that such increases would afford indigenes of the region opportunities to enjoy access to the resources and benefits of their ancestral land. The purpose of resources agitation is to have reasonable percentage of the oil revenue allocated to the Niger Delta that produces over 80% of Nigeria's foreign exchange (Orokpo, 2012). The resultant argument for what portion or percentage of the revenue accrues to either the Nigerian state or the Niger Delta became the sensitive issue that drove the conflict. Tobor (2014) emphasized that the feeling of deprivation and marginalization in the distribution process left the indigenous inhabitants of the Niger Delta region aggrieved thus leading to clamor for expanded share of the income. According to Tobor, the responses from the participants also suggest that some of them became militants because of their strong belief in these views. These responses are also consistent with what was suggested in the literature reviewed. For instance, Freire (1997) emphasized that people who perceive the reality of oppression as a limiting situation will engage in a struggle to transform that situation. The response from the participants indicates that they felt oppressed because their source of livelihood had been destroyed without adequate compensation (Tobor, 2014). This was a significant reason why they joined militant groups. Failure on the part of the Nigerian state to increase the share of the Niger

Delta states beyond 13% in 50 years led to an exponential increase in crimes, such as kidnapping of oil workers, abduction, vandalism of oil installations, and arms struggle with the agents of the Nigerian state.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to find out whether the activities of the Niger Delta militants can be classified as acts of terrorism or a clamor for resource control. In answering this question, the study demonstrated that there is danger in adopting the sweeping appellation of terrorism on any individual or groups because it evokes demeaning emotions and incites ideological mindset that seems to alter the very fundamentals at stake in any contextual scenario. The definitional haze surrounding the definition of terrorism is not just limited to the international community, but also to the Nigerian situation with particular emphasis on the Niger Delta conflict. Understanding the background of the Niger Delta study helped the study to arrive at a logical conclusion on how to classify the activities of the Niger Delta militants. The struggle of the Niger Delta region for oil-based resource control started from the 1960s. The people of the region embarked on peaceful and violent struggle for the emancipation of the Niger Delta from the economic exploitation of the Nigeria state (Agwu, 2011). The initial struggle for developmental and environmental justice later changed into youth militancy with its attendant consequences (Tobor, 2016). The Nigerian state employed state violence in protecting its core national interest in the oil revenue derived from the Niger Delta (Uzodike & Isike, 2011).

In all, proponents of terrorism school of thought relied heavily on the violent and criminal characteristics of the conflicts to buttress their position (Inokoba & Imbua, 2010). While the perceptions of the study participants interviewed offered an opportunity to balance the argument of whether their activities as militants could be classified as terrorism or a clamor for resource control, the literature reviewed also provided the platform to draw a reasonable conclusion. While Onuoha (2008) focused on the violent crimes associated with the activities of the Niger Delta militants, the definitional haze that surrounds the concept and construction of terrorism lack strong literature references based on terrorism. On the other hand, Orogun (2010) added a new dimension to the criminal perspective of the Niger Delta conflict by drawing attention to the highly organized domestic oil bunkering and a well-coordinated international smuggling of illegal crude oil from the Niger Delta. While the criminal elements to the conflict could be adjudged localized, it sufficed to conclude that it qualified for transnational criminal cartel given the volume of international pirates and multinationals remotely and overtly involved. It is noteworthy to mention that interrelated factors created conditions for the conflict. The Niger Delta is a strange paradox as it represents one of the extreme conditions of poverty and lack of development in the country, despite its oil and gas resources. Tobor (2014) suggested that these factors motivated conflicts against the Nigerian government, accused of development neglect and deprivation, and against the oil companies for neglecting corporate social responsibility in the region. For instance, one of the participants interviewed stated, "Look at our farmlands, they have been destroyed by these oil companies and our people have not been adequately compensated. No light, no good roads, no good hospitals." (p. 145). While sharing similar thoughts on the same question, another participant said, "We have to fight for what belongs to us. We have been peaceful and yet nothing has been done about our suffering." (p.145). This is also consistent with the literature reviewed. For instance, Ojo (2010) enthused that oil wealth distribution should accommodate derivation, ecological impact, and other socio-economic indexes that provoke resentment and conflicts between the Nigerian state and the states of the Niger Delta. Failure to achieve these goals by successive Nigerian governments became

the harbingers of the grievances, frustration and anger of the region, leading to conflicts (Orokpo, 2012).

If the definition of Bonager et al. (2007) of terrorism, that terrorist acts are forms of violence strategically used by aggressors to incite fear, terror or fright in civilian populations, is anything to go by then the classification of the Niger Delta conflict fails to pass for terrorism. This definition creates a classification ambiguity because of the Niger Delta militants' perceptions of the exploitative tendencies of both the federal government and multinational oil companies. The study participants (ex-militants) view the federal government as posing an obstacle to their natural petroleum resources. When asked whether they consider themselves as terrorists, all the study participants maintained that they were not terrorists but freedom fighters who were fighting for a just cause (Tobor, 2014). For instance, according to one of the ex-militants interviewed "I abhor violence. However, I cannot stand by and watch my people suffer in silence. Our people have oil and yet we do not have good roads, no hospital, no good water to drink and our people are suffering. This is why I became a freedom fighter. However, when the amnesty was introduced, it provided me an opportunity to change my way of life and also bring peace to our land." (Tobor, 2014, p.159).

All the participants mentioned the strong belief in their rights, social justice, equality, fairness, and entitlements to their God given natural resources (Tobor, 2014). For instance, on the issue of rights, fairness, and justice, one of the study participants stated, "The Urhobos believe in social justice, fairness, and their rights to their God given resources. They would do anything to fight for what rightfully belongs to them." (p.146). These assertions from the study participants insulate the Niger Delta conflict from terrorism. The view that terrorists are rational, purposeful and directional in their goals and objectives draws another definition attention. This definitional haze brings the Niger Delta resource control struggle to rational constructivism analysis. The demand for increased allocation of income accruing from oil and gas explored from their lands and waters negate the classification of the militants as terrorists. This is because the Nigerian state neglects the region which led to insurrection in the first place and thus the study does not classify a clamor for natural resources as an act of terrorism. The social implications of this study are that the research findings derived from the study may contribute towards formulating policies that will address the root causes of the Niger Delta crisis and help alleviate the current sufferings that are being experienced by the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

About the author: **John Oghenero Tobor** *has a PhD degree in Public Policy and Administration with Specialization in Terrorism Mediation and Peace. He is an educator/researcher/activist/security consultant who focuses on social change initiatives. He is the founder and chief executive officer of worldwide security consultants Ltd and Move Nigeria Forward Initiative - a nongovernmental and non-profit organization based in Nigeria and in the United States of America. He is a member of the Institute for Association for Counterterrorism & Security Professionals, American Society for Public Administration, American Society for Industrial Security, and Foreign Policy Association of Harrisburg. He has written and published several scholarly articles. He resides in York, Pennsylvania State, United State of America and can be reached on tobor_nero@ yahoo.com.*

References

Agbonifo, J. (2009). Oil, insecurity, and subversive patriots in the Niger Delta: The Ogoni as agent of revolutionary change. *Journal of Third World Studies, 26*(2).71-107.

Agwu, F. A. (2011). *From rebellion, insurgency to belligerency: the Niger Delta oil war in international law*. Ibadan: University Press, Plc.

Akinola, S. R. (2010). Restructuring the public sphere for social order in the Niger Delta through polycentric planning: What lessons for Africa? *African & Asian Studies, 9*(1/2), 55-82.

Ako, R. T. (2012). Re-defining corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Nigeria's post- amnesty oil industry. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies,3*(1). 9-22. doi:10.1108/20400701211197258

Akpan, F., & Ering, S.O. (2010). The politics of amnesty and oil-related conflict in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. *European Journal of Social Science,17*(2), 146-153.

Amadi, B. O., & Abdullah, H. (2012). Poverty alleviation through corporate social responsibility in Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Asian Social Science, 8*(4), 57-67. doi:10.5539/ass.v8n4p57

Amaraegbu, D. (2011). Violence, terrorism and security threat in Nigeria's Niger Delta: An old problem taking a new dimension. *African Journal of Political Science and International relations, 5*(4), 208-271.

Anele, K. A., & Omoro, J. (2012). Mobilizing the militants in the Niger Delta for national development: Prospects and Challenges. *Journal of International Diversity, 2012*(1), 107-122.

Arowolo, D. (2011). Nigeria's federalism and the agitation for resource control in the Niger-Delta Region. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, 2*(7), 3-88.

Badmus, I. A. (2010). Oiling the guns and gunning for oil: Oil violence, arms proliferation and the destruction of Nigeria's Niger Delta. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences, 2*(1), 323-363.

Bassey, C. O. (2012). Oil and conflict in the Niger Delta: A reflection on the politics of state responses to armed militancy in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 3*(11), 77-90. doi:10.5901/mjss.2012.v3n11p77

Benet, W. J. (2006). *The polarity management model of workplace democracy*. Doctoral dissertation, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Canada. Dissertation Abstracts International-A 67/06, Dec 2006, Publication No. AAT NR15724.

Benet, W. J. (2012). *Managing the polarities of democracy: A social economy framework for healthy, sustainable, and just communities*. Paper presented at the Association for Social Economics' 14th World Congress of Social Economics, Glasgow, Scotland.

Benet, W. J. (2013). Managing the polarities of democracy: A theoretical framework for positive social change. *Journal of Social Change, 5*(1), 26-39. doi:10.5590/JOSC.2013.05.1.03

Bongar, B., Brown, L. M., Beutler, L. E., Breckenridge, J. N., & Zimbardo, P. G., (2007). *Psychology of terrorism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Chase, E. (2013). Defining terrorism: A strategic imperative. *Small War Journals*. Retrieved from: http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/defining-terrorism-a-strategic-imperative

Cooper, H.H. (2001). Terrorism: The problem of definition revisited. *American Behavioral Scientist, 44*(6), 881–893. Retrieved from http://proquest.umi.com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/pqdweb?did=66946156&sid=1&Fmt=6&clientId=70192&RQT=309&VName=PQD&cfc=1

Egbe, O. D. (2012). Oil transnational corporations (TNCs) and dislocations in oil fence- line communities in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences, 5*(1), 154-178.

Ekeh, P. (2008). *On the matter of clans and kingdom in Urhobo history and culture*. Urhobo Historical Society.

Ekpeyong, O., & Dienye, E. H. (2010). Political identity and the Niger Delta crises. *Culture & Religion Review Journal, 2010*(4), 1-10.

Etemike, L. (2012). International dimension of the Niger Delta crisis: An insight into Nigeria's foreign policy challenges. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences, 4*(3), 577-593.

Freire, P. (1970/1997). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company.

Idowu, O. F. (2012). Niger Delta crises: Implication for society and organizational effectiveness. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences, 7*(11).

Ifedi, J. P., & Anyu, J. N. (2011). "Blood Oil," ethnicity, and conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *Mediterranean Quarterly, 22*(1), 74-92. doi: 10.1215/10474552-1189665

Inokoba, P. K., & Imbua, D. I. (2010). Vexation and militancy in the Niger Delta: The way forward. *Journal of Human Ecology, 29*(2), 101-120.

Nacos, L.B. (2010). *Terrorism and counterterroris*m (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Education Inc

Nacos, B. L. (2012). *Terrorism and counterterrorism,* 4th Edition. Longman-Pearson.

Nte, N. D., Eke, P., & Anele, K. (2010). Rural intelligence gathering and the challenges of counter insurgency: Views from the Niger Delta. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology, 7*(1), 21-32.

Nwagboso, C. I. (2012). Security challenges and economy of the Nigerian State (2007 – 2011). *American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 2*(6), 244-258

Oakley, P. (1989). Community involvement in health development. An examination of the critical issues. Geneva, WHO.

Obi, C. I. (2010). Oil extraction, dispossession, resistance, and conflict in Nigeria's oil- rich Niger Delta. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies, 30*(1-2), 219-236.

Odoemene, A. (2011). Social consequences of environmental change in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development, 4*(2), 123-135. doi:10.5539/jsd.v4n2p123

Ogbodo, S. M. (2010). Environmental issues and Nigeria's Niger Delta crisis. Implications for sustainable development and global peace. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, 02*(03). 17-21.

Ogege, S. O. (2011). Amnesty initiative and the Dilemma of sustainable development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development, 4*(4), 249-258. doi: 10.5539/jsd.v4n4p249

Ojo, E. O, 2010). The politics of revenue allocation and resource control in Nigeria: implications for federal stability. *Federal Governance, 7*(1), 15-38. Retrieved from http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/fedgov/article/view/4387/4405

Okpara, C. I. (2012). Right to a clean and healthy environment: The panacea to the Niger Delta struggle. *Journal of Politics and Law,* 3-9. doi:10.5539/jpl.v5n1p3

Okpo, O. C., & Eze, R. C (2012). Vandalization of oil pipelines in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and poverty: An overview. *Studies in Sociology of Science, 3*(2), 13-21. doi:10.3968/j.sss.1923018420120302.2950

Olankunle, M. F. (2010). Women's response to the question of development in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology,1*(1), 133-149.

Oluduro, O., & Oluduro, O. F. (2012). Nigeria: In search of sustainable peace in the Niger Delta through the amnesty programme. *Journal of Sustainable Development, 5*(7). 48-61. doi: 10.5539/jsd.v5n7p48

Oluwaniyi, O. O. (2011). Post-amnesty programme in the Niger Delta: Challenges and prospects. *Conflict Trends, 4*, 46-54.

Omotola, J. S. (2010). "Liberation movements" and rising violence in the Niger Delta: The new contentious site of oil and environmental politics. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 33*, 36-54. doi:10.1080/10576100903400597

Onuoha, F. C. (2008). Oil pipeline sabotage in Nigeria: Dimensions, actors and implications for national security. *African Security Review, 17*(3), 99-115. doi:10.1080/10246029.2008.9627487

Orogun, P.S. (2010). Resource control, revenue allocation and petroleum politics in Nigeria: the Niger Delta question. *GeoJournal, 75*(5), 459-507. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10708-009-9320-7

Orokpo, O. (2012). Revenue allocation commissions and contradictions in Nigeria's federal system: A revisitation. *Journal of Science and Policy Review*. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/2614756/revenue_allocation_commissions_and_the contradictions_inNigerias_federal_system:a_revisitation

Paki, F. A., & Ebienfa, K. I. (2011). Militant oil agitations in Nigeria's Niger Delta and the economy. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 1*(5).

Rubenstein, R. E. (1988). *Alchemists of revolution: Terrorism in the modern world*.

Tobor, J. O. (2014). Urhobo culture and the amnesty program in Niger Delta, Nigeria: An ethnographic case study. Doctoral dissertation, Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A. ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 3645926.

Tobor, J. (2016). Culture and the amnesty program in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences, 4*(3), 14-22.

Uzodike, U. O., & Isike, C. (2009). Whose security? Understanding the Niger Delta crisis as a clash of two security conceptions. *Institute for Security Studies, 18*(3), 103-116.

Field Principles for Countering and Displacing Extremist Narratives

by Alejandro Beutel, Stevan M Weine, Aliya Saeed, Aida Spahic Mihajlovic, Andrew Stone, John Oakley Beahrs, Stephen B Shanfield

Abstract

U.S. policymakers regard countering and displacing extremist narratives to be a core strategy of countering violent extremism. The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which uses highly sophisticated messaging to reach U.S. young persons, has further emphasized the need for this strategy. However, to date there has been little discussion of field principles to guide community-based practitioners in either countering or displacing extremist narratives associated with violent Islamist extremism. Drawing upon existing theory, empirical evidence, and practical experience from across multiple disciplines, this article seeks to fill these gaps with a set of field principles to guide both developing the content of new counter-narratives and alternative narratives and then delivering the new counter-narratives and alternative narratives.

Keywords: *Countering violent extremism; terrorism; ISIS; Al-Qaeda; narratives*

Introduction

Terrorism researchers and counter-terrorism practitioners have for some time recognized the power of narratives to recruit individuals into violent extremist activities (Schmid, 2014). This recognition has been incorporated into the new field of countering violent extremism (CVE). CVE includes an array of policies, programs, and initiatives designed to prevent violent ideologies from taking hold of people in the first place, and to stop them from crossing the line towards actual violence (Nasser-Eddine, et al., 2011). At the February 2015 White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, countering and displacing extremist narratives was one of the top priorities. "Countering" means offering narratives that directly challenge the extremist message and "displacing" means offering alternative narratives.

The effort to develop new strategies has become more urgent in the age of ISIS, which employs highly sophisticated and effective communication strategies. Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger (2014) describe how ISIS' messaging and savvy use of social media platforms have upended traditional jihadi methods of recruitment, resulting in thousands of fighters and other volunteers being recruited to their cause.

New counter-messaging initiatives have been developed, such as the Peer to Peer Challenging Extremism Initiative, a public-private partnership between the State Department and EdVenture Partners, which helps college students develop social or digital campaigns to counter violent extremism (Glavin, 2015). Such initiatives should be applauded, but also underline the need for empirical or best practices guidelines to help inform their efforts.

In this paper we seek to contribute to the efforts to counter and displace the violent narratives that violent Islamist extremists use to target and persuade American Muslims to radicalize into violence. This article focuses on responding to these narratives due to the particularly deadly nature of violent Islamist extremist

movements (Piazza 2009) and the high priority assigned to them by U.S. national security policymakers (Johnson 2014; Comey 2014). Engaging in a broader analysis inclusive of other actors such as the U.S. (Perliger 2012; Furlow 2012) and European (Kundnani 2012; Dafnos 2014) violent Far Right is beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, consistent with current counter-narratives scholarship (e.g. Braddock and Horgan 2015) and practice (e.g. Tuck and Silverman 2016) we assume the field principles articulated in this article are also applicable to other violent movements, such as the U.S. violent far right and U.S. violent far left. While informed by several of the authors' direct experiences with American Muslim communities, we also draw upon a broad diversity of literature in terrorism studies and other disciplines that is ideologically neutral in its content and scope.

This article draws from the scholarly literature in terrorism studies, communications, and public health, as well as other publications that incorporate and highlight community-sourced perspectives on narrative development and messaging. It also draws upon our own direct engagement with U.S. Muslim communities, including community-participatory research (Weine), community leadership (Saeed), and community-based civic and political advocacy (Beutel).

With some notable exceptions, (Ramsay 2012; Braddock 2012; Braddock 2015; Braddock and Dillard, forthcoming) there is a general deficit of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of counter-narratives and how countering extremist narratives and messaging elicits desired outcomes. Braddock and Horgan (2015) offered communication and psychology theory-based procedures for (1) analyzing terrorist narratives, (2) constructing counter-narratives that challenge terrorist narratives, and (3) disseminating the counter-narratives to overcome barriers to persuasion. For example, they found that developing effective messaging should, "Incorporate themes that advocate an alternative view of the terrorist narrative's target" (Braddock and Horgan 2015, 9) This strategy is consistent with prior claims from policymakers (Grant 2015) and researcher-practitioners (Matejic 2015) that counter-narratives have limited utility and that violent narratives must ultimately be replaced, not just countered.

One observer noted that CVE policies, "to date have been guided largely by intuition and anecdotal observation, rather than by clearly relevant metrics." (Berger and Strathern 2013, 37) We believe that this includes the development and delivery of narrative content. Some ways to evaluate alternative and counter-narratives include social network analysis, (Hedayah and International Center for Counter-Terrorism 2014, 4) polling, focus groups, sentiment analysis, (McCants and Watts 2012, 2) and other innovative scoring systems to measure influence and exposure over social media platforms like Twitter (Berger and Strathern 2013). The findings of these evaluations can begin to build an evidence-based set of lessons learned that can inform future efforts.

The article is divided into four sections. First, we define key terms and concepts, such as "narrative," "counter-narrative," and "alternative narrative." Second, we suggest field principles for developing the content of new counter-narratives and alternative narratives. Third, we offer field principles for delivering new content. Both sets of field principles are offered with a conscious, but not exclusive focus on U.S. Muslim community actors. Fourth, we discuss the implications for research, practice, and policy.

Key Terms and Concepts

Narrative

In the context of violent extremism, drawing from Scott Ruston (2009), we define an extremist narrative as *a system of stories that hang together to provide a coherent view of the world for the purpose of supporting individuals, groups, or movements to further illegal violent and violence-assisting activities.*

Researchers have identified 13 "master" narratives that *violent Islamist extremist movements, such as Al-Qa'ida,* use to influence their audiences. These narratives utilize historical events or religious concepts, such as the abolishing of the Caliphate in 1924 or Qur'anic passages on Satan (Arabic translation *Shaytan*), to influence their audience (Halverson, Goodall, and Corman 2011).

Each of these "master" narratives has 3 common elements:

- An underlying grievance in which a non-Muslim "other", typically Westerners, Zionists, and "Crusaders" are responsible, in collaboration with local dictators, for the mistreatment and humiliation of Muslims around the world.

- The notion of an ideal society where an Islamic state or the "Caliphate" rules under a purist notion of "*sharia,*" or perfect Divine law (which in reality is conflated with archaic interpretations of *fiqh*, the imperfect human effort to interpret Divine law) (Quraishi-Landes 2013, 10). The establishment of a "sharia" governed polity serves to replace the corrupt governance structures of secular Western-backed regimes.

- A means of moving from that grievance to achieving an ideal society namely through violent activity advocated by AQ and the ISIS (Schmid 2014, 6).

While messages from AQ and ISIS share various aspects and degrees of emphasis of these three elements, their narratives also diverge substantially. The differences between the two movements center on: 1) their ultimate political goals, and; 2) their relationship to violence. Both movements share an interest in establishing a Caliphate. For AQ, this is mostly a theoretical ideal. For ISIS, this is an active engagement in state building and governance. As a result, AQ's recruitment narratives and members are a "vanguard" movement, reflecting a more selective and elitist mentality. By contrast, ISIS is much more open to recruiting a broader array of people from various backgrounds and skill sets to fulfill diverse governance roles including doctors, engineers, nurses, elder caretakers, etc. As a result, each movement's use of violence also diverges substantially. For AQ, violence is a means to a political end (i.e. withdrawal of Western support from local Muslim regimes.) For ISIS violence is an end in of itself – a sign of its commitment to creating a "pure" Muslim society and polity. As a result, ISIS appears to be far more promiscuous and comfortable with its use of wanton violence against non-combatants, which is also reflected in its online messages to recruit (Fink and Sugg 2015; Al-Tamimi 2014).

By employing religiously-laden motifs, AQ and ISIS' narratives exploit two basic human psychological needs: 1) **cognitive closure** which, "amounts to the quest for certainty, and eschewal of ambiguity… It is the quest for structure and coherence in one's outlook and beliefs" (Kruglanski 2014) and; 2) **a quest for significance**, which, "denotes the supreme importance to humans of being noticed, mattering, and deserving honor and esteem." (Ibid.) Earning the status of a "hero" and a "martyr" plays on this quest.

There are several different ways that narratives can displace or counter extremist narratives. The Institute

for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) has described a "messaging spectrum" that include three types of messaging activities: 1) government strategic communications; 2) counter-narratives; and 3) alternative narratives. (Briggs and Feve 2013) In a U.S. domestic context, legal and strategic considerations, which are discussed later in this article, proscribe U.S. government actors from engaging in any counter-ideological strategic context. (Rascoff, 2012) Therefore, we mainly focus on counter-narratives and alternative narratives, which are elaborated upon in the next section.

Counter-Narrative and Alternative Narrative

We define **a counter-narrative** as *a system of stories that hang together to provide a coherent view of the world for the explicit purposes of combating violent extremist narratives, and eliciting legal and non-violent activities in support of individuals, groups, or movements, which support that worldview.* Counter-narratives seek to directly address a violent narrative after it has been delivered to an intended audience, making them a reactive type of messaging. For instance, videos that respond to the religious justifications of violent *extremists* (Muslim Public Affairs Council 2010) are part of a broader counter-narrative that sees groups like AQ and ISIS as religiously inauthentic.

An alternative narrative is a *system of stories that hang together to provide a coherent view of the world to promote and elicit legal and non-violent activities in support of individuals, groups, or movements, which support that worldview. Unlike counter-narratives, alternative-narratives are not explicitly intended to directly confront violent narratives, although they may have secondary outcomes, which do displace them.* Moreover, because they do not necessarily seek to directly address violent narratives, counter-narratives are not reactive per se; these narratives can proactively lead to anti-violence outcomes. For instance, an alternative narrative that promotes a faith-based form of citizen involvement and civic engagement among youth may be primarily intended to increase voter registration and participation rates among 18-year olds. However, these narratives can have a secondary effect of intellectually grounding individuals against violent narratives that say a person cannot be a loyal American citizen and an observant Muslim at the same time.

These different messaging activities are summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Counter-Messaging Spectrum (Briggs and Feve 2013, 6)			
What	**Why**	**How**	**Who**
Gov't Strategic Communications	Action to get the message out about what government is doing, including public awareness activities	Raise awareness, forge relationships with key constituencies and audiences and correct misinformation	Government
Counter-Narratives	Directly deconstruct, discredit and demystify violent extremist messaging	Challenge through ideology, logic, fact or humor	Civil Society
Alternative Narratives	Undercut violent extremist narratives by focusing on what we are 'for' rather than 'against'	Positive story about social values, tolerance, openness, freedom and democracy	Civil Society or Government

In discussing countering extremist narratives, the "counter-narrative" is typically mentioned far more

frequently than other types of messaging activities. Sometimes the other types of messaging activities are misidentified or misunderstood as counter-narratives.

One recent example of a counter-narrative was produced by Ambassador Alberto Fernandez of the U.S. State Department, called "Think Again, Turn Away". Fernandez who wrote the episode himself said that it was inspired by the Terry Jones television series about the Crusades and is a, "riff on jihadist videos describing what a joy ride it is to join ISIL." (Fernandez 2014b) According to Fernandez the goals were three fold: 1) contest the space; 2) redirect the conversation, and; 3) unnerve the adversary (Fernandez 2014a). This video generated lots of controversy in the U.S. (Watts 2015). In our opinion, it seems to go against many common sense principles of what should be done to construct narrative-based strategies and led us to articulate those principles that they might guide persons or organizations working on countering and displacing violent narratives.

Field Principles for Countering Extremist Narratives

We formulated field principles to inform the practice of countering and displacing extremist narratives, which are summarized in the table below.

Table 2: Suggested Field Principles for Countering and Displacing Extremist Narratives
Developing New Narrative Content
Utilize Emotional Communication
Complicate the Violent Narrative
Reframe Rather Than Confront
Avoid Fear-Based Messaging
Humanize the Subjects
Promote Positive Identities
Protect Communities' Rights and Liberties
Engage Beyond Violent Extremism
Delivering New Narratives
Know the Intended Audiences
Define the Desired Outcomes
Choose the Medium(s) of Communication
Choose Credible Messengers
Do No Harm
Diminish the 'Say-Do' Gap
Evaluate the Process and Impact

Generating New Narrative Content

Eight field principles were formulated to inform the development of new narrative content.

Utilize emotional communication. Use narratives with powerful emotional content in order to counter the highly emotional messaging of ISIS, as well as other violent extremist organizations. Narratives that are too much rooted in ideas risk losing the attention span of the audiences. Emotional messages that generate moral

outrage are regarded as the most effective in pulling individuals into a pathway toward terrorist violence (Bartlett, Birdwell, and King 2010, 98-99; Sageman 2004). Interestingly and in contrast, they also generate moral outrage among wider publics to delegitimize extremist ideology and violence. For example, when violent extremists in Egypt unintentionally killed a 12-year-old girl, Shayma, the Egyptian government widely publicized her death. The death of the young girl generated moral outrage among Egyptians and as a result public sympathy towards the terrorists quickly evaporated. In turn, this fostered to internal demoralization among militants that eventually led to defections and ultimately a cessation of violence (Brachman and McCants 2006).

Complicate the violent narrative. If violent narratives seek to provide certainty and simplicity out of chaos, then one response is to "disrupt" a black-and-white view and provide a more nuanced view. Such counter-narratives should, wherever possible, incorporate efforts to promote integrative complexity, or the ability of an individual to see the world and competing values in a nuanced, rather than a binary, manner. Prior research suggests that lowered integrative complexity substantially raises the probability of engaging in violence (Smith, et al. 2008). Programs promoting increased integrative complexity, such as "Being Muslim, Being British," appear to lead to positive anti-violence outcomes (Savage 2011; Savage, Liht, and Williams 2011; Liht and Savage 2013).

Reframe rather than confront. Create narratives that acknowledge the concerns that underwrite much of the sympathy toward extremist groups without validating the violent means that extremists advocate. This employs the same psychological mechanisms that violent extremists use to recruit people–a quest for significance and the need for closure—but uses them for different means. In this way the narrative redirects energies built up by unaddressed grievances, rather than getting involved in a direct ideological confrontation. For instance, a YouTube video by an anti-extremist activist called "Five Considerations for a Muslim on Syria" takes the concerns of its potential audience very seriously. To some extent, the video validates those concerns and grievances, while admonishing those who may seek to solve those grievances using violent means (Abdullah X 2014).

Avoid fear based messaging. Narratives should avoid frightening people into action, given the evidence that such strategies have been ineffective and counterproductive in various fields, including public health (Prevention First 2008; Peters, Ruiter, and Kok 2013) and criminal justice (Petrosino, Petrosino, and Buehler 2004). This does not completely undermine the value of strong emotional appeals or what some call shock value. For example, government agencies, such as the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), have employed a modest use of shock value to raise awareness about violent extremist recruitment targeted toward U.S. Muslim communities.

Humanize the subjects. Highlighting the human costs of terrorism can be a powerful reality check to the glossy and sanitized propaganda produced by violent extremists. For instance, the killing of innocent Muslim civilians and harsh realities of constantly being on the run are two of the most powerful reasons why violent *extremists* decided to "dropout" of their violent lifestyle (Jacobson 2010). Highlighting these aspects of terrorist activities can be a powerful counter-narrative. At the same, while invoking moral outrage at the terrorists, it is important to not necessarily demonize individuals who may be sympathetic to the grievances they articulate. Such efforts can intensify the risk of pushing at-risk individuals further along a pathway toward violent action (Bartlett, Birdwell, and King 2010). Research on disengagement and exiting from terrorism suggests that demonstrating respect and empathy toward target audiences is much more likely to elicit favorable outcomes (Bhulai, Fink, Ziegler 2014; Holmer 2014).

Promote positive identities. Alternative narratives seek to supplant the "solutions" that extremist narratives offer to Muslim communities' problems. Moreover, they often appeal to the same type of hero lionizing and psychological levers that AQ and ISIS use in their messaging such as by drawing on traditional Islamic religious concepts and local cultural hero mythologies. In the Middle East, Naif Al-Mutawa created the comic series, "The 99", a group of Muslim superheroes whose group name is taken from the "99 attributes" of God mentioned in the Qur'an (Merica 2011; Truitt 2011; The99Kids.com n.d.). In the United States, Marvel Comic's new "Ms. Marvel" character is a 16-year old Pakistani-American teenager named Kamala Khan who is the creation of G. Willow Wilson, a Muslim convert and comic writer (Hudson 2014).

Protect communities' rights and liberties. Narratives should aim to strengthen the defense of civil rights and civil liberties of communities. For example they can reframe or subsume the issue from one that is about "countering violent extremism" to "preventing targeted violence" (we discuss this more in the next section). Moving away from frames of "terrorism" and "violent extremism"—which often trigger a false association with Islam—reduces security-driven anxieties of the general population toward Muslims that in term fuels anti-Muslim animus (Das et al., 2009; Khan and Ecklund 2012; Sides and Gross 2013). This can also have the benefit of weakening violent narratives that claim government efforts to counter violent extremism are part of a so-called "War Against Islam" (al-Awlaqi 2008a; al-Awlaqi 2008a; Khan 2011, 3, 9)

Engage beyond violent extremism. Narratives should engage other types of violent extremism, specifically seeking to recruit Muslims into violent action. Indeed, a major criticism has been that, "violent extremism is a phenomenon that is not unique to American Muslim communities, [but] the government's CVE program remains focused solely on American Muslim communities" (Council on American Islamic Relations-California 2014). One alternative example is National Outreach for Hate Awareness and Threat Education (NO HATE) USA, a student-led violent prevention awareness campaign. NO HATE USA's philosophy is to fold CVE into a broader focus of preventing *targeted violence* (2015). This approach appears to have at least two benefits. First, it avoids being limited by geographic trends of violent extremism in the United States, which tend to cluster in 10 counties (LaFree and Bersani 2012). By contrast, acts of targeted violence, such as mass shooters, appear to occur throughout the United States without any particular geographic clustering (Blair and Schweit 2013). In addition, framing the issue as targeted violence serves to broaden public safety relationships with U.S. Muslim communities beyond a narrow focus on counter-terrorism intelligence gathering. Instead it is based on broader public safety concerns that affect all Americans. Rather than being seen as singled out, U.S. Muslims, in partnership with other communities have a narrative around which they can be comfortably united with their fellow citizens to promote the public good by actively working to enhance public safety.

Delivering New Narratives

Another seven field principles were identified to inform the delivery of new narratives.

Know the intended audiences. Choosing a specific group or groups of persons who you want to reach and learn all you can about them. For example, this could be an entire diaspora community, or late adolescents and young adults in that community, or their parents or teachers. It could also be the extremists themselves. Being clear about which one is of crucial importance to successful delivery and reception.

Define the desired outcomes. Clarify what kind of changes you want to impact. This could include changing knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors. For example, they may have an aim of specifically undermining the credibility of violent extremist leaders or organizations, or seeking to empower peers and parents to challenge

young persons who may want to become foreign fighters.

Choose the medium(s) of communication. Select the most appropriate medium for reaching your intended audience. For instance, adolescent and young adult audiences could be potentially be best reached via social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Whereas a public service announcement aired on a television or radio channel may be better for reaching a whole community.

Choose credible messengers. Narratives should be spoken by trusted and legitimate sources. In the U.S., due to legal and strategic considerations this means that the primary messengers of alternative and counter-narratives are, and should be, private American Muslim individuals and non-governmental civil society actors (Rascoff 2012). In the United States, the main legal issue related to counter-messaging efforts has to do with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits government endorsement of any religious tradition over another in public life. This includes prohibiting the use of taxpayer funds to promote certain interpretations of any religion that advocate non-violence over religious iinterpretations that do not. In strategic terms, U.S. government security agencies lack trust and credibility among American Muslim communities, due to negative perceptions related to domestic surveillance policies. (Ibid.) Choosing credible voices may include former extremists and militants because they may have ongoing social relationships with individuals who remain involved in hateful and violent movements (Braddock and Horgan 2015). Beyond that, other contextual considerations should be weighed. Victims of attacks or former violent extremists may be some of the most effective messengers because they speak with the unique moral authority of the survivor or witness (Jacobson 2010).

Do no harm. Narratives that have the potential to make a difference can also do harm. For example, humor and ridicule in anti-extremism messaging can be a double-edged sword. One study on satire of terrorist acts noted, "Just as an off color joke can offend your co-workers or sour a personal relationship, humor has the potential to be divisive and motivating in ways that are detrimental to larger policy goals" (Goodall et al. 2012). Knowing the target of the ridicule, and the intent of the ridicule is important. If the target is a particular terrorist leader, with the intent of making him/her look bad and have potential recruits no longer see him/her as glamorous, then this increases the probability of success. However if the direct target of ridicule is potential recruits, psycho-social literature would suggest that this will be counter-productive, eliciting a defiance response, instead of compliance (Infante et al. 1992; Infante and Wrigley 1986; Moscovici and Zavalloni 1969; Semic and Canary 1997). This is likely due to ridicule being perceived as an insult by making fun of a person's desire to contribute to a good cause (such as "helping the people of Syria"), albeit in a misguidedly violent way. By contrast, online counter-narrative content such as Abdullah X's "Five Considerations for a Muslim on Syria" uses rhetoric and a communication tone that takes the concerns of its potential audience very seriously (Abdullah X 2014).

Diminish the gap between government policies and rhetoric. Narratives should not be disconnected from realities or available actions for the intended audiences. For example, narratives that promote greater investment in the local community should be accompanied by public-private partnerships that actually create opportunities for that kind of involvement (Ahmed and Ezzedine 2009).

Evaluate the process and impact. Given the lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of counter-narratives, it is vitally important to apply program evaluation methods that evaluate both what impact a message has and how and why it is having that kind of impact. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluation should be utilized, including polls, focus groups, sentiment tracking, (McCants and Watts 2012) and social media influence metrics (Berger and Strathearn 2013).

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

Drawing upon a growing body of theory, empirical evidence, and practical experience from across multiple disciplines, we suggested field principles to guide both developing the content of new narratives and delivering new narratives. These principles are not a panacea and are likely to evolve in response to new threats, contexts, and lessons learned. But for the time being, these principles can assist policymakers and practitioners in developing and delivering narratives to counter and displace extremist narratives. Federal, state, and local government officials can let these guidelines inform their recommended best practices, which they encourage community-based practitioners to follow.

Presently, there is near total lack of empirical research on efforts to counter and displace extremist narratives. New efforts that are developed to counter and displace extremist narratives should have a monitoring and evaluation component. Additional new research is needed to support these efforts, especially in two areas.

One research priority area is to develop research that informs community-based practitioners about the narratives used by extremists to recruit individuals into violent action. Muslim community members have expressed concerns about engaging individuals online or in person who are supportive of violent extremists because they fear becoming the subject of a law enforcement investigation. Mainstream Muslims who might otherwise be interested in countering extremist recruitment find themselves at a disadvantage stemming from a lack of knowledge about messaging activities and narratives because they are hesitant to immerse themselves in the environments where such recruitment takes place (Beutel 2013). (A corollary policy implication of this finding is to examine whether or not surveillance practices and the legal standards regulating them are counterproductive, and if so, to reform them.) (Ibid.). One example of addressing this need is an open-source online library of narratives, counter-narratives, and alternative narratives being developed by the University of Maryland's START center (Braniff, 2015). In addition to providing information on extremist narratives and mainstream Muslim counter- and alternative narratives, being housed at a university research center, the library also provides a more comfortable (academic) venue, where community members can learn about this issue.

A second research priority area is to empirically test the process and impact of countering and displacing extremist narratives. Narrative approaches could be applied to analyze the content of narratives developed as well as the response of receivers to those narratives. Community-based participatory research approaches could investigate the community processes involved in the development and delivery of potentially effective narratives. Survey research approaches could be used to measure the impact of the narratives on the target population, for example assessing changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

About the authors

Alejandro J. Beutel *is Researcher for Countering Violent Extremism at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Prior to START, Beutel was the Policy and Research Engagement Fellow at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), an applied research think-tank specializing in the study and promotion of evidence-based development strategies for positive civic, social, and political engagement outcomes for American Muslim communities. He was also an independent research consultant to several non-profits, private corporations, and think-tanks.*

Stevan Weine *is Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine, where he is also the Director of the International Center on Responses to Catastrophes and the Director of Global Health*

Research Training at the Center for Global Health. Weine is author of *When History is a Nightmare: Lives and Memories of Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Rutgers, 1999) and *Testimony and Catastrophe: Narrating the Traumas of Political Violence* (Northwestern, 2006).

Aliya Saeed *is a clinical psychiatrist and is actively engaged in her Muslim community including in leadership positions.*

Aida Mihajlovic *is a practicing psychiatrist and researcher at the University of Illinois at Chicago whose research focuses on refugees' mental health, PTSD, and social psychiatry.*

Andrew Stone *is the Director of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Clinical Team at VA Medical Center Philadelphia. His expertise is in mental health, psychotherapy, and PTSD.*

John Beahrs *professional focus is on consciousness, volition, hypnosis, evolutionary biology, psych & law, social systems and social causation.*

Stephen Shanfield's *interests include psychological elements of international relations, conceptual elements of diagnosis, and history of psychiatry.*

The authors are members of the Committee on Terrorism and Political Violence of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry.

References

Abdullah X. "Abdullah X: 5 Aspekte zum Nachdenken für Muslime in Bezug auf Syrien (Five Considerations for a Muslim on Syria)." Online Video. *YouTube*, 8 Mar. 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PeqsxyvtZs.

Ahmed, Sameera, and Maha Ezzeddine. 2009. "Challenges and Opportunities Facing American Muslim Youth." *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 4(2): 159-174.

Al-Awlaqi, Anwar. 2008. "Voting for the American President (Part 1)," Web blog post, *Imam Anwar Al-Awlaqi*, October 31 Web. 29, Apr. 2015. http://anwar-awlaki.blogspot.com/2011/10/voting-for-american-president-prt-1.html.

Al-Awlaqi, Anwar. 2008. "Voting for the American President (Part 2)," Web blog post, *Imam Anwar Al-Awlaqi*, November 3. Web. 29, Apr. 2015. http://anwar-awlaki.blogspot.com/2011/10/voting-for-american-president-prt-2.html.

Al-Awlaki, Anwar. 2010. "Message to the American People," *Internet Archive*, http://archive.org/details/AwlakiToUsa.

Braddock, Kurt. "Fighting Words: The Persuasive Effect of Online Extremist Narratives on the Radicalization Process." Ph. D. Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania. 2012. Print.

Braddock, Kurt. 2015. "The Utility of Narratives for Promoting Radicalization: The Case of the Animal Liberation Front." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 8: 38-59.

Braddock, Kurt and John Horgan. 2015. "Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2015.1116277.

Braddock, Kurt, and James P. Dillard. "Meta-Analytic Evidence for the Persuasive Effect of Narratives on

Beliefs, Attitudes, Intentions, and Behaviors." *Communications Monographs*, forthcoming. Quoted in

Braddock, Kurt and John Horgan. 2015. "Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2015.1116277.

Bartlett, Jamie, Jonathan Birdwell, and Michael King. 2010. *The Edge of Violence: A Radical Approach to Extremism*. London, UK: Demos.

Beutel, Alejandro J. "Securing the Homeland Against Domestic Al-Qai'da-Inspired Violent Extremism: Partnership Based Approaches with American Muslim Communities?" MA Capstone. University of Maryland, College Park. 2013. Print.

Berger, J.M., and Bill Strathearn. 2013. *Who Matters Online: Measuring Influence, Evaluating Content, and Countering Violent Extremism in Online Networks*. London, UK: King's College, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence. http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/ICSR_Berger-and-Strathearn.pdf.

Bhulai, Rafia Barakat, Naureen Chowdhury Fink, and Sara Zeiger. 2014. *The Role of Families and Communities in Strengthening Community Resilience Against Violent Extremism*. New York, NY: Global Center on Cooperative Security. http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/MeetingNote_FamiliesandCommunities_FINAL_May2014.pdf.

Blair, J. Pete, and Katherine W. Schweit. *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013*. Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation. http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/september/fbi-releases-study-on-active-shooter-incidents/pdfs/a-study-of-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-u.s.-between-2000-and-2013.

Brachman, Jarret, and Will McCants. 2006. *Stealing Al-Qa'ida's Playbook*. West Point, NY: United States Military Academy at West Point, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

Braniff, William. 2015. "Narratives and Counter-Narratives Pairing Matrix Knowledge Tool for CVE Practitioners and Communities." National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland College Park.

Briggs, Rachel, and Sebastien Feve. 2013. *Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism: What Works and What are the Implications for Government?* London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. http://www.strategicdialogue.org/CounterNarrativesFN2011.pdf.

Council on America Islamic Relations. 2014. "L.A. Based Organizations' Statement on Federal Government's CVE Programs." https://ca.cair.com/losangeles/2014/11/l-a-based-organizations-statement-on-federal-governments-countering-violent-extremism-programs/

Dafnos, Andrea. 2014. "Narratives as a Means of Countering the Radical Right; Looking into the Trojan T-Shirt Project." *Journal EXIT-Deutschland*, *3*: 156-188.

Das, Enny, Brad Bushman, Marieke D. Bezemer, Peter Kerkof, and Ivar Vermeulen. 2009. "How Terrorism News Reports Increase Prejudice Against Outgroups: A Terror Management Account." *45*: 453-459.

Fernandez, Alberto M. "Center for Strategic and Counterterrorism Presentation." University of Maryland, College Park. Headquarters of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). College Park, MD. October 2014.

Fernandez, Alberto M. "Confronting the Changing Face of al-Qaeda Propaganda." Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Washington, DC. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/confronting-the-changing-face-of-al-qaeda-propaganda. February 25, 2014.

Fink, Naureen Chowdhury, and Bejamin Sugg. 2015. "A Tale of Two Jihads: Comparing the al-Qaeda and ISIS Narratives." *IPI Global Observatory*, February 9. http://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/02/jihad-al-qaeda-isis-counternarrative/.

Furlow, R. Bennet. 2012. *Extremism and Victimhood in the U.S. Context*. Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, Center for Strategic Communication. http://csc.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/csc1204-extremism-victimhood-us.pdf.

Ramsay, Gilbert. 2012. "Online Arguments Against Al-Qaeda: An Exploratory Analysis." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 6(1): 54-69.

Glavin, Nicholas, 2015. "Counter ISIS' Narratives on Social Media." The New York Times, The Opinion Pages, December 7.

Goodall Jr., H.L., Pauline Hope Cheong, Kristin Fleischer, and Steven R. Corman. 2012. "Rhetorical Charm: The Promise and Pitfalls of Humor and Ridicule as Strategies to Counter Extremist Narratives." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 6(1): 70-79.

Grant, Mark Lyall. "Countering violent extremism is one of the most pressing international challenges that we face," UN at the Security Council Open Debate on Maintenance of International Peace and Security. United Nations Security Council, New York, NY. 23, Dec. 2015.

Halverson, Jeffry R., H. L. Goodall, and Steven Corman. 2011. *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*. New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillian.

Hedayah and International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. 2014. *Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism*. http://www.icct.nl/download/file/Developing%20Effective%20CN%20Frameworks_Hedayah_ICCT_Report_FINAL.pdf.

Holmer, Georgia. 2014. *Creating Spaces for Effective CVE Approaches*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace.

Hudson, Laura. 2014. "First Look at the New Ms. Marvel, A 16-Year-Old Muslim Superhero." *Wired*, 7 Jan. http://www.wired.com/2014/01/ms-marvel-muslim-superheroine/#slideid-540391.

Infante, D.A., et al. 1992. "Initiating and Reciprocating Verbal Aggression: Effects on Credibility and Credited Valid Arguments." *Communication Studies*, 43(3): 182-190;

Infante, D.A., and C.J. Wigley. 1986. "Verbal Aggressiveness: An Interpersonal Model and Measure." *Communication Quarterly*, 53(1): 61-69.

Jacobsen, Michael. 2010. "Learning Counter-Narrative Lessons from Cases of Terrorist Dropouts." In, *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives*. Ed. Eelco J.A.M. Kessels. The Hague, Netherlands: National Coordinator for Counterterrorism.

Matejic, Nicole. "Why We Don't Need a CVE "counter Narrative": This War Is about Actions, Not Words." Web log post. *Nicole Matejic*. Info Ops HQ, 12 Dec. 2015. Web. 10 Jan. 2016. <http://www.nicolematejic.com/info-ops/why-we-dont-need-a-cve-counter-narrative-this-war-is-about-actions-not-words/>.

Khan, Mussarat, and Kathryn Ecklund. 2012. "Attitudes Toward Muslim Americans Post-9/11." *Journal of*

Muslim Mental Health, 7(1), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.10381607.0007.101.

Khan, Samir. 2011. "Blended Duality: Muslim and American?," *Inspire Magazine*, 8, http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/inspire-magazine-8.pdf.

Kruglanski, Arie W. 2014. "Psychology, Not Theology: Overcoming ISIS' Secret Appeal." *E-International Relations*, October 28. http://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/28/psychology-not-theology-overcoming-isis-secret-appeal/.

Kundnani, Arun. 2012. *Blind Spot? Security Narratives and Far-Right Violence in Europe*. The Hague, Netherlands: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Kundnani-Blind-Spot-June-2012.pdf;

LaFree, Gary, and Bianca Bersani. 2012. *Hot Spots of Terrorism and Other Crimes in the United States, 1970-2008*. College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. http://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/files/publications/research_briefs/LaFree_Bersani_HotSpotsOfUSTerrorism.pdf.

Liht, Jose, and Sara Savage. 2013. "Preventing Violent Extremism Through Value Complexity: Being Muslim Being British." *Journal of Strategic Security*, 6(4): 44-66.

McCants, William, and Clinton Watts. 2012. *U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism*. Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute. http://www.fpri.org/docs/media/McCants_Watts_-_Countering_Violent_Extremism.pdf.

Merica, Dan. 2011. "Muslim Superhero Comics Meet Resistance in U.S." Web blog post. *Belief Blog*, CNN, 5 Oct. http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/05/muslim-superhero-comic-series-meets-resistance-in-u-s/.

Moscovici, S., and M. Zavalloni. 1969. "The Group as a Polarizer of Attitudes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 12(2): 125-135.

Muslim Public Affairs Council. "Injustice Cannot Defeat Injustice." Online Video. *YouTube*, 12 Jul. 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IofpsHOosE.

Nasser-Eddine, Minerva, et al. 2011. *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review*. Edinburgh, Australia: Australian Government Department of Defence, Defence Science and Technology Organization. http://dspace.dsto.defence.gov.au/dspace/bitstream/1947/10150/1/DSTO-TR-2522%20PR.pdf

National Counterterrorism Center. 2012. *Annex of Statistical Information*, McLean, VA: National Counterterrorism Center. http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/195768.pdf

Neumann, Peter R. 2014. *The New Jihadism: A Global Snapshot*. London, UK: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence. http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ICSR-REPORT-The-New-Jihadism-A-Global-Snapshot.pdf

No author. *Jihad and the Islamic Law of War*. Amman, Jordan: The Royal Aal-al Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2009.

No Hate USA. 2015. "About Us". National Outreach for Hate Awareness and Threat Education USA, n.d., Web. 29 Apr. http://www.nohateusa.org/about-us.html.

Perliger, Arie. 2012. *Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America's Violent Far-Right*. West Point, NY: United States Military Academy at West Point, Combating Terrorism Center. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ChallengersFromtheSidelines.pdf

Peters, Gjalt-Jorn Ygram, Robert A.C. Ruiter, and Gerjo Kok. 2013. "Threatening Communication: A Critical Re-Analysis and a Revised Meta-Analytic Test of Fear Appeal Theory." *Health Psychology Review*, Supplement 1: S8-S31. DOI: 10.1080/17437199.2012.703527

Petrosino, Anthony, Carolyn Turpin Petrosino, John Buehler. 2004. *Scared Straight' and other Juvenile Awareness Programs for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency*. Oslo, Norway: The Campbell Collaboration. http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/lib/download/13/Scared+Straight_R.pdf

Piazza, James A. 2009. "Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous?: An Empirical Study of Group Ideology, Organization, and Goal Structure." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21(1): 62-88.

Prevention First. 2008. *Ineffectiveness of Fear Appeals in Youth Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug (ATOD) Prevention*. Springfield, IL: Prevention First.

Quraishi-Landes, Asifa. 2011. *Sharia and Diversity: Why Some Americans are Missing the Point*. Washington, D.C: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. http://www.ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Report_ShariaDiversity_Final_web.pdf

Rascoff, Samuel. 2012. "Establishing Official Islam? The Law and Strategy of Counter-Radicalization." *Stanford Law Review*, 64: 125-190.

Ruston, Scott W. 2009. "Understanding What Narrative is and Does." *Arizona State University Center for Strategic Communication*, September 3. http://csc.asu.edu/2009/09/03/understand-what-narrative-is-and-does/.

Sageman, Marc. 2004. *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Savage, Sara. 2011. "Four Lessons from the Study of Fundamentalism and Psychology of Religion." *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4(4): 131-150.

Savage, Sara, J. Liht, and R. J. Williams. 2011. "Being Muslim Being British: Preventing Extremist Violence Through Raising Integrative Complexity." Eds. M. Sharpe and F.Gere. *The Intangibles of Security*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: IOS Press, 2011.

Schmid, Alex P. 2014. *Al-Qaeda's 'Single Narrative' and Attempts to Develop Counter-Narratives: The State of Knowledge*. The Hague, Netherlands: International Center for Counter-Terrorism. http://www.icct.nl/download/file/AP-Schmid-Al-Qaedas-Single-Narrative-January-2014.pdf.

Semic, B.A. and D.J. Canary. 1997. "Trait Argumentativeness, Verbal Aggressiveness and Minimally Rational Argument." *Communication Quarterly*, 45(4): 355-378.

Sides, John, and Kimberley Gross. 2013. "Stereotypes of Muslims and Support for the War on Terror." *The Journal of Politics*, 75(3): 583-598

Smith, Allison, Peter Suedfeld, Lucian G. Conway III, and David G. Winter. 2008. "The Language of Violence: Distinguishing Terrorist from Nonterrorist groups by Thematic Content Analysis." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways Toward Terrorism and Genocide*, 1(2): 142-163.

Stern, Jessica, and J.M. Berger. 2014. *ISIS: The State of Terror*. New York, NY: Ecco Books.

Strange, Hannah. 2014. "Iraq crisis: Top Shia cleric Sistani withdraws support for PM Maliki – live." *The Telegraph*, 20 Jun. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10913727/Iraq-crisis-Obama-dispatches-300-US-military-advisers-live.html.

Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. 2014. "ISIS, al-Qaeda Compete for Supremacy in Global Jihad." *Al Monitor*,

February 11. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/originals/2014/02/isis-qaeda-zawahri-baghdadi-jihadist-syria-iraq.html#.

Truitt, Brian. 2011. "'The 99' Aspires to Teach Muslim Principles." *USA Today*, 19 Sep. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/comics/story/2011-09-19/the-99-muslim-inspired-superheroes/50471634/1.

Tuck, Henry and Tanya Silverman. 2016. *The Counter-Narrative Handbook*. London, UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf

United States Department of Homeland Security. 2008. *Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs_crcl_terminology_08-1-08_accessible.pdf

United States. Cong. House. Committee on Homeland Security. *Hearing on Worldwide Threats to the Homeland*, *United States House*, 113th Cong. 2nd sess. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014. (statement of Jeh Johnson, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security).

United States. Cong. House. Committee on Homeland Security. *Hearing on Worldwide Threats to the Homeland*, *United States House*, 113th Cong. 2nd sess. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014. (statement of James E. Comey, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation).

Wagemakers, Joas. " 'The Kafir Religion of the West': *Takfir* of Democracy and Democrats by Radical Islamists," in *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam. A Diachronic Perspective on Takfir*, edited by Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro, and Sabine Schmidke, 327-353. Boston: Brill Publishers, 2016.

Watts, Clinton. "Are We Our Own Worst Enemy? The Problems in Countering Jihadi Narratives and How to Fix Them." Web blog post. *Geopoliticus*. Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2 May 2015. Web. 4 Jun. 2015.

Book Review

Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger. *ISIS, The State of Terror*. London: Harper Collins, 2015. 416 pages. $27.99 Hardcover

reviewed by Houssem Ben Lazreg

Beheadings, mass executions of captives, women being raped and the destruction of cultural sites have been making newspaper headlines in the past few years. The jihadist organization called "ISIS" or "*Daesh*" (Arabic equivalent) acquired many territories in Syria and Iraq. Motivated by these advances, ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared the establishment of the "Caliphate," a move that, despite being criticized by Muslims and non-Muslims, sparked off many questions: Who is ISIS? What are its origins? What does this organization aim to achieve? How do they recruit fighters from Muslim and non-Muslim countries? Why are their tactics very brutal?

 Most of the answers to these questions can be found in *ISIS: The State of Terror* by Jessica Stern, a lecturer at Harvard University, and J. M. Berger, a terrorism analyst and researcher. This book, which is divided thematically into ten chapters, analyzes in a journalistic style the rise of ISIS, beginning with the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 to the organization evolution and its split from al-Qaeda and its establishment of the new Islamic Caliphate. By using social media, modern technology and highly sophisticated propaganda strategies, ISIS has managed to recruit fighters from all over the world.

In the first chapter, "The Rise and Fall of Al Qaeda in Iraq," Stern and Berger provide a portrait of Abu Musab al-Zarkawi, the founding father of ISIS. They claim that he "brought a particularly brutal and sectarian approach to his understanding of Jihad" (12) due to the violent and bloody attacks on the Shiites. Furthermore, the authors give an account of "The Management of Savagery," a document that represents the roadmap for the use of violence and the perpetuation of chaos in the wake of the weakening and disintegration of central states in order to eventually create the caliphate. Despite the importance of this document, Stern and Berger ignore the role of Wahabism in inspiring the ideology of ISIS, which is based on a radical, exclusionist and puritanical interpretation of Islam. One of the main tenets of Wahabism is the idea of Takfir. According to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of this doctrine, Muslims can be deemed infidels or apostates if their opinions do not conform to the ruler's (or the caliph's), and thus can be executed. The list of apostates includes the Shiites and the Sufis whose belonging to Islam was questioned.

In the second and third chapters, respectively, "The Rise of ISIS" and "From Vanguard to Smart Mob," Stern and Berger shed some light on how al-Qaeda Central dissociated itself from ISIS. On the one hand, the authors portray al-Qaeda as an exclusive "vanguard movement... a cabal that saw itself as the elite intellectual leaders of a global ideological revolution that it would assist and manipulate" (55). On the other hand, they describe ISIS as a populist organization that plays two roles: First, it acts as a permanent government that offers services to the people living under its rule; and second, it attracts thousands of supporters who have adopted and shared its ideology through social media platforms and tech-savvy recruiters (71). Although this shift from an "elitist" exclusive movement to a "populist" inclusive one that uses modern technology to attract

sympathizers from all over the world demonstrates a significant development in Jihadi thought, Stern and Berger fail to examine the dynamics of this development.

In chapters four through nine, Stern and Berger delineate the main focus of the book. Specifically, they switch to investigating the sociological and psychological aspects of ISIS's use of social media. They posit that in using Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, ISIS does not only promote itself as a violent jihadist organism, but also adapts its propaganda in order to radicalize and recruit fighters from all over the world. Moreover, the authors highlight the sophistication of ISIS's usage of social media and digital films and their impact on the psychological dimension of modern warfare. By posting and circulating bloody scenes in the media and on the internet, ISIS can boost the morale of its supporters and terrorize its adversaries (199). Stern and Berger note that the extensive use of Twitter by ISIS is highly successful. Once a Twitter account associated with ISIS is shut, dozens emerge. Their metaphor, "whack a mole" (136), sounds relevant and indicative of the complexities of cyber war. Although the technological prowess of ISIS is extensively examined, however, there is no mention of how this organization maintains its access to the internet despite numerous airstrikes against its infrastructures. Neither do the authors disclose the sources, origins, and capabilities of ISIS's media and film production, given that many Arab states do not possess the means to produce propaganda materials of similar sophistication level.

In their final two chapters, "The Coming Final Battle" and "The State of Terror," Stern and Berger explore the state of ISIS in 2015 and offer some insights on how to deal with it. In fact, they call for a different approach from the one implemented in the past to fight al-Qaeda. They disapprove of the military solution because the "current US strategy against terrorism, which is heavily focused on decapitation, could eventually prove to be ISIS's greatest asset" (191). The book concludes with a survey of the views of some Western scholars, such as Karen Armstrong who asserts that fundamentalists- such as ISIS- associate modernity with crisis, not with progress. For such scholars, secularism aims at wiping religion out (Armstrong, 2002: 165).

In spite of the insightful perspective on the subject, Stern and Berger rely only on Western sources, thus presenting a one-sided perspective on ISIS. The lack of references from the Muslim world, as well as research done by Middle Eastern scholars, is one of the limitations of this book. Despite the journalistic style, *ISIS, The State of Terror* offers readers an idea about the history of ISIS, but the authors' account of the origins of the Islamic Organization seems to be limited. They fail to consider the international, regional and geopolitical changes in the wake of the Iraq invasion in 2003. Nor do they provide an account of daily life under ISIS, its military strategies and tactics, its sources of funding, as well as the ways in which it governs its territories. For the general reader, *ISIS, The State of Terror* is informative about the historical rise of ISIS and its uses of state-of-the-art technology to radicalize and recruit fighters. Finally, the book features a helpful glossary and an appendix that provide a concise history of Islam and the frictions between the Sunna and the Shiites.

About the reviewer: **Houssem Ben Lazreg** *is currently a PhD student at the University of Alberta with the Department of Translation Studies.*

About JTR

In 2010 the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence launched the online Journal of Terrorism Research. The aim of this Journal is to provide a space for academics and counter- terrorism professionals to publish work focused on the study of terrorism. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the study of terrorism, high-quality submissions from all academic and professional backgrounds are encouraged. Students are also warmly encouraged to submit work for publication.

Authors who wish to have an article considered for publication should consult the submission guidelines or email gm39@st-andrews.ac.uk for further information.