

Terrorist Practices: Sketching a New Research Agenda

by Joel Day

Abstract

Contemporary approaches to the study of terrorism ignore the social practices that operate as 'background noise' in daily life. Research focusing on goal-seeking and the 'aims' of terrorist organizations leaves little room to analyze the performative, emotional, and ritual aspects of terrorism – key aspects of identity and disposition formation. Just as in other social cleavages, terrorist ritual and community practices forge actor preferences and passions. This note outlines puzzles which extant research agendas leave unanswered, proposes a 'turn' to cultural practice as an important new research area, and offers an example of how to conduct mixed method research on terrorist practices, looking specifically at how religious practice disaggregation predicts terror campaign duration. The research note concludes with academic and policy implications.

Keywords: terrorism; research; methodology; practice; culture; religion; duration; ideology; disaggregation

Introduction

Terrorism is widely understood as an organizational and strategic endeavor. Leading lights in the field argue that terrorism is a communication tactic, designed to produce political and social outcomes.[1] Even if terrorists engage in activities that are not supported by any rational cost-benefit analysis, their behavior is assumed to further organizational coherence strategies or ideological aims.[2] These mainstream approaches result in studies linking financing, weapons choices, training, doctrines—the “raw stuff” of what it takes to “do terrorism”—with terror outcomes like body count and target selection.[3] Such research designs leave little room to analyze the performative, emotional, and ritual aspects of terrorism – key aspects of identity and disposition formation. Terrorism studies thus reflects a trend that parallels Ted Hopf’s claim that academic international relations has virtually ignored what “most people do most of the time in their social lives.”[4] Essentially, contemporary approaches to the study of terrorism ignore the social practices that operate as “background noise” in daily life.

This Research Note presents an argument that a more fine-grained disaggregation of everyday life within terrorist groups is needed to help scholars understand differences within and between groups. Studying the actual activities and practical enactments of everyday terrorist life turns scholarly attention away from goals and ideas and towards social practice as the unit of analysis. Practice approaches are heterogeneous, but share a core commitment to understanding knowledge as social practice rather than ideology or goal-seeking. Ultimately, “turning” terrorism studies toward practice accommodates many epistemological views and builds new ways of understanding terrorism.[5] The approach builds on a pioneering call by Thomas Hegghammer to study “jihad culture.”[6] Hegghammer’s idea is part of a larger orientation in international relations and security studies generally, joining other works on “practice” as a way to help scholars understand gendered dimensions of diplomacy,[7] political bargaining,[8] security communities,[9] deterrence,[10] and peacekeeping.[11]

The following four sections of this Research Note sketch what a practice turn in terrorism studies might look like as a research endeavor. Section one displays how current theories in terrorism studies leave unanswered puzzles and are based on unfounded assumptions of how human socialization functions. Section two outlines a theoretical foundation for prioritizing everyday practice as a way to understand extremist groups, and

describes a potential mixed method approach for studying the identifiable practices of extremist groups. In section three, I offer a brief example of how to proceed within this research agenda. Here I disaggregate religious practices of terror groups, using a model that helps predict which terrorist groups have longer campaign durations. And the fourth section concludes by demonstrating the policy and research implications of this new approach to research in Terrorism Studies. In essence, there is clearly support for the argument that taking practices seriously will allow scholars to put aside “armchair analysis” and instead privilege observable social action on its own terms.[12]

Unsolved Puzzles and Questionable Assumptions

Current approaches in terrorism research result in at least three problematic themes. These include 1) the inability to answer puzzles about why terrorists often engage in aesthetic rather than strategic activities, 2) puzzles concerning disparate findings across the discipline, and 3) fundamentally misplacing emphasis on “thinking” as a principle social building-block and ignoring the more important role of “doing.”

First, there are many puzzles that current approaches simply cannot answer. What, for example, is the role of emotion in violent extremist organizations and how do emotive elements within everyday life frame passions and preferences of terrorists? Similarly, why do terrorists pursue art and aesthetics when such energy should rationally be used to hide, plan, train, and kill? For instance, the Sovereign Citizens’ practice of making artistically distinct forged documents is puzzling since many are intentionally poorly constructed, mocking rules of grammar and punctuation. If these domestic terrorist groups were trying to avoid authority interaction, why would they intentionally design forged documents to look suspicious and even comical, raising red flags and increased police oversight? Aesthetic inclinations are important because they reveal how elements of culture operate to shape and shove actors even without their overt mental processing. If terrorism isn’t just about pre-planned strategic actions, but the almost subconscious activities that are a result of the practices shaping day-to-day life, then current approaches to the study of terrorism are not doing justice to that reality.

Second, research that privileges exogenous social factors—institutions, financing, ideological affiliation, and politics—results in an inability to distinguish the difference among internal cultural characteristics of a group. The unfortunate result is evident in studies of religion and terrorism: A sizable portion of terrorism scholarship holds that religion is a secondary factor behind socio-political drivers like poverty.[13] However, other scholarship finds religious affiliation to be a principle explanation of extremist violence.[14] Such disparate findings indicate that over-aggregated measurements of religious affiliation (i.e. Muslim, Christian), and too much attention on exogenous variables result in inconclusive findings. Over-aggregated approaches also leave no ability to explain variation of activities within catch-all labels, such as why some Sufi groups produce ISIS recruits while others remain quietist. Over-aggregation of religious labels leave scholars with categories that lump actors like the Rainbow-Push Coalition and the KKK into the same analytical space because they are both “Christian.” Such labels do injustice to understanding obvious variations within and between groups.

Third, and perhaps most problematic, is the current literature’s assumption that meaning is created through propositional knowledge, or terrorist’s thinking through goals, organizational ties, or doctrine.[15] Accurate descriptions of goals or ideology requires a laborious amount of cognitive work for each and every actor in a violent environment, which most work in terrorism simply “assumes” into quantitative models. Recent work in this journal, for instance, has argued that differentiation between secular and religious terror groups is entirely based on ideologically informed and articulated goals.[16] I maintain that it is highly improbable

that actors search through an ideological or strategic “blueprint” for each and every action they take. If we look further into terrorist action, my hunch is that some events are driven neither by ideals nor by goals, but by unintelligible and unspoken “background” dispositions. For example, in my research on post-war Sierra Leone, I came in a town in the district of Kono, where after the war, the only two buildings left standing were the church and the mosque. When I asked former rebels about why they failed to raze the buildings, they responded that nobody burned churches—it just wasn’t done. The justification given was about organizational dispositions—“that’s just what we did,” not from consulting any prescribed cognitive blueprint for action. Thus, to conceptualize goal-seeking behavior as a mere mental state takes out of consideration the way that physical training (say, in training camps) constitutes violence as a practice of terrorism a priori. [17] My argument joins Alasdair MacIntyre who maintains that most of what we see as goal-seeking behavior (after the fact) is actually carried on unformulated, improvised, and non-representational ways.[18] The processes of practice, alternatively, are where an actor taps into a “stock of unspoken know-how, learned in and through practice, and from which deliberation and intentional action become possible.”[19] Practice theory would instruct the methodologist to set aside research on ideas and goals, and instead start observing the concrete proceedings of daily life as the central object of meaning-making in the world.

Social Practice and Terrorist Society

Studying terrorist everyday practices points away from organizational dynamics, tactical choices, and static ideological ascription, and instead towards the background “noise” and aspects of society that are taken for granted. Practice theory goes as far back as Aristotle, when he wrote of “practical wisdom” as a form of knowledge.[20] Aristotle posited it is through practical wisdom that one does the “right thing” as part of her disposition, not merely due to belief or cost/benefit analysis. Practice theory turns our attention to this sort of “acting out” the “right thing” and instructs those interested in social outcomes, such as terrorism, to pay special attention to the embodied, dispositional manifestations of how one goes about performing in their day-to-day life.[21] The practice approach argues that “what we do together defines the question of who we are” together.[22] To state more precisely, a practice-oriented approach seeks to “do justice to the practical nature of action by rooting human activity in a nonrepresentational stratum,” meaning those activities that actors may not think through in order to perform.[23]

These aspects of practical knowledge involve one knowing how to perform in ways that are socially expected of them, whether in the practice of scripture reading, document forging, or taking a rest in the trenches. Even ISIS’s method of beheadings could be understood as informed by the preferences forged by textual-interpretive tradition, mimicking, ritual, and belonging. Further, it is doubtful that the colorful orange jumpsuits ISIS prisoners wear before beheading is something that the fighters “think through” every time they force a prisoner to put one on – it is just something that is done. The ultimate argument is that social practices—such as dress, textual interpretation, discussing dreams,[24] or naming one’s Kalashnikov, are areas that produce relational power, internalized into daily routine by a process of bodily “disciplining.” Ultimately, the practices of a group reveal the kinds of activities necessary for actors to be considered by the organization as socially competent and a co-identity member.[25] Identity formation via ritual builds on Whitehouse, who argues that everyday rituals “fuse” actors to their community so that group members are not perceived as mere cooperators; they are kin.[26]

While practice opens the door for terrorism scholars to consider new types of social phenomena within groups, it also directs the data-collection agenda towards observable, material manifestations of collective identity. Prior study of practice theory has examined ritual performances, training manuals and meeting minutes to observe how social expectations are internalized and perpetuated in group members. Like the

method of process-tracing, tracing practices involves using evidence from within a case to make inferences about causal explanations within that case.[27] Yet, as Pouliot argues, while process tracing identifies a theoretically-informed causal chain “between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable,” practice-tracing is interested in how *bundles of activities* construct actors in particular ways.[28] Thus, the practice approach lends itself to both qualitative and quantitative investigations. First, case studies might consider singular local-level activities on a descriptive level, employing ethnographic methods, interviews, and (difficult for the study of terrorism) participant observations. This work would help us better understand particular groups, their processes of meaning-making, and social dispositions. Qualitative comparative cases might then compare, for example, how variation in Koranic interpretation between Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and ISIS impact elite instrumentalization of particular verses. Likewise, veiling, purity of dress, dietary and fasting practices may vary within jihadi organizations, perhaps explaining the variation in how jihadi members interact with local populations with divergent daily rituals. Thus the job of the practice ethnographer is to find singular, local “causality” within a particular group that might then be used to construct broader comparative categories for larger-N studies. In many instances, ethnographic data may be readily available to construct datasets for comparing hundreds of groups over space and time. For example, the work of art and music ethnography, food culture, and fashion studies, have deep reservoirs of data on sub-national groups from which terrorist groups arise, but such data has never been systematically applied to understand the effects of culture on terrorist preferences, passions and outcomes. In sum, practice can be employed as a unit of analysis sequentially up the ladder of abstraction from micro-level specific contexts up to large-N statistical models.[29]

Leveraging Practice Disaggregation: The Case of Religious Culture[30]

Practices are actions embedded in institutional and organizational sinew, evident and observable in member performance. Religion is one area of human activity that requires one to not only profess, but practice that profession in a visible way. One’s identity as a believer is thus profoundly not propositional—as extant strategic, organizational, or ideological approaches assume—but a series of doings and sayings rooted in dispositional knowledge.[31] Propositional approaches are problematic because religious socialization and meaning-making may not necessarily be that which is deliberated, calculated, and operationalized. Rather, ethnographic research in practical theology has found that persons participate from a dispositional “urge” often explaining how “We don’t think about our rituals, we just do them,” or simply “It’s always been done that way.”[32]

A Model of Religious Practice Disaggregation

To illustrate the argument and method described here, I collected data on several hundred terror groups’ practices, disaggregating the practices of actors in Asal and Rethemeyer’s BAAD dataset.[33] I code a terrorist group memberships’ religious practices on several dimensions, adding them together in an index, which serves as an explanatory variable for the outcome of campaign duration, while controlling for GDP, regime type, religious difference, and ethnic, leftist, and territorial goals. The data are then analyzed using a logistic regression.

The explanatory practice index has two components.[34] First, there are eight dimensions of religious practice that are widely comparable and which vary considerably from group to group. These are not arbitrary categories, but are core ways of describing the practical theologies as played out by religious communities. Fortunately, and unique to the field of religious practice, the practices of religious communities

have been recorded through extensive ethnographic work by religious sociologists.[35] Each element of practice is discussed in the most popularly cited texts on religious life, such as the Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practice, which includes analysis on almost every religious community from 245 religious scholars.[36] From localized, ethnographic sources, one can compare religious communities along eight dimensions of practice: 1) orientations towards scripture, 2) defined leadership hierarchy, 3) practice and rituals concerning an afterlife, 4) demarcations of sacred space, 5) practices of diet, 6) dress habits, 7) rites of passage, and 8) prayer rituals. These dimensions are a kind of typology of religious practice and a cut at how scholars can observe religious actors in action, helping answer recent calls in international relations to take “thick” descriptive approaches to religion seriously.[37]

Second, each aforementioned dimension of practice is coded based on the level of exclusivity demarcating who is allowed to participate. Such an approach is based on the Durkheimian definition of religion as a separation of the sacred from the profane, as participating in ritualized life is fundamentally asserting difference between communities, lifestyles and worldviews. Ritualization is the production of differentiation between in-groups and out-groups, as practicing one’s religion is a way of acting in a particular way that establishes a contrast of privileged being. Thus, the way to correctly categorize groups like ISIS/ISIL is not “literalist” but rather “exclusivist” in that they appropriate their religion in a particular sort of way in conflict. [38] I also code each dimension of religious practice based on the exclusivity of that practice. I employ a 0/.5/1 exclusivity scale per eight categories, thus a group’s membership can score between 0-8 in the index. I code a practice as (0) when there is very little frequency, salience, or distribution of the practice within the members of a group. I code a group this way when there is definitive evidence that membership explicitly rejects the practice. For instance, many neo-Marxist groups explicitly prohibit public prayer. While some membership may still engage in prayer, the frequency, group-wide salience and distribution is negligible. In cases where I find mixed group practices I code the variable as (0.5). Instances in this category will have evidence of some members participating in the practice while others may not, or will have contending practices (i.e. Christian mixed with traditional religion). When specific percentiles are available, I code as “mixed” any membership levels from 10%-50% engaging in the practice. I code the variable as (1) when there is high frequency, salience, and distribution of a practice. Cases in this category include if there is definitive evidence that majority of membership practices, if the practice is explicitly talked about in-group memoranda, or if a group explicitly requires such orthopraxy as a condition of membership.

The outcome variable of interest is the duration of the terrorist campaign, from founding or first event to the end of the campaign through die out, losing, winning, or other termination type. This is a good test of the effect of exclusive practice on outcomes, since communities with dispositionally rigid practices are theoretically less likely to give up fighting, even at great loss. Toft, for example, holds that religious groups are likely to “lengthen time horizons” by factoring in the cosmic struggle of eternal good versus evil.[39] A practice approach concurs with this finding, but revises the central mechanism at work. Rather than a community propositionally thinking through violence with a cosmic cost-benefit analysis, practice posits that the discipline of exclusive practices frame everyday life (not just the conflict at hand) in terms of cosmic time. Rites of passage like baptism, for example, are mile-markers in a cosmic performance. Thus, extended time horizons are not necessarily rationalized by cost-benefit analysis, but are part of everyday social structure. Once conflict breaks out, those groups with more hardline dispositional realities are likely to bring extended time horizons with them, approaching a violent environment with skewed time-frames. Those with everyday practices that extend time horizons and set restrictions for who gains access to that afterlife are less likely to give up their fight.[40]

Results

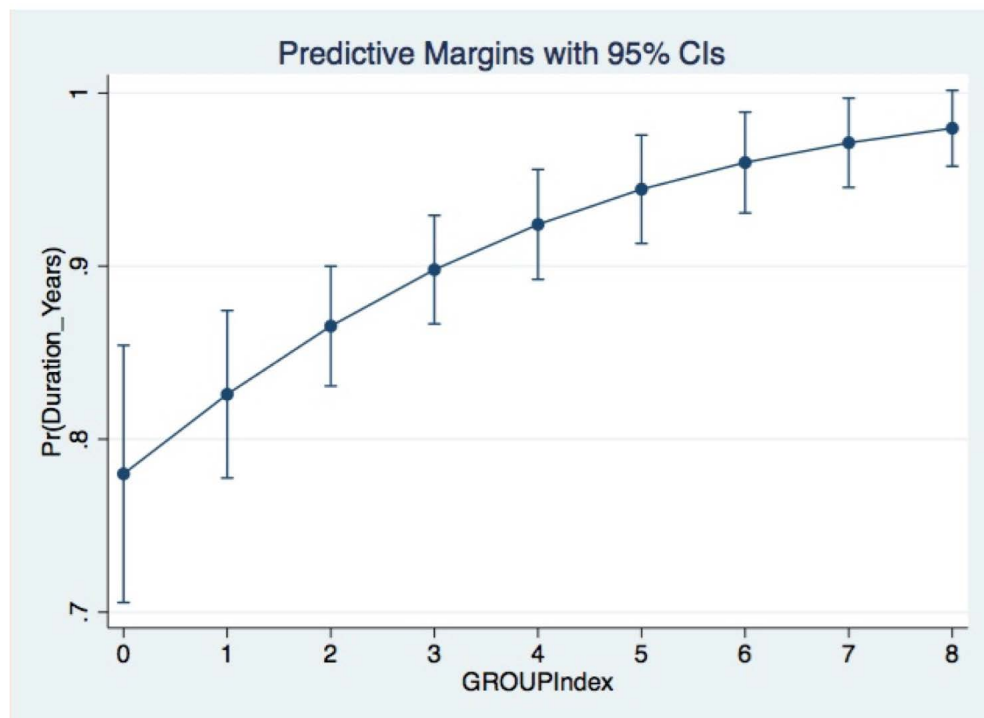
Model 1 tests how a practice index contributes to how we can explain the duration of terror campaigns. This basic test refutes the null hypothesis. The results (shown in Table 1) indicate a positive and highly significant correlation between a terrorist group’s exclusive religious practices and terror campaigns with longer duration. Models 2, 3 and 4 include controls for ethnic, leftist, and territorial based conflicts, regime type, GDP per capita, and a dummy variable indicating differences in religious affiliation between the terrorist group and the state. When we control for these structural factors, secular goals, and difference in religious identity markers, practice remains a significant indicator: higher levels of exclusive religious practices are positively and significantly contributing to the duration of terror campaigns.[41]

Table 1: Effect of Exclusive Religious Practices on Terror Campaign Duration

	(1) Duration	(2) Duration	(3) Duration	(4) Duration
GROUPIndex	0.530*** (0.0729)	0.533*** (0.0971)	0.368*** (0.0914)	0.366*** (0.0917)
Ethnic		1.422 (0.763)	1.610 (0.951)	1.580 (0.965)
LeftAnarchist		0.544 (0.548)	0.903 (0.618)	0.944 (0.613)
Territory		1.469 (0.935)	1.251 (1.148)	1.252 (1.149)
LogGDP			-0.456*** (0.0954)	-0.459*** (0.0964)
PolityOnsetYear			-0.0873* (0.0354)	-0.0854* (0.0374)
Rel_Dif				-0.111 (0.392)
Constant	0.636*** (0.145)	-0.102 (0.534)	4.590*** (1.133)	4.653*** (1.172)
Observations	560	560	560	560
Pseudo R-squared	0.249	0.298	0.361	0.361

Standard errors in parentheses
 * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The results of Model 4 are used to examine the predictive marginal effects of terrorist group practice on the likelihood of conflict intensity, shown in Figure 1. For each index point change in terror group practice, we see a corresponding rise in the likelihood of longer campaign duration. The most exclusive practicing groups are about 20% more inclined to have longer campaign durations.

Figure 1: *The Marginal Effect of Practice on Duration*

The findings suggest that categorizing religious conflicts as simply one group versus another (Christian versus Muslim, Sunni versus Shia), is an unhelpful variable to explain variation in campaign duration. Yet, when one disaggregates groups based upon their observable practices, one can better explain duration of terrorist campaigns.

Research and Policy Implications

There are important academic and policy implications for studying terrorist practices. On an academic level, the approach directs researchers away from the requirement to “get inside terrorists’ heads” in order to access information about their goals or ideology. One can then avoid assumptions about the effect of rhetoric or rationality on mobilizing persons towards extremism. This is preferable since in order for religious rhetoric to “work” on a population, there has to be some sort of framing device that triggers rhetorical and instrumental effectiveness. Practice gets closer to embedding the study of terrorism within the relational and embodied sites of society. Additionally, the choice to disaggregate groups based upon practices enables scholars to empirically examine “what people are doing on the ground” as the basis for categorizing religion and other social categories. Practice theory is thus better positioned to capture the activities of group membership, not simply the goals or doctrines promulgated by leaders. Since elements of religious practice exist even within groups that pursue secular goals, it is inappropriate to assume goals or ideology of elites are reflected in the daily life of group members. Simply categorizing groups based on their objectives fails to capture how ritual and practice frame dispositions of membership.

On a policy level, a practice approach argues that an understanding of violent groups should follow analysis of their “walk,” not just their “talk.” If jihadi, sovereign citizen, the Klan, or other extremist identities are forged less by propositional goals or beliefs and more through dispositional embodiment of social practice, then analyzing how terrorists live in their “everyday life” could offer data that helps researchers better understand group passions and preferences. Everyday practice offers a new, unexplored terrain for combating

violent extremists. For instance, when not posting on social media about ISIS and jihad, do ISIS fans watch *Friends* and cat videos? Answering this question could offer routes of mainstream connections for radicals, who might prove moderated by meaning made in non-extremist practices. Finally, a practice approach offers the ability to map and track specific activities in particularly problematic “hot-spot” areas. For example, large-scale mapping of religious practice would predict areas of conflict that will experience longer campaign duration. Mapping could thus be a predictive tool for the intelligence community by indicating zones of culture where, say resource scarcity or refugee spillover (for example), would be amplified by particularly exclusivist religious practices. Similar models could be constructed for other types of social practices including disaggregation of identity labels like ethnicity and gender. This information could then be used by academics, decision makers, and intelligence officers alike, to better understand the social culture of terror groups.

A practice-oriented approach to the study of terrorism offers researchers an exciting new way to disaggregate terror groups and thus better understand variation within and between them. Practice theory opens the field of terrorism studies far beyond models that privilege representational goal-seeking or belief, and instead positions scholars to deeply consider how art, diet, poetry, dress, religious ritual, and other disposition-forging practices constitute terrorist identities, passions, and preferences.

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Notes

[1] Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 379–99; Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 49–80; Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Reprint edition (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006).

[2] Max Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want,” *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 78–105; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, 3rd Edition*, Third Edition, Completely Revised edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[3] For instance, in their 2014 study, Horowitz and Potter demonstrate that lethality and sophistication of domestic terror attacks increases after financial and tactical connections are forged with a larger transnational terror partner. Michael C. Horowitz and Philip B. K. Potter, “Allying to Kill Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no. 2 (March 1, 2014): 199–225, doi:10.1177/0022002712468726.

[4] Ted Hopf, “The Logic of Habit in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* 16 (2010): 539.

[5] For a comprehensive analysis of the “Practice Turn” literature, see Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, “The Play of International Practice,” *International Studies Quarterly* 59: no.3 (2015): 449–460.

- [6] Thomas Hegghammer. "Why Terrorists Weep: The Socio-Cultural Practices of Jihadi Militants." Paul Wilkinson Memorial Lecture, University of St. Andrews, 16 April 2015. There are important differences, however. Hegghammer's work on "jihad culture" is concerned with "what terrorists do in their off time" while practice theory provides a focus on how meaning is created within jihadi culture, which integrates isolated activities like dressing together with violent practices like beheading. My argument is that practice offers observable, material points of identity formation, thus entirely related to preferences and passion creation that demonstrate in tactical choice and communication tactics. On the other hand, "culture" as conceived by Hegghammer seems to exist as a separate activity that jihadis engage in when not fighting. I argue that practice constructs actors in special ways that they take with them into fighting.
- [7] Iver B. Neumann, "The Body of the Diplomat," *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 671–95, doi:10.1177/1354066108097557.
- [8] Erik Voeten, "The Practice of Political Manipulation" in *International Practices*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- [9] Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, *International Practices* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011).
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- [12] Iver B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002): 627–51.
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- [18] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981)..
- [19] Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*..
- [20] The word used is *phronesis*. Otfried Höffe, *Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"* (Brill, 2010).
- [21] Pierre Bourdieu elaborates a compelling theory of practice which mirrors Aristotelian *phronesis*. Using the term *habitus*, Bourdieu refers to a set of habit-based dispositions (as opposed to thought-based propositions), where objective structures realize in prescribed actions of subjective agents.
- [22] Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38.
- [23] Theodore R. Schatzki, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 177.
- [24] Iain R. Edgar, "The Dreams of Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (July 31, 2015), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/453>.
- [25] Pouliot, Vincent, "The Logic of Practicality," *International Organizations* 54, no. 1 (2008): 257–88.
- [26] Harvey Whitehouse and Jonathan Lanman, "The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, Fusion, and Identification," *Current Anthropology* 55, no. 6 (December 2014): 674–95.
- [27] Vincent Pouliot, "Practice Tracing," in *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, ed. Andrew Bennet and Jeffrey Checkel (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- [28] Ibid.
- [29] Ibid., 252. According to Pouliot "practices are perfect units of analysis to travel up and down the ladder of abstraction."

- [30] Codebook, examples, and replication data are available at www.joelday.org
- [31] Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences*. Religion is, as sociologist Riesebrodt argues, “a complex of religious practices.” Martin Riesebrodt, *The Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
- [32] “Extreme Rituals Forge Intense Social Bonds – Dimitris Xygalatas – Aeon,” *Aeon Magazine*, January 21, 2015, <http://aeon.co/magazine/society/how-extreme-rituals-bond-us-for-life/>.
- [33] Victor H. Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer, “The Nature of the Beast: Terrorist Organizational Characteristics and Organizational Lethality,” *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008): 437–49.
- [34] Creating an index is helpful because the practices themselves are highly interdependent. The index is additive and unweighted for the sake of transparency and simplicity – no extant literature suggests a reason why one practice operates as more “rooting” than others, nor is there a natural hierarchy among practices.
- [35] Ethnographic work may be less available for say, Jihadi poetry or beauty practices of NeoNazis. In those cases, it would not be possible to create larger datasets – it would be necessary to start with local ethnographic data collection, practice tracing, and participant observation.
- [36] Thomas Riggs, ed., *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices*, 3 vols. (Detroit: Gale, 2006).
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- [38] Caner K. Dagli, “The Phony Islam of ISIS,” *The Atlantic*, February 27, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/02/what-muslims-really-want-isis-atlantic/386156/>.
- [39] Monica Duffy Toft, “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War,” *Security Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 34–69, doi:10.1080/09636410600666246.
- [40] Again, the exclusivity measurement is helpful here since Unitarians may practice afterlife rituals, but have no limitations on the type of actions that gain access to that afterlife.
- [41] Exclusivity is perhaps another way of talking about “otherization” but specified in material, physical manifestations. For the connection between “othering” and terrorist outcomes see Victor Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer, “The Nature of the Beast: Organizational Structures and the Lethality of Terrorist Attacks,” *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008): 437–449.