

OSTRACIZING PARIAHS? WHY U.S. TERRORIST DESIGNATIONS OFTEN FAIL

By

Manuel J. Reinert

Submitted to the

Faculty of the School of International Service

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of


the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

International Relations

Chair:


Joseph K. Young, Ph.D.


Miles Kahler, Ph.D.


James H. Mittelman, Ph.D.


Jordan Tama, Ph.D.


Dean of the School of International Service

4/27/2023
Date

2023

American University

Washington, D.C. 20016

© COPYRIGHT

by

Manuel J. Reinert

2023

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

OSTRACIZING PARIAHS? WHY U.S. TERRORIST DESIGNATIONS OFTEN FAIL

By

Manuel J. Reinert

ABSTRACT

Security designations have become major tools of international statecraft to tackle such issues as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and territorial invasion. Since 9/11, U.S. terrorist designations sanctioning non-state armed groups (NSAGs), and affiliated persons, have multiplied. While some policymakers present terrorist designations as silver-bullet policies, other assessments depict them as inconsequential or harmful. Through quantitative analyses of the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list, the IR literature posits that designations reduce attacks of targets operating in the territory of a U.S. ally or targets with limited financial adaptability.

This dissertation proposes an alternative theoretical and methodological approach to understand the variation in U.S. terrorist designations' outcomes. Building on a deviant case and different literatures, I advance a dual isolation-based and motives-based argument to examine two prominent designation programs: the FTO list and the Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) list. As these programs aim to ostracize, I suggest that only *strategic* designations directed at *connected* targets—NSAGs relying on support networks in which the United States has leverage—are impactful and effective, all else equal. *Disconnected* and *established* targets are either insulated from designations' effects or sufficiently resilient to withstand designations' material and social costs. *Non-strategic* designations are generally ineffective because they do not primarily aim at undermining targets' capabilities.

To test my argument, I use 12 case studies following diverse, longitudinal, and most similar case selection methods for cross-case comparisons. In addition to assessing attack trends—the favored proxy for NSAGs' capabilities in related studies—I rely on an original FTO

capability index to evaluate designations' impacts. I use process-tracing to control for existing theories and intervening variables, such as kinetic counterterrorism methods and multilateral regimes. I find that isolation type and designation motives offer a better framework to assess designations' outcomes.

The dissertation also contributes to research on the humanitarian side effects of terrorist designations, with the hypothesis-generating case of the conflict in northeastern Nigeria.

Through qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study suggests that: 1) terrorist designations hindered humanitarian assistance to civilians in conflict-affected areas; and 2) the FTO designation of Boko Haram was associated with an increase in conflict intensity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee: Joe Young, Miles Kahler, Jim Mittelman, and Jordan Tama. Since the advanced seminar in international relations in the first year of the PhD program, Joe Young has taught me to think differently and has provided me with consistent expertise and support throughout this project. Miles Kahler has been involved since the early stages of my dissertation and his seminars in global financial governance and varieties of political authority in the international system have considerably broadened my intellectual interests.

Jim Mittelman's class on globalization and global governance—taken as an exchange student from Paris—was critical in my decision to pursue a PhD. I was fortunate to have Jim teach the PhD seminar in social theory of international relations, to work with him for several years over the course of the program, and to benefit from his mentorship throughout the dissertation. I am grateful to Jordan Tama for energetically joining the project and providing me with extensive feedback. His expertise on the interactions between domestic politics and foreign policy turned out to be crucial for my research.

I sincerely thank the persons who agreed to be interviewed to inform this project: humanitarian workers in Northeast Nigeria and other conflict-affected areas, officials at the U.S. Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Treasury, and National Security Council, officers from different foreign services, representatives of civil society organizations, and scholars and experts.

I want to thank the SIS faculty and my PhD fellows, who provided me with excellent feedback and support at different stages of the project: Carl LeVan, Boaz Atzili, Sharon Weiner, Mike Schroeder, Daniel Bernhofen, Cherie Saulter, Noah Rosen, Matt Timmerman, and my cohort. Many thanks to Hyeran Jo for discussing her research on several occasions and to David Bosco for serving as the external reader.

I thank my former colleagues at the World Bank and at the French Institute for Research in Africa who supported my PhD undertaking and shared their expertise in fragile and conflict-affected situations and international development: David Bridges, Caroline Vagneron, Linda Kelly, Gérard Chouin, and Elodie Apard.

Finally, I am grateful to my family. I owe special thanks to my wife, Leah Wisser, for her relentless encouragement during this endeavor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Effects of terrorist designations	4
Terrorism and FTOs' power	7
Overview of the argument	10
Variables overview and hypotheses	13
Case selection.....	18
Organization of the Manuscript	24
CHAPTER 2 THEORY, BACKGROUND, METHODOLOGY	26
Designations in international relations and global governance	26
Isolation as a means of power in IR: connecting ostracism and designation policies	30
The U.S.-led international terrorist designation regime.....	36
FTOs' isolation type and designation motives.....	40
Measurements, methods, data	51
Theoretical expectations	70
CHAPTER 3 GENERATING HYPOTHESES: DEVIANT CASE OF BOKO HARAM.....	73
FTO Background	75
Generating hypotheses: Boko Haram's isolation type.....	81
Generating hypotheses: the motives behind Boko Haram's U.S. terrorist designations	88
Effects of U.S. terrorist designations on Boko Haram.....	104
Conclusion	113
CHAPTER 4 TESTING HYPOTHESES: LONGITUDINAL CASES AND MOST SIMILAR CROSS-CASE COMPARISONS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE AND THE TALIBAN	117
Cases of the Islamic State and longitudinal cross-case comparison	118

Cases of the Taliban and longitudinal cross-case comparison.....	149
Most similar cross-case comparison of the Islamic State and the Taliban	162
Conclusion	168
CHAPTER 5 TESTING HYPOTHESES: DIVERSE CASES AND MOST SIMILAR CROSS-CASE COMPARISONS OF ANSAR DINE, BOKO HARAM, MEK, ETA, RIRA, HEZBOLLAH, IRGC, AND AL-QAIDA.....	
Ansar Dine	171
Most similar cross-case comparison of Boko Haram and Ansar Dine	172
Mujahedin-e Khalq	177
Euskadi Ta Askatasuna	178
Real Irish Republican Army	186
Most similar cross-case comparison of ETA and RIRA.....	191
Hezbollah	198
Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps	199
Most similar cross-case comparison of Hezbollah and IRGC	207
Al-Qaida Central	212
Conclusion	215
CHAPTER 6 ASSESSING CONFLICT INTENSITY AND HUMANITARIAN SIDE EFFECTS OF TERRORIST DESIGNATIONS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND PLAUSIBILITY PROBE	
U.S. counterterrorism and humanitarian assistance	234
Terrorist designations and humanitarian conditions in northeastern Nigeria: a qualitative assessment.....	235
The impact of Boko Haram's FTO designation on conflict intensity in northeastern Nigeria: a quantitative analysis.....	238
Plausibility probe and conclusion	241
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION.....	
Core argument and main findings.....	253
Limitations and avenues for improvement	256
Implications for policy	261
Implications for related academic studies	264
APPENDIX.....	268
REFERENCES	274

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Terrorist designations' outcomes by isolation type and designation motives	12
Table 2: FTO cases by isolation type and designation motives	21
Table 3: Truth table of FTO cases	22
Table 4: Cases' values on X1, X2, CVs, and expectations of Y.....	72
Table 5: Cases' values on Y and relevance of control variables	227
Table 6: Conflict Lethality – Five-Year Estimates	249
Table 7: Conflict Lethality – Two-Year Estimates	250
Table 8: State of Emergency – Five-Year Estimates	251
Table 9: Cases and cross-case comparisons' levels of support for hypotheses	260
Table 10: FTOs' capability index	275

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Conflict Lethality – Entire Country	247
Figure 2: Conflict Lethality – State of Borno	248
Figure 3: Conflict Lethality – LGA of Maiduguri	248

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF Bureau	Bureau of African Affairs of the U.S. Department of State
AML/CFT	Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism
AQC	Al-Qaida Central
AQIM	Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CANAN	Christian Association of Nigerian-Americans
CT Bureau	Bureau of Counterterrorism of the U.S. Department of State
CVE	Countering violent extremism
DOD	U.S. Department of Defense
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DOS	U.S. Department of State
EO	Executive Order
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna or “Basque Homeland and Liberty”
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GSCF	Global Security Contingency Fund
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	Intergovernmental Organization
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LGA	Nigerian Local Government Area
MeK	Mujahedin-e Khalq or “People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran”
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières or Doctors Without borders
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
RIRA	Real Irish Republican Army
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SDGT	Specially Designated Global Terrorist
SDN	Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USDT	U.S. Department of the Treasury
WBG	World Bank Group
YPG	People's Defense Units

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Security designations have become major tools in foreign policy and global governance. States and intergovernmental organizations (IOs) increasingly use designations to tackle terrorism, nuclear proliferation, territorial invasion, and other security issues. On these bases, the United States designates states, non-state armed groups (NSAGs), firms, non-profit organizations, and individuals, under different statuses such as State Sponsors of Terrorism, Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO), and Specially Designated Nationals (SDN).

Designation represents the act of identifying or classifying—of setting apart for a specific purpose—and encompasses diverse phenomena in international relations (IR). Studies on the politics of state recognition,¹ naming and shaming,² rankings and indicators,³ economic sanctions,⁴ and terrorist lists⁵ illustrate the range of practices that entail a designation and the breadth of theoretical perspectives on designations in the field.

According to the designation scholarship, deciding whether a given actor is a state, a development top-performer, a nuclear proliferator, or a terrorist enabler is a political process that reflects power dynamics and elicits multidimensional consequences. International actors are seen in this literature as members of a society, who can mobilize both social and material pressures to coerce alleged wrongdoers and incentivize a specific perception of good behavior.⁶

Security designations, such as terrorist blacklists and economic sanctions, refer to policies targeting violators of international security rules and norms. They are used in tandem

¹ Coggins 2014; Visoka et al. 2020.

² Keck and Sikkink 1998; Hafner-Burton 2008; Friman et al. 2015.

³ Kelley 2017, Kelley and Simons 2020.

⁴ Zarate 2013, Drezner 2015, Biersteker et al. 2016, Rosenberg et al. 2016. As noted in Biersteker (2015: 165), identifying and naming is the first step in the process of imposing sanctions.

⁵ Phillips 2019 ; Jo et al. 2020.

⁶ Friman 2015: 5.

with, or instead of, military, diplomatic, intelligence, and law enforcement tools. These policies aim to identify and name pariahs, and subsequently isolate these unwanted actors from international society. Examples include restraining the pariah's ability to conduct business with other international actors and restricting their access to the international financial system.

Terrorist designations convey a particularly virulent condemnation.⁷ Persons designated terrorists are seen as the ultimate international outcasts, who should be ostracized and eradicated. As Mittelman notes, the “terrorist enemy” has oftentimes been portrayed in the United States as a totalitarian ideology threatening humanity, which should be utterly defeated.⁸

Following the 9/11 attacks, terrorist designations became prevalent in U.S. foreign policy.⁹ The U.S. government also promoted similar policy tools at the United Nations and in other IOs.¹⁰ The United States is thus considered as a “trendsetter” in terrorist designations,¹¹ which have developed within the institutions of the so-called “rules-based liberal international order.”¹² Over the past decade, however, the pertinence of these tools has been increasingly debated in academic and policy circles.

While certain U.S. legislators regularly promote terrorist designations as silver-bullet policies,¹³ some high-level officials argue that they have little practical value and are mostly symbolic.¹⁴ The U.S. defense community finds the contribution of designations to

⁷ Considering the deeply negative connotation of the word “terrorist,” these designations illustrate a “speech-act” as conceptualized by securitization theory (see Williams 2003).

⁸ Mittelman 2010: 145-46. For Hardt and Negri (2000: 6), the “terrorist” is the ultimate “enemy” in the international system of states, simultaneously banalized as an object of repression and absolutized as a threat to the ethical order.

⁹ The number of FTO designations went from 29 in 1997 to over 70 in 2021, in addition to the hundreds of individual and group designations in the SDGT list, under EO 13224, from 2001 onwards.

¹⁰ See de Jonge Oudraat and Marret (2010) on the generalization of designations among states and IOs post 9/11.

¹¹ Ilbiz and Curtis 2015, Phillips 2019, El Masri and Phillips 2021. About 25 states and IOs created formal terrorist designation lists following the establishment of the U.S. FTO list in 1997.

¹² According to neoliberal institutionalists, this U.S.-led order is organized around guiding principles such as the rule of law, multilateral organizations, open markets, and liberal democracy.

¹³ See, for instance, the cases of Boko Haram and, more recently, of Russian-backed NSAGs in eastern Ukraine.

¹⁴ Such as former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, see Legrand 2018.

counterterrorism inconclusive despite anecdotal evidence of success.¹⁵ Additionally, the humanitarian community denounces the negative consequences they can have on civilian populations.¹⁶

Academic research focusing on the impact and effectiveness of U.S. terrorist designations provides slightly different conclusions. Studies by Phillips and Jo, Phillips, and Alley posit that designation in the FTO list reduces attacks by NSAGs under specific circumstances: when the designated group operates in the territory of a U.S. ally,¹⁷ depends on private funding¹⁸ or has limited financial adaptability.¹⁹ This scholarship acknowledges the limitations of large-N analyses on the subject, such as the difficulty to confirm a precise causal mechanism at the FTO level,²⁰ and the absence of control for other counterterrorism efforts.²¹ Therefore, several puzzles remain unsolved or need to be refined to further our understanding of U.S. terrorist designations.

Precisely, why do certain FTOs delve deeper into violent activities following designation, while others renounce violence? Why do most groups seem to maintain their capabilities, while a few others scale down their operations? Why are certain designations associated with detrimental side effects while others are not? The present dissertation contributes to this research program by tackling the following question: **What explains variation in the outcomes of U.S. terrorist designation policies?**

¹⁵ Loertscher et al. 2020.

¹⁶ E.g., Norwegian Refugee Council 2018a; Modirzadeh 2011; Lewis and Modirzadeh 2021; and the resources from the Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Engagement Project of the Harvard Law School's Program on International Law and Armed Conflict.

¹⁷ Phillips 2019.

¹⁸ Jo et al. 2020.

¹⁹ Jo et al. 2021.

²⁰ Phillips 2019: 338: "A tradeoff with global analyses is that they cannot go into fine-grained detail about particular cases." Complementary work could examine specific militant groups in depth to see if the dynamics outlined here are observed as theorized."

²¹ Jo et al. 2020: 294: "[t]he combination of sanctions and military interventions, for instance, likely generates different effects on the attack capacity of terrorist organizations."

Effects of terrorist designations

To investigate this research question, I examine the FTO and the Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) lists, the most prominent U.S. programs against non-state actors. As mentioned in the literature, the notion of *outcomes* comprises the impacts, effectiveness, and side effects of these policies. *Impacts* represent the material and social costs experienced by targets while *effectiveness* represents the ability to achieve security and foreign policy objectives. *Side effects* are generally understood as unintended effects that adversely affect third parties and the designator or benefit the target.²²

At the most general level, the stated goal of U.S. terrorist designations is to undermine groups and individuals engaging in terrorism and threatening the security of U.S. nationals or U.S. national security.²³ The academic literature and policymakers advance different causal mechanisms to explain how designations should lead to a decrease in targets' capabilities and terrorist activity.

The intended effects of terrorist designations are both material and social. Designations impose sanctions on the targeted groups and their members, such as asset freezing and travel bans, and criminalizes third party support.²⁴ They also provides legal instruments to U.S. law enforcement and security agencies to facilitate investigation and prosecution.²⁵ These measures should weaken designated NSAGs by impeding their ability to fund their operations,²⁶

²² See Biersteker et al. 2016, Loertscher et al. 2020. Some studies treat side effects as part of impacts and certain studies argue that side effects are not necessarily negative. While I do not disagree with these perspectives, I use the breakdown detailed above and focus on nefarious side effects in the rest of the dissertation.

²³ See the rationale for the FTO list and EO 13224 at: U.S. Department of State. 2022. "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/> (last consultation June 2022). U.S. Department of State. 2022. "Executive Order 13224" <https://www.state.gov/executive-order-13224/> (last consultation June 2022).

²⁴ Ibid. As reasserted by the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*, 561 U.S. 1, the notion of support is comprehensive to the extent of including training on peaceful conflict resolution methods.

²⁵ Interview with John Campbell. Interview with Jason Blazakis. For instance, the material support clause found in 18 U.S.C. sections 2339A and 2339B.

²⁶ Jo et al. 2020.

complicating their members' freedom of movement, and exposing their members to arrest and prosecution.²⁷

Additionally, the literature and some policymakers assume that following designation, the United States increases military assistance to FTO host countries, which in turn intensifies the military pressure on the designated NSAGs.²⁸ While there are some instances of increased military aid following an FTO designation in specific cases, this indirect impact has not been systematically established.²⁹ FTO and SDGT designations may also deter designated NSAGs from using the international financial system or set in motion secondary sanctions dissuading third parties from conducting business with designations' targets, further isolating them.³⁰

As part of the social costs, U.S. terrorist designations characterize their targets as utmost security threats, signaling concern to the international community, promoting international cooperation, and legitimizing a violent confrontation against designated NSAGs.³¹

Indeed, in the words of the U.S. Department of State (DOS), FTO designation “stigmatizes and isolates designated terrorist organizations internationally, [...] heightens public awareness, [...] and signals to other governments our concern about named organizations.”³² Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counterterrorism at DOS from 2009 to 2012, further asserts that: “for the international community, FTO designation has been the gold standard in creating a united front against terrorist groups.”³³

²⁷ Loertscher et al. 2020.

²⁸ Jo et al. 2020.

²⁹ In one of the only concrete examples, Mills (2015) argues that this was the case for Uganda after the designation of the Lord's Resistance Army. Boutton and Carter (2014) argues that countries that are experiencing terrorism within their borders only see an increase in U.S. foreign aid if the terrorist activity is considered to threaten U.S. interests.

³⁰ Findley et al. 2015, Rosenberg and Tama 2019, Loertscher et al. 2020.

³¹ Pillar 2001, Cronin 2003, de Jonge Oudraat and Marret 2010. Jo et al. 2020.

³² U.S. Department of State 2022a.

³³ Interview with Daniel Benjamin.

In theory, this combination of factors should undermine the targets of terrorist designations and reduce terrorist activity. However, the literature mentions operational, legal, and political problems associated with terrorist designations, which can lead to counterproductive effects. For instance, designations can push NSAGs further underground and make surveillance more difficult; compromise negotiation tracks and freeze policy positions in conflict resolution processes; and increase targets' prestige, paradoxically bolstering the support they receive. Further, as designations conflate NSAGs with different characteristics—in terms of size, goals, ideology, tactics, etc.—they may not pertinently apply to all types of groups.³⁴

Indeed, U.S. terrorist designations appear insufficient to curb FTOs' capabilities and operations. Certain studies suggest that designations overall do not decrease—on the contrary, they may sometimes increase—FTOs' attacks and lethality,³⁵ while other research emphasizes that these policies have detrimental effects on civilian populations.³⁶ In fact, according to the literature, designations are only impactful and effective under specific conditions.

Phillips argues that the area of operation of the designated NSAGs is a crucial variable to understand the variation in designation outcomes. Since allied states are more likely to enforce each other's terrorist designations, Phillips advances that FTO designations on NSAGs operating in the territory of a U.S. ally are thus more likely to reduce attacks, compared to other NSAGs.³⁷

Jo, Phillips, and Alley's two studies focus on the financing of terrorism, as money remains the *nerf de la guerre* for terrorist organizations. They posit that FTOs relying on private funding are more exposed to the sanctions resulting from designation, because this funding is

³⁴ Pillar 2001; Cronin 2003; de Jonge Oudraat and Marret 2010.

³⁵ Loertscher et al. 2020. Jo et al. (2020: 288) remark that “interestingly, model 1 is statistically significant and positively signed, suggesting that FTO status is correlated with increased terrorist attacks.”

³⁶ Modirzadeh et al 2011. Modirzadeh and Lewis 2021.

³⁷ Phillips 2019.

more likely to transit through the international financial system. Consequently, these FTOs are more likely to reduce attacks following designations.³⁸

Jo, Phillips, and Alley further find that FTOs with high financial adaptability can maintain attack levels after designation because they are able to shift their resource base to adjust to sanctions. In turn, FTOs with low financial adaptability decrease attacks because designations take away their main income source or block their money flows in the international financial system. This study reports mixed results regarding the overall effectiveness of the FTO program.³⁹

Loertscher et al.'s report for the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point provides additional insights. Assessing both the FTO and the SDGT programs, the authors mention anecdotal evidence “where designations have impacted groups and individual behavior” but do not find a “systemic and consistent result” to attest the programs’ effectiveness.

The authors emphasize the lack of a “single metric or set of metrics that have been agreed upon or articulated in policy documents for what an effective sanctions regime against terrorist groups or individuals would look like.” In fact, finding pertinent metrics to measure terrorism and evaluate the power of NSAGs using terrorist tactics has also been a latent issue in academia.

Terrorism and FTOs’ power

As numerous scholars underline, any study on terrorism and terrorist groups should strive for conceptual clarity and precise definitions, considering the connotation of these terms. Referring to long-standing debates in the literature and society at large, Jordan, for instance,

³⁸ Jo et al. 2020.

³⁹ Jo et al. 2021. The authors find a 60% success rate in reducing attacks in their most liberal estimate.

notes that “the words terrorism or terrorist organization are laden with emotion and political biases and are subject to multiple understandings.”⁴⁰

For the sake of clarity, I adopt definitions of terrorism found in the statutes establishing the FTO list and in policy publications from the U.S. government. Terrorism can be understood as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetuated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”⁴¹ Described as the “unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies [...], terrorism is often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that are usually political.”⁴²

These definitions imply that only non-state actors can be perpetrators of terrorism. While it is empirically demonstrable that states can commit acts of terrorism, as defined above, the distinction can be justified because NSAGs using terrorism *generally* kill relatively few people while using their maximal striking power, while states *generally* kill more people but limit their lethal potential.⁴³ It must also be noted that there is no universally accepted conceptualization of what constitutes a terrorist group in the literature, and, as Phillips argues, the FTO list may not be a representative sample of the terrorist groups’ population.⁴⁴

Regarding the measurement of terrorism, Young finds that most quantitative studies focus on the variation in the number of terrorist attacks at the country-year unit of analysis. This “high degree of convergence on operational approaches” stands “in marked contrast to a more flexible conceptual literature.”⁴⁵ Young notes that only examining counts of events may miss

⁴⁰ Jordan 2019: 8-9.

⁴¹ Section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 (22 U.S.C. § 2656f(d)(2)).

⁴² U.S. Department of Defense 2014.

⁴³ Laurens 2010.

⁴⁴ Phillips 2015.

⁴⁵ Young 2019: 323.

important facets of terrorism as a concept, such as the symbolism of the target, the intensity of the attacks, etc.

Studies on U.S. terrorist designations embrace this operationalization to assess the effectiveness of terrorist designation policies. Attacks are used as a proxy for FTOs' capabilities since the stated goal of designation is to weaken their targets. Thus, if an FTO decreases attacks, it is assumed that the FTO's capabilities were diminished.

While attacks are arguably a relevant proxy, this operationalization can miss important components of FTO capabilities, which leads to a flawed assessment of FTOs' power.⁴⁶ For instance, it implies that an FTO like Hezbollah has seen its capabilities decline over the past 25 years. However, this FTO has grown increasingly influential in Lebanese politics and has built military forces capable of confronting Israel and supporting the government of Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian civil war.

As Cronin mentions, terrorist groups can in fact gain access to governmental representation as a result of their armed confrontation with a state.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, certain FTOs that gained governmental representation have remained designated, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, which implies that these groups are still considered as threat to U.S. national security by the U.S. government. In fact, the U.S. government sometimes intensifies designations on FTOs that have gained political representation to thwart their rising influence.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Power and capabilities are also not identical: power is instead a function of many factors that include material and social capabilities. A generally accepted conceptualization of power entails four characteristics: it is a "causal concept; should be viewed as a relational concept rather than a property concept; is a multidimensional concept; and its bases are many and varied, with no permanent hierarchy among them." Baldwin 2016: 3.

⁴⁷ Cronin 2009.

⁴⁸ For instance, the United States launched several waves of SDGT designations against Hezbollah in the mid-2000s and mid-2010s, targeting finances, operations, etc.

This study attempts to provide a more holistic assessment of FTO power, by considering attacks and lethality of FTOs but also their overall capabilities, which I encapsulate in an original capability index.

Overview of the argument

Connecting different literatures,⁴⁹ I introduce a dual isolation-based and motives-based argument to understand the variation in the outcomes of U.S. terrorist designation policies. I posit that two factors are particularly important: firstly, the isolation type of designation targets and, secondly, the motives driving the designation policies. This approach provides greater explanatory power than existing theories accounting for designations' outcomes.

Unlike certain U.S. legislators and policymakers, most academic and policy assessments suggest that the main U.S. terrorist designations—the FTO list and the SDGT list deriving from Executive Order (EO) 13224⁵⁰—likely have limited impact and effectiveness in counterterrorism. As I argue in this dissertation, the set of conditions necessary to obtain the desired outcomes apply to only a small subset of targeted NSAGs, which explains these limitations.

At the international level, terrorist designations aim to isolate their targets, notably by stigmatizing them, restricting their access to the international financial system, forbidding international travel, and criminalizing third party support. However, NSAGs using terrorist tactics—or FTO candidates⁵¹—are oftentimes already isolated actors in the international system.

⁴⁹ In addition to the literature on terrorist designations, I notably use the literature in global governance, economic sanctions, international networks, domestic drivers of foreign policy, and ostracism in social psychology.

⁵⁰ There are other U.S. terrorist designations, notably for immigration purposes, but these two tools are the most prominent to target groups and individuals.

⁵¹ I use the term FTO in the remaining of the study to describe designated FTO, delisted FTO, and NSAGs designated as SDGT that were also considered for FTO designation.

Compared to states, IOs, and many non-state actors—e.g., non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private firms—NSAGs are usually not well integrated in most legal networks and international fora, such as the international financial system. Thus, policies seeking to ostracize these actors have limited impact and effectiveness. The integration and isolation levels of these groups nonetheless vary. FTOs are not uniformly exposed to the effects of terrorist designations, which partially explains the variation in outcomes.

I categorize three isolation types of targets from the FTO population: FTOs can be disconnected, connected, or established. *Disconnected* FTOs have mostly local sources of support, funding, membership, and operations. *Connected* FTOs rely on support networks in which the designator has leverage and can have from local to global operations. *Established* FTOs are larger, state-sponsored, or state-like, entities with regional or global operations. They rely on local and/or international sources for support and funding.

Disconnected FTOs are largely insulated from the effects of terrorist designations. Connected FTOs are the most exposed to designations, while established FTOs are impacted by designations but not in sufficient proportions to undermine their power.⁵²

Furthermore, since terrorist designations were designed as strategic instruments aiming to achieve foreign policy and security goals, they do not intend to target all NSAGs and individuals perpetrating or supporting terrorism.⁵³ Yet, they are sometimes promoted for non-strategic purposes, such as appealing to domestic constituents.⁵⁴ While strategic and non-strategic motives

⁵² This argument builds on the insights of studies in international political economy suggesting that states moderately connected to the global economy will be more vulnerable to sanctions than insulated states or major economic actors. See Bapat and Kwon 2015 for a sender's market share argument to explain sanctions' impact.

⁵³ As Cronin (2012) notes: "there are hundreds of groups that meet the criteria [of using terrorist tactics] for the FTO list but do not get added."

⁵⁴ As suggested in the sanction literature: see Whang 2011 and Tama 2020.

oftentimes overlap, one aspect generally dominates the designations' decision-making process and implementation.

The driving motives of these policies can therefore distinguish between *strategic* and *non-strategic* terrorist designations. When designation policies are not implemented to fulfill strategic objectives, they are not as impactful and effective since undermining their targets is not the primary goal.

Table 1 represents the 2 by 3 matrix of predicted outcomes for U.S. terrorist designation policies. As illustrated in Table 1, the present dissertation posits that these policies only achieve effectiveness, on their own and all else equal, when they are strategically implemented on connected targets.

Table 1: Terrorist designations' outcomes by isolation type and designation motives

Isolation Motives	Disconnected	Connected	Established
Strategic	- Low impact and effectiveness 1	- Moderate to high impact and effectiveness 2	- Moderate impact and low effectiveness 3
Non-strategic	- Low impact and effectiveness 4	- Low impact and effectiveness 5	- Low impact and effectiveness 6

Additionally, I dedicate a chapter of the dissertation to the collateral victims of terrorist designations, by looking at the side effects of these policies on civilian populations, conflict intensity, and humanitarian work. Since the literature does not offer causal mechanisms explaining how these policies can, in certain instances, increase attacks and lethality, I formulate a specific argument in the hypothesis-generating case of northeastern Nigeria.

This research is relevant to both policy and academic audiences. U.S. elected officials have promoted terrorist designations as silver-bullet policies on various occasions, such as in the

case of Boko Haram in the early 2010s,⁵⁵ and more recently in the case of Russian-backed NSAGs in eastern Ukraine.⁵⁶ Further, these policies are now used to target state entities, as the 2019 FTO designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran (IRGC) illustrates, which raises their stakes and implications.⁵⁷

Consequently, it is important to assess whether such policies have concrete impacts and participate in achieving strategic security and foreign policy objectives. The study clarifies the conditions under which terrorist designations fulfill strategic objectives, when they do not, and when they trigger undesirable side effects.

The dissertation contributes to the designation scholarship by furthering our knowledge of social and material pressures as means of coercion among actors in the international system. It also participates in the literature on security designations as a tool of global governance. Notably, the dissertation answers a call in the sanctions literature to adopt a more holistic approach to understand the effects of designations on state and non-state actors.⁵⁸

Variables overview and hypotheses

I examine two independent variables: FTOs' isolation type (X1) and terrorist designation motives (X2). I focus on FTOs' capabilities as the dependent variable (Y) to assess the variation in impact and effectiveness. The study controls for four variables (Z). This section provides an overview of the variables and lays out the hypotheses. I specify X1, X2, Y, and Z in further detail in Chapter 2.

⁵⁵ See S.3249, 112th Cong. 2012. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act.

⁵⁶ See S.1189, 116th Cong. 2019. Russian Federation and Russian-sponsored armed entities in Ukraine Terrorist Designation Review. Certain legislators have also argued that Russia should be designated as State Sponsor.

⁵⁷ Reinert and Hickey 2021.

⁵⁸ E.g., Peksen 2019.

For X1, I categorize FTOs as disconnected, connected, and established targets using specific criteria reflecting points of connectivity and elements of protection. Notably, I evaluate the FTOs' insertion into the international financial system, reliance on U.S.-linked persons, membership exposure to arrest, state affiliation or support, and size and resources.

For X2, I develop a framework to categorize whether the policies were driven by strategic or non-strategic motives. I assume *a priori* that designations are strategic and examine whether other considerations played a role in the decision-making process and implementation. If so, I determine which considerations were more important to the decision-makers. Therefore, the "burden of proof" is on the researcher to show that specific designations were driven by non-strategic motives.

To assess Y, I consider the number of attacks perpetrated by the FTO, in line with the literature, and I also report the overall lethality of these attacks to check for different patterns as suggested in Young's analysis.⁵⁹ Additionally, I use an original FTO capability composite index that compounds the following factors: financial resources, territory, membership, weaponry, and political representation. Both attacks and the FTO capability index are used as proxies for FTOs' capabilities.

It must be acknowledged that some overlap exists between X1 and the FTO capability index. Yet, the index remains useful to show that FTOs' characteristics at time $t-1$ can affect vulnerability and protection from designations at time t . It also provides a more accurate assessment of FTOs' capabilities. Trends in attacks and the FTO capability index match for most cases but not all cases.

⁵⁹ Young 2019.

Control variables sometimes illuminate the divergence in the two measures. I control for four variables: military interventions, multilateral designations, ally mechanism, and financial adaptability. Military interventions are in general a primary tool to undermine FTOs⁶⁰ and this variable is not controlled for in other studies on U.S. terrorist designation outcomes. I expect this variable to have a significant impact on attacks and the FTO capability index.

Multilateral designations control for the effects of other terrorist designations by IOs and major states that are generally strategically aligned with the United States, i.e., the United Nations, the European Union, and the United Kingdom. The economic sanctions literature argues that multilateral regimes are more impactful and effective.⁶¹ Although relevant, this variable does not apply to NSAGs as powerfully as to states, mainly because other terrorist designation tools have much less reach than U.S. designations.

Ally mechanism and financial adaptability represent alternative theoretical explanations provided in the literature on U.S. terrorist designation outcomes. I posit that these explanations have an inferior explanatory power than the approach advocated in this dissertation, either because the hypothesized causal mechanisms are empirically hardly verified or because the conceptualization and operationalization of these explanations lead to an incomplete assessment of designation outcomes.

Combining these two approaches provides one rival explanation that can be summarized as follows. FTOs operating in U.S. ally countries or having low to medium financial adaptability experience a decrease in capabilities for two main reasons: 1) U.S. allies would enforce U.S. designations more effectively, consequently undermining these FTOs. 2) Designations confiscate

⁶⁰ Cronin 2009.

⁶¹ Bapat 2009; Rosenberg et al. 2016.

the main income source of FTOs with low to medium financial adaptability, leading to a decline in capabilities and therefore attacks.

However, the ally mechanism is challenged by strong empirical evidence from countries critical to U.S. counterterrorism, such as Pakistan. A U.S. ally on both measures used by Phillips, Pakistan has not been a reliable partner in counterterrorism efforts against the Taliban and most of the eight FTOs operating in its territory.⁶² According to Phillips' approach, these designated groups should experience a decline in capabilities, while my theoretical framework predicts that these NSAGs would not be undermined by designations, would not experience such decline, and would therefore figure in cells #1 or #3 of Table 1.

Further, it empirically appears that cooperative allied states are the ones asking the United States to designate NSAGs operating in their territory,⁶³ rather than the United States designating a threat to its security in these countries. Thus, the subsequent impact on their capabilities suggests another causal mechanism than the one suggested by Phillips.

Regarding financial adaptability, Jo et al. measure this concept through the sources of funding available to FTOs.⁶⁴ They posit that criminal activities alone provides autonomy and invulnerability (two of the three pillars of financial adaptability), yet, resorting to criminal activities does not protect the transactions of an FTO that is otherwise exposed in the international financial system. They also maintain that FTOs relying on private funding are more exposed to designations because this funding transits through the international financial system. Yet, private funding can be mostly local and operate outside financial institutions: the relevant dichotomy here is therefore local versus international forms of integration and isolation.

⁶² See Cronin 2011, Legrand 2018. Some of these groups have been directly supported by the Pakistani government.

⁶³ For instance, to legitimize their fight against these NSAGs.

⁶⁴ Private funding, state sponsorship, terrorist networks, and criminal activities.

According to Jo et al.'s framework, an FTO such as al-Qaida is coded as having high financial adaptability and should not experience a decrease in capabilities following terrorist designations. Conversely, al-Qaida would figure in cell #2 in Table 1 in my framework, considering its scores on the isolation type scale.

By both refining and diverging from rival theories, the dissertation clarifies the conditions under which FTO are exposed in networks where U.S. terrorist designations have leverage, and how this exposure undermines these FTOs. By unearthing FTOs' points of connectivity in vulnerable networks and elements of protection, my theoretical approach is better suited to explain how terrorist designations can work and why they often fail to reduce FTOs' capabilities.

To assess my argument, I use the following testable hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: U.S. terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives, all else equal.

Hypothesis 2a: U.S. terrorist designations on disconnected and established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

Hypothesis 2b: U.S. terrorist designations on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

Hypothesis 2c: U.S. terrorist designations have more impact on established FTOs than on disconnected FTOs, all else equal.

Hypothesis 3: U.S. terrorist designations driven by strategic motives on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, compared to designations driven by non-strategic motives and designations on other types of FTOs, all else equal.

To test the hypotheses, I compare attacks and the FTO capability index pre and post designations. Designation cutting points are either the FTO designation year or a wave of SDGT designations, defined as over 10 SDGT designations in a single year, against a NSAG.

It must be noted that hypothesis 2c and certain cross-case comparisons are not easily tested with the variation in attacks and on the FTO capability index, because both disconnected and established FTOs are not expected to face a decrease in capabilities as a result of designations. While trends and anecdotal evidence can provide a contrast, the determination is inevitably weaker.

I report results for attacks and lethality in the 3-year window pre and post designations, since it is the range used in Jo et al.'s study, as well as in the long term. I report results for the FTO capability index for the long term, as it is empirically complicated to assess this measure in the short term.

The 3-year window is justified by Jo et al. as a relevant time length for designations to be effective.⁶⁵ While this justification may be relevant for designations decided in the 2010s, it is not necessarily the case for older designations, such as the initial FTO list of 1997—because of the improvement of terrorist designation tools after 9/11, e.g., EO 13224, and the learning process needed to master these policies.

The variables and hypotheses used to investigate the impacts of U.S. terrorist designations on civilian populations, conflict intensity, and humanitarian work are detailed in Chapter 6. In contrast to previous studies using quantitative analyses to assess the outcomes of U.S. terrorist designations, I favor the use of case studies to test my main hypotheses.

Case selection

The heterogeneity of the FTO population and data scarcity on these actors are major challenges to any study on FTOs. As this study prioritizes the understanding of causal

⁶⁵ Jo et al. 2021.

mechanisms, I adopt a case study approach, following the method of structured, focused comparison.⁶⁶

To develop and test my hypotheses, I select cases of NSAGs targeted by U.S. terrorist designations according to case selection criteria highlighted in the methodological literature. Precisely, I use a deviant hypothesis-generating case, and diverse, longitudinal, and most-similar cases for cross-case comparison. I primarily rely on the techniques and typologies outlined in Seawright and Gerring,⁶⁷ and Gerring and Cojocaru,⁶⁸ to guide the case selection.

I first conducted a full-fledged case study analysis of U.S. terrorist designations on Boko Haram and used this case as hypothesis-generating. Treating Boko Haram as a deviant hypothesis-generating case is pertinent because existing explanations offered limited insights on the outcomes of designation and this case exhibited a singular value on one variable of interest (X2).

Boko Haram was targeted by a major military intervention pre and post FTO designation and faced a multilateral terrorist designation regime. Further, Boko Haram operated in Nigeria, which is a U.S. ally according to Phillips' measures, and the group had medium financial adaptability according to Jo et al.'s criteria.

Additionally, the value of X2 is uncommon, as Boko Haram's designation process was the subject of an intense confrontation between Congress and the executive branch. This level of controversy for an FTO designation was highly unusual at the time, especially considering the limited stakes for U.S. national security and interests in northeastern Nigeria. The case analysis

⁶⁶ George and Bennett 2005: 57: "The method is 'structured' in that the researcher writes general questions that reflect the research objective and that these questions are asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation of the findings of the cases possible. The method is 'focused' in that it deals only with certain aspects of the historical cases examined."

⁶⁷ Seawright and Gerring 2008

⁶⁸ Gerring and Cojocaru 2016.

suggests that the designation was driven by non-strategic motives and the isolation-type measurement situates Boko Haram as a disconnected target.

A deviant case is pertinent to develop generalizable hypotheses about the phenomenon of interest and to explain other deviant cases. Such a case should provide a unique insight into the causal mechanisms and have high internal validity. However, a deviant case must be integrated into a cross-case comparison framework to achieve representativeness.⁶⁹ Thus, I use diverse, longitudinal, and most similar cross-case selection methods to identify relevant cases and test my hypotheses.

Diverse cases—the selection on variation in the independent variables—aim to be representative of the full variation of the population and to assess several or all potential causes (Z) of Y (assuming causal equifinality).⁷⁰ This selection method is well suited to studies with categorical independent variables and multiple control variables. The diverse case selection method used in this study is confirmatory.

Additionally, I further test my hypotheses by estimating causal effects through cross-case comparisons.⁷¹ As Gerring and Cojocaru point out: “researchers should administer case selection strategies using information about how cases perform through time, in addition to how they compare to other cases at a particular point in time.”⁷² Thus, I use the two appropriate techniques to estimate causal effects in a small-n setting: longitudinal and most similar cross-case comparisons.

A longitudinal cross-case comparison should emulate a one-group experiment, where X changes while Z remains constant, and Y is observed over time. Most similar cases should

⁶⁹ Seawright and Gerring 2008: 302. See also Fearon and Laitin 2008; Gerring and Cojocaru 2016.

⁷⁰ Seawright and Gerring 2008: 297. Fearon and Laitin 2008: 763.

⁷¹ Gerring and Cojocaru 2016: 401.

⁷² Ibid: 397.

exhibit different values on X and similar values on Z. Under these circumstances and specific assumptions, the realized outcomes (Y) across cases enable an estimation of a causal effect. Finally, when differences and similarities are matters of degree, the selection should maximize variance on X and minimize variance on Z.⁷³

In addition to Boko Haram, I selected a total of 11 diverse, longitudinal, and most similar cases of NSAGs targeted by U.S. terrorist designations: Boko Haram, Ansar Dine, Mujahedin-e Khalq (MeK), Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), the Islamic State 2003-13, the Islamic State 2013-20, the Taliban 1999-2009, the Taliban 2009-2021, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hezbollah, and al-Qaida Central (AQC).

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of cases in the matrix of terrorist designation outcomes.

Table 2: FTO cases by isolation type and designation motives

Isolation Motives	Disconnected	Connected	Established
Strategic	- Ansar Dine - Islamic State (2003-2013)	- MeK - ETA - Al-Qaida	- Islamic State (2013-2020) - Taliban (2009-2021) - Hezbollah
Non-strategic	- Boko Haram	- RIRA	- Taliban (1999-2009) - IRGC

Table 3 provides the rationale for case selection and summarizes the cases' values on X1, X2, the control variables (where CV1: military intervention; CV2: ally mechanism; CV3: financial adaptability; and CV4: multilateral designation), and the hypotheses being tested through the cases or the cross-case comparisons.

⁷³ Gerring and Cojocaru 2016: 401-402. Also see Van Evera 2016: 57: "In the method of difference the investigator chooses cases with similar general characteristics and different values on the study variables"; and Seawright and Gerring 2008: 298: "Most similar cases (two or more) are similar on specified variables other than X and/or Y."

Table 3: Truth table of FTO cases

Cases	Selection criteria	X1	X2	CV1	CV2	CV3	CV4	Hypotheses
Boko Haram	Hypothesis generating and most similar cross-case: Ansar Dine	Disconnected	Non-S	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	1, 2a
Ansar Dine	Diverse (X2) and most similar cross-case: Boko Haram	Disconnected	Strategic	Yes	No	High	Yes	1, 2a
MeK	Diverse: high values on X1	Connected	Strategic	No	No	Medium	Yes	2b, 3
ETA	Diverse (X1) and most similar cross-case: RIRA	Connected	Strategic	No	Yes	Medium	Yes	1, 2b, 3
RIRA	Diverse (X2) and most similar cross-case: ETA	Connected	Non-S	No	Yes	Medium	Yes	1, 2b, 3
Islamic State 2003-13	Longitudinal (IS 2013-20) and most similar (Taliban 1999-2009 and 2009-21)	Disconnected	Strategic	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	2a, 2c
Islamic State 2013-20	Diverse (X1), longitudinal (IS 2003-13) and most similar (Taliban 1999-2009)	Established	Strategic	Yes	Yes	High	Yes	1, 2a, 2c
Taliban 1999-2009	Longitudinal (Taliban 2009-21) and most similar (IS 2013-20)	Established	Non-S	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	1, 2a
Taliban 2009-2021	Longitudinal (Taliban 1999-2010) and most similar (IS 2003-13 and 2013-20)	Established	Strategic	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	1, 2a, 2c
IRGC	Diverse (X2) and most similar cross-case: Hezbollah	Established	Non-S	No	No	High	No	1, 2a
Hezbollah	Most similar cross-case: IRGC	Established	Strategic	Yes	No	Medium	Yes	1, 2a
Al-Qaida	Diverse: intrinsic importance	Connected	Strategic	Yes	Yes	High	Yes	2b, 3

X1: Isolation type. X2: Strategic binary. CV1: Military intervention. CV2: Ally mechanism. CV3: Financial adaptability. CV4: Multilateral regime.

While longitudinal cross-case comparisons focus on the same FTO over time, most similar cross-case comparisons need to be justified further, in addition to their similarities on Z and variation on X1 or X2. Therefore, I provide detailed justifications as to why these cases are most similar in the cross-case comparison sections of their respective chapters.

Since I argue that U.S. terrorist designations, on their own and all else equal, are only effective on connected targets, I selected cases of connected FTOs that did not face military interventions for the cross-case comparisons in this category, because such a variable is more likely to lead to a decrease in attacks and on the FTO capability index. Methodologically, it is more pertinent to have a negative value for this variable rather than trying to disentangle the effects of designations from the effects of military interventions.

By contrast, all the other cases faced military interventions. If the combination of military interventions and terrorist designations did not lead to a reduction of attacks, it becomes easier to control for the military interventions variable and makes the argument stronger.

It must be noted that the most similar cross-case comparison of the Taliban (2009-2021) and Islamic State (2013-2020) does not test for a hypothesis but is conducted for its policy application. Indeed, the Taliban was targeted with multiple SDGT designations but was not designated as an FTO, while the Islamic State faced both the FTO designation and multiple SDGT designations.

Further, MeK and AQC do not have most similar or longitudinal cases for cross-case comparison, but these cases are selected as part of the diverse selection strategy. MeK exhibits particularly high values on X1 as a connected target and having extreme values on one independent variable is an important criterion for diverse case selection.⁷⁴ AQC is selected for its

⁷⁴ Seawright and Gerring 2008; Gerring and Cojocaru 2016.

intrinsic importance,⁷⁵ considering that the refinement and development of terrorist designation tools post 9/11 were primarily targeted at this FTO.⁷⁶

Finally, although diverse case selection is representative in “the minimal sense of representing the full variation of the population,” it does not necessarily mirror the distribution of the variation in the population.⁷⁷ One important assumption of the study is that the majority of FTOs are either in the disconnected or established category, which explains why U.S. terrorist designations rarely lead to a decrease in FTO attacks and capabilities.

I acknowledge this limitation of the study, which could only be fully addressed with case studies of all NSAGs targeted by U.S. terrorist designations and the combination of qualitative analyses illuminating the causal mechanisms and qualitative analyses providing external validity. Quantitative analyses with a more approximative coding of the variables would also provide additional external validity.⁷⁸

Organization of the Manuscript

The manuscript contains seven chapters and is organized as follows. Chapter 2 elaborates on the theoretical approach and provides a historical and technical background on U.S. terrorist designations. This chapter also details the methodology and data used in the study.

Chapter 3 focuses on the deviant hypothesis-generating case of Boko Haram, in which I comprehensively assess the claims made in the literature and by policymakers on the supposed effects of terrorist designations on FTOs’ capabilities. I subsequently develop a framework to standardize cross-case comparisons.

⁷⁵ Gerring and Cojocaru 2016.

⁷⁶ Zarate 2013.

⁷⁷ Gerring 2008: 648.

⁷⁸ Some scholars argue that case study methods and statistical analyses respond to different ontologies and epistemologies. Therefore, the causal mechanisms potentially illuminated in the cases would not be further validated by statistical analyses performed on a dataset (see Chatterjee 2013). However, descriptive statistics would provide indications of the distribution of the population on the variables of interest.

Chapter 4 examines the longitudinal cases of the Islamic State (2003-2013 and 2013-2020) and the Taliban (1999-2009 and 2009-2021). I perform both longitudinal and most similar cross-case comparisons to test hypotheses 1, 2a, 2c. I also provide a policy assessment of two terrorist designation strategies, with one combining FTO and SDGT designations and the other exclusively using SDGT designations.

Chapter 5 assesses the cases of Ansar Dine, MeK, ETA, RIRA, Hezbollah, IRGC, and AQC. I perform the most similar cross-case comparisons of Boko Haram and Ansar Dine, ETA and RIRA, and Hezbollah and IRGC. I also present the overall results for all the cases assessed in the study.

Chapter 6 provides a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the impacts of terrorist designations on civilian populations and the humanitarian situation, in the case of northeastern Nigeria where Boko Haram operates. I use this case as hypothesis-generating and conduct a brief plausibility probe to assess a possible generalization.

I find that terrorist designations had nefarious impacts on the humanitarian situation and in terms of conflict intensity. However, the causal mechanisms linking FTO designation to an increase in conflict intensity—assessed through conflict related deaths—do not transpose to the cases examined in the plausibility probe (the conflicts involving Ansar Dine and the Islamic State).

Chapter 7 presents the dissertation's primary findings and discusses prospects for further research as well as other applications of the theoretical approach used in the study. I also propose policy recommendations based on the dissertation's findings.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY, BACKGROUND, METHODOLOGY

This chapter serves three purposes. First, I delineate the theoretical approach of the study, building on different bodies of literature.⁷⁹ I develop in further detail the theory deployed to answer the study's research question: what explains variation in the outcomes of U.S. terrorist designation policies?

Second, I provide a historical and technical background on the use of terrorist designations by the United States and in global governance frameworks. This background is important to understand the implications of U.S. terrorist designations and other international terrorist designation regimes.

Finally, I detail the study's methodology, alluded to in the introduction. Notably, I clarify the measurements used for the dependent variable, independent variables, and control variables. I also specify data collection and investigation methods.

Designations in international relations and global governance

As mentioned in chapter 1, the designation literature in IR postulates that international actors are members of a global society. Certain actors can effectively mobilize social and material pressures to coerce alleged wrongdoers and incentivize a specific perception of good behavior.⁸⁰ Effective designations expose their targets to material and social consequences that integrate in or isolate from this global society.

One particularly tangible form of designation in the international system is state recognition. It facilitates protection under international law, access to multilateral bodies, and the

⁷⁹ In addition to the literature on terrorist designations, I notably use studies in global governance, economic sanctions, international networks, domestic drivers of foreign policy, and ostracism in social psychology.

⁸⁰ Friman 2015: 5.

development of relations with other states, while also promoting collective identity and ontological security. Conversely, nonrecognition or derecognition have a negative impact on these attributes and isolate stateless territorial entities.⁸¹

Classifications and rankings from intergovernmental organizations (IOs) such as the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, the Financial Action Task Force's non-complier list, and the former World Bank's *Doing Business* report have material and social impacts—positive or negative—on the actors being praised or shamed. These designations influence bureaucratic reputations, investor sentiment, internal politics, and condition these actors' ability to raise money on financial markets.⁸²

Regarding security designations, states targeted by U.N. sanctions face both material costs—such as sectorial embargoes or the blacklisting of national firms—and the social cost of being stigmatized by the U.N. Security Council, the most legitimate body under international law in matters of peace and security.⁸³

One recurrent consequence of designations that aim to penalize is the isolation effect on their targets: from social stigmatization that sets them apart within a group of equals, to embargoes that circumscribe their ability to trade with other international actors, to financial sanctions that restrict their access to international banking.⁸⁴

The literature suggests that this isolation process often aims to influence targets' behavior. Depending on the issue-area being investigated, scholars tend to focus on one category of effects that would cause targets to alter their behavior. Studies on naming and shaming⁸⁵ or on

⁸¹ Visoka et al. 2020, 2-3, 326-328.

⁸² Bisbee et al. 2020, Morse 2020, Doshi et al. 2020. The suspension of the *Doing Business* report, following allegations of political meddling by member states and interference by high-level staff in the scientific production of the report, tend to confirm Doshi et al.'s argument that actors care deeply about such rankings.

⁸³ Biersteker 2015.

⁸⁴ Friman 2015, Biersteker 2015, Kelley and Simons 2020.

⁸⁵ Keck and Sikkink, Hafner-Burton 2008, Friman et al. 2015.

rankings and indicators⁸⁶ emphasize the social impacts,⁸⁷ where actors would react to designations in the absence of material effects because of concerns for reputation and status.⁸⁸ Studies on security designations, such as sanctions, usually investigate their material effects,⁸⁹ and assess how economic isolation leads to changes in behavior.⁹⁰

Furthermore, the literature suggests that only specific actors have the power to wield effective designation policies and isolate international actors. Designators must possess sufficient material and/or social capabilities, depending on the type of designation pursued. For instance, research on U.S. financial sanctions highlights the tangible attributes of the designator—such as the predominance of the dollar in international exchanges, the size of the U.S. financial system, the extraterritorial reach of the U.S. judiciary, and the clout of the United States in international politics—to explain why U.S. designations can isolate their targets effectively.⁹¹

Studies on social pressures emphasize the “normative power” of designators, or the ability to shape conceptions of what is “normal.”⁹² For example, by choosing the semantic field describing an international issue and creating categories to assess it, designators affect both

⁸⁶ E.g., Kelley 2017, Morse 2020, Kelley and Simons 2020. This literature can be seen as the last wave of the naming and shaming concept. Kelley and Simons define global performance indicators as “a named collection of rank-ordered data that purports to represent the past or projected performance of different units.”

⁸⁷ Morse (2020) on the impact of the FATF non-complier list on national legislations and most studies in Kelley and Simons’ edited volume (2020) are good illustrations.

⁸⁸ Vis-à-vis targets and third parties. As expressed by Kelley and Simons (2020: 8): “A reputation refers to a widespread belief that a person or an organization can reliably be characterized in a particular way. [...] status is explicitly comparative: it refers to the relative social or professional standing of someone or something in a formal or informal social hierarchy. Both reputation and status are quintessentially social constructs; they are granted or accorded only by a social community.”

⁸⁹ These effects are not always easy to identify, as shown in research on sanction busting, enforcement, and compliance. See Early 2015, Early and Preble 2020a and Early and Preble 2020b.

⁹⁰ E.g., Biersteker 2015, Drezner 2015, Rosenberg et al. 2016. International sanction regimes usually relate to nuclear proliferation, terrorist activity, armed conflicts and territorial invasion, and other international crimes.

⁹¹ E.g., Zarate 2013. The example of massive private disinvestment from the Chinese institution Banco Delta Asia (designated as a “primary money laundering concern” under Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act) illustrates the reach of the United States in the international financial sphere.

⁹² Kelley and Simons 2020: 7, after Manners 2002.

discourse and policy. This process can be referred as “symbolic power”⁹³ or the ability to name, categorize, and subsequently integrate or isolate.

Potent designations stem from the authority and legitimacy of their promoters.⁹⁴

Designators have authority based on their assumed competence, which may be inferred from their economic development level, governance prowess, military capabilities, etc. Actors who are perceived as exemplifying specific norms are also more likely to be viewed as authoritative in judging them.⁹⁵

Thus, designators include established human rights NGOs, private financial firms, and specialized IOs. However, a select number of states and IOs are seen as the most powerful designators, considering their combination of material and social capabilities. For instance, the U.N. Security Council is the most legitimate actor to intercede in international conflicts⁹⁶ and its designations are backed by the world’s top military powers.⁹⁷

The literature also highlights that designation policies can have unintended effects and ulterior motives. Even seemingly benign policies such as development indicators may be counterproductive: for example, some low-income economies may have neglected parts of their development agenda to focus on the metrics evaluated by IOs, resulting in adverse effects for their overall development.⁹⁸

⁹³ As introduced by Bourdieu (1977).

⁹⁴ These concepts are linked, following Hurd (1999: 379-381) who considers that legitimacy is a particularly important source of authority in the international context and describes legitimacy as a “subjective quality, relational between actor and institution, and defined by the actor’s perception of the institution.”

⁹⁵ Kelley and Simons 2020: 6.

⁹⁶ It is in fact the only actor authorized to act on any issue threatening international peace under international law.

⁹⁷ See Bosco 2009, Biersteker 2015. These studies on the U.N. Security Council also highlight the reasons for its paralysis on certain security issues and the calls for reforms.

⁹⁸ Such as the U.N. Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, see Bisbee et al. 2020.

Regarding security designations, the humanitarian fallout of sanctions has been underlined as a particularly nefarious externality.⁹⁹ While mostly hurting vulnerable populations, sanctions may also produce “rally-round-the-flag” reactions that can bolster the targeted regimes.¹⁰⁰ Although some scholars describe targeted financial sanctions as smart tools that mitigate negative side effects and generate leverage,¹⁰¹ critiques of these policies are recurrent in both the academic and policy spheres.¹⁰² Studies also emphasize that sanctions can be used to fulfill domestic rather than international political goals.¹⁰³

Despite the variety of practices, the designation literature delineates common themes. International designations involve a designator identifying and categorizing international actors. Effective designations produce material and/or social effects that integrate targets or isolate them from specific international groups in global society. Designations may seek to influence targets’ behavior and regularly have unintended side effects.

As security designations aim to isolate their targets, the concept of ostracism is useful in understanding these policies. While certain studies mention it as a goal or consequence of international sanctions,¹⁰⁴ ostracism has essentially been used as a metaphor rather than a theoretical lens. This concept fits neatly with the ideas developed in the designation literature and is particularly relevant to terrorist designations.

Isolation as a means of power in IR: connecting ostracism and designation policies

Throughout history, practices involving stigmatization, exclusion, and isolation have been used across societies to control groups and individuals. The concept of ostracism originates

⁹⁹ Especially since the humanitarian disaster associated with the sanction regime on Iraq in the 1990s, Biersteker 2015.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Grauvogel and von Soest 2014.

¹⁰¹ E.g., Zarate 2013, Drezner 2015.

¹⁰² E.g., Peksen 2019, Hanania 2020.

¹⁰³ E.g., Whang 2011, Tama 2020.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Biersteker 2015.

in such a practice. In ancient Greece during the 5th century BC, Athenians established an annual consultation leading to a ten-year ban for the designated citizen, to protect the newly founded democratic institutions from potential dictators.¹⁰⁵ The term outlived this practice and came to represent exclusion and isolation “from a society or group” or “from common privileges and social acceptance.”¹⁰⁶

Ostracism is described in social psychology as a ubiquitous and powerful means of social control. Within modern cultures, it is used in various institutions such as schools and justice systems.¹⁰⁷ It encompasses different types of isolation—from ignoring (not including) to excluding—and has consequences on the target, the source, and third parties.¹⁰⁸ Ostracism can be oblivious, defensive, and punitive. Punitive ostracism, which is “used as a form of punishment for perceived or actual wrongdoing on the part of the target,”¹⁰⁹ accurately captures the logic behind terrorist and other security designations in international relations.

The literature in social psychology finds that being isolated can have dehumanizing and other “devastating psychological effects” on targets.¹¹⁰ In particular, ostracism threatens fundamental human needs such as belonging, meaningful existence, and recognition by others.¹¹¹ Depending on the intensity of the isolation and targets’ characteristics, reactions to ostracism

¹⁰⁵ The term comes from ‘ostrakon’ (Greek: ὄστρακον), which refers to the pottery shard used by Athenians to vote in this consultation. The Athenian democracy was an unprecedented form of government but excluded most of the adult population from the political process (e.g., women, enslaved people, etc.), thus, the term democratic in this context differs from modern standards.

¹⁰⁶ The notion of exclusion by ‘general consent’ is sometimes part of the definition, in reference to the Athenian practice.

¹⁰⁷ Williams 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Williams 2009, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Williams and Zadro, in Leary 2001: 29.

¹¹⁰ Bastian and Haslam 2010: 107.

¹¹¹ Williams 2009.

vary: from attempts at reintegration, compliance, and conformity, to alienation, provocation, radicalization, and violent retaliation.¹¹²

In general, it appears that ostracized people tend to behave more aggressively compared with non-ostracized people. As ostracism “leads to cognitive deconstruction by altering perceptions of reality,” it reduces targets’ perceived costs of aggression and subsequently incites aggression.¹¹³ Further, reactions to ostracism tend to be more aggressive if the prospects for reintegration are perceived as small or nonexistent.¹¹⁴ The literature on terrorist designations suggests comparable dynamics: a few NSAGs alter their behavior in order to be delisted following designation, while most NSAGs seem to continue or intensify their violent activities.¹¹⁵

The literature in social psychology underlines the importance of targets’ characteristics to understand their reaction to ostracism. For instance, larger groups are harder to isolate and their reaction to ostracism tends to be more belligerent than it is conforming.¹¹⁶ This suggests that attempts to ostracize through designation may not work if the target is too important in a given network.¹¹⁷ Regarding third parties, this literature finds that they often acquiesce to ostracism and fail to aid targets “because they are unwilling to accept the risk of behaving differently from others” and becoming targets themselves.¹¹⁸ This phenomenon reflects the rationale behind the criminalization of support for terrorism offenses, associated with U.S. terrorist designations.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Poon and Wong 2018: 1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Jo et al. 2020, Loertscher 2020.

¹¹⁶ Williams 2009: 306-307.

¹¹⁷ These notions are relatively subjective and a matter of definition. In other words, some targets would be “too big to be ostracized.”

¹¹⁸ Williams 2011: 71.

In fact, ostracism is omnipresent in international relations. Isolation operates among different actors and in different forms: from ignoring (not including) to excluding. States considered as not important enough are not included in certain gatherings, such as the G20. Other states are deliberately excluded from such groups because their actions are seen as reprehensible by the community, such as Russia from the G8 following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and from multiple international fora following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

As underlined in the designation literature, struggles over state recognition illustrate the importance of being integrated in the international system of sovereign states, as harsh campaigns oppose entities with limited statehood seeking to extend their status (e.g., Taiwan and the Palestinian territories) and those who want to keep them isolated (i.e., China and Israel).

Ostracism is acutely obvious when performed through security designations against non-state actors. In particular, terrorist designations convey an exceptionally strong condemnation.¹¹⁹ Terrorists are seen as the ultimate international outcasts, who should be ostracized and eradicated. Designations therefore aim to identify and isolate these pariahs—both materially and socially—from international society.¹²⁰

In line with the designation literature, ostracism through designations is better grasped as a power that certain actors use over others. A generally accepted conceptualization of power in IR posits that it is “a causal concept; should be viewed as a relational concept rather than a property concept; is a multidimensional concept; and [that] its bases are many and varied, with

¹¹⁹ Considering the deeply negative connotation of the word “terrorist,” these designations illustrate a “speech-act” as conceptualized by securitization theory, see Williams 2003.

¹²⁰ To take a few examples: Designation “stigmatizes and isolates designated terrorist organizations internationally.” U.S. Department of State. 2021. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations.” “Sanctions also expose and isolate terrorists and their organizations” U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2019. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2018: 2. Individual designations and sanctions are “designed to isolate individuals, and by extension, the groups they support from the U.S. and international financial systems.” Loertscher et al. 2020: 67.

no permanent hierarchy among them.”¹²¹ Well-known IR schools of thought are useful in understanding how this power may operate in the international system.

Notably, a corpus of scholarship considers that the international system is better understood as a society since it is made up of mutually constitutive social relationships.¹²² Following WWII, this society has had a Western-inspired institutionalized order—the so-called rules-based “liberal international order” (LIO)—even if this order is being challenged.¹²³ Finally, this society is global, unevenly integrated, and composed of multiple international actors.¹²⁴

Through these theoretical lenses, ostracism and isolation as means of power have been implied in different ways.¹²⁵ Such examples relate instances of a relational, causal, and

¹²¹ Baldwin 2016: 3, which builds on and shares key principles with Weber 1947; Dahl 1957; Lukes 1974; Strange 1996; Barnett and Duvall 2005.

¹²² This claim was initially advanced by international theorists who argued that the absence of a central authority did not prevent the formation of an international society (essentially the English School: see Bull 1977 and Dunne and Reus-Smit 2017 for an updated vision). Constructivists have anchored their approach in this assumption (e.g., Wendt 1999), opening the way to works that give greater importance to factors such as reputation and legitimacy (e.g., Hurd 1999). The idea is also adopted by international law scholars, who have argued that international law first developed among a society of states that saw each other as “civilized nations” (Anghie 1999). Citing Thomas Frank, Hurd (1999: 381) makes the cogent argument that “the international system should be the best social system in which to observe a ‘normative’ social order in its pure form, precisely because of the absence of an international government to enforce international laws and contract.” The act of mutual recognition, for instance, clearly indicates the presence of a social practice: recognition is fundamental to an identity relationship. More recently, network scholars have promoted the use of network analysis to identify social power in the international system (see Hafner-Burton et al. 2009).

¹²³ According to its proponents (e.g., Ikenberry, Keohane), the liberal international order is based on political and economic ideas that emerged in the West and was mostly promoted by the US and its European allies after WWII. The order’s guiding principles include the rule of law, multilateral institutions, open markets, and liberal democracy. International institutions and other rules-making frameworks created post-WWII are supposed to embody these principles. Critiques usually emphasize that powerful states, primarily the US, can avoid or manipulate the order’s rules when convenient: see Mearsheimer’s (1994) classic critique, Bosco (2009, 2014) and Stone (2011) for examples in different issue-areas. Yet, critiques acknowledge the existence, and oftentimes the importance, of these frameworks. Another debate is whether this order will survive a power shift towards more authoritarian poles such as China: liberal principles may fade following the diversification of powerful stakeholders in global economic and security governance frameworks (e.g., Kahler 2013).

¹²⁴ Major economic poles are increasingly interconnected (see works on complex interdependence and their iterations: Keohane and Nye 1977, Keohane 2002), although globalization is an uneven phenomenon (see Mittelman 2000, Sholte 2005). While states (powerful ones in particular) are the major actors of this society, the role of other actors has been increasingly studied and highlighted as crucial: for instance, the private sector (e.g., Strange 1996), NGOs (e.g., Keck and Sikkink 1998, Kelley 2017), and non-state armed groups (e.g., Kaldor 2001). For an approach combining these elements, see Milner and Moravcsik 2009 and Mittelman 2010.

¹²⁵ Seminal studies can illustrate this trend. One main argument of neoliberal institutionalism is that the American liberal hegemon decided on the terms of the global institutional framework that other actors had to accept in order to be integrated into global society (e.g., Keohane 1984). The very emergence of a liberal trading order began with the

multidimensional power. Multidimensional power involves a social relationship between two or more actors, triggers material and social effects, and can have unintended consequences.¹²⁶

Applied to terrorist designations, ostracism represents the power to isolate, or the process by which designators materially and socially isolate unwanted actors from global society. Through this process, designated pariahs should become isolated as their material and social ties to other international actors are loosened and broken.

Akin to the criteria suggested in the designation literature, designators need to be integrated into the international society's formal and informal institutions, and possess sufficiently high levels of authority, legitimacy, and coercive means. Network scholars have identified the need to be integrated to isolate others. They underline that actors with a "higher degree of centrality in the international system" can impose "social sanctions such as marginalization as a method of coercion."¹²⁷ Since isolation through designations aims to sever ties between nodes, the analytical tools and principles of network analysis in IR are useful to comprehend the process.¹²⁸

Thus, only a few actors can exercise ostracism in its multiple dimensions. In line with the designation literature, the most effective sources of ostracism are powerful governmental actors. Indeed, major states and IOs possess established security designation mechanisms (e.g., the

inclusion of most-favored-nation clauses in bilateral agreements creating a "club good:" states in such agreements shared a collective benefit while others were excluded and paid a substantially higher tariff rate (e.g., Stein 1990). Followers of Gramsci (e.g., Gill and Law 1989, Cox 1996) posit that the neoliberal 'hegemonic world order' places some actors at the center and leaves others at the margin, through institutionalized consent and coercion. In a precisely delimited issue-area, Simmons (2001) argues that the rest of the world had to adjust to the terms of the American hegemon regarding capital market regulation to remain included.

¹²⁶ Baldwin (2016: 73) remarks that scholars focusing on unintended effects systematically infer that they are detrimental to those affected by power, while it is not necessarily the case.

¹²⁷ Hafner-Burton et al. 2009: 570.

¹²⁸ This approach is grounded in three principles: "nodes and their behaviors are mutually dependent, not autonomous; ties between nodes can be channels for transmission of both material (for example, weapons, money, or disease) and non-material products (for example, information, beliefs, and norms); and persistent patterns of association among nodes create structures that can define, enable, or restrict the behavior of nodes." Ibid: 562. Variants of centrality in a network include "degree, closeness, and betweenness." Ibid: 563.

United States, U.N. Security Council, European Union, etc.) and emerging powers are developing their own policies while attempting to influence existing ones (e.g., China).¹²⁹ Tellingly, other governmental actors are unsuccessful in their attempts to designate and isolate. For instance, Iran has designated the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), parts of the U.S. military, and members of the U.S. Congress as terrorists in reaction to U.S. designations, with no tangible material or social effects.

Terrorist designations are the clearest expressions of ostracism as they seek to isolate targets and leave little room for reintegration.¹³⁰ However, even U.S. terrorist designations, extended by U.N. and other designations, often fail to undermine their targets. To understand the limitations of the power to isolate through terrorist designations, it is useful to review the historical and technical conditions in which these policies have developed and operated.

The U.S.-led international terrorist designation regime

Terrorist designations have developed within the institutions of the LIO. The United States was the first state to use designations to target actors involved in terrorism and subsequently promoted similar policies in major IOs. Considering the United States' clout in international political economy and security, U.S. terrorist designations should be particularly impactful.

In addition to top economic and military capabilities, the United States possesses the largest financial system in the world and the dominant currency in international financial

¹²⁹ China has sought to insert the non-state actors it opposes in the terrorist lists of Western countries and IOs, feeding the debate on whether emerging powers seek to integrate existing institutional frameworks of global governance (see Kahler 2013).

¹³⁰ One of the stated goals of the US FTO list is to “isolate designated terrorist organizations internationally” and instances of total delisting are rare. The SDGT list is also not structured to reintegrate designees: “Once an individual is designated, it is exceedingly difficult to be removed from the SDGT list. Those who have been removed had to face an unclear administrative review that lasted, on average, six years” (Loertscher et al. 2020: VIII).

markets.¹³¹ It is arguably the most influential member of the U.N. Security Council and of other powerful IOs.¹³² It has a considerable judicial branch with exceptional extraterritorial reach.¹³³ As the designation literature underlines, the United States also enjoys high levels of authority and legitimacy, and benefits from both “normative power” and “symbolic power.”¹³⁴

Consequently, the United States is described as a “trendsetter” in terrorist designations.¹³⁵ These tools and policies are the result of overlapping legislations that have built upon each other over the past decades. They reflect the pursuit of both domestic and foreign policy objectives, and they have progressively involved a growing number of U.S. governmental actors.

The first formal terrorist list, the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, stemmed from the 1979 Export Administration Act and was based on a total of three different statutes that authorized the Secretary of State to designate a foreign government for “repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism, and to curtail aid or trade to that country as a result.”¹³⁶

The creation of the Foreign Terrorist Organization list through the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) in 1996 further empowered the Department of State (DOS) with designating NSAGs as FTOs and provided the Department of the Treasury (USDT) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) with new prerogatives.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Simmons 2001, Drezner 2015.

¹³² Such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the FATF. The United States also wield influence in IOs of which it is not a member, such as the ICC. See Bosco 2009, 2014; Stone 2011.

¹³³ See Grundman 1980, Colangelo 2007, Terry 2020.

¹³⁴ Kelley and Simons 2020.

¹³⁵ See Ilbiz and Curtis 2015, Phillips 2019, El Masri and Phillips 2021. El Masri and Phillips (2021: 1) note that “[g]enerally, designation does not seem to be driven by target or attack severity. It often results from diffusion: most countries follow the United States.”

¹³⁶ Rennack 2015: 2. Four states were initially listed (Iraq, Libya, South Yemen, and Syria) and four states are designated as of 2021 (Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Syria).

¹³⁷ Immediate legal implications result from designation such as travel bans for FTO members, freezing of assets of any person or entity affiliated with the FTO, and prosecution of any person or entity providing “material support or resources” to the FTO. The freezing of assets is overseen by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of USDT. The prosecution for material support of terrorism is handled by DOJ.

Several rationales have been advanced to account for the creation of the FTO list, including: to address recent terrorist attacks on civilians by non-state actors, such as the Aum Shinrikyo attack in Japan and the McVeigh attack in Oklahoma City;¹³⁸ to target armed groups in the Middle East that opposed the U.S.-led Israeli-Palestinian peace process;¹³⁹ and to develop a new statute for prosecuting members of certain foreign organizations at the domestic level.¹⁴⁰

Following 9/11, DOS and USDT were equipped with additional designation tools. The SDGT list created by EO 13224, largely crafted by OFAC officials, aimed to leverage U.S. financial dominance to prevent individuals and entities linked to terrorist NSAGs from using the international financial system.¹⁴¹ In addition to DOS, USDT was empowered with issuing and monitoring SDGT designations. Since then, FTO designations have followed an interagency process—involving DOS, USDT, DOJ, NSC, and intelligence agencies—and have systematically been joined with an SDGT designation on the same NSAG.

EO 13224 aimed to target the financial infrastructure of terrorist networks beyond terrorist actors.¹⁴² It authorized the prosecution of international and domestic supporters of SDGT, enabling designations on “all those who provide financial or material support to, or who are ‘associated with,’ designated terrorist groups.”¹⁴³ The USA PATRIOT Act¹⁴⁴ from October 2001 also strengthened the leverage of terrorist designation tools. Designed to work jointly with

¹³⁸ Loertscher et al. 2020.

¹³⁹ Interview with John Campbell.

¹⁴⁰ Suggested by Anna Meier (upcoming publication). See the debates following the “Los Angeles Eight” case.

¹⁴¹ Zarate 2013.

¹⁴² Loertscher et al. 2020.

¹⁴³ Department of the Treasury 2002: 7

¹⁴⁴ “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism” Act.

EO 13224 (for instance, through section 311 designations), it created the Terrorist Exclusion List¹⁴⁵ and extended charges of proscribed material support (18 U.S.C. sections 2339A and B).¹⁴⁶

As a consequence of the 9/11 attacks, FTO and SDGT designations have mostly focused on “global jihadism”¹⁴⁷ and Islamic jihadist groups, in contrast to the nationalist/separatist and leftist/Marxist groups that were mainly targeted at the inception of the FTO list in 1997.¹⁴⁸

Further, the U.S. government promoted the adoption of similar policies in the U.N. system to enhance the legitimacy and efficacy of U.S. terrorist designations. U.S. policy goals against jihadist groups have been conveyed in several U.N. Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. The United Nations does not maintain a terrorist list *per se* and designations on this matter are the responsibility of the Security Council’s committee pursuant to UNSC resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1896 (2009)—targeting al-Qaida and associates—and 2253 (2015), targeting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh).

Resolution 1267 from 1999 was the first UNSC resolution to use the terrorist label: it established a sanction regime against designated individuals and entities associated with al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban. Mirroring the U.S. decision not to designate the Taliban as an FTO, the Security Council separated al-Qaida and the Taliban into two distinct designations and sanction committees in 2011.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Which authorizes the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General, to designate terrorist organizations for immigration purposes (Cronin 2003).

¹⁴⁶ Notably adding “expert advice or assistance” to forms of support and increasing maximum terms of imprisonment for these offenses (Doyle 2016: 1-2). The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 further amended the definition of “material support or resources” that applies to both sections.

¹⁴⁷ Jihadism is a neologism used to describe “militant Islamic movements that are perceived as existentially threatening to the West.” It originates from the Arabic word jihad, which means “striving” or “struggling.” Although frequently associated with war, jihad can refer in a religious context to any efforts one can make to live in conformity with God’s guidance, such as a struggle against one’s unholy inclinations. Firestone 2012: 263-285.

¹⁴⁸ Beck and Miner 2014.

¹⁴⁹ Charbonneau, Louis. 2011. “U.N. Council splits U.N. Taliban, Qaeda sanctions list,” *Reuters*, June 17.

Additionally, the United States and its allies have involved other IOs, such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank Group (WBG) to complement terrorist designations following 9/11. For instance, the mandate of the FATF was expanded to address the funding of terrorists acts and the Bretton Woods institutions developed substantial Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) programs.

One of the FATF's main tools is the publication of a designation list of "non-cooperative" states, aiming to incite them to pass stricter terrorist financing laws in their national legislations. As the designation literature points out, the FATF is used extensively by a range of financial actors and has adverse effects on recalcitrant countries.¹⁵⁰

Finally, the United States coordinates, to some extent, its terrorist designations with allies, such as the United Kingdom, which started a list of "proscribed international terrorist groups" under the 2000 Terrorism Act, and member-states of the European Union, whose terrorist list began in 2002.¹⁵¹

FTOs' isolation type and designation motives

Despite the U.S.-led designation regime on terrorism, U.S. designations are limited in their ability to undermine FTOs' capabilities and alter FTOs' behavior. At the same time, they can bring about undesirable externalities. This study posits that two factors explain this limited effectiveness: 1) FTOs' exposure to the costs of designation depends on their isolation type and

¹⁵⁰ Morse 2020.

¹⁵¹ Allies do not systematically agree on which organizations should be designated, however. The overlap between the US, UK, and EU lists was only 24% in 2012 (Beck and Miner 2013: 841.) El Masri and Phillips' more recent study (2021) nonetheless underlines that "most countries follow the United States."

only a small number of FTOs are sensitive to these costs; 2) these policies are not always implemented strategically, which makes them less effective.

Terrorist designations convey a particularly virulent condemnation and impose material and social costs on targets. The FTO and SDGT lists should hurt their targets through the conjunction of these costs, whose main purpose is to isolate. In the words of the U.S. government, the FTO list “stigmatizes and isolates designated terrorist organizations internationally,” and the SDGT list’s core logic is to isolate entities and individuals involved in terrorism from the international financial system.¹⁵²

FTO and SDGT designations trigger concrete measures to materially isolate targets, such as travel bans and the blocking of assets. They complicate targets’ international travel, facilitate judicial prosecutions with a set of specific charges, and criminalize support to deter third parties from interacting with them.¹⁵³ Through primary and secondary sanctions, they seek to impede targets’ ability to conduct international transactions and to access dollar-denominated accounts and assets. These designations also stigmatize targets to signal reprobation to international audiences¹⁵⁴ and to promote mobilization against them.¹⁵⁵ According to some accounts, they may also facilitate the deployment of U.S. military aid to states fighting designated NSAGs.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² See the full rationale for the FTO list at: U.S. Department of State. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/> (last consultation June 2022). For EO 13224: U.S. Department of State. “Executive Order 13224” <https://www.state.gov/executive-order-13224/> (last consultation June 2022).

¹⁵³ The prosecution for material support of terrorism is handled by the Department of Justice under 18 U.S.C. sections 2339A and 2339B. The interpretation of support is comprehensive and includes providing training on non-violent conflict resolution methods. See the 2010 Supreme Court case *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*: 561 U.S. 1, 130 S.Ct. 2705. The Supreme Court considered that such training gave legitimacy to the FTO (PKK).

¹⁵⁴ As identified at the inception of the sanction literature, see Galtung 1967.

¹⁵⁵ Pillar 2001, Cronin 2003, de Jonge Oudraat and Marret 2010. As ambassador Benjamin puts it: “for the international community, FTO designation has been the gold standard in creating a united front against terrorist groups.” Interview with Daniel Benjamin.

¹⁵⁶ Phillips 2019; Jo et al. 2020.

As a result of these measures, targets should be weakened, unable to operate, more vulnerable to other counterterrorism measures, or shamed into changing their behavior.¹⁵⁷ Yet, FTOs have different sensitivity to the costs of designations. This dissertation argues that this variation depends on their integration and isolation levels from international networks in which the United States has leverage.

1. Isolation type

U.S. terrorist designations seek to isolate targets from the international society's economic, political, and social networks. A globalized, interdependent, and interconnected world should provide the United States—a powerful state with a high degree of centrality—with this capability. However, many FTOs are poorly integrated in or fully isolated from the international networks in which the United States has leverage. Among the FTOs exposed in these networks, some are equipped to sustain the costs of designations, while others are more vulnerable.

Jo et al. identify four sources of funding that FTOs may rely on: private sponsors; state sponsors; terrorist networks; and criminal activities.¹⁵⁸ Conceptualized as support networks, these categories also include social components:

1) private sponsors (e.g., diaspora populations and influential patrons) may provide financial and political support; 2) state sponsors may provide territorial safe-havens, diverse forms of material support, and political support; 3) terrorist networks may provide logistical support, recruits, and direct funding; and 4) criminal networks may offer opportunities to profit from certain criminal activities (e.g., drug trafficking, contraband, kidnapping, and resource exploitation).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Loertscher et al. 2020

¹⁵⁸ Jo et al. 2020.

¹⁵⁹ FTOs do not need to be inserted into criminal networks to profit from other activities (e.g., bank robbery and illegal taxation).

These networks exhibit different levels of vulnerability. For instance, a target relying on diaspora population and influential patrons may lose financial and political support if these sponsors are sensitive to U.S. stigmatization, are arrested and prosecuted on terrorism support charges, or become unable to transfer funds through the international financial system as a result of terrorist designations. On the other hand, targets relying on other types of support networks may not suffer this vulnerability, leading Jo et al. to suggest that FTOs relying on state sponsorship, terrorist networks, and criminal activities are more resilient and therefore more active in perpetrating attacks.

However, it is empirically unlikely that a majority of FTOs would be sensitive to such leverage. Indeed, for U.S. terrorist designations to be effective, targets need to have a particularly high level of reliance on private funding transiting through the international financial system and/or on supporters or members sensitive to U.S. stigmatization, sanctions, and prosecutions (U.S.-linked persons).

While U.S. terrorist designations are suited to prevent the activities of international FTOs, research on NSAGs and terrorist networks challenges the idea of internationally well-connected FTOs. Most NSAGs operate with local recruits and resources, pursue local objectives, and primarily threaten the security of local civilian populations.¹⁶⁰ Studies on global jihadism, arguably the most internationally focused ideology among NSAGs and the primary ideology targeted by U.S. terrorist designations, further illustrate this trend. As the work of Mendelsohn on al-Qaida and Salafi jihadist networks suggests, jihadist franchises are composed of mostly local NSAGs, with local objectives, members, and resources.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ E.g., Englehart 2016.

¹⁶¹ See Mendelsohn 2016 and 2019.

Mendelsohn notably attributes al-Qaida's decline in the Salafi-jihadist movement to the tension between its global objectives and the immediate local concerns of most jihadist groups. He also points out that networks subsequently formed under the Islamic State because of the loose requirements and support levels this affiliation entailed, in contrast to stricter criteria for al-Qaida.¹⁶²

Recent studies also argue that the depth of the cooperation between jihadist groups has been inflated and suggests that these links have not been as instrumental as previously assumed.¹⁶³ These terrorist networks can provide material and operational support, yet it most likely does not determine the fate of FTOs, as even official affiliates do not receive critical assistance during times of crisis.¹⁶⁴ Thus, if FTOs in the most internationalized terrorist network are mostly locally based, motivated, and structured, it can be suspected that terrorist designation tools will not be able to reach them.

By contrast, most international private funding supporting terrorist activities has been directed towards major FTOs, such as al-Qaida and Hezbollah, and U.S. efforts to impede these financial flows have also focused on these prominent actors.¹⁶⁵ These FTOs are exposed to some of the costs of terrorist designations but are also equipped to weather these costs.¹⁶⁶ State

¹⁶² Mendelsohn 2019.

¹⁶³ See for instance the debate between Higazi et al. (2018) and Zenn (2018). The first group assembled experts on Salafi jihadism in the Sahel to contradict the claims made by Zenn and argue that jihadist groups in the region have responded to local dynamics and relied on local resources. Zenn argues that these groups have been deeply connected to al-Qaida or the Islamic State from their inception.

¹⁶⁴ See the examples of Boko Haram in Chapter 3, and other Islamic State's and al-Qaida's affiliates in Chapters 4 and 5. Terrorist networks face unique challenges that handicap their effectiveness. As noted by Kahler (2009: 121): "In contrast to criminal networks, terrorist networks confront a steep trade-off between the need for political communication and publicity on the one hand and their requirements of secrecy and concealment on the other."

¹⁶⁵ See for instance, the charities targeted by EO 13224 on the Treasury Department website: https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Pages/protecting-charities_execorder_13224-e.aspx (last consultation June 2022).

¹⁶⁶ Loertscher 2020.

sponsorships can be a major source of support but those are harder to disturb and also concern a minority of FTOs.¹⁶⁷

Therefore, targeted FTOs need to be integrated in international networks and/or linked to U.S.-persons for financial restrictions, travel bans, law enforcement, and stigmatization to be impactful (in undermining the target) and effective (in coercing the target to change its behavior). Stigmatization alone could be effective in situations where an FTO needs to reformulate their purpose to align with U.S. foreign policy as they cannot afford to be seen as an enemy labelled terrorist. Yet, such cases are seemingly rare outliers.

Building on these insights, I develop three FTO's isolation types:

Disconnected FTOs are targets with mostly local operations, support, membership, and sources of funding. These FTOs do not rely on diaspora communities and/or international influential patrons linked to the designator country for material and political support. They have limited use of the international financial system and of their domestic banking system. They are unlikely to be sensitive to stigmatization as they do not share any of the designator's policy objectives, nor do they rely on U.S.-linked persons.

Connected FTOs are targets relying on entities or individuals linked to the United States (e.g., diaspora groups, influential patrons, charities, and businesses as well as leaders and members) or to networks in which the U.S. government has leverage. These FTOs can have local or larger objectives and operations. They are more likely to rely on the international financial system and their domestic banking system to process their funding. They are more sensitive to material sanctions and/or to the isolation stigma resulting from terrorist designations.

¹⁶⁷ Byman 2008.

Established FTOs are larger, state-sponsored, or state-like targets with regional or global objectives and operations. Although some of their activities are exposed to the material costs of designation, these FTOs are more resilient because of their size, the diversity of their resources, and/or their state-like attributes on which terrorist sanctions have little impact. Their stature and purpose make them less sensitive to stigmatization.

In addition to targets' isolation type, designation policies' outcomes depend on the motivations behind their implementation, as not all designations aim to undermine FTOs as their primary objective.

2. Strategic and non-strategic motives

As hinted by de Jonge Oudraat and Marret, the driving forces of terrorist designations can be divided between strategic considerations focusing on security and foreign policy objectives and non-strategic motives pursuing domestic or other objectives.¹⁶⁸ While these forces overlap, one is oftentimes predominant.

U.S. terrorist designations are supposed to serve as strategic instruments designed to bolster national security and achieve political objectives. Therefore, the FTO and SDGT lists do not aim to designate all NSAGs and individuals perpetrating or supporting terrorism.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, studies find that groups using suicide bombings or targeting civilians are not more likely to be designated in U.S. and other terrorist lists.¹⁷⁰ Thus, targets must meet specific conditions besides perpetrating terrorism to be designated by the U.S. government.

¹⁶⁸ de Jonge Oudraat and Marret 2010.

¹⁶⁹ As Cronin (2012) argues: "there are hundreds of groups that meet the criteria for the FTO list but do not get added." On the conceptual and empirical challenges to define "terrorist group." See also Phillips 2015.

¹⁷⁰ While all else equal, Islamic groups are more likely to be designated. Beck and Miner 2014, El Masri and Phillips 2021. Beck and Miner find no relation between suicide attacks and designation in the U.S., U.K., and E.U. lists. El Masri and Phillips examine six lists and find no relation between target severity (civilians being the most severe), attack method severity, and the likelihood of being designated.

Three criteria are required for FTO designation: “the organization must be a foreign organization; the organization must engage in terrorist activity or terrorism,¹⁷¹ or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism; the organization’s terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security (national defense, foreign relations, or the economic interests) of the United States.”¹⁷² While the first two conditions are relatively straightforward, the third is subject to broader interpretation.¹⁷³ This last criterion is nonetheless crucial to understand the strategic logic of designations.

The United States tolerates or supports certain NSAGs that meet the first two criteria for designation, because it considers that these groups do not constitute a threat to U.S. national security or may in fact help fulfill national security objectives.

For instance, in the Syrian civil war where NSAGs have proliferated, the United States has supported groups fighting the regime of Bashar al-Asad and the Islamic State such as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The SDF’s main component is the People's Defense Units (YPG)—the armed wing of the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party affiliated to the designated FTO Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), based in Turkey. Under other circumstances, the United States may have designated the YPG as a SDGT or an FTO for its links with the PKK.¹⁷⁴

However, strategic considerations led to the support of this NSAG in the fight against the Syrian government, and especially against the Islamic State, because these objectives were

¹⁷¹ As defined in section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 (22 U.S.C. § 2656f(d)(2)). This statute defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”

¹⁷² U.S. Department of State. 2021. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations.”

¹⁷³ For example, Jaysh al-Adl (formerly Jundallah) was designated in 2010 for carrying out attacks on the Iranian government, a designated state sponsor of terrorism. The DOS Counterterrorism Bureau argued that the FTO’s attacks, which were occurring on the border of Iran and Pakistan, created a porous border that enabled al-Qaida members to move more freely. Interview with DOS official.

¹⁷⁴ The Turkish press reported the U.S. support to the YPG with such statements as “US equips YPG terror group in Syria with new armored vehicles.” See Daily Sabah 2021. The YPG has not been accused of engaging in terrorist activities in the way the PKK has, thus it is unclear whether the YPG would meet this criterion for FTO designation.

considered more important to U.S. national security and foreign policy. In the same context, the United States withdrew its support to Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki following reports that this NSAG had committed war crimes, but the United States did not impose terrorist designations.¹⁷⁵

The decision to designate or not to designate can thus be driven by clear strategic considerations. The multiple terrorist designations on al-Qaida—EO 13224 was expressly drafted to target this organization post 9/11,¹⁷⁶ in addition to the 1999 FTO designation—unequivocally aimed at crippling this NSAG. In the same vein, the decision not to designate the Taliban as an FTO post-2009 is often explained by a strategic logic, as designation was thought to jeopardize a negotiated solution to end the conflict in Afghanistan.

As studies on enforcement of economic sanctions have shown, U.S. agencies can be strategically selective regarding the targets they prioritize.¹⁷⁷ This approach likely applies to terrorist designations, whose implementation may differ depending on the strategic importance of targets. In fact, the U.S. government oftentimes complements FTO designation policies towards major NSAGs with SDGT designations of key people and entities.¹⁷⁸

However, different factors can prevent strategic considerations from prevailing. Foreign policy can be primarily directed at domestic audiences and national security threats can be exaggerated or underestimated as a result.¹⁷⁹ As suggested in the literature on U.S. sanctions, this observation is particularly valid for security designations.¹⁸⁰ Promoting designation on such a symbolic issue as terrorism is a low-cost and straightforward means to demonstrate leadership

¹⁷⁵ Rujouleh 2017.

¹⁷⁶ Zarate 2013.

¹⁷⁷ Early and Preble 2020a, 2020b.

¹⁷⁸ See Loertscher et al. 2020. NSAGs such as al-Qaida, the Islamic State (post-2013), Hezbollah, and the Taliban have been targeted by multiple SDGT designations on their leadership, financial, operational, and communication personnel.

¹⁷⁹ See Fearon 1998 and Ozkececi-Taner 2017 for reviews of this literature.

¹⁸⁰ E.g., Whang 2011, Tama 2020.

for policymakers. Further, terrorist designations have much lower costs than military interventions and are also cheaper than economic sanctions on states.

Both the executive branch and the legislative branch have different domestic incentives to promote security designations. For instance, Whang argues that sanctions on countries perceived as wrongdoers can boost the popularity of U.S. presidents, even if these policies are ineffective.¹⁸¹ Tama emphasizes that members of Congress have even less political capital at risk when promoting security designations. In foreign policy, unlike the president, “legislators can be held accountable by voters and interest groups for their positions on issues but are rarely held accountable for policy outcomes.”¹⁸² In fact, as Beck and Miner argue, NSAGs are more likely to be listed when they conform to the national audience’s expectation of what terrorism is.¹⁸³

Furthermore, as this dissertation argues, designation policies can also be decided to please international third parties, instead of aiming to undermine targets. For instance, the U.S. government can designate a NSAG at the demand of a partner state even if this NSAG has not threatened U.S. national security and even if the U.S. government has no interest in actively pursuing the NSAG. Such symbolic measures blur the line between the strategic and non-strategic separation hinted in the literature, because they may still fulfill a foreign policy objective but do not seek to undermine the target of designation.

In addition, agencies and bureaus inside U.S. Departments can respond to organizational mechanisms or government politics models of decision-making,¹⁸⁴ where promoting certain policies is a *raison d’être* more than a rational process. As George and Rishikof highlight, U.S. agencies can promote decisions that advance their own interests or are in line with the agency’s

¹⁸¹ Whang 2011.

¹⁸² Tama 2020: 400.

¹⁸³ Meaning that all else equal, Islamic NSAGs are more likely to be designated FTOs: see Beck and Miner 2013.

¹⁸⁴ Allison 1971.

internal culture and understanding of mission.¹⁸⁵ In fact, U.S. agencies and bureaus have gained new prerogatives through the legislations creating terrorist designations. Designations enable these actors to increase their relevance and influence, which is a basic incentive to promote such policies.

As a DOS official underlines: FTO designation “is of particular interest to the FBI and the Department of Justice” because domestic prosecutions rely on material support charges in relation to a group's placement on the FTO list.¹⁸⁶ The promotion of designations in this context is both a rational objective for agencies in charge of leading investigations and prosecutions on the U.S. territory and a means to increase these agencies’ influence. However, these motives do not always align with the broader objective of undermining a foreign NSAG. As the inter-agency coordination in the executive decision-making process is sometimes deficient,¹⁸⁷ positions on designations can conflict, and jeopardize a strategically designed measure.

Building on these insights, I conceptualize two designation motives:

Strategic motives aim to undermine targets and fulfill national security and foreign policy objectives. They usually consider the threats for U.S. security and interests, the geopolitical context, the relations with other actors, the expected impacts on targets, and the potential side effects. To reiterate, a strategic designation as defined in this study must seek to undermine designation targets.

Non-strategic motives represent any motive that does not aim at undermining designation targets. They include considerations of domestic political gains such as appealing to domestic constituents and appearing active on terrorism. They include measures to please

¹⁸⁵ George and Rishikof 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Under 18 U.S.C. section 2339A and 2339B. Interview with DOS official.

¹⁸⁷ George and Rishikof 2011.

international actors when the U.S. government do not attempt to undermine the targets. They include superfluous measures when the target is already under a heavier sanction regime than what the terrorist designation statute can provide. Arguments solely based on whether a group uses terrorist tactics (fact-based) may also fall in the non-strategic category because, as Cronin mentions, hundreds of NSAGs meet these criteria,¹⁸⁸ and U.S. designations were not designed to target all groups using terrorism, but to be used as strategic tools advancing national security.

The next section details how these two independent variables, as well as the dependent variable and control variables, are measured and evaluated vis-à-vis the study's hypotheses.

Measurements, methods, data

1. Variables

a. Summary of variables and hypotheses

- Unit of Analysis: FTO candidate (FTO or SDGT designation).
- X1: Isolation type (disconnected/connected/established).
- X2: Designation motives (strategic/non-strategic).
- Y: FTO's capabilities. Model 1: trend in attacks (decrease/no decrease). Model 2: capability index (decrease/no decrease).
- Control Variables: Military intervention (y/n), ally host country (y/n), FTO's financial adaptability (low/medium/high), multilateral designation (y/n).

Hypothesis 1: U.S. terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives, all else equal.

Hypothesis 2a: U.S. terrorist designations on disconnected and established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

Hypothesis 2b: U.S. terrorist designations on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

Hypothesis 2c: U.S. terrorist designations have more impact on established FTOs than on disconnected FTOs, all else equal.

Hypothesis 3: U.S. terrorist designations driven by strategic motives on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, compared to designations driven by non-strategic motives and designations on other types of FTOs, all else equal.

¹⁸⁸ Cronin 2012.

b. Independent variable X1: isolation type

To measure **X1**, I determine connectivity and establishment scores of designation targets. Connectivity is measured by the target's insertion into the international financial system (0-4), the target's reliance on U.S.-linked persons (0-4), and the exposure of the target's membership to national or international arrests (0-4). Thus, the maximum score for connectivity is 12. Establishment is measured by the group's affiliation with a state or support from a state (0-4) and the target's size and resources at the time of designation (0-4). Thus, the maximum score for establishment is 8.

Targets scoring under 4 on connectivity are considered disconnected. Targets scoring 4 and over on connectivity are considered connected. Targets scoring 4 and over on establishment are considered established. This approach maximizes targets' potential for connectivity and, by lowering the bar of the connected FTO type, makes the argument stronger if the causal relationships are verified.

Insertion into the International Financial System. Insertion into the international financial system is evaluated as follows: targets with over \$1,000,000 in blocked funds according to the Department of Treasury's Terrorist Asset Report (TAR) at any given time are given 4; with \$100,000-\$1,000,000 are given 3, with \$50,000-\$100,000 are given 2; with \$50,000-\$10,000 are given 1; and with less than \$10,000 are given 0.

These segments both divide the population homogeneously and seem pertinent regarding estimates of FTOs' average budgets. If other reliable sources relate that the FTO has had international financial activities, the FTO's insertion is evaluated with the same criteria. This measurement has an obvious shortcoming: it only captures FTOs that were identified and caught

using the international financial system. However, it is a suitable proxy as no consistent data exist on FTOs' use of bank accounts and international money transfer.

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons. Reliance on persons linked to the United States (diaspora groups, influential patrons, nonprofit organizations, and businesses as well as leadership and members) is evaluated qualitatively. For instance, I examine the size and characteristics of the diaspora as well as its level of support for the target.

I also consider leaders and individuals supporting the target that have substantial relations with or interests in the United States. For example, if FTO leaders and supporters have dealt with arrests and litigations in U.S. courts, it can be an indication that the group has an established presence in the United States, exhibited by enforcement focus as well as having the means for legal representation.

This qualitative assessment is detailed in the case studies, but examples can help illustrate the coding. For instance, the Provisional Irish Republican Army and its splinter groups are NSAGs that relied heavily on U.S.-linked persons and would most likely score the maximum score of 4. The 40 million strong Irish American community has long supported independentist republican groups in Northern Ireland and there is abundant evidence of consequential financial flows from the United States to these groups, through individuals or charities. Further, these groups received substantial political support from U.S. elected officials representing Irish constituencies.

Other groups such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (not investigated in this dissertation) reportedly had a relatively strong support among the 1.5 million Tamil Americans,¹⁸⁹ although the remittances from this diaspora was not necessarily as

¹⁸⁹ Fair 2005.

consequential.¹⁹⁰ Groups such as Hezbollah and MeK had established support networks in the United States, with different degrees of importance. These groups would score between 1 and 3. Finally, certain groups are straightforward to assess: ETA, for instance, has not benefitted from a strong support base from U.S.-linked persons (diaspora, businesses, etc.) and would score 0.

I am particularly careful in this assessment if a 1-point difference can change the isolation type of the NSAG.

Membership Exposure to Arrest. The membership exposure to arrest partially reflects the constraints on members' freedom of movement created by designations. It is evaluated through the percentage of FTO members designated SDGT who were arrested post-designation, when the number of SDGT designees is at least 10. If this percentage is 80-100%, the FTO scores 4; between 60-79%: 3; between 40-59%: 2; between 20-39%: 1; under 20%: 0.

This threshold aims to minimize reverse causality (where SDGT designation occurred because the FTO member had been identified and arrested in the past and/or was in custody at the time of designation) and considering arrests unrelated to designation. The data is provided in Loertscher et al.¹⁹¹

State Affiliation or Support. An FTO's affiliation with a state or support from a state is evaluated qualitatively and considers territorial and financial support. It assesses whether and to what extent the FTO was provided with territorial safe haven (0-2) or with material support (0-2). If the FTO is in control of a state's institutions and infrastructure, it scores 4 on the state affiliation scale.

This qualitative assessment is detailed in the case studies, but examples can help illustrate the coding. It is for instance well documented that certain NSAGs have received extensive

¹⁹⁰ Jo et al. 2020.

¹⁹¹ Loertscher et al. 2020.

material support from state sponsors, such as Hezbollah from Iran. In addition to training and weaponry, Hezbollah has received over \$100 million annually from Iran since the 1990s (with a peak of \$700 million in the late 2010s). This FTO would logically score 2 on material support but 0 on territorial safe haven, because this latter form of support has not been part of this sponsorship.

NSAGs such as the Haqqani network or the Taliban (2009-2021) would score 2 on territorial safe haven because they have been allowed to operate relatively freely in large areas of Pakistan. By contrast, NSAGs such as the MeK would score 1 on this measure, because its territorial safe haven from Iraq was strictly circumscribed to a few military camps. Finally, state entities or quasi-state entities such as the IRGC and the Taliban would score 2 on both material support and territorial safe haven.

Again, I am particularly careful in this assessment if a 1-point difference can change the isolation type of the NSAG.

Size and Resources. NSAGs' size and resources at the time of designation include membership size, territory (excluding state-sponsor provided territory), and financial resources. These attributes are evaluated using the Stanford Mapping Militant Organizations project, specific studies by the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point (CTC), and other sources when more precise data is needed.

Financial resources are weighed more than membership because they are considered more instrumental to FTOs' power and ability to weather sanctions. Groups with an annual revenue over \$50 million score 2, between \$10-\$50 million score 1, less than \$10 million score

0.¹⁹² When annual revenue data is not available, groups with estimated assets over \$10 million score 1. Groups with over 10,000 members score 1.¹⁹³ Groups with territorial control score 1.¹⁹⁴

c. Independent variable X2: designation motives

To measure **X2**, I assess the rationale of the actors advocating for specific terrorist designation policies towards a target. I use process-tracing to evaluate whether the dominant drive for these policies was strategic or non-strategic.

I assume *a priori* that all designations are strategic and examine whether other considerations played a role in the decision-making process and implementation. If so, I determine whether these considerations were more important to the decision-makers in regard to the strategic value of the designation policies being promoted. Therefore, the “burden of proof” is on the researcher to show that specific designations were driven by objectives unrelated to undermining the target, as strategic rationales are always advanced to justify these policies.

Several guidelines direct the assessment. Since the sanctions literature suggests that Congress is more likely to use designation policies for domestic purposes than the presidency,¹⁹⁵ I closely examine the situations where the legislative branch was particularly adamant regarding a specific designation policy. I also examine whether agencies promoting a designation respond to organizational mechanisms or culture and government politics models of decision-making.

However, as acknowledged in the literature, these phenomena are not systematic, hence the need for process-tracing on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, the President and other actors in the executive branch also have domestic incentives to promote designation policies or not, and

¹⁹² In 2018 dollars. These segments are based on a Forbes’ budget estimates of the wealthiest FTOs. See Zehorai, Itai. 2018. “The Richest Terror Organizations in the World” *Forbes International*, January 24.

¹⁹³ I use the upper segment from the Extended Data on Terrorist Groups (EDTG dataset): Dongfang, Gaibullov, and Sandler 2020.

¹⁹⁴ Territorial control is understood as the control of full administrative areas in which a state has no or very limited access. This parameter is estimated and justified with qualitative research.

¹⁹⁵ Tama 2020.

members of Congress have foreign policy goals. It can also be noted that the initial 1997 FTO list targeting 29 organizations might be more likely to be strategic overall, since at the time designations were less of a controversial domestic issue.¹⁹⁶

Further, the number and the nature of designation policies towards an FTO candidate provide indications on the level of strategic concerns. A high number of SDGT designations on members or entities affiliated with an FTO may reflect the pursuit of strategic objectives, especially if they are directed towards operational and financial nodes.¹⁹⁷ A high number of SDGT designations on a group purposefully not designated as an FTO, such as the Taliban, also suggest strategic considerations in the non-designation policies.

Finally, implementation can be a good indicator of the strategic or non-strategic nature of designation policies. As highlighted in the sanction literature, certain configurations, such as market conditions, disincentivize the enforcement of sanctions. As Bapat and Kwon argue, sanctioning states sometimes choose not to enforce sanctions, making these merely symbolic.¹⁹⁸

In the context of terrorist designations, the non-enforcement of sanctions on actors that are exposed to U.S. reach can indicate that policymakers valued the symbolism of designation but does not intend to strategically use this tool to undermine the target.

d. Dependent variable Y: FTOs' capabilities

To measure **Y**, I use two models in order to capture FTOs' capabilities in a more nuanced manner than other studies on U.S. terrorist designation outcomes. **Model 1** follows the norm in

¹⁹⁶ It is certainly not true for all designations and non-designations decided in this initial list, but as previously noted, terrorist designations have become increasingly controversial and politicized.

¹⁹⁷ Loertscher et al. 2020

¹⁹⁸ Bapat and Kwon 2015. Early and Preble (2020) also find that the U.S. government has varied its sanction enforcement strategy on private actors, balancing capacity issues and rewards.

the literature and examines trends in FTO attacks pre and post designations,¹⁹⁹ using data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).²⁰⁰

Model 1 focuses on attack trends in the long term. To assess long-term trends, I compare attack data for the three years preceding designation, including the designation year, to the last three years of data in the GTD, which ends in 2019.

In addition, I report results for attacks and lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term. This allows me to check for different patterns and facilitates comparison, as suggested by Young.²⁰¹ The 3-year range is considered as the relevant time length for designations to be effective in Jo et al.'s study.²⁰² While this justification may be relevant for designations decided in the 2010s, it is not necessarily the case for older designations because of the improvement of designation tools post-9/11—mostly through EO 13224 and the USA PATRIOT act—and the learning process needed to master these tools, hence the dissertation's focus on long-term trends.

Model 2 uses an original FTO capability index that captures five major components of FTOs' power pre- and post-designations: financial resources, membership, territory, weaponry, and political representation. The construction of the FTO capability index is inspired by the Composite Index of National Capacity (CINC) of the Correlates of War project²⁰³ and follows guidelines outlined in the methodological literature on constructing composite indices.²⁰⁴

The FTO capability index uses non-substitutable indicators, simple aggregation, absolute comparisons, and equal weighting. Each component is attributed a value between 0-1 and the average of the five components provides a composite FTO capability index ranging from 0 to 1.

¹⁹⁹ Designation cutting points are either the FTO designation year or a wave of SDGT designations, defined as over 10 SDGT designations in a single year, against an NSAG and its members.

²⁰⁰ START 2022.

²⁰¹ Young 2019.

²⁰² Jo et al. 2021.

²⁰³ Singer et al. 1972.

²⁰⁴ OECD 2008, Mazziotta and Pareto 2013.

I perform an indicization of numerical components using an externally fixed base to ensure absolute comparisons and equal weighting. This approach differs from the CINC, where each component is a dimensionless percentage of the world's total. Indeed, the goal of the FTO capability index is not to assess FTOs' capabilities relative to each other. Instead, it aims to evaluate their capabilities using states' standards—since states are the actors fighting FTOs—and to measure trends in capabilities.

The externally fixed base for the financial resources and membership components is derived from states' military expenditure and active military personnel data: a \$5 billion annual budget and 120,000 active military personnel represent base 1 for the first and second components of the index.

These thresholds reflect the minimum values for the top 40 states in terms of military power in 2019: they are equivalent to states such as Vietnam, Ukraine, Greece, Qatar, and Uruguay for military expenditure, and Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, Cambodia, and Spain for military personnel.²⁰⁵

For the weaponry component, I use the fortieth country in the Military Balance's list of countries by level of military equipment as the externally fixed base 1, to maintain consistency with the previous measurements.²⁰⁶ This country possessed in 2019 the equipment and personnel to sustain an army, navy, and air force.²⁰⁷ An FTO displaying similar capabilities is attributed 1 on weaponry.

When FTOs do not meet this threshold, I assess their possession of man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), anti-tank guided weapons (ATGWs), and tanks. I use data from

²⁰⁵ IISS 2020. SIPRI data 2015-2020.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Romania had a military budget of \$5.21 billion, with 377 main battle tanks, 7 frigates and corvettes, and 60 military aircraft. It had 70,000 active military, 50,000 reserve military, and 57,000 paramilitary forces. Ibid.

the Small Arms Survey. I also follow the Survey's methodology to assess possession of tanks or to assess possession of MANPADS and ATGWs when this data is missing for the FTOs in my sample.²⁰⁸

The Survey differentiates between possible possession (e.g., possession claimed by the group itself; suggestion by experts not corroborated by publicly available sources; or holding previously reported, but currently raising doubts) and higher likelihood of possession (e.g., at least two sources, a photo of the holding, or a peer reviewed source from the Small Arms Survey). On these bases, I attribute the following values for the weaponry component: 0.05 for possible possession of MANPADS, 0.1 for higher likelihood, 0.1 for possible possession of ATGWs, 0.2 for higher likelihood. I add another 0.1 for proven use of tanks specifically (not any armored fighting vehicle).

Regarding political representation, I assign the following values in the index: local representation: 0.1; national representation: 0.2; established lobby group in U.S. Congress or in direct negotiations with the U.S. government: 0.4-0.6; part of a governmental coalition: 0.5-0.7. State entity: 0.7-1.

Regarding territory, I first determine if the FTO had territorial control, using the standard mentioned previously.²⁰⁹ Subsequently, I assign the value of the territory held using the following criteria, in order of importance: number of cities held, natural resources (e.g., oil, gas, minerals, etc.), population, and area.

I report results for the FTO capability index only for the long term, as it is empirically challenging to assess trends in this metric in the short term.

²⁰⁸ Small Arm Survey 2001, 2008, 2013. Rigual 2013. Schroeder 2022.

²⁰⁹ Territorial control is understood as the control of full administrative areas in which a state has no or very limited access. This parameter is estimated and justified with qualitative research.

As the most powerful military component of Iran and a major political actor in Iranian politics, the IRGC has the highest values in the sample. At the time of designation in 2019, this FTO had a budget of \$7 billion,²¹⁰ counted 190,000 active personnel,²¹¹ and possessed its own army, navy, air force, intelligence service, and special operation unit. As a state entity of an oil-rich country, it also had superior territorial control and political representation than other FTOs. Thus, this FTO scores 1 on all the components of the index.

Finally, I report what I name “FTO’s behavior” when assessing the dependent variable. Indeed, renunciation of violence, disarmament, and demobilization should represent the ultimate objectives of designations as they signal a durable abandonment of terrorism. I thus consider a declaration of unilateral cessation of violent activities or a dissolution, associated with a complete interruption of attacks, as an attempt at normalization and a change in behavior.

While conducting the case studies, I control for four variables that represent alternative explanations found in the literature or rival theories on the outcomes of U.S. terrorist designations: military interventions, ally mechanism, financial adaptability, and multilateral designations.

e. Control variables

Military interventions. NSAGs designated terrorists are generally confronted with the use of force. In addition to police operations and domestic law enforcement, kinetic tools used against FTOs include military interventions and military actions.

While military interventions aim to achieve a comprehensive victory against an FTO, military actions—such as leadership decapitation and special operations—have more restricted objectives to undermine the target. The literature on counterterrorism posits that military actions

²¹⁰ Rome 2020.

²¹¹ IISS 2020.

are in general not as effective against NSAGs.²¹² Therefore, I focus on military interventions as a control variable.

Logically, military interventions are considered more effective to coerce states than non-kinetic tools, such as economic sanctions, and are also a cause of FTOs' decline.²¹³ However, the literature on economic sanctions rarely accounts for the independent impact of this variable.²¹⁴ The literature on U.S. terrorist designation outcomes also does not control for military interventions, although this shortcoming is sometimes acknowledged.²¹⁵

I define military interventions as state military operations against an FTO, involving the “overt, short-term deployment of at least 1,000 combat-ready ground troops,”²¹⁶ and assess their effect on FTOs' capabilities. Military interventions can be led by the host country, a foreign country, or a coalition. This control variable should logically explain some of the variation on the dependent variable. Thus, the dissertation improves existing approaches by including this variable in the analysis and by examining whether kinetic and non-kinetic counterterrorism tools are used strategically in conjunction.²¹⁷

Ally mechanism. The literature posits that international cooperation is instrumental in combatting terrorism and that terrorist designations need proper enforcement to be effective. Phillips therefore argues that allied states are more likely to enforce each other's terrorist

²¹² See Jordan (2019) on leadership decapitation and Koven (2020) on special operations in general.

²¹³ Cronin 2009. Cronin distinguishes military intervention, when the target is based beyond the borders of the intervening state, from internal repression, when the target operates domestically. Both forms are counted as military interventions in this study, in accordance with the criteria discussed below.

²¹⁴ For example, Rosenberg et al. (2016), who use a combination of the TIES and PIIE datasets, credit the sanction regime on Libya in 2011 for stopping “the armed suppression of protests,” while the military intervention and material support to opposition groups had a much greater influence.

²¹⁵ Phillips 2019, Jo et al. 2020, Jo et al. 2021. Jo et al. (2020: 294) admit that “[t]he combination of sanctions and military interventions [...] likely generates different effects on the attack capacity of terrorist organizations.”

²¹⁶ Following Saunders 2009: 122.

²¹⁷ This objective is regularly mentioned in the literature but has not been attempted. See Loertscher et al. 2020, Jo et al., 2021.

designations, making these policies more impactful in allied countries. Phillips' quantitative analysis suggests that FTOs operating in states allied to the United States are more likely to be impacted by terrorist designation policies and to reduce their attacks, compared to FTOs operating elsewhere.²¹⁸

To control for this variable, I use Phillips' main measure—military alliance data from the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project—and Phillips' alternate measure, the presence of an FBI office in the FTO host country. The models using these measures generate statistically significant results in Phillips' study. While the assumptions behind the ally mechanism logic are *a priori* sound, the approach in this dissertation is better suited to explain the variation on the dependent variable and the underlying causal mechanisms. Indeed, the absence of precise causal mechanisms at the FTO level is acknowledged as a shortcoming in Phillips' study.

First, the ally mechanism theory is challenged by strong empirical evidence from countries critical to U.S. counterterrorism efforts. For instance, Pakistan, which is a U.S. ally on both measures used by Phillips, has been notoriously noncooperative on counterterrorism efforts against multiple FTOs operating in its territory.²¹⁹ This lack of cooperation has been blatant to the point that designating Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism was discussed in U.S. policy circles.²²⁰

Furthermore, it seems more common that cooperative allied states ask the United States to designate an NSAG operating in their territory as an FTO—to legitimize their fight against the group—rather than the United States designating a threat to its security in these countries. In

²¹⁸ Phillips 2019.

²¹⁹ See Cronin 2011, Legrand 2018. Eight FTOs are based or have operations in Pakistan: some of them are directly supported by the Pakistani government.

²²⁰ Cronin 2011.

addition, allied states sometimes frontally oppose the designation of an NSAG operating in their territory, which does not suggest increased cooperation post-designation.

FTO designation may facilitate the deployment of military aid to the host country, which in turn can impact the FTO. Although this factor is considered in the process-tracing of this dissertation's cases, it suggests a different causal mechanism from the one hypothesized in Phillips' study. It must be acknowledged that the notion of "ally" used in Phillips' study—and therefore in this dissertation—is broad and includes U.S. security partners with agreements or understandings, but not necessarily mutual defense treaties.

Financial adaptability. Jo et al. propose that the effectiveness of FTO designations in reducing attacks depends on the financial adaptability of targets.²²¹ Financial adaptability is defined as a terrorist group's pre-designation capacity to maintain organizational resources in response to a new regulatory environment.

The authors hypothesize that FTOs with high adaptability can maintain attack levels after designation because they are able to shift their resource base to adjust to sanctions pressures. In turn, FTOs with low financial adaptability decrease attacks because designations take away their main income source or block funds transiting through the international financial system. Jo et al. find that the higher the financial adaptability of a terrorist group, the lower the probability that the group will decrease attacks after FTO designation.

Jo et al. distinguish three pillars of financial adaptability: autonomous, diverse, and invulnerable income sources. FTOs possessing the three pillars are coded as having high-level financial adaptability (those with two pillars are medium-level and with one pillar are low-level). To measure financial adaptability, they use the four sources of funding categories, identified in

²²¹ Jo et al. 2021.

their previous study.²²² Among 80 FTOs, 23 are classified as having high-level financial adaptability; 31 medium-level financial adaptability; and 26 low-level financial adaptability.

They find that FTO designation is associated with reduced attacks of 26% for high financial adaptability groups, 73% for medium financial adaptability group, and 77% for low financial adaptability groups. Jo et al. consider that the most liberal estimate for success rate is about 60% but qualify this finding: “the majority of these cases lack clear evidence that sanctions directly led groups to reduce attacks.”²²³

Thus, the authors seem skeptical about this relatively high result (this success rate is higher than in studies from the sanction literature). The use of case study methods in this dissertation can in fact help illuminates causal mechanisms that are admittedly missing in this study and previous studies on the outcomes of FTO designation.

This dissertation builds on the insights formulated in Jo et al.’s two studies. Yet, the dissertation offers a theoretical framework and empirical approach that better capture the phenomena.

For instance, Jo et al.’s first study maintains that FTOs relying on private funding are more exposed to designations because this funding transits through the international financial system. Yet, private funding can be mostly local and operate outside financial institutions, as the case of al-Qaida in Iraq in its early days illustrates.²²⁴ The relevant dichotomy here is therefore local versus international forms of integration and isolation, rather than the type of funding.

Further, Jo et al.’s latest study posits that criminal activity as a source of funding provides autonomy and invulnerability. This means, according to their operationalization, that FTOs using

²²² Jo et al. 2020: Private funding, state sponsorship, terrorist network, and criminal activities.

²²³ Jo et al. 2021: 28.

²²⁴ Gerges 2020.

criminal activity plus any other source of funding have high-level financial adaptability. Yet, resorting to criminal activity does not protect the transactions of a group that is otherwise exposed in the international financial system and uses other sources of funding.

Alternatively, this dissertation's theoretical framework aims to establish under what conditions FTOs are exposed in international networks in which U.S. terrorist designations have leverage and how this exposure undermines these FTOs.

Empirically, the coding of FTOs' financial adaptability in Jo et al.'s study appears as it could be improved with case studies. For instance, Boko Haram is coded as having high financial adaptability, while its quasi-exclusive source of funding was from criminal activity. Boko Haram's splinter groups are coded as having medium financial adaptability although they are the most similar groups in the FTO population.²²⁵ I control for this variable in the process tracing of my cases. I follow the authors' coding for most cases but adjust it for cases where the empirical evidence strongly suggests another interpretation.

Multilateral designations. The literature on economic sanctions emphasizes that multilateral regimes are more impactful and effective.²²⁶ For example, the sanction regime on Iran (2006-2015) is widely credited for leading to the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which restricted the development of Iran's military nuclear program.

According to these views, the combination of U.S., U.N., and E.U. targeted sanctions on multiple Iranian actors, associated with traditional sanctions such as oil embargo, imposed unprecedented pressures on Iran's economy. These material effects, in addition to the growing

²²⁵ If Boko Haram is considered to benefit from terrorist networks, it has been largely disproved in the literature. In addition, its splinter groups have comparatively had more substantial relations with other Salafi-jihadist groups.

²²⁶ Bapat 2009; Rosenberg et al. 2016.

diplomatic isolation targeting Iran, incited the government to negotiate limits on its nuclear program.

U.S. terrorist designations may thus be more likely to be impactful and effective if implemented in tandem with U.N. designations and designations from other Western states and IOs (i.e., the United Kingdom and European Union), which also have sophisticated mechanisms and are generally strategically aligned with the United States. Therefore, I determine whether an FTO is targeted by a multilateral regime and assess the impact of other designations. The regime is considered multilateral if the FTO is also designated by the U.N. Security Council, the European Union, or the United Kingdom.

While multilateral regimes certainly increase the scope of terrorist designation policies, I do not expect this factor to be as determinant for NSAGs as it is for states. Indeed, if an FTO is not exposed to the U.S. reach, it is also likely insulated from other designations. U.N. policies can appear as further reaching in theory, but their implementation and enforcement ultimately depend on the good will of national governments.²²⁷

The only exception could be if the FTO is located in the United Kingdom or in a E.U. country, where one can assume that domestic tools would have greater reach than U.S. designations. Yet, this does not alter the causal mechanism explored in this study. Unlike other parts of the world, U.S. designations in these countries usually occurred at the request of the host country and were decided after the implementation of domestic tools.²²⁸

²²⁷ However, U.N. designations might be more powerful in the social aspect of ostracism and their stigmatization of targets might have more resonance among international actors.

²²⁸ In fact, the United States was sometimes reluctant to designate these NSAGs for domestic reasons, as illustrated by the case of the Irish Republican Army splinter groups.

Therefore, the impact and effectiveness of U.S. designations in these cases are not likely to be maximized by other designations, as host countries counted on U.S. tools' material and social effects to address security issues their own tools could not resolve.

2. Investigation methods and data collection

I use process-tracing as a guiding method to investigate the dissertation's cases. This method is well suited to control for omitted variables that are inherent to case study and controlled comparison²²⁹ and allows for a sound assessment of alternative explanations and rival theories.

As George and Bennett underline, process-tracing examines “whether the causal process a theory implies is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables.”²³⁰ Process-tracing seeks a historical explanation of an individual case, and “this explanation may or may not provide a theoretical explanation relevant to the wider phenomenon of which the case is an instance.”²³¹

In the context of this research, I need to be particularly careful about examining both anticipated alternative explanations and explanations that may be unique to a particular case. It means to actively seek data that qualify or disprove my hypotheses. This approach guides data collection.

The study builds on semi-structured interviews, primary sources (e.g., Congressional legislation, legislation proposals, and hearings), and secondary sources (e.g., reports from IOs and NGOs), in addition to the sources and datasets mentioned in the measurement section.²³² The

²²⁹ Notably because “in social science the characteristics of paired cases are never nearly identical,” Van Evera 2016: 58.

²³⁰ George and Bennett 2005: 6.

²³¹ Bennet 2008: 704. Bennet notes that the best explanation for a given case might be unique to this case.

²³² The main sources include: reports from government agencies (Country Report on Terrorism from the State Department, Terrorist Asset Reports from the Treasury Department, Congressional Research Service reports), international organizations (FATF, U.N. al-Qaida and Islamic State sanctions committee), NGOs (Amnesty

interviewees include officials from the U.S. Foreign Service and Department of State, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Treasury, foreign officials, humanitarian personnel, representatives of populations in conflict-affected areas, and scholars and experts.²³³

The interviews served several purposes. I was able to get multiple insights from practitioners on the decision-making process and diverse implications of designations, which were not available in the literature. Further, I could obtain firsthand testimonies on the effects of designations on humanitarian work in conflict-affected areas. The interviews were also crucial in the process-tracing of certain cases, especially for the deviant hypotheses-generating case of Boko Haram.

Following Mikecz's recommendations,²³⁴ I prepared elite interviews with a solid knowledge of the interviewee's professional background. Interviewees often appreciate when the interviewer mentions former positions, titles, statements, and/or publications. When being asked and when relevant, I mentioned background similarities such as experience with a foreign service and experience in a particular country. While it would be naïve to think that loose background similarities would provide the interviewer with information that would have not been disclosed otherwise, as interviewees with high-level security clearances are mindful with their words, it can still be helpful in building a certain degree of trust.

During the interviews, my approach was to start with a mention of the interviewee's most relevant position regarding my research question. For U.S. officials, I usually asked an open-

International, Human Rights Watch), academic institutions (START at the University of Maryland, Mapping Militant Organization Project at Stanford University, Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Engagement Project at Harvard Law School), think tanks (RAND, Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, and the Council on Foreign Relations), as well as newspaper articles, books, and journal articles written on specific FTOs.

²³³ For instance, the interviewees include: Linda Thomas-Greenfield former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and current U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; Johnnie Carson, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; Daniel Benjamin, Ambassador-at-Large and former Coordinator for Counterterrorism at DOS.

²³⁴ Mikecz, Robert. 2012. Interviewing Elites: addressing methodological issues. *Qualitative inquiry*, 18(6), 482-493.

ended question in a precise context (e.g., about the general objectives of their position at the time) and moved to specific questions in the same context (e.g., role in promoting or advising against designation policies for a particular case, perspective on what these policies would achieve, etc.). I then aimed to progress to comparisons with other cases, generalization about terrorist designation tools, and less visible motivations for these policies.

The goal was to follow a precise outline leading to core questions gradually and manage time effectively. While this objective was not always reached—as interviewee may delve into a core question from the beginning of the interview or diverge on tangential questions—such interviews were usually very instructive, especially for unearthing, clarifying, or discounting causal mechanisms.

With respect to process-tracing, it was crucial in these interviews to consider and insist on every piece of information that did not confirm the hypotheses and not exclusively select pieces of information that supported my assumptions.

Theoretical expectations

The study posits that U.S. terrorist designation policies are impactful and effective—as assessed by the two models measuring the dependent variable—on connected targets but have low impact and effectiveness on disconnect targets and low effectiveness on established targets. The study also advances that impact and effectiveness on targets across isolation type are lower when these policies are driven by non-strategic motives compared to when they are driven by strategic considerations.

To test the hypotheses, I confront the selected cases against rival theories, namely ally mechanism and financial adaptability, as well as alternative explanations mentioned in the literature such as military intervention and multilateral designation. The hypothesis-generating case study of Boko Haram has *a priori* high internal validity: therefore, if rival theories provide a

better assessment of this case, it would seriously jeopardize the validity of the theoretical framework developed in this dissertation.

The longitudinal and cross-case comparisons aim to add external validity to the hypotheses. This will be achieved if the hypotheses explain the variation or at least part of the variation in the paired cases, compared to rival theories and alternative explanations. The theory will be weakened if it only explains a minority of cases in the sample or if it has inferior explanatory power than the control variables.

One caveat needs to be acknowledged: the theoretical framework explains why terrorist designation policies are not effective on their own in most cases. Since I hypothesize that disconnected and established targets are not decisively impacted by terrorist designations and disconnected targets of domestic-driven designations are also less impacted, the causal mechanism is oftentimes illustrated by the absence or weakness of impact.

Therefore, I should expect the process-tracing of the cases to provide indications on the other factors that led an FTO to embrace a particular fate, in the instance where the control variables do not provide these indications. A counterfactual assessment is therefore useful: what would have been different in the FTO's trajectory, in the absence of the designation policies?

Table 4 presents the cases' values on the independent variables (X1, X2), the control variables (CV1, CV2, CV3, CV4), and the expectations on the dependent variable (Y).

Table 4: Cases' values on X1, X2, CVs, and expectations of Y

Case	X1	X2	CV1	CV2	CV3	CV4	CF	CUS	CM	CT	ESA	ER	ET	Y predictions
Boko Haram	Disconnected	Non-S	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	2	2	No decrease
Ansar Dine	Disconnected	Strategic	Yes	No	High	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	No decrease
MeK	Connected	Strategic	No	No	Medium	Yes	3	2	0	5	2	1	3	Decrease
ETA	Connected	Strategic	No	Yes	Medium	Yes	0	0	4	4	0	1	1	Decrease
R-IRA	Connected	Non-S	No	Yes	Medium	Yes	0	4	0	4	0	1	1	No decrease
Islamic State 2003-13	Disconnected	Strategic	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	No decrease
Islamic State 2013-20	Established	Strategic	Yes	Yes	High	Yes	3	0	0	3	0	4	4	No decrease
Taliban 1999-2009	Established	Non-S	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	0	0	0	0	4	4	8	No decrease
Taliban 2009-2021	Established	Strategic	Yes	Yes	Medium	Yes	3	0	0	3	2	3	5	No decrease
IRGC	Established	Non-S	No	No	High	No	4	0	0	4	4	4	8	No decrease
Hezbollah	Established	Strategic	Yes	No	Medium	Yes	4	2	1	7	2	4	6	No decrease
Al Qaida	Connected	Strategic	Yes	Yes	High	Yes	4	1	1	6	2	1	3	Decrease

X1: Isolation type. X2: Strategic binary. CV1: Military intervention. CV2: Ally mechanism. CV3: Financial adaptability. CV4: Multilateral regime. CF: Connectivity score on financial insertion. CUS: Connectivity score on U.S-linked persons. CM: Connectivity score on membership exposure. **CT**: Connectivity score total. ESA: Establishment score on state affiliation. ER: Establishment score on resources. **ET**: Establishment score total.

CHAPTER 3

GENERATING HYPOTHESES: DEVIANT CASE OF BOKO HARAM

This chapter focuses on Boko Haram as a deviant and hypothesis-generating case. The case of Boko Haram can be considered as deviant since, according to the literature, U.S. terrorist designations should have impacted the group.

Indeed, the designated FTO operated in the territory of a U.S. ally, had medium-level financial adaptability, and was targeted by a multilateral terrorist designation regime.²³⁵ Furthermore, in the policy sphere, the narrative promoting FTO designation for Boko Haram was that it would provide the U.S. government with the necessary tools to undermine the group.

Combined with the literatures previously mentioned, this detailed case study is instrumental to formulate the theoretical approach and hypotheses of the dissertation. Two important insights emerge regarding the conditions needed for U.S. terrorist designations to be impactful, if not effective. First, targets need to rely on networks in which the United States has leverage. Second, these designations are more pertinent when they are decided with precise strategic objectives in mind.

Many experts and practitioners who were involved with the situation in northeastern Nigeria repeatedly explained that they could not identify how an FTO designation would undermine Boko Haram, because of the local and isolated nature of the group. In turn, the most ardent promoters of FTO designation were mainly focused on the symbolism of the measure instead of how it could undermine the NSAG. For instance, advocating for designation was a means to express a strong political stance against Islamic terrorism.

²³⁵ Phillips 2019; Jo et al. 2021; Rosenberg et al. 2016.

The case is also pertinent from a policy perspective since, unlike some other FTOs, there is little debate on whether Boko Haram was a NSAG using terrorist tactics. The group was one of the most lethal FTOs of the 2010s and employed methods that were even disapproved of by other violent Salafi-jihadist organizations that use terrorism. Thus, the promoters of designation were factually accurate that Boko Haram qualified as a terrorist group and could meet the requirements for FTO designation.²³⁶

However, the promoters of FTO designation were primarily motivated by non-strategic considerations such as domestic objectives: for instance, appealing to Christian right constituents in the United States. As the FTO list was not designed as a repertoire of NSAGs using terrorism, but a strategic tool aiming to undermine targets, the case helps explain the inconsistencies identified in the literature regarding terrorist designations.²³⁷ It also illustrates the growing politicization of designations.

The chapter is structured as follows: the first part provides a historical background on Boko Haram. The second part describes the group's integration in and isolation from support networks. In line with most of the literature on the subject, I find that Boko Haram was locally anchored and mostly isolated at the time of the designation debate. These characteristics provide the foundations of the disconnected FTO category in the isolation type independent variable (X1).

The third part describes the terrorist designation process on Boko Haram and demonstrates how the push for FTO designation was dominated by non-strategic motives. These characteristics provide the foundations of the strategic/non-strategic dichotomous variable. The

²³⁶ One caveat concerned the requirement of threatening U.S. security or interests, which was not obvious in northeastern Nigeria.

²³⁷ E.g., Cronin 2012; Beck and Milner 2013; Legrand 2018.

fourth part explores the effects of terrorist designations on Boko Haram, in relation to the dependent variable: FTO's attacks and capabilities. Finally, I apply the analytical model described in the methodology to this case, in order to systematize comparison with other cases.

FTO Background

Boko Haram (“Western culture is forbidden”)²³⁸ is a Sunni Islamist sect that emerged in northeastern Nigeria in the early 2000s. Also known as *Jamā'atu Ahli is-Sunnah lid-Da'wati wal-Jihād* (“People of the Sunnah Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad,” or JAS, a name adopted in 2010), the sect evolved into a particularly violent Salafi-jihadist organization.

According to Thurston, Boko Haram represents “the outcome of dynamic, locally grounded interactions between religion and politics.”²³⁹ Despite some dissenting accounts, a majority of analyses argue that the group has been geographically circumscribed and internationally isolated for most of its existence.²⁴⁰

Boko Haram was designated an FTO on November 13, 2013, along with Ansaru, a splinter group, and has remained highly active in the years following designation. The name Boko Haram is now commonly used to describe the activities of two groups, following another schism in 2016: the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) and JAS.²⁴¹

1. From inception to uprising: early 2000s-2009

While the beginnings of Boko Haram are not fully established, the sect's initial development revolved around the character of Muhammad Yusuf (1970–2009), a Salafi cleric

²³⁸ See Thurston 2017, 15-20, for an etymological analysis.

²³⁹ Thurston 2017, 4.

²⁴⁰ E.g., Thurston 2017, Mohammed 2014, Perouse de Montclos 2014, 2016, and interview with John Campbell, March 13, 2015. See Varin 2016 and Zenn 2020 for arguments that Boko Haram has been inserted in global jihadist networks early on.

²⁴¹ Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. “Boko Haram”. Stanford University. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/boko-haram>

born in Yobe State in northeastern Nigeria. Following his expulsion from several mosques for fundamentalist preaching, Yusuf was able to set up his own mosque complex in the city of Maiduguri²⁴² thanks to the support of influential patrons.

His rising popularity as a preacher is accounted for by social, ethnic, and religious dynamics peculiar to the state of Borno.²⁴³ For instance, Yusuf was able to attract many followers among disenchanted youths from the Izala, a relatively established Nigerian Salafi movement.²⁴⁴

Additionally, Yusuf benefited from the rivalry between the Governor of Borno, Mala Kashalla, and his challenger for the 2003 elections, Senator Ali Modu Sheriff. As in other states with a majority of Muslims in Nigeria at this time, the challenger built his campaign on accusations that the incumbent had been subverting Sharia. This argument appealed to voters, notably because a fair implementation of Sharia was seen as a remedy to endemic corruption.²⁴⁵

In the run-up to the election, Sherriff and Yusuf became allies. Yusuf supported Sherriff's candidacy, vetted for the religious authenticity of his message, and provided men to his militia, which was seen as essential to winning the election. The so-called ECOMOG militia was able to "intimidate and silence political opponents with impunity."²⁴⁶

In exchange, Sheriff promised ministerial positions to Yusuf's men and a better implementation of Sharia. Following his electoral victory, Sheriff nominated Buji Foi—an alleged conduit between him and Yusuf—as commissioner for religious affairs. However, it rapidly became obvious that recentering society around Sharia was not Sheriff's priority. The

²⁴² Capital of Borno State in northeastern Nigeria.

²⁴³ Thurston 2017: 84-142.

²⁴⁴ Perouse de Montclos 2016.

²⁴⁵ Reinert 2014.

²⁴⁶ International Crisis Group 2014.

new governor progressively rescinded the agreement and Yusuf became an inconvenient political ally.

In parallel, Yusuf clashed with mainstream Salafi clerics who had previously supported him, while also being confronted by hardliners within his group who were pushing for more radical positions, notably on the commitment to jihad. Between 2003 and 2008, Boko Haram members conducted their first violent actions in the Northeast, targeting police stations and rival Muslim clerics.²⁴⁷

As a result of this turmoil, Yusuf was arrested several times and momentarily fled to Saudi Arabia. Yet, by the end of 2008, Boko Haram was a loosely organized armed group whose members were undertaking paramilitary training.²⁴⁸ The government of Borno became worried about Boko Haram's rising power and launched a broad anti-banditry joint military and police operation. The goal was to trigger a direct confrontation with Boko Haram justifying the group's destruction without making Yusuf a martyr.

After repeated clashes in the summer of 2009, Boko Haram began a series of attacks in several cities of the states of Bauchi, Borno, and Yobe. The ensuing conflict with the police and the military resulted in an estimated 800 casualties—including a majority of civilians²⁴⁹—as well as in the extra-judicial killing of Yusuf and other Boko Haram high-ranking members. Hundreds of suspected Boko Haram members were arrested throughout northern Nigeria.

While the scale of the uprising was both massive and unexpected—Boko Haram was able to attack a wide range of targets in multiple locations—the operation was poorly designed and

²⁴⁷ The first recorded attack was in December 2003 in the town of Kanamma, Yobe State, where some Boko Haram members had retreated several months earlier. These members are described as “hardliners” by Thurston (2017: 94).

²⁴⁸ Thurston 2017: 84-142.

²⁴⁹ Chouin et al. 2014.

implemented.²⁵⁰ This led analysts to conjecture that the supposed links to al-Qaida must have been weak, as this organization would have been able to offer tactical support at low cost.²⁵¹

2. Installation as a durable regional security threat: 2010-2020

Following the 2009 crackdown, Boko Haram gradually regrouped under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, one of Yusuf's lieutenants. From 2010 to 2013, the group transformed into a lethal jihadist organization. Boko Haram's ideology crystallized around the rejection of the "colonial" state (constitutionalism, democracy, and any form of Westernization) and a violent religious confrontation with both Christians and Muslims dissenting with the group's fundamentalist Salafism.²⁵²

At the end of 2010, Boko Haram started raiding prisons to liberate members. From 2011, it began a series of frequent and increasingly sophisticated attacks on the state and its security apparatus. In August, it bombed the United Nations building in Nigeria's capital Abuja, its first international target.²⁵³

From 2012 to 2015, Boko Haram extended its influence in northeastern Nigeria, despite tensions within its leadership and the splinter of Ansaru.²⁵⁴ While Boko Haram continued to launch terrorist attacks and operate clandestinely in several Nigerian cities, it was increasingly willing to confront the Nigerian military in open battles for territorial control.²⁵⁵ The group also

²⁵⁰ As Mohammed (2009) put it: "The decision to choose urban Maiduguri to fight the state is mind boggling. How can any group that has decided to take on the might of the Federal Government of Nigeria decide to converge in a mosque and be sitting ducks to the fire power of the military?"

²⁵¹ Thurston 2017, Perouse de Montclos 2016.

²⁵² Thurston 2017: 194-197.

²⁵³ The U.N. bombing reportedly prompted a report in the U.S. Congress (Poling 2013). See: U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Homeland Security. 2011. *Boko Haram Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland*. Washington: Government Printing Office.

²⁵⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. "Boko Haram." Stanford University. Thurston 2017. The tensions would have opposed Shekau and Mamman Nur, another Boko Haram founding member and leader. It is not clear whether Mamman Nur ever led Ansaru, however, and the known leaders were Abubakar Adam Kamar and Khalid al-Barnawi. Interview with

²⁵⁵ Thurston 2017: 198-200.

diversified its criminal activities and sources of funding (e.g., bank robberies, extortion, kidnappings, and illegal taxation).

In May 2013, the Nigerian government of President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, involving the largest contingent of military personnel mobilized in Nigeria since the Civil War (1967-1970).²⁵⁶ In November 2013, Boko Haram was designated as an FTO by the U.S. government and the state of emergency was renewed.

Despite some territorial gains in Maiduguri, the Nigerian Army and the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF)'s heavy-handed approach did not inflict a decisive blow to the FTO, but durably destabilized the Northeast. In particular, the conflict was marred by countless human rights violations and arbitrary killings of civilians.²⁵⁷ By January 2015, Boko Haram was able to control a vast Salafi-jihadist territory in Borno and adjacent areas in neighboring Nigerian states as well as in Niger and Cameroon.²⁵⁸

Boko Haram captured the world's attention in April 2014, when it kidnapped 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno South. While previous mass killings of students had not triggered nearly as much outrage,²⁵⁹ a vast media campaign initiated by U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama known as the #BringBackMovement took off and prompted worldwide condemnation of the group.

²⁵⁶ Reinert 2014.

²⁵⁷ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, notably, extensively reported on human rights abuses and alleged war crimes. Among the multiple reports, see: Amnesty International. 2015. "Stars on their shoulders. Blood on their hands. War crimes committed by the Nigerian military." Amnesty International. 2012. "Nigeria: Trapped in The Cycle of Violence."

²⁵⁸ Boko Haram controlled about 20,000 square miles of territory according to estimates. Mapping Militant Organizations "Boko Haram" 2018.

²⁵⁹ Hundreds of students were notably assassinated in July and September 2013, and in February 2014.

Subsequently, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the African Union mobilized to provide counterterrorism resources to Nigeria. The pressure from the international community—as well as the growing involvement of Nigeria’s neighbors and the upcoming presidential elections—incited the Nigerian government to renew its efforts against Boko Haram.

Between February and April 2015, the Nigerian military was able to retake a large swathe of territory and key cities from the sect—thanks to the efforts of Chadian, Nigerien, and Cameroonian troops under the Multi-national Joint Task Force, and to Western military assistance.

These late military successes did not prevent Goodluck Jonathan from losing the presidential election in March 2015 to Muhammadu Buhari, a former military head of state (1983-1985) who had run on promises to restore security in the Northeast. Thereafter, the FTO’s receding territorial control, a more assertive leadership from the Nigerian government, and the regionalization of hostilities marked a new phase in the conflict.²⁶⁰

Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in early March 2015, as its troops were retreating to rural areas around Lake Chad and the Sambisa Forest near Cameroon. The Islamic State accepted the pledge several weeks later and referred to Boko Haram as ISWAP, a name that was subsequently used in global communications. By mid-2015, the FTO had lost most of its territorial control, no longer controlled towns, and the coalition was closing in on its camps in rural areas.²⁶¹

Yet, the military did not manage to inflict a decisive blow and could not reach the sect’s core leadership. In 2016, Abu Musab al-Barnawi (plausibly Yusuf’s son) claimed Boko Haram’s leadership. The Islamic State endorsed the move, splintering Boko Haram between ISWAP, led

²⁶⁰ Thurston 2017: 242-245.

²⁶¹ Mapping Militant Organizations. “Boko Haram.”

by Barnawi and Mamman Nur²⁶² and located in the Lake Chad area, and JAS, led by Shekau and located in the Sambisa Forest.²⁶³

Despite a decrease in Boko Haram's activities and lethality in 2016, the two splinter groups have resumed attacks at a sustained rate in the following years, regained substantial territory around Lake Chad and in northeastern Nigeria, and continued to pose a major threat to the Nigerian State.²⁶⁴ ISWAP has been the most powerful faction. It has adopted a different approach to the insurgency by sparing civilians—even gaining some popular support through the provision of certain services—and focusing on attacking state security targets.²⁶⁵

Generating hypotheses: Boko Haram's isolation type

In line with most of the literature on the matter, I argue that Boko Haram was a locally anchored and isolated group at the time of the designation debate and for most of its existence. The group had local objectives, support, membership, and sources of funding.

As certain studies posit that Boko Haram's insertion in regional and global Salafi-jihadist networks was instrumental to the group's development, I also discuss these analyses and explain why I favor the alternative interpretation.

1. Evaluating Boko Haram's integration in and isolation from support networks

Using Jo et al.'s framework on FTOs' support networks,²⁶⁶ it can first be noted that there is no evidence in the literature that Boko Haram received funding through legal means using the international financial system from private donors, charities, or diaspora populations. The Nigerian diaspora in the United States was, for instance, never linked to Boko Haram. There is

²⁶² Nur was reportedly killed in 2018.

²⁶³ International Crisis Group 2019.

²⁶⁴ Allen 2019.

²⁶⁵ International Crisis Group 2019.

²⁶⁶ Jo et al. 2020, 2021.

also no account suggesting that Boko Haram has had relations with a state entity and has benefitted from covered state sponsorship.

Furthermore, most accounts posit that Boko Haram was the product of local societal, socio-economic, and political dynamics. They maintain that—while ideologically influenced by al-Qaida and Salafi jihadism—Boko Haram did not receive a decisive support from global jihadist organizations at its inception and has had loose ties to jihadist networks for most of its existence.²⁶⁷ These analyses also argue that even after the affiliation with the Islamic State, actual support has remained very limited. Dissenting accounts claim that Boko Haram has entertained relations with al-Qaida from its early stages and received a consistent support from al-Qaida's network and subsequently the Islamic State's.²⁶⁸

Building on the assessments of the U.S. embassy in Nigeria, Thurston refutes the claims that the Boko Haram members responsible for the sect's first attack in Kanamma in 2003 were trained by al-Qaida and that Boko Haram received meaningful support from al-Qaida ahead of the 2009 uprising.²⁶⁹ Indeed, the poor operational deployment and lack of strategic planning, which characterized the uprising, suggest that Boko Haram was not receiving a high level of funding, training, or advice from more experienced jihadist groups at this time.²⁷⁰

Certain accounts, however, such as a 2014 International Crisis Group report, link Muhammad Ali, a Boko Haram hardliner and participant in the Kanamma attacks, to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, alleging that Ali received funds in 2000 to organize a cell in Nigeria.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ E.g., Kyari 2014, Thurston 2017, Higazi et al. 2018, Perouse de Montclos 2016, 2020

²⁶⁸ E.g., Varin 2016, Zenn 2018, 2020b.

²⁶⁹ Thurston 2017, using the following: United States Embassy Abuja, leaked cable 04ABUJA183, "Nigerian 'Taliban' Attacks Most Likely Not Tied to Taliban nor al-Qaida," 6 February 2004. United States Embassy Abuja, leaked cable 09ABUJA2014, "Nigeria: Borno State Residents Not Yet Recovered from Boko Haram Violence," 4 November 2009.

²⁷⁰ Thurston 2017. Perouse de Montclos 2016, 2020.

²⁷¹ International Crisis Group 2014.

According to Thurston, it remains unclear whether these funds ever reached Yusuf and helped Boko Haram develop.²⁷² On the other hand, Zenn argues that Muhammad Ali was a key figure of Boko Haram and describes the Kanamma retreat as an al-Qaida-modelled jihadist training camp.²⁷³ It is generally accepted that Boko Haram intensified its contacts with jihadist organizations, notably al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (or AQIM, formerly the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat) after the 2009 insurrection. Correspondence between Shekau and AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel shows that AQIM promised funding, training, weapons, and media support to Boko Haram.²⁷⁴

The suicide attacks perpetrated in Abuja in the summer of 2011—on the United Nations building and the national police headquarters—are seen as the result of AQIM’s involvement with Boko Haram since these attacks required a high level of training and planning. However, the relationship between Shekau and AQIM deteriorated rapidly in 2011, leading to the formation of Ansaru in January 2012 by dissatisfied Boko Haram commanders.²⁷⁵

Shekau then attempted to obtain the affiliation label and support from al-Qaida central (AQC), as sources recovered in bin Laden’s compound in Pakistan suggest.²⁷⁶ According to some accounts, Boko Haram members received training in Somalia with al-Shabab, a jihadist

²⁷² Thurston 2017, 162.

²⁷³ Zenn 2020a.

²⁷⁴ Jihadology. 2017. “New release from the archives of al-Qaidah in the Islamic Maghribs Shaykh Abu al-Hasan Rashid: shariah advice and guidance for the mujahidin of Nigeria.” <https://jihadology.net/2017/04/28/new-release-from-the-archives-of-al-qaidah-in-the-islamic-maghribs-shaykh-abu-al-e1%b8%a5asan-rashid-shariah-advice-and-guidance-for-the-mujahidin-of-nigeria/> (last consultation January 2021).

²⁷⁵ Thurston (2017) and Zenn (2018) agree on this point.

²⁷⁶ Letter from Abubakar Shekau to al-Qaida, circa 2010, published by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), <http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/arabic/Arabic%20Praise%20be%20to%20God%20the%20Lord%20of%20all%20worlds.pdf> (last consultation January 2021). Translated and cited in Thurston 2017: 175. ODNI translation is available here: <http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/english/Praise%20be%20to%20God%20the%20Lord%20of%20all%20worlds.pdf> (last consultation January 2021).

group that became affiliated with al-Qaida between 2008 and 2012.²⁷⁷ Zenn concludes that Boko Haram obtained the skills to conduct suicide bombings from its training with AQIM and al-Shabab.²⁷⁸

Yet, Shekau's personality and strategic divergences prevented closer ties between Boko Haram and al-Qaida. Shekau was perceived as unreliable, eagerly willing to kill Muslim civilians, and was uninterested in expanding the fight outside northeast Nigeria. On the other hand, Ansaru's approach was more closely aligned with AQC's global agenda, but the group's reach remained limited: it only committed a handful of major attacks and has remained dormant following the killing and arrest of its leaders.²⁷⁹

The schism between AQC and the Islamic State split the Salafi-jihadist movement into competing factions in the early 2010s. After the unsuccessful attempt to join the al-Qaida franchise, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to and received endorsement from the Islamic State in 2015. As Mendelsohn has pointed out, the Islamic State has been much less selective in its affiliations than AQC.²⁸⁰

The affiliation redirected Boko Haram's communication towards the global jihadi struggle (e.g., the use of Arabic instead of Hausa became more systematic) and the sect's messaging converged with the Islamic State media production in both methods and narrative. Boko Haram's recruitment may have diversified and expanded to the subregion, although evidence for this trend is thin.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Hansen 2013.

²⁷⁸ Zenn et al. 2018.

²⁷⁹ Thurston 2017: 172. Zenn et al. 2018. Abubakar Adam Kambar was killed in 2012 and Khalid al-Barnawi was arrested in 2016.

²⁸⁰ Mendelsohn 2016, 2019.

²⁸¹ Mahmoud 2018.

However, the relationship did not involve a substantial material support: funding, arms, members, and other supply networks remained local.²⁸² In fact, the cooperation between Boko Haram and the Islamic State has been loose compared to other Islamic State's branches such as groups in Libya. Furthermore, Boko Haram's leadership remained unchanged, and its attacks have reflected regional developments rather than a centralized strategy emanating from the Islamic State leadership. The Islamic State's recruitment campaigns also mostly directed potential members in West Africa to join the fight in North Africa and the Middle East, rather than in Nigeria.²⁸³

Finally, a recent study investigating Boko Haram's internal structure through its mobility patterns also emphasizes the local nature of the organization. The study suggests that Boko Haram "has a very high level of fragmentation and consists of at least 50–60 separate cells."²⁸⁴ In fact, not only Boko Haram's leaders have focused on local objectives and support networks, but many of the cells that make up the organization operate with a high degree of independence and respond to their own local environment.²⁸⁵

2. Assessing divergent analyses on financial and other support networks

A corpus of research led by Zenn supports the idea that Boko Haram became a major security concern because of the support of groups such as al-Qaida, AQIM, and the Islamic State. However, there are several reasons to favor the opposite interpretation that relations with other Salafi-jihadist groups had a marginal role in the development of Boko Haram.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Thurston 2017: 275-276.

²⁸⁴ Prieto Curiel et al. 2020: 1.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Academic debates on this issue have been particularly virulent. See Higazi, Kendhammer, Mohammed, Pérouse de Montclos, and Thurston 2018 vs. Zenn 2018.

Zenn's research focuses on the individual connections between several Boko Haram members and global jihadist groups. Zenn demonstrates that these Boko Haram members, including leaders such as Muhammad Ali and Mamman Nur, received training and sometimes funding at several points during Boko Haram's development.²⁸⁷ Yet, these individual examples do not prove a sustained organizational support nor a regular and substantial funding. As critiques highlighted, this approach omits crucial variables that explain Boko Haram's rise²⁸⁸ and increase the risk of selection bias.

One of Zenn's main arguments is that several Ansaru members received the training to engineer suicide bombing attacks, allowing Boko Haram to use the technique.²⁸⁹ However, this technique was marginally consequential in the context of the Boko Haram conflict. Since the conflict has remained circumscribed to northeastern Nigeria, suicide bombings have had a limited influence in battles for territorial control.

Furthermore, it appears that Boko Haram's preferred tactics off the battlefield, such as the kidnapping of local women, were self-generated and sometimes conflicted directly with the approach of other jihadist groups.²⁹⁰ For instance, AQIM opposed the mass killing of villagers and AQC disapproved the kidnapping of women.²⁹¹ The Islamic State-backed schism between ISWAP and JAS is also attributed to the fact the Islamic State considered Shekau as too brutal towards civilians.²⁹²

²⁸⁷ Zenn 2020a.

²⁸⁸ Perouse de Montclos 2020. In addition to the peculiar socio-political context that enabled Boko Haram's emergence, the strategic ineptitude and the deadly methods Nigerian forces durably alienated the local population.

²⁸⁹ Zenn (2020b) claims that Ansaru members reintegrated Boko Haram in 2013-2014, which is contested by his detractors (Higazi et al. 2018).

²⁹⁰ See Thurston (2017: 177), who argues Boko Haram's violence was "improvised, rather than directed from abroad."

²⁹¹ Ibid. Nossiter and Kirkpatrick 2014.

²⁹² Allen 2019.

There is also little evidence of combatants and resources sent to help Boko Haram, when it gained and eventually lost territorial control. As Reno pointed out, if al-Qaida, AQIM, and subsequently the Islamic State, were so integral to Boko Haram's development, it is surprising that they did not provide tangible support when Boko Haram was crumbling under assault.²⁹³

Regarding financing, available evidence suggests that Boko Haram's funding has been local and criminal.²⁹⁴ A FATF-GIABA-GABAC report on terrorist financing in West Africa highlights criminal activities as the confirmed sources of funding in Boko Haram's portfolio—including illegal taxation and extortion, robberies, kidnappings, and human trafficking—and does not mention international donations or the use of the international financial system.²⁹⁵

Less detailed studies mention funding from al-Qaida, AQIM, and to a lesser extent the Islamic State, but acknowledge that the evidence is very limited or contain serious inaccuracies.²⁹⁶ For instance, one study dedicated to Boko Haram's funding confuses 40 million nairas (\$200,000) with \$40 million in describing an alleged AQIM payment to Boko Haram.²⁹⁷ Tellingly, the chapter on Boko Haram's level of internationalization in Zenn's edited report (for the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point), by Mahmoud, maintains that Boko Haram's sources of funding were mostly domestic even at the height of the group's integration with other jihadist networks.²⁹⁸

Finally, U.S. officials from the Treasury Department (USDT) stated in 2014 that the level of assistance the group received from AQIM was "inconsequential" compared to other

²⁹³ Reno 2021.

²⁹⁴ Jo et al. (2020) list both criminal activities and terrorist network in Boko Haram's sources of funding.

²⁹⁵ FATF-GIABA-GABAC. 2016. "Terrorist Financing in West and Central Africa." FATF, Paris. www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/methodsandtrends/documents/terrorist-financing-west-central-africa.html (last consultation February 2021).

²⁹⁶ Comolli 2015, Rock 2016, Fanusie and Entz 2017.

²⁹⁷ Rock 2016: 5. See Ogala, Emmanuel. 2012 'Boko Haram Gets N40million Donation From Algeria', Premium Times, May 13.

²⁹⁸ Mahmoud 2018.

revenues.²⁹⁹ Although Boko Haram's functioning budget has not been established, a statement from the U.N. Counter-Terrorism Committee suggested that the group operated on a \$10 million budget in 2015.³⁰⁰ Other reports estimate Boko Haram's annual budget of \$10 million in the preceding years, without much detail on how they reach this number.³⁰¹

As analysts noted, the narrative of a strong financial support from global Salafi-jihadist groups to Boko Haram has sometimes been pushed by security forces in Nigeria and other countries to attract more international and domestic funding.³⁰²

Generating hypotheses: the motives behind Boko Haram's U.S. terrorist designations

In June 2012, the U.S. Department of State listed Boko Haram leaders Abubakar Shekau, Abubakar Adam Kamar, and Khalid al-Barnawi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorists under Executive Order (EO) 13224. On November 13, 2013, DOS designated Boko Haram an FTO under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and an SDGT under EO 13224.

The FTO designation took place under Secretary of State John Kerry after a particularly controversial and publicized process. While various considerations were at play during the process, the push for designation was driven by non-strategic motives that mostly reflected domestic objectives. Three sets of actors played a major role:

1) The U.S. Congress, led by its Republican members: the main promotor of designation, this actor was driven by the symbolism of the measure and domestic objectives. Notably, promoting FTO designation was a means to express a strong political stance against terrorism, especially terrorism related to Islamic groups, and appeal to certain constituents, such as the

²⁹⁹ Stewart, Phil and Lesley Wroughton. 2014. "How Boko Haram is beating U.S. efforts to choke its financing," *Reuters*, July 1.

³⁰⁰ Ahmed, Baba. 2015. "Chad imposes state of emergency around Lake Chad," *Associated Press*, November 10.

³⁰¹ Fanusie and Entz 2017. Considering that such reports assume important and consistent funding from al-Qaida, which is not substantiated, this is likely an overestimate of Boko Haram's annual budget.

³⁰² Perouse de Montclos 2016.

Christian right. It also provided Republican members with a line of attack against the Obama administration and Secretary of State Clinton.

This actor had a fact-based approach to justify FTO designation and had ample evidence to demonstrate that Boko Haram was a violent group using terrorist tactics. However, the actor was not concerned by the designation's strategic benefits and other consequences.

2) The majority of DOS, including the Bureau of African Affairs: initially reluctant to designate, this actor was mainly focused on the foreign policy implications of the measure. In particular, DOS did not see direct benefits to designation and faced the opposition of the Nigerian government, while it was trying to obtain Nigeria's cooperation in stabilizing the situation in Mali.

3) Certain parts of DOS and the Executive Branch, such as the Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT Bureau) and the Department of Justice's (DOJ) national security division: more inclined to designate than the rest of DOS, these actors were driven by their organizational culture and understanding of mission, fact-based assessments, and the symbolism of the measure.

Additional actors were also involved in the designation debate: other parts of the Obama administration such as the National Security Council (NSC) and the Department of Defense (DOD); the government of Nigeria; civil society organizations and interest groups, such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), its affiliate organization in America (CANAN), and U.S. Christian groups; and experts in think-tanks and academia.

A minute analysis of the different stages in the Boko Haram's designation process helps illuminate the different motivations driving each of these actors.

1. Terrorist designation process

Congress began promoting FTO designation in 2011 and confronted DOS for several years over this issue. The U.S. House of Representatives' Homeland Security Committee (HHSC) started to examine Boko Haram in August 2011, following the attack on the United Nations building in Abuja.³⁰³

HHSC's Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence held a hearing in November 2011³⁰⁴ and released a report in December. The report asked DOS to "determine whether Boko Haram should be designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization," considering that it "may be required to provide our intelligence and law enforcement communities the tools necessary to ensure Boko Haram does not attack U.S. interests and the U.S. homeland."³⁰⁵

The report argued that designation "would support U.S. Intelligence Community efforts to curb the group's financing" and "stigmatize and isolate it internationally."³⁰⁶ During the hearing, the expert witnesses who spoke on the issue of designation were more cautious. One expert warned that the practical effects would be minimal while the potential drawbacks were serious.³⁰⁷ Another expert deemed designation as premature.³⁰⁸

In January 2012, Lisa Monaco—DOJ's Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division—sent a letter to DOS's CT Bureau stating that Boko Haram met the criteria

³⁰³ Poling 2013.

³⁰⁴ U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Homeland Security. 2012. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, Boko Haram—Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland Hearing, 30 November 2011. Washington: Government Printing Office.

³⁰⁵ U.S. Congress, House. 2011, 3.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 24.

³⁰⁷ Jennifer G. Cook notably stated "because Boko Haram's leadership and structure do appear to be fractured, the United States should be very careful and give very careful consideration to potential consequences of designating the group as a foreign terrorist organization. In the short term, the designation risks further radicalizing Boko Haram, lending a coherence to a group that already appears to be fracturing, and narrowing the opportunity for dialogue and negotiation" in U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Homeland Security. 2012, 29. When Representative Patrick Meehan (R, PA) asked her if it was a mistake to identify Boko Haram as an FTO, Jennifer Cook reiterated her argument (ibid, 42).

³⁰⁸ J. Peter Pham in U.S. Congress, House. 2012, 43.

for designation because the group “engages in terrorism which threatens the United States or has a capability or intent to do so.”³⁰⁹ While this input may have been requested, it can be noted that it is usually not the role of DOJ’s National Security Division to assess whether an NSAG should be designated as an FTO.³¹⁰

On March 30 and May 18, Peter King (R, NY) and Patrick Meehan (R, PA), respectively Chairs of the HHSC and of the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, sent two letters to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. They argued that FTO designation could “no longer wait” because it would provide U.S. agencies with “the legal authorities to deter individuals who might be providing support to Boko Haram in the U.S. and abroad, and freeze any known Boko Haram assets.”³¹¹

In parallel, Patrick Meehan introduced H.R. 5822, the Boko Haram Designation Act of 2012, in the House on May 17³¹² and Senator Scott Brown (R, MA) introduced S.3249 identical bill in the Senate on May 24.³¹³ The legislation required the Secretary of State to provide a “detailed report” on whether Boko Haram met the criteria for designation and a “detailed justification as to which criteria have not been met”³¹⁴ if designation was not determined warranted.

In addition, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013, drafted from early 2012, contained a provision requiring DOS to determine whether Boko Haram qualified for FTO

³⁰⁹ Hosenball, Mark and John Shiffman. 2012. ‘U.S. Justice Dept urges terror label for Nigerian militants’, *Reuters*, May 17.

³¹⁰ Mark Hosenball and John Shiffman mentioned that the letter was leaked to them several weeks after it was sent to DOS in January 2012 (email exchange with the authors). I discuss interpretations in the next section.

³¹¹ Poling 2013.

³¹² H.R. 5822, 112th Cong. 2012. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act. H.R. 5822, 112th Cong. 2012. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/5822?r=27&s=1> (last consultation February 2021).

³¹³ S.3249, 112th Cong. 2012. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/senate-bill/3249> (last consultation February 2021).

³¹⁴ Ibid, 3-4.

status, a provision requiring an intelligence assessment on Boko Haram from the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and other obligations for DOS.³¹⁵

On June 21, 2012, DOS labeled Boko Haram leaders Shekau, Kamar, and al-Barnawi as SDGTs, under EO 13224. In July 2012, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson participated in a House hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Africa. Johnnie Carson's statement reflected DOS's view that SDGT status was a targeted tool better suited to the situation.

Pressed by representatives on why DOS had only designated these individuals and not the entire group as an FTO,³¹⁶ he emphasized the disparate nature of Boko Haram and stated that FTO designation "would serve to enhance their status, probably give them greater international notoriety amongst radical Islamic groups, probably lead to more recruiting and probably more assistance."³¹⁷

Subsequently, other actors entered the public debate. Notably, Nigerian Ambassador to the United States Adebawale Adefuye spoke against designation in *The Hill* in September 2012, reflecting the Nigerian government's opposition to the measure. Ambassador Adefuye stated: "In order to effectively combat Boko Haram, we need American help to be complementary—not contradictory—to our own efforts." He further suggested that the "well-intentioned efforts by a few members of Congress" to designate Boko Haram an FTO were counterproductive and pleaded for more cooperation on the issue.

³¹⁵ Poling 2013. H.R. 4310, 112th Cong. 2012. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/4310/text> (last consultation February 2021)

³¹⁶ Notably Christopher Smith (R, NJ) and Robert Turner (R, NY).

³¹⁷ U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2012. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights. U.S. Policy Toward Nigeria: West Africa's Troubled Titan. Washington: Government Printing Office, 37.

Ambassador Adefuye further argued that “unlike other jihadist organizations, Boko Haram is a domestic group with domestic aims” and that FTO designation “by a sovereign the size and stature of the United States” would give the group “the title they seek and status they desire, stimulating a fundraising effort that has not yet been attainable.” Ambassador Adefuye also mentioned risks for “desperately needed humanitarian and commercial activity” in northeast Nigeria as a result of designation.³¹⁸

These concerns partially echoed a letter sent to Secretary Clinton by a group of scholars and experts in May 2012. The group assessed that designation would “internationalize Boko Haram’s standing and enhance its status among radical organizations elsewhere” as well as “legitimize abuses by Nigeria’s security services, limit the State Department’s latitude in shaping a long-term strategy, and undermine the U.S. Government’s ability to receive effective independent analysis from the region.” The letter also mentioned a humanitarian component: “If economic development is to play a role in alleviating tensions in northern Nigeria, we should not hamper access by USAID or private NGOs in providing aid and assistance in the region.”³¹⁹

On the other hand, CAN, CANAN, and evangelical Christian groups strongly advocated for designation from 2011 to 2013.³²⁰ These organizations were primarily concerned with the rise of Boko Haram’s attacks on Christian targets.³²¹ In the July 2012 hearing, CAN president, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, stated: “By refusing to designate Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist

³¹⁸ Adefuye, Adebawale. 2012. “Nigerian ambassador Adebawale Adefuye: Radical Islamists cannot be defeated by military means alone.” *The Hill*, September 20. <https://thehill.com/policy/international/250777-nigerian-ambassador-adebowale-adeyeye-radical-islamists-cannot-be-defeated-by-military-means-alone?rl=1#ixzz320QOyfMu> (last consultation February 2021).

³¹⁹ LeVan, Carl et al. 2012. “Letter to Secretary Clinton from Nigeria Scholars,” May 21.

³²⁰ Multiple advocacy articles were published in evangelical newspapers, see for instance: Strode, Tom. 2012. “Nigeria’s persecuted Christians need help from U.S., ERLC says” *Baptist Press*, July 18. McDonnell, Faith. 2013. “Boko Haram: Terrorists With or Without Designation” *Juicy Ecumenism*, August 1st.

³²¹ Interview with Laolu Akande, CANAN Executive Director, August 2013. See Chouin et al. (2014), regarding the patterns of Boko Haram attacks on Christians.

organization, the United States is sending a very clear message, not just to the Federal Government of Nigeria, but to the world that the murder of innocent Christians, and Muslims who reject Islamism [...] are acceptable losses.”³²²

In fact, several Members of Congress, mostly within the Republican party, were unsatisfied with the sole SDGT label and intensified the pressure on DOS. For instance, Representative Mike Pompeo (R, KS), echoing the concerns of the Christian right, led an initiative to demand that Secretary Clinton denounce Boko Haram’s attacks as religiously motivated and designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

On January 31, 2013, Senator James Risch (R, ID) introduced S.198, the Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act of 2013. S.198 reiterated previous demands to DOS with stronger language, notably adding that “[i]t is the sense of Congress that Boko Haram meets the criteria for designation as a foreign terrorist organization [...] and should be designated as such.”³²³ Representative Chris Smith (R, NJ) introduced H.R.3209 in the House in September 2013, a similar legislation that added a sanction component against U.S. persons providing support to Boko Haram.³²⁴

Within DOS,³²⁵ the CT Bureau headed by Ambassador Daniel Benjamin started compiling an administrative record on Boko Haram in 2011, considering that the group was a

³²² U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2012. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights. U.S. Policy Toward Nigeria: West Africa’s Troubled Titan. Washington: Government Printing Office, 44.

³²³ S.198, 113th Cong. 2013. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act, 5. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/198> (last consultation February 2021).

³²⁴ H.R.3209, 113th Cong. 2013. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/3209> (last consultation February 2021).

³²⁵ Kessler provides an accurate snapshot of the internal debates at the DOS. Kessler, Glenn. 2014. “Boko Haram: Inside the State Department debate over the ‘terrorist’ label.” *The Washington Post*, May 19.

“clear candidate for designation because of the magnitude of the violence it was inflicting.”³²⁶

The CT Bureau led the interagency consultation process, and both USDT and DOJ rapidly expressed support for designation.

On the other hand, the Bureau of African Affairs (AF Bureau), headed by Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson, and the U.S. embassy in Nigeria recommended caution. They were primarily concerned with the strong opposition from the Nigerian government and skeptical about the benefits of FTO designation. Indeed, Nigerian officials worried about the stigma associated with designation, which in their view suggested instability, a weak government, and other negative attributes.³²⁷

The AF Bureau deemed it preferable not to “waste political capital on the FTO issue,”³²⁸ as the United States was seeking Nigeria’s cooperation in relation to the situation in Mali.³²⁹ Furthermore, it also viewed Boko Haram as a local issue—not “integrated in any regional or international system”—and believed that designation could bring the sect prestige and support from terrorist networks, without providing tangible tools to weaken it.³³⁰

Deputy Secretary of State William Burns initially leaned towards the AF Bureau position³³¹ and subsequently attempted to reconcile the two positions.³³² Burns tried to leverage designation to obtain a change in Nigeria’s counterinsurgency methods. DOS was concerned

³²⁶ Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019. The CT Bureau can initiate a review in accordance with the three criteria for FTO designation.

³²⁷ Interview with Linda Thomas-Greenfield, August 2019.

³²⁸ Interview with Johnnie Carson, June 2019.

³²⁹ The ongoing armed conflict in Mali started in January 2012, opposing the Malian government and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which was initially backed by Ansar Dine, a jihadist group designated FTO in March 2013.

³³⁰ Interview with Johnnie Carson, June 2019.

³³¹ Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019.

³³² Kessler 2014.

with the multiple reports on human rights violations by Nigerian forces, considering that the indiscriminate repression was fueling the insurgency.

During the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission on June 4, 2012, Burns told his counterparts that DOS would hold off on designation for 12 to 18 months, but that Nigeria needed to change its approach if they wanted U.S. cooperation on the issue.³³³ In parallel, DOS decided to designate three Boko Haram leaders, although the practical impact of the measure was understood to be limited considering the isolated nature of these targets.³³⁴

In 2013, DOS progressively extended the use of designation tools on Boko Haram. In June, it added Shekau to the Rewards for Justice Program and offered up to \$7 million for information leading to his location. In November, Boko Haram and Ansaru were formally designated as FTOs.

According to Johnnie Carson, who left the position of Assistant Secretary for African Affairs in March 2013, DOS decided to move forward on designation because it was using too much domestic political capital on an issue that had become particularly controversial. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who became Assistant Secretary for African Affairs in August 2013,³³⁵ mentioned that she was relieved to announce that Boko Haram had been designated during her first hearing with Congress in the position.³³⁶ She assessed that the pressure from Congress would have been “tremendously harsh,” had the decision to designate not been made.³³⁷

³³³ Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019.

³³⁴ Interview with Johnnie Carson, June 2019.

³³⁵ Linda Thomas-Greenfield replaced Donald Yamamoto, who had been acting Assistant Secretary following the departure of Johnnie Carson.

³³⁶ U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2014. Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, November 13, 2013. Washington: Government Printing Office.

³³⁷ Interview with Linda Thomas-Greenfield, August 2019.

2. Actors' motives

a. U.S. Congress

Congress was the primary actor advocating for the designation of Boko Haram. Although Republican members led the campaign, their Democratic counterparts did not oppose their efforts and some of them joined Republican initiatives on occasion. Democrats displayed more understanding towards DOS's position during hearings of career diplomats and members of the Obama administration, however.

While Congress had a fact-based approach regarding Boko Haram's activities, the push for designation was driven by the symbolism of the measure as well as domestic political incentives. Whereas the level of violence and terrorist tactics exhibited by Boko Haram were undisputable, Congress endorsed the most alarmist views regarding the sect's links to global jihadist networks, despite testimonies of experts arguing otherwise during Congressional hearings.

Members of Congress repeatedly claimed that FTO designation would equip U.S. agencies with the tools to decisively undermine Boko Haram, despite experts' feedback explaining that such tools were likely to be ineffective due to the isolation of the group. Appealing to domestic constituents such as Christian right groups, several members of Congress framed the conflict as a religious war consisting of jihadists persecuting Christians.³³⁸ From the

³³⁸ For instance: Representative Turner in U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2012. Senator Rubio in U.S. Congress, Senate. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2015. Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs, #BringBackOurGirls: Addressing The Threat Of Boko Haram, May 14, 2014. Washington: Government Printing Office. While Boko Haram's targeted attacks on Christians are undeniable, a majority of casualties have been Muslims (see Chouin et al. 2014). As mentioned, the indiscriminate killings of Muslims were one important factor explaining the loose relationship between Boko Haram and jihadist groups such as al-Qaida and Islamic State.

questions asked during hearings, certain members of Congress advocating for designation displayed a limited interest in Boko Haram and the situation in northeastern Nigeria.³³⁹

FTO designation offered members of Congress a concrete and visible avenue to display their strong stance against Islamic terrorism and for the defense of Christian populations. It also enabled Republican members to criticize the Obama administration for its alleged soft approach and inaction on terrorism. Specific constituents such as CANAN and the Nigerian community at large advocated for designation to Congress members, yet their influence is difficult to assess and may have been overall limited.³⁴⁰

The politicization of designation became apparent following the Chibok girls' abduction in April 2014. Former Secretary of State and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton faced repeated accusations from the Republican party and conservative media for not designating Boko Haram and somehow enabling the abduction.³⁴¹

b. Department of State

DOS's leadership was reluctant to designate Boko Haram for foreign policy and security reasons. Its main concern was the opposition of the Nigerian government: on the advice of the

³³⁹ For instance, certain questions to experts were about the total population of Nigeria and the African continent. Other questions assumed links between Boko Haram and Iran.

³⁴⁰ The Nigerian American community is in majority Christian, explaining its supports for designation. This group is not considered as having a strong influence in American politics but there was also no opposition to their demands among other constituents in this case. It can be noted that in 2012, seven of the twelve members of Congress promoting the "Boko Haram Designation Act" came from the ten states with the largest Nigerian American populations. Senators Brown (R, Massachusetts), Chambliss (R, Georgia), Representatives Meehan (Pennsylvania), King (New York), McCaul (Texas), Lungren (California), and Dent (Pennsylvania). The largest Nigerian American communities are found in Texas, Maryland, New York, California, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, Florida, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania (in this order).

³⁴¹ Among many examples: Fox News. 2014. "Clinton's State Department resisted labeling Boko Haram as terror group," May 8. CBS News. 2016. "Chris Christie puts Hillary Clinton on trial at GOP convention," July 19. CNN. 2014. "Gingrich: Hillary Clinton's Boko Haram problem" May 9. Grassley, Chuck. 2016. "Grassley, Vitter Demand Answers In Clinton's Refusal To Name Boko Haram A Terrorist Organization," March 10. Rogin, Josh. 2014. "Hillary Clinton's Boko Haram Fail" *Daily Beast*, April 14.

AF Bureau, DOS was careful not to compromise the bilateral relation with Nigeria with a measure that would not have a meaningful impact.

The quality of the bilateral relation was particularly important at this time as the United States was seeking Nigeria's cooperation to confront the challenges posed by the jihadist insurgency and war in Mali from January 2012. As Grossman points out, the organizational culture of the DOS, and especially of the regional bureaus, is characterized by a commitment to diplomacy, multilateralism, and consensus-building.³⁴² In fact, Nigeria became the second largest contingent of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali—authorized by the U.S.-backed U.N. Security Council Resolution 2085—and started deploying troops in January 2013.³⁴³

Further, DOS considered that tools enabled by FTO designation (e.g., asset freezes and travel restrictions) and the legal facilitations for U.S. law enforcement agencies were not pertinent in the case of Boko Haram and would not impact the NSAG.³⁴⁴ DOS also believed that designation could have negative effects such as internationalizing Boko Haram and elevating its prestige among jihadist groups, potentially helping with funding and recruitment.³⁴⁵ Another concern was not to appear complicit in the Nigerian army's human rights records.³⁴⁶

However, the CT Bureau was inclined to move forward with designation, following a fact-based rationale and because of the Bureau's organizational culture and understanding of

³⁴² Grossman 2011.

³⁴³ Nigeria deployed up to 1,200 soldiers.

³⁴⁴ Interview with John Campbell, March 2015. Interview with Johnnie Carson, June 2019.

³⁴⁵ Interview with Johnnie Carson, June 2019. See

³⁴⁶ Interview with John Campbell, March 2015.

mission. The *raison-d'être* of the Bureau is indeed to identify organizations that use terrorism and meet the criteria for designation.³⁴⁷

Boko Haram perpetrated particularly lethal attacks and bombed the U.N. building in Abuja, which justified the attention and recommendation of the Bureau, even if the third criteria for designation was not evident.³⁴⁸ However, the CT Bureau conducts its assessment with a degree of independence from certain foreign policy concerns, such as the wishes of the potential FTO's host country and broader regional objectives of DOS.³⁴⁹ The CT Bureau also viewed FTO designation as a means to mobilize the international community and “create a united front against a terrorist group” and attempted to convince DOS's leadership to embrace this position.³⁵⁰

DOS also tried to leverage FTO designation—considering the strong opposition of the Nigerian government to the measure—to obtain drastic changes in the Nigerian forces' counterinsurgency methods. As the humanitarian toll on civilian populations was seen as a major hurdle to both a military and a political solution, DOS as well as DOD incited Nigerian officials to take a “less brutal and more holistic approach” to the conflict.³⁵¹

At first sight, it is not clear how the FTO tool could be efficiently leveraged. Indeed, one concern of DOS was not to appear as if the United States was supporting human rights violations committed by Nigerian forces, *vis-à-vis* Muslim populations in the Sahel region and beyond, and FTO designation could legitimize the use of more intense violence.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Grant Harris, February 2019. Grant Harris coordinated policies across agencies at the NSC as Senior Director for African Affairs from 2011 to 2015. See George and Rishikof (2011) for a theoretical and empirical account of such dynamics.

³⁴⁸ “I would agree that the direct threat [to U.S. nationals or the national security of the United States] was minimal.” Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019. Practice has allowed the CT Bureau to have a broad interpretation of this criteria.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Grant Harris, February 2019.

³⁵⁰ Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019.

³⁵¹ Kessler 2014. Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019.

Further, FTO designation could in effect make the work of humanitarian actors subject to U.S. law more difficult, both in terms of aid delivery to civilians and reporting of human rights violations. Yet, as illustrated in Chapter 6, the intensity of the conflict likely increased and the humanitarian situation deteriorated following FTO designation, suggesting that the Nigerian government might have been trying to restrain Nigerian forces as a result of this quid pro quo.

One interpretation is that DOS used FTO designation to obtain an across-the-board improvement of the situation, which emphasized the humanitarian and human rights component, and progressively discounted Nigeria's preference as the situation kept deteriorating. Ultimately, the increasing domestic pressure from Congress was the decisive factor for DOS in moving forward with designation.

c. Rest of the Executive Branch

Other actors in the Executive Branch had varying views on designation and on the nature of Boko Haram's threat in general. DOJ's National Security Division took a strong stance to weigh in on the designation process by sending a letter to DOS's CT Bureau advocating for designation, a letter whose content was eventually made public.³⁵²

Following a fact-based assessment, DOJ considered that Boko Haram's activities cleared the bar for designation.³⁵³ It is usually not the role of DOJ's National Security Division to determine which groups should be designated FTOs and it is unlikely that the letter was leaked accidentally.³⁵⁴

³⁵² The letter itself was not published. The Reuters journalists who broke the story, Mark Hosenball and John Shiffman, explained that the letter was leaked to them several weeks after it was sent to DOS in January 2012 (email exchange). However, they could not find a copy in their archives.

³⁵³ The published content of the letter did not specify how Boko Haram met the third criteria for designation.

³⁵⁴ Interview with DOS official.

Among the possible interpretations, it is plausible that the letter was sent at the request of the CT Bureau. The leak may have been a strategy to increase the pressure on DOS to designate or to present DOJ's leadership in a favorable light, taking a strong stance against terrorism.

Although less vocal, USDT was also in favor of designation. The organizational process and culture of both actors can explain their position. FTO status, through EO 13224, enables USDT to designate, sanction, and block assets of Boko Haram members and supporters. Regarding DOJ, FTO designation facilitate domestic prosecutions because of the material support charge (18 U.S. Code § 2339B).³⁵⁵ Without designation, these agencies' roles would be limited.

DOD was not substantially involved in the designation process because FTO designation was seen as the prerogative of DOS and the decision to designate was not considered as having a crucial impact on DOD's policy towards Nigeria. Further, DOD was inclined to follow DOS's lead on Nigeria because DOS had a better relationship with its Nigerian counterparts than DOD.³⁵⁶

Within DOD, different perspectives also existed on the threat presented by Boko Haram. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) shared DOS's view that Boko Haram was a local phenomenon responding to local politics and circumscribed to northeastern Nigeria. The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), on the other hand, presented Boko Haram as involved with jihadist groups operating in the sub-region (Niger, Mali, Chad, Libya, and Algeria), such as AQIM.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Most terrorist prosecutions in the United States are made possible because of the material support charges that connect to a group's placement on the FTO list. It can have an extraterritorial impact as well, as the prosecution of the Libyan Ahmed Abu Khattala illustrates. Interview with DOS official.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Alice Friend, February 2019. According to Alice Friend, DOD was not consulted on FTO designation.

³⁵⁷ Interview with Alice Friend, February 2019.

According to certain accounts, some parts of the FBI and other members of the security community were also in favor of designation.³⁵⁸ As summarized by former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell, the U.S. security community was divided into two groups: certain actors saw Boko Haram as a manifestation of international terrorism,³⁵⁹ while others saw Boko Haram as the product of Nigerian factors.³⁶⁰ Campbell described that: “those who advocated strongly for designation tended to come from the group seeing Boko Haram as part of the international terrorist movement.”³⁶¹

d. Nigerian government

Nigeria was fundamentally opposed to designation through the term of President Jonathan, contrary to some accounts in the literature.³⁶² In addition to the reasons expressed publicly by Ambassador Adefuye,³⁶³ the Nigerian government had several concerns.

Nigerian officials generally disliked the reputational damage of being an FTO host country and the impact the measure could have on economic attractiveness and foreign investment.³⁶⁴ They also worried that designation would impede the transfer of remittance money and make visa attributions more difficult for Nigerian citizens.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁸ Grassley 2016.

³⁵⁹ Parts of the FBI, DOD, and DOJ.

³⁶⁰ DOS, the intelligence community, and most think tanks.

³⁶¹ Interview with John Campbell, March 2015. Campbell further considers that these actors “were also ill-informed about Boko Haram and designation tools.”

³⁶² Thurston 2017, 285.

³⁶³ Adefuye 2012. Mainly, that designation would internationalize Boko Haram, and secondly that designation would impede humanitarian assistance and commercial activity. The humanitarian concern seems paradoxical considering the human rights violations governmental forces were responsible of.

³⁶⁴ Interview with Linda Thomas-Greenfield, August 2019. Interview with John Campbell, March 2015.

³⁶⁵ Interview with John Campbell, March 2015.

When designation occurred, the Nigerian embassy declared that Nigeria was satisfied with designation because it had received assurances that the practical consequences of designation on innocent Nigerians would be minimized.³⁶⁶

However, a more plausible interpretation is that the Nigerian government was still opposed to FTO designation at this time. Indeed, Nigerian officials continued to resist the designation of Boko Haram at the United Nations, in the Security Council's al-Qaida Sanctions. This suggests that Nigeria reluctantly accepted FTO designation and did not have leverage on the process at this point. Nigeria's opposition to designation in the U.N. list lasted until after the Chibok girls' abduction.³⁶⁷

Effects of U.S. terrorist designations on Boko Haram

The literature, as well as policymakers, made various assumptions regarding the effects of U.S. terrorist designations on FTOs in general and on Boko Haram in particular. This section assesses the direct and indirect impacts on Boko Haram and explores the causal mechanisms leading to my dependent variable: FTO's attacks and capabilities.

According to the literature and the promoters of FTO designation, we should expect a decrease in both attacks and capabilities for several reasons. First, Boko Haram operates in the territory of a U.S. ally and has medium-level financial adaptability, since it relied almost exclusively on criminal activities in terms of funding. These two factors should make the FTO more vulnerable to the effects of designation.

³⁶⁶ Interview with John Campbell, March 2015.

³⁶⁷ At the "#BringBackOurGirls" Senate hearing on May 14, 2014, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Robert Jackson was asked by Senator Coons if Nigeria was still opposing U.S. efforts at the United Nations. Robert Jackson replied that they had just reversed their policy on the issue. U.S. Congress, Senate. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2015, 27. Boko Haram was listed in the UNSC list on May 22, 2014.

In addition, Boko Haram was the target of a multilateral terrorist designation regime. FTO designation of Boko Haram in the United States happened concurrently with other designation mechanisms. The United Kingdom labeled Boko Haram as a “proscribed terrorist group” in July 2013 under the Terrorism Act 2000, the U.N. Security Council added the group to its “Al-Qaida Sanctions” list on May 14, 2014 (subsequently the “ISIL ‘Da’esh’ and Al-Qaeda Sanctions” list, part of the consolidated list), and the European Union reflected the U.N. Security Council’s decision its own terrorist lists on May 28.³⁶⁸

Finally, Boko Haram has been the target of multiple military interventions pre- and post-designation. Only involving the Nigerian military at first, these operations have subsequently implicated forces from neighboring countries and military support from Western countries.

1. Direct impacts on Boko Haram

The direct impacts of FTO designation on Boko Haram have been very limited. First, travel restrictions have seemingly not applied to Boko Haram members and impeded their activity or freedom of movement. There is no instance of Boko Haram members being arrested while attempting to travel to the United States or any country with similar travel restriction due to terrorist designations.

Second, there has been no substantial asset freeze on Boko Haram members or supporting individuals or entities following designation. The Treasury Department’s Terrorist Assets Reports for the calendar years of 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 do not mention any blocked funds pertaining to Boko Haram. The Terrorist Assets Reports of 2018 and 2019 mention

³⁶⁸ The EU list included all entities listed at the United Nations. “Following the UN designation, the EU has added Boko Haram to the lists of persons, groups and entities covered by the freezing of funds and economic resources under EC Regulation No 881/2002 with (EU) Commission Implementing Regulation No 583/2014.” The EU act was published in the EU Journal and entered into force on 29 May 2014. European Union. 2014. Press Release: “The EU lists Boko Haram as a terrorist organization,” June 2. http://www.eas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140605_01_en.pdf (last consultation February 2021).

blocked funds of \$11,514 and \$16,661, respectively, pertaining to Boko Haram.³⁶⁹ Further, there has been no evidence or allegations that the Nigerian diaspora in the United States—which is in majority Christian—has ever been a resource base for the FTO.

The reports do not detail the reason behind the blocked funds or mention arrests of suspected Boko Haram members or supporters. According to a source, it is plausible that the blocked funds for both years relate to the same individual or entity, and/or are loosely associated to Boko Haram.³⁷⁰ Notwithstanding the justification, the measure occurred more than four years after designation and the sums at stake are modest.

While FTO designation provides law enforcement, intelligence, and security agencies points of facilitation in terms of investigation and prosecution, there has been no announcement on the arrest or the prosecution of Boko Haram members or supporters (regarding 18 U.S. Code section 2339A and 2339B, which concerns the provision of material support or resources to designated FTOs, or other charges).

2. U.S. military assistance to Nigeria and international mobilization against Boko Haram

The literature suggests that the United States increases military assistance to FTO host countries after designation³⁷¹ and that designation is more successful if host countries are U.S. allies.³⁷² These claims are also held by certain elected officials and practitioners, who consider

³⁶⁹ Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2020. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2019. Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2019. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2018.

³⁷⁰ Interview with senior DOS official and USDT official. It should also be noted that considering how publicized Boko Haram became after Chibok and since USDT pushed for FTO designation, the agency has high incentives to show that it can undermine the FTO.

³⁷¹ Jo et al. 2020. Mills (2015) argues that this was the case for Uganda after the designation of the Lord's Resistance Army. Boutton and Carter (2014) argues that countries that are experiencing terrorism within their borders only see an increase in U.S. foreign aid if the terrorist activity is considered to threaten U.S. interests.

³⁷² Phillips 2019. One statistically significant criteria of identification of U.S. allies in this study is the presence of an FBI office in the host country. Nigeria meets this criterion.

that designation is a useful means to mobilize the international community on a terrorist threat and can lead to more military support or the building of coalitions against the FTO.³⁷³

In the case of Boko Haram, there is no evidence of increased military support and counterterrorist assistance following designation in November 2013. In fact, such measures were not taken until the Chibok girls' abduction after April 2014.

First, the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program towards Nigeria did not see a substantial increase after designation. On the contrary, the program fell from \$1.35 million in 2009 and \$1.85 million in 2010 to \$600,000 in 2015 and 2016, before going back up to \$1.2 million in 2017 in terms of yearly attribution.³⁷⁴ Even when considering the length of the appropriation process, Nigeria still received less funding in 2017 than it did in 2009.

Second, foreign military sales agreements decreased from \$27 million in 2009 to \$2 million in 2015. Foreign military sales deliveries decreased from \$13 million in 2011 to \$10 million in 2014 and rose to \$33.5 million in 2015.

In fact, the first Nigerian military assistance program since the beginning of the insurgency (of \$9 million) was signed on September 24, 2015, and funded thereafter. The program was part of the Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) of \$45 million for Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria to support their efforts against Boko Haram.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ See U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2014. Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019.

³⁷⁴ FMF to Nigeria: \$1.35 million in 2009, \$1.85 million in 2010, \$1.21 million in 2011, \$1 million in 2012, \$0.95 million in 2013, \$1 million in 2014, \$0.6 million in 2015, \$0.6 million in 2016, and \$1.2 million in 2017. See U.S. Department of State. 2016. Foreign Military Financing Account Summary. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14560.htm> (last consultation March 2021), U.S. Department of State. 2021. U.S. Security Cooperation with Nigeria. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-nigeria/> (last consultation March 2021), KNOEMA. 2020. "U.S. Foreign Military Financing Account Summaries by Country" <https://public.knoema.com/fanojpc/u-s-foreign-military-financing-account-summaries-by-country> (last consultation March 2021).

³⁷⁵ U.S. Department of Defense. Defense Security Cooperation Agency. 2016. Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Other Security Cooperation Historical Facts, 77. The program is part of section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, pursuant to presidential drawdown, signed 24 September 2015. See also The White House. 2014. FACT SHEET: U.S. Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight against

The United States initially responded to the Chibok girls' abduction by insisting on the need for a holistic approach to the conflict and announcing counterterrorism assistance involving countering violent extremism (CVE) programs.³⁷⁶ In October 2014, the White House announced measures that included military support such as the GSCF project as well as advisory support through a multi-disciplinary team and expanded intelligence sharing, the Security Governance Initiative, and other actions.

In fact, the Chibok event reinvigorated a bilateral conversation on the provision of specific assistance to counter Boko Haram, which had not been conducive until then.³⁷⁷ Notably, AFRICOM Commander General Rodriguez met with security and military officials, including National Security Advisor Sambo Dasuki, to convince Nigerian forces to use a range of counter-insurgency tools. Material support and specific training programs with Nigerian units were negotiated then.

Thus, Chibok boosted U.S. military involvement in Nigeria, which was at a particularly low point until then despite FTO designation, but the support remained limited. The United States had a strict application of the Leahy Laws—the vetting process of U.S. military assistance to foreign security forces ensuring that recipients have not committed human rights abuses—regarding Nigerian forces.³⁷⁸

This complicated military support and created tensions. Ambassador Adefuye repeatedly criticized U.S. refusal to provide more sophisticated weapons to Nigeria and in December 2014,

Boko Haram, October 14. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/10/14/fact-sheet-us-efforts-assist-nigerian-government-its-fight-against-boko-> (last consultation March 2021).

³⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State. 2014. Boko Haram and U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance to Nigeria, May 14. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/05/226072.htm> (last consultation March 2021).

³⁷⁷ Interview with Alice Friend, February 2019.

³⁷⁸ According to some accounts, this process can be more lenient with allies deemed more strategic (e.g., Egypt).

Nigeria abruptly canceled scheduled military trainings to the dismay of U.S. officials.³⁷⁹ Finally, DOD was reluctant to involve the U.S. military in Nigeria more substantially as other matters such as the situations in Syria and Mali took priority.

It can be argued that designation participated in mobilizing the international community around the Boko Haram threat.³⁸⁰ Designation sent a strong signal from the United States to its allies that Boko Haram presented a serious risk for regional stability and needed to be handled accordingly.³⁸¹ Yet, the growing involvement of the African Union, France, and the United Kingdom as well as the formation of the Multi-national Joint Task Force also occurred after Chibok.³⁸²

3. Prestige, recruitment, and internationalization

Certain actors in the designation process—especially those advocating against designation— argued that the FTO label would internationalize Boko Haram, confer the sect accrued prestige, and help recruit new members. These effects should have had an adverse effect in the objective of reducing Boko Haram’s attacks and capabilities.

Years after designation, it is still difficult to assess both these aspects and the causal link with designation. The elusive nature of concepts such as prestige forces a nuanced approach in answering these questions. It appears that Boko Haram welcomed being designated an FTO by the United States and used the U.S. focus on the organization as a token of credibility in public communication. Content analyses of Abubakar Shekau’s sermons and online communication

³⁷⁹ Stein, Chris. 2014. “Nigerian Military Training Cancellation Baffles US Experts,” VOA, December 3. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/nigerian-military-training-cancellation-baffles-us-experts> (last consultation March 2021).

³⁸⁰ For instance, embassies in Abuja followed the U.S. evolution on designation closely and its consequences for U.S. involvement.

³⁸¹ Especially considering that U.S. involvement in this region has been comparatively low.

³⁸² Such as the summit organized by French President Holland in May 2014 for the heads of state of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, and Benin, along with senior officials from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

show that Boko Haram's leader mocked U.S. counterterrorism measures. However, these remarks were marginal in the overall communication, and the subject did not become a central talking point.³⁸³

Shekau's remarks were concomitant to an internationalization of the group's messaging and an effort to broaden the recruitment of new members from early 2014.³⁸⁴ These analyses denote both the professionalization of Boko Haram's communication and a rhetorical evolution towards the global jihad propaganda used by al-Qaida and the Islamic State. They underline, however, that this internationalization in communication did not reflect an evolution in strategic and operational terms, which remained locally grounded.³⁸⁵

While Boko Haram undoubtedly gained in credibility with Salafi-jihadist groups in 2013-2015, culminating with the Islamic State affiliation, it is difficult to measure the specific impact of FTO designation as a jihadist "badge of honor."

One study of the group's communication argues that "proscription of Boko Haram only increased the group's international visibility, and earned it the (belated) attention of Salafi-jihadi groups such as al-Qaeda, al-Shabab and ISIS."³⁸⁶ The mediatization of the Chibok girls' abduction may have played an even larger role in boosting Boko Haram's appeal with global jihadist groups and in terms of recruitment.

Although estimates of Boko Haram membership exist, they are not precise. The State Department estimated that the group counted hundreds to a few thousands of militants in the

³⁸³ Apard 2015b.

³⁸⁴ Apard 2015a and 2015b. Kassim et al. 2018.

³⁸⁵ Apard 2015. Interview with Elodie Apard.

³⁸⁶ Kassim et al. 2018: 203.

beginning of the 2010s. The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point noted a rise in membership from early 2014 to reach 15,000-20,000 members in 2014-2015.³⁸⁷

These numbers suggest larger and more successful recruitment campaigns post-designation but do not establish a causal link, especially considering the minor role U.S. counterterrorism measures played in the FTO's communication.

Thus, the assessment of these adverse effects of FTO designation is inconclusive. Based on the evidence available, these effects could be deemed plausible but unlikely. A conservative interpretation is that designation did not enhance the FTO's capabilities as some actors of designation process claimed.

4. Case values

X1: Disconnected

Insertion into the International Financial System: 1.

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons: 0.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 0 (0+0).

Size and Resources: 2. Financial resources: 1. Membership: 0. Territorial control: 1.

X2: Non-strategic

Boko Haram displays values of a disconnected FTO (X1). The group was targeted by U.S. terrorist designations driven by non-strategic motives (X2). Boko Haram has pursued local operations, with mostly local members and local sources of funding.

The FTO was not inserted in the international financial system. There is no mention of any substantial international financial transactions in open sources and USDT's terrorism assets reports mention between \$11,514 and \$16,661 in blocked funds five years after designation (score of 1).

³⁸⁷ Mapping Militant Organizations. "Boko Haram."

The FTO did not rely on U.S.-linked persons (score of 0) and did not benefit from state affiliation or support (score of 0). In terms of size, the FTO had an estimated few thousands of members prior to designation (score of 0). While information on Boko Haram's resources is imprecise, a high-end estimate would set Boko Haram's revenues prior to designation at \$10 million (score of 1).

As the process-tracing of U.S. terrorist designations on Boko Haram suggests, these designations were driven by non-strategic motives.

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range and in the long term (+66%, +35%). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term (+341%, +6%).

FTO capabilities: no decrease in financial resources; no decrease in territorial control;³⁸⁸ no decrease in membership; no decrease in weaponry; change in political representation not applicable. No decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: No challenge in court and renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

5. Analysis

Since the Boko Haram case is hypothesis generating, it is logically in line with hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on disconnected FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

Because of its local and isolated nature, the FTO was out of reach of the direct consequences of U.S. terrorist designations. In addition, the indirect effects of terrorist designation that should also lead to undermining the target did not occur in the case of Boko Haram.

Since terrorist designations were driven by non-strategic motives to fulfill domestic objectives, the advantages of designations were inflated, and their drawbacks were neglected.

³⁸⁸ Decrease in the 3-year window.

However, the side effects that could have boosted the FTO's capabilities, highlighted by those opposing designation, are also unlikely to have occurred.

Yet, the FTO designation likely had adverse effects on the conflict intensity and the humanitarian situation in northeastern Nigeria, as illustrated in Chapter 6.

6. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Medium relevance. This control variable accounts for the decrease in the FTO's territorial control in the short term. However, despite the substantial military means deployed, the FTO regained territory and did not experience a decline in attacks and capabilities.

Ally mechanism: Low relevance. Nigeria is a U.S. ally according to the measurements used in Phillips' study.³⁸⁹ Nigeria also passed AML/CFT regulations in 2012-2013 to comply with U.S. standards and was removed from the FATF's blacklist in 2013.³⁹⁰ Yet, Boko Haram did not decrease attacks in the short or long term.

Financial adaptability: Low relevance. The explanation does not hold since Boko Haram can be categorized as having medium-level adaptability: the FTO mostly relied on local criminal activities for its funding and did not decrease attacks.

Multilateral designations: Low relevance. The variable does not provide additional explanation as the FTO was also designated in the U.N. Security Council consolidated list, in the E.U. terrorist list, and in the U.K. list of proscribed terrorist groups. These designations did not maximize impact.

Conclusion

In 2016, during yet another Congressional hearing on the Boko Haram insurgency, Ted Poe, representative from Texas and chairman of the House's Subcommittee on Terrorism,

³⁸⁹ Formal military alliance or presence of an FBI office in the country.

³⁹⁰ Morse 2019.

Nonproliferation, and Trade, deplored that “the United States took 11 years to designate Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization.” He subsequently regretted that designation had not brought about the expected results: “there are questions about the implementation of the designation. It does not seem that all the tools that this designation carries are being brought to bear on the group.”³⁹¹

Indeed, it appears that U.S. terrorist designations did little to address the challenges posed by Boko Haram in the region. The FTO did increased attacks and lethality in the short and long term. The group also increased capabilities as per the capability index. Further, designation may have created more complications than solutions to deal with this security situation. As suggested in my theoretical framework, two factors account for this result.

First, Boko Haram was a disconnected entity. Designation tools were ill-suited to undermine a group highly isolated from support networks in which the United States has leverage. For instance, tools designed to disturb FTOs’ funding proved to be particularly inefficient on Boko Haram. In addition, certain assumptions about collateral benefits of designation, held as true by certain practitioners and scholars, did not apply in this case. For example, the idea that the host country of an FTO receives extra military support, especially if this country is a U.S. ally, did not materialize.

Second, the main proponents of designation were not driven by foreign policy or security considerations but rather by the symbolism and domestic appeal of the measure. FTO designation was not assessed in Congress as whether it was a pertinent tool to undermine the targets and fulfill strategic objectives. Instead, designation provided members of Congress with a

³⁹¹ U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2016. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade. Boko Haram: The Islamist Insurgency in West Africa, February 24. Washington: Government Printing Office, 2-3.

means to appear strong and resolute on such issues as terrorism and global jihadism towards certain constituents and interest groups, especially as the insurgency was increasingly framed as a war against Christians.

In fact, the hyper-mediatization through the #BringBackOurGirls campaign of one of the conflict's tragedies, the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls, brought about some expected benefits of designation: the mobilization of the international community, and an increased support for the Nigerian military and security agencies. Boko Haram suddenly became a top international issue following the involvement of the U.S. First Lady in this mediatic awareness campaign around the Chibok abduction.

As tackled in Chapter 6, designation brought about negative effects, in terms of conflict-intensity and the hurdles created for humanitarian aid assisting civilians in conflict-affected areas. This outcome is paradoxical since most actors in the designation debate, including proponents, were adamant about the need to improve human rights and the humanitarian situation in northeastern Nigeria.

Considering a counterfactual where FTO designation would not have been enacted, it is reasonable to assume that the broad dynamics of the conflict would have stayed the same: international mobilization and cooperation would have followed Chibok and the Nigerian government would have stepped up its military engagement ahead of the 2015 elections.

The humanitarian situation may have been slightly better overall. Possible negative effects of designation, such as the FTO's increased prestige resulting in more recruitment and a better insertion in global jihadist networks, are still particularly difficult to assess. The absence of designation would have probably not fundamentally changed these variables. In fact, Boko Haram's factions have remained fragmented and locally grounded.

However, on a domestic level, not designating Boko Haram before Chibok would have been particularly costly for DOS and the Obama administration. While designating Boko Haram earlier would not have prevented Chibok, DOS would have been exposed to mounting domestic political attacks (DOS, former Secretary of State Clinton, President Obama, and other parts of the administration were nonetheless vehemently criticized by the Republican opposition).

Even if designation did not help DOS's objectives in both its relationship with Nigeria and in dealing with a sub-regional security threat, moving forward with the measure in 2013 avoided wasting substantial domestic political capital and prevented a public relations debacle.

CHAPTER 4

TESTING HYPOTHESES: LONGITUDINAL CASES AND MOST SIMILAR CROSS-CASE COMPARISONS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE AND THE TALIBAN

The case of Boko Haram suggests that disconnected FTOs are not impacted by non-strategic U.S. terrorist designations and therefore do not experience a decline in capabilities. This chapter focuses on a disconnected FTO targeted by strategic designations and on established FTOs targeted by strategic and non-strategic designations.

Using the cases of the Islamic State (2003-2013 and 2013-2020) and the Taliban (1999-2009 and 2009-2021), the chapter investigates whether these FTOs are impacted by U.S. terrorist designations and examines how disconnected FTOs can transition to established FTOs.

While disconnected FTO are smaller groups with mostly local objectives, support, and membership, established FTOs are larger organizations, with greater resources and capabilities. As these FTOs have regional or global operations, they usually rank high in the strategic priorities of U.S. foreign policy against NSAGs. These groups are better-known to the public—such as Hezbollah, the Taliban, and the Islamic State—and represent a smaller share of the FTO population.

My theoretical framework predicts that terrorist designations do not impact disconnected targets and that they materially impact established targets but not sufficiently to decisively undermine their capabilities. U.S. terrorist designations do not impose significant social costs on established targets, because these FTOs are mostly impervious to U.S. and Western stigmatization. These policies are therefore not able, on their own, to undermine the capabilities or alter the behavior of disconnected and established targets.

The chapter employs longitudinal and most similar cases to assess hypothesis 1: U.S. terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities,

compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives, all else equal; hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on disconnected and established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal; and hypothesis 2c: terrorist designations have more impact on established FTOs than on disconnected FTOs, all else equal.

The case of the Islamic State 2003-2013 is used to assess hypothesis 2a and the longitudinal cross-case comparison of Islamic State 2003-2013 and 2013-2020 is used to test hypothesis 2c. The longitudinal cross-case comparison of the Taliban 1999-2009 and 2009-2021 and the most similar cross-case comparison of the Taliban 1999-2009 and the Islamic State 2013-2020 are used to test hypothesis 1. The most similar cross-case comparison of the Islamic State 2003-2013 and the Taliban 2009-2021 is used test hypothesis 2c.

Additionally, the comparison between the Taliban (2009-2021) and the Islamic State (2013-2020) offers insights on two strategic designation approaches (no FTO designation vs. FTO designation, with multiple SDGT designations in both cases).

Cases of the Islamic State and longitudinal cross-case comparison

The Islamic State originated in the 1990s as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad ("Organization for Monotheism and Jihad," also known as al-Tawhid), a Salafi-jihadist group founded by Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The development of the Islamic State can be divided into two distinct phases for cross-case comparison: a first phase from 2003 to 2013, when the nascent group settled in Iraq and was designated as an FTO in 2004 under the names al-Tawhid wal-Jihad and al-Qaida in Iraq; a second phase from 2013 to 2020, when it became the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant—an entity with substantial territorial control and resources—and faced numerous SDGT designations.

These cases illustrate how FTOs can transition from disconnected to established targets and why terrorist designations impact these two types of targets differently. During the first phase (2003-2013), the Islamic State was impervious to designations as it bore the characteristics of disconnected targets. During the second phase (2013-2020), the Islamic State became exposed to terrorist designations, but these policies fell short of decisively undermining the FTO's capabilities and operations. Ultimately, the FTO's decline was mostly attributable to military interventions, such as the U.S.-led international coalition Combined Joint Task Force—Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR).

The Islamic State's emergence is closely linked to the 2003 Iraq War. Following the U.S.-led intervention, al-Qaida Central (AQC) sought to establish a presence in Iraq to signal, as Mendelsohn puts it, to both “foes and friends that it was serious about meeting its archenemy on the battlefield.”³⁹² AQC recruited Zarqawi's group to conduct operations on its behalf, which became known as al-Qaida in Iraq. As Gerges notes, “it is worth stressing that before the U.S. military venture, Iraq had never experienced such a phenomenon [as a jihadist insurgency].”³⁹³

Yet, the NSAG did not share the grand long-term strategy of AQC's global jihad, and was ideologically and operationally focused on local objectives. The clearest example of this dissension is the full-blown war waged against Shia Muslims in Iraq.³⁹⁴ Al-Qaida in Iraq therefore operated to an important extent with self-generated local resources and membership, which were not impacted by U.S. terrorist designations.

³⁹² Mendelsohn 2016: 4. The inexact assertion that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was harboring al-Qaida's operatives was one of the accusations used to justify the U.S. intervention by the Bush administration.

³⁹³ Gerges 2017: 50.

³⁹⁴ As Mendelsohn (2016: 197) notes, this local agenda hurt al-Qaida's interests and laid the ground for the eventual split.

1. Islamic State 2003-2013: from al-Tawhid wal-Jihad and al-Qaida in Iraq to ISIS

a. FTO background

Upon the foundation of al-Tawhid, the confrontation with Shia Muslims and authoritarian secular Arab regimes were central objectives for Zarqawi and his mentor Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi.³⁹⁵ After spending several years in prison in Jordan for conspiring against the government, Zarqawi moved to Afghanistan where he took part in military trainings with AQC. Zarqawi was not considered a future commander by AQC's leadership and did not join the organization. He nonetheless participated in the battle of Tora Bora in December 2001, following the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, and subsequently fled to Iraq.³⁹⁶

Zarqawi reorganized his jihadist group in Iraq with a mostly Jordanian inner circle. Thanks to cultural overlaps (links to common transnational Bedouin tribes, similar dialects, norms, etc.), Zarqawi's group could fit in with the local population and managed to build a social constituency and operational infrastructure in the country.³⁹⁷ In the few years following the intervention, al-Tawhid was able to recruit from an increasingly large pool of Iraqis exasperated with the occupation.³⁹⁸

As Gerges underlines, three types of NSAGs fighting the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq can be distinguished: religious-nationalist, secular Baathist, and Salafi-jihadist. The U.S. government prioritized the fight against Salafi-jihadist groups, yet the deleterious environment created by the occupation and the de-Baathification campaign—seen by Sunnis as a discriminatory policy promoted by newly installed Shia rulers—facilitated al-Tawhid's recruitment.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ Gerges 2017: 54.

³⁹⁶ Ibid: 59, after Fouad Hussein 2004.

³⁹⁷ Brisard and Martinez 2005: 130-135. Gerges 2017:64-66.

³⁹⁸ Hussein 2005.

³⁹⁹ Gerges 2017: 67.

Al-Tawhid became well-known in the early stages of the insurgency for launching suicide attacks on Shia civilians and mosques, Iraqi government targets, the U.N. headquarters, the Jordanian embassy, and soldiers of the coalition. While AQC suffered major setbacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, al-Tawhid gained momentum in Iraq. Certain al-Tawhid commanders became eager to join the al-Qaida franchise, at the peak of its prestige among Salafi-jihadist groups, while AQC's leadership was adamant to establish a presence in Iraq.

However, Zarqawi did not share the same strategic objectives as AQC and was reluctant to join the franchise, unless AQC's leaders coopted his local agenda.⁴⁰⁰ During the negotiations with Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, Zarqawi insisted on setting the confrontation with the Shias and the new Iraqi government as main priorities and mentioned the need to establish Shariah-ruled territories.⁴⁰¹

Bin Laden and Zawahiri considered the global jihad against the West—and the United States in particular—to be AQC's primary purpose and viewed territorial control as premature. Furthermore, AQC's leaders wanted to avoid a confrontation with Shias and had been discouraging attacks against Iranian Shias in Afghanistan or in Saudi Arabia. They believed that the rising tensions between Iran and the United States converged with AQC's interests in the short-term. Yet, as Mendelsohn argues, AQC negotiated “from a position of weakness” that led to compromises on such core subjects, even though Zarqawi's plan was antinomic with AQC's long-term strategy.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Gerges 2017: 73.

⁴⁰¹ Zarqawi's positions were reflected in a letter intercepted by Iraqi Kurds and published by the U.S. government in 2004. U.S. Department of State Archive. 2004. “Musab al-Zarqawi Letter Obtained by United States Government in Iraq,” <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm> (last consultation March 2022).

⁴⁰² Mendelsohn 2016: 197.

In October 2004, Zarqawi announced that al-Tawhid had become al-Qaida in Iraq (or al-Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers, Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn) and pledged allegiance to bin Laden. This affiliation is described in the literature as a “marriage of convenience” that fulfilled both parties’ immediate needs: it enabled al-Qaida to claim an active presence in Iraq and take credit for attacks against the United States; in turn, it provided Zarqawi with an enhanced stature among Salafi-jihadist groups, facilitating recruitment and fundraising.⁴⁰³

Zarqawi had been identified as a threat to U.S. national security by the U.S. government before the affiliation. In September 2003, Zarqawi was designated as an SDGT by the Department of Treasury (USTD) for his links to AQC and the killings of U.S. and foreign civilians and officials. Five suspected associates, part of Zarqawi’s alleged cell in Germany, were also designated⁴⁰⁴ and the U.S. government promoted these designations in the U.N. Security Council’s al-Qaida sanction committee list.⁴⁰⁵ Over the following years, SDGT designations became targeted to Zarqawi’s close associates, who were instrumental in al-Tawhid’s operations in Iraq.⁴⁰⁶

In October 2004, DOS announced the designation of Zarqawi’s group as an FTO, under the name Jama’at al-Tawhid wa’al-Jihad. As basis for designation, the statement mentioned the

⁴⁰³ Hussein 2005; Gerges 2017; Mendelsohn 2019.

⁴⁰⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2003. “Treasury Designates Six Al-Qaida Terrorists,” August 5. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js757> (last consultation March 2022). Interestingly, the designation uses Secretary of State Colin Powell’s remarks at the United Nation in February 2003, where he mentions the presence of Zarqawi in Iraq as proof that the Hussein regime was harboring terrorists and, like with WMD, was lying about it. The links between Zarqawi and Saddam Hussein were subsequently contested in U.S. intelligence reports.

⁴⁰⁵ The designated individuals in Germany had been arrested in 2002. Some of them were delisted by the United Nations in 2004 and 2015. United Nations Security Council. 2015. “Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Deletes Two Individuals from Its Sanctions List,” September 28. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12060.doc.htm> (last consultation March 2022).

⁴⁰⁶ U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2005. “Al-Zarqawi Financier Designated by the Treasury,” April 13 <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js2370> (last consultation March 2022). SDGT designations on members of this FTO averaged 4 per year from 2003 to 2013.

links between Zarqawi and al-Qaida and listed numerous executions of U.S. and other foreign civilians as well as assassinations of Iraqi, U.S., and U.N. officials. The announcement reiterated the goals of U.S. terrorist designations, aiming to incite “governments to take action, as [the United States] ha[s], to isolate these terrorist organizations, to choke off their sources of financial support, and to prevent their members’ movement across international borders.”⁴⁰⁷

The designation was updated in the Federal Register in December 2004, to reflect the group’s new name, suggesting a delay in the U.S. government’s acknowledgment of the formal affiliation with AQC.

The rift between AQC and Zarqawi’s group kept widening over the years, as Zarqawi continued his war against Iraqi Shias and Sunni “traitors” with devastating attacks. Intercepted letters from AQC’s leaders to Zarqawi suggest an increasing malaise of AQC vis-à-vis their affiliate’s local agenda.⁴⁰⁸ Yet, as the bombings of an Amman hotel (killing mostly Jordanian civilians) in November 2005 and of the Shia Askariyah Shrine in Samarra in February 2006 illustrate, al-Qaida in Iraq disregarded AQC’s guidance.⁴⁰⁹

Zarqawi was killed on June 7, 2006, in a targeted operation led by U.S. forces. A few months prior, al-Qaida in Iraq had joined the Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin fi al-‘Iraq (The Jihadis’ Advisory Council in Iraq), an umbrella organization comprised of six Sunni militant groups that opposed U.S. occupation. The main rationale advanced in the literature for this initiative is that al-Qaida in Iraq was facing local backlash on its practices and needed to show cooperation with

⁴⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State Archive. 2004. “Foreign Terrorist Organization: Designation of Jama’at al-Tawhid wa’al-Jihad and Aliases,” October 15 <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/37130.htm> (last consultation March 2022).

⁴⁰⁸ Cited in Lahoud 2014, in al-Ubaydi et al. 2014. These letters are available on the website of the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point: <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-original-language-2/> and <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/atiyahs-letter-to-zarqawi-original-language-2/>.

⁴⁰⁹ Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. “Islamic State.” Stanford University.

other Salafi-jihadist groups.⁴¹⁰ Yet, participation in this jihadi council did not seem to influence the FTO's strategy.

The successors of Zarqawi, Abu Ayub al-Masri and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, persisted in perpetrating sectarian violence. As al-Qaida in Iraq's violent methods and harsh interpretation of Islamic law were disapproved of by a growing number of Sunnis, the FTO faced internal and external pressure to gain more local legitimacy.

Even if its membership at large was increasingly Iraqi, its leadership had historically been Jordanian. To anchor the group locally, the FTO was renamed Islamic State in Iraq in late 2006—although the previous name remained in use in most accounts, including in U.S. designations, until the early 2010s—⁴¹¹ and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi was likely chosen as one of the leaders because he was Iraqi.⁴¹²

However, the local pushback against the FTO led to cooperation between Sunni tribes from the Anbar province, U.S.-led coalition forces, and the new Iraqi forces of the Shia government. Joint military operations in 2007 and 2008 durably undermined the FTO. By mid-2008, it was reported that 8,800 members had been taken prisoners and 2,400 members had been killed, from an estimated membership of almost 15,000. The FTO progressively lost control of strongholds in Anbar Province, from Fallujah to al-Qaim.⁴¹³

Between 2009 and 2010, the U.S. government funded tens of thousands of Iraqi combatants, mostly Sunni, to back coalition forces. Abu Ayub al-Masri and Abu Umar al-

⁴¹⁰ Lahoud 2014. Stanford University Mapping Militant "Islamic State" 2021.

⁴¹¹ Gerges 2017.

⁴¹² Lahoud 2014. Mapping Militant Organizations "Islamic State" 2018.

⁴¹³ Kirdar 2011

Baghdadi were killed in a joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in April 2010, and by June 2010, 36 of the Islamic State's 42 commanders had been killed or arrested.⁴¹⁴

When another Iraqi leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, took command in May 2010 the FTO was “was internally besieged and bleeding.”⁴¹⁵ It faced coalition forces, the Shia government leading Iraq and the Shia population in general, and numerous Sunnis who opposed its ruthless behavior and ideology.

However, the sectarian policies promoted by the United States in the formation of the new Iraqi state, and the withdrawal of coalition forces in December 2011, eventually enabled the FTO to regain capabilities and momentum.⁴¹⁶ As it was no longer facing direct pressure from coalition forces, the Islamic State in Iraq was able to resume operations. In parallel, the Shia government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki sought to exclude all Sunnis from the Iraqi state apparatus and handled Sunni provinces such as Anbar with brutality.⁴¹⁷

In addition to alienating Sunni populations with these divisive policies, the Maliki government was becoming increasingly unpopular and losing legitimacy with the Iraqi population at large. Inspired by the Arab uprisings, tens of thousands of Iraqis marched against the government in 2011, protesting widespread corruption and failure to provide basic services. The protests were violently repressed and resulted in multiple deaths.⁴¹⁸

This instability led to security breaches that the Islamic State in Iraq managed to exploit. In July 2012, it launched the so-called operation “Breaking Down the Walls” to release members and Sunni inmates from governmental prisons—an issue that “resonated with Sunnis and was

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Gerges 2017: 98.

⁴¹⁶ Gerges 2017.

⁴¹⁷ Mapping Militant “Islamic State” 2021.

⁴¹⁸ Gerges 2017.

very close to their hearts” according to Gerges—and to recapture the former strongholds lost in years prior.⁴¹⁹

During 2013, the FTO managed to develop new alliances with local Sunni militias, incorporating Baathists and former high-officials with extensive military expertise such as Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, an army field marshal and vice-president under Saddam Hussein. In early 2013, it extended its territory in the Anbar and Nineveh provinces.

Benefiting from the power vacuum created by the Syrian Civil War, the FTO also expanded into Syria. In April 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi unilaterally proclaimed the founding of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—also referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and as its Arabic-language acronym Daesh⁴²⁰ (hereafter the Islamic State, officially adopted in 2014).

b. Case values

X1: Disconnected

Insertion into the International Financial System: 0.

Reliance on U.S.-linked persons: 0.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 0 (0+0).

Size and Resources: 0. Financial resources: 0. Membership: 0. Territorial control: 0.

X2: Strategic. 24 SDGT (2013).

On the independent variables, the Islamic State (2003-2013) displays values of a disconnected FTO (X1). The organization was targeted by several U.S. terrorist designations (FTO and SDGT) driven by strategic motives (X2).

⁴¹⁹ Ibid: 122-123.

⁴²⁰ The full name in Arabic language and Latin alphabet: *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi l-'Irāq wa-sh-Shām* abbreviated as *Dā'ish* (داعش).

The FTO was not inserted in the international financial system: it had \$0 in blocked funds in the USTD's TAR and there was no mention of substantial international financial transactions in other sources (score of 0 for insertion in the international financial system).

The FTO did not rely on U.S.-linked persons (score of 0) and its members were not exposed to arrest (6%, score of 0). The FTO did not benefit from state affiliation or support (score of 0), had minimal size and resources (score of 0), and had no substantial territorial control prior to designation (score of 0).

According to Hussein's testimony, Zarqawi started "with fewer than thirty fighters at the beginning of the US-led invasion of Iraq."⁴²¹ Zarqawi's organization had minimal funding from AQC but managed to secure about 2,000 thousand homegrown supporters, which helped recruit several thousand full-time fighters over the next few years.⁴²²

U.S. terrorist designations towards the Islamic State (2003-2013) were driven by strategic motives. The United States had identified Zarqawi as a threat since the early 2000s for his attacks on U.S. civilians and officials. Furthermore, the United States was involved in direct military confrontation with Zarqawi's group and had a direct strategic interest in undermining the FTO's capabilities.

The U.S. government designated Zarqawi as an SDGT in September 2003 and promoted his designation on the sanction list of the U.N. Security Council 1267 Committee for his links with AQC. Following the FTO designation of the Islamic State (as al-Tawhid, and subsequently as al-Qaida in Iraq) in 2004, the USDT and DOS's SDGT designations became more precise, targeting financiers and operatives.

⁴²¹ Gerges 2017: 67.

⁴²² According to Gerges (2017: 67), this was "a testament to the rapid radicalization and militarization of Iraqi society" and NSAGs' ability to infiltrate the country's fragile body politic.

On the dependent variable, the case does not exhibit substantial change or decrease in FTO attacks and capabilities (Y).

According to GTD and EDTG data, the FTO's attack and lethality trend is as follows: in 2004 (designation year), 11 attacks and 132 deaths; in 2005, 39 attacks and 587 deaths; in 2006, 4 attacks and 93 deaths; in 2007, 23 attacks and 277 deaths; in 2008, 20 attacks and 219 deaths; in 2009, 10 attacks and 190 deaths; in 2010, 13 attacks and 124 deaths; in 2011, 20 attacks and 165 deaths; in 2012, 276 attacks and 838 deaths; in 2013, 429 attacks and 1,752 deaths.⁴²³

The 3-year window and longer-term trend do not show a decrease in attacks and lethality patterns. On the contrary, both attacks and lethality see a substantial increase for both periods (over 500%).⁴²⁴ The years showing a decrease in one of the two measures compared to the previous year (2006, 2008, 2009, 2010) can be explained by the military pressure that the FTO was facing and generally still have values superior to the designation year.

Regarding other measures, the FTO did not attempt to legally challenge U.S. terrorist designations. It did not face a loss of territory, both in the 3-year window and the longer-term. Its territorial control was minimal at the time of designation, and it expanded in subsequent years. Although the FTO lost territory in 2008 in the Anbar province, it regained territory and conquered new territory in 2011-2013.

The FTO did not lose members following designation, as membership was estimated at over 10,000 combatants in 2008, from a few hundreds of members in 2003, and a few thousand members in 2004-2005. The FTO lost an important number of members in 2008 as a result of

⁴²³ GTD and ETGD data end for al-Qaida in Iraq and start for Islamic State in mid-2013, reflecting the name change this year. The numbers for 2013 are therefore the combination of both.

⁴²⁴ These figures also result from the fact that the base values only include 2004, the designation year, as there is no recorded attacks for this FTO prior to that year.

battle-related deaths and arrests, but regained members in the following years, especially after 2010.⁴²⁵

In terms of financial resources, the trend was also towards an increase. In addition to local supporters that provided a donation base, the FTO managed to diversify sources of funding under Zarqawi in 2005-2006, through criminal activities.⁴²⁶ Later on, the FTO profited from the theft and smuggling of oil.⁴²⁷ Territorial expansion in the Anbar province and in Syria in 2012-2013 offered additional resources and opportunities, such as illegal taxation. Finally, the FTO, did not gain political representation.

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range and in the long term (+500%, +1000%+), No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term (+625%, +1000%+).

FTO capabilities: no decrease in financial resources; no decrease in territorial control; no decrease in membership; no decrease in weaponry; political representation not applicable. No decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: no challenge in court, no renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

c. Analysis

The case of the Islamic State (2003-2013) is *prima facie* in line with hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on disconnected FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal. Despite the increasingly targeted designation policies on group members following the FTO designation, there is no evidence that the group was in any way materially, financially, or

⁴²⁵ Estimates of the Stanford Mapping Militant project, which compile DOS estimates and other sources, are as follow: a few hundred members in 2004; 1,000+ in 2005-2006; 5,000-10,000 in 2007; 1,000-2,000 in 2010; 10,000-20,000 in 2013. These estimates are slightly inferior to what is found related in other sources (Gerges 2017, al-Ubaydi et al. 2014) but follow a similar trend.

⁴²⁶ A RAND monograph argues that the FTOs raised \$4.5 million in the year 2006 from “stolen goods” and “spoils” but did not smuggle oil at this point. See Bahney et al. 2010.

⁴²⁷ Mapping Militant Organizations “Islamic State” 2018.

socially affected by these designations. The underground and local nature of the FTO's activities rendered its resources out of reach for U.S. and other international designations.

The FTO's growth and setbacks were more dependent on local dynamics, such as the backlash of Sunni populations, the mounting pressure of the new Shia-led Iraqi government, and, more decisively, the military campaigns of U.S.-led coalition forces with the help of Sunni fighters and militias.

From a theoretical perspective, the case bears distinctive characteristics. Contrary to most of al-Qaida's affiliates—which faced rigorous selection processes and hoped that joining the franchise would facilitate financing and recruitment⁴²⁸—Zarqawi's organization was strategic for AQC and negotiated its adhesion from a position of power.

While the direct material advantages of affiliation appeared to have been limited—in fact AQC asked Zarqawi for financial help as soon as 2005⁴²⁹—al-Qaida's membership socially benefited the FTO. It notably contributed to establishing the Islamic State as a major actor among Salafi-jihadist groups in Iraq and the Middle East.

In this regard, the situation is different from the disconnected target ideal type—i.e., FTOs with mostly local objectives, support, membership, and sources of funding, whose insertion in a terrorist network, if any, occurs at a later stage and has marginal consequences for their evolution.

Indeed, the Islamic State was more international than most disconnected FTOs and was linked to AQC from its early beginning. However, the Islamic State conforms to the disconnected isolation type in many respects.

⁴²⁸ Mendelsohn 2016. Boko Haram, for instance, did not receive the affiliation.

⁴²⁹ The letter from Zawahiri to Zarqawi, where Zawahiri asked for a \$100,000 contribution, was intercepted by U.S. intelligence and is available in English at https://irp.fas.org/news/2005/10/letter_in_english.pdf (last consultation June 2022).

In addition to fitting the measurements for disconnected targets, the Islamic State was focused on local objectives, recruitment, and sources of funding from its inception. Wedging a full-blown war against Shias and achieving territorial control to implement a particularly harsh form of Salafism were longtime objectives of the FTO's founder, Zarqawi.

The FTO was able to take advantage of the opportunities resulting from the generalized conflict situation in Iraq and relied on local sources of funding. Moreover, the U.S. occupation facilitated local recruitment and FTO members were mostly Iraqi as early as 2006. According to accounts by U.S. officials, 90% of the Islamic State's members were Iraqi by 2007.⁴³⁰ Further, both internal and external pressures led the FTO to promote Iraqi leaders, who in turn continued to pursue the sectarian conflict laid out by Zarqawi.

This local agenda was the main bone of contention with AQC and explains why the links between the two organizations became increasingly strained. AQC's leaders were not consulted on important decisions, such as major operations against Shia targets, or when the FTO was renamed the Islamic State in Iraq.

d. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Medium relevance. Military operations were key to understanding the advances and setbacks of the Islamic State (2003-2013). However, despite repeated military pressure, the FTO did not experience a decline in capabilities and did not decrease attacks.

Ally mechanism: Low relevance. Ally mechanism predicts that the FTO will decrease attacks if it operates in an ally country. The situation in Iraq following the U.S.-led invasion is certainly unique and does not fit neatly into the ideal type described in Phillips' study.

⁴³⁰ Mapping Militant "Islamic State" 2021.

Yet, the measurements and rationale used in Phillips' study would classify Iraq as an ally, considering the presence of an FBI office in Baghdad at the time of designation and the nature of the relationship between the newly installed Iraqi government and the United States. However, the FTO did not decrease attacks following designation.

Financial adaptability: Low relevance. The financial adaptability explanation is also not suited for this case. Jo et al. classify the Islamic State as having high-level financial adaptability and observe no decrease in attack patterns.

However, they do not treat the Islamic State (2003-2013)—al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad or al-Qaida in Iraq as the FTO was first designated—as a separate case from the current version of the Islamic State. In Jo et al.'s study, financial adaptability is evaluated prior to FTO designation, and there was only one FTO designation for this NSAG (with two updates to reflect name changes).

It is thus inaccurate to categorize the group as having high-level financial adaptability when it settled in Iraq, since its main source of funding then was private donations, mostly locally raised. The FTO did not decrease attacks despite having low-level or medium-level financial adaptability.

Multilateral designations: Low relevance. The FTO was targeted by a comprehensive regime: in addition to U.S. designations, the FTO and its prominent members were simultaneously or subsequently listed by the U.N. Security Council, the European Union, and the United Kingdom. These designations seemed as ineffective as the U.S. ones, especially regarding the local operations of the FTO.⁴³¹

⁴³¹ Furthermore, the designated members identified in Germany were arrested prior to U.S., U.N., and E.U. designations. Their actual links to Zarqawi appear weak and their role in Zarqawi's agenda seems very marginal.

2. Islamic State 2013-2020: maximal territorial expansion and decline

a. FTO background

The dysfunctional political system that developed in Iraq following the US-led intervention and the sectarian policies of the Maliki government greatly contributed to the revival of the Islamic State. Yet, the Syrian civil war was the key catalyst of the Islamic State's exceptional expansion. The conflict provided Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (hereafter, Baghdadi) and his entourage with the opportunity to build on Sunnis' grievances in both countries and extend the FTO's social networks.⁴³²

Baghdadi, an Iraqi Sunni who co-founded a jihadi insurgent group following the invasion, allegedly connected with members of al-Qaida in Iraq during his imprisonment at Camp Bucca and joined the group upon his release in 2006.⁴³³ As he became a close aide to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, his ability to recruit former Baathists and Sunni military leaders from the Hussein's regime foreshadowed the fast military modernization of the FTO in the early 2010s.

With his top commanders, the newly installed emir Baghdadi managed to appeal to Sunni communities in Iraq and Syria, despite pushback on the brutality of the Islamic State's literal application of Sharia.⁴³⁴

As the Islamic State advanced in Syria, the tensions with AQC became increasingly apparent. Baghdadi declared his group had merged with Jabhat al-Nusra (known as al-Nusra), a Salafi-jihadist cell in Syria that was endorsed by AQC and supported by Islamic State's operatives. Zawahiri and al-Nusra denied the merger, with Zawahiri ordering the Islamic State to restrict its operations to Iraq.

⁴³² Gerges 2017: 175.

⁴³³ Camp Bucca was deemed an "al-Qaida school" by former detainees.

⁴³⁴ Such as *hudud* (Islamic punishment). Gerges 2017: 139.

Yet, the FTO continued to seize territory in Syria and captured the strategic city of Raqqa in January 2014, against AQC's instructions. As a consequence of repeated refusals to obey orders, AQC's general command disowned the Islamic State and officially denounced the affiliation in February 2014.⁴³⁵

According to Mendelsohn, the killing of bin Laden in 2011 provided Islamic State's leaders with the leeway to disobey AQC's orders. Until then, "disgruntled affiliates were careful to show—at least outwardly—deference and respect to the icon."⁴³⁶

Throughout 2014, the Islamic State managed to expand its territory in Iraq and Syria with military offensives against multiple actors. The FTO fought governmental forces, the Kurdish Peshmerga in Iraq, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and YPG in Syria, and various rebel groups, including other jihadist groups. The FTO made large territorial gains in Iraq, seizing Fallujah in January and Mosul, Tikrit, and Tal Afar in June.⁴³⁷

In Syria, the Islamic State benefited from the ambivalent response of the Assad regime, who used the FTO's presence in the north to force other insurgents into a two-front war. As Levitt remarked: "[i]t may seem contrary to conventional wisdom, but the regime of Bashar al-Assad has consistently supported the Islamic State terrorist group, even as the regime struggles to retake control of Syrian territory from the various rebel groups engaged in the civil war."⁴³⁸

In fact, the Islamic State managed to maintain a stronghold around Raqqa in the first half of 2014, even though it was sustaining losses in northern Syria against the SDF. Subsequently, the FTO was able to gain ground in the area, thanks to weaponry captured from victories in Iraq. It benefited from the willingness of state actors—the Assad regime and Turkey, whose

⁴³⁵ Joscelyn 2014.

⁴³⁶ Mendelsohn 2016: 202.

⁴³⁷ Mapping Militant "Islamic State" 2021.

⁴³⁸ Levitt 2021: 724.

immediate strategic imperatives were not directed against the group—to purchase oil from its territories.⁴³⁹

In June 2014, the Islamic State proclaimed itself a worldwide caliphate, with Baghdadi as its caliph, asserting religious, political, and military authority over all Muslims. By August, the group had taken over major oil fields in Iraq, the Mosul Dam, and border-crossing points between Syria and Iraq. At its peak in late 2014, the FTO controlled an estimated territory of 100,000-110,000 square kilometers with a population of 11 million people, possessed over \$2 billion in assets, and generated over \$2 billion in annual revenue.⁴⁴⁰

As noted by military commentators, the “[Islamic State’s] strength came from its versatility: part terrorist group, part bureaucratic state, part light infantry. The group was able to seize territory quickly, incite fear [...], and establish a basic government in captured cities.”⁴⁴¹ The FTO’s strong media presence and sophisticated propaganda also facilitated the recruitment of both local and foreign fighters.

The FTO’s exponential territorial gains, the egregious crimes against populations it controlled such as the Yazidis, and attacks on Western cities by affiliates—extensively covered in international media—prompted an international reaction.

From the summer of 2014, the Obama administration initiated a redeployment of U.S. troops in the Middle East, airstrikes against the FTO, and military support to Iraqi forces and NSAGs—mainly Kurdish-dominated groups such as the SDF—involved in the confrontation. In October 2014, the United States officialized Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR).⁴⁴²

⁴³⁹ Mapping Militant “Islamic State” 2021.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ The Military Balance 2015: 304.

⁴⁴² Berger, Miriam. 2020. “Invaders, allies, occupiers, guests: A brief history of U.S. military involvement in Iraq” *The Washington Post*, January 11.

A heteroclite international coalition—which involved the United States, European and Arab states, Turkey, Iran, and Russia⁴⁴³—progressively formed to support the Iraqi army, Kurdish forces and the Peshmerga, Shia militias, and diverse NSAGs fighting the Islamic State. By late 2015, following a year of military offenses, the FTO had lost half of its territory.

Yet, the group managed to conquer the capital of Anbar province, Ramadi, and the historic Syrian city of Palmyra. It still held major Iraqi and Syrian cities and exercised control over 5 million people.

In addition to military support to specific factions,⁴⁴⁴ the United States intensified the use of non-kinetic tools, with multiple SDGT designations targeting the Islamic State's financing and operations. The United States promoted similar policies at the United Nations, with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2253 (2015), which specified that the sanctions in force against al-Qaida also applied to the Islamic State. Multiple FTO's members and related entities were added to the U.N. Security Council ISIL and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee and to the consolidated list.⁴⁴⁵

In 2016, the coalition defeated the Islamic State in important battles in Iraq and Syria. Iraqi forces recovered major cities such as Ramadi and Falluja, with the support of Iran-backed militias. The SDF led the fight in Syria, reducing the FTO's territory in the north to its stronghold of Raqqa. As the Islamic State was receding, the Assad regime and Turkey rushed in to capture the territory previously controlled by the FTO and fulfill other geopolitical objectives. Turkey's forces, for instance, started attacking SDF positions.

⁴⁴³ This is not an official coalition. The United States and France launched military operations and coordinate with other European states, Arab states, and Turkey,

⁴⁴⁴ Blanchard and Humud 2018.

⁴⁴⁵ Humud 2021.

In 2017, following sieges and casualty-heavy battles, the Islamic State surrendered its last major strongholds of Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. In October, U.S. military operations in Syria led to the death of the FTO's leader Baghdadi and chief spokesman Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir. From 2017 to 2019, the FTO progressively lost all meaningful territorial control.

The Islamic State reverted to terrorist tactics and consistently launched devastating attacks against civilians, governmental forces and infrastructure, and other NSAGs. As of 2020, the FTO remained a significant force in Syria and Iraq, with thousands of fighters, a strong media presence, and a considerable war chest that has been progressively invested in Iraqi markets.⁴⁴⁶

b. Case values on independent and dependent variables

X1: Established

Insertion into the International Financial System: 2 First, 2015: \$131,392. Highest, 2020: \$491,223.

Reliance on U.S.-linked persons: 0.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 0 (0+0).

Size and Resources: 4. Financial resources: 2. Membership: 1. Territorial control: 1.

X2: Strategic. 77 SDGT (2016). Peak: 30 in 2015.

In the early 2010s, the Islamic State (2013-2020) irreversibly transitioned from a disconnected to an established FTO as per the case values on the independent variable, target's isolation type (X1). The Islamic State (2013-2020) continued to be increasingly targeted by U.S. terrorist designations (FTO and SDGT) driven by strategic motives (X2). As SDGT designations strongly intensified from 2014 onward, this year is used as the cutoff point to evaluate these policies.

As a result of its territorial expansion and membership increase, the Islamic State was able to access particularly prolific sources of revenue and accumulated, by FTO standards,

⁴⁴⁶ Mapping Militant "Islamic State" 2021.

unprecedented reserves. The FTO controlled several branches of public and private banks, including the Central Bank of Iraq, and had to provide minimal public services.

Consequently, the FTO started to perform financial transactions with institutions in the surrounding region and became more exposed to the effects of designation.⁴⁴⁷

Indeed, the funds blocked by the USDT's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) for the Islamic State in relation to the FTO and SDGT programs started at \$131,392 in 2015 and peaked at \$491,223 as of 2020 (score of 3 in vulnerability for insertion in the international financial system).⁴⁴⁸

Yet, the Islamic State still did not rely on U.S.-linked persons (score of 0) and its members were not exposed to arrest (6% of arrested members after their SDGT designation, score of 0). The FTO was not sensitive to stigmatization by the United States and other designators.

The Islamic State gained the characteristics of an established target in 2012-2013. While the FTO did not benefit from substantial state support (score of 0), it decisively increased its membership size, resources, and territory. Even if the Islamic State is one of the most studied FTOs, estimates of membership and resources vary significantly. Yet, the ranges provided by different sources all situate the Islamic State (2013-2020) as an established target.

In 2013, the FTO allegedly counted 10,000 to 20,000 members and reached 31,500 members in 2014 according to U.S. intelligence agencies (score of 1 for membership).⁴⁴⁹ While al-Qaida in Iraq relied on Iraqi soldiers, the Islamic State's expansion into Syria benefited from

⁴⁴⁷ FATF 2015: 27.

⁴⁴⁸ See OFAC's annual Terrorist Assets from 2016 to 2021: from U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2016. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2015, to U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2021. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2020.

⁴⁴⁹ Mapping Militant "Islamic State" 2021. CIA estimates.

an influx of foreign fighters thanks to online propaganda and efficient recruiting campaigns. Experts evaluated the proportion of foreign fighters among Islamic State's troops at 30% in Syria and 10% in Iraq.⁴⁵⁰

Although the most precise estimates for the Islamic State's financing focus on 2014 and beyond, the FTO was already benefiting from diverse illicit proceeds from occupation of territory that exceeded \$50 million in 2013 (score of 2 for financial resources).⁴⁵¹ By 2013, the Islamic State had expanded within Iraq's provinces of Anbar and Nineveh as well as into Syria and therefore controlled substantial territory (score of 1 for territorial control).

The Islamic State was targeted by exponential designations driven by strategic concerns. Indeed, the remarkable intensification of the designation regime was concomitant with the FTO's rapid territorial expansion, as nearly 45 SDGT designations targeting members and related entities were enacted in 2014-2015 alone. The United States had to resume major military operations in the region and sought to use all counterterrorism tools available to counter the group's expansion. U.S. terrorist designations were targeted on persons identified as key to the FTO's activities.

The breakdown of the roles of the FTO members who were designated as SDGTs reinforces this perception: in addition to targeting leadership (36% of SDGT designated members), USDT and DOS designations targeted financing (35%), operations (21%), and communication/recruitment (6%).⁴⁵² While early designations focused on leaders, they became increasingly targeted on financing and operations, reflecting the collection and use of new intelligence.

⁴⁵⁰ Nakhoul, Samia. 2015. "Saddam's former army is secret of Baghdadi's success" *Reuters*, June 16.

⁴⁵¹ FATF 2015. This report does not provide a budget estimate but lists the different sources the FTO has been using. It gives anecdotal evidence to evaluate how much funding each source likely provided.

⁴⁵² CTC data. See Loertscher et al. 2020.

Regarding the dependent variable, the case exhibits notable variation for FTO attacks and capabilities, in the short and longer term. According to GTD and EDTG data, the FTO's attack and lethality trend is as follows: in 2013, 429 attacks and 1,752 deaths;⁴⁵³ in 2014 (designation year), 1,073 attacks and 6,097 deaths; in 2015, 953 attacks and 6,141 deaths; in 2016, 1,132 attacks and 9,132 deaths; in 2017, 1,213 attacks and 7,176 deaths; in 2018, 670 attacks and 2,187 deaths; in 2019, 441 attacks and 1,239 deaths.

The 3-year window shows no decrease in attack and lethality patterns during the period (increase of 94% and 169% respectively). However, 2017 sees a decrease in lethality compared to 2016, especially considering that the number of attacks increases. This may suggest that the FTO had no intention of changing its behavior, but its capabilities were affected. The FTO did not contest any of the designations in court.

In the last two years of data, 2018 and 2019, the decrease in attack and lethality patterns is noticeable. Both measures decrease every year and the lowest year, 2019, sees a 3-fold reduction in attack numbers and an 8-fold reduction in lethality, compared to the highest years (2017 and 2016 respectively). However, the long-term trend⁴⁵⁴ still shows an increase of both attacks and lethality (36% and 27% respectively).

The Islamic State lost substantial territory both in the 3-year window and longer term. At its peak in late 2014-early 2015, the FTO held a territory estimated to be between 100,000 and 110,000 square kilometers (~39,000 and 42,000 square miles). It controlled major cities such as Raqqa and Palmyra (Syria), Fallujah, Mosul, and Tikrit (Iraq), as well as all Iraq-Syria and Iraq-

⁴⁵³ GTD and ETGD data end for al-Qaida in Iraq and start for Islamic State in mid-2013, reflecting the name change this year. The numbers for 2013 are therefore the combination of both.

⁴⁵⁴ The percentage change between the three years preceding designation, including the designation year, and the last three years of data.

Jordan border crossings.⁴⁵⁵ From 2015 to 2019, however the Islamic State progressively lost all its major strongholds in both countries. The FTO lost its last piece of territory in Baghuz, Syria in March 2019.⁴⁵⁶

The Islamic State progressively lost membership, although variation in estimates makes the delineation of a precise trend difficult. U.S. intelligence agencies assumed that the FTO had over 30,000 fighters between 2014 and 2016.⁴⁵⁷ However, recent research based on uncovered Islamic State administrative documents suggests a much larger membership. According to a CTC analysis, 60,000 males were FTO “employees” in 2016, 18% of which served in administrative or governance roles. The FTO thus had almost 50,000 fighters as of 2016. Further, the documents mention 13,000 “martyrs” fallen in combat.⁴⁵⁸

The U.S. Special Operations Command stated that the U.S.-led Inherent Resolve Coalition killed 60,000 fighters between 2015 and 2017.⁴⁵⁹ The SDF also declared that 29,000 fighters had surrendered in 2019 and their final assault in Baghuz faced 1,000 to 2,000 fighters.⁴⁶⁰ Other estimates for the 2017-2019 time period oscillate between 15,000 and 30,000 fighters.⁴⁶¹ According to the U.N. Office of Counter-Terrorism, more than 10,000 fighters remained active in Iraq and Syria as of August 2020.

Communication about forces and casualties is a feature of modern warfare, and it is not surprising to see diverging accounts from different sources. This imprecision does not change the

⁴⁵⁵ Jones et al. 2017.

⁴⁵⁶ Mapping Militant “Islamic State” 2021.

⁴⁵⁷ CIA and US military intelligence agencies estimates. Mapping Militant “Islamic State” 2021.

⁴⁵⁸ Milton 2021.

⁴⁵⁹ Rempfer, Kyle. 2019. “Low Aim or Intel Failure? ISIS’ Last Stand Shows the Difficulty in Estimating Enemy Manpower.” *Military Times*, March 27.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid. The U.S. military declared that they defer to SDF tallies.

⁴⁶¹ U.N. Security Council and other estimates. Stanford University Mapping Militant “Islamic State” 2021. See also U.S. Department of State’s Country Reports on Terrorism 2017 with lower estimates.

case value, however, as the decrease in membership is clear in the longer term, if not in the 3-year window.

A similar trend is noticeable regarding financing. The Islamic State's assets and revenues seemingly peaked in 2014-2015 before progressively declining until 2020. Territorial control provided the FTO with "financial self-sufficiency and diversified resources."⁴⁶²

According to the FATF assessment, the FTO's economic foundation was based on:

1) Illicit proceeds from occupation of territory (bank looting and control; human trafficking; control of oil and gas reservoirs; extortion of agriculture; cultural artifacts; illicit taxation of goods and cash in transit; and illicit taxation of Iraqi government employees). 2) Kidnapping for ransom. 3) Donations, including by or through non-profit organizations. 4) Material support from foreign fighters. 5) Fundraising through modern communication networks.

The report provides anecdotal evidence of these components but does not estimate their respective weights in the FTO's portfolio.⁴⁶³

Diverse assessments—most of them based on information disclosed by the Iraqi National Intelligence Service—maintain that the FTO held approximately \$2.2 billion in assets in 2014 and 2015.⁴⁶⁴ A large part of these assets resulted from the capture of Mosul in June 2014: the FTO looted over \$500 million from the Central Bank of Iraq's branch located in the city and from private banks.

Certain think tanks detail the FTO's portfolio, although the evidence presented to justify the allocation is weak. The oft-cited "ISIS Financing" report claims that the FTO's revenues were \$2.9 billion in 2014 (82% natural resources, 16% criminal activities, 2% donations) and

⁴⁶² Bindner and Poirot 2016: 1.

⁴⁶³ FATF 2015.

⁴⁶⁴ Mapping Militant "Islamic State" 2021.

\$2.45 billion in 2015 (60% natural resources, 38% criminal activities, 2% donations). The FTO's decrease in oil revenue in 2015 following territorial loss (e.g., Tikrit's oil fields), declining energy prices, and air strikes by the US-led coalition targeting the oil infrastructure would have been partially compensated by an increase in criminal activities.⁴⁶⁵

Even if this account is taken as high-end estimates, subsequent governmental analyses underline a sharp decrease in the Islamic State's revenues in 2016 (under \$800 million for the year) and the following years.⁴⁶⁶ By 2020, the Islamic State had lost most sources of revenues but still held \$300 million in reserves according to USDT officials.⁴⁶⁷ The decline in financial resources is thus quite certain in the 3-year window and longer term. Finally, like its predecessor group, the Islamic State (2013-2020) did not gain political representation.

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range and in the long term (+85%; +31%). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term (+158%; +22%).

FTO capabilities: decrease in financial resources; decrease in territorial control; decrease in membership; decrease in weaponry; political representation not applicable. Decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: no challenge in court, no renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

c. Analysis

The case *prima facie* only partially supports hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal. The Islamic State's (2013-2020) attacks and lethality increased both in the 3-year window and in the long term. The FTO was not sensitive to the designation stigma and did not intend to change its behavior.

⁴⁶⁵ Bindner and Poirot 2016: 5-7. The main categories of the report's breakdown for 2015 are: extortion (33%), oil (25%), natural gas (14%), phosphate (10%), agriculture (7%) and others (cement, ransoms, donations, and antiques).

⁴⁶⁶ Levallois and Cousseran 2017.

⁴⁶⁷ Talley, Ian and Benoit Faucon. 2020. "Islamic State, Defeated U.S. Foe, Still Brims with Cash, Ambition." *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18.

Yet, the last two years of data for attacks and lethality show a noticeable decrease compared to the previous year. This decrease suggests a longer trend of declining capabilities, as reflected in the capability index. U.S. terrorist designations played a modest but concrete role in the FTO's decline in capabilities, which mainly resulted from an increased military pressure.

Compared to the Islamic State (2003-2013), the FTO developed points of vulnerability as an established target and became exposed to intensifying strategic terrorist designations. The FTO admitted feeling the pressure of designation in its weekly Arabic newsletter *al-Naba* in December 2019. While the article mentions that being on the “American lists of terrorism” is an honor, it acknowledges that designation creates challenges for the organization.⁴⁶⁸

Notably, the article deplores that many third parties refused to conduct business with the group due to fear of retaliation by the United States. This constraint was certainly palpable for the FTO, which was increasingly engaged in commercial transactions in its regional surroundings to monetize the products of the territories it controlled. Furthermore, the FTO's news outlet remarks that individuals and entities in foreign countries—and even governments—who may have wanted to support the Islamic State were deterred by U.S. terrorist designations.

This concern about the influence of designations on third parties is reflected in the direct material effects that U.S. designations had on the Islamic State. While OFAC does not specify the nature of blocked funds in the TAR, a DOS senior official hinted that the blocked funds for the Islamic State are likely the product of secondary sanctions on foreign financial institutions exposed to USDT's jurisdiction.⁴⁶⁹

However, the cumulated blocked funds for the Islamic State were at \$491,223 in 2020, which is not as significant for an FTO that once generated over \$2 billion in annual revenues.

⁴⁶⁸ Cited in Loertscher et al. 2020.

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with DOS official.

The FTO's economic model, mostly based on self-sufficient local activities, limited its exposure to tools suited to disrupt international donations. Further, the hawala system enabled the FTO to conduct some international transactions.⁴⁷⁰

Ultimately, the Islamic State's decline in capabilities was the result of mounting military pressure from a variety of actors on all sides of its territory and an inability to create long-lasting alliances in the region. As Gerges remarks:

Baghdadi and his inner circle mastered the art of making enemies near and far. [...] With ISIS, there are no blurred lines or gray areas, only followers and enemies: you either pledge allegiance to Baghdadi and his ideology or are labeled an enemy who could be killed. There is no neutral stance between good and evil; passivity is seen as apostasy. This binary black- and white worldview pitted the organization against the world, including the godfathers of Salafi-jihadist thought.⁴⁷¹

According to Gerges, these political and strategic miscalculations doomed the Islamic State's chances of survival, at least as a major state-like entity.

d. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: High relevance. The United States launched a specific military operation against the Islamic State (2013-2020). The FTO was challenged militarily by multiple states and NSAGs during the entire period, which explains its eventual decline in capabilities.

The case illustrates how designations can be associated with kinetic tools by the U.S. government. U.S. terrorist designations undermined the FTO, notably by deterring third parties from conducting business with it. Further, they were a part of the stigmatization effort that facilitated coalition building against the NSAG.

⁴⁷⁰ FATF 2015. Bindner and Poirot 2016. Donations were a small part of the Islamic State's resource base (2% according to their estimates). Described as money transfer without money movement, the hawala system is an informal value transfer system based on trust and a large international network of money brokers.

⁴⁷¹ Gerges 2017: 284.

Despite these impacts, terrorist designations would most likely not have been decisive without the military actions undertaken by the U.S.-led coalition, U.S.-backed NSAGs, and other actors.

Ally mechanism: Low relevance. The U.S.-Iraq relation accounts for U.S. involvement and cooperation with Iraqi forces to combat the Islamic State. Yet, the trend in the FTO's attacks and capabilities was not determined by the fact that Iraq was enforcing the different components of U.S. and U.N. terrorist designations.

Iraq did pass AML/CFT regulations into law to comply with the FATF recommendations, but there has been no evidence of the Islamic State's funds being curtailed within Iraq, despite the FTO's investments in multiple domestic businesses. This has most likely been a capacity issue for the Iraqi government rather than a refusal to enforce these regulations.

Financial adaptability: Medium relevance. Financial adaptability provides an explanation of the case when several assumptions of Jo et al.'s study are revised: if the Islamic State is evaluated as of 2013, if designation is considered to have occurred in 2014 with the wave of SDGT designations instead of the 2004 FTO designation on al-Tawhid.

Under these conditions, the Islamic State (2013-2020) qualifies as having high-level financial adaptability, and there is no decrease in attacks in the 3-year window. While this is not how Jo et al.'s study is framed, financial adaptability theory provides insights to explain the strength of an FTO that combines autonomous, diverse, and invulnerable income sources.

Multilateral designations: Low relevance. The other designations that were part of the multilateral terrorist designation regime on the Islamic State (2013-2020) seem to have been less impactful than U.S. designations, if they were at all impactful.

In addition to Resolution 2253 (2015), the UN Security Council approved Resolution 2170 (2014), forbidding member-states to undertake commercial transactions with the Islamic State, especially in the oil sector, and resolution 2199 (2015) aiming at concerted action by member-states to cut off the FTO's sources of financing.

However, member-states in which the enforcement of these resolutions would have been impactful were unwilling or unable to enforce them. Furthermore, the U.N. Security Council did not designate individuals and entities associated with the Islamic State at the same pace and ratio as the United States.

For instance, only five individuals had been designated in the U.N. consolidated list as of 2016, compared to more than forty in U.S. lists.⁴⁷² Finally, E.U. designations did not seem to trigger meaningful results, as no concrete repercussion has, to the author's knowledge, been documented.

3. Longitudinal cross-case comparison

The longitudinal cross-case comparison of the Islamic State 2003-2013 and 2013-2020 is used to test hypothesis 2c: terrorist designations have more impact on established FTOs than on disconnected FTOs, all else equal. Islamic State (2003-2013) qualifies as a disconnected FTO and Islamic State (2013-2020) as an established FTO. Both FTOs were targeted by strategic designations.

The test for this hypothesis is necessarily weak because the difference in impact is not easily measurable in terms of trends on Y. Indeed, both disconnected and established FTOs do not experience a decrease in attacks and capabilities following designation, all else equal, as per hypothesis 2a and the values of these cases.

⁴⁷² The reasons for this dichotomy were not investigated in this study but strikingly contrast with designation patterns of al-Qaida.

However, certain differences in trends can be noted. From 2003 to 2013, the Islamic State managed an exponential increase in attacks and lethality (over 500% in the 3-year range and long term), reaching a peak of 429 attacks and 1752 deaths in 2013. By contrast, the Islamic State (2013-2020) “only” increased attacks and lethality by 31% and 22% in the long term. In fact, the number of attacks in 2019, the last year of available data, had almost returned to its 2013 level (441 attacks and 1239 deaths). Additionally, the Islamic State (2013-2020) saw a decrease in capabilities while the Islamic State (2003-2013) experienced a significant increase, as per the capability index.

Yet, as underlined in the case study of Islamic State (2013-2020), U.S. terrorist designations played a modest role in these trends, which mainly resulted from the multifront military confrontation the FTO faced. Further, scale effects also nuance this account as the base years for attacks and lethality for nascent groups, such as Islamic State (2003-2013), usually have low values (single-digit or low double-digit values).⁴⁷³

Anecdotal evidence nonetheless suggests that Islamic State (2013-2020) increasingly felt the impact of U.S. terrorist designations, which complicated its ability to conduct business in the sub-region, to monetize the resources from its territory, and to receive funding. In fact, the stigma and material consequences of U.S. terrorist designations seemed to have been a powerful deterrent on third parties that were inclined to entertain a relation with the Islamic State (2013-2020), according to the FTO’s own account.

By contrast, Islamic State (2003-2013) did not seem to be impacted by any of the direct effects of designations. As underlined in the case study, there is no evidence that the group was in any way materially, financially, or socially affected by U.S. terrorist designations.

⁴⁷³ The FTO was also designated after two years of existence and started perpetrating attacks in the designation year.

On this basis, the cross-case comparison of Islamic State 2003-2013 and 2013-2020 provides a qualified support for hypothesis 2c.

Cases of the Taliban and longitudinal cross-case comparison

The Taliban 1999-2009 and 2009-2021 are used as both longitudinal and most similar cases for cross-case comparisons. The Taliban was targeted by a mostly non-strategic SDGT designation from 2002 to 2009 and by multiple strategic SDGT designations from 2009 onwards. Thus, the Taliban 1999-2009 is compared to the Taliban 2009-2021 to test hypothesis 1. The two cases are subsequently compared to cases of the Islamic State to test hypotheses 1 and 2c, and for their policy application (no FTO designation vs. FTO designation).

The Taliban 1999-2009 has 2002 as cutoff point, with the revocation of EO 13129 and the SDGT designation of the group. The Taliban 2009-2021 has 2009 as cutoff point, which marks the beginning of numerous SDGT designations on key members and affiliated entities.

1. FTO background

The Taliban (students in Pashto) is a Deobandi Islamic fundamentalist political movement and jihadist group formed in 1994 in Afghanistan. The group emerged victorious from the Afghan civil war (1992-1996) and ruled most of the country from 1996 to 2001, as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

The Taliban regime instituted a strictly Shariah-governed state and harbored the Salafi-jihadist group al-Qaida. The regime was overthrown following 9/11 and the U.S.-led intervention. After two decades of conflict, failed negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and the full withdrawal of U.S. forces, the Taliban regained control of the country in 2021.

Initially created by religious students from Pashtun areas of southeast Afghanistan under the leadership of Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban rallied mujahedeen forces that fought

the Soviet occupation from 1979 to 1989. U.S., Saudi, and Pakistani intelligence agencies had supported the Afghan mujahideen against Soviet forces period, and Pakistan supported the Taliban from its early emergence.⁴⁷⁴

Following their removal from power by U.S.-led NATO forces and the Northern Alliance in 2001, the Taliban leadership retreated to Pakistan. They established the new Taliban headquarters (Supreme Council or *Rahbarī Shūrā*) in the border city of Quetta and started to develop an insurgent force in 2002-2003. In parallel, the power-sharing Bonn Agreement—establishing the Afghan Interim Authority under Hamid Karzai—privileged Northern Alliance members, who were primarily Tajik and Uzbek, and excluded the Taliban as well as other Pashtun factions.⁴⁷⁵

In 2003-2004, the invasion of Iraq diverted U.S. attention from Afghanistan and facilitated the Taliban resurgence. By 2007, the group was reoccupying territory in its historic stronghold around Kandahar in the Southeast and was leading a full-blown insurgency. Between 2005 and 2008, the Taliban launched hundreds of attacks on coalition and Afghan forces, including suicide bombings, a relatively new tactic for the group.

In reaction, the Bush administration and thereafter the Obama administration sent substantial reinforcements, bringing the total of U.S. troops at 100,000 in December 2009. Despite successful military campaigns that dislodged the Taliban from Kandahar and other districts, the group remained operational, benefiting from the support of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI) and affiliated groups such as the Haqqani network.

⁴⁷⁴ Pakistan's main objective in Afghanistan has long been to prevent the installation of a regime amicable to India. Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. "The Afghan Taliban." Stanford University.

⁴⁷⁵ Although Hamid Karzai was himself from a prominent Pashtun family living in exile, the exclusion of the Taliban in these negotiations and subsequent ones has been described by certain analysts as a lasting impediment for peacebuilding and state building in Afghanistan. See Suhrke 2018.

While the Afghan President Hamid Karzai favored a political solution to the conflict through talks with the Taliban, the U.S. government was opposed to negotiations. Several episodes illustrate this contradiction. For example, the Karzai administration established contact with Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban second-in-command, for preliminary talks in early 2010; yet, Baradar was captured in a U.S.-Pakistani raid a few weeks later, jeopardizing this attempt at negotiation.⁴⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the lasting stalemate made the Obama administration progressively change strategy and approve third party talks with certain Taliban leaders.⁴⁷⁷ In 2011, Secretary of State Clinton admitted that U.S. government had reached out to the Taliban and the Haqqani network “to test their willingness and their sincerity, and we are now working among us—Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States—to try to put together a process that would sequence us toward an actual negotiation.”⁴⁷⁸ At the same time, U.S. officials were pushing Pakistan to take a tougher stance on the Haqqani network, seen as a particularly extreme and violent Taliban semi-autonomous faction.⁴⁷⁹

From 2012 to 2015, several rounds of negotiations were initiated but repeatedly collapsed.⁴⁸⁰ In 2015, Pakistan brokered the first official peace talks between the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan, after Ashraf Ghani had succeeded Hamid Karzai as President. U.S. and Chinese representatives attended as observers.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁶ Pakistan opposed these talks because had not been involved in the discussions by the Taliban and it considered the Karzai administration to be pro-India.

⁴⁷⁷ MacAskill 2010.

⁴⁷⁸ Quinn and Allbritton. 2011

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ For instance, following the official opening of an office in Qatar by the Taliban. The Karzai administration denounced the move, considering that the Taliban was not a legitimate government in exile. The U.S. government had sanctioned the opening but shared similar political concerns.

⁴⁸¹ Mapping Militant Organizations “The Afghan Taliban” 2018.

In 2016, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, and China agreed on a road map for peace, indicating that negotiations with the Taliban were accepted by all governmental actors. Yet, talks were regularly compromised because of military actions by the Taliban or coalition forces. Following a sharp increase in violence in 2018, the Ghani administration offered unconditional peace talks. Meanwhile, the Taliban were progressively reinvesting in rural districts in Afghanistan.⁴⁸²

In February 2020, the U.S. government and the Taliban signed the “Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan” in Doha, Qatar. The Afghan government was not involved in the negotiations. The deal provided the complete withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops in exchange for the Taliban pledge to not attack coalition forces, to negotiate a conflict resolution with the Afghan government, and to prevent al-Qaida from operating in Taliban-controlled territory.

In the few months following the agreement, Taliban’s attacks against Afghan security forces increased dramatically. As the United States started to withdraw troops in May 2021, the Taliban captured rural territory, isolating Afghan forces in urban centers. By August 15, the Taliban had taken control of most major cities, including the capital of Kabul. The last U.S. troops left Afghanistan on August 30, 2021, four days after an attack on Kabul airport by the Islamic State-Khorasan Province killed 183 people (170 Afghan civilians and 13 U.S. soldiers).

In September, the Taliban presented a caretaker government headed by Hibatullah Akhundzada, with Mohammad Hassan Akhund and Abdul Ghani Baradar as prime minister and deputy prime minister respectively.

Several factors are often highlighted to explain the Taliban’s eventual victory, including: the Taliban’s military and tactical acumen, the Taliban’s strategic use of ethnic tensions and

⁴⁸² Roggio 2021.

ability to broker deals with local leaders, the mounting rejection of foreign forces among Afghans, the lack of legitimacy of the Afghan government, and the weakness of local administrations. The 2020 U.S.-Taliban deal that excluded the Afghan government in the negotiations is also seen as a major turning point, which paved the way for the rapid Taliban advances.⁴⁸³

2. Terrorist designation regime

The designation status of the Taliban has attracted much attention, because the group was never designated as an FTO by the U.S. government. This situation has puzzled many analysts,⁴⁸⁴ notably since the Taliban is mostly responsible for the death of over 6,000 U.S. military, contractors, and officials from 2001 to 2019.⁴⁸⁵ However, the group has been targeted by multiple U.S., U.N., and other international terrorist designations.

In 1999, President Clinton issued EO 13129, which prohibited transactions with the Taliban and individually designated Mullah Mohamed Omar, for allowing Afghanistan to be used as a base for al-Qaida.⁴⁸⁶ The same year, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1267 established a sanction regime against al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban for their involvement in terrorism.⁴⁸⁷ Subsequent U.N. resolutions refined the mechanism, which included a sanction committee, a list of designated persons and entities, and requirements for member-states to ensure the implementation of sanctions.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸³ Congressional Research Service 2021.

⁴⁸⁴ Koskinas 2015.

⁴⁸⁵ Crawford and Lutz 2019.

⁴⁸⁶ The White House 1999.

⁴⁸⁷ U.N. Security Council 1999.

⁴⁸⁸ Such as U.N. Security Council Resolution 1526 (2004), which demanded that member-states take a number of steps regarding terrorism financing and the monitoring of designated persons. However, no enforcement mechanism exists to ensure that member-states follow these guidelines.

President Bush revoked EO 13129 with EO 13268 in July 2002, considering that the security threat justifying President Clinton's executive order had been "significantly altered given the success of the military campaign in Afghanistan."⁴⁸⁹ The Taliban as a group was added to EO 13224 and designated SDGT.

As noted by many observers, the Taliban was never added to the FTO list, and its members were not designated SDGT until 2009-2010, while the group was committing lethal attacks against U.S. forces and civilians through the 2000s. At the same time, the U.S. government refused direct negotiations with the Taliban and opposed talks between the new government of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

When the Obama administration decided to reinvest in Afghanistan in the late 2000s, the approach was to lead a counterinsurgency campaign using both military and non-kinetic tools. Relying on EO 13224, the Treasury Department created the Afghan Threat Finance Cell to "aggressively attack the finances of the Taliban, al-Qaida and other terrorist groups."⁴⁹⁰ In fact, the Treasury Department led the designation surge in 2009-2012, listing 21 Taliban members linked to financing as SDGT.⁴⁹¹

In the early 2010s, the executive branch's strategic evolution of accepting negotiations with the Taliban was reflected in U.N. Security Council resolutions 1888 and 1889. Passed in 2011, these resolutions separated the Taliban and al-Qaida committee into two separate sanction committees. The move aimed to induce the Taliban into talks, as the Afghan ambassador to the United Nations suggested: "[it] will help to create a regime of engagement for people to join the

⁴⁸⁹ The White House 2002.

⁴⁹⁰ U.S. Department of Treasury 2011.

⁴⁹¹ Financiers accounted for near 80% of total SDGT designations against the Taliban. Loertscher et al. 2020: 62.

peace process”. The U.S. ambassador noted that “the new sanctions regime [...] will serve as an important tool to promote reconciliation, while isolating extremists.”⁴⁹²

In September 2012, DOS announced the addition of the Haqqani network to the FTO list, simply stating that the organization met “the statutory criteria” for designation.⁴⁹³ According to former DNI James Clapper, the objective was to “drive wedges” between Taliban factions, as the Taliban was “not a monolithic group and there were gradations of extremism to moderation.”⁴⁹⁴

3. Case values

X1: Established.

Insertion into the International Financial System: 0 for 1999-2009; 3 for 2009-2021.

First, 2002: \$8,342. Last, 2020: \$108,704. Peak, 2018: \$206,805. 2002-2016: <\$8,342.⁴⁹⁵

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons. 0 for 1999-2010; 0 for 2010-2020.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 4 (2+2) for 1999-2009;⁴⁹⁶ 3 (2+1) for 2009-2021.⁴⁹⁷

Size and Resources: 4 (1999-2021). Financial resources: 2. Membership: 1. Territorial control: 1.

X2: Non-strategic (2002-2009) and strategic (2009-2021). 32 SDGT (2016). 1 before 2009. 7 in 2010, 6 in 2011, and 6 in 2012.

In control of the state of Afghanistan prior to the U.S.-led intervention, the Taliban displayed values of an established target for 1999-2009. Despite an initial retreat and a loss in revenues, territory, and membership, the Taliban still maintained values of an established target for 2009-2021, thanks to the support of Pakistan and substantial revenues from drug production

⁴⁹² Charbonneau 2011. Resolution 1988 established committee for the Taliban. See U.N. Security Council 2011.

⁴⁹³ U.S. Department of State 2012a.

⁴⁹⁴ Cited in Legrand 2018:

⁴⁹⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury 2021, 2016, 2008, 2002.

⁴⁹⁶ State entity until 2001.

⁴⁹⁷ State support from Pakistan: territorial safe haven (2) and material support (1).

and trade.⁴⁹⁸ Further, apart from a short period in the mid-2000s, the group could consistently rely on a large membership.⁴⁹⁹

U.S. terrorist designations targeting the Taliban were driven by strategic (1999-2001 and 2009-2021) and non-strategic motives (2002-2009). The U.S. government identified the Taliban as a security risk for harboring al-Qaida in 1999 and fought a protracted war against the group following 9/11. In addition to using *ad hoc* domestic designations, the U.S. government deployed significant efforts to impose a multilateral sanction regime against the Taliban through the United Nations.⁵⁰⁰

However, the 2002 designation policy that followed the military intervention in Afghanistan was symbolic in nature and ultimately non-strategic. The decision not to designate the Taliban as an FTO—and to replace former designations with a SDGT designation—reflects the Bush administration’s intention to signal that a security threat identified under the previous administration had been successfully dealt with. It also suggests an underestimation of what this threat would represent moving forward.

Since this interpretation may seem disputable, it needs to be justified further. The most common explanation for the decision not to designate the Taliban as an FTO is that the U.S. government considered that negotiations with the group were unavoidable for a lasting post-war

⁴⁹⁸ The group had state revenues until 2001, including taxation on poppy production (around \$500 million). After 2001, it still benefitted from drug trade (opium poppy transformed into heroin). In 2007, Afghanistan produced 93% of the world’s heroin (U.N. estimates), which was still controlled by the Taliban to a large extent despite their territorial loss. Mapping Militant Organizations “The Afghan Taliban” 2018. The FTO’s revenues were estimated at \$800 million in the mid-2010s (Zehorai 2018) or between \$300 million and \$1.6 (Thomas 2021).

⁴⁹⁹ 1995: 25,000, 1999: 50,000+. 2006: 4000-7,000, 2009: 10,000-25,000, 2010: 36,000+, 2018: 60,000+. Mapping Militant Organizations “The Afghan Taliban” 2018.

⁵⁰⁰ It can be noted that the U.S. government did not designate Afghanistan as a State Sponsor of Terrorism between 1999 and 2001. This is because the Taliban regime was not recognized by the United States and in the United Nations, where representatives of the previous regime continued to occupy Afghanistan’s seat.

settlement.⁵⁰¹ While this explanation is valid to describe the situation from 2009 onwards, it is inaccurate for 2002-2009.

Indeed, the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan then did not consider that negotiations were a necessity. The U.S. government categorically opposed talks with the Taliban, and between the Afghan government and the Taliban, until 2010. At that time, the Karzai administration was adamant to start negotiations to avoid a military stalemate, and U.S. forces had been dragged back to counter the Taliban resurgence.

In fact, as reflected in President Bush's EO 13268, there was a mistaken belief that the Taliban no longer posed a substantial threat to U.S. security:

I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, find that the situation that gave rise to the declaration of a national emergency in Executive Order 13129 of July 4, 1999, with respect to the Taliban, [...] has been significantly altered given the success of the military campaign in Afghanistan, and hereby revoke that order and terminate the national emergency declared in that order with respect to the Taliban.⁵⁰²

The perception that the Taliban would not threaten coalition forces and the new Afghan government was also clearly expressed in Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's communication on the end to major combat in Afghanistan:

The President of the United States and General Franks and I have been looking at the progress that's being made in this country and in cooperation with President Karzai have concluded that we are at a point where we clearly have moved from major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction and activities. The bulk of this country today is permissive, it's secure, it is clear that that's the case by virtue of the fact that we have seen people returning to their country from all across the globe in large numbers.⁵⁰³

This underestimation of the threat facilitated the Taliban's resurgence in the mid 2000s.

As an another example of this strategic negligence, the U.S. government did not target any Taliban members or affiliated entities with SDGT designations until 2009, when the Taliban

⁵⁰¹ E.g.: Cronin 2011, 2012.

⁵⁰² The White House 2002.

⁵⁰³ U.S. Department of Defense 2003.

resurgence was at its highest level of the decade. As illustrated from 2009 to 2021, the decision not to designate the Taliban as an FTO was fully compatible with numerous SDGT designations, which were strategically targeted to impede the group's funding and operations. Additionally, the U.S. government already targeted NSAGs such as AQC, AQIM, and Hezbollah with multiple strategic SDGT designations prior to 2009. Thus, this absence of SDGT designations on the Taliban cannot be explained by strategic considerations.

Furthermore, the U.S. government acted at the U.S. Security Council to separate the Taliban from the al-Qaida sanction committee only in 2011. This measure was seen as important to facilitate negotiations because it signaled that the Taliban was no longer placed on the same level as al-Qaida and other jihadist groups.

Finally, a last justification sometimes provided to explain the non-designation of the Taliban as an FTO is that such a measure was opposed by Pakistan or would lead to the designation of Pakistan as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, which would have had negative impacts in terms of intelligence sharing and other forms of cooperation with this country.⁵⁰⁴

However, the U.S. government designated the Haqqani network—a Taliban faction more closely associated with the Pakistani ISI than the core Taliban⁵⁰⁵—as an FTO in the 2010s, without designating Pakistan as a State Sponsor and despite Pakistan's opposition. This interpretation also does not explain the absence of strategic SDGT designations on Taliban and Haqqani members before the late 2000s.

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality (1999-2009): no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range and in the long term (+1000%+, +1000%+). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term (+1000%+, +1000%+).

⁵⁰⁴ Cronin 2011. Legrand 2018.

⁵⁰⁵ Cronin 2012.

FTO capabilities (1999-2009): decrease in financial resources, decrease in territorial control; decrease in membership; decrease in weaponry; decrease in political representation. Decline in the capability index.

FTO attacks and lethality (2009-2021): no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range and in the long term (+94%, +648%). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term (+76%, +1167%).

FTO capabilities (2009-2021): no decrease in financial resources; no decrease in territorial control; no decrease in membership; no decrease in weaponry; no decrease in political representation. No decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior (1999-2021): no challenge in court, no renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

4. Analysis

The longitudinal cross-case comparison of the Taliban (1999-2009) and the Taliban (2009-2021) does not prima facie confirm hypothesis 1: terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives. The cases prima facie support hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

Both the Taliban (1999-2009) and the Taliban (2009-2021) increased attacks following designation. Both groups also increased capabilities, once the 2001 U.S.-led military intervention is controlled for. Indeed, the Taliban (1999-2009) experienced a sharp drop in territorial control, membership, financial resources, and weaponry because of the military intervention in 2001 and considering its state entity nature. Yet, the group rapidly regained strength in all these areas in the following years, especially from the mid-2000s

The Taliban (1999-2009) was not affected by the non-strategic 2002 SDGT designation of the group, which only resulted in a few thousand dollars in frozen assets. The U.S. government neglected designation tools on the Taliban during this period, while these tools were actively being used on other groups (e.g., AQC, AQIM, al-Qaida in Iraq, Hezbollah, etc.).

By contrast, the U.S. government fully unleashed the power of EO 31224 on the Taliban after 2009. SDGT designations on key members and entities, associated with the United Nations' 1988 Sanctions Committee that listed over 130 members, reportedly played a role in disrupting the Taliban's finances and international travel.⁵⁰⁶ The removal of Taliban members from the U.S. SDN list and the U.N. consolidated list were thus an important negotiation point during the U.S.-Taliban deal signed in 2020.⁵⁰⁷

Nonetheless, it remains difficult to assess whether the material effects of designations, or the associated stigma for a group that aimed to assume the governance of a sovereign state, motivated this Taliban demand. Indeed, the impact of designation on the Taliban's finances seems to have been limited. It was only in 2018 that the Taliban's blocked assets passed \$15,000 to reach a peak of \$206,805, a modest amount considering the group's revenues in the late 2010s.

As the Taliban's activities were circumscribed to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and none of these countries were able or willing to enforce strict AML/CFT regulations, the group's resources were mostly insulated from U.S. and U.N. sanctions.

U.S. terrorist designations could in fact not prevent the Taliban's consistent increase in attacks and capabilities. The group's territorial progress in rural localities laid the ground for the successful military campaign against the Afghan government, concomitant to the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Therefore, the contrast between the Taliban (1999-2009) and the Taliban (2009-2021) is limited. Although process-tracing denotes a higher impact of strategic U.S. designations from 2009 onwards, this impact is not reflected on the dependent variable. Thus, the longitudinal

⁵⁰⁶ Loertscher et al. 2020.

⁵⁰⁷ Welna and Dwyer 2020.

cross-case comparison does not fully support hypothesis 1: U.S. terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives, all else equal. The cases nonetheless support hypothesis 2a: U.S. terrorist designations on disconnected and established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

5. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: High relevance for the Taliban 1999-2009, medium relevance for the Taliban 2009-2021. The initial decrease in capabilities for the Taliban 1999-2009 resulted from the U.S.-led military intervention. The group's resurgence occurred when the military pressure was eased. The eventual success of the Taliban 2009-2021 was concomitant to the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition troops.

Ally mechanism: Low relevance. The group operated in Pakistan, an allied country according to Phillip's measures, and Afghanistan, a regime installed with the help of and actively supported by the United States and the United Nations. Pakistan, because of differing geopolitical interests, and Afghanistan, for lack of capabilities, did not f terrorist designations.

Financial adaptability: Medium relevance. The Taliban can be considered as having medium-level of financial adaptability, considering their high reliance on drug production and trafficking. This activity provided the group with an autonomous and hard to disturb source of funding, which helps explain the group's ability to mitigate designation costs post-2009. However, other factors, such as the support of Pakistan which provided safe haven to the Taliban in years of vulnerability, are crucial to understanding the group's resilience.

Multilateral designations: Medium relevance. As suggested in the U.S.-Taliban deal negotiations, U.N. designations adequately complemented U.S. designations. However, the

combination of the two regimes was insufficient to significantly impact the group’s capabilities. Further, the changes in the status of designations—some of them decided to facilitate negotiations—most likely did not enhance implementation.

Most similar cross-case comparison of the Islamic State and the Taliban

The Taliban and the Islamic State can be considered as most similar cases for several reasons. Both groups were inspired by a Salafi-jihadist ideology and linked to al-Qaida. The Taliban emerged from the Deobandi school of Islam, but the group has in effect increasingly embraced the ideology promoted by Salafi-jihadist clerics.⁵⁰⁸

However, both the Taliban and the Islamic State departed from al-Qaida’s vision of global jihad wielded against the “far enemy”—the United States and the West in general—for local objectives leading to territorial control and the establishment of sovereign emirates.

The Taliban was most successful in this endeavor, as it came to control and govern 90% of the state of Afghanistan at the end of the 1990s, including the capital, Kabul. The group also regained control of most of Afghanistan by the end of 2021.

On the other hand, the Islamic State’s territorial hold was more precarious, controlling up to 110,000 square kilometers across Syria and Iraq. The entity’s contours were continuously contested and regularly redrawn, as the FTO faced offensives from multiple opponents. Yet, the Islamic State kept control over major cities and resource-rich areas for several years, generating over \$2 billion in revenues.

Both groups were not recognized as legitimate sovereign states. The Taliban was not recognized as the legitimate government of Afghanistan by the great majority of U.N. member-states and was not represented at the United Nations, where representatives of the previous

⁵⁰⁸ Kepel 2003.

regime continued to hold Afghanistan's seat.⁵⁰⁹ The Islamic State was never recognized by a U.N. member-state or any state entity.

The cases also have similar values on the control variables. The Taliban (1999-2009 and 2009-2021, both established targets) and the Islamic State (2003-2013 and 2013-2020, disconnected and established targets) all faced U.S.-led military operations, were targeted by multilateral terrorist designation regimes, and operated in the territory of U.S. allies (U.S.-backed Afghan and Iraqi governments).⁵¹⁰ In addition, the Taliban (1999-2009 and 2009-2021) and the Islamic State (2003-2013) had medium levels of financial adaptability, while the Islamic State (2013-2020) had a high level of financial adaptability.

The cross-case comparison of the Taliban 1999-2009 and the Islamic State 2013-2020 is used to test hypothesis 1: U.S. terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives, all else equal. The cross-case comparison of the Islamic State 2003-2013 and the Taliban 2009-2021 is used to test hypothesis 2c: U.S. terrorist designations have more impact on established FTOs than on disconnected FTOs, all else equal.

Further, the comparison between the Taliban 2009-2021 and the Islamic State 2013-2020 is conducted for its policy application as it offers insights on two designation approaches (no FTO designation vs. FTO designation, with strategic SDGT designations in both cases).

Once relegated to a clandestine group following the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, the Taliban managed a rapid and consistent increase of lethal attacks (increase over 1000% for attacks and lethality). The Taliban's campaign peaked in 2009 with 184 attacks and 604 deaths,

⁵⁰⁹ Only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates declared the Taliban regime to be the rightful government of Afghanistan.

⁵¹⁰ With FBI offices in both Baghdad and Kabul, as per Phillips' measures.

when the U.S. government decided to renew its military involvement and to target the group with a series of strategic terrorist designations.

As shown in the earlier cross-case comparison, the Islamic State (2013-2020) did not increase attacks and lethality in the same proportions, and lost capabilities, notably because of U.S.-led military operations. Even if minor, U.S. terrorist designations played a role in undermining the FTO.

By contrast, the Taliban was not impacted by the non-strategic SDGT designation on their group. By 2010, Taliban members were reportedly more concerned with the coalition forces' Joint Prioritized Effects List (JPEL),⁵¹¹ which became more comprehensive in the late 2000s as the U.S. government remobilized forces against the group.

It can be noted that the non-strategic designation SDGT on the Taliban (1999-2009) in 2002 was concomitant to a winding down of military operations in Afghanistan. When the U.S. military reinvested in the field in 2009, the U.S. government accumulated strategic U.S. terrorist designations on the group. Similarly, when the U.S. government decided on a full military confrontation against the Islamic State (2013-2020), the decision was accompanied with an array of strategic terrorist designations.

Nonetheless, the cross-case comparison of the Taliban (1999-2009) and the Islamic State (2013-2020) only offers a moderate support to hypothesis 1, as per the cases' values on the dependent variable and because of the reliance on anecdotal evidence.

The cross-case comparison of the Taliban (2009-2021) and the Islamic State (2003-2013) to test hypothesis 2c suffers the same limitations as the cross-case comparison of the Islamic

⁵¹¹ Waldman 2010. The JPEL was a list of individuals to be captured or killed by coalition forces.

State 2003-2013 and 2013-2020. U.S. terrorist designations did not result in a decrease in attacks for both targets.

The Taliban (2009-2021) increased attacks and lethality in the 3-year range (+94% and +76%) and in the long term (+648% and +1167%), peaking in the last year of available data (2019) with 1366 attacks and 7427 deaths. As seen, the Islamic State (2003-2013) increased attacks and lethality (over 500% in the 3-year range and over 1000% in the long term), with a peak of 429 attacks and 1752 deaths in 2013. In addition, both groups experienced an increase in capabilities over the period as per the capability index.

These values do not indicate an additional impact on the established target over the disconnected target. Once again, only anecdotal evidence suggests a differential in impact. As mentioned in the Taliban's (2009-2021) case study, the tens of SDGT designations on key members and entities, and the designation of over 130 members in the United Nations' 1988 Sanctions Committee, reportedly had some impact on the group's finances and members' freedom of movement. No evidence suggests that the Islamic State (2003-2013) faced comparable consequences.

Further, both the material and social effects of designations seemed to have mattered enough to the Taliban's leadership that the removal of members and associated entities from the U.S. and U.N. terrorist lists became part of the U.S.-Taliban negotiations in 2020. Yet, this evidence remains weak, and the cross-case comparison therefore only offers a limited support to hypothesis 2c.

The cross-case comparison of the Taliban (2009-2021) and Islamic State (2013-2020) provides interesting insights from a policy perspective. As mentioned in the case studies, the

Taliban was never designated as an FTO although it was targeted by multiple U.S. and U.N. terrorist designations.

When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 and harbored al-Qaida, the U.S. government did not designate this country as a State Sponsor of Terrorism because it would have been a tacit admission that the Taliban regime was Afghanistan's legitimate government. Yet, the Taliban was only designated as SDGT in 2002 and it took a violent resurgence for the U.S. government to start using strategic terrorist designations against the group at the end of the 2000s. By then, FTO designation had become undesirable because talks with the Taliban were considered unavoidable for a political solution to the conflict.

As seen in the case studies, the Taliban (2009-2021) increased attacks and capabilities consistently, while the Islamic State (2013-2020) decreased capabilities in the long term and its attack campaign decelerated. The Taliban eventually regained most of Afghanistan's territory, while the Islamic State lost its territorial control. However, it is doubtful that FTO designation's effects played a significant role in this difference of outcomes.

Indeed, the U.S. government deployed comprehensive strategic SDGT designations against the Taliban, and designated as FTOs a specific faction, the Haqqani network, and more distant support groups under the umbrella of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan), in the early 2010s.

Despite these designations, the U.S. government was only able to block over \$15,000 in assets allegedly held by the Taliban in 2018.⁵¹² Even then, the amounts blocked were modest considering the Taliban's revenues at the end of the 2010s.⁵¹³

⁵¹² \$206,805. There was no public communication regarding the nature of these assets or announcements of prosecutions under the material support charge.

⁵¹³ Over \$800 million.

An FTO designation on the Taliban would not have maximized the pressure on the Taliban's finances abroad, since this aspect of designation is covered under EO 13224, used for SDGT designations. In fact, there is no record of blocked assets for the Haqqani network in the USDT's terrorist asset reports to date (2020) and the sums reported for Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan are minimal.⁵¹⁴

It could be argued that FTO designation on the Taliban would have facilitated domestic investigations and prosecutions—in regard to the material support charge, 18 U.S.C. section 2339A and 2339B—for the DOJ, the FBI, and other security agencies. Yet, this aspect is irrelevant because the Taliban never depended on U.S.-linked persons for material or political support.

Nonetheless, while the non-designation of the Taliban as an FTO did not have consequences in terms of direct impacts on the group, the decision reflected a difference in terms of resolve. Terrorist designations on the Islamic State were associated with a rising military involvement and the mobilization of diverse coalitions against the FTO. Negotiations with the Islamic State were never seen as an option for conflict resolution.

By contrast, a complete military withdrawal from Afghanistan was the long-term objective for the U.S. government, which sought to transfer security responsibilities to the U.S.-backed Afghan government. This posture was increasingly obvious throughout the 2010s and the U.S.-Taliban deal—negotiated in 2020 without the involvement of Afghan officials—further clarified that this objective prevailed over the viability of the Afghan government.

Other factors also explained the difference in outcomes for the two groups. Notably, the Taliban progressively reinvested in Afghanistan by brokering alliances with traditional leaders

⁵¹⁴ Under \$5,000.

and local authorities. These arrangements were pragmatic political decisions and not an adhesion to the Taliban's ideology.

By comparison, the Islamic State's rigid ideology and antagonism towards all groups that did not embrace its emirate project limited the FTO's ability to form strategic alliances. This approach resulted in a multifront war that the Islamic State found impossible to manage in the long-term.

Conclusion

The cases of the Islamic State and the Taliban are overall in line with hypotheses 1, 2a, and 2c, although the degree of support for each hypothesis varies across cases. The process-tracing of these cases also uncovers several nuances that are worth underlining.

The Islamic State 2003-2013 fits the prediction of Y as a disconnected target and is in line with hypothesis 2a, with no decrease in attacks and in the capability index, while the case also displays no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range. The control variables do not provide a better explanation of the case. The wave of military operations explains the FTO occasional setbacks, yet the FTO did not decrease attacks and did not experience a decline in capabilities despite regular military pressure.

The Islamic State 2013-2020 only partially fits the prediction of Y as an established target. The FTO did not decrease attacks in the long term and the 3-year window but experienced a decline in capabilities as per the capability index. U.S. terrorist designation impacted the FTO, notably by restraining business opportunities in the region and limiting the monetization of the resources it controlled.

Yet, the decline in capabilities was due to the multifront military interventions the FTO faced, including a major operation led by the United States. The military intervention variable mostly explains the Islamic State's values on the capability index and the financial adaptability

variable provides insights to explain the FTO's resilience to multiple strategic designations. All else equal, it seems reasonable to assume that terrorist designations alone would not have caused this decline. However, designations were part of a multipronged approach to undermine the Islamic State and incontestably played a role in the FTO's decline.

The longitudinal cross-case comparison for the Islamic State 2003-2013 and 2013-2020, provides a limited support to hypothesis 2c. According to anecdotal evidence, the Islamic State 2013-2020 was more impacted by designations than the Islamic State 2003-2013, which seemingly did not experience any inconvenience from designations. The Islamic State 2013-2020 did not increase attacks at the same rate and saw a decline in capabilities, but as mentioned, these trends were only marginally the product of designations.

The Taliban 1999-2009 and the Taliban 2009-2021 are overall in line with hypothesis 2a as both cases show an increase in attacks in long term and in the 3-year window. The Taliban 1999-2009 saw a decrease in capabilities as per the capability index. These opposite trends (increase in attacks and decrease in capabilities) illustrate the Taliban's transition from a quasi-state to a NSAG and is explained by the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. After the non-strategic SDGT designation of the Taliban in 2002, the group increased both attacks and capabilities compared to 2001 and 2002 levels.

The Taliban 2009-2021 steadily increased attacks and capabilities, as per the index. Although there is anecdotal evidence of a higher impact of strategic U.S. terrorist designations on the Taliban after 2009, this impact is not reflected on Y. Thus, the longitudinal cross-case comparison of the Taliban 1999-2009 and 2009-2021 does not fully support hypothesis 1.

The cross-case comparison of the Taliban 1999-2009 and the Islamic State 2013-2020 offers a moderate support to hypothesis 1 in view of the slight differences on the values on Y,

but also relies on anecdotal evidence. A similar analysis prevails for the cross-case comparison of the Taliban 2009-2021 and the Islamic State 2003-2013 regarding hypothesis 2c.

CHAPTER 5

TESTING HYPOTHESES: DIVERSE CASES AND MOST SIMILAR CROSS-CASE COMPARISONS OF ANSAR DINE, BOKO HARAM, MEK, ETA, RIRA, HEZBOLLAH, IRGC, AND AL-QAIDA

The previous empirical chapters focused on cases of disconnected and established FTOs targeted by strategic and non-strategic U.S. terrorist designations. These cases suggest that both forms of designations are ineffective against these types of targets, in the absence of other measures and all else equal. However, strategic designations are able to impact established targets, while disconnected targets seem to be unaffected. The present chapter examines cases of disconnected, connected, and established FTOs, with specific objectives for cross-case comparisons.

In addition to the Islamic State (2003-2013), Ansar Dine provides another case of disconnected FTO targeted by strategic designations to assess hypothesis 2a. Furthermore, Ansar Dine is used as a most similar case to Boko Haram for cross-case comparison and allows for a more precise assessment of hypothesis 1 regarding disconnected FTOs.

MeK provides a case of connected FTO targeted by strategic designations to assess hypotheses 2b and 3, and was selected because of its high values on X1 as part of the diverse case selection method. ETA also provides a case of connected FTO targeted by strategic designations and is a most similar case of the R-IRA, a connected FTO targeted by non-strategic designations. The ETA and R-IRA cross-case comparison is the most pertinent test for hypothesis 1, since the theory predicts that U.S. terrorist designations are only impactful and effective against connected FTOs.

Hezbollah and IRGC provide additional cases of established targets to assess hypothesis 2a. These FTOs are also used as most similar cases: both are Shia organizations, either deeply

integrated in a state's apparatus (Hezbollah in Lebanon) or integral component of a state (IRGC in Iran). This cross-case comparison can further test hypothesis 1 regarding established FTOs.

The final case is al-Qaida Central, selected for its intrinsic importance, considering the means deployed by the United States to undermine this FTO. As al-Qaida displays values of a connected target, the absence of impact and effectiveness on this FTO would question the validity of the dissertation's theory: indeed, U.S. terrorist designations against al-Qaida should be a paradigm of strategic terrorist designations.

Ansar Dine

1. FTO Background

Ansar Dine (the "Defenders of the Faith") was a Salafi-jihadist Tuareg group founded in Mali by former Tuareg commander Iyad Ag Ghali in December 2011. It became Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM, the "Group for Support of Islam and Muslims") in March 2017 following a merger with other Islamic groups operating in the Sahel, under Ghali's leadership.⁵¹⁵

In early 2011, Ghali failed to take the leadership of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad's (MNLA)⁵¹⁶—a NSAG seeking to establish an independent Tuareg state in northern Mali. He subsequently secured an alliance with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and endorsed a Salafi-jihadist agenda, leading to the creation of Ansar Dine.⁵¹⁷

In January 2012, Ansar Dine participated in the Tuareg rebellion that started the Mali War, alongside the MNLA, AQIM forces, and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). After a successful military campaign in northern Mali, Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO turned against the secularist MNLA and took over most of the Azawad region. By June

⁵¹⁵ Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. "Ansar Dine." Stanford University. Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. "Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen." Stanford University.

⁵¹⁶ The French acronyms are commonly used for the MNLA and MUJAO.

⁵¹⁷ Bensimon et al. 2018.

2012, Ansar Dine and allies controlled the cities of Timbuktu, Kidal, and Gao, and started to implement Sharia law. The FTO attracted international attention when it destroyed seven Timbuktu mausoleums, a UNESCO World Heritage site.⁵¹⁸

Benefiting from local anchoring with traditional tribal and religious authorities, Ansar Dine became the dominant player in the jihadist coalition and conducted negotiations with the government of Mali and Burkina Faso.⁵¹⁹ In early 2013, the breakdown of talks and the lasting occupation of northern Mali by jihadist groups prompted U.N. Security Council Resolution 2085 and a French military intervention to support the government. Despite being rapidly defeated, Ansar Dine continued to operate and regularly attacked French forces and U.N. forces from the MINUMSA.⁵²⁰ The group was simultaneously designated FTO by DOS and in the U.N. consolidated list in March 2013.⁵²¹

Weakened by the military intervention, Ansar Dine became less active in 2014 before resuming regular attacks in 2015 and 2016.⁵²² The FTO reportedly claimed responsibility for 84 attacks in 2016, making it the most active AQIM affiliate in West Africa.⁵²³ In 2017, Ansar Dine merged with al-Mourabitoun, a splinter group from AQIM, as well as other local jihadist groups, to form JNIM. Ghali was established as leader and emir of the new group, and pledged allegiance to both Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abdelmalek Droukdel, leaders of al-Qaida and AQIM respectively. The merger was supposed to address the regional military mobilization and defections of former affiliates to the Islamic State.⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁸ Mapping Militant Organizations “Ansar Dine” 2018.

⁵¹⁹ Baba 2012.

⁵²⁰ The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, acronym in French.

⁵²¹ U.S. Department of State 2013. Ghali was designated SDGT in February 2012.

⁵²² U.S. Department of State 2020.

⁵²³ According to FDD’s Long War Journal data, see Caleb 2017. However, the GTD only reports 22 Ansar Dine attacks for 2016.

⁵²⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations “Ansar Dine” 2018.

Following its formation, JNIM regularly clashed with Operation Barkhane forces, the MINUSMA, and the G5 Sahel Joint Force. From 2018 to 2021, the group notably attacked the French embassy in Ouagadougou, the G5 Sahel Joint Forces' headquarters in Sevare, and a U.N. Peacekeepers camp. Instead of updating Ansar Dine's FTO designation to reflect the name change, JNIM was designated FTO as a separate entity in September 2018 by DOS.⁵²⁵

2. Case values

X1: Disconnected

Insertion into the International Financial System: 0.

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons: 0.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 0 (0+0).

Size and Resources: 2. Financial resources: 1. Membership: 0. Territorial control: 1.

X2: Strategic

Ansar Dine displays values of a disconnected FTO (X1). The group was targeted by U.S. terrorist designations (FTO and SDGT) driven by strategic motives (X2). Ansar Dine has pursued local objectives, with mostly local members and local sources of funding.⁵²⁶

The FTO was not inserted in the international financial system: \$0 in blocked funds in the Treasury Department's (USDT) terrorism assets report and no mention of substantial international financial transactions in other sources (score of 0). The FTO did not rely on U.S.-linked persons (score of 0). The FTO did not benefit from state affiliation or support (score of 0). In terms of size, the FTO had an estimated few hundreds of members at its inception and managed to recruit up to 1,200 in 2013 (score of 0).⁵²⁷

Information on Ansar Dine's resources is imprecise. The FTO certainly benefited from AQMI's support, notably in terms of light weaponry supplies taken from Libya.⁵²⁸ AQMI also

⁵²⁵ U.S. Department of State 2018.

⁵²⁶ Roetman 2019. Pérouse de Montclos 2021.

⁵²⁷ Senate of France 2013.

⁵²⁸ Roetman 2019.

provided some financial support.⁵²⁹ An Interpol study reports that once Ansar Dine was established as a dominant player in northern Mali, its sources of funding included taxation on drug trafficking and trafficking of migrants using routes on its territory, and illegal taxation on local populations. The study also estimates JNIM annual revenues at \$18 million in 2018.⁵³⁰ Therefore, a high-end estimate would set Ansar Dine's revenues prior to designation at \$10 million (score of 1). The FTO undoubtedly controlled territory prior to designation (score of 1).

U.S. terrorist designations on Ansar Dine were driven by strategic motives and were not a contentious issue in domestic politics. DOS mentioned the close cooperation between Ansar Dine and AQMI as the main rationale.⁵³¹ Further, the United States aimed to support the French effort in Mali: by providing logistical and intelligence assistance⁵³² and by mobilizing a regional coalition.⁵³³ Since U.S. legal authorities restricted the use of lethal counterterrorism tools overseas—such as drones—to combating al-Qaida and affiliates, the FTO designation reportedly facilitated the amount and nature of support provided to French forces.⁵³⁴

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range and in the long term (+400%, +1000%+). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term (+356%, +1000%+).

FTO capabilities: no decrease in financial resources; no decrease in territorial control;⁵³⁵ no decrease in membership;⁵³⁶ no decrease in weaponry; change in political representation not applicable. No decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: No challenge in court and renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

⁵²⁹ One rare example given in this regard is an alleged payment of 400,000 Euros from Tariq ibn Ziyad (AQMI commander) to Ghali. Ibid: 13.

⁵³⁰ Nellesmann et al. 2018: 137.

⁵³¹ U.S. Department of State 2013.

⁵³² Interview with Alice Friend. The rise of jihadist groups in North Africa and the Sahel was a primary concern following the attacks on U.S. personnel in Benghazi.

⁵³³ Interview with Johnnie Carson.

⁵³⁴ DeYoung 2013.

⁵³⁵ International Crisis Group 2021. Decrease in the 3-year window.

⁵³⁶ U.S. Department of State 2020. Mapping Militant Organizations "Ansar Dine" 2018. Mapping Militant Organizations "Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen" 2018.

3. Case analysis

The case is line with hypothesis 2a: U.S. terrorist designations on disconnected FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal. There is no evidence that designations impacted the FTO by disturbing its financial transactions, members' freedom of movement, operations, or support by third parties. Nevertheless, these policies might have played a role in facilitating U.S. support to French forces regarding certain legal constrains in the United States and, more marginally, facilitate a regional mobilization against the group.

4. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Medium relevance. The variable provides partial explanation for the case as it largely accounts for the decrease in the FTO's territorial control in the short term. However, despite the substantial military means deployed, the FTO did not experience a decline in attacks and capabilities.

Ally mechanism: Medium relevance. This explanation holds since Mali is not a U.S. ally according to the measurements used in Phillips' study.⁵³⁷ Yet, the explanatory power of this approach can be nuanced by the fact that designations were decided to support a close NATO ally, which was directly confronting the FTO militarily, the civilian government of Mali, and the implementation of a U.N. Security Council resolution.

Financial adaptability: High relevance. This explanation holds since Ansar Dine can be categorized as having high-level adaptability: the FTO has relied on criminal activities and terrorist network for its funding and did not decrease attacks.

⁵³⁷ Formal military alliance or presence of an FBI office in the country.

Multilateral designations: Low relevance. The variable does not provide additional explanation as the FTO was also designated in the U.N. Security Council consolidated list and in the E.U. terrorist list. These designations did not maximize impact.

Most similar cross-case comparison of Boko Haram and Ansar Dine

Boko Haram and Ansar Dine are most similar cases for several reasons. Both FTOs are Salafi-jihadist groups operating in the Sahel region that rebelled against their local and national governments. They both pursued local objectives with mostly local members and resources.

The control variables for these cases are also relatively constant. Both FTOs faced a military intervention and multilateral designations. Boko Haram operated in Nigeria, a U.S. ally country,⁵³⁸ while Ansar Dine operated in Mali, a non-U.S. ally. However, this difference is mitigated by the fact that counterterrorism efforts in Mali were mostly led by France, a closer ally to the United States than Nigeria.⁵³⁹

In terms of financial adaptability, Boko Haram can be considered as having medium-level adaptability as the FTO mostly relied on criminal activities and Ansar Dine can be considered as having high-level adaptability.

This most similar cross-case comparison is relevant to estimate hypothesis 1: terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives, all else equal. Indeed, Boko Haram's FTO designation was driven by mostly non-strategic motives while Ansar Dine's designation was strategically guided.

The cross-case comparison does not support this hypothesis as both FTOs were not impacted by designations. They did not decrease attacks, did not experience a decline in

⁵³⁸ Due to the presence of an FBI office in Abuja.

⁵³⁹ Formal military alliance through NATO and presence of an FBI office in Paris.

capabilities, and did not change behavior. Both FTOs faced a decrease in territorial control in the short-term, attributable to military interventions. On the long-term, they regained territory and did not face a significant decline in membership and resources.

However, the FTO designation of Ansar Dine facilitated U.S. military support to French forces, which offers an interesting contrast with the case of Boko Haram. On one hand, the Ansar Dine case illustrates how designation can be strategically wielded to assist an ally perceived as capable implementing a UNSC resolution against NSAGs destabilizing a third-party country. On the other hand, the case of Boko Haram suggests that designation can be unsuccessfully leveraged on a recalcitrant partner, because undermining the target was not the primary motive.

Yet, the measure had no direct impact on Ansar Dine as it seemingly did not affect trends in the FTO's attacks and capabilities. This assessment is nonetheless in line with the hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on disconnected FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

Mujahedin-e Khalq

1. FTO Background

The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, or Mujahedin-e Khalq (MeK) is a Marxist-Islamic group created in 1965 to oppose the U.S.-backed regime of the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The MeK conducted attacks in the 1970s against governmental and Western targets, including U.S. army personnel. During the Iranian Revolution, the MeK led by Massoud Rajavi supported Ayatollah Khomeini and contributed to the overthrow of the Shah.

Considering it too secular, Iran's Supreme leader subsequently banned the organization. The MeK launched a retaliatory campaign against the new government, killing hundreds of officials and civilians in the early 1980s.

Facing an intense repression, the MeK's leadership fled to Paris to organize the opposition to Khomeini, under the National Council of Resistance in Iran (NCRI). In 1983, the MeK negotiated an alliance with Saddam Hussein and sided with Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Following his expulsion from France, Rajavi relocated to Iraq with several thousands of MeK members, where the group organized multiple military raids against Iran. After the war, the MeK continued to serve the Hussein regime.⁵⁴⁰

According to many accounts, the MeK evolved from a popular organization to a cult. It lost most of its popular support inside and outside Iran because of the high number of civilians casualties resulting from its attacks and for siding with Iraq during the war. Testimonies from MeK camps in Iraq describe a mystical cult of personality for Rajavi and his wife Maryam (president of the NCRI) and numerous abuses on rank-and-file members.⁵⁴¹

Throughout the 1990s, the MeK perpetuated attacks on Iranian targets in Iran, Europe, and the United States. In parallel, the group developed the NCRI as its political wing. The NCRI directed communication and lobbying campaigns at U.S. and European parliamentarians, the United Nations, and the Iranian diaspora in Western countries. These efforts were critical in raising funds and gathering support against the Islamic Republic.⁵⁴²

MeK was designated as FTO in the initial DOS list in 1997 and NCRI was added as an alias. Officials involved in the designation process suggested that the decision was based on MeK's attacks against U.S. targets and on the U.S. willingness to improve relations with Iran after the election of President Khatami, considered as a moderate.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴⁰ Masters 2014. The MeK allegedly assisted the Iraqi forces in crushing uprisings of Shias, Kurds and Turkmens in 1991.

⁵⁴¹ Goulka et al. 2009, Clark 2007.

⁵⁴² U.S. Department of State 1994.

⁵⁴³ Kempster 1997.

Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, MeK members retrenched in Camp Ashraf surrendered to U.S. soldiers. Coalition forces determined that MeK camps did not pose a security threat and subsequently prevented the new Iraqi government from expelling MeK members to Iran. In 2004, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld determined that the status of MeK members was civilian “protected persons” under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention, instead of prisoners of war. As highlighted in a RAND report, the fact that U.S. forces were in effect protecting a designated FTO posed a major “policy conundrum.”⁵⁴⁴

The MeK contested the FTO designation five times between 1997 and 2008.⁵⁴⁵ The group officially renounced violence and set up a political platform based on democracy promotion and gender equality in Iran. It developed a well-funded network of advocates in the United States, enlisting the support of high-profile officials, such as former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton, and former New Jersey Senator Robert Torricelli (who served as a MeK lawyer). In 2005, President George W. Bush alluded to the MeK in a news conference, as he stated that Iran’s nuclear program had been revealed by a dissident group.⁵⁴⁶

The MeK was delisted in 2012 after an intense lobbying campaign. As recounted by former director of the CT bureau at DOS, Daniel Benjamin, MeK members at Camp Ashraf were at risk following the withdrawal of coalition forces, but the MeK leadership refused to let them relocate as individuals. DOS negotiated their relocation in small groups and individually in exchange for the delisting.⁵⁴⁷ In the announcement, DOS still raised concerns about the nature of the group:

⁵⁴⁴ Goulka et al. 2009.

⁵⁴⁵ Daniel 2017.

⁵⁴⁶ Clark 2007.

⁵⁴⁷ Benjamin 2016. Interview with Daniel Benjamin.

With today's actions, the Department does not overlook or forget the MEK's past acts of terrorism, including its involvement in the killing of U.S. citizens in Iran in the 1970s and an attack on U.S. soil in 1992. The department also has serious concerns about the MEK as an organization, particularly with regard to allegations of abuse committed against its own members.

The secretary's decision today took into account the MEK's public renunciation of violence, the absence of confirmed acts of terrorism by the MEK for more than a decade, and its cooperation in the peaceful closure of Camp Ashraf, its historic paramilitary base.

The United States has consistently maintained a humanitarian interest in seeking the safe, secure and humane resolution of the situation at Camp Ashraf, as well as in supporting the United Nations-led efforts to relocate eligible former Ashraf residents outside of Iraq.⁵⁴⁸

The delisting was supported by many U.S. and foreign policy officials, despite being criticized by the National Iranian American Council.⁵⁴⁹ Since then, the MeK has become a particularly influential lobby in Washington, DC.

In addition to the continued support from Rudolph Giuliani and John Bolton, who became U.S. National Security Adviser in 2018, the MeK has rallied the support of high-profile Republican and Democratic elected officials who publicly praise the group's opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The MeK reportedly provides particularly generous fees to politicians speaking at its rallies.⁵⁵⁰

2. Case values

X1: Connected

Insertion into the International Financial System: 3. First blocked assets: 2004: \$90,073. Highest 2011: \$120,488.⁵⁵¹

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons: 2.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 2 (1+1).

Size and Resources: Financial resources: 1. Membership: 0. Territorial control: 0.

X2: Strategic, no SDGT designation.

⁵⁴⁸ U.S. Department of State 2012.

⁵⁴⁹ Masters 2014.

⁵⁵⁰ Harb 2019.

⁵⁵¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury 2005. U.S. Department of the Treasury 2012.

The MeK displays values of a connected FTO (X1). The group was targeted by U.S. terrorist designations (FTO) driven by strategic motives (X2). The MeK operated internationally (United States, Europe, Iraq, and Iran) to recruit members, raise funds, and carry out attacks.

The MeK was highly integrated in the international financial system (score of 3) and relied on U.S.-linked persons to an important extent. The FTO had a financial support system based within Iranian diaspora communities in the United States and other Western countries. It used multiple nonprofit organizations and charities under various aliases to promote awareness campaign on the Iranian regime and raise funds, oftentimes with inaccurate information.⁵⁵² The MeK did not have designated SDGT members who were arrested post-designation (score of 0 for membership exposure), although there are cases of MeK members being arrested and prosecuted by U.S. federal authorities.

Even if the MeK was becoming a burden for the Hussein regime and lost consistent support by the end of the 1990s, it still benefited from safe haven, circumscribed to a few camps, and from some material support (score of 2 for state support).⁵⁵³ While the Iraqi support was declining, the MeK had other sources of annual revenue through its fundraising activities, which can be valued between \$10 and \$50 million (score of 1 for financial resources).⁵⁵⁴

The different estimates regarding MeK membership generally situate the total number of members between 5,000 and 10,000 at the turn of the century, with a majority of members based in Iraq (score of 0). The FTO did not have territorial control (score of 0)

⁵⁵² As detailed in Clark (2007: 68-75): The MeK methods included “raising funds from families of MeK members; ‘international financing operations,’ which focus on street “solicitation; what the organization refers to as ‘psychological methods;’ and activities known as ‘special financing operations.’” See also U.S. Department of State 1994. The Iranian community in the United States is the largest and wealthiest Iranian diaspora in the world.

⁵⁵³ Merat 2018.

⁵⁵⁴ Clark 2007. Goulka et al. 2009.

The U.S. terrorist designations on the MeK were strategic as they targeted an organization with a history of attacks against U.S. personnel, which was closely linked to an enemy regime, Iraq. The designations also had the foreign policy objective to improve relations with Iran.

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range, decrease in attacks in the long-term (+1000%+, -100%). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range, decrease in lethality in the long term (+5 deaths, 0 death).

FTO capabilities: no decrease in financial resources;⁵⁵⁵ change in territorial control not applicable; decrease in membership;⁵⁵⁶ decrease in weaponry; no decrease in political representation. Decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: challenge of FTO designation in court in 1997, 1999, 2003, 2004, and 2008.⁵⁵⁷ Renunciation of violence and complete interruption of attacks in 2001. No change in behavior in the short-term, change in behavior in the long-term.

3. Case analysis

The case is in line with hypothesis 2b and 3: terrorist designations on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, compared to other FTOs, all else equal; terrorist designations driven by strategic motives on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, compared to designation driven by domestic motives and other FTOs, all else equal.

As the early legal challenges suggest, MeK's leadership rapidly felt the effects of designation. In addition to diaspora funding that needed to move through the international financial system, the stigmatization of designation urged MeK leaders to take action to legitimize their organization.

⁵⁵⁵ The data is unclear. The MeK had many financial assets being frozen in the United States and Europe in the 2000s, but the fundraising effort for the lobbying campaign accelerated after 2003, bringing in wealthy Iranian American donors. Furthermore, In addition, there has been allegations of substantial funding from Saudi Arabia, but it is unclear whether such funding started before the delisting. See McGreal 2012 and Merrat 2018.

⁵⁵⁶ Following the dismantlement of Camp Ashraf, the MeK lost many members from its military branch.

⁵⁵⁷ Daniel 2017.

However, the MeK continued to perpetuate deadly attacks against Iran targets in the few years following designation. This is likely due to the dual nature of the MeK leadership. From Europe, Maryam Rajavi led the MeK's political wing, the NCRI, and focused on lobbying, resource mobilization, and normalization efforts. Massoud Rajavi led the MeK camps in Iraq and focused on organizing attacks against Iran.

The interests of the political wing seemed to have prevailed as it obtained the complete cessation of violent activities in 2001, a move considered indispensable to the success of the designation challenges.

As a result of the FTO designation, MeK members and supporters were arrested and several bank accounts related to MeK in the United States and Europe were blocked.⁵⁵⁸ Despite these hurdles, the MeK managed to sustain a vigorous fundraising to finance its lobbying campaign,⁵⁵⁹ raising questions on the application of the material support charge to politicians assisting the FTO at that time.⁵⁶⁰

The connected nature of the group exposed it to the material and social effects of designations: the FTO reduced attacks from 2001 and eventually fully terminated its operations and renounced violence. U.S. terrorist designations were therefore efficient in obtaining an end to violent activities in the long-term.

However, the impact of designations on the group's capabilities was more limited than hypothesized. The FTO was able to conduct attacks for some time after designation and to increase its fundraising efforts. The FTO's military wing was dramatically impacted by exogenous factors, namely the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq in 2003.

⁵⁵⁸ Rosenzweig 1999. Mark 2009. The European Union followed the U.S. terrorist designation in 2002.

⁵⁵⁹ McGreal 2012, Merrat 2018.

⁵⁶⁰ 18 U.S.C. sections 2339A and 2339B. See Said (2021) on the selectivity of material support prosecutions regarding the MeK.

The FTO's eventual delisting was contingent on domestic factors. The generous payment provided to politicians willing to publicly defend the group account for the significant support the MeK rapidly found in both Republican Democratic parties. The FTO's narrative played well with the neoconservative current and other proponents of an aggressive stand towards Iran. Consequently, politicians accepting MeK's payments to plead the group's cause did not risk political capital.

The delisting served a foreign policy objective, however. DOS permitted MeK members at Camp Ashraf to be able to leave the group and be relocated outside of Iraq individually or in small groups, which the MeK leadership initially opposed.

4. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Low relevance. Although the FTO was not confronted to a direct military intervention, the dismantlement of most of its military capabilities resulted from the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq. Coalition forces took control and disarmed the main MeK base of Camp Ashraf before providing protection to MeK members in the base. One of the conditions was for each member to sign a document renouncing terrorism and the use of violence. However, this episode occurred after the FTO had formally renounced violence and the group did not commit attacks between 2001 and 2003.

Ally mechanism: Medium relevance. The fact that the MeK had operations in U.S.-allied countries in Europe helped with the enforcement of terrorist designation provisions. Yet, these countries followed their own strategic imperatives regarding the implementation of designation (e.g., France, which tolerated MeK's activities to a greater extent than the United States). Obtaining delisting in the FTO list was the main motivation for MeK's renunciation of violence.

Financial adaptability: Low relevance. The MeK is coded as having low-level of financial adaptability in Jo et al.'s study, while it seems more accurate to code the FTO as having medium-level adaptability considering that it benefited from both state sponsorship from Iraq and diverse donations and business schemes in the United States and Europe. FTO designation had no impact on state sponsorship and evidence suggests that the group was able to continue fundraising.

Multilateral designations: High relevance. Following the U.S. FTO designation, both the United Kingdom and the European Union designated the MeK as a terrorist organization, increasing the social stigma and the material pressure on the group.

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna

1. FTO Background

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA, “Basque Homeland and Liberty”) was a nationalist separatist Marxist organization operating in the Basque Country, a cultural region situated in northern Spain and southwestern France. Founded in 1959 during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco in Spain, the group evolved into a paramilitary group engaged in a violent campaign of bombing, assassinations, and kidnappings.

ETA aimed to gain independence for the Basque Country and was the main actor of the Basque National Liberation Movement. Between 1968 and 2010, the FTO perpetrated around two thousand attacks, killing over eight hundred people and injuring thousands.⁵⁶¹

ETA declared several ceasefires from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s, but subsequently resumed operations. In 2010, the FTO declared a new ceasefire that remained in force. In 2011, it

⁵⁶¹ Rogelio 2011.

announced a definitive cessation of all armed activities.⁵⁶² Through the 2010s, the group attempted to negotiate its disarmament and the end of its political activities. In 2017, ETA announced a complete disarmament and provided the location of its weapons to authorities. In 2018, the FTO declared that it had completely dissolved its structures and terminated all political initiatives.⁵⁶³

The U.S. government designated ETA as a FTO in 1997. Both DOS and USDT designated dozens of ETA members in the early 2000s. Considered defunct, the group was removed from the FTO list in May 2022.⁵⁶⁴

2. Case values

X1: Connected

Insertion into the International Financial System: 0.

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons: 0.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 4. (80% arrested after designation).

State Affiliation or Support: 0 (0+0).

Size and Resources: 1 (1+0+0). Financial resources: 1. Membership: 0. Territorial control: 0.

X2: Strategic. 37 SDGT (2016).

ETA displays values of a connected FTO (X1). The group was targeted by U.S. terrorist designations (FTO and SDGT designations) driven by strategic motives (X2).

ETA was not integrated in the international financial system as per the USDT's terrorist assets reports (score of 0), although ETA members reportedly had funds frozen by the U.S. government.⁵⁶⁵ ETA did not rely on U.S.-linked persons (score of 0). ETA's designated members were exposed to arrest as 80% of members designated as SDGT were arrested post-designation (score of 4).⁵⁶⁶ ETA was not supported or affiliated to a state (score of 0).

⁵⁶² Through a video sent to the British news channel BBS. See BBC. 2011. "Basque group Eta says armed campaign is over," October 20.

⁵⁶³ Rogelio 2011.

⁵⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State 2022. The group remains designated under EO 13224.

⁵⁶⁵ Reuters. 2011. "U.S. moves to freeze assets of two ETA members," March 22.

⁵⁶⁶ Data from CTC. See Loertscher et al. 2020.

Regarding financial resources (score of 1), ETA had an estimated annual budget of \$5 million by the end of the 1990s, which fell to \$3 million by the mid-2000s. The FTO reportedly collected around \$150 million from the 1970s to the 1990s—mostly through kidnappings, but also robberies and extortion—with a peak in revenue in 1980s. Most accounts of ETA’s finances therefore assume that the FTO had reserves when its annual budget declined in the 1990s and 2000s.⁵⁶⁷

ETA’s membership oscillated between tens of militants to near a thousand (score of 0).⁵⁶⁸ The FTO did not have substantial territorial control (score of 0).

U.S. terrorist designations against ETA were mostly driven by strategic motives for several reasons. First, DOS designated ETA in the initial FTO list in 1997, at a time where most designations were less of a controversial domestic issue. Second, following Spain’s request to increase the bilateral cooperation on terrorism, the U.S. government strengthened the designation regime on ETA through numerous SDGT designation on ETA members after 2001.

These measures rewarded Spain for supporting the Bush administration’s global war on terror and military interventions abroad, especially regarding the invasion of Iraq which was a divisive issue among U.S. allies.⁵⁶⁹

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: decrease in attacks in the 3-year range and in the long term (-55%, -100%). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range, decrease in lethality in the long term (+123%, -100%).

FTO capabilities: decrease in financial resources;⁵⁷⁰ change in territorial control not applicable; decrease in membership; decrease in weaponry; decrease in political representation.⁵⁷¹ Decline in the capability index.

⁵⁶⁷ Aizpeolea 2018.

⁵⁶⁸ Rogelio 2011.

⁵⁶⁹ Jerez 2006.

⁵⁷⁰ Aizpeolea 2018. Ugarte Gastaminza et al. 2018: 162-168.

⁵⁷¹ In the 2001 elections for the Basque parliament, the radical nationalist party Euskal Herritarrok, close to ETA, lost half of its 14 seats and almost 80,000 votes, going from 17.9% in 1998 to 10.1%. The nationalist movement

FTO behavior: No challenge in court. Renunciation of violence and complete interruption of attacks in 2011. No change in behavior in the short term, change in behavior in the long term.

3. Case analysis

The case is *prima facie* in line with hypotheses 1, 2b, and 3. U.S. terrorist designations driven by strategic motives impacted the connected FTO in different ways, which led to a decrease in the FTO's attacks and capabilities in the long term. The FTO also changed its behavior as it unilaterally declared an end to violent activities and, subsequently, to all political activities. The extent and nature of the designation impacts can nevertheless be discussed.

After agreeing to designate the group in 1997 at the request of an ally, the United States demonstrated strong resolve to undermine the FTO from 2001 onwards. Following 9/11, the U.S. government made the new tools created by EO 13224 available to Spain. It designated 32 ETA members as SDGT in 2002 alone, providing intelligence and surveillance support to Spanish and French authorities. The SDGT designations were described by the Treasury Department as the "result of close cooperation with the Government of Spain and the European Union."⁵⁷²

Instead of designations only targeting the leadership, SDGT designations on ETA focused primarily on operatives (51% of designations).⁵⁷³ These designations were reported to have helped "block the flow of finances to ETA and increase the cooperation in prosecuting members of the organization in other countries."⁵⁷⁴ The U.S. government continued to monitor and sanction ETA members even after the group's substantial decline.⁵⁷⁵

tried to regain momentum with the creation of Batasuna. The new party was identified as ETA political wing and eventually made illegal in 2002. Rogelio 2008, 2011.

⁵⁷² U.S. Department of the Treasury 2002.

⁵⁷³ Loertscher et al. 2020.

⁵⁷⁴ Jerez 2006.

⁵⁷⁵ Reuters 2011.

While U.S. designations impacted the FTO—and were associated with intelligence sharing and other forms of cooperation—most accounts of the ETA decline in capabilities point out to the efforts deployed by, primarily, the Spanish government, and secondarily, the French government. These countries’ authorities adopted a multifront approach, applying pressure on ETA at the political, police, social, and judicial level. This combined action “damaged ETA’s ability to operate and also reduced its popular support and the group’s capacity to mobilize supporters and activists.”⁵⁷⁶

Most of the judicial measures were directly inspired by U.S. terrorist designation tools, particularly EO 13224, and implemented with the support of the U.S. government. The *ad hoc* terrorist designation laws passed in Spain facilitated freezing assets of designated entities and individuals. Notably, the Spanish government proscribed a network of nonprofit organizations associated to ETA, as well as its new political party, Batasuna.⁵⁷⁷ Thus, U.S. terrorist designation policies can be credited for the FTO’s decline in capabilities to a larger extent than their immediate impact in the case of ETA.

4. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Not applicable.

Ally mechanism: Medium relevance. Although Spain is a U.S. ally, the causal process at play in the ETA case differs from the causal process theorized in the ally mechanism argument. Instead of Spain enforcing U.S. terrorist designations because of its relationship with the United States, U.S. designations on ETA were made at the request of Spain to increase the pressure on a group the Spanish government had been actively combatting for decades.

⁵⁷⁶ Rogelio 2008: 208.

⁵⁷⁷ Jerez 2006, Rogelio 2008.

Further, the United States arguably agreed to assist Spain in its counterterrorism efforts because of Spain's support to the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq, not because it saw ETA has a national security threat.

Financial adaptability: Medium relevance. ETA is coded as having medium-level of financial adaptability in Jo et al.'s study, which seems accurate considering the FTO's reliance on criminal activities. The FTO did not immediately reduce attacks. The FTO's decline in capabilities was the result of a combination of factors and not only the result of financial pressure. Despite a declining budget, which started prior to the designations, ETA had ample reserves and could have continued to operate.

Multilateral designations: Medium relevance. The designations of ETA and some of its members at the European Union level contributed to ETA's decline in attacks and capabilities. Yet, U.S.-inspired *ad hoc* terrorist designations by the Spanish government proved more instrumental.

Real Irish Republican Army

1. FTO Background

The Real Irish Republican Army (Real IRA or RIRA) is a dissident Irish republican paramilitary group that has been operating since the last phase of the Troubles, the Northern Ireland conflict. The RIRA is a splinter group from the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), formed in 1997 by militants who opposed the peace negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement signed in April 1998.

The group followed a maximalist republican ideology that justified violence to achieve the reunification of the island of Ireland. The RIRA's initial goal was to prevent the negotiations taking place between most of Northern Ireland's political parties and between the British and Irish governments. The NSAG aimed to jeopardize the Good Friday Agreement and perpetrated

its most violent attacks in 1998. In the following two decades, the group conducted hundreds of smaller operations—including bombings, shootings, and kidnappings—in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and England. In 2012, the RIRA integrated smaller dissident republican groups to create the New IRA.⁵⁷⁸

The RIRA is responsible for the deadliest attack that occurred during the Northern Ireland conflict. In August 1998, its militants detonated a 500-pound car bomb in Omagh, Northern Ireland, killing 29 civilians and injuring over three hundred. After claiming the attack, the RIRA stated that all civilian deaths were accidental as the authorities had supposedly been alerted.⁵⁷⁹ Facing a major backlash in the population, the group declared a ceasefire that lasted until 2000.

DOS designated the RIRA as FTO in 2001. The DOS also designated another, smaller, PIRA splinter group in 2004, the Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA). Unlike other organizations whose designation was updated following a name change (e.g., al-Qaida in Iraq) or that were the subject a new designation following a merger (e.g., JNIM), there has not been a formal update after the creation of the New IRA.

2. Case values

X1: Connected

Insertion into the International Financial System: 0.

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons: 4.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 0 (0+0).

Size and Resources: 1. Financial resources: 1. Membership: 0. Territorial control: 0.

X2: Non-strategic. 0 SDGT members.

⁵⁷⁸ Sullivan 2018. Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. “Real Irish Republican Army.” Stanford University.

⁵⁷⁹ It appears that the R-IRA did alert the police but gave contradictory information to the police as the militants in charge of the operation did not manage to place the bomb near the courthouse, which was the intended target. Ibid.

The RIRA displays values of a connected FTO (X1). The group was targeted by a U.S. terrorist designation (FTO) driven by non-strategic, mostly domestic, motives (X2). As per the USDT's terrorist assets reports, the RIRA was not integrated in the international financial system (score of 0).

However, the group was largely reliant on U.S.-linked persons (score of 4): the United States has the largest Irish diaspora in the world and Irish republican groups have long enjoyed great financial and political support from the Irish American community (over 40 million people). Financial support to the RIRA has come through donations to nonprofit organizations, such as the Irish Northern Aid Committee, which raise millions of dollars annually in the United States.⁵⁸⁰ The RIRA and other PIRA-splinter groups have also benefited from substantial political support in the U.S. Congress and in states' governments, with vocal defenders such as Peter King (R-NY).⁵⁸¹

RIRA's membership was not exposed to arrest post-designation as no RIRA member was ever designated SDGT (score of 0).⁵⁸² According to most accounts, the RIRA was never supported or affiliated to the Republic of Ireland or any other state (score of 0). Regarding financial resources, the NSAG is estimated to have gained \$50 million from donations and smuggling deals from 1998 to 2002 (score of 1).⁵⁸³ The group's membership was estimated to be around 100-200 members between 1998 and 2008 (score of 0)⁵⁸⁴ and the FTO did not have substantial territorial control (score of 0).

⁵⁸⁰ McDonald 2002, Murphy 2011, Cotter 2016.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Data from CTC. See Loertscher et al. 2020.

⁵⁸³ McDonald 2002.

⁵⁸⁴ Mapping Militant "Real Irish Republican Army" 2018.

The FTO designation of RIRA and its implementation are inextricably linked to domestic politics and should be considered as non-strategic. As this categorization may seem controversial and can be disputed, it needs to be clearly justified.

As Irish republican groups have received substantial political and financial support from Irish Americans for decades, the question of imposing terrorist designations on the PIRA and its splinter groups has long been a conundrum for the U.S. government.

Despite the PIRA's violent and lethal activities committed on the territory of the United Kingdom—one of the United States' closest allies—this NSAG was not designated in the initial FTO list in 1997, although these designations were decided before the Good Friday Agreement. One of the main factors was the opposition of politicians from the northeast of the United States, representing large Irish constituencies.⁵⁸⁵ These politicians, along with other actors, notably argued that designation would derail peace the negotiations.⁵⁸⁶

Such considerations are understandable from a foreign policy standpoint. Yet, the U.S. government maintained its decision not to impose the FTO designation on the RIRA following the Omagh bombing, which occurred after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. This reluctance to designate the RIRA created tensions with the United Kingdom, at a time where terrorism was becoming a pressing international security issue for the United States.⁵⁸⁷

The RIRA was finally designated an FTO in 2001, easing a major point of contention in the U.S.-U.K. relationship. It is indubitable that the designation was motivated by foreign policy objectives: the U.S. government sought to please the United Kingdom by granting a long-standing request and maintain a good relationship with a crucial ally. However, the RIRA

⁵⁸⁵ Murphy 2011, Cotter 2016.

⁵⁸⁶ Cotter 2016.

⁵⁸⁷ Cronin 2011.

represents a case of non-strategic designation, as defined in this dissertation, because the U.S. government never intended to undermine the NSAG and viewed this designation as a purely symbolic measure to satisfy an ally.

Indeed, the issue remained extremely sensitive in domestic politics and implementing the provisions of the designation would have been a substantial source of problem for any U.S. administration. First, there was an immediate and significant pushback from several U.S. elected officials following designation. Notably, some congressmen pressured the executive branch to separate PIRA's splinter groups from the global war on terror and denounced a Congressional hearing on these NSAGs' illegal activities in 2002.⁵⁸⁸

More importantly, the ties between American nonprofit organizations supporting Irish republican groups—such the Irish Northern Aid Committee—and designated PIRA's splinter groups were particularly tricky to deal with. It meant that potentially hundreds of U.S. entities and millions of U.S. citizens, including prominent officials, should be prosecuted under the material support charge. The U.S. government had therefore no interest in pursuing an organization that had never threatened U.S. national security or interests and never attacked American targets.

The best evidence of the U.S. government's tacit decision not to implement the designation is the absence of any such repercussion. The RIRA is arguably the NSAG designated FTO that benefited the most from financial transfers coming from the United States, mainly through Irish American citizens and charities. Yet, the U.S. government never imposed any SDGT designation on individuals or entities associated with the RIRA or any PIRA-splinter

⁵⁸⁸ Cotter 2016.

groups, although it had many potential targets. Over the past 20 years, it also never blocked any asset or led any prosecution in relation to these NSAGs through the FTO and SDGT programs.

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: decrease in attacks in the 3-year range, no decrease in attacks in the long term (-31%, +115%). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range and in the long term (1 death, 1 death).⁵⁸⁹

FTO capabilities: no decrease in financial resources,⁵⁹⁰ territorial control not applicable; no decrease in membership;⁵⁹¹ no decrease in weaponry; no decrease in political representation.⁵⁹² No decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: No challenge in court or renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

3. Case analysis

The case is *prima facie* in line with hypothesis 1. U.S. terrorist designations mostly driven by non-strategic motives had little impact on the RIRA and did not result in a decrease in the FTO attacks and capabilities in the long term. There was a slight decrease in attacks in the 3-year range, which is more accurately explained by the fact that the RIRA declared an unconditional ceasefire following the backlash of the 1998 Omagh bombing, and only gradually resumed violent activities.

Indeed, both the FTO's attacks and capabilities have increased since designation.

Because of domestic factors, the FTO designation of the RIRA was a non-strategic measure, and it appears that most provisions of designation were never implemented against the group.

⁵⁸⁹ The RIRA did not conduct any lethal attacks for three years following the Omagh bombing. Since then, the FTO has tried not to kill civilians in its attacks. Because the comparison is between the three years leading to FTO designation, including the designation year, the data does not include the Omagh bombing, hence the "no decrease" assessment.

⁵⁹⁰ By the 2010s, the RIRA was considered as one the wealthiest "terror organizations" in the world by Forbes, with \$50 million in annual revenues. See Zehorai 2018.

⁵⁹¹ Mapping Militant "Real Irish Republican Army" 2018. While membership was estimated at around 100-200 members between 1998 and 2008, membership of the New IRA is in the several hundred.

⁵⁹² The 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM) has been described as the political wing of the RIRA. It does not usually contest in elections but acts as a pressure group, with branches organized throughout the counties of Ireland. However, in 2014, 32CSM was elected to the Derry and Strabane super council. In the 2010s, delegations of 32CSM members have planned speaking tours in North America.

DOS and USDT never designated members of the RIRA as SDGT, while some of these individuals had long been identified by U.K. security services. Furthermore, there is no instance of arrests, prosecutions, or blocked assets on any RIRA's members or entities. This may seem surprising considering the density of links between U.S. persons and the FTO, and the inevitable use of the international financial system to channel U.S. donations.

However, the reluctance to enforce sanctions on the FTO beyond the symbol of designation is explained by the fact that the U.S. government has not wanted to incriminate potentially millions of U.S. citizens, including federal elected officials. Furthermore, prominent American politicians communicated extensively to dissociate the activities of the RIRA with international terrorism post-9/11. Consequently, the material and social effects of U.S. terrorist designations marginally, if at all, impacted the FTO.

4. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Not applicable.

Ally mechanism: Low relevance. The group was designed as FTO because of the close relationship with the United Kingdom but designation tools were not implemented and did not result in a decrease in FTO's attacks and capabilities.

Financial adaptability: Medium relevance. The RIRA is coded as having low-level of financial adaptability in Jo et al.'s study—which seems inaccurate considering the mix of donations and criminal activities in the FTO's portfolio—and is considered as having decreased attacks using the 3-year range. In fact, the FTO probably benefited from having medium/high-level adaptability to increase capabilities in late 2000s and 2010s. Again, the fact that the RIRA has not faced the scrutiny of U.S. authorities regarding its financial transactions facilitated this trend.

Multilateral designations: Low relevance. Despite dual U.K. and U.S. designations, the FTO did not experience a decline in capabilities.

Most similar cross-case comparison of ETA and RIRA

ETA and the RIRA are most similar cases for several reasons. Both FTOs are violent independentist groups in Western Europe and were active in the 1990s and 2000s. These FTOs were confronted with police actions but did not face military interventions. They both operated in a U.S. ally country and they both faced multilateral designations. In terms of financial adaptability, ETA can be considered as having medium-level adaptability and RIRA can be considered as having medium to high-level adaptability.

This most similar cross-case comparison is relevant to test hypothesis 1: terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by non-strategic motives, all else equal.

The cross-case comparison is in line with this hypothesis: U.S. designations driven by strategic motives were vigorously implemented against ETA and participated in the FTO's decrease in attacks and capabilities. Further, the criminalization of ETA's political ventures and overall stigmatization resulted in the FTO's legitimacy decline and led to a unilateral renunciation of violence and political activities.

On the other hand, the FTO designation of the RIRA and its implementation were mostly driven by non-strategic consideration, because of the high sensitivity of the issue in U.S. domestic politics. Designation was repeatedly delayed and reluctantly adopted, even though the FTO operated in the territory of a close U.S. ally.

The tacit decision not to implement most provisions of U.S. terrorist designations was consequential, resulting in marginal impacts on the RIRA and reflecting an unwillingness to actively undermine the FTO. Consequently, this NSAG was able to steadily increase capabilities

and became one of the wealthiest NSAGs in the world. The RIRA also ramped up attacks in the 2010s.

Hezbollah

1. FTO Background

Hezbollah (“Party of God”) is a Lebanese Shia Islamist armed group and political party. Formed in the early 1980s, Hezbollah has evolved from a militant group into a hybrid organization that provides social services and participates in politics, while also conducting international attacks and military operations. The organization is led by Hassan Nasrallah, its secretary-general since 1992, and has a military branch and a political branch: the Jihad Council and the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc party, respectively.⁵⁹³

Having a history of attacks against U.S. targets and U.S. allies, Hezbollah has long been considered as an enemy organization by the U.S. government. The group was designated as FTO in the initial DOS list in 1997 and has been the target of multiple SDGT designations in the 2000s and 2010s.

Hezbollah was created in South Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) by Shias clerics and militia who broke away from the aging Amal Movement. From its early beginnings, the group received substantial support from Iran, which provided training, weapons, and funding. Syria was a strong backer of the rival Amal Movement but also became a source of support to Hezbollah, once the FTO became the main Shia organization in Lebanon.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ Daher 2019.

⁵⁹⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations. 2016. “Hezbollah.” Stanford University.

During the civil war, Hezbollah attacked U.S. and French forces (notably in 1983 with the Beirut barracks bombing),⁵⁹⁵ Christian militias such as the South Lebanon Army, and Israeli forces.⁵⁹⁶ From its inception, the group's primary focus was to end Israel's occupation of Lebanon. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and besieged Beirut to eliminate the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) presence. Following a series of military and political developments,⁵⁹⁷ Israel withdrew to South Lebanon and occupied the territories claimed by an allied Christian militia. Hezbollah conducted an asymmetric warfare against Israel, notably using suicide bombings against Israeli forces and other targets outside of Lebanon.⁵⁹⁸

Thanks to the Taif Agreement that ended the civil war in 1989, Hezbollah was able to join Lebanese politics as an official party and participated in national elections in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2009, 2018, and 2022. The organization consistently gained representation in the Lebanese Parliament—from 8 seats out of 128 (6%) in 1992 to 15 (12%) in 2022—and has had two members occupying ministerial positions in all the governmental coalitions since 2005.

In parallel, Hezbollah has provided diverse social services to Shia populations in South Lebanon, Beirut, and the Baalbek region. Investing in projects ranging from infrastructure to health care and education, the group established itself as a reliable provider. Furthermore, Hezbollah's political wing worked on image and communication, notably by presenting itself as an anti-corruption party and by showing an ability to compromise while in government. These actions contributed to the group's popularity in the Shia community.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁵ The attack killed over 300 U.S. marines and French soldiers. A group named the "Islamic Jihad Organization" claimed responsibility. Following an investigation, the U.S. government stated that the group was linked to the nascent Hezbollah's, backed by Iran and Syria.

⁵⁹⁶ Pape 2006.

⁵⁹⁷ Such assassination of Bachir Gemayel, the public outrage resulting from the Sabra and Shatila massacre, and the U.S.-brokered May 17 Agreement.

⁵⁹⁸ Making it one of the first Islamic groups in the Middle East to use suicide bombings as a tactic, in addition to assassinations, kidnappings, hijacking, and conventional military tactics. Pape 2005.

⁵⁹⁹ Daher 2019.

As Hezbollah became more inserted in Lebanese politics, the organization continued to fight Israeli forces and developed into a significant military actor in the Middle East. In 2000, Hezbollah's protracted asymmetric conflict with Israel was largely credited for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from South Lebanon. The confrontation carried over in 2000–2006 with the Shebaa Farms low-intensity conflict.⁶⁰⁰

In 2006, a full-blown war broke out between Hezbollah and Israel after the FTO led a cross-border raid, kidnapping two Israeli soldiers, and killing eight others. The conflict, which lasted over a month, ended after the approval of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 and a U.N.-brokered cease-fire: it resulted in 165 Israeli deaths (including 45 civilians) and 1,125 Lebanese deaths (including over 800 civilians).⁶⁰¹

In Israel, a governmental commission deemed the intervention as unsuccessful and pointed out leadership failures. In Lebanon, Hezbollah politically benefitted from the conflict outcome,⁶⁰² although the Lebanese government and the Arab league—including the Palestinian Authority—had blamed the FTO for igniting it.⁶⁰³

In coordination with Tehran, Hezbollah became increasingly active at a regional level from the early 2000s. The FTO has provided training to Shia militias in Iraq since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. It participated in furthering Iran's influence over Iraqi politics, supported anti-American groups that were involved in attacks on U.S. forces, and also contributed to the regional fight against the Islamic State.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁰ Mapping Militant “Hezbollah” 2016.

⁶⁰¹ Mapping Militant “Hezbollah” 2016.

⁶⁰² Daher 2019.

⁶⁰³ Haaretz 2006.

⁶⁰⁴ Mapping Militant “Hezbollah” 2016.

In the 2010s, Hezbollah sent military advisors to Syria to help the Assad government withstand a precarious position in the civil war, and to Yemen to support the Houthis. From 2013, the FTO started deploying combat forces in Syria to back the Assad regime: despite heavy casualties, Hezbollah's troops played a key role in the regime's territorial reconquest.⁶⁰⁵

Despite a reduction of operations against Israel as a result of the war in Syria, the FTO was deemed responsible for a suicide bombing on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria in 2012. This attack on European soil as well as the organization's involvement with the Assad regime led the European Union to designate Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist organization in 2013.⁶⁰⁶ In addition, the U.S. government stepped up its pressure on the FTO from the late 2000s onwards, designating numerous Hezbollah members and affiliates linked to financing and operations as SDGT in 2006, 2013, 2015, and 2016.⁶⁰⁷

In 2015, the U.S. Congress also passed the "Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act" to impose sanctions on foreign financial institutions that process Hezbollah's transactions in the international financial system.⁶⁰⁸ Further, the Trump administration designated over fifty Hezbollah's individuals and entities under EO 13224 from 2017 to 2021, including members of the Lebanese Parliament.⁶⁰⁹

In 2021, the Biden administration pursued the crack down on Hezbollah's financing by designating individuals and entities affiliated to a network of "Lebanon- and Kuwait-based financial conduits that fund Hezbollah," also under EO 13224.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Robinson 2022.

⁶⁰⁷ Loertscher et al. 2020.

⁶⁰⁸ Robinson 2022.

⁶⁰⁹ U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2019. "Treasury Targets Iranian-Backed Hizballah Officials for Exploiting Lebanon's Political and Financial System" July 9.

⁶¹⁰ U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2021. "Treasury Sanctions International Financial Networks Supporting Terrorism." September 15.

2. Case values

X1: Established

Insertion into the International Financial System: 4 First, 2006: \$108,176. Highest 2020: \$22,912,674.

Reliance on U.S.-linked persons: 2.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 1.

State Affiliation or Support: 2 (0+2).

Size and Resources: 4. Financial resources: 2. Membership: 1. Territorial control: 1.

X2: Strategic. 57 SDGT (2016). Peak: 9 in 2006, 13 in 2015.

Hezbollah displays values of an established FTO (X1) with points of vulnerability associated to connected FTOs. The group was targeted by U.S. terrorist designations driven by strategic motives (X2).

Hezbollah has been highly integrated in the international financial system (score of 4) and relied on U.S.-linked persons to a certain extent (score of 1). Notably, Hezbollah has benefitted from rich donors, charities, and criminal activities in the United States.⁶¹¹ Hezbollah has had slightly over 20% of designated SDGT members who were arrested post-designation (score of 1 for membership exposure).

Most of Hezbollah's financial and material support come from Iran, which has provided over \$100 million to the FTO annually since the 1990s (score of 2 for state support),⁶¹² with a peak of \$700 million in the late 2010s.⁶¹³ In addition to this substantial financial support, Hezbollah has various criminal and legal activities that generate revenues, making it one of the wealthiest FTO in the world (score of 2 for financial resources).⁶¹⁴

Despite a statement from Hassan Nasrallah in 2021 claiming that Hezbollah had 100,000 trained fighters—a figure that was immediately disputed⁶¹⁵—Hezbollah has long been discreet

⁶¹¹ Levitt 2007. Fanusie and Entz 2017b.

⁶¹² Fanusie and Entz 2017b.

⁶¹³ U.S. Department of State 2020.

⁶¹⁴ Fanusie and Entz 2017b. Zehorai 2018.

⁶¹⁵ AFP 2021.

about its manpower and membership estimates vary. It is nevertheless generally accepted that the FTO has had over 10,000 members since the 1990s (score of 1).⁶¹⁶ The FTO also had territorial control (score of 1).

The U.S. terrorist designations on Hezbollah have been strategic since they targeted a rising political and military organization supported by an antagonist state, Iran; that was directly involved in the deaths of U.S. soldiers and kidnapping of U.S. officials; and that has been in direct confrontation with a U.S. close ally, Israel. However, it can be noted that domestic factors also played a role in these designations. Pro-Israel groups in U.S. politics, such as the neoconservatives, have generally advocated for terrorist designations on all NSAGs confronting Israel in the Middle East and for a particularly strong stance against Hezbollah.

U.S. designations have been reactive to Hezbollah's activities in relation to U.S. foreign policy: the U.S. government increased SDGT designations in 2006, following the conflict with Israel, and in the 2010s, as the FTO became a major support to the Assad regime. SDGT designations for Hezbollah members and affiliated individuals have primarily targeted financiers (56% according to CTC data), suggesting a consistent goal to constrain the FTO's activities.⁶¹⁷

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range, decrease in attacks in the long term (+192%, -58%). no decrease in lethality in the 3-year range, decrease in lethality in the long term (+290%, -70%).

FTO capabilities: no decrease in financial resources; no decrease in territorial control;⁶¹⁸ no decrease in membership;⁶¹⁹ no decrease in weaponry; no decrease in political representation. No decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: No challenge in court. No change in behavior.

⁶¹⁶ Daher 2019.

⁶¹⁷ Loertscher et al 2020: 57.

⁶¹⁸ Humud 2021. Blanford and Spyer 2017.

⁶¹⁹ 25,000 full-time fighters and 30,000 reservists. Blanford and Spyer 2017.

3. Analysis

The case prima facie does not fully support hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

While Hezbollah's attacks increased in the 3-year range, they decreased in the long term, as captured by GTD data. However, Hezbollah's capabilities have consistently increased on all the components of the capabilities index since designation.

In fact, Hezbollah has been able to conduct military operations comparable to states' operations in different parts of the Middle East, deploy military advisors that support NSAGs attacking U.S. troops or U.S. allies, and has become the most powerful actor in Lebanese politics.

Therefore, it is unsound to argue that terrorist designations have substantially undermined the FTO. On the contrary, Hezbollah has become too important and powerful to focus its efforts on attacks, as a tactic of asymmetric warfare used by smaller NSAGs. Hezbollah's military operations over the past fifteen years resemble those of a state and are therefore not captured accurately in databases counting NSAGs' attacks. The long-term decrease in attacks here actually illustrate the FTO's size and status enhancement.

Under these considerations, and using the capabilities index as the relevant measure for the dependent variable, the case provides strong support for hypothesis 2a.

4. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Low relevance. Multiple military interventions did not manage to reduce Hezbollah's capabilities and the process-tracing analysis suggest that they cannot be credited for the reduction of attacks in the long term.

Ally mechanism: Medium relevance. Lebanon is not a U.S. ally from Phillips' measures and terrorist designations did not result in Hezbollah's reduction in attacks and capabilities. However, the Lebanese government attempted to implement certain provisions of U.S. terrorist designations, showing a willingness to align with the U.S. government. These measures impeded certain Hezbollah's members and resulted in domestic political tensions, underlying the link between alliances and designation enforcement.

Financial adaptability: Medium relevance. Hezbollah is coded as having medium-level of financial adaptability in Jo et al.'s study. The mix of state support, legal businesses, and criminal activities that composed the FTO's financial portfolio suggest a high-level of financial adaptability according to the authors' criteria. Hezbollah decreased attacks in the long-term but arguably became more powerful as an organization. Hezbollah's budget is nevertheless dependent on Iran's support. In this perspective, financial adaptability offers some insight on the relation with FTOs' power but does not provide the best lens to understand the case.

Multilateral designations: Medium relevance. While Hezbollah as a whole was designated FTO by the U.S. government in 1997, its designation status has been less straightforward in other countries and international organizations. The European Union only designates Hezbollah's military branch, the Jihad Council, as a terrorist organization, and so did the United Kingdom until 2019, when it extended the terrorist designation to the entire organization. Different parties in the European Parliament are advocating for a full designation to disrupt Hezbollah's donation networks in Europe. Hezbollah's communication suggests that the FTO is concerned about this issue, seemingly more because of the legitimacy damage than the material effects.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

1. FTO Background

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, Persian: *Sepāh-e Pāsdārān-e Enqelāb-e Eslāmi*, also called Pasdaran or the Guards) is a branch of the Iranian Armed Forces. It was founded in 1979 in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution by Ayatollah Khomeini, the Supreme leader of the newly installed Islamic regime. The creation of the IRGC aimed to unify and organize the revolutionary paramilitary forces as a permanent military institution in parallel to the Iran army, which was mistrusted for its role in the 1953 coup d'état and its proximity to the Shah Pahlavi.⁶²⁰

Enshrined in the Islamic Republic's constitution in 1980, the IRGC responds directly to the Supreme leader, bypassing the president and parliament.⁶²¹ The Guards are responsible for protecting the political system and tasked with thwarting foreign interference, military coups, and domestic dissident movements. The IRGC became Iran's dominant military force during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and adopted a conventional military command structure.⁶²² The Guards possess their own army, navy, air force, intelligence service, and a special operation unit known as the Quds Force (IRGC-QF).⁶²³

The IRGC has been central in the proxy conflicts between Iran and Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. It has conducted diverse international operations since its creation, notably providing military and logistical support to multiple NSAGs in the Middle East⁶²⁴ and to the Assad regime. According to the U.S. government, the IRGC has been implicated in the Beirut

⁶²⁰ Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018.

⁶²¹ CFR 2020.

⁶²² CFR 2019.

⁶²³ Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018.

⁶²⁴ In Iraq (multiple Shia militias), Lebanon (Hezbollah), Yemen (the Houthis), and the Palestinian territories (Hamas and other groups).

barracks bombing in 1983, in numerous attacks against U.S. troops in Iraq since 2003, and in the assassinations of opponents to Iran’s regime abroad.⁶²⁵

At the domestic level, the IRGC became increasingly powerful politically and economically. The IRGC benefited from the consistent support of Iran’s Supreme leaders—Ayatollah Khomeini and his successor Ayatollah Khamenei—and capitalized on the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013), a former member. Over the past decades, the IRGC has received large government contracts and loans, and numerous former IRGC officers have obtained senior governmental positions. Consequently, the Guards control major sectors of the Iranian economy, from oil to infrastructure.

In 2019, the U.S. government designated the IRGC as FTO, marking the first time such tool was targeted at a state entity.⁶²⁶ The decision was part of the Trump administration’s “maximum pressure campaign” on Iran that followed the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement negotiated under the Obama administration to curb Iran’s nuclear program. The campaign included an array of sanctions on designated Iranian officials, governmental institutions (including Iran’s central bank), and businesses.

While unprecedented, these measures followed decades of sanctions related to Iran’s support of NSAGs in the Middle East and nuclear proliferation issues. Indeed, Iran has been designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism since 1984. In the 1990s, several executive orders and the Iran–Libya Sanctions Act (renamed Iran Sanction Act in 2006) aimed to restrain Iran’s strategic power, by barring trade and investments in key economic sectors.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁵ CFR 2019.

⁶²⁶ U.S. Department of State 2019b.

⁶²⁷ Katzman 2022.

In the 2000s, the Iran Nonproliferation Act and additional executive orders targeted all persons linked to Iran's nuclear and weapons of mass destruction programs.⁶²⁸ In 2007, the IRGC-QF was designated as SDGT in parallel to EO 13382, "Blocking Property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and their Supporters," which notably listed the IRGC, the Ministry of Defense, and several Iranian banks.⁶²⁹ The entire IRGC was designated as SDGT in 2017.⁶³⁰

Between 2007 and the signing of the JCPOA in 2015, the U.S. government designated 17 IRGC-QF officers as SDGT, with peaks in designations in 2010, 2012, and 2014. These designations notably aimed to persuade third parties in the international financial system to terminate business relationships with a range of Iranian actors. In 2015, the Treasury Department blocked over \$14 million in accounts linked to the IRGC-QF, a figure that has stayed stable until 2019, when it fell to \$1.1 million.⁶³¹

2. Case values

X1: Established

Insertion into the International Financial System: 4 First: 2015: \$14,109,469. Highest 2018: \$14,989,761.

Reliance on U.S.-linked persons: 0.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 0.

State Affiliation or Support: 2 (2+2).

Size and Resources: Financial resources: 2. Membership: 1. Territorial control: 1.

X2: Non-strategic. 17 SDGT (2016) peak: 4 in 2010, 2012, 2014. Only 2 before 2010.

The IRGC displays values of an established FTO and is in fact a state entity, part of a sovereign and recognized state member of the United Nations. The entity was targeted by U.S.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Loertscher et al. 2020.

⁶³⁰ U.S. Department of the Treasury 2017.

⁶³¹ While not disclosed in the Terrorist Assets Report, some of the funds may have been used to compensate the family of U.S. citizens who have been allegedly killed by Iran, such as FBI agent Robert Levinson.

terrorist designations driven by strategic (SDGT designations) and non-strategic (FTO designation) motives (X2).

The IRGC has been highly integrated in the international financial system (score of 4) and did not rely on U.S.-linked persons (score of 0). No IRGC's officer designated as SDGT has ever been arrested post-designation (score of 0 for membership exposure).

Since the IRGC is part of the armed forces of a state, it has the maximum score for state support (score of 4). In addition to its weight in Iran's economy, the IRGC had a budget of around \$7 billion at the end of the 2010s (score of 2 for financial resources).⁶³² It had 190,000 active personnel (score of 1 for membership) and territorial control (score of 1).⁶³³

While the IRGC has been targeted by both strategic and non-strategic U.S. terrorist designations, the case study focuses on the non-strategic FTO designation from 2019. This permits to use the IRGC as a most similar case to be compared with other established FTOs targeted by strategic designations.

The FTO designation of the IRGC was mostly non-strategic since the state entity was already heavily sanctioned and designated under multiple statutes that covered all the provisions of the FTO statute. This designation was therefore superfluous. As part of the Iranian state, the IRGC was targeted by the State Sponsors of Terrorism designation. It was designated as SDGT (IRGC-QF in 2007 and the entire IRGC in 2017) and added to the SDN list in 2007. It was also designated under several executive orders in relation to nuclear proliferation and human rights abuses.

The FTO designation of a state entity attracted a lot of media attention and pleased domestic constituents (e.g., the Christian right, neoconservatives, right-wing pro-Israel groups,

⁶³² Rome 2020.

⁶³³ IISS 2020.

and some components of the Iranian diaspora) supporting the maximum pressure campaign against Iran. The designation also had a foreign policy component, as its symbolism was well-received by certain U.S. allies whose leadership was close to the Trump administration at the time, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia.⁶³⁴ However, the designation did not bring new allies as part of the coalition against Iran. Considering the lack of strategic impact on the entity and several potential drawbacks, the FTO designation was opposed by high-level officials in the Trump administration.⁶³⁵

The Biden administration's decision to maintain the FTO designation is also linked to non-strategic domestic factors, even if policymakers in this administration opposed the designation in the first place and are leading indirect talks with Iran to revive the JCPOA. As noted by former officials of the DOS CT bureau, "as the 2022 midterm elections approach, the removal of the Revolutionary Guard from the terrorist list would surely be wielded as a cudgel against Democrats."⁶³⁶

The situation once again illustrates that removing or opposing terrorist designations has substantial political costs at the domestic level.

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no attack and lethality data.

FTO capabilities: no decrease in financial resources; no decrease in territorial control; no decrease in membership; no decrease in weaponry; no decrease in political representation. No decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: No challenge in court, no renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

⁶³⁴ Notably, the timing of the announcement aimed at giving Prime Minister Netanyahu a boost in a tight re-election campaign. Wong and Schmitt 2019.

⁶³⁵ DeYoung 2017.

⁶³⁶ Benjamin and Blazakis 2022.

3. Analysis

The case is *prima facie* in line with hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

There has been no change in IRGC's capability index since the FTO designation. While attack and lethality data are not available, anecdotal evidence suggests that IRGC has increased its activity in the Middle East since the FTO designation.

4. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: Non applicable.

Ally mechanism: Non applicable. Since the host state and the FTO are the same entity, the theory does not apply.

Financial adaptability: Medium relevance. While the theory is not suited to state actors, states' high level of financial adaptability, in comparison to NSAGs, provides one explanation as to why such designations have a very limited impact on state entities.

Multilateral designations: Low relevance. While the sanction regime on Iran preceding the JCPOA involved numerous actors, including the U.N. Security Council and E.U. members, the United States has been isolated in the imposition of these types of designations on the IRGC. However, it is doubtful that similar designations from the European Union or allied countries would maximize a non-existent material impact.

Most similar cross-case comparison of Hezbollah and IRGC

Hezbollah and IRGC are most similar cases for several reasons. In the population of designated FTOs, Hezbollah and IRGC are the most integrated in the institutions of sovereign states. These organizations respond to Shia authorities, operate in the Middle East, and are strategic allies. The IRGC is fully part of the Iranian military and possesses all components of

conventional armed forces. Although Hezbollah cannot claim similar capabilities, the FTO has a standing army that is allegedly more powerful than the Lebanese military.

Regarding the control variables, IRGC has not faced a military intervention aimed at eliminating the group per se, while Hezbollah was confronted to a major Israeli military intervention in 2006. Notably due to their quasi-state nature, both FTOs can be considered as having high level of financial adaptability and both operated in a non-U.S. ally.

Regarding terrorist designations, both organizations have had an equivocal status. None of them is designated in the U.N. Security Council consolidated list and no other states or international organizations has designated IRGC as a terrorist group.

Hezbollah's designation regime has also been controversial, with several states and international organizations listing Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist group but considering its political wing as a legitimate political organization (e.g., the European Union and its members). The entire group is nonetheless designated by the United States and the United Kingdom.

This most similar cross-case comparison is relevant to test hypothesis 1: terrorist designation policies driven by strategic motives decrease FTOs' attacks and capabilities, compared to policies driven by symbolic motives, all else equal.

The cross-case comparison *prima facie* does not confirm this hypothesis as these FTOs did not experience a decline in capabilities and did not change behavior because of terrorist designations. This assessment is nonetheless in line with the hypothesis 2a: terrorist designations on established FTOs do not decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal.

However, several differences can be noted in terms of impact. As Hezbollah is more reliant on U.S.-linked persons for its resources, the accumulation of designations has been more consequential for Hezbollah's members and financial support infrastructure.

For instance, Kassim Tajideen, a Lebanese businessman designated SDGT for its support for Hezbollah, was arrested in Morocco and extradited to the United States in 2017. In 2018, he was convicted for conducting major transactions through the U.S. financial system.⁶³⁷ Another example is Iman Kobeissi, arrested in 2015 "on money laundering and arms trafficking charges associated with Hezbollah."⁶³⁸

As U.S. regulations target third parties dealing with Hezbollah, the FTO's finances were also put under pressure when the Lebanese Central Bank governor enjoined financial institutions to enforce sanctions in order to maintain access to the U.S. financial system in 2016. As a result, Lebanese banks froze funds and closed multiple accounts of entities linked to Hezbollah.

Hassan Nasrallah and Hezbollah's representatives in the Lebanese strongly condemned the Central Bank and banks cooperating with the enforcement of sanctions. The Banque du Liban et d'Outre-Mer (BLOM), which had been identified as a politically motivated and overzealous enforcer by Hezbollah's media outlet, was even the target of a bombing against its headquarters in Beirut in 2016.⁶³⁹

By contrast, the FTO designation of IRGC did not result in added pressure on financial institutions linked to the organization. Based on these elements, this cross-case comparison provides a weak support to hypothesis 1.

⁶³⁷ He pleaded guilty for conducting more than \$50 million in transactions with U.S. businesses and allegedly moved more than \$1 billion through the U.S. financial system. Although Tajideen pleaded guilty to violations of OFAC regulations, he did not plead guilty to supporting Hezbollah and continues to deny any affiliation with the group. Loertscher et al. 2020: 72.

⁶³⁸ Ibid: 87.

⁶³⁹ Ibid: 87-88.

Al-Qaida Central

1. FTO Background

The case of al-Qaida Central (AQC) is examined for its intrinsic importance.⁶⁴⁰ Indeed, most of the counterterrorism efforts post-9/11 have been directed at AQC, the NSAG responsible for the deadliest foreign assault ever on U.S. soil. Indeed, the terrorist designation tools developed in the aftermath of 9/11—notably EO 13224 that focused on the financing of terrorism and created the SDGT list—were primarily targeted at AQC.⁶⁴¹ In 1999, the group had already been designated an FTO by the DOS and targeted by the first U.N. Security Council terrorist designations ever, following attacks on U.S. embassies in East Africa.

AQC is a distinctive NSAG in the landscape of FTOs. On one hand, AQC developed as a global organization with an exceptional ideological aura that inspired the Salafi jihadist movement around the world, and which is responsible for the most lethal and resounding terrorist attacks of the past decades. On the other hand, AQC has remained relatively small from an operational perspective, with a limited core membership, funding, and weaponry. AQC's strengths and weaknesses as a terrorist group have been attributed to its peculiar structure, which has evolved over time.⁶⁴²

AQC's development can be analyzed through five different periods. The first period starts in the 1980s, when Osama bin Ladin joined the mujahideen fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.⁶⁴³ Member of a wealthy Saudi family, Osama bin Laden gained importance in the

⁶⁴⁰ Gerring and Cojocaru 2016.

⁶⁴¹ See Zarate 2013.

⁶⁴² Kalher 2009, Mendelsohn 2016.

⁶⁴³ Kahler 2009.

movement by providing funds and began organizing his own jihadist group following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989.⁶⁴⁴

The second period covers AQC's move to Sudan (1990-1996), where it became "a formal organization with a small central staff," developed connections with other jihadist groups, and supported nascent jihadist cells with "small-scale seed money and training."⁶⁴⁵ During this time, AQC began formulating its Salafi jihadist ideology and strategy, shifting its focus from secular regimes in the Middle East perceived as anti-Muslim to the "far enemy," the West in general and the United States in particular.

Meanwhile, Sudan faced increasing international pressure to stop harboring jihadists, notably after the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995, supported by AQC. Persona non grata in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden was forced to relocate his group to Afghanistan in 1996, marking the beginning of the third period (1996-2001).⁶⁴⁶ Despite financial challenges and a lukewarm host—the Taliban reportedly charged AQC \$10-20 million per year for shelter⁶⁴⁷ and regularly pressured bin Laden not to draw international attention—the NSAG developed major operations during this period.

Between 1996 and 1998, bin Laden formally launched and heavily publicized a holy war against the United States and its Western allies. Thanks to the close cooperation—and eventually the informal merger—with Ayman al-Zawahiri's section of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, AQC raised funds and managed to train thousands of jihadist fighters in its camps in Afghanistan.

⁶⁴⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations. 2019. "Al Qaida." Stanford University. Kahler 2009.

⁶⁴⁵ Kahler 2009: 107.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ 9/11 Commission Report 2004: 171.

While AQC collaborated with different groups in the Salafi jihadist movement, it restricted access to its core membership.⁶⁴⁸

In 1998, AQC directly attacked the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing hundreds and injuring thousands of people. In 2000, it targeted the destroyer USS Cole, killing 17 sailors. In 2001, AQC's 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington D.C. killed near three thousand people and injured over five thousand. In reaction, a U.S.-led military coalition intervened in Afghanistan to confront al-Qaida and remove their Taliban host from power.

According to some accounts, the goal of 9/11 was to provoke the U.S. invasion to draw the United States into a long and draining war in Afghanistan.⁶⁴⁹ Others argue that bin Laden never anticipated the U.S. response to 9/11 and his lack of strategic acumen precipitated AQC's decline.⁶⁵⁰

The fourth period, from 2001 to 2011, is characterized by the destruction of AQC's infrastructure in Afghanistan and the increasing pressure on the FTO's finances, leadership, members, and operations, culminating with the killing of bin Laden in Pakistan in May 2011. AQC claimed major terrorist attacks in Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia during those years, but these attacks oftentimes were the product of loosely affiliated groups and did not involve al-Qaida's core members.⁶⁵¹

AQC's strategy post 9/11 has been described as focusing on inspiring and endorsing potential affiliates and "lone wolfs" to launch terrorist attacks in Western or Western-aligned countries.⁶⁵² In fact, Mendelsohn argues that this franchising strategy was a reflection of AQC's

⁶⁴⁸ 9/11 Commission Report 2004. Mapping Militant Organizations "Al Qaida" 2019.

⁶⁴⁹ E.g., Riedel 2010.

⁶⁵⁰ E.g., Mendelsohn 2016.

⁶⁵¹ Mapping Militant Organizations "Al Qaida" 2019.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

increasingly fragile position. He finds that the expansion of the “al-Qaida franchise” was overall harmful to AQC, notably because the affiliates able to sustain substantial capabilities and launch recurring operations focused on local objectives that regularly contradicted AQC’s strategy of a global jihad against the West.⁶⁵³

The last period (2011 to 2022) starts with the death of bin Laden and ends with the death of his successor al-Zawahiri, killed in a U.S. drone strike in Kabul in August 2022. This period is characterized by the failing leadership of al-Zawahiri and the dismemberment of part of the AQC’s network, which sometimes led to a frontal confrontation with former affiliates. The GDT does not record any lethal attacks from al-Qaida during this period, although some analyses count the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in Paris as AQC’s doing because of the alleged links between one of the perpetrators and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.⁶⁵⁴

As described in Chapter 4, the death of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri’s lack of legitimacy to lead the Salafi jihadist movement empowered the Islamic State to break away from al-Qaida and split the movement into two rival factions at the international level. Mendelsohn finds that most AQC’s affiliates “contributed little to the group’s operational strength and reputation,” while other affiliates such as the Islamic State “inflicted real damage” to the FTO.⁶⁵⁵

Certain affiliates, such as AQIM, proved more reliable than others to contain defections to the Islamic State, but did not advance AQC’s strategic agenda beyond the name recognition and a symbolic presence in new arenas. Thus, while franchising did not cause the FTO’s challenges, the multiplication of affiliates likely did not reflect an increase in AQC’s capabilities but an attempt to remain relevant in a considerably deteriorated environment.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ Mendelsohn 2016.

⁶⁵⁴ Hoffman 2018. Mapping Militant Organizations “Al Qaida” 2019.

⁶⁵⁵ Mendelsohn 2016: 201.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

The threat that AQC represents for U.S. national security and interests is still debated and U.S. officials are mindful to not underestimate it.⁶⁵⁷ Experts maintaining that AQC is still a major international security issue ground their analyses on the geographic expansion of AQC's affiliates, the relative successes of a few affiliates, and the fact that certain affiliates remained loyal to the FTO during the rise of the Islamic State.⁶⁵⁸ The Taliban's reconquest of Afghanistan and the presence of al- Zawahiri in Kabul at the time of his killing are also used as evidence that AQC's long-term strategy has been pertinent.⁶⁵⁹

Other experts emphasize that AQC's leadership has had little to no control over its loyal affiliates' strategic orientations and behavior, which have mostly reflected local objectives and have not helped the FTO's global jihad agenda against the "far enemy." They underline that beyond swearing fealty to al-Zawahiri, such affiliates have been independent in terms of financing and operations. These analyses also point out that AQC has been considerably crippled by U.S. counterterrorist measures and unable to foment significant operations in over ten years.⁶⁶⁰

2. Case values

X1: Connected

Insertion into the International Financial System: 4. First: 2001: \$1,125,025. Highest 2010: \$13,519,916.

Reliance on U.S.-linked Persons. 1.

Membership Exposure to Arrest: 1. (28% arrested after designation).

State Affiliation or Support: 0 (1+0).

Size and Resources: 1 (2+0+0). Financial resources: 1. Membership: 0. Territorial control: 0.

X2: Strategic. 176 SDGT (2016).

⁶⁵⁷ As reflected in the Annual Threat Assessment of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (2022: 25): "Consistent U.S. and allied counterterrorism pressure has degraded the external attack capabilities of al-Qa'ida, but they still aspire to conduct attacks in the United States."

⁶⁵⁸ E.g., Hoffman 2018; Mir in Byman and Mir 2022.

⁶⁵⁹ Hoffman 2022.

⁶⁶⁰ Byman in Byman and Mir 2022. Byman 2022. Mendelsohn and Clarke 2021. Hanna and Nada 2020.

Despite its global stature and aura, AQC displays the values of a connected FTO (X1). The organization was targeted by U.S. terrorist designations driven by strategic motives (X2).

AQC was highly integrated in and reliant on the international financial system to process funding (score of 4)⁶⁶¹ and relied on U.S.-linked persons to a small extent, through charities and individual donors (score of 1).⁶⁶² The rate of the FTO's members designated SDGT who were arrested post-designation is 28% (score of 1 for membership exposure).

At the time of the FTO designation, AQC benefited from the support of the Taliban regime in control of the Afghan state, which provided safe haven to the group. However, this support was limited as the Taliban was wary of bin Laden's agenda and demanded compensation for harboring al-Qaida (score of 1 for state support).⁶⁶³

AQC's funding was mostly based on private donations from various part of the world but primarily from countries in the Arabic peninsula, such as Saudi Arabia.⁶⁶⁴ The FTO's annual budget was around \$30 million per year at the end of the 1990s and prior to 9/11 (score of 1 for financial resources).⁶⁶⁵

Following 9/11, AQC has faced a sustained pressure on its finances as the result of the U.S. designation tools on terrorist financing and the international CFT regime that were primarily created to target the FTO.⁶⁶⁶ While no recent budget estimate exists for AQC,⁶⁶⁷ the group relied heavily on private donations and financial assistance from a few affiliates by the end

⁶⁶¹ Zarate 2013.

⁶⁶² 9/11 Commission Report 2004. Mapping Militant Organizations "Al Qaida" 2019.

⁶⁶³ Reportedly between \$10-20 million per year. 9/11 Commission Report 2004. Mapping Militant Organizations "Al Qaida" 2019.

⁶⁶⁴ 9/11 Commission Report 2004. Mapping Militant Organizations "Al Qaida" 2019.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid. This represents around \$40 million per year in 2018 dollars.

⁶⁶⁶ Zarate 2013, Mapping Militant Organizations "Al Qaida" 2019.

⁶⁶⁷ No USDT, DOS, or UNSC report on al-Qaida central can provide a figure for the FTO's finances, beyond the fact that those have been severally diminished. Estimates are provided for some al-Qaida's affiliates.

of the 2010s, instead of providing seed funding to potential affiliates as it did at the end of the 1990s.⁶⁶⁸

Regarding AQC's membership, estimates range from 500 to 1,000 members in the late 1990s/early 2000s (score of 0)⁶⁶⁹ and from 400 to 600 members in the late 2010s.⁶⁷⁰ The FTO never had territorial control (score of 0).

AQC has been targeted by strategic U.S. terrorist designations. The United States designated the group a FTO in 1999 following the bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa and initiated the creation of a terrorist sanction regime within the U.N. Security Council against the group.

Following 9/11, the new designation tools to counter the financing of terrorism, such as EO 13224 and its iterations, were specifically designed to undermine AQC. In fact, AQC is the FTO with the highest number of members designated SDGT (176), with more than double the figure for the second highest (the Islamic State with 79 members).

Y:

FTO attacks and lethality: no decrease in attacks in the 3-year range (+650%), decrease in the long term (-100%). No decrease in lethality in the 3-year range (+1000%+), decrease in lethality in the long term (-100%).

FTO capabilities: decrease in financial resources; change in territorial control not applicable; decrease in membership; no decrease in weaponry; change in political representation not applicable. Decline in the capability index.

FTO behavior: No renunciation of violence. No change in behavior.

⁶⁶⁸ Byman and Mir 2022, Hanna and Nada 2020. In the mid-2000s, al-Qaida's financial situation was so dire that Zawahiri asked the defiant al-Qaida in Iraq's leader Zarqawi for a \$100,000 contribution (see Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi in English at https://irp.fas.org/news/2005/10/letter_in_english.pdf, last consultation June 2022). Current al-Qaida's membership and activities suggest an operational budget of a few millions of dollars at most.

⁶⁶⁹ Mapping Militant Organizations "Al Qaida" 2019. CIA-FBI Task Force estimate.

⁶⁷⁰ Hanna and Nada 2020. Estimates of the UNSC sanction committee on al-Qaida.

3. Analysis

The case is *prima facie* mostly in line with hypothesis 2b and 3: U.S. terrorist designations on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, all else equal; U.S. terrorist designations driven by strategic motives on connected FTOs decrease attacks and capabilities, compared to designation driven by domestic motives and other FTOs, all else equal.

AQC did not decrease attacks and lethality in the 3-year range (2000-2002), which included its most significant terrorist actions. Yet, the FTO rapidly waned down its activities in the 2000s, to reach 0 attacks in 2009, a figure that has stayed stable ever since (with the only caveat that some analyses attribute certain attacks by affiliates or “lone-wolfs” to AQC). Further, the FTO experienced a decline in capabilities as per the capability index.

Yet, this case remains complicated to assess for different reasons. First, unlike the other cases of connected FTOs in this study’s sample, al-Qaida faced multiple counterterrorism efforts at once, including military interventions. It is consequently harder to measure the independent effects of U.S. terrorist designations on attack and capability trends.

As reported in various accounts, U.S. designations undoubtedly disturbed AQC’s finances.⁶⁷¹ Pre and post 9/11, the FTO relied to an important extent on donations using the international financial system, from individual donors, charities and nonprofit organizations, and subsequently from affiliates. Although AQC diversified its sources of funding with criminal activities and used informal value transfer systems to avoid sanctions, the FTO did not regain the financial base it had found prior to 9/11.

The comparison between the IRGC and AQC in terms of blocked assets illustrates the different levels of exposure. These two targets are by far the most sanctioned FTOs, all U.S.

⁶⁷¹ Zarate 2013, Mapping Militant Organizations “Al Qaida” 2019, Loertscher et al. 2020.

terrorist designation programs considered, with between \$13 million and \$15 million of blocked funds by the USDT.⁶⁷² Yet, \$15 million is not as significant for a state entity with a budget of \$7 billion, which control strategic sectors of a country's economy, like the IRGC. On the other hand, it is substantial for an organization that was operating on a \$30-\$40 million annual budget at its peak such as AQC.

Further, U.S. terrorist designations stigmatizing AQC as the absolute pariah among NSAGs had social and material consequences on the FTO. One pertinent example is the decision of the Al Nusra Front (or Jabhat al-Nusra) to distance itself from AQC. Designated FTO in 2012, al-Nusra was considered as one of the most loyal AQC's affiliates, notably for standing up to the Islamic State and maintain a solid presence in Syria under the al-Qaida banner.⁶⁷³

However, al-Nusra progressively broke away from AQC because the stigma of being associated with the group was limiting potential partnerships and fundraising in the region.⁶⁷⁴ In 2016, al-Nusra Front's leader Abu Muhammad al Julani announced the dissolution of the group and the foundation of a new organization called Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. The announcement underlined that the new group would have "no affiliation to any external entity" and hinted that the measure would protect the group from U.S. counterterrorism efforts.⁶⁷⁵

While certain analysts doubted the veracity of the defection,⁶⁷⁶ the move apparently enabled Jabhat Fateh al-Sham to merge with other NSAGs operating in Syria to form yet another group, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, which formally severed ties with AQC. This decision attracted the

⁶⁷² The total figure of blocked funds is most likely higher since some of these funds have been regularly confiscated and redistributed to the victims of these FTO's attacks.

⁶⁷³ Mendelsohn 2016.

⁶⁷⁴ Loertscher et al. 2020.

⁶⁷⁵ Joscelyn 2016.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

ire of al-Zawahiri: he blamed the new group's leadership as well as the "financiers" who fear being associated to AQC, cave to U.S. demands, and hurt the jihadist unity.⁶⁷⁷

AQC's connectivity exposed it to U.S. terrorist designations. Yet, considering the other factors that have negatively impacted the group, the case cannot provide a strong support for hypotheses 2b and 3. Further, AQC is unique in so many respects that it appears difficult to find a suitable most similar candidate for cross-case comparison.

However, if this case had triggered different values on Y than what the hypotheses predicted, it would have substantially challenged the theoretical framework of the study.

Indeed, U.S. terrorist designations against al-Qaida are the archetype strategic designations considering that eliminating this NSAG has been a core objective of U.S. foreign policy for two decades.

AQC relied on various international networks for its funding and operations, characteristics of connected FTOs: while this was initially a strength, it eventually made the group more vulnerable to designations.

4. Alternative explanations

Military intervention: High relevance. Undermining AQC was a primary objective of major U.S.-led military interventions and operations. The intervention in Afghanistan eliminated AQC's infrastructure and training camps. AQC's leadership and key members have been relentlessly targeted with a range of kinetic tools, from special operations to drone strikes. This variable has a significant explanatory power to account for Y's values.

Ally mechanism: Low relevance. Following the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, AQC's leadership relocated to Pakistan, which is a U.S. ally based on Phillips' measures. Bin

⁶⁷⁷ Loertscher et al. 2020: 89.

Laden was located in Pakistan when he was killed in a U.S. special operation and had seemingly been protected by some officials for years.

Financial adaptability: Low relevance. Jo et al.'s classifies AQC as having high-financial adaptability because of wealthy donors from Gulf countries, terrorist networks, and eventually criminal activities. They find that "the fact that the group had multiple sources of funding and support meant the group was diversified, and since it did not receive funding from regular financial channels, sanctions on U.S. persons or institutions were unlikely to directly affect the group."⁶⁷⁸ They thus explain that the group was able to increase attacks after FTO designation.

This reasoning seems inaccurate, however, and illustrate the limitations of using a 3-year band to assess terrorist designations' effects. As reported in diverse accounts,⁶⁷⁹ AQC has been severely undermined by terrorist designations, in combination with kinetic counterterrorism tools. In fact, the FTO drastically decreased attacks and capabilities in the 2000s. In the long term, AQC was unable to foment any attacks from its core membership and its capabilities were severely diminished. The elaboration of new designation tools post-9/11 and the learning curve needed for the U.S. government to undermine NSAGs through designations explain why these outcomes cannot be captured in the 3-year range.

Multilateral designations: Medium relevance. AQC was probably the target of the most comprehensive terrorist designation regime ever. The United Nations, the European Union, major U.S. allies, and many other states had some form of terrorist designations against the FTO. While this regime probably helped accentuating the pressure on AQC, it was the U.S.

⁶⁷⁸ Jo et al. 2021: 20. See also Jo et al. 2020 on al-Qaida's adaptability.

⁶⁷⁹ E.g., Zarate 2013, Loertscher et al. 2020, in addition to the USDT's terrorist asset reports and DOS's country reports on terrorism.

designations and the threat of being barred from using the dollar and the international financial system that seem to deter most financial institutions from processing the FTO's funds.

Further, U.N. designations on AQC did not trigger a Pakistani crackdown on the group's finances in a comparable fashion than Pakistan's reaction following the U.N.'s designation of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (formerly Lashkar-e-Taiba). As the implementation of U.N. designations depends on the good will of U.S. member-states, the strength of the multilateral regime varied from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Conclusion

1. Cases' values on Y and control variables

Table 5 below summarizes all the cases' values on Y and the relevance of each alternative explanation. I find that my theoretical approach explains trends in FTO's capabilities—either measured in number of attacks or through the capability index—in a majority of cases, including when the 3-year range is used to measure attack trends.

The cases provide different degrees of support for the study's hypotheses. No case displays results that contradict the hypotheses on all measures of Y, although the support for the hypotheses is sometimes weak. The process-tracing method forces a nuanced interpretation of several cases.

In the 3-year range, the study's predictions are inaccurate in terms of attack trends for four cases. Process-tracing helps illuminate the underlying reasons. For the RIRA, the 3-year range shows a decrease in attacks while the I predicted that this FTO will not decrease attacks.

Table 5: Cases' values on Y and relevance of control variables

Cases	Attacks 3-y	M1: Attacks	M2: Cap index	CV1	CV2	CV3	CV4	Behavior	Y: Results AEE
Boko Haram	No decrease	No decrease	No decrease	Medium	Low	Low	Low	No change	No decrease
Ansar Dine	No decrease	No decrease	No decrease	Medium	Medium	High	Low	No change	No decrease
MeK	No decrease	Decrease	Decrease	NA	Medium	Low	High	Change	Decrease
ETA	No decrease	Decrease	Decrease	NA	Medium	Medium	Medium	Change	Decrease
R-IRA	Decrease	No decrease	No decrease	NA	Low	Medium	Low	No change	No decrease
Islamic State 2003-13	No decrease	No decrease	No decrease	Medium	Low	Low	Low	No change	No decrease
Islamic State 2013-20	No decrease	No decrease	Decrease	High	Low	Medium	Medium	No change	No decrease
Taliban 1999-2010	No decrease	No decrease	Decrease	High	Low	Medium	Low	No change	No decrease
Taliban 2010-2021	No decrease	No decrease	No decrease	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	No change	No decrease
IRGC	NA	NA	No decrease	NA	NA	Medium	Low	No change	No decrease
Hezbollah	No decrease	Decrease	No decrease	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	No change	No decrease
Al Qaida	No decrease	Decrease	Decrease	High	Low	Low	Medium	No change	Uncertain

CV1: Military intervention. CV2: Ally mechanism. CV3: Financial adaptability. CV4: Multilateral regime. Red highlight: outcome contradictory to predictions on Y. Green highlight: outcome in line with predictions on Y. Orange highlight: highly relevant control variable to explain values on Y.

This is explained by the backlash that followed the Omagh bombings, which led the FTO not to conduct any attack for a few years and not to conduct any lethal attack for three years. Yet, the FTO resumed attacks in the 2000s and intensified its campaign in the 2010s, while rival explanations expected this organization to decrease attacks. The RIRA also increased capabilities as per the capability index.

The MeK, ETA, and AQC did not decrease attacks in the 3-year range, while the study predicts a decrease for connected FTOs targeted by strategic designations. As anticipated, these three NSAGs were designated FTOs in the late 1990s and became fully exposed to U.S. terrorist designations only once the U.S. government unleashed the power of EO 13224 and other terrorist designation tools. In fact, these three FTOs decreased attacks and capabilities, according to the index, in the long term.

Yet, it can be noted that the MeK was already impacted by both the material effects and social stigma associated with terrorist designations in the late 1990s, as the legal challenges mounted to contest the FTO designation illustrate. AQC also felt some of the pressure of the FTO designation at these early stages, but this pressure was not impactful enough to undermine its operations or change its behavior.

Regarding the study's actual measurements of Y—trends in attacks in the long term and in the capability index—three cases display values that contradict the study's prediction: Hezbollah decreased attacks in the long term, and both the Taliban 1999-2009 and the Islamic State 2013-20 saw a decrease in the capability index. However, these results do not fundamentally challenge my theoretical framework for several reasons.

First, Hezbollah saw a decrease in attacks in the 2000s as it transitioned from an NSAGs waging asymmetrical warfare through terrorist attacks to a structured military organization able to confront states' militaries in the field, using both guerrilla warfare and conventional means.

For instance, the GTD only record 4 attacks and 16 deaths for Hezbollah in 2006, which does not reflect the military power reached by the FTO at that time. Hezbollah's operations during the 2006 Lebanon War killed over 120 Israeli soldiers, 44 civilians, wounded thousands of soldiers and civilians, and destroyed or damaged multiple tanks, helicopters, and one corvette. In the long term, it is indisputable that Hezbollah substantially increased its capabilities, as suggested by the capability index.

The Taliban 1999-2010 and the Islamic State 2013-20 both show a decrease in the capability index, although these FTOs increased attacks in the short and long term. This outcome is mostly explained by the military intervention control variable.

Both FTOs were the target of major military interventions, which explains their decline in capabilities. The Taliban, who was first designated in 1999 under an *ad hoc* terrorist designation, decreased capabilities following the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan because the group lost its control on the Afghan state apparatus, most its membership was disbanded, and its leadership had to relocate to Pakistan. However, its number of attacks increased steadily following the invasion, illustrating the transition from a state entity to an NSAG using terrorism. After the unique and non-strategic SDGT designation of 2002, the Taliban unwaveringly increased attacks and capabilities, as per the capability index.

The Islamic State 2013-20 was badly hit by the multiple military interventions and operations aiming to annihilate it, which explains the decline in capabilities as per the index. However, the FTO still managed to maintain a high level of attacks till the end of the 2010s.

In addition to the Taliban 1999-2009 and the Islamic State 2013-20, the military intervention control variable provides a high explanatory power for the values of Y for AQC in the long term. Even if U.S. terrorist designations significantly impacted AQC, it is unlikely that the FTO would have decreased attacks and capabilities at the same rate without the use of force. It remains difficult to assess whether AQC would have experienced a decreased in capabilities as a result of terrorist designations in the absence of kinetic tools.

It is clearer that the Taliban 1999-2010 and Islamic State 2013-20 would not have been undermined by U.S. terrorist designations alone and military interventions were key to precipitate their decline in capabilities. All else equal, it is reasonable to assume that this decline would not have been observed if terrorist designations had been the only instruments to undermine these NSAGs.

Regarding other control variables and rival theories, I find that ally mechanism does not provide a better explanation in any of the cases, in view of the causal mechanism hypothesized in Phillips' study. It does provide some insights in understanding four of the cases, however.

Financial adaptability provides one cogent rival explanation for the case of Ansar Dine, an FTO with high financial adaptability that did not reduce attacks and capabilities as per the index. Yet, it does not seem that U.S. terrorist designations ever reached the FTO, which mostly raised funding at the local level and outside of the international financial system. Financial adaptability provides explanatory insights for seven additional cases but does not provide a better theoretical explanation of those cases.

Multilateral designations, a control variable for found in the literature on economic sanctions, is highly relevant for the MeK case. U.K. and E.U. designations, notably applying in France and Germany, accentuated the social stigma and material pressure on the FTO.

Although the removal from the U.S. list was the priority of the MeK leadership and the renunciation of violence leading to a total interruption of attacks occurred several years after the U.S. designation, the combination of designations has a substantial explanatory power in this case, which was not anticipated in the study's theoretical framework. The overall argument on MeK's exposure to U.S. designations due to its high values on X1, characterizing the group as a particularly connected FTO, still holds, however.

Finally, the process-tracing of the ETA case, which supports hypotheses 2b and 3, illuminates new causal mechanisms and generates nuances. Indeed, U.S. terrorist designations proved impactful and effective on their own and in indirect ways. U.S. designations participated in the stigmatization of the group and constrained its ability to use the international financial system. Yet, it was the emulation and transposition of U.S. designations into *ad hoc* domestic terrorist laws by the Spanish government—with U.S. support—that turned out to be particularly efficient to socially stigmatize and materially constrain the FTO.

2. Longitudinal and most similar cross-case comparison

The longitudinal and most similar cross-case comparisons were used to test specific hypotheses. As seen in the previous chapter, the longitudinal cross-case comparison of Islamic State 2003-2013 and 2013-2020 and the most similar cross-case comparison of the Islamic State 2003-2013 and the Taliban 2009-2021 provide a relative support for hypothesis 2c. In the same vein, the longitudinal cross-case comparison of the Taliban 1999-2009 and 2009-2021 and the most similar cross-case comparison of the Taliban 1999-2009 and the Islamic State 2013-2020 provide limited support to hypothesis 1.

Indeed, in these comparisons, the values on Y do not offer enough variation to confirm these hypotheses. Even when noticeable differences in Y's values are found—in the number of

attacks or in the capability index—they do not alter the general trend. It is also uneasy to directly link the impacts of U.S. terrorist designations to these differences.

In fine, the support for hypotheses 1 and 2c and these cross-case comparisons comes from anecdotal evidence gathered in the process-tracing, making this support inevitably weaker. these results are not surprising however, since the theoretical framework predicts that U.S. terrorist designations are not impactful enough to alter the capabilities of disconnected and established FTOs.

The most similar cross-case comparison of Boko Haram and Ansar Dine—two disconnected FTOs targeted by non-strategic and strategic designations respectively—does not provide support for hypothesis 1. Both FTOs were insulated from the effects of U.S. terrorist designations. The strategic FTO designation of Ansar Dine reportedly facilitated U.S. military support to French forces operating in Mali but this additional help was not reflected in trends in the FTO's attacks or in the capability index.

The most similar cross-case comparison of the ETA and RIRA—two connected FTOs targeted by strategic and non-strategic designations respectively—provides the strongest support for hypothesis 1. The strategic FTO designation on ETA and the multiple SDGT designations on its key members both stigmatized and materially constrained the group. In addition, the transposition of similar terrorist designations in Spanish law, with U.S. support, proved particularly efficient to delegitimize ETA and undermine its capabilities. In the 2000s, the FTO progressively reduced attacks and eventually renounced all forms of violence and political activities in the 2010s.

By contrast, the non-strategic FTO designation on the RIRA did not undermine the group, which became one of the wealthiest NSAGs in the world. Because of domestic politics,

the U.S. government was not willing to implement the provisions of the FTO designation and it did not assist the United Kingdom further regarding terrorist legislations targeting the RIRA. The FTO managed to steadily increase its capabilities and to ramp up attacks in the 2010s.

Finally, the most similar cross-case comparison of Hezbollah and the IRGC—two established FTOs targeted by strategic and non-strategic designations respectively—provides limited support for hypothesis 1. While both FTOs did not experience a decrease in capabilities, as per the capabilities index, Hezbollah has undoubtedly been impacted by U.S. terrorist designations, to the extent that it created serious tensions in Lebanese domestic politics. By contrast, there is no evidence that the FTO designation of the IRGC—an already heavily sanctioned state entity, part of a heavily sanctioned state—had any additional impact on the group.

CHAPTER 6

ASSESSING CONFLICT INTENSITY AND HUMANITARIAN SIDE EFFECTS OF TERRORIST DESIGNATIONS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND PLAUSIBILITY PROBE

As reflected in recent U.S. policy decisions, the impact of terrorist designations on humanitarian conditions in conflict-affected areas and on de-escalation initiatives has become an important concern for some policymakers. In February and November 2021, DOS reversed the policies of two former administrations by revoking the FTO designations of Ansarallah (also known as the Houthis) and of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on such considerations.

Secretary of State Blinken cited concerns over “the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen” to justify the decision to delist Ansarallah: “[w]e have listened to warnings from the United Nations, humanitarian groups, and bipartisan members of Congress, among others, that the designations could have a devastating impact on Yemenis’ access to basic commodities.”⁶⁸⁰

Regarding the FARC, DOS also mentioned humanitarian grounds and emphasized that the revocation would “facilitate the ability of the United States to better support implementation of the 2016 [peace] accord [between the FARC and the Colombian government], including by working with demobilized combatants.”⁶⁸¹

The preceding chapters have shown that the impacts of U.S. terrorist designations on targeted NSAGs are limited and are in fact only effective under specific conditions. Yet, as these recent policy decisions suggest, terrorist designations also have negative externalities. In fact, the sanction literature has long acknowledged that certain sanction regimes have devastating

⁶⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State 2021c.

⁶⁸¹ U.S. Department of State 2021d.

consequences on civilian populations.⁶⁸² Studies on the humanitarian consequences of terrorist designations are more recent but expanding, led by diverse actors in the humanitarian community.⁶⁸³

The present chapter contributes to this literature, by examining the impact of terrorist designations on the humanitarian situation in Nigeria in relation to the Boko Haram insurgency. In doing so, the chapter focuses on the collateral victims of ostracism and isolation, as implemented through terrorist designation policies. The chapter aims to be policy relevant and to generate hypotheses for further studies. Through qualitative and quantitative analyses, I investigate the circumstances under which terrorist designations impacted the humanitarian situation in northeastern Nigeria. The chapter is structured as follow:

First, I briefly review the literature linking counterterrorist policies to humanitarian complications; second, I qualitatively assess the impact of terrorist designations on humanitarian work in northeastern Nigeria; third, I formulate a specific hypothesis regarding the impact of the the FTO designation of Boko Haram on the intensity of the conflict and conduct a quantitative analysis of conflict-related deaths to test this hypothesis; finally, I outline a plausibility probe using evidence from the case of Islamic State (2003-2013) and Ansar Dine.

U.S. counterterrorism and humanitarian assistance

Support for humanitarian assistance under international humanitarian law (IHL) has long been a proclaimed goal of U.S. foreign policy.⁶⁸⁴ Aiming to provide life-saving aid to civilians in

⁶⁸² The paradigmatic case is the sanction regime on Iraq in the 1990s, which resulted in “unacceptably high humanitarian consequences” (Biersteker 2015: 165). Despite the advent of targeted and financial sanctions, which supposedly minimize collateral damages, similar critiques are formulated against current regimes such as Iran.

⁶⁸³ NGOs, specialized research centers, and certain intergovernmental agencies. See notably: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) 2018a; Modirzadeh 2011; Lewis and Modirzadeh 2021; Moret 2021; and the resources from the Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Engagement Project of the Harvard Law School’s Program on International Law and Armed Conflict.

⁶⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State 2021b.

armed conflicts, and subject to precise obligations under IHL, humanitarian assistance is guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality.⁶⁸⁵

The literature underlines two countervailing sets of norms regarding humanitarian assistance and terrorist designations: “one promoting humanitarian engagement with non-state armed groups in armed conflict in order to protect populations in need, and the other prohibiting such engagement with listed terrorist groups in order to protect security.”⁶⁸⁶

This tension between norms can affect the capacity of humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance in areas under the control of NSAGs. As noted by Modirzadeh et al., the promulgation of “domestic laws prohibiting material support to listed terrorist entities, and multilateral laws and policies creating a corresponding global counter-terrorism regime present serious concerns for those engaged in the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance in armed conflict involving listed entities.”⁶⁸⁷

Indeed, terrorist designations impede humanitarian assistance in different ways. For instance, they expose humanitarian personnel to criminal prosecutions, notably through the material support provision under U.S. law (18 U.S.C. sections 2339A and 2339B). In a 2010 landmark case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against humanitarians who meant to provide training on peaceful conflict-resolution methods to the PKK, a designated FTO, inter alia.

The opinion holds constitutional the criminalization of the provision of material support section 2339B, in the form of speech and expertise, even if this engagement aims to help members of an FTO to use peaceful methods instead of violence.⁶⁸⁸ Therefore, more

⁶⁸⁵ Modirzadeh et al. 2011; Norwegian Refugee Council 2018a. Specific obligations apply to situations of non-international armed conflict (NIAC).

⁶⁸⁶ Modirzadeh et al. 2011: 1.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid: 3.

⁶⁸⁸ Said 2021. Supreme Court 2010. *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*, 561 U.S. 1.

straightforward forms of support, such as the informal taxes that humanitarians must often accept to pay to gain access to FTOs' controlled areas, necessarily fall under such provisions. A related hurdle for humanitarians is the full prohibition by governments to access conflict-affected areas in which a listed NSAG operates.

Another major impediment for aid deployment is the practice of financial de-risking. De-risking refers to the phenomenon of financial institutions terminating business relationships in certain areas or with certain banks, remittance companies, and other categories of clients, to avoid the risks associated with Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regulations.⁶⁸⁹

These side effects of terrorist designations regularly lead to the disengagement of humanitarian organizations in conflict-affected areas and further the fragility touching civilian populations. In response, the U.N. Security Council adopted resolutions 2462 and 2482 in 2019, urging states “to take into account the potential effects of certain counterterrorism measures on exclusively humanitarian activities [...] that are carried out by impartial humanitarian actors in a manner consistent with IHL.”⁶⁹⁰ Multi-stakeholder initiatives have also emerged, such as the global NPO Coalition on FATF, which seeks to engage civil society in the debate on AML and CFT and address unintended consequences from incorrect implementation of FATF standards.⁶⁹¹

Finally, the FTO literature provides interesting insights regarding the effects of designation on conflict intensity. In Jo et al.'s statistical analysis using GTD data, the authors remark that “interestingly, model 1 is statistically significant and positively signed, suggesting

⁶⁸⁹ See NRC 2018a. Interview with Sarah Adamczyk. Moret (2021) uses the concept of “over-compliance” to describe de-risking.

⁶⁹⁰ Lewis and Modirzadeh 2021: 1.

⁶⁹¹ Moret 2021.

that FTO status is correlated with increased terrorist attacks.”⁶⁹² As illustrated in the Boko Haram case study, several actors in the FTO designation process were concerned that the designation would heighten violence. However, clear causal mechanisms are missing in the literature to understand how this outcome would result from terrorist designations.

Terrorist designations and humanitarian conditions in northeastern Nigeria: a qualitative assessment

In the case of the Boko Haram conflict, counterterrorism mandates have had diverse negative effects on humanitarian assistance, while humanitarian concerns were central in the rationale of most actors in the designation debate. By 2019, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assessed that the Boko Haram insurgency had resulted in 35,000 direct casualties and 314,000 indirect deaths due to humanitarian conditions.⁶⁹³ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 7.1 million people were affected by the conflict, including 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states and 200,000 Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.⁶⁹⁴

In 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that 29 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states were either completely inaccessible or largely inaccessible to humanitarians.⁶⁹⁵ In 2016, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) issued a press release describing a dire humanitarian emergency in the town of Bama, in Borno state. Major news agencies subsequently reported the hidden starvation crisis being uncovered in areas previously controlled by Boko Haram. By late 2016, the United Nations had named northeastern Nigeria as a potential famine region.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹² Jo et al. 2020: 288.

⁶⁹³ UNDP 2021.

⁶⁹⁴ UNHCR 2019.

⁶⁹⁵ UNOCHA 2019.

⁶⁹⁶ Roberts 2017.

As reflected in reports from humanitarian organizations and interviews with humanitarian actors, the methodological difficulty in the process-tracing of this case is to disentangle the effects of the FTO designation from other counterterrorism measures. Two types of effects can therefore be identified: diffuse and concrete. At a diffuse level, the FTO designation contributed to the polarizing narrative of the global war on terror that the Nigerian government has used to restrict humanitarian activities. At a concrete level, humanitarian organizations receiving U.S. funds became very limited in terms of engagement and programming. They faced greater difficulty to fund projects because the banking sector terminated business relationships with their local banks as part of their de-risking strategy.

The Nigerian government has regularly confronted humanitarian actors working in the Northeast in the name of fighting terrorism. In 2018 for instance, contentious discussions took place regarding the Humanitarian Response Plan, as the humanitarian community estimated that over one million people were in inaccessible LGAs. The Nigerian military maintained that no civilians lived in these areas and the government refused to facilitate access.⁶⁹⁷

Furthermore, the Nigerian government regularly “accused organizations which have attempted to access areas under the group’s [Boko Haram] control of supporting terrorism” [...] and “introduced a burdensome registration process for NGOs, requiring background checks on all staff.”⁶⁹⁸ Major humanitarian organizations or human rights NGOs such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mercy Corps, and Amnesty International have been accused of supporting Boko Haram and have seen their activities disturbed as a result.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁷ NRC 2018b (unpublished report). UNOCHA and other humanitarian organizations concur with these estimates, which the government subsequently acknowledged.

⁶⁹⁸ NRC 2018a, 21.

⁶⁹⁹ Interview with Kerri Leeper.

In fact, some interviewees denounced a deliberate campaign from the government to undermine the legitimacy of humanitarian NGOs, with serious security and safety implications. For example, the government spread rumors in the press that humanitarian workers and organizations were transferring goods and money to Boko Haram.

Humanitarian actors therefore considered that designation blurred the line of key humanitarian principles such as independence and neutrality.⁷⁰⁰ Some interviewees deplored that neutrality was durably undermined due to the overly acquiescent relationship of institutional humanitarian organizations (e.g., U.N. agencies) with the Nigerian government, despite the fact that the government's counterterrorism methods (arbitrary killings, detention without trial, blocking means of subsistence, etc.) largely fueled the crisis.⁷⁰¹

FTO designation had concrete consequences on multiple types of humanitarian actors receiving U.S. funding, as they became subject to a much stricter control. One interviewee explained that their U.S.-based organization had to take multiple precautions to vet local partners—with little guidance from the U.S. government and uncleared criteria—and faced a constant risk of losing funding for projects.⁷⁰² The threat of individual criminal liability was also taken seriously: humanitarian workers reconsidered working in areas where Boko Haram can be active because they worried about the risk of being blacklisted or unable to travel to the United States.⁷⁰³

Furthermore, as de-risking further complicated the funding of projects, in an environment where financial services were already not easily available, humanitarian organizations had to

⁷⁰⁰ Interview with Chitra Nagarajan.

⁷⁰¹ Anonymous source.

⁷⁰² Anonymous source.

⁷⁰³ Anonymous source.

resort to transporting large amounts of cash to conflict-affected areas. This practice was associated with increased risks, such as being robbed, kidnapped, or killed.

As Chitra Nagarajan underlines, multiple Nigerian and foreign humanitarian workers, have fallen victims of NSAGs when trying to support civilian populations in conflict-affected areas. For instance, in July 2019, six workers for Action against Hunger (known as ACF, Action contre la Faim) were abducted by ISWAP and their driver was killed. In 2018, three ICRC and MSF health workers were abducted—two were executed and one was enslaved—which led ICRC to temporarily close its office in Nigeria.⁷⁰⁴

The narrative that humanitarian work helped terrorists made the position of humanitarian actors vis-à-vis the Nigerian military increasingly perilous: in 2019, for example, some Mercy Corps members and their local NGO partners were arrested and publicly accused of passing money to terrorist groups while trying to implement humanitarian projects.⁷⁰⁵

In addition to these diverse effects, U.S. terrorist designations likely had a concrete impact in terms of conflict intensity, as suggested in the quantitative analysis.

The impact of Boko Haram's FTO designation on conflict intensity in northeastern Nigeria: a quantitative analysis

As shown in the case study of Boko Haram, DOS was concerned with the multiple reports on human rights violations by Nigerian forces, considering that the indiscriminate repression was fueling the insurgency.⁷⁰⁶ Consequently, Deputy Secretary of State William

⁷⁰⁴ Interview with Chitra Nagarajan.

⁷⁰⁵ Interview with Chitra Nagarajan. Akwagyiram, Alexis. 2019. "Mercy Corps suspends northeast Nigeria work after army shuts offices." *Reuters*, September 26.

⁷⁰⁶ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch regularly reported on human rights abuses and alleged war crimes. Among the multiple reports, see: Amnesty International. 2015. "Stars on their shoulders. Blood on their hands. War crimes committed by the Nigerian military." Amnesty International. 2012. "Nigeria: Trapped in The Cycle of Violence."

Burns tried to leverage the designation of Boko Haram as an FTO to obtain a change in Nigeria's counterinsurgency methods, since the Nigerian government strongly opposed the designation.

During the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission on June 4, 2012, William Burns told his counterparts that DOS would hold off on designation for 12 to 18 months, but that Nigeria needed to change its approach if they wanted further cooperation from the United States on the issue.⁷⁰⁷

It is unclear whether Nigerian officials ever attempted to improve the human rights record of Nigerian forces and the humanitarian situation at large in the Northeast in response to U.S. pressure. There was no visible improvement while U.S.-Nigeria discussions were ongoing in 2012-2013. Subsequently, the FTO designation of Boko Haram ended this source of leverage and most likely compromised progress, if any, on the issue.

On the contrary, I posit that designation emboldened the Nigerian government to increase the intensity of the repression, because the terrorist designation of a group operating on Nigerian territory was perceived as a public international embarrassment by Nigerian officials. Consequently, the heightened military pressure likely increased the death toll of the conflict in the short and medium run.

However, if FTO designation provided relevant tools to decisively undermine the group, as proponents of designation argued, the conflict lethality should have decreased over time following the move. The literature also suggests that designation should have weakened the group because Nigeria is a U.S. ally.⁷⁰⁸

As Boko Haram was involved in a long-term territorial conflict with governmental forces, one way to assess the effects of designation is to geographically examine trends in

⁷⁰⁷ Interview with Daniel Benjamin, August 2019.

⁷⁰⁸ Phillips 2019.

conflict-related deaths. Using difference-in-difference estimations, it is possible to compare conflict lethality pre- and post-designation in areas where Boko Haram was the most active versus in the rest of Nigeria.⁷⁰⁹

Multiple studies have underlined the difficulty of collecting data on conflict-related deaths in the Boko Haram insurgency: in addition to reporting issues inherent to many domestic armed conflicts, the Nigerian government and Boko Haram have fought a war of numbers regarding death tolls.⁷¹⁰

Yet, these studies emphasize that civilians have been the primary victims (estimates vary between 60% and 80% of the total number of deaths).⁷¹¹ Thus, as the distinction between combatant and non-combatant units is particularly delicate to determine,⁷¹² I consider the total number of deaths to assess the intensity and lethality of the conflict.

1. Data

The dataset used is from Nigeria Watch,⁷¹³ a database on violent deaths occurring in Nigeria since 2006. Nigeria Watch relies on ten Nigerian daily newspapers (Daily Champion, Guardian, Punch, ThisDay, Vanguard, Independent, Daily Trust, The Nation, PM News and New Nigerian; the last two were replaced by Leadership and Nigerian Tribune in 2013), which are analyzed daily by researchers.

Any event reported in these newspapers and involving at least one violent death is listed in the database. Other sources of information, such as the police, the judiciary, hospitals, human

⁷⁰⁹ Angrist and Pischke 2009.

⁷¹⁰ See Chouin et al. 2014.

⁷¹¹ Chouin et al. 2014. This trend is confirmed by ACLED data: see ACLED 2022.

⁷¹² Human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have extensively reported on how Nigerian forces overestimate the number of Boko Haram members killed in military operations, while it was in fact civilians.

⁷¹³ Nigerian Watch 2018. The database follows a similar methodology as ACLED but focuses exclusively on Nigeria.

rights organizations (mainly Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International), as well as private security firms and embassies, are used to cross-check data.

I use data from 1/1/2011 to 9/1/2016, which roughly corresponds to a 2.5-year interval before and after designation. Within this range of dates, I conduct difference-in-difference estimations using 2-year and 5-year bands around the date of designation.

2. Hypothesis

In the context of Boko Haram, I argue that the negative externalities of designation outweighed positive effects in the objective of reducing conflict intensity. FTO designation gave the Nigerian army greater legitimacy to suppress the insurrection. Since the Nigerian government's main concern was to avoid the terrorist label for an NSAG operating in Nigeria, the issue-linkage with human rights and humanitarian improvement disappeared once the FTO designation was acted.

Furthermore, the FTO designation did not provide adequate tools to undermine Boko Haram and impede its activities. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

H_1 : FTO designation (11/2013) led to an increase in conflict-related deaths (CRD).

H_0 : FTO designation led to a decrease in conflict-related deaths or had no effect on conflict-related deaths trend.

Since a state of emergency was declared a few months prior to designation (5/2013), and potentially also impacted the conflict, I conduct the difference-in-difference estimation with this breaking point as well.

3. Methods

Nigeria is divided into thirty-six states and one Federal Capital Territory, which are subdivided into 774 LGAs. Figures 1, 2, and 3 illustrate trends in conflict-related deaths during the

examined period at the country level, the state of Borno (stronghold Boko Haram state), and the LGA of Maiduguri (epicenter of the conflict and of Boko Haram activities).⁷¹⁴

Difference-in-difference estimations allow to determine the effect of designation on conflict-related deaths in Boko Haram territory (the ‘treated’ area) while controlling for omitted variables at the national level that might lead to an overall increase in conflict-related deaths.⁷¹⁵

The difference-in-difference of conflict-related deaths in the ‘treated’ and ‘control’ areas pre- and post-designation can be represented by the following baseline equation:

$$CRD_{jt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BHterritory_j + \beta_2 PostD_t + \beta_3 BHterritory_j * PostD_t + X' + u_{jt} \quad (1)$$

Where CDR is a measure of conflict-related deaths, BHterritory indicates an LGA or state as being ‘treated’ as a BH stronghold, PostD denotes whether events occur after designation (11/2013), and X' represents control variables. The models and preliminary results are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

4. Models and Results

I use 6 different models with various specifications for treatment and control areas. In Model 1, the Maiduguri LGA is defined as the treated area because of its centrality for Boko Haram activity and in the conflict in general. The rest of the country is the control area in model 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. Model 2 expands the treatment zone and includes Maiduguri as well as five LGAs that were Boko Haram strongholds: Kukawa, Bama, Gwoza, Damboa, and Askira/Uba.

In Model 3 the treatment is expanded again to include Yobe urban areas where Boko Haram was particularly active, such as the LGAs of Damaturu and Potsikum. Model 4 takes Borno state as the treated area and uses Yobe and Adamawa states as control areas. In Model 5,

⁷¹⁴ These graphs are drawn from the database, which is not able to isolate particular LGAs from their respective state, making the illustration of parallel trends between treatment and control difficult.

⁷¹⁵ Angrist and Pischke 2009.

Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states are the treated area. In Model 6, Borno state alone is the treated area.

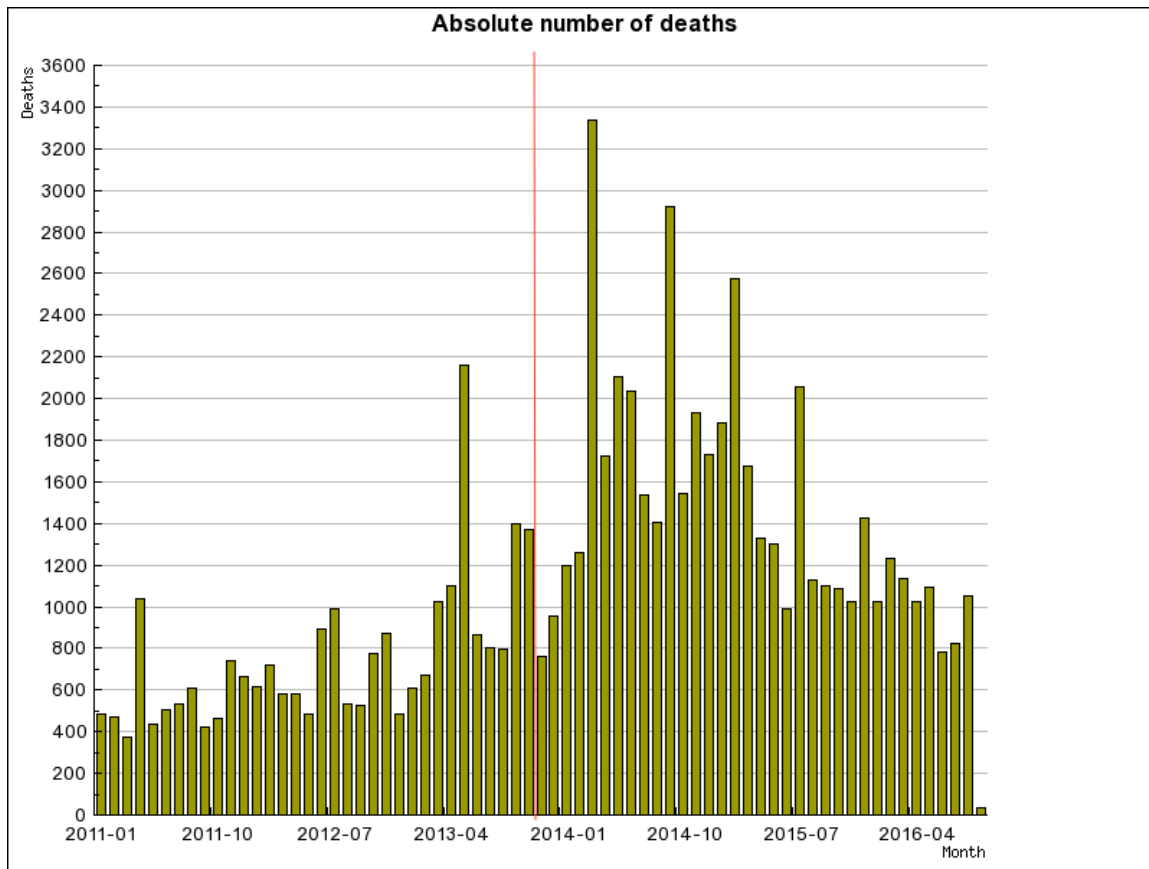
Observations are “violent events,” defined as a “deadly occurrence caused by human violence, happening in one or several contiguous LGAs and terminating when there are no deaths recorded during seven continuous days.”⁷¹⁶ I therefore add duration as a control variable, and I cluster at the state level, which is the highest administrative level here.⁷¹⁷

Results for my hypothesis are summarized below. Figures 1, 2, and 3 illustrate pre- and post-designation trends in conflict-related deaths for the entire country, Borno, and Maiduguri, respectively. Table 1 and 2 below shows the 5-year estimates (2.5 years before and after designation) and the 2-year estimates (1 year before and after designation). The 2-year estimates can help determine the short-term effects of designation. Table 3 shows the 5-year estimates of the state of emergency.

⁷¹⁶ Nigerian Watch 2018. “Methodology:” <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/index.php?html=4> (last consultation: June 2018)

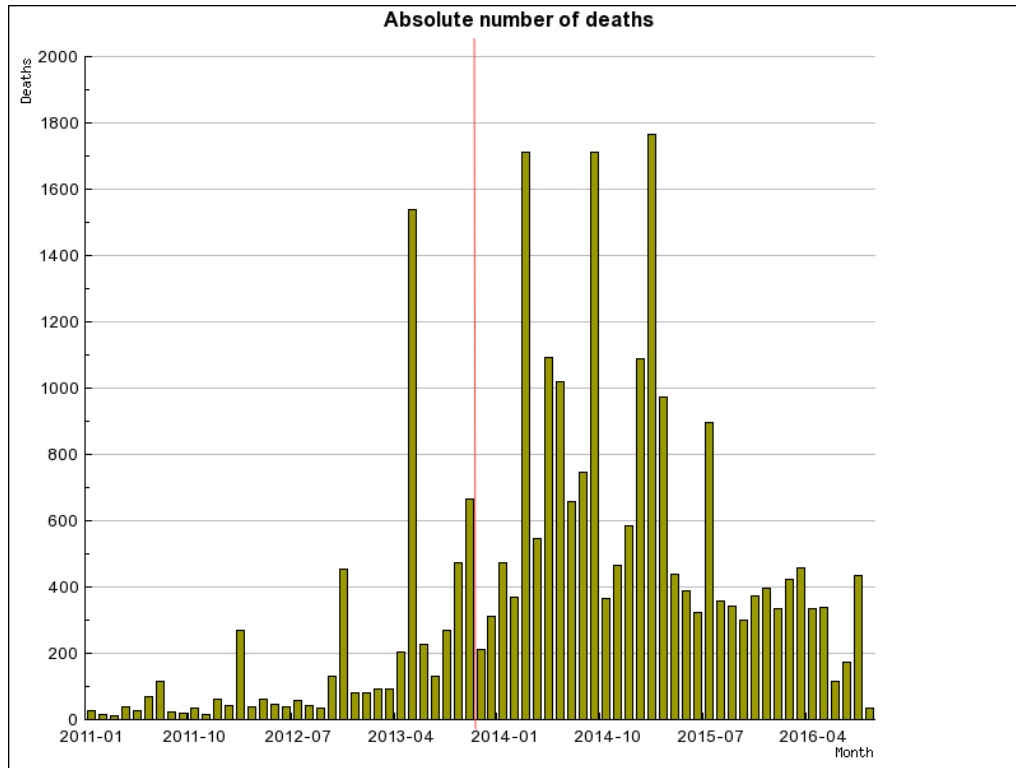
⁷¹⁷ See justification for clustering in Bertrand, Duflo, and Mullainathan (2004).

Figure 1: Conflict Lethality – Entire Country



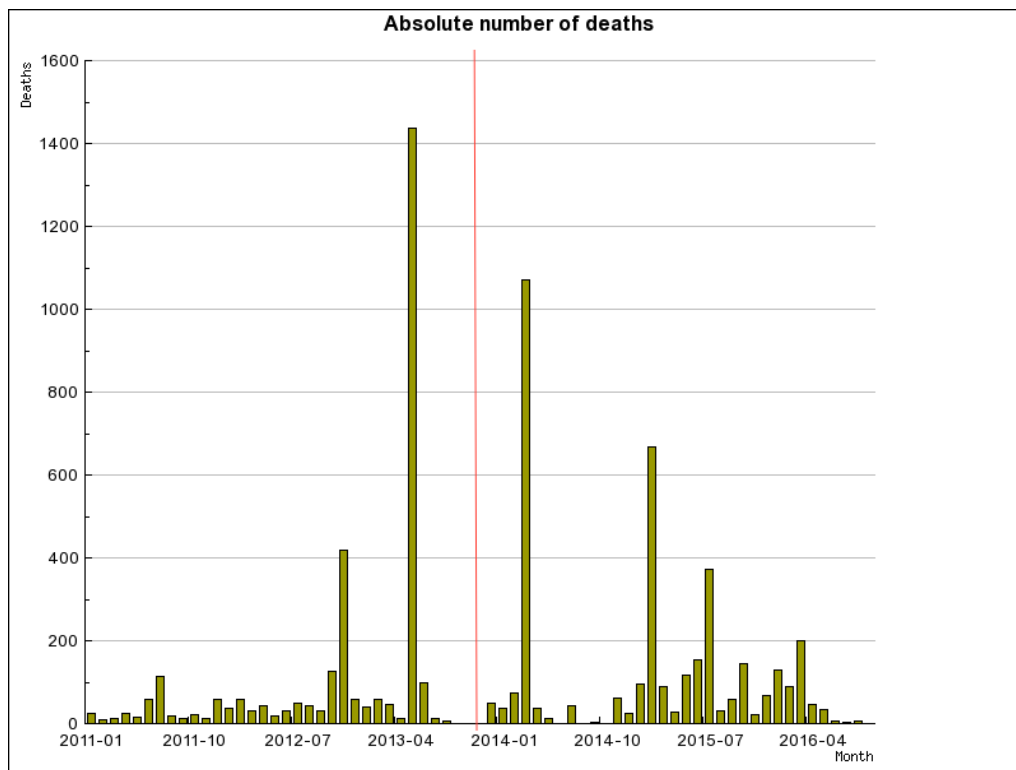
Note: the redline represents the FTO designation date

Figure 2: Conflict Lethality – State of Borno



Note: the redline represents the FTO designation date

Figure 3: Conflict Lethality – LGA of Maiduguri



Note: the redline represents the FTO designation date

Table 6: Conflict Lethality – Five-Year Estimates

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Post Designation	13.53*** (1.575)	13.62*** (1.582)	14.72*** (1.631)	12.56 (5.540)	10.36*** (2.289)	12.86*** (3.511)
BH Territory	-1.700 (3.028)					
Diff-in-diff	17.21*** (1.570)					
Duration	1.409*** (0.0124)	1.389*** (0.00811)	1.392*** (0.0108)	1.393*** (0.00870)	1.398*** (0.0111)	1.394*** (0.00801)
BH Territory		2.141 (2.308)				
Diff-in-diff		5.644*** (1.586)				
BH Territory			2.917 (3.082)			
Diff-in-diff			3.338 (2.761)			
BH Territory				3.388 (1.417)		
Diff-in-diff				3.533 (5.542)		
BH Territory					7.229*** (1.629)	
Diff-in-diff					5.029* (2.463)	
BH Territory						5.990*** (1.487)
Diff-in-diff						3.236 (3.513)
Constant	12.56*** (3.046)	10.78*** (2.317)	10.11*** (2.995)	10.70** (1.422)	6.185*** (1.482)	8.098*** (1.487)
Observations	1,355	1,355	1,355	1,169	1,355	1,355
R-squared	0.077	0.076	0.075	0.073	0.076	0.077

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7: Conflict Lethality – Two-Year Estimates

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Post Designation	11.11*** (1.005)	8.783*** (2.641)	8.626** (3.392)	13.74 (4.745)	9.105* (5.118)	12.07** (4.681)
BH Territory	14.86*** (2.876)					
Diff-in-diff	48.89*** (0.993)					
Duration	1.364*** (0.0106)	1.331*** (0.00420)	1.333*** (0.00624)	1.346*** (0.00402)	1.353*** (0.0107)	1.346*** (0.00387)
BH Territory		9.006** (4.070)				
Diff-in-diff		5.746** (2.650)				
BH Territory			7.833* (3.919)			
Diff-in-diff			6.815** (2.777)			
BH Territory				12.90** (2.529)		
Diff-in-diff				-4.329 (4.745)		
BH Territory					17.39*** (3.621)	
Diff-in-diff					0.756 (5.197)	
BH Territory						15.59*** (2.620)
Diff-in-diff						-2.657 (4.681)
Constant	18.07*** (2.905)	17.60*** (4.078)	17.52*** (5.064)	13.47** (2.530)	6.726** (2.688)	10.78*** (2.619)
Observations	524	524	524	466	524	524
R-squared	0.095	0.083	0.083	0.079	0.082	0.083

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 8: State of Emergency – Five-Year Estimates

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Post Designation	17.59*** (2.408)	17.20*** (2.711)	19.13*** (2.512)	12.91*** (4.338)	8.636*** (2.392)	12.28*** (2.407)
BH Territory	3.260 (2.233)					
Diff-in-diff	5.130** (2.408)	0.874 (4.291)	-2.280 (4.097)	5.028 (4.888)	8.350*** (3.088)	5.652* (3.287)
BH Territory		6.070** (2.676)				
BH Territory			7.455*** (2.322)			
BH Territory				2.404 (4.507)		
BH Territory					5.167** (2.347)	
BH Territory						4.388* (2.559)
Constant	10.43*** (2.233)	8.765*** (1.818)	7.375*** (1.300)	11.31** (4.241)	8.042*** (1.819)	9.323*** (2.062)
Observations	1,355	1,355	1,355	1,169	1,355	1,355
R-squared	0.018	0.019	0.019	0.015	0.020	0.020

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

5. Interpretation

In the five-year estimates, Models 1 and 2 are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ and Model 5 at $p < 0.1$. The coefficient for Model 1 is 17.21, meaning that violent events in the Boko Haram stronghold of Maiduguri have resulted in 17.21 more deaths on average than in the control group after designation. Coefficients are smaller for Model 2 and 5 (5.64 and 5.02 respectively). The duration control variable indicates that violent events which last longer are more lethal on average, which seems intuitive.

In the two-year estimates, the coefficient for Model 1 is much larger (48.89), while Models 2 and 3 are also statistically significant. This suggests that conflict-related deaths in the treatment area increased at a higher rate closer to the date of designation.

The 5-year estimates for the state of emergency give statistically significant coefficients for Model 1, 5, and 6 at $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.1$, respectively. Model 5 is the most statistically significant and has the highest coefficient (8.35), which makes sense as it uses the three states where the state of emergency was declared as the treated area. However, this coefficient is inferior to the 5-year estimates for FTO designation.

The results suggest that FTO designation was indeed associated with an increase in lethal violence in Boko Haram strongholds and in the conflict at large, in line with my hypothesis that the Nigerian army heightened the repression of the insurgency following the U.S. decision. As the Boko Haram case study shows, this conflict intensification was also not linked to an increased military support from the United States, resulting from the FTO designation.⁷¹⁸

As mentioned, it has been particularly difficult to precisely report conflict-related deaths data in the case of the Boko Haram conflict, which means that any data analysis should be used with caution.⁷¹⁹ It must also be acknowledged that the causal mechanism hypothesized here was not obvious to several interviewees mentioned in the study (at DOS and in the humanitarian community), but it was considered plausible.

However, other measures tend to confirm the trends suggested in my analysis. For instance, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) One-Sided Violence Dataset⁷²⁰ shows a

⁷¹⁸ Jo et al. (2020) suggests that FTO designation can be accompanied with increased military aid for host countries. While this may have been the case for other countries, it was not for Nigeria.

⁷¹⁹ Synthetic control methods (see Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2015) and replication with alternative datasets could provide additional robustness to this study.

⁷²⁰ Davies et al. 2022. Eck and Hultman 2007.

substantial increase in one-sided violence against civilians by the government following designation: from 60 fatalities due to one-sided violence in 2013 to 364 in 2014 and 363 in 2015. The political terror scale used in the Latent Human Rights Protection Scores Dataset⁷²¹ also shows an increase in Nigeria in 2014 compared to 2013 in two of the three measures available (Amnesty International and State Department reports), while the third measure shows no change (Human Rights Watch report).

Plausibility probe and conclusion

The impact of terrorist designations on humanitarian work in diverse conflicts involving designated NSAGs is well documented: from al-Shabaab in Somalia to FTOs in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.⁷²² However, a plausibility probe is needed to assess whether the causal mechanism described in this study could be applicable to other cases. I provide the example of Islamic State (2003-2013) since it also concerns a disconnected FTO that participated in a conflict with dire humanitarian consequences, and briefly survey the case of Ansar Dine in Mali, as it represents a most similar case with Boko Haram.

This case of Islamic State is difficult to assess for several reasons. The conflict initially involved an interstate war, which morphed into an insurgency during the occupation of U.S.-led coalition forces. The conflict involved numerous combatant actors and was therefore more complex than a typical government versus FTO confrontation. Further, ACLED data is not available for Iraq prior to 2016 and the Harvard's Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Engagement project has not focused on this phase of the conflict.

However, the Brown University's Costs of War Project provides the following assessment: between 134,000 and 250,000 civilians were killed by the war's violence between

⁷²¹ Fariss et al. 2020.

⁷²² Norwegian Refugee Council 2018a and 2018b; Lewis and Modirzadeh 2021.

2003-2013. A similar range is estimated for the number of men, women, and children who were seriously injured. 2006 was the most lethal year with nearly 30,000 civilian deaths.⁷²³

The majority of civilian deaths between 2003 and 2008 were attributed to “unknown” perpetrators. Between March 2003 and March 2004, coalition forces were the first known perpetrator of civilian deaths by armed violence. Between March 2004 and March 2008, anti-coalition groups were the first known perpetrator of civilian deaths.⁷²⁴

There is no specific account or evidence that U.S. terrorist designations have impacted humanitarian work during this phase of the conflict or that the FTO designation of al-Qaida in Iraq (Islamic State 2003-2013) could have changed the behavior of either coalition forces or Iraqi forces. While GTD data on lethality shows a conflict intensification following designation, coalition forces mostly led military operations against the FTO during this period. Therefore, the causal mechanism is not applicable.

The case of Ansar Dine and the humanitarian situation in Mali does also not suggest a link between FTO designation and conflict intensification. The government of Mali did not oppose Ansar Dine’s designations by the United States or the U.N. Security Council, and supported the resolution that authorized the French military intervention against the insurgents.

Furthermore, unlike the Nigerian government, the Malian government appeared much more constrained in terms of capabilities and seemingly did not have the firepower to increase military pressure on Ansar Dine.

Finally, while GTD data on Ansar Dine’s lethality shows a conflict intensification, the scale is not comparable with either Boko Haram or Islamic State (2003-2013). Indeed, Ansar

⁷²³ Crawford 2013.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

Dine was involved in violent events that resulted in less than 50 deaths in the three years following designation, compared with thousands for Islamic State (2003-2013) and Boko Haram.

Thus, it is possible that the causal mechanism hypothesized in the quantitative analysis is peculiar to the Boko Haram case. It represented a rare situation where a state actively opposed the FTO designation of a group operating in its territory, while this designation was also being leveraged for an improvement on the human rights and humanitarian aspects of the conflict.

One interpretation is that the Nigerian government was not purposely leading an indiscriminate repression that killed mostly civilians but it had limited leverage on the way the Nigerian military behaved at the local level, for reasons mentioned in the Boko Haram case study.⁷²⁵ However, once the FTO designation was acted, the government had no incentives to restrain the military.

Further study would be needed to investigate a related causal mechanism: that FTO designation leads to increased U.S. military support to the host country, which in turn heightens the repression against an NSAG. While this hypothesis is suggested in the literature, it has not been empirically proven.

Finally, as reflected in the qualitative analysis, the FTO and other terrorist designations also complicated humanitarian assistance in different ways: from limiting access to civilians in conflict-affected areas to the practice of de-risking.

⁷²⁵ Such as the endemic corruption that curtailed the resources for front soldiers and led to a demoralization of troops. In this context, indiscriminate killings can be perceived as the safest way to conduct asymmetric warfare.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This final chapter aims to summarize the core argument and main findings of the dissertation, acknowledge the study's limitations and avenues for improvement, and discuss the study's implications for policymaking and related academic research.

Core argument and main findings

This dissertation argues that U.S. terrorist designations are oftentimes unsuccessful in reducing the capabilities of targeted NSAGs for three main reasons. First, designations fail when they target local and isolated NSAGs, which are not linked to networks in which the U.S. government has leverage. Indeed, ostracizing pariahs often falls short because such actors are poorly integrated in international networks. Second, these policies have a limited impact on major NSAGs because these actors can weather the costs of designations, when exposed to their effects. Finally, designations are mostly inefficient when they are driven by non-strategic motives and do not aim to undermine targets.

The study challenges several assumptions held by many legislators as well as certain policymakers and scholars regarding the causal mechanisms that should lead to a decrease in the capabilities of NSAGs targeted by U.S. terrorist designations.

As the deviant hypothesis-generating case study of Boko Haram illustrates, the direct effects of terrorist designations—such as the blocking assets, travel bans, and facilitations for law enforcement—do not affect FTOs that are locally grounded and highly isolated from the international networks impacted by such measures. Other oft-cited positive effects of designations—such as an increased military aid for the host country and the building of international coalitions to fight the target—did also not occur for Boko Haram until the highly

mediatized tragedy of the Chibok girls' abduction, suggesting that these effects are not systematic.

Building on these insights and different bodies of literature, the dissertation advances a new theoretical framework to understand the conditions under which U.S. terrorist designations lead to a reduction of targets' capabilities. Such outcome depends on the targets' isolation type and whether designations are driven by strategic or non-strategic motives. I hypothesized that, all else equal: designations are impactful and effective when strategically used against connected FTOs; strategic designations impact established FTOs, but not sufficiently to be effective; designations have no impact in all other configurations.

I examined a total of 12 cases of FTOs following diverse, longitudinal, and most similar case selection methods to assess these hypotheses. I used two models to measure the dependent variable of the study, FTOs' capabilities: trends in FTOs' attacks—the standard metric in the literature on U.S. terrorist designations' outcomes (model 1)—and a novel capability index based on five components of FTOs' power (model 2).

The study's theoretical framework correctly predicted U.S. terrorist designations' outcomes in 10 out of 11 cases for model 1 (see Table 9). As there is no attack data for the IRGC, this case could not be assessed using this metric.

The case of Hezbollah did not match the study's prediction in model 1 since this FTO decreased attacks in the long term. Hezbollah nevertheless increased capabilities according to model 2, the capability index. I suggest that model 2 is a more relevant metric to assess this case as the decrease in attacks illustrates Hezbollah's transition from an NSAGs waging asymmetrical warfare through terrorist attacks to a structured military organization able to confront states'

militaries, using both guerrilla and conventional means. The control variables and rival theories did not provide better explanations of this case.

My theoretical framework correctly predicted U.S. terrorist designations' outcomes in 10 out of 12 cases for model 2 (see Table 9). The cases of the Taliban 1999-2009 and Islamic State 2013-20 did not match the study's predictions as both groups decreased capabilities. In these two cases, military interventions provided the most convincing alternative to explain trends in FTOs' capabilities. While this control variable is not accounted for in other studies on the effects of U.S. terrorist designations, its impact on the dependent variable was anticipated in this study (see chapter 2).

Indeed, the U.S.-led intervention of Afghanistan forced the sharp decrease in capabilities of the Taliban 1999-2009, which transitioned from a quasi-state entity to a weakened NSAG in the early 2000s. The group subsequently embraced terrorist tactics and exponentially increased attacks as illustrated in model 1. Regarding the Islamic State 2013-20, model 2 provides a more accurate picture than model 1: despite the rise in attacks, this FTO experienced a substantial decline in capabilities, as a result of multiple military challenges, including a major U.S.-led operation.

The military intervention variable also provides a solid alternative explanation to the case of AQC. This FTO was heavily impacted by U.S. terrorist designations and decreased capabilities according to both model 1 and 2. Yet, the United States also targeted AQC with an array of kinetic tools, including the military intervention of Afghanistan, and it remains doubtful that the FTO would have decreased capabilities at the same rate in the absence of such measures.

Regarding other control variables, multilateral designations provide a solid alternative explanation to the case of the MeK, an FTO that was also materially and socially impacted by

U.K. and E.U. terrorist designations. Yet, as the case study suggests, this FTO was primarily concerned with U.S. designations.

The rival theories formulated in the literature, ally mechanism and financial adaptability, provide credible alternatives for four and eight cases respectively, but have an inferior explanatory power than the dissertation's theory or the other control variables. The causal mechanisms hypothesized in the ally mechanism and financial adaptability theories were not always identifiable in the process-tracing of these cases.

To test the specific hypotheses of the dissertation, I used longitudinal and most similar cases for cross-case comparisons. The results of the cross-case comparisons are summarized in Table 6. The most similar cross-case comparison of ETA and RIRA provides strong support for hypothesis 1. The most similar cross-case comparison of Boko Haram and Ansar Dine does not support hypothesis 1, as both disconnected FTOs were not impacted by designations. The other cross-case comparisons provide support for hypotheses 1 and 2c, yet this support is weak because it is based on anecdotal evidence uncovered in the process-tracings or by slight variations on the dependent variable, but not by an inverse trend.

The three cases of connected FTOs targeted by strategic U.S. terrorist designations all show a decrease in capabilities according to both model 1 and 2. The study's theoretical framework focused on identifying NSAGs' points of vulnerability regarding the range of tools offered by U.S. terrorist designations, and these FTOs proved to be vulnerable in different ways. Yet, as discussed in the next section, the impact and effectiveness of U.S. designations on these groups can be further debated and nuanced.

Finally, the dissertation contributes to the literature on the humanitarian consequences of terrorist designations. Through the case study of northeastern Nigeria in relation to the Boko

Haram insurgency, I investigated the effects of U.S. terrorist designations in terms of humanitarian assistance and conflict intensity. The case shows that U.S. terrorist designations had both diffuse and concrete negative effects on the humanitarian situation and the deployment of humanitarian aid.

Through a quantitative analysis of conflict-related deaths, the case also shows that the FTO designation of Boko Haram was associated with an increase in conflict intensity. However, the plausibility probe suggests that the conditions creating a causal relation between the FTO designation and the increase in conflict intensity might be unique to this case.

Table 9: Cases and cross-case comparisons' levels of support for hypotheses

Cases and cross-case comparisons	H1	H2a	H2b	H2c	H3
Boko Haram	In line	In line	NA	NA	NA
Ansar Dine	NA	In line	NA	NA	NA
Boko Haram/Ansar Dine	No support	NA	NA	NA	NA
MeK	In line	NA	In line	NA	In line
ETA	In line	NA	In line	NA	In line
RIRA	In line	NA	NA	NA	NA
ETA/RIRA	Support	NA	NA	NA	In line
Islamic State 2003-13	NA	In line	NA	NA	NA
Islamic State 2013-20	NA	In line	NA	NA	NA
Islamic State 2003-13/2013-20	NA	NA	NA	Weak Support	NA
Taliban 1999-2009	In line	In line	NA	NA	NA
Taliban 2009-2021	NA	In line	NA	NA	NA
Taliban 1999-2009/2009-21	Weak support	NA	NA	NA	NA
Islamic State 2003-13/ Taliban 2009-21	NA	NA	NA	Weak support	NA
Taliban 1999-2009/Islamic State 2013-20	Weak support	NA	NA	NA	NA
IRGC	In line	In line	NA	NA	NA
Hezbollah	NA	In line	NA	NA	NA
IRGC/Hezbollah	Weak support	NA	NA	NA	NA
Al Qaida	In line	NA	In line	NA	In line

Limitations and avenues for improvement

This research faces limitations in terms of data, methodology, and theory. These shortcomings need to be acknowledged and potential solutions should be suggested.

Open-source information about NSAGs designated terrorists, even prominent ones, is oftentimes scarce or not fully reliable. As illustrated in this study and others, this leads to the adoption of proxy variables and of approximative estimates to measure variables, which in turn weakens the precision of the methodology and the robustness of the results.

Information on FTOs' financial resources and portfolios is a critical example. As seen in the case studies, estimates on finances and sources of funding vary greatly or rely on questionable sources. This study attempted to address this issue by using middle-range figures or estimates that were the least favorable to the theory's predictions, but these solutions remain overall unsatisfactory.

An important consequence of this data gap is the imprecise measurement of certain variables such as FTOs' insertion in the international financial system. The study mainly used the blocked funds declared by USDT in relation to the SDGT and FTO programs to measure a group's insertion, yet this measure is made *a posteriori* and only captures groups that were actively and successfully pursued by the U.S. government.

Hypothetically, an FTO could be highly inserted but never identified or pursued. As suggested in the sanction literature⁷²⁶ and the case study of RIRA, the U.S. government does not systematically enforce all designations and sometimes has incentives to show results in specific cases over others. As the USDT's terrorist asset reports do not detail the origins of the blocked funds, the figures cannot always be taken at face value in the absence of other sources

⁷²⁶ Early and Preble 2020a and 2020b.

triangulating the information. Yet, the only way to truly improve this part of the dissertation would be to assess non-publicly available information on FTOs' financial data.

Independently of the quality of the data, the study can be challenged on certain points of methodology. Notably, the independent variable X1 on FTOs' isolation type is complex and its measurement involves a variety of data. A pertinent simplification of the measurement assessing this variable would make the study's conclusions stronger.⁷²⁷

Further, it appears that certain components of X1 could be weighed differently in regard to the insights generated by the case studies. For instance, territorial control seems to be more crucial to FTOs' resilience than total financial resources at *t-1* and should probably be given a higher weight when considering a group's size and resources. Using Jo et al.' typology, a sustained territorial control may provide more autonomous and invulnerable income sources.⁷²⁸ This variable may have been underestimated in this study and other studies on FTOs.

Finally, the dissertation has operated under certain assumptions about the nature of the FTO population. Following the insights on the literature on designated NSAGs—notably groups part of the global jihadist movement but also groups following other ideology and political objectives—this study assumes that the great majority of NSAGs targeted by U.S. terrorist designations in the FTO an SDGT programs are locally grounded and focus on local operations. As these NSAGs are seldom impacted, this explains the relatively low rate of effectiveness found in certain policy and academic studies.⁷²⁹

In fact, this dissertation posits that the success rate of U.S. terrorist designations, on their own and all else equal, is probably much inferior than all previous estimates (i.e., in the absence

⁷²⁷ In this regard, Phillips' (2019) independent variable has the merit of being straightforward and easy to measure.

⁷²⁸ Jo et al. 2020, 2021.

⁷²⁹ Loertscher et al. 2020. Jo et al. 2020. Jo et al. set their most liberal estimate of success rate at 60%.

of other, coordinated measures). To unequivocally address this question, the research would need to be expanded to all NSAGs targeted by U.S. terrorist designations, following the case study and process-tracing methods used in this dissertation. Such research would be able to estimate the proportion of connected FTOs targeted by strategic designations and both—potentially—reinforce the external validity of the theory as well as provide decisive evidence to explain the low rate of effectiveness.

In fact, the process-tracing of the three cases of connected FTO targeted by strategic U.S. terrorist designations, which all experienced a decline in capabilities according to both model 1 and 2, do not display a straightforward causal mechanism. The MeK was undoubtedly socially stigmatized and materially undermined by U.S. designations, yet it took an exogenous factor, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, to dismantle most of its military capabilities.

The ETA and its members were actively targeted by U.S. terrorist designations, in both the FTO and SDGT programs, which complicated its operations and exposed members to arrests. However, it is the transposition of U.S. designation-like legislations in Spanish law that was most successful in isolating the group. Finally, as previously mentioned, AQC suffered from the array of U.S. terrorist designations, but was also subject to a constant military pressure.

Thus, although these cases illustrate impactful and effective designation policies, their peculiar circumstances cannot be ignored in the analysis. Hence, this part of the theoretical framework could be improved and refined further.

In fact, it may well be that U.S. terrorist designations almost systematically fail to decrease FTOs' capabilities, in the absence of other measures and exogeneous factors. However, the usefulness of designation policies can be assessed in other ways, as the next sections discuss.

Implications for policy

From a policy perspective, and when analyzed under different lenses, U.S. terrorist designations can be considered to have fulfilled key strategic objectives. For instance, there has been no major terrorist attacks from designated NSAGs on U.S. soil since 2001. Over the past two decades, attacks on U.S. soil investigated under terrorist statuses and linked to a designated NSAG were perpetrated by radicalized U.S. citizens or permanent residents and were not engineered by the designated entity. This suggests that travel restrictions and facilitations for law enforcement in relation to designations in the FTO, SDGT, and other U.S. terrorist lists may have been effective.

U.S. terrorist designations can also be seen as tools that should systematically be assessed as complements of military, diplomatic, intelligence, and law enforcement tools. In this regard, U.S. terrorist designations were adequate complements of the array of measures deployed against the Islamic State, as they substantially impacted the FTO and assisted the U.S.-led military intervention—and, indirectly, other military operations—in decisively undermining the group’s capabilities.

Further, U.S. terrorist designations can be used as diplomatic pressure tools, albeit sometimes unsuccessfully as illustrated by the issue-linkage used by DOS regarding the Boko Haram’s FTO designation and an improvement on human rights in the conflict in northeastern Nigeria. They can also help with domestic hurdles to foreign policy, as the case of Ansar Dine shows: FTO designation facilitated U.S. military support to the U.N.-sanctioned French intervention in Mali.

While this dissertation assesses that multilateral terrorist designation regimes only rarely amplify the overall effects of designations on targets’ capabilities, broader regimes, especially those involving IOs, can increase the legitimacy of U.S. designations and serve other purposes.

Indeed, it appears that designations through the U.N. Security Council project a more powerful social stigma on targets than U.S. ones alone. As the case of the Taliban (2009-2021) indicates, the Taliban's insistence to have U.N. designations removed during the 2020 negotiations seemed linked to the NSAG's eagerness to be recognized as a legitimate governmental actor (a recognition that had been denied to the group in the 1990s and was still being denied following the 2021 takeover of Afghanistan).

As the case of the Islamic State suggests, the implication of U.N. designations may also extend the reach of U.S. secondary financial sanctions.⁷³⁰ Although this dissertation has not unearthed a systematic trend,⁷³¹ the deterrence effect of designations, preventing both targets to use the international financial system and third parties to interact with targets, is undoubtedly plausible. In the long term, consistently promoting U.S. terrorist designations in coordination with IOs and multilateral fora seems to be a rational means to increase cooperation and compliance from U.N. members and private actors regarding CFT measures.

Additionally, the complementarity between designations and intelligence tools is crucial in many regards but can also lead to tensions. Intelligence provided by the counterterrorism finance community can be essential to identify and target the financial networks sustaining groups and individuals posing a threat to U.S. national security and interests. Yet, designation being a "speech-act"⁷³² aiming at public display, it can alert targets that they have been identified and jeopardize intelligence collection as well as law enforcement and military operations.

⁷³⁰ Findley et al. (2015) find that the risk of terrorist financing as defined in international law is taken seriously by private actors, including in non-OECD countries.

⁷³¹ Further, a rapid assessment shows no correlation between FATF compliance in FTOs' host countries and FTOs' capability trends in the dissertation cases: The U.K., Ireland, Spain, and France were always compliant. Nigeria was compliant shortly before and after designation. Mali was always compliant. Iraq stopped compliance in 2013. Afghanistan stopped compliance in 2012. Iran stopped compliance in 2007. Pakistan was non-compliant between 2010 and 2015.

⁷³² Following the concept introduced by securitization theory, see Williams 2003.

For instance, some experts have argued that the IBACS network providing drone components and funding to the Islamic State would not have been dismantled as efficiently, had the key individuals operating in seven countries been designated as SDGTs.⁷³³ Although the counterfactual of this case is hard to assess, from the experts' own admission, these concerns reflect the predictions found in the early literature on terrorist designations, which warned that such policies would push targets further underground and complicate surveillance.⁷³⁴

These considerations lead to another policy issue identified in this dissertation: the politicization of U.S. terrorist designations to pursue objectives unrelated to foreign policy and national security. The use of designations to appeal to domestic constituents instead of addressing an international security issue has increased, yet this approach is problematic for several reasons.

Absent of strategic concerns for foreign policy and national security, the promotion of terrorist designations oftentimes sets unrealistic expectations on these policies' ability to weaken targets and overlooks their side effects, notably on the humanitarian front. Terrorist designations can have heavy consequences on humanitarian work and even impact the lethality level of a conflict under certain circumstances. Such aspects are more likely to be considered if foreign policy concerns prevail over non-strategic motives in the designation process, although this outcome would certainly not be systematic.⁷³⁵

The demoting of designations for non-strategic reasons—for instance, to show that one administration succeeded in addressing a security issue identified under a previous

⁷³³ Loerstcher et al. 2020. See Rassler (2018) on the IBACS network.

⁷³⁴ Pillar 2001.

⁷³⁵ Foreign policy concerns in this case are a necessary but not sufficient condition. In addition to the Boko Haram conflict, other cases have been examined, including in Yemen (Ansarallah), Somalia (Al-Shaabab), Syria (multiple FTOs), and Iraq (multiple FTOs). See NRC 2018a, and Lewis and Modirzadeh 2021. On the delisting of Ansarallah following humanitarian concerns, see Reinert and Hickey 2021.

administration—can also lead to an underestimation of a still compelling threat. Moreover, a politicized and too frequent use of terrorist designations likely undermine these tools’ credibility and legitimacy.

As noted in the literature on sanctions, the legislative branch is more susceptible to follow this ill-advised approach because members of Congress are often judged on their stance on issues rather than on the end result of the policies they promote.⁷³⁶ Yet, this pitfall is also regularly found in the executive branch. It is sometimes the case because of organizational mechanisms in governmental decision-making, but also because posturing prevails over strategy, from the presidency to U.S. departments, agencies, and bureaus.

Ideally, U.S. terrorist designations should be decided uniquely on the basis of foreign policy considerations—which includes human rights and humanitarian aspects according to the U.S. government’s official position on these issues—and national security objectives. These policies should not be instrumentalized for domestic purposes. Their benefits and drawbacks, especially in terms of humanitarian impact, should be carefully weighed against one another in the designation process.

The U.S. government could also make clear that terrorist designations are strategic tools used in U.S. foreign policy, not a value judgement ranking the “evilness” of NSAGs. Indeed, despite statutes mentioning that a NSAG must pose a threat to U.S. national security to be considered an FTO, the U.S. government is generally ambiguous regarding the grounds for designation in official statements. It is obvious to international actors that similar NSAGs may meet different fates—ranging from being supported to being designated and combatted—

⁷³⁶ Tama 2020.

depending on geopolitical imperatives. Higher clarity on the purposes of these tools would reinforce their credibility and legitimacy.

Additionally, as other studies have underlined, U.S. terrorist designations still pose a conundrum in U.S. law in terms of due process and avenues for delisting.⁷³⁷ From a policy perspective, it means that the impact of stigmatization and social effects are partially lost because the legal and administrative review for delisting is unclear and long, both at the group and the individual level.⁷³⁸ If the prospects for delisting are excessively slim, the incentives for targets to change behavior are minimal. Thus, the U.S. government should communicate clearly what is expected from targets for them to be delisted.⁷³⁹ It is telling that one of the rare cases of delisting for an active FTO, the MeK, involved the mobilization of a well-funded lobby in Washington.

Pragmatically, however, U.S. administrations are likely to continue weighing domestic concerns higher than foreign policy ones in many instances, as the politicization of terrorist designations has intensified. With hindsight, it is probable that most members of the Obama administration consider that Clinton's DOS wasted excessive domestic political capital over the FTO designation of Boko Haram. Delisting any FTO can also be very costly in terms of domestic politics, as the reluctance of the Biden administration to delist the IRGC illustrates, despite its effort to revive the JCPOA.

Implications for related academic studies

This dissertation contributes to different research programs in IR. The results presented provide insights and recommendations for further work on the effects of U.S. and other terrorist designations. The dissertation also has implications for research on security designations as a

⁷³⁷ E.g., Justin 2017, Said 2021.

⁷³⁸ Loerstcher et al. 2020 point out that individuals who have been removed of the SDGT list faced a tortuous process that lasted over 6 years on average.

⁷³⁹ Rosenberg and Tama 2019.

tool of foreign policy and global governance. The theoretical framework developed in the dissertation can potentially be adapted to other security designations involving social and material pressures as means of coercion, such as sanctions against states.

Regarding research on the effects of terrorist designations, one of the dissertation's main insights is that these policies should not be analyzed in a vacuum. Even if the objective is to measure the independent effects of terrorist designations, other policies or phenomena impacting designated NSAG need to be controlled for. This study examined four control variables that seemed essential in regard to the literature on the subject. Yet, this selection is not exhaustive, and it is only by adding all relevant intervening variables that this research program will be able to accurately isolate the independent effects of terrorist designations.

If the objective is to produce research that is more relevant to policymaking, future studies may want to focus on identifying the relevant combination of terrorist designations with other non-kinetic and kinetic tools that lead to a decrease in a targeted NSAG's capabilities. As this dissertation shows, terrorist designations are sometimes used strategically in coordination with military, diplomatic, intelligence, and law enforcement tools, and sometimes used on their own with unrealistic expectations as to their ability to undermine targets' capabilities.

As mentioned earlier, the dissertation challenges certain assumed effects of terrorist designations found in the literature, such as an increase in foreign aid and military support for the target's host country as well as the building of coalitions to confront the target. From the cases examined in this research, such outcomes appear to be contextual and not systematic. Further research is thus needed to accurately assess these claims, which are currently not supported beyond anecdotal evidence.

Among other conclusions, the dissertation finds that most designated entities examined in the research responded with aggressivity to isolation, as hinted in the social psychology literature. Despite the virulent naming and shaming associated with terrorist designations the dissertation finds that material effects are more consequential than social effects in security designations. Social effects play a role in terrorist designations, as illustrated in several case studies, but oftentimes indirectly. Stigmatization of designated NSAGs is more likely to deter third parties from interacting with targets rather than alter the behavior of targets themselves.

The dissertation's principal novelty is the emphasis on isolation, as a means of power, to understand the outcomes of security designations. Indeed, terrorist designations represent an extreme form of punitive ostracism, a concept developed in social psychology but seldom used in IR. The combination of the social psychology literature on ostracism and different IR literatures provided theoretical and methodological axioms to this research as well as empirical hints. These insights can potentially apply to further studies on terrorist and security designations, such as sanctions against states.

A first and simple principle is the identification of the types of actors that can isolate others efficiently. In line with these literatures, this study suggests that designators wishing to isolate other international actors need to possess a combination of authority, legitimacy, and coercive means. Although this is not a novel argument, the dissertation emphasizes the importance of targets' characteristics to understand reactions to isolation and designations' outcomes.

Considering sanction regimes against state actors, the literature already examines some targets' characteristics, positing that sanctions are more effective if they are directed at allies

rather than rivals or if they target more democratic regimes.⁷⁴⁰ Research also finds that sanctions are more likely to be enforced and impactful depending on the sender's market share in the targeted country.⁷⁴¹

The dissertation's framework could be applied to sanctions against states by classifying targets as disconnected, connected, and established.⁷⁴² Such approach could provide additional insights to the outcomes of the sanction regimes on North Korea (since 2006, disconnected target), Iran (2005-2013, connected target), and Russia (2014-2022 and since 2022, established target). The approach would combine both material and social effects, as some states are more sensitive to stigmatization than others based on their isolation type.

Further, this dissertation emphasizes several methodological points that could be useful if implemented more systematically in sanctions research. First, the distinction between impact and effectiveness seems important, as a source of criticism in the sanction literature stems from how success rate is measured. Understanding the motives behind sanction regimes can help clarify this distinction. For instance, it can be argued that some sanction regimes on certain states do not actually aim at "regime change" as claimed, but merely seek to weaken an enemy as much as possible, even if these policies actually strengthen the targeted regime.

Second, controlling for all factors acting on the dependent variable—generally, sanctions outcomes—including military interventions and other tools aiming to coerce or incentivize targets, is needed in sanction studies. Third, systematically considering side effects when measuring sanctions' outcomes would also be a desirable development in this literature.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴⁰ Hufbauer et al. 2007, Peksen 2019. Peksen provides a comprehensive review of the sanction literature.

⁷⁴¹ Bapat and Kwon 2015.

⁷⁴² With different selection criteria to measure this variable

⁷⁴³ Some of these needs are highlighted in Peksen (2019).

Seminal studies on sanctions provide different success rates: 34% in Hufbauer et al.⁷⁴⁴ and in 37% in Morgan et al.⁷⁴⁵ for conventional economic sanctions, 22% in Biersteker et al.⁷⁴⁶ for U.N. targeted sanctions, and 40% in Rosenberg et al. for U.S. financial sanctions.⁷⁴⁷ Yet, these rates vary depending on how success is measured and whether intervening variables are controlled for.

Certain studies underline anomalies regarding the rates provided by some of these datasets, positing that success might be statistically inflated.⁷⁴⁸ When success is more narrowly defined, success rates dramatically decline.⁷⁴⁹ The absence of control variables can also lead to surprising claims, such as crediting sanctions on Libya with stopping “the armed suppression of protests,”⁷⁵⁰ while the NATO military intervention had, most likely, a much greater influence in this outcome. Just as advised for studies on terrorist designations, a more holistic approach considering the military, diplomatic, and intelligence tools deployed (or not) in parallel to a sanction regime would provide more accurate assessments of success.

In the sanction literature, the expected outcomes generally reflect foreign policy goals such as altering the target’s behavior in terms of both foreign and domestic policies or undermining its capabilities (policy change, regime change, forcing a reconsideration of military operations, impairing the development in military capabilities, etc.). As suggested by certain

⁷⁴⁴ PIIE dataset. Hufbauer, Elliott, and Oegg 2007.

⁷⁴⁵ TIES dataset, Morgan, Bapat, and Kobayashi 2014.

⁷⁴⁶ Biersteker, Eckert, and Tourinho 2016.

⁷⁴⁷ Rosenberg, Goldman, Drezner, and Solomon-Strauss 2016.

⁷⁴⁸ For, instance, Shahadat and Bergeijk (2012: 4) argue that success is inflated in the PIIE dataset, underlining that the “3rd edition’s methodology in comparison to the methodology used in the 2nd edition is biased in favor of finding positive results for modest policy change, regime change and the use of sanctions to disrupt military adventures and to achieve military impairment.”

⁷⁴⁹ E.g., Biersteker et al 2016, although this study may reflect the limitations of sanctions at the U.N. level when key states do not enforce, as posited in this dissertation for terrorist designations. Using a very high standard of success, an older study advances a particularly low success rate of 5% (Pape 2017).

⁷⁵⁰ Rosenberg et al. 2016: 57.

studies and advocated in this dissertation,⁷⁵¹ systematically considering other motives—such as pleasing domestic constituents or allied regimes particularly close to a specific administration at a certain point in time—would provide a better understanding of the end goals of sanctions.

For instance, the claim that the maximum pressure campaign on Iran led by the Trump administration aimed to trigger a renegotiation of the JCPOA under more favorable terms and the cessation of Iran’s geopolitical activism in the Middle East can be amply disputed.

Finally, negative externalities concomitant to sanction regimes should be considered in the assessment of sanctions’ outcomes. The scope of this dissertation only permitted to examine the consequences of terrorist designations for humanitarian conditions and conflict intensity in one case study. Yet, research on all security designations should systematize weighing the range of negative externalities against the achievements, if any, of these policies’ stated objectives.

Over the past two decades, studies on conventional, targeted, and financial sanctions’ nefarious side effects in target countries have expanded, acknowledging a rise in authoritarianism and state repression, deteriorated governance, worsening health conditions, and increasing poverty and inequalities.⁷⁵² Such outcomes regularly contradict the official objectives justifying the imposition of security designations in the first place. If foreign policy and national security lead the decision-making process, considering these factors should be imperative to determine whether ostracizing pariahs is the right course of action.

⁷⁵¹ E.g., Whang 2011, Tama 2020.

⁷⁵² Peksen 2019.

APPENDIX

Interviews

Adamczyk, Sarah, former Humanitarian Coordinator at the Norwegian Refugee Council, October 23, 2020.

Akande, Laolu, Executive Director of the Christian Association of Nigerian-Americans, August 28, 2013.

Anonymous humanitarian actors in northeast Nigeria.

Anonymous officials at the U.S. Department of State and Department of the Treasury.

Apard, Elodie, Researcher at the French *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement*, December 3, 2020.

Benjamin, Daniel, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State (2009-2012), August 9, 2019.

Blazakis, Jason, Director of the Counterterrorism Finance and Designations Office, Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State (2008-2018), April 23, 2021.

Campbell, John, U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria (2004-2007), March 13, 2015.

Carson, Johnnie, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (2009-2013), June 12, 2019.

Friend, Alice, Principal Director for African Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense (2012-2014), February 12, 2019.

Harris, Grant T., U.S. Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for African Affairs, National Security Council (2011-2015), February 26, 2019.

Leeper, Kerry, Humanitarian Context Analyst at Mercy Corps Nigeria (2018-2020), April 2, 2019.

Nagarajan, Chitra, Senior Conflict Adviser for Northeast Nigeria, Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Program (2013-2016), Center for Civilians in Conflict (2016-2021), July 25, 2019.

Thomas-Greenfield, Linda, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (2013-2017), August 13, 2019.

Table 10: FTOs' capability index

Cases	Mil index	Fin index	Ter index	Mem index	Pol index	Total cap index pre	Mil index2	Fin index2	Ter index2	Mem index2	Pol index2	Total cap index post	Index change
Boko Haram	0.05	0.002	0.1	0.08	0	0.0464	0.2	0.002	0.2	0.08	0	0.0964	No decrease
Ansar Dine	0.05	0.002	0.15	0.02	0	0.0444	0.2	0.002	0.2	0.04	0	0.0884	No decrease
MeK	0.4	0.006	0	0.08	0	0.0972	0	0.006	0	0.04	0.4	0.0892	Decrease
ETA	0.1	0.003	0	0.008	0.1	0.0422	0	0	0	0	0	0	Decrease
RIRA	0.1	0.003	0	0.002	0	0.021	0.1	0.01	0	0.008	0.1	0.0436	No decrease
Islamic State 03-13	0.05	0	0	0.08	0	0.026	0.4	0.02	0.4	0.17	0	0.198	No decrease
Islamic State 13-20	0.4	0.02	0.4	0.17	0	0.198	0.3	0.04	0	0.08	0	0.084	Decrease
Taliban 99-09	0.9	0.2	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.64	0.7	0.02	0.1	0.2	0	0.204	Decrease
Taliban 09-21	0.7	0.02	0.1	0.2	0	0.204	0.7	0.2	0.9	0.6	0.5	0.58	No decrease
IRGC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	No decrease
Hezbollah	0.3	0.02	0.1	0.17	0.1	0.138	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.46	No decrease
Al Qaida	0.15	0.01	0	0.08	0	0.048	0.15	0.002	0	0.04	0	0.0384	Decrease

REFERENCES

- 9/11 Commission. 2004. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Abadie, Alberto, Alexis Diamond, and Jens Hainmueller. 2015. "Comparative politics and the synthetic control method." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (2): 495-510.
- Achilleas, Philippe. 2020. "United Nations and sanctions" in Asada, Masahiko (ed.). 2020. *Economic Sanctions in International Law and Practice* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- ACLED. 2022. "Nigeria." <https://acleddata.com/tag/nigeria/> (last consultation July 2022).
- ACLED. 2022. "The Year in Review 2021." 8 March. <https://acleddata.com/2022/03/08/2021-year-in-review/#exec> (last consultation July 2022).
- Adefuye, Adebowale. 2012. "Nigerian ambassador Adebowale Adefuye: Radical Islamists cannot be defeated by military means alone." *The Hill*, September 20. <https://thehill.com/policy/international/250777-nigerian-ambassador-adebowale-adebye-radical-islamists-cannot-be-defeated-by-military-means-alone?rl=1#ixzz320QOyfMu> (last consultation February 2021).
- AFP. 2021. "Lebanon's Hezbollah chief claims militant group has 100,000 'trained' fighters," October 18, <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20211018-lebanon-hezbollah-chief-declares-militant-group-has-100-000-trained-fighters> (last consultation July 2022).
- Africa News. 2020. "Fact check: Did the U.S. reimpose \$7m bounty on Boko Haram's Shekau?" March 7. <https://www.africanews.com/2020/03/07/fact-check-did-the-us-reimpose-7m-bounty-on-boko-haram-s-shekau/>
- Ahmed, Baba. 2012. "Nord-Mali : quand Ansar Eddine tente de marginaliser Aqmi" *Jeune Afrique*, December 21. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/172963/politique/nord-mali-quand-ansar-eddine-tente-de-marginaliser-aqmi/> (last consultation July 2022).
- Ahmed, Baba. 2015. "Chad imposes state of emergency around Lake Chad," *Associated Press*, November 10.
- Aimen, Dean, Edwina Thompson, and Tom Keatinge, "Draining the Ocean to Catch One Type of Fish: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Global Counter-terrorism Financing Regime," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7:4 (2013): pp. 68-70.
- Aizpeolea, Luis R. 2018. "Las cuentas del terrorismo etarra," *El Pais*, February 22. https://elpais.com/politica/2018/02/21/actualidad/1519238990_863473.html (last consultation July 2022)
- Akwagyiram, Alexis. 2019. "Mercy Corps suspends northeast Nigeria work after army shuts offices." *Reuters*, September 26.
- Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Nelly Lahoud, Daniel Milton, and Bryan Price. 2014. *The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*. Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point.
- Allen, Nathaniel. 2019. "How Boko Haram Has Regained the Initiative and What Nigeria Should Do to Stop It." *War on the Rocks*, December 24.
- Allison, Graham. 1971. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Little Brown.
- Alonso, Rogelio. 2008. "The Spanish Experience of Countering Terrorism: From ETA to al-Qaeda" in Moran, Jon and Mark Phythian. *Intelligence, Security and Policing Post-9/11 : the UK's Response to the "War on Terror."* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alonso, Rogelio. 2011. "Why Do Terrorists Stop? Analyzing Why ETA Members Abandon or Continue with Terrorism." *Studies in conflict and terrorism* 34, no. 9: 696-716.

- Amnesty International. 2012. "Nigeria: Trapped in The Cycle Of Violence"
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/16000/afr440432012en.pdf> (last consultation February 2021).
- Amnesty International. 2015. "Stars on their shoulders. Blood on their hands. War crimes committed by the Nigerian military."
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4416572015ENGLISH.PDF> (last consultation February 2021).
- Anghie, Antony. 1999. *Finding the Peripheries: Sovereignty and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century International Law*, 40 Harv. Int'l L.J. 1.
- Angrist, Joshua David, and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. 2009. *Mostly harmless econometrics: an empiricist's companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Apard, Elodie. 2015a. "Les mots de Boko Haram. Décryptages de discours de Mohammed Yusuf et d'Abubakar Shekau," *Afrique Contemporaine* 255 (3): 43-74.
- Apard, Elodie. 2015b. "Le Jihad en Vidéo." *Politique Africaine*. 2015/2 138, 135-162.
- Asada, Masahiko (ed.). 2020. *Economic Sanctions in International Law and Practice* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Bahney, Benjamin, Howard J. Shatz, Carroll Ganier, Renny McPherson, and Barbara Sude. 2010. "An Economic Analysis of the Financial Records of al-Qa'ida in Iraq." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1026.html> (last consultation April 2022)
- Baldwin, David A. 2016. *Power and international relations: A conceptual approach*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bapat, Navin A., and Bo Ram Kwon. 2015. When are sanctions effective? A bargaining and enforcement framework. *International Organization* 69 (1): 131-62.
- Bapat, Navin A., and T. Clifton Morgan. 2009. Multilateral Versus Unilateral Sanctions Reconsidered: A Test Using New Data, *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 53, Issue 4, December, Pages 1075–1094,
- Barnett, Michael N., and Raymond Duvall. 2005. *Power in global governance*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Barry, Colin M, and Katja Kleinberg. 2015. "Profiting from Sanctions: Economic Coercion and US Foreign Direct Investment in Third-Party States." *International Organization* 69 (4): 881–912.
- Bass, Gary Jonathan. 2000. *Stay the hand of vengeance: The politics of war crimes tribunals*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- BBC. 2011. "Basque group Eta says armed campaign is over," October 20.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-15393014> (last consultation July 2022).
- Beach, Derek and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. 2013. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Beck, Colin and Emily Miner. 2013. "Who Gets Designated a Terrorist and Why?" *Social Forces*. 91(3): 837–872,
- Benjamin, Daniel and Jason M. Blazakis. 2022. "On Iran, Biden should reverse Trump's imaginary statecraft," May 24, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/05/24/iran-nuclear-deal-irgc/> (last consultation July 2022).
- Benjamin, Daniel. 2016. "Giuliani Took Money From a Group That Killed Americans. Does Trump Care?" *Politico*, November 23.

- <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/11/giuliani-mek-terrorist-group-money-bolton-iran-214479/> (last consultation July 2022).
- Bennett, Andrew. 2008. "Process Tracing: a Bayesian Perspective" in Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M, Henry E Brady, and David Collier (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bensimon, Cyril, Madjid Zerrouky, Joan Tilouine, Nathalie Guibert et Charlotte Bozonnet. 2018. "Iyad Ag-Ghali, l'ennemi numéro un de la France au Mali" *Le Monde*, July 27. https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/07/27/mali-iyad-ag-ghali-l-ennemi-numero-un-de-la-france_5336668_3212.html (last consultation July 2022)
- Berger, Miriam. 2020. "Invaders, allies, occupiers, guests: A brief history of U.S. military involvement in Iraq" *The Washington Post*, January 11. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/01/11/invaders-allies-occupiers-guests-brief-history-us-military-involvement-iraq/> (last consultation March 2022).
- Bertrand, Marianne, Esther Duflo, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. How much should we trust differences-in-differences estimates? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119 (1): 249-75.
- Biersteker, Thomas J., Sue E. Eckert, and Marcos Tourinho (eds.). 2016. *Targeted Sanctions: The Impacts and Effectiveness of United Nations Action*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Biersteker, Thomas. 2015. "UN Targeted Sanctions as Signals: Naming and Shaming or Naming and Stigmatizing?" in Richard H. Friman (ed). *The Politics of Leverage in International Relations: Name, Shame, and Sanction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Biglaiser, Glen, and David Lektzian. 2011. The effect of sanctions on U.S. foreign direct investment. *International Organization* 65 (3): 531-51.
- Bindner, Laurence, and Gabriel Poirot. 2016. "ISIS Financing." Center for the Analysis of Terrorism.
- Bisbee et al. 2020. in Judith G. Kelley and Beth A. Simmons, (eds.) *The Power of Global Performance Indicators*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Blanchard, Christopher M. and Carla E. Humud. 2018. "The Islamic State and U.S. Policy" Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, September 25.
- Blanford, Nicholas and Jonathan Spyer. 2017. "Israel raises alarm over advances by Hizbullah and Iran," *Jane's Intelligence Review*.
- Blazakis, Jason M. 2019. "What's The New Terror Financing Executive Order All About?" Just Security, September 17.
- Bosco, David 2014. *Rough Justice: The International Criminal Court in a World of Power Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Bosco, David. 2009. *Five to rule them all: The UN security council and the making of the modern world*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bosco, David. 2013. "Why is the ICC Picking only on Africa?" *The Washington Post* March 29.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977 "Sur le pouvoir symbolique," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, vol. 32, 3: 405–41.
- Boutton, Andrew, and David Carter. 2014. Fair Weather Allies: Terrorism and the Allocation of United States Foreign Aid. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58(7):1144–73.
- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M, Henry E Brady, and David Collier (eds). 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brisard, Jean-Charles., and Damien. Martinez. *Zarqawi : the New Face of Al-Qaeda*. New York: Other Press, 2005.

- Byman, Daniel, and Asfandiyar Mir. 2022. "How Strong Is Al-Qaeda? A Debate" *War on the Rocks*, May 20.
- Byman, Daniel. 2022. "Al-Qaeda After Al-Zawahiri," *Lawfare*, August 2.
- Carish, Enrico and Loraine Rickard-Martin. 2016. "Implementation of United Nations targeted sanctions" in Biersteker, Thomas J., Sue E. Eckert, and Marcos Tourinho (eds.). 2016. *Targeted Sanctions: The Impacts and Effectiveness of United Nations Action*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Carter, Barry E. and Ryan M. Farha. 2013. "Overview and operation of U. S. financial sanctions, including the example of Iran," *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, 44, 3 (Spring): 903-913.
- CBS News. 2016. "Chris Christie puts Hillary Clinton on trial at GOP convention," July 19. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/chris-christie-puts-hillary-clinton-on-trial-at-gop-convention/> (last consultation February 2021).
- CFR editors. 2019. "Iran's Revolutionary Guards," Council on Foreign Relations, May 6 <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/irans-revolutionary-guards> (last consultation July 2022).
- CFR editors. 2020. "The Islamic Republic's Power Centers," Council on Foreign Relations, February 25 <https://www.cfr.org/article/islamic-republics-power-centers> (last consultation July 2022).
- Chandler, Adam. 2015. "The Islamic State of Boko Haram?" *The Atlantic*. Mar. 9.
- Charbonneau, Louis. 2011. "U.N. Council splits U.N. Taliban, Qaeda sanctions list," *Reuters*, June 17. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-un-idUSTRE75G62720110617> (last consultation July 2022).
- Chatterjee, Abhishek. 2013. "Ontology, Epistemology, and Multimethod Research in Political Science." *Philosophy of the social sciences* 43, no. 1: 73–99.
- Chouin, Gerard, Manuel Reinert and Elodie Aparé. 2014. "Religion and body count in the Boko Haram crisis" in Pérouse de Montclos, M.A. (ed.). *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. Leiden: IFRA/ASC West African Politics Series.
- Clark, Mark E. 2007. "An Analysis of the Role of the Iranian Diaspora in the Financial Support System of the Mujahedin-e Khalq" in Costigan, Sean S., and David Gold. *Terrornomics*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.
- CNN. 2014. "Gingrich: Hillary Clinton's Boko Haram problem" May 9. <https://www.cnn.com/2014/05/09/opinion/gingrich-hillary-clinton-boko-haram-terrorist> (last consultation February 2021).
- Coggins, Bridget. 2014. *Power Politics and State Formation in the Twentieth Century: The Dynamics of Recognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Colangelo, Anthony J. 2007. "Constitutional Limits on Extraterritorial Jurisdiction : Terrorism and the Intersection of National and International Law." *Harvard international law journal* 48, no. 1: 121–201.
- Comolli, Virginia. 2015. *Boko Haram Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Congressional Research Service (CRS). 2021. "U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions," Library of Congress, September 17. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46879> (last consultation July 2022).
- Cotter, Anne Grace. 2016. "The Politics of the Terrorist Watch List." Dissertation, University of Michigan.

- Crawford, Neta C and Catherine Lutz. 2019. "Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars: Direct War Deaths in Major War Zones, Afghanistan and Pakistan (October 2001 – October 2019) Iraq (March 2003 – October 2019); Syria (September 2014-October 2019); Yemen (October 2002-October 2019); and Other." Costs of War Project, Brown University.
- Crawford, Neta C. 2013. "Civilian Death and Injury in the Iraq War, 2003-2013." Costs of War Project, Brown University.
- Crenshaw, Martha and Gary LaFree. 2017. *Countering Terrorism*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Crenshaw, Martha. 2010. *The consequences of counterterrorism*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2003. *The "FTO List" and Congress: Sanctioning Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations*. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2009. *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2011. "Why the Haqqani Network is not on the Foreign Terrorist Organizations List: The Politics of Naming and Shaming" *Foreign Affairs* (December 21).
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2012. "Politics, Strategy, and the Haqqani Network" *Small Wars Journal*, September 6.
- Daher, Aurélie. 2019. *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1957. "The Concept of Power." *Behavioral Science* 2 (July): 201–15.
- Daily Sabah. 2021. "U.S. equips YPG terror group in Syria with new armored vehicles." October 4. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/us-equips-ypg-terror-group-in-syria-with-new-armored-vehicles> (last consultation June 2022).
- Daniel, Justin S. 2017. "Blacklisting Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Classified Information, National Security, and Due Process." *University of Pennsylvania law review* 166, no. 1: 213–261.
- Davidson, Jason, and George Shambaugh. 2000. Who's Afraid of Economic Incentives? The Efficacy-Externality Tradeoff. In *Sanctions as Economic Statecraft: Theory and Practice*, edited by Steve Chan and A. Cooper Drury, 37-64. New York: Palgrave.
- Davies, Shawn, Therese Pettersson and Magnus Öberg. 2022. Organized violence 1989-2021 and drone warfare. *Journal of Peace Research* 59(4).
- de Jonge Oudraat, Chantal, and Jean-Luc Marret. 2010. "The Uses and Abuses of Terrorist Designation Lists." Pp. 94-129 in *The Consequences of Counterterrorism*, edited by M. Crenshaw. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- DeYoung, Karen, 2017. "Defense, intelligence officials caution White House on terrorist designation for Iran's Revolutionary Guard" *The Washington Post*, February 8.
- DeYoung, Karen. 2013. "United States designates Ansar Dine a foreign terrorist organization" *The Washington Post*, March 21.
- Doshi et al. 2020. in Kelley, Judith G. and Beth A. Simmons, (eds.). 2020. *The Power of Global Performance Indicators*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Doyle, Charles. 2016. "Terrorist Material Support: An Overview of § 2339A and § 2339B," Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, December 8.
- Drezner, Daniel W. 2015. "Targeted Sanctions in a World of Global Finance." *International Interactions* 41 (4): 755–64.

- Dunne, Timothy, and Reus-Smit, Christian. *The Globalization of International Society* Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Dursun Peksen. 2019. "When Do Imposed Economic Sanctions Work? A Critical Review of the Sanctions Effectiveness Literature," *Defence and Peace Economics*, 30:6, 635-647
- Early, Bryan R. 2015. *Busted Sanctions: Explaining Why Economic Sanctions Fail*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Early, Bryan R., and Keith A Preble. 2020a. "Going Fishing Versus Hunting Whales: Explaining Changes in How the US Enforces Economic Sanctions." *Security studies* 29, no. 2: 231–267.
- Early, Bryan R., and Keith A. Preble. 2020b. "Enforcing US Economic Sanctions: Why Whale Hunting Works." *The Washington Quarterly*, 43:1, 159-175.
- Eck, Kristine and Lisa Hultman. 2007. Violence Against Civilians in War. *Journal of Peace Research* 44(2).
- El Masri, Mirna, and Brian J. Phillips. 2021 "Threat Perception, Policy Diffusion, and the Logic of Terrorist Group Designation." *Studies in conflict and terrorism* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print: 1–24.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica Editors. 2018. "Real Irish Republican Army." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 25 Nov. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Real-Irish-Republican-Army> (last consultation July 2022).
- Englehart, Neil A. 2016. "Non-State Armed Groups as a Threat to Global Security: What Threat, Whose Security?" *Journal of global security studies* 1, no. 2: 171–183.
- European Union. 2014. Press Release: "The EU lists Boko Haram as a terrorist organization," June 2. http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140605_01_en.pdf (last consultation February 2021).
- Fair, Christine. 2005. "Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1: 125-156.
- Fanusie, Yaya J. and Alex Entz. 2017a. "Boko Haram Financial Assessment." Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance, Foundation for Defense of Democracies.
- Fanusie, Yaya J. and Alex Entz. 2017b. "Hezbollah Financial Assessment." Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance, Foundation for Defense of Democracies.
- Fariss, Christopher, Michael Kenwick and Kevin Reuning. 2020. "Latent Human Rights Protection Scores Version 4," <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/RQ85GK>, Harvard Dataverse, V2.
- Farivar, Masood. 2017. "Why Isn't Afghan Taliban on US List of Foreign Terror Groups?" *VOA*, (last consultation March 2021).
- FATF-GIABA-GABAC. 2016. "Terrorist Financing in West and Central Africa." FATF, Paris www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/methodsandtrends/documents/terrorist-financing-west-central-africa.html (last consultation February 2021).
- FATF. 2015. "Financing of the terrorist organisation Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)," FATF, www.fatf-gafi.org/topics/methodsandtrends/documents/financing-of-terrorist-organisation-isil.html (last consultation April 2022).
- Fearon, James D. 1998. Domestic politics, foreign policy, and theories of international relations. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1, 289–313.
- Findley, Michael G., Daniel L. Nielson, and J.C. Sharman. 2015. "Causes of Noncompliance with International Law: A Field Experiment on Anonymous Incorporation," *American Journal of Political Science* 59, 1: 146-161.

- Firestone, Reuven. 2012. “‘Jihadism’ as a New Religious Movement” in Mikael Rothstein and Olav Hammer (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion New Religious Movements*. Cambridge University Press, 263–285.
- Forsdyke, Sara. 2005. *Exile, ostracism, and democracy: The politics of expulsion in ancient Greece*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Fox News. 2014. “Clinton's State Department resisted labeling Boko Haram as terror group,” May 8. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/clintons-state-department-resisted-labeling-boko-haram-as-terror-group> (last consultation February 2021).
- Friman, H. Richard (ed). 2015. *The Politics of Leverage in International Relations: Name, Shame, and Sanction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. BCSIA Studies in International Security. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Gerges, Fawaz A. 2017. *ISIS: a History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gerring, John, and Lee Cojocaru. 2016. “Selecting Cases for Intensive Analysis: A Diversity of Goals and Methods.” *Sociological methods & research* 45, no. 3: 392–423.
- Gerring, John. 2008. “Case Selection for Case-Study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques” in Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M, Henry E Brady, and David Collier (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- George, Roger, and Harvey Rishikof (eds). 2011. *The National Security Enterprise : Navigating the Labyrinth; Foreword by Brent Scowcroft*. Washington, District of Columbia: Georgetown University Press.
- Ghasseminejad, Saeed and Mohammad R. Jahan-Parvar. 2020. The Impact of Financial Sanctions: The Case of Iran 2011-2016. International Finance Discussion Papers 1281.
- Goulka, Jeremiah, Lydia Hansell, Elizabeth Wilke, and Judith Larson. 2009. *The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq: A Policy Conundrum*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Grassley, Chuck. 2016. “Grassley, Vitter Demand Answers In Clinton’s Refusal To Name Boko Haram A Terrorist Organization,” March 10. <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-vitter-demand-answers-clintons-refusal-name-boko-haram-terrorist> (last consultation February 2021).
- Grauvogel, Julia, and Christian von Soest. 2014 . “Claims to Legitimacy Count: Why Sanctions Fail to Instigate Democratisation in Authoritarian Regimes.” *European journal of political research* 53, no. 4: 635–653.
- Grossman, Marc. 2011. “The State Department: Culture as Interagency Destiny?” in George, Roger, and Harvey Rishikof (eds). 2011. *The National Security Enterprise : Navigating the Labyrinth; Foreword by Brent Scowcroft*. Washington, District of Columbia: Georgetown University Press.
- Grundman, V. Rock. 1980. “The New Imperialism: The Extraterritorial Application of United States Law.” *The International lawyer* 14, no. 2: 257–266.
- Guibet Lafaye, Caroline and Pierre Brochard. 2021. “Methodological approach to the evolution of a terrorist organisation: ETA, 1959-2018.” *Quality & Quantity*.
- Haaretz. 2006. “Arab League Declares Support for Lebanon, Calls on UN to Step In,” July 15. <https://www.haaretz.com/2006-07-15/ty-article/arab-league-declares-support-for-lebanon-calls-on-un-to-step-in/0000017f-e18e-d568-ad7f-f3ef269e0000> (last consultation July 2022).
- Hafner-Burton, Emilie M. 2008. Sticks and stones: Naming and shaming the human rights enforcement problem. *International Organization* 62 (4): 689-716.

- Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., Miles Kahler, and Alexander H. Montgomery. 2009. Network analysis for international relations. *International Organization* 63 (3): 559-92.
- Hall, Rodney Bruce and Thomas J. Biersteker. 2002. *The emergence of private authority in global governance*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanania, Richard. 2020. "Ineffective, Immoral, Politically Convenient: America's Overreliance on Economic Sanctions and What to Do about It." Policy Analysis No. 884, Cato Institute, Washington, DC, February 18.
- Hanna, Andrew and Garrett Nada. 2020. "Jihadism: A Generation After 9/11." Wilson Center Report, September 10.
- Hansen, Stig. 2013. *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005–2012*. London: Hurst, 136.
- Harb, Ali. 2019. "How Iranian MEK went from US terror list to halls of Congress" *Middle East Eye*, July 17 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/Iranian-MEK-US-terror-list-halls-congress-PMOI-Iran> (last consultation June 2022).
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Head, Michael. 2016. Global Governance Implications of Terrorism: Using UN Resolutions to Justify Abuse of Basic Rights. In *Transnational Governance: Emerging Models of Global Legal Regulation* (Head, Mann, and Kozlina, eds). London: Routledge.
- Hess, Michel. 2007. Substantiating the Nexus between Diaspora Groups and the Financing of Terrorism in *Terronomics*, Sean Costigan and David Gold (eds), 49–63. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Higazi, Adam, Brandon Kendhammer, Kyari Mohammed, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, and Alex Thurston. 2018. "A Response to Jacob Zenn on Boko Haram and al-Qa'ida." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 12(2), 203-213.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2006. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2018. "Al-Qaeda's Resurrection," CFR Expert Brief, March 6.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2022. "What Zawahiri's Killing Means for al-Qaeda" CFR Expert Brief, August 2.
- Hosenball, Mark and John Shiffman. 2012. 'U.S. Justice Dept urges terror label for Nigerian militants', *Reuters*, May 17.
- Hou, Dongfang, Khusrav Gaibullov, and Todd Sandler. 2020. "Introducing Extended Data on Terrorist Groups (EDTG), 1970 to 2016." *The Journal of conflict resolution* 64, no. 1: 199–225.
- Hufbauer, Gary Clyde, Jeffrey J. Schott, Kimberly Ann Elliott, and Barbara Oegg. 2007. *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Humud, Carla E. 2021. "Lebanon," Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, April 21. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44759#page=31> (last consultation July 2022).
- Humud, Carla E. 2021. "The Islamic State: in focus" Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, May 10.
- Hurd, Ian. "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics." *International Organization* 53, no. 2 (April 1, 1999): 379–408.
- Hussein, Fu'ad. 2004. *Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, from Herat to Baghdad* [documentary]. Beirut: LBC TV, broadcast April 27 and 28 [in Arabic].
- Hussein, Fu'ad. 2005. *Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, from Herat to Baghdad part 3* [documentary]. Beirut: LBC TV, broadcast May 16 [in Arabic].

- International Crisis Group. 2014. "Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency."
- International Crisis Group. 2019. "Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province." Crisis Group Africa Report N°273, May 16.
- International Crisis Group. 2021. "Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM," Report 306/Africa, December 10. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/306-mali-enabling-dialogue-jihadist-coalition-jnim> (last consultation July 2022).
- International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS). 2015. "Middle East and North Africa," *The Military Balance*, 115:1.
- International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS). 2020. "Middle East and North Africa," *The Military Balance*, 120: 348-352.
- International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS). 2020. *The Military Balance*. Routledge.
- Jerez, Andreu. 2006. "Uprooting Terrorism in Spain After Sept. 11," *Deutsche Welle*, September 7. <https://www.dw.com/en/uprooting-terrorism-in-spain-after-sept-11/a-2154926> (last consultation July 2022).
- Jermano, Jill. 2018. "Economic and Financial Sanctions in U.S. National Security Strategy," *PRISM* 7:4:65-73.
- Jihadology. 2017. "New release from the archives of al-Qaidah in the Islamic Maghribs Shaykh Abu al-Hasan Rashid: shariah advice and guidance for the mujahidin of Nigeria." <https://jihadology.net/2017/04/28/new-release-from-the-archives-of-al-qaidah-in-the-islamic-maghribs-shaykh-abu-al-%e1%b8%a5asan-rashid-shariah-advice-and-guidance-for-the-mujahidin-of-nigeria/> (last consultation January 2021).
- Jo, Hyeran, and Beth A. Simmons. 2016. Can the international criminal court deter atrocity? *International Organization* 70 (3): 443-75.
- Jo, Hyeran, Brian Phillips, and Joshua Alley. 2021. "Countering the Adaptive: Can Sanctions on Terrorist Groups Work?" Manuscript, Texas A&M University, University of Essex, and University of Virginia.
- Jo, Hyeran, Phillips, Brian J, and Alley, Joshua. 2020. "Can Blacklisting Reduce Terrorist Attacks?: The Case of the US Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) List." In *The Power of Global Performance Indicators*, 271–299. Cambridge University Press.
- John, Mark. 2009. "EU takes Iran opposition group off terror list," *Reuters*, January 26. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Mojahedin_Organization_of_Iran#cite_note-Reuters2009-337 (last consultation June 2022).
- Jones, Seth G., James Dobbins, Daniel Byman, Christopher S. Chivvis, Ben Connable, Jeffrey Martini, Eric Robinson, and Nathan Chandler. 2017. "Rolling Back the Islamic State." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1912.html
- Jordan, Jenna. 2019. *Leadership Decapitation: Strategic Targeting of Terrorist*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Joscelyn, Thomas. 2014. "Al Qaeda's general command disowns the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham." *The Long War Journal*, February 3.
- Joscelyn, Thomas. 2016. "Analysis: Analysis: Al Nusrah Front rebrands itself as Jabhat Fath Al Sham," *FDD's Long War Journal*, July 28.
- Kaempfer, William H., and Anton D. Lowenberg. 1992. *International Economic Sanctions: A Public Choice Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Kahler, Miles, and David A. Lake. 2003. *Governance in a global economy: Political authority in transition*. Oxford; Princeton, NJ:: Princeton University Press.

- Kahler, Miles. 2009. "Collective action and clandestine networks: the case of Al Qaeda" in Mile Kahler (ed.), *Networked Politics: Agency, Power, and Governance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kahler, Miles. 2013. Rising powers and global governance: Negotiating change in a resilient status quo. *International Affairs* 89 (3): 711-29.
- Kassim, Abdulbasit, Michael Nwankpa, and David Cook. 2018. *The Boko Haram Reader: from Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press2.
- Kelley, Judith G. 2017. *Scorecard Diplomacy: Grading States to Influence their Reputation and Behavior*. Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.
- Kelley, Judith G. and Beth A. Simmons, (eds.). 2020. *The Power of Global Performance Indicators*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kempster, Norman. 1997. "U.S. Designates 30 Groups as Terrorists." *Los Angeles Times*, October 9. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-oct-09-mn-40874-story.html> (last consultation June 2022).
- Keohane, Robert O. 1984. *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Keohane, Robert O. 2002. *Power and governance in a partially globalized world*. 1st ed. New York; London: Routledge.
- Keohane, Robert O., Joseph S. Nye. 1977. *Power and interdependence: World politics in transition*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Kepel, Gilles. 2003. *Jihad. Expansion et déclin de l'islamisme*. 2nd ed. Paris: Gallimard.
- Kessler, Glenn. 2014. "Boko Haram: Inside the State Department debate over the 'terrorist' label." *The Washington Post*, May 19.
- King, Nigel, and Christine Horrocks. 2010. *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Kirdar, M.J. 2011. Al Qaeda in Iraq. Publication. Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2011. Web. 24 Nov. 2014. 3-5.
- KNOEMA. 2020. "U.S. Foreign Military Financing Account Summaries by Country" <https://public.knoema.com/fanojpc/u-s-foreign-military-financing-account-summaries-by-country> (last consultation January 2021).
- Koskinas, Ioannis. 2015. "Call the Taliban What They Are — Terrorists" *Foreign Policy*, February 19.
- Koven, Barnett S. 2020. "Re-Evaluating Special Operations Forces-Led Counterterrorism Efforts." Joint Special Operations University Press (March). <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=836794>
- Laurens, Henry and Mireille Delmas-Marty. 2010. *Terrorism: Histoire et Droit*. Paris: CNRS Edition.
- Leary, Mark R. 2001. *Interpersonal Rejection*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lederer, Edith M. 2020. "Over 10,000 Islamic State fighters active in Iraq, Syria as attacks 'significantly' increase: UN." *Military Times*, August 25.
- Legrand, Tim. 2018. More Symbolic—More Political—Than Substantive: An Interview with James R. Clapper on the U.S. Designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30:356–72.

- Leuprecht, Christian, Olivier Walther, David B. Skillicorn, and Hillary Ryde-Collins. 2015. "Hezbollah's Global Tentacles: A Relational Approach to Convergence with Transnational Organised Crime." *Terrorism and Political Violence*.
- Levallois, Agnès and Jean-Claude Cousseran. 2017. "The financing of the 'Islamic State' in Iraq and Syria" Directorate-General for External Policies, European Parliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/603835/EXPO_IDA%282017%29603835_EN.pdf (last consultation April 2022).
- LeVan, Carl et al. 2012. "Letter to Secretary Clinton from Nigeria Scholars," May 21.
- Levitt, Matthew. 2007. "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God," in Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas (eds.) *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Levitt, Matthew. 2013. *Hezbollah : the Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Levitt, Matthew. 2021. "The Role of the Islamic State in the Assad Regime's Strategy for Regime Survival: How and Why the Assad Regime Supported the Islamic State." The Washington Institute, policy analysis series.
- Lewis, Dustin A. and Naz K. Modirzadeh. 2021. "Taking into Account the Potential Effects of Counterterrorism Measures on Humanitarian and Medical Activities: Elements of an Analytical Framework for States Grounded in Respect for International Law" HLS PILAC (May).
- Loertscher, Seth, Daniel Milton, Bryan Price, and Cynthia Loertscher. 2020. *The Terrorist Lists: An Examination of the U.S. Government's Counterterrorism Designation Efforts*. Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point.
- Lukes, Steven. 1974. *Power: A Radical View*. London: Macmillan.
- MacAskill, Ewen. 2010. "White House shifts Afghanistan strategy towards talks with Taliban," *The Guardian* July 19. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/19/obama-afghanistan-strategy-taliban-negotiate> (last consultation July 2022).
- Mahmoud, Omar. 2018. "Local, Global, or in Between? Boko Haram's Messaging, Strategy, Membership, and Support Networks" Zenn, Jacob (ed.). 2018. *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines : Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*. West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, United States Military Academy.
- Manners, Ian. 2002. Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2):235–58.
- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2016. "Hezbollah." Stanford University <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/hezbollah> (last consultation July 2022).
- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. "Ansar Dine." Stanford University <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/ansar-dine> (last consultation July 2022).
- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. "Boko Haram". Stanford University. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/boko-haram> (last consultation July 2022).
- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. "Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen." Stanford University <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/jamaat-nusrat-al-islam-wal-muslimeen> (last consultation July 2022).

- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. “Real Irish Republican Army.” Stanford University <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/real-irish-republican-army> (last consultation July 2022).
- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2018. “The Afghan Taliban.” Stanford University <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban> (last consultation July 2022).
- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2019. “Al Qaida.” Stanford University.
- Mapping Militant Organizations. 2021. “Islamic State.” Stanford University. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state> (last consultation July 2022).
- Masters, Jonathan. 2014. “Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK) Backgrounder.” Council on Foreign Relations <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/mujahadeen-e-khalq-mek> (last consultation June 2022).
- Mazziotta, Matteo, and Adriano Pareto. 2013. “Methods For Constructing Composite Indices: One For All or All For One?” *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica*, Volume LXVII n. 2 Aprile-Giugno.
- McDonald, Henry. 2002. “Real IRA makes millions from smuggling deals,” *The Guardian*, January 5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/jan/06/northernireland> (last consultation July 2022).
- McDonnell, Faith. 2013. “Boko Haram: Terrorists With or Without Designation” *Juicy Ecumenism*, August 1st. <https://juicyecumenism.com/2013/08/01/boko-haram-terrorists-with-or-without-designation/> (last consultation March 2021).
- McGreal, Chris. 2012. “MEK decision: multimillion-dollar campaign led to removal from terror list,” *The Guardian*, September 21.
- Mendelsohn, Barak and Colin Clarke. 2021. “How Strong Is Al-Qaeda? A Debate” *War on the Rocks*, February 24.
- Mendelsohn, Barak. 2016. *The Al-Qaeda Franchise: the Expansion of Al-Qaeda and Its Consequences*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Mendelsohn, Barak. 2019. *Jihadism Constrained: the Limits of Transnational Jihadism and What It Means for Counterterrorism*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Merat, Arron. 2018. “Terrorists, cultists – or champions of Iranian democracy? The wild wild story of the MEK,” *The Guardian*, November 9.
- Mikecz, Robert. 2012. Interviewing Elites: addressing methodological issues. *Qualitative inquiry*, 18(6), 482-493.
- Mills, Kurt. 2015. *International Responses to Mass Atrocities in Africa*. Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Milner, Helen V., and Andrew Moravcsik. 2009. *Power, interdependence, and nonstate actors in world politics*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Milton, Daniel. 2021. *Structure of a State: Captured Documents and the Islamic State’s Organizational Structure*. Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point.
- Mittelman, James. 2000. *The globalization syndrome: Transformation and resistance*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Mittelman, James. 2010. *Hyperconflict*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Modirzadeh, Naz, Dustin Lewis, and Claude Bruderlein. 2011. Humanitarian Engagement under Counter-Terrorism: A Conflict of Norms and the Emerging Policy Landscape. *International Review of the Red Cross* 93(883):623–47.

- Mohammed, Kyari. 2014. "The Message and Methods of Boko Haram" in Pérouse de Monclos, M.A. (ed.). *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. Leiden: IFRA/ASC West African Politics Series.
- Moret, Erica. 2021. "Time to act: harmonizing global initiatives and technology-based innovations addressing de-risking at the interfacing sanctions-counterterrorism-humanitarian nexus", *International sanctions: improving implementation through better interface management*. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: 74-82.
- Morgan, T. C., Navin Bapat, and Yoshiharu Kobayashi. 2014. "Threat and imposition of economic sanctions 1945–2005: Updating the TIES dataset." *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 31(5), 541–558.
- Morse, Julia C. 2019. "Blacklists, Market Enforcement, and the Global Regime to Combat Terrorist Financing." *International organization* 73.3: 511–545.
- Mroue, Bassem. 2019. "US sanctions squeezing Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon." *Associated Press*, October 4. <https://apnews.com/article/economy-financial-markets-ap-top-news-international-news-lebanon-a37836f1f39f40028710c2ad226a7760> (last consultation July 2021).
- Murphy, Tim. 2011. "Peter King's Terrorism Problem." *Mother Jones*, January 19. <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/01/peter-king-terrorism-problem/> (last consultation July 2022).
- Nakhoul, Samia. 2015. "Saddam's former army is secret of Baghdadi's success" *Reuters* June 16.
- Nellemann, C., Henriksen, R., Pravettoni, R., Stewart, D., Kotsoy, M., Schlingemann, Shaw, M. et Reitano, T. (Eds). 2018. "Atlas Mondial des Flux Illicites." RHIPTO-INTERPOL-GI.
- Nephew, Richard. 2020. "Implementation of sanctions United States" in Asada, Masahiko (ed.). 2020. *Economic Sanctions in International Law and Practice* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Nigerian Watch. 2018. <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/> (last consultation: March 2018).
- Noack, R. 2019. The State Department Designates Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. *American Journal of International Law*, 113(3), 609-613.
- Norwegian Refugee Council. 2018a. "Principles Under Pressure: The Impact of Counterterrorism Measures and Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism on Principled Humanitarian Action."
- Norwegian Refugee Council. 2018b. CT-CVE Research Report (unpublished report).
- Nossiter, Adam, and David Kirkpatrick. 2014. "Abduction of Girls an Act Not Even Al Qaeda Can Condone," *The New York Times*, May 7. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/08/world/africa/abduction-of-girls-an-act-not-even-al-qaeda-can-condone.html?_r=0
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence. 2022. *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*. Washington D.C., March 8.
- Ogala, Emmanuel. 2012. "Boko Haram Gets N40million Donation From Algeria" *Premium Times*, May 13 <http://saharareporters.com/news-page/boko-haram-gets-n40million-donation-algeria-premium-times?page=1> (last consultation February 2021).
- Onuoha, Freedom. 2018. "Anatomy of Boko Haram: The Rise and Decline of a Violent Group in Nigeria." *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2008. *Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ostovar, Afshon. 2019. "Designating Iranian military unit a 'terrorist organization' will make U.S. relations with Iran more difficult. Here's how." *The Washington Post*, April 8.

- Ozkececi-Taner, Binnur. 2017. "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. September 26.
- Pape, Robert A. 1997. "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work." *International Security* 22 (2): 90–136.
- Pape, Robert. 2005. *Dying to win: the strategic logic of suicide terrorism*. New York: Random House.
- Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine. 2016. "A Sectarian Jihad in Nigeria: The Case of Boko Haram." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27 (5): 878.
- Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine. 2020. "Lectures" *Politique étrangère*, 3(3), 197-201.
- Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine. 2021. "Les groupes djihadistes au Sahel: Une communication globale à l'épreuve des réalités locales," *Étude* 87, IRSEM, October.
- Phillips, Brian J. "What Is a Terrorist Group? Conceptual Issues and Empirical Implications." *Terrorism and political violence* 27, no. 2 (2015): 225–242.
- Phillips, Brian J. 2019. Foreign Terrorist Organization Designation, International Cooperation, and Terrorism. *International Interactions* 45 (2): 316–43.
- Pillar, Paul. 2001. *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press.
- Poling, Caitlin C. 2013. "U.S Congress and Boko Haram" in Ioannis Mantzikos (ed.). *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*. Bristol, UK: e-International Relations.
- Poon, Kai-Tak, and Wong, Wing-Yan. 2018. "Turning a Blind Eye to Potential Costs: Ostracism Increases Aggressive Tendency." *Psychology of Violence*.
- Prieto Curiel, Rafael, Olivier Walther, and Neave O'Clery. 2020. "Uncovering the Internal Structure of Boko Haram through Its Mobility Patterns." *Applied Network Science* 5.1: 1–23.
- Quinn, Andrew, and Chris Allbritton. 2011. "Clinton Says U.S. Officials Have Met with Haqqanis," *Reuters*, October 21. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-60014720111021> (last consultation August 2022).
- Ranstorp, Magnus and Paul Wilkinson. 2013. *Terrorism and Human Rights*. London: Routledge.
- Rassler, Don. 2018. *The Islamic State and Drones: Supply Scale and Future Threats*. West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center.
- Reinert, Manuel and Samuel Hickey. 2021. "Trump changed how the U.S. assigns the label 'terrorist.' Can Biden change it back?" *The Washington Post*, February 12.
- Reinert, Manuel. 2014. "Boko Haram: a chronology" in Pérouse de Montclos, M.A. (ed.). *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. Leiden: IFRA/ASC West African Politics Series.
- Reinhard, Scott and David Zucchini. 2021. "20 Years of Defense, Erased by the Taliban in a Few Months." *The New York Times*, August 14. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/08/14/world/asia/afghanistan-maps-taliban.html> (last consultation July 2022).
- Rempfer, Kyle. 2019. "Low Aim or Intel Failure? ISIS' Last Stand Shows the Difficulty in Estimating Enemy Manpower." *Military Times*, March 27.
- Rennack, Dianne E. 2015. "State Sponsors of Acts of International Terrorism—Legislative Parameters: In Brief," Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, November 19.
- Reno, Will. 2021. "Unmasking Boko Haram: exploring global Jihad in Nigeria," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 32:1, 173-176.

- Reuters. 2011. "U.S. moves to freeze assets of two ETA members," March 22.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/spain-eta-usa/u-s-moves-to-freeze-assets-of-two-eta-members-idUSN2218747520110322> (last consultation July 2022).
- Riedel, Bruce O. 2010. *The Search for Al Qaeda Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.
- Rigal, Christelle. 2013. "Armed Groups' Holdings of Guided Light Weapons" *Small Arms Survey Research Notes*, Number 31, June.
- Roberts, Natalie. 2017. "Raising the alert in Borno State, north-eastern Nigeria" *Humanitarian Exchange* Number 70, October. London: Humanitarian Practice Network.
- Robinson, Kali. 2022. "Hezbollah Backgrounder." Council on Foreign Relations
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah> (last consultation July 2022).
- Rock, Jason L. 2016. "The funding of Boko Haram and Nigeria's actions to stop it." Master Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School
- Roetman, Tim Jan, Marie Migeon and Véronique Dudouet 2019. "Les groupes armés salafidjihadistes et la (dés)escalade des conflits : Le cas d'Ansar Dine au Mali. Rapport d'étude de cas." Berlin: Fondation Berghof.
- Roggio, Bill. 2021. "Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan" *The Long War Journal*.
<https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan> (last consultation July 2022).
- Rogin, Josh. 2014. "Hillary Clinton's Boko Haram Fail" *Daily Beast*, April 14.
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/hillary-clintons-boko-haram-fail> (last consultation February 2021).
- Rome, Henry. 2020. "Iran's Defense Spending," *The Iran Primer*, United States Institute for Peace, June 17.
- Rosenberg, Elizabeth, Zachary K. Goldman, Daniel Drezner and Julia Solomon-Strauss. 2016. "The New Tools Of Economic Warfare," *Center for a New American Security*.
- Rosenberg, Elizabeth, and Jordan Tama. 2019. "Strengthening the Economic Arsenal," *Center for a New American Security*.
- Rosenzweig, David. 1999. "15 Held on Charges of Helping Alleged Terrorists Enter U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, March 17. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-mar-17-me-18221-story.html> (last consultation June 2022).
- Rujouleh, Ruwan. 2017. "Syria's Civil War: What are the Main Factions?" Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. <https://institute.global/policy/syrias-civil-war-what-are-main-factions> (last consultation March 2022).
- Said, Wadie E. 2011. "The Material Support Prosecution and Foreign Policy," *Indiana Law Journal* 86:543-593.
- Said, Wadie E. 2021. "Material Support Prosecutions and their Inherent Selectivity," 27 MICH. J. RACE & L. 163
- Said, Wadie. 2015. *Crimes of Terror: The Legal and Political Implications of Federal Terrorism Prosecutions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Saunders, Elizabeth N. 2009. "Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy," *International Security* 34, no. 2: 121.
- Schroeder, Matt. 2022. "The Illicit Possession and Transfer of MANPADS: A Global Assessment." Small Arms Survey blog post, June 10.

- Senate of France. 2013. "Rappel des principaux faits intervenus depuis le précédent rapport 'Mali : comment gagner la paix,'" April 23. <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r12-720/r12-7204.html#fn8> (last consultation July 2022).
- Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee, Muhammad, and Peter Bergeijk. 2012. "Reconsidering Economic Sanctions Reconsidered. A Detailed Analysis of the Peterson Institute Sanction Database," *International Institute of Social Studies Working Paper No. 549*.
- Shapiro, Julie B. 2008. "The Politicization of the Designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations: The Effect on the Separation of Powers." *Cardozo Public Law, Policy & Ethics Journal* 6 (3): 547.
- Simmons, Beth A. 2001. "The International Politics of Harmonization: The Case of Capital Market Regulation." *International Organization*. 55 (3): 589–620.
- Singer, J. David, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey. 1972. "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965." in Bruce Russett (ed) *Peace, War, and Numbers*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 19-48.
- SIPRI. 2021. Military Expenditure Database. <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri> (last consultation July 2022).
- Slawotsky, Joel. "U.S. Extraterritorial Jurisdiction in an Age of International Economic Strategic Competition." *Georgetown journal of international law* 52, no. 2 (2021): 427–.
- Small Arms Survey. 2001. *Small Arms Survey 2001: Profiling the Problem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Small Arms Survey. 2008. *Small Arms Survey 2008: Risk and Resilience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Small Arms Survey. 2013. "Guided Light Weapons Reportedly Held by Non-state Armed Groups 1998– 2013." Database. Geneva: Small Arms Survey.
- START (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism). 2022. Global Terrorism Database 1970 – 2020. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd> (last consultation July 2022).
- Steil, Benn, and Robert E. Litan 1950. 2006. *Financial statecraft: The role of financial markets in American foreign policy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Stein, Chris. 2014. "Nigerian Military Training Cancellation Baffles US Experts," VOA, December 3. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/nigerian-military-training-cancellation-baffles-us-experts> (last consultation March 2021).
- Stewart, Phil, and Lesley Wroughton. 2014. "How Boko Haram is beating U.S. efforts to choke its financing," *Reuters*, July 1.
- Stone, Randall. 2011. *Controlling Institutions: International Organizations and the World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strange, Susan. 1996. *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*. Vol. 49. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Strode, Tom. 2012. "Nigeria's persecuted Christians need help from U.S., ERLC says" *Baptist Press*, July 18. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/nigerias-persecuted-christians-need-help-from-u-s-erlc-says/> (last consultation March 2021).
- Suhrke, Astri. 2018. "Lessons from Bonn: Victors' peace?" *Accord*, issue 27.
- Sullivan, Colleen. 2018. "Real Irish Republican Army." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 25 Nov. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Real-Irish-Republican-Army> (last consultation July 2022).

- Talley, Ian and Benoit Faucon. 2020. "Islamic State, Defeated U.S. Foe, Still Brims with Cash, Ambition." *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18.
- Tama, Jordan. 2016. Working Paper, SIS Security Research Cluster. "The Domestic and International Drivers of Legislative Action on Sanctions."
- Tama, Jordan. 2020. Forcing the President's Hand: How the US Congress Shapes Foreign Policy through Sanctions Legislation. *Foreign Policy Analysis* 16, 3 (2020): 397-416.
- Tansey, Oisn. 2007. "Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling." *PS: Political Science Politics* 40, no. 4 (October): 765-772.
- Terry, Patrick C.R. 2020. "Enforcing U.S. Foreign Policy by Imposing Unilateral Secondary Sanctions: Is Might Right in Public International Law?" *Pacific Rim law & policy journal* 30, no. 1: 1-27.
- The White House. 1995. "Executive Order 12947: Prohibiting Transactions with Terrorists Who Threaten to Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process," January 25.
- The White House. 1999. "Executive Order 13129: Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With the Taliban," July 4. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-1999-07-07/pdf/99-17444.pdf> (last consultation July 2022).
- The White House. 2002. "Executive Order 13268: Termination of Emergency With Respect to the Taliban and Amendment of Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001" July 2 <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/WCPD-2002-07-08/pdf/WCPD-2002-07-08-Pg1129.pdf> (last consultation July 2022).
- The White House. 2014. Fact Sheet: U.S. Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight against Boko Haram, October 14. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/10/14/fact-sheet-us-efforts-assist-nigerian-government-its-fight-against-boko> (last consultation March 2021).
- Thomas, Clayton. 2021. "Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for Congress," Library of Congress, November 2, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46955> (last consultation July 2022).
- Thurston, Alexander. *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*. E-book, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- U.N. Security Council Consolidated List. 2021. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/un-sc-consolidated-list> (last consultation July 2021)
- U.N. Security Council. 1999. Resolution 1267. Available at https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2016-03/UNSC_1267.pdf (last consultation July 2022).
- U.N. Security Council. 2001. "Resolution 1373: Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts," September 28.
- U.N. Security Council. 2001. Resolution 1373 "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts," September 28.
- U.N. Security Council. 2011. Resolution 1988. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1988> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.N. Security Council. 2015. "Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Deletes Two Individuals from Its Sanctions List," September 28. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12060.doc.htm> (last consultation March 2022).
- U.N. Security Council. 2021. Consolidated List. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/un-sc-consolidated-list> (last consultation July 2021).

- U.S. Congress, House. 2012. “H.R. 4310, 112th Cong. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013.” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/4310/text> (last consultation February 2021)
- U.S. Congress, House. 2012. “H.R. 5822, 112th Cong. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act.” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/5822?r=27&s=1> (last consultation February 2021).
- U.S. Congress, House. 2013. “H.R.3209, 113th Cong. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act.” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/3209> (last consultation February 2021).
- U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2012. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights. U.S. Policy Toward Nigeria: West Africa’s Troubled Titan, July 10. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2014. Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, November 13. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2016. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade. Boko Haram: The Islamist Insurgency in West Africa, February 24. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Homeland Security. 2011. *Boko Haram Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland*. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Congress, House. Committee on Homeland Security. 2012. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, Boko Haram—Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland Hearing, 30 November 2011. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Congress, Senate. 2012. “S.3249, 112th Cong. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act.” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/senate-bill/3249> (last consultation February 2021).
- U.S. Congress, Senate. 2013. “S.198, 113th Cong. Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act.” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/198> (last consultation February 2021).
- U.S. Congress, Senate. Committee on Foreign Affairs. 2015. Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs, #BringBackOurGirls: Addressing The Threat Of Boko Haram, May 14, 2014. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Defense. 2003. “Secretary Rumsfeld Joint Media Availability with President Karzai.” Available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20040627022117/http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030501-secdef0159.html> (last consultation June 2022).
- U.S. Department of Defense. 2014. “Joint Publication 3-26: Counterterrorism.” Available at <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=759133> (last consultation June 2022).
- U.S. Department of Defense. 2016. Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Other Security Cooperation Historical Facts.
- U.S. Department of State. 1994. “Report on the People’s Mojahedin of Iran,” October 28. Available at http://iran.org/news/1994_10-State-Dept-MEK-report.htm (last consultation June 2022).

- U.S. Department of State. 2004b. “Foreign Terrorist Organization: Designation of Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad and Aliases,” October 15 <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/37130.htm> (last consultation March 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2004a. “Musab al-Zarqawi Letter Obtained by United States Government in Iraq,” <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm> (last consultation March 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2012a. “Report to Congress on the Haqqani Network,” September 28. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2012/09/197474.htm> (last consultation August 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2012b. “Delisting of the Mujahedin-e Khalq,” September 28. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/09/198443.htm> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2013. “Terrorist Designations of Ansar al-Dine.” <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/03/206493.htm> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2014. Boko Haram and U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance to Nigeria, May 14. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/05/226072.htm> (last consultation March 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2015. Country Reports on Terrorism <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/258249.pdf> (last consultation March 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2016. Foreign Military Financing Account Summary. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14560.htm> (last consultation March 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2018. “State Department Terrorist Designation of Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM),” September 5. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designation-of-jamaat-nusrat-al-islam-wal-muslimin-jnim/index.html> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2019a. Country Reports on Terrorism. https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Country_Reports_on_Terrorism_2020.pdf (last consultation March 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2019b. “Designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,” April 8. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/designation-of-the-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps/index.html> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2020. Country Reports on Terrorism. https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Country_Reports_on_Terrorism_2020.pdf (last consultation March 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2021. U.S. Security Cooperation with Nigeria. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-nigeria/> (last consultation March 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2021a. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm> (last consultation February 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2021b. “Human Rights and Democracy” <https://www.state.gov/policy-issues/human-rights-and-democracy/> (last consultation February 2021).
- U.S. Department of State. 2021c. “Revocation of the Terrorist Designations of Ansarallah,” February 12, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/revocation-of-the-terrorist-designations-of-ansarallah/> (last consultation August 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2021d. “Revocation of the Terrorist Designations of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Additional Terrorist Designations,” February 12, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/revocation-of-the-terrorist-designations-of-ansarallah/> (last consultation August 2022).

- U.S. Department of State. 2022. “Revocation of Five Foreign Terrorist Organizations Designations and the Delisting of Six Deceased Individuals as Specially Designated Global Terrorists,” May 20. <https://www.state.gov/revocation-of-five-foreign-terrorist-organizations-designations-and-the-delisting-of-six-deceased-individuals-as-specially-designated-global-terrorists/#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20Department%20of%20State,Gama'a%20al%2DIslamiyya> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2022a. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/> (last consultation June 2022).
- U.S. Department of State. 2022b. “Executive Order 13224” <https://www.state.gov/executive-order-13224/> (last consultation June 2022).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2021. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2020.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2020. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2019.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, 2019. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2018.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2018. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2017.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2017. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2016.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2016. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2015.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2015. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2014.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2012. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2011.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2005. Terrorist Assets Report for Calendar Year 2004.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2002. “Contributions by the Department of the Treasury to the Financial War on Terrorism,” September. <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/documents/2002910184556291211.pdf> (last consultation July 2021).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2002. “Secretary Paul O’Neil - Remarks on Terrorist Financing Designations.” February 26, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/po1047> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2003. “Treasury Designates Six Al-Qaida Terrorists,” September 24 <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js757> (last consultation March 2022).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2003. “Treasury Designates Six Al-Qaida Terrorists,” September 24 <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js757> (last consultation March 2022).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2005. “Al-Zarqawi Financier Designated by the Treasury,” April 13 <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js2370> (last consultation March 2022).

- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2011. “Fact Sheet: Combating the Financing of Terrorism, Disrupting Terrorism at its Core,” September 8. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/tg1291> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2017. “Treasury Designates the IRGC under Terrorism Authority and Targets IRGC and Military Supporters under Counter-Proliferation Authority,” October 13. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0177> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2019. “Treasury Designates China as a Currency Manipulator,” August 5. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm751> (last consultation September 2021).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2019. “Treasury Targets Iranian-Backed Hizballah Officials for Exploiting Lebanon’s Political and Financial System” July 9, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm724> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2021. “Treasury Sanctions International Financial Networks Supporting Terrorism.” September 15, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0362> (last consultation July 2022).
- U.S. Supreme Court 2010. *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*, 561 U.S. 1.
- Ugarte Gastaminza, Josu (ed.). 2018. *La bolsa y la vida : La extorsión y la violencia de ETA contra el mundo empresarial*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros.
- United Nations Development Programme. 2021. “Assessing the impact of conflict on development in north-east Nigeria.” Abuja: UNDP.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. “Global Appeal, 2018–2019.” Geneva: UNHCR.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2019. “North-East Nigeria Humanitarian Situation Update,” Abuja: UNOCHA, May 31.
- Varin, Caroline. 2016. *Boko Haram and the War on Terror*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Visoka, Gözim, John Doyle, and Edward Newman (eds.). *Routledge Handbook of State Recognition* / Edited by Gözim Visoka, John Doyle and Edward Newman. London ;: Routledge, 2020.
- Waldman, Matt. 2010. “Dangerous Liaisons with the Afghan Taliban,” *United States Institute of Peace*,
- Weiss, Caleb. 2017. “Al Qaeda linked to more than 250 West African attacks in 2016.” *The Long War Journal*, January 7. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/01/over-250-al-qaeda-linked-attacks-in-west-africa-in-2016.php> (last consultation July 2022).
- Weiss, Thomas G. 1999. “Sanctions as a Foreign Policy Tool: Weighing Humanitarian Impulses.” *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (5): 499–509.
- Welna, David and Colin Dwyer. 2020. “U.S. Signs Peace Deal With Taliban After Nearly 2 Decades Of War In Afghanistan,” *NPR*, February 29. <https://www.npr.org/2020/02/29/810537586/u-s-signs-peace-deal-with-taliban-after-nearly-2-decades-of-war-in-afghanistan> (last consultation July 2022).
- Wendt, Alexander. 1999. *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge, UK; New York;: Cambridge University Press.
- Whang, Taehee, and Hannah June Kim. 2015. International signaling and economic sanctions. *International Interactions* 41 (3): 427–52.
- Whang, Taehee. 2011. “Playing to the Home Crowd? Symbolic Use of Economic Sanctions in the United States.” *International Studies Quarterly* 55 (3): 787–801.

- Williams Kipling D. and Lisa Zadro. 2001. "Ostracism: On Being Ignored, Excluded, and Rejected" in Leary, Mark R. *Interpersonal Rejection*. New York: Oxford University Press USA - OSO.
- Williams, Kipling D. 2001. *Ostracism: The power of silence*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Williams, Kipling D. 2009. Ostracism: A temporal need-threat model. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* Vol. 41, pp. 275–314. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Wong, Edward and Eric Schmitt. 2019. "Trump Designates Iran's Revolutionary Guards a Foreign Terrorist Group," *The New York Times*, April 8.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-revolutionary-guard-corps.html> (last consultation July 2022).
- Young, Joseph. 2019. "Measuring Terrorism." *Terrorism and political violence* 31, no. 2: 323–345.
- Zarate, Juan C. 2013. *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Zehorai, Itai. 2018. "The Richest Terror Organizations in the World" *Forbes International*, January 24.
- Zenn, Jacob (ed.). 2018. *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines : Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*. West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, United States Military Academy.
- Zenn, Jacob. 2020a. *Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Incorporated.
- Zenn, Jacob. 2020b. Boko Haram's Conquest for the Caliphate: How Al Qaeda Helped Islamic State Acquire Territory. *Studies in conflict and terrorism*. 43 (2), 89–122.