Contemporary Voices

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Editorial

Voices matter. We already know that they can be rallying cries for justice, equality and freedoms in many arenas. Perhaps this is why we are constantly told to 'have a voice', to 'use our voice', to 'voice our concerns'. Yet, while voices can be framed as productive forces, many people remain silent and silenced within international relations. Coming face to face with this reality raises a series of fundamental questions. What is a voice? Who has a voice? How do we hear and understand different voices? Can older voices speak to contemporary realties? Can contemporary voices respond to historical legacies?

We created Contemporary Voices of International Relations (CVIR) as a space in which scholars can explore these questions anew. More broadly, we wanted to create a journal that celebrated the ever-changing ways in which international relations are constructed and contested. Obviously, this is an extremely difficult task. In an era of rapid digital transformations, surveillance and fake news, every moment becomes worthy of critical investigation and collective conversations.

Against this backdrop, CVIR seeks to cultivate a feeling that nothing is off limits when it comes to the study of international relations. In this way, we are seeking to transcend conceptual straightjackets that dictate what voices are and can be. Certainly, voices are typically understood as verbal modes of communication. Without denying that words are extremely powerful, CVIR also calls attention to other means of encountering international relations. To capture this energy, CVIR seeks to publish pieces that will surprise, inspire and challenge readers to rethink their own positionalities, subjectivities and insecurities. We are mindful that our initial attempts to embark on this journey will be difficult. However, we still hope that the pieces that we publish will allow us all to learn more about international relations as they continue to unfold.

The Editors, St Andrews

26 April 2019

Contemporary Voices

Articles

ISIL recruiters as social media influencers: Mechanisms of legitimation by young Australian Muslim men

by Ben Caló, Eliza Hartley

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of ISIL recruiter influence on Australian Muslim identity through social media. McCall and Simmons' "Mechanisms of Legitimation" (MoL) framework will be applied to fifty online ISIL-inspired exchanges and postings through five Australian Muslim case studies. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the mechanisms in each case study will be analysed in order to develop better understandings of how ISIL-inspired outputs provide examples of both identity legitimation and ISIL recruiter influence.

Keywords: ISIL, Radicalisation, Identity, Social Media, Australian Muslims, Mechanisms of Legitimation

Setting the Scene: Australian Muslims, ISIL and the Role of Psychology

Since September 11, 2001 (9/11), there has been an increase in scholars seeking to understand why individuals will risk their lives and freedom to engage in terrorist acts (Kilcullen 2015; Stern and Berger 2015). Of growing concern are the increasing instances of homegrown terrorism appearing in Western countries (Malet, 2014; Vidino, 2009). In particular, Australia has witnessed a significant increase in young Australian Muslims involved in homegrown terrorism since the rise of the ISIL (Zammit, 2017). Among other factors, scholars have associated this with issues of identity and belonging (Dawson, 2018; Ingram, 2017; Yusoufzai and Emmerling, 2017), which is linked to the complex construction of Muslim identities in Western states and the multiple factors that can lead to radicalisation (Abdel-Fattah, 2017; Kabir, 2013; Rane, Ewart and Abdallah, 2010). Therefore, the objectives of this paper are to explore how young Australian Muslim men inspired by ISIL view themselves; how they believe they are viewed by others; and how negative discourses on Islam can affect their identity construction. This objective is significant because, to date, there is a paucity of research that examines radicalisation from the perspective of the 'recruited'.

These personal perspectives help to lay the foundations of understanding how terrorist groups utilise identity constructs in their propaganda to recruit Western foreign fighters (Farwell, 2014; Ingram, 2017; Pelletier, et al., 2016). For groups like ISIL, social media is a vital tool for constructing identity frames in order to recruit Muslim sympathisers from Western countries (Amarasingam and Dawson, 2017; Wesphal, 2017). Therefore, exploring the themes of young Australian Muslim identity and ISIL recruitment together form the second objective of this paper, which is two-fold: firstly, to highlight the importance of ISIL recruiter influence in shaping the identity of young Australian Muslim men on social media; and secondly, to develop a better understanding on how ISIL-inspired exchanges and postings by young Australian Muslim men provide examples of ISIL recruiter influence.

Scholars have also highlighted the important role that psychology continues to play in understanding terrorism and the need for greater application in the field (Horgan, 2004; Lynch, 2018; Taylor,

Roach and Pease, 2015). Due to the interdisciplinary nature of identity studies, the final objective of this paper is to apply a psychological framework to understand ISIL's role in influencing the identity of young Australian Muslim men. Therefore, this paper, utilised George McCall and Jerry Simmons' Mechanisms of Legitimation (MoL; 1978) framework to unpack ISIL-inspired exchanges and postings by young Australian Muslim men on social media to understand how MoL may assist in explaining ISIL's recruiter influence. [1]

Identity Theory, Australian Muslims and ISIL Recruitment

Identity theorists Jan Stets and Peter Burke (2009, p.3) define identity as a "set of meanings" that define an individual as having a "particular role in society", "being part of a particular group", or claiming particular "unique characteristics". In many ways, identity is deeply intertwined with terrorism, radicalisation and Islamism, which provides a foundation for these processes and actions. However, the role of identity in the path to terrorism is rarely straightforward (Taylor and Louis, 2004; Yusoufzai and Emmerling, 2017). To narrow the scope of research, this literature overview will briefly discuss the four bases of identity, how this relates to the social structure of Muslim identity, and how ISIL uses identity in their recruitment strategy.

Identity Theory from a Psychological Perspective

Identity theory seeks to explain the meanings of identities and how they influence behaviour, thoughts, emotions, and society as a whole (Stets and Burke, 2010). There are four main identity categories addressed by the mainstream identity literature. At the base level, "personal identity" is what makes every individual unique (Stets and Burke, 2010, p.125). Michael Hogg (2006, p.115) describes personal identity as the "idiosyncratic personality attributes or meanings that are not shared with other people". Unlike other identity bases, personal identity is constantly activated as an "identity standard" for other social interactions (Stets and Burke 2010, p.125). In this case, an individual may apply their identity meanings of being "moral" and "brave" to the role identity of a terrorist. Pioneered by McCall and Simmons (1978, p.92), "role identity" can be defined as internalised meanings and societal expectations of a role that guide an individual's attitudes and behaviour. The role of a terrorist, for example, may require an individual to carry out attacks and inspire others.

Since role identities are relational, individuals tend to interact with each other in a way that has been discussed in the literature on "social identity" (Stets and Burke, 2010, p.128). Social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) developed Social Identity Theory (SIT) in order to understand how identity is intertwined with group membership. Through "categorisation", "identification" and "comparison", Tajfel and Turner's (1979, p.33-37) work has provided a useful framework for understanding identity within "in-group and "out-group" behaviours. SIT has also been highlighted as a theory best suited to analysing "how social cognitive behaviours are associated with group membership" (Hogg and Terry, 2000, p.121). As a result, terrorism scholars have employed SIT in order to better understand how individuals come to identify with terrorist groups (Al Raffie, 2013; Kfir, 2015). In turn, social identity is closely related to the theory of collective identity (Stets and Burke, 2010). Collective identity can be described as "the self" in action, working together on shared goals and plans which in turn creates a shared sense of identity (Melucci, 1995, p.41). Collective identities are especially applicable to social and political movements, including terrorism (Stets and Burke, 2010). For example, ISIL slogans such as "This is our Call of Duty" and "We are all

[1] Due to contestations surrounding what deems an individual radicalised, this project has opted to use the term 'ISIL-inspired'.

ISIS" regularly highlight the themes of collective identity and duty (Speckhard 2015, p.4, 23). The application of these theories to young Australian Muslims and their complex identity construction will be explored further below.

Australian Muslim Identity

Two centuries of Muslim immigration to Australia has created a plethora of multi-ethnicities and associations which has generated interest in how Australian Muslims view their own identity. Many Australian Muslim leaders have suggested that Islam is "malleable and adaptable to Australian culture" (Sohrabi and Farquharson, 2016, p.398). Indeed, participation in Australian sporting, cultural and economic activities has highlighted how many Muslims identify strongly with their Australian citizenship (Voloder, 2015). In this regard, it is not surprising that Australian Muslims are "sensitive and responsive" to public concerns about Islam (Sohrabi and Farquharson,2016, p.398). Some research has highlighted that Australian Muslims feel labelled as a "suspect community" which has created feelings of guilt and increased anxiety (Cherney and Murphy, 2016, p.481).

In response to negative discourses, a great deal of literature has described Australian Muslim identity as diverse and peaceful (Akbarzadeh and Saeed, 2001; Kabir, 2011). Through multiple interviews, Nahid Kabir (2011) has explained the positive ways that Australian Muslims integrate Australian culture into their Islamic way of life. Many of these methods, such as sporting and education, have emphasised the compatibility of Australian and Muslim identities (Kabir, 2011). In addition, Rachel Woodlock's (2011) study of two-hundred Australian Muslims and their perception of identity found that the sample valued both their Australian and Muslim identity. This in turn relates to the body of literature addressing misconceptions of Islam in Australian society. Scholars have highlighted Australia's tendency to take a 'broad-sweep approach' to Muslims by categorising Islam as a single monolithic identity (Akbarzadeh and Saeed, 2001; Mitha, Adatia and Jaspal, 2017). Part of this has been the 'othering' of Muslim identity within Australian mainstream media in order to promote a more homogenised view (Aly, 2007; Hopkins, 2011). Douglas Pratt and Rachel Woodlock (2016, p.146) explain that categorising the 'other' threatens to produce "two tiers of Australian identity", where the first tier are considered "true Australians" and second tier can only achieve "official status" if they assimilate. Contrastingly, Gary Bouma (2016, p.201) advocates that Australia's multicultural policy has "avoided" the "othering" of Australian Muslims and is a "successful multicultural and multi-faith society". For Bouma, a policy of social inclusion and mutual respect has promoted Muslim communities and reduced inter-group conflict (Bouma, 2015, p.201). As described below, it is through these negative discourses of Australian Muslims that ISIL's recruitment strategy benefits.

ISIL's Recruitment Strategy

Elements of organisation, ideology, and technology encompass ISIL's recruitment strategy. The organisation of ISIL's propaganda has been highlighted as a major factor in their recruitment strategy (Ingram, 2015; Klausen, 2015; Pelletier, et al., 2016). Haroro Ingram (2015) notes that ISIL's information operations rely on a mixture of pragmatic and perceptual factors for message effectiveness. Behind this strategic logic, Ingram (2015) highlights that security and social identity factors aid the effective messaging structure for building followings. Similarly, Laura Pelletier et al. (2016) describe the specific tactics ISIL employs when constructing messages to achieve strategic objectives. These include highlighting historical roots, aligning actions with Islamic law, and utilising catalysts to construct messages (Pelletier, et al., 2016). Scholars have also cited the ideological elements of ISIL's recruitment strategy (Bunzel, 2015). Through political rhetoric that mixes ideological goals with ancient Islamic texts, ISIL attempts to glorify war against apostates

and hail fighters as soldiers of Islam (Haykel, 2016). If foreign fighters cannot immigrate, ISIL has also encouraged Muslims to wage war behind enemy lines (Malet 2014). This all-encompassing recruitment ideology has seen ISIL promote a leaderless resistance of self-sufficient terrorism, limiting central leadership to an ideological role (Malet, 2014).

By attracting over 40,000 foreign fighters through social media propaganda, many academics have proclaimed ISIL to be agents of technological change (Farwell, 2014; Siboni, Cohen and Koren, 2015). ISIL's social media videos incorporate violent propaganda, slick production techniques and a simple narrative to attract young Muslims to identify with their cause (Friis, 2015; Winter, 2016). In this social media environment, individuals facilitate jihad by personalising and publishing experiences which leaves an online template for others (Hoskins, Akil, and O'Loughlin, 2009). Charlie Winter (2016, p.15) describes this process as the "symbiosis between the propagandist and the propagandee" whereby users disseminate material across public and private spheres. In particular, the literature has described ISIL's use of Twitter as the 'multiplatform zeitgeist' of terrorist activism (Klausen, 2015). Through the form of 'Tweets', [2] messages can reach a plethora of individuals with cross-links to other platforms through embedded URLs (Stern and Berger, 2015). Applications such as 'The Dawn of Glad Tidings' have been analysed by researchers for their ability to create cells of belonging through ISIL updates, interactions and propaganda (Saltman and Winter, 2014).

Seven Mechanisms of Legitimation

For those who fall victim to ISIL's recruitment techniques, it is important that their new identity is accepted in their social environment. Stets and Burke (2010, p.69) refer to this process as "identity-verification", whereby an individual's actions correspond to the identity they have prescribed for themselves. In the case of ISIL, an individual may receive support from the terrorist group, though others may not support this new identity. It is under these conditions that individuals seek to justify their new identity (Stets and Burke 2010, p.43). Known as the "Mechanisms of Legitimation", McCall and Simmons (1978, p.92) outline seven negative emotions or "mechanisms" that individuals may employ to legitimize their new role identity if necessary. The first mechanism is *Short-Term Credit (1),* which refers to how a new identity is temporarily accepted by others because of the individual's previous successful identities in that group (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p.92). Stets and Burke (2010, p.43) explain that individuals in this instance will draw upon a "line of credit" they have developed from previous identities to "ride out" an unsuccessful new role identity. In regards to terrorism, an individual inspired by ISIL may convince his peers to accept his new identity as they are his friends.

The second mechanism is *Selective Perception (2)* which refers to individuals only "attending to cues that they think support an identity of theirs" and avoiding all others (Stets and Burke, 2010, p.44). Using the above example, the ISIL-inspired individual may attend to his friend's positive non-verbal cues such as laughing and smiling but ignore verbal cues that reject his ISIL identity. Closely linked is the mechanism of *Selective Interpretation (3)* which refers to individuals interpreting cues as supportive when they are not (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p.92). In the case of the ISIL-inspired individual, he may interpret his friends' negative verbal cues that reject his new identity as sarcasm rather than honesty. Other mechanisms to justify one's identity may be *Blaming Others (4)* for not supporting an identity (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p.92). Here, the ISIL-inspired individual may criticise his friends for not supporting him in his new identity. Further, an individual may *Disavow (5)* a new identity as an unintended performance (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p.92). An ISIL-inspired individual may explain to his friends that he instead identifies with some of the ideologies

[2] A post made on the social media platform Twitter.

of the group rather than identifying as a sympathiser. An individual may also *Switch Identities (6)* or *Withdraw (7)* from social interaction to avoid a new identity being threatened (Stets and Burke 2010, p.44).

This Mechanisms of Legitimisation (MoL) framework was selected as it allowed exploration into the relationship between identity and ISIL recruitment. Various scholars have highlighted MoL as a useful lens for understanding various aspects of identity (Stets and Burke, 2010; Stryker, 1994; Swann, 1990). Stets and Burke (2010, p.45) described McCall and Simmons' (1978) framework as providing identity researchers with a "theoretically rich and fruitful way of understanding the self and other interactions". The process of legitimation is well covered by terrorism scholars (Crenshaw 1983; Gilley 2012; Sprinzak 1991). However, little research has applied MoL to terrorism studies. Focusing on radicalisation and the media, Andrew Hoskings, Akil Awan and Ben O'Loughlin (2011) discuss how the Global Jihadist movement has employed MoL to propound their ideology and narrative. From a different perspective, Raimondo Catanzaro (1991) discusses how the 'Red Brigades' used self-legitimisation mechanisms to justify left-wing terrorism. Although the MoL framework has seldom been applied to terror studies, other fields such as psychology and economics have used this theory extensively (Burke, 2001; 2006; Silveira, et al., 2015). Therefore, this paper aims to fill the gap in terror research by applying a psychologically-rooted version of MoL in an attempt to understand the role of ISIL in shaping the identity of ISIL-inspired Australian Muslim men on social media. The next section will discuss the methodological approach to interpreting MoL through the use of case studies and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Interpreting ISIL-Inspired Social Media: MoL, Case Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis

This study applied the MoL framework to five case studies of ISIL-inspired Australian Muslim men and their social media activity. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical technique to interpret social media posts into the MoL framework, researchers attempted to understand the role of ISIL in shaping the identity of young Australian Muslim men on social media. Below is a breakdown of the participants, procedures, measures and analyses used in this study.

Participants

Although not all cases of radicalisation involve young adults, the majority of reported cases appear to be so, with a trend towards even younger ages (Bekker, 2009; Dawson, 2018). Young Australian Muslim men were chosen for analysis because they are arguably a prime target of ISIL's social media strategy and therefore likely to represent examples of identity (Harris-Hogan, 2017; Zammit, 2017). Despite growing figures of women radicalising, the data available on Australian Muslim women and their radicalisation remains small, making it hard to determine whether there are gender-specific interpretive links (Dawson, 2018). Therefore, the study sample comprised of five cases studies involving young Australian Muslim men as they provide the best publicly available examples of ISIL-inspired social media activity. Below is a brief overview of each case study:

> *Neil Prakash* is a 26-year-old Australian Muslim from Victoria and ISIL recruiter. Prakash reportedly converted from Buddhism to Islam in 2012 and then travelled to ISIL-controlled territory via Malaysia in 2013 (LeGrand, 2016). Since 2014, Prakash's social media activity has grown with countless ISIL-inspired posting and exchanges under various pseudonyms. He has appeared in many ISIL propaganda videos and provided an important link for

ISIL's recruitment of Australian Muslims. Prakash was arrested in November 2016 and remains imprisoned in Turkey (Counter Extremism Project, 2018).

Khaled Sharrouf is a 36-year-old Australian Muslim from New South Wales with a history of terrorist involvement. First imprisoned by *Operation Pendennis* in 2004 (Welch and Dredge, 2017), Sharrouf was again arrested in 2005 for terrorist-related offences and was involved in the planning of 2012 Sydney anti-Islam film protests. Despite being subject to a travel ban, he travelled to ISIL-controlled territory in 2013. Sharrouf rose to global prominence in 2014 after disseminating a picture of himself and his seven- year-old son holding the heads of ISIL victims (Welch and Dredge, 2017). He was falsely reported killed in a July 2015 and eulogised on social media by Australian ISIL recruiter Neil Prakash (Counter Extremism Project, 2018).

Jake Bilardi was an 18-year-old Australian Muslim from Victoria who converted to Islam in 2013 following his mother's death (Bachelard, Burke and Spooner, 2015). In 2014, he expressed sympathy for Osama bin Laden on Facebook and travelled to ISIL-controlled territory the same year. Bilardi's social media exchanges came to prominence in 2015 in his manifesto blog *From Melbourne to Ramadi: My Journey* (2015) (Bachelard, Burke and Spooner, 2015). He died in March 2015 from a suicide attack in Ramadi, Iraq. ISIL has been using his death as recruitment propaganda (Safi, 2015).

Abdullah Elmir was a 17-year-old Australian Muslim from New South Wales who travelled to ISIL-controlled territory in June 2014 (Welch, 2014). Elmir was featured in ISIL propaganda videos from October 2014, coming to prominence by threatening political leaders such as Tony Abbott and Barack Obama (King, 2015). In 2015, he utilised Twitter and Facebook extensively to post ISIL-inspired messages. It is suspected Elmir was killed by air strikes in late 2015 (Tran and Quinn, 2015).

Numan Haider was an 18-year-old Australian Muslim from Victoria who, on September 23, 2014, stabbed two police officers while holding an ISIL flag before being shot and killed in suburban Melbourne (Neubauer and Loyd, 2014). Despite apparently not holding extremist views for most of his youth, his social media posts had indicated he had become radicalised and increasingly frustrated by injustices in the Middle East and his perceived hounding at the hands of policing and intelligence services (Roose, 2016).

Procedures

This study analysed fifty ISIL-inspired exchanges and postings by five young Australian Muslim men (described above) on social media from 2014 - 2017. This time period was selected because it is when ISIL-inspired exchanges and postings by young Australian Muslim men have arguably been most prominent (Ingram, 2017; Pelletier, et al., 2016; Zammit, 2017). Captured data was retrieved by analysing dormant social media postings and exchanges from publicly available online sources. Each output was collected in its entirety and selected quotes from each output were analysed verbatim. Captured data represented any combination of videos, images or text from any social media platform. All output types were evenly analysed. However, images were focussed on less in this analysis as they provided less opportunity for analysis when compared with other output types. For example, a common theme among images in the study sample was the re-tweeting of ISIL propaganda in the form of images, which provides little insight into MoL or cases studies. Lastly, the collected data from each case study was then qualitatively analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for evidence of McCall and Simmons' MoL framework (1978, cited in Stets and

Burke, 2010) in order to explore the influence of ISIL recruitment in shaping the identity of young Australian Muslim men on social media.

The researchers encountered the following ethical considerations when carrying out the study. Firstly, there was the physical risk to researchers gathering primary data from highly dangerous and violent individuals through traditional methods such as interviews. Therefore, the secondary analysis of social media accounts was chosen, as it avoids any immediate risks to researchers. Secondly, there was the risk of psychological distress for the individual participants in this study and their families by analysing the social media activity of deceased individuals. Associated with this was the potential to raise suspicion from law enforcement or intelligence services regarding accessing the social media of convicted terrorists. To counter these problems, researchers collected only social media postings and exchanges from publicly available online sources that had already been viewed, interpreted and associated with each case study by the public, thus minimising the risk. Further, the collected data in this project may provide impartial accounts of social media exchanges and postings as opposed to media reports which can distort events and provide biased accounts of political situations.

Measures

The framework for this study were the seven negative emotion mechanisms used by young Australian Muslim men to legitimise their new ISIL-inspired identities. This construct was measured using McCall and Simmons' (1978) Mechanisms of Legitimation framework. There were fifty outputs drawn from social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and they were analysed using this measure across five cases studies. Table 1 below provides a definition of each mechanism.

Coding	Mechanism	Description
1	Short-Term Credit	An identity that is not being supported is temporarily accepted by others because of the support received from previous identities.
2	Selective Perception	Attending to cues that support an identity and avoiding cues that do not support an identity.
3	Selective Interpretation	Interpreting cues as supportive of an identity when the cues are not supportive.
4	Blaming Others	Criticising others for lack of support or not confirming an identity.
5	Disavow	To deny responsibility for an identity by revealing alternative intentions.
6	Switch Identities	Switching to an alternative identity.
7	Withdraw	Withdrawing from interactions that threaten an identity.

Table 1 Mechanisms of Legitimation and their associated definitions (McCall and Simmons, 1978, cited in Stets and Burke, 2010, pp.43-44).

Analyses

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was the analytical technique employed for interpreting data in this study. Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley and Nelson Phillips (2004, p.19), describe this type of analysis as a "methodology for analysing social phenomena that is qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist". Similarly, Norman Fairclough (2013) describes that CDA can be used to interpret and focus on the complex layers of social relations, such as connections between individuals, events and objects. CDA can also be used to assess a range of materials such as articles, books, periodicals and other sources to inform analysis (Gerring, 2007; Fairclough, 2013). In this project, CDA was utilised to explore exchanges between individual Australian Muslims and ISIL in order to understand how the power relations between the individual and group. For example, ISIL-inspired social media exchanges and postings can represent self-empowerment, but also highlight the power of ISIL recruitment strategies. Secondly, CDA can be described as all-encompassing in the sense that one discourse is linked to another, allowing for the cross-fertilisation of thoughts and ideas (Philips and Harley, 2004). In this regard, themes of identity in ISIL-inspired exchanges and postings are representative of broader discourses such as the evolution of terrorism and power of collective action.

An example from the study sample is a Tweet from Khaled Sharrouf's case study:

> "@AFP Media by the way you cowards I am running to my death I want martyrdom that's why I am blessed u rock spiders" (Sharrouf, 2015).

In this case, an output represents a tweet which is then analysed using CDA to see whether the meaning embedded in the text represents one or more of the seven mechanisms provided by McCall and Simmons' (1978) MoL framework using the definitions provided in Table 1.

The study also adopted the following methodological strategies to ensure the reliability and credibility of this measure: the engagement of meticulous record keeping for consistency of results; the provision of verbatim descriptions to support findings; and systematic documentation during data collection, analysis and interpretation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Noble and Smith, 2015). Despite being underutilised as a measure, McCall and Simmons (1978) MoL framework has been identified as a reliable framework for measuring aspects of identity through negative emotions arising from an identity being questioned (Burke, 2006; Kiecolt, and LoMascolo, 2003; Silveira, et al., 2015; Stryker, 1994; Swann, 1990).

ISIL Identity Legitimation: Results and Discussion

Overall findings

From the findings, a few generalised points can be presented. Firstly, each mechanism was observed throughout the study sample, and all case studies included at least three observed mechanisms. This suggests that ISIL identities were readily legitimised through a variety of mechanisms, which supports the aims of this study. *Selective perception (2)* and *blaming others (4)* were the most common mechanisms evidenced in the data set, with all case studies observing these strategies. A potential reason for this trend could be that both these mechanisms are regularly observed in ISIL propaganda through their selective perception of the Koran and denouncement of the West (Stern and Berger 2015). Considering the data set is comprised of ISIL-inspired outputs, ISIL recruiter influence in each case study is a high possibility.

Some mechanisms were more prevalent than others. *Selective Interpretation (3)* and to *Disavow (5)* were each only found once in the data set. Three reasons could explain this. Firstly, some case studies had more publicly available exchanges and postings than others to analyse.[3] This raises the possibility that some mechanisms may not be captured as readily in the data set as others due to the study sample size. Secondly, some platforms may enhance the amount of mechanisms observed in outputs. Blogs, such as in Jake Bilardi's case, offer more dialogue to address all mechanisms when compared to an image or a "Tweet" that has a 140-character limit. Lastly, the number of outputs analysed in each case study did not correlate to the amount of mechanisms observed. Rather, it was the quality, length and type of output that determined the amount of mechanisms observed. For example, despite Numan Haider's case study having the least amount of available outputs, his contributions provided lengthy, direct interaction with others which translated to a variety of mechanisms to legitimise his role identity. [4]

Name	Years active	No. of outputs analysed	Output type	Platforms used	Observed mechanisms
Neil Prakash	2013-2016	11	Videos, Images, Text	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube	2,4,5,6,7
Khaled Sharrouf	2013-2015	13	Images, Text	Facebook, Twitter	2,4,6
Jake Bilardi	2013-2015	10	Images, Text	WordPress, Facebook, Twitter	2,4,6,7
Abdullah Elmir	2014-2015	10	Videos, Images, Text	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube	1,2,4,
Numan Haider	2014	6	Images, Text	Facebook, Twitter	1,2,3,4

Table 2 Data matrix of each case study and their observed mechanisms.

Mechanisms of Legitimation

Below is an in-depth CDA analysis of each mechanism and their associated case studies. Mechanisms representing similar characteristics have been grouped together to highlight their interconnection. Following a brief explanation of the mechanism, each case study with the best output examples of the observed mechanism are discussed. The observed outputs were then analysed for ISIL recruiter influence.

Short-Term Credit (1)

Short-term credit refers to "an identity that is not being supported but is temporarily accepted by others because of the support received from previous identities" (Stets and Burke 2010, p.43). Actors essentially draw upon a line of credit they have earned from prior identity support to "ride out" a current, unsuccessful role performance (Stets and Burke 2010, p.43). This mechanism was

[3] Exchanges and postings will also be referred to as "outputs" as highlighted in Table 2.
[4] Direct social interaction refers to conversations between the case studies and other individuals through social media.

displayed in both Abdullah Elmir's and Numan Haider's case study. Numan Haider's case study provided the best example of the short-term credit mechanism through his exchanges on Facebook. Haider's case also offered the smallest amount of data to analyse with only six ISIL-inspired outputs. However, his analysed social media activity provided important accounts of his interaction with others revealing the short-term credit mechanism. On the 18th of September 2014, Haider posted a picture of himself wearing a balaclava and holding the ISIL flag (Haider, 2014). In response to this photo, a friend of his commented, "So what now? You killing Shias too?" This comment can be seen as the point at which Haider's identity is threatened, triggering the response from him "if necessary", which was then quickly followed up with "Kb dw bro im not gonna kill you" which received two "likes".[5] Haider's friend then replied with "HAHAHAHHA" (Haider, 2014).

This ISIL-inspired dialogue is an example of the short-term credit mechanism as his Facebook friends temporarily support his new role identity with ISIL through both liking his comments and laughing at his reassurance that he will not kill his friend. It can be suggested that Haider's prior line of credit earned from his friend allows him to "ride out" his current unsuccessful role performance (Stets and Burke, 2010, p.44). This conversation displays elements of ISIL recruiter influence through his dehumanisation of the out-group, Shias in this case (Miller, 2013). By ascribing to ISIL's worldview, he is able to justify killing anyone who does not adhere to ISIL's belief system through labels of 'good' and 'evil' (Yusoufzadi and Emmerling, 2017).

Another example of short-term credit is Abdullah Elmir's posts on Facebook. Elmir's case study was more varied in content and platforms than Haider's, providing both Facebook and Twitter posts as well as YouTube videos to analyse. In late 2014, Elmir posted the following message on Facebook:

> "To my brothers and sisters back in Tony Abbott's caliphate of Western decadence. Does anyone wanna buy a heavily discounted camping ticket for the Byron Falls festival? I'm not going to be able to make it ☹" (Elmir, 2014a).

Through this comment, he appears to be referencing his new role identity as an ISIL terrorist due to the fact that he had travelled to ISIL-controlled territories by that time (Welch, 2014). In response to this post, a friend of Elmir's threatened his new role identity by replying, "bro were the fuk r u?". This was quickly followed by the comment, "How much? my bro might be keen" (Elmir, 2014a). Similar to Haider's interaction online, short-term credit seems applicable here as Elmir's friends initially challenged his role identity, but temporarily accept the change by responding to his original question. Through this mechanism, Elmir's post also displays elements of ISIL influence, as his criticism of the West as "decadent" is consistent with ISIL's ideological denouncement of Western culture (Bunzel, 2015; Pelletier, et al., 2016). Additionally, there appears to be a trace of ISIL recruiter influence in Elmir's post, as he posted about his absence from the festival and did not reply to his friend regarding his whereabouts.

Selective Perception (2) and Selective Interpretation (3)

Selective perception refers to "attending to cues that support an identity and avoiding cues that do not support an identity" (Stets and Burke 2010, p.44). All five case studies displayed this mechanism through their outputs, but the best example in the data set is evidenced by Jake Bilardi. This case study provided ten posts and exchanges that highlighted mechanisms of legitimation. The most salient of these for selective perception, was his blog entry, *From Melbourne to Ramadi: My Journey*:

[5] A "like" refers to the thumbs up emoji in Facebook showing support for a comment (Emojipedia 2010).

> "As I read through the Qur'an, I couldn't help but make strong associations between the speech of Allah (azza wa'jal) and the chaotic scenes around the world today... It was my conversations with brothers from the State online though that began getting me to question my view of the organisation and the stories I had heard about it. As the Islamic State began to expand, seizing the cities of Raqqah, Fallujah, Mosul, Tikrit and others, Allah (azza wa'jal) Himself exposed the lies of the liars and humiliated the enemies of the State, a clear sign that they were upon the truth. Slowly but surely, I would come to love the State, recognising that they are the only people in the region establishing the Islamic system of governance, providing services for the people and most importantly they possess a sound aqeedah and manhaj that has led to their correct and effective implementation of the Sharia" (Bilardi, 2015a).

Through this passage, we see that he has employed selective perception by attending to the cues that support ISIL as an "Islamic system of governance" and avoiding cues (particularly Western) that refer to it as a terrorist organisation (Bilardi 2015a). What is interesting about his blog is the self-reflective thinking that gives an in-depth insight into the legitimation process of his new role identity. As seen above, many posts in the data set reveal selective perception by referencing excerpts of the Koran in order to support their ISIL identity, while avoiding passages that do not. A common quote highlighting this mechanism was, "know that paradise is under the shade of swords" (Bilardi, 2015a; Elmir, 2015; Sharrouf, 2014a). According to Khouwaga Yusoufzai and Franziska Emmerling (2017), Islamism provides a clearly prescriptive "black-and-white worldview" that eliminates uncertainty for Western Muslims battling with their identity. In this way, it could be argued that Bilardi's output is highlighting ISIL recruiter influence by legitimising his new role identity through violent interpretations of Islam.

Another example of selective perception is evidenced through a YouTube video in late 2014 where Elmir sends a threat to Western political leaders:

> "To the leaders, to Obama, to Tony Abbott, I say this: these weapons that we have, these soldiers, we will not stop fighting. We will not put down our weapons until we reach your lands, until we take the head of every tyrant and until the black flag is flying high in every single land, until we put the black flag on top of Buckingham Palace, until we put the black flag on top of the White House." (Elmir, 2014b).

The emotionally charged delivery in this video points to Elmir's identity being threatened by Western political powers. Through the depiction of Western political leaders as "tyrants" and the reference to the black flag "flying high in every single land", he is engaging in selective perception to legitimise his ISIL identity. Additionally, the imagery of armed ISIL fighters congregated together with flags chanting "Takfir" in response to Elmir's words also highlights a collective agency engaging in selective perception (Elmir, 2014b).[6] Many scholars have highlighted the significance of YouTube as a platform for jihadist groups and their supporters to disseminate propaganda (Farwell, 2014; Veilleux-Lepage, 2016; Winter, 2016). This video appears to highlight how ISIL propaganda can use YouTube to convey MoL. Combining his words, collective agency, and the platform utilised in this video, it could be argued that ISIL recruiters have directly influenced the selective perception mechanism in this output.

In some outputs, rather than disregarding cues that do not support an identity, ISIL-inspired messages have interpreted cues to be supportive when they are not intended to be (Stets and Burke, 2010). Known as a *selective interpretation (3)*, only one case study evidenced this mechanism, which could

[6] Takfir is a term referring to a Muslim who accuses another Muslim of apostasy (Esposito 2013).

be due to the limited number of direct social interactions within the study sample. This mechanism can be viewed in the continuation of Haider's post via Facebook on the 18th of September 2014. Following the short-term credit he received, two friends appear to reject Haider's role identity. Haider's first friend replies, "Do you purposely want to get raided or what?" (Haider, 2014). In response to killing Shias, his second friend replies, "I'm not saying you are, i'm trying to say isn't that what this group is doing atm". He then responded with:

> "What group are you talking about exactly? I haven't mentioned groups or "terrorist" organisations, I support Taliban 100% because by Australian Law they are not a "terrorist" organisation" (Haider 2014).

Haider evidences selective interpretation by appearing not to understand his second friend's negative cue and then preceding to discuss his beliefs, despite posting a picture of himself bearing the ISIL flag. There is also an overlap between perception and interpretation in this exchange. By stating that he has not referred to "terrorist" organisations but he supports the "Taliban 100%", he is using selective perception by avoiding terrorist labels while supporting ISIL's goals (Haider, 2014). This cryptic response could be to avoid law enforcement detection while still validating his role identity with ISIL. Further evidence of selective interpretation is shown when he interprets these negative cues as supportive of his identity by using inclusive language to provide a more generalised narrative of Western aggression towards Islam:

> "Let's not put the focus on other things, the main message I'm sending with these statuses and photos is to the dogs AFP and ASIO who are declaring war on Islam and Muslims, ASIO go fist each other up the ass" (Haider, 2014)

This comment marked the end of the discussion thread and received nine "likes" suggesting that through a process of both selective and interpretation perception, Haider has successfully interpreted negative cues towards his identity as positive (Haider, 2014). The hardened view he espouses in these comments suggests a strengthening of his ISIL identity in response to the threat posed by his friends. Research by Yusoufzai and Emmerling (2017) on Islamist terrorist behaviour has highlighted that individuals tend to harden their views and convictions when faced with uncertainty. Putting these two things together, it could be suggested that utilising both selective perception and interpretation allowed him to validate his role identity with ISIL, while remaining covert enough to avoid prosecution. Through this logic, the influence of ISIL recruiters becomes apparent when, upon Haider's death, ISIL recruiter Prakash congratulated Haider on his martyrdom despite the Australian government confiscating his passport (Prakash, 2015a). Similar to the interrelation between selective perception and selective interpretation, the mechanisms of blaming others and disavowing will be explained below.

Blaming Others (4) and Disavowing (5)

The mechanism of *blaming others (4)* refers to criticising others for lack of support regarding a new identity or not confirming identities altogether (Stets and Burke, 2010). All case studies evidenced this mechanism but in two primary ways. Either by blaming the West and non-Muslims for trying to destroy ISIL, or by blaming Muslims for their lack of ISIL support. Khaled Sharrouf's case study prominently displayed this mechanism in seven out of the thirteen outputs analysed. Primarily through Twitter, he targeted Western governments and their agencies through posts such as:

> "@AFP Media blow myself up is because I love to slaughter use & ALLAH LOVEs when u dogs r slaughtered" (Sharrouf, 2014b)

> "@AFP Media by the way you cowards I am running to my death I want martyrdom that's why I am blessed u rock spiders" (Sharrouf, 2014c)

In both these posts, Sharrouf's group and role identity appears to be threatened by Western agencies, in this case the Australian Federal Police (AFP). In order to legitimise his ISIL identity, he appears to attack the AFP with derogatory terms such as "dogs" and "rock spiders" while highlighting his religiosity through "ALLAH" and "martyrdom" (Sharrouf, 2014b; Sharrouf, 2014c). These prescribed labels in Sharrouf's Twitter posts highlight how perceived injustices and attacks on Islam can generate resentment toward Western society (Abdel-Fattah, 2017; Murshed and Pavan, 2011). Terrorist groups such as ISIL use these types of grievances to recruit individuals to their cause (Ingram 2017; Stern and Berger, 2015). In fact, negative sentiment towards the Australian police was widespread throughout the data set as three case studies referred to the AFP as "dogs" (Bilardi, 2015b; Haider, 2014; Sharrouf, 2014b). Through the repetition of this reference in the data set, it could be argued that the case studies are using this term due to their influence from ISIL recruiters. Other posts showing Sharrouf and his sons behind ISIL flags and holding the heads of "kuffar" (non-Muslims), also highlights ISIL's influence in shaping this blame towards non-Muslims (Sharrouf, 2014d).

Blaming others was also used in the data set to criticise Muslims for their lack of support (Elmir, 2014b; Prakash, 2015a). The case study of Neil Prakash provided eleven outputs to analyse. Many of these were more transactional in nature, offering technical advice to those looking to travel to ISIL-controlled territory (Prakash 2015b). However, an excerpt from Prakash's YouTube video entitled *The Story of Abu Khaled – Al Cambodi from Australia* (2015), produced by al-Hayāt Media Centre, evidences this mechanism:

> "I also send a message to my brothers of Islam in Australia, now is the time to arrive, now is the time to wake up, now is the time to rush for what Allah has promised you! You must start attacking before they attack you, look at how many of your sisters have been violated. All I hear on the news in Australia is that this sister was hurt, that this sister's hijab was ripped off. But no, brothers are sitting, and I ask brothers, when is the time that you are going to rise up and attack them for attacking you?" (Prakash, 2015a).

Through his twelve-minute message, it can be suggested that Prakash is criticising Australian Muslims for their lack of support in confirming his new role identity. This is shown through his remarks that "brothers are sitting" despite "sisters" being attacked (Prakash, 2015a). Through this rhetoric, it is observable that his use of this mechanism is different to Sharrouf's. While Sharrouf blames the West through sporadic and aggressive Twitter Posts, Prakash blames Muslims for inaction by building a narrative and context through his YouTube videos. Prakash's more calculated approach could suggest that he is not only legitimising his ISIL identity, but is using it as a recruitment tool for ISIL. Strengthening this argument is Prakash's reputation as a prominent ISIL recruiter (Zammit, 2017). In 2016, the Australian government identified him as "actively involved both in recruitment and in encouraging of domestic terrorism," making it clear that ISIL has influenced Prakash's use of MoL in this output (Zammit, 2017, p.26).

Interwoven into this narrative is the disavowal mechanism. *Disavowing (5)* an identity refers to denying responsibility for an identity by revealing alternative intentions (Stets and Burke 2010). This mechanism was only displayed once throughout the data set. Once again, Prakash was the instigator of this mechanism. In the following excerpt from the same video, he highlighted how he came to follow ISIL:

> "As spoke to a Muslim and he said, why are you following the religion of buddism? I said because my family is. He said, well that is not a reason to stay somewhere, you should keep searching…I just want to say to you before me here, I was idle. And by the will of Allah the Islamic State destroyed this idle." "I turned to Allah and I asked him, Allah please guide me towards the group that will bring you victory. He said, ad-Dawla." (Prakash, 2015a).

When pairing this statement to the disavowal mechanism, Prakash appears to deny responsibility for his old Buddhist identity by stating that he was "idle" before Islam and only followed Buddhism because of his family. Building on this point, Prakash explains that through "Allah" his "journey began" to ISIL. Facilitating Prakash's disavowal of his previous Buddhist identity are the multiple camera angles, montages, and slow-motion action shots during this excerpt (Prakash, 2015a). Scholars have highlighted that high-quality imagery from al-Hayāt Media Centre helps to legitimise ISIL's identity and promote its state-building ambitions (Saltman and Winter, 2014; Veilleux-Lepage, 2016). Acknowledging these factors, Prakash's disavowal of his previous Buddhist identity in this statement also highlights ISIL recruiter influence through his pro-ISIL narrative: if you are lot or idle, Allah will guide you to ISIL for fulfilment.

Switching Identities (6) and Withdrawing (7)

In some instances, individuals will switch to an alternative identity in order to avoid further negative emotions from an identity threat (Stets and Burke, 2010). This mechanism was highlighted in two of the five case studies: Prakash and Bilardi. Through Bilardi's blog entry, we can observe the logic that convinced him to adopt his new role identity in ISIL:

> "Then things took a turn, something I did not fear as an Atheist but began to fear as a Muslim, was supporting the mujahideen, convinced that I had been 'radicalised' by violent terrorist organisations. So, what I can say is one of the most shameful periods of my life, the research I had been doing all these years and the beliefs I had held so strongly to despite no-one around me sharing them were thrown aside. "However, as I read through the Qur'an, I couldn't help but make strong associations between the speech of Allah (azza wa'jal) and the chaotic scenes around the world today… Is this not the reality of the kuffar today? Who claim to be helping to free the people while doing nothing but increasing their suffering. As my realisation of this reality re-kindled my previous views about global revolution, I began to truly understand what I had focused on studying for more than five years, the motivation of the mujahedeen: The doctrine of jihad and it's superiority in Islam." (Bilardi, 2015a).

Through this statement, Bilardi is discussing his identity switch from Atheism to Islam. The interesting thing to note is that he appears to be aware of ISIL recruiter influence by stating that he had been "radicalised by violent terrorist organisations". Despite this claim, his next words suggest he sees it as necessary to identify with ISIL in order to remove the negative emotions arising from the "kuffar". In his final passage, Bilardi appears to confirm his new role identity by proclaiming that he "began to truly understand what I had focused on studying for more than five years, the motivation of the mujahideen". Through this mechanism, he separates old and new identities by associating the "kuffar" with increased suffering, which he contrasts with the "motivation of the mujahedeen" and superiority of Islam (Bilardi, 2015a). Indeed, many scholars have highlighted how "in-group" identity is strengthened by highlighting "out-group" difference (Hogg, 2006, p.115). In relation to ISIL, research has shown that propaganda readily glorifies the ummah while simultaneously denouncing the out-groups through derogatory labels such as "apostate" (Christein, 2016; Ingram,

2017; Pelleter, et al., 2016). Through these understandings, it is evident that ISIL recruiter influence has shaped Bilardi's MoL.

Prakash also provides an in-depth discussion of his progression to ISIL role identity in another excerpt from *The Story of Abu Khaled – Al Cambodi from Australia* (2015):

> "I started thinking deeper and started getting a lot of thoughts to myself. And the thoughts were telling me why don't you leave your religion and enter Islam. But then other thoughts would come to me saying would you leave the religion of your forefathers to follow something that is new and strange. My family took me to a trip of Cambodia, I finally saw what the meaning of this religion was for me, and it didn't make sense to me… If anyone was to ask me three years ago and tell me I was living under Sharia amongst Muslims I would tell them they're crazy, but by the mercy of Allah look what he has planned for me, he can plan this for you too, all you have to do is put to do is put your trust in him." (Prakash, 2015a).

It appears that his trip to Cambodia was the tipping point for his identity to switch to Islam. Research has highlighted the difficulty of balancing separate identities with different cultures and belief systems (Maalouf, 2011; Meuus, 2015). This is especially prevalent in second and third-generation Australians that have interrelationships between cultural and inherited ethnic identities (Asghari-Fard and Hossain, 2017). This excerpt suggests that he entered ISIL to remove the negative emotions arising from his lost faith in Buddhism. Compared to Bilardi's blog, Prakash's highly produced video ,complete with visual montages and *nasheeds*[7], suggests that ISIL's influence was much more direct in Prakash's output. This is shown in the final sentence when he uses his personal narrative of identity to rally others to ISIL, "Allah, look what he has planned for me, he can plan this for you too, all you have to do is put to do is put your trust in him" (Prakash, 2015a).[8] Through this sentence, we can see the importance of ISIL in shaping Prakash's identity. In turn, once an individual switches identity, it is likely that they will withdraw altogether.

Thus, the last mechanism discussed by McCall and Simmons (1978, cited in Stets and Burke, 2010) is to *withdraw (7)* oneself from interactions that threaten an identity. Three out of the five case studies addressed this mechanism, all with similar themes referring to leaving the West to be purified by Islam (Bilardi, 2015a; Elmir, 2014b; Sharrouf, 2014e). This similar ideology in all three case studies suggests ISIL recruiters have influenced these outputs. Both Sharrouf and Bilardi evidenced this mechanism but approached their articulation in different ways. Sharrouf sought to blame Australian society for forcing him to leave:

> "We live better than we lived in our country" ... "@AFP Media u can't stop and trust me if I wanted to attack aus I could have so easily I chose to leave as a Muslim". (Sharrouf, 2014e).

In the first sentence, it can be argued that he is comparing the Caliphate to Australian society, believing that life with ISIL is better. Associated with this post, was an image of an armed Sharrouf in front of a BMW and an ISIL Flag. Applying MoL, it could be suggested that he is articulating that his old life no longer threatens his Muslim identity because he has withdrawn from it. It could also be argued that he believes ISIL life is better due to his wealth, weapons and cause. This reasoning is consistent with ISIL's media strategy of promoting both material and ideological wealth in order to appeal to and recruit from diverse audiences (Farwell 2014; Saltman and Winter, 2014).

[7] Prakash, N. (2015a). The Story of Abu Khaled – Al Cambodi from Australia. Available at: https://jihadology.net/2015/04/21/al-%E1%B8%A5ayat-media-center-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-stories-from-the-land-of-the-living-abu-khalid-al-kambudi/(Accessed: 19 May 2018).
[8] Ibid.

Through political rhetoric that mixes ideological goals with ancient Islamic texts, ISIL has laced their traditional religious zeal with interpretations that resonate with today's jihadist movement (Bunzel, 2015; Stern and Berger, 2015). Through this logic, ISIL recruiters have influenced his withdrawal by catering towards an interest in material goods as well as practising Islam.

The second part of Sharrouf's post expands on his initial point by suggesting that he was forced to leave Australia in order to practice Islam because of the oppression of Western governments and agencies like AFP. Once again, he is highlighting how he was forced to withdraw from his Australian identity as his Muslim identity was being threatened. The interesting point here is his emphasis on personal agency in the last sentence. While he admits he has joined ISIL, he also communicates to the AFP that it was of his own volition to leave without attacking Australia (Sharrouf, 2014e). This personalisation of an ISIL-inspired post can be referred to as the "symbiosis between the propagandist and the propagandee", where users are also co-producers, facilitating jihad by personalising and publishing experiences (Winter, 2016, p.15).

Imran Awan (2017, p.138) refers to this personalisation process as "the virtual playground for extremist views", whereby individuals can share their own unique interpretation of Jihad to the cyber world. Terrorist groups such as ISIL allow these interpretations, thus providing a platform for Sharrouf to legitimise his identity, air grievances, and incite jihad.

Contrastingly, Bilardi's (2015a) reasons for withdrawing seem to extend from a desperation to leave Australian society and a yearning to live in ISIL-controlled territory. From an excerpt in his blog, he provides a detailed account of this:

> "I was growing tired of the corruption and filthiness of Australian society and yearned to live under the Islamic State with the Muslims. I now had the determination to finally remove myself from this land. I continued my search for a contact, even at one point considering simply crossing the border alone without any assistance. Finally, I made contact with a brother online who promised to bring me across the border, it was a risky decision to trust someone online but I was desperate to leave and was confident the brother was genuine." (Bilardi, 2015a).

Through this excerpt, his negative emotions appear to arise from "the corruption and filthiness" of Australian society threatening his role identity with ISIL (Bilardi, 2015a). Bilardi describes at length the withdrawal mechanism through his desperation to leave Australia and "live under the Islamic State with the Muslims". It could be argued that his desperation to leave Australia was because he had already withdrawn from his old identity due to his deep research into Islam for 'more than five years'. Buril (2016, p.2), describes cases like Bilardi's as "born-again Muslims", who have a "desperate need to please God after years of neglect". ISIL utilises these newfound religious experiences as recruitment tools to channel beliefs into the goals of the organisation (Buril, 2016; Ingram, 2017; Pelletier, 2016). Further ISIL recruiter influence is observed when he describes making "contact with a brother online" (Bilardi, 2015a). Unlike other outputs in the data set, this passage provides us with a first-hand account of how an ISIL recruiter facilitated Bilardi's withdrawal out of his old Australian identity.

Limitations

The findings of this study must also be considered in the context of their limitations. Firstly, a limitation of using MoL was the inability to work directly with respondents through structured methods, such as interviews, to measure human responses to interaction (Amarasingam and

Dawson, 2017; Dawson, 2018). Another issue is that identity-based theories can lack a distinction between 'individual' or 'group' psychology (Jenkins, 2004). These limitations were countered by using the qualitative interpretative qualities of CDA to develop key themes centred on the data set. Additionally, case studies narrowed the breadth of discourse to analyse, making the analysis more manageable. Although beneficial for this study, CDA endures some limitations. Firstly, discourse analysis lacks consistency in the collation of data, making information difficult to quantify. Indeed, Powers (2001, p.64) explains that findings are subject to the researcher's qualitative analysis, thus generalisations with other discourses affect measurability. Furthermore, the impartiality of discourse can limit analysis as topics are inextricably linked to wider social practices. As Neta Crawford (2004, p.24) notes, discourse analysis can only ever be a partial representation of a wider social practice. Therefore, the analysis of Islamic texts can create issues for CDA as the language used spans multiple discourses, causing misinterpretation. James Gee and Michael Handford (2013) discuss how the analysis of language can present issues for researchers, such as misinterpretation of metaphors and their use in discourse. To counter these limitations, MoL should reduce inconsistencies by providing a conceptual framework for CDA to work through.

Implications for further research

Due to the generalisability of the MoL framework, future research could apply these findings to the broader terrorist network of actors, such as Al Qaeda. Furthermore, due to the interdisciplinary nature of identity studies, this research can be enhanced through contributions from other fields (Côté, 1996; Schwartz, 2005). For example, sociological and criminological perspectives could increase our understanding of ISIL-inspired social media postings and exchanges by young Australian Muslim men. Finally, this study focused solely on Australian Muslim men; therefore, investigation into ISIL-inspired Australian Muslim women could be an avenue for future research and highlight whether there are gender-specific links between ISIL recruitment and identity on social media (Dawson, 2018).

ISIL Recruiters as Social Media Influencers

Through the application of McCall and Simmons' MoL framework (1978 cited in Stets and Burke, 2010) this paper aimed to highlight how young Australian Muslim men inspired by ISIL view themselves; how they believe they are viewed by others; and how negative discourses on Islam can affect their identity construction. As a result, this study achieved this aim by offering a unique insight into ISIL radicalisation from the perspective of the 'recruited'. Through these perspectives, the second objective of assessing the importance of ISIL recruiter influence in shaping the identity of young Australian Muslim men on social media was also achieved. Critical discourse analyses of the data set revealed that all seven mechanisms were observed in the social media exchanges of radicalised young Australian Muslim men. The mechanisms *selective perception* and *blaming others* were observed in all five case studies, which may reflect ISIL recruiter influence in each case study. It was also found that some mechanisms were not observed as frequently, possibly due to the small sample size; the limitations of the social media platform used (e.g. word limited posts versus video posts); or the quality of the social media exchange (e.g. direct versus indirect interaction with others) which are likely to have impacted on the mechanisms used to legitimise role identity.

Thirdly, this paper aimed to develop a better understanding of how ISIL-inspired exchanges and posts provide examples of ISIL recruiter influence. Analysis of the data set provided insight into the variety of ways identity is shaped through ISIL. Through the application of MoL, the most common mechanisms, such as selective perception and blaming others, shared strong links with

ISIL's ideology. For less common mechanisms, direct social interaction such as in Numan Haiders case study, offered rich insight into ISIL's influence. Descriptions of personal agency, such as in Sharrouf's case study, and first-hand accounts of ISIL recruitment in Bilardi's, provided examples of the multiple ways mechanisms could be articulated. Lastly, this study highlights the important role that psychology continues to play in understanding terrorism and the need for its greater application in the field (Horgan, 2004; Lynch, 2018; Taylor, Roach and Pease, 2015). Therefore, by applying McCall and Simmons' MoL (1978) framework, this study provides more clarity on ISIL's role in influencing the identity of young Australian Muslim men. With additional comparative analysis into how other jihadists groups influence the identity of young Australian Muslim men on social media, it may be possible to generalise these conclusions to other jihadist organisations. Further, broadening the application of MoL to ISIL-inspired social media posts from both genders and various countries would be useful in providing a broader picture of how ISIL recruiter influence is permeated through social media activity.

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Contemporary Voices

Qualitative content analysis of images of children in Islamic State's *Dabiq and Rumiyah* magazines

by Wojciech Kaczkowski

Abstract

The Islamic State (ISIS) is infamous for their use of social media and new technologies to recruit fighters and spread their ideology worldwide. Oftentimes, the group exploits children for their propaganda efforts. This study presents a qualitative content analysis of images of children in the ISIS propaganda magazines, Dabiq and Rumiyah. Overall, our findings indicate that the representation of children in the magazines evolves from their depiction as victims of the group's enemies to future fighters in the group. Based on the social identity concepts theory, we argue that these images are used to generate in-group favoritism and out-group derogation.

Keywords: Islamic state, children, propaganda, Dabiq, Rumiyah, social identity

Introduction

The Islamic State (ISIS) has gained considerable notoriety for its use of social media and new technologies to disseminate its ideology and recruit new members from around the world. The group has extensively relied on visual images in its media campaign: various studies estimate that between 78% to 95% of the group's total media output consists of single images or photo reports (Milton, 2016; Winter, 2015; Zelin, 2015). One of the most alarming aspects of the ISIS propaganda has been the inordinate use of children.

Shocking depictions of children perpetrating gruesome acts of violence, such as the video of five prepubescent boys preparing to shoot Kurdish prisoners (Kumar, 2016) or the image of a seven-year-old Australian boy holding up a severed head (Fraser, 2014), have gained international attention and condemnation. Scholars, policy makers and the public have expressed concern at the effects of this violence on the children who, willingly or unwillingly, have joined the group; furthermore, the question arises whether ISIS intends to recruit and radicalize future generations of fighters. Consequently, we conducted a thematic analysis of the images of children in ISIS's two online magazines, *Dabiq and Rumiyah*, to address the following research questions: (1) In what ways does ISIS depict children in its official propaganda? And, (2), How does this depiction of children serve the group's purposes?

The following paper begins with a description of the study's theoretical framework. Based on the social identity and realistic conflict theories, we argue that the depiction of children serves to invoke in-group favoritism, out-group derogation and zero-sum conflict. Following the discussion of the data collection and analysis methods, we describe five identified themes of the depiction of children in the ISIS propaganda: victimization, safety/normalcy, guidance, training and perpetration of violence. In the conclusion, we argue that the use of these themes complements the primary strategic objectives of ISIS's media campaign, which frame the group as the sole defender of Sunni Muslims (in-group favoritism), its enemies as all-powerful and menacing (out-group derogation), and the conflict between them as a decisive battle for the fate of Sunni Muslims (zero-sum conflict).

Psychology of Propaganda

Propaganda is defined as "a form of purposeful persuasion …to influence the emotions, opinions, and actions of specified target audiences for ideological, political or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages" (Nelson, 1996: p. 232). From a psychological perspective, propaganda serves as a form of persuasion that targets emotional, rather than rational, decision-making processes and is intended to result in a shift in belief systems in accordance with a "pattern of us versus the enemy" (Biddle, 1931). In other words, propaganda uses emotive language and salient images to appeal to the audience's emotions. Such techniques attempt to associate the in-group, or "us", with positive emotions, and the out-group, or the "enemy", with hostility and resentfulness. For example, the term 'terrorist' can serve as more than a simple description of a person who commits certain acts. Instead, the term carries emotional valence, meaning that it is strictly bound to moral values leading to value judgments and potentially triggering emotions of anger and hostility towards the person that it is describing (Frijda et al., 2000). Previous studies indicate that visual imagery is more effective at producing an emotional response than textual content (Joffe, 2007). Violent visual content, such as images of dead or wounded civilians, are most likely to prime thoughts of anger and hostility, which in turn produce more significant changes in belief systems (Anderson et al., 2003).

The psychology of propaganda is based on the social identity concepts theory, which posits that individuals derive their "concept of self" from perceived membership in social groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986, 1979). Since one's self-worth is connected to the perceived status of one's social group, people tend to perceive their in-group members more favorably than out-group members (Taylor and Doria, 1981). In other words, people oftentimes look for a reason to prove to themselves that their own in-group is in some way superior to others. According to the realistic conflict theory (Campbell, 1965), in-group favoritism and out-group derogation arise as a result of perceived competition between two or more distinct groups over limited resources. When individuals view their interactions with other groups as a zero-sum outcome, they are more likely to favor members of their own in-group (Sherif et al., 1961). This way, they ensure that the limited resources are allocated to them and their communities. Propaganda relies on the dual concepts of social identity and realistic conflict theories: it accentuates differences between the in-group and the out-group, presents any competition between them as zero-sum, and depicts in-group members more favorably than out-group members (Biddle, 1931; Nelson, 1996).

Islamic State Propaganda

Since its inception, ISIS has created a media organization that some experts describe as "highly sophisticated" (Christien, 2016: p. 1) and "rivaling those of many nation-states" (Winkler et al., 2016: p. 1). As the group has lost nearly all its territory in Syria and Iraq, some scholars note that its official propaganda production has also decreased significantly. Milton (2018, 2016) found that the number of official ISIS visual media releases has declined from more than 700 in August 2015 to less than 200 in August 2016 and only 44 in June 2018. Furthermore, the group ceased the production of the majority of its online magazines. For example, the latest issue of Rumiyah was released on September 9, 2017. Despite the overall decrease, ISIS is likely to maintain a relatively strong online presence in the future. Research previously noted fluctuations in visual propaganda production, with significant increases in the early months of 2018 and in the spring of 2017, when the group was producing 260 to 300 visual images per week from May to June 2017 (Frampton et al., 2017). While ISIS no longer publishes its English-language magazines, it still manages to produce and disseminate the Arabic-language magazine *al-Naba* on a regular basis (Winter, 2018).

Overall, ISIS's media campaign can be described as somewhat diminished, but still threatening (Milton, 2018; Winter, 2018).

ISIS online propaganda serves multiple intertwined objectives. First, it disseminates the group's ideology and distorted interpretation of Islam to potential supporters across the globe (Winter, 2015). Second, it communicates the ISIS "brand" and projects an image of power and sophistication (Ingram, 2014; Winter, 2015). This "branding" acts as a force multiplier, allowing the group to cultivate new recruits, intimidate its enemies, inspire followers to conduct lone actor attacks, and strengthen the morale of its current fighters (Ingram, 2014; Winter, 2016). In-group favoritism, out-group derogation and zero-sum outcome serve a critical role in this process (Ingram, 2015). ISIS's propaganda narrative frames the group as the champion of Sunni Muslims and its enemies as menacing 'others' that pose a mortal threat to the existence of Islam. Consequently, the conflict between ISIS and its enemies is depicted as a zero-sum game, with the complete eradication of non-Muslims needed to save Muslims and their faith (Wignell et al., 2017).

While there is an abundance of literature on the strategic objectives of ISIS online propaganda, there are only a few studies examining the use of children in its media campaign. Most research focuses on the process of recruitment, indoctrination and training of underage fighters into the group, rather than on their depiction in online propaganda (Benotman and Malik, 2013; Morris and Dunning, 2018; Vale, 2018). Bloom et al. (2016) analyzed images of children and youth from their original database of martyrdom propaganda, but the focus of their article was on the nature of the propaganda and not on the psychological motives. Christien (2016) examined the representations of children in Dabiq magazine, but the study's analysis of visual content was limited to only thirteen pictures drawn from the first eight issues. In order to fill this gap in research, we conducted a qualitative visual analysis of images of children from all currently published issues of *Dabiq and Rumiyah*. We took an inductive approach to data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), relying on themes to emerge from the data rather than trying to verify any pre-specified themes within the images. The following research questions were developed a priori:

Question 1: *In what ways does ISIS depict children in its official magazines, Dabiq and Rumiyah?*

Question 2: *How does the depiction of children in Dabiq and Rumiyah serve the group's propaganda and recruitment purposes?*

Methodology

The current study is a qualitative visual content analysis (Kuckartz, 2014) with elements of phenomenological design (Creswell et al., 2007). We found this form of analysis to be the most appropriate approach for our study for several reasons. First, it fits the form of our data since it does not require any interaction between the researcher and the subject. Second, phenomenological visual content analysis aims to offer insights into how a given person makes sense of visual imagery (Creswell et al., 2007).

The guiding research question of our study, examining how ISIS uses images of children for propaganda and recruitment purposes, fits within the framework for a phenomenological design. In other words, we seek to recognize the meanings that the group puts on the images. The goal of our study is to generate new ways of seeing existing data and constructing a framework that does not necessarily reflect our own perspective or prior research results.

While our study focuses exclusively on visual imagery analysis, we also recognize that the examined images are not featured alone in the magazines. Instead, they accompany and supplement the textual content. Nevertheless, we can analyze them separately from the text, since viewers examine them differently from the rest of the content (Barry, 1997; Griffin, 2004; Pfau et al., 2008). Images serve to attract viewers' interest (Knobloch et al., 2003), provoke emotional response (Barry, 1997) and enhance their attitudes (Griffin, 2004). In other words, they draw viewers to the story more strongly and quickly than the textual content. Nevertheless, we still explored the relationship between textual and visual components as part of our analysis. Specifically, we coded whether each image is featured by itself (i.e. whether it covers an entire page and does not relate to any article), in a set of multiple images, or as a supplement to an article. Also, we coded whether a text caption accompanied each image.

Data Analysis

As the first step of our analysis, the study's three coders examined all available issues of *Dabiq and Rumiyah* and independently identified images featuring children. For our analysis, we followed the United Nation's Children's Funds (UNICEF) guidelines of using the age of eighteen as the end point for the childhood category. At the same time, we needed to recognize that this broad cut-off point may not be consistent with some local cultural, social, and legal perspectives. Furthermore, children had to be featured in the foreground of the image; we did not include in our analysis any images in which children were only visible in the background. Each image was coded only once; if any images were to be reused in the magazines, researchers were to code them in the first instance.

After the initial stage of analysis, coders met to discuss any discrepancies between their individual sets of coding. We had to exclude any images for which coders were not able to agree whether the individuals in the images were younger than eighteen. Overall, we identified 104 images of children from the published issues of *Dabiq and Rumiyah*, as of September 14, 2017. Researchers did not find any instances in which the magazines used the same image of children more than once.

Next, we conducted an initial identification of themes and development of a codebook. Although we developed research questions a priori, we derived themes and categories from the images themselves rather than determining them prior to our analysis. To reduce the potential subjective bias in the identification of salient themes, two researchers independently examined a portion of the data and developed a list of themes to be used. We determined potential codes and definitions of the codes once the research team reached consensus. All eighteen coding categories are listed in Table 1. Afterwards, we conducted an inter-coder reliability test to determine measurement consistency, with Cohen's Kappa used to determine reliability. After resolving any remaining disagreements between the coders, each category met Cohen's (1960) minimum inter-coder reliability standard for almost perfect agreement (0.80). We calculated the overall inter-reliability for the coding instrument at 0.94.

Results

Based on our analysis, we identified five themes that best described how children were shown in ISIS propaganda: victimization, safety/normalcy, guidance, training and perpetration of violence. We categorized each image into a single theme. Four images did not fall into any of the aforementioned themes. If an image included features across multiple themes, we categorized it by its most salient theme. We discussed each theme individually before describing the relationship between them and the trajectory of changes in theme prevalence.

Victimization

Twenty-three images (22.1% of all images) featured dead or wounded children as victims of the group's enemies. Out of those, twenty-two images depict children that appear to be prepubescent, or under the age of thirteen. They are featured alone or only with other victims. There are no images of underage victims of ISIS. Instead, the images depict casualties of attacks and bombings conducted by the group's enemies: Russia, the United States, Turkey, or pro-Assad forces in Syria. Notably, the eleventh issue of Dabiq features the infamous picture of Aylan Kurdi, a three-year old Syrian boy who drowned while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea with his family in September 2015, alongside the article "The dangers of abandoning Darul-Islam" (Dabiq, 2015: p. 22).

Ten images include a caption or other text disclosing information about the group responsible for the attack, such as: "The following are pictures of the US massacre of the Muslim families supposedly to preserve American 'interests'" (Dabiq, 2014: p. 49). For eight images, the accompanying caption does not make it clear who is responsible for the casualties. For example: "The crusaders' indiscriminate bombing shows no mercy to the young" (Rumiyah, 2017: p. 22). Nineteen images are included with articles, while four are featured as a part of "Selected 10" (i.e. a full-page graphic featuring images from the group's ten selected videos and encouraging the viewers to watch them online) or other collections of images. While five images do not have captions, they accompany articles that clarify the perpetrator of the depicted atrocities. Thus, the viewers always know that the children are the victims of the enemies of ISIS.

Past psychological research can inform our analysis of this theme. ISIS uses images of dead and wounded children to elicit a strong emotional response in its target audience and depict the out-group (i.e. its enemies) as menacing, powerful and threatening to all Muslims. The images imply that Muslim children are constantly in danger of attack from the group's enemies. The lack of other individuals in the images also suggests that they are alone and defenseless. Images of dead refugee children denote that the threat is not limited to certain areas. In other words, ISIS seeks to present the current socio-political situation in the world as a deadly zero-sum conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. While some of the magazine's captions identify the perpetrators, it is implied that all of the group's enemies are in some way responsible for the victimization of children. In sum, ISIS propaganda seeks to present its enemies as a homogeneous entity, a single threat to all Muslims.

Worth noting, most of the images featuring victimization are found in the early issues. Specifically, there are sixteen images of victimization in the publications of 2014-2015, and only five in those of 2016-2017. We believe that shifting needs in the group's propaganda may explain this trend. In the first few years since its creation, the recruitment tactics of ISIS focused mostly on promoting their cause and justifying their violence. Thus, the group used images of young victims of their enemies to excuse their own violent acts and provide evidence for their claims of the war between Islam and the West.

Safety/Normalcy

Twenty-one images (20.1%) depict children playing, attending school, or receiving medical treatment while living in the ISIS Caliphate. Fifteen of those images feature children that appear to be under the age of thirteen. They are either in groups or with at least one adult present and they display symbols associated with ISIS, such as the group's flag or the raised index finger. Seventeen images include captions, which typically indicate that the photographs come from the ISIS Caliphate and that the children are living in accordance with the ISIS Islamic doctrine: "Muslim children being raised in the land of Islam" (Dabiq, 2016: p. 39). Images of safety are featured regularly throughout

the issues, with an average of five images per year. Twelve images accompany articles on the everyday life in the ISIS Caliphate, while nine images are included in "Selected 10" or other sets of images.

The theme of safety and normalcy can also be explained in terms of social identity constructs and in-group favoritism. Specifically, these images serve to depict the in-group (i.e. ISIS and its members) as innocent, virtuous and strictly adhering to its doctrine. While images of victimization are meant to elicit a negative emotional response towards the out-group, images of children's safety are intended to produce a positive response towards the in-group. The ISIS Caliphate is portrayed as the only safe haven for Muslim families, while ISIS members are the only ones capable of defending them. The images imply that Muslim refugees fleeing to Europe are still in danger, while Muslim children in the ISIS Caliphate are safe, happy and well-protected.

Guidance

Twenty-two images (21.1%) depict young children with ISIS soldiers serving as father figures. While it is unclear in most of the images whether the child and the adult are in fact related, we categorized these images based on the body language, actions within the images and the accompanying text captions or articles. Specifically, the adults in the images are interacting in a paternal manner with the children: taking care of them, teaching them a specific task (e.g. how to hold or aim a gun), or simply playing with them. In most images, the children have positive facial expressions, and there is physical contact between them and the adults. Accompanying captions also denote that the depicted soldiers are grooming these children to be their potential successors: "My father told me" (Rumiyah, 2017: p. 2) or "So follow their guidance" (Rumiyah, 2017: p. 3).

Eighteen of those images feature children that appear to be under the age of thirteen. In contrast to the theme of safety/normalcy, children carry fake or real weapons and often wear military uniforms. Adults are likewise in uniform and carrying group symbols or weapons. Images of guidance are featured regularly throughout the issues, with an average of five to six images per year and a slight decrease in 2017. Eleven images accompany articles, while 10 serve as a part of collections of images. One image is featured on the cover of the eighth issue of Rumiyah: it depicts Abu Sulayman ash-Shami, the magazine's chief editor, holding an unidentified infant (Rumiyah, 2017: p. 1).

The theme of guidance is conceptually related to that of safety: it serves to depict members of the in-group (i.e. ISIS soldiers) as benevolent, patriarchal and protective. It seeks to elicit a positive emotional response towards the in-group by suggesting that ISIS soldiers are the only ones capable of protecting Muslim children. This theme stands in contrast to images of victimization, in which enemies of ISIS are targeting Muslim children. Furthermore, it serves to suggest that ISIS is raising a new generation of soldiers. Children in these images are carrying weapons and displaying group symbols, implying that they will take on the fight from their father figures in the future. Consequently, the theme of guidance also functions to assure the readers of the prolonged existence and continuity of the ISIS Caliphate.

Training

The theme of training is the most predominant one, with twenty-six images (25.0%). Notably, ISIS uses this theme most widely in later issues: there were only eight images of training in 2014-2015, but this number increased to eighteen in 2016-2017. These images depict children engaging in military training or posing with weapons and group symbols. They are alone or with their peers,

wearing matching uniforms and serving as their own military units. Importantly, children in these images seem to be older than those in the images of guidance: in nineteen images, they appear to be over the age of thirteen years. Three images are presented by themselves, nine accompany articles, and 14 are included in "Selected 10" or other sets of images. Six images have no captions, while the other 20 images feature captions such as "The generation of epic battles" (Dabiq, 2016: p. 77).

Just like images of guidance, this theme serves to support the idea that there is a new generation of ISIS soldiers in the making and that the ISIS Caliphate will be preserved in the future. Notably, the images never depict children as current soldiers: they do not engage in direct combat with the enemy troops, but rather train or pose as future fighters. The theme of training is most prevalent in later issues, as the group's propaganda needs shift from justifying its actions and establishing its cause to assuring its audience of the group's long-lasting survival. ISIS claims to be the only legitimate authority that can undertake the leadership of jihad and purify Islamic society. Therefore, preservation of the group and its territory is central to maintaining this claim. In recent years, military and territorial losses challenged the notion that ISIS is invincible and destined to control the Middle East. Images of children depicted as future soldiers of ISIS can be used to assure the group's supporters that, despite recent losses, their ideology will continue to live on.

Perpetration of Violence

The theme of perpetration is the least common one, with only eight images (7.6%). It is the most disturbing theme, however, as it features children perpetrating acts of violence. All of these images depict young boys, between the age of thirteen and eighteen, executing the group's captives. They wear military uniforms, carry group symbols, and are often accompanied by older ISIS soldiers. Importantly, none of the images actually depict the moment in which the child is executing a captive. In six images, children are posing with captors prior to an execution; in two images, they are posing with the dead bodies. Based on the images themselves, it is unclear whether the children actually conducted the execution, although the accompanying articles often make this claim. In some cases, additional published information, such as videos, reiterate or confirm the claim of responsibility. Importantly, most of these images come from later issues: two images in 2015, three images in 2016 and additional three in 2017. Four images accompany articles, and four are part of "Selected 10". All images feature captions, such as "The lions of tomorrow" (Dabiq, 2015: p. 20).

Some researchers hypothesize that Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) mobilize children in an attempt to replenish dwindling military manpower (Beber and Blattman, 2013). While ISIS may possibly use children in a desperate bid to boost its military strength, our analysis clearly suggests that children are not depicted in the group's propaganda as active members of the military, engaging in direct combat against the enemy or conducting suicide attacks. Instead, they are shown exclusively at executions of captives, which do not require extensive manpower. These images may solely serve propaganda functions to shock the audience and gain international attention. ISIS gained considerable notoriety in the summer of 2014 with the execution of journalist James Foley. Since then, it has used numerous, more shocking forms of execution to dominate the media. The use of children in executions is likely a part of this trend of resorting to more extreme tactics to gain media attention.

Additional Images

Four images included in our analysis did not fall into any of the aforementioned themes. All of these images supplement articles and have their own captions. These images depict children of the enemies of ISIS: two show children in a Saudi elementary school, one in a Syrian elementary school, and one at a pro-LGBT rally in the West. These images serve to show that the group's enemies are 'brain-washing' children with their own ideology. For example, the caption for the pro-LGBT image states, "An example of the perversion the West seeks to spread" (Dabiq, 2016: p. 32). They are always juxtaposed against the images of safety and guidance. Two images are featured in the twelfth issue of Dabiq with the article "O you who have believed, protect yourself and your families from fire" and an image of a group of young boys from the ISIS Caliphate learning Quran (Dabiq, 2015: p. 33-34). The image from a pro-LGBT rally is featured in the fifteenth issue of Dabiq, along with an article "Why we hate you and why we fight you" and two images of children from the ISIS Caliphate playing in a park (Dabiq, 2016: p. 32). While there are not enough of these images to include a new theme in our analysis, it is important to note that they serve as juxtaposition to the previously described themes.

Discussion

This study provides some preliminary insights into ISIS propaganda and recruitment efforts by examining its use of images of children in *Dabiq and Rumiyah* magazines. We examined the content and features of images, allowing themes to emerge naturally and unprompted. Overall, the focus of images of children has shifted from depicting young victims of the group's enemies (i.e. theme of victimization) to portraying them as future soldiers of ISIS (i.e. theme of training). The ISIS Caliphate is depicted as the only safe haven for Muslim families from the group's enemies (i.e. theme of safety/normalcy), while its members are depicted as moral, compassionate and protective of Muslim children (i.e. theme of guidance). In a few extreme cases, children are depicted executing prisoners (i.e. theme of perpetration of violence); these images most likely serve to shock the audience and attract media attention.

Limitations

In our analysis, we were unable to determine the precise age of the individuals featured in the images. All coders had to agree on an approximate age range before including images in our analysis. Whenever possible, we also used additional sources of information to triangulate our research and identify individuals in the images to determine their actual age. For example, one of the children featured in an image of five underage boys executing captives, published in the first issue of Rumiyah in September 2016, was identified as 11-year old "JoJo" Jones from the United Kingdom. However, it is still likely that we omitted some images featuring underage youths from the study or that we unintentionally included some individuals over the age of eighteen.

Due to the nature and source of this data, we cannot describe or examine the characteristics of the intended audience of *Dabiq and Rumiyah*. We had no control over the analyzed content, no opportunity to report ages or other demographic information about the readers, and no option to conduct interviews with the potential readers. Still, although qualitative analysis cannot predict psychological responses to images of children, our analysis can lay the groundwork for developing hypotheses to test different theories and models.

Finally, it is important to note that the study focuses exclusively on two online magazines, *Dabiq and Rumiyah*, and consequently missed out the vast majority of the group's propaganda. Therefore, any

conclusions drawn from the study are only relevant to the context of these two foreign-language publications. Further studies need to re-examine the use of children in the group's audiovisual productions, as well as other magazines, such as *al-Naba*.

Future Directions

In the future, researchers may potentially examine whether other VEOs replicate ISIS propaganda strategy. Any differences between the groups can help us identify distinct propaganda and recruitment objectives of ISIS and other VEOs. Furthermore, as the group continues to lose territory in the future, researchers need to track changes in prevalence and trajectory of themes of images of children in its propaganda. The theme of training may become even more dominant as the group tries to assure its supporters of its sustainability and longevity. On the other hand, a potential addition of images of children serving as suicide bombers or foot soldiers may suggest that ISIS is losing manpower and has to resort to deploying younger soldiers.

Although we focus on visual image analysis in our study, we also find that the presented images are conceptually related to the accompanying text. The majority of analyzed images include text captions and over half of them supplement articles. Also, images in "Selected 10" are used to promote the group's videos, encouraging readers to explore other sources of ISIS propaganda. Subsequent studies need to further examine the relationship between various components of ISIS propaganda (i.e. images, videos, texts) and how the group brings them together to effectively present its ideology to its audience.

Conclusion

The representation of children in the online magazines *Dabiq and Rumiyah* offers a better understanding of ISIS propaganda. While this study cannot determine whether the group currently recruits children for military efforts, it clearly shows that the group's media campaign uses them to further promote its propaganda objectives. Images of children serve to promote the narrative of 'us vs. them', depicting all Muslims in a state of deadly zero-sum conflict with non-Muslims. Additionally, ISIS uses such images of children training and posing as future soldiers to assure its readers of the Caliphate's survival and longevity. The group views the existence of the Caliphate, which is depicted as the only true Muslim state and the restoration of early Islamic caliphates, as its greatest achievement. Its collapse is a tremendous blow to the group's credibility, making it more difficult for ISIS to claim itself as the only legitimate authority in the Muslim world.

About the author

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Table 1: Intercoder reliability by coding category

Coding Category	Coded Items	Cohen's κ
Group Composition	0 = None (child alone) 1 = Yes (one adult) 2 = Yes (one other child) 3 = Yes (multiple other children) 4 = Yes (multiple adults) 5 = Yes (multiple, both children and adults)	0.93
Age Category	0 = Mixed 1 = Under 13 2 = Between 13 and 18	0.94
Physical Contact with Others	0 = No 1 = Yes (with other children) 2 = Yes (with adults) 3 = Yes (with children and adults)	0.95
Facial Expression	0 = Not applicable 1 = Positive 2 = Neutral 3 = Negative 4 = Masked (incl. partially covered)	0.95
Weapons	0 = No 1 = Yes	0.93
Weapon Type	1 = Bladed weapons 2 = Small arms (e.g., handgun, rifle, shotgun, submachine gun) 3 = Light weapons (e.g., rockets, missiles, RPGs) 4 = Mixed	0.97
Militant Clothing	0 = No 1 = Yes (e.g., camo, sand-colored uniforms, "ninja" uniforms)	0.97
Blurred Individuals	0 = No 1 = Yes	0.93
Group Insignia	0 = No 1 = Yes	0.94
Type of Insignia	1 = Flag 2 = Patches 3 = Hats 4 = Others (specify) 5 = Mixed	0.93
Activity	In one statement, describe what the child is doing in the picture (e.g., posing, gesticulating, etc.)	n/a
Looking Directly at Camera	0 = No 1 = Yes	0.96
Setting	0 = Indoor 1= Outdoor (incl. inside vehicles)	0.97
Post-Production	0 = No 1 = Yes	0.96
Type of Post-Production	1 = Banners 2 = Flags 3 = Emblems 4 = Other	0.92
Text Caption	0 = No 1 = Yes	0.94
Article	0 = No accompanying article 1 = Accompanying article 2 = Part of series of images	0.95
Visual Properties/ Qualities	1 = Extreme Long Shot 2=Long Shot 3=Full Shot 4=American Shot 5=Medium Shot 6=Close-Up 7=Extreme Close Up	0.95

Contemporary Voices

How do Internet memes speak security?

by Loui Marchant

Abstract

Recently, scholars have worked to widen the scope of security studies to address security silences by considering how visuals speak security and banal acts securitise. Research on Internet memes and their co-constitution with political discourse is also growing. This article seeks to merge this literature by engaging in a visual security analysis of everyday memes. A bricolage-inspired method analyses the security speech of memes as manifestations, behaviours and ideals. The case study of Pepe the Frog highlights how memes are visual 'little security nothings' with power to speak security in complex and polysemic ways which can reify or challenge wider security discourse.

Keywords: Memes, Security, Visual, Everyday, Internet.

Introduction

Security Studies can be broadly defined as analysing "the politics of the pursuit of freedom from threat" (Buzan 2000: 2). In recent decades, scholars have attempted to widen security studies beyond traditional state-centred concerns as "the focus on the state in the production of security creates silences" (Croft 2006: 387). These security silences can be defined as "places where security is produced and is articulated that are important and valid, and yet are not usual in the study of security" (2006: 387). A widening approach seeks to address these silences, allowing for the analysis of environmental, economic and societal threats which are arguably just as relevant to international relations as those emanating from state actors. Visual and everyday security studies are overlapping approaches which seek to break these silences by analysing iterations of security formerly overlooked by security studies.

Internet memes in particular are often both visual and everyday, and as such this article will bring together existing literature by analysing how they speak security. There are many methodological obstacles in the study of internet memes, as they are ever-changing and their sources have questionable reliability. Hence, the nature of the study of internet memes necessitates the use of some unconventional sources. Nonetheless, this analysis remains grounded in academic theory and is essential to understanding how security is spoken today.

The next section of this paper explores the existing literature on visuals, everyday security and internet memes and draws out an essential argument of this paper: that visual memes metaphorically speak both within and outside of their immediate intertextual/intervisual context in ways that text alone cannot. In section two, a bricolage methodological approach draws from the work of many scholars to create a new method of analysis. This method considers meme manifestations as visual objects, as well as addressing the wider visuality of memes through consideration of distribution patterns, humour, polysemy, constitution of truths, affection and displacement of mythical with banal power. Section three responds directly to Andersen et al.'s call for a stronger empirical orientation in visual security studies by applying this new method to the case study of the popular Pepe the Frog meme (2015: 112). This analysis leads to the conclusion that the speech of internet

memes supports and contributes to, as well as disrupts, dominant security narratives. Memes speak security with ambiguity and polysemy in dramatically contrasting ways depending on their creation, distribution, intertextual/intervisual context and audience. Humour in memes can reaffirm or alter the security claims they are making, sometimes disguising the claim or making it more palatable to certain audiences. Thus, internet memes are not only significant to world politics, but are visual "little security nothings" that are part of a process which allows for the "rupturing" of grand speech acts to securitise.

Security Studies, Visuals and the Everyday

The Visual

The visual is arguably "central to the construction of security." (McDonald 2008: 569). In the 21st century, many scholars have called for the demystification of visuals to aid in understanding and challenging these security constructions (e.g. Der Derain 2005, Croft 2006). Consequently, the last ten years have witnessed the publication of numerous works theorizing visual security. For instance, scholars have analysed televisual media, photographs, colours, symbols and artwork (i.e. Vuori 2010, Hansen 2011 & 2015, Bleiker & Butler 2016, Guillaume et al. 2016, Andersen 2017, Vuori & Saugmann 2018).

This article defines visuals as not only images, videos or visual objects, but also the wider visuality around them. Anderson et al. explain visuality as the process of, 'rendering visible, invisible, or visible in particular ways' (2015: 85). This understanding of the visual also borrows from the work of Barthes, who contends that images, like text, are kinds of speech which can have multiple layers of signified meaning (2000). For instance, a cover of *Paris-Match* shows a black soldier giving a French salute at one level of meaning, while at a second level it expresses non-discriminatory nature of French imperiality (Barthes 2000: 116).

Barthes argues that "all images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a 'floating chain' of signifieds, the reader able to choose some and ignore others" (1977: 156). In other words, visuals have the "capacity of signs to have multiple meanings" (Andersen et al. 2015: 86). Depending on the knowledge and perspective of the audience, visuals may thus be interpreted in a wide variety of (even contradictory) ways. In this way, polysemy relates to the visual security concept of ambiguity (Möller: 2007, Hansen: 2013). According to Möller, the ambiguity of the visual implies that "no image can be reduced to the meaning assigned to it in a given [verbal/textual] speech-act, politically motivated or otherwise" (2007: 185). In turn, visual security scholarship has since shown how the polysemy/ambiguity of art can create disruptive post-colonial narratives (Bleiker & Butler 2016), different constitutions of imagery in legal and humanitarian contexts (Aradau & Hill 2013) and the construction of binaries in racialised and gendered discourses (Aradau & Hill 2013, Cloud 2006, Schlag & Heck 2013).

While visuals can be seen as fundamentally polysemic in nature, there remains some contention over how and if visuals and their polysemy 'speak' security. Here 'speaking' means leaving an impression or creating an argument beyond the existing discourse and, in so doing, 'speaking' in a metaphorical sense. Hansen contends that visuals can securitise; although they do not speak alone but rather through their constitution in discourse (2015: 263). This raises the concept of intertextuality, which she defines as the way texts interact with each other, while intervisuality speaks of the same relations between visuals (2011: 53). She then presents an intervisual/intertextual methodological framework for analysing images. In analysing the Muhammad cartoons of the Danish crisis, she presents a four-

point model: 1) the visual itself, 2) its immediate intertext, 3) the wider policy discourse, and 4) the linguistic constructions of the images (2013: 51). For the analysis of 'international icons', meaning widely circulated and recognised images, Hansen introduces a more detailed three-tier framework: 1) the image itself, 2) the international status and political impact and 3) appropriations of the icon (2015: 277-8). This second framework recommends the consideration of inter-iconicity, meaning how one icon interacts with others as well as the interpretation of multiple versions of the same image. This focus on only 'iconic' images in the sense of recognisability removes the analysis from the realm of the everyday; however, it raises the question of what makes one image more successful than other versions. One successful image may become 'iconic' in this way because it amalgamates or builds on other images and/or texts to more clearly speak a discourse. Despite arguing that visuals do not speak outside of their context, Hansen does note that they are unique from text alone in terms of their ambiguity, immediacy (in terms of affective response) and circulability (in terms of transgressing linguistic boundaries) (2013: 55-8).

In contrast to Hansen, Schlag & Heck argue that images have the power to speak metaphorically (2013). They borrow from Bredekamp in contending that this metaphorical speech is a form of auto-activity (2013: 896). However, they also concur, to an extent, with Hansen in acknowledging that images do not exist in a social vacuum but are always embedded in discourses (2013: 907). They employ an iconological approach which takes this social embeddedness into account (2013: 891). In this way, their focus shifts more to the everyday than Hansen's, as they look at 'icons' in the sense of looking at all visuals, as opposed to simply adopting Hansen's definition of icons as particularly memorable and circulated images. However, their analysis mirrors Hansen's in that it expands outwards through 1) describing the pre-iconic subject (defined here as the content of the image prior to symbolic or contextual analysis), 2) undergoing iconographic analysis of the image using knowledge of relevant literary and historical sources, and 3) attempting to determine the meaning of the symbolic form of the image (2013: 899). This article is based on Schlag and Heck's contention that visuals speak metaphorically within and outside of their context, and in different ways than text alone.

Indeed, Andersen et al. demonstrate some of the ways in which visuals speak differently than text and independently of intertextuality in their focus on visuality (2015: 85). The study of colour use is an example of considering how visuality can change how images speak (2015: 91). For instance, Guillaume et al. examine the spatio-temporal significance of the colour change of army uniforms from bold tones to camouflage in terms of the associated evolution of social meanings of battlefields (2016).

Andersen et al. further focus on visuality as speaking security through the constitution of truths, affection and displacement of the mythical with banal power (2015: 94). The constitution of truths refers to how certain ways of seeing strengthen or discredit claims of truth (2015: 97). Der Derain deals with this concept in considering the perceived authenticity of image and film, including the Bin Laden videos (2005: 27-8). While photographs are generally seen as more authentic than other visuals, technical reproducibility brings this authenticity into question (2005: 28). Aradau & Hill's analysis of the drawings of Sudanese children depicting the Darfur conflict considers how drawings have their validity questioned in a very different manner than other visual objects (2013: 370-2). Secondly, affect as pre-emotion is said to move people through images "in different ways than in the case of words" (Andersen et al. 2015: 100). This relates to Hansen's concept of immediacy. It is particularly true of images that may be tailored to particular "affective intensities and related discourses" (Andersen et al. 2015: 104). Lastly, the notion of banal power borrows from Ranciere's concept of the emancipated spectator (2011). Andersen et al. call for the end of myths about the naivety of the spectator (mythical power), and subsequently for a greater analysis of the role of the

audience (banal power) (2015: 112). They state that we should "see what [images] do, and what their viewers do with them" (2015: 112).

The Everyday

Much of contemporary security studies is built on the foundations of Buzan et al's securitisation framework (1998). According to this framework, a securitising actor makes a speech act identifying an existential threat. This threat is said to endanger a referent object (i.e. a population needing protection) in ways that warrant extraordinary counteractive measures (1998: 21). Securitisation is successful only when it convinces the intended audience (1998: 31). Vuori describes the normative element of securitisation theory as altering "'security' from the inside by unmasking its operative logic and stripping away its innocent appeal" (2017: 66). Through critique of security discourses, International Relations may focus less on political actions justified through security concerns and more on transparent politics (Vuori 2017: 67). This is related to the notion of desecuritisation, or removing issues from the security agenda, by deconstructing their operative logic (McDonald 2008: 566).

However, the 'operative logic' of security arguably cannot be fully 'unmasked' without acknowledging the elements which traditional securitisation theory continues to overlook by maintaining a narrow focus on grand speech acts by political leaders (Williams 2003: 525, McDonald 2008: 569, Huysmans 2011, Schlag & Heck 2013). This narrow focus dismisses the analytical value of everyday, banal security practices. This concept of banal power in visual security ties in with the IR theory of the everyday, which suggests that the analysis of banal, commonplace events can make important contributions to analysis (Enloe 2011). The mystification of the link between the personal and the political leads to assumptions about who has knowledge (Tickner 2005). In other words, it "designates the practice of IR as the exclusive domain of experts, statesmen, diplomats and…chieftains of global business" (Davies & Neimann 2002: 561). Everyday IR theorists reject this exclusivity. They call for the disruption of the binaries of "inside/outside, low politics/high politics [and] unremarkable/remarkable" in which the former descriptors are considered unimportant to traditional IR (Guillaume 2011: 459). They contend that relations occurring on 'private' sites reify and legitimise the power relations of 'public' state-level politics (Enloe 2011: 447). For example, Enloe notes that the production efficiency at public-sphere export factories relies on the assertion of traditional gender identities in the private context of soldiers' households (2011: 448-50). Guillaume further argues that when the everyday is included in scholarship, it tends to be associated with a romanticised concept of resistance (2011). He examines the 'myth' of "the quotidian individual… as an inherent locus of resistance to global phenomena of domination and injustice" (2011: 460). In turn, he stresses the need for a wider assessment of everyday sites and tactics.

Huysmans further brings the theory of the everyday to security analysis by exploring security practices, including data collection and CCTV surveillance, which might be considered "little security nothings" when compared to grand, existential speech acts (2011, 2015). These traditional acts of securitisation must follow certain linguistic-grammatical rules and the speaker must hold a position of power from which the act can be carried out (Williams 2003: 525). Huysmans critiques this exceptionalism by contending that securitisation is not one existential rupturing speech act, but a process taking place through a myriad of seemingly insignificant critical decisions or 'nothings' (Huysmans 2011: 3). While Vuori notes, "[a]udiences that grant moral support for security policies may differ from those that can grant deontic powers" (2017: 68), Huysmans' framework maintains that the acts and relations of both audiences are the small but significant decisions which make the 'existential' and deontic securitising speech acts of political leaders possible.

Methmann et al. perhaps come closest to bringing together theoretical perspectives on security, the visual and the everyday (2014). In their analysis, they follow Huysmans' lead by calling visual constructions of Climate Induced Migration (CIM) "visual little security nothings" (2014: 162). CIM is an unknown threat as there is no certainty about potential harms (2014: 164), however the visuals used play into a wider gendered and racialised colonial narrative about the encroachment of 'nomadic' irregular migrants into the Schengen space (2014: 171-3). Their article thus demonstrates the importance of analysing seemingly banal visuals in order to understand how they contribute to security discourse.

Scholars have also developed assessments of the roles of popular culture and humour in everyday security. Weldes & Rowley argue that popular culture may seem trivial, but it actually reflects the broader cultural resources of society (2012: 514). They explore the performance of in/securities and identities in television through the empirical example of the TV shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*. These shows both present a realist perspective in earlier seasons, which evolves into a deeper, wider and more identity-focused understanding of security by later seasons (2012: 524-5). Meanwhile, those with power can use humour to maintain hierarchies in security discourses (see Harrington 2014). The restriction of humour in certain spaces, i.e. airports, can maintain their construction as hyper-securitised sites in dominant narratives (Salter 2015: 31). On the other hand, humour can be "central to modes of critique and the formation of discourses which seek radical cultural transformation" (Campbell 2011: 159). The ambiguity of jokes can further undermine the presentation of security as an issue of certainty and severity (Salter 2015: 39). This ambiguity can also be used to 'other' certain populations. As Särmä notes, "[l]aughter at certain Others of world politics can violently push them beyond the boundaries of human polity" (2015: 114). Conversely, humour can question this 'othering' and thus de-securitise (Campbell 2011). Ultimately, "laughter is always tied up with power" and can tell us something about power relations in regard to speaking security (Särmä 2015: 113).

Internet Memes

In recent years, and in parallel with these developments in security studies, scholars from a range of academic fields have developed analytical frameworks to analyse the phenomenon of internet memes. The term 'meme' was first defined by Richard Dawkins in 1976 as the cultural equivalent of a gene which leaps "from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (1989: 192). He presents the examples of "tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions [and] ways of making pots or of building arches" (1989: 192). As the term gained in popularity and became more synonymous with developments on the internet, sociological and literary studies of the phenomenon began (Knobel & Lankshear 2007, Davidson 2012, Shifman 2014). These sought to bridge "the yawning gap between (sceptic) academics and (enthusiastic) popular discourse about memes" (Shifman 2014: 4).

In his work on providing a descriptive vocabulary for classifying internet memes, Davidson defines them as "a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission" (2012: 122). He notes how memes have three key components: the manifestation (as sets of objects, e.g. cat pictures), the behaviour (actions taken by individuals, e.g. taking and editing photographs of cats) and the ideal (the idea of the meme, e.g. that cats are funny) (2012: 123). While Davidson agrees with Dawkins' original notion of the replication and mutation of memes, he argues that these are subjective and intentional acts (2012: 123). Dawkins has since agreed that the mutation of memes online does not happen through random change, but creative human alteration (Solon 2013).

Alternatively, Shifman defines an internet meme as "a group of digital items sharing common *characteristics* of content, form, and/or stance; (b) that were created *with awareness of each other*; and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed *via the Internet by many users*" (2014: 7). This definition shares with Davidson's an acknowledgement of the role of meme mutation. Shifman also stresses the intertextuality of memes as they often relate to others in diverse ways (2014: 2). She perceives a single cultural unit (video, photo etc) to be a viral while an internet meme is always a plurality or collection of such cultural units (2014: 56). Arguably, this notion of the viral equates to a single manifestation in Davidson's framework. This article borrows from both scholars in its definition of internet memes as deeply intertextual/intervisual groups of cultural units shared online and made up of manifestations, behaviours (of creation, circulation, imitation and mutation) and ideals. In sum, individual cultural units such as photos represent one manifestation of a wider meme.

Knobel & Lankshear further develop Dawkins' original criteria for a successful meme: longevity, fecundity and copying-fidelity (Dawkins 1989: 194). They define fidelity as the qualities of a meme that make it easy to distribute, fecundity as the rate at which the meme spreads and longevity as the length of time a meme stays in transmission (Knobel & Lankshear 2007: 201-2). They further suggest the additional criterion of susceptibility as "the 'timing' or 'location' of a meme with respect to people's openness," to it (2007: 202).

As such, internet memes fall on the intersection of the visual and the everyday. Memes are often images, or combinations of image and text, and thus are often visual (Davidson 2012: 127, Särmä 2014: 67), while they are also everyday in terms of how they are created and distributed. Anyone with internet access can make, view, share and edit memes. This occurs in what might be termed the 'private sphere' of 'non-expert' geographical, cultural, social and political online communities. Interestingly, in recent years, media outlets and international figures have referenced the importance of internet memes in global politics (e.g. Clinton, in Revesz 2016). Despite this, academics in the IR field are only just beginning to theorise the meme phenomenon (Hamilton 2014, Hristova, 2014, Särmä 2014, Nagle 2017).

IR meme scholarship has largely built upon an increasing body of work on the political significance of the Internet. Shirky writes on how recent US Internet freedom policy has 'overestimated' broadcast media and 'underestimated' private communication on social media in fostering political change (2011). In her analysis of Internet culture wars, Nagle references a number of memes used by both the political left and right to assert their collective political identities and to mock their political opponents (2017). Warrington in turn considers how civil society actors have the ability to present de-securitising narratives on Twitter (2017). In addition, Andersen addresses the significance of digital videos (a form of meme) in mediating security articulations in a very different manner from traditional visual media (Andersen 2017). The public actively constitutes the virality of such videos, as viewing such data brings them to the attention of mass media (2017: 362).

Some scholars have noted that many memes directly address issues related to IR scholarship (Hamilton 2014, Särmä 2014, Hristova 2014, Mina 2014). Hamilton concludes:

Audiences that engage with international affairs via internet memes are almost certainly larger in number and demographic variety than those that read our books and journal articles…these are the images that contribute to the worldviews of our 'digital native' students' (2014).

Subsequently, these are the images that make up the myriad of 'little nothing' security articulations produced by these audiences.

These pioneering assessments of the role of internet memes in IR highlight that while memes are often everyday, they are by no means irrelevant to politics. As such, they are a phenomenon warranting further investigation. While meme studies, visual security and everyday security are all flourishing research areas, they have not yet been merged, as a visual security analysis of memes recognising the importance of the everyday is currently missing from the IR literature. This article seeks to fill this research gap by examining how memes speak security. In so doing, it responds to calls to increase visual security and everyday security analysis, as well as deepening our theoretical understanding of internet memes. As Ranciere notes, '[p]olitics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak' (2004: 13). An understanding of how internet memes speak security will illuminate how this phenomenon might be changing what it means to have political visibility: the ability to see and talent to speak. The next section will draw from this literature review to present a new methodological framework for the empirical study of internet memes as everyday visual speakers of security.

A Methodology of Memes

This section draws from the scholarly work explored in the previous section to create a new methodology to study internet memes as visual speakers of security. This analysis is guided by a reflexive epistemology, which maintains that the interpretation of memes is highly subjective and subsequently acknowledges the subjectivity and positionality of the author. This methodology is built around a theoretical understanding that brings the visual and everyday into the realm of security studies in a way that can teach the IR scholar a great deal about how security is constituted. Thus, first and foremost, it takes the intersection of the visual and the everyday seriously, grounding itself in a relational ontological understanding that "images [and subsequently memes] are as much the producers of their reality as they are its products." (Schlag & Heck 2013: 897). While there are many non-visual internet memes, this article focuses on visual memes in order to understand how they speak security in multiple and complex ways.

There are a number of notable methodological challenges in this study. The first is that online culture is fast-paced and ever-changing as "stuff circulates at an incredible speed from one corner of the world to another" (Särmä 2015: 111). As Bleiker notes, "website headlines often change by the hour or even minute," making it harder to identify visual patterns in the static manner one would analyse a newspaper (2015: 877). Internet memes are thus replicated and mutated incredibly quickly across multiple online platforms. In turn, many are created anonymously and may have originated on private forums or semi-private social network sites. Details of their creation and mutation may also be reported by unreliable sources. All of this makes their intent, lifespan and impact harder to analyse.

These memes are visual objects or manifestations, but they are also the behaviours and ideals which bring about these visual objects (Davidson 2012: 123). The methodology presented here aims to take these obstacles into account. In order to address the overall complexity of the internet meme phenomenon, it will draw from a variety of methods in its analysis. Andersen et al. highlight that the visual is so diverse that it would be too limited by a single research programme (2015: 87). Bleiker furthers this idea by calling for pluralist methods in visual global politics research (2015). This article thus engages with Aradau et al's notion of methodological bricolage as a way of experimenting with methods, not to seek certain knowledge, but to rather "bring out relations that otherwise remain largely invisible" (2015: 7).

Drawing primarily from Schlag & Heck (2013), this article acknowledges that memes speak both within and independently of their intervisual/intertextual context. They are best understood through

employment of a methodology which considers both their context and the visual qualities of their speech that cannot be replicated in words. Thus, this methodology centres on an intervisual/intertextual method for analysing visual objects. This borrows from Vuori, Schlag & Heck and, most notably, Hansen. However, it also considers the wider questions of meme visuality explored in the literature review, including distribution practises, humour, constitution of truths, affection and displacement of mythical with banal power. This framework will allow for the acknowledgement that memes speak in a plurality of ways to audiences across varying geographic and temporal contexts.

This original method is broadly sequential in that it suggests an order for analysis that moves from a focus on the pre-iconic manifestation of a meme to a wider assessment of its position in discourse. The method will not apply to all manifestations in the same way and will likely apply differently to one manifestation over time. It will be most relevant to those memes with political ideals (e.g. not to those whose ideal is solely that cats are funny).

This method is further supported by a number of methodological assumptions. Firstly, internet memes are constantly referencing other memes, from both online and offline, in their creation and mutation. This forms Barthesian-style chains of signification which can alter interpretation of the meme as a visual object. Secondly, it is assumed that the audiences of memes have banal power in that they are empowered to actively participate in the process of creating, interpreting, sharing and altering memes (Shirky 2012: 239, Solon 2013). This participation empowers individuals as pop culture producers, due to the fact that virtually anybody can create memes with potentially global reach (Särmä 2014: 67). These producers are often not powerful individuals; indeed, they are often anonymous. They may not have the perceived authority to make a securitising speech act within the framework of traditional securitisation theory, yet the memes they create in banal settings are 'little security nothings' which together make up Huysmans' formulation of the securitising process. Thirdly, this approach maintains that the way memes are created and mutated likely contributes to them being constituted differently than other forms of visual objects. This is due to the fact that memes are not necessarily seen as truths, but as opinions or jokes (Davidson 2012: 122). Thus, the constitution of truthfulness will also vary greatly from meme to meme. Much like Der Derain's take on photography, memes which use photographic visuals may be seen in a different light than cartoon memes (2005: 28).

As internet memes are often seen and even defined as jokes, this methodology acknowledges that memes can and often do speak using the communicative tools of humour and irony. Subsequently, humour can change the meaning and reception of the meme amongst certain audiences. The humour used is often exclusive, inviting only certain viewers with certain types of knowledge to join in with the laughter (Särmä 2015: 114) On the one hand, it can be used to strengthen a meme's support for existing power structures, which Särmä dubs 'hegemonic laughter' (Särmä 2015: 114). However, humour can also be used to strengthen memetic disruption of the dominant narrative. It also can be used to 'other' certain populations (Särmä 2015) or to question this 'othering' and thus de-securitise (Campbell 2011).

The role of humour ties in with perhaps the most important methodological assumption of this article; namely that memes, like all visuals, speak with a deep polysemy and ambiguity. The frequent anonymity of memes' creators and mutators often makes the intent behind them unclear and open to debate. Even when intent is expressed, audiences still interpret the same meme in a variety of ways. References to other memes and specific forms of knowledge contribute to these different interpretations. Humour means that it is not clear when to take the security speech of a meme 'seriously'. As author of this article is not likely to have the knowledge to appreciate the full

polysemy of every meme, it is not able to definitively confirm the intent of a meme creator, nor the interpretation of every audience.

Bearing these methodological assumptions in mind, this article draws together scholarship on memes, visuals, visuality and banality to present this five-point sequential method for determining how memes speak security:

1. **The pre-iconic meme**
- What do we see by looking at this manifestation's visual content before we have applied symbolic and contextual analysis?

2. **Immediate intertextual/intervisual analysis**
- How do visuals and text (if applicable) within the meme interact with each other?
- Is there immediate intertext and how does it interact with the manifestation?
- Where was this manifestation found online and does this alter its speech?
- Does the manifestation have a named author? What is the impact of this?
- Are there recognisable characters/scenes within the manifestation? What inter-iconicity is evident?

3. **The wider policy discourse**
- What is the political context? Is there susceptibility?
- What is being said about the topic of the meme?

4. **Constitutions of the manifestation**
- What are people saying about the manifestation?
- Is it being constituted as truthful? In what ways?
- Do any aesthetic elements of the meme shape interpretation?
- In what ways is the manifestation polysemic/ambiguous?
- Has it elicited a strong affective response?
- Is the manifestation being perceived as humorous? How does this impact response?
- What can be said about the manifestation's longevity and fecundity?
- What behaviours and ideals are being encouraged by this manifestation?

5. **Appropriations of the manifestation**
- Does the manifestation have strong copying-fidelity?
- Is this manifestation an appropriation of another?
- Are there notable appropriations of this manifestation? If so, how do they support/subvert the manifestation's original message?

In sum, this method is designed to focus on memes first as manifestations, then as behaviours and ideals. This begins with a basic description of the content of the manifestation, before considering its symbolic and referential elements. It then contextualising it within broader security narratives and debates. An exploration of wider visuality also acknowledges how these memes speak in ways text alone cannot; mainly through aesthetics, humour and affect. In turn, while analysis of susceptibility, longevity, fecundity, copying-fidelity and other habits of audience engagement focus on the behaviour/s of the meme, the consideration of the polysemy and perceived truthfulness of the meme allows for a clearer understanding of its ideal/s. While this method may never fully capture all of a meme's iterations and intricacies of speech, these layers of analysis allow for a clearer understanding of how memes speak security in different times and spaces as well as what they say to different audiences.

Little Amphibian Nothings: The Case Study of Pepe the Frog

Pepe the Frog is an 'anthropomorphic frog character' created in 2005 by comic book artist Matt Furie (Know Your Meme (KYM) 2018a). Pepe was one of four main characters in Furie's comic series *Boy's Club*. The comics' plotlines were generally light-hearted, revolving around the "blissfully stoned frog" and his friends leading a "simple life" of eating, drinking, gaming and crude humour (Furie 2016). In 2008, a toilet humour joke from the comic in which Pepe says, "Feels good man" was posted and popularised on the 4chan /b/ (random) messaging board (KYM 2018a). This board is one of the most well-known on the 4chan site, as it is not limited to any specific type of content and there are minimal rules policing what can and cannot be posted (KYM 2018b). Users of /b/ board are generally internet-savvy and less 'politically correct' than the average person in that they oppose limitations on their freedom of speech and praise memes with 'shock value' (KYM 2018b).

Over the next few years, the Pepe meme grew in prominence online. The 'Feels good man' smiling Pepe (image 1)[1] was one of a number of manifestations of the meme which became templates for further mutations. I shall refer to these templates as 'Reaction Pepes'. Other notable Reaction Pepes include the 'Feels bad man' sad Pepe and smug Pepe (images 2 and 3). In a very short time, users of the meme had a Reaction Pepe at their disposal for almost every form of broad emotional response, which could then be tailored to create manifestations fitting specific situations. Pepe had become "a symbol fit for all of life's ups and downs and the full spectrum of human emotions, as they played out online" (Nuzzi 2016).

By 2014, Pepe was a widely recognised meme character across the internet. He had his own Tumblr and Facebook page (KYMa), and high-profile celebrities were posting humorous images of the frog on their social media (KYMa). 'Rare Pepes', meaning particularly unusual images of the frog were being swapped, bought and sold online as if they were collectables (KYMa). Pepe was constantly being reified as a meme: a series of manifestations, a set of behaviours and an attached set of ideals. The manifestations were the many Reaction Pepes, Rare Pepes and other Pepe images posted online. The behaviour was the making, sharing, liking and altering of these images across the internet. The associated ideal was generally a belief that Pepe was a funny and relatable character. This ideal is seemingly what gave the frog such mass appeal.

However, the Pepe meme was already speaking in political and polysemic ways at this early life stage. Even the most seemingly banal and non-political Pepe meme was edited, framed and distributed in selected ways. Theory of the everyday highlights that these decisions may seem insignificant but were in fact political decision-making happening on a small scale. Moreover, "at the end of the day, he [Pepe] meant whatever you wanted him to mean" (Nuzzi 2016). The wide appeal of the character meant he was used in memes to express opinions from across the political spectrum in both overt and subtle ways. Pepe's association with humour meant that these memes often spoke security to audiences with humour and irony, but they also spoke with even deeper ambiguity. Layers of irony could strengthen the voice and message of a meme to certain audiences, while mystifying or softening its speech to others. As the meme grew in popularity, there appears to have been something of a backlash on sites including 4chan /b/, where the meme became popularised. By 2015, Pepe was the biggest meme on Tumblr (Nuzzi 2016). However, the character was having something of a memetic identity crisis; speaking security with such increasingly contrasting political agendas in increasingly complex and subversive ways.

This article will now apply its original five-point method to four manifestations of the Pepe meme. The method will be followed in a broadly chronological manner, although adapted slightly to fit each manifestation. These manifestations have been selected using Särmä's method of 'reverse-

[1] All images analysed in this article have been included as hyperlinks to avoid any breach of copyright.

snowballing' (2015: 117) The images were found through internet browsing, following links, reading thought pieces on the meme and referring to biographies of the Pepe character in meme encyclopaedias such as KYM. The 'reverse-snowballing' process was selected so that empirical data could be found in a manner mirroring the slightly random and ever-shifting nature of online memetic encounters. From this data, the Pepe manifestations selected for analysis have spoken security in loud and contentious ways, and in so doing have helped to shape or alter the behaviours and ideals of the meme. These manifestations are analysed in a broadly linear order from the date first shared online. While it is never certain when a manifestation was first posted, this consideration of rough temporal order helps to foster an understanding of how the security speech of this meme has evolved.

Throughout the analysis, it is worth noting two things. Firstly, the manifestations selected here are merely a snapshot of thousands of manifestations of this meme which have each acted as seemingly small but significant developments in building and altering how Pepe speaks security. Secondly, each of these selected manifestations are more than the single visual objects displayed, but simultaneously have a much wider visuality, which will subsequently be explored.

Manifestation 1

The first manifestation of the Pepe meme this article will analyse is the 'Super Rare Skinhead Pepe' (Premium Pepes 2018) (Image 4). In pre-iconic terms, this image shows the face of a smiling green cartoon frog, recognisable as Pepe, with multiple words and pictures drawn on his face and neck in black ink. The image was found on a Tumblr page called "PremiumPepes," which also displays many other Pepe images. The implication here is that the page owner is very familiar with the Pepe character. This particular manifestation was posted in April 2015 at the request of another Tumblr user called Kuailfy, whose own Tumblr board displays a great deal of violent, sexual and right-wing imagery (2018). In terms of immediate intertext, the title assigned to the image references the humorous 'Rare Pepe' meme, although it is unclear if it does so ironically. It also suggests that this Pepe is in the likeness of a 'skinhead', a term which stereotypically refers to a white male with a shaved head who is prone to violence and/or white supremacist beliefs. In terms of fecundity and longevity, this manifestation appears to have been only moderately shared, at least across public internet sites.

However, this image does tap into the fecundity and longevity of the wider Pepe meme, and through inter-iconicity it speaks security with and alongside a number of other manifestations. The symbols on Pepe's skin, in addition to the skinhead reference, suggest a very specific and aggressive articulation of security. Under each of Pepe's eyes is a swastika, a symbol that is today almost universally associated with fascism. The number 14 on the left eyelid is numeric shorthand for "we must secure the existence of our people and a future for our children', while 88 on the right eyelid can mean 'Heil Hitler' (Nuzzi 2016). The number 5150 may refer to the California police code for taking a dangerous mentally ill suspect into custody (California WIC 2018). Other symbols on Pepe's face appear to include the Valknot and Celtic Cross, which are both associated with white supremacy (ADL 2018c&d). Some of these symbols have multiple meanings, including non-white supremacist associations. However, their inclusion together in this image means most audiences are likely to interpret this manifestation as speaking security in a way that presents white people as the referent object and other races as threats.

It is arguably because of the overtly white supremacist speech of this manifestation that it has not been more susceptible to virality. In wider political discourse, international organisations and state governments are generally opposed to overt expression of white supremacist ideals. However,

Nagle highlights how the Internet culture war of the 2010s has given the 'Alt-Right' the space to form as a political movement in favour of free speech and against liberal 'political correctness' (2017: 11). Within certain Internet communities, 'Alt-Right' ideas, which range from traditional conservatism to fascism, have become recognised as normal and celebrated. Forums like 4chan, and the memes created and shared in these spaces, have given this new Alt-Right movement a 'youthful energy' (Nagle 2017: 13). Amongst the alt-right, and indeed among others who reject that label, references to white supremacy were growing more permissible and amusing at the time this image was shared.

In terms of how this meme has been constituted, traditional media sources have generally overlooked manifestations such as this as unimportant speakers of security. This lack of serious attention is perhaps due to the deeply affective symbolic content of the image being juxtaposed by the cheerful aesthetic of a cartoon frog and the setting of a moderately popular Tumblr page. However, some retrospective analysis has been attempted. Nuzzi appears to reference this particular manifestation in a 2016 Daily Beast article which makes the argument that Pepe has become a white supremacist symbol. She contends that this version of Pepe is evidence of the grim versatility of the meme and its use as an alt-right weapon (2016). She quotes alt-right Twitter users who claim that the association of Pepe with the Alt-Right has been built intentionally as a backlash against "normies," meaning mainstream Internet users (2016). Some right-wing publications have since mocked Nuzzi's conclusion. The Daily Caller, for example, declared that Nuzzi had been 'trolled' by such images and her interviewees (Bennett 2016). The suggestion here is that manifestations such as this are purely humorous vehicles for the mockery of those, like Nuzzi, gullible enough to critique them. As Nagle notes, "interpretation and judgement are evaded through tricks and layers of meta-textual self-awareness and irony" (2017: 31). While the white supremacist speech of this manifestation is therefore relatively unambiguous, the polysemy of this image is still disputed as some audiences claim to perceive Pepe as speaking 'white' security in jest.

Although there is still a degree of ambiguity in the ideal of this meme, it is arguably encouraging a behaviour of associating the Pepe character with white supremacist insignia in online imagery. In terms of copying-fidelity, this behaviour proved easy and popular to replicate. This is evidenced by other mutations of the Pepe meme which use some of the same symbolic references and were becoming increasingly popular at the time this image was posted. It is not clear which precise manifestation/s began this trend, but perhaps more important is the fact that manifestations continued to build from and blend into each other to create the association. This particular manifestation is part of a chain of memetic signification which has shaped how the overarching Pepe meme has spoken to various audiences since, particularly as a white referent object.

Manifestation 2

This manifestation depicts a blond-haired Pepe holding up a badge that says "Trump" and, "Make America Great Again" (Image 5). On the other side of a fence labelled "US Border," stand a man and a woman holding a baby. This couple are wearing stereotypically Mexican clothing. The man's expression appears angry, while the woman's is perhaps best understood as submissive and sad. This manifestation was posted by the Malaysian artist Maldraw onto 4chan's /pol/ (politically incorrect) board in July 2015 (KYM). As a result, early viewers will more likely have been a part of the alt-right movement. An intertextual/intervisual analysis suggests this image shows a Smug Pepe representing a satisfied Donald Trump. The two Mexican characters are drawn with the face of another common meme; Wojak or 'the Feels Guy'. Since the early 2010s, Wojak has typically been used as a reaction image to express feelings including regret, melancholy and loneliness (KYMd).

The character is also included in many 'I know that feel bro' memes expressing genuine or mock empathy. Wojak and Pepe have a long relationship history in meme culture (KYMd). While some manifestations depict the characters as friends, there has been a trend since 2014 of depicting them as nemeses. Comic series and manifestations have shown Pepe committing "various unethical acts towards Wojak" (KYMd). A binary has emerged; framing Pepe as strong, funny and masculine, and Wojak as emotional, weak, feminine and other. Arguably, this manifestation is playing on assumed knowledge of this binary.

This manifestation has proved very popular in terms of longevity and fecundity and can now be found on multiple social media and search engine platforms. This is perhaps due to the susceptibility of how well its speech was attuned to popular contemporary security narratives. At the time this manifestation was first shared, then presidential candidate Trump was presenting a contentious security narrative about the Mexican border. In a series of comments, Trump clearly marked out Mexican immigrants as an existential threat to the referent object of US citizens. For example, he tweeted a month before the creation of this manifestation that, "Mexico is not our friend. They're killing us at the border and they're killing us on jobs and trade" (Reilly 2016). Trump made a campaign promise that a wall would be built between Mexico and the USA. An example of his framing the wall as the extraordinary action needed to counter the existential threat of immigration is his March 2015 tweet stating, "I want nothing to do with Mexico other than to build an impenetrable WALL and stop them from ripping off U.S." (sic) (Reilly 2016). Given the timing and intertextuality/intervisuality of this manifestation, it can be assumed that the fence in the image represents this promised wall.

This manifestation can thus be seen as reiterating and building on Trump's securitisation of the US-Mexico border. Its popularity suggests that it was being constituted as telling a truth by many within and beyond the 4chan community. The manifestation remains polysemic/ambiguous in so far as it can still be framed as a 'joke'. This 'joke' is arguably employing hegemonic laughter to mock and 'other' those represented by the Wojaks. The manifestation is thus affective in that it likely either incites laughter at the 'other' or anger and rejection of that laughter. This anger might be interpreted as not 'getting' the joke. Another layer of ambiguity here is whether 'Trump Pepe' shares the same beliefs as 'Skinhead Pepe' and other alt-right iterations of the character. This manifestation is a key stage in building the association between Trump and the alt-right precisely because of the visual stickiness of Pepe signifying alt-right beliefs in other manifestations. While not all audiences picked up on or agreed with this stickiness, this manifestation appears to have contributed to a memetic ideal of Trump as an Alt-Right hero as well as a behaviour of using Pepe to put this message across in a comical, and thus more ambiguous, way.

This is evident in the vast number of appropriations of this manifestation, which had very high copying-fidelity. It is particularly interesting to note that in many appropriations, the Wojak Mexicans had their colourless skin coloured in brown (Wordpress 2018). In line with Aradau & Hill, this can be seen to racialise the security speech of the Pepe meme. In a further series of appropriations, the core layout of the image was altered slightly to depict Pepe as other political leaders, particularly those revered by the Alt-Right, or simply as a caricature of a particular nation, while the Wojaks would be altered to represent the non-white, non-European 'other' deemed to be the existential threat.

Manifestation 3

In September 2016, Trump's son, Donald Jr, posted a Pepe manifestation on Instagram (Image 6). The image features Pepe, Trump, Trump Jr and other Republican and alt-right figures, including Mike Pence, Ben Carson, conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and former Breitbart writer Milo Yiannopoulus.

Each of their faces have been edited onto the bodies of men in combat gear. The words 'The Deplorables' are superimposed over the image. Trump Jr was not the only individual in the public eye to share this particular manifestation. Trump advisor Roger Stone had shared the same image previously and has been credited with the creation of the manifestation (Owen 2016). Trump Jr's post brought the image further into the public eye. With over 11000 Instagram likes, it increased the overall fecundity and longevity of the manifestation. An excerpt from Trump Jr's post caption reads, "All kidding aside I am honoured to be grouped with the hard-working men and women of this great nation that have supported @realdonaldtrump…He's fighting for you and won't ever quit" (Trump Jr 2017).

Intervisual analysis reveals that this is an edited version of the film poster for *The Expendables*. The 2010 film launched a series which brought together an all-male group of actors famed for playing action heroes. In the first film, they act as a group of mercenaries with the mission to "eliminate a Latin dictator and renegade CIA agent" (IMDb 2010). These men carry out dangerous, violent and secretive missions; "the type…the US government wouldn't be able to officially sanction" (Owen 2016). The textual pun in the meme stems from a comment made by Hillary Clinton at a private fundraiser where she stated that half of Trump's supporters belonged to "a basket of deplorables" (Jacobs 2016). Thus, those who Clinton perceives as deplorable become the Expendables here. This parallel relies on popular culture to portray Trump and allies as a highly masculinised and militarised team of patriotic yet rebellious Americans. They offer patriarchal national protection from existential threats. Interestingly, the films include both internal threats and threats from states close to the US border.

Mere months before the Presidential election, this manifestation was shared at a crucially susceptible time in the security narratives of both the Clinton and Trump campaigns. In her 'deplorables' speech, Clinton had called some Trump supporters "racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic," and, "irredeemable" (Jacobs 2016). She would soon ask voters to imagine the threat of Trump having access to US nuclear codes (NBC News 2016). She and her team were constructing a narrative of Trump as a security threat to the referent object of minority groups, the wider nation and even the world. On the other hand, Trump was tweeting and speaking regularly of 'Crooked Hillary' (Trump 2016), and in a month's time he would make his first call for Clinton to be 'locked up' (The Guardian 2016). Shortly afterwards he would first use the language of 'draining the swamp' in Washington, meaning to eliminate establishment bureaucrats (Harrington 2016). This manifestation thus speaks security in line with Trump's narrative of an administration which would protect the American referent object, using extraordinary measures if necessary, from both external forces like immigrants and internal establishment forces like 'Crooked Hillary'.

The inclusion of Pepe in this manifestation continued the trend of associating Trump with the cartoon frog. The popularity of this trend had been buoyed a year earlier when Donald Trump himself had retweeted a manifestation of the Trump-Pepe hybrid meme (Trump 2015). However, wider Pepe discourse was also continuing to associate the character with white supremacist ideals. Before his turn as Trump, Pepe had been portrayed as many seemingly apolitical, funny and innocuous characters. However, there was now a clear pattern of Pepe's depiction as a white supremacist and as anti-Semitic characters, including the aforementioned skinhead, KKK members and Adolf Hitler. The behaviour of associating Trump with alt-right ideals continued to escalate in appropriations and mutations of the Pepe meme from this point until the Presidential election (KYMe). Thus, the inclusion of Pepe in this manifestation might also suggest a racialised quality to the protection offered by the Trump administration.

In term of constitutions of this manifestation, Hillary Clinton's team posted a Pepe meme exposé on their campaign team website mere days after Trump Jr's Instagram post. Clinton's team emphasised the link between Pepe and white supremacy and called it "horrifying" (Revesz 2016). The article specifically referenced the Deplorables image as one linking the Trump campaign to white nationalism. The piece was met with some ridicule, but "after the laughter died, the media continued to label Pepe as an alt-right icon" (Di Placido 2017). Trump Jr claimed ignorance of the association between Pepe and white supremacy, as he told *Good Morning America* that he had never seen the meme before, and that he "thought it was a frog in a wig…I thought it was funny" (Nelson 2016). This comment coupled with his Instagram caption act as signposts for interpreting the meme in a humorous way. Nonetheless, there is still ambiguity over how this manifestation is to be interpreted. Certain audiences will find the meme funny, but likely for different reasons. Depending on their knowledge and interpretation of the meme they may have an affective response which causes offense, confusion or a sense of belonging.

Interestingly, a matter of weeks after this manifestation was posted, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) contested the security narrative of the Pepe character by constituting the meme as a potential security threat. The organisation made the decision to classify Pepe the Frog as an alt-right hate symbol, on the basis that the meme was repeatedly appearing in anti-Semitic and racist contexts (Kircher 2016). This seemingly eliminated some of the ambiguity around the Pepe character. However, the ADL acknowledged that "[t]he mere fact of posting a Pepe meme does not mean that someone is racist or white supremacist…if the meme itself is racist or anti-Semitic in nature, or if it appears in a context containing bigoted or offensive language or symbols, then it may have been used for hateful purposes' (ADL 2016:a).

Thus, the alleged white supremacist undertones of how this manifestation speaks security are still up for debate. This was further complicated by a similar mutation of the Pepe meme posted by former KKK leader David Duke. His manifestation also featured right-wing individuals' faces edited over 'The Deplorables', this time with the tagline, "Anti-racist is a code word for anti-white" (Duke 2016). Thus, what Trump Jr's manifestation clearly did reconstitute was the behaviour of making manifestations and mutations associating Trump with Pepe and the ideal that Pepe was a voice of support for Trump's ideas. What it appears to have reified within certain audiences, both pro and anti-Trump, is the ideal that Trump's security narrative represents white nationalist and anti-Semitic security interests.

Manifestation 4

The final manifestation this article will examine is a meme taking the form of a comic strip, created and shared by Matt Furie in October 2016 (image 7). The strip shows a sad Pepe morphing into a Trump-Pepe hybrid before turning monstrous and multiplying. Inside the mouth of the monstrous Trump-Pepe forms another sad Pepe. There is then a pane showing an explosion before the cartoon cuts to Pepe screaming in his bed, presumably waking from a nightmare. Shrouded in blue, Pepe hears approaching footsteps, indicated by text reading, "thump, thump, thump." He disappears into his mattress, as if hiding. Furie has titled the manifestation, "To Sleep, Perchance to Meme," which references the Hamlet Soliloquy in which the Shakespearian character considers whether it would be better to die but fears what dreams may come in death. A subtitle states, "The creator of Pepe draws his alt-right election nightmare." Given that, in this rare instance, the sole author of this manifestation is known, this meme can be definitively seen to be speaking security from Furie's own perspective. The textual and visual elements combine to suggest horror and disgust at the purposes for which Furie's character was now being used.

In 2010, Furie had expressed a bemused happiness at the popularity of the Pepe meme (KYM 2010d). A month before he shared this image, he described feeling little concern and 'amusement' at Alt-Right mutations of his meme. He predicted that, "[co]me November, it's just gonna go on to the next phase [sic]" (Serwer 2016). However, following the ADL classification, Furie re-evaluated his stance. In a statement released at the same time as this manifestation, Furie and his publishers condemned "the illegal and repulsive appropriations of the character by racist fringe groups linked to the alt right…[and] Trump presidential campaign" (Fantagraphics 2016). This meme can be seen to represent Furie's feelings in ways that words alone cannot; employing affect, dark humour and aesthetic elements, including colour, to comment on the life cycle of the Pepe meme to date and express security concerns over a Trump Presidency and return the voice of Pepe back to its 'owner'. Furie then joined the ADL in launching a 'Save Pepe' campaign aimed at re-associating the character with narratives of peace and fun (ADL 2016b). He said, "I understand that it's out of my control, but in the end, Pepe is whatever you say he is, and I, the creator, say that Pepe is *love*" (Time 2016).

In terms of wider discourse, Furie's manifestation was part of a culture of prominent figures condemning Trump as his win loomed (Boardman 2016). It thus proved to be susceptible to virality so close to the US election, with high longevity and fecundity. It was one manifestation of thousands playing into the discourse of Trump v Hillary, with both potential victories being positioned as a signal of doom. This cartoon strip manifestation was constituted as a form of truth by a number of news sites because it was made by Pepe's original creator, who they deemed to have a certain authority (e.g. Wade 2016). However, this manifestation spoke security in deeply polarising ways. To some, it was an attempt to limit their freedom and stifle Pepe's voice. Many found the manifestation humorous in a different way than it was intended, as they mocked the idea that Pepe belonged solely to Furie or that he could control how Pepe spoke security. For others, this was an attempt to let Pepe speak in the inclusive ways he was originally intended to.

A contestation over Pepe ownership emerged as this manifestation and its intertext encouraged two contrasting sets of behaviours, appropriations and ideals. On one hand, the subsequent Save Pepe movement was part of a growing behavioural trend of creating 'Wholesome Memes' (Feldman 2016). These are "post-ironic, meaning that they convey love, affection and genuine friendship by re-contextualising classic meme formats" (Feldman 2016). For instance, one manifestation of Pepe reading the words 'Supportive Friendships' in a book received over 86000 notes on Tumblr (Feldman 2016). Generally, 'wholesome' Pepe spoke security with the ideal that this character should not represent the Alt-right. However, such manifestations could still speak with layers of irony to certain audiences and be mutated to suit other ends. On this point, there was also a behaviour of continuing to associate Pepe with the Alt-right and an ideal that Furie was not in charge. Due to continued Alt-right manifestations of the meme, Furie decided to kill off the Pepe character in May 2017. He announced the news through a funeral comic strip (KYMa). Once again, some commentators saw this manifestation's speech as highly valid and Pepe's 'death' as a definitive conclusion for the character (e.g. BBC News 2017). However, others continued to create and mutate manifestations, highlighting Furie's lack of power in determining how Pepe speaks security.

The application of the five-point method to the Pepe the Frog case study has thus highlighted how memes metaphorically speak security in complex, ever-changing and powerful ways. Focusing on specific manifestations of the meme, before considering intertext, wider discourse, behaviours, ideals and appropriations, has shown how each manifestation speaks both within its intertextual/intervisual context as well as independently, through aesthetic, affective and symbolic qualities. Pepe memes have spoken the ideals of the Alt-right, but they have spoken them with ambiguity

and layers of irony. Their great diversity and polysemy mean that they have not always spoken these ideals and are also capable of challenging them. Today, Pepe remains as polysemic and ambiguous a speaker of security as ever. Furie has relaunched his Save Pepe campaign after it became clear that the character was not dying (Furie & Furie 2017). Klee contends that "mutability…ensures Pepe will always be bigger and better than the racists who love him" (2016). Pepe will likely always be associated with hate speech in certain contexts, but in others he may speak in de-securitising ways which chime into narratives of peace and reconciliation.

Conclusion

As cultural units transmitted online, visual internet memes have gained considerable attention in popular discourse in recent years. However, the phenomenon is under-represented in academic, and specifically International Relations, literature. The visual security movement has considered how visuals can metaphorically speak security and securitise particular issues. Theorists of the everyday have focused on how security is not exclusively produced through grand securitising speech acts, but through a greater myriad of seemingly banal acts, or 'little security nothings'. This article has sought to address a silence in security studies by combining these two fields with meme studies to analyse internet memes as visual and everyday speakers of security.

Methodologically, a bricolage approach has drawn from a number of key scholars' visual methods to create a new, broadly sequential method. This has allowed for analysis of memes as not only visual objects/manifestations, but also as behaviours and ideals with wider visuality. It has shown how manifestations metaphorically speak independently of, as well as within, wider discourse, and how they do so with humour, affect and polysemy. It has also highlighted the relevance of meme mutation, distribution patterns, the constitution of truths and displacement of mythical with banal power in memetic security speech.

Applying this method to the case study of Pepe the Frog has highlighted how internet memes can speak security in deeply complex, polysemic and ambiguous ways which echo, and are echoed within, wider political narratives. A single manifestation of Pepe can speak of a white referent object needing to be saved from the non-white 'other' to some, while speaking in an innocuous way to others, and of politically correct liberals as a threat to freedom of speech or satire to yet another audience. Layers of humour can alter and disguise Pepe's security speech, while contestation over ownership and constant mutation and appropriation of the meme make it all the more complex to interpret. Pepe is simultaneously constituted as an irrelevant cartoon, a heroic political character and a hate symbol. However, it is this polysemy and ambiguity that not only allow Pepe to securitise so effectively, but also to potentially de-securitise and counter-securitise. He speaks across international borders and speaks for and to a wide array of political parties, from the US President to anonymous individuals and collectives. Pepe is an active site of the 'little security nothings' of internet culture wars, fought over who security is for and how it should be conducted. His myriad of speech acts have helped to create a security climate in which Trump's most seemingly 'rupturing' grand speech acts securitise.

Internet memes are made, shared and changed at such a quick pace across private, semi-private and public spheres that there is no way of knowing for certain how many are created and mutated worldwide each day, who is responsible for these changes or what their exact motivations are. While this article has provided in-depth analysis of the Pepe meme, it could not feasibly delve into an exploration of all the memetic manifestations, behaviours and ideals of even this one specific case study. It is also limited in so far as it relies on the subjective knowledge of its author. Indeed, the study of memes can never be truly objective, nor should it strive to be. Instead, it should be

conducted in an intersubjective web of analysis which reflects the polysemic nature of memes. As their significance in many people's everyday lives continues to grow, memes will continue to speak security in louder and more complex ways, contributing more to the myriad of 'little security nothings' which build up debate, consensus and norms surrounding security issues. This study thus calls for more authors to engage with Internet memes as everyday visual speakers of security and suggests some key areas for subsequent research.

Firstly, there should be more scholarship which applies this method, or other tailored methods to empirical examples of internet memes. The more we empirically evaluate memes in all their forms from varied and diverse perspectives, the more our intersubjective knowledge of the complex and polysemic ways they speak security will grow. Pepe is a meme primarily used in the global 'West', but there are many other national and international meme movements in different geographical and cultural contexts to explore (e.g. Mina 2014). Taking the speech of and around memes seriously through feminist, post-colonial and other theoretical lenses will allow for greater insight into the norms and power structures their speech upholds and helps to tear down.

Secondly, the rise of Internet memes has dramatically shifted "who has the ability to see and the talent to speak" in politics (Ranciere 2004: 13). This article has addressed how the opinions of people with limited political power can be expressed through the creation and sharing of Pepe memes. As a result, they have the ability and talent to speak security through Pepe, and to use these 'little amphibian nothings' to build up security narratives. The study of memes as visual (and non/semi-visual) speakers of security would benefit from more analysis of the nature and consequences of how their speech shifts power from traditional political realms into banal, online settings. It would also benefit from an analysis of who remains silent when internet memes speak. We must ask ourselves which communities are wholly or partially excluded from meme creation, mutation and hegemonic laughter, and how this affects the speech of memes and their wider power dynamics.

Finally, there is an additional layer to the context of Internet memes that this article has not considered but which shapes their speech, consumption and mutation. This relates to the involvement of the online platforms on which memes are shared. Most websites and search engines have sharing rules and limit what can be posted. They also employ algorithms, which are often secretive in nature, to determine who sees shared content and when (Andersen 2017: 359, Aradau & Blanke 2018). The impact of the power of technology companies on the ways memes speak security should not be underestimated. Thus, further research should continue to assess how web platforms and their algorithms ascertain who or what has the 'talent to speak' (2017: 368).

The speech of internet memes is layered and not easy to understand, nor is it going away. In the time it has taken to write this article, thousands of more memes have likely been created and mutated, each a seemingly banal 'little security nothing' contributing to a wider process of ever-changing security discourse. Whether it be Pepe or other characters who dominate memetic speech in years to come, it is clear that memes are changing how we speak security, and we need to acknowledge their role in the conversation.

About the author

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Contemporary Voices

On the life and lives of digital data: The US - EU safe harbor framework and beyond

by Katarina Rebello

Abstract

Digital data is entangled in a variety of intersecting discourses and debates- from narratives about 'big data revolutions' and 'open data movements' to controversies surrounding security and surveillance practices as well as divisive questions about privacy and data protection as social and legal principles. This article will unpack digital data from a security perspective within the context of the Safe Harbor Framework, a governance arrangement designed to facilitate digital data flows between the United States and the European Union. The driving focus of this article is best defined through several interrelated questions, namely: What is digital data? How is it possible for digital data to be constructed in overlapping and contested ways? And what does the development and deterioration of the Safe Harbor Framework reveal about the nature of digital data in the contemporary world? This article proposes that digital data is 'alive' and has many 'lives'- simultaneously constructed as a 'mundane' feature of everyday life, as a component of 'security-enhancing' strategies, and as a 'security threat'.

Keywords: Big Data, Data Protection, Open Data, Privacy, Security, Surveillance, Transatlantic

Introduction

Digital data represents the sum of information generated through actions and interactions on the Internet- encompassing everything from emailing and instant messaging to video streaming, online banking, and social networking (Gralla, 2007, p.13). The information generated through these increasingly diverse online activities is converted and stored as digital data using a numerical system of binary code, commonly represented by assorted sequences of 0's and 1's (Lupton, 2015, p.8). The upsurge of global Internet connectivity and the rapid development of Internet-accessible technologies and devices have enabled individuals and communities around the world to be constantly connected to the Internet (Lupton, 2015, p.9). Collectively, these phenomena have resulted in the 'datafication' of contemporary life in the twenty-first century- as digital data is continuously collected, stored, and analyzed around world to produce insights about a wide range of social behaviors (Cukier and the Mayer- Schonberger, 2013, p.78).

In tandem with these ongoing transformations, digital data has become entangled in a variety of intersecting discourses and debates- ranging from narratives about 'big data revolutions' and 'open data movements' to controversies surrounding security and surveillance practices as well as divisive questions about privacy and data protection as social and legal principles. These tensions are nowhere more prominent than within the context of the United States (US) and the European Union (EU). Since the late-twentieth century, the collection, storage, and analysis of digital data have generated notable transatlantic tensions, resulting in a complex legal and regulatory arena (Andrews *et al.*, 2005, p.128). For over 15 years, the US - EU Safe Harbor Framework was unchallenged as the 'gold standard' of data transfer agreements- facilitating digital data flows between the United States and the European Union (Connolly, 2008, p.5). This governance arrangement suddenly deteriorated in October 2015, when the Court of Justice

of the European Union (CJEU) invalidated the Safe Harbor Framework, citing concerns that the United States was no longer upholding adequate standards for such an arrangement (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2015). The consequences of this landmark decision placed the future of transatlantic data flows in jeopardy- exposing crucial tensions surrounding digital data in the twenty-first century.

The focus of this article is best defined through several interrelated questions, namely: What is digital data? How is it possible for digital data to be constructed in overlapping and contested ways? And what does the development and deterioration of the US - EU Safe Harbor Framework reveal about the nature of digital data in the contemporary world? In order to explore these questions, this article will unpack digital data from a security perspective. Looking at digital data through a security lens offers a unique entry point into thinking critically about the multiple roles of digital data in modern life. This research does not seek to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' practices surrounding digital data (Kitchin, 2014b, p.165). Rather, this article will explore the many ways in which digital data are actively shaping and being shaped by our world. Going further, this article proposes that digital data is 'alive' and has many 'lives' simultaneously existing as a 'mundane' feature of everyday life, as a component of 'security- enhancing' strategies, and as a 'security threat'.

Defining Digital Data

It is important to develop conceptual clarity about digital data and consider the primary contexts against which it is understood. In general, the ways that digital data are spoken about have become increasingly complex in recent years, involving many terminologies- each with meaningful social, political, and legal consequences (Aradau, 2010, p.494). Actors that generate digital data are broadly known as 'data subjects' while actors that engage in the collection, analysis, and storage of digital data are known as 'data controllers' (Bygrave, 2014, p.18). The rights and obligations conferred onto data subjects and data controllers largely depend on the definition of digital data. The focus of most contemporary discussions concerns 'personal data', signaling that information may be connected to an identifiable individual possessing specific rights (Kuner, 2013b, p.17). In recent years, however, there have been considerable efforts to distinguish 'personal data' from 'non-personal data' (Rubinstein, 2013, p.74). Non-personal data, often referred to as 'metadata', implies that data has been disaggregated or anonymized so that it can no longer be connected to any one individual, thereby unfastening the rights and obligations associated with personal data (Aradau, 2010, p.493). There are reasons to question these arbitrary distinctions. Among others, Kuner concedes that digital data categorized as 'non- personal' or 'anonymized' can almost always be linked to an individual (Kuner, 2013b, p.18).

In addition to questions about the distinction between 'personal' and 'non-personal' data, there have also been notable efforts to differentiate between 'national' and 'international' data flows- further impacting the respective rights and obligations of data subjects and data controllers. This distinction suggests that digital data may be collected, stored, and analyzed entirely within territorial state borders or that it can flow freely across borders. Such terminologies, however, are largely misleading- failing to recognize how digital data moves and circulates in fluid ways (Dalton *et al.*, 2016, p.6). Some argue that Bigo's analogy of the Mobius strip adequately conveys the blurring of boundaries between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of contemporary data flows (Bauman *et al.*, 2014, p.125). From a more technical perspective, De Hert and others remind us that the Internet is not designed to transmit data on the basis of geographical borders (De Hert *et*

al., 2016, p.26). On this basis, "it may no longer be feasible to differentiate between transborder data flows and those that do not cross national borders" (Kuner, 2013b, p.6).

For the purposes of this article, references to digital data encompass both personal data and non-personal data, recognizing the increasingly blurred distinctions between these terms. This article also contends that digital data flows epitomize a comprehensively transborder phenomenon, thereby resisting efforts to distinguish between national and international data flows. This conceptual orientation is by no means unproblematic. However, such an approach seeks to address the implications of these vocabularies while equally moving beyond them. Building on these foundations, it becomes possible to engage more closely with the overlapping and contested roles of digital data in the contemporary world. The sections below will explore prevailing discourses and debates surrounding digital data within the context of the US and the EU, namely: big data and open data, security and surveillance as well as privacy and data protection in order to lay down the conceptual foundations of this article.

Big Data and Open Data

Recent mentions of 'big data' in discourse and practice seek to differentiate historical uses of digital data from more contemporary developments related to the generation, collection, storage, and analysis of data in the twenty-first century (Cukier and Mayer-Schonberger, 2013, p.6). Definitions of big data commonly include references to the '3 V's': volume, variety, and velocity (Andrejevic, 2014, p.1676). This definition evokes the unprecedented diversity, access, and speed of contemporary data practices while simplifying their technical complexity. The advent of big data technologies is also widely referred to in terms of a 'revolution' (Cukier and Mayer-Schonberger, 2013, p.6). As society generates increasing amounts of digital data, the commercial opportunities to analyze and monetize this information have amplified (Aiden and Michel, 2013, p.11). The rise of data mining, data analytics, and the expansion of data storage facilities worldwide have allowed private sector businesses to accumulate unprecedented quantities of digital data (Walker, 2015, p.7). Big data 'pioneers' like Google, Amazon, and Facebook have benefitted from the ability to convert this digital data information into new forms of economic value (Cukier and Mayer-Schonberger, 2013, p.116). "Data has been figured as a 'gold mine' and as the new oil of the Internet and the new currency of the digital world" (Gitelman, 2013, p.123). Unlike other commodities, however, "data's value does not diminish when it is used; it can be processed again and again" (Cukier and Mayer-Schonberger, 2013, p.101). From this position, "the more data gathered and analyzed, the better" (Lupton, 2015, p.94).

In tandem with these developments, there has been a notable upsurge of data intermediaries and data brokers- creating an entire economy around the collection, sale, and resale of digital data (Kitchin, 2014b, p.42). Examples of these actors include search engines, financial and transactional intermediaries as well as advertising intermediaries (DeNardis, 2014, p.155). Many public and private sector industries employ third-party data intermediaries and data brokers to expedite the process of monetizing digital data generated online (DeNardis, 2014, p.155). Drawing on the prospects of data use and reuse, these activities generally involve consolidating, repackaging, and reselling digital data (Custers and Ursic, 2016, p.8). This has created a "multibillion dollar industry, with vast quantities of data…being rented, bought, and sold daily across a variety of markets- retail, financial, health, tourism, logistics, business intelligence, real estate, private security, political polling, and so on" (Kitchin, 2014b, p.42).

Another offshoot of the alleged 'big data revolution' relates to 'open data' (Kitchin, 2014b, p.xv). In recent years, the government 'appetite' for digital data has intensified (Cate *et al.*,

2012a, p.195). Governments have embraced commercial big data practices under the guise of 'open data initiatives' (Jaatinen, 2016, p.28). The argument for open data follows that increasing government access to digital data as well as the publication of this data on official government websites will improve transparency, decision-making capabilities, innovation opportunities, and public participation (Kitchin, 2014b, pp.55-56). "This idea has led to countless open government data initiatives around the globe"- legitimizing systematic government data collection (Cukier and Mayer-Schonberger, 2013, p.116). As Kuner observes: "The purposes for such data access are highly varied"- including everything from administering taxes and operating national parks to supporting law enforcement and social welfare programs (Kuner, 2013b, p.56). The United States and the European Union are both heavily saturated with private sector businesses and public government initiatives seeking to benefit from big data and open data strategies (Svantesson, 2013, p.285). These emerging practices have heightened the importance of regulatory harmonization between the US and the EU (Weber, 2013, p.130). Specifically, the growing economic value of data collection, storage, and analysis as well as the potentially invasive nature of these activities has put increasing pressure on governments and businesses to develop comprehensive guidelines governing digital data (Cate *et al.*, 2013b, p.65). These tensions, which are interrelated with the development of privacy and data protection as social and legal principles, have become increasingly problematic, not least in the US - EU context (Kuner, 2015a, p.2098).

Security and Surveillance

Beyond narratives about big data and open data, many governments around the world have also embraced digital data for security purposes. Against the background of the 'global war on terror', contemporary governance increasingly entails risk calculation and the use of security practices such as surveillance in order to anticipate security threats (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007, p.91). De Goede characterizes these developments as 'preemptive security governance'- a collection of security practices justified on the basis of risk management (De Goede, 2008, p.164). The convergence between governance, security, and risk has only been magnified by the rise of the Internet and digital technologies (Deibert and Rohozinski, 2010, p.16). In addition to widespread video surveillance, the underlying strategies of preemption have bolstered mass surveillance through the collection of digital data, sometimes referred to as 'dataveillance' (Lyon, 2014, p.4). These practices rely on complex algorithms and software used to process digital data and calculate security risk (Amoore, 2011, p.27). Lyon argues that data-driven surveillance encourages social sorting and predictive profiling, which reverse conventional security practices by placing greater emphasis on prediction and prevention (Lyon, 2014, p.4). Others like Andrejevic and Gates reaffirm that government aspirations for 'total information awareness' necessarily depict every individual as a suspect (Andrejevic and Gates, 2014, p.187). Increasingly, digital data from numerous sources are "abstracted from embodied persons and manipulated to create profiles and risk categories in a networked, rhizomic system" (Lyon, 2002, p.242).

Private sector businesses have taken on a prominent albeit controversial role in contemporary security and surveillance practices. (Ball *et al.*, 2015, p.13). Internet giants like Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft have become increasingly embedded in an emerging 'political economy' of security and surveillance, facilitating government access to digital data (Ball *et al.*, 2015, p.17). Public disclosures made by former US government contractor, Edward Snowden, in May 2013 exposed facets of this complex web of practices- revealing how US government agencies, in tandem with private sector businesses and other government agencies around the world, conduct mass surveillance (Bauman *et al.*, 2014, p.122). The emphasis of the Snowden revelations was placed on surveillance programs operated by the US National Security Agency (NSA), including an

integrated online data collection program known as PRISM (Bigo *et al.*, 2013, p.7). The PRISM program was of particular interest given the scope of private sector cooperation with government authorities (Bauman *et al.*, 2014, p.123). These disclosures shed light on complex surveillance networks, blurring the lines between public and private while equally exposing intricate security relationships between different governments around the world (Cate *et al.*, 2013a, p.217).

Within the context of the 'global war on terror', both the United States and the European Union have contributed towards the rise of preemptive security governance and the increasing use of digital data for security and surveillance practices, albeit to varying degrees (Aldrich, 2004, p.731). Notably, the United States has a strong historical legacy of surveillance (Cate, 2008, p.435). The US government adopted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in 1978, authorizing surveillance of foreign subjects without a court order for national security purposes (Bender, 2016, p.120). In the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks, US Congress enacted the 2001 Patriot Act as an amendment to FISA, enhancing provisions for mass surveillance of both foreign and domestic subjects (Weber, 2013, p.118). In response to growing public concerns about the Snowden revelations, the US government implemented the 2015 Freedom Act to amend FISA and replace the Patriot Act; however, these efforts remain under close national and international scrutiny (Epstein, 2016, p.330).

Since the early 2000s, the European Union has also embraced preemptive security governance, becoming a prominent actor in counterterrorism (Argomaniz *et al.*, 2015, p.196). Security frameworks have gradually embraced mass surveillance and intelligence gathering as central strategies for preventing terrorism- with contributions from EU agencies like Europol and Frontex (Argomaniz *et al.*, 2015, p.200). Den Boer reaffirms: "Intelligence as a process and product has been strongly promoted by the EU as a useful and necessary tool in the fight against terrorism, radicalization, organized crime, and public order problems" (Den Boer, 2015, p.402). Across the EU, these issues have faced controversy. One important example includes the 2006 Data Retention Directive (DRD), which mandated the continued storage of digital data by telecommunications providers across the EU for security purposes (European Parliament, 2006). The Court of Justice of the European Union invalidated the DRD in 2014 on the basis that the scope of data retention disproportionally violated fundamental rights of privacy and data protection (Fabbrini, 2015, p.65). In spite of ongoing controversy, however, EU member states and institutions continue to conduct widespread surveillance for national and regional security purposes (Bigo *et al.*, 2013, p.5).

Adding to these debates, it is important to acknowledge the scope of transatlantic security cooperation and data sharing (Aldrich, 2004, p.731). Following the September 11 terror attacks, the US government called for greater international data sharing to enhance counterterrorism efforts (Kaunert and Léonard, 2013, p.143). While the US government has remained the principal target of public criticism since the Snowden revelations, these issues "cannot be limited to the United States versus the rest of the world" (Bauman *et al.*, 2014, p.121). Indeed, the Snowden revelations also exposed intricate surveillance networks between the US and EU member states like the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Sweden (Bauman *et al.*, 2014, p.122). Equally important is the growing role of private sector businesses in transatlantic security and surveillance practices, revealing how "networks of these different services are not only transnational but also hybrids between public and private actors" (Bauman *et al.*, 2014, p.123).

Privacy and Data Protection

A final body of discourses and debates surrounding digital data relates to the development of privacy and data protection as social and legal principles (Kitchin, 2014b, p.168). Privacy

is commonly defined as 'being let alone' or 'being free from intrusion', sometimes framed using a discourse of fundamental rights (Langford, 2000, p.65). In the twenty- first century, privacy may be understood as the extension of these values to digital technologies and the Internet (Langford, 2000, p.66). Data protection may be understood as a collection of principles specifically crafted to protect privacy rights in the digital age (Langford, 2000, p.65). There is considerable controversy as to the precise meaning of these concepts (Moulds, 2014, p.16). Some suggest that privacy and data protection are interchangeable terms (Kuner, 2013b, p.20). Others contend that privacy represents American values whereas data protection represents European values (Langford, 2000, pp.65-66). This article will refer to privacy and data protection as a collective phrase, so as to include both sets of vocabularies. It is important to reaffirm, however, that the use of these terms is ongoing and contentious (Bygrave, 2014, p.26).

Above all, privacy and data protection frameworks are created in order to safeguard the "interests and rights of individuals in their role as data subjects- that is, when data about them is processed by others" (Bygrave, 2014, p.1). There is a widespread presumption that privacy and data protection confer positive values onto society and that these values are threatened by the nature of the Internet and digital technologies (Langford, 2000, p.89). However, there is also widespread acceptance of the need to 'balance' these social and legal values with national security interests (Etzioni, 2015, p.104). Given that many governments and businesses around the world address these questions in different ways, there are specific concerns about the need for global harmonization of privacy and data protection as social and legal principles (Bygrave, 2014, p.123). Forums like the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have sought to engage with these issues in recent decades; however, there remains no 'universal' approach to privacy and data protection in the twenty-first century (Bygrave, 2014, p.19).

In considering the changing realities of big data and open data as well as security and surveillance practices, it is clear that "none of these concerns fit comfortably within the standard 'privacy-oriented' framing of issues" (Andrejevic, 2014, p.1675). Even so, privacy and data protection frameworks remain the prevailing approach of governments around the world in dealing with questions about the collection, storage, and analysis of digital data. Both the United States and the European Union have historically sought to 'balance' privacy and data protection with security and surveillance while also maximizing the economic value and business incentives of digital data (Cate, 2008, p.482). Despite common objectives, however, major divergences between the United States and the European Union persist (Andrews *et al.*, 2005, p.128).

Towards an Analytical Framework

Against this contextual background of digital data, this article will move to consider relevant theoretical contributions across the discipline of International Relations (IR) and beyond. Scholarship from critical data studies and critical security studies will be evaluated in tandem with actor-network theory (ANT) to craft a broad analytical framework. This article does not aspire to present a cohesive theory or methodology but will rather draw upon the notion of 'bricolage'- embracing a multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach in order to more fully grasp the contemporary realities of digital data (Aradau *et al.*, 2015, p.7).

Critical Data Studies

Emerging scholarship associated with critical data studies offers nuanced interpretations of the technical and social transformations related to digital data, largely drawing from the disciplines of science and technology studies, geography, and sociology (Kitchin, 2014a, p.7). Without diminishing the diversity of this scholarship, critical data studies may be said to reflect general skepticisms of the 'big data revolution'. As Lupton notes: "A breathless rhetoric has emerged around the concept of big data" (2015, p.94). "Much of the enthusiasm surrounding big data stems from the perception that it offers easy access to massive amounts of data," creating unprecedented business opportunities to monetize this information (Boyd and Crawford, 2012, p.673). Critical data studies scholars such as Strauss seek to 'demystify' these commercial narratives, unpacking the 'seductive power' of big data (Strauss, 2015, p.836). Others like Kitchin are also skeptical of government efforts to adopt big data strategies under the guise of 'open data initiatives', which largely conceals the potentially invasive nature of these activities (Kitchin, 2014b, p.126). Couldry and Powell reaffirm the importance of these critiques, noting: "However misleading or mythical some narratives around big data, the actual processes of data-gathering, data-processing, and organizational adjustment associated with such narratives are not mythical; they constitute an important, if highly contested 'fact', with which all social actors must deal" (Couldry and Powell, 2014, p.1). Kitchin similarly contends that understanding the scope of ongoing transformations related to digital data requires deep knowledge of their technical, temporal-spatial, political, social, and economic implications (Kitchin, 2014b, p.12).

In a broad sense, critical data studies scholarship explores questions of digital data from the 'bottom up' (Couldry and Powell, 2014, p.1). This approach indicates that critical analysis should begin with data itself rather than generic accounts of a 'big data revolution'. In doing so, critical data studies challenges the idea that digital data exist as benign or neutral foundations of modern life, upon which businesses or governments may build (Lupton and Michael, 2015, p.4). Indeed, critical data studies treats digital data "not as static pieces of information, but as participating in a dynamic economy in which they move and circulate" (Lupton, 2015, p.107). In line with these efforts, Lupton observes the tendency across critical data studies to refer to digital data "as living things- as having a kind of organic vitality in their ability to move from site to site, morph into different forms, and possess a 'social life'" (Lupton, 2015, p.108). Relevant contributions include the 'data journeys' framework, which traces the 'life' and movement of digital data across time and space (Bates *et al.*, 2016, p.2). Similar efforts across critical data studies have equally brought attention to "the tendency to overlook the social and cultural lives of data" (Baker *et al.*, 2016, p.2).

Critical data studies also seeks to unpack the complex relationships between humans and digital data- recognizing the agency, reflexivity, and socio-materiality of digital data, in and of itself (Kennedy *et al.*, 2015, p.6). Traditional accounts of digital data tend to obscure its agency, often portrayed as a 'byproduct' of technological advances in the digital age (Lupton, 2015, p.101). Critical data studies moves beyond this one-dimensional view, acknowledging that digital data is a product of human actions and interactions but may equally shape human actions and interactions (Lupton, 2015, p.8). This approach reaffirms the reflexive and circular relationships between humans and digital data, appreciating "how relations between data are also simultaneously relations between people" (Baker *et al.*, 2015, p.131). Building on these understandings of agency and reflexivity, critical data studies also acknowledges the socio- materiality of digital data. On the one hand, the socio-materiality of digital data has a 'physical' manifestation- in computer files, databases, and data storage centers (Bates *et al.*, 2016, p.3). On the other hand, the socio-materiality of digital data has a 'social' manifestation- structuring "our concepts of identity, embodiment, relationship, our choices and preferences, and even our access to services or spaces" (Lupton, 2015, p.26).

While critical data studies offers important contributions upon which this article hopes to build, there are limitations of this scholarship that should be considered. Above all, it is important to reaffirm that critical data studies does not exist in a separate theoretical universe, removed from ongoing developments, but rather "the meaning of critical data studies is as political as the data it engages" (Dalton *et al.*, 2016, p.1). Critical data studies also maintains a relatively narrow focus on conceptual and theoretical development, exposing gaps in its empirical contributions (Bates *et al.*, 2016, p.2). Adding to these observations, critical data studies remains largely disconnected from many of the security debates that surround digital data, offering limited engagement with questions about the roles of digital data in security practices such as surveillance. In some ways, it may be argued that critical data studies directs significant attention to digital data in everyday life- critiquing private business and public government practices- without considering how these activities also intersect with security practices.

Critical Security Studies

In considering the limitations of critical data studies, critical security studies opens up a unique space to explore the security dimensions of digital data. Within the discipline of International Relations, critical security studies has made meaningful contributions towards the 'broadening' and 'deepening' of security, operating from a consensus that security threats are socially constructed and do not exist a priori (Krause and Williams, 1996, p.230). The critical security studies project encompasses many different 'schools' of thought and the full extent of these academic debates exceeds the scope of this article (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p.9). In recognition of the analytical depth that characterizes critical security studies, it is possible to identify several strands of scholarship that have engaged with questions of digital data, specifically those related to 'surveillance studies' and 'securitization'. Surveillance studies offers meaningful insight into the growing connections between governance, security, and surveillance practices (Balzacq, 2015, p.15). Much of this vast body of literature explores the power relations created by surveillance and relevant ideas surrounding 'governmentality' and the 'panopticon' (Kremer and Müller, 2014, p.8). For the purposes of this article, however, scholarship related to securitization will serve as a primary focus given that it offers more wide- ranging and nuanced approaches to understanding the social construction of (in)security.

Securitization is a broad conceptual framework that has been explored by various schools of critical security studies- with the Copenhagen School representing a foundational approach (McDonald, 2008, p.563). The Copenhagen School embraces the power of language and social interactions, asking who can 'do' or 'speak' security (Buzan *et al.*, 1998, p.27). This approach focuses on the discursive constitution of security threats, where referent objects are 'securitized' and shifted from the 'everyday' to the 'exceptional' realm of politics (Buzan *et al.*, 1998, p.25). Put another way, securitization may be understood as an intersubjective process where securitizing actors attempt to convince an audience that some object or phenomena poses an existential security threat, warranting a similarly extreme political response (Helgesson and Mörth, 2012, p.4). To 'securitize' is to depict something as 'dangerous', constitutive of an 'existential threat' (Ball *et al.*, 2015, p.20). Above all, the securitization framework recognizes that 'security' and 'insecurity' are socially constructed; therefore the characterization and management of security problems cannot be taken for granted (Balzacq *et al.*, 2014, p.3). In line with the objectives of this article, securitization facilitates critical analysis about the ways in which digital data may be constructed and reconstructed.

While attention to 'speaking' security has produced meaningful scholarship across critical security studies, significant limitations persist (McDonald, 2008, p.563). Among the criticisms, it is suggested that the Copenhagen School creates binaries between the 'everyday' and the 'exceptional' while also privileging the importance of discourse over materiality (Aradau *et al.*, 2015, p.58). Many of these limitations are evident in the application of securitization to a 'digital' context. As Hansen and Nissenbaum demonstrate, the Copenhagen School approach is not easily applied to the Internet and related digital technologies on the basis of blurred distinctions between 'security' and 'insecurity' as well as the obfuscation of 'speech acts' and 'audiences' in the digital domain (Hansen and Nissenbaum, 2009, p.1157). While Copenhagen School analyses of digital data remain underdeveloped, challenges such as those posed by the Internet and digital technologies are likely to correspond with questions of digital data. On this basis, then, it becomes necessary to consider alternative theorizations of securitization, which build upon and move beyond the Copenhagen School approach.

In response to these shortcomings, productive debates led by scholars such as Balzacq have advanced strands of 'sociological securitization' (Balzacq, 2010, p.1). Moving away from the Copenhagen School tradition, Balzacq recognizes that securitization can be "discursive and non-discursive; intentional and non-intentional" (Balzacq, 2010, p.2). "Security problems can be designed or they can emerge out of different practices, whose initial aim (if they ever had) was not in fact to create a security problem" (Balzacq, 2010, p.2). As Balzacq explains: "Some manifestations of securitization might best be understood by focusing on the nature and functions of policy tools used by agents to cope with public problems, defined as threats" (Balzacq, 2010, p.15). From this perspective, it becomes possible to unpack security threat construction through the critical examination of governance frameworks and policy tools- overcoming the limitations of an exclusively 'discursive' lens (Balzacq, 2008, p.75).

Efforts to carve out space for sociological variants of securitization may also be compatible with calls for the 'materialization' of securitization- or what Aradau describes as attention to "non-human objects in the production of (in)security" (Aradau, 2010, p.509). This approach reinforces the links between material objects, security, and the functioning of everyday life (Aradau, 2010, p.491). In line with these efforts, Salter investigates the role of 'things', considering how the interplay between humans and non-humans compels us to think more critically about security (Salter, 2015, p.vii). While materialism is not new to critical security studies, these contemporary enquiries have brought renewed attention to the relationships between 'discourse' and 'materiality' and between 'humans' and 'non-humans', rather than favoring one over the other (Aradau *et al.*, 2015, p.58). Notable contributions to these efforts include the work of De Goede and Sullivan, who analyze the agency and 'liveliness' of security lists as a critical lens for understanding contemporary security practices and power relations (De Goede and Sullivan, 2015, p.6). Within the context of this article, engagement with materiality and non-human objects in the constitution of (in)security may equally shed light on the 'life' and 'lives' of digital data.

Building on these contributions, Huysmans offers a similarly unconventional approach to 'associative securitization', which highlights the links between securitizing practices through discursive, institutional, and technological forces (Huysmans, 2014, p.83). "This associating will mostly look unspectacular, unexceptional, continuous, and repetitive; instead of speech acts, we get the securitizing 'work' of a multiplicity of little security nothings" (Huysmans, 2011, p.376). Huysmans explores how securitizing processes are 'folded' into everyday life (Huysmans, 2011, p.377). Of particular interest is the diffusion of surveillance in everyday life- referred to as 'extitutional surveillance' (Huysmans, 2016, p.73). Huysmans contends that "the exceptionality of certain surveillance practices…are so thoroughly enveloped in the everyday that it is difficult to maintain

the boundary between the two" (Huysmans, 2016, p.79). From this position, security practices can only be understood in their multiplicity (Huysmans, 2016, p.79). These insights help to illuminate the social construction of (in)security as well as the overlapping and contested roles of digital data, which similarly transcend conventional distinctions between the 'everyday' and the 'exceptional'.

Actor-Network Theory

In an attempt to bring together and build upon scholarship from critical data studies and critical security studies, actor-network theory is engaged here as a critical set of tools. Following the contributions of Latour, a leading actor-network theorist, ANT embraces the complex relationships that exist between humans and non-humans (Hassard and Law, 1999, p.4). ANT challenges conventional understandings about non-human objects, resisting the tendency to "take the existence of such objects for granted, as a stable base on which the superstructure of international politics is subsequently erected" (Barry, 2013, p.421). Latour reaffirms: "It is a theory, and a strong one, but about how to study things, or rather how not to study them" (Latour, 2005, p.142). Above all, ANT is driven by the mutually constitutive and fluid relationships that exist between human and non-human actors, which are envisioned as 'networks' (Nexon and Pouliot, 2013, p.343). Latour clarifies this point, noting: "It is in this complete reversibility- an actor is nothing but a network, except that a network is nothing but actors" (Latour, 2011, p.800).

Another important contribution of ANT relates to 'assemblage thinking' and the ability to map heterogeneous relations and associations (Müller, 2015, p.28). Müller explores the links between actor-network theory and assemblage thinking, observing that: "Both are concerned with why orders emerge in particular ways, how they hold together, somewhat precariously, how they reach across or mold space, and how they fall apart" (Müller, 2015, p.27). From a corresponding position, Law and Singleton argue that ANT is well equipped to deal with multiplicity and heterogeneity (Law and Singleton, 2014, p.379). "The crucial point is since there are lots of practices there are also multiple realities. Practices are sitting alongside one another in different places and practices, and what becomes really important is how the different…realities get related together in practice" (Law and Singleton, 2014, p.386). Ultimately, actor-network theory and assemblage thinking demonstrate a strong capacity to make sense of multiple human and nonhuman actors as well as multiple discourses and practices.

For the purposes of this article, bringing ANT into a 'digital' context has meaningful implications that should be considered. Latour acknowledges the opportunities and challenges related to this transition, noting the capacity of ANT to move beyond conventional distinctions between the 'digital' world and the 'real' world, thus allowing for more fluid conceptualizations of contemporary socio-material relations (Latour, 2011, p.809). Lupton elaborates on this potential, observing that: "In emphasizing the role of agency and non-human actors in shaping human actors…exponents contend that humans are always imbricated within networks comprised of human and non-human actors and cannot be isolated from these networks" (Lupton, 2015, p.23). While theoretical engagement with ANT in the context of digital data remains limited, scholars such as Michael reiterate the broader importance of understanding "how the 'digital' is part of the 'social' and vice versa" (Michael, 2017, p.149).

In determining the relevance of ANT to this analytical framework, there are limitationsthat must also be addressed. Müller reminds us that actor-network theory and assemblage thinking have found a 'cautious reception' within the discipline of International Relations (Müller, 2015, p.27). As Barry contends: "Actor-network theory thrives on details and fragments of evidence, which are never likely to add up to a complete picture but will nonetheless reveal something that

was perhaps unexpected or unanticipated" (Barry, 2013, p.418). Nexon and Pouliot similarly argue that the emphasis on 'uncertainty' and 'fluidity' within ANT literature may inhibit empirical investigations (Nexon and Pouliot, 2013, p.344). From this position, ANT "cannot be simply applied as a theory," but rather demands a complete reconfiguration of research questions and methodologies (Barry, 2013, p.414). In spite of these potential obstacles, ANT may be used to reimagine traditional tensions and debates across International Relations (Nexon and Pouliot, 2013, p.345). Here, it is useful to return to Latour's claim that ANT is a theory "about how to study things, or rather, how not to study them" (Latour, 2005, p.142).

'Bricolage' in Context

This article brings together an eclectic combination of scholarship, operating from the position that each body of literature has something to offer the other. The objectives of this article ultimately reinforce multi-disciplinary and multi-method engagement (Aradau *et al.*, 2015, p.7). Such an approach moves away from 'rigid' epistemological and methodological choices within the discipline of IR- echoing a growing acceptance of 'bricolage' and the benefits of "experimenting with combining theories, concepts, [and] methods" (Aradau *et al.*, 2015, p.8). In considering the task of constructing an analytical framework, critical data studies and critical security studies provide important starting points for this investigation. Actor- network theory and assemblage thinking become vehicles to engage with the concepts that exceed the scope of both critical data studies and critical security studies. Following the example of 'bricolage', it is useful to briefly summarize how these diverse strands of scholarship come together and build upon one another.

Critical data studies seeks to unpack the narratives and practices surrounding the 'big data revolution', producing a variety of conceptual and theoretical frameworks that reassert the power of digital data, in and of itself. Above all, critical data studies reiterates the importance of analyzing the agency, mobility, socio-materiality, and 'liveliness' of digital data in the contemporary world. In spite of these contributions, however, critical data studies remains broadly disconnected from ongoing security debates. In some ways, it may be argued that critical data studies directs attention to digital data in ordinary business and government practices without considering the overlapping and contested roles of digital data in extraordinary security practices. Critical data studies would be strengthened by empirical development and greater attention to the ways in which digital data can occupy the space between the 'everyday' and the 'exceptional'.

Critical security studies and the securitization framework provide meaningful insights into the social construction of security and insecurity, addressing some of the aforementioned 'gaps' in critical data studies. This article will primarily draw upon the contributions of Balzacq's 'sociological securitization' and Huysmans' 'associative securitization', which highlight the web of agents, practices, and policies surrounding the construction of (in)security as well as the interlinking roles of human and non-human actors. Balzacq and Huysmans collectively reaffirm that securitization embodies a set of ongoing and performative processes that may take diverse forms. This is particularly useful in considering how digital data may be framed as a 'security threat' while simultaneously being framed as part of a 'security-enhancing' strategy through practices such as surveillance. Huysmans also reaffirms the importance of understanding how 'mundane' objects and practices become embedded within these processes. For the purposes of this article, then, securitization enables us to conceptualize how referent objects move between the 'everyday' and the 'exceptional'. Going beyond this, however, sociological strands of securitization begin to shed light on how these distinctions are messy, blurred, and overlapping.

ANT and assemblage thinking provide important conceptual channels across critical data studies and critical security studies. On the one hand, ANT echoes critical data studies, treating digital data as a socio-material object with agency and reflexivity. Assemblage thinking likewise embraces the complex ways that humans and non-human actors interact (Lupton, 2015, p.24). On the other hand, ANT and assemblage thinking bolster critical security studies and securitization. ANT reinforces renewed attention to materiality and the roles of human and nonhuman actors in the constitution of (in)security. In recent years, critical security studies has gradually opened up to ANT and assemblage thinking. Notable efforts include those of Balzacq and Dunn-Cavelty, who explore ANT in tandem with securitization in order to analyze cybersecurity threats (Balzacq and Dunn-Cavelty, 2012, p.197). Huysmans, too, proposes that the 'assemblage' offers a useful conceptual tool for analyzing the diffusion of (in)security (Huysmans, 2014, p.108). ANT and assemblage thinking strengthen the conceptualization of these processes in their fluidity and their reflexivity.

For the purposes of this article, digital data is positioned as a non-human actor with agency, mobility, and socio-materiality- actively shaping and being shaped by human actions and interactions. The narratives and practices surrounding digital data are fluid, heterogeneous, and intersubjective. From this position, there are multiple human and nonhuman actors that come into play- bringing together a complex assemblage of consumers, private businesses, government agencies, regulatory bodies, data intermediaries, data storage centers, and digital data itself. This investigation builds from an understanding that different actors can use and reuse digital data in different ways or in the same ways more than once. Not only can digital data be generated and collected but digital data can also be shared, repurposed, recontextualized, aggregated, or disaggregated. Returning to the driving research questions of this article, it is argued that digital data may be simultaneously constructed as a 'mundane' feature of everyday life, as a component of 'security-enhancing' strategies, and as a 'security threat'. This article also recognizes that digital data may wield socio-material power over human actors, taking on a 'liveliness' of its own.

Building on this analytical orientation, the US - EU Safe Harbor Framework will be evaluated as an empirical case study to demonstrate how digital data may be constructed in overlapping and contested ways. Rather than exploring the Safe Harbor Framework as a singular or static phenomenon, this article appreciates the ongoing changes and processes that characterize its development and deterioration. This approach reinforces the claims that securitization can occur through "the functions and implications of policy tools used to meet a public problem" (Balzacq, 2008, p.75). This analytical framework also embraces the importance of evaluating social and political processes "that may not be visibly associated with securitization but that may supply important parts of the jigsaw puzzle" (Helgesson and Mörth, 2012, p.6).

Case Study: The US - EU Safe Harbor Framework

The United States and the European Union manage the collection, storage, and analysis of digital data in distinctive ways (Langford, 2000, p.87). While the US is commonly critiqued for its failure to present a cohesive framework to govern digital data, the EU has, on the contrary, faced criticism for its 'overreach' (Svantesson, 2013, p.286). Historically, the US has favored a decentralized approach, relying on voluntary mechanisms and guidelines developed by the private sector for collecting, storing, and analyzing digital data (Shimanek, 2001, p.472). Notably, "there is no general framework covering every sector, creating general rights [and] obligations" (Andrews *et al.*, 2005, p.116). In contrast, the EU has crafted a comprehensive legal and regulatory agenda around digital data (Shimanek, 2001, p.472). The foundation of the European approach is

the 1995 Data Protection Directive (DPD) (European Parliament, 2006). The DPD upholds data protection as a fundamental right extended to all citizens of the EU- establishing Data Protection Authorities as supervisory bodies in every member state and determining appropriate conditions for collecting and storing digital data generated in the EU (European Parliament, 1995). Drawing from a legal tradition that views data protection as a fundamental right, the DPD is reinforced by provisions in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2014, p.14). The CJEU has also demonstrated considerable engagement with questions of privacy and data protection in recent years. There is an extensive body of relevant case law, much of which exceeds the scope of this article (Laudati, 2015, p.1). However, it is important to acknowledge several landmark cases overseen by the CJEU, including *Digital Rights Ireland* and *Google Spain*- both of which strengthened the European position on data protection as a fundamental right (Ni Loidean, 2016, p.11).

With regards to processing and transferring digital data outside the EU, the European approach is primarily based on 'adequacy principles' (Kuner, 2013b, p.76). Under the DPD, "transborder data flows are not allowed unless the recipient country provides an adequate level of protection as determined by the European Commission" (Weber, 2013, p.120). "In essence, the adequacy requirement is a mechanism to ensure that there are no loopholes found in the high level of protection of personal data provided by the [DPD]" (De Hert *et al.*, 2016, p.27). Over time, EU adequacy principles have gained global significance, shaping the development of privacy and data protection frameworks around the world to satisfy European preferences (Kuner, 2013b, p.106). There is an increasing assumption that EU data protection frameworks have an 'extraterritorial scope', thereby extending protections for EU citizens to all locations where digital data is transferred (Kuner, 2015b, p.243). These arguments surrounding European regulatory overreach and extraterritoriality remain controversial, not least in the transatlantic context (Kong, 2010, p.441).

The Safe Harbor Framework was created by US and EU policymakers in July 2000 to 'bridge' the transatlantic divide in privacy and data protection- providing for "the systemic and free flow of data from the EU without any conflicts arising under the Data Protection Directive" (De Hert *et al.*, 2016, p.27). Given that the US did not meet the requirements of the DPD, the notion of a 'safe harbor' suggested it was possible to craft adequacy protections through a set of established guidelines, jointly enforced by US and EU authorities (Kuner, 2013b, p.125). These guidelines would be known as the 'Safe Harbor principles', including: notice, choice, consent, onward transfer, data integrity, access, and enforcement (European Commission, 2000). Under the Safe Harbor Framework, US businesses could voluntarily register for Safe Harbor certification, thereby accepting a legal obligation to uphold the Safe Harbor principles in exchange for adequacy status in the EU (Shimanek, 2001, p.473).

From its inception, the Safe Harbor Framework was not viewed "as an overwhelming success on either side of the Atlantic" (Kobrin, 2004, p.121). Many contended that the very logic of 'safe harbors' was flawed, combining US preferences for self-regulation with robust social and legal mechanisms for privacy and data protection in the EU (Colonna, 2014, p.203). As Regan observes: "Under the thin veil of the Safe Harbor principles...there is no one government entity but fragmented state and local agencies with sometimes unclear jurisdictions" (Regan, 2003, p.275). Clunan and Trinkunas also note that "the EU was the agenda setter and enforced compliance," creating particular tensions with the US (Clunan and Trikunas, 2010, p.244). Ongoing transformations in the twenty-first century have only intensified these strains on the Safe Harbor principles, specifically related to the increasing collection and processing of digital data by businesses and governments (Kuner, 2009, p.2). In the contemporary world, "data are not

just transferred once and then locked away," but are rather used and reused by a variety of actors in disclosed and undisclosed ways (Kuner, 2009, p.1). These tensions were exacerbated by the Snowden revelations about US government surveillance, which began to unfold in May 2013 (Farrell and Newman, 2016, p.130). In response, the European Commission called for a broad reexamination of the Safe Harbor principles; however, significant concerns persisted across the EU (De Hert *et al.*, 2016, p.30).

The viability of the Safe Harbor Framework began to unravel when an Austrian citizen- Maximillian Schrems- filed a complaint in June 2013 with the Irish Data Protection Commissioner against the US social media company, Facebook, whose European headquarters are located in Ireland. Schrems claimed that Facebook was actively violating "his data protection rights by transferring his personal data to the [United States] and the US security services were accessing that data" (Fitzgerald, 2016, p.9). This complaint was later referred to the CJEU, where the Court held that the US was in breach of the fundamental rights of EU citizens, ultimately invalidating the Safe Harbor Framework in October 2015. This judgment, known as the Schrems Decision, created significant distress across the Atlantic, jeopardizing digital data flows between the EU and the US (Tracol, 2016, p.345). While the Schrems Decision was hailed as a triumph for fundamental rights in the EU, the sudden deterioration of the Safe Harbor Framework was both unexpected and unwelcome in the US (Epstein, 2016, p.337). Interestingly, the CJEU did not exclusively focus on Facebook but rather extended the scope of its judgment to thousands of Safe Harbor-certified companies (Tracol, 2016, p.358). Determann also observes that the CJEU "did not address these topics in any depth but merely referred to the vague assertions of the complainant in the Irish proceedings as well as media reports about NSA espionage, without establishing a comparative context to...similar surveillance activities" across the European Union (Determann, 2016, p.245).

The development and deterioration of the US - EU Safe Harbor Framework illuminates the diverging ways in which digital data are constructed and reconstructed in the contemporary world. Between July 2000 and October 2015, various actors attempted to frame digital data as posing an existential 'security threat' while simultaneously justifying the same or related practices involving digital data as 'mundane' features of everyday life or as part of broader 'security-enhancing' strategies. The following sections will mobilize the analytical framework set forth in this article to unpack these overlapping and contested roles- drawing on critical data studies, critical security studies, and actor-network theory to appreciate the agency, mobility, and socio-material power of digital data as well as the complex relationships between human and non-human actors in the constitution of (in)security.

In evaluating the Safe Harbor Framework through the analytical approach set forth in this article, it is important to acknowledge that there are multiple 'agents' and 'audiences' of securitization (Helgesson and Mörth, 2012, p.132). The primary agents of securitization are public government and private business actors involved in the development and deterioration of this governance arrangement- namely, the US Federal Trade Commission, the US Department of Commerce, the European Commission, the European Parliament, Data Protection Authorities, and the Court of Justice of the European Union as well as US-based private sector industries with interests in facilitating transatlantic data flows. The primary audiences are broadly comprised of public citizens across the US and the EU; however, these audiences are neither 'passive' nor can they be considered inherently 'compatible' (Balzacq, 2010, p.9).

Going further, this proposes that digital data is 'alive' and has many 'lives'. On this basis, digital data becomes an agent within the securitization framework- reaffirming that digital data is not

only a material 'thing' that exists in the contemporary world (Turner, 2009, p.154). Here, ANT and assemblage thinking help to make sense of these complex 'networks' of human and non-human actors that are constructing digital data in overlapping and contested ways. Helgesson and Mörth suggest that this multiplicity of agents and audiences raises an important question: "Where does one draw the line concerning who is responsible for what aspects of the securitization process?" (Helgesson and Mörth, 2012, p.6). Accordingly, this analytical approach appreciates how changing relationships between securitizing actors, audiences, and referent objects reflect the nature of securitization as an intersubjective process.

Digital Data as 'Mundane'

The Safe Harbor Framework was developed, first and foremost, in response to the awareness that the US did not meet the adequacy principles of the EU Data Protection Directive (Weber, 2013, p.126). The negotiation of the Safe Harbor Framework was also broadly linked with efforts to create a 'digital marketplace' for transatlantic commerce, recognizing the growing economic value of digital data (Andrews *et al.*, 2005, p.101). Notably, the principles underlying the Safe Harbor Framework were crafted prior to the advent of big data practices and technologies (Cate *et al.*, 2012b, p.47). The Safe Harbor Framework was also conceptualized before the upsurge of preemptive security and narratives about the global war on terror (Bellanova, 2014, p.112). From this position, digital data was framed as the product of everyday activities, like emailing and web browsing. Equally, the collection of digital data by private sector industries was framed as part of routine procedures, which enhanced business operations (Ball *et al.*, 2015, p.22). As Huysmans reaffirms: "In itself, data gathering is not connected to the diffusing of insecurities" (Huysmans, 2014, p.97). On this basis, the development of the Safe Harbor Framework constructed digital data neither as part of 'security-enhancing' practices nor as a 'threat' to individuals and society. Rather, the development of the Safe Harbor Framework presented digital data as a 'mundane' feature of everyday life.

Digital Data as 'Security-Enhancing'

As the twenty-first century progressed, the Safe Harbor Framework was made to coexist alongside mounting questions about the importance of data collection and data sharing for security purposes in the United States and the European Union. With the rise of preemptive security and risk-based governance that accompanied the global war on terror, digital data was increasingly constructed as part of security-enhancing strategies on both sides of the Atlantic (Weber, 2013, p.118). As a consequence, the collection of digital data for security and surveillance purposes was framed as "necessary for the protection and defense of democracy, fundamental rights, and freedoms of citizens" (Barnard-Wills, 2013, p.172). These potentially invasive activities- which involved both public government and private business actors- were broadly legitimized on the basis of the 'common good' (Etzioni, 2015, p.104). The Safe Harbor principles were not altered to reflect ongoing transformations in the nature of security and surveillance or the 'boundary blurring' of public-private actors in the security domain (Helgesson and Mörth, 2012, p.132). Instead, digital data was framed as a component of 'security-enhancing' strategies, subsequently used by actors to 'securitize' other referent objects.

Digital Data as a 'Security Threat'

As the twenty-first century unfolded, competing pressures surrounding digital data continued to intensify. Within the context of the Snowden revelations and the Schrems Decision, the acquisition of digital data by US government agencies like the NSA was framed by the CJEU as posing a security threat to the claimant, Maximillian Schrems, and all other citizens of the European Union. Put another way, digital data was securitized on the basis that the widespread collection of digital data in the US infringed upon the fundamental rights of EU citizens (Fabbrini, 2015, p.65). This perception of digital data as a security threat relates to concerns about the invasive nature of data-driven surveillance practices like social sorting and predictive profiling- where "states and corporations know and anticipate so much about individuals…that they possess the power to enforce rigid and pernicious forms of disciplinary control" (Kitchin, 2014b, p.180). As Poulin concedes: "The actions of large corporations…and governments have the potential to affect behavioral change on those populations" (Poulin, 2014, p.113). Amoore goes further, arguing: "The harm is in the violence done to associational life, to the potentiality of futures that are as yet unknowable" (Amoore, 2014, p.110). This has been referred to elsewhere as 'digital footprints' and 'digital shadows'- signaling that the nature of threats posed by digital data is multilayered and, at times, unknown (Koops, 2011, p.1). In different ways, then, the deterioration of the Safe Harbor Framework constructed digital data as a dangerous 'security threat' to individuals and society.

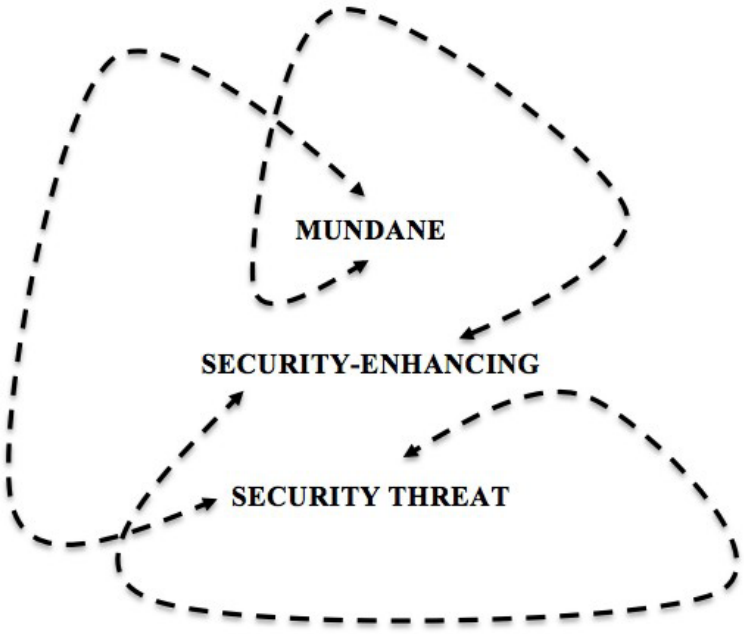

Figure A Overlapping and contested roles of digital data

Crucial to this analysis is the recognition that these different roles of digital data are overlapping and contested (see Figure A)- creating a complex assemblage of relations (Aradau and Blanke, 2015, p.1). This assemblage may be disentangled in the following ways: Consumers willingly contribute vast amounts of information through actions and interactions online, generating huge amounts of digital data that can be aggregated, stored, and analyzed to produce insights about various social behaviors (Galič *et al.*, 2016, p.21). Private sector industries collect this digital data on the basis of broad consumer consent (Lupton, 2015, p.37). Government agencies also collect this digital data on the more limited basis of national security and governance purposes. Adding to these

phenomena, many private sector businesses are voluntarily or involuntarily cooperating with government agencies to provide access to the vast amount of digital data in their possession (Cate *et al.*, 2013a, p.218). What becomes clear is that: "Today, threats...emerge in a highly connected and technologically complex world where a myriad of public and private actors participate, perhaps even unwittingly, in creating them" (De Hert *et al.*, 2016, p.25). In this way, the same digital data generated and collected through 'mundane' practices may become an existential 'security threat' or a broader component of 'security-enhancing' strategies.

This analysis suggests that digital data may be simultaneously constitutive of 'security' and 'insecurity'. But how is it possible that digital data can be constructed and reconstructed in these multiple and sometimes contradictory ways? In order to make sense of these overlapping and contested roles, this article has proposed that digital data is 'alive' and has many 'lives'. Reconceptualizing digital data in this way allows for greater insight into the nature of digital data in the contemporary world. Once digital data is generated, this information may continue to move and transform, "disconnected from the continuing embodied experience of the individuals from which they were extracted" (Huysmans, 2014, p.99). In some ways, this conceptualization of the 'liveliness' of digital data is compatible with what Lyon refers to as 'data doubles'- signaling the duality between an individual and the information generated by that individual, which may go on to circulate in known and unknown ways (Lyon, 2006, p.77). However, this approach goes one step further, opening up the possibility that digital data may become a securitizing actor, in and of itself.

Bringing these strands together, this case study analysis concludes that it is possible to understand how digital data may be constructed in overlapping and contested ways when it is acknowledged that digital data is 'alive' and has many 'lives'. In considering these factors within the context of the US - EU Safe Harbor Framework, it may be argued that digital data is not only 'securitized' as an existential threat and used by different actors to 'securitize' other referent objects but digital data itself may also become an agent of securitization. The Safe Harbor Framework did not adequately address this 'liveliness', which ultimately helps to explain why this governance arrangement failed to withstand emerging pressures related to digital data. Embracing the notion that digital data possesses agency, mobility, and socio-material power makes it possible to engage more critically with contemporary realities and redress the ways in which digital data are conceptualized in the twenty-first century.

Beyond Safe Harbors

While the Safe Harbor Framework remains central to this analysis, there have been several legal and regulatory developments since its invalidation in October 2015. The US and the EU came together in February 2016 to negotiate a new adequacy agreement- the Privacy Shield- as a successor to the Safe Harbor Framework (European Commission, 2016). The Privacy Shield introduces new mechanisms for transatlantic cooperation; however, much of its content remains closely aligned with the original Safe Harbor Framework (Bender, 2016, p.130). The EU also introduced the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as an updated framework to replace the DPD (European Parliament, 2016). The GDPR, which went into effect in May 2018, builds on the legacy of the DPD while equally advancing stronger protections for individuals (Van der Sloot, 2014, p.315). In the European Union, the Brexit referendum and subsequent negotiations have created "particular uncertainty regarding the fate of the EU's GDPR in the United Kingdom" given that "Brexit will again put the spotlight on the EU's criterion of adequacy for data transfers" (Cate *et al.*, 2016, p.167). Others have pointed to concerns about the election of US

President Donald Trump, who has yet to directly address issues of privacy and data protection between the United States and the European Union (McDermott, 2017, p.4).

Adding to these challenges, a second legal case was launched in June 2016 against Facebook in the European Union, known widely as 'Schrems II' (Cate *et al.*, 2016, p.168). Similar to its predecessor, this case challenges provisions for 'standard contractual clauses' within adequacy frameworks like the Privacy Shield, which permit transfers of digital data outside of the EU on a contract basis (Fitzgerald, 2016, p.9). While the invalidation of the Safe Harbor Framework had significant consequences in the transatlantic context, Schrems II challenges the use of standard contractual clauses on a more global scope- threatening adequacy decisions around the world as well as undermining the legal basis of adequacy itself (Fitzgerald, 2016, p.11). For these reasons, Schrems II has been described as "one of the most important cases that the [CJEU] will ever hear" (Fitzgerald, 2016, p.11). At the time of writing, these legal proceedings are ongoing.

In considering these unfolding developments, what is the way forward? And must there only be one path? Tene argues "the new generation of technology and of users calls for a new generation of data protection" (Tene, 2011, p.16). Others, like Koops, are less optimistic about the future of governance arrangements like the Safe Harbor Framework in the digital age (Koops, 2014, p.250). Kuner, too, concedes: "The search for an overarching solution may in itself be problematic, since it can give rise to unrealistic expectations" (Kuner, 2013b, p.186). No single policy or set of principles can "wholly resolve these tensions, since they reflect the hypocrisies of a world simultaneously fascinated by the benefits of globalization and of the Internet and frightened by the insecurities they bring" (Kuner, 2013b, p.187).

Ultimately, it remains unproductive to rely on governance arrangements such as the Safe Harbor Framework to address emerging challenges of digital data in the US - EU context and beyond. Until governance frameworks embrace the tensions of the overlapping and contested roles of digital data, they are unlikely to sustain contemporary pressures from unfolding discourses and debates like those surrounding big data and open data, security and surveillance, as well as privacy and data protection. This was clearly demonstrated by the deterioration of the Safe Harbor Framework as well as ongoing uncertainties about the viability of the Privacy Shield. Looking ahead, alternative approaches are needed in order to account for the 'liveliness' of digital data in the contemporary world- repositioning digital data as a non-human actor with agency, mobility, reflexivity, and socio-material power.

Conclusions

This article has sought to disentangle the fragmented and competing discourses and practices that come together in an assemblage of 'digital data'. The development and deterioration of the US - EU Safe Harbor Framework illustrated how digital data may be constructed in overlapping and contested ways- simultaneously framed as a mundane feature of everyday life, as a component of security-enhancing strategies as well as an existential security threat. In order to make sense of this fluidity and multiplicity, this article proposed that digital data is 'alive' and has many 'lives'- reconceptualizing how digital data is actively shaping and being shaped by the contemporary world.

Digital data has been engaged across the discipline of IR in different ways, however, this article has sought to 'fill the gaps'- advancing the critical study of digital data through a security-focused lens. The spirit of this research reflects an ambition to understand the fullest spectrum possible of ways in which digital data is constructing and being constructed. The scope of this

research was necessarily limited to focus on several major discourses and debates surrounding digital data in the context of the United States and the European Union, namely: big data and open data, security and surveillance, and privacy and data protection. It is acknowledged, however, that these categories are largely arbitrary and many of these discourses and debates are still unfolding. Additionally, in considering potential limitations surrounding the empirical case study evaluated, it is important to reaffirm that the US - EU Safe Harbor Framework is not, in its intention, a 'security-driven' policy tool. However, much of the scholarship surrounding the Safe Harbor Framework remains entrenched in dense legal debates, without critical attention to the roles of digital data in security contexts or the changing realities of business and governance practices. This sense of discord reinforces the need to evaluate the Safe Harbor Framework through a security lens- offering a unique entry point to exploring digital data as a multilayered and performative process.

Contemporary society continues to grapple with new realities of digital data in the twenty-first century- increasingly dominated by business efforts to monetize digital data, government efforts to remediate digital data for various governance and security purposes as well as social and political efforts to confer distinctive rights and obligations onto the subjects and controllers of digital data. Not only are these phenomena parallel, they are also perpendicular- intersecting in complex and multidimensional ways. Governance arrangements such as the Safe Harbor Framework remain the dominant approach for managing digital data flows in the contemporary world but they need not be the only approach. Ultimately, the ways that governments, businesses, and individuals around the world choose to navigate the challenges of digital data will serve as a reflection of broader global tensions and priorities (Kuner, 2013b, p.18). For these reasons, digital data must be critically engaged and reimagined in ways that more powerfully capture the dynamics of an increasingly 'datafied' world.

About the author

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Contemporary Voices

Book reviews

Wars of terror by Gabriele Marranci

by Erika Brady

'Wars of Terror' takes a fresh view of the Islamic terrorist threat which exists in the world today. As an anthropologist, Marranci brings this non-traditional focus to the analysis of counter-terrorism, supplanting the more traditional political analyses to explore human interactions and social perceptions in an effort to provide better understanding of why Islamic terrorism is taking place. To do this, Marranci focuses on the emotion of fear, the dynamics of which have resulted, he claims, in pushing some individuals to develop specific ways of perceiving their environment with its challenges and threats. At the heart of his argument is the notion of what it means to be human, with the 'other' being described as inhuman, uncivilised or barbaric. Rather than taking Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' (1996) as a linchpin for his analysis, Marranci instead presents the central notion that it is individual civilisers who have been responsible for what he considers 'wars of terror'. He states: "The War on Terror, its rhetoric and paraphernalia has hidden this more complex, and dangerous, reality of civilizational discourse and with it the clash of civilizers."

Throughout the book, Marranci provides an in-depth analysis of the existing theories and literature which attempt to unravel the motivation and historical context for the development of Islamic terrorism. While this is not an easy feat, Marranci provides a useful overview, building on his previous research including extensive interviews with Muslims from around the world.

At the outset, he provides a historical overview of Islamic terrorist attacks which primarily have taken place in the West between December 1985 and spring 1996. Following this factual overview, he states: "Never again would Europe experience such frequency and intensity of what was called 'Islamic terrorism'. No politician, during those years, made any reference to 'war' or questioned the possibility that such actions may be a serious threat to 'Western civilisation'." (2015, 3) This point presents a theme which continues throughout the book: that it is a change in narrative, rather than a change in ability or strategy, that has made Islamic terrorism the entity it is today and has framed the narrative that we are engaged in an existential war (or series of wars).

As the book progresses, Marranci replaces the traditional political and contextual analyses, which he uses as foundational starting points, with his anthropological focus and explores such scholarly literature which identifies a difference between emotions (physical reactions) and feelings (cerebral reactions). Marranci refers to Huntington's (1996) theory that the liberal and democratic Western civilization and oppressive and undeveloped Islamic civilization were culturally incompatible and contends that "the dynamic has less to do with culture and geographical essentialism and more to do with human emotions." (2015, 98) He goes on to focus on the prominence of the emotion of fear in his argument. Marranci states that some Muslim communities perceive, in regard to the West, not only a "deep injustice" but also a "high degree of hypocrisy" (2015, 106). Examples of this, they claim, can be seen in drone attacks and Hellfire missiles, where innocent civilians often lose their lives. All of this, Marranci proposes, is linked to emotions and feelings.

By looking back through history at 'civilisational narratives', that is Western and non-Western perspectives, Marranci provides interesting insights into both grievances and motivations that have established the notion of 'fear of the other' in today's psyche. This historical look at the complex socio-dynamic issues which have developed through interactions over centuries ensure that the reader achieves a perspective on what Marranci calls 'wars on terror' that differs from most political analyses of the issue.

The framework of the book is presented as an exploration of a number of concepts. Concepts such as labels, stigmas, gender issues, conspiracism and justice are both applicable to Western and non-Western views of the so-called wars of terror and are recognisable as emotive and topical aspects of terrorism narratives. Marranci applies the anthropological analysis to these concepts through an exploration of the existing literature and the application of social implications for a Western and non-Western societies. Yet what truly provides the unique insight in this book is the exploration of the notions of 'occidentalism' and 'jahiliyya'. Occidentalism is put forward as a "dehumanizing picture of the West by its enemies" and whose origins arose out of the "same thinking that characterised the Enlightenment movements in Europe" (2015, 54) while jahiliyya has been "translated as a state of ignorance" (2015, 56) or might also be referred to as 'barbarism'. It is rare to find an exploration of these non-Western concepts in terrorism literature, and the introductory analysis carried out in 'Wars of Terror' opens the possibility of better understanding between two societies that perceive their struggle as existential.

The notions of occidentalism and jahilyya, and the actions and reactions resulting from these beliefs among some Muslim communities, lead Marranci to discuss Bateson's (2002) concept of 'symmetrical changes', a macro example of which is armament races. In particular, Bateson identified the notion of "progressive escalation, which [he] called 'schismogenesis'. Bateson noticed that certain rituals or realities can either inhibit or stimulate schismogenic relations. As (is proffered) in this book, the 'circle of panic' (part of Marranci's emotional analysis) and the associated 'rituals' are reinforcing the symmetrical schismogenic property of a clash of civilizers, of which the War on Terror is nothing but a product."

The final chapter links the many concepts raised throughout the book together and ties them into Marranci's own conclusions. Here, he again analyses the various terms and historical contexts discussed throughout the book, summarising each chapter with the knowledge that the reader has now developed the tools necessary to assess the state of the field as well as make conclusions regarding emotional Islam and the circle of panic which he claims have led to the wars of terror. In conclusion, Marranci states: "If my assumption is correct … then the only way of ensuring that we do not remain trapped within the wars of terror is to stop this circle of panic." (2015, 130) He suggests that "what we are observing is the result of a cognitive process that brings certain individuals to look at others through their own narrative of civilisation." (2015, 123) This anthropological view is eminently useful in helping to build an understanding of the complex motivations for the asymmetrical conflicts taking place across the globe and more particularly between the West and the non-West civilisers.

Marranci adeptly integrates the theories and perspectives put forward by others within the framework of this publication, and this integration provides a strong and unbiased contribution to the field, where all sides of an argument are put forward and his own conclusions made. That being said, at times the book reads more as an overview of existing research and literature than as a completely original analysis. While this is a worthy endeavour, particularly from the under-applied perspective of anthropology on terrorism studies, a more in-depth qualitative or quantitative approach to the research would provide a fresh and, to some extent, unique insight into what is a complex and

challenging topic. Nonetheless, Marranci's work here paves the way for future research in the area and his aim to provide further insight into an area of the field of terrorism research which has not been appropriately explored to date is laudable. There is a clear need for this type of publication and the format and style, while not necessarily appealing to the broader population, certainly provides a substantive contribution to the academic field, especially from an inter-disciplinary perspective. I believe this book provides a solid foundation for future research in this area and will undoubtedly become a must read for those attempting to understand the complexity of the Islamic terrorism of modern times.

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Contemporary Voices

Terrorism scholars: book essay

by Richard English

When I first began to read about terrorism many years ago, two of the scholars whose work most impressed me were Martha Crenshaw and Bruce Hoffman. Now, well into the post-9/11 period, both scholars continue to generate powerful and important work.

Martha Crenshaw and her recent co-author Gary LaFree were both involved in the creation of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and they bring with them different disciplinary perspectives. Crenshaw is a Political Scientist, while LaFree's background is in Criminology, and their 2017 volume *Countering Terrorism* benefits from that dual analytical inheritance. Their aim in regard to counter-terrorist responses is to encourage "sensible and moderate policy decisions based on a realistic appraisal of the threat" (viii). In particular, their insightful book aims 'to explain the characteristics of terrorism that make it inherently difficult for governments, especially the US government, to formulate effective counter-terrorism policies' (1). They argue – rightly, in my view – that the complexity of analysis regarding terrorist definition, classification, explanation and response makes sound policy more problematic to achieve; and they suggest that terrorist attacks' atypicality represents one of the main issues to be faced.

There is much to applaud in the calmly expressed arguments that are offered in the book. Crenshaw and LaFree note the persistent problem of unhelpful state over-reaction to terrorist atrocity; they are honest about the counter-productive effects of the 2003 Iraq invasion and subsequent imbroglio; they stress that very many terrorist attacks generate no fatalities, and that most planned terrorist attacks fail or are foiled; and they are clear about the heterogeneity of terrorists and terrorisms, a reality which makes it 'hard to identify trends and patterns' (49). One important aspect of their work is to point out how feeble most terrorist ventures actually are: 'nearly half (49 percent) of all terrorist organizations recorded as active since 1970 – 1,147 organizations – have committed only one known attack'; 'a sizeable majority of organizations – nearly 70 percent – last on average for less than a year' (114-5).

The focus of the book is primarily on the USA, a reflection of one of the important aspects of post-9/11 terrorism scholarship: the different centres of gravity that are often evident between those respectively based in the US and those working elsewhere.[1] But the insights of the book are relevant for readers across many countries and locations. The authors refer to 'the polarized and simplistic qualities of many debates about terrorism in the public arena' (196), and their book offers the chance for people to remedy this through consideration of policy-relevant but evidence-based analysis.

The third edition of Bruce Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* renews readers' familiarity with the author's previous arguments about the fluidity of the phenomenon and brings the blood-stained tale up to date with careful arguments about al-Qaida and ISIS. There is serious-minded attention in the book to issues of definition, to the origins of modern terrorist violence and to some key themes within that violence (the relationship between religion and terrorism, for instance, or the residually shocking tactic of suicide terrorism, a method possessing 'continuing appeal' (180)).

[1] R. English, 'The Future Study of Terrorism', *European Journal of International Security* 1/2 (July 2016), pp. 135-49.

Professor Hoffman does not dodge the issue of state-sponsored terrorism, and he offers also a brave analysis of 'New and Continuing Challenges' (298), coloured by religiously-motivated terrorism and the foreign fighter problem. Hoffman recognizes many continuities across terrorism's different eras (the average age of involvement, for example, remains youthfully consistent), and he criticizes false orthodoxies such as the persistent belief that poverty and lack of education powerfully generate terrorist violence.

Foreign fighters as such are themselves not new either, although Hoffman points out that the scale of the recent jihadist phenomenon is distinctive. This, together with the violence of ISIS and the fact that 'al-Qaida's demise is neither ordained nor imminent' (320), lead the author towards a certain pessimism: 'Bin Laden would arguably be a happy man were he still alive' (325). Hoffman sensibly cautions against any assumption that a war on terrorism will prove victorious any time soon. But, as the tension between state and non-state actor continues, the scholarly insights of this major book will continue to have a well-deserved influence.

Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman have not always agreed on terroristic matters, and Sageman's *Misunderstanding Terrorism* devotes a fair amount of space to attacking Professor Hoffman's arguments again. In reality, much that Sageman says can be reconciled with the arguments offered by Hoffman, as by Crenshaw and LaFree. So Sageman refers to 'a great inflation of the terrorist threat to the United States, resulting in popular hysteria that leads to calls to abrogate civil liberties of suspect populations and demands to kill hundreds or thousands of innocent Muslims abroad' (21). Fair enough, but I doubt that there would be much dispute regarding this point from Georgetown, Stanford or Maryland, to be honest.

Sageman's insights in this book, as in his previous works too,[2] offer much that is of value. The approach is at times somewhat over-stated but, despite this, the book contains valuable reflections. There is statistical analysis of recent terrorist plots against the West, and interview-based recognition of the vital point that many terrorists see themselves as 'soldiers defending their endangered community' (71). There is also much sure-footed assessment of other aspects of terrorism: 'the empirical literature in the field shows that terrorists come from a variety of backgrounds and the vast majority have no criminal history'; 'scholars have reached a consensus that terrorists generally do not suffer from any major mental illness and have failed to discover a "terrorist personality"' (93). If all journalists absorbed these points, then public awareness regarding terrorism would be richly improved.

Sageman offers what he terms 'A Model of the Turn to Political Violence' (111) and, while I tend to agree with what he suggests, I felt that many scholars who have studied terrorist organizations over many years would feel that there was little that is truly novel in his argument here. The process, as set out by Sageman, involves "the activation of a politicized social identity, which generates an imagined political protest community"; "escalating conflict with an out-group (often the state), disillusionment with peaceful protest, and moral outrage at out-group aggression" (117), and the activation of a martial social identity. This is all persuasive. But it is also a pattern deeply familiar from the vast literature on terrorism in Spain, Israel/Palestine, Ireland, Germany and elsewhere.

Any such models – and, as I say, I rather sympathize with the essence of this one – only makes fullest sense when understood in context. The complex particularity of each (ultimately unique) setting, and the assessment of contingent change and continuity over long periods of the past, offer a powerful way of appreciating the dynamics of terrorist causation, sustenance and conclusion.[3]

[2] M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
[3] On the distinctive value of history as a means towards understanding terrorism, see R. English, *Does Terrorism Work?*

Much of the terrorism analysed by Crenshaw, LaFree, Hoffman and Sageman alike has Middle Eastern roots, and one of the sharpest-eyed scholars to assess the dynamics which have generated it is UCLA's Professor James Gelvin. The fourth edition of *The Modern Middle East: A History* provides extraordinarily thoughtful reflections on the deeper roots behind much of the violence on which contemporary terrorism studies focuses. The book is intellectually ambitious, aiming to offer 'a reconceptualization of the trajectory of the history of the modern Middle East' (ix). The work opens with the 2010 self-immolation which triggered the Arab uprisings and so the approach, despite the book's historical depth, remains one that has an eye to the pressingly imminent. Gelvin's book is based on the conviction that one cannot understand the early-twenty-first-century Middle East without, at least, going back to the sixteenth century; he also holds (equally persuasively, in my view) that readings of the region which interpret it as occurring outside the developments of other areas of the world are unhelpful: 'historians specializing in the Middle East certainly have a story to tell, but it is a global story told in a local vernacular' (5). How many articles on contemporary terrorism would possess a richer and more serious quality if they adopted such a perspective?

Gelvin suggests that the eighteenth century decisively changed the Middle East owing to two global developments: the emergence of a world economy and the birth of the nation-state system. The combination of these two epochal transformations produced lasting power-relations, and inheritances which have enduringly shaped the Middle East's politics and its economic relationships internally and externally. Part of this involved the way in which 'the Middle East was one of the places where the competition among European states played itself out' (44). It may be unpopular to remind people of this on Fox News but, without appreciating the inheritances of such imperial relationships, little in the contemporary Middle East (its borders, its fractures, its economic relationships, its frequently Fanonist rage) makes good sense. Gelvin himself is brutally honest: sectarianism within the Islamic Middle East owes far less to anything inherent within Islam, than it does to the legacies of formal and informal imperialism; moreover, 'imperial blundering' (105) continues to occur, as with the twenty-first-century US-Iraq fiasco.

The referencing system adopted in the book by Oxford University Press is sometimes less than helpful. Yet the book's importance and its depth of scholarship are unquestionable. Much of the story that Gelvin tells reinforces scepticism about historical inevitability; the Palestinian palimpsest that he carefully paints provides one example, with contingent and complex developments abounding. And, while there is nothing inevitable about the continued role of the state as the unit of power within the region, Gelvin's long-rooted historical intuition is that the nation-state in the Middle East has some long life in it yet. In tune with this, he is critical of those politicians who have exaggerated the threat posed by ISIS: a point on which one can imagine Professors Crenshaw, LaFree, Hoffman and Sageman (for all their differences of approach) nodding in agreement.

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