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## CENTRAL EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY STUDIES

▶ **Embracing the Maverick: The Evolution of President Donald Trump's Management of Foreign Policy-Making**

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▶ **Strange Bedfellows: Relations between International Nongovernmental Organisations and Military Actors in Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism in Northeast Niger**

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▶ **Canadian Discourse and Emotions on Terrorism: How Canadian Prime Ministers Speak about Terrorism since 9/11**

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Research article

# Embracing the Maverick: The Evolution of President Donald Trump's Management of Foreign Policy-Making

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## Abstract

*Research on the American presidency reveals that all presidential advisory systems follow a similar pattern of change over time from standard, formal interagency structures to informal structures in which decisions are made outside the traditional interagency processes. We employ a longitudinal comparative case design to analyze the dynamics of the Trump administration's foreign policy-making to explain how Trump's management of foreign policy decision-making evolved over his tenure in office. By using a focused-structured comparison to analyze five foreign policy case studies, we argue that Trump confirms the main tenets of the evolution model of presidential policy-making which claims that, over time, presidents increasingly rely on informal and ad hoc decision-making structures and processes. However, rather than adopt structures and processes that assured a broad deliberation of options, Trump increasingly sought information and policy options that confirmed his pre-existing beliefs or preferences, replacing individuals in his administration who challenged his views and consolidating the decades-long trend of the personalization of foreign policy decision-making in the hands of the president.*

**Keywords:** *advisory systems, decision-making, Donald Trump, evolution model of presidential policy-making, U.S. foreign policy*

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## **Introduction**

In 2016, Donald Trump ran for the presidency of the United States with the promise of overturning entrenched politics as most Americans had traditionally known them. Throughout the presidential campaign, Trump eviscerated the political establishment in Washington, tarring them with the epithets of stupidity, incompetence and corruption. Domestically, Trump lambasted his predecessors for their economic policies. On the international front, Trump scorned decision-makers in Washington for weakening America's global standing by squandering resources, permitting allies to swindle the U.S. and allowing both allies and adversaries to hold American power in contempt (c.f. Trump 2016).

For decades, most presidential candidates have presented themselves as agents of change, whose ultimate goal is to transform politics in Washington. However, more than any modern presidential candidate, Trump pushed the boundaries of what was traditionally considered acceptable language and behaviour (Lieberman et al. 2019). The bellicosity of Trump's campaign rhetoric was characteristic of his actions as a real-estate developer and businessman. For over four decades, Donald Trump had built and expanded his business organisation by employing the same boisterous and truculent behavior. He was renowned for his erratic and contradictory attitude which resulted in inconsistent decisions (Kruse 2016). In fact, Trump had a long history of rejecting professional advice and following his own inclinations, building a reputation for being a reckless entrepreneur who had made a name for himself by regularly stretching the truth and browbeating his adversaries and critics (Kranish & Fischer 2017).

Trump's unorthodox style raised concerns as the 2016 presidential campaign proceeded. Several months prior to the election, several prominent U.S. newspapers appealed to their readers not to vote for Trump due to concerns regarding his fitness for the office (The New York Times 2016; The Washington Post 2016; USA Today 2016). A similar sentiment of apprehension existed among numerous conservatives and GOP officials (Blake 2016; Caldwell 2016). Notwithstanding these concerns, Republican leaders expected Trump to slowly pivot away from his campaign mode and 'behave himself' upon winning the presidency (Coppins 2017). This assumption was bolstered by several commentators and academics who assured the public that the institutional presidency would rein in Trump's most dangerous impulses (Luttwak 2017; Mearsheimer 2017). Others, while reluctant to vouch for the president himself, were confident that he would

surround himself with ‘the best and the brightest’ and that these individuals would ultimately be responsible for developing the administration’s policies (Landler 2016).

These views reflected the long-held assumption in American society that the institution of the presidency has a moderating effect on the behaviour of any president (Denton, Jr. 1983). Research on presidential policy-making argues that the main challenge facing the president is not the lack of information, but rather the capacity to manage and process the vast amount of available data, intelligence and perspectives. As Rudalevige (2005: 338) points out, ‘for reasons of time and cognitive capacity, no president could usefully receive as much information as exists on any given topic.’ Therefore, in order to overcome these obstacles, presidents implement advisory systems to help them organise and make sense of the plethora of available information. While the choice of personnel is important, researchers emphasise the relevance of the advisory structures created to help organise the decision-making processes (Burke 2009; Rudalevige 2009).

However, research on the presidency reveals that decision-making structures and processes change over time. More precisely, research on U.S. national security attests to the fact that over time, all presidential administrations follow a similar pattern of change from formal to informal decision-making structures and processes (Newmann 2015). The specific leadership traits of each individual president are critical in determining which of these structures will ultimately reign over foreign policy. As William Newmann (2004) notes, each president will rely on different structures depending on their particular leadership styles.

This paper seeks to build on and extend the previous work on the evolution of presidential foreign policy-making by analysing how Trump’s management of foreign policy-making evolved over his presidency. In order to address this research question, we undertook longitudinal research by means of the comparative case study method. In contrast to traditional studies on foreign policy decision-making which tend to focus on particular policy episodes, longitudinal research allows for the observation of a small number of subjects over an extended period of time in order to identify and explain change in one or more variables of interest (Menard 2008). The case studies are examined using a structured-focus comparison which involves asking a set of standardised, general questions of each individual case in order to assure the controlled comparison of the data from the cases (cf. George 2019). The questions framing the analyses are: 1) What is the role of the president in the advisory system? 2) What is the role and relationship amongst the advisors in the advisory system? 3) What are the procedures for managing the advisory system? and 4) What is the general dynamic of the decision-making process? The first question seeks to assess the style and the level of involvement of each president, particularly the level of centralisation of

the process, as well as the relationship between the president and his advisors. The second question focuses on the relationship amongst the president's main foreign policy advisors in an attempt to assess if they compete for the president's attention or cooperate in the deliberation process. The third question examines the procedures characterising the deliberations, namely identifying if main processes involve formal or informal channels of communication and advice. The final question seeks to identify the pervasive pattern of interaction amongst the president, his advisors and any others providing input for the final decision. This question also provides an opportunity to determine if there were any changes to the president's decision-making structures and processes over time.

In order to maintain greater control over the situational variables, three criteria guided our case selection by narrowing the universe of foreign policy decision-making instances. First, the cases were all situations of unilateral U.S. foreign policy decision-making. While in some instances the U.S. did involve or cooperate with other international actors, the decision processes determining U.S. policy were all initiated and carried out unilaterally by American decision-makers, rather than in a multilateral framework. Second, all of the cases involve decisions regarding equivalent opponents. The policies specifically address a host of states that are similar in terms of their relationship with the U.S. More specifically, despite the fact each state differs in size and resources, they all share an asymmetric power relationship with their American counterpart. In other words, the relationship between the actors reveals a significant disparity with respect to the elements of military, economic and political power broadly construed and that favour the U.S. This situation reinforces the previous criterion since research reveals that asymmetric relationships tend to lead the more powerful actor to act unilaterally and reject mediation (Quinn et al. 2006). Third, the cases share a commensurable political context in order to minimise the number of potentially confounding variables. More precisely, we have geographically circumscribed the cases to the Greater Middle East region in order to maintain greater control over the situational variables. As a result, we have selected the following five cases, over the four years of the Trump presidency, which we subsequently analyse using the structured-focus questions identified above: the surge in Afghanistan, the U.S. military strikes in Syria (2017 and 2018), the cancellation of the strike on Iran after the downing of a U.S. drone, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria and the killing of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.

### **Managing foreign policy decision-making**

Information is the key currency in foreign policy decision-making. A good advisory system should provide presidents with the information and advice they

need to decide on a particular policy issue. However, the main challenge facing the president of the United States is not the lack of information, but rather the capacity to manage and process the vast amount of available data, intelligence and perspectives. As Rudalevige (2005: 338) points out, ‘for reasons of time and cognitive capacity, no president could usefully receive as much information as exists on any given topic.’ Therefore, in order to overcome these obstacles, presidents implement advisory systems to help them organise and make sense of the plethora of available information. While the choice of personnel is important, researchers have emphasised the relevance of the advisory structures created to help organise the decision-making processes (Burke 2009; Rudalevige 2009).

Political scientists have identified three models to explain how presidents manage their advisory systems: the formalistic model, the collegial model and the competitive model (George 1981; Johnson 1974; Porter 1988). In the formalistic model, the president centralises the advisory system in his White House staff which is responsible for managing the information flow to and from the president. In this system, cabinet heads of departments and agencies are responsible for collecting and forwarding information and advice from their subordinate units through formal channels of communication. This process is centred predominantly around briefing papers prepared by the department or agencies. As a result, the president endorses a division-of-labour among the departments and agencies based on their functional expertise and advisors provide information exclusively on the policy area under their jurisdiction. The formalistic model is predicated on the belief that there are optimal policies that can be identified and implemented by breaking down problems into their pros and cons and emphasising their technical criteria and considerations.

In contrast, the collegial model favours an inclusive advisory process that emphasises negotiation and compromise. In this system, advisors serve as a ‘problem-solving’ team by openly airing and discussing their differing views and the president is directly exposed to their competing arguments and proposals. Rather than maintaining their role as functional experts, advisors are encouraged to act as policy generalists and policy discussions are kept informal enough to encourage open deliberation of the competing assessments and proposals. While the collegial model requires the active involvement of the president, it exposes him to the trade-offs involved in each proposal and allows him to try and reconcile them in the formulation of policy. Inherently, this implies that the resulting policies are usually ‘substantively sound and politically doable’ (Johnson 1974: 7).

Finally, in the competitive model the president purposely encourages competition among his advisors and heads of cabinet by attributing overlapping assignments and authority to individuals on an ad hoc basis. In this model, the

president centralises the decision-making process on himself and communication or collaboration among the advisors is minimal. Moreover, the president uses the multiple channels of communication to engage directly with subordinates in the bureaucracy, circumventing the cabinet and the heads of agencies.

The models of presidential management are ideal-type constructs which are particularly helpful as conceptual frameworks for analysing how presidents manage foreign policy decision-making. In practice they are not mutually exclusive, and presidents do adopt different elements from each model. More significantly, research reveals that decision-making structures and processes change over time. In particular, Newmann (2015) argues that, with regard to national security decision-making, all presidential administrations follow a similar pattern of change. More precisely, according to Newmann, every administration begins by employing a standard, formal interagency structure (centred on the National Security Council [NSC]) as the main hub for the decision-making processes. However, over time, each administration develops informal structures and presidential confidence structures in which decisions are made outside the traditional standard interagency processes. Using a series of case studies, Newmann showcases how, over time, presidents as different as Eisenhower, Kennedy, Reagan and George H. W. Bush overcame the burdens of the standard decision-making structures by using informal advisory groups consisting of their most trusted advisors to reach key foreign policy decisions. Ultimately, Newmann's research has consistently demonstrated that, throughout their time in office, each individual president 'will implicitly or explicitly arrange his advisors in a hierarchy, from a first among-equals advisor who has a unique relationship with the president, down to other important advisors often included in the informal structure, down to those advisors who may be NSC participants but not part of the informal structure' (Newmann 2004: 300). Similarly, by studying the personal interactions between Presidents Nixon and Carter and their advisors, Michael Link (2000) identified a pattern where both presidents moved away from formal group deliberations to favouring informal meetings with their network of most trusted advisors. A comparable dynamic is revealed by Luis da Vinha's research on the Carter administration. In analysing the development of the administration's Middle East policy, the author demonstrates how Carter's increasing reliance on informal decision-making structures allowed Brzezinski and the NSC staff to direct foreign policy decision-making by controlling access to the president, as well the information and advice he received (da Vinha 2016).

The specific leadership traits of each individual president are critical in determining which of these structures will ultimately reign over foreign policy. As Newmann (2004: 273) notes, 'the origins, use, and interactions between these

structures are dependent on the leadership style of the president and will vary from administration to administration; different presidents come to rely on different structures.’ However, several other factors contributing to changes in advisory structures have been identified. For instance, Walcott and Hult (1995) argue that the political environmental and organisational dynamics are two important explanatory factors in determining staff structures. With regard to the environmental factors, the authors highlight the role of other governmental actors, the public and technology as possible influences on how governance structures may evolve over time. In terms of the organisational dynamics, the authors point out that the unpredictable nature of change can lead to the emergence of structures that generate resistance and internal conflict. These organisational dynamics are particularly important when analysing the Trump administration, since research reveals that Trump is a ‘political maverick’ whose ‘mercurial personality and instinctual behaviour have hindered the development of a thoughtful and structured advisory process’ (da Vinha 2019: 300). More importantly, numerous reports revealed the existence of numerous internal struggles and the development of several informal structures that not only fostered institutional dysfunction, but also sought to manipulate the decision-making process by circumventing the president (Idem; Woodward 2018).

### **The surge in Afghanistan**

After only 24 days on the job, General Michael Flynn resigned as the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA) and was replaced by General H. R. McMaster, whose first goal was to reorganise the NSC’s organisational structure (Burke 2017). One of the first policy issues undertaken by McMaster was to review American policy in Afghanistan. In particular, the number of troops was central to U.S. strategy and informed most of the discussions among the military leadership. While the Department of Defense estimated that there were up to 20 active terrorist groups in Afghanistan, the U.S. could count on only about 8,500 troops on the ground to deal with the burgeoning violence (Byman & Simon 2017). From the perspectives of the NSC, Pentagon, Department of State and the various intelligence agencies, the U.S. needed to increase the number of troops. However, Trump had consistently criticised America’s involvement in Afghanistan and called for the withdrawal of American forces (Landler & Haberman 2017). As a candidate, he pledged to end America’s nation-building endeavours being actively pursued in the Middle East, condemning them for squandering the nation’s resources (Nakamura & Philip 2017).

In order to balance the military’s recommendations with the president’s preferences, by late March 2017, McMaster had developed what became known as the 4Rs strategy (reinforce, realign, reconcile and regionalise). The main goal

of the NCS's proposal was to consolidate the capacity and legitimacy of the Afghan government and involve other regional actors to help create the political stability necessary to confront the Taliban and other terrorist groups and establish a sustainable political settlement to end the conflict. As the details of the plan were refined, by May the NSC developed a proposal for deploying between 3,000-5,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan (Idem). The recommendation coincided with the views of the military leadership in Afghanistan which in February had told members of Congress that the situation was at a 'stalemate' and that the U.S. was lacking a 'few thousand' troops (Gordon 2017a).

Members of the administration expected a decision to be made by May 25 when the U.S. would meet with its allies in the NATO summit hosted in Brussels. However, only after an attack killed over 150 people in Kabul, revealing the deteriorating security situation in the country, did Trump authorise Secretary of Defense James Mattis to determine the troop levels needed in Afghanistan, allowing him to deploy up to 4,000 additional troops (Landler & Haberman 2017). While Mattis had the authority to increase the number of U.S. forces, he wanted any decision to be framed within a broader strategic framework for the region, promising the Senate Armed Services Committee that the administration would develop a new strategy for Afghanistan by the early months of summer (Gordon 2017b).

The strategy review initiated in June 2017 revealed deep divisions within the administration and publicly showcased the political machinations employed by the different factions within it to try to influence the president's final decision. The national security team composed of McMaster, Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson embodied the establishment's 'realist internationalist' outlook which argued for the continuation of American leadership of the liberal international order (Pfiffner 2018). They sought to maintain America's commitment to international allies and to the multilateral organisations and institutions it created throughout the post-war era, such as NATO. McMaster wanted to 'depoliticize' the deliberation process and conduct the strategy review using the formal bureaucratic structures available to the NSC (Jaffe & Rucker 2017). His overarching goal was to develop a strategy that allowed the U.S. to bolster its position in Afghanistan and create a situation wherein it could negotiate a settlement with the Taliban from a position of strength.

The 'establishment' proposal was countered by the 'nationalist' faction within the White House and which was led by White House Chief Strategist and Senior Counsellor to the President, Steve Bannon. For Bannon and his acolytes, the main goal was to withdraw American military forces from Afghanistan without the administration appearing to lose face by capitulating to the Taliban. In order to overcome this conundrum, Bannon advocated for the privatisation of

the war. More precisely, Bannon and Jarred Kushner proposed using private military contractors to fill the void left by removing U.S. troops (Landler, Schmitt & Gordon 2017). The nationalist faction roused Trump's most basic sentiments regarding America's international role. As a result, he rejected the NSC proposal to send thousands of additional troops to Afghanistan, declaring that the U.S. was 'losing' and criticising his national security team and the military for continuously promoting failed strategies (Landler & Haberman 2017).

The appointment of General John Kelly as the Chief of Staff in July 2017 bolstered the national security team's objectives. In seeking to instil a more formal decision-making process within the White House, Kelly instituted several new procedures in order to discipline the information flow to the president (Haberman, Thrush & Baker 2017). Therefore, not only was Bannon increasingly excluded from decision-making, but Kelly also pushed the deliberation process by gathering the national security team for a decisive meeting at Camp David on 18 August.

Three options had been developed for Afghanistan: 1) withdrawal of U.S. forces, 2) shift to a covert counterterrorism strategy led by the CIA or 3) an increase in the number of U.S. troops (Landler & Haberman 2017). At Camp David, the national security team argued that withdrawing U.S. forces would lead to the collapse of the Afghan government and the consolidation of the Taliban and other terrorist groups. Mattis compared the situation to Iraq in which Obama's decision to withdraw American forces had created a vacuum that allowed ISIS to form and grow. The Director of the CIA, Mike Pompeo, also informed the president that his agency was not ready to take responsibility for a full-fledged counterterrorism campaign. Pompeo argued that the CIA would take nearly two years to develop the capacity to successfully manage such a mission. Accordingly, McMaster made the case for continuing the existing strategy and augmenting the number of U.S. troops by approximately 4,000.

Trump disagreed with his advisors' assessments, doubting that the U.S. could win in Afghanistan and reiterating his criticism of the existing strategy. However, despite his inclination to blame the military for the situation and his drive to extract America from Afghanistan, Trump did not want to be perceived as being responsible for creating a potential security vacuum in the region that would strengthen America's enemies. Furthermore, Mattis' analogy with Obama's withdrawal from Iraq provided Trump with an opportunity to try to establish a stark contrast in leadership with that of his predecessor (Woodward 2018). Reluctantly, Trump approved the strategy developed by the NSC and which embodied McMaster's 4Rs, adding 4,000 additional U.S. troops to the existing 8,500 servicemen in Afghanistan. In announcing the new strategy, Trump defined victory as 'attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al Qaeda,

preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge' (The White House 2017a). During his address, Trump admitted that his original instinct was to withdraw American forces but emphasised that his role as president compelled him to consider America's broader strategic interests.

### **Responding to Syria's chemical weapons attacks**

As the administration struggled with the decision to increase troop deployments to Afghanistan, the situation in Syria escalated rapidly when news broke of the 4 April 2017 chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhoun. Images of the dead, men, women and children, underscored the failure of the ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey from late 2016, and struck a chord with President Trump. Informed of the attack during his presidential daily briefing, Trump tasked the Secretary of Defense and Pentagon with drafting retaliatory military options (Hartmann & Kirby 2017). The president consulted with his top national security advisors, throughout the day speaking with secretaries Mattis and Tillerson, and General Joseph Dunford (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) who agreed on the need to carry out airstrikes to punish the Syrian regime (Dawsey 2017).

The first public statement came from Press Secretary Sean Spicer, who on 4 April laid the blame on Assad and former President Obama (Merica, Scott & Starr 2017). Trump made a similar allusion in his first public statements, criticising Obama for not enforcing his 'red line' threat and resolving the crisis in Syria. Asked by a reporter if the recent chemical attack had crossed a red line, Trump responded that 'It crossed a lot of lines for me. When you kill innocent children, innocent babies – babies, little babies – with a chemical gas that is so lethal – people were shocked to hear what gas it was – that crosses many, many lines, beyond a red line. Many, many lines' (The White House 2017c).

The following day, President Trump and the senior members of the NSC met and were presented with four courses of action (Hersh 2017). The first, to continue business-as-usual and do nothing to address the chemical attacks, was dismissed by all present at the meeting as inconceivable. Just like Obama, Trump had drawn his own 'red line(s)' and any sign of lassitude would open his administration to the same criticism he levelled at Obama. The remaining options focused on a range of military strikes, escalating from a strike on a Syrian airfield to decapitating the Assad regime by bombing his command-and-control network, personal residence and bunkers in Damascus (Woodward 2018). After several hours of discussion, Trump directed his advisors to pursue the more modest military options.

Trump was unenthusiastic about having to carry out military strikes in Syria and was certainly not interested in any attempt to decapitate the Assad regime.

What did motivate him was the desire to appear decisive and assertive. Shortly after the Khan Sheikhou attack, Trump pointed out to several friends and associates that, after backing down from the military strikes in Syria, Obama had come across as ‘weak, just so, so weak’ (Trump cited in Dawsey 2017). According to an aide present at the meeting, Trump ‘was looking for something aggressive but “proportionate” that would be sufficient to send a signal – but not so large as to risk escalating the conflict’ (Shear & Gordon 2017). On 6 April, Trump convened a ‘decision meeting’ with his national security team at Mar-a-Lago for a final round of deliberations and to inform them of his decision to authorise the strike (Gordon, Cooper & Shear 2017; Pettypiece et al. 2017).

At 7:40pm EDT, the *USS Porter* and *USS Ross* fired 59 Tomahawk missiles striking Syria’s al-Shayrat airfield and destroying its hardened aircraft shelters, aircraft, radar equipment, fuel depots, ammunition supply bunkers and logistical storage (Hartmann & Kirby 2017). While in 2013 Trump claimed that Obama required Congressional approval in order to carry out a military strike against Syria, in this instance the administration made ‘a conscious decision not to seek permission from Congress’ (Dawsey 2017). Trump claimed the military strikes were essential to the nation’s vital national security interest in the war powers letter he submitted to Congress on 8 April (The White House 2017b).

The Trump administration received acclaim for the missile strikes, both at home and among allies (BBC 2017). Above all, the president’s action provided an opportunity for the administration to show political resolve and dispel some of the criticism surrounding its perceived dysfunctional decision-making system. For Tillerson and McMaster in particular, the deliberation process leading to the strikes rebutted criticism of their managerial ineptitude in running their respective bureaucratic organisations and allowed them ‘to show that they were wielding influence over critical national security decisions’ (Landler 2017). The description of a quick and steadfast decision-making process also allowed Trump to differentiate himself from Obama’s purported indecisiveness. Ultimately, the strikes provided him with the opportunity to change the prevalent narrative questioning his fitness for the presidency.

Despite the sense of accomplishment, the administration had to address the challenge posed by chemical weapons again the following year. On the evening of 7 April 2018, an attack on the rebel-held town of Douma killed some 70 people and injured over 500 more. Images of the victims, again including children, began to circulate on social media, while Syrian state media hurriedly blamed rebel groups for themselves deploying chemical weapons in the town to halt the advance of Syrian troops (Shaheen 2018). The State Department responded that the ‘Assad regime and its backers must be held accountable, and any further attacks prevented immediately’ (Hubbard 2017) and Trump (2018c) tweeted

'President Putin, Russia and Iran are responsible for backing Animal Assad. Big price . . . to pay.' The language employed in the statements indicated a forthcoming response and the military began developing strike options as the national security team considered how forcefully the U.S. would respond to Syria (Rucker et al. 2018). Trump was reportedly frustrated that the 2017 strikes had failed to deter Assad from using chemical weapons, and so he sought a quick and impactful intervention (Lucey & Colvin 2018). Meanwhile, advisors such as Mattis and Dunford recommended patience to analyse the available options and assess potential consequences and coordinate the response with allies (Crowley & Restuccia 2018).

Trump alternated between acceding to the more deliberative advisory process and Twitter outbursts with open threats. On 11 April Trump (2018b) tweeted, 'Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and "smart!":' The statement confounded U.S. military officials who were still assessing the source and type of chemicals used in the attack at Douma, as well as those developing the military options as they had not been informed of an official decision to intervene. Indeed, the final attack options, including targets, would not reach the president's desk until the day after the tweet (Rucker et al. 2018).

The military intervention was launched on 13 April and targeted sites associated with chemical weapons research and development, command and control, as well as weapons storage in Damascus and Homs (Crowley & Restuccia 2018; Rucker et al. 2018). In his address to the American people, Trump stated 'The purpose of our actions tonight is to establish a strong deterrent against the production, spread, and use of chemical weapons' (The White House 2018b). Indeed, the limited objective was made clear the next morning when the president declared 'Mission Accomplished!' (Trump 2018a) and Secretary Mattis later affirmed that when he described the intervention as a 'one-time shot' (Crowley & Restuccia 2018).

### **Pulling back from striking Iran**

After withdrawing the U.S. from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Trump embraced the policy of 'maximum pressure' and authorised the imposition of a host of economic sanctions on the Iranian regime and the mobilisation of American military resources in the region (Bergman, R. & Mazzetti 2019). However, over the following months, the administration continued to exhibit signs of disorder by conveying conflicting signals. For example, while throughout the spring of 2018, Trump repeatedly threatened Tehran, in late July, he took many of his advisors by surprise by announcing that he was prepared to meet with Iranian leaders without any preconditions.

Over the subsequent months, both sides embarked on a tit-for-tat policy of confrontation. A sense of crisis erupted when an American RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned surveillance drone was shot down over the Strait of Hormuz on 19 June. In contrast to past incidents, Iran claimed responsibility for downing the drone, justifying its actions by claiming that drone had breached its airspace. The Commander in Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Hossein Salami, argued that by violating Iran's borders, the U.S. had crossed 'our red line' and, therefore, Tehran had provided an unequivocal signal that it would resist American aggressions (Shear et al. 2019).

That morning, the APNSA, John Bolton, convened a meeting with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, the acting Secretary of Defense, Patrick Shanahan, and his replacement Mark Esper. The national security team swiftly reached a general agreement in recommending that the U.S. respond to Iran's provocation with military action (Baker, Haberman & Gibbons-Neff 2019). The main issue under discussion was the level of military response. The Pentagon proposed sinking an Iranian missile boat that it was tracking in the Gulf of Oman. The military leadership believed that by warning Tehran of the imminent attack this option would avoid casualties and offer a proportionate response to the destruction of the American drone. Pompeo and Bolton wanted a more assertive response which implied striking a more 'comprehensive list' of targets inside Iran. However, the need for an expeditious response led the advisors to settle for a more limited set of targets made up of three missile batteries and radars inside Iran (Baker, Schmitt & Crowley 2019).

Subsequently, at 11:00am, the national security team reconvened to discuss the situation and present the military strike options to the president. The advisors recommended the limited military strike option agreed to in the previous meeting, arguing that the strike would result in about 150 Iranian casualties. General Dunford was more circumspect than his peers and emphasised the need for a proportionate response in order to avoid a spiralling of military escalation that might potentially endanger U.S. forces and allies in the region (Baker, Haberman & Gibbons-Neff 2019). While the president did not formally sign-off on the proposal, the advisors left the meeting convinced that he had approved the strikes and, therefore, began mobilising the military resources required to carry out the mission (Baker, Schmitt & Crowley 2019).

After the meeting, Trump confounded some of his advisors. Earlier that morning, Trump had tweeted that 'Iran made a very big mistake' (reproduced in Olorunnipa et al. 2019). However, in a post-conference briefing session with Canada's prime-minister, Justin Trudeau, Trump was sceptical and played down the situation. Despite Tehran having accepted responsibility for the attack,

Trump argued that, most likely, the incident was not an intentionally hostile act on the part of the Iranian regime, but rather the responsibility 'of somebody who was loose and stupid that did it' (Trump cited in Olorunnipa et al. 2019). This state of uncertainty continued as Trump convened his top advisors in the Oval Office that evening. The president was visibly concerned about the potential repercussions of the strikes, namely the number of possible casualties (Idem). Before the meeting began, Trump repeatedly recounted a story that General Jack Keane told the *Fox News* evening show of how the U.S. inadvertently shot down an Iranian commercial airliner in 1988. In the interview, Keane suggested that the downing of the U.S. drone might have also been a mistake. According to reports, several of the president's advisors believed that 'Keane's brief history lesson exacerbated Trump's pre-existing doubts about carrying out the strike' (Johnson 2019). In fact, in the preceding days, another *Fox News* host, Tucker Carlson, had also frequently spoken with the president, warning of the risks to his presidency and the prospects of his re-election if he involved the U.S. in another war in the Middle East (Baker, Schmitt & Crowley 2019).

Despite the president's concerns, his advisors once again made the case for military retaliation against Iran's actions. By this time, over 10,000 U.S. military personnel in the Middle East were already positioned, and carrier-based fighter planes and navy vessels were ready for launching retaliatory strikes (Idem). Nevertheless, Trump was fixated with the 150 potential Iranian casualties resulting from the strikes. The president highlighted that when the U.S. drone was downed, no Americans were killed. Therefore, with Pence, Pompeo and Bolton absent from the meeting, Trump latched on to the potential Iranian fatalities and decided to cancel the strikes (Olorunnipa et al. 2019).

Trump's decision caught many of his advisors off-guard. Pompeo and Bolton were particularly upset with the decision because they believed it would further embolden Iran's aggressive behaviour (Baker, Schmitt & Crowley 2019). The decision also fostered bipartisan criticism in Congress. For example, Liz Cheney (R-WY) called the failure to respond assertively to Iran a 'very serious mistake' and Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) said he was disappointed with the president's decision (Olorunnipa et al. 2019; Shear, Cooper & Schmitt 2019). However, Trump defended his decision based on its proportionality. After the meeting, the president tweeted 'We were cocked & loaded to retaliate last night on 3 different sights [sic] when I asked, how many will die. 150 people, sir, was the answer from a General. 10 minutes before the strike I stopped it' (reproduced in Diamond et al. 2019). The president reasoned that Americans would not equate the downing of a \$130 million drone and the killing of 150 people the same way, conceding to his aides that 'the dollar figure would resonate less with U.S. voters than the potential casualties' (Bender & Lubold 2019). The president also publicly acknowledged

General Dunford's moderating influence, contrasting him to his other advisors' more bellicose views. In fact, throughout the day of the decision, Dunford had consistently made the case for a more restrained course of action, highlighting the risks of escalation and the danger to U.S. forces in the region if America's response was not proportionate (Baker, Haberman & Gibbons-Neff 2019).

### **Withdrawing U.S. troops from Syria**

President Trump's penchant for policy-making by tweet persisted as the administration continued to address the challenges in Syria. In contrast to his predecessor, throughout the campaign Trump devalued the need to remove Assad, arguing that America's focus in Syria should be on defeating ISIS (Langley & Baker 2016). Trump was not interested in committing the U.S. to Syria's internal conflict any further. However, administration officials continued to push for greater American engagement in addressing the political situation in the country.

For instance, Mattis and Tillerson repeatedly made the case for the U.S. working towards a political settlement to the conflict and having a long-term 'stabilizing' role in Syria and the region (BBC 2018a; Worth 2018). While Trump had reluctantly sanctioned his national security team's plans for maintaining U.S. forces in Syria, he continued to publicly assure Americans that U.S. troops would be withdrawing from the country 'very soon' (BBC 2018b). After ordering the suspension of financial recovery assistance for Syria, on 3 April 2018, Trump met with the NSC and instructed his national security team to begin preparing for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria. Mattis and Dunford argued that a precipitous withdrawal would allow for the resurgence of ISIS and reinforce Iran and Russia's standing in the region (David 2018; DeYoung & Harris 2018). Trump reluctantly conceded that more time was required but emphasised the need to begin preparations for extracting American forces.

Despite diverging public remarks from administration officials, throughout the following months, the national security team continued to develop and prepare retaliatory measures in the case that the Assad regime attacked the opposition forces in the Idlib province or employed chemical weapons again on its population (Bolton 2020). This reflected the belief among many of the president's national security advisors that the primary objective was to challenge Iran's growing regional assertiveness. With Tillerson gone and Mattis increasingly shunned by the president, Bolton and Pompeo embarked on a policy of imposing 'maximum pressure' on Tehran in an attempt to force the regime to modify its behaviour (Kube & Lee 2018; Seligman 2019). According to the new Secretary of State, the U.S. should leverage economic sanctions, military deterrence and domestic opposition in Tehran to force the change (Pompeo 2018).

As administration officials remained earnestly committed to a prolonged engagement in Syria, in December 2018, Trump brought the issue of withdrawal to the fore once more. Over the preceding months Trump and the President of Turkey, Recep Erdogan, had been sparring over a series of diplomatic issues which led to the imposition of sanctions between the two countries (Bolton 2020). The quarrel was attenuated as Trump and Erdogan held a bilateral meeting at the Buenos Aires G20. In a phone call between the two leaders on 14 December, Erdogan reiterated his concern about the U.S. support for Kurdish forces operating near the Turkish border (Seligman & Hirsh 2018). During the call, Erdogan indicated that Turkey wanted to eliminate the threat of both the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and ISIS. Trump seized on the offer and told him he was ready to withdraw American troops from Syria if Turkey would deal with ISIS. He then told the APNSA to develop a plan for the extraction of American forces, entrusting Turkey to continue the fight against ISIS (Bolton 2020).

Following the call, Bolton, Mattis and Pompeo met with the president in the White House and tried to convince him to not hastily withdraw U.S. forces. To no avail, the advisors argued that the decision would provide an opportunity for ISIS to regenerate itself and that it would bolster Iran's position in the region (Bergen 2019). On 18 December, Bolton, Mattis, Pompeo, Dunford, Gina Haspel (Director of the CIA) and Dan Coats (Director of National Intelligence), among others, met in the Pentagon to discuss the situation and the options available to best comply with the president's demands. Dunford informed them that it would take approximately four months to remove U.S. troops from Syria (Bolton 2020). However, Trump gave his advisors no time to prepare for the roll out of the decision and the following morning, 19 December, Trump tweeted 'We have defeated ISIS in Syria, my only reason for being there during the Trump presidency' (reproduced in Seligman & Hirsh 2018) and, later that day, promised to bring U.S. troop home (reproduced in Landler, Cooper & Schmitt 2018). The president had once again made a major policy announcement without warning his national security team and denying them time to plan the response. This was evident when the White House and the Pentagon struggled to explain how the withdrawal would proceed. The Press Secretary issued a statement claiming that the withdrawal marked the beginning of the 'next phase' with ISIS, while the Pentagon limited itself to stating that it would begin removing U.S. forces from Syria, but without providing any details or a timetable (Borger & Chulov 2018).

Mattis made one last attempt to persuade the president to postpone the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria, arguing that leaving would create an opportunity for threats to resurface in the future and emphasising how the Obama administration had made the same mistake. He also underscored that the Kurds were shouldering the brunt of the fighting and that allies and international

organisations were also contributing to the mission. When Trump refused to budge, Mattis resigned, telling the president that ‘you have the right to a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours on these and other subjects’ (Woodward 2020).

Trump was, however, persuaded to sign off on a slower withdrawal during a meeting with military officials during a visit to Al Asad Air Base in Iraq, on 26 December. By assuring that U.S. forces could liquidate the ISIS caliphate while they were withdrawing and manage any resurgent problems from bases in Iraq, the commander of the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve, Lieutenant General Paul LaCamera, was able to convince the president to allow for up to four weeks to complete the mission (Bolton 2020). Afterwards, in remarks to American troops, Trump stated, ‘There will be a strong, deliberate, and orderly withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria – very deliberate, very orderly – while maintaining the U.S. presence in Iraq to prevent an ISIS resurgence and to protect U.S. interests, and also to always watch very closely over any potential reformation of ISIS and also to watch over Iran’ (The White House 2018a).

Despite Trump’s rhetoric, the withdrawal proceeded at a gradual pace (Seligman 2019). With Erdogan threatening to invade Northern Syria throughout the summer, Trump again focused his attention on Syria. After a new phone call with his Turkish counterpart on 6 October, Trump ordered the withdrawal of the remaining U.S. troops from Syria. The decision again blindsided many administration officials and generated fierce criticism for the abandonment of America’s Kurdish allies (Barnes & Schmitt 2019).

### **Killing general Qasem Suleimani**

The tensions between the U.S. and Iran continued to simmer throughout the second half of 2019. As Iran progressively extricated itself from the provisions of the JCPOA and continued to increase the country’s uranium enrichment process, the Trump administration persisted in ratcheting up its policy of maximum pressure. When protests led to clashes with security forces in Iran (Fassihi & Gladstone 2019), officials in the Trump administration felt that their policy of stepping-up economic pressure against the regime in Tehran was vindicated (Sanger 2019).

In the meantime, Iranian-backed militias continued their campaign of rocket attacks on Iraqi bases housing American troops. One such group was the Shia paramilitary group Kata’ib Hezbollah which had strong connections to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps which supplied it with weapons and other lethal aid. Over the year, the group had carried out several rocket attacks as a way to keep the pressure on the U.S. (Baker et al. 2020). However, the situation escalated on 27 December 2019, when Kata’ib Hezbollah launched about 30 rockets

at the Iraqi K1 military base in Kirkuk, killing an Iraqi-American civilian interpreter and wounding three U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi police officers (Bender et al. 2020; Ryan et al. 2020).

The following day, the Pentagon briefed the president on the situation and presented a host of possible military options, including strikes against Iranian-backed militias in Iraq or on Iranian ships or missile facilities. According to reports, military officials 'also tacked on the choice of targeting the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, General Qasem Suleimani, mainly to make other options seem reasonable' (Cooper et al. 2020). Over the weekend, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley, among others, travelled to Mar-a-Lago to discuss the administration's best course of action. Trump ultimately rejected the possibility of killing Suleimani and approved retaliatory strikes on a host of militia targets. As a result, on 29 December the U.S. Air Force carried out airstrikes on several militia sites on the Iraq-Syria border, killing over 25 members of Kata'ib Hezbollah and injuring over 50 others (Ryan et al. 2020). As a response, two days later, thousands of pro-Iranian militia members and their supporters besieged and stormed the American embassy in Baghdad. The U.S. military quickly dispatched over 100 marines from Kuwait who were able to disperse the protesters and contain the situation without any American casualties (Baker et al. 2020).

Watching the events in Baghdad play out on television in Washington, Trump and his advisors feared that the administration would face a situation akin to or worse than the attack against Americans in Benghazi, Libya (Cooper et al. 2020). When four Americans, including the U.S. Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, were killed in 2012, Trump argued that it was a bigger scandal than Watergate, tweeting, 'Don't let Obama get away with allowing Americans to die. Kick him out of office tomorrow' (reproduced in Osborne 2017). This time around, Trump again took to Twitter warning: 'Iran will be held fully responsible for lives lost, or damage incurred, at any of our facilities. They will pay a very BIG PRICE! This is not a Warning, it is a Threat. Happy New Year!' (reproduced in Harding & Borger 2019). The president also assailed Iraqi authorities for failing to control the situation and protect the U.S. embassy.

As events were unfolding, the APNSA, Robert O'Brien, circulated a top-secret memo among members of the administration which suggested a score of potential targets for American retaliatory action, including targeting high profile Iranian officials such as General Suleimani and Abdul Reza Shahlai, a commander of Iran's elite Quds Force in Yemen (Baker et al. 2020). Several U.S. officials held Suleimani responsible for the death of hundreds of American troops in the region (Crowley, Hassan & Schmitt 2020). However, Presidents George W. Bush

and Barack Obama had avoided striking Suleimani and other high-level Iranian officials, believing that killing them was too provocative and the costs of killing them outweighed the benefits.

Despite the concerns of his predecessors, President Trump had been contemplating killing Suleimani for several months. He first raised the prospect of killing the general in the spring of 2017 after Iranian-backed Yemeni rebels attacked Riyadh on the eve of Trump's first visit to Saudi Arabia. As tensions with Iran escalated, Trump would periodically bring up the issue (Sonne, Jaffe & Dawsey 2020). In May 2019, Bolton requested that the U.S. military and intelligence agencies revise their options for deterring Iran's increased belligerency. As a result, the agency review put forward the option of the targeting members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and intensified their surveillance of Suleimani.

Notwithstanding the planning, officials in the Pentagon were still reluctant to endorse the killing of Suleimani, questioning the benefits and propriety of striking the Iranian official (Idem; Bender 2020). However, the president's top advisors converged in their assessment that eliminating Suleimani was the best course of action. In particular, Vice President Pence and Secretary Pompeo were the most vocal supporters of this course of action (Cooper 2020). Pompeo was the only remaining member of Trump's initial national security team and consistently promoted a more belligerent policy toward Iran. Accordingly, after the attack on the U.S. embassy, the Secretary of State spurred the president to authorise the killing of the Iranian general (Wong & Jakes 2020). Haspel bolstered Pompeo's position, referencing evidence that Suleimani was planning attacks on several American resources in the region and arguing that the consequences of not acting were more dangerous than taking decisive measures (Baker et al. 2020).

The opportunity to act came when reports indicated that Suleimani would visit Baghdad on Friday, 3 January 2020. Trump met with his national security team at Mar-a-Lago on 1 and 2 January to discuss the prospect of killing Suleimani and assess the possible repercussions. Several additional options were discussed, such as a new round of military strikes on Iranian-backed militias in Iraq or on Iranian ships and missile batteries. However, Trump had grown weary of officials insistently warning him throughout his presidency that taking bold actions would ultimately harm U.S. security (Schmitt et al. 2020). More significantly, several of Trump's advisors suggested that the president's reluctance to act assertively in the past had emboldened Iranian leadership. For some, the decision to cancel the strikes on Iran after the downing of an American drone was portrayed as a sign of hesitancy and weakness (Ryan et al. 2020). The appearance of weakness was one of Trump's greatest fears. Killing Suleimani would offer

him the opportunity to again establish a clear contrast with his predecessor. As the president would publicly admit a few days later, 'it was going to be another Benghazi, had they broken through the final panels of glass. Had they gotten through, we would have had either hundreds of dead people or hundreds of hostages,' adding that 'We did it exactly the opposite of Benghazi, where they got there so late' (Trump cited in Boyer 2020).

Trump officially authorised the operation to kill Suleimani on Thursday evening (Schmitt et al. 2020). Several military officials were taken aback by the president's decision. While they had provided him with the option, they considered it to be the most extreme choice and did not believe he would act on it. In particular, they were concerned with the safety of U.S. troops in the region in the eventuality of an Iranian reprisal, as well as the precedent set by the U.S. in sanctioning the assassination of foreign government officials (Cooper et al. 2020; Walt 2020). The decision was reached swiftly since the deliberation process was limited to a handful of the president's closest advisors – i.e., Vice President Pence, Secretary of State Pompeo, Defense Secretary Esper, Gina Haspel (CIA Director), Robert O'Brien (APNSA), Mick Mulvaney (Chief of Staff) and Eric Ueland (Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs) (Schmitt et al. 2020). The multiple meetings and conference calls were organised and coordinated through the vice president's office, as Pence served as the point man in the deliberation process, even though he was not at the president's Mar-a-Lago resort (Cooper et al. 2020). The decision was also carried out quickly and diligently since it departed from the traditional channels of planning and implementation, excluding consultation with some high-level officials, lower-level staffers in the military, members of Congress and key American allies (Bender et al. 2020).

Accordingly, on 3 January 2020, as Suleimani's two car convoy left Baghdad Airport, an American MQ-9 Reaper drone carried out the missile strike, killing the general and nine other associates (Baker et al. 2020). The administration confirmed the attack at 9:46 pm in a short press release as Trump denounced Suleimani as 'the number-one terrorist anywhere in the world' and justified his decision by claiming that the general 'was plotting imminent and sinister attacks on American diplomats and military personnel' (The White House 2020). Over the following days, administration officials echoed the president's justification that there were imminent attacks on American interests throughout the region (Ryan 2020).

While the administration's explanations experienced increasing domestic and international scrutiny and the clash between the U.S. and Iran festered, the episode came to reveal an increasingly confident president, who was willing to make bold decisions, despite the reluctance of many of his military advisors. Moreover, contrary to deliberations in the past where the presidents' advisors

clashed and diverged on the appropriate course of action, the national security team was now wholly aligned with Trump's worldview and decision. By this point in his presidency, Trump had cycled through civilian advisors to the extent that few remaining would challenge his perspective, and he no longer exhibited his earlier deference to military officials. The decision to kill Suleimani further continued the trend in the Trump administration for carrying out expeditious deliberation processes and increasingly to circumvent many of the formal structures and process of decision-making.

### **Conclusion**

Our analysis of Trump's Middle East policy confirms the main tenets of the evolution model of presidential policy-making which claims that, over time, the 'participation in the decision-making process narrows, more ad hoc or informal processes are created, and the full interagency process is bypassed or streamlined on a regular basis' (Newmann 2015). This evolution reflects the assumption that presidents learn on the job and change their organisational structures and processes to assure they implement the best decisions (cf. Levy 1994). However, Trump did not learn in office in the sense of adjusting and adopting processes that assured he received the information and advice that was needed to make the best possible decisions. Rather, as the structured-focus comparison of the five cases illustrates, over time, the president increasingly bypassed traditional structures and implemented ad hoc processes to personalise foreign policy formulation. The disregard for well-defined structures and processes stemmed from the personalisation of decision-making on Trump himself and reflected the style that had characterised the management of his corporate enterprises. In other words, in the Trump world, he establishes the rules and makes the decisions.

His national security team initially tried to reign in his most basic impulses and establish formal processes for discussing and developing foreign policy. In particular, Kelly and McMaster sought to implement a more functional deliberation system by instituting several procedures for vetting the information coming to and from the president. Nevertheless, Trump increasingly thwarted the deliberation process by allowing advisors to circumvent these structures and processes, by actively seeking alternative sources of information (particularly from outside governmental institutions), and by announcing decisions without previously consulting with or informing his advisors. Sceptical of the advice of his national security team, the president increasingly sought information and policy options that confirmed his pre-existing beliefs or preferences. As frustration with his advisors grew and he became increasingly confident of his political instincts, Trump gradually replaced those individuals that challenged his views

and refused to enthusiastically embrace his agenda – leading to one of the highest turnover rates in the modern presidency (Tempas 2021).

Accordingly, over time, Trump implemented an advisory system that reflected his personal needs and expectations. By the end of his term, Trump had a foreign policy team of more like-minded advisors who were in sync with his worldview and less willing to push back or challenge his beliefs and judgement. Over the years, he consolidated his unconventional style of management at the head of the executive branch of government, centralising decision-making, forestalling orderly deliberation processes, and shattering institutional conventions and norms (da Vinha & Dutton 2021). Even after losing his re-election, Trump continued to manage the White House the same way he managed his corporate enterprises. This is patent in his decision to withdraw American forces from Afghanistan at the end of 2020, which precluded a thorough deliberation process and led Trump to oust Defense Secretary Mark Esper after he questioned the president's decision (Lamothe et al. 2020).

Ultimately, Trump continued the decades-long trend of the personalisation of foreign policy decision-making in the hands of the president. However, more than any of his recent predecessors, Trump tried to fundamentally change the role and the office of the president of the U.S. (Baker 2017). Since the beginning of his presidency, Trump, with the help of many of his advisors, was bent on tearing down the government apparatus (Calabresi 2017). Robert Denton, Jr. (1983: 372) long suggested that 'the best measure of a politician's greatness is his ability to create new roles for an established office.' In this respect, despite his aspirations, Trump failed to change these expectations. In fact, several of his former national security advisors are unrelenting in their criticism of Trump's leadership. John Bolton argued that Trump was 'unfit for office' and lacked the 'competence to carry out the job' (Wagner 2020), while H. R. McMaster claimed that the president had repeatedly compromised American principles 'in pursuit of partisan advantage and personal gain' (Choi 2021). Even more disconcerting, James Mattis denounced Trump as a threat to the Constitution and John Kelly admitted that if given the chance, he would support invoking the 25<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution in order to remove the president from office (Cole 2021; Goldberg 2021). Concern with the president's erratic decision-making led the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), to speak with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the safeguards in place to prevent the president from initiating a nuclear exchange or other military hostilities (Lamothe, Wagner & Sonne 2021). Trump's unorthodox style ultimately consummated his place in history as the only American president to have been impeached twice.

Trump's foreign policy decision-making not only defied conventional assumptions regarding presidential behaviour, but also raises serious concerns

about the future of U.S. foreign policy-making. As Preston (2020) argues, 'In the absence of leaders who have high needs for information and an openness to alternative views, many of the efforts suggested in the literature to address advisory group dysfunction so that it augments a leader's strengths and compensates for their weaknesses are likely to fail.' In the Trump administration, the president's disdain for comprehensive deliberation processes created an environment prone to dysfunction and manipulation. Several accounts have highlighted how many of Trump's advisors, having failed to persuade the president or been unwilling to challenge his views, sought to influence policy outcomes by concealing information, leaking material to the public, and delaying or simply ignoring the president's directives (da Vinha 2019). However, as John Bolton acknowledges, many of the attempts to constrain or circumvent Trump's actions early in his presidency only strengthened his conviction to follow his intuition. Rather than establish order, the attempts by the alleged 'adults in the room' to regulate the president's behaviour only 'fed Trump's already-suspicious mind-set, making it harder for those who came later to have legitimate policy exchanges with the President' (Bolton 2020). Moreover, several key administration officials, concerned about rousing Trump's ire, actively endeavoured to ward off any information and advice that did not conform to the president's expectations and beliefs (Schmitt, Sanger & Haberman 2019).

Constraints on presidential action have been waning for decades and Trump merely represents the culmination of a long process of unconstrained executive power (Goldgeier & Saunders 2018). The increasingly polarised context of American politics favours an ever more assertive president. The dangers inherent in this trend were patently manifested in the Trump's Middle East policy. With that said, we are not making a judgement on the policies per se – their consequences can only be properly assessed with historical hindsight. Rather, we argue that positive outcomes may well be attributable to serendipity, since policies were overwhelmingly formulated outside the framework of an orderly deliberation process which guaranteed the necessary airing and consideration of the numerous options and alternatives. Therefore, it is our hope that we can learn from the Trump presidency and seriously contemplate how we can mitigate, if not reverse, what Robert Dahl (1990) designated as the 'pseudodemocratization of the presidency.'



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Research article

# Strange Bedfellows: Relations between International Nongovernmental Organisations and Military Actors in Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism in Northeast Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Previous studies have examined the impact of the relationship between international nongovernmental organisations and the military on peacekeeping operations and humanitarian programming. However, how relations between international nongovernmental organisations and military actors affect preventing/countering of violent extremism has not been central to existing debates. By using the qualitative-dominant mixed methods approach, this paper investigates relations between these actors in Northeast Nigeria and argues that the dynamic interactions between international nongovernmental organisations and the military largely breed mistrust and conflict between them. This undermines the capacity of international nongovernmental organisations to prevent/counter violent extremism. The paper concludes that mutual respect for the operational procedures of the military and international nongovernmental organisations in the Northeast is relevant for an enhanced relationship between them and sustainable preventing/countering violent extremism programming in Nigeria and beyond.*

**Keywords:** *preventing/countering violent extremism, international nongovernmental organisations, civil–military relations, counterterrorism, Boko Haram, Nigeria*

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### Introduction

Globally, counterterrorism (CT) emphasises hard power as the primary response of the military to terrorism. It is commonly used to restore law and order as well as preempt and retaliate terrorist attacks (Duyvesteyn 2008). Whereas this strategy is effective in dislodging terrorists (Clubb & Tapley 2018), it is largely repressive, non-viable and unsustainable (Nwangwu & Ezeibe 2019). It has also been criticised for a high level of human rights violations and generating tension between stakeholders in CT (Sampson 2016). This led to the evolution of an alternative strategy known as preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) (Aly 2015). The central idea underpinning P/CVE is that violent extremists should not be countered exclusively by hard power but also through soft power (Frazer & Nünlist 2015). This involves tackling the structural causes of violent extremism such as lack of socioeconomic opportunities, marginalisation and discrimination, poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law, prolonged and unresolved conflicts and radicalisation in prisons (Club de Madrid 2017; UN Development Programme 2018; United Nations 2015b).

P/CVE strategy promotes the role of the civil society organisation (CSOs) in CT (Commonwealth Secretariat 2017; Nye 2004; Steinberg 2018). The CSOs are important to remedy certain political, economic and social factors that contribute to terrorism (Charity and Security Network 2010). Hence, CSOs comprising international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), local nongovernmental organisations (LNGOs) and community based organisations (CBOs) alongside United Nations agencies play key roles to stabilise conflict regions (Clubb & Tapley 2018; Nwangwu & Ezeibe 2019). These CSOs, especially the INGOs, participate in P/CVE through *deradicalisation* and *counterradicalisation* in the global South, though a credibility issue persists as many INGOs receive funding for these projects from governmental institutions (Abu-Nimer 2018; Aldrich 2014; McMahan 2017; Schlegel 2019; Spalek 2016).

As the role of these INGOs in humanitarian and P/CVE programming increases, the number of INGOs increases. In 2014, there were over 20,000 INGOs globally (Penner 2014). Most of these INGOs operate in the global South, especially Africa, the domain of most humanitarian conflicts (Byman 2001; Novelli 2017; UN Economic and Social Council 2018). INGOs refers to voluntary, transnational and nonprofit organisations that set international standards for peace, security and development, hold nations accountable to these standards and provide the resources to meet the standards (Lee 2010). Independence, humanity, impartiality, neutrality and universality are the underlying principles of the INGOs (De Torrenté 2006; Duffield, Macrae & Curtis 2001), though they are often perceived as biased (Abiew 2012). This is connected to the tendency of the INGOs to promote neoliberal principles such as democracy, gender equality and human rights in the global South (Abiew 2012; Duffield, Macrae & Curtis 2001; Karlsrud 2019).

Despite the criticisms against the INGOs, their activities continue to expand, even to the shores of Nigeria where violent extremisms have continued to rear their ugly heads since the 1980s. This period witnessed the rise of the Maitasine group, a fanatic religious group that terrorised the Northern states of former Gongola, Bauchi and Kaduna (Ezeani et al. 2021). Keying into a similar ideological doctrine of Islamic fundamentalism propagated by this group, Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 founded the *Jamatu Ahli Al-Sunna lil Da'wa Wal Jihad* (JAS) (People committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teaching and Jihad). To this group, Western education is forbidden (Boko Haram)—a term that has come to be the name of the sect. Boko Haram's continued forceful and violent campaign, essentially for the abolishment of Western education and for the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria, brought it face to face with the Nigerian authorities, especially the military. The immensity of the dastardly activities of Boko Haram terrorists/terrorism in Nigeria has led to the promulgation of a number of

ant-terrorism laws. These include the Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011 and the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act of 2013, both of which seek to imprison for not less than twenty (20) years any person(s) convicted of directly or indirectly participating, supporting or sponsoring terrorism or terrorist groups in Nigeria.

Although the Nigerian military has consistently carried out military campaigns to counter the violent activities of Boko Haram in the Northeast of Nigeria and have had occasions to declare the sect 'technically defeated' (BBC 2015; Lenshie et al. 2021), the violent operations of the group continued to soar. This led to the realisation that military might alone is incapable of P/CVE in the Northeast of Nigeria. The existence and operation of over 36 leading INGOs alongside other CSOs for P/CVE and humanitarian programming is therefore an acknowledgement of the fact that military might needed to be complemented with non-kinetic and humanitarian ventures (Nigeria International Non-Governmental Organization Forum 2018). The major INGOs implementing P/CVE programming in Northeast Nigeria include Mercy Corps, the Centre for Human Development, Search for Common Ground, International Alert and the International Committee of Red Cross. These INGOs also operate alongside the national military, especially the Army and the Air Force, in the conflict region to improve human security (Abiew 2003; Bell et al. 2013). Meanwhile, 'civil-military relations are complex and not always harmonious' (Cunningham 2018). Naison Ngoma observed that 'civil-military relations in Africa are strongly influenced by its colonial history of the military that was feared and disliked' (Ngoma 2006). Although INGOs are transnational in character, they are deeply embedded in national context. Thus domestic institutional configurations and the nature of mandates shape their relationships with other INGOs and security agencies (Ruffa & Vennesson 2014).

While previous studies have examined the role of INGOs in transnational advocacy (Ahmed & Potter 2006), the relationships between international and local offices of INGOs (Luxon & Wong 2017) and the impact of INGO-military relations on peacekeeping operations and humanitarian programming (Abiew 2012), how INGO-military relations affect the P/CVE programming has not been central to existing academic debates. In specific terms, the study sought objective answers to the following questions: (i) In which ways do the peculiarities and dynamic natures of INGOs and those of the military affect their relations in the course of P/CVE in Northeast Nigeria? (ii) What are the drivers of the mistrust and conflict between INGOs and the military on P/CVE in Northeast Nigeria? (iii) How have this mistrust and conflict between INGOs and the military impacted the P/CVE in Northeast Nigeria?

This study probes how relations between INGOs and military actors affect preventing/countering violence extremism in Northeast Nigeria, arguing that

INGO–military relations in Northeast Nigeria are largely mistrustful and or conflictive due to the variance in their operational principles. In view of this, the study focuses on unravelling the areas of conflict between these two types of actors, especially as it concerns their mutual perceptions of each other in relation to the P/CVE programming in Northeast Nigeria. It addresses the question of how the divergent operational dynamics of the INGOs and the military have sown a seed of mistrust, and how this mistrust has further undermined the P/CVE programming in Northeast Nigeria, with Bauchi, Adamawa and Yobe states in focus. Hypothesising from the foregoing, the study pursues an argument that perhaps mutual respect for the operational procedures and principles of the military and international nongovernmental organisations in the Northeast may be relevant for enhanced international nongovernmental organisation–military relations and sustainable preventing/countering violent extremism programming in Nigeria and beyond. This line of argument presents an opportunity for achieving goal 16, target 1 of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) which seeks to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (United Nations 2015a). With the foregoing dutifully providing the needed introductory/background information, the remaining parts of this study are discussed under the following themes: methodology; modelling violent and non-violent social order in INGO–military relations; nature of INGO–military relations and the impact of INGO–military relations on P/CVE in Northeast Nigeria. General conclusions relevant for enhanced INGO–military relations and reducing all forms of violence and related deaths were drawn.

### **Methodology and scope of the study**

The empirical focus of this study is the Northeast geopolitical zone in Nigeria. The zone is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. It houses six out of the 36 federating states in Nigeria, including Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states. Since 2002, the Northeast has been under the attacks of Boko Haram, an Islamic sect that has transformed into a terrorist group (Eji 2016; Yusuf 2013). From 2009 to 2019, Boko Haram carried out major attacks on both public and private institutions across northern Nigeria, including the United Nations office in Abuja (Oriola 2017).

Purposive sampling was employed to select three states in northeast Nigeria, including Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states. These states are the hotbed of Boko Haram insurgency (Assessment Capacities Project 2016; Ezeani et al. 2021) and the major focus of military CT and INGOs' P/CVE in Nigeria from 2009 to 2019. The participants in the study are 84 stakeholders involved in CT and P/CVE in BAY states. The stakeholders comprise staff /officers of United Nations agencies, INGOs and LNGOs, Nigerian military, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)

and Knifar women, a group that is made up of over 2,000 women whose husbands, children and fathers were killed or arrested by the military in Borno State, Nigeria (Olanrewaju & Nwosu 2019). We also purposively selected five leading INGOs in the BAY states that have operational presence and committed to implement P/CVE programmes in at least two of the BAY states. They include: Amnesty International, International Medical Corps, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Aid, International Rescue. For clarity, the Nigerian military is a tripod of the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Air Force and the Nigerian Navy. However, the usage of the Nigerian military in this study is limited to the activities of the Army and Air Force which mostly carry out the counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast.

To address the above questions in the light of convincing objectivity, several modalities that are consistent with the qualitative-descriptive research orientation, including the longitudinal design, were adopted for data collection and subsequent analysis. The longitudinal approach enabled the researchers to identify and measure changes in subjects' responses at different intervals from 2017 through 2018 and 2019 to 2020. In other words, data for the study was collected during extensive fieldwork involving the researchers and six research assistants in June 2017 with return visits in January 2018, March 2019 and March 2020 to the end of validating the previous responses. The study also utilised qualitative-dominant mixed methods comprising seventeen key informant interviews (KIIs), six group interviews, field observations and reference to secondary literature. On KIIs and group interviews: To guarantee inter-rater reliability and internal consistency, a somewhat split half method was adopted by making sure that the same set of questions, divided into two, were administered to the respondents of both the KIIs and those of group interviews. Although different persons made up these two groups, the split-half method enabled the researchers to check the consistency of responses both between the two broad groups of interviewees and among the members of each group at different intervals of our repeated visits. Between seven and eleven persons participated in each group interview. Hence, a total of 42 persons participated in the group interviews in BAY states. The criteria for selection of participants in the group interviews were cognate experience with military and INGOs operations in BAY states, availability and willingness to participate in the study. English, Pidgin English and Hausa languages were used for the interviews, depending on the educational levels of the respondents. For ease of collection and analysis, the main instruments of data collection (interview schedules) were prepared in such a way that there were three sections. Each section addressed one of the three main research questions by eliciting information from the respondents (interviewees) on minor questions derived from the major research questions. Table 1 shows at a glance the

Table 1: Main topics of discussion and derivate subsidiary question items

S/N	Topics of discussion	Key questions on:
1.	Nature of INGO –military Relations in Northeast Nigeria	Conflictive/ Mistrustful
		Competitive
		Cooperative
2.	Drivers of the mistrust and conflict between INGOs and military	INGOs' publication of unverified information
		INGOs' exaggeration of humanitarian crisis in northeast
		INGOs' campaign of calumny against the military
		INGOs' criticisms of the military strategies
		INGOs' disrespect of the military and its strategies
		INGOs' interference with military procedures in CT
		INGOs' enriching of themselves at the expense of civilians in North East
		Military's accusations of INGOs spying and supporting Boko Haram
		High income and extravagant lifestyle of INGO staff
		Increased international funds for INGOs and decreasing support for the military
		Prevalence of indigenous INGO staff
		Military's violation of human rights
		Corruption in the military
		Military's distortions of facts about terrorism and counterterrorism
Failure of the military to provide security for civilians, INGO staff and supplies		
3.	Impacts of INGO – military mistrust and conflicts on P/CVE Programming	Reports of INGOs on human rights violation by the military erodes public trust
		Reports of INGOs on human rights violation by the military shrinks international support base of the military
		Limits intelligence sharing between the INGOs and the military
		Promotes the restriction of INGOs to some conflict areas
		Deny and delay provision of relief materials and social services to victims of terrorism
		Trivialises the efforts of INGOs in humanitarian assistance and P/CVE
		Trivialises the efforts of the military in counterterrorism
		Emboldens the terrorists
		Increases Boko Haram attacks on military bases
		Increases Boko Haram attacks on civilians and aid workers
Increases out of school children		

Source: Authors' tabulation 2020

three main topics of discussion corresponding to three research questions and their derivate or subsidiary question items to which the interviewees responded.

Field observations were done at Maiduguri and Monguno in Borno, Mubi and Yola in Adamawa as well as Potiskum and Damaturu in Yobe. Our field observations were conducted in two stages. First, an exploratory pilot study involving a small sample was designed. This helped the researchers in gaining insights

into and ideas about the nature of the INGO–military relations in the Northeast as well as variables/issues linked to the dynamic relations. It was the information gathered at this stage that enabled the researchers to articulate the specific question items in the interview schedule. The second phase of the field observation (structured non-participant observation) ran concurrently with the KIIs and groups interviews. We already had ideas of what we were looking out for, and keenly observed and noted how they were playing out. Secondary literature was also used to collect data on INGO–military relations and the impact of the relationship on CT and P/CVE. These secondary data were helpful in corroborating the data we gathered in the field and thus constituted a veritable part of the empirical verification of our research objectives and hypotheses.

Given the peculiarities of the sources/methods of data collection and considering the complex nature of the responses, the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) was employed to identify regular repeating patterns. There therefore came the need to order and sort them according to a number of schemas to allow for constant and consistent comparison between and amongst the gathered data. First was the first order comparison. Here, data (responses from interviewees) collected during the KIIs at different intervals (visits) of different years (2017–2020) were assembled and saved in one folder. This was followed by a systematic comparison of the responses from 2017 to 2020, noting the patterns of their consistencies and otherwise. For the data collected on group interviews, the same procedure was adopted. Those of structured non-participant field observations and secondary data were similarly sorted. Under the second order comparison, results of each group (say KIIs) were compared with the results of the group interview of the same year to establish their degree of consistency for reliability of findings. The third order comparison juxtaposed the results of the triangulated data (collected via KIIs, groups interviews, field observations) for one year with the triangulated data of other years. Hence, data collected during the KIIs, group interviews and field observations were continuously compared and then related to the study context. Secondary data of analogous temper and content were used to supplement and/or corroborate the above primarily sourced data by interposing them where and when necessary. Observably, this is a logical way of testing the reliability of data (Ezeibe et al. 2019; Glaser 1965). It should be noted that the data generated from KIIs and group interviews were transcribed from Pidgin English and Hausa to English, ordered and content-analysed. Descriptive statistical tools like tables and simple percentages were also used to analyse the data. The final manuscript was subjected to member check by the authors (Ezeibe 2021; Koelsch 2013; Mbah et al. 2021) in order to enhance inter-rater reliability, credibility and validity.

### **Contextualising P/CVE and modelling the violent and non-violent social order of INGO–military relations**

Many studies like those by Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE),<sup>1</sup> Peter Neumann (2017), Nehlsen et al. (2020) and Baaken et al. (2020) have examined P/CVE under various themes such as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization (PCVER). Despite some observable definitional and conceptual variations in their orientations, a common denominational thread that runs through their contributions is that each of these themes represents a set of strategies and approaches that aim to prevent or mitigate radical and/or violent extremism. Although pontificating from the health sciences, Gerald Caplan and Robert Gordon made very insightful efforts to categorise and explore the applications of the various categories of the prevention approach, depending on the time and character of the target population (Gordon 1983). While Gerald Caplan came up with what he listed and described as universal, selective and indicated preventions (Caplan 1964), Robert Gordon settled for what he conceives as the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention approaches (1983).

Although slightly different, Caplan's three-phased prevention approach loosely corresponds to those of Gordon, such that we can hazard such pairings as universal/primary, selective/secondary and indicated/tertiary preventions (Caplan 1964). While the first two pairings (universal/primary and selective/secondary) are basically preemptive and targeted at preventing the development and manifestations of social disease (violent extremist tendencies) by nipping them in the bud, tertiary/indicative prevention applies to people among whom the unwanted phenomenon (extremism/violence) had become fully developed. The primary aim of the tertiary/indicative prevention is, therefore, to wean such individuals or groups from such social deviancy (extremism/violence) and to ensure that they do not go back to it later. *Stricto sensu*, 'tertiary or indicated prevention describes a reactive measure tackling problems that are already manifest' (Nehlsen et al. 2020). Implicit in this, therefore, is that countering extremism is an integral part of the tertiary or indicated prevention approach and thus can be accommodated within the theoretical adumbrations of Caplan and Gordon, among others.

Our operationalisation of P/CVE therefore agrees largely with the foregoing, noting further that the Nigerian Government's Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) programme geared towards deradicalising, demobilising, rehabilitating and reintegrating repentant Boko Haram members falls neatly within the operational vicinity of P/CVE. Interestingly, the OPSC programme is a non-kinetic

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1 For details, check <https://www.osce.org/unitedCVE>.

approach to P/CVE, it being coordinated by the Nigerian Military (International Crisis Group 2021). Under it, Boko Haram members are encouraged to renounce extremism and embrace normal life and get some benefits, including trainings on vocational jobs and oversea scholarships. Although the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) corroborate with the Military in the coordinating the OPSC programme, the programme itself, is a multi-agency, multi-national humanitarian operation composed of 468 staff comprising 17 ministries, Departments and Agencies as well as other international agencies and organisations, aimed at deradicalising, rehabilitating and re-integrating repentant Boko Haram members, as part of the measures to fast track the peace process in the Northeast (Abdullateef 2020). The INGOs' P/CVE programmes in the Northeast essentially focus on local stabilisation operations/programmes. These are programmes which fit into the broader definition of seeking to bolster legitimate state authority, reconciliation and peaceful conflict management systems, and as such centre on the following priorities:

- strengthening local-level and state-level conflict prevention and community security mechanisms to help communities prevent and solve emerging conflicts and tensions;
- rehabilitating civilian infrastructure and basic services to strengthen government legitimacy and responsiveness to citizen needs; and
- supporting the reintegration of former fighters, civilian militia and those associated with insurgent groups, as well as local-level social cohesion more broadly, with a long-term view toward social healing and reconciliation (Brenchmacher 2019).

Our conceptualisation of the P/CVE programme in this study therefore is a contrivance for the multi-jointed tasks and activities carried out (or expected to be carried out) by both the Nigerian military and the INGOs towards managing violent conflicts in the Northeast of Nigeria. In other words, there is both a soft side and a hard side to the INGO–Military coordinated P/CVE in the Northeast of Nigeria.

The existence of these two dimensions to the P/CVE in the Northeast, Nigeria finds expression in the theoretical model of Smart Power. The coinage and formulation of what has come to be Smart Power theory around 2004 have been attributed to Suzanne Nossel,<sup>2</sup> although Joseph Nye<sup>3</sup> who also claims to

2 Suzanne Nossel was Deputy to Ambassador Holbrooke at the United Nations during the Clinton administration, and is credited with coining the term in an article in *Foreign Affairs* (Nossel 2004).

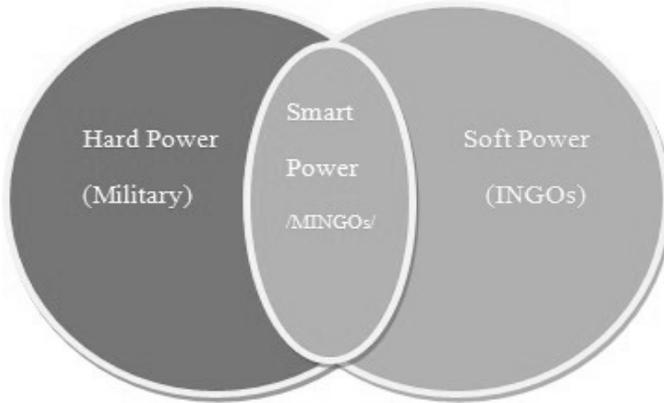
3 Joseph Nye was former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs under the Clinton administration and author of several books on smart power strategy.

have invented the term in 2003 has made enormous contributions to its refinement and development. As a term, Smart Power was originally used within the field of international relations to refer to the combination of hard power and soft power strategies. By way of further elucidation, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies sees it as an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships and institutions of all levels to expand one's influence and establish legitimacy of one's action (CSIS 2007). Whereas hard power entails the deployment of and reliance on military, coercive and other aggressive means for the attainment of an end/objective, soft power focuses on the activation of diplomacy, culture and history in attaining the same (Copeland 2010). Smart Power theory/model presupposes the existence of two circles of power (hard and soft) placed side by side with a point of intersection. It is at the point of intersection that a hybrid power (smart power) emerges, embodying and combining the features of both soft power and hard power. As Michael Ugwueze and Freedom Onuoha rightly identified, the absence of soft power approach/dimension to the hard-power-dominated counter-terrorism measures has remained one of the major challenges confronting the Nigerian state in its effort to defeat Boko Haram insurgency even with military force (Ugwueze & Onuoha 2020). The Smart power model, therefore, is a hybrid of the interagency corroboration that Okechukwu Ikeanyibe et al passionately advocate for in the management of counter-insurgency campaigns against Boko Haram in Nigeria (Ikeanyibe et al. 2020). It is interesting to remark that these scholars are in agreement with Joseph Nye (2009) who argues that combating terrorism demands smart power strategy, insisting that employing only hard power or only soft power in a given situation will usually prove inadequate.

From Figure 1 above, our Smart Power Model designates the military principally as the hard power component, the INGOs as the soft power component, while MINGOs (Military/INGOs) represents the meeting point of the two circles of power—the smart power.

This model assumes that the military and INGOs frame violent and non-violent social order respectively. On the one hand, violent social orders employ forceful or coercive behaviours and symbols to guide the conduct of groups, promote human cooperation and prevent anarchy (Henslin 2001; Parguez 2016; Rodríguez-Alcázar 2017). Although social institutions with dispersed coercion (Raekstad 2018) such as international organisations could maintain order without monopoly of force, 'only the coercive apparatus of the state (military and police) are able to provide order to large and conflicting social groups' (Burelli 2021). The military comprising the Army, Navy and Air Force establishes violent social orders (Braun 2009) in order to protect the state in times of war, rebellion

Figure 1: Diagrammatic illustration of the components of the Smart Power model



Source: Authors' illustration

and terrorism. Often, the military are associated with human rights abuse, intimidations and aggravated assaults (Junger-Tas et al. 2010; Ramsay & Holbrook 2015).

On the other hand, non-violent social order calls into question violent social orders and seeks to create new order by opening up economic opportunities and assisting the victims of violence (Braun 2009; Mielke, Schetter & Wilde 2011). INGOs establish non-violent social order by appealing to radicalised or violent constituents to explore peaceful dialogues (Ramsay & Holbrook 2015). INGOs provide assistance to families in conflict-affected communities in the BAY states in order to promote peace (Nigeria International Non-Governmental Organization Forum 2018). For instance, while Amnesty International is involved in an advocacy campaign against human right abuse by terrorists and military in Northeast Nigeria, International Medical Corp is providing medical care for malnourished children in the region. Between 2015 and 2017, *Catholic Relief Services* empowered more than 8,500 people to purchase food and other household supplies (Stulman 2017). In 2018, Christian Aid fed more than 1.3 million people, supplied blankets to more than 231,000 children and constructed or rehabilitated boreholes and toilets in IDP camps in Northeast Nigeria (Christian Aid 2018). International Rescue committees have also constructed classrooms, provided books and pens for school children and trained teachers in the Northeast (International Rescue Committees 2017). Following this example, the International Committee of the Red Cross, in 2019 alone, provided more than 745,000 people with either food items or food assistance in other ways and improved access to water for over 500,000 people including household and those living in IDP camps (PRNigeria 2020). Search for Common Ground emphasises Transforming Violent Extremism and has been working towards strengthening the coalition of Human Rights in Northeast Nigeria. This approach seeks to empower commu-

nities' ability to use non-violent means to address their grievances, support individuals who choose non-violence as an alternative, assist governments to work with other stakeholders and encourage non-violent approaches and alternative pathways to violence (Monzani & Sarota 2019).

Although the military and INGOs largely frame violent and non-violent social order respectively, there are areas of overlap and interdependence (Cuervo et al. 2018). The military is not restricted to framing violent social order. The military sometimes employ non-violent strategy to provide economic opportunities for the population in order to stabilise their dominion (Braun 2009). The overlap of INGOs' and the military's roles in the conflict region create relationships of cooperation, competition and conflicts. While competition and conflict occur in the absence of shared values and distinct resource bases between the actors, the combination of shared values and distinct resource bases facilitates cooperation (Johnson 2016; Nwangwu et al. 2020).

Whereas in Europe and other advanced countries of the world 'the military is perceived as one of the most selfless and dedicated professionals in counterterrorism' (Seiple 1996: 9), African militaries are characterised as violent, corrupt, arbitrary, immense, threatening, partisan, politicised, undisciplined, untrustworthy, unprofessional, abusive, under-funded, ill-equipped and poorly motivated (Adeakin 2016; Bappah 2016; Dala 2011; Robertson 2015). These features of the militaries in Africa are traceable to their colonial history (Clubb & Tapley 2018; Omitoogun & Oduntan 2006). Comparing the operations of Boko Haram and the military in Nigeria, the military is perceived as more violent and destructive than Boko Haram (Matfess 2017). The proliferation of cases of human rights violations by the military in Nigeria facilitates the mistrustful and conflictive relationships between the military and the stakeholders in P/CVE (Amnesty International 2018), especially the INGOs. The mistrust also promotes the military's accusations of INGOs spying for terrorists (Nwachukwu 2018). The major implication of these mutual accusations is that it severs the relationships between them and undermines their capacities to leverage on the information, resources, alliances and networks available to each of them to promote human security (Asad & Kay 14). The next section addresses the nature of INGO-military relations in BAY states.

### **Nature of military-INGO relations in countering Boko Haram in BAY States**

Boko Haram insurgency is a complex emergency with many aspects that no government, military, local or international organisation can handle alone. These emergencies are ambiguous and difficult for actors with different sets of interests to cooperate. The dynamic interaction and parallel existence between the

INGOs in P/CVE and the military in CT generate mixed relationships. Abby Stoddard, Monica Czwarno, and Lindsay Hamsik acknowledged in their report on *NGOs and Risk: Managing Uncertainty in Local-International Partnerships* that issues of trust have continued to undermine INGOs and other national/local partners' relationship in P/CVE in the Northeast of Nigeria (Stoddard, Czwarno & Hamsik 2019). Again, the creation of ministries which are also actively engaged in humanitarian activities by the Nigerian government has also led to questions about the duplication of the humanitarian roles of the INGOs. While it is the duty of the state (government) to coordinate the activities of both the ministries/agencies and the INGOs, the state seems to be wary of the activities of the latter. It is therefore not surprising that the Nigerian government has come up with a number of legislative attempts to control the activities of INGOs in Nigeria, including the June 2016 'Bill for an Act To Provide For The Establishment Of The Non-Governmental Organizations Regulatory Commission For The Supervision, Co-ordination And Monitoring Of Non Governmental Organizations'.

The views of Abby Stoddard, Monica Czwarno and Lindsay Hamsik are corroborative of the informed opinions of our respondents/participants. Seventeen KIs in this study agree that 'the interactions between the INGOs and the military create competitive, conflictive, adversarial, cooperative, mistrustful, distrustful and tensed relationships.' Hence, Paul Carsten and Alex Akwagyiram described these relationships as fraught (Carsten & Akwagyiram 2018). Table 2 summarises the subjective views of participants on the nature of the relationships between the INGOs and the military in BAY states.

Table 2: Nature of INGO–military relations in Northeast Nigeria

S/N	Nature of relationship	Percentage
1	Conflictive/Mistrustful	61
2	Competitive	22
3	Cooperative	16

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2019

For clarity, a conflictive or mistrustful relationship is one that sprouts from conflict of principles. In other words, when two parties (which in this case are the military and the INGOs) find themselves equidistantly standing on the opposite sides of a spectrum of interests arising out of apparent incompatibility of principles and in turn giving rise to antagonistic relations, we speak of conflictive relations. Such relations are said to be mistrustful too because antagonistic relations, as a rule, indulge neither trust nor love. There is, however, a thin line between conflictive relations and competitive relations in the sense that most conflictive dealings usually result from competitive dealings. It is however in the place of the existence of an established rule of engagement that the former takes a radical tangential departure from the latter. The rule of engagement serves, among other

things, as a restraint on the competitors from slipping suddenly into a conflictive situation. Usually, but not always, competitive relations tend to spring from the collapse of cooperative dealings. Placed side by side with goal/target attainment (P/CVE in Northeast), cooperative, competitive and conflictive relations tend to lead to higher, lesser and no goal/target attainment respectively. This is why some insights into the nature and dynamics of the relationship between and among stakeholders in P/CVE in Northeast Nigeria matters so much to the researchers.

What Table 2 above showcases, therefore, is a summary of the subjective views of participants on the nature of the relationships between the INGOs and the military in BAY states. Those percentages were arrived at through the determination of the numbers of participants in relation to their responses to questions pertaining to those qualifiers/categories (i.e., cooperative, competitive and conflictive). For instance, KII with a staff of an INGO in Maiduguri in March 2019 showed that ‘the relationship between INGOs and the military is dynamic. Frequently, cooperative and competitive relations degenerate to conflictive relations, and conflictive relations sometimes become cooperative.’ Another KII with a staff of an INGO in Maiduguri in March 2019 revealed that ‘INGO–military relations in BAY states vary from time to time and from organization to organization. INGOS that participate in education, nutrition, health, WASH are more cooperative with the military than INGOs involved in P/CVE programmes ranging from advocacy, early recovery, transportations and child and women protection.’ Hence, INGO–military collaboration is more efficient during humanitarian programming than P/CVE programming (Penner 2014). Lauren Greenwood and Gowthaman Balachandran observe that ‘the nature of the relation between one or a group of humanitarian organization(s) and the military as well as the conduct of these actors in this relationship may also have an effect on other humanitarian agencies working in the same area and even beyond’ (Greenwood & Balachandran 2014: 9).

KII with a staff of one of the INGOs in Mubi in January 2018 averred that ‘the relationship between INGOs and the military is largely conflictive. Meanwhile, this is relevant for the INGOs to protect their core values of impartiality and independence in the region.’ Indeed, ‘the underlying tension between the INGOs and military actors is as a result of their different world views, identities, interests, and organizational cultures’ (Goodhand & Sedra 2013: 273). Daniel Byman observes that the preservation of these core values is essential for the survival of NGOs in conflict and post conflict emergencies (Byman 2001). While Nicholas de Torrente observes that the coordination of humanitarian NGOs and the military in conflict situations compromises the security function of the former and the independence of the latter (De Torrenté 2006), ‘working separately in an uncoordinated manner is likely to undermine the efforts of each other with

Table 3: Drivers of the mistrust and conflict between INGOs and military

S/N	Remarks	Frequency in %
1	INGOs' publication of unverified information	46
2	INGOs' exaggeration of humanitarian crisis in North East	55
3	INGOs' campaign of calumny against the military	49
4	INGOs' criticisms of the military strategies	64
5	INGOs' disrespect of the military and its strategies	46
6	INGOs' interference with military procedures in CT	61
7	INGOs' enriching of themselves at the expense of civilians in North East	51
8	Military's accusations of INGOs spying and supporting Boko Haram	58
9	High income and extravagant lifestyle of INGO staff	46
10	Increased international funds for INGOs and decreasing support for the military	48
11	Prevalence of indigenous INGO staff	60
12	Military's violation of human rights	54
13	Corruption in the military	47
14	Military's distortions of facts about terrorism and counterterrorism	45
15	Failure of the military to provide security for civilians, INGO staff and supplies	51

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2019

substantial implications for bringing about peace in divided societies' (Abiew 2003: 36). Thus INGOs prefer to operate independently of the military in order to uphold their core values, they sometimes use military escorts in Borno State, where security risks are very high (Carsten & Akwagyiram 2018; Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa 2019).

The point is that the military, by the nature of their training and orientation, tend to see Boko Haram/extremist groups as an eternal enemy that must be crushed and decimated, whereas the INGOs are usually inclined towards giving considerations to such drivers of extremism like socio-economic, cultural and historical antecedents. As such, the INGOs are usually found attending to such issues that border on humanitarian and local stabilisations. These differential perceptions and treatments of extremists are fertile grounds for the eruption of tension between the military and the INGOs.

### **Drivers of the mistrust and conflict between military and INGOs in BAY states**

There are multidimensional factors that fuel the mistrust and conflicts between INGOs and the military in BAY states. Table 3 summarises the views of the par-

ticipants of the group interviews on the major drivers of the mistrust and conflict between INGOs and the military in BAY states.

Table 3 catalogues the issue areas around which military–INGO mutual mistrust and conflict tend to centre as well as the graduated responses of our participants. It shows, among other things, that INGOs' criticisms of the military strategies and INGOs' interference with military procedures in CT are among the major issues that the military frowns on concerning the operations of the INGOs in the Northeast. Similarly, the failure of the military to provide security for civilians, INGO staff and supplies as well as the military's violation of human rights are among the cardinal issue areas that the INGOs feel bad about concerning the activities of the military in P/CVE in the Northeast of Nigeria. Killings with all the staff of the INGOs across the BAY states in June 2017, January 2018 and March 2019 show that human rights violations by the military is the most decisive factor which sever INGO–military relations in the region. Amnesty International reports that 'in response to threats by the armed group Boko Haram and its ongoing commission of war crimes, security forces in Cameroon and Nigeria continued to commit gross human rights violations and crimes under international law' (Amnesty International 2018: 21). At least 1,200 people have been killed extra-judicially by the military in its operations in BAY states as of 2015 (Amnesty International 2015). However, the reports of military violation of human rights in Nigeria are not peculiar to the Northeast zone. Other cases of human rights violations by the Nigerian military abound. Some of the obvious instances include the extra-judicial killings in Odi in Bayelsa state and ZakiBiam in Benue state in 1999 and 2001 respectively. The military have also involved in arbitrary arrests, detentions and extra-judicial killings of members of a separatist organisation known as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in South East Nigeria between 2017 and 2018 (Amnesty International 2018).

The recurrence of allegations and incidences of human rights violations by the Nigerian military derives from a false claim of military superiority to civilians in Nigeria. This is traceable to Nigeria's colonial history and reinforced by the long years of military rule in Nigeria. The return of constitutional democracy in 1999 has had limited impact on the conduct of military personnel in the management of civil affairs (Ezeibe 2012). According to International Crisis Group, 'increased involvement of the military in human rights violation alienates them from the people and deny them access to community intelligence it needs to conduct internal security operations efficiently' (International Crisis Group 2016: 17). Furthermore, the involvement of the Nigerian military in human rights violations hampers their relationship with the governments and militaries of advanced democracies, especially the United States, which is the largest donor country for humanitarian assistance for combating insurgency (Ibekwe 2014; U.S. Mission Nigeria 2018).

Again, mutual suspicion between the INGOs and the military severe their relationships. KII with a troop commander in Mongunoin in March 2019 shows that ‘the military has a strong reason to believe that the INGOs and the LNGOs are providing intelligence and supplies for Boko Haram terrorists.’ In 2018, a member of Nigeria’s House of Representatives accused INGOs of aiding Boko Haram by providing intelligence, medications and other supplies to them (Ayitogo 2018). KII with a staff of an INGO in March 2019 revealed that ‘the military often conflate perpetrators and victims of terrorism as well as humanitarian-based and P/CVE-based INGOs. Thus, whenever P/CVE-based INGO provides services for people in conflict affected communities, where suspected Boko Haram members may inhabit; the military will accuse them of aiding and supporting terrorists. Meanwhile, INGOs ought not to be discriminatory in order to enhance their access to everyone in need of assistance.’

KII with a troop commander in Maiduguri in January 2018 notes that ‘Some INGOs are just making unnecessary troubles with the military instead of utilising the huge resources at their disposal to help the poor. Irrespective of the progress we have made in stabilising the Northeast, most INGOs are reporting poor comportment of the military and pervasive human rights abuse to justify the funds flowing to them from the international community instead of the local organisations that have the structure to reach the real people in need’. Despite the huge funds available to INGOs in BAY states, they are largely underperforming in P/CVE (Haruna 2017).

Although UNSCR 2250 highlighted the need to engage and invest in youth and women as partners in preventing conflict and pursuing peace (Williams, Walsh Taza & Preliis 2016), KII with one of the troop commanders in Yola in June 2018 pointed out that ‘the tendency of the INGO staff to enrich themselves instead of restoring and reintegrating dislocated youths and women in Northeast brews tension among stakeholders, especially between INGO and LNGOs as well as INGOs and the military.’ Meanwhile, INGOs often conduct trauma counseling workshops for young people and internally displaced people to facilitate their healing and ability to forgive (Frank & van Zyl 2018). KII with a staff of an INGO in March 2019, argued that ‘the interventions of INGOs are not concentrated on restoring already radicalized youth. They also carry out comprehensive and inclusive economic empowerment programmes for people who have not involved in violent extremism in order to ensure that they do not cross the line of peace. In fact, INGOs often create small-scale business initiatives to engage the people and or facilitate economic recovery to improve the access of youth and women to economic livelihoods.’

Field observations reveal that the military, especially the army, perceives the values and principles of other stakeholders as a threat to counterterrorism.

Hence, they often seek to subordinate the roles of other stakeholders, especially the INGOs and United Nations agencies in Northeast Nigeria. A troop commander emphasised that ‘while the military is the most critical stakeholder in the management of Boko Haram in Nigeria, the police and other law enforcement officers are secondary actors. These secondary actors ought to play by our rules in order to be effective in the management of insurgency’ (KII with a troop commander in Maiduguri in June 2017). Meanwhile, INGOs can only play a complementary role to the military. KII with a staff of one of the INGOs in March 2019 showed that ‘the mandate of INGOs guarantees only a complementary relationship with the military. It is unprofessional for the military to subordinate INGOs like other security agencies such as the police and the CJTF.’ Hence, Chris Seiple observed that the military cannot assume, assert and act in control of INGOs that play different roles from security agencies (Seiple 1996). KII with a staff of one of the INGOs in March 2020, argued that ‘securitization of INGOs by the military frustrates collaborative approach. It also undermines dialogue among stakeholders and the effectiveness of peacebuilding approach in P/CVE.’

Again, the principle of neutrality forbids the INGOs, especially in their international humanitarian actions, from coordinating such assistance and interventions with the state security actors (the military inclusive) (UN Development Programme 2021). The same principle also forbids them (the INGOs) from reporting to them and/or accepting their escorts. Whatever the rationale for this style of neutrality, it has its own pitfalls. First, in a terrain where insurgents’ attacks on the military has intensified in guerrilla fashion, expecting the military to be less bothered about unchecked movements in the name of coordinating humanitarian assistance and interventions is less likely.

### **Impact of military–INGO relations on preventing/countering violent extremism**

The impact of INGO–military relations on P/CVE are widespread. The UNDP blames the prolongation of the Boko Haram crisis on the conflict and mistrust between the CSO (NGOs and INGOs) and the military. Their inability to synergise has given the insurgents the leeway to enjoy a field’s day, by smartly appropriating the gap to endear themselves to the local populations who soon become willing recruits to their folds. This conflict and mistrust has also resulted in the inability of the humanitarians to provide much-needed relief services to vulnerable civilian populations.

Table 4 summarises the views of participants on the impact of the mistrust and conflicts between the INGOs and the military on P/CVE in BAY states.

The table shows in percentage degree the cumulative consequences of the inability of the military and the INGOs to collaborate well in P/CVE in North-

Table 4: Impacts of INGO–military mistrust and conflicts on P/CVE programming

S/N	Remarks	Frequency in %
1	Reports of INGOs on human rights violation by the military erodes public trust	88
2	Reports of INGOs on human rights violation by the military shrinks international support base of the military	75
3	Limits intelligence sharing between the INGOs and the military	95
4	Promotes the restriction of INGOs to some conflict areas	92
5	Deny and delay provision of relief materials and social services to victims of terrorism	74
6	Trivialises the efforts of INGOs in humanitarian assistance and P/CVE	78
7	Trivialises the efforts of the military in counterterrorism	81
8	Emboldens the terrorists	91
9	Increases Boko Haram attacks on military bases	71
10	Increases Boko Haram attacks on civilians and aid workers	56
11	Increases out of school children	52

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2019

east Nigeria. Among other things, the mistrust and conflict have limited intelligence sharing between the INGOs and the military culminating dangerously to increase in Boko Haram attacks on civilians, aid workers and the military themselves, etc. KII with a troop commander in Maiduguri in March 2019 reveals that 'the reports of INGOs on human rights abuse by the military in BAY states damage the local and international reputation of the military, erodes public trust of the military and hampers the supports from militaries of developed countries and their governments.' This view is in sync with the UNDP report of 2021 which holds that the military's blanket accusations, arbitrary arrests and civilian detentions created an atmosphere of fear among communities and a deep resentment towards security forces (UN Development Programme 2021).

While the non-violent nature of NGOs makes them civilian-friendly and gives them access to intelligence, the military orientation makes it difficult to access information (Byman 2001; Smith 2010). Meanwhile, collaboration between the key national and international actors that operate in conflict areas such as Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan improved the capacity of civil society organisations to deliver on P/CVE programming unlike in Northeast Nigeria, where poor collaboration between INGOs and the military is re-escalating terrorist attacks. KII with a staff of an INGO in Maiduguri in March 2020 remarks that 'Poor collaboration between the key national and international actors that operate in the counterterrorism theater frustrates P/CVE programming, especially, efforts of INGOs to promote criminal justice, rule of law, community resilience and financial inclusion. It also undermines counterterrorism efforts in the region.' Human Rights First noted that the tendency of the Nigerian security agencies, especially the military, to apply force, silence dissenting voices,

violate human rights and attack civil society organisations and human rights defenders is not only reversing the gains of P/CVE but fomenting extremism in the Northeast region. Meanwhile, this is not peculiar to Nigeria. The government and security agencies of Bahrain, Egypt, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have also been involved in stifling peaceful dissent, muzzleing the media and preventing legitimate activities of non-violent civil society organisations (Human Rights First 2015).

Although the Nigerian military recorded a huge success in degrading the territorial control of Boko Haram from 2015 to 2016, the attacks by the group on military bases increased from 2017 to 2019 (Brechenmacher 2019). In 2018, Boko Haram overran 14 out of 20 military bases in northern and central Borno and killed over 1000 soldiers. This figure excludes soldiers killed in Yobe, Adamawa and Southern Borno (Salkida 2019). The increasing Boko Haram attacks have not only led to loss of soldiers, it also leads to loss of costly weapons. The Nigerian Air Force and the Nigerian Army lost over N4.8bn worth of military weapons in between January and May 2019 (Aluko 2019).

Sustained Boko Haram attacks have also heightened the fatalities of aid workers in Nigeria from only one in 1997 to more than 400 in 2016 (Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa 2019; Oladimeji 2016). Boko Haram terrorists have killed over 27,000 people and displaced over 1.8 million with 7.7 million people in need (International Crisis Group 2019; UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2019). The conflict has also destroyed over 1500 schools, killed over 2,295 teachers, displaced over 19,000 teachers and kidnapped more than 4000 persons, especially school girls in BAY states (Aluko 2018). KII with the leader of CJTF in Maiduguri in March 2019 shows that 'limited civil-military cooperation fuels Boko Haram attacks on schools and increases the number of out of school children in BAY states'. The number of out-of-school children in Nigeria increased from 10.5 million in 2017 to 13.3 million in 2018. Hence, Nigeria accounts for 45% of out-of-school children in West Africa and 69% of the children are in Northern states (Lawal 2018). The military's inability to protect civilians from Boko Haram terrorists generated widespread resentment of the military. It also led to communities' accusation of security forces collaborating with the insurgents, and prolonging the fighting for financial gain (Brechenmacher 2019).

Despite the escalation of Boko Haram attacks and increase in the number of terrorist victims in BAY states, the military restricts INGOs from accessing Guzamala, Abadam, Marte, Kukawa, KwayaKusar, Shani, Bayo local governments in Borno (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2019). The military use a counterterrorism agenda to justify these restrictions, arguing that they are unable to guarantee the safety of staff (Norwegian Refugee Council 2018). KII with a troop commander in Monguno in June 2018 reveals that the 'mili-

tary's restriction of INGOs from accessing these conflict areas is as a result of our suspicions that INGOs are providing supplies and spying for Boko Haram terrorists'. Between 2018 and 2019, the Nigerian military accused United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Mercy Corps, Action Against Hunger and Amnesty International of engaging in clandestine activities that undermine counterterrorism operations in Northeast Nigeria. They also suspended these organisations, though the suspension was later reversed (Njoku 2020).

These restrictions and suspensions promote the inaccessibility of the INGOs to the conflict affected areas as well as prevent them from providing relief materials and supporting community resilience, peacebuilding and P/CVE programming. This leaves an estimated 3 million people at risk of hunger in the BAY states (Daily Trust 2018; UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2017). It also generates poor child health outcomes in the resource poor area (Dunn 2018). In fact, strict control of Borno by the military undermines the capacity of the INGOs to provide services ranging from coordination and management of displaced persons' camps, education, early recovery, emergency telecommunications, food security, health, transportations, nutrition, protection and shelter to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Significantly, 'the restriction of INGOs from accessing some of the conflict areas hampers the participation of other CSOs in P/CVE' (KII with a staff of INGO in Maiduguri, March 2019). Thus this 'increases the vulnerability of women and children in BAY states' (KII with a staff of an INGO in Damaturu, January 2018). Perhaps relaxing these restrictions of access of INGOs to conflict areas is relevant for enhancing the role of INGOs in P/CVE (International Crisis Group Asia 2019).

## **Conclusion**

The article argues that INGO–military relations is a critical aspect of civil–military relations, although the Nigerian experience has so far proven to be fraught, largely mistrustful and conflictive. The major factor driving these mistrustful and conflictive INGO–military relations in the BAY states is mutual suspicion and dynamics of operations. While the INGOs argue that the military's violation of human rights, corruption, accusation that INGOs are spying for Boko Haram and the failure to secure citizens, INGOs' staff and relief material weakens INGO–military relations, the military on the other hand contends that INGOs' publication of unverified information, exaggeration of humanitarian crisis, campaign of calumny against the military, disrespect of military strategies and procedures in counterterrorism are the major sources of the tension between the INGOs and the military in the Northeast region.

This mutual suspicion between the INGOs and the military is counterproductive for P/CVE programming in BAY states. It erodes public trust of the mil-

itary, shrinks the international support base of the military, limits intelligence sharing between the INGOs and the military, restricts the INGOs to some conflict areas, delays the speed of delivery of relief materials and social services to victims of terrorism and increases Boko Haram attacks on civilians, military bases and aid workers and heightens the level of vulnerability of women and children. It undermines the capacity of INGOs to build sustainable societies and reverses the gains of the military in counterterrorism. The paper concludes that mutual respect for the operational procedures and principles of the military and international nongovernmental organisations in the Northeast is relevant for enhanced international nongovernmental organisation–military relations and sustainable preventing/countering violent extremism programming in North-east Nigeria and beyond.



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Research article

# Canadian Discourse and Emotions on Terrorism: How Canadian Prime Ministers Speak about Terrorism since 9/11

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## Abstract

*This paper analyses the character of the discourse and emotions invoked in speeches delivered by prime ministers of Canada from the 9/11 terrorist attacks up until now. There is increased recognition in academic literature of the need to study emotions, because people are not rational beings and they base their decisions on feelings. Especially the discourse on terrorism is often emotional. The paper argues that there is a need to study the discourse on terrorism and emotions in them, because if the discourse is manipulative it can lead to adoption of counterterrorism measures that are considered ineffective or even counterproductive. This paper attempts to fill the gap in academic literature on terrorism discourse, which usually focuses only on the United States and United Kingdom, by providing a study of Canadian discourse on terrorism. The paper presents an analysis of speeches delivered by Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau conducted in NVivo. It finds that each of these prime ministers attempts to influence emotions to some extent to gain support for their counterterrorism policies by invoking emotions such as fear or hate. However, there are also some more calming and less emotional features of the speeches.*

**Keywords:** terrorism, discourse, emotions, Canada, war on terror

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## Introduction

Terrorism became a vastly discussed topic after the 9/11 terrorist attacks that resulted in the United States and its allies declaring a 'War on Terror'. As every war that is initiated by a democratic country, the War on Terror needs to be legitimised to citizens and they need to be convinced that the war has to be fought. For the legitimisation purposes, politicians use the tool of discourse (Martin 2013: 461–462). Thus there is a need to study the discourse presented by politicians, so it can be evaluated whether they intentionally influence people, for example by invoking emotions, in order to gain support for their counterterrorism policies. People are no longer considered to be purely rational beings (Freeden 2013) and their political behaviour can be influenced by their emotions. This means that if politicians invoke particular emotions in their speeches, it may lead to change in public behaviour and thus influence the public to behave as the politicians wish. There is, for instance, research that proves that people are more likely to support aggressive counterterrorism measures when they feel angry about terrorism (Sirin & Geva 2013: 718–726). In other words, emotional framing of terrorism or other phenomena has important practical consequences and indicates a lot about how possible responses may be structured (Doty 1993).

This paper attempts to contribute to the need to study emotions in political discourse concerned with terrorism by analysing terrorism discourse presented by Canadian prime ministers<sup>1</sup> and the presence of emotions in these speeches. The analysis of emotions is included for the reason that, as implied above, emotions can contribute to the manipulation of public opinion and to adoption of ineffective or even counterproductive counterterrorism policies. It may be said that there is no need for such research since the speeches on terrorism are naturally emotional. This is not necessarily the case. This can be demonstrated by speeches on terrorism delivered by politicians in two other Anglosphere countries. Barack Obama, at least in some of his speeches, tried to calm the emotions down rather than invoke them. He attempted to calm the negative emotions which may lead to support of aggressive counterterrorism measures and by referring to calmness he wanted to minimise the importance of emotional framing. He told people that they should not be scared and should live their normal lives, because for them to be afraid is what terrorists want (Obama & Holland 2015). Another example of speeches that are not delivered in an emotional manner, but rather attempts to minimise the emotional framing, are speeches delivered by British prime minister Gordon Brown (Měřičková 2021). Thus, it is important to analyse the presence of emotions in speeches of political leaders to

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1 Even though prime ministers are not the official head of Canada, they have actual executive power and thus they were selected for analysis. The Queen of England, who is the official head of Canada, only has a representative role and was thus not selected for the analysis.

identify who invokes the emotions to gain support for aggressive counterterrorism policies and how they do that.

This paper analyses the discourse delivered by four Canadian prime ministers and the emotions invoked in their speeches. It asks: What is the character of terrorism speeches delivered by Canadian prime ministers between 9/11 and the end of 2019 and what emotions do they invoke in their speeches? Analysing the adopted counterterrorism measures is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it presents examples of such counterterrorism policies. One instance of such policies is the War on Terror itself, which is criticised by some authors (Jackson 2018). Another example would be targeted killing, which is also highly questionable and there is lively debate in the academic literature on whether it presents an effective tool or a counterproductive policy that creates more terrorists than it kills (Lehrke & Schomaker 2016: 736–741). Generally, aggressive, repressive and violent counterterrorism policies with the use of force are considered ineffective (Um & Pisiou 2015: 231–232).

Papers that focus on terrorism discourse often focus only on some countries – usually the United States and the United Kingdom (Al-Sumait, Lingle & Domke 2009; Appleby 2010; Foy 2015). However, Canada should not be excluded from the research on terrorism discourse. Canada is fighting in the War on Terror, and even though it did not participate in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Fiorino 2015), it sent its troops to Afghanistan in 2001 and was involved in Afghanistan until the end of 2014 (Canada 2019). Furthermore, it is a member of the coalition fighting the Islamic State (Defence 2014). Therefore Canada, like other democratic countries, has to convince its citizens of the necessity of its involvement in the War on Terror. However, Canadian discourse on terrorism is analysed by few authors. There are various works on Canadian discourse, but a very limited number of these works on discourse are concerned with terrorism. Some authors analyse media discourse in Canada (Berry 2015; Campbell 2015; Smolash 2009). Other papers focus on the discourse or narrative of Canadian prime ministers but not in relation to terrorism (Cooper & Momani 2014; Dangoisse & Perdomo 2020; Gecelovsky 2020; Snow & Moffitt 2012), some even focus on the ‘bad French’ of Trudeau’s discourse (Bosworth 2019). Some other papers focus on discourse and terrorism in Canada but focus on angles different from prime ministers speeches – for example discourse of fear of Canadian university students (Shahzad 2014), or of antiterrorism laws (Patel 2007).

Very few papers focus on Canadian prime minister terrorism discourse (Brunschot & Sherley 2005), some go even further by examining the speeches by other members of Canadian government as well as other relevant documents or combine analyses of Canadian discourse with the discourse from other western countries (Beall, Goodfellow & Putzel 2006). However, these papers analyse the

discourse only in a limited time period and do not focus on the whole period of the War on Terror, so these articles do not allow us to analyse how the discourse on terrorism evolved over a long period of time, and thus do not provide us with enough knowledge that would enable us to analyse the patterns of the discourse. They also do not focus on emotions invoked in the speeches. This paper attempts to fill this gap and provide an analysis of the Canadian terrorism discourse in a longer time period – presented from the 9/11 terrorist attacks until the end of 2019<sup>2</sup> and in connection with emotions invoked in the speeches. This knowledge also allows us to see whether there are patterns between changes in counterterrorism policies that coincide with changes in discourse, and whether there is a relation between more violent policies, which are considered ineffective (Um & PISOIU 2015: 231–232), and more aggressive discourse. However, these questions are beyond the scope of this paper. This paper focuses on the character of the speeches and the emotions invoked in them. In this paper, the author presents only the character of the discourse and its connection to emotions. The study of emotions is included because discourse on terrorism is unlikely to be objective, and the emotions present in the discourse influence the audience and its support for counter-terrorism measures (Sirin & Geva 2013: 718–726).

The paper uses the critical terrorism studies (CTS) theoretical framework. The CTS allows us to analyse and question the counterterrorism measures, or even the War on Terror itself. It allows us to study discourse and the manipulation of emotions to find out whether it contributes to the terrorism problem instead of providing an effective solution. The CTS literature questions the Western counterterrorism measures, the War on Terror and even describes some western actions themselves as terrorist acts (Jackson 2018).

This article provides an analysis of the speeches delivered by each of the four Canadian prime ministers who were in the office between the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the end of 2019. The author conducts a critical discourse analysis (CDA) inspired by Norman Fairclough. Fairclough proposes a three level analysis of the CDA, which focuses on the textual level which studies the character of the discourse; the intertextual level, which focuses on the relation to other discourses that already exist; and the contextual level, which focuses on the context in which the speeches were delivered and the measures that were adopted as a result of the discourse (Fairclough 2013: 94). Due to the scope of the paper, it analyses only the first – textual – level. However, it does not only focus on the character of the discourse, but also on its connection to emotions that are invoked by the discourse, as explained above. The textual level is thus the key level

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2 The end of 2019 was chosen because I want to analyse the speeches to the present; however, I need a clear end date to which all of the speeches are available. I selected the end of 2019 because I started the research in 2018 and the end of 2019 was the last date to which I could wait before collecting all of the data.

for the analysis presented by this paper, because it provides us with information about the objectivity of the discourse, its character and connection to emotions. These findings alone should shift the knowledge that we have about terrorism discourse and should also contribute to information that we need in order to assess the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures, i.e. whether leaders attempt to influence public behaviour by the discourse and emotions they invoke in their terrorism speeches in order to gain support for counterterrorism measures that are already considered to be counterproductive.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, it focuses on the concepts of discourse and emotions. The next part of the paper explains the methodology and analysed data. The next section presents the findings. This section is divided into four subsections, each providing the findings of one of the four analysed Canadian prime ministers (Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau). This section is followed by the conclusion, which summarises the findings that each of the prime ministers uses emotional language; although, each does so in different ways. It also shows the reader that some prime ministers attempt not only to invoke but also to calm the negative emotions down. Nevertheless the manipulative potential of the speeches is still substantial and may lead to legitimisation of counterproductive counterterrorism measures, as explained in the introduction.

## **Discourse and emotions**

### *The role of discourse in researching terrorism*

Discourse is defined by Norman Fairclough as follows: it 'signals the particular view of language in use . . . as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements' (Fairclough 2003: 3). Since terrorism is socially constructed, it is necessary to study language, which is an instrument of the social construction. Language is not the only tool of social construction. The discourse may also consist of visual images or sound effects (Fairclough 2003: 3); however, I focus solely on the role of language. Likewise, the academics who deal with terrorism research also recognise the importance of the study of discourse (Blain 2017; Brecher, Devenney & Winter 2010; Dixit & Stump 2016; Gleeson 2016; Hodges 2007; Jackson 2018; Lausten 2016).

There may be more discourses on the same issue, each of them presenting an opposing view, because each side sees the reality in a different way. Which of these discourses wins and becomes the dominant one depends on the relative power of the actors presenting various discourses. A great example is the article written by Pervaiz Nazir who presents the differences between the dominant discourse on the War on Terror presented by the United States and their

Western allies, and discourses presented by various actors in Pakistan. These discourses are in most cases different from the one presented by the Western countries. While the United States and its allies present the War on Terror as an attempt to defeat terrorism and spread 'freedom, democracy and modernity' (Nazir 2010: 68), Pakistan understands the War on Terror more as an attempt to dominate and transform the Muslim world (Nazir 2010).

Since each actor presents a different discourse, and thus portrays reality differently, we need to study the discourse and reality of each actor to understand his motives and actions and to be able to understand the legitimisation of counterterrorism measures – why and how were the counterterrorism policies adopted, even though these policies are considered harmful and ineffective? Language has thus the power to create the reality we live in – what we fear, what we hate, who we like, etc. It has the power to make people feel alienated, to legitimise a war or even cruel treatment like torture. Language has the power to dehumanise people (Antwi-Boasiako 2010: 107) and present them as an existential threat which has to be feared, avoided or even destroyed. For these reasons, it is necessary to focus on the study of language and the wider discourse.

This is especially true for terrorism, which is a highly subjective label and almost every speaker describes it differently. While the US forces cooperate with Kurdish troops in Syria, Turkey (a US ally and NATO member) considers the same Kurdish troops to be terrorist fighters. The United States, in our opinion a democratic western ally, is considered a terrorist organisation by some Middle Eastern citizens. The terrorism label is even more dangerous because of the fact that once something is labelled as terrorism, politicians have free choice to use any means they consider necessary to deal with the issue (Richards 2014: 215). Not many people will question the used means because of the fear that they would be described as advocates of terrorism. As George W. Bush's famously said: 'people are either on the side of the United States or they are with terrorists' (Bush 2001).

Since overly violent counterterrorism measures are considered ineffective by academic literature, it would be more appropriate to use a combination of non-violent counterterrorism measures, such as countering terrorist financing, countering radicalisation, etc. This is closely connected to the discourse which is used to legitimise the counterterrorism measures. The legitimisation of violent counterterrorism measures with the use of force requires a different kind of discourse than non-violent measures. Even when the counterterrorism measures are mild and non-violent, if the discourse is either aggressive or creates a sense of fear in people, it may lead to their requirement that the government should adopt more forceful measures to fight against terrorism because they feel that the adopted measures are not sufficient to fight against an existential threat as

terrorism is portrayed. This should demonstrate the necessity of studying the discourse. The following section will now focus on the role of emotions, which also play an important role in the fight against terrorism, and, especially, the legitimisation of counterterrorism measures.

### *Emotions as an important factor in terrorism research*

The role of emotions in discourse, terrorism studies and international relations/security research in general has been increasingly recognised by researchers (Erisen & Villalobos 2014; Gartner & Gelpi 2016; Loseke 2009; Matsumoto, Hwang & Frank 2014; Wettergren & Jansson 2013; Wright-Neville & Smith 2009). In contrast to rational theory's assumptions, people are not rational beings (Freed-en 2013). It is recognised that people are influenced by emotions while making decisions. This idea was presented even in ancient times and all philosophical thinkers, such as Aristotle, Plato or Cicero stressed the importance of emotions and their role in the persuasion of audience (Wright-Neville & Smith 2009: 85). The idea of the importance of understanding emotions was suppressed by the enlightenment which put a major focus on reason and rationality (Wright-Neville & Smith 2009: 89), and has only been becoming back recently. These authors recognise that people are influenced by emotions which are closely related to cognitive decision-making. This means that people do not only rationally think about the information which they receive in a speech, but, most importantly, it is essential to know how it made them feel. Especially terrorism is a highly emotional and subjective term (Antwi-Boasiako 2010: 105). If we label some act as 'terrorist', it depends on our subjective view and how we feel about it. If the attack happens closer to our homes, we tend to be more afraid and talk about the event as a 'terrorist attack' (Weinberg, Pedahzur & Hirsch-Hoefler 2004: 779). This also works in the opposite way. If we hear about a terrorist attack, it makes us more afraid than when we hear about another type of attack (Spencer 2006: 189–191).

Emotions have already made their way to the research on terrorism as well. Probably the most often studied emotion is fear. This is mostly due to the reason that the main goal of terrorists is to spread fear. It is believed that the victims of terrorism are not only people who were killed or injured, but also all the people who are scared to live their normal lives (Spencer 2006: 190). For this reason, Spencer proposed measuring the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures based on the presence of fear in society, rather than on hard quantitative data such as body count or a number of terrorist attacks (Spencer 2006: 191–195). Another emotion that is present in terrorism research is anger. Sirin and Geva studied in their article the influence of anger on the support of aggressive counterterrorism policies. They concluded that people who feel angry are more likely

to support more aggressive counterterrorism measures and they provide their support even in a shorter period of time and without searching for other relevant information. What is important is the fact that according to their conclusions the emotion of anger has to be triggered by a terrorism-related action and not by something irrelevant, like for example learning about a traffic accident (Sirin & Geva 2013: 718–726).

This supports the argument that it is necessary to study the character of discourse and especially the presence of emotions in it, as well as what emotions the speaker attempts to invoke in the audience. If we want to deal with ineffective and aggressive counterterrorism measures, we have to learn why these counterterrorism policies can be adopted in the first place. To do that, it is necessary to study how these policies are legitimised and why they receive the support of the public. The manipulation of human emotions plays an undeniable role in this. Even though the academic researchers, including the studies focused on terrorism, have increasingly recognised the role of emotions in people's decision-making and political behaviour, there still is a need for further research.

## **Methodology**

The methodology used for the analysis presented in the paper is inspired by Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which consists of analysing three levels of a discourse. The first level is textual. This level comprises analysis of the character of the text itself. The second, intertextual level, analyses the connection of the presented discourse to other discourses that already exist. The last level is the contextual level, and it analyses the context in which the discourse was delivered, as well as the social practices that were adopted by the discourse (Fairclough 2013: 94). Because of the scope of the paper, it presents only the first level of the analysis and combines it with the analysis of emotions, as explained in the introduction. The first, textual level, is the key level that provides us with the knowledge about the character of the speeches and its connection to emotions. It alone is able to show us whether the speeches are manipulative and invoke negative emotions in the audience or whether the speakers rather attempt to calm the audience. The paper analyses the character of the discourse presented in the official speeches delivered by the four analysed prime ministers (Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau), what labels they use, whether they ascribe terrorism to a particular minority, what emotions they invoke in speeches, whether they attempt to make the public calm or rather angry/scared, whether they talk about terrorism neutrally/objectively, or rather use emotional language. The analysis is conducted in NVivo software for qualitative analysis.

The analysis and coding in NVivo will search for the presence of emotions in the analysed speeches. I distinguish between positive and negative emotions<sup>3</sup>. Each of these categories plays a different role. Positive emotions, such as the feeling of safety, may be aimed at support of policies that make people feel safe at home, which are usually non-violent, such as legal measures. Negative emotions like hate or fear may lead to discrimination or alienation of certain groups of people, who may even be targeted. However, another group of emotions that may also be seen as positive, like nationalism, may lead to a support of violent measures such as a war as well.

All of the speeches<sup>4</sup> were collected from the official Canadian government website and its archives. All of the collected speeches were delivered between the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the end of 2019<sup>5</sup>. After collecting all of the speeches delivered by the prime ministers the author uploaded them and the statements into the NVivo. Since all of the speeches delivered by each of the four analysed prime ministers were collected, it was necessary to create a dataset that consisted only of the speeches focused on terrorism<sup>6</sup> for each of the four prime ministers. This was done by a query in the NVivo. The author conducted a text search for the term 'terror' including the stemmed words<sup>7</sup>, and saved the result of the query as a set of speeches focused on terrorism. The created dataset now contained all of the speeches where the term 'terror' (including stemmed words) was used at least once. Some speeches may thus have still been primarily focused on other issues; however, since the term 'terror' or a similar term was used at least once, the speech still got to the dataset. As this paper presents only the analysis of the speeches focused on terrorism, it was necessary to exclude the speeches that mention terrorism only briefly, without focusing on it. This was achieved by in-

- 3 A good definition of positive and negative emotions is provided in the article by Sirin and Geva, who describe these two distinct categories of emotions as follows: '... positive emotions are associated with the approach system motivating one to achieve positive outcomes for pleasure and reward whereas negative emotions are linked to the avoidance system activated to elude negative outcomes in order to protect against pain and harm' (Sirin - Geva 2013: 710).
- 4 All of the available speeches, which were delivered by the four analysed prime ministers, were downloaded, regardless of the topic they covered. The speeches on terrorism were selected in the NVivo.
- 5 As explained in the introduction - 2019 represents the present time to which all the data were available when starting the research.
- 6 For the purpose of the article there is no need for definition of terrorism. Defining terrorism would be even counterproductive, because it would artificially limit the dataset of analysed speeches. The goal of the paper is to analyse how the Canadian prime ministers talk about terrorism. A part of the analysis is also to find how and when they apply the 'terrorism' label to an attack or any other action. Instead of making a definition, the paper 'lets' the prime ministers apply their own definition. This will prevent the exclusion of speeches which may not fit our definition but do focus on terrorism, from the prime ministers' point of view.
- 7 Words similar to terrorism, terrorist, etc.

cluding only the speeches with coverage of the term terrorism at least by 0.5%<sup>8</sup> into the final dataset. This percentage was selected as a reasonable compromise, which meant that the dataset would consist of enough speeches for analysis and the speeches focused on different issues are excluded. A different percentage was not selected because selection of a lower percentage would lead to inclusion of too many speeches that focus on topics other than terrorism. On the other hand, including a higher percentage would also be problematic, because the next percentage similar in all speeches<sup>9</sup> is over 1% and this would lead to significant reduction of the dataset. The number of speeches and percentage of all speeches before and after the reduction are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

When all four datasets were created, all of the speeches that were included in individual datasets were coded manually in the NVivo by the author. The speeches were coded inductively, thus there were no codes created prior to coding. The coding unit is a coherent idea that consists of at least one sentence and is no longer than one paragraph in the speech. One idea may be coded into more than one code. The parts of the speeches which do not relate to terrorism were not included in any of the codes. All of the codes that were created while coding the speeches are summarised in Table 3 at the end of the findings section of the paper.

The author created twenty different codes based on the reading of the speeches, not all of them present in speeches delivered by every speaker. The code *determination* includes part of the speeches where the speaker talks about the determination of Canada to fight and win against terrorism, this code refers mainly to the determination to fight terrorism abroad. The code *safe* on the other hand refers mostly to politics adopted to protect the Canadian homeland, which should make people feel safe at their homes. Similarly the code *calm* refers to parts of the speeches which attempted to calm the emotions of people and make them not scared of terrorism. The code *courage* includes mentions of people fighting terrorism and responding to a terrorist threat, mainly soldiers or emergency services. Two codes similar in the message the speaker attempts to send to the public are *nationalism/pride* and *certain victory*. The first referring to Canadian greatness highlighting its values, the later mentioning the certainty of Canadian (or Western) victory against terrorism. The code *solidarity* refers to parts of the speeches when the prime minister expressed sympathy to either a country that suffered a terrorist attack or to the family of victims of such an attack either at home or abroad. The code *cooperation* includes parts of speeches

8 I.e., the term terror or stemmed words constitute at least 0.5% of the whole article.

9 It is not possible to choose a percentage that is not similar in datasets of all analysed prime ministers, for example choosing the percentage of 75% would be problematic since one of the datasets constitutes speeches with coverage of 0.58% and then 1.14%, with nothing in between. This dataset would be more limited than the other two. This paper attempted to limit all the articles by the same percentage.

Table 1: The number of speeches, coverage and number of references to the word terror (including stemmed words) before reduction of the dataset

Name	Number of speeches	Coverage (min-max in speeches)	Number of references (min - max in speeches)
Jean Chrétien	57	0.05 - 2.85%	1 - 16
Paul Martin	33	0.03 - 1.52%	1 - 5
Stephen Harper	64	0.05 - 5.60%	1 - 16
Justin Trudeau	38	0.07 - 2.92%	1 - 7

Table 2: the number of speeches, coverage and number of references to the word terror (including stemmed words) after reduction of the dataset

Name	Number of speeches	Coverage (min-max in speeches)	Number of references (min - max in speeches) <sup>a</sup>
Jean Chrétien	21	0.50 - 2.85%	1 - 16
Paul Martin	10	0.53 - 1.52%	1 - 3
Stephen Harper	25	0.50 - 5.60%	1 - 16
Justin Trudeau	24	0.50 - 2.92%	1 - 7

<sup>a</sup> Some speeches still consist only of one mention of terror (or stemmed words) and the limited dataset may even consider speeches with a lower number of references per speech than the original dataset. However, these speeches (statements) are short enough so the term terrorism (or stemmed words) presents a sufficient percentage. The percentual coverage is the main indicator that the speech is focused on the topic of terrorism.

when the prime minister refers to the necessity of cooperation to successfully fight terrorism. Some speakers also expressed the need for patience and explained that terrorism cannot be defeated over a short period of time, these references were coded into the code *patience*. The codes *fear* and *hate* refer to parts of the speeches which invoke these two emotions. An example of an idea coded into *fear* is part of a speech describing a terrorist attack in detail or telling people that another terrorist attack is imminent. An example of an idea coded into *hate* is describing terrorist goals and their desire to destroy our way of life. However, these two codes are very similar and many of the statements may invoke both hate and fear in people, thus many of the statements which belong to one of these codes is also coded into the other. Closely connected to these two codes are *innocent victims*, a code that directly mentions the innocence of the victims who did not deserve to die, making the attack seem even more brutal, and the codes *urgency* and *new threat*, which include parts of the speeches which describe terrorism as an urgent threat which needs to be addressed immediately, and which describe it as a new threat that has never been here before. Even though terrorism itself is not new, they see the terrorist threat we face now (at the time of delivering the speech) as at least qualitatively different from the terrorist (and other) threats we faced in the past. The code *Us vs. Them* contains parts of the speeches which label the struggle with terrorism as a fight between us vs. them, such as good vs. evil, civilised vs. barbaric nations, etc. The code *emotional words* contains references where the prime minister used emotionally charged words

– such as ‘barbaric attack’, ‘horrible tragedy’, ‘shocking attack’, etc. These parts of speeches do not only invoke emotions, such as fear, by for example scaring people with imminence of another attack, but actually use emotional language.

The remaining codes do not contain references invoking particular emotions but show what other topics are present in the analysed speeches. The code *9/11* refers to parts of the speeches talking about the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA, *not joining the Iraq War* refers to speeches where the prime minister explains the Canadian decision not to participate in the 2003 Iraq War, *Islam* contains parts of the speeches where prime ministers talk about Islam and Muslims, usually in an attempt to calm negative emotions towards minorities in Canada, and *definition* contains references to the need to find a common definition of the term terrorism.

The research has some limits. The main one is the fact that the coding was conducted only by the author. The coding may be subjective, especially with codes as similar as *fear* and *hate*, as described above. For this reason the author tries to make the coding and the whole analysis as transparent as possible. The second limit is connected with the data collection. The data were collected from the archived website for Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin. For Justin Trudeau, all of the speeches were collected from his current governmental website. The only problem was the data collection for Stephen Harper. His archived website could not be opened due to technical issues. All of his speeches were found on the Canadian governmental website through the search engine; however, it is not absolutely certain that all of his speeches were found and collected. However, the author was still able to collect a total of 1076 speeches for him, which should be representative enough for the analysis. The third limitation is the terminology used on the websites of each prime minister - each of them label the speeches in a different way: as speeches, statements or even news.

## Findings

The following section presents the findings of the analysis. It is divided into four individual sections, each presenting the results for one of the prime ministers. It presents the character of speeches delivered by each prime minister and the emotions present in (or invoked by) the speeches. The prime ministers are ordered chronologically so it is easier to observe the evolution of the terrorism discourse in Canada.

### *Jean Chrétien*

Jean Chrétien was in office from 4 November 1993 until 12 December 2003 (Canada 2013). The article analyses his speeches delivered since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. A total of 180 speeches were collected for Jean Chrétien, 57 of them

contained the word *terror* (or words stemming from it) and 21 speeches were included in the final dataset and coded. Jean Chrétien was the Canadian prime minister during important milestones of terrorism and the fight against terrorism – the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the invasion of Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq.<sup>10</sup> These events may be an explanation why the dataset for Jean Chrétien is the biggest even though his time in office (at least for the purpose of our analyses) is the shortest.

Prime Minister Chrétien framed terrorism in a more emotional than objective way. He frames it as a struggle between the civilised world and terrorists, so he frames it as a war between us and them (43 references). Chrétien uses emotionally charged words in his speeches describing terrorism (39 references). He uses terms such as ‘awful news’, ‘sad and trying days’, ‘terrible situation’, ‘a singular event transfixes the world’, ‘occasions when the dark side of human nature escapes civilised restraints and shows its ugly face to a stunned world’ (Chrétien2001). He often mentions the 9/11 terrorist attacks (24 references) and describes it as a tragic event that changed the world and can never be forgotten. The emotional references are also connected to the victims of terrorist attacks (17 references), who are described as innocent people.

Chrétien stressed the solidarity Canada felt towards its southern neighbour and the friendship Canada and the United States share. He talked about the friendship with the United States, solidarity (33 references) and cooperation (30 references), but on the other hand he stressed the Canadian decision not to follow the United States in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (7 references), because Canada is an independent country and cannot go to war only to follow their friends. He explained that Canada prefers a solution via the United Nations.

Most of Chrétien’s references (54 references) are about the determination of Canada to fight and defeat terrorists. The *Determination* code was selected for ideas that Canada is in the war, must fight terrorism on a global level or that this fight represents the fight between the civilised world and terrorists and the civilised world must win. This category thus refers more to the global military fight than providing safety to Canadian citizens on Canadian soil. This was represented by the code *safety*, which has a lower number of references (26 references). This code refers to parts of the speeches that invoked feelings of safety of Canadians at home, for example adoption of new counterterrorism laws and an increase in security measures in airports. The messages about Canadian determination are closely connected to the certainty of Canadian victory, which is stressed in 11 references.

Chrétien often invoked the feeling of Canadian nationalism and pride (44 references) when he talked about the Canadian response to 9/11 and the help that

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<sup>10</sup> However, Canada did not participate in the invasion of Iraq.

Canadian people provided to Americans at that time, pride for Canadian troops or Canadian values that need to be protected. He also talked about the courage of Canadian people, and especially its armed forces (15 references).

While Chrétien invokes emotions of fear (24 references) and hate (9 references) in people, he also tries to calm them (18 references), ask them for patience (11 references) and explain that Islam is not the enemy of Canada (5 references). He invokes fear by stressing the global reach of terrorists and the fact that they are a global threat to all countries. He describes it as a new threat that was never here before (19 references) and that is urgent (16 references) and must be dealt with now, or the terrorists will pose an immediate threat to Canada. The hate is invoked, for instance, by stressing the attempt of terrorists to destroy the Canadian (and Western) way of life, Canadian values, or by the reminder of the destruction of the World Trade Center on 9/11. However, Chrétien also attempts to make people calm, especially to prevent attacks on immigrants and Muslims in particular. He also tries to make people patient and explain that this war cannot be won overnight.

### *Paul Martin*

Paul Martin was the Canadian prime minister from 12 December 2003 until 6 February 2006 (Canada 2013). In total 205 speeches were collected for Paul Martin. Of these speeches, 33 contained at least one reference to the word terror (or stemmed words), 10 files were included in the final dataset and coded.

The code called solidarity contained the most references (11 references) of all created codes. Paul Martin delivered most of his speeches that were coded in reaction to a terrorist attack somewhere in the world, or in reaction to the death of soldiers in the War on Terror in Afghanistan. Six of the ten analysed speeches referred to these two kinds of events. In most speeches he thus expressed solidarity with countries, soldiers and their families who were victims of terrorist attacks or the War on terror. Paul Martin, as his predecessor, did not deliver emotionally neutral speeches, which may also be connected to the fact that his speeches were most often delivered as a reaction to terrorist attacks, or Canadian casualties in Afghanistan. His speeches include 10 emotionally charged ideas. He uses phrases such as 'unspeakable attack', 'horrific reminder', 'terrible loss' or 'barbaric act' throughout his speeches. Martin talks about the victims of terrorism (8 references), and stresses that they are innocent. When talking about solidarity, Martin also talks about the need for cooperation and the Canadian willingness to cooperate with countries to deal with the threat of terrorism (5 references). The emotiveness in his speeches is also connected to the reference of 9/11, which he mentioned in one of his speeches. He describes the 9/11 terrorist attacks in an emotional manner (using words such as 'shocked', 'horrified',

‘senseless act’) and as an event that cannot be forgotten. He framed the fight as an Us versus Them conflict, where Us refers to Canada and the Western world and Them to terrorists, using murder to achieve their goals (5 references).

Martin also talked about Canadian determination to fight terrorism (5 references). And the measures Canada adopted to protect its people at home and make them safe (5 references), such as the adoption of counterterrorism laws. He also talks about the steps that are taken against nuclear terrorism, making people feel safer. Connected to the determination is his assurance of certain victory against terrorism (1 reference). Martin invoked feelings of national pride, especially in connection to Canadian values that need to be protected (5 references), and about the courage of Canadian armed forces (1 reference). However, he also invoked feelings of fear (3 references) and hate (1 reference). He invoked fear by presenting terrorism as a real and present threat. He claimed terrorism to be a new threat, emerging on 9/11 (1 reference), and he stressed the urgency to deal with terrorism (1 reference), since it is a threat that presents a danger to people at the moment. Martin, unlike his predecessor, does not attempt to calm people and make them realise that the war is not aimed against immigrants in general and Islam in particular. However, he calls for the definition of terrorism (1 reference).

### *Stephen Harper*

Stephen Harper was in the office of the Canadian prime minister between 6 February 2006 (Canada 2013) and 4 November 2015 (‘Prime Minister of Canada’ 2013). In total 1076 speeches were collected for Stephen Harper. Of these speeches, 64 contained at least one reference to terrorism and 25 of them were included in the final dataset and coded.

As with his predecessor, Stephen Harper delivered some of his speeches focused on terrorism as a reaction to a terrorist attack or death of Canadian soldiers (8 of 26 speeches), other speeches were delivered on an anniversary of major terrorist attacks from the past, 9/11 and the terrorist attack on Air India Flight 182 from 1985 (12 of 26 speeches). The character of these 20 speeches may explain why the code labelled *Emotional* comprises the most references (57 references). He uses emotionally charged phrases – ‘tragedy’, ‘horrific act’, ‘heinous acts’, ‘horrible acts’. The second most references describe victims (54 references) of the terrorist attacks. Harper expresses Canadian solidarity (42 references) to other countries who were victims of terrorist attacks, or to families of victims. He also stresses the need for cooperation among countries to defeat terrorism, and Canadian willingness to cooperate with her allies (11 references). As his two predecessors, Harper talks about 9/11 on anniversaries of the attack. He describes the 9/11 terrorist attacks emotionally; however, he does not describe it as the worst

terrorist attack. Harper uses the label of the worst terrorist attack for the 1985 attack on Air India Flight 182 that killed all 329 passengers (280 of whom were Canadians). Harper talked about this attack in seven of the 26 analysed speeches. The references to this attack may explain why Harper did not refer to terrorism as a new kind of threat. However, this may also be caused by the fact that the War on Terror had already been going on for five years when he was sworn into office.

Harper did frame the War on Terror as an Us versus Them conflict (19 references), where the Us stands for Canada and its friends and allies, and Them stands for terrorists. He did not frame the war as a war between civilised and barbaric nations. He stresses the determination to fight terrorism (24 references) and the certainty that the war will be won (4 references). The determination to fight and defeat terrorism globally is complemented by the assurances of providing safety for Canadian citizens at home (14 references). Another element of his speeches are references to national pride (23 references) and courage (18 references); however, unlike his predecessors, he uses references of pride and courage exclusively in connection with the Canadian military, not Canadians values or ordinary people and not even rescue services.

Harper invokes fear in citizens (20 references) by stressing that terrorism is a serious threat to all countries, and especially by saying that terrorist organisations designated Canada as its target. He talks about the urgency to fight terrorism (4 references), amplifying the fear. Another negative emotion invoked by Harper is hate (9 references), when he described past terrorist attacks on Canada, or the brutality of terrorist attacks. These references could invoke both emotions – fear and hate. Harper did not attempt to calm people and their negative emotions toward minorities or Islam, as Chrétien did.

### *Justin Trudeau*

Justin Trudeau has been in the office of the prime minister of Canada since 4 November 2015 until the present day ('Prime Minister of Canada' 2013). The last included date for Justin Trudeau was the speech on 31 December 2019, as explained in the methodology. Of the 718 speeches collected for Justin Trudeau, 38 of them contained at least one reference to terrorism and 24 speeches were included in the final dataset and coded.

Trudeau refers mostly to victims (58 references) and solidarity (58 references), and his speeches are also emotionally charged (52 references). The speeches on terrorism, which were included in the dataset, were mostly in reaction to terrorist attacks committed around the world (17 of 24 speeches). He uses emotional words such as 'deeply shocked and saddened', 'we mourn', or 'cowardly attack', 'brutal act'. He also used emotional language when talking about anniversaries

of terrorist attacks. Trudeau mentioned the 9/11 terrorist attack only in one of the analysed speeches (2 references), and, as his predecessor, he did not consider it to be the worst terrorist attack. In four speeches he refers to the 1985 bombing on Air India Flight 182, which he, like Stephen Harper, considers the worst attack for Canada. He also did not refer to terrorism as a new kind of threat, and not even as an urgent threat that needs to be solved quickly.

Trudeau describes the fight against terrorism as a fight of democracies (Us) versus the terrorists, representing hate and violence (Them) (26 references). He stressed Canadian determination to fight terrorism on a global level (22 references) and that Canada will not be defeated by terrorists (2 references). As with the previous prime ministers the paper analyses, Trudeau also invokes a feeling of safety of Canadians in their homeland (6 references). Trudeau emphasises the need for cooperation to defeat terrorism (16 references), but he also invoked the feelings of nationalist pride (12 references) and courage of Canadians (9 references). He does not ascribe these characteristics only to military personnel, but to all Canadians.

Even though Trudeau tried to make people feel safe, he did invoke the negative feelings of hate (7 references) and fear (19 references) in people as well, by describing terrorism as a very real and present threat that can strike at any time, and targets innocent people. He did not attempt to calm people, remind them that this fight needs patience or that it is not aimed against any particular community.

## **Conclusion**

When looking at the evolution of terrorism discourse in Canada between 9/11 and the end of 2019, it is possible to notice that there are both similarities and differences between the character of the speeches delivered by the four prime ministers and the emotions they each invoke. The similarities are that all of them talked about terrorism in an emotional manner, using emotionally charged words. None of the four analysed prime ministers described terrorism without invoking emotions. All of them expressed solidarity with other countries who suffered from terrorist attacks and with the families of victims. The victims were also mentioned in the speeches of all of the four prime ministers. All of them also talked about the need for cooperation and the willingness of Canada to cooperate with its allies. All of the prime ministers expressed the determination of Canada to fight terrorism on a global level and all of them expressed a certainty of Canadian victory. They all invoked positive emotions of safety, nationalism and courage. However, Stephen Harper invoked the latter two only in relation to Canadian military forces. Another similarity for all the speakers is the invocation of negative feelings in their speeches – particularly

feelings of hate and fear of terrorism, which was invoked using descriptions of terrorist actions, terrorist goals and by stressing that terrorism is a very real threat to Canada.

There can also be differences observed among the four speakers. While all of them describe the fight against terrorism as an Us versus Them conflict, Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau did not frame it as a war between civilised and barbaric nations. All the prime ministers mentioned 9/11 and described it in an emotional manner. However, Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau did not describe it as the worst terrorist attack in history, instead they both used this label to describe the 1985 terrorist attack of the Air India Flight 182. Harper and Trudeau, unlike their predecessors, also did not describe terrorism as a new threat that emerged after 9/11, and Trudeau did not even talk about it as an urgent threat. This can be caused by the fact that the War on Terror had already been going on for years when they got sworn into office; however, this is only one possible explanation. Jean Chrétien is the only one of the four prime ministers who attempted to calm the people, especially to calm the negative feelings towards immigrants in general and Islam in particular. Chrétien was also the only one of the four prime ministers who asked people for patience in the fight and explained that the war cannot be won overnight. Chrétien was the only one

Table 3: All codes and number of references made by each prime minister in his speeches

	Jean Chrétien (21 speeches)	Paul Martin (10 Speeches)	Stephen Harper (25 Speeches)	Justin Trudeau (24 Speeches)
Determination	54	5	24	22
Nationalism/pride	44	5	23	12
Us vs Them	43	5	19	26
Emotional words	39	10	57	52
Solidarity	33	11	42	58
Cooperation	30	5	11	16
Safety	26	5	14	6
9/11	24	3	14	2
Fear	24	3	20	19
New Threat	19	1	-	-
Calm	18	-	-	-
Innocent victims	17	8	54	58
Urgency	16	1	4	-
Courage	15	1	18	9
Patience	11	-	-	-
Certain victory	11	1	4	2
Hate	9	1	9	7
Not joining Iraq war	7	-	-	-
Islam	5	-	-	-
Definition	-	1	-	-

who talked about not joining the invasion of Iraq; however, this was probably caused by the fact that he is the only one who was in the prime minister's office while making the decision. Martin was the only one who stressed the necessity of adopting a common definition of terrorism.

It can be concluded that all of the analysed Canadian prime ministers used emotional language and invoked negative emotions in people, which can lead to support of aggressive counterterrorism policies. Jean Chrétien was the only one who also attempted to calm the negative emotions towards immigrants and especially Muslims, which means that there is degeneration rather than improvement in calming the impact of negative emotions in speeches. Calming the negative emotions at least towards immigrants and Muslims may lead to lack of alienation of these groups of people and push them towards radicalisation. Since all of the speeches are emotional and influence the feelings of citizens, it is necessary to continue with this kind of research. The next step is to analyse the adopted counterterrorism measures to determine whether the emotional speeches lead to an adoption of ineffective counterterrorism measures, such as an increase in the number of troops in the War on Terror, torture, targeted killing or other violent measures. This article contributes to the literature on terrorism discourse by analysing the Canadian discourse delivered by prime ministers; however, there is still a need for further research. Similar analyses aimed at different countries is also needed, since most of the analyses only focus on a limited number of countries. The analysis of discourse on terrorism should not be omitted since it can give us an idea about the adoption and legitimisation of counterterrorism policies that may be ineffective and contribute to the issue of terrorism rather than providing a solution. Another possible analysis would be that of how Canadian prime ministers talk about homegrown terrorism since these speeches were not included in the dataset. There are three possible explanations why these speeches did not 'make it' to the dataset. First, the prime ministers did not address this issue in their speeches at all. Second, the prime ministers do not refer to these attacks as terrorist acts. And the third possibility is that they talk about homegrown terrorism in speeches where they focus on other issues as well, which would lead to exclusion based on percentual coverage of the word 'terror'. All of these analyses would help us better understand how the discourse on terrorism is presented and how it influences human emotions to gain support for various counterterrorism policies.



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## **Speeches and Documents**

### *Jean Chrétien*

Address by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on the occasion of a Special House of Commons Debate in response to the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001

Address by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on the occasion of the Canada – U.S. Border Summit – September 9, 2002

Address by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to the Appeal of Conscience Foundation – October 1, 2002

Address by the Prime Minister Chrétien at the Fighting Terrorism for Humanity Conference – September 22, 2003

Notes for a Statement by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien An Address to the Nation Concerning the International Campaign Against Terrorism – October 7, 2001

Notes for an Address by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien at the Opening of the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly – September 23, 2003

Notes for an Address by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on the occasion of a Special House of Commons “Take Note” Debate on the International Campaign Against Terror – October 15, 2001

Notes for an Address by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien To the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual NATO Parliamentary Assembly – October 9, 2001

Remarks by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien Announcing Canada’s Contribution to the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction – May 30, 2003

Statement by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announcing a National Day of Mourning in Canada on September 14, 2001 in memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks in the United States – September 13, 2001

Statement by the Prime Minister – August 2, 2002

Statement by the Prime Minister – March 20, 2003

Statement by the Prime Minister – May 31, 2002

Statement by the Prime Minister – November 10, 2003

Statement by the Prime Minister – November 8, 2002

Statement by the Prime Minister – November 9, 2001

Statement by the Prime Minister – October 26, 2002

Statement by the Prime Minister – video message – December 2001

Statement by the Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in Support of a Motion in the House of Commons – April 8, 2003

Statement by the Prime Minister- October 2, 2003  
Statement by the Prime Minister to mark the two-year anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States – no date

*Paul Martin*

Demolition of Palestinian home in Gaza – May 20, 2004  
Prime Minister Martin condemns bombing in Amman, Jordan – November 9, 2005  
Statement by Prime Minister Paul Martin – July 7, 2005  
Statement by the Prime Minister after developments in the hostage-taking incident in a school in North Ossetia, Russia – September 3, 2004  
Statement by the Prime Minister at the signing of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism – September 14, 2005  
Statement by the Prime Minister on a United Nations Report proposing internal reform – March 21, 2005  
Statement by the Prime Minister on the attacks in Egypt – July 23, 2005  
Statement by the Prime Minister on the death of Private Braun Scott Woodfield – November 24, 2005  
Statement by the Prime Minister on the third anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attack – Statement by the Prime Minister – September 10, 2004  
The death of a Canadian Soldier in Kabul, Afghanistan – Statement by the Prime Minister – January 27, 2004

*Stephen Harper*

Address by the Prime Minister To the Canadian Armed forces in Afghanistan – March 13, 2006  
Prime Minister Harper Declares September 11 a National Day of Service September 9, 2011  
Prime Minister Harper Marks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 9/11 – September 11, 2011  
Prime Minister Harper's Statement Regarding 9/11 During His Address to the Australian Parliament – September 11, 2007  
Statement by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on the assassination of Benazir Bhutto – December 27, 2007  
Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – April 11, 2010  
Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – June 23, 2010  
Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – March 8, 2010  
Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – May 18, 2010  
Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – May 8, 2010  
Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – no date  
Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – no date

- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – no date
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada – September 11, 2010
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada in response to the situation in Israel – July 13, 2014
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2013
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on passage of second ISIL motion in Parliament – March 30, 2015
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the Anniversary of 9/11 and the National Day of Service – September 11, 2013
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the bombing at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport – January 24, 2011
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2012
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2014
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada Strongly Condemns Terrorist Attacks in Mumbai – July 13, 2011
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada to honour the Canadian Armed Forces – no date
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada to mark the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2015
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the Deaths of Sergeant Darcy Tedford and Private Blake Williamson – October 15, 2006

### *Justin Trudeau*

- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on an apparent terrorist attack in Manchester, United Kingdom – May 22, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on Remembrance Day – November 11, 2016
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium – March 22, 2016
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the anniversary of the attack at the National War Memorial and Parliament Hill in Ottawa – October 22, 2016
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the attack in London, United Kingdom – March 22, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the attack in Stockholm, Sweden, April 7, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the results of the Australian general election – May 18, 2019

- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the terrorist attack in France – March 23, 2018
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the terrorist attack in London – June 4, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the terrorist attack on Coptic Christians in Egypt – May 26, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the terrorist attacks on Coptic Christian churches in Egypt, April 9, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the terrorist attack in Istanbul, Turkey – January 1, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on the tragic shooting in Orlando, Florida – June 12, 2016
- Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada to mark the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2016
- Statement by the Prime Minister on terrorist attack in Barcelona – August 17, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the anniversary of 9/11 and the National Day of Service – September 11, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the death of a Canadian citizen in Jordan – December 19, 2016
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the mosque attack in Egypt – November 24, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2019
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2018
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism – June 23, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the terrorist attack in Burkina Faso – August 15, 2017
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the terrorist attack in Somalia – July 14, 2019
- Statement by the Prime Minister on the terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka – April 21, 2019

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# Go East!: A History of Hungarian Turanism

## Reviewed by Tristan Kenderdine

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The scholarly origins of ethno-linguistics is always a fascinating framework of inquiry. The rapidity of any findings in this field though, being appropriated into far right nationalism devoid of scholarship and formed on superficial bullying politics of power is consistently disturbing. Balázs Ablonczy's scholarship shines through in this history of people shaping an interesting and refined idea. Ablonczy's is an excellent history, far deeper and broader than the contemporary Hungarian political narrative which has been captured from the same sources that it is constructed from. Turanianism in this Hungarian form was less about linguistic and geographic ethnology and more about finding a polity-defining theory to base a political push into the future on. In that sense, its appropriation by Viktor Orbán and Fidesz in the age of the European Union is more understandable as an interrelationship between the right element in the Hungarian polity seeking not a return to Turanian origins, but a return to the legitimacy of Turanism as political thought through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is the dangerous element of revising this already revisionist history for a modern populist movement.

Ablonczy here though offers an impartial, apolitical and genuinely authoritative history of a political thought through a mosaic of smaller people, actions and institutions within the historical record. Ablonczy details the loose collection of personalities and the formal institutions which formed the foundation of the Hungarian Turanist movement. Natural for the time, most institutions took

the form of business and social groups such as the freemasons, the Hungarian Eastern Economic Center, the Turanian Society (later the Hungarian Eastern Cultural Center); or the formal scientific and philanthropic societies such as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Orientalist Institute, though these were more often formal academic manifestations of the lobbying power of the members of the stronger Hungarian Eastern Economic Center. The grand mosaic of Ablonczy's history is mostly tiled from the falling institutional debris of the collapse and dissolution of the Dual Monarchy. Hungarian elites watched the development of European nationhood in modern Turkey while still cultivating connections with Balkan and Ottoman groups based on the shared institutional confusion of Hungarian Easternism. Against the reality of institutional decay, the need for a replacement Central European political ideology conflicted with contemporary ideas of statism.

'The East' of the Hungarian Turanists shares much with the émigré White Russians of Eurasianism in the 1920s, struggling with the problems of geographic determinism, linguistics and ethnography. The Russian Eurasianist émigrés were working in Central and Eastern Europe at the same time period as the development of Hungarian Turanism, exploring the same call to nature and geographic determinism which was later built out into an ethnic minority ideology in the Soviet Union through a combination of cooptation and genuine interpretation of Gumilev's work. Both Eurasian and Turanism though veer dangerously into the ethno-identitarianism that destroyed 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, and of which the 21<sup>st</sup> century politics are still rightly wary. For Hungarian Turanism though, the core impetus for a sustained attempt at ideology formation throughout the long 20<sup>th</sup> century was the concept of Turanic peoples as an identity in opposition to other European identities, and an identity also at odds with either the small industrial nationalism emerging in Western Europe or the large decaying multi-ethnic Empires of the Dual Monarchy and the Ottoman.

The history as a whole though is a smooth narrative. Perhaps Ablonczy could have connected the reader more clearly with the changing tapestry of Europe at the time, we often feel fully buried in domestic Hungarian people and institutions and then force ourselves to remember what else was happening in Europe at the time. Throughout, the ideas of Turanism as they developed also always seem sequestered within a sand box. The exploration of Eastern historiographic, ethnographic, anthropological and linguistic origins was developed by a society which was overwhelmingly European, an Austro-Hungarian society of periodicals, artistic and scientific societies, Hungarian Turanism was developed by the elites and the inheritors of an advanced European empire. Perhaps here is the book's key fault, largely ignoring the Turanist movement's impact on any of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century wars which shaped the internal form of the Hungarian state

and society. Concepts of ethnonationalism and economic nationalism were intertwined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in devastating industrial nationalist wars. Hungary's internal political frictions developed alongside the ethnographic tradition of Turanism, and the interplay between conflicting national identities must have been formative through the First and Second World War periods. Instead, we skate over both wars, as if they were merely 19<sup>th</sup> century imperial border skirmishes, not bothering the coffee house Turan elites in Buda.

This is a thoroughly good history though, it is not sensationalist, not rushed and not politicised in its findings or arguments. It is a calm, reasoned, well thought through and cogent narrative based on each part being in good enough form to allow each moving part to be disassembled and reassembled to examine for functionality. Ablonczy has constructed a miniaturised version of history here, populated with a cast of hundreds of characters, each built up competently from source work. This is the type of sweeping history which accurately delivers the macroscope of grand historical narrative simply by animating all the small human personalities who actually created their history. In terms of publication standards, Indiana University Press here is outdoing some of the larger imprints in quality, and a well-priced paperback version is most welcome. The endnotes are in good order, neither excessive nor unnecessarily clipped. Early and mid-career scholars should take note that university imprints like this do such a good job that there is no need to use the lower-tier Routledge or IB Tauris publishers when such great university presses are still doing real work.

Ablonczy's history is like a cathedral in Mittel Europa, the architectural façades full of detail which adds to the overall beauty, the structure itself solidly planned out. This book is well founded and structured, each piece whether ornamental or functional can be disassembled, examined and appreciated on its own, and the functional usefulness of describing the political motivations, structures and future signposts of a theory of pan-ethnonationalism which cuts to the heart of the European political identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is monumentally useful.



BUGAJSKI, Janusz, ASSENOVA, Margarita. *Eurasian Disunion. Russia's Vulnerable Flanks*. The Jamestown Foundation, 2016. ISBN 978-0-9855045-5-7.

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# Eurasian Disunion: Russia's Vulnerable Flanks

## Reviewed by Mikael Veli

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The geopolitical approach to the analysis of Russian foreign policy is not new nor particularly groundbreaking; however, it is an important part of understanding the Russian state and its actions. Six years since the publication of the book, the themes explored in it are still relevant. The intertwined political and economic systems of Russia produce new unpredictable outcomes with the same constant – Vladimir Putin is still the Russian President, and the people surrounding him are still able to cling to power in Russia.

Janusz Bugajski and Margarita Assenova successfully manage to reasonably and apolitically describe the very real Russian geopolitical concerns and fears that play out in the background of seemingly irrational and even aggressive Russian foreign policy. The authors do a great job of separating Russian society and the Russian state, with specific focus on Putin and his entourage and the Kremlin's regime. They spotlight a Putinist understanding of the world around Russia which is seen strictly in hostile realist geopolitical terms.

The authors propose that current Russian foreign policy is based on the vague revisionist notion of returning to former imperial glory, whether the time of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. To prove it, they analyse the relationship of Russia with various regions of influence surrounding the state. The theme of the 'Russian world' present throughout the text is highlighted in Russia's relationship with the former USSR states. Their economic and security dependency on Russia is one of the main pillars of relative Russian success, the

other one being the lack of political will of the West to oppose the autocratic regime in Russia.

The thorough analysis of every *flank* is provided from multiple perspectives – every tension (social, economic, nationalist, etc.) is explored in detail and helps the reader fathom what is happening. A new iteration of the book, if it comes out, should best separate the Arctic region as its own vulnerable flank, as the involvement of other greater powers such as China and the US is much more apparent there than in any other geopolitical region surrounding Russia. Currently, it was only briefly mentioned in relation to the Northern flank but not included as its own vulnerable flank.

One of the biggest strengths of the book already mentioned in the introduction is the comprehensive itinerary of tools and tactics used by the Kremlin to solidify its power. The list consists of over 60 methods conveniently broken down into eight categories (international, informational, ideological, economic, ethnic, political, social and military) and could be very useful for other researchers interested in analysing political actions of the Kremlin.

On the other hand, the list of policy proposals in the conclusion of the book seems rather aggressive and one-sided. Even though the authors clearly state their focus on Putin's regime, they have not included the efforts of Russian civil society and other political actors opposing the Kremlin from the inside. With hindsight, we can see Putin's (and not just the Kremlin's) ability to withstand the pressure from the West, but the opposition is much more significant if it comes from within. After the controversial election results and the imprisonment of Alexey Navalny in 2021, the protest broke out around Russia but were provoked more by the apparent vote manipulation and corruption, and less so by the economic realities of Putin's regime as argued in the book.

Nevertheless, *Eurasian Disunion: Russia's Vulnerable Flanks* is an essential reading for anyone interested in Russian foreign policy as it conceptualises and scrutinises the geopolitical and geoeconomic interests of the Russian state and gets into the mind of the Kremlin elites.

