

TRI Thesis Award 2015 Announcement by the Jury

The jury of the Terrorism Research Initiative's annual competition for the TRI Award for the 'Best Doctoral Dissertation on Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism' has determined three finalists and among them a winner.

The jury, consisting of Prof. Clark McCauley, Prof. James J.F. Forest, and Prof. Alex P. Schmid (chairman), evaluated 13 theses which were submitted and/or defended in 2015 at an academic institution. Eight of the theses were written by post-graduate students or professionals from Anglo-Saxon countries (US, UK, and Canada); two were from the Netherlands, one from Denmark, one from Pakistan and one from Saudi Arabia. They dealt with the following subjects:

- Captivated by Fear: An Evaluation of Terrorism Detention Policy;
- Aviation Terrorism: Thwarting High-Impact Low-Probability Attacks;
- War on Terror and Pakistan-US Partnership: Effects, Problems and Prospects (2001-2012);
- The Smiling, Scented Men: The Political Worldview of the Islamic State of Iraq (2003-2013);
- A Question of Participation -Disengagement from Extremist Right. A Case Study from Sweden;
- Theorising Militant Groups' Meso-Level Evolution. A Comparative Study of the Egyptian Islamic and Jihad Groups;
- British Jihadism: The Detail and the Denial;
- The Roots of Violent Extremism;
- Counter-Terrorism in Saudi Arabia;
- The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer (incl. chapter on Islamists Fight over Soccer);
- How Jihadist Networks Operate;
- Everyday Indivisibility: How Exclusive Religious Practices Explain
- Variation in Subnational Violence Outcomes;
- Patterns of Collective Desistance from Terrorism.

After careful evaluation, the members of the jury selected three finalists (the authors of the last three theses on this list) and, among these, the winning thesis: 'Patterns of Collective Desistance from Terrorism'. The winning thesis was written by Dr. Erin Miller (College Park, University of Maryland). The other two finalists are Dr. Joel Day (San Diego, United States) and Dr. Jasper de Bie (Leiden, The Netherlands). A summary of the winning thesis in the form of an article is included in this issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*. An article based on the thesis of one of the other finalists, Jasper de Bie, is also included in the present issue while an article from Joel Day, based on his dissertation, has been published in the Vol. IX, Issue 6 of *Perspectives on Terrorism* (December 2015) under the title 'Terrorist Practices: Sketching a New Research Agenda'. The winner will receive a prize of US \$ 1,000.- while the other two finalists will, like the winner, receiving a document acknowledging their achievement.

All three finalists impressed the jury by handling successfully large amounts of quantitative and/or qualitative data.

Dr. de Bie's thesis stuck out by his original use of primary data from 28 investigations based on Dutch police files. He looked at the *modus operandi* of Dutch jihadist networks from 2000 – 2013, using unique empirical data (e.g. wiretaps) for social network analysis (for some of his findings, see his article in this issue).

Dr. Joel Day coded data on 724 sub-national armed groups for the period 1970-2015 and developed a 'religious practices index', showing that religious actors initiate conflict at a higher rate than their secular counterparts, that these conflicts last longer, are more deadly, and are less prone to negotiated termination.

Dr. Erin Miller, the winner of the TRI Thesis Award 2015, has for more than ten years been at the heart of the maintenance and updating of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the University of Maryland-based National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Using a group-based trajectory analysis to model the 'life course' of 632 perpetrator organisations, she managed to demonstrate that the concept of a 'terrorist organisation' is a construct that hides a plethora of diverse groups –ranging from organized crime groups to political parties and insurgents (for details, see her article in this issue). Her conclusion that we must not short-cut the often painstaking work of grappling with the fundamental building blocks of data in order to establish an adequate model of complex realities, is a salutary reminder that all terrorists are not alike and—consequently—that one set of counter-measures cannot fit all.

For the third time in a row the winner of the annual TRI Thesis Award has been a female scholar. In a field dominated by male security experts, this is a remarkable achievement for all three of them: Dr. Tricia Bacon (TRI Award 2013), Dr. Anneli Botha (TRI Award 2014) and now Dr. Erin Miller (TRI Award 2015). Congratulations!

N.B. The deadline for the next round of submissions for the TRI Thesis Award 2016 (Doctoral theses submitted and/or defended at an academic institution in 2016), is 31 March 2017.