Transnational Terrorism as a Threat: Cross-Border Threats

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1   Introduction

Both as a theoretical area of analysis and as a practical phenomenon, the question of terrorism has grown exponentially in significance over the past few decades and a renewed interest has recently emerged in the policy debate [16]. Overall, strategies and characteristics of this peculiar challenge are no longer solely discussed in academic settings and in strategic documents, but they became an important part of our everyday lexicon in ways that are far more profound than in the past. Among many other issues related to terrorism, in the last few decades, both policymakers and academics have been quite preoccupied with understanding the features and conditions under which terrorist groups are more likely to expand their activities across borders and within different neighbouring countries. Indeed, despite clear domestic claims and histories, many terrorist organisations expand their operational field outside national borders, indicating a general need for a better analysis of these dynamics. Transnationalism, indicating the presence and activities across different countries, might indicate terrorist organisations respond to different strategic needs and actually manifest in different formats and dimensions. However, we are often left wondering what is the exact nature and relevance of this phenomenon. What are the main characteristics of transnational terrorist activities? What are the advantages and potential shortcomings of transnational activism for terrorist groups? And what makes transnational terrorism particularly and uniquely threatening?

In order to provide a refined discussion of the varieties of transnationalism, this chapter reviews and discusses previous research on transnational terrorism and will specifically focus on four dimensions of 'going global', meaning: 'going

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global in movement and targeting', 'going global in communication', 'going global in allegiance', and 'going global in business'. While doing so we emphasise the role played by globalisation in facilitating the transnational turn of many terrorist activities.

At this point, it is also worth clarifying that in this chapter we employ 'terrorism' as umbrella term to include a series of warfare techniques rather than the specific identity of a group or organisation. In fact, despite being one of the most ancient warfare techniques, the label 'terrorist' has featured more heavily in political discourse since the early 2000s, responding to the rise of 'salafist' terror attacks across the Middle East, Gulf, and West Asia, as well as separatist movements [12]. This label has been employed by securitising actors to elicit strong aversion to a group and its goals among the audience [3, 4]. Within the academic debate, 'terrorism' has been largely contested in its objective meaning to underline the political nature of its definition [34] and it is, today, increasingly so also in the general policy discourse. Hence, references will be made to groups using violent means on non-military targets to achieve their political ends. By doing this, we aim to recognise and emphasise that definitions of 'terrorist' are contested and potentially subject to political manipulations without, however, sacrificing its utility as descriptive label.

The chapter is structured as follows: We first set the scene and clarify the definition of terrorism and the general academic discussion on the role of globalisation. We focus then on the four abovementioned dimensions of 'going global' to emphasise key aspects and examples. Finally, we reflect and conclude on the relevance of the study of transnational activities of terrorist organisations and highlight how these might represent a challenge beyond the traditional military battlefield.

2   The Story So Far: Terrorism, Transnationality, and Globalisation

Regardless of their location and specific features, the final goal of terrorist campaigns is to put enough pressure on governments to implement some form of political and\or social change: despite the victims being civilians, terrorists target upwards [17, 36]. Specifically, transnational terrorist groups can be categorised into a few select archetypes. Unlike terrorist attacks per se, transnational terrorism is defined by its cohesion and organisation around a group or, more often, a consistent ideological frame. What makes terrorist organisations transnational can be cross-border supply chains, or a causal timeline between an initial event in one state, and a qualitatively similar event in another state. The former is more indicative of a larger and organised alliance, whereas the latter suggests ideological ties and inspirations from other groups' activities, or through *agitprop*: thus inspiring stochastic terrorism. It is a misnomer to suggest that terrorism was a phenomenon

that was, prior to an arbitrary date of 'full globalisation', limited to a nation-state's borders. Terrorist movements have always moved across borders as well as inspired, supported one another, and learned from each other's praxis. For instance, the German Revolutions of 1918 were directly inspired and supported by the Bolsheviks who recently took over the Russian Empire in the October Revolution [29], although they lacked the requisite information on tactics used by the Bolsheviks [40]. Despite this, as this chapter aims to demonstrate, globalisation has created new avenues for cooperation across borders, and decentralised command, leading to more resilient networks. Globalisation is interpreted in the literature as an economic, cultural, political, and military phenomenon of accelerated interactions and interconnection [26, 37]. Robertson [71] emphasises the cultural aspect of globalisation, downstream from economic integration, noting the development of a global discourse and culture on 'the world becom[ing] a single place' (281–282). Much of this has been fuelled by the internet and its ever-expanding global reach, which interestingly has a comparable timeline to the birth and expansion of Al-Qaeda [51].

Much of the literature on globalisation and its effects on terrorist patterns originate in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Naturally, this was in reaction to the September 11 terrorist attacks and their international character. Literature from this period often pointed to persistent poverty, inequalities within and between states, and oppression against minorities inside a state as conditions for fomenting terrorism [36]. Authors further speculate that globalisation will aggravate these economic inequalities and will engender further anti-Western sentiments in the Global South, leading to them targeting economic institutions that sustains the Western-dominated global market [17, 37]. This is similar to the Marxist organisations targeting business leaders in the 1970s. However, this would disregard the ideological character of white supremacist terrorism as an ideology that appeals to a privileged majority. This would also contradict the premise that oppressed minorities are a fertile ground for building terrorist groups. Overall, authors of this era appear to have over-emphasised the Middle East and North Africa as hostile to the West and uniquely capable of destabilising US hegemony. As the rise in white supremacist terrorist attacks in Germany, New Zealand, the UK, and the United States show, there is a need to zoom the focus out. While this chapter will not depart fully from previous works, it will attempt to recontextualise previous assumptions on globalisation and how terrorist organisations can utilise this interconnectedness for the furtherance of its goals.

Indeed, we focus on transnationality as a multifaceted concept. Transnational terrorism can conjure images of elaborate, multi-stage, multi-actor plots across several regions of the globe, but transnational terrorism can equally apply to recruited foreign fighters relocating to a country to commit a domestic attack. This chapter considers all potential characteristics that make a terrorist organisation transnational and discuss this in relation to the broader phenomenon of globalisation. Specifically, to operationalise globalisation and the transnationalism of terrorist groups, we focus on four aspects of 'going global': (a) 'going global in movement and targeting', meaning cross-border movement for relocation as well as for implementation of attacks; (b) 'going global in allegiance' meaning transnational connections and

supporting activities of different organisations; (c) 'going global in business', meaning global financing and transnational business activities; and (d) 'going global in communication' referring to transnational communication through the Internet and social media, including propaganda purposes.

What emerges is a complex, interconnected network of individuals, businesses, and 'full time' terrorist organisations that are consistently evolving and adapting. Similarly, the countering of this phenomenon is similarly networked and fluid, which will be discussed in the latter half.

2.1 Transnational Terrorism Today: The Ways to 'Going Global'

'Going Global' in Movement and Targeting

There are tactical and logistical advantages for a group to become transnational, but also challenges in maintaining discipline and political focus. Scholars have therefore tried to identify the conditions for endemic terrorist movements to transfer to another state.

A foundational logic in some part of the literature within International Relations (IR) (see [24]) is that fragile states promote the growth of transnational terrorism. Piazza [46], for instance, shows that there is a disproportionate contribution from 'failed and failing states' to extant transnational terrorism and its operations (p. 483). Although Piazza puts both failed states with failing states in attracting terror, others argue that transnational terrorist organisations prefer to move and operate out of the latter [66]. Overall, terrorist organisations play a delicate balancing act in where they choose to host their operations. Menkhaus [66] finds that terrorist organisations prefer weak state legal systems that allow for effective capture, as opposed to outright lawlessness and complete state failure. This is because an outright failed state encourages the intervention of counterterrorism from the international community with significantly more resources. Degrees of state failure also can affect the types of attacks that can be organised within its territory. George [61] finds that fragile states are more likely to host complex-type attacks—those that involve much more resources, variables, and risks of exposure. However, he also underlines that the fragility of a state does not necessarily align with the nationality of the attacker, seeing as Saudi attackers were overrepresented in transnational terrorist attacks. Instead, fragile states would serve as fertile ground for terror entrepreneurs to create training hubs for aspiring recruits.

While it is safe to say that a globalised system can better facilitate the movement of capital, people, and information without major obstacles, terrorist organisations are limited by their disposable resources and tend to operate inside of regional 'hot spot' neighbourhoods [63]. These neighbourhoods experience, compared to an 'average neighbourhood in the international system', a higher occurrence of terrorist attacks (285). 'Hot spots' are also characterised by the presence of many high-

value targets, porous borders, and weak political institutions to tackle extant terrorist groups. Therefore, there is a noticeable plurality of scholars that view fragile states as breeding grounds or 'safe havens' for transnational terrorist organisations to operate from and move to.

However, part of the literature also warns against some of these conclusions, arguing that some of these observations might be over-essentialised. D'Amato [18] highlights the costs associated with moving terror operations across borders. Without de facto control of territory, as often happens in the so-called 'safe heavens', there are physical, social capital, and strategic costs associated with acting transnationally. Therefore, operating abroad might not be a simple and direct consequence of lack of strong institutions, but rather a careful conclusion of a cost–benefit analysis. In the case of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād* (colloquially known as Boko Haram), for instance, the overactive and 'hard stick' approach of the Algerian and Nigerian security apparatuses seems to better explain the transnational operations of these organisations.

Overall, insurgent organisations are typically able to entrench themselves among local communities due to the security and services they might provide that the state can (or will) not. When researching transnational terrorist organisations, it is fundamental for researchers to first consider the material circumstances of each region or 'neighbourhood' and what these organisations may offer the population they would otherwise lack.

There is an ongoing division in the literature on what states and demographics are more likely to be targeted in transnational terrorist attacks. Some of the terrorist attacks with the highest fatalities were those targeting the 'far enemy', meaning a foreign demographic and required further complexity than domestic attacks. These are often prescribed in the foundational ideology of the organisation, as was the case with Al-Qaeda and the attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon [22]. However, these attacks can also be in reaction to changing circumstances, and an attempt to internationalise a localised rebellion. In this sense, questions arise as to whether societal differences play a part in what states terrorist groups choose to target and whether a state's integration into the global economic system is correlated to a greater risk of transnational terrorist attacks occurring in its territory. Li and Schaub [35] explore the effects of economic development and integration on the frequency of terrorist attacks in a country. They find that economic integration and development, in fact, reduce the likeliness of a transnational terrorist attack. One of their models showed a 19.3% decrease in the likeliness of experiencing a transnational terrorist attack for every 1% increase in GDP per capita. The implications for this research have been very broad, often seeping into policymaking institutions and think tanks. This would suggest that globalisation, in fact, does *not* help terrorist groups conduct transnational, more elaborate attacks.

Other scholars have argued, however, that wealthier democracies are considered more valuable targets for transnational terrorist organisations, due to their free press and incentive to cover damaging attacks. This is contrasted with authoritarian regimes who are predilected to secrecy and cover-ups to mask inherent instability in

the regime's rule [46]. Moreover, they argue democracies are easier to operate in as a home country and more attractive as an attack destination, because civil society can pressure political apparatuses to respond, an often sought-after goal with terrorist groups [35, 57]. This may be cause for concern for policymakers in democratic regimes and would necessitate stronger transnational counterterrorism measures to identify suspected individuals and frustrate efforts to attack these states.

However, historical analysis of terrorist attacks from 1970 to 2006 suggests that terrorist attacks have been concentrated to specific countries. LaFree et al. [33] found that just 10 countries had been the location for 38% of all terrorist attacks, with 75% of attacks in 32 countries. Carter and Ying [12] directly contradict the conclusion that democracies are more like to be attack destinations. They found no relationship between a state being democratic, and the likeliness of a terrorist attack occurring or being organised on its territory. Instead, using the structural gravitation model, they propose that foreign policy objectives differences better predict attack destinations. It is the 'extreme' relative difference between the home state's foreign policy goals when contrasted to destination's, and their closeness to the United States, which 'attracts' the flow of transnational terrorist attacks. Thus, despite globalisation providing affordable travel opportunities, and facilitating inter-continental connections, terrorist attacks do not appear to have similarly reached across the globe equally. Plümper and Neumayer [47] concur with this position, arguing the level of democracy is related to the power disparity between foreign counterterrorist alliances this finding, but found that regime type has no effect on the coverage of attacks. Insurgent terrorist organisations will, as an intermediate goal, begin to target foreign allies of their home country if this foreign ally is militarily more capable than the home country. This can lead to increased support for the group among the domestic base, due to the perceived illegitimacy of the foreign troops on the country's soil. Carter and Ying [12] liken organisations to businesses, emphasising the hierarchy of political goals and balancing their associated costs, similar to D'Amato [18] above. These findings have considerable repercussions for the broader discussion on the linkage between democracy, security, and economic prosperity. It is a discussion on which many assumptions are made about the United States, its allies, and its position in the world.

There are also debates on the effects that ideology plays on terrorist organisations going transnational in their targeting. Due to the wider exposure Islamic fundamentalist attacks have been given, the question whether these groups conduct more, and deadlier attacks than non-fundamentalist groups, has arisen. Klein [31] investigated the hypothesis that Islamic fundamentalist attacks are both more likely to be transnational and deadlier, on the basis that religious justifications allow for the easier construction of a transnational 'other'. He found, excluding the Kenyan 1998 embassy bombing and 9/11 as outliers, that transnational Islamic fundamentalist attacks did not create higher death counts than others. Saying that attacks across borders typically resulted in more deaths, potentially due to their increased complexity and scope. Carter and Ying [12] also demonstrate that Islamic fundamentalist groups are less likely to target non-Islamic states, countering the

highly reductive conclusion of Huntington [65] and his belief in 'bloody borders' between 'Islamic' and 'non-Islamic' civilisations.

Transnational terrorist attacks, despite *potentially* being organised anywhere around the world, it is clear they are clustered in a very limited number of countries and are motivated by political goals and antagonisms. Thus, it raises questions on where resources should be allocated to tackle these transnational actions most effectively. Policymakers should keep in mind the non-trivial costs transnational terrorist organisations incur when organising, and balance that with the potential goals it can achieve with a successful attack.

'Going Global' in Allegiance

Terrorist groups form alliances with each other to exchange best practices, technical knowledge, or receive needed supplies. Horowitz and Potter [28] found that, like cooperating states and businesses, terrorist groups partner up for mutual benefit. Among the effects of these alliances is the improved efficacy of their attacks—more elaborate attacks can be executed, and fatalities are increased. Some provided examples include the partnership between the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and the Colombia FARC, where it is speculated a series of successful assaults against the Colombian government were conducted by mortar inspired by the PIRA homegrown mortar device. The PFLP-Special Operations Group (SOG) hosted the Maoist organisation, the Japanese Red Army, and conducted an attack on the Lod Airport in Israel together. The trade here was more fighters for the PFLP-SOG to execute its attacks, in exchange for passing on experience, techniques, and knowledge to the Japanese Red Army to take back to their region.

Not all alliances between groups are equally effective, they appear to operate on a core-periphery model. Groups with renowned reputations for being efficient and deadly seek alliances with similarly renowned organisations (2012). They also tend to have multiple alliances operating at once, with a higher degree of alliance depth, which align with higher predicted fatalities per attack. Thus, these organisations benefit the most from allying with sympathetic groups. Likewise, allying with less renowned organisations provides little benefit to either party [28]. However, there are so-called 'alliance hubs', organisations renowned for allying with several groups simultaneously and bridge collaboration between disparate ones [6]. Thus, alliance networks consist of a 'core' of organisations with similar political goals that collaborate with others often, and a periphery of smaller, satellite organisations that are perceived as less successful and smaller scale; there is little incentive for organisations to collaborate with the latter. Hub organisations appeal to smaller terrorist groups with their access to needed knowledge and resources that they usually would have no access to. Possession of territory and displays of capabilities act as advertisements for ideologically sympathetic groups to pledge allegiance to these hubs. As this group is combated, and loses access to much of its territory and resources, its alliance network begins to dwindle, and only attracts less capable

groups [6]. These less capable groups are seen as less bother than they are worth and thus still do not attract former alliance hub organisations. This is the paradoxical situation the Islamic State ended up in after it lost most of its territory in 2017. Moderately successful organisations like Boko Haram ceased their allegiance to the Islamic State, and very few organisations (mainly in South Asia) wished to join the network [6].

When do terrorist groups ally with each other, and what are the consistent explanatory factors for these alliances? There are a number of factors that play into forming transnational alliances aside from consistent ideologies. Bacon [6] underlines that the first step is to consider the organisations' primary needs in seeking an alliance with hub organisations. These are as followed: (a) training and operational assistance, (b) sanctuary or protection from adversary or counterterrorism efforts, and (c) mobilisation of needed resources.

Yet, there are also obvious risks for organisations that ally together. Being clandestine in nature, survival of the cadre is always at the top of their priorities [5]. Alliances can jeopardise the survival of a group and its political mission; infiltration by an adversary is a particular concern [6]. As organisations exist for longer periods of time, the leadership becomes predominantly concerned with forcing allegiance, maintaining group solidarity, and preventing factionalism, rather than the achievement of their political goals [6, 15]. This undoubtedly hampers the efficacy and flexibility of these alliances and their willingness to risk it all for a little more.

The characteristics of organisations, and their objectives, also affect the likeliness of them forming alliances. Phillips' [70] survey of international alliances formed between 1987 and 2005 shows that groups motivated by religion are significantly more likely to form international alliances, as are groups sponsored by a state such as Iran (p. 1011). Group membership also plays a part in forming alliances. As stated above, small-size groups do not attract cooperation from more advanced, larger groups, as there is little to gain for them. However, groups with a 'moderate' membership (100–900 members) occupy the 'goldilocks zone', and attract similarly sized groups to assist in attacks on a more powerful enemy: such as a rival group, or a hostile state. Thus, it is important to understand that alliances do not necessarily improve terrorists' capabilities to achieve their goals, rather it is a carefully calculated weighing of costs and benefits.

Overall, across different world regions, insurgent and terrorist organisations use alliances to receive support as well as to increase their visibility and therefore their perceived power within and across their supporting base as well as in the eyes of their opponents [64]. The way these connections and supporting practices are implemented might vary but it is a very common feature and important aspect of terrorist campaigns that academics and policymakers alike should keep analysing.

'Going Global' in Business

Monetary support to terrorism takes several forms, facilitated and obfuscated due to decentralisation and globalisation. Remittances have historically, and continue to be, a primary source of income for clandestine groups. Mascarenhas and Sandler [38] found a strong linkage between a national of a 'failed state' with an insurgency sending remittances back home, and the likeliness of a terrorist attack occurring.

The financing networks of terrorist organisations are eclectic and flexible. Conventional electronic transfers directly to suspects leave a potentially traceable payment trail, and financial regulations such as know-your-customer (KYC) protocols can help prevent this. However, digital transactions are not sufficiently regulated to prevent these transfers from being completed [2] and suspects are often convicted after attacks have been successfully funded [52]. Indeed, the considerable number of simultaneous global transactions would make this difficult to identify in one occasion [55]. Alongside remittances and transfers, terrorist organisations might establish charitable foundations to have a public-facing entity that can solicit donations for a sympathetic cause, and recruit new volunteers for their cause. The Irish-American charity Noraid, helped provide needed funds to the Provisional Irish Republican Army's families, while the diaspora helped arm active militants [58]. Al-Qaeda and its use of overseas charities received significant attention after 9/11, with the Saudi al Haramain Islamic Foundation operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the Global Relief Foundation in Pennsylvania. Charity personnel thought to be sympathetic to Osama Bin Laden's cause were named a considerable contributor to Al-Qaeda's bottom line in the run up before 9/11 [48]. Accusations of this nature can also be highly politically motivated, however. Several organisations in the Netherlands have campaigned for the defunding of Palestinian human rights NGOs on the unsubstantiated grounds that they are monetarily supporting proscribed terrorist groups [21].

Another often cited means to transfer money with relative security, for transnational terrorist groups operating in the Sahel, West and Central Asia, is the 'hawala' system. Hawala is an informal means of moving money across borders using trusted partners and a network of debt and repayment. It can be considered a physical version of Western Union [8]. There is very little paper trail, and hawaladars (money 'movers') use unrelated business accounts to avoid suspicion that large deposits might incur [11]. Hawala is used primarily as a method to remit money abroad at a comparatively lower cost, and with less regulatory scrutiny, than other platforms. The degree of hawaladar involvement in more serious illicit activity has not been fully surveyed, and it would be fallacious to tar the entire practice as heavily synonymous with terrorist financing [50]. Al-Qaeda's use of hawala for its funding of attacks is also heavily disputed: Some claim it sourced most of its money through hawala networks before 9/11 [48], whereas others argue there is no evidence for this and is used to stigmatise this informal remittance system [42, 56]. This feat notwithstanding, the network can collapse should just one of the hawaladars be compromised, as was the case of the Al-Qaeda hawala network after 9/11 [48].

A recent way to avoid crackdowns on front organisations has been the use of pseudonymous digital currencies, also known as cryptocurrencies. Cryptocurrencies use cryptography to encrypt the details (sender and recipient) of a transaction, but have a decentralised public ledger to record all transactions made. There is a critical flaw with many conventional cryptocurrencies, however: once they are 'cashed-out' into fiat currencies, the transaction can be traceable [20]. Additionally, the wallet address of individuals and organisations can be traceable through forensic analysis of their transactions. Once identified, transactions of associated accounts can be publicised through social media (see Neonazi BTC Tracker for an example). All of these transactions are publicly available, due to the nature of the blockchain. There are ways to subvert these limitations, such as using fully anonymous coins like Monero or Zcash, that hide transaction information from both parties and the blockchain. Another is to 'mix' the cryptocurrency with other transactions and currencies to hide the payer and the recipient [60]. Methods to counteract terrorist financing through cryptocurrencies is beyond the scope and technical focus of this chapter, but it is important to highlight the unfolding and changing funding landscape for transnational terrorist organisations.

In many instances, such a focus on the use of technologies by terrorist organisations for financing purposes builds on a much broader discussion on the distinction between groups that employ violence to advance political goals (often referred to as an insurgency), and those that employ it for monetary gain (more properly referred to as criminality) [23, 27, 49]. Without entering the details of such debate, we find interesting to point to studies such as Palma [69] that problematise this dichotomy. Terrorist groups, it is found, require consistent funding, and being made illegal as an organisation drastically lowers the cost of engaging in illegal activities, the most profitable being the narcotics trade. Indeed, by negotiating with growers of narcotic products (coca leaves, opium, etc.) and providing security as well as a bulk buyer of their products, the terrorist organisation can gain a legitimate foothold in these communities [14]. In this sense, we highlight, local and global business of many groups and organisations is not necessarily about economic gain but rather about building legitimacy and increasing political control.

'Going Global' in Communication

Communications across borders remain a keystone part of transnational terrorism for recruitment, inspiration, and messages of solidarity between groups. As Klein [31] reminds us, terrorist attacks are messages in, and themselves, a 'propaganda of the deed', to quote Kropotkin [32]. Through messaging and online comments, groups often react to successful attacks, or military victories, expressing support or taking specific positions on particular matters or actions. For instance, jihadist organisations worldwide congratulated the Taliban for taking control of the Afghanistan government, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham organised parades in Idlib to celebrate [1]. Conversely, terrorist groups can also publicly distance themselves from others in the same field with statements. The Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (PFLP) distanced itself from the PFLP-General Command after it attacked the Palestinian Yarmouk camp in Syria [45]. Online far-right communities often collaborate to organise in-person events to facilitate networking and interaction across borders [19]. Overall, however, the primary goal of transnational online communication is gaining sympathies and new recruits [9].

Distinct from structurally decentralised, but ideologically compatible terrorist groups, globalisation provides a multitude of opportunities for all actors (both individual and organisation) to disseminate *agitprop* to susceptible audiences. Social media and messaging platforms are host to a number of small-to-medium-sized like-minded communities that form an echo-chamber for its members to reaffirm their political beliefs. These are effective platforms for sharing ideologically sympathetic and riling content among its members but, perhaps out of fear of censorship or reprisal, instructions for how to exercise these ideological goals is scarce [72]. Contrary to expectation, though, Guhl and Davey [62] suggest these looser and more decentralised networks of sympathisers can be similarly effective in inspiring violent action. Wakeford and Smith [54], however, argue there are limits to proving causation in assessing the efficacy of online radicalisation. It is unclear to what degree regular consumers of online *agitprop* are converted to offline terrorists. They use the phenomenon of 'clicktivist' or 'slacktivist' to argue there is no such 'slippery slope' (158). Despite this, the authors recognise the influence the internet had on the Manchester bomber in 2017. Thus, setting aside the efficacy of online communications, there are several spectacular terrorist attacks that can be attributed to online radicalisation, altering the modern, common conception of transnational terrorist groups. We find interesting to focus specifically on the use of digital communication for recruitment and agitation.

Alongside the 2017 Manchester bombing, the Christchurch shooting, and the 'memeification' of this reprehensible attack has demonstrated the power that online communications can have on susceptible candidates for 'lone wolf', stochastic attacks. This attack, committed by Brenton Tarrant, was livestreamed in its entirety on Facebook Live and viewed thousands of times. Before the attack commenced, Tarrant published his manifesto on the far-right 8chan/pol/internet message board. Although not unique in any of its composite elements, the Christchurch shooting was the most successful streamed mass shooting of all time and led to Tarrant, despite his incarceration, becoming a commemorated figure head of the online far-right. As the shooting was unfolding, and even now, the footage featured in images, flashy promotional videos for far-right online communities, and Tarrant's manifesto has been cited in other mass shootings (such as in the El Paso shooter's manifesto).

Much of the work on the communication of transnational terrorist organisations has primarily used jihadist extremist groups as case studies, a limitation that Conway [13] argues should be addressed in future scholarship. Zelin [59] demarcates four phases in jihadist communication, ending in modern online communication. The first phase used post and physical media such as magazines to advertise the organisation's mission and activities, it then transitioned into the second phase of

Web 1.0 websites and the networking of sympathetic terrorist media groups. The first two phases required the outlay of capital and a front face for the organisation. The third phase was the introduction of Web 2.0 and the relocation of propaganda to Internet forums and social media sites. The fourth phase involves the co-creation of propaganda by members of the terrorist organisation and sympathisers alike, using social media sites and 'Software as a Service' to minimise costs for disseminating their message. As time has gone on, then, transnational communication for terrorist organisations has become exponentially cheaper and decentralised. Although other ideologies may have different initial phases, the end point of using Web 2.0 social media sites, such as Telegram, Gab, Twitter, or Facebook, is the same. As extremist movements decentralise, anonymous, dynamic, and quickly replaceable online platforms for disseminating *agitprop* (agitation propaganda) are the natural response to harsher counterterrorist efforts. Creating an echo-chamber or 'pipeline' for radicalising a susceptible demographic is essentially free, effective in affirming victim narratives [67], and quickly expands its consumer base. The existence of an actual 'slippery slope' from consuming extremist content to committing a terrorist attack is spurious, but the consumption alone affects how the audience interprets social relations. Using the examples of ISIS, extremist propaganda involves the simple dichotomisation of society [68] – the virtuous and pious (those who will comply with the primary message of the organisation) versus the 'enemy' (anyone who would resist it, regardless of how much). This mentally restructures the consumers' outlook and colours how they interpret societal relations ([25, 39, 53]). The consumer morally justifies their actions; minimises, ignores, or misconstrues consequences of reprehensible behaviour; and blames the victim for this behaviour [7].

Mainstream social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) have attempted to clamp down on extremist content by banning far-right content creators. However, the migration of these creators to alternative sites with slacker moderation, or sympathetic moderators, only heightens the 'tunnel vision' consumers of this propaganda experience, because they are drawn to a site with higher concentration of extremist content.

How organisations recruit, organise, and inspire susceptible sympathisers online is an important part of understanding transnational terrorism. Unlike the other transnational conduct described above, distributing *agitprop* and attracting a susceptible audience is effectively cost-and-risk-free. Moreover, many of the most spectacular and scarring attacks in Europe, North American, and New Zealand were perpetrated by 'lone wolf' regular consumers of this propaganda. Finally, it is very difficult to fully ban this propaganda. Accounts that are taken down are very quickly brought back up with the same content as before, or moved to more sympathetic platforms. The method of communicating extreme messages also rapidly changes, requiring moderation staff to stay up-to-date constantly with the latest insinuations and inside 'jokes' of those communities.

3 Transnational Terrorism, Responses, and Remaining Challenges: Final Remarks and Conclusions

Transnationality today is a key, generalised and undeniable feature of many terrorist organisations. Across different world regions, political settings, and ideologies, we find groups implementing or taking advantage of transnational possibilities, especially facilitated by the dynamics of globalisation. As we have seen, the question for many policymakers and academics is how to respond to this. Indeed, the possibility to operate, communicate, and organise across borders presents some advantages to terrorist organisations and it challenges states' security apparatuses, still largely dependent on national capabilities and operative structures [30]. One of the main issues for states concerns the realisation that the peculiar transnational nature of terrorism makes a traditional counterterrorism military strategy far less effective. Indeed, current forms of transnational terrorism do not represent a security challenge for their operative strategies on the ground but also in light of their facilitated communication and funding activities across the globe. The realisation of these shortcomings pushed a large part of the policy world to focus on a problem-solving approach based on cooperation and creation of counterterrorism networks [43]. The idea is, as summarised by Nye [41] two decades ago, that 'the best response to transnational terrorist networks is networks of cooperating government agencies'. As mentioned, cooperation on solely military terms did not prove to be particularly effective in solving the actual cause of transnationalism and therefore the overall problem in mid-long term. Crenshaw ([16]: 19), for instance, has recently underlined how 'military force can destroy a terrorist base, remove key leaders, and disrupt operations in the short term, but it may increase local instability and motivate transnational terrorist attacks in the longer term. An added complication is that when foreign intervention intended to retaliate for terrorism or defend a threatened government precipitates more terrorism and internal disorder, the third party finds it hard to withdraw from its commitment because the local partner cannot provide security. IS is already regrouping in Syria and Iraq following the abrupt withdrawal of US troops in October 2019'.

Accordingly, there has been an attempt to respond along different lines, especially when considering terrorist transnational business and communication, reinforcing dynamics of regionalisation and regional governance where security, political but also economic interactions between different states are redesigned [44]. Border-spanning discourses, institutions, and agencies are generated as new social spaces to facilitate cross-border cooperation as well as information flow and sharing with preventive but also prosecuting purposes across the globe [10]. Nonetheless, cooperation in these fields also remains challenging. It is complex to sustain and generally significantly slower than the evolution of the nature and the tools employed by the threat they intend to address as it necessitates constant disclosure, convergence on bureaucratic practices, and a commitment in information sharing.

Overall, this chapter aimed at addressing the main dimensions of transnationalism in order to discuss the varieties of features of this threat and the challenges

it poses. We discussed, in particular, transnationalism over four dimensions indicating different ways to cross-national borders, meaning movement and targeting, allegiance, business, and communication. Across these four dimensions, we have seen how the 'global' could be used in order to increase material and ideological support as well as a facilitator for economic interests and communicative strategies. On a conclusive note, what seems fair to argue is that the challenges posed by transnationalism terrorism do not only concern the characteristics of the threat itself but also the characteristics and difficulties related to many states' structures as well as the features of the international system.

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