RESOLVE

THE GOVERNANCE NEXUS:

Surveying the Research on Violent Extremism, Governance Failures, and the Quest for

and the Quest for Political Legitimacy



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ABOUT RESOLVE

THE RESEARCHING SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM (RESOLVE) Network is a global consortium of researchers and research organizations whose work focuses on understanding the drivers of vulnerability and sources of community resilience. International stakeholders established the RESOLVE Network to generate, facilitate, aggregate, and synthesize methodologically sound, locally informed research on the dynamics of violent extremism. The network promotes opportunities for high-impact exchanges between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers on ways to build effective, sustainable responses to the drivers of violent extremism. The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) is a member of the RESOLVE Network Steering Committee and serves as the Secretariat for RESOLVE. Led by a team of public policy experts, researchers, and practitioners from across the conflict, security, and development sphere, the RESOLVE Network Secretariat staff has worked on the frontlines of armed conflict and along the fault lines of violent extremism in numerous countries across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. To learn more about our team and the RESOLVE mission, please visit the RESOLVE Network website at www.resolvenet.org.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study benefited greatly from the assistance of partners across the RESOLVE Network. The RESOLVE team would like to offer thanks to several individuals in particular who deserve special recognition. The team is especially grateful to our colleagues at the U.S. Institute of Peace for their advice and support. We would specifically like to thank Beth Cole, USIP's Special Advisor on Countering Violent Extremism, Fragility, and Conflict; Carla Koppell, Vice President of the Institute's Applied Conflict Transformation Center (ACT); and Amelia Cotton Corl, ACT Chief of Staff, for the generous time and effort they put into helping us to make the Network a reality. This report also benefited from considerable assistance from our colleagues Shazia Amin, Peggy Archambault, Jake Harris, and Erica Holsclaw, all of whom provided invaluable inputs during the editorial process for this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the United States and its coalition partners work to dismantle remnants of Da'esh in Mosul, the question we all need to be asking is what comes next? What exactly do groups like Da'esh offer in place of state-supported governance, and why are some violent extremist organizations more successful at employing nonviolent means to achieve often violent ends than others? When we think about organizations like Da'esh, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban today, we tend to think mostly about bomb blasts and beheadings. For many engaged in counterterrorism policy, action shots of packs of armed men, kitted out in masks and makeshift military gear, wielding rocket launchers and AK-47s are standard fare. Historically, research on nonstate armed actors who promote extremist ideas about governance has likewise focused variously on the origin stories of groups like al-Qaeda; the rise and fall of leading organizational ideologues such as Osama bin Laden; and global, national, and local responses to the destruction they leave in their wake in parts of the world as disparate as Brussels and Bamako. But, it is safe to say that we still don't know what we don't know about the nonviolent tools, tactics, and tricks violent nonstate organizations employ to stoke support for their own agendas.

Much of the research on terrorism and violent extremism to date has focused on the outcomes of violent action. While the violent tactics employed by groups like al-Qaeda and Da'esh are without doubt central to any discussion about how best to prevent and counter extremism, a strict focus on violent action and mobilization to violence may not tell us much more than we already know: failed governance is the nexus point where the interests of fragile states and extremists most often converge and diverge. Research suggests that a lot more can be learned, however, from the bullets that aren't fired and the bombs that don't go off than most policymakers, practitioners, and researchers might suspect. The unanswered and more pertinent questions are when, why, where, and under what conditions do extremist organizations and their supporters employ nonviolent means to achieve strategic results that often have violent ends?

State corruption, abuse of power, and poor governance form the narrative arc of grievances that have fueled the rise of extremist organizations worldwide. In Afghanistan, the Taliban are well-known for the rough but ready justice they offer Afghani constituents looking to circumvent a court system riddled with corruption. In Kosovo, religious charities fill the void in many places where the government falls short on education and provision of basic services. In Bangladesh and elsewhere in parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, extremism is on the rise. These and other anecdotal examples culled from the history of the last two decades, since the UN first imposed sanctions on al-Qaeda in 1998, suggest that in countries where governance has failed, it is not uncommon for groups advocating extremist views to step into the vacuum and provide goods and services. The strategic calculus for many extremist organizations is clear: do what the government can't or won't do or risk illegitimacy and political irrelevance. Yet, much of policy to date has focused on online and offline recruitment tactics, and research on violent extremism has generally followed suit.

Recruitment tactics are no doubt worthy of study, but the current vogue of scraping the Internet for clues distracts somewhat from the structural factors that drive young men and women into the arms of extremist groups. A broad overreliance in conflict analysis literature on secondary sources, such as media accounts, small-scale key stakeholder interviews, and perception surveys focused on pathways to extremist recruitment, has obscured the subtle interplay between community decisions to abstain from, actively resist,

or support violent social movements. What is most often missing from the analytical picture is the way community responses to failures of governance drive extremist grievance narratives. When mass violence occurs or some other disaster strikes, the first question asked in almost any context is where is the government? The rise in extremist violence over the last decade suggests, however, that we should also be asking how the government's response impacts community perceptions of what is just and equitable. The research for this comparative case study suggests attention from international stakeholders in post-civil war settings like Afghanistan and Kosovo has generated a lot more analysis about when and where extremists become first responders in moments of need than it has in places like Bangladesh, where there has been little in the way of external intervention against extremist groups. But, it is precisely at this point where research focus is truly needed if prevention of extremism is the primary policy goal.

Findings from this study suggest four key takeaways:

- Social justice narratives often form the fulcrum of extremist recruitment tactics when governments
 fail and inaction prevails in times of crisis. Close study of nonviolent tactics employed by extremist groups and active supporters of extremist ideologies can reveal when governance failures begin
 to have salience beyond well-known constituents of extremist views.
- Very little is understood about variance at the subnational level in localized support or resistance to nonviolent tactics employed by violent extremist organizations. Research in this area has so far been guided by guess work and anecdote.
- To better understand the appeal of extremist messages, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers need to pay close attention to the timing and content of statements from extremist organizations that suggest support for public service provision or to the changes in practice that indicate a departure from the use of violence to govern and enforce social norms.
- Researchers need to counterbalance overreliance on secondary media accounts and perception surveys with primary source interviews with current or former members of extremist groups. These interviews should include questions about how and why groups decide to distribute public goods and services or about when they determine not to intervene or even cooperate with governments.
- Researchers need to broaden their analysis of extremist materials beyond social media content to
 include a review of written statements, letters, communiqués, and decision memos from groups
 about the provision of justice, education, and other public goods and services.

INTRODUCTION

The growing influence of conflict prevention frameworks like the United Nations Secretary General's Plan of Action for the Prevention of Violent Extremism signals a shift in how we should be thinking about the rise of armed extremist organizations and the appeal of violent social movements. The plan argues that we know a lot more today than we did at the turn of the 21st century about the deleterious impact of conflict on human development, but we don't know enough about why violent sectarian and ethnic strife appear to have become more virulent. Governments around the world have, nonetheless, expended enormous sums on programs aimed at addressing the rise of violent extremist organizations and rebuilding community resilience in war-torn places like Mosul, Kabul, and Kano. It is not yet clear, however, that this has been money well spent.

Many of the programs under the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) framework start from the assumption that a state's inability or unwillingness to provide equal access to justice, security, education, and other public goods and services stokes distrust in state institutions. This can result in a power vacuum for violent extremist groups to exploit. Therefore, restoring the state's ability to provide security and justice equitably as well as citizens' faith in the state are central concerns of most P/CVE policy. But, the increasing evidence of efforts by violent extremist groups to provide services commonly supplied by the state suggests we may be missing an important part of the prevention puzzle.

Research conducted for this study suggests that examining why and when nonstate organizations aligned with extremist agendas fill the governance void when state governance fails might offer fresh approaches to more effective interventions. The nexus between governance, state fragility, and noncoercive strategies violent extremist organizations employ to bolster their political legitimacy, and the appeal of violent social movements that target minorities, is grossly underexplored in much of the peer-reviewed academic literature. Yet, the provision of public goods and services by armed nonstate actors in states grappling with civil war and sectarian and communal conflict is not a new phenomenon.

Violent social movements emerge in a variety of contexts in a variety of countries. For more than a century, the Ku Klux Klan has terrorized marginalized Americans in the United States. In the 1970s and 1980s, vanguard Marxist organizations perpetrated violent attacks in Europe and the Middle East. In Africa today, affiliates of al-Qaeda and Da'esh¹ engage in brutal violence within the various countries in which they operate. Not all these groups share the same attributes. Nor do they all employ the same strategies to mobilize people to violence. A few, like the Taliban and al-Shabaab, nonetheless, stand out for their unrelenting focus on the failure of state institutions to provide equal access to public goods and services. In many parts of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Europe, passive or active public support for extremism and violent social movements is a direct response to specific flaws in security, justice, and governance institutions that exclude whole sections of society from the state's social contract with its citizens. Despite the considerable and prolonged debate about what distinguishes one nation's freedom fighter from another state's terrorist, history is rife with examples of armed nonstate actors who have employed governance

¹ Da'esh is the Arabic translation of the acronym for the Islamic State in the Levant, also known as ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) or ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). As a general rule, the RESOLVE Network refers to ISIS by this Arabic acronym.

structures to remedy those flaws and to distribute goods and services, such as health care, education, and dispute resolution, more equitably.

Near the turn of the 18th century, the rebellious colonies of the United States, for example, established the Articles of Confederation to guide and organize colonial administrators during the American Revolution. Similarly, since the end of World War II, rebels and insurgents from Mao's People's Liberation Army to the Islamic State have continued to rely on a strategy of governance, specifically the provision of goods and services to populations during periods of domestic upheaval. From 1945 to 2003, more than 30 percent of all rebel groups and almost 60 percent of rebel groups that controlled territory provided some form of governance.² Leading scholars of conflict dynamics posit that the provision of governance and public goods has two primary impacts: increased recruitment³ and greater political legitimacy.⁴ Nonstate actors provide governance not only to generate positive legitimacy for themselves, but also to delegitimize other institutions, especially the state.

Yet, despite the variegated emergence of nonstate actors who employ violence to promote sectarian causes, not all of these groups provide governance. This begs the question: Under what conditions might we expect violent nonstate actors allied with extremist agendas to provide governance? The answer to this question varies depending on the structure of the state itself and the highly context-specific historical, geographic, and cultural contingencies that influence the emergence of violent social movements in unstable states around the world. Unpacking those complexities may hold important clues on how governments and communities should rethink their approaches to countering and preventing violent extremism.

In the sections that follow, researchers for this study consider those very complexities by examining the gaps in the existing literature on Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Kosovo. All three countries have experienced a range of internal and external responses to state failures to provide sufficient governance. In Afghanistan, the ongoing war continues to foment insecurity, weaken institutions, and empower corrupt strongmen, prompting prolonged military interventions by US and NATO forces. While the intensity of political violence and extremist attacks in Bangladesh is nowhere near the levels of nearby Afghanistan, signs of instability on the heels of massive electoral violence and growing schisms over the role of religion in public life suggest a possible opening for the expansion of support for violent social movements. In Kosovo, the period of active conflict has long since been over, but the rising influence in the public sector of charitable organizations aligned with a violent extremist agenda is unmistakable and bodes ill for future stability. All three of these cases, as outlined below, illustrate the need for more dedicated efforts to address major gaps in our understanding of how and when extremist groups employ nonviolent means to achieve violent ends.

² Stewart, forthcoming.

³ Weinstein 2006; Berman and Laitin 2008.

⁴ Grynkewich 2006; Mampilly 2011; Stewart, forthcoming.

METHODOLOGY

This report represents the third and last in a series of working papers aimed at assessing the state of the research and evidence on the drivers of violent extremism. From June 2016 to January 2017, the RESOLVE Network Secretariat mined the expertise of the nearly two dozen think tanks, academic research centers, and policy training institutes engaged with RESOLVE and the Global Research Network on Conflict.⁵ The mapping exercise also entailed a large-scale review of the literature on conflict, political violence, terrorism, and violent extremism across the Network's six priority regions.⁶ The first paper in the series employed a combination of online surveys and structured focus group discussions with more than eighty experts to identify priority themes and countries in need of deeper research.⁷ The second paper in this series used automated text-mining analysis tools to review the content of over 3,000 peer-reviewed English language research articles to examine the intersection of conflict, political violence, and anti-pluralist belief systems.⁸

For this third and final paper in the series, the RESOLVE Network Secretariat team collaborated with three principal investigators to conduct a comparative case study analysis on the state of the literature on the nexus between poor governance and the rise of violent extremism and violent social movements in three priority countries identified by Network members in the first phase of the study, conducted from June to September 2016. The searches focused on samples culled in part for the text-mining study (see the annotated bibliographies at the end of this paper for a full listing). Our analytical lens for this exercise was focused on literature that examined organizations that have at one time or another been officially sanctioned for terrorist activities or for providing support to sanctioned terrorist organizations or individuals. Despite the breadth of sources searched, the lead investigators only turned up a little over 200 articles that met the search criteria and appeared to touch on relevant questions. The bulk of the study focused primarily on review of the literature on this and related topics in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Kosovo. Each of the contributors was asked to apply the same search strategy and terms for each country and then, upon a review of the literature, answer the six sets of key interrelated questions below:

- 1. When and under what conditions do violent extremist organizations provide, enable, or block the provision of public goods and services that might otherwise be provided by the state or nonviolent nonstate actors?
- 2. What avenues of communication and negotiation exist between communities and the state or extremist organizations? How do those communication channels impact a community's ability to negotiate with the state or extremists for access to public goods and services?
- 3. What mechanisms and means do state and nonstate actors allied with extremist agendas use to enforce cooperation with local norms around governance, security, and the provision of public goods and services?

⁵ The Global Research Network on Conflict (GRNC) is the nonprofit organization charged with managing the RESOLVE Network initiative. Registered as a charitable organization in Washington, DC, GRNC supports the activities of the RESOLVE Secretariat and maintains the network's online platform: www.resolvenet.org.

⁶ The RESOLVE Network has identified the following six regions as priority areas where more knowledge exchange and research capacity building is needed to improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation of CVE efforts: (1) Balkans/Caucasus, (2) Middle East/Levant, (3) North Africa and the Sahel, (4) Horn of Africa, (5) South and Central Asia, (6) Southeast Asia.

⁷ RESOLVE Network Secretariat 2016.

⁸ Douglass and Rondeaux 2017.

- 4. How do violent extremist organizations shape the moral and political discourse around governance, security, justice, and legitimacy at the national and subnational levels?
- 5. How have complex emergencies, disasters, mass casualty events, and/or large-scale displacement impacted community perceptions of the legitimacy of the state and of violent extremist organizations?
- 6. How does the state engage with communities as a response to the activities of violent social movements and extremist organizations?

The lead researchers for this study—Galen Englund, Prakhar Sharma, and Megan Stewart—all have considerable field experience in examining the way violent extremist organizations and violent social movements operate in parts of South Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. RESOLVE Network Secretariat Director Candace Rondeaux and Research Associate Kateira Aryaeinejad conducted additional research as well as wrote and co-edited the final version of the report.

Researchers reviewed more than 200 peer-reviewed journal articles using an agreed-upon menu of search terms to explore the catalogs of 40 peer-reviewed journals that have been commonly cited by leading researchers on terrorism, insurgency, civil war, and political violence over the last two decades. In instances where search terms came up empty, researchers cast their nets wider in a second-round review of the general literature published in an array of less well-known area studies, thematic journals, and think tank publications. This secondary examination of so-called "gray literature" often proved more fruitful, reinforcing findings of the first two RESOLVE Network working papers that "classic" and "authoritative" sources of English-language analysis, data, and evidence often overlook contributions from the diverse, global group of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers engaged in confronting the challenge of violent extremism and violent social movements around the world.

⁹ Schmid 2011

COUNTRY CASE STUDY COMPARISONS: AFGHANISTAN, BANGLADESH, AND KOSOVO

Afghanistan: The Taliban's Quest for Political Legitimacy, Prakhar Sharma

Context

Impediments to governance in Afghanistan are formidable, interconnected, and mutually reinforcing. ¹⁰ The ongoing war continues to foment insecurity, weaken institutions, and empower corrupt strongmen. The local economy has shrunk with the drawdown of coalition forces over the last three years, illustrating the extent to which employment and investment in Afghanistan were dependent on the presence of US military forces. Ethnic divisions endure and continue to slow institutional and state building. ¹¹ The human resource base is scarce, and each Afghan government ministry still requires enormous investment in training and capacity building to carry out its core functions. ¹² Corruption and nepotism have increased with the infusion of foreign assistance. ¹³ Transparency and public accountability remain almost entirely absent. ¹⁴ The solution to these issues does not lie solely in securing larger or more strategic investment of resources, but also in realizing that to understand governance in Afghanistan we must look through a different lens.

Since the founding of contemporary Afghanistan as a nation state, governance has rarely been the sole prerogative of the government that ruled Kabul. Traditionally, communities in rural areas resisted the government's attempts to interfere in their affairs. Afghanistan's history is marked by periods of widespread, violent rejection of a highly-centralized Afghan government, but not of the need for governance. 15 Many Afghan communities were convinced that their locally developed informal institutions and political orders were better suited to address their needs. These communities recognized the need to have a proper, functional government in Kabul that would take on the more strategic responsibilities, such as providing national defense, preserving internal security, and representing Afghanistan globally. At the same time, they fought to maintain their own local systems and were fiercely protective of their autonomy from Kabul. Many Afghans living in the rural countryside continue to ally with traditional, informal institutions rather than the formal structures set up by the Afghan government. The Afghan Constitution of 2004, however, vested all administrative authority with the government in Kabul, thereby disrupting the fundamental dynamic that historically balanced a government bureaucracy in Kabul with an autonomous citizenry in the country.¹⁷ The Taliban have ably exploited ruptures between the central government in Kabul and pockets of the rural countryside seeking greater autonomy, demonstrating agility in exploiting Afghanistan's differing cultural contexts.

¹⁰ A large body of literature engages with the challenges of governance in contemporary Afghanistan. See for example: Goodson 2003; Constable 2007; Daxner 2011; Marten 2007; Jones 2008; Tadjbakhsh and Schoiswohl 2008.

¹¹ Riphenburg 2005b. Other papers that deal with the politicization of ethnicity in Afghanistan include Saikal 1998; Barfield 2011; Adeney 2008.

¹² Englehart and Grant 2015.

¹³ Maley 2011; Neumann, Hadley, and Podesta 2012.

¹⁴ Hadley and Podesta 2012.

¹⁵ Barfield and Nojumi 2010.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Roberts 2016.

Peer-reviewed literature on Afghanistan suggests that the Taliban are willing to provide dispute resolution as a service to communities under their dominion. The Taliban also occasionally permit the Afghan state and NGOs to provide services, such as education and health care, in areas that they control. The Taliban's perspective, mirrored in their version of justice, conflicts with traditional Western liberal values, such as "respect for individualism and equality, preference for experience over theory, intellectual openness, and commitment to fairness." Their ability to deliver services, therefore, presents both an invitation for dialogue with them, as well as the moral dilemma of reconciling with a regressive, draconian worldview, which is incompatible with modern sensibilities. Academic scholarship has lagged behind journalistic accounts in capturing the nuanced dynamics of the interplay between the structure of Afghan state institutions and the Taliban's shifting stance on the provision of public goods and services.

Findings

Scholarly literature on Afghanistan has proliferated since 2001. While it has offered a wealth of knowledge to those interested in studying Afghanistan specifically, or civil wars more broadly, most of the literature remains focused on the nature of international engagement in Afghanistan,¹⁹ explaining the insurgency led by the Taliban,²⁰ and studying the flaws in the structure of the Afghan government.²¹ We know enough today about the workings of the Afghan government and the international community, their interactions and challenges, but very little about Afghan insurgents. Beyond journalistic accounts—some of which are highly insightful—the scholarship has not been ambitious enough to study the logic of the Taliban's nonviolent conduct.

The literature illustrates evidence of service provision by the Taliban, but its conclusions are deterministic rather than probabilistic. Most research on Taliban service provision has also been conducted in areas that the Taliban control and where the Taliban have provided or enabled services. We therefore do not know why the Taliban did not provide or enable services in other areas with similar characteristics to those under their control. We are, thus, not yet in a position to make inferences about the causes of service provision.

Scholarship suggests that service provision by the Taliban is an attempt by the armed group to position itself as a government in exile.²² This is not a novel insight; emerging literature on rebel governance, despite the dissensions, is unified on the fact that insurgents provide services to position themselves as a viable state, even when they have no desire or capacity to actually govern. While the literature acknowledges that the Taliban provide services, such as maintaining order, collecting taxes (zakat), patrolling roads, and levying tolls, it points to justice, or dispute resolution, as the crown jewel of the Taliban's governance agenda.²³ Why would this be the case?

Veteran scholars Antonio Giustozzi and Adam Baczko contend that the Taliban judiciary is the closest approximation of its intent to emulate the trappings of a state.²⁴ In their rare study of the Taliban judiciary,

¹⁸ Wolfe 2010.

¹⁹ Suhrke 2013.

²⁰ Jones 2008.

²¹ Adeney 2008; Allan 2003; Bose and Motwani 2014; Fjæstad and Kjærnet 2014; Freeman 2002.

²² Johnson 2013.

²³ Ledwidge 2009.

²⁴ Giustozzi and Baczko 2014, 199–224.

they mention that often the Taliban actively sought out cases to deal with rather than wait for villagers to bring grievances. Taliban judges could turn up unannounced in a village to inquire about a specific case or a dispute. They suggest that the Taliban view the judiciary not only as a service they provide, but also as a strategy to penetrate rural communities. He but this still does not explain why the Taliban would use their judicial capability and not any other as a legitimization tool for their shadow government or as a strategy to penetrate rural communities. A possible answer could reside in the fact that justice is endowed in the conception of fairness. It confers religious legitimacy to whoever provides it. The Taliban provide justice not only because they have the capacity to do so, but also because doing so perceivably deepens their religious legitimacy.

So far, the available literature suggests that the Taliban don't just settle disputes by giving verdicts, they also enforce their decisions. In other words, in addition to arbitrating a case, they back their decision with force—something that the Afghan government's justice system or the customary/informal justice system is largely unable to accomplish. Corporal punishment, executions, and public beatings punctuate the Taliban view of justice. Thus, the Taliban provide two interrelated services in one: settling disputes and enforcing the decisions of their judges.

Understandably, this view of justice finds more resonance among Afghanistan's villagers than among city dwellers. Indeed, scholarly evidence suggests that the Taliban provide services, such as dispute settlement in rural rather than in urban areas, in remote villages and districts where the presence of the Afghan state is weak, in locations where the threat of night raids is minimal, and in areas that are economically marginalized.²⁷ Yet, little of the peer-reviewed literature appears to state clearly the timing or the specific conditions under which the Taliban provide services.

As Giustozzi notes, in places where the Taliban enjoy territorial control, they collect taxes on harvests and wealth and enforce strict rules, such as closing secular schools, banning TV broadcasting, and imposing limitations on women. This suggests that while the relationship between the provision of justice and territorial control may be linear—the Taliban are more likely to provide justice in areas that they control—for other services, such as education and health care, the relationship seems inversely proportional to control—that is, they are likely to block the provision of these services in areas they control at least initially.²⁸ This may be because the Taliban are unable to provide these services on their own, and provision of these services does not define their identity as a law-and-order group. Blocking and then subsequently enabling these services gives them negotiating power against the state and NGOs. Rifts within the Taliban leadership as well as targeting by the Afghan state and UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) cause disruptions to the provision of services by the Taliban. What we can infer is that the provision of services, such as justice, follows directly after the Taliban have seized control of a district. This supports theories of territorial control in civil wars; insurgent groups are more likely to provide services when they do not have to allocate the same resources toward fighting other armed contenders.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Johnson and Dupee 2012.

²⁷ Giustozzi 2012a; Giustozzi 2012b.

²⁸ The author does not draw this inference in his work.

²⁹ For a conceptualization of "territorial control," see Kalyvas 2006. A recently published book on the specific topic of rebel governance, authoritative in both its scope and ambition: Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015. Yet, neither Kalyvas, nor the authors included in this recent book on rebel governance focus specifically on Afghanistan or the Taliban's service provision.

These are, however, inferences. We have very thin evidence to draw from; the number of studies on service provision by the Taliban doesn't even reach double digits. These studies employ methods whose replicability remains questionable. They hint at theories that aren't falsifiable. We have a long way to go before more sophisticated research builds on the challenging work of Giustozzi and Baczko. For now, we are unable to explain when, where, and how the Taliban provide services, let alone explain why people would demand those services from the Taliban in the first place.

In addition to providing dispute settlement as a service, in select areas the Taliban also enable the provision of services, such as education and health care, through the NGOs and the Afghan state.³⁰ These entail complex and often ad-hoc negotiations between the Afghan state, the NGOs, and the Taliban. Accounts certifying service provision by the Taliban outside of their justice system are, however, either journalistic or written as policy documents that are not peer reviewed as scholarly works.

Review of scholarly literature also suggests that at the level of institutions, evidence of formal negotiations between the Afghan state and the communities is thin. Yet, we know that institutions do not preclude the communities and the state from communicating and negotiating. Kinship ties and patronage networks continue to elicit commitment among communities. Scholarship suggests little systematic negotiation between the Taliban and the communities. It mostly highlights the importance of information for the Taliban.³¹ The Taliban seek to use a combination of avenues such as websites, magazines, *Layha* (the Taliban military Code of Conduct), mosque sermons, radio broadcasts, and audio/video CDs to communicate their messages to communities.³² This is a practice that the Taliban adopted after 2001, as a departure from their erstwhile boycott of technology and media. The key themes that the Taliban now use in their communication are Islam, Taliban as national heroes willing to sacrifice for Allah, the glorious history of Afghans in fighting the infidels, and foreign militaries as groups seeking to destroy Afghan culture and tradition.

We can observe evidence of informal negotiation processes and communication between the Taliban and the communities in the efforts of the Taliban to seek communities' oversight on their judicial process. Literature suggests that in places where village elders can act collectively through a district *shura*, they are able to exercise influence over the process and flag instances of corruption in the Taliban judiciary.³³ Conversely, in places where the elders are not organized, the only meaningful oversight of the judicial process is internal. There is also evidence that, in some areas, the Taliban invite the local population to register complaints about a judge. However, the appeals process remains weak. People would generally approach a Taliban commander and then request that he convey their grievances to the appropriate Taliban authority.³⁴ Fear of retribution deters most villagers from taking this approach, so only those best connected to the Taliban exercise this option.

The Taliban also invite communities to resolve their disputes using traditional dispute mechanisms.³⁵ Only when communities are unable to resolve their disputes do the Taliban take interest in their cases. This approach helps the Taliban cut their costs and engage more effectively with communities. Here, too, there are several dark corners in the literature. For instance, none of the studies capture the dynamism of the

³⁰ Giustozzi 2012a. Other works on the topic include Giustozzi and Franco 2013; Giustozzi and Franco 2011. These documents are some of the most insightful work done on the topic, but they are not peer reviewed or scholarly.

³¹ Johnson 2007.

³² Afshar, Samples, and Wood 2008.

³³ Giustozzi and Baczko 2014.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ledwidge 2009.

interaction between the Taliban, the communities, and the Afghan state. Instead, the research presented remains focused singularly on either the interaction between the Taliban and the Afghan state, or, less so, between the Taliban and the communities. Yet, we know that the communication processes that we see play out are more interactive and simultaneous than suggested by the literature. Another limitation of the literature is that it fails to illustrate how the different channels of communication between the state, the insurgents, and the communities vary from one place to another, and from one time to another. We thus do not yet know the impact of different communication channels on the ability of the communities to negotiate a better deal for themselves.

In theory, one would envision that the state would enjoy rational-legal and bureaucratic legitimacy to be able to enforce cooperation with local norms and maintain order. Its mechanism, then, is its formal-legal authority over the population. One could also posit the Taliban exercising control over the people simply by using physical force. The reality, of course, is far more complex. Literature suggests that the formal legitimacy of the Afghan state derives from the electoral process; the election quagmires in 2009 and 2014 have, however, eroded Afghans' confidence in their state and its authority. The Taliban's mechanisms of legitimacy involve a deft use of religion to mobilize people around their goals and the use of weapons to enforce compliance. Beyond these broad generalizations, the literature does not help us understand how the legitimacy of the state and the insurgent group varies from one province or district to another, from one context to another, the reasons for such variation, or the opportunities those reasons may create for the state to present itself as the only viable Leviathan.

The literature reviewed for this study suggests that the enforcement capacity of the Afghan state is considerably weak outside the provincial capitals.³⁶ Even inside these capitals, enforcement of norms results largely from the state negotiating for political space with local strongmen who wield influence in the specific area.³⁷ The Taliban are able to coerce the populations in remote and rural areas. Their ability to enforce norms stems from their capacity to coerce populations into complying with their verdict. They use the judiciary as an instrument of domination, forbidding access to courts set up by the Afghan state and exacting harsh punishments on those who violate their orders. For instance, they are known to execute those who take cases already adjudicated by them to the government-run courts. But, do they perform such practices in all cases or only where the possibility of a community-led rebellion is low? The literature does not provide answers.

The Taliban realize the importance of tribal elders and mullahs in shaping public opinion. They are known to systematically target those elders and mullahs who declare their loyalties to the Afghan state or voice their criticism of the Taliban. They also replace these traditional elites with new mullahs from Quetta and Peshawar who subscribe to the Taliban ideology. However, we need more research that helps us understand how the traditional elites among the religious figures and tribal elders actually legitimize or delegitimize the state or the insurgents.

The literature presents two competing narratives about the Taliban and the manner in which they frame conversations around legitimacy, governance, justice, and security. The first perspective is grounded in the political economy of conflict. It contends that the Taliban are able to elicit support and sympathy not because of cultural or ideational reasons, but because of rational calculation about Afghans, who would

Most literature supporting this assertion focuses on explaining the rise of the insurgency in Afghanistan, for instance, Jones 2008; Barakat and Zyck 2010; Farrell and Giustozzi 2013.

³⁷ Maley 2011.

tend to support the winning side. When the Taliban control an area and overrun the Afghan state, the communities side with them to receive protection against the state. Conversely, when the Afghan government pushes the Taliban out of a district, the communities align with the state.

A second perspective about the Taliban is based on their cultural appeal. It finds the rational and political economy explanations simplistic. It argues that the Taliban deftly use narratives that resonate with preexisting values and traditions of specific ethnicities, tribes, and clans.³⁸ The Taliban refer to myths, history, memories, sacrifices, and values that find appeal among the Afghans. In a way, the Taliban have managed to position themselves as defenders of Pashtun traditions and as fighters for the cause of Islam.³⁹

Regardless of which perspective one accepts, the Taliban frame their agenda as exclusively Afghan. Their goal is to evict Western military forces from Afghanistan, rewrite the Afghan Constitution, and reestablish the Islamic emirate within the territorial borders of Afghanistan. Since 2001, when they were ousted from power in Afghanistan, the Taliban have continued to operate under the name of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. This has enabled them to project themselves as a government-in-exile rather than a rebel armed group. In their messages, they call themselves mujahedeen, equating themselves with those who fought the jihad against the Soviets. In the same vein, they have, since the beginning of 2002, framed the US-led international military and civilian communities as "enemies" and "infidels" and the Afghan government as their "puppets." As fighters against these enemies, the Taliban have portrayed themselves as Afghanistan's legitimate rulers.

The Taliban identify themselves with the purist culture and traditions of the Islam of the village.⁴² The fault lines in Afghan conflicts have traditionally been drawn around the "rural" versus "urban," "modernizing" versus "authentic" Afghan, and "victim" versus "oppressor." In this regard, the Taliban have been able to successfully project themselves as fighting for the victims, for the moral ruralization of the urban space in Afghanistan, and for a return to core Afghan traditions.⁴³

Literature suggests that another narrative the Taliban repeatedly peddle is that of Pashtun nationalism. They combined commonly cited themes, such as "the government in Kabul rightfully belongs to the Pashtuns"; "Afghanistan is the land of the Pashtuns"; and "Afghanistan is a graveyard of empires." In framing nationalism in opposition to the Western world,⁴⁴ they draw on symbolic resources that glorify a history of conflict against infidels. The Taliban's behavior can thus be interpreted as a manifestation of the dominant Afghan historical narrative and the fascination among Afghans for concepts such as jihad and martyrdom.

The Taliban are acutely aware that the conflict is ultimately about legitimacy. For most Afghans, legitimacy of a regime depends on its ability to provide peace and security. To emphasize their understanding of this dynamic, the Taliban have printed on the back cover of their Layha, an inscription that reads, "This is our mission: to keep people and their property safe." The Taliban's reliance on sharia also accrues to them a degree of legitimacy from even those Afghans who otherwise do not like their ways or are embittered by losing a case in the Taliban judicial process.

³⁸ Kamel 2015.

³⁹ Both Barfield 2012 and Schetter 2005 have made similar arguments before.

⁴⁰ Kamel 2015.

⁴¹ Raqib and Amilcar 2014.

⁴² Sullivan 2007.

⁴³ Johnson and Waheed 2011.

⁴⁴ Johnson 2013.

As with other questions posed as part of this study, scholarly literature has made progress in describing the conduct of the Taliban, identifying specific instances that disconfirm the prevailing understanding of the Taliban, and attempting to weave these into a pattern. Yet, when it comes to explaining variation in such conduct, the literature is weak. We are thus unable to understand whether what we know from the literature is the exception or the norm. For this reason, we are in no position to generalize these findings to all areas under Taliban control. We need more rigorous research that builds on existing evidence and develops these case studies into theoretically informed studies whose logic and findings would travel across space and time.

Although Afghanistan's mass casualty events, large-scale displacement, and vulnerability to natural disasters are well-known risk factors, it is difficult to assess with any certitude how crises and emergencies impact community perceptions of the political legitimacy of violent extremist organizations and the state. Again, the accounts that suggest a shift, after critical events, in perceptions among Afghans about the Taliban and the Afghan state are journalistic.

Conventional wisdom would dictate that when people are victimized, they respond negatively toward whomever they believe should have prevented them from the victimization. The question then is whether the people share perceptions with whoever is in control of their area. The Taliban are not known for tolerating dissent, while the Afghan state does not have the feedback loops to respond to perceptions.

The National Solidarity Program (NSP illustrates a point. We know that the NSP grants to communities result in positive perceptions among these communities about the Afghan state.⁴⁵ But, we also know that when the NSP is withdrawn or scaled down because of security concerns, the people attribute blame to the Afghan state, not to the insurgents who foment violence. Thus, the Afghan state is far more vulnerable to local perceptions than are the Taliban. The Taliban do not seek to compete with the Afghan state over popularity; they compete on projecting religious legitimacy, strength, and effectiveness.

The relationship between mass casualty events, civilian victimization, and perceptions of the populace suggests that the identity of the perpetrator matters. Victimization by the Afghan state—or its partners in international coalition forces—results in reduced support for the Afghan government and increased support for the Taliban.⁴⁶ On the other hand, if the Taliban victimize a community, their actions do not result in positive perceptions toward the Afghan state, and only marginally reduce support for the Taliban.⁴⁷

On this question, research conducted so far is perhaps the thinnest, but also more sophisticated in its methodological rigor than for any other question in this case study. Yet, the key limitation of this literature is that we aren't sure how sophisticated randomized experiments add to any existing theory. Their methodological advances are a welcome development, but we need an overarching theory that disciplines these studies.

For every question in this case study, fine-grained answers are available in journalistic accounts and policy documents; the scholarship, however, comes up short.⁴⁸ Still, there are reasons to be optimistic: a few doctoral dissertations already engage with this topic.⁴⁹ While the scant academic literature may appear as

⁴⁵ Beath, Christia, and Enikolopov 2013.

⁴⁶ Blair, Imai, and Lyall 2014.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Murtazashvilli 2009.

a setback, it is also an opportunity for researchers to address these large gaps. One obvious gap pertains to the logic of the Taliban's nonviolent conduct. That is, what kinds of interactions between the state, the community, and the Taliban enable provision of services; and what kinds prevent it? What factors shape the different avenues of communication between the state, the communities, and the Taliban? Do the interactions among the three lend themselves to more dynamism in one context over another? Based on the existing literature, we are not in a position to answer these questions.

We are also not sure how the different actors, structures, norms, and practices transform as a result of the war. Even conservative estimates are difficult based on the existing literature. Could it be that the questions that we are engaging with are hard to answer while meeting the methodological standards of the scholarly publications? Or, is it that the academic community, in its quest for methodological rigor, has scaled back its ambitions, and thus seeks to answer very specific questions instead of broad ones about political order and representation that form the basis for this case study? Or, a third possibility, could it be that the hostility of the civil war context in Afghanistan presents methodological and conceptual challenges that the scholarship must still reconcile? We do not know the answer, but there is a need to incentivize scholarly research that goes to the heart of these questions. As with the broader literature on civil wars, we need to encourage more research to transition from a case study approach toward theoretically rich studies and toward rigorous subnational comparative studies that illuminate our understanding of the dynamic interaction between the state, communities, and insurgent groups.

Bangladesh: Exploring the Patchwork Politics of Islamist Groups, Candace Rondeaux and Galen Englund

Context

In 2014, Bangladesh confronted its worst electoral violence in recent memory. Now, two years on, it faces an even deeper crisis with a rise in violent extremism. The spectacular attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka in July 2016 ranks among the most serious incidents to date. It was, however, only one in a spate of deadly assaults over the last eighteen months perpetrated by violent extremists against journalists, bloggers, Hindu religious leaders, and secular civil society activists in the wake of highly partisan electoral violence. The wave of violence that followed the 2014 elections left hundreds dead, deepened the rift between the country's majority Muslim and minority Hindu population, and presented an opening for Da'esh and al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS, which claimed credit for dozens of targeted attacks during that same period. Bangladesh, one of the world's most populous Muslim-majority countries with a population of 169 million, ranks among the top twenty-five countries most highly impacted by terrorist attacks, according to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index. This dubious distinction has prompted concerns about the sustainability of Bangladesh's democratic government.

A widening gulf between the pro-secularist Awami League (AL government and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP, following the selection of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajid to lead the AL government in 2014, has paralleled the country's ascent in the ranks of the terrorism index over the last few years. The AL government's arrest in 2015 of Khaleda Zia, BNP's leader and the country's former prime minister, a year after the polls, was one of many early signs that escalating sectarian divisions could elevate the threat

posed by violent social movements. In an effort to recapture political ground and gain leverage, BNP has forged a tenuous alliance of convenience with the Jamaat-e Islami party, a staunchly pro-Islamist faction that has been linked to sectarian violence and now faces an internal crisis with the execution of a number of its key political leaders by way of government-sponsored war crimes tribunals.

Launched in 2010, the International Crimes Tribunal was established ostensibly to address and lay to rest long-festering divisions between victims and perpetrators of atrocities during Bangladesh's tumultuous and bloody war for independence from West Pakistan in 1971. But, rather than extinguishing the urge for political vengeance that has seen the country lurch from military coup to near collapse on several occasions over the last forty-five years, the special court has instead reignited distrust between the government and both mainstream and extremist Islamist factions. Prosecutions have disproportionately targeted members of Jamaat-e Islami, fueling accusations that the AL-led government is opportunistically pursuing a campaign to eliminate Islamist opposition.

Lack of transparency in trial proceedings and harsh sentences have also provided extremist groups such as the Hefazat-e-Islam (HI) faction a fresh pathway to influence in rural areas of Bangladesh. Event-driven violent responses to government failures have also been undergirded by rapid urbanization across the country that has exacerbated socioeconomic and intergenerational frictions that cleave along secularist and pro-Islamist lines. Recent years have seen a groundswell of support for blasphemy laws promoted by groups like HI. Along the way, the political machinations of elites in Dhaka have fueled a deep-seated crisis of legitimacy and political power among ordinary Bangladeshis whose ability to influence outcomes is sharply constrained by widespread economic and social inequality. Intergenerational friction between disenfranchised youth and traditional gatekeepers of institutional power have also increased with the burgeoning numbers of Bangladeshis under the age of twenty-four. These trends have eroded notions of an inclusive Bangladeshi body politic, raised tensions around the country's pluralist traditions, and challenged the role of religious and cultural institutions in shaping shared understandings of citizenship and identity. The country's increasingly volatile state has renewed concerns that violent social movements could gain wider traction in the near term.

Yet, there is a dearth of qualitative and quantitative data on key drivers behind the increased strength of violent social movements and extremism in Bangladesh. Little is known about how communities in Chittagong differ from communities in Khulna or Dhaka in their views on the relationship between religious identity, violence, morality, and rule of law. Empirical analysis of the intersection between evolving notions of citizenship, religious identity, political legitimacy, and the rise of violent extremism in Bangladesh is scant. Accounts of popular support for blasphemy laws and other signs of social fracturing are, moreover, anecdotal at best. The rise of groups like Da'esh and AQIS in Bangladesh has, nonetheless, precipitated a chaotic trial by error search for effective interventions. Absent an evidence-base and solid data on social cohesion, however, it remains unclear what works and what doesn't work in addressing violent extremism.

The peer-reviewed literature on violent extremist organizations operating in Bangladesh is dominated by a few leading scholars. Ali Riaz, a political science professor and presently the chair of the Department of Politics and Government at Illinois State University, is considered to be among the most preeminent scholars of political Islam and political violence in Bangladesh. In addition to writing and editing several

books on the rise of militant groups in the country with occasional co-author C. Christine Fair,⁵⁰ his work is widely cited in much of the literature reviewed for this study. Riaz's accounts are generally quite comprehensive, but the rapidly evolving security and political situation in Bangladesh suggests that more dedicated study on the nonviolent strategies employed by violent extremist groups in the country are needed.

Findings

High-quality, peer-reviewed literature assessing Bangladesh is not readily found in many of the most prominent academic conflict studies-related journals. Particularly lacking are articles rigorously examining violent extremist groups. As a recent work from 2016 puts it, "Whereas the origins of Islamist militancy and support for the same is fairly well characterized in Pakistan and several other countries in Southwest and Southeast Asia, these issues have not been explored empirically in Bangladesh." A thorough review of the forty relevant peer-reviewed journals chosen by RESOLVE only returned some fifty-five articles, the bulk of which were published in the *Asian Survey*. Expanding the search to include broader databases returned an additional twenty-seven peer-reviewed works. The total corpus of relevant literature includes a set of well-researched, in-depth works on violent political groups. Unfortunately, a greater number of articles lack either empirical basis, rely on secondary or tertiary sources, or duplicate theoretical content from earlier works.

Extant literature rarely reflects a cross-disciplinary approach. With a few notable exceptions, security studies and political science journal articles generally rely on secondary sources, such as media reports, though recent works from Ali Riaz, C. Christine Fair, and Animesh Roul draw on primary field data. The most robustly researched works come from the field of public health and include excellent primary survey data examining government and NGO health care service provisioning. Complex emergency and disaster studies research is also well-designed and includes a strong empirical basis. A separate body of work focuses on NGO efforts in the late 1990s. Lastly, several sociological studies focusing on gender provide some insight into the intersection of women's rights and political Islamist movements in Bangladesh. Thus, the review conducted for this study suggests that research into the nonviolent strategies employed by extremist organizations to gain greater political legitimacy is fragmentary at best.

However, the literature reviewed for this study does lend some context to the questions posed about the nexus between governance and nonviolent strategies employed by different nonstate actors. The Bangladeshi government is generally portrayed in the literature as weak and plagued by corruption and underdevelopment. Parliamentary reform has so far been relatively ineffective,⁵² and patronage networks are portrayed in the literature as the operational norm for leading national political parties. Complementary studies about the general state of political and economic affairs show that government provision of health care and basic services has improved substantially, potentially limiting the space for violent extremist organizations to carry out their own provisioning.⁵³ In their 2016 analysis of polling data, Fair, Hamza, and Heller suggest that there appears to be little or no relationship between respondents' desire for service provision by Islamist organizations and their support for violence.⁵⁴ The literature reflects a bevy of attempts to make sense of the role of education in influencing public perceptions of violent social movements and the activities

⁵⁰ Riaz and Fair 2010.

⁵¹ Fair, Hamza, and Heller 2016.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Balabanova et al. 2013; Ahmed et al. 2013; Chowdhury et al. 2009; Chowdhury et al. 2006.

⁵⁴ Fair, Hamza, and Heller 2016, 21.

of extremist groups. Of particular interest are studies that examine the role of nonstate madrassas in proliferating Islamic ideals. Some 64,000 madrassas are spread across Bangladesh, around 10,000 of which sit fully outside of state control.⁵⁵ However, much of the literature is highly speculative, suggesting the schools serve as recruitment channels for violent political groups. Empirical research shows that, while some fighters come from madrassas, a majority do not.⁵⁶

Research examined for this study shows that the two mainstream parties—BNP and AL—have both sought to co-opt mainstream Islamic groups and, in doing so, have tacitly supported violent extremist organizations.⁵⁷ This conflation of national political parties with violent extremist organizations is reasonably well-assessed in the political science literature. The two main parties are locked in a political stalemate and, according to the literature, have taken risky steps to gain the political upper hand in the electoral process. This has led both groups, including the traditionally secular AL, to court the religiously conservative Jamaat-e-Islami party and, through it, develop linkages to violent extremists.⁵⁸

Community perceptions of government legitimacy are not assessed in the literature on Bangladesh, but state responses to complex emergencies, namely tsunamis and flooding, are well researched. More recently, there has been increased coverage of the mass exodus of ethnic Rohingyas from neighboring Myanmar into Bangladesh by leading think tanks,⁵⁹ but government responses are viewed as having improved substantially over the past fifteen years, which does not map onto the increased support for violent political groups over the same time period. Large-scale migration and displacement of ethnic Muslim Rohingya from Myanmar into Bangladesh has featured prominently on the political landscape since the early 1980s and led to the subsequent formation of the Rohingyan Solidarity Organization (RSO), a military wing that developed close ties with JI, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), and al-Qaeda. RSO's presence is alluded to frequently as a factor that reinforced the strength of other violent extremist organizations. Unfortunately, however, there has been no significant in-depth treatment of the Rohingya migration phenomenon and its relationship to violent extremism in the country in any of the journals reviewed for this study. Given the escalating numbers of Rohingya migrants into the country and rising fears over the risks of radicalization in this highly vulnerable population, the absence of any recent academic studies suggests a gap that urgently needs attention.

Kosovo: The al-Haramein Example, Galen Englund

Context

Kosovo, a small landlocked region in the heart of the Balkans, endured a deadly ethnic conflict fueled by violent political extremism in various forms. During the period of active fighting from 1998 to 1999, nearly 12,000 people were killed and 200,000 to 260,000 displaced. The war was fought between Kosovar Albanian militants and the Serbian-controlled Yugoslav government. Depending on the historical narrative of choice, clashes between the two groups can be traced back anywhere from fifty to hundreds of

⁵⁵ Lintner 2013; Islam 2011; Hasan 2012, 64; Riaz 2016.

⁵⁶ Riaz 2016: Erans 2006.

⁵⁷ Roul 2016; Fair, Hamza, and Heller 2016, 12; Riaz 2003; Gohel 2014; Riaz 2013.

⁵⁸ Lintner 2013; Datta 2007; Datta 2005; Imtiaz Hussain 2007, 222.

⁵⁹ See, for example, ICG 2016.

⁶⁰ Salama, Spiegel, and Brennan 2001; Spiegel and Salama 2000; Percival and Sondorp 2010.

years.⁶¹ Recent antecedents for the conflict in the 1990s, however, date to 1974 when the revised Yugoslav Constitution granted Kosovo significant autonomy during the rule of Josip Broz Tito. Long the poorest region of Yugoslavia, Kosovo was nonetheless for many years populated by a mix of ethnic Serbs, Albanians, and other groups, with approximately 74 percent Albanians and 24 percent ethnic Serbs making up the majority before the war broke out. From 1974 to 1991, Kosovo witnessed a shift in its previously mixed demographics, with the Albanian population growing to 80 to 90 percent.⁶² The situation in the region deteriorated rapidly during the 1980s for three main reasons. First, the death of Josip Tito left a power vacuum eventually seized by Slobodan Milošević, a nationalist ideologue campaigning on protecting Serbs; second, an economic crisis subsequently weakened the Yugoslav economy; and third, Albanian separatists began a mostly peaceful campaign—at first—for independence,⁶³ although some Albanians stoked tensions during the 1980s by harassing Serbs and looting villages.⁶⁴

In 1989, Milošević rescinded Kosovo's independent status. In response, Kosovar Ibrahim Rugova formed the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and pursued nonviolent resistance by creating parallel government institutions and taxation structures.⁶⁵ A three percent tax levied on a diaspora of approximately 900,000 Albanians funded parallel clinics, schools, and local elections.⁶⁶ Though lacking a police or military, the LDK leveraged passive resistance for the next eight years.⁶⁷ Following the civil wars across Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s, a faction of LDK dissatisfied with nonviolent tactics, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), split off in 1993. By 1997, the KLA was attacking Serbian targets across Kosovo.⁶⁸ In the following year, conflict intensified as Belgrade responded to the KLA attacks with a police crackdown.

Serbia portrayed the KLA as terrorists with connections to Islamist networks—an assessment with which the international community generally concurred.⁶⁹ Later interviews with leaders of the KLA revealed that it reluctantly incorporated twenty to one hundred foreign fighters, possibly with Islamist leanings, into the group's ranks.⁷⁰ The leadership refused funding offers from Saudi Arabia—instead relying ostensibly on criminal and diaspora sources.⁷¹ Still, the United Nations and the United States referred to the KLA as terrorists through 1998.⁷² Local and international support for the group galvanized that year only after Serbian police massacred seventy-five suspected KLA members and civilians.⁷³

Spurred by the worsening situation, the United States sought the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces and threatened aerial intervention by NATO if Milošević did not comply. Despite an initial agreement, the KLA con-

⁶¹ Wolfgram 2008; Ingrao 2009; Sharp 1999.

⁶² Kuperman 2008; Dyrstad 2012; Dyrstad 2013.

⁶³ Wolfgram 2008; Judah 2001; Webber 2009; Power 1999.

⁶⁴ Grigoryan 2010; Webber 2009; Koktsidis and Ten Dam 2008.

⁶⁵ Hedges 1999.

⁶⁶ Kuperman 2008, 65; Hedges 1999, 30; Strazzari 2008; Mertus 2009; Adamson 2005.

⁶⁷ Caplan 1998.

⁶⁸ Wolfgram 2008, 469; Hedges 1999; Crawford 2001.

⁶⁹ Hedges 1999; Hutchinson and O'Malley 2007.

⁷⁰ Hedges 1999; Shtuni 2015; Mijalkovski and Trifunović 2014.

Shipoli 2009; Dishman. 2001; Strazzari 2008; Arsovska and Basha 2012; Hutchinson and O'Malley 2007, 1096; Mijalkovski and Trifunović 2014; Adamson 2006, 192.

⁷² Pokalova 2010.

⁷³ Kuperman 2008, 65; Rohde 2000; Mulaj 2008; Pokalova 2010; Haines 2009.

tinued their attacks, spurring counterattacks from Serbian forces.⁷⁴ In March 1999, the NATO Operation Allied Force began bombing Serbia⁷⁵ and continued to do so until June when Milošević, also embattled by a protest movement in Belgrade, capitulated and withdrew his forces.

The NATO intervention left the KLA in effective control of Kosovo. ⁷⁶ Two international bodies were tasked with overseeing Kosovo: the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). ⁷⁷ The newly independent, disputed country suffered from significant infrastructure damage, a dire lack of security, and rampant corruption. ⁷⁸ Ample funds flowed into the country—an average of \$742 to \$936 per capita for the first two years of reconstruction and \$271 per year following thereafter, more than for almost all post-conflict countries. ⁷⁹ However, humanitarian aid goals clashed with security imperatives. Local political elites, many drawn from the KLA, sought to co-opt political processes in a struggle against the LDK while the first president, Ibrahim Rugova, was perceived as aloof, making him vulnerable to competition from power-seeking local elites. ⁸⁰ The KLA was demobilized and converted into the Kosovo Protection Corps, a move that disturbed the remaining Serb population, because of fears that lingering ethnic tensions could be reignited more easily. ⁸¹ A lack of international donor coordination befuddled the provisioning of health care, reconstruction funds, and basic aid. ⁸² Longstanding divisions between urban and rural regions were exacerbated by unequal funding flows, creating a void filled by other donors, including violent politically linked groups. ⁸³

Rebuilding in Kosovo continued with sporadic outbreaks of interethnic violence, including a wave of riots in 2004 that undermined the legitimacy of KFOR and UNMIK.⁸⁴ In February 2008, the Kosovo government declared full independence from Serbia.⁸⁵ The transition was largely peaceful, and protection of non-Albanian minorities in Kosovo was made a requirement by most Western states for recognition of the new country.⁸⁶ The top-down governance structures implemented in Kosovo, however, have drawn the ire of ethnic Albanians and Serbs alike. Since the end of the war, ethnic divisions have been institutionalized through quotas and self-governing enclaves of Serbs, while economic growth has remained anemic, at best.⁸⁷ Despite improvements in the rule of law and governance, academic literature since 2008 emphasizes the continued socioeconomic and security challenges facing Kosovo.⁸⁸ With the lowest Human Development Index in Europe, the young country remains impoverished; without substantial economic or educational opportunities for its citizens, Kosovo's vulnerability will endure.

⁷⁴ Webber 2009, 449.

⁷⁵ Sperling and Webber 2009; Koktsidis and Ten Dam 2008, 171; Dunn 2009.

⁷⁶ Auerswald 2004.

⁷⁷ Weller 2008a: Weller 2008b.

⁷⁸ Zoellick 2008; Zürcher 2011; Galtung and Tisné 2009; Fagan 2015; Tansey 2009; Kupchan 2005.

⁷⁹ Sums vary based on calculations used. Figures in 2006 dollars. Wilson 2006, 160; Zürcher 2011, 84; Dobbins 2003.

⁸⁰ Hedges 1999, 30.

⁸¹ Yannis 2001: Peterson 2010.

⁸² Rubenstein 2011; Wilson 2006; Borrel et al. 2001; Salama et al. 2004; Kerac and Reeve 2000.

⁸³ Yannis 2001; Shipoli 2009; Blumi 2003; Gutaj 2014; Percival and Sondorp 2010.

⁸⁴ Goldstone 2002; Lemay-Hébert 2013; Tansey and Zaum 2009; Economides, Ker-Lindsay, and Papadimitriou 2010.

⁸⁵ Pond 2008.

⁸⁶ Dahlman and Williams 2010.

⁸⁷ Bargués-Pedreny 2016; Lemay-Hébert 2013; Richmond 2013.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Bargués-Pedreny 2016; Radin 2015; Fagan 2015; Richmond 2013; Lemay-Hébert 2013; Pond 2012; Haar and Rubenstein 2012; Zürcher 2011; Wang et al. 2010; Dahlman and Williams 2010; Grigoryan 2010.

Findings

There is very little analysis about how and when extremists in Kosovo use nonviolent means to impose social norms and fill governance gaps. Substantial academic resources have been spent researching the particularities of the dire humanitarian situation in Kosovo following the cessation of active fighting. Many aid groups flooded the region with funds—a few of these faith-based charities have come under suspicion for alleged links to violent extremist networks. Whether institutionally supporting *takfiri* groups that advocate for violence against Muslims for perceived failures to keep the faith, or simply harboring individual members who advocate violent extremist ideology, several organizations in Kosovo, including al-Haramein, actively stepped into the governance gap following the war to advance their extreme ideological ends.

Advocating for extremism is not the same as taking targeted violent action against the state or civilians. It is important to note that none of the organizations suspected of having links to violent extremists in Kosovo have been charged with or accused of directly arming the handful of foreign fighters embedded with KLA during the war.⁸⁹ Among organizations active in Kosovo following the war, al-Haramein is perhaps the best known for supporting al-Qaeda–linked elements.⁹⁰ Literature directly addressing al-Haramein is scarce, but several other groups operating in Kosovo in a similar manner have been scrutinized more closely. The Saudi Joint Relief Committee for Kosovo and Chechnya (SJRC) was believed to be linked to al-Qaeda and sponsored large-scale educational, health, and reconstruction programs in Kosovo.⁹¹ In the first two months of 1999 alone, the SJRC spent over \$1 million.⁹² Much of the SJRC funds were routed through the Islamic Endowment Foundation in Kosovo.⁹³ The Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, a Kuwaiti-based organization functioning in Kosovo since 1999, also carried out similar work despite being on the US Treasury Department's list of organizations supporting terrorism since 2002.⁹⁴ Other active organizations include the al-Waqf al-Islam, also linked to al-Qaeda.⁹⁵ These groups are regarded in the literature as having set the foundation for radicalization processes inside Kosovo and for serving generally interchangeable roles from 1998 to 2003.⁹⁶

Broadly speaking, al-Haramein and similar groups have stepped in to fill the void where local and international efforts to provide governance have been unsuccessful. The failure of international interventions in Kosovo to establish clear security, provide basic services, and legitimize local government structures opened a space for ideological actors to enter the country. One researcher has recently suggested that the large flows of foreign fighters from Kosovo to Syria from 2012 to 2015 are the result of an early tactical exploitation by organizations affiliated with violent social movements of Kosovo's weak governance following the war. Friction between donor countries and the Kosovar government over the pace and scale of reconstruction, and infighting between the central government and Serb enclaves are cited as among the

⁸⁹ Williams 2003; Shipoli 2009, 89.

⁹⁰ Arsovska and Basha 2012; Fulton 2010; Rakic and Jurisic 2012; Shtuni 2015.

⁹¹ Arsovska and Basha 2012, 11; Shipoli 2009, 90; Blumi 2003, 124.

⁹² Arsovska and Basha 2012, 11.

⁹³ Blumi 2003, 125.

⁹⁴ Shipoli 2009, 90; Arsovska and Basha 2012, 11.

⁹⁵ Gutaj 2014, 369.

⁹⁶ Schwartz 2002; Shipoli 2009; Rakic and Jurisic 2012; Shtuni 2015.

⁹⁷ Blumi 2003; Shipoli 2009; Shtuni 2015; Rakic and Jurisic 2012.

⁹⁸ Shtuni 2015.

primary drivers of extremist influence.⁹⁹ Moreover, the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK) is too fragmented internally to serve as a counterweight, let alone to monitor religious organizations in the country.¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

While much is often made of the strategic value of the spectacular violence employed by violent extremist organizations and their supporters, more focused analysis on when, where, and why extremists choose not to employ violence could offer important clues about the issues that are gaining salience beyond core constituencies that may fall along sectarian and/or ethnic divides. A broad look at the existing research literature on several countries where extremism has proliferated suggests that more pointed questioning from researchers who are more familiar with local languages, customs, and culture might reveal more about what kinds of messages around governance resonate at the local level. To better understand the appeal of extremist messages, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers need to pay closer attention to the timing and content of statements from extremist organizations that suggest support for service provision, or a change in practice that suggests a departure from the use of violence to govern and enforce social norms. There needs to be a greater counterbalance to the overreliance on secondary media accounts and perception surveys in favor of primary source interviews with current or former members of extremist groups that include questions about how and why groups decide to distribute public goods and services or when they determine not to intervene or even to cooperate with governments. Local researchers, in particular, need to broaden their analysis of extremist materials beyond social media content to include a review of written statements, letters, communiqués, and decision memos from groups about the provision of justice, education, and other public goods.

⁹⁹ Yannis 2001; Yannis 2004; Economides, Ker-Lindsay, and Papadimitriou 2010; Tansey 2009; Harland 2010; Bargués-Pedreny 2016; Grigoryan 2010.

¹⁰⁰ Shipoli 2009; Shtuni 2015; Blumi 2003.

CASE STUDY SOURCES

Each bibliography created for the three case studies in this report has been divided into four thematic areas—Ideology, ¹⁰¹ Intervention, ¹⁰² Polity, ¹⁰³ and Violence ¹⁰⁴—based on the relevance of the article to each category. When an article was relevant to more than one category, the bibliographic entry is noted as such with the superscripted initials of the secondarily relevant category— ^{ID} for Ideology, ^{IN} for Intervention, ^P for Polity, and ^V for Violence. ¹⁰⁵

Short annotations derived from the case study analyses are included for each of the categories that summarize the state of the literature and gaps in research on that topic in each country.

Afghanistan: Case Study References

Ideology

Scholarly literature on the topic of *Ideology* in Afghanistan illuminates the role that websites, radio broadcasts, music CDs, night letters, mosque sermons, and Layha (Code of Conduct) serve as means through which the Taliban communicate their policies and practices to the communities. The key narratives that the Taliban shape, as revealed in the literature, are centered around themes of Pashtun nationalism, jihad, Islam, projection of the Taliban as national heroes willing to sacrifice for Allah, the glorious history of Afghans in fighting the infidels, and framing foreign militaries as groups seeking to destroy Afghan culture and tradition.

A select portion of literature on the topic also delves into how outside actors involved in the conflict and reconstruction of Afghanistan have shaped their own narratives and framed their rationale for involvement in the country. It is less noted, however, how the Afghan government or the general population, beyond the Taliban, communicate their ideas.

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¹⁰¹ *Ideology* is concerned with the way ideas about morality, ethics, and violence are communicated between networks of people and organizations.

¹⁰² *Intervention* covers questions about public health challenges associated with mass violence and the demographics of groups that might be targeted for interventions.

¹⁰³ *Polity* encompasses the political economy of national and subnational institutions and the political health of a state and its ability to maintain the monopoly of violence internally.

¹⁰⁴ Violence covers questions about the interaction between states and rebel groups or other subnational actors.

¹⁰⁵ For more on how these categories were derived, and for further analysis of the gaps in scholarly research on violent extremism-related issues and dynamics, see Douglass and Rondeaux 2017.

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