Muslim Foreign Fighters
in Armed Conflicts

Jasper Schwampe

Muslim Foreign Fighters in Armed Conflicts

PhD Dissertation

Table of Contents

Preface

This report summarizes and discusses my PhD thesis "Muslim Foreign Fighters in Armed Conflict". The dissertation was written at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University between February 2015 and June 2018 under the supervision of Thomas Olesen and Lasse Lindekilde. The dissertation consists of the following papers:

- Schwampe, Jasper and Thomas Olesen, "Unrooted Cosmopolitans: The Persistence of Foreign Fighter Activism", under review.
- Schwampe, Jasper and Emil Souleimanov, "Poisonous Partnerships –The Failure of Alliance between Foreign Fighter Groups and Local Militant Organizations", working paper.
- Schwampe, Jasper, "Local Militant Organizations' Strategies for Dealing with Foreign Fighter Groups", under review.
- Schwampe, Jasper and Roman Senninger, "Explaining Local Mobilization into Foreign Fighter Groups – A Geo-Nested Approach", working paper.
- Schwampe, Jasper, "Group-Switching in Civil Wars", under review.

The summary presents the general ideas and conceptual basis of the project, outlines the connection between the different articles and discusses the thesis' overall contribution. For details on specific theoretical arguments, methods, data, and analysis, the reader should refer to the individual articles.

Acknowledgements

The last three and a half years were one of the most intense phases of my life. Since starting my PhD in Aarhus in February 2015, I moved four times within Denmark alone, spent half a year on research and fieldtrips in Bosnia and the United States, visited so many international conferences, workshops, and summer schools that I knew my passport number by heart at some point, commuted twice per week between Kiel and Aarhus, listened to 39 audiobooks, drank about 3800 cups of coffee (756 working days x 5), wrote a dissertation, got married, and became father to a wonderful little daughter. Hello Ida! Naturally, I owe an almost insurmountable amount of debt to those people who accompanied me during this period.

To begin with, I want to thank the members of my assessment committee, Thomas Hegghammer, David Malet, and Morten Brænder for thoroughly reading my thesis and providing valuable feedback. The comments are much appreciated and will substantially improve future publications. When I arrived in Aarhus, I was warmly welcomed by the Political Sociology Section and my supervisors Thomas Olesen and Lasse Lindekilde. Thomas and Lasse were incredibly helpful by commenting on my work, motivating me when I was worrying about my progress, and making me feel at home in Denmark. Importantly, I always felt that both were not only interested in my professional development, but also in my personal well-being. I am also thankful to Anne Binderkrantz who stepped in as a supervisor when Lasse spent a semester in the United States.

At the department, I had the privilege of getting to know a group of great colleagues like Jonas Gejl Pedersen, Mathilde Cecchini, Anne Pintz, Nicolas Burmester, David Parker, Alexander Bor, Casper Sakstrup, Kristina Jessen Hansen, Rachel Beach, Mathias Osmundsen, Mikkel Jagath Hjelt, Sadi Shanaah, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Tonny Brems Knudsen and many others. Everyone at the department supported me in different ways. Be it by inviting me to football games, helping me with administrative matters, housing, translations, or simply conversations about the challenges of being a PhD candidate. Thank you all. As heads of the graduate school, Christoffer Green-Pedersen and Peter Munk Christiansen deserve praise for their steady and genuine efforts to improve the already great working conditions for PhD students. I could not have asked for better research conditions. Closely related to that, I am thankful for the support of the ever-friendly administrative staff. Even on short notice, financial questions, grant applications, as well as proofreading requests, were handled in an extremely efficient fashion. Unlike the Trump Whitehouse, the department really works like a "well-oiled machine".

Introduction

Motivation and Research Objectives

> The apostle instituted brotherhood between his fellow immigrants and the helpers, and he said according to what I have heard – and I appeal to God lest I should attribute to him words that he did not say – "Let each of you take a brother in God." – Ibn Ishaq

In summer 622, the Prophet Muhammed and his followers left their hometown of Mecca after being threatened by some of Muhammed's enemies in the local Quraysh tribe. About three weeks later, they arrived in the oasis-town of Yathrib, which is known today as Medina. In Medina, several local supporters (*ansar*) welcomed and hosted the immigrants (*muhajirun*) around Muhammed. Although Islamic egalitarianism postulates that no Muslim should have antecedence over another, the relationship between *mujahirun* and *ansar* was not always one of equals. Halm (2004) explains that soon after their arrival in Medina, the immigrants started to take over political, religious, and military leadership positions.[1] Furthermore, the wording of sure 8:5 of the Quran – "just as when your Lord brought you out of your home [with the intend to fight Mecca] in truth, while indeed, a party among the believers were unwilling" – suggests that some *ansar* only reluctantly followed Muhammed into his military campaigns against Mecca (Jansen 2008; Ibn Ishaq 1967).

In winter 1995, more than 1,300 years after Muhammed's immigration (*hijra*), another group of *muhajirun* congregated in the central Bosnian city of Zenica to discuss their relationship with the local *ansar*. Since summer 1992, the foreign fighters of *Katibat El-Mudzahid* (KEM) had been fighting alongside Muslim Bosniak forces against local Serbs and Croats in the Bosnian Civil War (1992-1995).[2] Yet, in November 1995, the Bosnian government's agreement to the Dayton Peace Accords caused considerable upheaval amongst

---

[1] In addition, the first four leaders of the Rashidun Caliphate after Muhammed's death in 632 were all *muhajirun* from Mekka.

[2] Throughout the dissertation, I use the term "Bosniak" to refer to Bosnians of Muslim faith.

KEM's leadership, because it mandated that "all foreign forces […] from neighboring and other states shall be withdrawn from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina […]."[3]

With this threat of expulsion, two points dominated the meeting's agenda: First, how to react to the Bosnian government's decision? Second, could some of the almost 700 local KEM members be entrusted with leadership positions? The discussions about the proper course of action were intense. A foreign fighter named Abu Hamza chastised the group's supreme leaders, "Expulsion from Bosnia is a great humiliation for the Muslims. […] Let us confront the infidels and make a pledge of martyrdom with God to die in his cause. […] Even if Abu al-Maali and the shaykh accept such humiliation, we will not accept it. We will neither leave the country nor turn over our weapons." Abu Hamza was supported by Abu al-Sabur, who argued, "The religious cause which we served does not allow us to depart." Another foreign fighter named Nadim pledged, "To not allow this group to be disbanded or dissolved in any shape or form." Others emphasized the necessity to find some kind of arrangement with the Bosniak leadership that would protect the group from "the Americans". Regarding the role of Bosniak KEM members, the leadership assumed that about "70 percent" would stay loyal if conflict with the government became unavoidable. Accordingly, some foreign fighters proposed to offer leadership positions to some of the locals: "The responsibility is not ours alone as Arab leaders; it belongs to […] the *ansar* as well." Others remarked skeptically, "If a task is assigned to them [the Bosniaks] without the benefit of guidance, they fail to accomplish it in in a satisfactory manner."[4]

Regardless of its outcome, the discussion provides important insights into the relationship between foreign fighters and locals during armed conflict. KEM operated as an autonomous group, which had successfully assembled a base of loyal local followers. Clearly, the foreign fighters felt entitled to lead the locals. Throughout the discussions, several foreign fighters drew on the classical notions of *muhajirun* and *ansar* to underline their (religious) leadership claims.[5] For KEM, the religious cause and missionary task was more important than the Bosnian government's wish for peace. Hence, the duality of objectives generated a potential for infighting between the allies. At the

---

[3] United Nations, "General Framework for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina", 30.11.1995.

[4] Anwar Sha'ban, "Translations of Handwritten Documents Found by the HVO Next to the Remains of Anwar Sha'ban," 04.07.2005, ICTY Archives.

[5] Anwar Sha'ban, "Translations of Handwritten Documents Found by the HVO Next to the Remains of Anwar Sha'ban," 04.07.2005, ICTY Archives.

same time, some foreign fighters' warnings to stop provoking the government implies that the group depended on local patronage.

It is precisely this charged relationship between foreign fighters and locals that this PhD thesis explores. The research question I intend to answer goes as follows: *How do foreign fighters interact with locals during armed conflict?*

Studying Muslim foreign fighters is a timely and important scholarly undertaking. Since 2011, 40000 to 50000 foreign fighters defined as "foreign militant activists who directly participate in the planning and/or conduct of organized violent activities in the context of armed conflict" (Schwampe and Olesen 2018) travelled to Syria and Iraq.[6] The extent of this massive mobilization exceeds that of all previous transnational militant mobilizations to armed conflicts.[7] Parallel to that, public and policy interest in the phenomenon of foreign fighting skyrocketed. A Lexis Nexis search shows that 16,635 newspaper articles were published on Muslim foreign fighters between 2011 and 2017. This constitutes a substantial increase vis-à-vis just 4,630 articles written on the same topic in the ten years before. Slightly delayed, social sciences followed suit. A similar search for academic work on foreign fighters in the Web of Science and Google-Scholar databases demonstrates that the number of articles and books on foreign fighters has increased substantially over the last three years (see figure 1).[8]

Crucially, a closer look at the type of studies reveals a substantial gap in the literature. Scholars focus heavily on the radicalization of foreign fighters *before* they travel abroad as well as on their actions *after* they return from the conflict country. Yet, we know little about foreign fighters' organizational structures, resources, military capacities, leadership, and objectives in armed conflicts. Understanding the activities and impact of foreign fighters within the conflict theatre is important for several reasons. First, foreign fighters and their local followers have acted as spoilers in peace processes or even provoked the onset of new wars (Souleimanov 2005; Moore and Tumelty 2009). Second, the radicalization process of an individual does not stop with his departure from his home country as foreign fighters are violently socialized within the

---

[6] This study deals with Muslim foreign fighters from the Sunni branch of Islam.

[7] For overviews of different Muslim foreign fighter mobilizations, please see: Hegghammer 2010; Malet 2015; Duyvesteyn and Peeters 2015.

[8] Please note that the Web of Science does not include some journals such as *Perspectives of Terrorism* that are major outlets for the study of foreign fighters (search string: "TS = (foreign fighter)"). Nor does it include the more policy-oriented works of think tanks and NGOs. Thus, the statistic is not an exact portrayal of the state of research. However, it suffices to depict general research trends over time. For a meta-overview of trends in the terrorism literature, see Schuurman 2018.

conflict theatre (Nilsson 2015; Checkel 2017). Third, and in relation to the previous point, individuals form transnational networks that can be activated to conduct militant activities elsewhere (Williams 2011; Hafez 2009; Nesser 2008). Fourth, foreign fighters' interactions with locals may divide and transform local communities into supporters and opponents of their cause. This polarization can have long-lasting effects on local societies that endure throughout the aftermath of a conflict (Wood 2008; Becirevic 2016).

Figure 1. Trends in News Reports and Academic Literature on Foreign Fighters

Panel A: News Reports per Year

Panel B: Academic Articles per Year

Panel C: Type of Academic Article
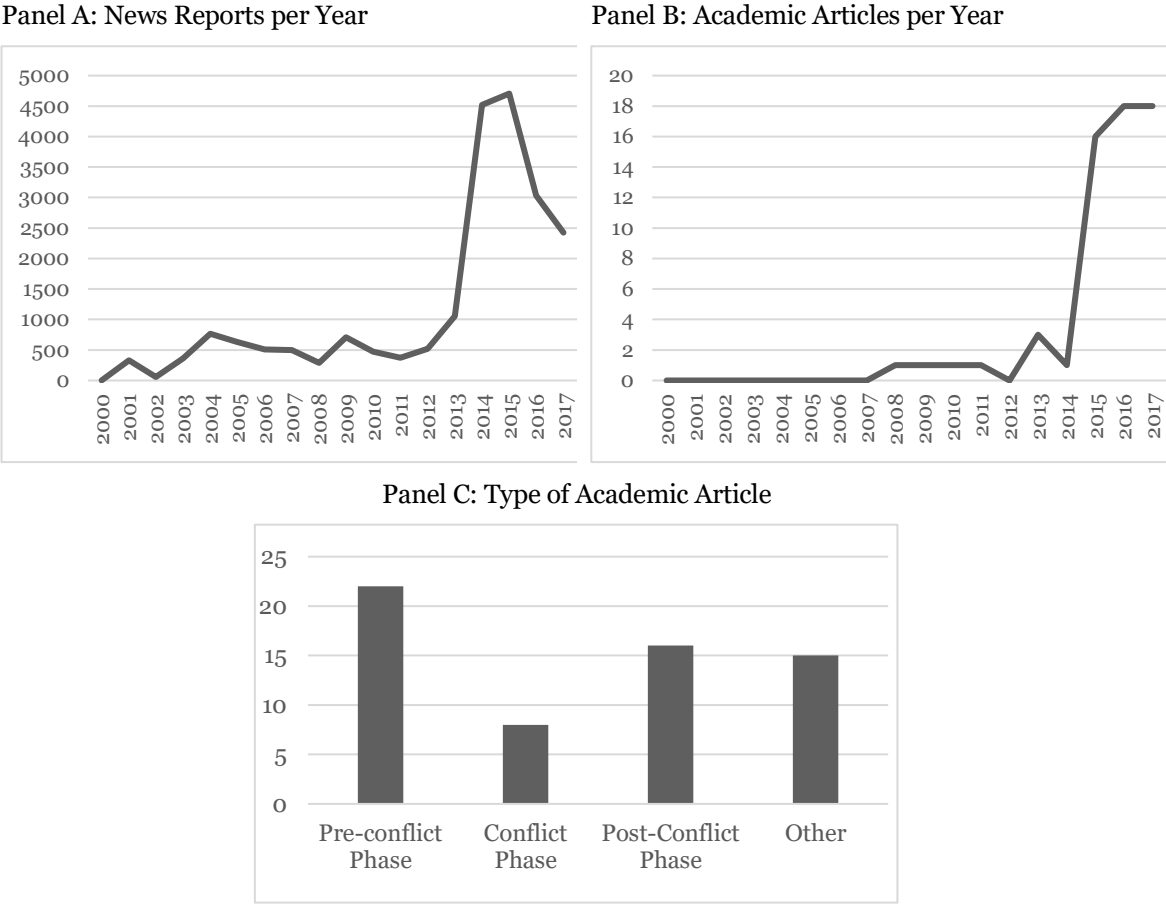
Several factors explain the skewed distribution of research efforts. For Western researchers it is easier to obtain government funding on issues that take place and/or directly affect their societies (Neumann and Kleinmann 2013). Data is more readily available (e.g. from social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter), and mechanisms and causes of radicalization can be examined via popular analysis and data-gathering methods such as experiments and machine learning.[9] Finally, radicalization and de-radicalization research

---

[9] For a combination of machine-learning and social media data see: Mitts 2017.

has become increasingly important in today's political climate. Terrorist attacks involving foreign fighter returnees contribute to an atmosphere of insecurity and Islamophobia that can easily be exploited by populist actors (Bakker and De Roy Van Zuijdewijn 2015; Renard and Coolsaet 2018). However, despite the undebatable importance of this line of research, I find scholars' focus on foreign fighters' pre- and post-conflict activities problematic.

Radicalization is commonly understood as a gradual process during which an individual comes to accept violence as a legitimate method to achieve his or her objectives.[10] Accordingly, the bulk of current scholarship on foreign fighters portrays them as inexperienced individuals who have just recently been pushed and pulled towards participating in an armed conflict. The trigger for radicalization is not necessarily religious but often includes boredom, a desire to impress friends or the opposite sex, a search for identity, meaning, and camaraderie, the desire to become part of a historical project, and many other things (Borum and Fein 2016; Coolsaet 2015; Lindekilde, Bertelsen, and Stohl 2016; Gates and Podder 2015; McCants 2015). Upon their arrival in the conflict zone, so the dominant "foreign fighter narrative" goes, the recently radicalized individuals join local actors (Chu and Braithwaite 2017). Yet, this portrayal differs markedly from the impression we get from observing KEM. KEM was a self-directed organized group of experienced and religiously committed veterans who were ready to turn against their local hosts.

Thus, the first objective of this thesis is to theorize about and conceptually distinguish between individual foreign fighters and foreign fighter groups. In contrast to most of the literature, which looks at foreign fighters as members of local militant organizations (Chu and Braithwaite 2017), this thesis focuses explicitly on foreign fighter groups as autonomous actors. Besides KEM, typical examples of foreign fighter groups include Musab al-Zarqawi's group *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*, which operated during the Iraqi insurgency (2002-2011), and Ibn al-Khattab's group of Arabs, which fought alongside Chechen rebels against Russian forces (1994-2002).[11] These groups are not altruistic actors who merely help local militant organizations to defeat their enemies. They have independent objectives that often center on the missionary task of spreading a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. KEM, for example, defined its goal as the "forming and raising of a generation to carry this religion and […] not just engaging in military operations."[12] This objective clearly

---

[10] For discussion about the term "radicalization" see: McCauley and Moskalenko 2008; Sedgwick 2010 and Borum 2011.

[11] Please see table 5.

[12] KEM, "Call of Jihad: Newsletter of the 'El Mujahid' detachment in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 6.3.1995, ICTY Archives.

differed from the Bosniak government's vision of a "normal state in which Islam will also be free" (Hoare 2004, 104). Considering all this, I argue that foreign fighter groups are not subservient adjuncts to local conflict parties. Instead, I define them as *self-directed militant organizations under foreign leadership*. Conceptually, they thus resemble militias (Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015; Krause and Milliken 2009). By offering a more nuanced understanding of the different ways the phenomenon of foreign fighting materializes during armed conflict, I want to provide a solid conceptual foundation for future research to build on.

The second objective is to explore two types of interactions between foreign fighter groups and locals. First, I investigate how foreign fighter groups interact with local militant organizations. Few in numbers and lacking local knowledge, foreign fighter groups depend on local protection and patronage. In turn, local militant organizations deploy foreign fighter groups against their enemies. Although the relationship appears mutually beneficial on the surface, the foreign fighters' pursuit of independent objectives bears great conflict potential. In order to analyze these inter-group processes, I rely on insights from organizational theory, the social movement literature, and works on business organizations (Zald and Ash 1966; Selznick 1953; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Horowitz, Perkoski, and Potter 2017).

Second, the thesis examines the interactions between foreign fighter groups and the local population. Thereby I focus on foreign fighters' attempts to recruit amongst the local population and to poach members from allied organizations. Foreign fighter groups try to disseminate their message amongst the population and depend on local recruits for various organizational purposes. The example of KEM shows that many locals sympathized with the foreign fighters and eventually joined them. Why they joined them remains puzzling, however. After all, foreign fighter groups do not represent the local grievances that originally led to the outbreak of war. Instead, they arrive after conflict has already broken out and introduce new norms that ought to alienate substantial parts of the population. To examine the interactions between foreign fighter groups and the local population, I draw on works that focus on mobilization and military insubordination during civil wars (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Kalyvas 2008). My thesis addresses the conceptual issues and research objectives outlined above concerning the activities of foreign fighters during armed conflict in five papers.

Papers, Structure, and Contributions

The papers are connected in two ways. First, there is a consecutive logic to them, i.e., the findings and conclusions of a paper influence the motivation

and theoretical ideas of the next paper. The papers can thus be read successively. Second, the papers deal with interactions between foreign fighters and locals on different levels of analysis. The first paper provides a broad overview of the global foreign fighter movement; the second and third paper deal with interactions between foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations; and the fourth and fifth paper address interactions between foreign fighter groups and the local population (see Figure 2). The brief summaries below provide the reader a basic sense of the main questions and research objectives in the papers.

In a seminal article that constitutes the foundation for much contemporary research on Muslim foreign fighters, Hegghammer (2010) explains that a transnational foreign fighter movement developed in the Muslim World during the 1970s and 1980s. Building on Hegghammer's insights, paper 1, "Unrooted Cosmopolitans: the Persistence of Foreign Fighter Activism", investigates the factors that enable the exceptional historical longevity of Muslim foreign fighting. The paper starts by analyzing the career trajectories of 700 transnationally operating Muslim militants. The analytical breakdown of the original dataset shows that Muslim foreign fighters are regularly able to relocate, slip into new activist roles, and stay active over several years. Employing Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, the article theorizes and empirically demonstrates via three individual-level case studies how the trans-spatial, processual, and trans-temporal dimensions of Muslim foreign fighting are embedded in, facilitated by, and productive of a global militant Islamist grievance community. Crucially, the paper suggests that foreign fighting is not a one-and-done type of activity, but that many foreign fighters become veterans who influence future generations of foreign fighters.

The abysmal record of foreign fighters in aiding local militant organizations motivates the second paper entitled "Poisonous Partnerships – The Failure of Alliance between Foreign Fighter Groups and Local Militant Organizations". A historical review of foreign fighters' activities during conflict strongly suggests that they were often a barely relevant military contributor and sometimes even a seriously divisive force. The paper investigates foreign fighters' negative impact on their local allies' organizational cohesion. Building on the findings of paper 1, the article argues that many veteran foreign fighters operate in well-organized foreign fighter groups. The paper systematically compares the writings of Islamist revolutionaries and Marxist rebels and postulates that foreign fighter groups face a similar dilemma as another species of transnationally operating insurgents: *focoist* guerillas. Similar to *focoism*, Jihadist revolutionary thought advocates the idea of vanguard groups restructuring local social orders according to their ideological visions (Guevara 1961; Childs 1995; Qutb 1964; Azzam 1988, n.d.; al-Zawahiri 2001; Lia 2007). To do

so, foreign fighter groups depend on local support and thus aid local actors in their struggle against a common enemy. Yet, their objective of changing the foundations of local social orders regularly contradicts local interests, and alliances between foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations are highly likely to decay over time. The empirical part of paper 2 traces this process in a case study that details the rise of al-Khattab's foreign fighter group and the parallel fragmentation of the Chechen-Ichkerian Army during the Chechen Wars (1994-2002).

Based on the previously developed concept of self-directed foreign fighter groups, paper 3, "Local Militant Organizations' Strategic for Dealing with Foreign Fighter Groups", explores local militant organizations' strategic responses to these groups. In particular, I examine under which conditions local militant organizations tolerate, cooperate, violently suppress, or contain foreign fighter groups. Building on insights from the literatures on business firms and drawing a comparison between foreign fighter groups and pro-government militias, I argue that local actors' decision-making is influenced by two factors: military pressure and organizational structure. I demonstrate that the level of military pressure affects whether local militant organizations decide to seek help from foreign fighters or to repress them. In turn, the degree of organizational centralization influences the strategic options available to militant organizations. Under high military pressure, centralized organizations are capable of coordinating operations with foreign fighters. In contrast, fragmented organizations are forced to tolerate the activities of foreign fighter groups. Likewise, when military pressure is less intense, centralized organizations are more likely to find non-violent solutions of containing foreign fighter groups, while fragmented organizations' options are limited to violent suppression (Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015; Staniland 2015; Horowitz, Perkoski, and Potter 2017). I evaluate this theory against alternative theoretical explanations (ethnicity, ideology, popular support) in two case studies on KEM during the Bosnian Civil War and al-Khattab's group during the Chechen Wars.

Papers 2 and 3 examine group-level interactions between foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations. In contrast, paper 4, "Local Mobilization into Foreign Fighter Groups – A Geo-nested Approach", investigates why local individuals joined KEM during the Bosnian Civil War. It thus addresses interactions between foreign fighter groups and the local population. To answer the research question, the paper utilizes original data on the place of origin (municipality level) of more than 1,000 locals who joined KEM between April 1993 and December 1995. The research design follows a geo-nested approach (Harbers and Ingram 2017a). The analysis starts by examining classic

mobilization arguments (religious motivations, ethnic and political grievances, socioeconomic factors, social networks, and lust for revenge) using statistical methods. Since the municipalities might not be truly independent from each other, geo-nested analysis accounts for spatial dependence between the units of analysis.[13] The large-n analysis leads to two conclusions. First, conventional mobilization theories do not sufficiently explain subnational variation in recruitment numbers. Second, the results suggest the existence of a "diffusion or spillover process where events in one place predict an increased likelihood of similar events in neighboring places" (Harbers and Ingram 2017a, 296). Hence, the observed subnational variation appears to depend not merely on municipalities' characteristics but also on the ways KEM's recruitment narrative diffused through the municipalities. After identifying geographic hot spots of mobilization, I conducted 50 interviews with former Bosniak Jihadists and local soldiers to uncover KEM' recruitment narrative and the diffusion mechanism at work. The qualitative evidence suggests that KEM's framing diffused via relational and mediated mechanisms throughout central Bosnia. Interestingly, the speed and direction of the diffusion process was affected by physical factors such as roadblocks and shifting frontlines.

Besides revealing the importance of diffusion processes, the data gathered for paper 4 suggests that many locals who joined KEM were deserters from the Bosnian Army. Motivated by this observation, paper 5, "Group-Switching in Civil Wars", develops a comprehensive theory of the process of group-switching. Group-switching is defined as a process whereby an individual leaves one armed group to join an allied armed group that fights the same enemy. Bridging meso- and micro-level explanations, I argue that the decision to switch groups vis-à-vis alternative courses of action such as staying put or desertion is influenced by the type of combatant disaffection (self-regarding vs. other regarding types of disaffection) and their expectations of being physically punished or socially sanctioned for such behavior (deserters' dilemma).[14] Based on 50 in-depth interviews with former jihadists and veterans from the Bosnian Civil War, the paper probes the theory by juxtaposing the trajectories of Bosnian soldiers who joined KEM with those of soldiers who deserted or stayed put. The analysis suggests that other-regarding fighters' decision-making is influenced by the expectations of social sanctions, while self-regarding fighters are more concerned about physical punishment.

---

[13] "Not being truly independent from each other" simply means that an event in one unit of analysis might affect the likelihood of a similar event occurring in a neighboring unit of analysis.

[14] For more information on the deserter's dilemma see: Albrecht and Koehler 2017; Koehler, Ohl, and Albrecht 2016 and McLauchlin 2014.

Figure 2 Analytical Structure and Consecutive Logic of the Dissertation
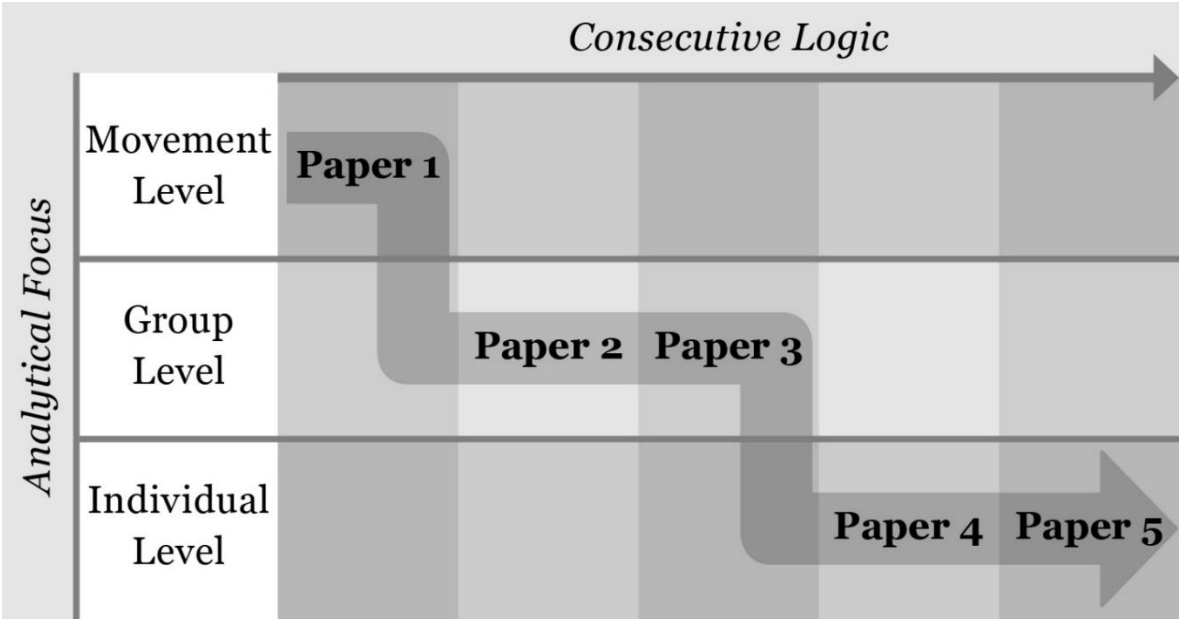
The dissertation is an exploratory study into an empirically under-investigated, under-theorized, and under-conceptualized field of study that has far-reaching implications. Combined, the papers will substantially improve our empirical, conceptual, and theoretical knowledge on foreign fighters' activities during armed conflict. The remainder of the summary is structured as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the existing literature on foreign fighters in armed conflict and the relevant conceptual issues. Chapter 3 outlines the data sources, research designs and methods. Chapter 4 discusses the main findings of the five papers. The dissertation summary concludes with a discussion of the thesis contributions, limitations, and further avenues of research in chapter 5.

Foreign Fighters in Armed Conflict

This section introduces central concepts, discusses the shortcomings of existing research on foreign fighters, situates the conceptual and theoretical contributions of the thesis in the literature, and explains baseline theoretical expectations that motivate and guide the individual papers. The review's focus lies on studies that deal with foreign fighters' activities during armed conflict. Most of the theoretical ideas and conceptual ideas summarized below are debated at length in the theory sections of papers 1 to 3.

What is a Foreign Fighter?

In this year occurred an outstanding thing and one much to be marveled at, for it is unheard of throughout the ages. About the time of Easter and Pentecost,4 without anyone having preached or called for it and prompted by I know not what spirit, many thousands of boys, ranging in age from six years to full maturity, left the plows or carts which they were driving, the flocks which they were pasturing, and anything else which they were doing. This they did despite the wishes of their parents, relatives, and friends who sought to make them draw back. Suddenly one ran after another to take the cross. Thus, by groups of twenty, or fifty, or a hundred, they put up banners and began to journey to Jerusalem. - *Chronica Regiae Coloniensis Continuatio Prima*

Sporadic references to non-citizens of conflict countries joining local conflict parties have occurred in scholarly works on armed conflict and transnational politics since the 1960s (Rosenau 1964; Malet 2013). However, Malet (2010) notes that for most of the 20th century and the first decade of the new millennium, the social science literature lacked an established term to describe this phenomenon. A reason for the lack of a common understanding, according to Hegghammer (2010, 55), lies in the fact that "foreign fighters constitute an intermediate actor category lost between local rebels, on the one hand, and international terrorists, on the other." Accordingly, most scholars employ ad-hoc definitions that demarcate foreign fighters from terrorists and other transnationally operating actors such as mercenaries (Arielli and Collins 2012; Ettinger 2014).

Table 1. Foreign Fighter Definitions

Authors/Source	Term	Definition
Moore and Tumelty 2008	Foreign fighters	"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."
Malet 2013	Foreign fighters	"non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflicts" to defend some transnational identity com- munity.
Bryan 2010	Foreign fighters	"not agents of foreign governments, but they leave home typically to fight for a transnational cause or identity."
Bakke 2014	Transnational insurgents	"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.
Pape and Feldman 2012	Transnational fighters	"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.""
Cilluffo, Cozzens, and Ranstorp 2010)	Western foreign fighters	"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."
Hegghammer 2010	Foreign fighters	"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 war- ring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid."
Vidino 2006	Foreign mujahedeen	"Islamist volunteer combatants that have decided to join the global jihad and fight in various internal conflicts on behalf of Muslims against those they deem to be infidel enemies […]."
Bakker and Singleton 2016	Foreign fighters	"individuals driven mainly by ideology, religion and/or kinship, who leave their country of origin or their country of habitual residence to join a party engaged in an armed conflict"
United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa	Combatants on Foreign Soil	"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."
United Nations Security Council	Foreign terrorist fighters	"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."
Malet 2015	Foreign fighters	"A non-citizen of a state experiencing civil conflict who arrives from an external state to join an insurgency (e.g., International Brigades, ISIS)."

"Foreign fighter" is the most commonly employed term in scholarly circles. The adjective "foreign" usually refers to a citizen of a different nation-state than the one where the conflict occurs. Recently, scholars have also started to use the term "transnational insurgents" (Bakke 2014; Gates and Podder 2015), which stresses the non-state nature of the phenomenon. A less used term – "Combatants on Foreign Soil" – appears to emphasize the lack of what Carl Schmitt describes a telluric orientation, a "tie to the soil, to the autochthonous population, and to the geographical particularity of the land" (Schmitt [1963] 2007, 21; Li 2015, 5). While these terms are often used analogously without causing much confusion,[15] the UN Security Council's 2014 adoption of the term "Foreign Terrorist Fighter" (FTF) contradicts earlier attempts to differentiate foreign fighters from terrorists (Malet 2015; Schmid 2015).

Nowadays, foreign fighting is frequently linked to the ideology of radical Islam. This thesis too focuses on Muslim foreign fighters. Still, accounts such as the one about the Children's Crusade 1212 in the opening quote of this section show that foreign fighting is neither a recent nor an exclusively Muslim phenomenon. The post-Westphalian record of foreign fighting includes nationalist foreign fighters of the 19th century's risorgimento era, socialist International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War, and central Africa's contemporary rebel diasporas (Malet 2013; Krueger and Levsen 2011; Clapham 1998). During the Bosnian Civil War, right-wing extremists from Europe fought alongside the Catholic Bosnian Croats, while Muslims from Northern Africa and the Arabian peninsula joined the Bosniaks (Arielli 2012; Hoare 2004). The Orthodox Serb General Ratko Mladić reportedly hoisted a Greek flag over the town of Srebrenica in honor of "the brave Greeks fighting on our side" (Blom et al. 2002). Similar dynamics can be observed in the more recent conflicts such as Syria and Iraq (Patin 2015).

Importantly, Malet (2015) and Hegghammer (2010) note that it is not the extent of recent foreign fighter mobilizations that makes Muslim foreign fighting stand out but rather their historical persistence and increasing prevalence. According to Malet (2013), about a quarter of all foreign fighter mobilizations between 1818 and 2016 were connected to conflicts in the Muslim World. Investigating the "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters" over the last four decades, Hegghammer (2010) highlights that after the Afghan-Soviet War (1978-1992), foreign fighters were present in at least seventeen armed conflicts involving Muslim conflict parties compared to just two transnational mobilizations between 1945 and 1978. According to Hegghammer (2010, 71

---

[15] I prefer the term "foreign fighter" over the term "transnational insurgent" as the latter – strictly speaking – excludes individuals and groups such as KEM that fight on the side of local governments.

ff.), the cause of this recent proliferation lies in the emergence of a militant, pan-Islamist, foreign fighter movement during the 1970s and 1980s. Muslim foreign fighters' life-stories suggest that while some return to their former lives once a conflict ends, others engage in terrorism or travel to other conflict zones (Nasiri 2006; Al-Bahri 2013; Al-Suwailem, n.d. Hegghammer 2007). Crucially, the historical longevity of Muslim foreign fighting makes it an interesting field of inquiry and it calls for a more systematic definition of the term "foreign fighter".

For example, a Saudi foreign fighter named Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin began his militant career in the late 1980s. Enraged by the plight of Afghan Muslims, al-Muqrin became a vocal advocate of the local movement that channeled foreign fighters to Afghanistan. After this phase of non-violent (yet violence-condoning) domestic advocacy, he travelled to Afghanistan in 1991 where he made contact with members of the al-Qaida network and participated in the fighting against the Najibullah regime. Around 1992/1993, he left Afghanistan for the Maghreb and smuggled weapons for the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) during the Algerian Civil War. Following a brief sojourn in Saudi Arabia, he again left his home country to join the mujahedeen in the Bosnian Civil War and became a religious instructor in a training camp. In 1995, he left the Balkans and joined Islamist rebels in Somalia. After being caught and imprisoned for six years, he once more travelled to Afghanistan to support al-Qaida and the Taliban government against the US invaders. Following his return to Saudi Arabia in early 2002, he became the leader of al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), planning and conducting several domestic terrorist attacks until his death in 2004 (Hegghammer 2007).

Al-Muqrin's career involved numerous relocations, alternating activist roles, and lasted several years. This highlights the remarkable ability of Muslim foreign fighters to continuously re-invent and transform themselves. In paper 1, I therefore suggest that foreign fighting is not a fixed identity and foreign fighter not a fixed political category. To define foreign fighting, I take inspiration from the literature of social movements and consider it as *one* of several other types of militant transnational activism (Tarrow 2005). Accordingly, I define the term contextually vis-à-vis other forms of militant Islamist activism. What are these other types of activism?

Despite al-Muqrin's extremist worldview, not all his activities were violent. Non-violent forms of activism such as fundraising, recruitment, facilitation, and provision of material resources dominated significant episodes of his activist career. The literature is agnostic about such non-violent forms of activism, which results in two problems: how to systematically identify these additional forms of activism and how to subsequently define them vis-à-vis foreign fighting without having to add an infinite number of denoting attributes?

Simply increasing the number of attributes ad-hoc and unsystematically would emphasize the distinctions between the categories but would tell us little about the actual relatedness of the different forms of activism (see paper 1).

The political activism perspective employed in paper 1 allows me to exclude mercenaries and state-actors such as the French Foreign Legion or the Russian "Group Walter". The reviewed definitions feature three recurring themes. First, most definitions refer to the individual's status as non-indigenous or foreign. Second, foreign fighting is considered a violent activity. Third, foreign fighting is conducted within a confined conflict zone. Next, I translate these themes into three denoting attributes: (1) type of activity; (2) location of activity; and (3) context of activity. Then, I allocate binary values to each attribute: (re 1) violent/non-violent; (re 2) domestic/foreign; and (re 3) conflict/non-conflict. Finally, I combine the three attributes and their corresponding binary values with each other. Table 3 shows the resulting typology of eight possible combinations of attributes and values that each represents a particular sub-type of militant Islamist activism. Table 4 displays the corresponding definitions. Ultimately, a foreign fighter is defined as a "foreign militant activist, who participates directly in the planning and/or conduct of organized violent activities in the context of armed conflict".

Table 2. Typology of Militant Activism

Activity		Location			
		Domestic	**Foreign**	**Domestic**	**Foreign**
	Violent	Local insurgent	Foreign fighter	Local terrorist	Foreign terrorist
	Non-violent	Local supporter	Foreign supporter	Local activist	Foreign activist
		Conflict	**Conflict**	**Non-conflict**	**Non-conflict**
		Context			

Table 3. Definitions of different types of militant activism

Type of activity	Definition	Typical actions
Local insurgent	A local militant activist, who directly participates in the planning and/or conduct of organized violent activities in the context of armed conflict	Training for fighting Fighting
Local supporter	A local militant activist, who non-violently supports and/or promotes organized violent activities in the context of armed conflict	Propaganda Facilitation Recruitment Fundraising Logistics
Foreign fighter	A foreign militant activist, who directly participates in the planning and/or conduct of organized violent activities in the context of armed conflict	Training for fighting Fighting
Foreign supporter	A foreign militant activist, who non-violently supports and/or promotes organized violent activities in the context of armed conflict	Propaganda Facilitation Recruitment Fundraising Logistics
Local terrorist	A local militant activist, who directly participates in the planning and/or conduct of organized violent activities in a non-conflict context.	Training for terrorism Terrorism
Local activist	A local militant activist, who non-violently supports and/or promotes organized violent activities in a non-conflict context	Propaganda Facilitation Recruitment Fundraising
Foreign terrorist	A foreign militant activist, who directly participates in the planning and/or conduct of organized violent activities in a non-conflict context.	Training for terrorism Terrorism
Foreign activist	A foreign militant activist, who non-violently supports and/or promotes organized violent activities in a non-conflict context	Propaganda Facilitation Recruitment Fundraising

Like any typology, the present one constitutes a complexity reduction that produces ideal types of, in reality, more complex social phenomena. Furthermore, it may be difficult to find sufficient evidence to distinguish, for instance, an individual who travelled abroad for the purpose of fighting (foreign fighter) from an individual who travelled abroad to obtain skills to conduct terrorist attacks somewhere else (foreign terrorist). Still, the resulting eight categories neither oversimplify nor overcomplicate the issue. The typology improves cur-

rent conceptualizations because it makes it possible to disaggregate the careers of militant Islamists in detailed militant episodes beyond simple "terrorist-foreign fighter" dichotomies.[16]

Foreign Fighter Groups

Having arrived at a general understanding of foreign fighters, I now turn to their activities during armed conflict. The things we do know about foreign fighters' activities during armed conflict paint an ambiguous picture. Malet (2013) points out that incumbents have won 60 percent of all civil wars since 1800 and insurgents only 27 percent. Yet, in conflicts where foreign fighters supported the local insurgents, the latter won 39 percent of the time while the incumbents won merely 44 percent. According to Malet, foreign fighters increase local insurgents' prospect of victory because they provide new skills and resources. However, a study conducted by Seymour, Bakke, and Cunningham (2015) suggests that the presence of foreign fighters is associated with a higher risk of organizational fragmentation.

While these large-n studies include non-Muslim foreign fighters, the case study literature on Muslim foreign fighters also stresses that foreign fighters present a potential force multiplier and a liability at the same time. Bakke (2014) has conducted two of the most important studies on foreign fighters' activities during armed conflict. Focusing on the case of Chechnya, she argues that foreign fighters influence local insurgents' framing, repertoires of action, and resources. In turn, changes in framing, tactics, and resources affect local militant organizations' strength and cohesion. Her analyses suggest that while the foreign fighters' resources help local insurgents in the short term, the use of radical tactics and the introductions of new norms and ideas (e.g. the implementation of *sharia* law) facilitate internal conflict and polarize the population. Hence, in order to profit from the external resources, the local insurgent leaders need to "sell" the foreign ideas and tactics to the population.

Inspired by Bakke's work, Rich and Conduit (2014, 1) compare the impact of foreign fighters on the Chechen and Syrian insurgent movements. The authors argue that while "foreign fighters may facilitate greater resource mobilization, their impact on the political and ideological aspects of national causes

---

[16] In the papers, I frequently use the term "foreign *mujahedeen*" as an equivalent of "Muslim foreign fighters". *Mujahedeen* describes a person who is currently engaged in *jihad* and is not to be confused with the above-mentioned *muhajirun*. Not all *muhajirun* are *mujahedeen* and vice versa. Throughout the thesis, I use "foreign *mujahedeen*" to describe foreign fighters and "local *mujahedeen*" to describe local members of foreign fighter groups.

has generally been less positive". Overall, they identify four central conflict dynamics that foreign fighters can influence: goals and objectives, insurgent cohesion, domestic and international perception of the insurgent movement, and government response to the insurgent movement. Like Bakke, they conclude that foreign fighters' resources and skills help local insurgents in the short term. In the long term, however, new ideas and tactics facilitate infighting amongst the insurgents and allow the incumbent to frame them as extremists.

These accounts are representative of a number of qualitative case studies on the role of Muslim foreign fighters in conflicts, such as the Kashmiri Insurgency, the Insurgency in the Ogaden, the post-9/11 Afghan Insurgency, the Iraqi Insurgency, and the Bosnian Civil War (Garner 2013; Vidino, Pantucci, and Kohlmann 2010; Jarle Hansen 2013; Harpviken 2012; Stenersen 2017; van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012; Vidino 2006; Mitchell 2008; Hafez 2007). While these studies emphasize different aspects of the phenomenon, they consistently suggest that potential positive effects of foreign fighters' material contributions are regularly offset by the accompanying ideological baggage. I do not disagree with the general findings, but in the following, I want to offer a more nuanced conceptual take on foreign fighting by paying close attention to the different ways the phenomenon materializes during armed conflicts.

Confronted with this ambivalent picture, recent studies started disaggregating the phenomenon to examine whether specific subtypes of foreign fighters are responsible for the frequent friction between *muhajirun* and *ansar*. In one of the few systematic statistical studies on foreign fighters' impact on local conflict dynamics, Chu and Braithwaite (2017) argue that individuals who have travelled longer distances and share ethnic ties with local insurgent groups are less likely to have a detrimental impact on their local hosts. In particular, they theorize that recruits who travelled long distances are on average more committed than individuals with shorter travel histories. In addition, shared ethnic ties between foreign and local fighters facilitate organizational cohesion. Likewise, in an unpublished working paper, Moore (2016) argues that variation in cultural overlap affects foreign fighters' behavior towards the population. In addition, insufficient understanding of the local context and poor language skills hinder effective socialization and thus increase the risk of fragmentation. Overall, these approaches remind of the literatures on desertion and small-unit cohesion where several authors posit that shared social backgrounds decrease the risk of disintegration and mutiny (Bearman 1991; Costa and Kahn 2001; McLauchlin 2015; Shils and Janowitz 1948). I find these initiatives to distinguish different types of foreign fighters important, but some issues with the approaches outlined above need to be addressed.

First, the studies code complex variables such as ethnicity in a dichotomous fashion. Describing a contingent of foreign fighters either as co-ethnic or as non-co-ethnic is an oversimplification. The foreign fighter contingent in Syria consists of individuals from at least 51 nation-states (Barret 2017). A more fruitful approach would be to investigate the composition of individual foreign fighter contingents. Mendelsohn (2011, 195) suggests that, "volunteers from Western countries are not only insignificant for the fighting effort; they may even become a liability. Instead of a force multiplier on the front, many need the equivalent of babysitting. [...]. In many cases, they have poor language skills, are unused to the harsh conditions, and tend to become ill. More useful are foreign fighters originating from the "near abroad," the immediate neighboring states." Likewise, Gates and Podder (2015) explain that in the ranks of the Islamic State (IS), regional foreign fighters as well as central Asians are considered to be better fighters than Westerners, who, however, are more media savvy and better educated. A potential way forward would be to assess degrees of commitment and foreignness. The ideal type of foreign recruit would be an individual who scores high on commitment and low on foreignness. From such foreign fighters we would expect frictionless interactions with the locals. In contrast, individuals who score high on foreignness and low on commitment are more likely to cause trouble. However, such a model is currently not feasible due to a lack of individual-level data and inaccurate proxies.

Second, the studies deal with non-Muslim as well as Muslim foreign fighters and assume that foreign fighters join local groups. Crucially, however, this is not always the case for Muslim foreign fighters. An intelligence report from the Bosnian War (1993-1995), for example, reads that "since the beginning of the war there have been volunteers from foreign countries [...] who have not entered the ranks of the BH Army in spite of being invited to." The author highlights that the foreign fighters' actions were "directly detrimental to the BH state." The report also mentions that the foreign "troublemakers" belonged to the so-called El-Mudzahid group, which "was under the command of a certain 'Emir' who owns oil wells, most probably in Saudi Arabia."[17] Besides Katibat El-Mudzahid, the Bosnian Army was also concerned about at least two other independent foreign fighter groups that operated in central

---

[17] ABiH 3rd Corps Command, "Report to Be Delivered to RBH Army Staff Commander (attn. Mr. Rasim Delic) RBH Army Staff Chief (attn. Mr. Sefer Halilovic)," 13 May 1993, ICTY Archives.

Bosnia (the al-Zubayr Group and the "Turkish Guerilla").[18] The case of Bosnia is not idiosyncratic regarding this matter. In 1997, the Afghan Taliban established an Arab Liaison Office that coordinated their relationship to six different groups of foreign fighters (Stenersen 2017). Other well-known examples of foreign fighter groups include *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* operating under the Jordanian al-Zarqawi during the Iraqi Insurgency (2003-2009) and al-Khattab's group of Arabs fighting in Chechnya (1995-2002) (Hafez 2007; Moore and Tumelty 2008).

These examples support Hegghammer (2010), who argues that in many cases veteran Jihadists instead of local militant groups organize foreign fighter mobilizations. The *emir* of the mujahedeen in Bosnia, Abu Abd al-Aziz, fought in the Soviet-Afghan War before travelling to Bosnia in spring 1992. Likewise, al-Khattab was a veteran of the Afghan and Tajik Civil Wars, and al-Zarqawi operated a training camp in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan before travelling to Iraq. In papers 2 and 3, I thus argue that religiously committed veteran foreign fighters and their groups do not altruistically assist local militant organizations in defeating their enemies. More specifically, in paper 2, I juxtapose foreign fighter groups with transnationally operating Marxist guerrillas that were active during the Cold War. Instead of being committed to their local allies' cause, both Marxist guerrillas and Muslim foreign fighter groups consider themselves the vanguard of their ideology and prize their own objectives higher than those of their allies (Guevara 1961; Lenin 1902; Qutb 1964; Azzam 1988). In the case of Muslim foreign fighter groups, the objective often includes spreading a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Hence, unlike the individual foreign fighters debated in the works above, foreign fighter groups are not subservient adjuncts to local actors. In paper 3, I highlight that their relationship to local militant organizations resembles that between pro-government militias and the government. Similar to militias and governments, foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations cooperate against a common enemy. However, over time, militias' as well as foreign fighter groups' interests can diverge from those of their allies and the relationship will turn sour.

Despite plenty of anecdotal evidence on the existence and activities of foreign fighter groups, the literature has refrained from taking them seriously as autonomous actors in armed conflict. This dissertation differentiates between individual foreign fighters and foreign fighter groups and defines the latter as

---

[18] FBiH Intelligence and Security Service, "Conversations with Kodzak/Kojak", 14.10.2003, ICTY Archives; FBiH Agency for Investigation and Documentation (AID), "Analysis with proposal for future handling", 24.6.2002, ICTY Archives.

self-directed militant organizations under foreign leadership. In the following, the thesis will address Bakke's (2014, 187) question whether it "matters whether they [foreign fighters] enter the struggle as solo fighters, serve under the command of domestic insurgent leaders, have leadership positions, or form independent units."[19] While it is difficult to list *all* foreign fighter groups, Table 4 provides a rough overview of prominent examples since the Afghan Soviet War. Most importantly, the data shows that foreign fighter groups have been active in every conflict that featured foreign fighters.

Table 4. Overview of well-known foreign fighter groups 1989-2015

Conflict name	Conflict onset	First foreign fighter group entry	Prominent foreign fighter group
Insurgency in Kashmir	1989	1991	al-Badr Group
Tajik Civil War	May 1992	Summer 1992	al-Khattab Group
Bosnian Civil War	April 1992	June–July 1992	Katibat El-Mudzahid Turkish Guerilla al-Zubayr Group
Insurgency in the Ogaden	April 1991	July 1993	al-Qaida Central
Chechen Wars	December 1994	January–February 1995	al-Khattab Group
Afghan Civil War	April 1992	May 1996	al-Qaida Central Ibn Sheikh Group Abu Zar'a Group Egyptian Islamic Jihad al-Suri Group al-Zarqawi Group
Afghan Insurgency	October 2001	December 2001	al-Qaida Central
Iraqi Insurgency	May 2003	Winter 2002	Jama'at al-Tahwid wal-Jihad
Somali Civil War	2002	2002	al-Qaida in East Africa
Al-Shabaab Insurgency	2006	2006	Yemeni Mujahedeen
Azawat Insurgency	January 2012	March 2012	al-Qaida in the Maghreb al-Mourabitoun
Syrian Civil War	March 2011	October 2011	Jabhat al-Nusra Junud al-Sham Ajnad al-Kavkaz

---

[19] Short answer: It does.

Theoretical Expectations about Foreign Fighter Groups' Interactions with Locals

Due to the lack of research on the activities, military capabilities, organizational structures, and leadership of foreign fighter groups, I compare them with a similar type of actor to develop baseline theoretical assumptions about the nature of their interaction with locals. Kalyvas (2018) outlines substantial parallels between Jihadist rebel groups and Marxist revolutionaries from the Cold War Era. Similar to Marxist rebels, Jihadist insurgent groups are part of a transnational revolutionary movement that opposes the dominant liberal-capitalist world order. Fueled by revolutionary ideas, Jihadist and Marxist insurgents do not merely strive for power but aim at reshaping societies according to their ideological tenets. The term *focoism* describes a theory of Marxist revolutionary warfare that was developed by Ernesto "Che" Guevara (Guevara 1961). While classic Marxist thought postulates that the strong anger of the proletariat against capitalist oppression is necessary for a revolutionary situation to arise, Guevara emphasized that a vanguard or "nucleus of 30 to 50 men" could ignite a revolution by force (Payne 2008). Crucially, Guevara was convinced of the strategy's universal appeal: Marxist revolution could be exported to other countries.

Not unlike Guevara's campaign against Western capitalism, the Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb advocated violent *jihad* (holy war) against corrupt Muslim rulers during the 1950s and 1960s. Similar to Marxist revolutionaries, Qutb (1964) promoted the idea of an Islamist vanguard. The Qutbian idea of a vanguard waking the Muslim *ummah* from its slumber influenced subsequent generations of Islamist revolutionaries. Most importantly, Abdullah Azzam (1988; n.d.) argued that without a "self-sacrificing vanguard that spends everything in its possession for the sake of making its ideology prevail [...] this ideology will be stillborn, perishing before it sees light and life." Crucially, Azzam diverged from Qutb's focus on national revolutions and instead emphasized the individual duty of every able-bodied Muslim to wage jihad against the non-Muslim occupation of all Muslim lands. The internationalization of Jihadist vanguardism permeates revolutionary Islamist thinking of the late 20th and early 21st century and mirrors the *focoist* idea of exporting revolution to other countries.[20] Echoing Azzam as much as Guevara, the Jihadist

---

[20] The first emir of Katibat El-Mudzahid came out as a follower of Abdullah Azzam in a 1992 interview: "One of those who came to our land [Saudi Arabia] was sheikh Dr. Abdallah Azzam -- may his soul rest in peace -- I heard him rallying the youth to come forth and join him to go to Afghanistan. This was in 1984 -- I think. I decided

strategist al-Suri (Lia 2008, 381) advocates that foreign fighters should "head for wherever the fronts open up, whenever they open."[21]

Similar to Marxist considerations of workers solidarity, Jihadist foreign fighters assume that the concept of the *ummah* overrules local disputes and facilitates a shared revolutionary outlook between *muhajirun* and *ansar*. Yet, while Marxist as well as Jihadist revolutionaries ideological convictions do not categorically preclude an understanding of local norms, they support a sense of moral superiority that encourages proselytization instead of tolerance (Payne 2011; Mitchell 2008). In his African and Bolivian diaries, Guevara admits that his guerrilla group had problems mustering local support and a difficult relationship to local rebel leaders. The sense of superiority of Marxist as well as Jihadist foreign fighters also implies a strong claim to lead the locals. A central lesson Guevara drew from his failure to ignite revolution in Congo was that the local peasantry needed better "revolutionary" and "political leadership" owing to their "uncultivated state" (Childs 1995, 612; Guevara 2006, 2012). In a similar fashion, the jihadist strategist Abu Bakr Naji (2006, 37), whose thinking inspired Musab al-Zarqawi, advises that the "the entire political administration or most of it should" be made up of senior jihadists.

The comparison of Marxist guerrillas and Muslim foreign fighter groups makes it possible to formulate theoretical expectations on the interactions between foreign fighter groups and locals during armed conflict. Foreign fighter groups and locals interact on two levels of analysis: local militant organizations and the local population.

Regarding the first type of interactions, it appears that alliances between local militant organizations and foreign fighter groups are mutually beneficial. The local militant organization employs the foreign fighters as force multipliers, while the foreign fighters get local contacts that help disseminate their revolutionary ideology. Yet, due to diverging local and foreign objectives, I expect that the relationship between foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations eventually turns sour. Thus, paper 2 theorizes and traces the process of how foreign fighter groups facilitate the fragmentation of local militant organizations.[22] Subsequently, paper 3 examines local militant organizations' strategies to deal with self-seeking foreign fighters.

---

to go and check the matter for myself. This was, and all praise be to Allah, the beginning of my journey with Jihad. I am still following this same path" (T. Tawfiq, "Interview with Sheikh al-Mujahideen Abu Abdel Aziz", Al-Sirat Al-Mustaqeem (The Straight Path), August 1994).

[21] For a discussion of *focoism* and al-Qaida's strategy see: Payne 2011.

[22] Note that "fragmentation" conceptually differs front the previously used "disintegration". I employ fragmentation as a group-level concept that describes the act of

To investigate these inter-group dynamics, I rely on insights from organizational theory and the literature on business firms (Selznick 1953; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Horowitz, Perkoski, and Potter 2017). By doing so, I follow civil-war researchers' recent turn to the meso-level of analysis (Pearlman and Cunningham 2012, 5–6). Militant organizations are the principal actors in armed conflicts and are responsible for most violent incidents. Having "one or more criteria of membership and the presence of an authority (and, or constitutional) structure" (Kenny 2010, 535), militant organizations such as the Taliban or the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade differ from movements like the Afghan or Iraqi Insurgencies, which consist of multiple militant organizations. At the same time, militant organizations themselves are not unitary actors but consist of multiple factions that compete for intra-organizational influence (Krause 2013a, [b] 2013; Kenny 2010; Tamm 2016).

Second, foreign fighter groups interact with the local population. Foreign fighter groups need to recruit locals for the same reasons they form alliances on the group level. Asked about the role of Arabs during the Chechen Wars, a war-witness replied, "without Chechens they [the foreign fighters] were nobody, nobody would take them seriously, they felt very insecure surrounded by the Chechens."[23] Due to their uncompromising tendencies, foreign fighter groups have many local enemies, and local recruits can help deter these enemies. Importantly, locals can be mobilized in greater numbers and in a faster period than foreign fighters; they are embedded in social networks (Staniland 2012; Parkinson 2013) and can identify potential threats and gather information without causing unwanted attention (Schutte 2015; Lyall 2010);[24] and finally, locals facilitate trust in the legitimacy of the foreign fighters' agenda. Despite numerous arguments in favor of foreign fighter groups "going local", it remains puzzling why locals prefer to join foreign fighter groups instead of local groups. This leads to two expectations. First, I expect that foreign fighter groups' mobilization of locals follows different dynamics than local actors' mobilization. Second, since foreign fighter groups arrive only after the conflict has started, I expect that they will try to lure away members of local militant organizations.

To study these dynamics, I rely mainly on the literature on mobilization and military disobedience during civil wars (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008;

---

one part of an organization breaking out and building a new organization. In contrast, disintegration is about individual-level interactions within small groups that affect morale, desertion rates and combat readiness.

[23] Interview conducted by Emil Souleimanov in summer 2016.

[24] This is especially important in population-centric insurgency scenarios where the survival of the group hinges very much on the support of the local population.

Parkinson 2013; Petersen 2002; Kalyvas 2008; McLauchlin 2014; Albrecht and Koehler 2017). More specifically, paper 4 investigates to which extent different mobilization theories can explain local mobilization into foreign fighter groups. Building on paper 4, paper 5 takes a closer look at the attempts of foreign fighter groups to recruit deserters from their local allies.

Research Design

Summarizing the research design of a paper-based dissertation is a challenging task. Unlike in a monography, it is difficult to demarcate *one* analytical strategy. Instead, each paper has its own research objective and, hence, utilizes data and methods differently. This does not mean that a paper-based model automatically lacks analytical coherence. However, when debating fundamental research design issues such as research objectives, units of analysis, case selection, and data, it is important to differentiate between the design of the dissertation as a whole and the design of the papers.

Case Selection and Units of Analysis

The dissertation itself is clearly exploratory in design and objective. I was dissatisfied with the lack of systematic research on the activities of foreign fighters during armed conflict. When I started the project, I found not only that the phenomenon was empirically under-investigated, but that we also lacked proper concepts and theories. While the literature did not allow deriving and testing hypotheses, it provided a sense of what ethnographers call "foreshadowed problems", i.e., topics of interest or especially puzzling observations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2010). Foreshadowed problems can be transformed into theoretical consideration that guide the overall thesis and inspire the research question of the individual papers. In this case, the theoretical considerations revolve around the ambivalent relationship between foreign fighter groups and locals. My overall objective is to develop better concepts and general theoretical propositions through systematic empirical investigation and to lay the foundation for future research on foreign fighters' activities during armed conflict.

A major problem when starting an exploratory project is case selection. Based on what logic can we select cases when existing scholarship does not offer established concepts and theories? The first choice a researcher needs to make is between the breadth and the depth of the investigation. I developed the concept of foreign fighter groups at the onset of the thesis. However, due to the complexity of the phenomenon and obvious data limitations, it quickly became evident that formulating a finite case universe is unfeasible.[25] The best

---

[25] In Syria alone, there are more than 1,000 armed opposition groups. Many are foreign-led *jamaats* (units), such as Junud al-Sham, which I would consider a foreign fighter group. However, besides some famous exceptions we have little data on the bulk of them beyond a name or an acronym.

I can do is to provide a rough list of prominent foreign fighter groups on which at least some data is available (see table 4). In addition, a lot of my initial dissatisfaction with the literature results from studies providing inaccurate empirical findings and flawed conclusion based on weak data and without proper theorization and conceptualization. I therefore decided to opt for depth instead of breadth, but what case(s) to select for in-depth study?

In case-study terminology, the objective of the thesis is theory building rather than theory testing (George and Bennett 2005; Eckstein 1975).[26] Hence, selection guidelines for deductive approaches that rely on established concepts and already formulated hypotheses do not apply. For example, without previous knowledge of independent and dependent variables it is impossible to employ most-similar or most-different designs (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Moreover, most inductive approaches (idiographic historical studies and theory guided-case studies) are guided by an intrinsic and often limited interest in the case itself, and researchers often lack the ambition to develop generalizable theoretical propositions (Levy 2008; Grandy 2010).

Considering the thesis' exploratory objective, I find the notion of "instrumental cases" most useful (Stake 1994, 1995). The purpose of an instrumental case is to produce novel theoretical implications, develop new hypotheses, and yield new theoretical and empirical insights. In order to maximize learning opportunities, the researcher selects positive instrumental cases. Positive cases show the phenomenon of interest in detail and allow the researcher to investigate those mechanisms and processes about which he has previously formulated theoretical expectations. The argument behind selecting positive cases is thus comparable to the logic of selecting typical cases in which "the mechanism can at least in principle be present" in theory-building process tracing (Beach and Pedersen 2016, 314). Accordingly, an instrumental case is not selected due to its "historical significance or a deductive logic of hypothesis-testing, but through careful theoretical consideration of learning opportunities about the phenomenon of interest" (Pechmann 2018, 32; Grandy 2010).

Guided by my theoretical expectations, I reviewed the relevant literature and the historical record of Muslim foreign fighting and selected two cases for in-depth study. My main case is Katibat El-Mudzahid (KEM) – a foreign fighter group that was active in central Bosnia during the Bosnian Civil War (1992-1995). The other case is the foreign fighter group led by Ibn al-Khattab, who was active during the Chechen Wars (1994-2002). It is important to emphasize that the two cases do not carry equal weight and that I mainly rely on insights and data on the case of KEM to develop theories and concepts. The

---

[26] Please note that I do not present *one* great theory on the impact of foreign fighter groups at the end of the thesis and thus employ this language with caution.

additional case of al-Khattab was predominantly utilized as a correlative and corrective to refine my ideas.

Importantly, the research-design considerations of the thesis as a whole differ from those of the individual papers. While the thesis objective is exploratory, papers 3 and 4 have theory-testing designs. Furthermore, the logic of case selection and the units of analysis differ from paper to paper. The description above should not convey the (false) impression that foreign fighter groups are always the unit of analysis. This is only the case in paper 2. In papers 1 and 5, the unit of analysis is individuals. In paper 3, the unit of analysis is periods of strategic interaction between foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations. In paper 4, it is Bosnian municipalities (see table 5). Accordingly, the logic of case selection is unique for every paper.

Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of the thesis as a whole and to answer the individual papers' research questions, I need data on the inner workings and outward communication of Muslim foreign fighter groups. However, data on militant actors such as foreign fighters is extremely difficult to obtain. In 2001, Silke (2001) pointed out that research on terrorism and related issues suffers from an over-reliance on secondary data. About a decade later, Neumann and Kleinmann (2013, 360) claimed that 34 percent of terrorism-related articles were "either methodologically or empirically poor, whereas 11 percent were both." A more recent meta-review on the terrorism literature by Schuurman (2018, 10) shows considerable improvements. Nonetheless, only "53.8% of articles used some kind of first-hand data, [only] 39.2% were based exclusively on literature review, 15.8% utilized interviews, and 8.0% incorporated databases."[27]

There are several reasons for the lack of primary data in this field of inquiry. Regarding the availability of primary documents, scholars have mentioned that militant organizations usually attempt to minimize their paper trail, and government institutions are often reluctant to share their insights (Shapiro 2013; Neumann and Kleinmann 2013);[28] Many primary documents are not translated and thus require knowledge of a foreign language like Arabic; and interviews with active or former members of jihadi groups entail a variety of ethical, feasibility, reliability, and security concerns (Dolnik 2011;

---

[27] See: Dawson and Amarasingam 2017 and Nilsson 2015 for examples of studies relying on interviews with foreign fighters.

[28] For a great example of research on Jihadist groups using archival work see: Stenersen 2017.

Nilsson 2017; Cronin-Furman and Lake 2018). In the following paragraphs, I describe my data sources and explain how I addressed these challenges.[29]

My first major data-collection effort is an original database that provides information on the careers of almost 700 transnationally operating militant Islamist activists. Most information stems from the commercially available Data on Terrorism Suspects Database (DOTS),[30] which is essentially a large collection of newspaper articles on several thousand individuals who were allegedly involved in terrorist activities. To be included in the dataset, the source material had to indicate that the individual was involved in at least one type of militant activity in a foreign context. Since news reports like other open sources are often unreliable and vary in detail, I complemented, whenever possible, the information included in DOTS with additional evidence from the academic literature, Jihadist propaganda statements, martyr epitaphs, and additional news reports.

The bulk of the data I use in this dissertation derives from interviews I conducted with 50 individuals in central Bosnia. My fieldwork lasted four months and consisted of two rounds. During the first part, in summer 2016, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 37 individuals: 12 former KEM members, 13 "regular" soldiers, seven members of Muslim Brigades and Bosniak militias, and five civilians. In winter 2016, Bosnian research assistants conducted interviews with 13 additional respondents: six former KEM members, six regular Bosniak soldiers, and one civilian.

To access potential interviewees, I relied on theory-driven non-probability sampling methods (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014; Cohen and Arieli 2011). I aimed at increasing the sample's variety by approaching the interviewees via different entry points. I first established contacts with several locals whom I had identified as potential gatekeepers based on previous research on the case of KEM. While most initial contact requests were rejected, I was eventually able to arrange meetings with some of these individuals. After explaining that my interests were purely scholarly, I was able to gain the trust of some gatekeepers, and they agreed to introduce me to my first interviewees. Importantly, the gatekeepers' personal networks did not overlap. While the gatekeepers regularly came up with new suggestions, I developed an independent,

---

[29] For a particularly helpful article on the ethics of fieldwork in the context of post-conflict Bosnia see: Clark 2012. In addition to studying the literature on the ethics of fieldwork in post-conflict scenarios, I participated in a course on "Ethnographic Fieldwork Methods at the Peace research Institute Oslo (PRIO) prior to going to Bosnia.

[30] An earlier version of DOTS is available in the form of the Terrorism List by Mickolus and Simmons 2009.

respondent-driven chain-referral strategy to minimize network and referral biases to the widest extent possible (Nilsson 2017).

Trust was an issue both when accessing the respondents and during the interview process. Topics related to the war and especially to religious zealotry are not only provocative but also extremely politicized in Bosnia. More than 350 individuals have travelled from Bosnia to Syria, and many members of local Salafi communities feel that they are under constant surveillance by the security services (Becirevic 2016). Furthermore, almost every interviewed local mujahedeen stated that the media was portraying them unfairly. It was therefore imperative to grant the respondents full anonymity and convince them of my scholarly interest. This also means that I do not provide detailed contextual information that could identify and potentially harm the interviewees. Furthermore, I purposefully did not ask questions about extremely sensitive and controversial issues such as alleged atrocities conducted by KEM.

About half of the interviewees allowed audio recordings.[31] During the remaining interviews detailed notes were taken. The interviews lasted between one and three hours. In general, the longer the conversations lasted, the more the respondents opened up. Some respondents were interviewed multiple times, and newer interviews often yielded better results. Most of the interviews were conducted in Bosnian and some in English and German. I introduced myself and obtained informed consent in the local language. During the interviews, I relied on the assistance of local translators.[32] Relating to the concern that recollections of past events are potentially influenced by present-day experiences, I followed Viterna's (2006, 13) example and structured the interview guide "around past events rather than past attitudes because memories of events are more reliable." For example, I connected questions with locally specific events, e.g. the desecration of a mosque, which were not covered in international media but had huge relevance for local villagers.

---

[31] These were mostly soldiers and civilians. The interviewed mujahedeen were on average more reluctant to be recorded.

[32] One of the main problems when using translators is that the investigator easily loses certain details. It is often difficult to reconstruct the exact wording because some ideas and concepts cannot be translated. I addressed this concern by asking my interpreters before the interviews to take note of slang terms etc. that could be especially interesting for interpretation. At the same, I found that the employer-employee relationship between us had the positive effect of showing the interviewees that I was an experienced researcher. For a discussion of the benefits and challenges of working with translators see: Bujra 2006. For a discussion of the ethics of working with local research assistants see: Gupta 2014.

The recordings and field notes of the interviews were translated into English (when necessary) and transcribed so that they could be organized and analyzed. The interview data was processed in two steps. First, I catalogued the information from the interviews into subfields or topics of general interest. Second, for each individual paper, I engaged in more focused coding to address the respective research questions (Bazeley and Jackson 2013).

The results from the interviews were supplemented with archival data that I collected from the UN International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia (ICTY), in The Hague, Netherlands. Between 2006 and 2008, the ICTY held two trials against Bosnian Army commanders who allegedly failed to prevent atrocities conducted by KEM. Following the closure of the two cases, prosecution and defense released most of the collected evidence. The ICTY investigators obtained several thousands of documents from the Bosnian Army and the foreign fighter group. These documents are available in English and can be inspected online. Since researchers are not granted access to the archives of the Bosnian Army, the ICTY archives are the most important source of primary documents on the activities of KEM. Analyzing this extremely detailed data on local conflict dynamics before conducting fieldwork helped me identify potential gatekeepers and gave me detailed information about the micro-level history of the war in central Bosnia. Hence, I could identify unintended or intended "mistakes" in interviewees' recollections of events and steer the conversations into more promising directions. Overall, the triangulation allowed me to increase the reliability of the conclusions I draw from the interview data.

In addition to the ICTY, I frequented two other archives. First, I visited the library of Zenica to obtain the regimental histories of the Bosnian military units (306th Brigade and 7th Muslim Brigade) with the closest ties to KEM. Second, I spent two weeks in the archives of the United Nations (UN) in New York to review recently classified documents produced by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). UNPROFOR was active in central Bosnia from 1992 to 1995. Particularly valuable were war diaries and summaries of the military situation (MILINFOSUM), which regularly dealt with the activities of the foreign fighters.

Crucially, I used the archival data to supplement and prepare the interviews and to build an original quantitative dataset that allows me to test whether classic mobilization theories (religiosity, ethnic and political polarization, material endowments, social networks, and lust for revenge) explain subnational variation of recruitment into KEM. Amongst the tens of thousands primary documents in the ICTY archives, I discovered a complete list of all KEM members. The list was compiled by KEM's leadership and submitted to the Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps at the end of the war. It includes all local KEM

members' place of origin, date of entry into KEM, and date of withdrawal from KEM. The place of origin of local recruits is given at the municipality level. Combined with information from the Bosnian census of 1991, I constructed a dependent variable that indicates the number of local KEM members per 1,000 Muslim inhabitants per municipality.

To measure the effect of religiosity, the dataset includes the number of mosques per 1,000 Muslim inhabitants. Official municipality-level data on the spatial distribution of mosques does not exist. Accordingly, I relied on data provided by Robin Cognée, who collected this information for his work on the destruction of cultural heritage during the Bosnian Civil War.[33]

Ethnic polarization is captured by a measure introduced by Weidmann (2011). The measure makes use of data on the ethnic composition of more than 2,000 villages and cities located in the different municipalities in Bosnia. This measure is aggregated at the municipality level by using averages at the village level by municipality. To test for political polarization between Muslims and secular Communists, the dataset calculates the absolute distance between the combined vote share of all Communist parties and the Muslim Nationalist Party of Democratic Action (SDA) in the Bosnian municipality elections of 1991. Hence, the measurement follows a similar logic as the ethnic polarization measure. When the absolute distance between the two vote shares is smaller, the political contest between the two political blocs is considered more intense and consequently the political landscape to be more polarized. For this measurement, I obtained a reformatted version of the original election data compiled by ZIPO (a Sarajevo data-company) in 1991.[34]

From the 1991 Statistical Yearbook of Yugoslavia I obtained data on the average income per municipality in order to test whether comparatively poor individuals are more likely to join KEM. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain exact information on the distribution and size of Muslim households, which would be an ideal proxy for the density of community structures. Due to lack of data, I followed the example of Tezcur (2016) and relied on a proxy that indicates the share of the Muslim population in the total population of the municipality. Finally, to test whether individuals who have been exposed to

---

[33] Cognée, Robin. 2017. "La destruction des mosquées en Bosnie-Herzégovine pendant la guerre de 1992-1995 et leur reconstruction/restauration/construction après-guerre (1ère partie)." Mémoire de master - Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO), Université de Paris. I am thankful to Robin Cognee for sharing his data.

[34] The original dataset was compiled by ZIPO (erczipo.ba a Sarajevo data company) in 1990/91 and almost lost during the war. It was retrieved by Analitika (analitika.ba) and re-formatted by Nenad Stojanović and Damir Kapidzic. I am thankful to Damir Kapidzic for providing the data.

high levels of violence would be more willing to join the foreign fighters, I gathered information on the number of killed Muslims per 1000 Muslim inhabitants per municipality. The data on wartime casualties originally comes from the Population Loss Project by the Research and Identification Centre in Sarajevo and was shared by Kevin Mazur of Oxford University.[35]

To study the case of al-Khattab's group, I rely mostly on primary sources in the form of memoirs, interviews, and biographies of foreign fighters and local insurgents as well as the excellent secondary literature (Souleimanov 2007; Sokirianskaia 2009; Bakke 2014; Gall and De Waal 2000; Lieven 1998). In addition, I draw on insights from several interviews with former members of the Chechen elite conducted by Emil Souleimanov – one of my co-authors – in summer 2016.

Data Analysis Strategies

Combined, the different data sources build the empirical foundation of the dissertation and are used to different extents in the individual papers. In paper 1, I use information from the dataset on the almost 700 transnational militant Islamists to provide descriptive statistics that demonstrate the persistence of Muslim foreign fighter careers. More specifically, I utilize the definitions from the typology of transnational militant Islamist activism (see table 3) to re-construct stylized activist pathways that demonstrate the sequences of activities during militant activists' careers. I also coded a "relocation" whenever a militant activist moved to another country.

In paper 2, I start out by formulating basic theoretical expectations on how foreign fighter groups contribute to the fragmentation of local militant organization. Based on the theoretical discussion, I postulate that an alliance of a foreign fighter group with a sub-faction of a local militant organization leads to the fragmentation of the local militant organization as well as to influential foreign fighters. However, it is not clear how exactly these factors are connected. To examine whether a plausible causal mechanisms exists between them, I conduct a theory-building process-tracing study that builds on first-hand empirical information about the divisive activities of al-Khattab's group during the Chechen Wars. I thereby follow Beach and Pedersen (2016, 314) advice to utilize theory-building process tracing "when we know that there might be a relationship between C and O, but we are in the dark regarding potential mechanisms linking the two."

---

[35] For a discussion of the data on Muslim casualties, see: Ball, Tabeau, and Verwimp 2007.

In paper 3, I rely heavily on the interview and archival data from Bosnia and Chechnya to examine local militant organizations' strategies of dealing with foreign fighter groups. More specifically, I conduct a plausibility probe that builds on cross-case and within-case evidence on the Chechen-Ichkerian Army's and the Bosnian Army's varying strategic responses to al-Khattab's group and KEM. The research design allows me to probe whether a combination of military pressure and organizational structures better predicts local militant organizations' strategic responses to foreign fighter groups than alternative explanations (ethnicity, popular support, and ideology). Whenever a prediction is correct, I employ congruence analysis to look for mechanistic evidence that makes it possible to confirm or disconfirm whether and—if yes—how the individual combinations of variables affect strategic decision-making. In comparison to process tracing, which unpacks each and every aspect of the causal mechanisms at work, congruence analysis relies on a more minimalist understanding of mechanisms as causal arrows in between the variables (Beach and Pedersen 2016). While it is less detailed than a single-case process-tracing study, the method still provides rough empirical narratives of what happened in multiple cases.

Paper 4 builds on a recently introduced mixed-methods research design called "geo-nested analysis" to analyze subnational variation in recruitment numbers into KEM (Harbers and Ingram 2017b, [a] 2017). Similar to Lieberman's (2005) nested analysis, a geo-nested research design combines quantitative and qualitative methods. However, it also considers the possibility that the units of analysis – in my case municipalities – are not independent of each other but spatially dependent. The design therefore integrates several steps to test spatial dependence between the municipalities. Based on the outcomes of the test, the quantitative large-n analysis identifies cases that can be further investigated with qualitative methods. In the paper's qualitative part, I utilize empirical evidence on KEM (interviews and archival data) to trace the diffusion process of the group's recruitment narrative.

Paper 5 draws extensively from the 50 interviews I conducted in Bosnia to explore the different motivations of Bosnian soldiers who deserted, stayed with the Bosnian Army or joined the foreign fighters of KEM. In practice, this means that I use congruence methods to reconstruct and trace Bosnian soldiers' trajectories from the formation of their initial motivation to the different outcomes of staying, deserting, or switching groups. I first map out trajectories leading to the outcome of group-switching into KEM and subsequently compare them with those of deserters and soldiers who remained in the Bosnian Army. Table 6 provides an overview of the individual papers' research questions, objectives, data sources, units of analysis, and analytical strategies.

In the next section, I outline the theoretical foundations and key findings of the individual papers.

Table 5. Overview of Data and Analytical Strategies

Paper title	Research question/objective	Unit of analysis	Main data sources	Analytical Strategy
Unrooted Cosmopolitans: The Persistence of Foreign Fighter Activism	What explains the persistence of Muslim foreign fighters?	Individuals	Descriptive data-set on 694 transnational militant careers, open source information, interviews from Bosnia	Structured comparative case-studies
Poisonous Partnerships – The Failure of Alliances between Foreign Fighter Groups and Local Militant Organizations	What explains the detrimental effect of foreign fighter groups on local militant organizations?	Group(s)	Interviews from Chechnya, secondary literature, foreign fighter memoirs	Process tracing
Local Militant Organizations' Strategies for Dealing With Foreign Fighter Groups	What explains local militant organizations' strategic responses to foreign fighter groups?	Interaction periods	Interviews from Bosnia and from Chechnya, archival data from the ICTY and the UN	Plausibility probe, congruence analysis
Local Mobilization into Foreign Fighter Groups – A Geo-Nested Approach	What explains local mobilization into foreign fighter groups?	Municipalities	Large-n data-set on local recruitment in Bosnia, Interviews from Bosnia, archival data from the ICTY and the UN	Geo-nested analysis, process tracing
Group-Switching in Civil Wars	What explains group-switching in civil wars?	Individuals	Interviews from Bosnia, archival data from the ICTY and the UN	Congruence analysis

Central Findings of the Individual Papers

This part summarizes the individual papers. Since I have already discussed most of the conceptual contributions as well as data and methods in the previous sections, my focus will be on the papers' theoretical foundations, empirical findings, and contributions to the literature.

Paper 1: Unrooted Cosmopolitans: The Persistence of Foreign Fighter Activism[36]

The aim of paper 1 (co-authored with Thomas Olesen) is to explain the historical persistence of Muslim foreign fighting. Although foreign fighting is not an exclusively Muslim phenomenon and there have been numerous instances of foreign fighter contingents with diverse ideological backgrounds, Muslim foreign fighting stands out because it has developed a historically exceptional persistence since the 1980s (Hegghammer 2010). A review of foreign fighter memoirs and biographies suggests three characteristics that make Muslim foreign fighting distinct. First, many foreign fighter careers involve numerous relocations (the trans-spatial dimension). Second, Muslim foreign fighters often engage in alternative types of militant activism (e.g. terrorism) after they have stopped fighting in a conflict zone (the processual dimension). Third, and related to the above, many foreign fighters stay active for several years (the trans-temporal dimension).

The paper considers foreign fighting a type of transnational militant activism (Tarrow 2005) and develops a definition of foreign fighting that situates the phenomenon in a typology with other types of militant Islamist activism. Based on this typology, we systematically code the careers of almost 700 transnationally operating Islamist militants to provide systematic evidence on their careers' trans-spatial, processual, and trans-temporal dimensions. Since our dataset relies on open source information from Western newspapers, it is not perfectly representative of the overall population of Islamist militant activists. Yet, due to the systematic coding, it represents a considerable improvement to existing data on Muslim foreign fighters' persistence. The descriptive statistics highlight three issues in particular. First, the high number of different activities throughout the analyzed careers (Figure 3) underlines the need to

---

[36] This paper is currently under review. An earlier version has been presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting 2016, Seattle, USA.

view labels like "foreign fighter" as permeable and transposable, that is, as elements in a larger process. Second, Muslim foreign fighter careers are often *trans-spatial* and *trans-temporal* in that many foreign fighters have relocated several times and been involved in militant activism in at least two different countries (Figure 4). Accordingly, their careers regularly extend over several years and sometimes decades. Third, the findings suggest that we look more closely at the differences and repeated interactions between recently radicalized newcomers and veteran militants who have been active for long periods.

Figure 3. Number of different activities per career
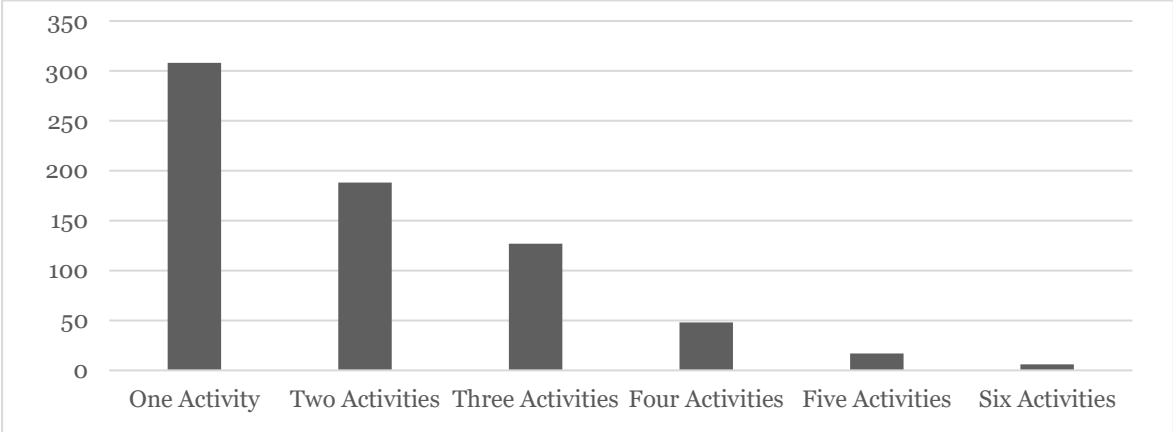
Figure 4. Number of relocations per career
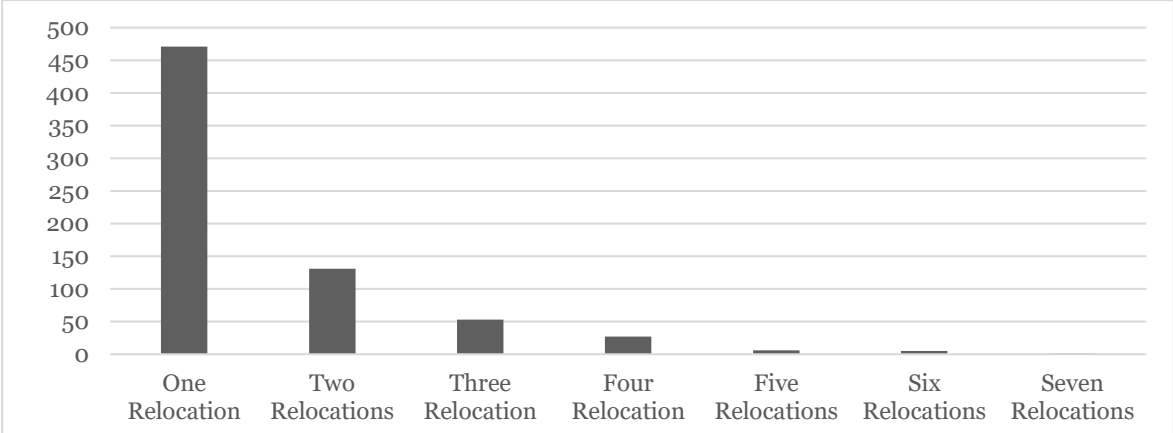
How can foreign fighters stay active over long periods, change their activities, and relocate? The paper theorizes that foreign fighting is embedded in, facilitated by, and productive of a global militant Islamist grievance community. Grievance communities (1) have generated social and political belief and meaning systems that fundamentally challenge dominant authority systems; (2) are "united" primarily through shared perceptions of injustice; (3) display a strong identity and solidarity element; and (4) are loosely organized in cross-

border networks driven and maintained by, especially, various forms of political activism. Grievance communities, in this conception, are imagined communities in the sense that its "members" are dispersed and "connected" primarily through shared injustice perceptions, identities, and solidarities. The paper considers grievance communities structural in a Giddensian sense (Giddens 1984). What is especially important from a persistence point of view is Giddens' argument about the co-productive relationship between structure and agency. Human action is enabled and motivated by existing norms, rules, and resources, but in actively employing these, agents also reproduce and, potentially, strengthen the structure. This interactional dynamic is at the core of our understanding of foreign fighter persistence.

The paper empirically illustrates the structural embeddedness of foreign fighters through three in-depth, individual-level case studies of foreign fighters' careers (Nasser al-Bahri; Dennis Cuspert; Lionel Dumont). We organized the case studies along three core insights derived from the discussion above. First, foreign fighters motivationally draw on available legitimating frames anchored in the militant Islamic grievance community. Second, foreign fighter activism is enabled by existing resources and networks. Third, veteran foreign fighters command symbolic capital that allows them to promote the views of the militant grievance community and recruit new activists.

Although the studied individuals have different backgrounds, come from different regions and were active at different times, the case studies display interesting similarities. More specifically, they provide evidence that the cross-time and cross-space activities of foreign fighters are facilitated by resources and motivational and legitimating frames rooted and developed in a militant Islamist grievance community. The mobility and transposability of foreign fighters are enabled by a global network of agents, resources, action spaces, and ideas. This networked grievance community is continuously expanding through new activities and cohorts of militant Islamists. The dynamic interaction between agency and structure accounts in important ways for the *persistence* of the phenomenon. Our emphasis on relocation, mobility, and transposability all point to the same conclusion: Foreign fighting is not an isolated phenomenon and episode, neither in a sociological nor in a psychological sense. It is enabled by existing structures of resources and meaning, which, in turn, are developed and reproduced through action and the accruement, dissemination, and conversion of knowledge, experience, and symbolic capital.

The paper complements and connects existing approaches that examine the emergence of a global foreign fighter movement (Hegghammer 2010) and details the persistence of Muslim foreign fighting (Malet 2015) exactly by showing *how* the interaction between structure and agency within the foreign fighter movement – or grievance community – enables persistence.

Paper 2: Poisonous Partnerships: The Failure of Alliances between Foreign Fighter Groups and Local Militant Organizations[37]

Paper 2 (co-authored with Emil Souleimanov) looks at the historical record and "success rate" of Muslim foreign fighters in supporting local militant organizations. Despite the historical prevalence and persistence of the phenomenon, there are few instances of foreign fighters having prevented their local allies from being defeated. Foreign fighters appear to have added very little – if any – military value. More often than not, foreign fighters' missionary activities produce internal dissent with counterproductive results. Overall, foreign fighters appear to constitute at best a barely relevant contributor and at worst a seriously divisive force (Seymour, Bakke, and Cunningham 2015; Bakke 2014; Rich and Conduit 2014).

A shortcoming of existent research on foreign fighters' impact on local militant organizations is that researchers have not conceptualized the different empirical manifestations of the phenomenon. Most scholars assume that foreign fighters join local groups and therefore theorize that individual-level factors such as different degrees of commitment or ethnic ties to local fighters influence whether they contribute positively or negatively to the development of local militant organization (Chu and Braithwaite 2017). There is nothing inherently wrong with these approaches. Indeed, many foreign fighters (especially from Western countries) travel alone or with friends to join local conflict parties (Coolsaet 2015). However, the paper stresses that there are other types of foreign fighters too. Plenty of anecdotal evidence suggests that foreign fighters regularly operate in groups that form loose alliances with local militant organizations.

Although foreign fighter groups are not inanimate aides to local militant organizations, the literature has not yet taken them seriously as a unique type of actor in armed conflicts. Accordingly, we know very little about their organizational principles, strategies, and objectives. This paper defines them as *self-directed militant organizations under foreign leadership* and explores their interactions with local militant organizations. There is one observation about the relationship between foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations that we find particularly interesting: in cases such as Chechnya and Iraq,

---

the rise of influential foreign fighter groups was paralleled by the fragmentation of allied local militant organizations.

Since there exists little theoretical or conceptual work on foreign fighter groups, we discuss them vis-à-vis Marxist *focoist* guerrillas to get a better understanding of the objectives and approach of foreign fighter groups. Overall, the scholarly exercise suggests that foreign fighter groups (like *focoists*) depend on local help to achieve their objectives. In turn, local militant organizations employ foreign fighter groups as force multipliers. However, as both parties have different (ideological) objectives, the alliances regularly turn sour.

Based on this understanding, we draw on insights from the literature on the external support of insurgent movements and organizational theory to highlight that foreign fighter groups – similar to e.g. state sponsors – seldom support local militant organizations as a whole but use their resources strategically to back particular sub-factions (Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011; Sawyer, Cunningham, and Reed 2017; Byman and Kreps 2010; Sinno 2008; Tamm 2016). If the provision of additional resources leads to a more balanced distribution of power amongst the local militant organizations' factions, this sets off two interrelated dynamics. First, the foreign fighters' allies become able to challenge their internal rivals, which directly increases the risk of fragmentation (Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012; Kenny 2010). Second, since the foreign fighters' allies' expansion depends on the foreign fighters' resources, the latter gain leverage over the former (Pfeffer 1981; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978), and the foreign fighters' allies become more likely to accept and promote the foreign fighters' ideology. Overall, this dual logic implies that the more influential foreign fighter groups become, the more likely it is that local militant organizations will split.

We further develop the logic of this argument in a case study of the Chechen Wars, during which the rise of al-Khattab's foreign fighter group was paralleled by the fragmentation of the Chechen-Ichkerian Army. During the First Chechen War, Khattab formed an alliance with Shamil Basayev, a powerful and ambitious Chechen field commander. Basayev protected Khattab from local enemies and received material and tactical support from the foreign fighters. Yet, since the overall leadership of the Chechen-Ichkerian Army around Aslan Maskhadov controlled a considerably larger share of resources, Basayev remained loyal, and Khattab had limited influence.

This changed in the inter-war period. Despite the defeat of the superior Russian forces in 1996, the First Chechen War had left the country in ruins. The devastation affected the internal distribution of resources between the leadership and the individual field commanders. More specifically, the Chechen leadership had problems generating income from internal sources and trade. Basayev, however, received a considerable share of external resources

from Salafi funds, which allowed him to balance against the Chechen leadership. To activate and maintain this stream of income, Basayev extended his framing to include Khattab's ideological notions. Accordingly, the latter became an influential player in Chechnya.

With Basayev's and Khattab's alliance becoming increasingly powerful and rhetorically radical, the inter-war period was plagued by internal strife and fragmentation. During the Second Chechen War, the influence of the Islamist faction around the Khattab and Basayev contributed to Nationalist field commanders switching their allegiance and joining the Russian forces. This organizational split between Nationalists and Islamists weakened the separatist forces, and the insurgency degraded into a terrorist campaign (Souleimanov 2007; Toft and Zhukov 2015).

The paper's main contribution is conceptual. It is the first article that clarifies the differences between individual foreign fighters as members of local militant organizations and self-directed foreign fighter groups with independent objectives. It thereby adds nuance to our understanding of foreign fighters' detrimental influence and promotes the idea of studying the phenomenon on the meso-level.

Paper 3: Local Militant Organizations' Strategies for Dealing with Foreign Fighter Groups[38]

This paper is based on the conceptualization of foreign fighter groups as self-directed militant organizations in paper 2 and compares their relationship to their local hosts with the interactions between pro-government militias and state-governments. Building on research about militias (Staniland 2015; Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015), the article explores the conditions in which local militant actors decide to tolerate, cooperate with, violently suppress, or contain foreign fighters. With inspiration from organizational theory, I argue that a combination of two factors, i.e., military pressure and organizational structure, influences the strategic decision-making of local militant organizations (Horowitz, Perkoski, and Potter 2017; Selznick 1953; Sinno 2008; Heger, Jung, and Wong 2012; Johnston 2008).

Since the intensity of military pressure directly affects the likelihood of organizational survival, I posit that local militant organizations will decide to seek help from foreign fighter groups when they are under high pressure. In contrast, if there is little or no military pressure, and organizational survival is relatively secure, local militant organization will try to eliminate the foreign

---

[38] This paper is currently under review.

fighter groups as independent actors. While the degree of military pressure determines the general course of action, the level of organizational centralization affects the strategic options available to local militant organizations.

I differentiate between centralized and decentralized organizational structures. Centralized organizations are more capable than fragmented organizations of cooperating with foreign fighters under high military pressure and of containing foreign fighters when military pressure is low. Cooperation produces more efficient military performance and is therefore more desirable for local militant organizations than simply giving the foreign fighters plenty of leeway. Yet, cooperation demands efficient coordination and strong command and control mechanisms. Fragmented organizations do not have the organizational capacity to coordinate their activities with foreign fighter groups. Thus, under high military pressure, they merely have the option to tolerate the foreign fighter group activities. When military pressure is less intense, I assume that containment should be considered a more congenial strategy than suppressing foreign fighters through sustained violence. Killing merited foreign fighters may cause parts of the local militant organization's constituency to solidarize with the foreigners. However, co-optation of leaders and integration of rank-and-file foreign fighters are organizationally demanding activities. Decentralized local militant organizations that do not command such organizational capabilities are, hence, more likely to violently suppress foreign fighters. The theory is summarized in the 2x2 table below.

Table 6. The Combined Effect of Military Pressure and Organizational Structure on Strategic Decision-making

	High military pressure	Low military pressure
Centralized organization	Cooperation	Containment
Decentralized organization	Toleration	Suppression

I discuss three potential alternative explanations for local militant organizations' strategic responses: ethnicity, ideology, and public support. Consistent with the organizational structure argument, I presume that military pressure determines whether local armed actors decide to support or confront foreign fighter groups in the first place. The level of ethnic and ideological overlap between the local militant organization and the foreign fighters as well as the latter's popularity then determine the ways and means of doing so. In particular, I assume that low public support and ideological fit as well as the absence of shared ethnic backgrounds lead local armed actors to choose suppression over containment and toleration over cooperation.

To illustrate the relative explanatory power of the candidate theories, I examine evidence from the interactions between Katibat El-Mudzahid and the Bosnian Army as well as Ibn al-Khattab and the Chechen Ichkerian Army. In particular, the paper examines the Bosnian Army's strategic changes from tolerating KEM (1992–93) to cooperating with the foreign fighters (1993–95) to trying to contain their influence (1995) as well as the Chechen–Ichkerian Army's strategic shift from cooperating with al-Khattab (1995–96) over suppressing (1996–99) and back to tolerating him (1999–2001).

In the case of KEM, the ethnicity and organizational structure arguments clearly outperform the popular support and ideology arguments. Both predict all three strategic changes correctly. However, I found only mixed mechanistic evidence that details how exactly the process of Bosniakization (recruitment of locals into KEM) affected the decision-making of the Bosnian Army. In contrast, I found more convincing mechanistic evidence that explains how the Bosnian Army's decision-making was influenced by its increasingly centralized organizational structure. Concerning the interactions between al-Khattab and the Chechen-Ichkerian Army, the popular support and organizational structure arguments correctly predict the strategic changes. As in the Bosnian case, however, the organizational structure argument provides more convincing mechanistic evidence. The following tables summarize the results of the empirical case studies[39]

Table 7. Results of KEM-Bosnian Army Case Study

Explanation	Period I Toleration		Period II Cooperation		Period III Containment	
	Correct prediction	Mechanistic evidence	Correct prediction	Mechanistic evidence	Correct prediction	Mechanistic evidence
Popular support	No	-	No	-	No	-
Ideology	Yes	Little	No	-	No	-
Ethnicity	Yes	Mixed	Yes	Little	Yes	Mixed
Organizational cohesion	Yes	Strong	Yes	Strong	Yes	Strong

---

[39] I use three categories to assess the mechanistic evidence. "Strong" means that I found evidence that confirms the theory. "Mixed" means that I found evidence that confirms the theory as well as evidence that makes me question it. "Little" means that I did find none or almost no mechanistic evidence at all. The design of the tables is based on Tamm 2016.

Table 8. Results of Khattab-Chechen-Ichkerian Army Case Study

Explanation	Period I Cooperation		Period II Suppression		Period III Toleration	
	Correct prediction	Mechanistic evidence	Correct prediction	Mechanistic evidence	Correct prediction	Mechanistic evidence
Popular support	Yes	Little	Yes	Little	Yes	Little
Ideology	No	-	Yes	Strong	Yes	Little
Ethnicity	No	-	No	-	No	-
Organizational structure	Yes	Strong	Yes	Strong	Yes	Strong

The results demonstrate that the proposed theory consistently outperforms alternative approaches. Comparing the cases of Bosnia and Chechnya shows that the generally lower degree of organizational centralization of the Chechen–Ichkerian Army allowed foreign fighters in Chechnya more operational freedom than those in Bosnia. The longitudinal within-case evidence suggests that changes in military pressure and organizational structure were regularly followed by strategic shifts. The occasional support for alternative explanations suggests that no single factor explains local militant organizations' strategic responses to foreign fighter groups. The explanations are thus not mutually exclusive.

This article is the first to define a theoretical framework that helps to understand and analyze the complex interactions between foreign fighter groups and local militant organizations in a succinct and systematic fashion. By highlighting the parallels of pro-government militias and foreign fighter groups, it also advances the group-level approach promoted in paper 1.

Paper 4: Explaining Local Mobilization into Foreign Fighter Groups: A Geo-Nested Approach[40]

Paper 4 (co-authored with Roman Senninger) builds on a simple, yet, crucial observation: Foreign fighter groups are often not *that* foreign. Many foreign fighter groups recruit locals into their ranks. Foreign fighter groups have several comprehensible reasons for recruiting locals. First, locals can be mobilized in greater numbers than transnational recruits. Second, local knowledge constitutes a critical resource for organizational survival in hostile conflict

---

[40] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Danish Political Science Association Conference 2017 in Vejle, Denmark.

zones (Schutte 2015; Lyall 2010). Third, a local support base signals legitimacy and thereby helps foreign fighter groups to disseminate their ideological message (Mitchell 2008). In contrast, it is puzzling why locals prefer foreign fighter groups to local groups. After all, foreign fighter groups do not represent local grievances but try to force foreign ideological convictions upon the local population. Accordingly, the paper asks: What explains local mobilization into foreign fighter groups?

To shed light on this issue, we investigate local mobilization into KEM during the Bosnian Civil War using quantitative and qualitative data. Our original large-n data set includes municipality-level information on more than 1,000 locals who joined KEM between April 1993 and December 1995. Descriptive statistics show considerable subnational variation in recruitment numbers between the different Bosnian municipalities.

Figure 5. Origins of Local KEM Members
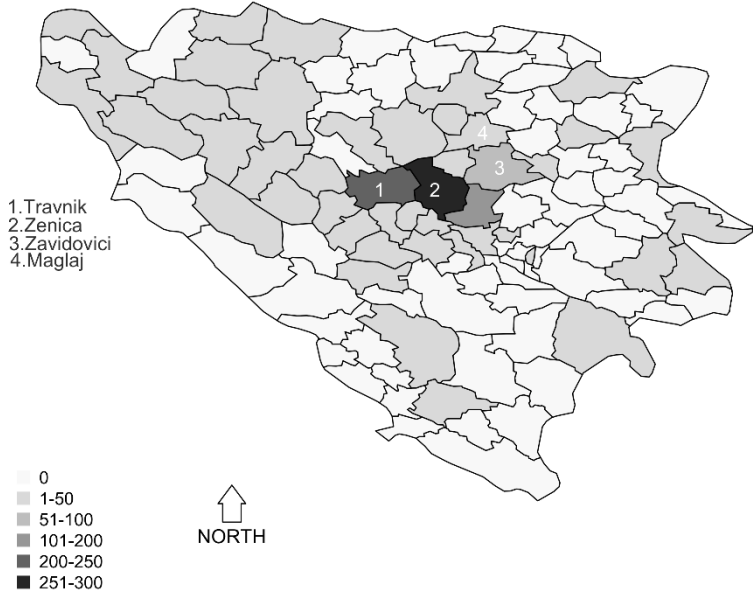
To explain this variation, we obtained additional quantitative data from a variety of sources that allows us to test the most relevant variables (religiosity, political and ethnic polarization, socioeconomic factors, community structures, and lust for revenge), which we derived from the mobilization literature.[41] Since geographical units of analysis like municipalities are unlikely to be independent from each other, we rely on a research design (called geo-

---

[41] For the different mobilizations explanations see, for example: Popkin 1979; Lichbach 1994; Weinstein 2007; Gurr 1970; Horowitz 1985; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Viterna 2013; Sanin and Wood 2014.

nested analysis) that allows us to account for spatial dependence (Harbers and Ingram 2017b, [a] 2017).

In an initial regression model without a measurement for spatial dependence, only the variable of ethnic polarization turns out to be significant. Yet, since we assume that the units of analysis are not independent from each other, we run another model that considers the same variables as the previous model but includes a spatial lag variable. The spatial lag of the dependent variable is positive and statistically significant in all models. This indicates that a municipality's value of the dependent variable is positively related to the values of the dependent variable of its neighbor municipalities. Table 9 below shows the results of the spatial lag model in which the significant spatial lag is demarcated as ρ (*rho*).

Table 9. Results of S-ML Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Religiosity	0.043 (0.061)						0.055 (0.063)
Ethnic polarization		0.396 (0.323)					0.328 (0.360)
Political polarization			-0.0001 (0.004)				-0.004 (0.007)
Socioeconomic development				0.00001 (0.00001)			0.00000 (0.0001)
Community structures					0.002 (0.003)		0.003 (0.005)
Muslim casualties						-0.001 (0.002)	
Urban	0.302 (0.658)	0.218 (0.608)	0.123 (0.615)	0.088 (0.693)	0.048 (0.620)	0.113 (0.623)	0.371 (0.726)
Camps	2.186*** (0.335)	2.157*** (0.336)	2.187****(0.336)	2.187*** (0.354)	2.174*** (0.335)	2.188*** (0.342)	2.156*** (0.352)
Road density	4.374** (2.082)	3.392 (2.065)	4.001** (2.017)	4.007** (2.016)	3.901* (2.021)	4.014* (2.077)	3.780* (2.128)
ρ	0.377*** (0.104)	0.358*** 0.105	0.379*** 0.104	0.381*** 0.096	0.381*** 0.104	0.371*** 0.106	0.356*** 0.099
Constant	-0.586 (0.638)	-0.533 (0.556)	-0.341 (0.537)	-0.360 (0.559)	-0.332 (0.537)	-0.310 (0.558)	-0.805 (0.690)
Observations	107	107	107	107	107	103	107
AIC	246.398	245.411	246.898	246.882	246.606	242.053	252.346

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Dependent variable: Number of recruits per 1000 Muslim inhabitants. Unstandardized coefficients.

The results suggest a diffusion process, which is regarded as "true contagion or substantive spatial dependence" (Anselin and Bera 1998, 247). Essentially,

this means that the observed subnational variation is not merely a result of municipalities' characteristics that made the local population more or less sympathetic to the group but in a large part of how KEM's recruitment narrative diffused between the different municipalities.

Using fine-grained qualitative data from 50 interviews with local KEM members, soldiers, and civilians, we focus on exploring the dynamics of the diffusion process. The qualitative part starts with an investigation into the relationship between KEM's recruitment narrative and local motivations. Importantly, the evidence suggests that motivations for joining KEM evolved over the course of the war and as a reaction to specific wartime developments. This shows the difficulty of explaining mobilization solely based on pre-war variables (Kalyvas 2008; Weinstein 2007). Furthermore, there is no single type of motivation or aspect of KEM's recruitment message that by itself explains the variation. Instead, individuals felt attracted by KEM for a variety of reasons.

The next two parts look at the diffusion of KEM's recruitment narrative. First, we examine how the group's framing entered and subsequently diffused through local networks in the central Bosnian municipality of Travnik via repeated personal interaction between locals and foreign fighters as well as through hired mediators. In other words, we provide evidence on mediated and relational diffusion (Tarrow 2005; Sageman 2004). Interestingly, we find that in the early phase of the war, diffusion and mobilization were geographically limited to Travnik municipality, because intense fighting between Croats and Bosniaks restricted inter-personal exchange between the municipalities. Once the fighting ended, KEM's recruitment message diffused regionally from Travnik municipality to the neighboring city of Zenica, then to Zenica's hinterland and after that to other central Bosnian municipalities. Similar to the diffusion within Travnik municipality, the regional diffusion happened via relational and mediated processes.

In addition to illuminating the diffusion process, the fine-grained qualitative evidence shows how KEM's recruitment and propaganda efforts became increasingly professional and systematic over time. For example, the foreign fighters isolated their camps from the population and introduced screening tests for new members after bad experiences with some local recruits. While this impeded relational diffusion, they increased their attempts to spread their message through specially organized training camps and religious workshops.

Paper 5: Group-Switching in Civil Wars[42]

This article is the first to explore the process of group-switching vis-à-vis alternative courses of action such as desertion and staying put. Group-switching is the process whereby an individual leaves one armed group to join an allied armed group that fights the same enemy. To explain why some individuals prefer group-switching over staying put or desertion, I draw on the literature on military insubordination (Bearman 1991; McLauchlin 2015; Bou Nassif 2015). Scholars have debated the role of in-group and out-group dynamics, economic incentives, and fighters' social backgrounds. Based on these factors, it is usually estimated who becomes disaffected and accordingly more likely to desert.

Yet, armed groups punish deserters, and credible threats of physical reprisals restrain aggrieved soldiers, and some researchers caution that disaffection alone does not explain desertion. To overcome the so-called "deserters' dilemma," fighters need desertion opportunities. McLauchlin (2014) postulates that inaccessible terrain triggers desertion because it increases the chances of evading physical reprisals. Building on the notion of desertion opportunities, I argue that group-switching functions as a desertion opportunity because joining a new group provides protection from physical reprisals when other desertion opportunities (e.g. mountainous terrain) are rare.

However, this does not explain group-switching under more favorable conditions for deserters. When I am fed up with fighting and could simply hide in the mountains, why should I take the risk of joining another armed group? Based on the literature of social networks and community structures, I argue that the fear of being socially sanctioned in so-called strong communities can have a restraining effect on disaffected fighters comparable to that of physical reprisals (Granovetter 1985; Petersen 2002). Individuals do not want to be shamed as cowards and want to be able to return to their communities once the fighting has ended (Costa and Kahn 2008; Costa and Kahn 2003). Thus, contingent on public opinion towards the allied group, group-switching also addresses the "social dimension of the deserters' dilemma." Individuals who switch groups instead of deserting allay suspicions of cowardice.

The two dimensions of the deserters' dilemma present explanations for the likelihood of group-switching under different social and physical conditions. Yet the approach does not explain why some individuals behave differently than others under similar conditions (Viterna 2013). Therefore, I link the de-

---

[42] This paper is currently under review. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference 2017 in Chicago, USA.

serters' dilemma framework with a micro-level investigation into fighters' motivations for leaving their groups. In particular, I argue that individuals react differently to the deserters' dilemma based on whether they have developed self- or other-regarding types of disaffection. Self-regarding types of disaffection include, for example, being upset by a lack of opportunities for self-enrichment or being petrified by the dangers of combat. Other-regarding types of disaffection include, for example, frustrations over the group's lack of concern for civilian lives or slow military progress. Figure 6 illustrates the proposed analytical framework.

Figure 6. Theoretical Framework and Pathways of Group-switching
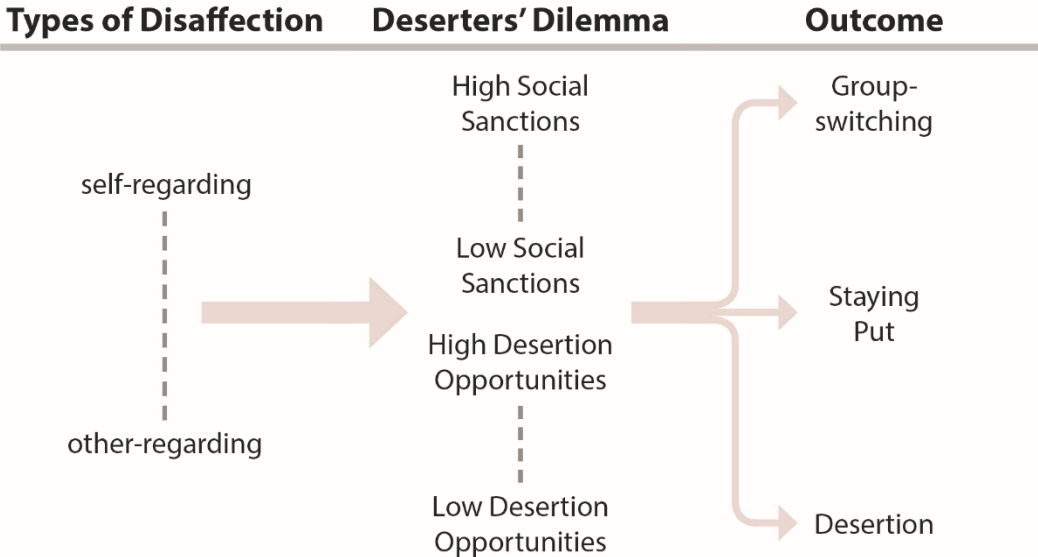
Building on these theoretical propositions, I studied and compared the trajectories of 50 Bosnian soldiers who stayed in the Bosnian Army with those of deserters and soldiers who joined the foreign fighters of KEM. The most striking patterns I identified show that individuals who showed self-regarding tendencies regularly joined KEM regardless of negative public opinion and concomitant social sanctions when there were no desertion opportunities. It furthermore appears that self-regarding individuals preferred desertion over alternative actions regardless of any other factors if they had the opportunity to leave unscathed. By contrast, soldiers whose disaffection was based on other-regarding motives only joined KEM when their communities considered KEM an acceptable alternative to the Army. Crucially, some of them switched groups despite desertion opportunities. Social factors such as a fear of being shamed not only for desertion but also for joining the mujahedeen also led some other-regarding fighters to stay put even though they were extremely discontent with the Army's performance.

Importantly, the reconstruction of these trajectories makes it possible to build a typological theory that demonstrates how various potential combinations of individual and structural factors generate different outcomes. The typology thus contributes to the current discussion about whether structural opportunities or individual motivations best explain military disobedience. I do not see these explanatory attempts as opposed or mutually exclusive (Albrecht and Koehler 2017; Koehler, Ohl, and Albrecht 2016; McLauchlin 2014). Instead, I show that it is the combination of individual and structural factors that shapes particular outcomes. Table 10 presents a structured overview of 16 trajectories that lead to group-switching, desertion, and staying put.

Table 10. Typological Theory of Group-switching

Trajectory	Individual-level factors		Structural-level factors		Outcomes
	Type of disaffection	Public opinion	Desertion opportunities	Social sanctions	
1	Self-regarding	Low	Low	High	*Group-switching*
2	Self-regarding	Low	Low	Low	*Group-switching*
3	Self-regarding	High	Low	High	*Group-switching*
4	Self-regarding	High	Low	Low	*Group-switching*
5	Other-regarding	High	Low	High	*Group-switching*
6	Other-regarding	High	Low	Low	*Group-switching*
7	Other-regarding	High	High	High	*Group-switching*
8	Other-regarding	Low	Low	High	*Staying put*
9	Other-regarding	Low	Low	Low	*Staying put*
10	Other-regarding	Low	High	High	*Staying put*
11	Self-regarding	Low	High	High	*Desertion*
12	Self-regarding	Low	High	Low	*Desertion*
13	Other-regarding	Low	High	Low	*Desertion*
14	Self-regarding	High	High	High	*Desertion*
15	Self-regarding	High	High	Low	*Desertion*
16	Other-regarding	High	High	Low	*Desertion*

The typological theory provides important baseline predictions regarding what behavior we can expect to observe under certain conditions. Hence, it allows scholars to formulate precise hypotheses about group-switching vis-à-vis its alternatives. These hypotheses can be integrated into surveys of ex-combatants (Arjona and Kalyvas 2013; Oppenheim et al. 2015). In addition, the paper reaffirms the importance of taking wartime dynamics seriously in mo-

bilization research. It has clearly been shown that during armed conflict structural and individual factors are not set in stone but are in constant flux (Kalyvas 2008).

Conclusion

This thesis started by highlighting a substantial gap in existing research on Muslim foreign fighters. I pointed out that the literatures on terrorism and civil wars do not offer concepts and theories that allow systematic investigation of the interactions between foreign fighters and locals during armed conflict. I addressed these shortcomings in five empirically driven papers on, respectively, the persistence of Muslim foreign fighting (paper 1), foreign fighter groups' detrimental impact on their local allies (paper 2), local strategies for dealing with foreign fighter groups (paper 3), the recruitment of locals into foreign fighter groups (paper 4), and foreign fighter groups' efforts to lure deserters from their allies (paper 5). The main contribution of this thesis is to provoke researchers to take a closer look at what I identify as the "conflict phase" of foreign fighter careers. Below, I summarize in detail how the individual papers and the thesis as a whole contribute to narrowing the gap and discuss implications for future research and policy as well as potential limitations.

Contributions and Implications for Future Research and Policy

The contributions of the thesis are threefold. First, it advances and improves our current understanding of foreign fighters' activities during armed conflict by providing better concepts and clear definitions.

The typology on different forms of militant activism developed in paper 1 has utility far beyond differentiating foreign fighters from terrorists and coding militant careers. It details eight different roles that foreign as well local individuals can occupy during armed conflict and terrorist campaigns, and it highlights that not all members of terrorist groups or insurgent organizations are combatants. Even though membership of militant organizations to a large extent consists of individuals who are not directly involved in the fighting, the activities and impact of the militant "support cast" are seldom investigated (Parkinson 2013; Holman 2016). Hence, the typology encourages more nuanced research on militant organizations' membership.

Regarding the role of transnational recruits within local militant organizations, the typology can provide a coherent framework for systematically analyzing whether individuals with different backgrounds predominantly occupy specific roles. Much anecdotal evidence suggests that Western individuals trying to become foreign fighters travel to conflict zones only to be convinced of

conducting terrorism at home (Malthaner 2014; Hegghammer 2013a). Future research could use the typology to systematically explore whether Western recruits usually occupy support roles or receive terrorist training because they lack fighting prowess and travel on Western passports (Mendelsohn 2011; Gates and Podder 2015).

The concept of foreign fighter groups is very much at the center of this dissertation. Most current studies on foreign fighters either consider them foreign members of local militant organizations (Chu and Braithwaite 2017; Braithwaite and Chu 2017; Schram 2015), or do not clarify that they deal with foreign fighter groups (Bakke 2014, 2013). This is problematic because organized foreign fighter groups and individuals are obviously different types of actors that need to be studied with separate analytical strategies. Furthermore, foreign fighter groups might have considerably greater impact on conflict outcomes than individual foreign fighters. For example, reports from Syria show that disaffected foreign fighters within the Islamic State are easily isolated and killed. In contrast to individual fighters, organized foreign fighter groups can put up a fight, threaten to switch sides and thereby weaken powerful local organizations. The comparison I draw in paper 3 between foreign fighter groups and pro-government militias links them with a well-established concept in the civil war literature. Treating foreign fighter groups as a similar type of actor would make it possible to address completely new questions and dynamics, for instance, internal structures, organizational principles, and recruitment strategies. At the very least, the conceptual work done here should provoke scholars to clarify at the outset of their studies whether they are examining the phenomenon of foreign fighting on the group or on the individual level.

The second contribution of the thesis is empirical. Throughout the summary report as well as the papers, I highlight that research on interactions between foreign fighters and locals during armed conflict suffers from a dearth of primary data. This is not surprising given the formidable challenges in terms of logistics, ethics, research design, and security that accompany this type of research. Looking for suitable cases that would allow me to elaborate on my previously formulated theoretical expectations, I eventually settled on Katibat El-Mudzahid and Ibn al-Khattab's group. While I selected these cases based on their value for developing concepts and theory, I quickly realized that the fieldwork in Bosnia enabled me to shed light on one of the most intensely debated yet least rigorously studied aspects of the Bosnian Civil War.

Most work on KEM is written in a semi-journalistic style without any use of primary data (Kohlmann 2004; Shay 2008; Deliso 2007; Schindler 2007). This literature focuses heavily on alleged connections between the "Bosnian mujahedeen" and al-Qaida. The fact that the discussion about foreign fighters

revolves around their international connections rather than their local activities is emblematic of the lack of in-depth research on the conflict phase. In Bosnia, the role of the local Bosniak mujahedeen is an extremely polarizing issue, which is frequently utilized by populist parties to foster political interests. Depending on which side of the aisle an argument originates, local KEM members are either considered fanatic terrorists or regular members of the Bosnian Army.[43] In addition, local as well as Western media outlets portray specific villages as no-go zones and hotbeds of recruitment for the Islamic State.[44] In papers 4 and 5, I offer a more nuanced perspective on the issue. The motives of individuals who joined the foreign fighters were extremely diverse as were their actions during and after the war. Some individuals became believers in a global Jihadist agenda, stayed active as propagandists, and returned to militant activism in recent years (see paper 1). Others returned to their former lives and customs, which include a fondness for fruit brandy and cigarettes. Others again settled down in Salafi communities without (substantiated) connections to the militant milieu (Becirevic 2016; Azinovic and Jusic 2015). Importantly, in the hot spots of KEM recruitment identified in paper 5, it was not possible to attest widespread support for the foreign fighters. Instead, the general impression from the interviews is that local communities even after 25 years are still split into tacit KEM sympathizers who emphasize the groups' legacy of helping fellow Muslims and strict opponents of their presence. A very interesting task for future research would be to assess the long-term effects of foreign fighter presence on the transformation of local communities and social networks in more detail. This could be done via a combination of in-depth interviews and surveys amongst the local population (Wood 2008).

In addition, the detailed observations of the foreign fighters' interaction with the local population open up a variety of micro-level questions that have not yet been addressed. For example, how foreign fighters use local marriages as a strategic tool to grow local roots and how they adjust their recruitment narratives to micro-level grievances (e.g. neighborhood quarrels). I found

---

[43] This obviously affects the interview process itself and makes it necessary to account for biased perspectives as much as possible.

[44] Ernst, Andreas. "Der Pietist aus Osve." Neue Zuercher Zeitung." 12.6.2016. https://www.nzz.ch/international/europa/salafismus-in-bosnien-der-pietist-aus-osve-ld.116126. [Accessed: 1.6.2018]; Hill, Patrick, and Ed Wright. "ISIS set up a stronghold in the heart of Europe as terrorists secretly buy land near an isolated village." *The Mirror*. https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/isis-set-up-stronghold-heart-6094785. [Accessed: 1.5.2018].

KEM's ability to professionalize its structure and especially recruitment system fascinating. In the early phase of the war, almost every local could join the group, but later the foreign fighters introduced rigid screening tests after bad experiences with some recruits. Besides a few meaningful exceptions (Hegghammer 2013b; Forney 2015), the issue of adverse selection is not well explored in research on mobilization into militant organizations. Especially due to the foreign fighter groups' social distance to their local recruitment targets, it appears to be a great concern for this type of actor.

Furthermore, my research demonstrates one way to triangulate and integrate different types of methods and data in empirical research on militant organizations. In particular, I show how thorough archival research can inform and guide the data-generation process during fieldwork. Paper 4 derives a quantitative dataset from archival sources and combines it with qualitative fieldwork to test basic explanations for local mobilization into foreign fighter groups. Regarding the case of KEM specifically, this dataset can be improved by obtaining more municipality-level data and conceptualizing better proxies for precise measurement. On a more general note, I hope that the data-collection efforts motivate scholars to gather their own data – be it qualitative or quantitative – instead of solely relying on "on the shelf datasets" and secondary sources.

Third, the dissertation advances research on foreign fighters, terrorism, and armed conflict theoretically by offering novel and clear guidelines for future research. The first paper is clearly inspired by the theoretical work of renowned sociologists like Giddens (1984) and Tarrow (2005). By theorizing how Muslim foreign fighter activism is structurally embedded and enabled within the confines of a global grievance community, it highlights what a sociological perspective can offer in terms of understanding phenomena that are predominantly studied within the fields of international relations, security, and terrorism studies.

By focusing on the role of foreign fighters as resource providers, paper 2 develops a plausible alternative to existing theories on foreign fighters' detrimental effect on local militant organizations (Bakke 2014; Vidino 2006). More specifically, the paper highlights that it is not the framing of the foreign fighters per se that leads to internal conflict, but rather their efforts to increase their influence and promote their framing. Paper 3 provides a systematic theoretical framework to analyze local militant organizations' strategic response to foreign fighters. Other researchers have not yet addressed this issue. Drawing on organizational theory, papers 2 and 3 also contribute to the growing research agenda that looks at the inner workings of militant organizations to explain conflict dynamics and outcomes (Horowitz, Perkoski, and Potter 2017; Shapiro 2013; Tamm 2016).

Demonstrating the applicability of a multi-methods research design, paper 4 explores the spread of KEM's narrative throughout central Bosnia via mediated and relational mechanisms of diffusion. The paper's findings highlight the importance of wartime developments in terms of explaining mobilization. Wartime mobilization constitutes an important field of research because most individuals do not join militant organizations at the beginning of the war. Instead, members of militant organizations are recruited throughout the duration of the war. Yet, most research explains mobilization based on factors that are present at wars' onset (Weinstein 2007).

Paper 4 furthermore suggests that diffusion research should pay close attention to "diffusion agents" and how their efforts to transmit information can be influenced by physical factors (Forsberg 2014). While this paper focuses on human transmitters and thus mediated and relational diffusion, future research could investigate non-relational diffusion via the internet, radio, and television. During armed conflict, communication breakdowns and energy shortages are common and should, hence, affect non-relational diffusion processes. Likewise, one of the first steps of autocratic regimes facing a revolutionary situation is to restrict access to social networks like Facebook. It would be interesting to know more about the ways such measures influence the spread of protests (Tufekci and Wilson 2012; Dafoe and Lyall 2015).

Paper 5 was written so that its findings do not only apply to foreign fighter groups but to militant organizations in general. In other words, I utilized KEM as a proxy for a militant organization that poaches members from its allies. This type of competition for recruits is regularly observed in conflict scenarios with multiple actors. Besides the aforementioned typology, the paper adds a crucial piece to the puzzle of military insubordination. So far, the discussion about desertion opportunities has merely dealt with physical factors such as corporal punishments and the possibility to hide in the mountains. The introduction of the social dimension of the deserter's dilemma that concerns the effects of public shaming thus constitutes a critical addition to the literature.

Besides inspiring future research efforts, the dissertation also offers implications for policymaking. Obviously, the radicalization of a foreign fighter does not stop with her or him leaving the country of residence. Instead, the individual is further radicalized within the conflict zone. I showed that returning foreign fighters regularly work as recruiters and propagandists. This is especially concerning with respect to the current refugee situation in Europe, because individuals who feel unwelcome and excluded by a foreign society are susceptible for radical messages. There is no obvious solution the challenge of returnees. Yet, security analysts and policy makers need to invest in the development of counter-narratives and in identifying how the communicative networks of militant Islamists can be blocked. The puzzle, of course, is to achieve

this without interfering human and democratic rights, such as freedom of speech.

While returnees receive a lot of academic and public attention, less attention has been payed to the fact that foreign fighters also radicalize and influence parts of the local population in the conflict zone. Yet, for post-conflict societies, the challenges of coping with radicalized minorities are unlike higher than e.g. in Western Europe. It is important to distinguish between hardcore followers of the foreign fighters' radical agenda and the majority of individuals who belong to a wider (Salafi) milieu that does not necessarily condone violence. Based on my (limited) observation from Bosnia it appears that exclusion, stigmatization, and job discrimination against members of Salafi communities not only caused mistrust in the government, but also maintained divides that resulted from the foreign fighters' presence. A potential solution would be to increase support in local community outreach programs and thereby help the communities to address their differences through dialogue.[45]

In addition, the thesis showed that foreign fighters and especially foreign fighter groups are extremely mobile and persistent actors who can influence various conflict dynamics. The exodus of foreign fighters from Afghanistan affected conflicts throughout the Muslim world in the last 30 years. The expected exodus of foreign fighters from the Islamic State's collapsing caliphate is likely to cause similar if not more severe transformations. In order to prevent future mobilizations it is not only necessary to tackle the problem in the foreign fighters' respective home countries, but also to limit veteran foreign fighters' and foreign fighter groups' financial and travel capabilities via close international cooperation.

Limitations and Concluding Remarks

Since I opted for depth over breadth when designing the dissertation, the main limitations I need to address concern the external validity of the dissertation's findings and theories.

Papers 2 and 3 develop and probe theoretical assumptions based on empirical evidence from just two cases. It is thus hard to claim generalizability. However, the building blocks of the respective theories have shown to apply to a variety of social phenomena. The argument of paper 2 relies on the widely

---

[45] Note that I refer to intra-communal dialogue within the Muslim community. Developing local forums for productive dialogue between firm adherents to Salafism and members of the other Bosnian ethnicities (Croats and Serbs) would be much greater challenge.

accepted notion that latent rivalries exist in militant as well as private organizations and that a more balanced distribution of resources increases the likelihood of internal conflict (Salancik and Pfeffer 1974; Tamm 2016; Selznick 1949). Accordingly, I assume that under specific scope conditions roughly similar to those in Chechnya between 1994 and 2002, comparable processes of organizational fragmentation should be observable in other conflicts too. The scope conditions go as follows: First, the foreign fighter group must have connections to external financiers or other sources of income. Second, the local militant organization must consist of a dominant faction and at least one challenging faction for whom the foreign fighters present "factors in the environment that visibly and proximately open up the prospect of success" (Tarrow 2011, 164). Third, the foreign fighters, the challenging faction, as well as the dominant factions must have different objectives. In other words, there must be a modicum of fragmentation. By applying these contextual conditions to the collected data on foreign fighter groups (see table 4), I presume that comparable processes happened during the Iraqi insurgency, the Tuareg Rebellion in Mali, the Kashmiri Insurgency, and the Civil War in Somalia.

Please note that I do not claim that this process is the only one that leads to the fragmentation of local militant organization. However, it appears to be a highly plausible explanation for the more seldom combined outcome of local militant organizations' fragmentation *and* a powerful faction of foreign fighters. Since few cases show such an outcome, future research may employ a combination of medium-n research techniques such as qualitative content analysis QCA with detailed process tracing to find more definite proof (Ragin 2008).

Similar concerns about generalizability apply to paper 3. Again, I cannot claim generalizability, but I argue that under scope conditions similar to those of Bosnia and Chechnya, comparable dynamics should affect local militant organizations' strategic responses to foreign fighter groups. We may take the Taliban's interactions with al-Qaida to briefly illustrate the logic of the proposed argument in another case.

From 1994 to 1996, the newly formed Taliban were by no means a centralized organization. In addition, they faced strong enemies in the form of the Northern Alliance and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's *Hizb e-Islami*. When the Taliban come into contact with al-Qaida near Jalalabad in fall 1996, they simply tolerated their actives. After their occupation of Kabul, the Taliban became better organized, but they suffered severe defeats at the frontlines north of the capital. Accordingly, they cooperated with the foreign fighters in a more systematic fashion to fight their enemies. Between 1998 and 2001, the Taliban defeated most of their local enemies, consolidated their power, and became the de facto rulers of Afghanistan. Faced with the inflammatory behavior of

al-Qaida, they tried, without much success, to contain bin Laden's activities (Stenersen 2017; van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012; Lia 2008).

Again, I do not claim that this is the only viable explanation. Instead, I cast a wide net for alternative explanations and treated them with the same attention as my theory (Bennett and Checkel 2015). What ultimately remains, however, is that the proposed theory appears to have the highest explanatory power and thus warrants further investigation while the other explanations should be discarded in favor of it (Eckstein 1975).

The second main limitation concerns the quantity and quality of the collected data. All papers build on painstakingly collected primary data from Bosnia and – to a lesser extent – Chechnya. Especially in paper 1 and paper 4, the quantitative data is not without weaknesses as it is extremely hard to find this kind of data on clandestine actors such as foreign fighter groups. I accommodated for these weaknesses by supplementing the quantitative findings with in-depth qualitative data to increase reliability. In the data section of this report, I debate at length the reliability issues and problems of gathering primary data on militant organizations as well as how I address these challenges via triangulation and intense preparation.

In closing, I would thus like to emphasize that the objective of this exploratory dissertation is to formulate concepts and potentially generalizable theories that lay the groundwork for a new research agenda on foreign fighters' activities during conflict. Of course, it would be desirable that the proposed theories are refined based on better data and cross-case comparison. Yet, as of now, they offer the most plausible explanations of previously uninvestigated phenomena. Overall, I hope that my research, together with the additional questions listed in this section, will inspire future research on foreign fighters.

Bibliography

Al-Bahri, Nasser. 2013. *Guarding Bin Laden - My Life in Al-Qaida*. London: Thin Man Press.

Albrecht, Holger, and Kevin Koehler. 2017. "Going on the Run: What Drives Military Desertion in Civil War?" *Security Studies* 0 (0):1–25.

Al-Suwailem, Samir Saleh. n.d. *The Experience of the Arab Ansar in Chechnya Afghanistan and Tajikistan.*

Al-Zawahiri, Ayman. n.d. *Exoneration*. https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/jihadi-document-repository/ideologues-and-leaders/egypt-and-north-africa/ayman-al-zawahiri/english/exoneration.pdf. [Accessed: 10.5.2018].

Al-Zawahiri, Ayman. 2001. *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*. *https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/6759609-knights-under-the-prophet-banner.pdf*. [Accessed: 10.5.2018].

Anselin, Luc, and Anil K. Bera. 1998. "Spatial Dependence in Linear Regression Models with an Introduction to Spatial Econometrics." In *Statistics Textbooks and Monographs,* edited by Aman Ullah and David E.A. Giles: 237–90. New York: Marcell Dekker.

Arielli, Nir. 2012. "In Search of Meaning: Foreign Volunteers in the Croatian Armed Forces, 1991–95." *Contemporary European History* 21 (01):1–17.

Arielli, Nir., and Bruce Collins. 2012. *Transnational Soldiers: Foreign Military Enlistment in the Modern Era*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Arjona, Ana M., and Stathis N. Kalyvas. 2013. "Rebelling Against Rellion: Comparing Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Recruitment." *Unpublished Working Paper*.

Azinovic, Vlado, and Muhamed Jusic. 2015. *The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters' Bosnian Contingent*. Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative.

Azzam, Abdullah. n.d. *Defense of the Muslim Lands: The First Obligation After Imam*. https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/jihadi-document-repository/ideologues-and-leaders/palestine-and-the-levant/abdallah-azzam-/english/the-defense-of-the-muslim-lands-the-first-obligation-after-iman.pdf. [Accessed: 5.4.2018].

Azzam, Abdullah. 1988. *Join the Caravan*. https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/jihadi-document-repository/ideologues-and-leaders/palestine-and-the-levant/abdallah-azzam-/english/join-the-caravan.pdf. [Accessed: 5.4.2018].

Bakke, Kristin M. 2013. "Copying and Learning from Outsiders? Assessing Diffusion from Transnational Insurgents in the Chechen Wars." In *Transnational Dimension of Civil War*, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel, 31–62. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2014. "Help Wanted? The Mixed Record of Foreign Fighters in Domestic Insurgencies." *International Security* 38 (4):150–87.

Bakke, Kristin M., Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and Lee J. M. Seymour. 2012. "A Plague of Initials: Fragmentation, Cohesion, and Infighting in Civil Wars." *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (2):265–83.

Bakker, Edwin, and Jeanine De Roy Van Zuijdewijn. 2015. "Jihadist Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in Western Europe: A Low-Probability, High-Impact Threat." *The Hague Research Paper*.

Bakker, Edwin, and Mark Singleton. 2016. "Foreign Fighters in the Syria and Iraq Conflict: Statistics and Characteristics of a Rapidly Growing Phenomenon." In *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond*, 9–25. The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press.

Ball, Patrick, Ewa Tabeau, and Philip Verwimp. 2007. "The Bosnian Book of Dead: Assessment of the Database (Full Report)." *Households in Conflict Network* Research Design Note no 5:1–62.

Barret, Richard. 2017. "Beyond the Caliphate - Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees." The Soufan Center.

Bazeley, Pat, and Kristi Jackson. 2013. *Qualitative Data Analysis With NVivo*. London: Sage Publications.

Beach, Derek, and Rasmus Pedersen. 2016. *Causal Case Study Methods*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press..

Bearman, Peter S. 1991. "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War." *Social Forces* 70 (2):321–42.

Becirevic, Edina. 2016. *Salafism vs. Moderate Islam - A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims*. Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative.

Bennett, Andrew, and Jeffrey T. Checkel. 2015. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Theoretical Tool*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Blom, JCH, P Romijn, N Bajalica, G Duijzings, T Frankfort, BGJ de Graaff, AE Kersten, et al. 2002. "Srebrenica - A 'Safe' Area. Reconstruction, Background, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a Safe Area." Amsterdam: Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD).

Borum, Randy. 2011. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism: A Review of Social Science Theories." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 (4):7–36.

Borum, Randy, and Robert Fein. 2016. "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 0 (0):1–19.

Bou Nassif, Hicham. 2015. "'Second-Class': The Grievances of Sunni Officers in the Syrian Armed Forces." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38 (5):626–49.

Braithwaite, Alex, and Tiffany S. Chu. 2017. "Civil Conflicts Abroad, Foreign Fighters, and Terrorism at Home." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 0 (0):1-25.

Bryan, Ian. 2010. "Sovereignty and the Foreign Fighter Problem." *Orbis* 54 (1):115–29.

Bujra, Janet. 2006. "Lost in Translation? The Use of Interpreters in Fieldwork." In *Doing Development Research*, edited by Vandana Desai and Robert Potter, 172–79. London: Sage Publications.

Byman, Daniel, and Sarah E. Kreps. 2010. "Agents of Destruction? Applying Principal-Agent Analysis to State-Sponsored Terrorism." *International Studies Perspectives* 11 (1):1–18.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis." *World Politics* 62 (1):87–119.

Checkel, Jeffrey T. 2017. "Socialization and Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 54 (5):592–605.

Childs, Matt D. 1995. "An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's Foco Theory." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27 (3):593–624.

Chu, Tiffany S., and Alex Braithwaite. 2017. "The Impact of Foreign Fighters on Civil Conflict Outcomes." *Research & Politics* 4 (3):1-7.

Cilluffo, Frank J, Jeffrey B Cozzens, and Magnus Ranstorp. 2010. *Foreign Fighters - Trends, Trajectories and Conflcit Zones. Terrorism.* George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute.

Clapham, Christopher S. 1998. *African Guerrillas.* Cape Town: James Currey.

Clark, Janine Natalya. 2012. "Fieldwork and Its Ethical Challenges: Reflections from Research in Bosnia." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34 (3):823–39.

Cohen, N., and T. Arieli. 2011. "Field Research in Conflict Environments: Methodological Challenges and Snowball Sampling." *Journal of Peace Research* 48 (4):423–35.

Coolsaet, Rik. 2015. "What Drives Europeans to Syria, And to IS? Insights from the Belgian Case." *Egmont Paper* no. 75:1–24.

Costa, Dora. L, and Mathew E. Kahn. 2003. "Cowards and Heroes: Group Loyalty in the American Civil War." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118 (2):519–48.

———. 2008. *Heroes and Cowards: The Social Face of War.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cronin-Furman, Kate, and Milli Lake. 2018. "Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts." *Political Science and Politics*, 0 (0):1–21.

Dafoe, Allan, and Jason Lyall. 2015. "From Cell Phones to Conflict? Reflections on the Emerging ICT–political Conflict Research Agenda." *Journal of Peace Research* 52 (3):401–13.

Dawson, Lorne L., and Amarnath Amarasingam. 2017. "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivations for *Hijrah* to Syria and Iraq." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40 (3):191–210.

Deliso, Christopher. 2007. *The Coming Balkan Caliphate.* Westport: Praeger Security International.

Dolnik, Adam. 2011. "Conducting Field Research on Terrorism: A Brief Primer." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5 (2):3–35.

Duyvesteyn, Isabelle, and Bram Peeters. 2015. "Fickle Foreign Fighters? A Cross-Case Analysis of Seven Muslim Foreign Fighter Mobilisations (1980-2015)." *ICCT Research Paper*: 1–35.

Eckstein, Harry. 1975. "Case Study and Theory in Political Science." In *Handbook of Political Science*, edited by Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson S. Polsby. Reading MA: Addison Wesley.

Ettinger, A. 2014. "The Mercenary Moniker: Condemnations, Contradictions and the Politics of Definition." *Security Dialogue* 45 (2):174–91.

Forney, Jonathan F. 2015. "Who Can We Trust with a Gun? Information Networks and Adverse Selection in Militia Recruitment." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (5):824–49.

Forsberg, Erika. 2014. "Diffusion in the Study of Civil Wars: A Cautionary Tale." *International Studies Review* 16 (2):188–98.

Gall, Carlotta., and Thomas. De Waal. 2000. *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*. New York: New York University Press.

Garner, George. 2013. "Chechnya and Kashmir: The Jihadist Evolution of Nationalism to Jihad and Beyond." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25 (3):419–34.

Gates, Scott, and Sukanya Podder. 2015. "Social Media , Recruitment, Allegiance and the Islamic State." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (4):107–16.

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Grandy, Gina. 2010. "Instrumental Case Study." In *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe, 474-475. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Granovetter, Mark. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness" *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 91, No. 3 (1985): 481–510.

Guevara, Ernesto. 2006. *The Bolivian Diary*. San Jose: Ocean Press.

Guevara, Ernesto. 2012. *Congo Diary : Episodes of the Revolutionary War in the Congo*. San Jose: Ocean Press.

Guevara, Ernesto. 1961. *Guerilla Warfare*.

Gupta, Akhil. 2014. "Authorship, Research Assistants and the Ethnographic Field." *Ethnography* 15 (3):394–400.

Gurr, Robert Ted. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hafez, Mohammed M. 2007. *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace.

———. 2009. "After Iraq: Lessons from the Arab Afghans." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32 (2):73–94.

Halm, Heinz. 2004. *Der Islam : Geschichte Und Gegenwart*. Munich: Beck.

Hammersley, Martyn., and Paul Atkinson. 2010. *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Harbers, Imke, and Matthew C. Ingram. 2017a. "Geo-Nested Analysis: Mixed-Methods Research with Spatially Dependent Data." *Political Analysis* 25 (03):289–307.

———. 2017b. "Incorporating Space in Multimethod Research: Combining Spatial Analysis with Case-Study Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50 (04):1032–37.

Harpviken, Kritian. B. 2012. "The Transnationalization of the Taliban." *International Area Studies Review* 15 (3):203–29.

Heger, Lindsay, Danielle Jung, and Wendy H. Wong. 2012. "Organizing for Resistance: How Group Structure Impacts the Character of Violence." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24 (5):743–68.

Hegghammer, Thomas. 2007. "Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia , 1979 - 2006." *Doctoral Dissertation*. Université Sciences-Po Paris.

———. 2010. "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad." *International Security* 35 (3):53–94.

———. 2013a. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting." *American Political Science Review* 107 (1):1–15.

———. 2013b. "The Recruiter's Dilemma: Signalling and Rebel Recruitment Tactics." *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (1):3–16.

Hoare, Attilla Marko. 2004. *How Bosnia Armed*. London: Saqi Books.

Holman, Timothy. 2016. "'Gonna Get Myself Connected': The Role of Facilitation in Foreign Fighter Mobilizations." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (2):2–23.

Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press.

Horowitz, Michael C., Evan Perkoski, and Philip B.K. Potter. 2017. "Tactical Diversity in Militant Violence." *International Organization* 0 (0):1–33.

Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M Weinstein. 2008. "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War", *American Journal of Political Science* 52(2):436–55.

Muhammad Ibn Ishaq. 1967. *The Life of Muhammad*. Pakistan Branch, Oxford University Press.

Jansen, Hans. 2008. *Mohammed: Eine Biographie*. Munich: Beck.

Jarle Hansen, Stig. 2013. *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group 2005-2012*. London: Hurst and Company.

Jentzsch, Corinna, Stathis Kalyvas, and Livia Isabella Schubiger. 2015. "Militias in Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (5):1–15.

Johnston, Patrick. 2008. "The Geography of Insurgent Organization and Its Consequences for Civil Wars: Evidence from Liberia and Sierra Leone." *Security Studies* 17 (1):107–37.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2008. "Ethnic Defection in Civil War." *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (8):1043–68.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2018. "Jihadi Rebels in Civil War." *Daedalus* 147 (1):36–47.

Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Matthew Adam Kocher. 2007. "How 'Free' Is Free Riding in Civil Wars?: Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem." *World Politics* 59 (2):177–216.

Kenny, Paul D. 2010. "Structural Integrity and Cohesion in Insurgent Organizations: Evidence from Protracted Conflicts in Ireland and Burma." *International Studies Review* 12 (4):533–55.

Koehler, Kevin, Dorothy Ohl, and Holger Albrecht. 2016. "From Disaffection to Desertion: How Networks Facilitate Military Insubordination in Civil Conflict." *Comparative Politics* 48 (4):439–57.

Kohlmann, Evan. 2004. *Al Qaida's Jihad in Bosnia: The Afghan-Bosnian Network*. New York: Berg Publishers.

Krause, Keith, and Jennifer Milliken. 2009. "Introduction: The Challenge of Non-State Armed Groups." *Contemporary Security Policy* 30 (2):202–20.

Krause, Peter. 2013a. "The Political Effectiveness of Non-State Violence: A Two-Level Framework to Transform a Deceptive Debate." *Security Studies* 22 (2):259–94.

———. 2013b. "The Structure of Success - How the Internal Distribution of Power Drives Armed Group Behaviour and National Movement Effectiveness." *International Security* 38 (3):105–36.

Krueger, Christiane, and Silke Levsen. 2011. *War Volunteering in Modern Times - From the French Revolution to the Second World War*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Lenin, Vladimir. 1902. "What Is to Be Done?" *Collected Works*. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/download/what-itd.pdf. [Accessed: 2.5.2018].

Levy, Jack S. 2008. "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25 (1):1–18.

Li, Darryl. 2015. "Jihad in a World of Sovereigns : Law , Violence , and Islam in the Bosnia Crisis" 0 (0):1–31.

Lia, Brynjar. 2007. *Architect of Global Jihad : The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lichbach, Mark I. 1988. "What Makes Rational Peasants Revolutionary? Dilemma, Paradox, and Irony in Peasant Collective Action." *World Politics,* 40(1):383–418.

Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99 (3):435–52.

Lieven, Anatol. 1998. *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lindekilde, Lasse, Preben Bertelsen, and Michael Stohl. 2016. "Who Goes, Why, and With What Effects: The Problem of Foreign Fighters from Europe." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27 (5):858–77.

Linschoten, Alex van, and Felix Kuehn. 2012. *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban - Al Qaida Merger in Afghanistan*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lyall, Jason. 2010. "Are Coethnics More Effective Counterinsurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War." *American Political Science Review* 104 (1):1–20.

Malet, David. 2013. *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identy in Civil Conflicts*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2015. "Foreign Fighter Mobilization and Persistence in a Global Context." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 38 (8):1–20.

Malthaner, Stefan. 2014. "Contextualizing Radicalization: The Emergence of the 'Sauerland-Cell' from Radical Networks and the Salafist Movement." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37 (8):638-653.

McCants, William F. 2015. *The ISIS Apocalypse : The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

McCauley, Clark, and Sophia Moskalenko. 2008. "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (3):415–33.

McLauchlin, Theodore. 2014. "Desertion, Terrain, and Control of the Home Front in Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58 (8):1419–44.

———. 2015. "Desertion and Collective Action in Civil Wars." *International Studies Quarterly* 59 (4):669–79.

Mendelsohn, Barak. 2011. "Foreign Fighters-Recent Trends." *Orbis* 55 (2):189–202.

Mickolus, Edward F., and Susan L. Simmons. 2009. *The Terrorist List: The Middle East: Volume 1: A-K*. Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International.

Miles, Mathew B., Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana. 2014. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Mitchell, Jeni. 2008. "War-Fighting: The Bosnia Precedent." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (9):808–28.

Mitts, Tamar. 2017. "Countering Violent Extremism: Do Community Engagement Efforts Reduce Extremist Rhetoric on Social Media?," *Unpublished Working Paper*.

Moore, Cerwyn, and Paul Tumelty. 2008. "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (5):412–33.

———. 2009. "Assessing Unholy Alliances in Chechnya: From Communism and Nationalism to Islamism and Salafism." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25 (1):73–94.

Moore, Pauline. 2016. "Transnational Insurgents and Violent Conflict: Using Social Network Analysis to Conceptualzie the Fragmentation of Militant Organizations." *Unpublished Working Paper*.

Naji, Abu Bakr. 2006. *The Management of Savagery*. https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf. [Accessed: 4.4.2018].

Nasiri, Omar. 2006. *Inside the Global Jihad: How I Infiltrated Al Qaeda And Was Abandonned By Western Intelligence*. London: Hurst and Company.

Nesser, Petter. 2008. "How Did Europe's Global Jihadis Obtain Training for Their Militant Causes?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2):234–56.

Neumann, Peter, and Scott Kleinmann. 2013. "How Rigorous Is Radicalization Research?" *Democracy and Security* 9 (4):360–82.

Nilsson, Marco. 2015. "Foreign Fighters and the Radicalization of Local Jihad: Interview Evidence from Swedish Jihadists." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38 (5):1–16.

———. 2017. "Interviewing Jihadists: On the Importance of Drinking Tea and Other Methodological Considerations." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 0 (0):1–14.

Oppenheim, Ben, Abbey, Steele, Juan F. Vargas, and Michael Weintraub. 2015. "True Believers, Deserters, and Traitors: Who Leaves Insurgent Groups and Why." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(5):1–30.

Pape, Robert Anthony, James K. Feldman. 2012. *Cutting the Fuse : The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *American Political Science Review* 107 (3):418–32.

Patin, Nathan. 2015. *The Other Foreign Fighters: An Open-Source Investigation into American Volunteers Fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria A Bellingcat Investigation*.

Payne, Kenneth. 2011. "Building the Base: Al Qaeda's Focoist Strategy." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34 (2):124–43.

Pechmann, Phillipp. 2018. "Systematic Case Selection in Theory Building Research: The Concept of Positive Instrumental Case Studies." *Unpublished Working Paper*.

Petersen, Roger D. 2002. "Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe." Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey. 1981. *Power in Organizations*. London: Pitman Books Limited.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey, and Gerald R. Salancik. 1978. *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*. New York: Harper and Row.

Popkin, Samuel L. 1979. *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Qutb, Sayyid. 1964. *Milestones*. https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Milestones%20Special%20Edition.pdf. [Accessed: 10.5. 2018.]

Ragin, Charles C. 2008. "What Is Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)?" *Economic and Social Research Council's Research Methods Festival, Saint Catherine's College, Oxford University*.

Renard, Thomas, and Rik Coolsaet. 2018. "Returnees who are they why are they (not) coming back and how should we deal with them? Assessing Policies on

Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands." *Egmont Paper* 101:1–76.

Rich, Ben, and Dara Conduit. 2014. "The Impact of Jihadist Foreign Fighters on Indigenous Secular-Nationalist Causes: Contrasting Chechnya and Syria." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38 (2):113–31.

Rosenau, James N. 1964. *International Aspects of Civil Strife*. Princeton University Press.

Sageman, Marc. 2004. *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Salancik, Gerald R, and Jeffrey Pfeffer. 1974. "The Bases and Use of Power in Organi- zational Decision Making : The Case of a University." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19 (4):453–73.

Salehyan, Idean. 2007. "Transnational Rebels: Neighboring States as Sanctuary for Rebel Groups." *World Politics* 59 (02):217–42.

Salehyan, Idean, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and David E. Cunningham. 2011. "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups." *International Organization* 65 (04):709–44.

Sanin, Francisco. G., and Elisabeth. J. Wood. 2014. "Ideology in Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and beyond." *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (2):213–26.

Sawyer, Katherine, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and William Reed. 2017. "The Role of External Support in Civil War Termination." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61 (6):1174–1202.

Schindler, John R. 2007. *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qaida, And the Rise of Global Jihad*. St Paul: Zenith Press.

Schmid, Alex P. 2015. "Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates : Conceptual and Data Issues." *ICCT Policy Brief* 217.

Schram, Peter. 2015. "Managing Terror." *Unpublished Working Paper*.

Schutte, Sebastian. 2015. "Geography, Outcome, and Casualties: A Unified Model of Insurgency." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (6):1101–28.

Schuurman, Bart. 2018. "Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 00 (00):1–16.

Schwampe, Jasper, and Thomas Olesen. 2018. "Unrooted Cosmoplitans - The Persistence of Foreign Figther Activism." *Unpublished Working Paper*.

Seawright, Jason, and John Gerring. 2008. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61 (2):294–308.

Sedgwick, Mark. 2010. "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22 (4):479–94.

Selznick, Philip. 1953. "The Organizational Weapon." New York: Arno Press.

Selznick, Philip. 1949. *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Seymour, Lee J., Kritin M. Bakke, and Kathleen G. Cunningham. 2015. "E Pluribus Unum, Ex Uno Plures: Competition, Violence, and Fragmentation in Ethnopolitical Movements." *Journal of Peace Research* 0 (0):1-16.

Shapiro, Jacob N. 2013. *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Shay, Shaul. 2008. *Islamic Terror and the Balkans*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Shils, Edward A., and Morris Janowitz. 1948. "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (2):280–315.

Silke, Andrew. 2001. "The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13 (4):1–14.

Sinno, Abdulkader H. 2008. *Organizations at War*. London: Cornell University Press.

Sokirianskaia, Ekaterina. 2009. "Governing Fragmented Societies: State-Building and Political Integration in Chechnya and Ingushetia (1991-2009)." *Doctoral Dissertation*. Central European University.

Souleimanov, Emil. 2005. "Chechnya, Wahhabism and the Invasion of Dagestan." *Middle East* 9 (4):48–71.

———. 2007. "An Endless War: The Russian-Chechen Conflict in Perspective." Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Stake, Robert E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. London: Sage.

Stake, Robert E. 1994. "Case Studies." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* edited by Norman K. Denzing and Yvonna Lincoln, 236-47. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Staniland, Paul. 2015. "Militias, Ideology, and the State." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (5):770–93.

Staniland, Paul. 2012. *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse*. London: Cornell University Press.

Stenersen, Anne. 2017. *Al-Qaida in Afghanistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tamm, Henning. 2016. "Rebel Leaders, Internal Rivals, and External Resources: How State Sponsors Affect Insurgent Cohesion." *International Studies Quarterly* 0 (0):1-12.

Tarrow, Sideny G. 2011. *Power in Movement*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney G. 2005. *The New Transnational Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tezcur, Gunes Murat. 2016. "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Risks: Participation in an Ethnic Rebellion." *American Political Science Review* 110 (02):247–64.

Toft, Monica Duffy, and Yuri M. Zhukov. 2015. "Islamists and Nationalists: Rebel Motivation and Counterinsurgency in Russia's North Caucasus." *American Political Science Review* 109 (2):222–38.

Tufekci, Zeynep, and Christopher Wilson. 2012. "Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square." *Journal of Communication* 62 (2):363–79.

Vidino, Lorenzo. 2006. "The Arab Foreign Fighters and the Sacralization of the Chechen Conflict." *Al-Nakhlah*:1-11.

Vidino, Lorenzo, Raffaello Pantucci, and Evan Kohlmann. 2010. "Bringing Global Jihad to the Horn of Africa: Al Shabaab, Western Fighters, and the Sacralization of the Somali Conflict." *African Security* 3 (4):216–38.

Viterna, Jocelyn. 2013. *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2007. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, Brian Glyn. 2011. "On the Trail of the 'Lions of Islam': Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1980-2010." *Orbis* 55 (2):216–39.

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2008. "The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (1):539–61.

Zald, Mayer, and Roberta Ash. 1966. "Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay and Change." *Social Forces* 44(3):342–44.

English Summary

Since 2011, more than 40,000 to 50,000 foreign fighters defined as "foreign militant activists who directly participate in the planning or conduct of organized violent activities in the context of armed conflict" travelled to Syria and Iraq. Parallel to this wave of transnational militant mobilization, research on foreign fighters proliferated. Yet, a closer look at the literature shows that specific aspects of the phenomenon evaded scholarly attention. Researchers focus on examining the radicalization pathways of individuals *before* they leave their home country and try to assess the risk of foreign fighters becoming involved in terrorism *after* they return from the conflict country. However, we know very little about the activities, organizational structures, resources, military capacities, leadership, and objectives of foreign fighters during armed conflict. Understanding the roles foreign fighters play within the conflict zone is important for several reasons. While abroad, foreign fighters regularly spoil peace negotiations, form transnational militant networks, transform local communities, and are further radicalized.

One of the most interesting aspects of foreign fighters' activities during armed conflict concerns their interactions with the local population and local militant organizations. Intuitively we would assume that the presence of foreign fighters benefits local militant organizations and their constituencies because the foreigners help to defeat the enemy. Yet, recent research and just a cursory look at the historical record of foreign fighters show that they regularly clash with their local hosts and mistreat the local population. Hence, from a local perspective, foreign fighters appear to be a force multiplier and a liability at the same time. It is precisely this charged relationship between foreign fighters and locals that the dissertation explores. By addressing an empirically under-investigated, under-theorized, and under-conceptualized phenomenon, my main objective is to improve concepts and theories and to demonstrate ways to analyze the interaction between foreign fighters and local actors empirically and systematically. I intend to lay the foundation for a future research agenda on the activities of foreign fighters during armed conflict.

Based on novel qualitative and quantitative data gathered via fieldwork and archival research, I examine the interactions between locals and foreign fighters in five papers, which in combination advance our current understanding of foreign fighters in three ways.

First, they provide better concepts and clear definitions. More specifically, I offer a new definition of the term "foreign fighter" and situate it in a typology of different types of militant activism. The typology details eight roles that for-

eign as well as local individuals occupy within militant organizations. In addition, I distinguish between individual foreign fighters who join local militant organizations and self-directed foreign fighter groups that pursue independent objectives. This clear conceptual distinction is overdue because organized foreign fighter groups and individuals need to be investigated with different analytical approaches. Ultimately, I call for treating foreign fighter groups as an independent type of actor similar to militias. The conceptual work encourages scholars to think carefully about whether they want to investigate foreign fighting on the group or on the individual level when designing their studies.

Second, the dissertation advances research on foreign fighters, terrorism, and armed conflict theoretically by developing novel explanations and clear guidelines for further exploration. In particular, I theorize and empirically demonstrate how a constantly evolving global grievance community structurally enables foreign fighters' persistence and transnational mobility. In addition, the dissertation offers new theories and empirical evidence on foreign fighter groups' detrimental effect on their local hosts' organizational cohesion and the ways local militant organizations' attempts to manage foreign fighters' activities strategically. Besides group-level interactions, the thesis provides novel explanations for why local individuals desert local militant organizations and join foreign fighter groups.

Third, the thesis provides detailed empirical insights into the inner workings of notoriously hard-to-study militant organizations. I collected original quantitative and qualitative data during in-depth fieldwork and extensive archival research. This information not only drives the development of concepts and theories discussed above but also offers nuanced perspectives on the highly divisive and intensely debated issue of foreign fighters' local connections during the wars in Bosnia and Chechnya.

In sum, I hope that the developed concepts, theoretical propositions, and examples of data gathering inspire future research on the activities of foreign fighters during armed conflict.

Dansk Resumé

Siden 2011 er flere end 40.000 to 50.000 udlandskrigere, defineret som "udenlandske militante aktivister som direkte deltager i planlægningen eller udførelsen af organiseret voldelige aktiviteter under en væbnet konflikt", rejst til Syrien og Irak. Samtidig med denne bølge af transnational militant mobilisering har forskningen i udlandskrigere vundet stor udbredelse. En gennemgang af litteraturen viser imidlertid, at visse aspekter af fænomenet stadig mangler at blive undersøgt. Forskere har fokuseret på at undersøge radikaliseringsprocessen af individer, *før* de forlader deres hjemland, og at vurdere risikoen for, at udlandskrigere bliver involveret i terrorisme, *efter* de er vendt hjem fra konfliktlandet. Men vi ved meget lidt om udlandskrigernes aktiviteter, organisatoriske strukturer, ressourcer, militære kapaciteter, lederskab og formål under væbnet konflikt. Det er af flere årsager vigtigt at forstå, hvilken rolle udlandskrigere spiller i konfliktzonen. Mens de er udenlands, spolerer udlandskrigere ofte fredsaftaler, danner transnationale militante netværk, transformerer lokale samfund og bliver yderligere radikaliseret.

Et af de mest interessante aspekter af udlandskrigeres aktiviteter under væbnet konflikt vedrører deres forhold til den lokale befolkning og de lokale militante organisationer. Umiddelbart skulle man tro, at tilstedeværelsen af udlandskrigere er en fordel for lokale militante organisationer og deres bagland, da udlandskrigere hjælper med at bekæmpe fjenden. Men ny forskning, samt et hurtigt blik på udlandskrigeres historik, viser, at de ofte kommer i konflikt med deres lokale værter og mishandler den lokale befolkning. Udlandskrigerne ser således ud til at være både en forstærkning og en byrde. Det er præcis dette sprængfarlige forhold mellem udlandskrigere og de lokale, som denne afhandling belyser. Ved at undersøge et underbelyst, underteoretiseret og underbegrebsliggjort fænomen, er mit hovedformål at forbedre begreber og teorier og at vise, hvordan man empirisk og systematisk kan analysere forholdet mellem udlandskrigere og lokale aktører. Mit mål er at danne grundlag for en fremtidig forskningsagenda om udlandskrigeres aktiviteter under en væbnet konflikt.

Baseret på nyt kvalitativ og kvantitativ data, indsamlet via feltarbejde og arkivarbejde, undersøger jeg forholdet mellem lokale og udlandskrigere i fem artikler, som tilsammen fremmer vores nuværende forståelse af udlandskrigere på tre måder.

For det første introducerer de bedre begreber og klarere definitioner. Mere specifikt præsenterer jeg en ny definition af begrebet "udlandskriger" og placerer det inden for en typologi af forskellige typer militær aktivisme. Typologien fremstiller otte roller, som udenlandske såvel som lokale individer kan

påtage sig inden for militære organisationer. Derudover skelner jeg mellem individuelle udlandskrigere, som slutter sig til lokale militante grupper, på den ene side og selvorienterede udlandskrigergrupperinger, som forfølger selvstændige mål, på den anden side. Denne klare konceptuelle opdeling er på sin plads, fordi organiserede udlandskrigergrupperinger og individuelle udlandskrigere kræver hver deres analytiske tilgang. Således opfordrer jeg til at behandle udlandskrigergrupperinger som en selvstændig aktør på linje med militante grupper. Begrebsarbejdet opfordrer forskere til at tænke grundigt over, hvorvidt de ønsker at undersøge udlandskrigere på gruppe- eller individniveau, når de udfører deres forskning.

For det andet fremmer afhandlingen forskningen af udlandskrigere, terrorisme og væbnet konflikt, teoretisk ved at udvikle nye forklaringer og klare retningslinjer for videre undersøgelser. Jeg teoretiserer og demonstrerer empirisk, især hvordan den globale konstant voksende gruppe af utilfredse mennesker strukturelt muliggør udlandskrigeres vedvarende transnationale mobilitet. Afhandlingen introducerer derudover nye teorier og empirisk evidens for udlandskrigergrupperingers skadelige effekter på deres lokale værters organisatoriske sammenhængskræft og de måder, hvorpå lokale militærorganisationer strategisk forsøger at håndtere udlandskrigeres aktiviteter. Ud over interaktioner på gruppeniveau giver afhandlingen også nye forklaringer på, hvorfor lokale individer deserterer fra lokale militærorganisationer og i stedet melder sig ind i udlandskrigergrupperinger.

For det tredje giver afhandlingen detaljerede empiriske indsigter i de indre dynamikker af militante organisationer, som ellers er så notorisk svære at studere. Jeg har indsamlet ny kvantitativ og kvalitativ data under dybdegående feltarbejde og intensivt arkivarbejde. Denne information driver ikke kun udviklingen af de begreber og teorier, som diskuteres ovenfor, men tilbyder også nuancerede perspektiver på det yderst splittende og intenst diskuterede emne omkring udlandskrigeres lokale forbindelser under krigene i Bosnien og Tjetjenien.

Jeg håber således, at begreberne, de teoretiske udsagn, og eksemplerne på dataindsamling vil inspirere fremtidig forskning i udlandskrigeres aktiviteter under væbnede konflikter.