
News from National/Regional TRI Networks of PhD Theses Writers

1. Establishment of the TRI PhD Network for Germany, Switzerland and Austria

Recently, the Terrorism Research Initiative PhD Network for Germany, Switzerland and Austria was established as a platform to promote intellectual exchanges between PhD students with a research focus on terrorism, counter-terrorism, radicalization, political violence, insurgency, counter-insurgency, violent non-state actors, asymmetric warfare, security studies and related fields. Despite an increasing threat from violent non-state actors, and unlike in countries like the United States, Great Britain or the Netherlands where terrorism research has reached a high degree of academic institutionalization, such consolidation has not been reached in the German language area.

Since radicalization, mobilization and support for terrorist acts constitute highly complex and heterogeneous social and political phenomena, research cooperation between researchers from various academic disciplines is crucial to improve the understanding of the processes underlying the occurrence of political violence and insurgencies. This necessity also becomes evident when it comes to participation in public debates which are often ill-informed and shaped by stereotypes and prejudices.

One of the principles of the TRI PhD Network Germany, Switzerland and Austria is its inter-disciplinarity, in line with the TRI overall mission statement “Enhancing Security through Collaborative Research”. In addition, the network should help members to share their research and experiences to an interested and informed audience.

With this announcement, the new German-language based network seeks to establish first contacts with post-graduate students and professionals in the above-mentioned research fields. Once a critical number of participants has been assembled, workshops, lectures and conferences in cooperation with academic institutions, think tanks and policy-making institutions will be organized. Furthermore, an effort will be made to expand the dialogue between the various national and sub-regional TRI PhD writers’ networks. PhD students in the field of Terrorism Studies and related fields from German, Swiss and Austrian universities interested in participating in the new Terrorism Research Initiative PhD Network are invited to contact this network’s Lucerne-based coordinator Johannes Saal (who is writing a PhD thesis on religious terrorism) at johannes.saal@terrorismanalysts.com.

2. New Greek chapter of TRI’s Network of PhD Thesis Writers established.

A new chapter of TRI PhD theses writers has been established for Greek postgraduate students at home and abroad. The Greek chapter seeks to link up post-graduate students of Greek universities (public and private) having departments of political science, sociology, anthropology, criminology and military and other sciences. It also seeks to bring in touch with each other Greek researchers abroad who are working on their doctoral theses in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies (and related subjects like low-intensity conflicts, civil war, insurgency and various forms of political violence).

Ioannis Mantzikos, PhD Candidate at the University of Free State South Africa and RIEAS Senior Analyst, has been designated as country coordinator.

To join the TRI Greek Network, please contact: jmantzikos@gmail.com and provide him with the following details:

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- Your name, email address and GSM
 - The (working) title of your thesis and short description
 - Name of your principal thesis supervisor and department at the university
 - Expected date of completion of PhD thesis.

3. Report of Meeting of the TRI-network Netherlands–Flanders

On 20th February 2015, the Dutch-Flemish network met in Antwerp to discuss how to do research on clandestine groups (and lone actors), with a focus on exploring the mindset of (potential) foreign fighters who (want to) go to Syria and Iraq. It was noted that a better understanding about motives can only be obtained by allowing (potential) foreign fighters to share their story. To do so, a researcher has to be aware of the social milieu from which many of the foreign fighters have emerged. Interactions via Facebook and Twitter can be a good start of getting closer to the research population. Several other recommendations came out of the meeting, including these: (i) Work through intermediaries who can help to get you into contact with members of the researched population; (ii) Promise the interlocutors and informers anonymity as this tends to lead to more useful information; (iii) Use (semi-) public places to meet the persons you want to interview as this lowers the boundaries and increases security (*Summary of report by Daan Weggemans (CTC/ICCT) and Lisa Heintzbergen (CTC)*).