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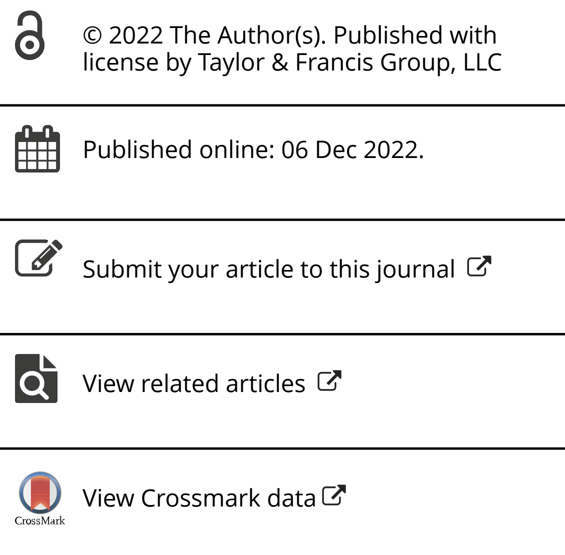

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Fighting against Jihad? Blood Revenge and Anti-Insurgent Mobilization in Jihadist Civil Wars

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ABSTRACT
Previous studies have shown that many recent Jihadist insurgencies differ from other types of civil wars due to their high levels of civilian victimization and their incidence among tribal and honorific societies. We argue that these characteristics of Jihadist wars may have an effect on anti-rebel mobilization among the local population. Notwithstanding the importance of political and sectarian motives, brutal violence against civilians frequently ignites cycles of blood feuds in societies still abiding by customary traditional laws. We argue that excessive violence against civilians that facilitates blood revenge should not be overlooked as one of the primary causes of anti-rebel mobilization in Jihadist civil wars. We draw our empirical insights by examining how and why local population mobilized against Jihadist insurgents during civil wars in Chechnya. Our findings based on unique interviews with both participants and non-participants of Chechen conflicts in the 1990s and the early 2000s illustrate that both excessive civilian victimization by Jihadist rebels and ensuing cycles of blood revenge functioned as robust anti-insurgent mobilization mechanisms.

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This study seeks to provide theoretically-grounded and empirically-supported explanation of why and under which circumstances civilians take up arms and mobilize against Jihadist[1] rebels. We focus exclusively on anti-rebel mobilization occurring against Jihadist insurgents in religious civil wars, rather than in ethnic or political ideology-centered conflicts. Notwithstanding the importance of anti-rebel mobilization in civil wars fought against Jihadist groups, few efforts were made to explain why and under which circumstances civilians mobilize against Jihadist rebels. A number of important questions on the dynamics of anti-Jihadist mobilization remain unanswered. What are the specific mechanisms facilitating anti-rebel mobilization in Jihadist insurgencies?

The bulk of literature on religious conflicts has focused on socioeconomic factors,[2] power struggle[3] and sectarian factionalism[4] as explanations behind anti-Jihadist mobilization in selected case studies. Nevertheless, both micro-dynamics and broader trends of anti-rebel mobilization in Jihadist insurgencies remain underexplored. Similarly, few explanations emerge from studies on ethno-nationalist anti-rebel

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mobilization,[5] which tend to focus on identity shift, loyalty and economic greed, most of which are of limited relevance to Jihadist rebellions. The lack of emphasis on anti-Jihadist mobilization is particularly noteworthy in light of the major role that Jihadist insurgencies play in terms of conflict fatalities over the past twenty years.[6] For example, only civil wars involving ISIS and other Jihadist organizations in Syria and Iraq claimed 45,878 conflict fatalities out of the total global count of 91,902 in 2017.[7]

The key theoretical argument of this study is that anti-Jihadist mobilization among the local population is most of all fueled by individual obligations to retaliate, which are engendered in customary laws and sociocultural traditions of Muslim societies in conflict-affected areas. We borrow from anthropology and ethnography the concept of "honorific societies",[8] as communities preserving local customary laws and adhering to traditional ways of life, to draw connection between anti-Jihadist mobilization and the role of blood revenge as socially-embedded and morally-sanctioned custom. We argue that obligation to retaliate provides a trigger for civilians to mobilize against Jihadist insurgents. The anti-Jihadist mobilization involves not so much side-switching among members of Jihadist groups, as mobilization against them by the local population. While political disagreements and sectarian grievances within Muslim communities may enhance and accentuate anti-rebel sentiments, blood revenge can serve as one of the fundamental micro-level mechanisms that facilitates individual anti-rebel mobilization in Jihadist conflicts. The obligation to claim vengeance is triggered by civilian persecution and victimization, commonly practiced by ISIS, al-Qaeda, the Philippines' Abu-Sayyaf, and many other Jihadist groups. Since revenge seekers, bound by customary law to avenge their family members, often lack weapons and capacity to fight alone against powerful Jihadists, joining anti-rebel forces provides avengers with an opportunity to complete their revenge missions while serving as part of counterinsurgents. The role of blood revenge and other sociocultural codes have been identified by scholars as critical toward pro-insurgent mobilization in armed conflicts.[9] Civilian victimization and disregard for local customs by counterinsurgents were defined as fundamental causes behind pro-rebel mobilization among tribal and clannish societies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and many other conflict-affected areas.[10] Nevertheless the question as to whether social sanctions enshrined in customary laws lead to anti-rebel mobilization has not been previously examined as one of the primary mechanisms of anti-rebel mobilization in Jihadist insurgencies.

We draw our empirical insights from the case study of anti-Jihadist mobilization in Chechnya. In-depth qualitative interview data on anti-Jihadist collective action provide unique insights into the micro-dynamics of popular resistance to Jihadis, something that cannot be obtained from survey data or large N-analyses. Our evidence suggests that although political and sectarian grievances, along with material greed, provide basic ideological and rationalist conditions for mobilization, it is the socially-embedded duty to revenge that has offered civilians a much-needed trigger to join counterinsurgents. In contrast to many other ethnographic research works on participation in civil wars, our research design benefits from incorporating opinions of both conflict participants and nonparticipants.

Theorizing Anti-Jihadist Mobilization

Over the past two decades, the overwhelming number of religious civil wars consisted of Jihadist insurgencies.[11] In Isaacs's[12] definition, religious intrastate conflicts are civil wars where actors on either side of the dyad "employ the language of religion to encourage collective mobilization". A large and growing body of literature on religious conflicts contends that grievances over religious issues both cause and escalate political violence.[13] A number of quantitative studies confirmed that religious civil wars are longer lasting and more lethal than all other types of intrastate conflicts, including ethno-nationalist civil wars.[14] Religious civil wars are also described as more intractable and far harder to resolve through peaceful means than other types of civil wars.[15] The indivisibility of religious conflicts[16] posed a further challenge to peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding.[17] Along with challenges to negotiated settlements, religious civil wars are notoriously hard to resolve militarily, and many such conflicts tend to result in rebel victories.[18]

As argued by Toft[19] and other scholars, Jihadist insurgencies are not only more likely to occur more frequently than other religious conflicts, but they also pose much harder counterinsurgency challenges to governments. Among other religious conflicts, Jihadist insurgencies are identified as causing the highest number of fatalities among both combatants and civilians.[20] The use of excessive and indiscriminate violence by Jihadist rebels is well documented. This study focuses specifically on religious civil wars that involve radical Jihadist insurgents on the one side of dyad and a government which opposes or challenges – owing to sectarian differences or different interpretations of Islam – theological objectives of the rebels on the other side of dyad. This type of religious conflict is classified in the literature as "theological conflict", which in Basedau et al.'s[21] formulation "refers to an incompatibility over religious ideas between the state and the rebel group", and "requires that at least one side has explicit theological goals that differ from those of the other conflict party". As long as the incompatibility is fought over different interpretations of the same religion, sectarian conflicts are also a form of theological civil wars. A theological civil war is therefore different from interreligious conflict where belligerents belong to different religions and fight over religious differences. Governments involved in theological conflicts are often covertly or openly supported by external actors opposed to sectarian-theological tenets of Jihadist rebels, which is likely to further deepen divides between the government and rebels.

Notwithstanding the high costs of challenging Jihadists, anti-rebel mobilizations by civilians have been a frequent occurrence in many recent Jihadist insurgencies.[22] From Sunni Awakening (*al-Sahwa*) and anti-ISIS tribal coalition (*Sahwat*) in Iraq to anti-Boko Haram mobilization in northern Nigeria and Somalia's *Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a*, Jihadist rebels often encounter consistent opposition from local populations. Indeed, such powerful Jihadist organizations as ISIS and al-Qaeda in Iraq encountered the toughest opposition from among local population whom these groups perceived as their key recruitment pools and ideological supporters.

Bearing in mind distinct characteristics of Jihadist conflicts, such as high lethality rates and higher intensity of violence identified in the literature, we expect anti-rebel

mobilization in Jihadist insurgencies to differ from anti-insurgent participation in other types of conflicts. Although a voluminous body of literature on sectarian conflicts and religious violence is focused on factors behind religious radicalization and mobilization into Jihadist terrorist organizations and radical religious movements,[23] few efforts were made to theorize anti-Jihadist mobilization as a distinct phenomenon and to systematically explain its occurrence.[24] Similarly, studies on anti-rebel and pro-government forces have not sought to distinguish anti-Jihadist mobilization or to explain its dynamics. The bulk of qualitative literature on anti-Jihadist mobilization is centered on the Sunni Awakening case. Some scholars of Sunni Awakening emphasized economic incentives, such as creation of security jobs, as reasons for the local population to switch their loyalties. Others argue that although material incentives were available since the start of the U.S. invasion in 2004, the Awakening did not occur until 2007, when local grievances against al-Qaeda erupted into armed resistance to Jihadists.[25] Other cases of anti-Jihadist mobilization received much less scholarly attention. Although the key strands of explanations have evolved around themes of sectarian differences[26] and political disagreements between the Jihadists and locals,[27] local grievances were frequently rehearsed as crucial toward the local opposition to Jihadists.[28] Clashes between the "local" and "global" Jihadists were described as major causes of violent factionalism and intra-group fighting within Jihadist organizations.[29] Although theological differences between local Jihadist members and foreign fighters possibly contribute toward fueling animosity among Jihadist combatants, they fail to explain broader anti-Jihadist mobilization among the local population. Bearing in mind that Jihadist insurgents derive their legitimacy not only from religious doctrines, but also from capitalizing upon local grievances, and in particular oppression of religious communities by the government or foreign powers, particularly at the onset of rebellions, they tend to enjoy widespread popular support. For example, the intra-group rivalry and in-fighting among Jihadi factions in Syria's Idlib province was insufficient to deprive Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (al-Nusra front) of local support or to incite mobilization against the group among local Sunnis.

Similarly to sectarian disagreements, political grievances only offer partial explanation for popular anti-Jihadist mobilization. In fact, tribal leaders hosting Jihadists tend to benefit from their presence and often welcome and invite Jihadists in the first place.[30] Examples of anti-Jihadist mobilization in Iraq and Libya demonstrate that power struggles between the local elites and Jihadists tend to emerge at least two years after the civil war onset and only after the Jihadists unleash campaigns of civilian victimization. For example, fragmented authority and the limited influence of tribal leaders over the population in Jihadist controlled-areas of Iraq,[31] enabled tribal sheiks to mobilize relatively limited local support whenever they sought to oppose either al-Qaeda or its successor ISIS. By contrast, large numbers of tribesmen who have taken up arms against Jihadists during both the Sunni Awakening and *Sahwat* displayed limited loyalty and allegiance to tribal sheiks and were often pursuing exclusively their own interests.

Seeking to fill the gap in research on anti-Jihadist mobilization, this study aims to explain why local population chooses to mobilize against Jihadist insurgents. Although anti-Jihadist mobilization does not exclude members of Jihadist groups switching sides

to counterinsurgents, the process first of all involves mobilization against the Jihadists by the local population. That said, the anti-Jihadist mobilization refers to individuals' decisions to take up arms, rather than maintaining a non-armed stance and reporting on the insurgents or providing other type of civilian support to the other group. We believe that anti-Jihadist mobilization differs qualitatively from anti-rebel participation in ethno-nationalist conflicts. The distinctions derive from the nature of religious civil war and Jihadist insurgencies, in particular. As explained by Toft,[32] "unlike nationalism, which by its nature tends to be a local issue, religion … tends to be trans-national". Hence, anti-rebel mobilization among the local population in ethnic conflicts very often entails turning on fellow co-ethics recruited from the same ethnic communities.[33] By contrast, Jihadist insurgencies are often trans-national and the presence of foreign fighters became an inseparable characteristic of Jihadist insurgencies. Unlike popular participation against ethno-nationalist rebellions, many of which are localized, anti-Jihadist mobilization frequently involves challenging powerful and ruthless Jihadi groups enjoying trans-national support. Both the trans-national support, which Jihadists often enjoy, and their violent reputation could be expected to serve as deterrents for the local population against challenging Jihadists.

Economic incentives are frequently discussed as significant determinants of anti-rebel participation in ethnic conflicts.[34] In a similar vein, material "greed" has been rehearsed as one of the strongest incentives for civilians in intrastate conflicts to mobilize on the side of incumbent.[35] The evidence from cases of anti-Jihadist mobilization suggests different dynamics. The U.S. administration in Iraq offered funding, weapons and training to all Iraqi tribesmen willing to rise up against al-Qaeda in Anbar province as early as in 2004.[36] However, only the members of Albu Nimr tribe, who have held grudge against al-Qaeda, had taken up the offer when all other Sunni tribes continued their support for Jihadists. Considering that rebelling against Jihadists would almost certainly result in brutal persecution of defectors, their families and often entire tribes and clans, material incentives offer limited incentives for the would-be anti-Jihadist rebels to take part in counterinsurgency.[37]

The above discussion demonstrates that many existing explanations of anti-rebel mobilization among civilians hold limited explanatory strength in the context of Jihadist insurgencies. However, this study does not pursue drawing distinctions between anti-rebel mobilization in Jihadists insurgencies and other types of conflicts. The main goal of this article is to explain why and under which circumstances local populations rise against Jihadists. The key theoretical argument of this study posits that local populations are more likely to mobilize against Jihadist insurgents in honorific societies wherein excessive rebel violence against civilians fuels anti-Jihadist blood feuds.[38] This theory rests upon two interrelated assumptions. *Firstly*, the Jihadists' use of violence against the local population results in accumulation of deep-seated local grievances against the rebels. The Jihadists' disregard for local customs, traditions and the way of life further aggravates the rift between the rebels and the local population. *Secondly*, as Jihadist insurgents are often based in tribal, clannish or traditionalist communities, which we describe by the term "honorific societies", socially-sanctioned codes of blood revenge, retribution and preservation of tribal customs facilitate armed local mobilization against the Jihadists.

Civilian Victimization Matters

Scholars have argued that the success of rebellions edges heavily on the support from local population.[39] Violence committed by rebels against civilian population is a major factor undermining local support and encouraging locals to collaborate with the incumbent denunciating insurgents, and even taking up arms against the rebellion.[40] Among other types of civil conflicts, religious civil wars are characterized by high levels of violence against civilians. In Toft's[41] estimation, religious conflicts "are four times as deadly for noncombatants" than all other types of civil wars. Juergensmeyer[42] was among many other scholars to claim that Jihadists are notorious for exceptionally high levels of violence against civilians. Numerous studies have found that the reliance on terrorist attacks and violent intimidation campaigns by Jihadist groups lead to upsurge in the numbers of civilian casualties.[43] As the use of violence against noncombatants finds justification in theological-religious ideology, it becomes systematically adopted by successive Jihadist organizations as a typical mode of operation.[44] Breslawski and Ives[45] have found that the reliance on civilian victimization[46] by Jihadists is directly associated with the organizations' success, since more violent Jihadist factions are perceived as more likely to achieve their goals.

At the onset of rebellion, the Jihadists' violent methods could be seen by locals as effective in eliminating opposition and weeding off government informants and sympathizers. However, sustained campaigns of executions, torture and rape against the local population, implemented in conjunction with disregard for civilian lives during military confrontations, are bound to alienate and antagonize the locals. Local grievances against the government, or an external power, which in the first place enabled Jihadists to establish their presence among the local population, can easily yield under the increasing number of civilian casualties. The rise of Iraqi Sunni tribes against al-Qaeda during the Sunni Awakening is an example of how numerous local grievances against the regime, which have brought a diverse contingent of nationalists, Ba'athists and rival tribesmen under the al-Qaeda banners, were swept off by the Jihadists' violent tactics against the locals.

Yet opposing Jihadists is a risky endeavor that can easily outweigh benefits of mobilization. As examples of anti-Jihadist mobilization from Iraq and Libya demonstrate, civilians involved in Jihadist rebellions emerge as reluctant rebels and the mobilization rates remain low during the first years of conflict. Atrocities committed by Jihadists against the locals and the prospect of even harsher persecution serve both as deterrents and determinants of mobilization. As observed by Clayton and Thomson,[47] "[w]hen faced with a recalcitrant and actively hostile local population, the insurgents retaliate to deter future defections and re-establish their control over contested areas". This indicates that resistance to Jihadists increases the likelihood of rebels employing ever more violent tactics in dealing with the local population, which further inflate the cost of anti-Jihadist collective action.

Violence committed by Jihadists against the local population creates favorable conditions for anti-rebel mobilization by accentuating local grievances against Jihadists. However, bearing in mind that anti-rebel mobilization is likely to result in Jihadists targeting not only families of the "rebels", but also their entire clans and tribes, the

cost of high-risk action as a result of civilian victimization is too high for rational individuals to bear. We argue that although violence against civilians facilitates conditions favorable for violent mobilization, on its own it is insufficient to overcome the collective action problem, and that individuals faced with excessive rebel violence are more likely to refrain from participation than mobilize.[48] Rather it is the combination of civilian victimization and the socially-sanctioned obligation to retaliate that expedites anti-rebel collective action in Jihadist insurgencies.

Enters Blood Revenge

We expect that civilian victimization is particularly likely to lead to anti-insurgent mobilization in societies with strong revenge norms. We propose that it is the socially-encoded obligations, engendered in the tradition of blood revenge that serve as a trigger for individuals in honorific societies to take up arms against powerful and brutal Jihadist groups. Honorific cultures were conceptualized by Nisbett and Cohen[49] as societies prioritizing traditional forms of socio-political organization such as extended patriarchal families, clans and tribes over central government. Honorific societies are also characterized by the preference of customary laws and codes over the formal rule of law. The notion of honor in honorific cultures is tightly linked with appropriation of violence for the purpose of defending individual and family honor. Notwithstanding nuanced interpretations of reliance on violence in order to defend ones' honor in different honorific societies, tradition of blood revenge or blood feud holds across many different honor-centered cultures around the world. Although the concept of revenge has multiple interpretations in the literature,[50] blood revenge refers to an act of retribution for murder, rape or dishonor that requires offender to payback in blood. Nivette[51] explained that blood revenge "can follow many forms of perceived wrongdoing".

Previous studies have found that revenge was an important dynamic during the conflict in Northern Ireland and the Spanish Civil War.[52] For instance, Stein's[53] work attributes a vengeance motivation to violence in many modern societies, including the United States. However, revenge incidents in modern societies are isolated individualist choices that are not socially sanctioned and not encoded in customary laws or any other forms of social obligations. Blood revenge as mechanism of violent mobilization works differently in modernized and honorific societies. We argue that although blood revenge can serve as a robust explanation for anti-rebel mobilization in honorific societies, it only offers circumstantial evidence for anti-insurgent mobilization in modernized societies.

To start with, blood revenge in honorific societies is almost always socially-sanctioned and obligatory. Busquet[54] described that in Corsica "the man who has not avenged his father, an assassinated relative or a deceived daughter can no longer appear in public". Elster[55] confirmed that blood revenge is bound by social norms to be mandatory. The fundamental "eye-for-an-eye" principle of blood revenge in honorific societies is based on reciprocity requiring for a life to be taken if a life was lost. Enshrined in an Arab phrase "blood demands blood",[56] the logic of blood revenge is also reflected in the Islamic law (*qisas*), which demands that a murder is to be reciprocated.[57]

The onslaught of modernization confined the survival of blood revenge to tribes of the Amazon basin, Oceania, indigenous communities of Sub-Saharan African, Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as Arab tribes of the Middle East and North Africa, parts of Albania, south-eastern Turkey and mountainous areas of the North Caucasus. Nivette[58] explained that blood revenge tends to persist in places "where there is low political complexity, low economic interdependence and strong fraternal interest groups". Incidentally, blood revenge is prevalent in areas affected by the present-day Jihadist insurgencies. For Iraqi tribes, "[f]ailure to fulfill the obligation of '*thar* [blood revenge] badly damages the group's reputation".[59] Blood revenge (*badal*) also plays prominent role in *Pashtunwali*, the customary law of Afghanistan's and Pakistan's Pashtun tribes. Mahdi[60] details that *badal* is "taken to avenge death, or when the honor of a woman has been involved". In accordance with Pashtunwali "[i]f one man murdered another, the murdered man's kin were collectively obligated to seek blood revenge".[61]

Scholars have found that in the context of civil wars blood revenge functions as a powerful pro-insurgent mobilization mechanism in honorific societies.[62] For example, Kilcullen[63] observed how indiscriminate aerial attacks on Afghan villages by the NATO forces encouraged Pashtuns to seek revenge. Maloney[64] described *badal* as one of the main drivers behind Taliban violence. Unable to reach foreign troops on their own, *badal*-seekers are forced to join Taliban who provide them with weapons, training and plentiful opportunities to revenge. Similar dynamics have been reported in the post-U.S. 2003 invasion of Iraq, where Sunni tribesmen flocked into al-Qaeda ranks after heavy-handed tactics by the U.S. troops left hundreds of civilians dead in Anbar province.[65]

Notwithstanding the scope of research on blood revenge as cause of pro-insurgent support, little is known what role blood feuds play in facilitating anti-rebel mobilization. Since the rise of ISIS in 2014, numerous reports indicate that blood revenge against ISIS was critical behind the 2015–17 *Sahwat* in Iraq.[66] The evidence from the Sunni Awakening suggests that individual blood feuds, including by tribal elites,[67] to avenge atrocities committed by al-Qaeda were crucial toward convincing the majority of Sunni tribes to switch sides. In Afghanistan, *badal* has seemingly worked both ways as well, as Taliban intimidation campaigns in the countryside continuously produced numerous recruits for the Afghan security forces.[68] With these facts in mind, we turn the predictions that blood revenge facilitates pro-Jihadist support on their head and argue that blood revenge also encourages anti-Jihadist mobilization.

Our argument makes a particular sense because present-day Jihadist groups are firmly embedded into honorific societies. Collombier and Roy[69] in their volume on tribes and global Jihadism made a curious observation that most Jihadist insurgencies are based in tribal areas. For centuries, tribes hosted radical Jihadist movements not only providing Jihadists with recruits and shelter, but also benefiting from the special political status that many tribes in the Middle East, North Africa and East Asia enjoy. Jihadists in their turn connected tribes through their trans-national networks to the outside world and elevated their status locally. However, the relationship between tribes and Jihadists is a complicated one. On the one hand, honorific societies with their pre-modern values, special political status and remote locations are perfect hosts for Jihadists. On the other hand, most tribes tend to support the Sufi order, vehemently opposed by Salafi-Jihadists.[70] Archaic customary laws of honorific cultures rarely

conform to strict tenets of Salafi Islam, and the tribal identity contradicts the trans-national character of the Global Jihad. Roy[71] explained that "[t]ribal identity is an obstacle for the Islamic state, even if tribesmen are welcome to join, provided that they reject any kind of tribal loyalty". The level of Jihadists' tolerance toward honorific culture differs from case to case.[72] And the most radical Jihadist organizations were keen to obliterate the honorific culture. Efforts to subdue tribesmen through violence, to ban their customary laws and to abolish their way of life are bound to encounter resistance. In Roy's[73] words "the recasting of tribal identity into a jihadist one reaches its limits when the jihadist organization goes too far in erasing, instead of manipulating, tribalism". Demolition of Sufi shrines by al-Shabaab in Somalia, calls in Salafi madrasas of Pakistan's tribal belt for rejection of *Pashtunwali* and the ISIS campaign of deposing Iraqi tribal sheiks were destined to further alienate locals from Jihadists.

Given that irreconcilable socio-cultural rifts are added to individual insults of murder, rape and torture, blood revenge emerges as an obvious solution to the problem. Although taking up arms against Jihadists could be highly counterproductive, revenge-seekers are bound by social sanctions to retaliate. Schumann and Ross[74] reminded that blood revenge is rarely rational, but it is almost always unavoidable. Unlike political or sectarian grievances, which can provide broader ideological base for anti-Jihadist mobilization, the obligation to revenge is first of all personal and therefore is rarely affected by ideological shifts.

Blood revenge can provide both the motive and incentive for participation in organized violence, allowing to overcome collective action problem, which participation in insurgencies almost always entails. As argued by Humphreys and Weinstein[75] "the threat of social sanctions should be as effective in motivating counterinsurgent activity as they are believed to be in motivating rebellion". This logic allows us to theorize that owing to civilian victimization (often occurring in conjunction with disregard for tribal customs), committed by Jihadists against local population in honorific cultures, blood feuds fuel violent mobilization against Jihadists. This theory cannot be applied to all types of civil wars, but only to Jihadist insurgencies based in honorific societies.

Data and Methods

This article is part of our larger decade-and-a-half long research project on the political ethnography of insurgency in Russia's Chechnya and the neighboring republics of the North Caucasus.[76] Owing to our longstanding contacts with members of Chechen diaspora communities in Russia, Western Europe, the United States, Georgia, and Turkey, we managed to access introverted groups of former fighters, their families, and eyewitnesses of violence in this volatile republic. Due to immense security concerns for both interviewees and interviewers, and the critical unwillingness of (potential) interlocutors to share sensitive information with outsiders, the bulk of interviews took place outside Chechnya and Russia in the safe haven of Western European cities.[77] Most interlocutors were refugees from Chechnya from the 2000s, either first-generation asylum seekers, or individuals who were granted political asylum in Western European countries.

While we understand potential limitations of relying on a single case study, we believe that the empirical case of Chechen Wars provides an excellent laboratory for

studying anti-rebel mobilization in Jihadist insurgencies. Our empirical case not only involved an external counterinsurgent actor (Russian Federation), and a local pro-counterinsurgent government, but it also occurred in the midst of sociocultural milieu with clearly defined honorific traditions. These characteristics enable drawing comparative and generalizable observations with relevance to other anti-Jihadist mobilizations in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, where similar conflict dynamics are observed.

For the purpose of this article, we conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with a total of 73 individuals: 18 former insurgents, 47 noncombatant eyewitnesses, and 8 journalists and experts with first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon. The major criterion for selection of the interviewees, including journalists and experts, was their unmediated experience with the researched phenomenon either as members of Chechen armed forces hosting or dealing with Jihadists; living in villages or city neighborhoods hosting Jihadists or interacting directly with Jihadist groups in their immediate vicinity; or, for experts and journalists, spending a minimum of a month in Chechnya in the studied period for the purpose of fieldwork on the current or related topics.

Our interviews were conducted between 2011 and 2019 and roughly relate to events that took place from 1991, when Chechnya's separatist elites declared independence from Russia, to 2004, when the backbone was formed of *kadyrovtsy*, Moscow-backed paramilitary force manned primarily by insurgent defectors. Interviews spanned from a minimum of around 40 min to four hours. We conducted more than a single interview with around two thirds of interviewees as part of our larger research project. We conducted numerous follow-up interviews – face-to-face, telephone, or via various online communication channels – on the same or closely related topics to acquire a broader picture of the studied phenomenon, its socio-cultural and political context, and its implications. Among other things, our approach enabled us to boost mutual trust and allow our interlocutors to share sensitive information that they would tend to hide from outsiders during the first or even second meeting.

Referral method was used to access interlocutors. We used several gatekeepers to ensure a broader pool of respondents and to maximize the variability of data acquired during our research on the current article. As a result, our interviewees represented a wide geographical spectrum and come from many walks of life: from farmers and manual workers to engineers and intellectuals. The age of our respondents was from 16 to 69 years at the time of researched events.

During some interviews, notes were taken, while during most interviews, no notes were taken to reduce the visible discomfort and insecurity of the interviewees. On some occasions, interviewees requested to discontinue taking notes having initially contested to us taking notes. Whenever no notes were taken during the interviews, we schematized the interviews and summarized their main findings immediately after their termination. No interviewee agreed to be video or audio-taped. Due to security concerns, all interlocutors consented to being interviewed on the condition of strict anonymity. For the same reason, the locations of interviews are not revealed as the interviewees expressed concern over their identities being revealed should the geographical location of the interviews be disclosed. The identities of experts and journalists

are revealed in this article unless they explicitly requested the opposite. It goes without saying that we are knowledgeable of the identities of all our interviewees, both anonymized and non-anonymized. We used narrative analysis to code the interview data.

Interwar Chechnya: How the Local Population Turned against Jihadists

Following a period of relative peace, hostilities between the Jihadists and the local population commenced after Russia's withdrawal from Chechnya as a result of its failure to break the backbone of the local insurgency during the First Russian-Chechen War (1994–1996). Indeed, the interwar period (1996–1999) marked the end of almost a decade-long era of peaceful cohabitation between the two groups. Although ideological and cultural disputes erupted between the minority Jihadists and majority local population in earlier years, they rarely escalated into violence. In fact, during the First Russian-Chechen war, some Jihadists displayed lack of respect toward the elements of Sufi tradition, for instance, deliberately assuming fighting positions in the vicinity of Sufi graveyards or sites of veneration. Jihadists also disapproved of strong Chechen ethnic nationalism, a driving force of Chechen separatism in the early 1990s and during the First Russian-Chechen War, which they considered essentially non-Islamic as it contradicted the concept of *ummah,* the Islamic nation. Instead, the Jihadists openly expressed willingness to establish a supra-ethnic theocracy as their ultimate goal following Chechnya's de facto victory in the war.[78] At the same time, initially, Jihadist fighters were usually held in high esteem by ordinary Chechen fighters for their piety, modesty, and discipline. As a former insurgent put it: "during the First War, we didn't really understand the [theological] nuances […] These guys [Jihadists] spoke Chechen, looked Chechen, didn't shave moustaches [as they did later], they were part and parcel of our people" (Interviewee 1). While some Chechens did show concern over the Jihadists' ultimate objectives, the majority local population failed to regard Jihadists as an existential threat to Chechen statehood and tradition, not least because of the miniscule support enjoyed by the minority Jihadists in pre-war and war-torn Chechen society. "Nobody took them [Jihadists] seriously prior to the post-war period or thought they might become a serious problem in the republic".[79]

Yet it was in the interwar period (1996–1999) that Jihadists, now backed by generous overseas funds and a number of influential politicians and warlords,[80] launched an all-out attack on what they considered essentially non-Islamic Chechen practices and customs. *Adat,* Chechens' much-esteemed customary law, became a source of vicious Jihadist discontent as it was identified as *jahilliyah,* pre-Islamic heresy. As a backbone of *nokhchalla,* Chechenness, it was held in high respect by the majority local population who equaled any attacks against it with attacks on fiercely-protected Chechen identity. According to a former insurgent, "these Arabized comrades *[arabizirovannie tovarishi]* wanted to destroy our age-old identity, our values that we inherited from our grandfathers and our grandfathers inherited from their grandfathers. They wanted us to become Arabs, Saudis, and of course, we didn't like it: what was the meaning of winning the war [with Russia]? To become Arabs?" (Interviewee 2). The Jihadists' appeal to Chechens to disregard not only Sufi sheikhs, but also to only respect God as a source of all sanctity implied that Chechens were not obliged to follow the strictly

hierarchical order stipulated by *adat*: elder brothers, fathers, clan elderly, Sufi *murids*. In the words of Vakhit Akaev, a prominent Chechen historian and an eyewitness of the interwar events, "harsh arguments" emerged routinely in the interwar period between the Jihadists and the local population dividing entire families: "young man [were] being instructed by an adherent of 'pure Islam', who says: 'do not revere sheikhs and *ustazes* [murshids], do not revere the elderly people!' A question raises immediately: why is it forbidden to revere elderly people? The answer is simple: because it is tantamount to creating an equal to Allah".[81] Hence, Jihadist demands went beyond the sectarian divide; they challenged the whole fabric of Chechen society as they aimed at destroying Chechens' tradition of unwritten law.

The majority local population were to return to the tenets of Sunni Islam by emancipating themselves from the burdens of the customary law which regulated all segments of personal and communal life; from birth to marriage to death; from retaliation to forgiveness; from war to peace. The Islamic law, *shari'ah*, was to replace *adat*, as well as secular law, as the single source of law and order in society. The very idea that *jahilliyah* was to be exterminated to pave the ground for the creation of truly Muslim Sunni identity, formally shared by both groups, irritated the local population as an alien-led efforts to break the backbone of Chechen tradition for which thousands of Chechens have sacrificed their lives. "Wahhabites [Jihadists] taught Chechens how to become 'real' Sunnis, which was only possible through abandoning Chechen culture and customs. For great many Chechens, this was unacceptable".[82] Moreover, for many locals, the perception of Jihadists' agenda in Chechnya was seen to Arabize Chechens instead of re-Islamicizing them. As Aslan Maskhadov, the secularly-minded president of the Chechen Republic confessed in a televised statement to the nation in 1999,

> This ideology [Wahhabism] is being brought here artificially… They say that only they [Wahhabis] have been on the right path and that all others are their enemies […] We have always been proud of being Chechens. And now they tell us: Don't say you're Chechens. Don't say you're Chechen people. They want to take away the faith of our forefathers, our customs and traditions and *adat*.[83]

Jihadists' attempts to introduce *shari'ah* law courts across the country were often challenged by the local population. Many locals regarded inappropriate the public punishment according to Islamic law practiced by Jihadists, which they considered demeaning. As a Chechen eyewitness confessed, "to beat a Chechen publicly, by a couple of random strain vandals [vandaly bez rodu i plemeni], goes against Chechen honor, *nokhchalla*, everything we were taught about being a Chechen […] Of course we didn't like it… To see your cousin being beaten up in the middle of a square by some straw dogs virtually for nothing" (Interviewee 3).[84] Moreover, *shari'ah* courts were dominated by Jihadists and run by local jihadi bosses, who tended to discriminate against locals as opposed to Jihadists turning a blind eye on the latter's misbehavior. Crime conducted by jihadi warlords – including rape and murder – sometimes went unpunished, while Jihadist-dominated *shari'ah* courts punished individuals for consuming alcohol and tobacco, as well as participating in wedding ceremonies, singing, dancing, and other allegedly *haram* activities.[85] At the same time, bribing was widespread at *shari'ah* courts which were increasingly utilized as Jihadists' instrument in political struggle with their opponents, which all further decreased the credibility of

shari'ah courts.[86] Therefore, while some locals did initially support the establishment of *shari'ah* courts as legitimate legal platforms for the sake of restoring public order, they soon changed their opinion. Our respondents recalled cases of individuals seeking retaliation for the humiliation to which they were subjected at *shari'ah* courts.

Apart from attempting to abolish secular education, Jihadists engaged in a campaign to superimpose modesty targeting uncovered Chechen women in their controlled areas. Women were often humiliated verbally and sometimes attacked physically because they were dressed "inappropriately" and lacked headscarves. In itself, such behavior was unprecedented as the morale of women, according to *adat*, is an exclusive domain of their male relatives to which outsiders have no say. Given the sensitivity of female honor in Chechen society, such display of disrespect inflicted severe counterattacks at the hands of the local population who deployed violence to punish Jihadist culprits and their fellows alike. This, in turn, caused violent escalation as Jihadists retaliated against the local population which usually led to bloodshed. According to an eyewitness of such clashes, "we couldn't have tolerated these attacking our women… We had to give them a lesson to make sure they stood away from our sisters and daughters" (Interviewee 4).

Since 1997, in Akaev's words, "the proponents of Salafism launched a campaign of terror" against the non-Salafi local population. Sufi clergy, well-respected by the ordinary Chechens, become a particular target of attacks. Sheikh Yakhyaev, a 75-year old imam of the Grozny mosque and a reputed Sufi scholar, was assassinated.[87] Next year, the respected 77-year old imam of the Alkhan-yurt mosque Idrisov was murdered while asleep by Jihadists. These assassinations mobilized hundreds of the locals, particularly male members of the slain imams' families who vowed to retaliate for the murders.[88] In 1998–1999, Akhmat Kadyrov, the pro-regime *mufti* of Chechnya, an insurgent during the First Russian-Chechen War and an ardent critic of Jihadism, survived several assassination attempts for his staunch anti-Jihadist views and activities. While Kadyrov did survive the assassinations, his relatives from among his personal army were killed, which marked the beginning of blood revenge between the powerful Kadyrov clan and the Jihadist organizers of the assassination. Kadyrov then famously announced that "his only enemies were Wahhabites", focusing his activities against the jihadi groups led by Chechnya's leading Jihadist warlords, such as Arpi Barayev, Abdul-Malik Mezhidov, Shamil Basayev, ibn-Khattab, and ideologues, particularly Movladi Udugov, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, and Vakha Arsanov. In the interwar period, numerous assassinations of less prominent Sufi leaders carried out by Jihadists took place across the country. In some areas, Jihadists destroyed sites of Sufi veneration which "sparked massive outrage in the midst of nationalists [majority local population], pitching them [nationalists] against Salafi-Jihadists not least because some of the desecrated Sufi sheikhs were someone's ancestors".[89]

In July 1998, a major clash occurred between the local Jihadists backed by Mezhidov and Barayev, on the one hand, and the pro-regime fighters of the Yamadayev group on the other hand, in the second-biggest city of Chechnya, Gudermes. In the clashes, an estimated 50–100 fighters, predominantly Jihadists, lost their lives. The local population flocked in hundreds to back *yamadayevtsy*, displaying the sympathies of the majority population. In a later interview, Jabrail Yamadayev stated that "128 Wahhabis

were killed during the battle which Khattab and Basayev would never forgive us".[90] Following the Gudermes incident, locals hardened their attitude toward the Jihadists, with the clashes between the Jihadists and the local population becoming more frequent. Maskhadov himself required the extradition of several Arab jihadis, hedging against "efforts to turn us into Afghan Talibs… We are Sunnis of *naqshbandiyyah* and *qadiriyyah* branches, no other Islam is to take root in Chechnya". Apart from that, Maskhadov appealed to fellow Chechens to "drive them [Wahhabis] away from our villages and restore order at our home".[91]

As the atmosphere in Chechen society further polarized following acts of violence, particularly in the aftermath of the Gudermes incident, all over the country, Jihadists engaged in violence with the local population over ideological and non-ideological matters alike. In the areas controlled by the Jihadist forces, indiscriminate violence was often deployed against the unsympathetic local population causing dozens of deaths. For instance, in the Tsotsi-Yurt, according to some reports, up to a hundred civilians were killed in the interwar period, along with four consequent heads of the local administration that resisted the Jihadists.[92] "Over time, radicalism of the Wahhabites [Jihadists] led and their conflict with the traditionalists [majority local population] led not just to ideological discord, but also to clashes between the two which often resulted in bloodshed".[93] Low-level blood revenge hit the republic in the interwar period, with Jihadists and majority local population attacking each other on a daily basis. "Some areas of Chechnya in 1998 and 1999 were wrapped in a sort of war, with a great many Chechen families engaged in blood feud… They were [previously unheard-of] instances when violence broke out in the midst of Chechen families, as well, with cousins going after each other just because someone was a Wahhabite and the other a Sufi. We didn't fight for this", summarized a former insurgent (Interviewee 5).

The Dawn of Revenge: The Second Russian-Chechen War (1999–2004)

In August 1999, Chechen-Dagestani Jihadist groups led by Shamil Basayev, Umar al-Khattab, and a Dagestani jihadi leader Bagauddin Kebedov launched an attack on the neighboring republic of Dagestan. In fall 1999, a heavily restructured Russian army, having learned lessons from its previous and largely disastrous campaign in 1994–1996, marched into the de facto independent republic. By 2000, the capital city of Grozny along with Chechnya's urban areas had been occupied by the Russian Army, with the insurgency being largely confined to wooded mountainous areas in the republic's south, east, and west.

While Russia's thrust into Chechnya during the First Chechnya War saw massive insurgent mobilization, the second invasion was marked by divisiveness. Many Chechens, having been antagonized by the Jihadists particularly in the interwar period, sought to take advantage of the advancing Russian military to settle scores with their enemies. Blaming the Jihadists for the resuming of armed conflict with Russia which, as an interviewee (#4) put it, "threatened to annihilate the Chechen people", many locals regarded the Jihadists as a lesser evil compared to the Russians. A formed insurgent eloquently summarized the predominant view in that:

> the Wahhabites showed utmost disrespect to our people, to our age-old values and traditions. While the Russians sought to subjugate us, the Wahhabites [Jihadists] wanted to remodel us into Saudis, make us forget our customs, language, traditions for which the generations of our forefathers have fought […] Fighting the Wahhabites was a historical need to remain Chechens. We had no choice (Interviewee #9).

Against this backdrop, the pro-Moscow government of Akhmat Kadyrov was established in Chechnya in the early 2000s, with the main aim of fracturing the insurgency from within.[94] Available evidence from open sources illustrates that many Chechens chose to join pro-Moscow forces because by the time of Russian invasion of 1999, they had been in the state of blood feud with the Jihadist fighters and their relatives.[95] As a former insurgent eloquently put it, "Ichkeria [Chechen independence] had to take a break until a personal enemy was walking around and plotting to kill our relatives" (Interviewee 6). Indeed, apart from the numerous – forced and voluntary – defections of the insurgent leaders and their gunmen to the pro-Moscow camp,[96] hundreds of ordinary non-veteran Chechen males reportedly joined the ranks of *kadyrovtsy* paramilitaries and other pro-Moscow armed groups to exact revenge against Jihadists.[97] As Leonid Kitayev-Smyk, a Russian military psychologist who served on the ground during the campaigns admitted, "[b]ecause of the Wahhabites [Jihadists], many hundreds of Chechens found themselves trapped into blood revenge. The Second Chechen War is also a war between the Chechens who, in order to legitimize their revenge, join different [pro-Moscow] law enforcement units established by the federals to kill each other".[98] Andrei Babitskii, an eyewitness of the events, claims that many Chechen clans saw the Russian intrusion as a once in a lifetime opportunity to get the green light to settle scores with their enemies – usually in the midst of Jihadists:

> For the Chechens [during the early 2000s], the threat posed by Jihadists was vital: the Jihadists themselves were mostly Chechens, so they knew exactly who and where to kill. On the other hand, the Russians were an abstract force: falling at the hands of artillery shelling or a random mop-up was non-personal and thus less likely… We must understand that after the fiasco of Chechen independence, hundreds, possibly even thousands of Chechens had been in the state of blood feud which often involved Jihadist minority and the non-Jihadist majority. This predetermined the behavior of many Chechens for the years to come and ultimately facilitated the Russians' reoccupation of Chechnya.[99]

Our interviewees coalesce over the frequent *Leitmotiv* of joining *kadyrovtsy* paramilitaries being the *carte blanche* granted by federal authorities to pro-Moscow forces to continue blood revenge against their former enemies, with political preferences being of minor or no importance. Indeed, as admitted by an eyewitness, "when your brother or son can be killed at any minute, you don't really care about national independence […] Rather, you care about making sure your son isn't hit. And for that reason, you have to physically eliminate the source of threat" (Interviewee 7). An alliance with the Russians was thus seen as a rational act of striking a deal with a lesser – or political – enemy to combat the bigger – or personal – enemy. With *kadyrovtsy* being deployed against the insurgents and their families, the violence perpetuated as additional male relatives of *kadyrovtsy* sought membership in pro-Moscow paramilitary groups to fight against their personal enemies in the ranks of Jihadists and their families.[100]

Conclusion

This study has sought to examine why the local population mobilizes against Jihadi insurgencies. We argue that anti-Jihadist collective action occurs as direct consequence of the Jihadists' violence against civilians and ensuing blood feuds in honorific societies. Although other types of anti-rebel mobilization could evolve and escalate incited by civilian victimization, taking up arms against co-ethnics in ethno-nationalist rebellions rarely involves the same amount of risks as mobilizing against Jihadi insurgents and, therefore does not require an extra trigger, such as resorting on blood revenge. Evidence from the Chechen case substantiates the empirical salience of our theory. Our empirical findings demonstrated that although at the onset of Jihadi insurgency, Chechen population welcomed and supported Jihadists, violence against civilians coupled with disregard for local customs and traditions unleashed the cycle of blood revenge against the Jihadists. Notwithstanding the risks associated with opposing Jihadists and, particularly mobilizing on the side of Russians, the urge to exact revenge and the threat posed by Jihadists were instrumental behind the large-scale anti-Jihadist mobilization.

Although examining the relationship between conflict dynamics (such as patterns of anti-rebel mobilization) with conflict outcomes is beyond the scope of this study, it can be assumed that conflicts with anti-Jihadist mobilization are potentially likely to witness different conflict resolution and termination patterns. The Chechen case demonstrated that anti-Jihadist mobilization enabled the counterinsurgents to effectively – albeit in a brutal top-down manner – install post-conflict governance institutions, including security structures. The most obvious drawback of these processes in the Chechen case was that reliance on clan-based paramilitary forces in counterinsurgency prevented any sort of transparent and open post-conflict transitional justice or peace-building processes.[101]

The theory of anti-Jihadist mobilization contributes to research on anti-rebel mobilization as it underscores the importance of sociocultural traditions, such as blood revenge, in participation in civil war violence. The key practical implication of this study is that local anti-rebel mobilization in the context of Jihadist insurgencies tends to evolve through stages involving the conflict onset, use of one-sided violence by Jihadists and the cycle of blood revenge.

Notes

1. We use terms Jihadist, Jihadi and Jihadism interchangeably to refer to armed anti-government groups promoting radical Salafi ideology, as defined by the Crisis Group: https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/rightsizing-transnational-jihadist-threat.
2. Monica Duffy Toft, "Getting Religion? The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War," *International Security* 31, no. 4 (2007): 97–131, 97; Daniel R. Green, "The Fallujah Awakening: A Case Study in Counter-Insurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 4 (2010): 591–609.
3. Virginie Collombier and Olivier Roy, eds., *Tribes and Global Jihadism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
4. Paul Staniland, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Insurgent Fratricide, Ethnic Defection, and the Rise of Pro-State Paramilitaries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (2012): 16–40.

5. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jason Lyall, "Are Coethnics More Effective Counterinsurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 1 (2010): 1–20.
6. Isak Svensson and Desiree Nilsson, "Capitalizing on Cleavages: Transnaitonal Jihadist Conflicts, Local Fault Lines and Cumulative Extremism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2022.2058350, 2.
7. See https://ucdp.uu.se/#/year/2017.
8. Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Paris: Hachette UK, 1996).
9. Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Huseyn Aliyev, "Blood Revenge and Violent Mobilization: Evidence from the Chechen Wars," *International Security* 40, no. 2 (2015): 158–80; David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Emil Souleimanov and Huseyn Aliyev, *How Socio-Cultural Codes Shaped Violent Mobilisation and Pro-Insurgent Support in Chechen Wars* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Emil Souleimanov and Huseyn Aliyev, "Evaluating the Efficacy of Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Chechnya and Dagestan," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 3 (2016), 392–416.
10. Steven Zech and Zane Kelly, "Off with Their Heads: The Islamic State and Civilian Beheadings," *Contemporary Voices: St Andrews Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 2 (2015): 83–9.
11. Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Toft, "Getting Religion?," 97.
12. Matthew Isaacs, "Sacred Violence or Strategic Faith? Disentangling the Relationship between Religion and Violence in Armed Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 2 (2016): 211–25, 214.
13. Victor Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer, "The Nature of the Beast: Organizational Structures and the Lethality of Terrorist Attacks," *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008): 437–49; Jonathan Fox, *Religion, Civilization, and Civil War: 1945 Through the New Millennium* (Washington, DC: Lexington Books, 2005); 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 (2014): 199–225; Susanna Pearce, "Religious Rage: A Quantitative Analysis of the Intensity of Religious Conflicts," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 3 (2005): 333–52.
14. Fox, *Religion, Civilization, and Civil War*, 45.
15. Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Ideology in Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and Beyond," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2 (2014): 213–26.
16. Defined by Gilady and Russett a condition "where the adversaries perceive the disputed resource as a unit they cannot divide between them". See Lilach Gilady and Bruce M. Russett, "Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution," in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse, and B. A. Simmons (London: Sage, 2022), 392–408, 401.
17. Ron E. Hassner, ""To Halve and to Hold": Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility," *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003): 1–33.
18. Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How to Lose a War on Terror: A Comparative Analysis of a Counterinsurgency Success and Failure," in *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War* (London: Routledge, 2006), 160–85.
19. Toft, "Getting Religion?."
20. Matthias Basedau, Birte Pfeiffer, and Johannes Vüllers, "Bad Religion? Religion, Collective Action, and the Onset of Armed Conflict in Developing Countries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60, no. 2 (2016): 226–55.
21. Basedau et al., "Bad Religion?," 235.
22. Austin Long, "The Anbar Awakening," *Survival* 50, no. 2 (2008): 67–94.
23. William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

24. We do not expect anti-Jihadist mobilization to be necessarily pro-government mobilization. In contrast to literature on mobilization into pro-government militias, we are interested in broader phenomenon of anti-Jihadist participation among local population.
25. Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 80; Mark Wilbanks and Efraim Karsh, "How the" Sons of Iraq" Stabilized Iraq," *Middle East Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (2010): 57–70, 62; Farook Ahmed, "Sons of Iraq and Awakening Forces," *Institute for the Study of War* (2008): 43–59.
26. Giulio Di Domenicantonio,"“With God on Our Side”: A Focus on Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a, a Sufi Somali Paramilitary Group," *The Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 12, no. 13 (2015): 64–9.
27. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Sterling Jensen, "The Role of Iraqi Tribes after the Islamic State's Ascendance," *Military Review* 95, no. 4 (2015): 102–10.
28. Virginie Collombier and Olivier Roy, eds. *Tribes and Global Jihadism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Ismail Alexandrani, “Sufi Jihad and Salafi Jihadism in Egypt's Sinai,” in *Tribes and Global Jihadism*, ed. Virginie Collombier and Olivier Roy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 101.
29. Mohammed M. Hafez, "Fratricidal Jihadists: Why Islamists Keep Losing Their Civil Wars," *Middle East Policy* 25, no. 2 (2018): 86–99.
30. Collombier and Roy, *Tribes and Global Jihadism*, 8–9.
31. Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 82–3.
32. Toft, "Getting Religion?," 103.
33. Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 8 (2008): 1043–68; Huseyn Aliyev, “The Logic of Ethnic Responsibility and Pro-Government Mobilisation in East Ukraine Conflict,” *Comparative Political Studies* 52, no. 8 (2019), 1200–31.
34. Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection,” 1052.
35. Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War," *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 2 (2008): 436–455, 450.
36. Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (2012): 7–40, 19.
37. We do not argue that similar mechanism cannot occur in other types of insurgencies, but the levels civilian victimization are likely to be more contained in ethno-nationalist conflicts where rebels would less eager to persecute co-ethnics.
38. We do not exclude that similar dynamics of mobilization can occur in honorific societies during anti-government insurgencies when the government uses excessive military force against civilian population. See Souleimanov and Aliyev, “Blood Revenge.”
39. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).
40. Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection,” 1059.
41. Toft, "Getting Religion?," 101.
42. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Vol. 13 (University of California Press, 2017).
43. See Toft, "Getting Religion?"; Peter S. Henne and Jason Klocek, "Taming the Gods: How Religious Conflict Shapes State Repression," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 1 (2019): 112–38.
44. Bruce Hoffman, "“Holy Terror”: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 18, no. 4 (1995): 271–84; Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (2003): 30–58.
45. Jori Breslawski and Brandon Ives, "Killing for God? Factional Violence on the Transnational Stage," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 3 (2019): 617–43, 617.

46. We employ terms “violence against civilians” and “civilian victimization” interchangeably, referring not only to acts of murder committed by Jihadists against the local population, but also to other instances of bodily harm, such as torture, physical attacks, injuries and attempted murder. We also use these terms to cover verbal insults and sociocultural offences, such as desecration of holy sites and religious texts, which constitutes violation of the local population’s religious rights and freedoms.
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55. Elster, "Norms of Revenge," 866.
56. Patricio Asfura-Heim, *No Security without Us: Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq*. No. COP-2014-U-007918-Final, CNA Analysis and Solutions Arlington VA, 2014, V.
57. Mohamed S. El Awa, *Punishment in Islamic Law* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1993), 45.
58. Nivette, "Violence in Non-State Societies," 585.
59. Asfura-Heim, *No Security without Us*, 9.
60. Niloufer Qasim Mahdi, "Pukhtunwali: Ostracism and Honor among the Pathan Hill Tribes," *Ethology and Sociobiology* 7, no. 3-4 (1986): 295–304, 150.
61. Thomas J. Barfield, "On Local Justice and Culture in Post-Taliban Afghanistan," *Connecticut Journal of International Law* 17, no. 3 (2001): 437–44.
62. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, 58–9; Michael J. Boyle, "Revenge and Reprisal Violence in Kosovo: Analysis," *Conflict, Security & Development* 10, no. 2 (2010): 189–216, 195.
63. Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 85.
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76. Due to the length limitations of this study, we were unable to provide a more nuanced sketch of the Chechen Wars' contours and dynamics. However, more detailed discussion of the conflict can be found in ….
77. As a rule, asylum-granted interlocutors based in Western Europe felt most protected and thus on average more comfortable to talk about their experiences from war-torn Chechnya. Chechen diaspora in Western Europe is estimated to be around 130,000–150,000 strong, that is, up to a tenth of the entire Chechen population.
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