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The *UVU Journal of National Security* is Utah's first student-edited academic journal focused on national security issues. The *JNS* is published twice annually—in April and December—and it is supported by the Center for National Security Studies (CNSS) at Utah Valley University (UVU). The *JNS* publishes timely, insightful articles on critical national security matters, including topics relating to foreign affairs, intelligence, homeland security, terrorism, and national defense. The *JNS* accepts articles from UVU students, alumni, faculty, staff, and administration. Submissions should be sent to the *JNS* Editor-in-Chief at [nationalsecurity@uvu.edu](mailto:nationalsecurity@uvu.edu).

#### THE CENTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

The CNSS at UVU was established in January 2016. The Center is the first of its kind in the State of Utah. The CNSS is a nonpartisan academic institution for the instruction, analysis, and discussion of issues related to the field of US national security. The mission of the CNSS is twofold: to promote an interdisciplinary academic environment on campus that critically examines both the theoretical and practical aspects of national security policy and practice; and to assist students in preparing for public and private sector national security careers through acquisition of subject matter expertise, analytical skills, and practical experience. The CNSS aims to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities needed to succeed in the growing national security sector.

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UVU is a teaching institution that provides opportunity, promotes student success, and meets regional educational needs. UVU builds on a foundation of substantive scholarly and creative work to foster engaged learning. The university prepares professionally competent people of integrity who, as lifelong learners and leaders, serve as stewards of a globally interdependent community.

The opinions expressed in this journal are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Utah Valley University.

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## A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

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*Samuel D. Elzinga*

I have thought long and hard what to say as editor-in-chief of this edition of this journal. What began as a normal semester both academically and for the journal quickly shifted to a format foreign to many, universally altering how we went about our lives. Students across the country traded backpacks for masks and classroom desks for dining room tables. It goes without saying that this pandemic has impacted the world severely. This is a time of confusion for many, as well as a time where it seems that all hope is lost. I cannot speak for many things beyond this journal, but I hope that the publication of this highlights the coming return to normalcy.

This is the first edition of the fourth year of this journal. For four years every fall and spring semester, a dedicated group of students on UVU's campus worked tirelessly to produce this edition of the journal, as well as help bring into creation a new forum for scholarly work on national security: our first online publication titled the *UVU National Security Review*. This journal will be published once a year in the spring, highlighting work specifically from UVU students. As our flagship publication, the *UVU Journal of National Security*, continues to grow, we find it fitting to continue to provide an outlet just for UVU students to publish their work.

I could not thank Dr. Gregory Jackson and Mr. Ryan Vogel for their mentorship helping expand the journal to include more graduate school submissions this semester, as well as my dedicated Executive Editor, Hannah Lewis. I would like to thank my managing editors, Cierra Peters and Cougar Einfeldt, for their help, as well as my team of twelve content editors for their work on the journal. Additionally, this journal would not be the caliber it is without the support from Dr.

Deb Thornton and her dedicated editing class. Lastly, I would like to thank Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Mr. John Dinkelman for his forward and Professor Mary Kent for her faculty contribution. This journal, like many things in life, is a team effort, and I would not trade it for the world. It is my sincere wish you would enjoy this edition of the journal and welcome it as a refuge from our self-isolated lives.

Samuel Elzinga  
Editor-in-Chief  
*UVU Journal of National Security*





## Reflections on the Role of Utah in the Modern National Security Landscape

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*John Dinkelman,*

*Deputy Assistant Secretary—Office of Logistics Management (A/LM)*

While visiting Utah Valley University's campus in November, I was surprised, and (very flattered) by Mr. Elzinga's request for me to provide a forward to this edition of the Journal. My surprise quickly turned to consternation after reading previous editions of the Journal—each with an insightful and informative forward provided by highly respected subject matter expert. Perhaps I had indeed bitten off more than I could chew?

I left my Utah home for a career in the US Department of State in the 1980s—when Utah Technical College was the only higher-level public educational alternative in Utah Valley. From a distance over the ensuing decades, I noted the institution's evolution from "Utah Tech" to Utah Valley Community College, then to Utah Valley State College, and finally to Utah Valley University. My interest in UVU continued to grow as many of the rising generation of my own family started to opt for green and white school colors instead of the red and blue alternatives of their parents' generation. Obviously a lot has changed while I was traveling.

The story of UVU's meteoric development is impressive enough for someone acquainted with the University's history. For those unfamiliar with the story, it can be much harder to understand how, in a few short years, UVU could grow into Utah's largest university. The establishment of the Center for National Security Studies and publication of the *UVU Journal of National Security* are further signs of the rising star among Universities that is UVU.

As a disproportionately high percentage of UVU's student body possesses prior overseas living experience and foreign language profi-

ciency, it is my firm belief that UVU alumni are well-suited for careers in Foreign Affairs-related fields. On my visit to campus in November, I was overwhelmed by the interest shown in the Foreign Service. While the State Department has greatly benefitted from the service of the UVU graduates in its ranks, much more can and should be done to ride this wave of continued growth of the University and its reputation—along with its placement of alumni in our nation’s Diplomatic Corps.

Since the professionalization of the US Foreign Service almost a century ago, the Foreign Service Exam process has served as the principal path to a career as a US Diplomat. In the image of the nation it is privileged to represent to the world, the Foreign Service’s examination process is open to all US citizens 21 years and older. With a goal to be the “face of America,” it is important that America’s diplomats come from all segments of our nation. I invite the UVU community to aspire to joining our ranks in accomplishing the Department’s mission to promote and demonstrate democratic values and advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world as we lead the nation’s foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety and economic prosperity.



## Domestic Extremists and the Infamy of Online Social Forums

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*Mary Kent*

The Internet is a prime example of how terrorists can behave in a truly transnational way; in response, States need to think and function in an equally transnational manner.  
—Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

### Abstract

Investigations of the increasing number of active shooters in the United States have led to an increased scrutiny of online social forums and their use by national and international extremists to spread their ideology of hatred and declarations of violent intent. This article explores social forum usage by violent extremists, focusing on active shooters, and the difficulties associated with detection and mitigation of these threats.

### Introduction

Individuals and organizations are able to publish large amounts of information on the internet for reasons that range from promotion of ideology, recruitment, statement of opinions on various topics, and intention to act violently based on the aforementioned reasons. Given the existence of thousands of websites that provide a platform for free speech, it is not difficult to find a stage to illuminate violent and extremist thoughts and actions. We can deduce that where one violent extremist goes to post the vitriol they feel, others of similar thought and feeling will gather also. This deduction has proven to be true as extremists, racists, terrorists, and other violent criminal actors shape forums and sub-forums to spread their brands of hate and intolerance. The open definition of free speech has bred social communities where criminal activities and hate speech are encouraged and where manifes-

tos detailing active shooter intent go unreported or unnoticed until an incident has occurred.

### Social Forums Defined

Online social forums are online communities where individuals and organizations can post and comment on topics from politics to dog breeding. They are designed to bring people together based on common interests. The majority of online social forums allow users to obtain a free account and post anonymously if they choose. There is little policing of topics, writing, images, and videos. Although designed to be free from criminal usage and affiliation, these websites provide a platform for free speech that may be (and is often encouraged to be) socially unacceptable, criminal, or too violent in nature to be voiced elsewhere. Over the past ten years, this is exactly the reputation that such social forums have obtained; they are free speech platforms for terrorists, extremists, and other criminally minded individuals.

A few of the most popular online social forums are Reddit, 4Chan, 8Chan (now reborn as 8Kun), and Gab. As of August 2019, Reddit has 542 million users, with 4Chan coming behind at 22 million, and Gab with 1 million.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Due to 8Chan being shut down, we cannot get an accurate count of the number of users it once had. However, we know that 8Chan had roughly “a little over 1 million-page views per day, 35,000 unique visitors per day, and 400,000 posts per week for the last few weeks,”<sup>4</sup> as stated by 8Chan’s owner, Frederick Brennan. After users of 8Chan protested strongly against its removal, a new website titled 8Kun emerged as a replacement. Users of 8Chan are allowed to contact the web managers for 8Kun and have their former 8Chan forums transferred over to 8Kun; the action thus rapidly rebuilt a platform that

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1. Ben Makuch, “The Nazi-Free Alternative to Twitter Is Now Home to the Biggest Far Right Social Network,” *Vice.com*, July 11, 2019, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/mb8y3x/the-nazi-free-alternative-to-twitter-is-now-home-to-the-biggest-far-right-social-network](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/mb8y3x/the-nazi-free-alternative-to-twitter-is-now-home-to-the-biggest-far-right-social-network).

2. Kit Smith, “126 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts,” *Brandwatch*, June 13, 2019, <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts/>.

3. M. Archibald, “31 Jaw-Dropping Reddit Statistics for Marketers in 2019,” *Foundation*, December 4, 2019, <https://foundationinc.co/lab/reddit-statistics/>.

4. Matt Keeley, “What Is 8chan? Extremist Message Board Linked to El Paso Mass Shooting,” *Newsweek*, August 5, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/8chan-el-paso-mass-shooting-1452641>.

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was originally shut down for spreading hate and violence.<sup>5</sup>

According to 8Kun's website, content is not posted by 8Kun administration, and it does not represent administrative opinions:

Warning: some boards on 8kun might have content of an adult, mature, or offensive nature. Please cease use of this website if you are under 18 years of age and/or if it is illegal for you to view such content. On 8kun, boards and posts are user-created and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the 8kun Administration. Any content that violates the laws of the United States of America will be deleted and the poster will be banned.<sup>6</sup>

The statement reads well, but it is not followed by forum users and administration. According to the United States Courts website, some items that the First Amendment freedom of speech protection does not include are inciting actions that would harm others and making or distributing obscene materials.<sup>7</sup> These are two of the things that you will find on 8Kun.

An ongoing challenge for lawmakers is determining where social forum free speech ends and criminal hate speech begins. Criminal hate speech is defined as speech that would incite violence, bigotry, racism, hostility, and sexually explicit material. For example, if a rally is held on a college campus and the speakers condemn gay marriage, would that be considered free speech or would it be hate speech against a minority group? In this same case, who would make the decision on what type of speech this is? The Supreme Court of the United States, the city, or the school? Online social forums pose the same free speech issues but add the element of anonymity, national and international reach, and unregulated content.

### Active Shooter Manifestos

The owners of online social forums generally allow any type of free speech on their website and only censor it when forced to do so (if they can be forced, that is). The allowance of all topics and the ability

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5. Twitter user 1.

6. 8Chan Website.

7. U.S. Courts, "What Does Free Speech Mean?" *USCourts*, <https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does>.

to express any thought or sentiment on these sites is the first element in making these forums so popular among criminals and the disaffected. The second is the gathering of like-minded individuals who provide support, encouragement, and aid in spreading violent expressions and intentions. These elements are key to an active shooter's decision to voice their hatred, publish their attack plans, and post their manifesto or declaration of their views, motivations, and intentions. Online social forums may also result in the radicalization of otherwise faultless users. When discussing the Halle, Germany, shooting, the three anonymous 4Chan users quoted below show the range of opinions found on 4Chan.

The first, self-titled "The Autistic German Shooter," writes, "So, I'm browsing the board today and I see the news about this kid who shot up some people in Germany. This place is all fun with the memes and stuff and the edgy political commentary, but is it really radicalizing young men into doing this stupid shit?"<sup>8</sup> Anonymous replies, "Honestly, no one is getting radicalize on 4chan. They are getting radicalized by having their own government hate them and view them as the source of all evil in the world,"<sup>9</sup> to which another anonymous user counters, "Yes we WILL keep radicalizing white people and there's nothing you can do about it."<sup>10</sup>

On October 9, 2019, German national Stephen Balliet attempted to shoot his way into a Jewish Synagogue in Halle, Germany, where local Jewish followers were celebrating the Yom Kippur holiday. Upon failing to enter the synagogue, the shooter then fired on citizens in the streets, killing two and wounding others. According to news reports, the shooter published his manifesto and posted a live video stream of the shooting on open social forums: Twitch (online social gaming), 4Chan, Kohlchan (German-based online social forum), and Meguca (affiliated with 4Chan).<sup>11, 12</sup>

8. The Autistic German Shooter, post no. 229263772, *4Chan Forum Politically Incorrect*, October 9, 2019.

9. Anonymous, post no. 229263940, *4Chan Forum Politically Incorrect*, October 9, 2019.

10. Anonymous, post no. 229265749, *4Chan Forum Politically Incorrect*, October 9, 2019.

11. Ryan Broderick, "Far-Right Halle Shooter Allegedly Posted A Manifesto with Xbox-Like 'Achievements' To Anime Message Board Before Livestreaming Attack," *Buzzfeed*, October 12, 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatesthis/halle-germany-shooter-meguca-anime-manifesto>.

12. Ryan Broderick, "A Gunman Apparently Motivated by Anti-Semitism

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In the manifesto Balliet discusses what weapons he intends to use and why, his target location, the difficulties of attacking there, and how he will film the attack. The shooter then lists his objectives as: to prove the viability of improvised weapons, to increase the moral of suppressed whites by spreading the footage, and to kill as many anti-whites as possible, especially Jews. He adds that not dying is a bonus objective.<sup>13</sup> Upon searching 4Chan for a copy of this manifesto, no less than 15 4Chan users were requesting a copy of the manifesto, and multiple individuals responded with the information. This shows not only an interest in obtaining and reading the Halle, Germany, shooter's manifesto but also that 4Chan users are willing to save and share the information, thereby spreading active shooter propaganda and ideology. Efforts to find and share the Halle, Germany, shooter's manifesto and video have been found on Twitch and 4Chan (both Kohlchan and Meguca are no longer functioning). Kohlchan.net posted a statement to their front and only functional page stating:

We investigated the matter and concluded that the shooter did not use Kohlchan to spread his Twitch stream or his manifesto. The press releases of, e.g., The Guardian, Sueddeutsche, [ . . . ] contradict our findings and do not correspond to the truth.

So either the "independent journalists" from Reuters, Deutsche Presse Agentur, The Guardian, Sueddeutsche, LeMonde, [ . . . ] are exceptionally bad at their profession or they deliberately lied.<sup>14</sup>

On August 3, 2019, an active shooter opened fire at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, killing 22 people and injuring 24. Before the attack the shooter, Patrick Crusius, posted his manifesto to 8Chan, a then-popular free speech forum that has since been shut down. In that manifesto, Crusius stated,

In general, I support the Christchurch<sup>15</sup> shooter and his manifesto. This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas. They are the instigators, not me. I am simply

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Livestreamed Himself on Twitch Attacking A Synagogue," *Buzzfeed*, October 10, 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatesthis/a-gunman-apparently-motivated-by-anti-semitism-livestreamed>.

13. <https://is2.4chan.org/pol/1570882906694.jpg>

14. <https://kohlchan.net/>.

15. March 2019 mass shooting at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand.

defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion.<sup>16</sup>

Two important points are brought to light through this manifesto. First, Crusius had access to another active shooter's manifesto, and, second, he was using that manifesto to support his own actions. Texas State University performed a study in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and found that in the case of active shooters in schools, 50% actively study previous school shooting events before committing their own act of violence. In 80% of school shooter cases, at least one person knew the attack would occur, and multiple people knew in 66% of the cases.<sup>17</sup>

On 15 March, 2019, another active shooter, Brenton Tarrant, entered Al Noor, a Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque, and killed 51 individuals. He made a video recording of the interior of his vehicle where he kept his weapons, the drive to the mosques, and the murder of 51 worshippers. Although law enforcement and open source websites made efforts to remove the video from the internet, the video can still be found. Users of the forum 4Chan post and share links to the video to this day.

Online social forums enable shooters to research past active shooter events, provide a platform for their manifestos, aid in the spread of their manifesto, and deliver an audience for their final shooting event. Future active shooters can also find support, encouragement, and challenges by forum users to commit more violence on a grander scale than their predecessors.

### Issues with Regulation

There are three critical issues with regulating social forum communications: the first is defining the line between free speech and criminal hate speech, the second is the ability of web users to circumvent laws and hide their communications, and the third is the public reaction to the monitoring of social posts.

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16. Egberto Willies, "El Paso Mass Shooter Patrick Crusius (The Inconvenient Truth) Evil Manifesto," *EgbertoWillies*, August 4, 2019, [https://egbertowillies.com/2019/08/03/patrick-crusius-manifesto/?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=ios\\_app](https://egbertowillies.com/2019/08/03/patrick-crusius-manifesto/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=ios_app).

17. B. Martindale, *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000–2015*. Texas State University and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Texas State University ALERRT Center, 2019.



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Regarding free speech issues, arguments over the boundaries of the First Amendment have become increasingly complicated with the advent of social media and social forums. Law enforcement and legal professionals are faced with the interpretation of online communications in order to discern between free speech and a threat to life. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that although the First Amendment protects free speech, it does not defend violence. Difficulties in interpreting online communications arise when a written passage promotes violence but does not facilitate violence. In addition, the First Amendment extends to US citizens speaking abroad or to foreign nationals within the US but does not extend to foreigners posting online while situated outside of the US, which is a concern regarding terrorist recruitment and ideology being posted in online social media chat rooms, forums, and blogs that are accessible in the US.

There is no globally determined free speech definition. User agreements from any nation vary between social forums and other social media platforms. However, no matter how the user agreement is constructed, users cannot commit an act that goes against the laws of the United States. 8Kun, the reincarnation of 8Chan, states on their front web page, which is quoted above. While the warning looks reasonable, there are a number of loopholes that users and website administrators can use. First, there is no way to truly verify whether a user is 18 or older. A fake account can be created as easily as a legitimate one. Second, stating that content does “not necessarily represent the opinions of the 8Kun administration”<sup>18</sup> is a way to detach the website administration from any criminal content on the website and can be interpreted as a ploy to absolve the administrators of any guilt when evidence of criminal pre-planning is found on their web page. Third, the debate between free speech and criminally liable hate speech has not been resolved. If there is no definitive law defining and criminalizing hate speech, then terrorists, extremists, active shooters, and the like can freely post their ideology and vitriol.

For example, prior to Brenton Tarrant’s attack on the Al Noor Mosque, he posted a 40-page manifesto online titled “The Great Replacement.” In the first section of the manifesto, Tarrant quotes the poem “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” by Dylan Thomas then proceeds to discuss what he believes to be the ethnic, cultural, and

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18. 8Chan Website.

racial replacement of whites in America.<sup>19</sup> Although these writings may be insulting to some and irrational to others, everything written in these two areas is protected under the First Amendment. Also, Tarrant was living in New Zealand when he wrote and posted his manifesto online, which means he did not fall under US law. It is not until the “Answering possible questions” section that we see a change to facilitating violence and the actual plan Tarrant laid out to be an active shooter and mass murderer. Had Tarrant not published the sections in which he facilitates violence, his manifesto would have been nothing more than the published ideological views of a New Zealand national rather than the manifesto of a person intending to become an active shooter.

While manifestos, such as the one mentioned above, can be detected, it is virtually impossible to monitor every online social forum in existence let alone the posts placed therein. Supporters of unregulated free speech are capable of creating secure websites, browsers, and social platforms in order to avoid law enforcement detection. Users of The Onion Router or TOR have created dark websites where communication is unregulated, criminal activities abound, and the policing of online content may lead to individuals using more secure ways of communication or limiting their posts to free speech content while keeping their violent plans to themselves until the act is committed.

Restrictions placed on social forum free speech have typically been met with derision and protest from one side of the argument and with support from the other. When 8Chan was shut down in September 2019, users began posting their disapproval on other social platforms. For example, one Twitter user stated, “DEFYING LOGIC . . . 8Chan is immediately & falsely accused of somehow being complicit in ‘several white supremacist’ mass shootings and summarily shutdown.”<sup>20</sup> Another individual said, “Why is 8chan under attack? The manifesto was posted to Instagram first, and then posted to 8chan by someone else.”<sup>21</sup> Individuals supporting the removal of 8Chan have stated, “It’s a community rife with unethical/racist dumpster humans.”<sup>22</sup> Another user believes that “Websites like 8chan create a home for #WhiteNationalistTerrorism to fester and breeds #activeshooter(s).”<sup>23</sup>

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19. <https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/206631221/>.

20. Twitter user 2.

21. Twitter user 3.

22. Twitter user 4.

23. Twitter user 5.

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## Solutions

Three elements to finding a solution must be considered. The first is the First Amendment right to free speech. Second is the user agreement entered into when creating a social forum user account. Third is the point at which both user agreements and free speech are void due to an imminent threat to life. Websites such as 4Chan and 8Kun enable users to write and post anything they choose without content and sharing restrictions, despite website administration having stated otherwise. This can include white supremacist remarks and recruitment, the posting of active shooter manifestos, suicide notes, and more.

In May of 2019, the United States Congressional Research Service (CRS) stated that “free speech jurisprudence” and the absence of a “controlling authority” are two of the major challenges facing the regulation of online social forums. The CRS made the following two legal recommendations: first, create laws that primarily regulate online conduct rather than speech and a governing system that can incidentally control online content; second, ensure that the laws are narrowly conscripted to forbid online speech that falls into an unprotected category of speech (hate speech).

Before these recommendations can be instituted, however, the law needs to define hate speech. The American Liberty Association states,

“Hate speech” doesn’t have a legal definition under U.S. law, just as there is no legal definition for rudeness, evil ideas, unpatriotic speech, or any other kind of speech that people might condemn. Generally, however, hate speech is any form of expression through which speakers intend to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred against a group or a class of persons.<sup>24</sup>

But simply hating something or someone is not a crime.

In 1969, Ku Klux Klan (KKK) leader Clarence Brandenburg held a rally where attendees were filmed wearing their KKK robes and burning a cross. Brandenburg was eventually charged with advocating violence at that rally and was sent to prison for one to ten years. The US Supreme Court overruled the sentencing, however, stating that “speech that supports law-breaking or violence in general is protected by the

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24. American Library Association, “Hate Speech and Hate Crime,” *ALA*, December 2017, from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/hate>.

First Amendment unless it directly encourages people to take an unlawful action immediately.”<sup>25</sup> Essentially, the court was saying that in order to be categorized as criminal hate speech, the speech must incite direct and immediate criminal action, a definition that stills holds sway to this day.

If courts are to continue using this definition, there must be regulations placed on the owners and managers of open social forums that direct how their rules and user policies are written and designate a criminal punishment for violations not only for those posting but for the website administrators who allow it. Currently, social forums have varying user rules and policies. For example, in 4Chan’s “Global Rules” or terms of use, the company states that in the /hc/ or hardcore channel, “only tasteful hardcore pornography [is] allowed.” On the other hand, Gab’s Terms of Service state that “User Contributions must NOT: Be obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic.” Both Gab and 4Chan are advertised as online social forums embracing the free speech of its users. In order to comply with the law, user agreements would be required to include the definition of criminal hate speech and the consequences for violating that law. Website administrators would be held accountable for any criminal hate speech on their website and thus more likely to monitor their forums.

The difficulty in deciding when social forum user agreements and free speech no longer apply is in the interpretation of content. Can we identify the point at which opinion becomes a commitment to action? If Brenton Tarrant had not laid out his plan to commit mass murder, his manifesto would have remained a manifesto with no law enforcement action taken. With his actions, however, it is a manifesto and criminal evidence in 51 murder cases. How often have individuals written or said something to the effect of “I’ll kill you!” in a joking manner or as a way to blow off steam? Would the law deem it a threat regardless of context? Finding the answers to these questions may require trial and error through the formulation of laws and the study of cases to further define each form of speech and their associated context.

### Conclusion

The idea of governing free speech has been met with resistance;

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25. *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 395 U.S. 444 (1969), *Justia: US Supreme Court*, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/395/444/>.

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however, the idea of governing criminal hate speech has not. Perhaps part of the issue US law makers are facing is caused by identifying unrestrained free speech as the issue rather than honing in on the precise issue of criminal hate speech. US constitutional rights dictate the right to free speech, but by separating criminal hate speech from free speech, US lawmakers can rightly regulate online social forum communication. This can pave the way for earlier warnings of criminal hate speech before the criminal event occurs and force website administrators to take the threat of criminal hate speech by active shooters, extremists, and other criminal elements more seriously.





## Should Australian Fixed Threat Assessment Centres Submit “Fixed Persons” to Involuntary Detention on Mental Health Grounds?

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*Sasha Greenaway*

The involuntary detention of individuals with mental illness is a highly controversial issue. Australian Fixed Threat Assessment Centres (AFTACs)<sup>1</sup> have been established to manage the mental health concerns and reduce the security threat posed by individuals who have “intense, pathological fixations.”<sup>2</sup> We will address such individuals as “fixed persons.” The breadth of this definition is essential as it encompasses the wide range of practices, beliefs, and ideologies demonstrated by fixed persons including, but not limited to, stalking, death threats, and extremist behaviour. This paper will address whether it is both effective and necessary for AFTACs to involuntarily detain fixed persons, who have already been assessed as having a mental illness, as a means of managing the risk they pose to society.<sup>3</sup> The paper will achieve this by first examining in greater depth the link between fixed persons and mental health. Then, we will explore the security threat posed by fixed persons to the community and assess the importance of managing their mental health. Finally, this paper will discuss the efficacy of AFTACs’ use of involuntary detention to control the threat fixed persons pose. Ultimately, this paper will assess whether submitting fixed

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1. We will use the term AFTACs to refer to the Fixed Persons Investigations Unit in New South Wales, the Fixed Threat Assessment Center in Victoria, the Queensland Fixed Threat Assessment Center and the Australian Federal Police Fixed Threat Assessment Team.

2. D. V. James et al., “The Fixed Threat Assessment Centre: Preventing Harm and Facilitating Care,” *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 21, no. 4 (August 2010): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14789941003596981>.

3. A discussion of police powers of arrest on *suspicion* of severe mental illness falls outside the scope of this paper.

persons to involuntary mental health detention is effective enough at reducing the security threat to the public to be considered a “necessary” risk management strategy by AFTACs.

### Key Terms

In examining the efficacy of involuntary detention on mental health grounds, it is important to first define key terms with respect to guiding legislation. In Australia, involuntary inpatient treatment requires the presence of a mental illness as defined by the relevant state legislation.<sup>4</sup> This paper uses the Queensland definition of mental illness, which is defined as “a condition characterised by a clinically significant disturbance of thought, mood, perception, or memory.”<sup>5</sup> This definition is useful as it is the most recent definition of mental illness provided in Australian state legislation, and, of the states in question,<sup>6</sup> it provides the lowest threshold for a person to be classified as “mentally ill.” As a result of the low threshold, a person in Queensland who is labelled “mentally ill” could potentially be detained involuntarily even though their condition may not be considered serious enough to fulfill the criteria for “mental illness” in another state and, therefore, involuntary mental health detention in the other state would be illegal. As a result of the implications of a low mental illness threshold, we will apply the Queensland definition of mental illness to our analysis.

### Link Between Fixated Persons and Mental Illness

According to the Fixated Research Group, psychiatry plays an essential role in “confronting the issue of threat from fixated individuals.”<sup>7</sup> This concept was articulated by Dietz and Martell, who asserted that every attack on a public figure in the US has been the work of a

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4. See *Mental Health Act of 2007* (NSW) s2, *Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic) s4, *Mental Health Act 2016* (Qld) s10. This paper will reference legislation only from New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland as they are the only Australia states that currently have Fixated Threat Assessment Centres.

5. *Mental Health Act 2016* (Qld) s10(1).

6. New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria.

7. D. V. James, Frank R. Farnham, and Simon P. Wilson, “The Fixated Threat Assessment Center—Implementing a Joint Policing and Psychiatric Approach to Risk Assessment and Management in Public Figure Threat Cases,” in *International Handbook of Threat Assessment*, eds. J. Reid Meloy and J. Hoffman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1, <https://www.fixatedthreat.com/perch/resources/ftac-chapter.pdf>.



mentally disordered person who issued at least one pre-attack signal such as an inappropriate letter, visit, or statement.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively in Europe, a 2009 study based on the examination of 8,001 police case files concerning inappropriate behaviour towards the British Royal Family found evidence that 84% of persons in the case files had serious mental illness.<sup>9</sup> A similar study was conducted in The Netherlands concerning the nature of 107 individuals who had submitted disturbing communications to the Dutch Royal Family.<sup>10</sup> The findings in this study revealed that 75% of individuals were psychotic and 11% were suffering mood disorders.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, these studies highlight that the link between fixated persons and mental health is a global phenomenon.

In the Australian context, a study of politicians in Queensland revealed that 93% of respondents suffered threats, harassment, and other behaviours of concern.<sup>12</sup> A further 15% had been subjected to an attempted or actual assault and in 48% of cases, the perpetrators were believed to be mentally ill.<sup>13</sup> Although this study refers strictly to politicians, they are used as an example of a category of persons who are at risk of harassment and potential harm.

Ultimately, this study aims to demonstrate the link between fixated persons and mental illness by highlighting that mentally ill fixated persons can pose a security threat to society. However, not all would agree with this judgment. The low threshold in the Queensland mental illness definition leaves the above mental illness statistics open to criticism.

Furthermore, the Identifying Vulnerable Persons (IVP) Guidance document identifies the concern level of 16 criteria, which correlate to

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8. Park Dietz, and Daniel A. Martell. "Commentary: Approaching and Stalking Public Figures—A Prerequisite Attack," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 38, no. 3 (2010): 344.

9. D. V. James et al., "Stalkers and Harassers of Royalty: The Role of Mental Illness and Motivation," *Psychological Medicine* 39, no. 9 (September 2009): 1479–90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291709005443>.

10. Bram Bart van der Meer, Lieke Bootsma, and Reid Meloy, "Disturbing Communications and Problematic Approaches to the Dutch Royal Family," *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 23, no. 5–6 (October 2012): 571–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2012.727453>.

11. Bram Bart van der Meer, 577.

12. Michele Pathé et al., "The Harrassment of Queensland Members of Parliament: A Mental Health Concern," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 21, no. 4 (2014), 577–584, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2013.858388>.

13. Pathé et al., 577.

the extent that such characteristics evolve into observable criminal behaviour, but this list does not include mental illness.<sup>14</sup> Fixated persons are commonly reported to AFTACs as a result of behaviour that is a part of the IVP Guidance criteria, such as violent rhetoric, risk taking behavior, and isolation from family. However, it is only once AFTACs have assessed and classified these individuals as fixated persons will a mental health assessment be conducted. Although it is possible for fixated persons to have no indicator of mental illness while fulfilling many of the IVP Guidance criteria, the results of a three-year research project revealed that 80% of the fixated persons assessed were found to be suffering a mental illness.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, our analysis will continue under the supposition that there is a strong link between fixated persons and mental illness that leads to the security threat that AFTACs seek to manage.

### Security Threat Posed by Fixated Persons

AFTACs work to identify the threats posed by fixated persons in order to manage the threats and to reduce the likelihood of fixated persons reverting to violence. The status of fixated persons as a security threat, as acknowledged by the National Terrorism Threat Advisory System,<sup>16</sup> is from their “fixation” on a person, group, or idea and is not necessarily connected to radicalism. Although the Fixated Research Group acknowledges that few fixated persons cases actually escalate to violence,<sup>17</sup> the few cases that do end in violence can have catastrophic consequences which is what AFTACs are tasked with preventing.

The Sydney Lindt Café siege in 2014 that resulted in the deaths of two hostages is what sparked the establishment of the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre in New South Wales.<sup>18</sup> Other such attacks by

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14. Emily Alison et al., *Guidance for Identifying People Vulnerable to Recruitment into Violent Extremism*, (England: University of Liverpool, 2009), 16, [https://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/uploads/editor/files/IVP\\_Guidance\\_Draft\\_v0.3\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/uploads/editor/files/IVP_Guidance_Draft_v0.3_web_version.pdf).

15. James et al., “Stalkers and Harassers of Royalty.”

16. “National Terrorism Threat Advisory System,” Australian Government: Australian National Security, <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Securityandyourcommunity/Pages/National-Terrorism-Threat-Advisory-System.aspx>.

17. Fixated Research Group, “Inappropriate Communications, Approaches and Attacks on the British Royal Family, with Additional Consideration of Attacks on Politicians, (London: Home Office, 2016).

18. Binoy Kampmark, “Releasing the ‘Terror Genie’: Man Haron Monis and

lone-actors in Australia include the stabbing of Mia Ayliffe-Chung in Queensland in 2016 by a lone-actor who was, at that time, unknown to police.<sup>19</sup> After the attack, four psychiatrists assessed the perpetrator, Smail Ayad, as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and operating under the belief that there was a plot to “kill him and burn his body in a pizza oven.”<sup>20</sup> The case of Ayad reveals that fixated persons suffering from severe mental illness can constitute a serious security threat through their propensity for violence against the unsuspecting public.

The threat of violence and physical harm to the public is the primary concern for AFTACs even though they have acknowledged that fixated persons can also pose a risk to their family, friends, and themselves.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, AFTACs have adopted the public figure section of the Stalking Risk Profile as their framework to assess the risk fixated persons pose to the community as a whole.<sup>22</sup> The key factors of the Stalking Risk Profile that AFTACs apply include; escalation, disruption, persistence, psycho-social damage to the perpetrator, and violence.<sup>23</sup> These factors are viewed in connection with the IVP Guidance criteria discussed above to assess the immediacy and the severity of the threat that fixated persons pose to society. It is essential that AFTACs accurately assess the threat fixated persons pose to the public in order to determine the appropriate management strategy to decrease the risk of violence posed by an individual.

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the ‘Sydney Siege,’” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 496, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2017.1399601>.

19. Natalie Evans et al., “Australia stabbing: British woman backpacker, 21, murdered in hostel by Frenchman screaming ‘Allahu Akhbar!’” *The Daily Mirror*, August 24, 2016, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/australia-stabbing-british-woman-backpacker-8693473>.

20. Guy Birchall, “KICKBOXING KILLER Who is Smail Ayad? French national who murdered Mia Ayliffe-Chung and Tom Jackson in Home Hill, Queensland,” *The Sun*, November 13, 2018, <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/7731778/smail-ayad-french-national-murdered-mia-ayliffe-chung-tom-jackson-home-hill-queensland/>.

21. Michele T. Pathé et al., “Public Figure Fixation: Cautionary Findings for Mental Health Practitioners: Public Figure Fixation: Cautionary Findings,” *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 34, no. 5 (September 2016): 682, <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2252>.

22. R. D. MacKenzie et al., *Stalking Risk Profile: Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Stalkers* (Melbourne StalkInc & Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science: Monash University, 2009), 120.

23. R. D. MacKenzie et al., 120.

## Management of the Threat Posed by Fixated Persons

In order to determine the efficacy of involuntary detention, we must first discuss how AFTACs identify fixated persons. Many individuals who are referred to AFTACs are already known to the police or mental health services. For example, in the first year of operation of Australian Federal Police Fixated Threat Assessment Team (AFP FTAT), 88% of individuals referred to the unit were already known to police, 86% of individuals already had prior contact with a public mental health service and 75% of total cases were known to both police and mental health services.<sup>24</sup> These statistics highlight that once an individual has been referred to an AFTAC, there is often a lot of prior information to help determine their mental state and threat level. Both a police officer and a psychologist assess individuals for mental illness and risk to the public once they have been referred to an AFTAC.<sup>25</sup> Once the psychological assessment is complete, and once they are classified as fixated persons, AFTACs must then determine the appropriate cause of action to reduce the risk of danger to the community.

AFTACs will only consider involuntary detention in cases in which individuals are assessed as being of moderate or high concern. In some high concern cases, such as an acutely ill schizophrenic who has demonstrated a severe fixation, AFTACs act on the psychiatric assessment immediately, often through hospital admission or alternate forms of psychiatric care.<sup>26</sup> In order for involuntary detainment to be a legal mode of intervention, the fixated person must have been assessed by a registered mental health practitioner as being of serious danger to either themselves or the community, and there must be need for immediate treatment.<sup>27</sup> These two criteria, danger and the need for treatment, are essential prerequisites for involuntary detention in Australia.<sup>28</sup> These

24. Felicity J. Riddle et al., "Towards a National Strategy for Managing Fixated Persons in Australia," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 26, no. 3 (May 4, 2019): 461, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2018.1506722>.

25. Michele T. Pathé et al., "Establishing a Joint Agency Response to the Threat of Lone-Actor Grievance-Fuelled Violence," *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 29, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2017.1335762>.

26. James et al., "Implementing," 19.

27. Simei Zhang et al., "Involuntary Admission and Treatment of Patients with Mental Disorder," *Neuroscience Bulletin* 31, no. 1 (February 2015): 102, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12264-014-1493-5>.

28. See *Mental Health Act 2007* (NSW) s 14; *Mental Health Act 2016* (Qld) s 12;

criteria are in place specifically to ensure that involuntary detention only occurs in situations where it is absolutely necessary for the sake of both the individual and the community at large.

It is possible to use the controversial High Court case, *McKenna v Hunter & New England Local Health District* (*McKenna*), as a case study to demonstrate how such legislation works in practice. In this case, a patient who had been known to suffer from chronic schizophrenia was involuntarily detained overnight in a mental health facility under the *Mental Health Act 1990* (NSW).<sup>29</sup> The next day, following a psychiatric assessment, the patient was discharged into the care of a friend, whom he killed that night.<sup>30</sup> In this case, the court determined that the Health Service had done their duty properly and to have continued to detain the patient involuntarily when a psychiatric assessment had not revealed an immediate risk of violence would be in violation of their statutory obligations and the rights of the patient.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, this case reveals that involuntary detention of individuals with severe mental health concerns must only be done when psychiatrists have assessed that there is an immediate and severe threat to the patient or the public. Even though the patient in *McKenna* was wrongly assessed as not being an immediate threat, mental health practitioners must operate in line with statutory obligations as they are in place to protect the rights of individuals. Therefore, although some may argue that it was necessary for the Health Service to detain the patient for longer, despite the results of the psychiatric assessment, this line of thinking has the potential to lead to catastrophic human rights violations through unjust detention. Ultimately, the court in *McKenna* did not award any damages because they were determined to avoid setting a dangerous precedent.

It is also important to assess quantitative data when determining the necessity for involuntary detention. In the first year of operation, the AFP FTAT assessed and managed 227 fixated persons.<sup>32</sup> The primary intervention strategies used by the AFP FTAT involve either mental health or policing interventions.<sup>33</sup> Only 24% of cases led to inpatient

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*Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic) s 5.

29. *McKenna v Hunter & New England Local Health District*; See *Simon v Hunter & New England Local Health District* [2014] HCA 44 (*McKenna*).

30. *McKenna v Hunter & New England Local Health District*.

31. *McKenna v Hunter & New England Local Health District*.

32. Riddle et al., "Towards a National Strategy," 460.

33. Riddle et al., "Towards a National Strategy," 460.

psychiatric admission as a result of AFP FTAT referral to mental health services.<sup>34</sup> However, these statistics do not reveal whether those inpatient admissions were voluntary or involuntary. Ultimately, of all the cases that were initially assessed as being of moderate or high concern, 88% were reduced to a low level of concern.<sup>35</sup>

A closer look reveals that 13% of the total referrals were initially assessed as high concern, yet 91% of these cases were managed to low, and an additional 9% were managed down to moderate concern.<sup>36</sup> Thus, at the end of the first year, no individuals had kept their high concern. The positive results from AFP FTAT's first year of operation echo a similar case study completed by the UK Fixated Threat Assessment Centre.<sup>37</sup> However, even though the AFP FTAT example demonstrates the efficacy of AFTACs in reducing the security threat fixated persons pose, it does not reveal whether involuntary detention was a necessary factor in reducing the concern level for certain fixated individuals.

It could be argued that the threat level of fixated persons could be increased through premature detention. It is the experience of the Fixated Research Group that invasive intervention in cases assessed as being of lower concern can potentially increase the level of risk that the fixated person poses to the community.<sup>38</sup> This scenario is analogous to that found in offender rehabilitation cases where the common mode of thought is that the intensity of treatment should match the risk level of the offender.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, AFTACs never consider involuntary detention for low risk cases. However, there is a great deal of grey area with respect to moderate concern cases. In order to absolve this issue, AFTACs turn to legislation that dictates that an individual can only be detained involuntarily if there is no other care of a less restrictive kind reasonably available.<sup>40</sup> The definition of "reasonable," however, allows

34. Riddle, et al., "Towards a National Strategy," 462.

35. Riddle, et al., "Towards a National Strategy," 461.

36. Riddle, et al., "Towards a National Strategy," 461.

37. D. V. James et al., "Persistence in stalking: a comparison of associations in general forensic and public figure samples," *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2010): 283–305.

38. James et al., "Implementing," 19.

39. D. A. Andrews, James Bonta, and R. D. Hoge, "Classification for Effective Rehabilitation: Rediscovering Psychology," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 17, no. 1 (March 1990): 20.

40. See *Mental Health Act 2007* (NSW) ss 12(1)(b), *Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic) ss 5(d), *Mental Health Act 2016* (Qld) ss 3(2)(b).

for a wide scope and therein lies the potential for AFTACs to abuse this definition and detain individuals unnecessarily in order to gain better control over the threat they pose.

Finally, the case of Fiona Wilson, a whistleblower who worked for Origin Energy, is just one example of an instance in which AFTACs have arguably acted outside their purview and detained citizens unnecessarily.<sup>41</sup> In 2014, Wilson sent photographs of evidence of tampering within the investigation of Origin Energy to the Queensland Employment Minister. However, Wilson had also attached multiple photos of herself with a 22 caliber rifle. The Minister then referred Wilson to the Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (QFTAC), which detained her and injected her with an antipsychotic drug, aripiprazole, which is commonly used in the treatment of schizophrenia.

QFTAC made the claim that Wilson was delusional, but an independent clinical consulting psychologist concluded that she was simply suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. Without access to QFTAC files it is impossible to make an accurate determination of the appropriateness of QFTACs intervention. However, the publicly available evidence seems to suggest that Wilson had no intention of harming the Minister or anyone else and thus immediate involuntary detention was not necessary for the safety of herself and others, as per the *Mental Health Act 2016* (Qld) s 12. This case has yet to be resolved by the courts but this is just one instance which demonstrates that, while legislation is in place to protect individuals from unnecessary and invasive intervention, the wide scope of the legislation and the ambiguity of the terminology provides potential for these processes to be abused. This leads to great difficulty in determining whether involuntary detention of fixated persons can ever be considered necessary for the safety of the public.

### Evaluation

The involuntary detention of fixated persons on mental health grounds remains a complicated issue. It is evident that there is a link between fixated persons and mental health, that fixated persons pose a serious threat to society, and that involuntary detention by AFTACs can prove effective at reducing the security risk posed by fixated persons.

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41. "Are the Thought Police Coming?" *Blot Report*, May 7, 2018, <http://www.blotreport.com/australian-politics/are-the-thought-police-coming/>.

Despite these findings, there is not yet enough data to definitively determine whether involuntary detention is a necessary aspect of risk management. When making a judgment using only currently available information, it is evident that involuntary detention should only be undertaken by AFTACs if three criteria are met: the case is assessed as high concern, immediate detention is necessary to prevent danger to the community, and there is no less invasive treatment option available. This thesis is supported by evidence that when each state complies with their mental health legislation, the involuntary detention of fixated persons has been an effective method of managing the security risk such individuals pose. It is only when the legislation is not followed that involuntary detention has the potential to lead to an increased risk of harm or human rights abuses. Further research is necessary to gain a greater understanding of how involuntary detention affects the security threat posed by fixated persons on both a short- and long-term basis. These findings will allow for broader limitations to be placed on AFTACs' power, which will ensure that a fixated person's rights to liberty and autonomy are preserved.





## Motivations in Motion: Drivers of Lone Wolf Attacks

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*Alyssa Coons*

### Introduction

In the wild, a lone wolf separates from the pack to hunt and live. The lone wolf is often characterized as being more vigorous and aggressive than other wolves. Lone wolves are considered to be “dangerous predators” and “accomplished apex killers” with alpha personalities.<sup>1</sup> The typical animal hierarchy presents alpha wolves as the head of the pack and omegas as the followers who are often bullied, afflicted with inter-pack conflict, and forced to live with minimal support from the pack. In fact, omega wolves often abandon the pack as the result of receiving continuous abuse, a circumstance that gives rise to the term “lone wolf terrorists” to describe individual actors who commit violence while remaining unaffiliated with organized terrorist groups or networks. These individuals often become radicalized due to a combination of personal vendettas, psychological components, and individual motivations, which commonly stem from their perceived injustices. Through the analysis of right-wing extremist, jihadist, and single interest “lone wolf” case studies, it has become evident that no single motivation drives lone wolf terrorism, but rather these attacks are driven by an interplay of factors, individual processes, interpersonal relations, and socio-political and cultural circumstances;<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, the most prevalent motives in propelling lone wolf attacks have been alienation and political or personal grievances that which fabricate their individual ideologies.

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1. Orlandrew E. Danzell and Lisandra M. Maisonet Montañez, “Understanding the Lone Wolf Terror Phenomena: Assessing Current Profiles,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism & Political Aggression* 8, no. 2 (May 2016): 135–159.

2. Mark S. Hamm and Ramón Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

However, lone wolf terrorism remains a multi-faceted crime that experts unceasingly debate due to its vast complexity. In fact, scholars still dispute the mere definition of lone wolf terrorism; they also draw a fine line between “lone wolves” and small terrorist networks. For the purpose of this study, individuals are considered “lone wolves” when the attack involves anywhere from one to three persons, as defined by Christopher Hewitt. A terrorist organization will be defined as four or more people.<sup>3</sup> The debate that surrounds lone wolf terrorism does not cease at the terminology; in fact, these attacks remain difficult to counter as there is no single profile of these actors, and experts still do not fully understand their mindsets and motivations.<sup>4</sup> Even though many case studies and personal interviews have been conducted, researchers cannot identify the “tipping point” or the root of radicalization as it remains a combination of personal and political factors.<sup>5</sup>

Many successful interviews have been conducted with lone wolf terrorists; however, the true motivations or drivers of attacks may not be revealed because they can lie or display psychopathic tendencies.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, with our current understanding of the personal and political motives of lone wolf terrorists, it remains intractable to firmly identify and distinguish the preconditions from the direct cause of attack.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, various scholars have devised general typologies for “at-risk individuals” who are likely to commit an act of terrorism—and to do so independently.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the scope of the research conducted for this essay includes three case studies—a single interest, jihadist, and right-wing extremist—in order to potentially correlate the personal motivations across these diverse groups.

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3. Hamm and Spaaij, *Lone Wolf*.

4. Jan Leenaars and Alastair Reed, “Understanding Lone Wolves: Towards a Theoretical Framework for Comparative Analysis,” *International Centre for Counter Terrorism*, Apr. 2016, [www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ICCT-Leenaars-Reed-Understanding-Lone-Wolves-April-2016.pdf](http://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ICCT-Leenaars-Reed-Understanding-Lone-Wolves-April-2016.pdf).

5. Hamm and Spaaij, *Lone Wolf*.

6. Jessica Eve Stern, “X: A Case Study of a Swedish Neo-Nazi and His Reintegration into Swedish Society,” *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 7 Apr. 2014, doi:10.1002/bsl.2119.

7. Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 379–399, [www.jstor.org/stable/421717](http://www.jstor.org/stable/421717).

8. Raffaello Pantucci, “A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists,” *ICSR*, April 5, 2100, <https://icsr.info/2011/04/05/a-typology-of-lone-wolves-preliminary-analysis-of-lone-islamist-terrorists/>.

Typologies for at-risk individuals generally occur in three categories: the definitional, behaviorist, and the radicalization approach. The definitional approach characterizes lone wolves by utilizing behavioral and personality trait typologies,<sup>9,10</sup> while the behaviorist approach examines the psyche of the actor aligned to deviant characteristics, including “adolescence, education and training, relationships, ideologies, and so on.”<sup>11</sup> Finally, the radicalization approach, which exists as the focus of this essay, integrates “psychological and environmental determinants in profiling lone wolves.”<sup>12</sup> Even though this approach proves to be the least developed of the three, it most efficiently explains the personal motivations and vendettas of lone wolves. According to Wilner and Dubouloz, radicalization subsists as “a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence.”<sup>13</sup> Despite the popular belief that lone wolves must suffer from a mental disorder or psychopathy, McCauley and Moskalkenko prove that normal people can be moved towards violent behavior through the process of radicalization.<sup>14</sup>

Analogously, the internal pack conflict theory and the transformative learning theory complement the radicalization theory. The internal pack conflict theory, constructed by Danzell and Montañez, provides a micro-analysis of key personality and environmental drivers in the radicalization process.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, transformative learning theory explains the process of radicalization as three intertwined phases: the trigger phase, the process of changing phases, and the outcome phase, while demonstrating how trigger factors cultivate a critical reflection of one’s existing beliefs.<sup>16</sup> Occurring simultaneously with other phases, the trigger may be exacerbated by factors such as illness, economic hardship,

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9. Pantucci, “Typology.”

10. Hamm and Spaaij, *Lone Wolf*.

11. Danzell and Maisonet Montañez, “Understanding the Lone Wolf.”

12. Danzell and Maisonet Montañez, “Understanding the Lone Wolf.”

13. Alex S. Wilner and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz, “Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization,” *Global Change, Peace & Security* 22, no. 1 (February 2010): 33–51, 38.

14. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko, “Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual from Radical Opinion to Radical Action,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 1 (Jan 2014): 69–85.

15. Danzell and Maisonet Montañez, “Understanding the Lone Wolf.”

16. Wilner and Dubouloz, “Homegrown Terrorism.”

or socio-political and personal grievances. The process of changing phases is where radicalization occurs, and sometimes “violent behavior takes place in the final phase and is a reflection of the solidification and empowerment of the individual’s new identity, values, and belief system.”<sup>17</sup> The process of radicalization remains rooted in a combination of personal and political motives, psychological disturbances, and inclinations towards social ineptitude; even though many terrorists become radicalized in similar means, the rate of radicalization varies.<sup>18</sup>

### Roots of Radicalization

Radicalization, or the connection of trigger factors with the outcome phase, remains an integration of extreme ideals that essentially result in the formation of an ideology.<sup>19</sup> Even though the individual pathway to terroristic action remains too varied to construct a precise profile of individual characteristics, “but there remains the possibility that lone wolf terrorists—those who act alone, without group support—may share characteristics that could provide a useful profile of potential for lone wolf violence.”<sup>20</sup> According to a study by Hamm and Spaaij on five cases from the United States, Australia, Israel, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, radicalization remains the result of an interplay of abuse, alienation, personal or political grievances, personal victimization, cultural factors, ideology, triggering factors, and the influence of radical group dynamics. Even though our current understanding of the process and its triggering factors remain limited, the interaction of these factors has shown a significant impact on radicalizing individuals.<sup>21</sup> For instance, alienation exists as a common root as many lone wolf actors have faced alienation from their peers, family, society, organizations, or terrorist groups.<sup>22</sup>

Crenshaw says, “What limited data we have on individual terrorists [. . .] suggest that the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality,”<sup>23</sup> while Hamm and Spaaij assert that many suffer

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17. Wilner and Dubouloz, “Homegrown Terrorism,” 48.

18. Jan Leenaars and Alastair Reed, “Understanding Lone Wolves.”

19. Jeffrey D. Simon, *Lone Wolf Terrorism: Understanding the Growing Threat* (n.p., Prometheus Books, 2016).

20. McCauley and Moskalenko, “Toward a Profile,” 83.

21. Hamm and Spaaij, *Lone Wolf*.

22. Jessica Eve Stern, “X: A Case Study.”

23. Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” 390.

from mental illness, usually in the shape of anxiety, depression, or schizophrenia; however, they found that these actors still did not lose contact with reality.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, various cultural factors can play a role; for instance, jihadists believe Islam remains under attack by Western crusaders, and “the actions they take in the defence of Islam are proportional, just, and religiously sanctioned.”<sup>25</sup> In other cultures, it may be seen as a sign of weakness to attain necessary help for mental illnesses or grievances.<sup>26</sup> Thus, any personal or political injustice may act as a source of radicalization. Finally, the formation of an ideology may serve as the factor that drives an individual towards an act of violence, for many lone wolf terrorists attain ideologies based on perceived injustices or radical terrorist group ideals.

### Psychology of Self-Sacrifice

The personal motivations of lone wolf terrorist attacks can also be attributed to evolutionary psychological components, including strong reciprocity, group identification, and altruism. Even though many undergo the process of radicalization, not everyone carries out atrocious attacks of violence, and according to McCauley and Moskaleiko, the difference remains in the basis of evolutionary psychology.<sup>27</sup> Strong reciprocity, or the natural willingness to punish moral transgressors, attributes for lone wolf actors’ ability to commit non-kin sacrifices.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, individual actors often sacrifice themselves in order to punish transgressors as their targets “represent a larger human audience whose reactions terrorists seek.”<sup>29</sup> In the “Prisoner’s Dilemma” experiment, “participants face a choice between cooperating and defecting, where defecting means choosing self-interest over the rewards of cooperation.”<sup>30</sup> Defection is always rewarded, while cooperation is rewarded only when the other chooses to cooperate as well and causes

24. Hamm and Spaaij, *Lone Wolf*.

25. McCauley and Moskaleiko, “Toward a Profile,” 70.

26. Ruth C. White, “The Culture of Mental Health,” *Psychology Today*, 2011, [www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culture-in-mind/201109/the-culture-mental-health](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culture-in-mind/201109/the-culture-mental-health).

27. McCauley and Moskaleiko, “Toward a Profile.”

28. McCauley and Moskaleiko, “Toward a Profile.”

29. Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” 379.

30. Sophia Moskaleiko and Clark McCauley, “The Psychology of Lone-Wolf Terrorism,” *Counseling Psychology Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (June 2011), 115–126, 121.

punishment if the other defects. At first, most individuals are willing to cooperate and pay extra to punish those who do not cooperate. In fact, research shows that not only those who suffer are ready to punish the defector, but a third party, between 40 to 60% of participants who did not personally suffer, often remains willing as well.<sup>31</sup>

Lone wolf terrorists will commit violence in order to punish others for the group or cause they identify with, even if they were not personally affected by the injustices. For example, Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian far-right terrorist who perpetrated the 2011 Norway attacks, committed these atrocities in order to preserve European culture because of the recent Muslim immigration into Norway. Even though he never faced injustice from Muslim immigration, he was willing to pay the price of committing these attacks in order to “save” the people and culture of Europe.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, group identification serves as the proximate explanation to many lone wolf attacks. If an individual has a positive identification with a group and a perception that the group is being victimized, a negative identification and likely conflict will ensue. Despite researchers inability to identify the precise relationship between empathy and aggression towards a perpetrator, group identification has proven to be increasingly important in driving solo actors as it allows them to identify with a purpose greater than themselves.<sup>33</sup>

### Case Study Selection

The following case studies have been selected because of their single-interest, Jihadist, and right-wing extremist origins in order to establish a potential pattern of commonality among personal motivations. The cases selected fit the definition of lone wolf terrorism as stated above by Christopher Hewitt, and they similarly maintain political roots, for the US Intelligence Community defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence.” The case studies are based in the United States and exclude individual US-born actors that execute in foreign states. Finally, these actors were groomed and selected for their

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31. Ernst Fehr and Urs Fischbacher, “Third-Party Punishment and Social Norms,” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 25, no. 2 (March 2004): 63–87.

32. Scott Stewart, “Norway: Lessons from a Successful Lone Wolf Attacker” *Stratfor*, 28 July 2011, [worldview.stratfor.com/article/norway-lessons-successful-lone-wolf-attacker](http://worldview.stratfor.com/article/norway-lessons-successful-lone-wolf-attacker).

33. Moskalkenko and McCauley, “The Psychology of Lone-Wolf Terrorism.”

well-documented backgrounds and varying degrees of motivations that drove them towards radicalization.

*Case Study 1: Timothy McVeigh*

Timothy McVeigh, the American militant who carried out the Oklahoma City Bombing on April 19, 1995, killed 168 and injured hundreds by detonating a truck bomb in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, making it the deadliest US domestic terrorist attack in history.<sup>34</sup> Growing up in New York, he faced severe bullying from his peers and instability in his home life. In fact, he was often referred to as “noodle McVeigh” by students because of his scrawny nature and athletic inability, and he constantly felt a failure in comparison to his athletic father. Furthermore, his parents divorced, furthering his isolation as he lost a natural source of support. Remaining with his father, Timothy was forced to simply sit by and watch his two sisters and mother walk out the door. Nevertheless, the split made him closer with his grandfather, who introduced him into guns and engendered a vigorous passion within him. For the first time in his life, he became excited about something, for he claimed guns turned him from a weak boy into a confident, empowered man.<sup>35</sup> He initiated his self-education by immersing himself in books about firearms, self-defense, and physical and psychological training manuals, including *The Turner Diaries* by former American Nazi Party official William Pierce.

In the army, McVeigh met Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier, who engendered similar radical ideologies. In addition, McVeigh faced various personal issues with other soldiers as he attempted to grapple with his hatred towards the United States, which he perceived to be “the bully he had avoided all his life.” McVeigh was aggrieved at the army for consistently lying to the troops, failing to report friendly fire incidents, and rejecting his special forces assessment. He believed that the government as engaging in “reverse discrimination,” and the anti-government novels he read only reaffirmed his beliefs. Finally, the Ruby Ridge incident, the Waco Siege, and the Federal Assault Weapons Ban advanced his radicalization process as he viewed these occurrences as citizen rights violations.<sup>36</sup>

34. Danzell and Maisonet Montañez, “Understanding the Lone Wolf.”

35. Lou Michel and Can Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing* (New York, Harper’s 2001), 23.

36. Danzell and Maisonet Montañez, “Understanding the Lone Wolf.”

*Case Study 2: Theodore “Ted” Kaczynski (The Unabomber)*

Between 1978 and 1995, Theodore Kaczynski killed three and injured at least 24 by packaging and delivering 16 small bombs across the US. According to Kaczynski, he grew up in an “unhappy home” as the academic demands from his parents derived his social isolation. In fact, he was so intellectually advanced compared to his peers that he skipped the sixth and eleventh grade and eventually entered Harvard University at sixteen. Throughout high school, he struggled to attain a stable identity or a place where he belonged; in fact, his class was the first after *Brown v Board of Education*, so it lacked a sense of community as there was “no commonality among the student body.” He imagined that college would be better; however, Harvard only further isolated him from his peers. As he entered college, he was declared one of the “brightest freshmen” and was designated to live in the dean’s house with only 20 other students in the pursuit of creating a “nurturing, intimate environment.”

However, he found the opposite; his group, already isolated from their peers, further secluded themselves by staying in their individual rooms. Henry A. Murray, who had formerly monitored psychological profiling in the OSS,<sup>37</sup> deceived Kaczynski into subjecting himself to over 200 hours of purposely brutalizing psychological experiments. Consisting of “vehement, sweeping, and personally abusive attacks,” these interrogations attempted to dismantle their egos as well as their most cherished ideals and beliefs.

According to Sally Johnson, a forensic psychiatrist with the US Bureau of Prisons, the “Unabomber” was created from the combination of two beliefs: his obligation to get revenge against society for its malicious tendencies and the transformation of his intense anger towards his family. Moreover, many general education classes at Harvard engendered a “culture of despair” as they preached anti-technology messages and exclaimed the dangers of scientific and technological advancements, which closely resembles Kaczynski’s philosophy. After leaving Harvard, he took up various unsatisfying teaching positions which drove him to “retreat to a survivalist lifestyle.” Living in a cabin in Montana, Kaczynski harbored his intense anger and radical ideolo-

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37. Johnathon D. Moreno, “Harvard’s Experiment on the Unabomber, Class of ‘62,” *Psychology Today*, [www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/impromptu-man/201205/harvards-experiment-the-unabomber-class-62](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/impromptu-man/201205/harvards-experiment-the-unabomber-class-62).



gies in his manifesto, known as the “Industrial Society and its Future,” and began his reign of terror through the production and distribution of package bombs.<sup>38</sup>

### *Case Study 3: The Tsarnaev Brothers*

Commonly known as the “Boston Marathon Bombers,” Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev killed three and wounded hundreds by detonating two pressure cooker bombs near the finish line of the race. Immigrating to the United States in 2002, the Tsarnaev family left their home in the southern Russian region of Dagestan, where they lived for a year after leaving their childhood country of Kyrgyzstan. The family received political asylum in the states due to fear of deadly persecution for their Chechen ethnicity; however, they left Tamerlan with his uncle in Kyrgyzstan for the following two years, isolating him from his own family. Even in the States, the family always longed to return to Dagestan or Chechnya, for they felt extremely isolated due to the Muslim prejudice that lingered after the 9/11 attacks. Thus, Tamerlan decided to return to Dagestan for six months in 2012, one year before the bombing, and left his wife and young daughter in the States.

In Dagestan, he discovered a place full of young men that bonded over their strong sense of importance, their passion for the Quran, and their obligations to the Islamic Faith. For the first time in his life, Tamerlan found a purpose and a sense of identification when he joined The Union of the Just, an Islamic organization that preaches nonviolence.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Dagestan was home to an insurgency pursuing an Islamic theocracy that traveled to Iraq to join ISIS forces and fight the US occupation and Russian forces (al-Shishani). This experience, paired with self-radicalization from the internet, caused Tamerlan to become increasingly angry at the world-wide discrimination against Muslims and the American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Dzhokhar, religiously following the path of his older brother, posted on various Islamic websites, including links to videos of the Syrian Civil War and websites advocating for Chechnya’s independence and supporting his

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38. Alston Chase, “Harvard and the Making of the Unabomber,” *The Atlantic*, 14 Aug. 2017, [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/06/harvard-and-the-making-of-the-unabomber/378239/](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/06/harvard-and-the-making-of-the-unabomber/378239/).

39. David Greene and Marsha Gessen, “The Brothers’ Examines Motivation Behind Boston Marathon Bombing,” *NPR*, 3 Apr. 2015, [www.npr.org/2015/04/03/397213144/-the-brothers-examines-motivation-behind-boston-marathon-bombing](http://www.npr.org/2015/04/03/397213144/-the-brothers-examines-motivation-behind-boston-marathon-bombing).

Islamic worldviews. Despite living a normal life and attending college, Dzhokhar also remained aggrieved by the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the murder of Muslims, and he became radicalized by Anwar La-Awlaki, a radical Islam cleric, with his brother.<sup>40</sup>

### Analysis

Through the analysis of these three diverse cases, it can be inferred that the most common roots of radicalization are alienation and political or personal grievances, often in the form of abuse. These roots often drive the formation of an ideology, which essentially propels an attack. For example, each case study actor explicitly faced isolation and/or alienation, either from their family, friends, or culture. Timothy McVeigh became isolated from his family at a young age when the family split, and he remained alienated from his peers as they constantly bullied him. In the army, he was also alienated by fellow soldiers who labeled him as racist for making derogatory comments towards black soldiers and solely distributing the clean-up jobs to them.

Like McVeigh, Kaczynski endured extreme isolation throughout his life. He did not make long-lasting friends and could never identify with peers; and the lack of cohesion after *Brown v. Board of Education* did not help. This sense of isolation continued through and after college, for he lived independently from his peers and did not interact with anyone within his “gifted program.” His several extremely unsatisfying teaching positions then coerced him to move to an isolated cabin in the Montana woods, where he transcribed his manifesto, mailed explosives, and lived until he was arrested.

Comparably, the Tsarnaev brothers were alienated from their culture, heritage, and peers due to the family’s political exiles. The family identified as Chechens; however, the kids never visited to touch base with their heritage, cultivating in the absence of an identity and making it extremely difficult for the two brothers to make friends or even feel at home in a country. Tamerlan, especially, felt extremely isolated as he was separated from his family for two years when they moved to the States, and he was never able to attain citizenship in the United States due to an ongoing investigation. He also was never able to find steady

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40. Bev Ford and Corky Siemaszko, “Dzhokhar Tsarnaev Was ‘Radicalized’ by Anwar Al-Awlaki, and Visited Shooting Range Month before Boston Marathon Bombing,” *New York Daily News*, 9 Apr. 2018, [www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/dzhokhar-tsarnaev-radicalized-anwar-al-awlaki-expert-article-1.2160612](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/dzhokhar-tsarnaev-radicalized-anwar-al-awlaki-expert-article-1.2160612).

work or provide for his impoverished family. Thus, when he finally found men when the same religious obligations and ideals in Dagestan, he attained a sense of identity he thought he must repay as part of a group identification mentality.

Finally, the people in these three instances endured political and personal grievances that drove them to develop ideologies. For instance, Timothy McVeigh personally dealt with the separation of his family, abuse from peers as a child, and issues with other soldiers in the army, while politically enduring “reverse discrimination” and “infringements on civil rights” in the Ruby Ridge Incident, the Waco Siege, and the Federal Assault Weapons Ban.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Kaczynski faced both personal and political grievances, for he personally faced emotional, mental, and spiritual abuse from engaging in the “ethically indefensible” Murray experiments.<sup>42</sup> He also desperately called for an anti-technology revolution, and he proclaimed this political grievance within his manifesto. The Tsarnaev brothers analogously faced political and personal grievances. The brothers employed group identification, for their political grievance existed as the American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan and the mass killing of Muslims, even though they were never directly affected by it. They faced personal grievances because they were cast out by their family for not living in their ethnic homeland of Chechnya due to war, which made it difficult for them to attain a stable identity.<sup>43</sup> Personally desiring to make a difference in the world, the brothers grieved to do something “that really mattered” and found it easiest to make that change with a weapon.<sup>44</sup> Along with isolation, personal and political grievances most commonly drive lone wolf terrorism as it historically propels the development of an ideology.

### Counter Arguments

Even though many subject matter experts claim that case studies are not relevant in accurately depicting typologies, they provide a detailed insight into the specific characteristics and personal motivations

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41. Danzell and Maisonet Montañez, “Understanding the Lone Wolf.”

42. Chase, “Harvard and the Making of the Unabomber.”

43. Peter Finn, et al. “Tsarnaev Brothers’ Homeland Was War-Torn Chechnya.” *The Washington Post*, 19 Apr. 2013, [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/details-emerge-on-suspected-boston-bombers/2013/04/19/ef2c2566-a8e4-11e2-a8e2-5b98cb59187f\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/details-emerge-on-suspected-boston-bombers/2013/04/19/ef2c2566-a8e4-11e2-a8e2-5b98cb59187f_story.html).

44. Greene and Gessen, “The Brothers’ Examines Motivation.”

that many lone wolf terrorists share across different ideologies. It can also be argued that rigidly profiling potential lone wolf terrorists can ignore the possibility of threats outside the specific profile; however, Alex Shone of the Henry Jackson society, a British-based think tank, assures that the most effective counter terrorism response remains “knowing not who will carry out an attack, but rather in knowing how such attacks are formulated” by specifically understanding the differentiating roots of radicalization.<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusion

Even though experts still cannot identify the specific roots of radicalization, it remains possible to deter future attacks by understanding the backgrounds and triggering factors of former lone wolf perpetrators, so we may profile and monitor those with similar backgrounds. Through the analysis of three independent case studies, it can be determined that those who face extreme isolation and socio-political grievances pose the greatest risk; thus, the rest of the “pack,” or society, needs to be aware of these motivations in order to deter lone wolves and their malicious attacks.

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45. Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, “Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: Some CT Approaches Addressed,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, [www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/preventing-lone-wolf/html](http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/preventing-lone-wolf/html).



## American Grand Strategy: Balancing Against China

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*Mason R. Taylor*

For the last twenty years, China has seen an astounding burst of political, economical, and industrial power that challenges the United States as the global hegemon. This new challenge to US influence makes an already complex relationship even more complicated. These two very strong states find themselves in a head-to-head competition that threatens the very fabric that holds their bilateral and multilateral relationships together. China was once seen as a country that “could never become a first-class military power” and whose culture was “not conducive to any rapid technical or economic development,”<sup>1</sup> yet they are slowly becoming “one of the most challenging and consequential bilateral relationships the United States has ever had to manage.”<sup>2</sup> Since opening vital links to the West by implementing an Open Door policy in 1978, China raised itself to a position of power through economic entrapment of US businesses, aggressive military expansion, expanding global influence under the Belt and Road Initiative, and its growing ability to conduct cyber-warfare.

China’s ascent to power is one of the first challenges to US global influence since the end of the Cold War and has left many of America’s leaders in a state of confusion. From this confusion comes the temptation to contain China, much like what was done to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Though implementing a containment strategy against the Soviet Union was the right move to make at the end of World War II, striving to do so against China is no longer possible for

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1. Victor D. Cha, *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia* (Princeton University Press, 2018).

2. Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>.

two reasons. First, China, with its developing diplomatic relationships, informational capabilities, growing military power, and strong economic influence, has already broken out of East Asia and established itself as a competitive global power. This alone makes a containment policy ineffective simply because China has already begun to compete with the United States in various parts of the international arena. Second, due to the vast web of economic and political relationships that exist between the United States and China, a containment strategy presents serious risks of straining an already complex relationship and of potentially escalating existing contentions. Therefore, the United States, in hopes of maintaining its democratic influence throughout East Asia and the rest of the world, should adopt a strategic balancing approach to China. The United States can accomplish these objectives by strengthening its regional partners and allies through economic investment, revitalizing its naval power in an effort to secure sea lines of communication, deepening its trade investments with regional organizations, and bolstering its economy to maintain a strategic balance.

China's ascension to power presents unique challenges that threaten not only America's global influence but that of the international order as a whole. Beginning in 1978, former Chinese president Deng Xiaoping opened China's economic doors to the world, setting in motion the machine that would slowly accumulate power and bring China into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Though many global challenges arose with China's rise to power, at the center lies the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—an economic "Silk Road" megaproject proposed by China's current president Xi Jinping in 2013 to physically connect countries to Asia through continental and maritime highways.

Although the Silk Road was proposed as a plan to uphold global "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit,"<sup>3</sup> there is a growing concern that China has ulterior motives that could pose serious repercussions for countries that participate in the BRI. One of the chief concerns of BRI critics is the amount of debt that poorer countries have accumulated since taking part in the initiative and the resulting realm of influence to which they become

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3. Xi Jinping, "Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (speech, Beijing, China, May 17, 2017), Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the People's Republic of China, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1465819.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1465819.shtml).

subject. While the BRI appears to be an attempt to provide poorer nations with potential economic benefits, Gary White argues, “this borrowing trap will be used to exert significant leverage on participating countries and their leaders when they inevitably find themselves in financial distress.”<sup>4</sup> As countries effectively surrender their sovereign power to China through various monetary loans, they become subject to the Chinese Government, which will leverage its position to obtain strategic advantages in international systems across the globe.

A good example of the potential subjection that the BRI puts on countries is Sri Lanka. In 2002, the Sri Lankan government began to develop infrastructure projects that were designed to strengthen and transform their economy. Among those developments was the building of a seaport in the southern district of Hambantota, which, according to Jonathan E. Hill, was hoped to “transform a small fishing town into a major shipping hub.”<sup>5</sup> However, with an economy unable to provide the necessary funds to build this port and fund their other projects, the Sri Lankan government, led by former president Mahina Rajapaksa, turned to China to receive the financing it needed to make these projects a reality. Upon being elected in 2005, Hillman claims, President Rajapaksa led “Sri Lanka . . . on a series of ambitious projects. Many of these big-ticket projects—including an international airport, a cricket stadium, and the port—had three things in common: they used Chinese financing, Chinese contractors, and Rajapaksa’s name.”<sup>6</sup> Rajapaksa, being from Hambantota, had a special interest in developing the port and turning his home district into a lucrative market that would contribute to the building of Sri Lanka’s economy. In his eagerness to pursue these projects, however, Rajapaksa put his “political ambitions ahead of market demands” and failed “to consider Hambantota port within a larger development strategy.”<sup>7</sup> The port was originally planned to act as a fueling station, but Rajapaksa expanded that plan and wanted it to include other maritime activities.

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4. Gary White. “Is China’s Belt and Road Initiative a Threat to the West?” *Charles Stanley*, April 26, 2019, <https://www.charles-stanley.co.uk/group/cs-live/china’s-belt-and-road-initiative-threat-west>.

5. Jonathan E. Hillman, “Game of Loans: How China Bought Hambantota,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/game-loans-how-china-bought-hambantota>.

6. Hillman, “Game of Loans.”

7. Hillman, “Game of Loans.”

The problem with expanding the plan for port Hambantota was that many of those services were already being provided in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital port. With that being the case, and with Rajapaksa losing the presidential seat to Maithripala Sirisena in 2015, port construction halted and deals were reexamined.<sup>8</sup> Halting construction to the port proved to be a stepping stone that led the Sri Lankan government to surrender its port to the Chinese to satisfy the high-interest loans it had taken to construct the port in the first place. The result, Hillman explains, was that "by 2015, some 95 percent of Sri Lanka's government revenue was going toward servicing its debt, and the government initiated debt renegotiations with China. Talks culminated in the 70 percent equity and 99-year lease deal."<sup>9</sup>

China, now in possession of the Hambantota port, finds itself in a strategic position that increases its economic foothold in Asia and expands the reach of the BRI. Hillman further states:

This . . . explains how Hambantota became a cautionary tale in Asia's infrastructure contest. The port was intended to transform a small fishing town into a major shipping hub. In pursuit of that dream, Sri Lanka relied on Chinese financing. But Sri Lanka could not repay those loans, and in 2017, it agreed to give China a controlling equity stake in the port and a 99-year lease for operating it. On the day of the handover, China's official news agency tweeted triumphantly, "Another milestone along path of #BeltandRoad."<sup>10</sup>

While China's true intentions with Sri Lanka are debated, the story of Hambantota sheds a cautionary light on the BRI that should inform countries seeking to obtain deals and loans with China. The BRI, though arguably not as sinister as some critics have made it out to be, could be an attempt by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to not only expand China's economic influence but also establish a stronger political and military foothold. As was noted earlier, Sri Lanka stands as an example for other countries that are currently engaged with the BRI to do their due diligence to prevent similar events from crippling their ability to grow their economies.

China's growing economic influence and strategic positioning has

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8. Hillman, "Game of Loans."

9. Hillman, "Game of Loans."

10. Hillman, "Game of Loans."



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made room for it to build up its military and begin exercising its capabilities throughout the Indo–Pacific region and other parts of the globe. Despite having some military power after the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the official fighting force of the CCP, was mainly a territorial defense force that had a limited army and a large militarized Coast Guard. As the Chinese economy began to grow, however, so did its defense budget, which allowed the PLA to ramp up its strength and capabilities.

In *The Big Stick*, Eliot A. Cohen suggests that “the real Chinese buildup began in the 1990s and accelerated in the 2000s. . . . And with increased spending and development have come ever increasing military power, particularly in the domains most relevant to the United States—air, sea, and space.”<sup>11</sup> Though many facets make up the PLA, the purpose of this argument is to highlight the buildup of China’s naval forces and Anti-Access Area Denial (A2/AD) strategies, which in large part are designed to undermine the United States’ strong military structure throughout the Pacific.

The United States has been able to maintain a global military superiority that has been unchallenged by any power since the end of the Cold War. Military supremacy has allowed the United States to spread its influence throughout the world and maintain a level of power that supports its role as global hegemon. As retired US Airforce Brigadier General Robert Spalding explains in *Stealth War: How China Took Over While America’s Elite Slept*, the United States “achieved military dominance largely as a result of President Ronald Regan’s ‘peace through strength’ policies, spending more money on weapons, equipment, and armed forces than any other nation.”<sup>12</sup> Even though the United States maintains the most dominant military in the world, it has been slow to recognize the steps that the CCP has taken to develop the PLA over the last two decades. This, along with some of the more recent military actions, the United States has taken throughout East Asia, poses serious concerns regarding the United States’ ability to wage and win a major war with China.

Spalding also argues that the United States’ slow recognition of

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11. Eliot A. Cohen, *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 100.

12. Robert Stanley Spalding and Seth Kaufman, *Stealth War: How China Took Over While Americas Elite Slept*. (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2019), 81.

this build-up “has resulted in ceding gains—strategic, geographical, technological, and digital—to the People’s Liberation Army.”<sup>13</sup> Amidst these advancing military gains are the PLA’s development of missile systems and naval technologies to bolster its strength and strategic positioning throughout the East and South China seas.

On October 1, 2019, the CCP staged a parade to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The CCP showed off its new military capabilities by putting its newly developed strategic weapon systems on display. Covering this event, Ian Williams and Masao Dahlgren observed:

Among the pageantry was a military parade in which the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) performed a highly orchestrated show of strength, exhibiting many of its strategic weapon systems. While China has regularly held such displays in the past, this year’s parade was exceptional for the number and diversity of new, high-tech weapons. . . . Although a carefully choreographed piece of propaganda, the parade nevertheless provides clues about China’s emerging warfighting doctrine. In doing so, it also revealed a nation seeking to supplant the United States as the dominant military and technological power in the Asia–Pacific region.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the development of these strategic weapons systems is the newly developed and ever-growing fleet of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). David Lague states that “in just over two decades, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) . . . has mustered one of the mightiest navies in the world. This increased Chinese firepower at sea—complemented by a missile force that in some areas now outclasses America’s—has changed the game in the Pacific.”<sup>15</sup> While the United States still wields superior naval power, PLAN, in terms of sheer numbers, has the world’s largest fleet and “is also growing faster than any other major navy.”<sup>16</sup> Under the support of these missile systems, the

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13. Spalding and Kaufman, *Stealth War*, 81.

14. Ian Williams and Masao Dahlgren, “More Than Missiles: China Previews Its New Way of War,” *Missile Threat*, November 26, 2019, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/more-than-missiles-china-previews-its-new-way-of-war/>.

15. David Lague, “Special Report: China’s Vast Fleet Is Tipping the Balance in the Pacific,” *Reuters*, April 30, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-army-navy-specialreport-idUSKCN1S612W>.

16. Lague, “Special Report.”

newly developed and ever-growing fleet of PLAN lies at the center of Xi Jinping's vision of exercising total control over the seas off China's coast and is fulfilling its maritime objectives of breaking through what it calls "The First Island Chain" off its main coast.

As China has built itself into an economic global power, it gravitated towards the sea in order to sustain its vast and steady growth. With its focus on the sea, China has endeavored to establish sea lines of communication throughout East Asia and develop a blue water navy. Standing in the way of that development is the military structure of the United States and its allies. In *Red Star Over the Pacific*, Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes explain that The First Island chain "refers to the offshore archipelago that envelops Eurasia's eastern seaboard in its entirety. . . . It centers primarily on the Japanese home islands, the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, and the Philippine Islands."<sup>17</sup>

These islands are central in Chinese strategic thought because the US, since the start of the Cold War, has maintained military power in the western Pacific through the building of forward bases along the First and Second Island chains. As such, the CCP developed a "perennial belief that the United States harbors malign intent toward China and has done so since the early days of the Cold War. . . . Beijing knows it must contend directly with the occupants of The First Island Chain, and especially with the combined military power of the US–Japan alliance."<sup>18</sup> The presence of the United States along The First Island Chain fuels the ongoing development of the PLAN and strengthens China's resolve to break out and assert itself as the dominant regional power. Yoshihara and Holmes state:

China's economic success has drawn it toward the seas, begetting demands that China develop the means to protect its seaborne interests. As Beijing leans seaward, though, it finds itself bumping up against the first island chain, the geographic basis of American primacy in Asia.<sup>19</sup>

Though the Chinese view the presence of the United States as a looming threat, the future of American influence and commitment to The First Island Chain remains unclear.

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17. Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, *Red Star Over the Pacific* (Naval Institute Press, 2019), 71.

18. Yoshihara and Holmes, *Red Star Over the Pacific*, 74–75.

19. Yoshihara and Holmes, *Red Star Over the Pacific*, 99.

Concerns over the United States' commitment to its partners and allies in The First Island Chain were deepened on February 11, 2020, as the Philippines ended a defense agreement that was first signed almost seventy years ago. According to Nick Aspinwall, "Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte decided . . . to end a long-standing defense agreement with the United States, signaling a major break in a US–Philippines military alliance that the United States has long seen as essential to countering the rise of China."<sup>20</sup> While this move by President Duterte was quickly shrugged off by the Trump administration, Aspinwall notes that "defense officials and analysts in both countries expressed grave concern the termination would fuel Beijing's aggressive position in the South China Sea, where it asserts sovereignty over areas claimed by other countries, including the Philippines."<sup>21</sup>

The end of the US–Philippine alliance stands as a primary example of what will happen if the United States continues to take miscalculated steps in East Asia and to distance itself from its allies in The First Island Chain. If the United States wishes to maintain its level of influence throughout the region, it must recommit itself to its allies and partners through maintaining its dominant naval power throughout the First Island Chain. However, that commitment seems to fade with each passing year. James R. Holmes argues that "we [the US] thought China would be a great pushover for way too long, and so we let them start the naval arms race while we dawdled."<sup>22</sup> The inaction put the United States in a position where it is forced to admit that its standing as a global hegemon is slowly coming to a close and that it has a competitor who not only seeks to rival its influence but has the means to do so.

China has also opened a new battlefield, one that remains an enigma to most nations and that China is currently exploiting. The new battlefield lies within cyberspace, and it has become one of the biggest national security threats the United States has faced since 9/11. China's drive in expanding its global economic control and modern military development stems from its belief that war is waged not just through military means, but through all means necessary to accumulate power

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20. Nick Aspinwall, "Duterte Terminates US Defense Pact, Pleasing Trump but Few Others," *Foreign Policy*, February 14, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/14/vfa-philippines-china-duterte-terminates-us-defense-pact-trump/>.

21. Aspinwall, "Duterte Terminates US Defense Pact."

22. Lague, quoting Jame Holmes, *Special Report: China's Vast Fleet Is Tipping the Balance in the Pacific*.

and influence. In *Unrestricted Warfare*, two former PLA colonels, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, state that

new principles of war are no longer “using armed force to compel the enemy to submit to one’s will,” but rather are “using all means, including armed force or nonarmed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one’s interests.”<sup>23</sup>

China, internalizing this philosophy, has looked towards the cyber arena and has developed strategies that allow it to illegally undermine the United States and other Western countries by executing coordinated attacks that hack into various industries and steal intellectual property, disrupt corporate businesses, and thwart economic development. The main actor believed to be behind these attacks is Unit 61398, the PLA’s cyber warfare division. Mandiant, a US-based Internet security firm, refers to cyber-attack groups as Advanced Persistent Threats (APT) and, in tracking many APT groups, tracked what it deems “the most prolific of these groups” to China.<sup>24</sup> These prolific groups, known as APT1, have been tied to illegal cyber activity that has

systematically stolen hundreds of terabytes of data from at least 141 organizations, and has demonstrated the capability and intent to steal from dozens of organizations simultaneously. . . . APT1 has a well-defined attack methodology, honed over years and designed to steal large volumes of valuable intellectual property.<sup>25</sup>

Cyber warfare has become a focal point in China’s accumulation of power. According to Spalding and Kaufman,

stealing technical plans is great for specific purposes that . . . can help destroy industry rivals, drive huge profits, and further strategic goals. But stealing data in bulk and accessing email can be even more valuable, unleashing a trove of information to be used broadly to achieve influence.<sup>26</sup>

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23. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999), 7.

24. Mandiant, “APT1 Exposing One of China’s Cyber Espionage Units.” November 26, 2019, 2. <https://www.fireeye.com/content/dam/fireeye-www/services/pdfs/mandiant-apt1-report.pdf>.

25. Mandiant, “APT1 Exposing One,” 3.

26. Spalding and Kaufman, *Stealth War*, 95.

The growing concerns surrounding this new way of waging war are vast and very complex. Despite its complexity, however, the overall concern surrounding this new approach to warfare is simple to understand and stands as a warning for leaders in both the private and public sectors. While this is an uncomfortable reality, the dangers of cyber warfare present an opportunity for the United States and its allies to recognize the threat China poses to cyberspace and to work together in such a way that they balance out China's power on all fronts, effectively persuading it to abide by international laws.

One of the contributing factors to the ongoing tensions between Washington DC and Beijing is that their approaches to international affairs are not compatible with each other, and this has led to ongoing conflicts throughout the Indo-Pacific, including the current economic trade wars, and has made cybersecurity one of the greatest threats to American national security. As has been discussed, China's grand strategy revolves around the use of military and non-military methods in such a way that it seeks to "fundamentally alter the balance of power in Asia, diminish the vitality of the US-Asian alliance system, and ultimately displace the United States as the Asian leader."<sup>27</sup> So far it has been able to accomplish these goals to varying degrees and has reached a point where it "has acquired the wherewithal to challenge the United States . . . and to slowly chip away at the foundations of the liberal international order globally."<sup>28</sup> It is here that the United States must look at its strategy towards China and alter it to adequately adapt to the ongoing challenges the imbalance presents to the international order.

While there are ideas on how to adapt effectively, the first step is a recognition among the leadership of the United States that China has broken out of East Asia and has emerged as a world-class economic power with advanced military and technological capabilities. Though still a very strong global power, the United States may no longer be the hegemon and must rearrange its strategy in order to maintain its democratic influence. By not doing so, the United States runs the risk of slowly becoming subject to China's totalitarian views and practices as it begins to shift power away from the Western "liberal international

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27. Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley J. Tellis, "Revising US Grand Strategy Toward China," *Council on Foreign Relations*, <https://www.cfr.org/report/revising-us-grand-strategy-toward-china>.

28. Blackwill and Tellis, "Revising US Grand Strategy."

order”<sup>29</sup> and towards itself in hopes of gaining a prominent standing in international governance. This calls into question how to respond properly to a rising power that has already begun challenging Western democracy. While the answer to this question is complex, the United States must avoid the temptation of replicating its Cold War containment strategy and focus on adopting a strategic balancing approach against China.

When establishing an effective strategy to counter a rising power, the United States has tended toward three major approaches that supported its rise to power throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Outlining these approaches, Ashley J. Tellis begins with the most frequented approach throughout history—wage war. Second, use a diplomatic approach to establish ways to internally transform the country to secure common ends. And third, running parallel with the United States’ grand strategy towards the former Soviet Union, implement containment.<sup>30</sup>

While all three have their place in developing US strategy throughout its history, the case of approaching China is unique and requires more pragmatic solutions. The first and last approaches are too radical, while the second does not prove to be enough to change the nature of China’s domestic and foreign policies. The United States needs to develop a strategy under the “presumption that China will continue to grow, among other things, because of its strong economic ties with the United States and the wider international community.”<sup>31</sup>

While many argue that the three previously mentioned approaches are the best way to approach China, and indeed there are potential situations where they would be the most effective, it is important to note that the United States has never faced a challenge such as this. The United States must develop a strategy that does not try to stop the inevitable expansion of China; rather, they must find effective ways to prepare for the impact that Chinese power will have on the international order. The best way of doing this is through strategic balancing, which, according to Tellis,

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29. Blackwill and Tellis, “Revising US Grand Strategy.”

30. Ashley J. Tellis, “Balancing Without Containment,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2014, 27–29, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/balancing\\_without\\_containment.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/balancing_without_containment.pdf).

31. Tellis, “Balancing Without Containment,” 30.

will require the United States to buttress its Asian partners, redress the losses in relative gains suffered because of China's participation in global trade, reinvest in sustaining the military superiority necessary for effective US power projection worldwide, and revitalize its national economy.<sup>32</sup>

Strategic balancing, therefore, is the middle ground that offers a more *realpolitik* approach to China's economic, political, and militaristic advances while minimizing the chance of catastrophic conflict. This, then, renders the argument that the United States must begin to revamp its efforts in strengthening its relations with regional actors, expanding globalization, bolstering its military strength, and revitalizing its economy. By doing so, the door opens for other parts of strategic balancing to take hold and begin effectively countering the impact of Chinese expansion.

China rose to power due in part to its ability to take advantage of the missteps of the United States in its failure to recognize China as a potential threat to its global influence. First targeting the US partnerships throughout the region, China has been striving to drive a wedge between these partners and western democratic influence. Melanie Hart and Kelly Magsamen explain that "China is seeking to build out its own sphere of influence in the Asia-Pacific and make it harder for the United States to counter Chinese activities in the region by driving wedges in regional institutions and in US security alliances and partnerships."<sup>33</sup> While this does impact the economic ties the United States has to the region, it should first be noted that part of sustaining economic stability is only possible under the protection of a strong military presence.

As noted, the PLA has developed military capabilities that make it difficult for the United States not only to maintain its current regional influence but also to continue to strengthen its regional partnerships to balance against China. Though China's development incorporates several technological and strategic advances in this sphere, the largest threat is its establishment of lines of communication throughout the East and South China seas that grants it opportunities to undermine US influence over regional powers. Tellis argues this point further:

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32. Tellis, "Balancing Without Containment," 33.

33. Melanie Hart and Kelly Magsamen, "Limit, Leverage, and Compete: A New Strategy on China." *Center for American Progress*, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/04/03/468136/limit-leverage-compete-new-strategy-china/>.



China . . . can threaten all the major regional states located along both its continental and maritime peripheries through highly robust, and rapidly improving, interior lines of communication. Furthermore, the bulk of its military capabilities are either directly deployed along its eastern seaboard or can be swiftly moved to any one of its strategic peripheries. Thus, . . . China can more easily overawe the major power centers in the Indo-Pacific while at the same time more effectively preventing the United States from bringing rearward reinforcements to bear in defense of its regional allies.<sup>34</sup>

It is here that the United States must look at the underdevelopment of its naval power and begin developing policies that will renovate its navy so it too can establish sea lines of communication that will help strengthen its regional partners in The First Island Chain and counter China's A2/AD strategies.

Doing so will also open the door for the United States to increase its spread of liberal globalization by completing trade deals with certain regional organizations. By doing so, the United States secures advances in procuring strategic positions to counterbalance China's influence in these areas of interest. Tellis explains,

Since comprehensive global liberalization remains a distant goal, Washington should work to quickly conclude key regional trade pacts, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which promise increased relative gains to the United States and its allies vis-à-vis China.<sup>35</sup>

As these parts of the balancing process begin to take place, the United States will then need to revitalize its economy to meet the demands of sustaining its pursuits in East Asia. Tellis continues:

Revitalizing the domestic economy is imperative to sustaining American hegemony. To maintain its global economic dominance, the United States must emphasize labor force renewal, promote disruptive technological innovations, increase efficiency in production, and resolve the political squabbles that prevent Washington from fixing the country's public finances.<sup>36</sup>

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34. Tellis, "Balancing Without Containment," 6.

35. Tellis, "Balancing Without Containment," x.

36. Tellis, "Balancing Without Containment," x.

Though some may have reservations about the challenges that balancing against China will bring, it is the only way to begin the process to develop an effective policy that will not only increase America's security but strengthen its allies and partners throughout the world and, in particular, those that sit in China's looming shadow.

The United States, despite its imperfections, is a country that strives to bring peace and stability to a world that constantly breeds threats and challenges. It now faces a country whose political and nationalistic beliefs threaten that process and challenge the international order in a way that makes it hard to develop policy consistent with its mission for establishing peace and development among partners and allies. Though China's pursuit of its national interests is legal, its methods are often not, and it shows no sign of stopping its questionable practices. It is because of the CCP's refusal to abide by international laws and its doubling down on using questionable practices that it has been able to bring China to a position where it can confidently challenge the United States and displace it as the global hegemon.

Regardless of the arguments against this thought, China's procurement of this position threatens Western ideals of democracy; it has become a matter of vital importance that the United States, along with its allies, seek to develop policies that balance against China and reduce its power and influence. Producing an effective strategy will take time and will not provide immediate results, but if the United States wishes to remain in its current hegemonic position, then this process must begin immediately. That is why the United States must look past its current fears of challenging its relationship with China and commit itself to balance against it through re-engaging with its Asian partners and allies, strengthening its militaristic capabilities, investing in trade agreements with regional organizations, and revitalizing its economy to meet the demands of this approach. Moreover, the United States, as the champion of democracy, must lead the charge to preserve its democratic ideals and prevent the rise of a power that seeks to displace those values with totalitarian views and practices, which ignore human rights and threaten freedom.



## The Strategy of Decapitation and Its Effects on Al-Qaeda

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*Alec Heitzmann*

Since the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, the United States government, along with every agency within the Intelligence Community, has been racing to find a way to dismantle international terrorist organizations. After various trials and errors throughout the years following these attacks, it became very clear that this issue would not be resolved overnight. Now, 18 years later, there is still no clear strategy that has been set in place by any government or international institution that has proven effective in the overall elimination of terrorist groups. Each terrorist organization is different, and handling each group requires distinctive strategies. The difficult part for policy and decision makers is deciding which one would be most effective for the terrorist group at hand. Al-Qaeda is a valuable case study to analyze when deciding counterterrorism strategy. This study will explain the differences between decapitation and targeted killings, will look at the differences in effectiveness of al-Qaeda before and after Osama bin Laden's death, and how the United States' strategy of decapitation has significantly weakened the once-potent organization.

To understand this study, it is critical to understand the difference between decapitation and targeted killings and how their differences will distinguish how decapitation was the strategy that the United States government used against al-Qaeda. A suitable description of the two strategies comes from Antulio J. Echevarria:

The military strategies of decapitation and targeted killing derive from dislocation and attrition, respectively. Decapitation is the attempt to paralyze or destroy a group by removing its leadership, and targeted killing is the systematic

elimination of an organization's members, whether these individuals are in key positions of leadership or in the rank and file. Both strategies have been widely used to combat terrorists and insurgents. 'Decapitation and targeted killing' shows that the use of these strategies has increased markedly since the twenty-first century began, particularly with the widespread production of remotely piloted vehicles, but they remain highly controversial as strategic techniques. They may not destroy an organization permanently, but they can temporarily degrade its effectiveness.<sup>1</sup>

In simpler terms, the main difference between decapitation and targeted killings is the specificity of the target. In a strategy of decapitation, the leader of the organization is the target, while in targeted killing, the target can be any individual who is part of the organization. After understanding what each strategy is and what their definitions are, it is clear that decapitation is the strategy that the United States government used when dealing with al-Qaeda. On May 2, 2011, SEAL Team Six assassinated Osama bin Laden in his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> From the beginning, the SEAL team's objective was to kill Osama bin Laden, who had been one of the reigning leaders of al-Qaeda for 23 years. The differences between al-Qaeda before and after Osama bin Laden's death shows how this strategy was effective, but not 100% successful.

### Al-Qaeda Deadly Attacks Before Death of Osama bin Laden

This section presents a timeline of al-Qaeda's deadly attacks before the death of Osama bin Laden, starting in the 1990s. This timeline will not include attacks performed by any group linked to al-Qaeda, any failed attacks, or any injuries. It will include only attacks perpetrated solely by al-Qaeda or joint attacks that al-Qaeda perpetrated in conjunction with another terrorist organization, and it will document the number of casualties that each attack produced. It will also display how many times the United States was the target versus the total number of attacks on other nations.

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1. Antulio J. Echevarria, II, "Decapitation and Targeted Killing," *Military Strategy: A Very Short Introduction*, edited by Antulio Echevarria II, (Oxford University Press, 2017), 81.

2. Peter Baker, Helene Cooper, and Mark Mazzetti, "Bin Laden Is Dead, Obama Says," *New York Times*, May 1, 2011, [https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/asia/osama-bin-laden-is-killed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

In December of 1992, five years after al-Qaeda was established, bombs were detonated in Aden, Yemen, where two Austrian tourists were pronounced dead.<sup>3</sup> In February of 1993, Ramzi Yousef, who was a known operations strategist for al-Qaeda, killed six people in the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, but he had intended to kill thousands.<sup>4</sup> In that same year, al-Qaeda shot down a US helicopter in Mogadishu, Somalia, killing 18 US soldiers.<sup>5</sup> This attack came to be known as “Black Hawk Down.” In August of 1998, two bombs went off at the same time in two US embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, killing 258 people.<sup>6</sup> After two years of no activity, al-Qaeda planned their next attack. On October 12, 2000, an inflatable raft equipped with suicide bombers drove into the side of the *USS Cole* and killed 17 people.<sup>7</sup>

These attacks raised some concern to the United States, but the attacks were not at the forefront of the US agenda. America never believed that there would ever be an attack more deadly than the bombing of the US embassies in 1998. That changed on September 11, 2001, when al-Qaeda militants flew two airplanes into the World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon, and another that was flown off course into the middle of Pennsylvania. This attack killed an estimated 2,977 people and created utter chaos for the United States.<sup>8</sup> Al-Qaeda did not stop; instead it became even more violent.

In February 2002, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Daniel Pearl, was on his way to Pakistan to speak with a Muslim fundamentalist leader but was kidnapped and beheaded.<sup>9</sup> After multiple targeted killings directed at the United States, al-Qaeda started orchestrating their attacks on their regional adversaries. On April 11, 2002, al-Qaeda claimed the

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3. Robert Windrem, “Al-Qaida Timeline: Plots and Attacks,” *NBC News*, 2005, [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world\\_news-hunt\\_for\\_al\\_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.Xdd5GS-ZNQJ](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.Xdd5GS-ZNQJ).

4. Windrem, “Al-Qaida Timeline.”

5. Andrew Wander, “A History of Terror: Al-Qaeda 1988–2008,” *The Guardian*, July 12, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/13/history.alqaida>.

6. “Al Qaeda,” *Counter Extremism Project*, 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/taxonomy/term/2>.

7. “Al Qaeda.”

8. “Al Qaeda.”

9. “U.S. Journalist Daniel Pearl Is Dead, Officials Confirm,” *CNN*, February 22, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/02/21/missing.reporter/>.

bombing of a synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia, that killed 19 people.<sup>10</sup> The attack was carried out by a suicide bomber by the name of Niser bin Muhammad Nasr Nawar. On 5 October, 2002, they attacked a French oil tanker in Yemen. In Kuwait three days later, they killed two US Marines; on 12 October, 202 people were killed in a nightclub in Indonesia.<sup>11</sup> On November 28, 2002, al-Qaeda bombed a hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, leaving 15 people dead. Five months later, al-Qaeda attacked a housing unit that killed 34 people on May 12, and killed 44 people in Casablanca, Morocco, by suicide bombings on May 16.<sup>12</sup> On November 8, 2003, of that same year in Saudi Arabia, al-Qaeda disguised vehicles equipped with bombs as police cars and drove them into another housing area, killing 17 people. After a number of attacks in their region, they decided to diversify and expand their targets.

On March 11, 2004, the group bombed a train in Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people: their biggest attack since 9/11.<sup>13</sup> After over two years with no attacks on US targets, al-Qaeda sent a suicide bomber into the US coalition headquarters in Baghdad on May 17, 2004, and killed seven people, one of which was the Iraqi president at the time, Essedine Salim. On December 6, 2004, al-Qaeda targeted the US consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and killed five employees, who were not Americans.<sup>14</sup> On 29 December, al-Qaeda attacked Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior in Riyadh, killing seven people.<sup>15</sup> On July 7, 2005, the worst terrorist attack in UK history occurred when multiple suicide bombers attacked an underground railway in London, leaving 56 people dead.<sup>16</sup> An often overlooked, but extremely horrible attack occurred on August 16, 2007, when al-Qaeda bombed five fuel trucks in the Yazidi Kurdish villages of al Qataniyah and al Adnaniyah. This attack left an astonishing number of deaths, ranging from 300–400 total. The exact number of deaths remains unknown. The final known attack of the original al-Qaeda organization that occurred before the death of Osama bin Laden came in September 2007, when a car bomb was det-

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10. "Al Qaeda."

11. Windrem, "Al-Qaida Timeline."

12. Windrem, "Al-Qaida Timeline."

13. "Al Qaeda."

14. Windrem, "Al-Qaida Timeline."

15. Windrem, "Al-Qaida Timeline."

16. Windrem, "Al-Qaida Timeline."

onated in Dellys, Nigeria, killing 28 coast guard officers.<sup>17</sup>

The total estimated number of deaths that occurred before bin Laden's death in 2011, was 4,270. The total number of known attacks that occurred is roughly 20: nine on US citizens and 11 on non-US citizens. The total number of deaths of US citizens was 3,291, and the total number of non-US citizen deaths was around 979.

### Al-Qaeda Deadly Attacks after the Death of Osama bin Laden

The first attack perpetrated by al-Qaeda came soon after bin Laden was killed, which struck doubt into the minds of US policy makers and the public. They thought that their efforts and planning had been all for nothing because al-Qaeda retaliated quickly after bin Laden was dead. What the United States did not know at the time was that this would be the final recorded attack that al-Qaeda would single handedly execute against the United States.

On September 11, 2012, al-Qaeda attacked the US consulate in Benghazi, which killed United States Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.<sup>18</sup> Al-Qaeda moved its activity through western Africa, invading a natural gas plant in Algeria on January 23, 2013, holding many workers hostage and placing bombs throughout the workspace, resulting in the deaths of 37 people.<sup>19</sup>

Following the Algeria gas plant bombing, al-Qaeda had no activity ending in fatalities until January 14, 2015, when they claimed responsibility for attacking the headquarters of a weekly newspaper, *Charlie Hebdo*, which killed 17 people in Paris, France.<sup>20</sup> A year and a half later, the terrorist group used suicide bombers disguised as average citizens to kill 33 people in Yemen on October 20, 2014.<sup>21</sup> One year after the attack in Yemen, on November 20, 2015, al-Qaeda and al Mourabitoun killed 21 people at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali.<sup>22</sup> On March

17. "Al Qaeda."

18. "Al Qaeda."

19. "Al Qaeda."

20. Sami Aboudi, "Al Qaeda Claims French Attack, Derides Paris Rally." *Reuters*, January 14, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-shooting-aqap/al-qaeda-claims-french-attack-derides-paris-rally-idUSKBN0KN-0VO20150114>.

21. Mohammed Ghobari, "Al Qaeda Attacks Kill at Least 33 People in Yemen." *Reuters*, October 20, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-crisis-fighting/al-qaeda-attacks-kill-at-least-33-people-in-yemen-idUSKCN0I91PO20141020>.

22. "Al Qaeda."

13, 2016, al-Qaeda opened fire a machine gun barrage on a beach in Grand-Bassam, killing 19 people.<sup>23</sup> On January 27, 2018, al-Qaeda insurgents stormed a Malian army base that killed 14 people. Over a year later, on March 17, 2019, more al-Qaeda gunmen stormed yet another Malian army base, killing 16 people.<sup>24</sup> Just six days later on March 23, al-Qaeda killed 110 people in the villages of Ogossagou and Welingara.<sup>25</sup> The final known attack that al-Qaeda executed came on August 2, 2019, when they killed 19 soldiers at the al-Mahfad army base.<sup>26</sup>

The total estimated number of deaths that occurred after Osama bin Laden was eliminated in 2011 was 324. There have been 13 known attacks: one US, 12 non-US; there were four deaths of US citizens and 320 deaths of non-US citizens.

The killing of Osama bin Laden produced a drop in deaths caused by al-Qaeda from 4,270 to 324 after 2011, a decrease of 92%. The total number of US deaths caused by al-Qaeda after dropped from 3,291 to 4, a decrease of over 99%. The total number of attacks that al-Qaeda was responsible for after 2011 went from 20 to 13, a 35% decrease. Lastly, the number of US-targeted attacks that al-Qaeda was responsible for after 2011 dropped from 9 to 1, an 88% decrease.

### How Effective Is Decapitation?

The killing of Osama bin Laden is one case in which decapitation has been deemed effective. The United States' execution of the strategy sent al-Qaeda into a fury of disorganization, a decreasing number of members, and a succession of unreliable leaders. Has the United States completely defeated al-Qaeda? There have been al-Qaeda attacks within the past year, so the US has not completely defeated al-Qaeda—but the US has done a great job in limiting their attacks, especially on targets in the United States.<sup>27</sup> Osama bin Laden's death resulted a rapid decrease in al-Qaeda's legitimacy and is a huge accomplishment.

As this case study may suggest, decapitation can be a successful tactic in the counterterrorism world. It is important to realize that this was just one group with which decapitation was successful, compared to many other targeted organizations against which the strategy was

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23. "Al Qaeda."

24. "Al Qaeda."

25. "Al Qaeda."

26. "Al Qaeda."

27. "Al Qaeda."



employed and it proved to be unsuccessful. Various leaders of terrorist groups have been killed, yet the group still remained just as strong, and sometimes came out even more violent than they were before. Some of these leaders include Adan Garar of al Shabaab, Mokhtar Belmokhtar of al Mourabitoun, Abu Muhammad Adnani of the Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant, and Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour of the Taliban.<sup>28</sup> The deaths of these leaders may have disrupted the activity of these groups, but they did not have the same effect as they did on al-Qaeda when bin Laden was killed. In fact, groups like the Taliban substantially increased their number of fatal attacks from 32 before the death of Mullah Mansour to 180 after his death.<sup>29</sup> This provides further explanation as to why each group needs individual attention when designing strategy to combat terrorism. It also gives reason as to why there is no universal solution to combat terrorism.

Although decapitation has not worked as successfully on the aforementioned groups, this is not to say that the use of decapitation will be ineffective for others. Decapitation was employed to kill a leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines named Isnilon Totoni Hapilon, who was killed during a gunfight on October 16, 2017.<sup>30</sup> Since his death, there have been only a handful of terrorist attacks that the Abu Sayyaf Group have been responsible for. In fact, their last recorded attack came on August 13, 2019.<sup>31</sup> Although this may seem like a short amount of time, it is much longer when comparing it to other groups that have conducted attacks within the last week. The Abu Sayyaf Group went from being an internationally known terrorist group that was sponsored by al-Qaeda to what is now nothing more than a violent group of people who desire financial gain.

Decapitation was used recently on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant group (ISIS). On October 26, 2019, Abu Bark Al-Baghdadi was

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28. Razzan Nakhlawi, "The Kill List: Islamic State Leaders Taken off the Battlefield," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2016, <https://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-targeted-killings-drone-snap-htmlstory.html>.

29. "Taliban," *Counter Extremism Project*, 2020. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/taliban>.

30. Ted Regencia, "Marawi Siege: Army Kills Abu Sayyaf, Maute Commanders," *Aljazeera*, October 16, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/marawi-siege-army-kills-abu-sayyaf-maute-commanders-171016072551985.html>.

31. "Eid Al-Adha Attack Kills Filipino Soldiers, Child in Sulu," *Aljazeera*, August 13, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/eid-al-adha-attack-kills-filipino-soldiers-child-sulu-190813064213733.html>.

assassinated, who was the leading spokesperson of ISIS since its creation. Losing someone who was in charge for a substantial period of time can be devastating on an organization like ISIS. Considering that there have been no recorded attacks since October, the strategy can be seen as effective even if it has only been four months. Now, it is a waiting game to see if killing al-Baghdadi was effective or not.

There is no easy way to combat terrorism. A substantial amount of thinking and consideration goes into counterterrorism strategy before any plans are set in place. In some cases, by the time a strategy is outlined, the opportunity is already gone. One counterterrorism strategy could be seen as outdated and ineffective for one terrorist group but could be 100% successful for another terrorist group. That is why it is important to have people within the intelligence community continuously working on these strategies so the United States can be proactive in combating possible future attacks. Counterterrorism has come a long way since 9/11, but it is still so new and complex, which is why cases like al-Qaeda are crucial to understand in the history of combating terrorism.



## The Impact of Iranian Quds Force on International Relations and the Changes in Regional Power Dynamics after the Death of General Suleimani

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*Viktorii Babrii*

The year 2020 started with major developments on the international arena that will have a lasting impact on American national security throughout the decade. On January 2, the United States conducted a deadly airstrike in Iraq on General Qassem Suleimani, one of the key foreign policy framers and military leaders of Iran and the head of the Iranian Intelligence Agency Quds Force. Despite the official US claims of imminent threat related to Suleimani allegedly planning a series of attacks on US embassies,<sup>1</sup> which would justify American strike, the event itself has left many wondering what repercussions it will have on the US-Iranian relationship. The event also raises questions about how it will impact the Middle Eastern and global security climate in general. Therefore, this paper will offer a non-partisan analysis of the Quds Force inter-workings and General Suleimani's application of asymmetrical warfare, and it will examine prominent security threats that will come into play in the region after the changes in US-Iranian power dynamic.

Over the course of the last several decades, the Middle Eastern region has experienced severe turmoil. The conflicts such as the Iraq War, Arab Spring, War in Syria, and Israel-Palestine conflict not only are characterized by the ethnic, religious, and political tensions, but also became defined by the involvement of the third parties engaged in the regional violence to assert their power on an international arena. While

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1. David Welna, “‘Imminent’ Threat—Trump Justification of Attack on Iranian General—Is Undefined,” *NPR*, January 10, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/10/795438264/imminent-threat-trump-justification-of-attack-on-iranian-general-is-undefined>.

the United States and Russia have been involved in the various proxy conflicts since the Cold War, Iran, after the revolution of 1979, has become a new player to consider. When the Revolutionary Guards came into power as an Islamic government, they brought a new agenda regarding Iranian international relations.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the mission to export the revolution ideas<sup>3</sup> was assigned to the Quds Force, a branch of the Revolutionary Guards focused on the protection of the Iranian national security and promotion of Persian self-interest.<sup>4</sup> The organization is known for cooperating with regional terrorist networks, using sabotage and covert operations to target individuals unfavorable to the Iranian government, and providing financial, military, and logistical support for Islamic extremists abroad.<sup>5</sup> With their associates operating as far as Turkey, Argentina, Thailand, and United States,<sup>6</sup> it is apparent that the Quds Force plays a large role in global peace and security.

The Iran–Iraq War shaped the ideology of modern Iranian leadership, many members of which are war veterans of those years. Hoping to conquer Iran in its post-revolutionary instability,<sup>7</sup> Saddam Hussein’s government used US-produced chemical weapons against Iranians, which, in combination with influence of Islamic Republic ideals, subsequently caused the sense of betrayal and ideological hatred towards the West within Iranian society.

In addition, being the only Shiite power in the region among the Sunni-governed states posed an existential threat for Iran, further impacting its political agenda. Due to those factors, the Iranian Supreme Leader Khomeini decided to continue the armed conflict even after the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Iran, employing asymmetrical warfare, which later was laid in a foundation of newly formed Quds Force and its Lebanese wing, Hezbollah.<sup>8</sup>

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2. Dexter Filkins, “The Shadow Commander,” *The New Yorker*, November 17, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/30/the-shadow-commander>.

3. Dore Gold, “Inside the Octopus: Unraveling Iran’s Terrorist Quds Force,” *Jerusalem Center For Public Affairs*, March 12, 2012, <http://jcpa.org/article/inside-the-octopus-unraveling-irans-terrorist-quds-force/>.

4. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

5. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

6. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

7. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

8. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

In the described conditions, Iranian hardliner leaders made sure to employ those structures against national security threats, which manifests in the organizational chain of command.<sup>9</sup> All the decisions on future plans are approved by the Supreme Council for National Security, which is comprised of the Iranian Supreme Leader, the President, the ministers of defense and intelligence, Council's Secretary, and Quds Force representative. Further, the Council recommendations are passed to a sub-committee that determines whether it would be Quds Force or the Intelligence Ministry (both found in close cooperation with each other as well as Revolutionary Guard's intelligence) that will be tasked with plan implementation. The agency further breaks implementation down to tactics, specific operations, and personnel selection.

In terms of organizational structure, Quds Force is divided into financial, intelligence, instructional, political and special operations divisions, and sabotage department,<sup>10</sup> with the main headquarters located in the former US Embassy compound in Tehran.<sup>11,12</sup> Due to the classified nature of information, it is hard to provide the exact number of current Quds Force operatives. According to 2008 data, the Quds force ranges from 10,000 to 20,000<sup>13</sup> with a continuous average of 15,000 men;<sup>14</sup> however, more recent estimates from British think tank assume a number of operatives to be from 17,000 to 21,000.<sup>15</sup> This data includes intelligence agents, "combatants and those who train and oversee foreign assets,"<sup>16</sup> and the locations where the men from different categories undergo different training and selection processes. For example, candidates for the intelligence officers are selected on the basis of their ideological fitness, family connections, and skill levels.<sup>17</sup> They go through three to nine months of training in one of the specialized facilities, which also train operatives for Hezbollah and Shiite groups

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9. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

10. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

11. Filkins, "The Shadow Commander."

12. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

13. Filkins, "The Shadow Commander."

14. John Pike, "Qods Force / Sepah-e Qods / Qods Corps / Jerusalem Corps," *Global Security*, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/iran/qods.htm>.

15. Henry Austin, "What Is Iran's Secretive Quds Force?" *NBC*, January 3, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/who-are-iran-s-secretive-quds-forces-n1110156>.

16. Filkins, "The Shadow Commander."

17. Filkins, "The Shadow Commander."

from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> Three major facilities include Imam Ali Base near Tehran for foreign terrorists' training, the Wali-I-Assar Base in Shiraz designed for internal security services (analogical to Israeli Shin Bet), and the "Jerusalem Operation" College in Qom for spiritual and ideological education.<sup>19</sup> Afterwards, the operatives tasked with combatant specialization are sent to Afghanistan, Iraq,<sup>20,21</sup> and Syria<sup>22</sup> under the cover of Iranian construction workers to gain the field experience, which, for the full-on agents, consists of local recruitment and training,<sup>23</sup> operating bomb factories, "weapon smuggling, joint operations, and terrorist attacks."<sup>24</sup> In regard to their manpower, Quds Force recruits the Shiite men from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and other countries; ideal recruits are either favorable towards the regime, seek a financial benefit, or are forced by their immigration status<sup>25</sup> to fight in the Iranian high-casualty proxy conflicts, undergoing only two weeks of prior training in the Iranian boot-camps.<sup>26</sup>

Quds Force intelligence agents frequently operate under diplomatic cover with goals of espionage and local recruitment, cases of which have become public knowledge in Amman, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq. Some diplomats housed in Iranian embassies have been expelled from the states.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, a special division of Iranian Foreign Ministry provides new passports for the Force's agents, many of whom are not originally Iranian citizens. The agents subsequently leave the country via neutral states to avoid affiliation with Iran.<sup>28</sup> The Quds Force routinely selects its intelligence assets and foot soldiers from among the many Islamic pilgrims in large Muslim cities and Islamic holy sites; their key operational agency is the "Dar al-Tawahid" hotel in

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18. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

19. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

20. Filkins, "The Shadow Commander."

21. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

22. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

23. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

24. Filkins, "The Shadow Commander."

25. Mujib Mashal and Fatima Faizi, "Iran Sent Them to Syria. Now Afghan Fighters Are a Worry at Home," *The New York Times*, November 11, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/11/world/asia/afghanistan-iran-syria-revolutionary-guards.html>

26. Filkins, "The Shadow Commander."

27. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

28. Gold, "Inside the Octopus."

Mecca.<sup>29</sup> In addition to ongoing recruitment, the Iranian government also is known to have long-term strategic connections with individuals who, at the time of the Iran–Iraq War, fought alongside Iranian forces and then rose to power in their respective states.<sup>30</sup>

In regard to the Quds Force leadership, Major General Qassem Suleimani had occupied the position of the head of Quds Force since 1998 and was in charge of the Iranian policies in Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza, Afghanistan,<sup>31</sup> Syria, and Yemen.<sup>32</sup> He was an Iran–Iraq War veteran with deep connections within the Iranian government. The foreign intelligence agencies described him as a nationalist militant, strong-willed person, and intelligent strategist. Within a scope of regional power, he established the Shiite terrorist network financed and operated by Quds Force associates, which, in combination with Iranian political and economic influence, is known as the “Shiite Axis.”<sup>33</sup>

Iran is more influential than US in the region because of its profound understanding of the local religious and ethnic disputes, which enables Iran to manipulate them for their own benefit, such as the case of Kurdish issue<sup>34</sup> (and precedent of Iranian assistance to Kurds in the 70s)<sup>35</sup> and the economic assistance to pro-Iranian forces.<sup>36,37</sup> In the case of Iraq, after the overthrow of Hussein’s regime, a new system “crafted by Iraqis and enabled by the Americans, enshrined . . . [the division of] political power along religious and ethnic lines.”<sup>38</sup> Under new administration, de-Baathification took place—former members of Saddam’s

29. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

30. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

31. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

32. Thomas L. Friedman, “Are Iran and Israel Headed for Their First Direct War?” *The New York Times*, April 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/15/opinion/war-syria-iran-israel.html>.

33. Robert F. Worth, “Kidnapped Royalty Become Pawns in Iran’s Deadly Plot,” *The New York Times*, March 14, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/14/magazine/how-a-ransom-for-royal-falconers-reshaped-the-middle-east.html>.

34. Renad Mansour, “Iraq Is not Iran’s Puppet,” *The New York Times*, November 02, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/02/opinion/iraq-iran-haider-al-abadi.html>.

35. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

36. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

37. Mansour, “Iraq Is not Iran’s Puppet.”

38. Alissa J. Rubin, “Iraqis Rise Against a Reviled Occupier: Iran,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/world/middleeast/iraq-protests-iran.html>.

ruling Baath Party were fired from governmental and military positions and mostly replaced with pro-Iranian Shiites. Marginalized, unemployed and resentful, many Sunni joined insurgency groups (such as ISIS); “sectarian warfare between Sunnis and Shias raged, the Shia population looked to Iran as a protector,”<sup>39</sup> resulting in mobilization of pro-Iranian forces in Iraq. This way, “Iran exploited framework [put in place by the United States], using it to embed itself in Iraqi politics.”<sup>40</sup>

To analyze the degree of Quds Force interference in international relations, first we need to look into its eight organizational directorates, which are based on the geographic location.<sup>41</sup> Those include: 1) Western countries and the former Eastern Bloc, 2) Former Soviet Union, 3) Iraq, 4) Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, 5) Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan, 6) Turkey, 7) North Africa, and 8) Arabian Peninsula.<sup>42</sup> However, it is important to acknowledge the fact that because of the changing political climate, this information from 2005 may reflect present conditions, and, because of its classified nature, details cannot be clarified.

Hezbollah, the key Iranian ally in the region, is the Shiite Islamist political power and militant group based in Lebanon, which, in cooperation with Quds Force, operates in Israel, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. However, it is Israel and its nationals that are being targeted by Hezbollah and Quds Force due to the existential threat Israel is seen to represent to the Shiite population. This claim is supported by the attacks in Buenos Aires on the Israeli Embassy in 1992 (29 killed); the Jewish center in 1994 (85 killed, 300 wounded);<sup>43</sup> and joint attacks in Cyprus, Azerbaijan, and Turkey;<sup>44</sup> Quds Force’s unsuccessful assassination attempts on Israeli diplomats in Bangkok (and New Delhi and Georgia) in response to Israeli assassination of four Iranian scientists;<sup>45</sup>

39. Tim Arango, James Risen, Farnaz Fassihi, Ronen Bergman, and Murtaza Hussain, “The Iran Cables: Secret Documents Show How Tehran Wields Power in Iraq,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/18/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-spy-cables.html>.

40. Rubin, “Iraqis Rise.”

41. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

42. David J. Dionisi, *American Hiroshima: The Reasons Why and a Call to Strengthen America’s Democracy* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005).

43. Mark Dubowitz and Toby Dershowitz, “Iranian Terror. Argentinian Cover Up. Justice at Last?” *The New York Times*, December 11, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/11/opinion/argentina-kirchner-iran-nisman.html>.

44. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

45. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”



and Hezbollah kidnapping of Israeli soldiers in 2006, which escalated to a national conflict and resulted in bombings of Lebanon.<sup>46</sup> Hezbollah is also known for its anti-Western agenda, evident from the attack on the American Embassy, bombings of American and French military barracks in 1980s,<sup>47</sup> and plans of assault on American military bases in Kuwait in 2011.<sup>48</sup>

Iranian original vision was to establish “Hezbollah cells all over the world,”<sup>49</sup> where the Quds Force has contributed with joined planning, advising, training, and heavy financing of Hezbollah operatives. One of the reasons for choosing Hezbollah as a regional ally was the fluency in Arabic by Lebanese operatives, which made them better equipped for regional operations.<sup>50</sup> The two organizations cooperate via Unit 2800 on Quds Force side<sup>51</sup> and Special Security Apparatus on the Hezbollah side,<sup>52</sup> yet it is hard to define the current status of their relations. As the evidence for Hezbollah being a Quds Force subsidiary speaks its recognition of Iranian Supreme Leader as an ultimate authority; Hezbollah also supports the Iranian activities in Lebanon.<sup>53</sup> Quds Force is known to have assisted Hezbollah in Lebanon at least on the occasion of the assassination of former Lebanese Sunni Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, when both Iran and the Assad regime provided advisory and logistics support, which therefore indicates strong regional Shiite cooperation. Moreover, to target Israel, as of 2018, Iran planned to supply Hezbollah in Lebanon with advanced GS-guided missiles (with 50-meter radius accuracy),<sup>54</sup> which would have impacted Israeli border security and affected the relations of those states. However, Hezbollah also has been known to act autonomously. When the organization attacked the Israeli tourist bus in Bulgaria in July 2012, Iran was both unaware and uninvolved in the planning of the Hezbollah’s attack.<sup>55</sup>

As is illustrated above, the Quds Force has continuously acted

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46. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

47. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

48. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

49. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

50. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

51. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

52. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

53. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

54. Friedman, “Are Iran and Israel Headed for Their First Direct War?”

55. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

against the interests of the US and its allies, and the dynamic of the Iranian–American relationship has a significant impact on regional security in particular when it comes to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. Iran, having the history of mutual hostility with the Taliban, in the aftermath of 9/11, conducted a series of covert meetings with senior US officials under the direction of General Suleimani with the goal of having a two-way intelligence and strategy exchange in battling the Taliban.<sup>56</sup> The cooperation, however, was compromised when President George W. Bush mentioned Iran in his “Axis of Evil” speech in 2002,<sup>57</sup> which, in retrospect, might have set Iran on the path of future cooperation with the Taliban.

When it came to the Iraq invasion in 2003, despite the benefit of removal of Hussein from power, Iranians were hesitant to support US actions due to the threat of being the next candidate for regime overthrow, which eventually caused them to slow down on their nuclear program. However, it did not diminish Quds Force regional standing. Consequently, while forming a new Iraqi government, the United States consulted with General Sulemani (on account of his strong regional connections and expertise) on the candidate selection. Even though at a time such cooperation was a highlight of Iranian–American relations, in the following years it only led to growing Iranian influence in Iraq.

Unlike the situation in Lebanon, Quds Force activities in Iraq have not been attached to a single entity, but rather are operated via various proxy militant groups and coordinated with pro-Iranian political powers. Despite the history of the Iran–Iraq War, the Iranian government is not interested in full destabilization of Iraq, but rather, is concerned with keeping it marginally powerful under pro-Iranian Shiite forces<sup>58</sup> while ensuring its de-Ba’athification by assassinating Ba’th party members, disabling the Iranian wing of the Iraqi intelligence apparatus,<sup>59</sup> and preventing the formation of Kurdistan as an independent state.<sup>60</sup> To achieve that, Quds Force employed the services of the Iraqi militant groups such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Kataib Hizb Allah (KH), the Promised Day Brigades (PDB),<sup>61</sup> and Badr Bridage (armed wing of a

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56. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

57. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

58. Mansour, “Iraq Is not Iran’s Puppet.”

59. Pike, “Qods Force.”

60. Arango et al., “The Iran Cables.”

61. Pike, “Qods Force.”

Shiite political party Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, whose former member Adil Abdul-Mahdi<sup>62</sup> was the Iraqi Prime Minister from 2018 to 2020).<sup>63</sup> It is important to note, though, that not all Shiite anti-American groups are Iranian allies. For example, Mahdi Army (later revised as The Peace Companies) under the leadership of populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr had a rocky relationship with Iran.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, despite the lack of ties with a group, Suleimani tried to use the armed tensions between American troops and Mahdi Army in 2008 for his benefit in the negotiation process with the United States by attributing his influence over a group.<sup>65</sup>

Whether through direct involvement or local extremists support, in 2004 the Quds Force was responsible for 20% of American casualties in Iraq caused by roadside bombs. In response, in 2006 the United States formed a task force designed to “kill and capture Iranian-backed insurgents,” as well as target Quds Force agents. In combination with Iran-oriented Iraqi leadership, it created a clash of the two states’ security interests, an example being the capture of Quds’ General Mohsen Chizari by American forces and his subsequent release by Iraqi Prime Minister. When US troops captured five Quds Force operatives with Iranian diplomatic status in Iraqi’s Erbil, pro-Iranian Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq responded by killing five Coalition soldiers in Karbala Provincial Center, followed by the American assassination of the group’s leader and the capture of its members, including a senior Hezbollah commander, Ali Musa Daqduq. Despite it being direct proof for Iranian involvement, at the time the decision was made not to cross a border to take down training camps and bomb factories in fear of escalation of a national conflict.<sup>66</sup>

On the political spectrum, Iran played a big role in the formation of the 2010 Iraqi government under Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. The process was coordinated by General Suleimani via the negotiation

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62. Sinan Salaheddin, “Iraq Tasks Shiite Independent with Forming New Government,” *AP News*, October 02, 2018, <https://apnews.com/dcc34eb6b-5da49f8b4ee144bf71331a4>.

63. Linah Alsaafin, “Mohammed Allawi Appointed New Iraq PM, Protesters Reject Him,” *Al Jazeera*, February 1, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/02/iraq-president-appoints-mohammed-allawi-pm-state-tv-200201150554113.html>.

64. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

65. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

66. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

with major Iraqi Shiite and Kurdish leaders on a vote choice, pushing pro-Iranian candidate for the position of president, neutralizing the opposition, and, through Maliki, requesting that US troops withdraw from Iraq.

For his practices of intimidation and sponsorship of Iraqi politicians and media, Suleimani received a title of “the most powerful man in Iraq.” He cooperated with Prime Minister Maliki in engaging Iraq as a stable oil consumer, and he was an intermediary for Iranian financial operations and oil sales that allowed Quds Force to develop immunity against Western economic sanctions. Multiple members of the Iraqi administration were found to have the “special relationship” with Iran, including the former Iraqi Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim al-Jafari, as well as the officer of military intelligence in the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, who offered to Iran his service in sharing information on American activities, technologies, and training techniques in Iraq.<sup>67</sup>

However, it would be wrong to state that Iraqi–Iranian relations are entirely subsidiary in nature, with even pro-Iranian Maliki denying land access for Iranian troops to Syria as well as having difficulties in cooperating with the Assad regime. Moreover, with the new government under Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi coming to power in 2014, Iraq stepped on the trajectory of Shiite nationalism, free of Iranian hegemony, with the government cooperating in equal measure with Iran, the United States, and Saudi Arabia in fighting ISIS and in promotion of its own national interests.<sup>68</sup>

At the end of 2019, more than 200,000 Iraqis marched in Baghdad to oppose Iranian interference in Iraq, especially in light of Iranian role in governmental corruption and support for Shiite militias, which had become mafia-style groups.<sup>69</sup> Demonstrations have continued through 2020; it is hard to predict the impact that the youth-run protests will have on the Iranian involvement in Iraq. The state notoriously has a precedent of deflecting anti-Iranian moods, such as Suleimani’s interference in Kurdish referendum and formation of Iraqi government in 2018, accompanied by assassination of Iranian opponents,<sup>70</sup> and the

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67. Arango et al., “The Iran Cables.”

68. Mansour, “Iraq Is not Iran’s Puppet.”

69. Mansour, “Iraq Is not Iran’s Puppet.”

70. Dionisi, *American Hiroshima*.

shutdown of the US Consulate<sup>71</sup> after its assault in Basra in 2018 as a response to local protests on corruption and Iranian influence on delivery of crucial life services in the region.

Finally, when it comes to a wider range of influence, Sudan is another state known for its affiliation with Iran, and as of 2012 it hosted Quds Force headquarters of North African Affairs Unit (Division 6000), which operated in “Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Gambia, and Nigeria.”<sup>72</sup> In addition to supplying weaponry to Palestinian Gaza and coordinating activities of Quds Force agents in the region, the Sudanese unit was responsible for training new recruits, later on sent to South Sudan, Yemen, and Gaza. However, due to the Sunni cleric execution case in Iran in 2014, Sudan as Sunni-dominant state decided to break its ties with Iran,<sup>73</sup> with no plans to restore them in the near future.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, also accounting for changes in the political climate caused by Arab Spring and ongoing military conflicts, it is difficult to verify or dismiss whether the Iranian network still operates in Sudan and how it currently conducts its activities in Yemen and Gaza.

In regard to other directorates, Quds Force division in Turkey is responsible for operations in Bulgaria, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan (with its border access to Russia), while its activities are focused on espionage, local terrorism coordination, and weapons smuggling. Meanwhile, the Iranian division in the city of Bushehr operates in relation to “Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Somalia.”<sup>75</sup> Its operatives are known for plans of attack the Israeli embassy and the failed assassination attempt on the Saudi Ambassador in Washington in 2011.<sup>76</sup>

Aside from open military action, the United States has used a number of diplomatic and economic measures to counter the influence of

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71. Edward Wong, “Blaming Iran, U.S. Evacuates Consulate in Southern Iraq,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/28/world/middleeast/iraq-iran-consulate-basra-closed.html>.

72. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

73. AFP in Khartoum, “Why Has Sudan Ditched Iran in Favour of Saudi Arabia?” *The Guardian*, January 12, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/12/sudan-siding-with-saudi-arabia-long-term-ally-iran>.

74. “Sudan Will not Return to Iranian Axis: Minister,” What’s Next for Sudan after Bashir’s Nomination for a Third Term? *Sudan Tribune*, November 27, 2017, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article64119>.

75. Gold, “Inside the Octopus.”

76. Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”

Iran and its Quds Force. The above-described attacks targeting Israel and Saudi Arabia resulted in US sanctions on General Suleimani<sup>77</sup> and other Iranian officials, adding up to the sanctions previously imposed on Quds Force by the US in 2007 for providing weapons, training, and financial support to the Taliban and other terrorist organizations.<sup>78</sup>

Additional sanctions were put in place in the following years, including 2018, when US placed sanctions on eight Taliban members (including two Quds Force operatives) for terrorism affiliation. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain designated terrorist status to General Suleimani and Quds Force members. Sanctions imposed by the US Treasury Department allowed the US to “freeze property . . . under American jurisdiction,” while its main goal was to provide regional security and to counter Shiite influence. The United States also recognizes the importance of joined diplomatic pressure on Iran, which was one of the key objectives of the 2019 Middle Eastern tour of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, where he held the meetings with the key regional powers such as Egypt, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, not only US and Middle East is interested in anti-Iranian course of action as the European Union has largely contributed with counterterrorism and counterespionage operations against anti-Israeli efforts of Quds Force agents in Europe.<sup>80</sup>

In the end, after analyzing the scale of the Quds Force impact on the regional affairs, what predictions can we make regarding the impact of the change in organization’s leadership? General Esmail Qaani, the long-term deputy of General Suleimani, has been assigned as a new Commander of Quds Force, with his qualifications being outstanding

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77. Reuters, “Saudi, Bahrain Add Iran’s Revolutionary Guards to Terrorism Lists,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2018/10/23/world/middleeast/23reuters-saudi-bahrain-security-iran.html>.

78. “Designation of Iranian Entities and Individuals for Proliferation Activities and Support for Terrorism,” *US Department of the Treasury*, October 25, 2007, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp644.aspx>.

79. Al Jazeera, “Pompeo: US to Boost Efforts to Counter Iran’s ‘Malign Influence,’” *GCC News | Al Jazeera*, January 08, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/secretary-state-mike-pompeo-starts-middle-east-visit-jordan-190108090632341.html>.

80. “Germany Seeks 10 Members of Iran’s IRGC-Qods Force for Spying on Israeli, Jewish Targets,” *The Tower*, January 16, 2018, <http://www.thetower.org/5844-germany-seeks-10-members-of-irans-irgc-qods-force-for-spying-on-israeli-jewish-targets/>.

IRGC service in the Iraq–Iran War alongside Suleimani, management of “organizational and administrative” functions of Quds Force, wide expertise and connections in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. According to an Al Jazeera-affiliated expert,<sup>81</sup> since Afghanistan was General Qaani’s focus area, Quds Force may be expected to expand their activities there, while the assassination of General Suleimani may result in wider expansion into the West and overall more aggressive tactics on behalf of the agency. Steady cooperation with autonomous Quds Force units and Hezbollah will continue, while the activities and structure of other branches in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia can fluctuate, depending on the further course of action of a new Quds Force leadership.

The situation is more complicated regarding Iraq and Syria. On-going anti-Iranian protests may weaken the organization’s hold over Iraq; however, the recent withdrawal of support for protestors from the above-mentioned Shiite cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr,<sup>82</sup> a prominent political figure and anti-Iranian oppositionist, may indicate a weakening in the protest movement and, therefore, a continuing power-hold for Iran and Quds Force.

On other hand, Iran and Quds Force contributed enormously to the diminishing the power of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Therefore, high tensions arose between Iran and the United States over the killing of General Suleimani. Tensions are further fueled by such factors as the yet-unknown strategy of the new Quds leadership, the rising sectarianism in Iraq, political polarization over presence of American troops in the state, and withdrawal of US troops from Syria.<sup>83</sup> All of these will result in changing power dynamic in the region, “creating a power vacuum for the Islamic State [or other Sunni militias] to exploit.”<sup>84</sup>

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81. Arwa Ibrahim, “Esmail Qaani: New ‘Shadow Commander’ of Iran’s Quds Force,” *Al Jazeera*, January 19, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/esmail-qaani-shadow-commander-irans-quds-force-200118191907985.html>.

82. Alissa J. Rubin, “Iraq Police Crack Down on Protests as Influential Cleric Withdraws Support,” *The New York Times*, January 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/25/world/middleeast/iraq-protests-Sadr.html>.

83. Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Eric Schmitt, “US-Led Coalition Halts ISIS Fight as It Steels for Iranian Attacks,” *The New York Times*, January 5, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/us/politics/us-isis-iran.html>.

84. Ali H. Soufan, “Why ISIS Is Delighted That Suleimani Is Dead,” *The New York Times*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/14/opinion/iran-isis-iraq.html>.

However undesirable, this income can destabilize a region even further and jeopardize the international security for many years to come; therefore, it should be taken into account by policy makers who are crafting their plans to deal with Iran and the Quds Force.





## Contributors

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**Viktoriia Bahrii** (“The Impact of Iranian Quds Force on International Relations and the Changes in Regional Power Dynamics after the Death of General Sulimani”) is a senior student at Utah Valley University, pursuing a bachelor’s degree in International Relations and minors in National Security Studies and Mathematics. Viktoriia grew up in Ukraine; as a kid, she traveled to Egypt for family vacations and became captivated with the history of a region, hence her interest in the Middle East Studies. Viktoriia speaks English, Russian, and Ukrainian, and is in the process of studying Italian and Arabic. Ms. Bahrii occupied the position of Vice President of Logistics with Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) from fall 2018 to spring 2019. The highlight of her involvement with a club was a delivery of a statement during the UN Parallel Event at the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, as well as the participation in the 68th UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City. After graduation, Viktoriia plans to pursue a career in data analysis with a think tank, non-profit, or transnational organization.

**Alyssa Coons** (“Motivations in Action: Drivers of Lone Wolf Attacks”) is an undergraduate student at Mercyhurst University in Erie, PA, studying Intelligence and the Psychology of Crime and Justice. Alyssa concentrates her research in the realm of National Security, specifically in counter-terrorism and the psychology behind terrorism. She independently researched the psychology and personal motivations of lone wolf terrorism at the International Security and Intelligence Programme at the University of Cambridge in Cambridge, England. Her scope of academic research has grown to include the psychology of

terrorism, the stability of Middle Eastern countries, Russian cyber operations, and human trafficking in Southeast Asia.

**Sasha Greenaway** (“Should Australian Fixated Threat Assessment Centres Submit ‘Fixated Persons’ to Involuntary Detention on Mental Health Grounds?”) is a Juris Doctor candidate at the University of Melbourne in Australia. She graduated in 2018 with a BA in Russian Studies and Spanish & Latin American Studies. Throughout university, Sasha has taken advantage of international study opportunities, including completion of the International Security and Intelligence Summer Programme run as a collaboration between The Cambridge Security Initiative and King’s College London, and a semester exchange at Lomonosov Moscow State University in Russia. Alongside her studies, she previously held the role of Student Club President at Janet Clarke Hall, a residential college at the university, and is currently the External Competitions Officer on the Melbourne University Law Students’ Society. In her free time Sasha enjoys watching Spanish films, travelling to new places, and spending time with friends.

**Alec Heitzmann** (“The Strategy of Decapitation and Its Effects on Al-Qaeda”) is a junior at Utah Valley University, majoring in National Security Studies with a minor in Chinese Commerce. He has served as the Vice-President of Service for the National Security Studies, interned at Dexter and Dexter Law, and studied abroad in China. He intends to go to graduate school to seek a degree in Strategic Intelligence Studies upon graduation from UVU.

**Mary Kent** (“Domestic Extremists and the Infamy of Online Social Forums”) is an adjunct professor of Criminal Justice and National Security Studies at Utah Valley University, Orem, Utah. Before coming to UVU, Professor Kent served in the United States Army for seven years as an Aviation Operations Specialist. Her time in service placed her in the Middle East during the 9/11 attacks of 2001. She also worked as a Victim’s Advocate for a local Utah police agency, where she led the internship program and provided training and case interviews for the Provo Police Citizen’s Academy, Fox13 News, ABC4 News, the Center for Women and Children in Crisis, and the University of Toledo’s

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International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference. She obtained a master's degree with honors in National Security and Terrorism Studies from the American Military University. Professor Kent currently serves as an intelligence analyst working with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. She has received intelligence analysis training from multiple agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the United States Secret Service.

**Mason R. Taylor** (“American Grand Strategy: Balancing Against China”) is a senior at Utah Valley University and is the Student Representative for the Center of National Security Studies. He is majoring in History and minoring in National Security Studies. He is very active in several activities on campus, including serving as a Managing Editor of UVU’s Journal of International Security and Strategic Studies and as a member of the National Security Society. Upon graduation, he will pursue a masters degree in National Security Affairs and Statecraft with an emphasis in Intelligence from the Institute of World Politics in Washington DC. He hopes to start a career in national security policy and strategy that supports US maritime security, interests, and strategy.

