

V. Notes from the Editor

Announcement:

Dr. Anneli Botha: Winner of the Best Ph.D. Thesis 2014 Award

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) is awarding each year a prize of US \$ 1,000.- for the Best PhD Thesis in the Field of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies. By the deadline of 31 March 2015, a total of 14 theses successfully defended at an academic institution of higher learning in 2014 were submitted to the jury.

The jury received dissertations from Australia (2), Canada (3), Japan (1), the Netherlands (1), Pakistan (1), South Africa (1), and the United States (5). Eight of the doctoral theses had male and six female authors. The topics covered a broad range of subjects and ranged from *Criminalizing Terrorism: The Impact of Context and Cohort Effects on the Sentencing Outcomes of Terrorists* to *National Confidence and Development in Afghanistan: Insurgency vs. Counterinsurgency*, from *The Politics of the Attack: A Discourse [Analysis] of Insurrectionary Communiques to Leaderless Resistance, Radical Environmentalism, and Asymmetrical Warfare*, from *The Fatal Attraction of Suicide Terrorism: An Empirical Analysis of Suicide Terrorist Attacks in the Middle East and South Asia* to *Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Terrorism Vulnerability: A Case Study of Central Tokyo, Japan*, from *Contributions to Bayesian Statistical Modeling in Public Policy Research to Police and Counter-Terrorism in Pakistan after 9/11 (2001-2010)*, from *Adult Public Education for Nuclear Terrorism: An Analysis of Cold War and War on Terror Preparedness Discourses to Extraordinary Measures – A Comparative Approach to Crafting a New Legal Framework for Preventive Detention of Suspected Terrorists*, to *The Science of Fighting Terrorism: The Relation Between Terrorist Actor Type and Counterterrorism*.

The jury, consisting of the three directors of the Terrorism Research Initiative (Robert Wesley, James Forest and Alex Schmid) utilized a standard set of criteria to assess the quality of the submissions. These included whether or not the thesis under consideration was the product of in-depth research, whether it showed originality in terms of introducing new data, theory or methodology, and whether it showed novelty/uniqueness in its findings. After evaluation, three theses stood out and became the finalists:

- *Radicalisation to Commit Terrorism from a Political Socialisation Perspective in Kenya and Uganda*, written at the University of the Free State in South Africa by Dr. Anneli Botha;
- *Countering Terrorism in the Maritime Domain: A Contemporary Evaluation of the International Legal Framework*, written at the University of Wollongong, Australia, by Dr. Robin Bowley; and
- *Pro-Integration: Disengagement and Life after Extremism*, written at Monash University, Australia, by Dr. Kate Barrelle.

The thesis of Dr. Barrelle investigated individual disengagement from violent extremism in liberal democracies. It is based on the analysis of interviews with former extremists of different ideologies (left- and right-wing, jihadist and separatist) and asked the basic question “What is the experience of disengagement from the perspective of extremists themselves?” Based on social movement theory, the lucidly written thesis developed new empirical data on the basis of a strong conceptualisation. While the author’s own sample of interviewees was relatively small (n = 22) she tied her own data in with the results from more than 200 other interviews with ex-extremists and found common themes like disillusionment with the inside world of terrorist groups as cause for exiting. Dr. Barrelle, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), developed a holistic model of disengagement and societal re-engagement called PIM (Pro-Integration Model) that is of direct practical utility for counter-radicalisation efforts.

The thesis of Dr. Robin Bowley examined “To what extent are international agreements ...likely to be successful in enabling the prevention of contemporary forms of maritime terrorism?” The author developed a Maritime Terrorism Threat Matrix, distinguishing 21 forms of such terrorism. While written from a legal perspective, the thesis is rich in empirical data as the author identified and analysed 228 cases of maritime terrorism between 1968 and 2013, creating a comprehensive new data base (reproduced in the Appendix). The thesis is the product of an innovative and impressive breath of original research and analysis, with useful policy recommendations. The jury was particularly impressed by the painstaking empirical work, drawing on a vast array of sources.

The thesis of Dr. Anneli Botha is based on extensive fieldwork in two East African countries, involving 238 interviews with members of four militant and terrorist groups (al-Shabaab, the Mombasa Republican Council, the Allied Democratic Forces and the Lord’s Resistance Army) as well as 47 close family members to generate thorough biographical profiles. Point of departure of the author was the question of one mother why one of her sons became a policeman and the other a terrorist. In order to answer such a question, the author used a political socialization framework, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Anneli Botha looked at primary (family, friends, school) and secondary (e.g. media) socialization agents and their influence on the development of radicalisation in Uganda and Kenya. The author managed to identify the factors that radicalised young people – e.g. anger, hatred and frustration based on injustices experienced or witnessed. Those who joined militant organisations had lost trust in the fairness of the political system and had often experienced at close quarters instances of indiscriminate repression (mass arrests, torture) from the security forces.

The jury was particularly impressed by the extensive original field research of the author and by her ability to test standard assumptions (e.g. the role of poverty [negative] and the role of revenge [positive]) about what makes young people join terrorist groups.

While all three finalists produced remarkable theses, the jury finally decided to rank the dissertations of the finalists in this order: (1) Dr. Botha, (2) Dr. Bowley and (3) Dr. Barrelle. The TRI Thesis Award 2014 therefore goes to Dr. Anneli Botha, with Dr. Robin Bowley and Dr. Kate Barelle as other finalists also receiving a document acknowledging their ranking as finalists. The winner has been invited to summarise some of the findings of her 439 pages long dissertation in an article which the reader can find in the current issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

Congratulations, Dr. Botha!