

This article was downloaded by: [David Malet]

On: 05 May 2015, At: 17:58

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Terrorism and Political Violence

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ftpv20>

Foreign Fighter Mobilization and Persistence in a Global Context

David Malet^a

^a School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Published online: 05 May 2015.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: David Malet (2015): Foreign Fighter Mobilization and Persistence in a Global Context, *Terrorism and Political Violence*

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2015.1032151>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Foreign Fighters

Foreign Fighter Mobilization and Persistence in a Global Context

DAVID MALET

School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne,
Melbourne, Australia

Although foreign fighting is hardly new, scholarly research on the phenomenon is only a decade old. Since 2005, there has also been a dramatic rise in the number of transnational insurgents fighting in the Middle East, and they appear to have become the face of the jihad movement. However, of the dozens of foreign fighter contingents around the world in recent decades, only about half have been Islamists. In this article, I contend that the difference between the other contemporary and historical foreign fighter groups and the jihadis is not one of mobilization or effectiveness, but of persistence. Most other foreign fighters demobilized at the end of their conflicts and reintegrated. I argue that the primary factor that accounts for the persistence of the jihadis was the policies of their home and host states that prevented reintegration and created cohorts of stateless, and now professionalized, actors who perpetuate in weakly-governed conflict zones. In presenting this argument, I first attempt to establish a common working definition of foreign fighter based on the first decade of discourse in this emerging field of study, and present a comparative examination of the largest recorded foreign fighter mobilizations.

Keywords diaspora, foreign fighter, jihadis

Most accounts of the prominence of foreign fighters in conflict states—accorded high profiles because of their connection to the post-9/11 international campaign against Al Qaeda affiliates and later against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—have focused on the effectiveness of Islamist organizations since the 1980s in transnational recruitment by framing local wars as extensions of a global conflict threatening the future of the global Islamic community. While there had been foreign volunteers fighting with non-state military forces in prior conflicts, the growing number of transnational jihadis descending upon conflicts in both the core and periphery of the Muslim world signified a qualitative shift in the efficacy of violent Islamists in a unique form of transnational civil society activism.

Stepping back to view a geographically and temporally broader vista suggests otherwise. Both in overall number of cases and among the largest instances, only

David Malet is a Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne.

Address correspondence to David Malet, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC 3010, Australia. E-mail: david.malet@unimelb.edu.au

about half have been jihadis. Examining foreign fighters provides clear evidence that many, if not all, were organized by a wide range of transnational movements.

The difference between the other contemporary and historical foreign fighter groups and the jihadis is not one of mobilization or effectiveness, but of *persistence*. Win or lose—and the majority have lost—most other foreign fighters demobilized at the end of their conflicts and reintegrated, sometimes with state or international assistance. I argue that the primary factor that accounts for the persistence of the jihadis was not one endogenous to their movement, but rather the policies of their home and host states that prevented reintegration and created cohorts of stateless actors that perpetuate in weakly-governed conflict zones elsewhere.

In this article, I first attempt to establish a common working definition of foreign fighter based on the discourse in the emerging field of study, and present new comparative data on foreign fighter mobilizations in modern world history. I conclude with an examination of state and IGO reintegration efforts geared toward foreign fighters and what lessons might be learned from them.

What is a Foreign Fighter?

Discussions of foreign participation in rebel groups can be found in works on civil wars and transnational politics since at least the mid-1960s.¹ However, forty years later, there were still no attempts to study this type of activity systematically or even to provide a name for it. The first extant work to do so was Reuven Paz's 2005 paper *Arab Volunteers Killed in Iraq: An Analysis*, which also noted that similar actors had fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia. Rather than attempt to provide a comprehensive review of the literature, which would soon be out of date, this article examines the evolving discourse via the various definitions advanced by researchers in the first decade of work on foreign fighters. Existing reference lists are available for readers interested in a more comprehensive catalog of works on related subjects.²

Research into foreign fighter activity has been marked by a lack of common terminology between and among academics, policymakers, and journalists.³ With an expanding range of scholarly work on foreign fighters and non-state armed groups operating transnationally, generating a meaningful debate on foreign fighter mobilization and persistence requires a shared understanding of terms for discourse. Without shared meanings, it is impossible for different researchers to analyze the same propositions, so conceptualization and justification of which data are to be included are necessary initial steps of research, a process Kuhn described as the logic of discovery.⁴

Analysis of why foreign fighters are considered atypical actors in a distinct category from other militants might begin fairly early in the modern era of the international system of sovereign states. In 1793, Gideon Henfield, a United States citizen who had served on a French privateer ship (a pirate vessel receiving limited state support from France but not part of its regular naval forces) was prosecuted under American common law for violating “the law of nations.”⁵ The following year, the United States became the first country to criminalize foreign and non-state military service and recruitment, and most nations had adopted such measures by World War II.⁶

Despite the emerging global norm against transgressing citizenship-based military service, during their largest mobilizations of the twentieth century foreign fighters typically did not receive harsh penalties. Foreign volunteers taken prisoner in 1930s Civil War Spain by the Fascist side were often afforded better treatment than local adversaries. However, the Franco regime subsequently refused to release

others, for example holding one Chinese Communist volunteer until three years after the war ended.⁷ South African and American volunteers captured by Egypt during the Israeli War of Independence were told that they were prisoners of war and would be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention, although not all may have been.⁸

The term *foreign fighter* was used occasionally in contemporaneous accounts to describe International Brigade volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, and later for European mercenaries serving with Croat forces in the Yugoslav wars of the early 1990s. But it was the United States' decision in Afghanistan in late 2001 to release local Taliban fighters while detaining non-Afghan combatants that brought the term into its modern vernacular usage, and linked it with jihadis. The subsequent activities of foreign jihadis in Iraq intensified Coalition and global media attention and a presumed association with the jihadi movement. A number of insurgent groups operating transnationally (in Iraq, Algeria, etc.) also adopted the Al Qaeda brand, presumably to enhance their credibility and fundraising power.⁹ More recently, a number have publicly re-aligned themselves with the Islamic State for the same reason.¹⁰

Research on foreign fighters as a distinct type of actor began subsequent to the explosion of media coverage of their relatively higher levels of violence in Iraq. Many were prefaced with historical comparisons to non-Muslim foreign fighters, indicating some degree of comparability. Some of these studies further include a range of state, non-state, and state-supported actors, making delineation of the phenomenon potentially problematic.

Most of the early works on foreign fighters, focused exclusively on contemporary jihadis in the 2000s, adopted an "I know it when I see it" approach, discussing foreign fighters without ever defining just which actors should be counted and why. Others made references comparing jihadis operating transnationally to the non-Islamist antecedent cases of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War and MACHAL in Israel, but did not elaborate on their similarities.¹¹ Still others used the term interchangeably to describe both cases of exporting insurgent operations and importing insurgents.¹²

Some authors have attempted to create precise definitions for what counts as a foreign fighter, and there has been a good amount of agreement between most of the approaches:

Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty (2008) examined jihadis in Chechnya, and adopted the definition of "non-indigenous, non-territorialized combatants who, motivated by religion, kinship, and/or ideology rather than pecuniary reward, enter a conflict zone to participate in hostilities."¹³

David Malet (2008, 2013), in a comparative study of transnational mobilization by rebels in the Texas Revolution, Spanish Civil War, Israeli War of Independence, and Afghanistan War, defined foreign fighters as "non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflicts" to defend some transnational identity community. This definition excludes terrorists, and also regular military forces, foreign legions, and private contractors operating abroad on behalf of a state because they still enjoy legal status as combatants. It also excludes rebel groups in safehavens, rather than fighting in a civil war, in the host country.¹⁴

Ian Bryan (2010) describes foreign fighters as "not agents of foreign governments, but they leave home typically to fight for a transnational cause or identity." He argues that their transnational nature represents a concern to the international system only because the particular cause of the jihadi movement threatens the interests of hegemonic actors, and not because non-state actors

organizing militants transnationally directly challenges the legitimacy of institutions of sovereignty.¹⁵

Kristin Bakke (2010), also examining Chechnya, used the term “transnational insurgents in intrastate conflicts [to] refer to armed non-state actors who, for either ideational or material reasons, choose to fight in an intrastate conflict outside their own home country, siding with the challenger to the state. Transnational insurgents, who are also referred to as foreign fighters, exclude foreign legions and private security firms.”¹⁶

Robert Pape and James K. Feldman (2010) described the International Brigades, MACHAL, and jihadis traveling to Somalia as “transnational fighters” comprised of “kindred communities” with loyalties that stretch across national boundaries. The strength of these loyalties is measured by their willingness to self-sacrifice, and “the existence of foreign military threat appears to be a crucial condition for mobilization.”¹⁷

Frank Ciluffo, Jeffrey Cozzens, and Magnus Ranstorp (2010) declared that “Western foreign fighters are violent extremists who leave their Western states of residence with the aspiration to train to take up arms against non-Muslim factions in Jihadi conflict zones.” Besides restricting the definition of foreign fighters to jihadi cases only, this definition also would seem to exclude many of the activities of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria, which have been attacks against fellow Muslims. However, the authors widened the definition to include foreign-trained militants operating in states that have a military presence in conflict zones, such as the 7/7 London bombers.¹⁸

Thomas Hegghammer (2010) established a more restrictive definition: “[A] foreign fighter [is] an agent who (1) has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship links to its warring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid.”¹⁹ Hegghammer excludes from his definition foreign fighters who have come from neighboring states, which eliminates from consideration local rebels operating across the border, who Salehyan (2009) terms “transnational insurgents.” Discounting ties based on kinship eliminates most foreign fighters in ethnic conflicts. He also describes foreign volunteers as state-supported rather than true foreign fighters if they received financial or military support from governments. Thus, his definition would preclude the Soviet-supported International Brigades and the kin-linked diaspora Jews of MACHAL that he subsequently describes as the only other large-scale examples of foreign fighters in the twentieth century besides the jihadis. And the rise of al Qaeda and ISIS occurred in part thanks to measures of state support as well.

In his 2013 study of foreign versus domestic fighting, Hegghammer “knowingly departs” from his earlier definition to encompass anyone leaving or trying to leave “the West” to engage in any military activity, including terrorist acts, against any enemy.²⁰

Barak Mendelsohn (2011) maintains that foreign fighters are not terrorists, and employs the standard of having citizenship external to the conflict forces, and not being part of a national military, with the distance of the home country from the conflict zone irrelevant to the distinction of legal citizenship.²¹

Beyond the scholarly literature, the term is also used varyingly by policy-makers.²² For example, “the United States military uses the term ‘foreign fighters’ in press releases to describe al Qaeda and allied terror groups from outside of Afghanistan” in that theatre of combat.²³ In a report on “Combatants on Foreign Soil” (or COFS), the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (hereafter UNOSAA) declares, “COFS are those (non-state) combatants who do not

operate in their country of origin (or nationality). COFS may either pursue political objectives or personal interests in the country of origin or the host country. Moreover they may either serve in a cross-border armed group operating from their own country or they may have joined an armed group of a foreign country.”²⁴ In addition to motivations of grievance and greed, it notes a third category of individuals who became foreign fighters through coercion, either by being kidnapped or misled (e.g., Rwandan COFS in the DRC who were told that they would be employed building roads).

The report distinguishes between armed groups that cross borders and COFS, which are described as individuals joining armed groups in other countries. But it also uses the term “foreign fighter” interchangeably with COFS, including to describe Islamists in Somalia. Indeed, the report notes that “COFS are not a specifically African problem; COFS have been known to participate in e.g., the Spanish Civil War, revolutionary wars in Latin America and more recently e.g., in Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, the Philippines and Afghanistan.”²⁵

2014 saw policymakers diverge from academics with the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, based on the recommendations of the multilateral Global Counterterrorism Forum working group on “foreign terrorist fighters (FTF).” It called upon all UN members states to prosecute citizens, specifically in the context of ISIS and Jabat al Nusra, who engaged in “recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning of, or participation in terrorist acts.”²⁶ In creating the term FTF, the Security Council blurred all analytic distinctions and has since led to the terms FTF and foreign fighter being used concurrently in international meetings with no basis of delineation. It also ignored the UN-supported programs on COFS and foreign fighters.

Common Ground and Proposed Criteria

All definitions of foreign fighters advanced since 2005 have centered on their linkage with non-state organizations or communities and lack of formal affiliation with state regimes or regular armies. Likewise, none have included volunteers in foreign legions or private military companies, which are likewise state employees and operate with at least the tacit acceptance of the incumbent government in civil war zones.

It is neither necessary nor feasible to have an uncontested definition of foreign fighter for all future studies. However, as de Bie, de Poot, and van der Leun note in this special mini-series, with the growing prominence of domestic security issues related to ISIS, other disciplines are now beginning to examine the phenomenon using different methodologies and with different sets of questions.²⁷ It would therefore be helpful to have recognizable parameters to avoid cross-sector jargon from various academic disciplines and government agencies.

Based on the first decade of research on the phenomenon, I propose the following delineations to add clarity to future policy debates:

- Transnational insurgent: Non-state (i.e., rebel) groups that extend operations across borders into states external to the civil conflict (e.g., Nicaraguan groups operating in Honduras).
- Foreign-trained fighter; foreign-trained terrorist: Individuals who have traveled abroad to receive paramilitary training of some form, or to participate as a foreign

fighter in an insurgency and then return to their home states to participate in a civil war or to commit terrorist attacks (e.g., 7/7 Bombers).

- Foreign terrorist: A non-citizen who travels to another state not experiencing a civil conflict to commit an attack, and is not affiliated with a local insurgent group (e.g., 9/11 Hijackers).
- Foreign fighter: A non-citizen of a state experiencing civil conflict who arrives from an external state to join an insurgency (e.g., International Brigades, ISIS).

I suggest a loose definition of foreign fighter rather than one that employs restrictions on type of linkage to local insurgents, proximity of home country to conflict zone, or seeking or receiving either private payments or third party state support. The limited data available in various cases suggest the difficulty in attempting to make blanket categorizations.

Ethnic Ties: Guns Not Sons

There is a great deal of literature concerning how ethno-nationalist symbolism is used to stoke civil wars, and how reliance on such messaging and ethnic community structures to promote insurgencies can also lead to cross-border or diaspora involvement that makes the conflicts fiercer or more intractable.²⁸ Elsewhere in this special mini-series, Cerwyn Moore makes the case that kin structures can be purely imagined communities: replacements for national identity rather than familial relations.²⁹

Historical cases of insurgency likewise provide evidence that rebels with clan networks upon which they can rely for shelter and intelligence have a far easier time than those who are ethnically isolated from the communities in which they are operating.³⁰ But there is little research available to suggest that kin ties make foreign fighters more likely to join distant conflicts because they enjoy pre-existing levels of trust and social organization.

For example, the Jewish foreign fighters in the Israeli War of Independence were the first large-scale ethnic mobilization on behalf of a non-state actor in modern history (although not all foreign fighters on the Jewish side were Jews).³¹ Presumably, then, this foreign fighter mobilization would have successfully leveraged ethnic kinship ties in a previously unprecedented fashion. However, among surviving Machalniks, only one in ten reported having had any relatives in Palestine before travelling there.³²

In another example, perhaps as many as one-third of the Kosovo Liberation Army were diaspora foreign fighters in the 3,000-strong force recruited by Homeland Calling. Most were German residents, but approximately 200 were United States citizens in the “Atlantic Brigade” who spoke English as their first language and wore American flags sewn on their uniforms. The cohort also included mercenaries from Israel and Denmark.³³ There is no evidence that the partially assimilated diaspora Kosovars in this contingent enjoyed particular benefits because of their shared ethnicity with locals; indeed, there were evident cultural tensions between them. Without evidence that ethnic ties to the population of the conflict state facilitate their recruitment, and with the observation that even diaspora foreign fighter contingents contain significant numbers of participants who do not share the ethnic identity that is ostensibly the cause at stake, there seems no evident reason to discount foreign fighters if they share an ethnic identity with the locals. Indeed, the evidence indicates that foreign fighters inevitably end up in varying degrees of open conflict with local rebels; shared ethnicity does not mitigate this.³⁴

On a related note, proximity of foreign fighter home states to the conflict zone also does not appear to have a direct bearing on whether ethnicity plays a role in mobilization. For example, in the largest foreign fighter mobilization of the past two hundred years, the Comintern-raised International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, the largest contingent were French citizens who came from directly across the border.³⁵ There was no meaningful shared identity on an ethnic basis, therefore none of the kin links which facilitate spill-over that feature in studies of ethnic conflict and transnational insurgency, and so excluding French foreign fighters in Spain because they hailed from an adjacent state would be a questionable proposition.

Additionally, the French (and the other pro-Republic foreign fighters, nearly all of whom entered via France) were still required to evade border patrols by state and international actors.³⁶ Whether from an adjoining state or not—even one with historical linkages between local ethnic groups such as the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier—the international community reifies incursions by non-citizens as violations of sovereignty. In this regard, foreign fighters are no more acceptable coming to Iraq from adjacent Saudi Arabia than from Libya.³⁷

If shared ethnicity were a greater facilitator of foreign fighter mobilization than other ties like religion or ideology, then we would expect to see large foreign fighter contingents in the major ethnic conflicts of recent decades. Instead, the data (presented in the subsequent section) indicates that ethnic cohorts are not particularly more likely to become foreign fighters. Indeed, foreign fighters have been conspicuous by their absence in some major ethnic conflicts.

Despite fundraising and arms shipments, the Kurdish diaspora appears not to have sent foreign fighters to Turkey or Iraq for ethnic conflict. European Kurdish volunteers began to emerge in 2014 in response to the apparently existential threat posed by the Islamic State.³⁸ Overseas Tamils were not recruited to Sri Lanka despite the otherwise aggressive tactics of the LTTE. Irish-Americans may have provided political and material support to the IRA but did not venture to its training camps.³⁹

Why do ethnic diasporas send material support but so few mobilize foreign fighter contingents?⁴⁰ In this special mini-series Jensen argues that the already radicalized, those Tarrow described as “birds of passage,” emigrate. If so, there would be no reason to expect diasporic communities to be more vulnerable to radicalization.⁴¹

Another possible reason for the preference of sending guns but not sons is that most ethnic conflicts lack what appear to be the requisite preconditions for foreign fighter mobilization, namely the credible message of an existential threat to the group so grave that it overcomes collective action barriers, as well as the transnational community infrastructure to spread the message and organize recruits. Most diasporas have the latter in place, but ethnic diaspora foreign fighter movements appear likely to occur when the community is threatened by, or has prior experience with, the specter of genocide, such as Jews, Kosovars, Armenians, etc.⁴²

The Role of State Support

While diaspora support is readily apparent, the question of defining foreign fighters by whether their movement was entirely financed and organized by private actors is difficult. It is particularly problematic given that the lack of precision in categorizing foreign fighters has led to the conflation of different types of transnational or foreign forces operating outside of their normal jurisdictions.⁴³ However, it is difficult to

find instances, even in cases of volunteers organized by private entities that are ostensibly fighting for non-state organizations, where the foreign fighters received no form of state support whatsoever.

As Hegghammer details in his translation of the writings of Abdullah Azzam, the organization behind the Arab Afghans received permission from authorities in the United States to open a recruitment center in New York City, and to deposit in a local bank donations to pay for foreign fighter transportation.⁴⁴ This effort, which continued to funnel recruits to Bosnia, also reportedly received direct financial support from at least some elements of the Saudi regime. Iran trained and sent a force that included Afghan and Arab volunteers before the first fighters linked to the Muslim Brothers were recruited. The Central Intelligence Agency made monetary donations during this period to Maghreb Islamic charities sending volunteers to Afghanistan, and also reportedly trained Arab recruits at its facilities in the United States. That such endeavors would have been in violation of United States law is evidence that states may provide vital assistance to foreign fighters despite their formal official policies.⁴⁵

The subsidization of airplane tickets to Pakistan by the Saudi government was also accompanied by free advertising for the cause by state media that presented reports on the Afghan resistance. The Egyptian government's release of political prisoners so that they would leave the country for the sake of jihad must also count as a form of state support. It was markedly similar to the tactic of British Mandate officials sending troublesome Jewish dissidents off to the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁶ The International Brigades were organized and funded by the transnational Comintern in the face of reluctance by the Kremlin to commit resources to the conflict. Whereas the Soviet Union contributed a token force of military advisors, Mexico was one of the few states to openly side with Republican forces and supply arms in the face of an international embargo.⁴⁷ Mexico, as well as Panama, also provided support to MACHAL in the Israeli War of Independence by providing fraudulent vessel registrations to evade an embargo on military hardware.⁴⁸ In the case of Rwanda, the Ugandan government created military service opportunities for the Tutsi refugee population and provided the RPF with shelter.⁴⁹ ISIS enjoyed at least benign neglect from several governments whose private citizens donated generously to the group.⁵⁰

In short, given the resource advantages of states, it is doubtful that any foreign fighter contingency could flourish without *any* external state support. It is difficult to identify any group that received none whatsoever, or to demonstrate that any particular level of state sponsorship of transnational volunteers in non-state armed groups disqualifies them from being counted as foreign fighters. In none of these cases did the states involved claim sovereignty over the foreign fighters or offer them legal status as combatants.

Soldiers of Fortune?

It is similarly problematic to classify whether transnational insurgent groups were foreign fighters on the basis of whether members were paid or not. The dearth of accurate records, and incentives for veterans to lie about their motives compounds the problem, but so does the fact that in some cases some foreign fighters were recruited by particular movements with the promise of significant payments, while others in the same cohort were not. Would this mean that some groups were partly foreign fighters and partly mercenaries? A related question is what is the bar below

which payments and benefits are no longer considered sufficient motivators? The aphorism that all armies travel on their stomachs indicates the necessity for all rebel groups to provide sufficient sustenance to their members. All foreign fighters therefore receive at least this benefit for their service, and daily meals or pocket change would not be an inconsiderable incentive to the unemployed.⁵¹

In the case of Machalniks in Palestine-Israel, desperately needed specialists were offered large pecuniary rewards, with some American volunteers deserting upon arriving in Europe and not finding promised advances waiting for them, and one even threatening a public suicide that would draw the attention of local law enforcement unless he was paid and sent home. The large South African contingent reported none of the morale problems of their North American compatriots, but they also had a dedicated local office providing them with cash and sundries from home. Differences in demands made by various national contingencies reportedly influenced where recruitment efforts were focused.⁵² Likewise, the Arab Afghans were reportedly informed, beginning in 1984, that Osama bin Laden would pay \$300 per month to cover their expenses.⁵³ Volunteers who remained in the conflict zone to join the nascent Al Qaeda were offered annual salaries of \$10,000–\$20,000 and benefit packages that included healthcare, vacations, and severance pay.⁵⁴ “The same is true in Syria where groups like Jabat al-Nusra and ISIS provide modest stipends for their members.”⁵⁵

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to dismiss foreign fighters as simply mercenaries who had aligned with rebels instead of states. There are the unavoidable statistics from Iraq and Somalia that demonstrate that suicide attacks are overwhelmingly conducted by foreign insurgents.⁵⁶ While it is tempting to write them off as Islamic fundamentalists seeking their reward in the afterlife, historically Catholic, Protestant, and atheist foreign fighters have also been more willing to engage in high risk or suicide operations than local fighters, possibly because they have internalized the frame that the conflict is an existential struggle.⁵⁷

Perhaps the best illustration of the peril of attempting to classify foreign fighters by whether they sought or received compensation is the example of one American Machalnik with heavy child support obligations. He demanded at the end of the war back payment for the promised pilot salary of one thousand dollars per month rather than the standard six-dollar rate that he had received. The rejoinder of “That was for the mercenaries! Aren’t you a Jew?” failed to mollify him, and he finally received a cheque—which he then tore up on the spot, apparently considering his commitment honored.⁵⁸

Looking for Foreign Fighters Where They Fight

Idiosyncrasies can be useful for illuminating unexpected patterns (or lack thereof) but should be examined in the light of more rigorous analytic approaches. Malet (2013) found that during 1816–2005, just one quarter of the total of foreign fighter insurgencies involved jihadis, with even 40 percent of cases being non-Islamist since the 1980s rise of jihadi foreign fighters. Also, the evidence does not indicate that the jihadis have been particularly successful in organizing the biggest foreign fighter contingents: Of the 15 largest foreign fighter cohorts, only 6 were organized by jihadis.⁵⁹

Globally, there have been two major streams of foreign fighters since the Cold War. Apart from jihadis, private armed groups have been a continuing political feature in many African conflicts. Some take safehavens or engage in pillage where

Table 1. Largest foreign fighter mobilizations (+1000) by reported size

Conflict	Foreign contingent	Range
Spain (1936–1939)	International brigades	30,000–60,000
	Various anti-Communists	1,000–1,500
Afghanistan (1978–1989)	Arab Afghans	500–2,000; Soviet occupation
(1990–2001)		10,000–20,000;
(2001–2015 ongoing)		Internal strife 500–4,000; Coalition occupation Total: 11,000–26,000
Syria (2011–2015 ongoing)	Various jihadi groups	10,000–16,000
Iraq (2013–2015 ongoing)	Shiite volunteers	5,000–10,000 Total: 15,000–26,000
Central African Conflicts (1997–present)	COFS in “Insurgent Diaspora”	7,000–10,000
Israel/Palestine (1946–1949)	MACHAL, Aliyah Bet	4,400–5,000
	Arab Liberation Army	5,000–6,000
Bolivarian Revolutions (1818–1822)	Albion Legion	5,000–7,000
Texas–Mexico (1835–1836)	Various volunteer groups	2,000 during war 2,000–4,000 post-conflict Total: 4,000–6,000
Rwanda (1990–1994)	Rwandan Patriotic Front	~4,000
Iraq War (2003–2009)	Various jihadi groups	3,000–5,000
Kosovo–Yugoslavia (1998–1999)	Homeland Calling	~3,000
Kashmir (1989–Present)	Various jihadi groups	2,000–3,000
Pakistan (1998–2015 ongoing)	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	~2000
Greece (1821–1832)	Filiki Eteria	1,000–2,000
Angola (1975–1991)	Marxists, anti-Communists, mercenaries	~1,000
Somalia (1991–2015 ongoing)	Al Shabaab	500–1,500

they face no organized opposition, and others obtain recruits to send back to fight in the insurgents’ home countries. UNOSAA found that most recruits in African conflicts initially joined armed groups under duress, but were willing participants by the time they later crossed international borders to become foreign fighters. In keeping with much of the literature on civil war mobilization—as opposed to terrorist radicalization—the report declares that rent-seeking gradually replaces states’ political grievances as the primary motivator for continued rebel activity. It also notes regional effects, arguing that foreign fighters in the Great Lakes region appear more committed to their causes than their mercenary West African counterparts.⁶⁰

The largest of these foreign fighter cohorts operated through the Rwandan Tutsi diaspora. Refugee Tutsis served in the National Resistance Movement in Uganda in the 1980s, while others already established in that country founded the exile Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1979. Beginning in 1990, the RPF sent approximately 4,000, mostly second-generation, residents of Uganda back to reclaim their unfamiliar homeland as foreign fighters.⁶¹ Subsequent to the Rwandan genocide, over 10,000 Rwandans have appeared as transnational insurgents in Congo and elsewhere in the Great Lakes region as armed groups become “rebels without borders” to obtain security or resources in areas of weak governance.⁶²

The prevalence of COFS in Sierra Leone led the United Nations to begin to study foreign fighter mobilization and repatriation in 2005, a development simultaneous with the emergence of studies on foreign jihadis in Iraq. Most foreign fighters in Sub-Saharan Africa are regional actors whose insurgencies operate transnationally. The UN does note that Islamists are relatively new to Africa, but that they appear more effective in attracting foreign fighters on average than other rebel groups. However its report argues that “while Islam may play a part in the ideology of the various groups, there are also always other aspects.” For example, in Somalia, the Union of Islamic Courts is dominated by particular clans and its appeal to Islam may simply be a way to broaden its appeal beyond its base: “Therefore, while religion may be a genuine motivation for some, for others it is a tactical tool to rally support.”⁶³ The recruitment efforts of Al Shabaab, Somalia’s Al Qaeda affiliate, complicate the picture, as it simultaneously exhorted foreign Muslims to jihad on behalf of its would-be Sharia state but also urged diaspora Somalis in Western refugee communities to return home and expel Ethiopian peacekeepers allegedly committing atrocities against civilians.⁶⁴

Foreign Fighter Persistence

The question then becomes, what was sufficiently unique about the jihadis to explain their persistence, and indeed growth, when every other movement of thousands of foreign fighters faded away quietly even when they attained hard-won national sovereignty (as in the cases of Israel and Kosovo)? Put another way, what explains the success of the Afghan Arabs in sustaining their mobilized forces, transferring them to other conflicts, and inserting themselves into rebel structures in a global panopoly of civil wars?

All cases of foreign fighter recruitment appear to begin with transnational religious, ethnic, or ideological organizations with varying levels of state support and a message of existential threat intended to overcome individual collective action barriers. The most easily identifiable difference between the Afghan Arabs and all other mass foreign fighter mobilizations that would explain the persistence of the former is to be found not with the beginnings of their conflict but with its *ending*. Despite having violated the laws of many of their home countries with their enlistment and violation of neutrality laws, foreign fighters in major conflicts from the Israeli War of Independence to the Spanish Civil War, from Kosovo to Rwanda to Texas, faced no punishment from their home governments for their extra-legal activities. In some cases, the rebels were actively or tacitly supported by their home states, but even where they were not, no barriers to resuming their civilian lives were erected.⁶⁵ Some Machalniks noted that they left for Palestine with specific commitments from their employers, including public utilities offices, to hold their positions until their return.⁶⁶ At the same time, the armed groups or associated governments

arranged for foreign fighter demobilization and paid their return costs, even in instances in which they lost the war.⁶⁷

Governmental Approaches

This approach was attempted in the 2000s for a number of African conflicts by the World Bank, the United Nations, and partner states and NGOs for the Multi-country Disarmament and Reintegration Program (MDRP). Between 2002–2009, MDRP spent approximately \$500 million on reducing conditions that produced the persistence of armed groups, including foreign fighters. The project's goal was to disarm and reintegrate the estimated 400,000 armed combatants in the Great Lakes region, and MDRP reported providing reintegration assistance to nearly a quarter of a million militants, including financial assistance in starting farms and businesses. It did not distinguish in its final report how many of them were on foreign soil.⁶⁸

“Human Rights Watch, in a 2005 report on West Africa’s ‘regional warriors,’ interviewed some 60 combatants from 15 groups. Most had fought in at least two conflicts in the region.”⁶⁹ An estimated 2,000 combatants from the Liberian Civil War, or five percent of the total rebel forces, are thought to have become foreign fighters in neighboring conflicts, with one who went on to fight in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire stating that some of his compatriots no longer felt comfortable without a gun in their hands. One foreign fighter reported that his career began as a child soldier in Uganda before serving in rebel groups and national armies of six other African countries during the 1980s. He claimed not to have been a mercenary but a devoted follower of two different armed groups during this period. In attempting to deal with such individuals, the MDRP found no significant difference in accomplishing the rehabilitation of local and foreign fighters in Africa, except that the latter had been used more often in punitive missions against the local populace, and it was therefore harder to integrate them in areas where they had operated.⁷⁰

Since the implementation of these programs, “some 20,000 former rebels have returned, aided by small financial settlements that include cash, scholarships, vocational training, access to credit and other support for setting up small businesses and income-generating projects.”⁷¹ In early 2009 alone, more than 1,000 Rwandan Hutus returned from Congo after some of their comrades scouted-out reconciliation programs and let them know that it was safe to return. The Rwandan program, encouraging foreign fighters to “feel at home,” permitted them to socialize with their comrades who had already been repatriated.⁷²

By contrast, the Arab Afghans were provided no assistance in transitioning out of foreign militant activity and back to their home countries. The United States ended its support for the Afghan mujahidin on September 11, 1991 and in January 2003 Pakistan ordered foreign fighters out of the country.⁷³ Some of their home countries, including Egypt and Syria, which had produced large foreign fighter contingents of jailed radicals who presumably were hoped would find martyrdom, refused to allow their return for fear that they would provide valuable guerilla experience to local militants. Facing the threat of persecution at home, many foreign fighters elected to remain in the field to look for other “just wars” to protect Muslims, which they immediately found in Bosnia, and subsequently in locales from

the Philippines to Chechnya to Algeria.⁷⁴ Perhaps the closest historical analog would be the European foreign fighters in the International Brigades who were no longer safe in their Fascist home countries after the Spanish Civil War, and who went on to become involved in other conflicts in Palestine and China.⁷⁵ The Arab states that denied re-entry to their foreign fighters were authoritarian as well.

UNOSAA contends that foreign fighters have the same needs as other demobilized combatants and require years of reintegration programs, and “should never be neglected.” The rationale for such programs is that foreign fighters who remain unrepatriated, or merely even unassimilated into routine jobs by their home communities, are likely for reasons of economic and/or psychological displacement to remain floating regional mercenary warriors, part of a seasoned, pre-trained “insurgent diaspora” that is particularly attractive to rebel groups.⁷⁶ Failure of governments suspicious of their former adversaries to provide rehabilitation programs is also viewed as a contributor to the problem.⁷⁷

It is beyond the scope of this article to evaluate the effectiveness of state rehabilitation programs for rebels or terrorists, and the empirical evidence appears decidedly mixed.⁷⁸ In Ingushetia, amnesty programs promising lawful treatment of detainees and incorporating family assistance have been credited with reducing levels of violence.⁷⁹ In the United Kingdom, between 9/11 and early 2008, “there were 196 convictions for terrorist-related offenses, most of which were connected to al-Qa’ida-related extremism.” By early 2009, “nearly 100 had already been released back into society; to date, none have been re-arrested or convicted for subsequent involvement in terrorist activity (or apparently any other illegal activity). There is no evidence that any have attempted to engage in terrorist activity overseas.”⁸⁰

Elsewhere, however, Saudi Arabia reported a 10 percent return to militant activity by rehabilitated jihadis, with double that rate for Guantanamo detainees, possibly providing evidence that amnesty programs are more effective than punitive measures that produce new grievances.⁸¹ A similar program in Yemen that, like its Saudi counterpart, incorporated debates with moderate clerics and art therapy has also been unreliable, with some graduates subsequently killed in Iraq.⁸²

The concern over blowback from returning foreign fighters understandably leads many states to follow the same policies of denial and detention adopted by Arab states toward jihadis returning from Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, this concern is legitimate: Australian citizens who had fought in Somalia were arrested in 2009 after returning home and plotting an attack on an army barracks.⁸³ However, closing the door also leaves such individuals with no home or support outside of their network of militant connections, and to sympathetic or weakly governed states where they can operate with indemnity, perpetuating the “Sherwood Forest” phenomenon identified by Oren Barak.⁸⁴

Even if the doors of reconciliation are thrown open, as the UN and MDRP noted, there are a wide range of motivations for foreign fighters, encompassing both greed and grievance, and no single model of blanket repatriation program seems likely to cover all returning combatants.⁸⁵ However, given the histories of most large mobilized foreign fighter cohorts, it might be that doing nothing is the most effective policy at any rate. Members of the International Brigades and MACHAL maintained interest in their causes, as evidenced by veterans organizations, and 60th and 70th anniversary reunion events for survivors within the past decade. But nearly all reintegrated when permitted to do so.

Waning Persistence? Looking for Foreign Fighters in Libya and the Arab Spring

Given the enduring ties of foreign fighters to their causes and the lack of opportunity for most jihadis to resume daily lives, it is reasonable to question why they did not assume a more prominent position during the civil unrest that gripped the Arab world in 2011. The violent civil war in Libya that would have seemed the likeliest place for a new incidence of foreign fighters. After all, foreign fighters reportedly appeared in Iraq even before Coalition forces did in 2003, and were documented in international media reports within weeks of the invasion. By contrast, within the first six months of The Libyan Civil War in 2011, there were no more than “flickers” of intelligence suggesting the presence of individuals affiliated with Al Qaeda or Hezbollah among the rebels, which is anyway not necessarily the same thing as foreign fighters.⁸⁶ Instead, media reports of “foreign fighters” in Libya referred to volunteers or conscripts from Mali and Niger in the regular army of the regime, or a handful of non-jihadi Westerners, such as a Korean-American university student looking for excitement on spring break.⁸⁷

The lack of foreign fighters in Libya might be particularly surprising given not only near-simultaneous events in Syria, but also because the country produced a large number of foreign fighters who appeared in Iraq,⁸⁸ and also because some of the Libyan rebels have self-identified as foreign fighter recruiters for the Iraqi theatre, so it might be expected that these personal connections would facilitate foreign fighters into Libya.⁸⁹ However, the Libyans in Iraq were heavily engaged in martyrdom operations, as indeed foreign fighters constituted the vast majority of suicide bombers in Iraq.⁹⁰ Potentially another factor in the lack of bleed-out from Iraq to the revolutions across the Middle East has been that “Al Qaeda in Iraq requires some exiting fighters to sign contracts demanding they not join other Jihadi groups.”⁹¹ In any case, another factor besides open reintegration that ends foreign fighter persistence may prove to be the prevalence of martyrdom operations.

Examining foreign fighters for all causes demonstrates that they return to their homes and authority of their home states once their groups stop fighting—whether Rwandan Hutus, Jewish nationalists, or even the anti-Fascist International Brigadesmen who demobilized even as Hitler’s war machine gained momentum. Much more research remains to be done in the area of how frustrated foreign fighters are persuaded that they and their loved ones no longer face an existential threat. In the meantime, short of hoping that they all find martyrdom, governments might be well-advised that a charitable hand—or even no program at all—might be the best approach to reining in the expanding foreign fighter phenomenon.

The Next Ten Years

How big of a concern foreign fighters will be to various governments in coming years is impossible to predict. Still, if history is any indication, the phenomenon will be present in any number of conflicts. If anything, conditions at the end of the first decade of study point to growing cohorts of active transnational militants.

With the sheer magnitude of the number of foreign fighters aligned with ISIS, increasing legal sanctions against foreign fighting in a number of countries including Saudi Arabia and Australia potentially deterring jihadis from returning. With decades of semi-professional infrastructure in place to maintain them, veterans of Syria and Iraq will persist in the Levant and elsewhere. Meanwhile, hundreds of volunteers,

mostly Orthodox Christians on the Russian side, joined the Ukraine conflict in 2014, demonstrating again that foreign fighting must be studied in a global context.

After a decade of research on the scope and nature of the phenomenon undertaken, a raft of follow-on questions remain to be answered—on recruitment and the relative importance of psychological versus ideological motivators; on differences that would predict why particular individuals go; on the effects of restrictions designed by governments to prevent them; on how traditional media coverage and social media exposure affect decisions to volunteer, and on how to apply the laws of war between states to these non-state actors. The recent persistence of foreign fighters in militant activity years, if not decades, beyond their initial mobilization and their potential for continuing violence ensures that security concerns over foreign fighters can persist well beyond their time in their theater of conflict.

In the past, most foreign fighters simply demobilized, with a few becoming domestic terrorists or going on to join other wars. Their impact on conflict outcomes were so obscured by state sponsors and the groups themselves that they escaped consideration in the study of international security. Today their presence cannot be ignored and their persistence and global diffusion ensures that it will remain necessary to examine them for the foreseeable future.

Notes

1. See various chapters in James Rosenau, ed., *International Aspects of Civil Strife* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964); and Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane, eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

2. Reuven Paz, "Arab Volunteers Killed in Iraq: An Analysis," *PRISM Occasional Papers* 3, no. 1 (March, 2005): 1–7. For a thorough listing of works on the subject 2005–2010, see Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters," *International Security* 45, no. 3 (2010–11): 54–56. Various websites on the subject also contain links and documents, including Jihadology, Selected Wisdom, Across the Green Mountain, and The Foreign Fighter Project.

3. For the importance of common terminology and classification standards see Robert Adcock and David Collier, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 95, no. 3 (Sept. 2001): 529–546; David Collier and James E. Mahon, Jr., "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis," *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 4 (Dec. 1993): 845–855; Peter Winch, "The Idea of a Social Science," in Eric Bredo and Walter Feinberg, eds., *Knowledge and Values in Social and Educational Research* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1972); and Claire Selltiz, Lawrence Wrightsman, and Stuart Wellford Cook, "General Problems of Measurement," *Research Methods in Social Relations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1976). For another treatment of the terminology of "foreign fighter" see Timothy Holman, "Begin the Begin," *Across the Green Mountain*, June 14, 2011, <http://crossthegreenmountain.wordpress.com/>.

4. Scott A. Kleiner, *The Logic of Discovery: A Theory of the Rationality of Scientific Research* (Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993).

5. Leonard Slater, *The Pledge* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 209.

6. Janice Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 78–82.

7. Nancy Tsou and Len Tsou, "The Spanish Civil War: Ideologies, Experiences, Historical Recoveries—Homage to Robert G. Colodny," *Science & Society* 68, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 329–363.

8. Henry Katzew, *South Africa's 800: The Story of South African Volunteers in Israel's War of Birth* (Ra'anana, Israel: South African Zionist Federation, 4th ed. 2003, orig. ed. 1998), 222, 223, 232.

9. David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). For the adoption of the al Qaeda brand by local groups rather than efforts by the central organization to recruit, see Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Clint Watts, "Foreign Fighters: How Are They Being Recruited? Two Imperfect Recruitment Models," *Small Wars Journal* (2008), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/69-watts.pdf>; and Mark Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

10. Robert Spencer, "Jihadis Abandoning al-Qaeda Affiliates to Join Islamic State," *Jihad Watch*, August 10, 2014.

11. Examples include Vahid Brown, "Foreign Fighters in Historical Perspective: The Case of Afghanistan," in Brian Fishman, ed., *Bombers, Bank Accounts and Bleed-out: Al Qaida's Road In and Out of Iraq* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008), 16–31, and Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (see note 9 above), 7, 74.

12. The United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (UNOSAA), *Combatants on Foreign Soil*, Issue Paper, Kinshasa, DRC (2007): 7 uses the term to describe both rebel groups from neighboring states extending operations into the DRC and foreign jihadis joining Somalia's Al Shabaab. Idean Salehyan, *Rebels without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 129, 142, 157, 175 uses the term foreign fighter in the context of non-citizens entering Iraq, but also to describe Rwandan Hutu groups escaping to Congo and Nicaraguan Contras operating in Honduras.

13. Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no. 5 (2008): 412–433.

14. David Malet, "Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, August 29, 2008). See also Malet, 2013 (note 9 above).

15. Ian Bryan, "Sovereignty and the Foreign Fighter Problem," *Orbis* 54, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 115–129.

16. Kristin M. Bakke, *Copying and Learning from Outsiders? Assessing Diffusion from Transnational Insurgents in the Chechen Wars*, PRIO Working Paper, November 9, 2010.

17. Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 59.

18. Frank Ciluffo, Jeffrey A. Cozzens, Magnus Ranstorp, *Foreign Fighters: Trends, Trajectories, and Conflict Zones* (Washington, DC: Homeland Security Policy Institute, October 1, 2010), 3. See Mohammed Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007) for the Muslim targets of suicide attacks in Iraq. See Marc Sageman, *The Foreign Fighter Problem: Recent Trends and Case Studies* (Foreign Policy Research Institute e-notes, November, 2010) for the distinction between foreign fighters and foreign-trained terrorists.

19. Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters" (see note 2 above), 58–60, 90–91.

20. Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (February 2013): 1–15.

21. Barak Mendelsohn, "Foreign Fighters – Recent Trends," *Orbis* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 192–193.

22. In addition to the definitions cited, Deborah Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25 includes a typology of the financing and delivery of security that does not include foreign fighters, but does leave blank cells related to private actors that could easily be filled by transnational jihadi, Communist, or diaspora combatants.

23. Bill Roggio, "Jordanian al Qaeda Fighter Killed in US Airstrike in Eastern Afghanistan," *The Long War Journal*, June 15, 2011.

24. UNOSAA (see note 12 above), 7, 8.

25. *Ibid.*, 7, 8, 21.

26. United Nations, "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution Condemning Violent Extremism, Underscoring Need to Prevent Travel, Support for Foreign Terrorist Fighters," September 14, 2014.

27. Jasper L. de Bie, Christianne J. de Poot, and Joanne P. van der Leun, "Shifting *Modus Operandi* of Jihadist Foreign Fighters from the Netherlands between 2000 and 2013: A Crime Script Analysis," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2015, this special mini-series).

28. Examples include Steven Saideman, "Explaining the International Relations of Secessionist Conflicts: Vulnerability Versus Ethnic Ties," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 721–753; Lars-Erik Cederman, Luc Girardin, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Ethno-nationalist Triads: Assessing the Influence of Kin Groups on Civil Wars," *World Politics* 61, no. 3 (July 2009): 403–437; Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile, Patriotism, and the Balkan Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

29. Cerwyn Moore, "Foreign Bodies: Transnational Activism, the Insurgency in the North Caucasus and 'Beyond,'" *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2015, this special mini-series).

30. Compare the experience of anti-Nazi resistance fighters moving between clan households in George Psychoundrakis, *The Cretan Runner* (London: Penguin Books, 1999) with that of Jewish partisans confronting hostile Polish and Ukrainian villagers in Nahum Kohn, *A Voice from the Forest* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Museum, 1980).

31. For example, at least 300 of 1,300 North American volunteers were gentiles. One such example was a Navajo from Oklahoma who settled in the Negev and rustled cattle from across the Jordanian border after the war. Jason Fenton, "The MACHAL Story," 1997, <http://www.sabra.net/machal/section3.html>. He had told a reporter who asked him why he was fighting to establish a Jewish state in the Middle East: "I reckoned it was the Christian thing to do." Craig Weiss and Jeffrey Weiss, *I Am My Brother's Keeper: American Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence 1947–49* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 1998), 22.

32. Malet, 2013 (see note 9 above).

33. Hockenos, *Homeland Calling* (see note 28 above), 238, 239, 255.

34. David Malet, "In Afghanistan, Less is More," *Small Wars Journal* (October 2010). The continuum of conflict between locals and foreign fighters ranging from intramural gun battles in Afghanistan to more minor incidents: According to the president of their veterans' group, MACHAL pilots in Israel would regularly "get wrecked" in bars and steal cars to get back to base. Smoky Simon, interview May 19, 2009.

35. E. H. Carr, *The Comintern in the Spanish Civil War* (London: MacMillan Press, 1984), 22–23.

36. B. Dan Richardson, *The Comintern Army* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 36; Robert A. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pegasus Books, 1969), 32.

37. Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Al Qaida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007).

38. Jan M. Olesen and Karl Ritter, "Kurds in Europe Take up Arms against IS Group," *Associated Press*, September 16, 2014.

39. Hockenos, *Homeland Calling* (see note 28 above); Malet, 2013 (see note 9 above), Appendix B. Kurdish Islamists, including Abdullah Kurd in Chechnya, have been foreign fighters elsewhere.

40. Some observers contend that there is a "Muslim Diaspora," see Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Islam is a non-particularistic religion that encompasses a range of ethnic groups. Ethnic consciousness and divisions have been evident among jihadi foreign fighters throughout the duration of their movement. For examples, see Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* (note 18 above), 174–175; "Abdullah Azzam," Thomas Hegghammer, translator, in Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, eds., *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 120, 123, 124; Omar Nasiri, *Inside the Jihad* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 216–217; Ken Conboy, *The Second Front: Inside Asia's Most Dangerous Terrorist Network* (Jakarta, Indonesia: Equinox, 2006), 41–42; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 101–116; Evan Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* (New York: Berg, 2004), 8.

41. Richard Bach Jensen, “Anarchist Terrorism and Global Diasporas, 1880–1914,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2015, this special mini-series).

42. One South African Jew quipped pre-Israeli independence that the motto of the South African Zionist Federation should be “Today your money, tomorrow your sons.” Katzew, *South Africa’s 800* (see note 8 above), 67.

43. For example, Frederic Pearson, “Foreign Military Interventions and Domestic Disputes,” *International Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1974), listed together various regular military peacekeeping forces, transnational non-state forces, and private mercenaries as examples of military intervention.

44. “Azzam,” translated by Hegghammer, in Kepel and Milelli (see note 40 above), 137–138.

45. John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 83–89, 100, 102.

46. Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 68, 69; Conboy, *The Second Front* (see note 40 above), 41. An example of a Jewish veteran of the International Brigades who returned to fight in the Israeli War of Independence was Shimon Avidan, commander of Palmach Givati Brigade. Joe Woolf, correspondence, May 17, 2008.

47. W. G. Krivitsky, *In Stalin’s Secret Service* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 74–78; Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds, *The MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion: The Canadian Contingent in the Spanish Civil War* (Ottawa, Canada: Carleton University Press, 1986), 16–17; Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 438–439.

48. Hank Greenspun, *Where I Stand* (New York: David McKay Co., 1966), 127; Harold Livingston, *No Trophy, No Sword: An American Volunteer in the Israeli Air Force during the 1948 War of Independence* (Chicago: Edition Q, 1994), 33.

49. International Crisis Group, “Uganda and Rwanda: Friends or Enemies?,” *ICG Central Africa Report*, no. 14, (May 4, 2000): 1–38.

50. Elizabeth Dickinson, *Playing with Fire: Why Private Gulf Financing for Syria’s Extremist Rebels Risks Igniting Sectarian Conflict at Home*, The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World Analysis Paper 16 (December 2013).

51. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* (see note 18 above), 174–175, notes that foreign fighters in Iraq were glad when their units were joined by Gulf Arabs who could spread cash around to compatriots.

52. Ben Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance* (New York: Crown, 1976), 158, 228. Katzew, *South Africa’s 800* (see note 8 above), 91, 127, 128, 231.

53. Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 155.

54. Wright, *The Looming Tower* (see note 40 above), 131–133, 141–142.

55. Joseph A. Carter, Shiraz Maher, and Peter R. Neumann, *#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks* (London: The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Violence, 2014), 10.

56. Fishman, *Bombers, Bank Accounts and Bleed-out* (see note 11 above); Lisa Myers, “Who Are the Foreign Fighters in Iraq?” *NBC Nightly News*, June 20, 2005, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8293410/>.

57. See Malet, 2013 (note 9 above) for examples of Texas revolutionaries and Communist and Catholic foreign fighters in the Spanish Civil War who engaged in suicide attacks and were held up as exemplars.

58. Katzew, *South Africa’s 800* (see note 8 above), 67.

59. The source data that I have used to construct my own dataset actually increases the representation of jihadi foreign fighters by counting different phases of the Afghanistan conflict as three separate civil wars, and by excluding the South American Bolivarian Revolutions of 1818–1822.

60. UNOSAA (see note 12 above), 7, 14–16, 33.

61. Robert Nalbandov, *Foreign Interventions in Ethnic Conflicts* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 133; Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis, 1959–1994: History of a Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1995), 73–95.

62. UNOSAA (see note 12 above), 7, 15.

63. UNOSAA (see note 12 above), 14, 23–24.

64. David Malet, Brian Priest, and Sarah Staggs, "Involving Foreign Fighters in Somalia," in Emma Leonard and Gilbert Ramsay, eds., *Globalizing Somalia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
65. International Crisis Group (May 4, 2000).
66. Katzew, *South Africa's 800* (see note 8 above), 11, 18–20.
67. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left* (see note 36 above), 333–334; Katzew, *South Africa's 800* (see note 8 above), 306–309; Tsou and Tsou, "The Spanish Civil War" (see note 7 above), 347.
68. MDRP Final Report, IBRD (Washington DC, World Bank, July 2010), 2, http://www.mdrp.org/PDFs/MDRP_Final_Report.pdf.
69. Ernest Harsch, "Setting Foreign Fighters on the Long Road Home," *Africa Renewal* 23, no. 2 (July 2009): 6.
70. UNOSAA (see note 12 above), 17, 19, 29. Insurgent groups in South Asia have also relied upon foreign fighters to engage in greater levels of violence against the civilian populations. Matthew Van Wagenen, *An Analysis of the Indian Government's Counterinsurgency Campaign in Jammu and Kashmir* (US Army General Command and Staff College, 2004), 66; David Rohde, "Foreign Fighters of Harsher Bent Bolster Taliban," *The New York Times*, October 30, 2007, www.nytimes.com/2007/10/30/.../30afghan.html.
71. Harsch, "Setting Foreign Fighters on the Long Road Home" (see note 69 above), 6, 10.
72. Ibid.
73. Roy Gutman, *How We Missed the Story: Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008), 33; Kohlmann, 16–18.
74. Yoram Schweitzer and Saul Shay, *The Globalization of Terror: The Challenge of Al-Qaida and the Response of the International Community* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 25, 56–58; Wright, *The Looming Tower* (see note 40 above), 163–164; Brown, "Foreign Fighters in Historical Perspective" (see note 11 above), 28.
75. Joseph Heckelman, *American Volunteers and Israel's War of Independence* (New York: Ktav, 1974), 227; Weiss and Weiss, *I Am My Brother's Keeper* (see note 31 above), 34; Tsou and Tsou, "The Spanish Civil War" (see note 7 above).
76. UNOSAA (see note 12 above), 10–16.
77. Harsch, "Setting Foreign Fighters on the Long Road Home" (see note 69 above), 6.
78. For detailed discussions, see John Horgan and K. Braddock, "Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalization Programs," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 1 (2010): 1–25.
79. *The Economist*, "The Peaceful Exception," April 9, 2011.
80. Andrew Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists," *CTC Sentinel* 4, no. 1 (January 1, 2011).
81. Paul Handley, "20 Percent Failure Rate in Saudi Gitmo Rehab Programme," *AFP*, June 19, 2010, 18–20.
82. Gregory Johnsen and Christopher Boucek, "The Dilemma of the Yemeni Detainees at Guantanamo Bay," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 12 (Nov. 2008): 1–4.
83. BBC World News, "Australia Detains Terror Suspects," August 4, 2009.
84. Peter Bergen, "Beyond Iraq: The Future of AQI," in Brian Fishman, ed., *Bombers, Bank Accounts and Bleed-out: Al Qaida's Road In and Out of Iraq* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008), 12–33; Oren Barak, "The Modern Sherwood Forest: Why the International Community Cannot Let States Fail" (paper presented at the annual conference of the International Studies Association, Montreal, Canada, March 5, 2005).
85. UNOSAA (see note 12 above), 14.
86. *The Economist*, "Briefing: Islam and the Arab Revolutions: A Golden Opportunity?" April 2, 2011.
87. Ernesto Londono, "Captured Gaddafi Soldiers, Including Foreign Fighters, Tell of Low Morale," *The Washington Post*, July 7, 2011. These foreign legionnaires were reportedly used to attack civilians when Libyan troops loyal to Gaddafi hesitated to do so, and in this regard their function may be similar to foreign fighters in Africa and South Asia. For a detailed account of UCLA student Chris Jeon, see Joshua Davis, "Arab Spring Break," *Men's Journal*, September 13, 2012, <http://www.mensjournal.com/magazine/arab-spring-break-20120913>.

88. Felter and Fishman documented 109 Libyans among 600 foreign insurgents in Iraq, the second largest contingent after Saudis. Clint Watts has cautioned that the intake of foreign fighters in Sinjar may not be representative of all of Iraq, but might merely reflect where smuggling connections led particular contingents to cross the border. Clint Watts, *Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan: What Foreign Fighter Data Reveals About the Future of Terrorism* (New York: PJ Sage, April 17, 2008).

89. “The rebel military coordinator in Derna, Abdelkarim al-Hasadi, for example, has openly admitted that he recruited 25 young men in Derna to join the Iraqi jihad, some of whom are now fighting on the front lines in Ajdabiya. Al-Hasadi, a history teacher, had fought in Afghanistan but was captured by U.S. forces in 2002 and handed over to Libya where he continued to be monitored by the security services.” Alison Pargeter, “Are Islamist Extremists Fighting among Libya’s Rebels?,” *CTC Sentinel* 4, no. 4 (April 1, 2011): 9–12.

90. My thanks to Clint Watts for noting this explanation, correspondence June 30, 2011. Three quarters of suicide bombers were foreigners 2006–2007. Felter and Fishman, *Al Qaida’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq* (see note 37 above), 6. Prior to this they committed over 90 percent of the suicide bombings. Myers, “Who Are the Foreign Fighters in Iraq?” (see note 56 above).

91. Fishman (see note 11 above), 7, 10–11.