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SEPARATISM AND JIHADISM: INTERACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY*

Separatism and Jihadism: Interaction in the Context of Terrorist Activity

According to the well-known concept of consequential waves of terrorism, proposed by American researcher David C. Rapoport, since 1979, the world has encountered a wave of religious terrorism. Religiously motivated terrorists are the most dangerous and cruel terrorists who continue to lead the world. All four terrorist groups responsible for 55 per cent of total deaths in 2019 are jihadists (Global Terrorism Index 2020). The Taliban, Boko Haram, ISIL, and Al-Shabaab all fight for the establishment of their own quasi-state entities within the borders of existent sovereign states. This political objective associates the jihadists with another ideological movement – separatist-terrorists – in Rapoport’s model. Despite apparent distinctions in ideological foundations and political agendas, these two movements are similar in their struggle for self-determination within the borders of sovereign states. In this article, we use data from the Global Terrorism Database to compare how these two ideological movements with similar political objectives influence

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each other in the area of terrorist activity. Having analysed and reviewed information about 3,617 terrorist organisations that committed at least one terrorist attack from 1970 to 2018, we check how jihadist and separatist-terrorist activities were interrelated and how this interrelation manifested itself in different countries.

Keywords: jihadism, separatism, terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

On 4 November 2020, the news was published in pro-Islamic state channels in Telegram that a group of Rohingya rebels in Myanmar had declared their allegiance to the so-called Islamic State and made an oath to its leader – Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi. The new group was named *Katibat Mahdi fi Bilad al-Arakan* and most likely linked to the well-known separatist group the Arakan Liberation Army (ALA), which has fought both the central government and Myanmar's military since 1970. In 2015, the political wing of ALA – the Arakan Liberation Party – signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and joined the peace process as a legal political party.¹ But most radical members of the ALA continue to fight and the new group with its ISIS ties might choose the Islamic State model of fighting by using terrorist attacks, suicide attacks on civilians, and mass casualty attacks to reignite the conflict.² At the same time, halfway around the world, one of the most powerful European politicians, the President of France, Emanuel Macron announced a new campaign to eradicate the so-called “Islamist separatism”, a new political movement which threatens freedoms and the political system in the country.³ Both events present one of the most underrated and unresearched phenomena in terrorism studies – cooperation and interrelation between separatist and jihadist movements. The Philippines, Pakistan, India (Jammu and Kashmir), Mali, Angola, Nigeria, Algeria and other conflict-affected countries in the world have demonstrated the same pattern when, during

¹ *Myanmar Signs Historic Cease-fire Deal with Eight Ethnic Armies*, Radio Free Asia, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5674037f11.html> [accessed 17.07.2022].

² J. Zenn, *Islamic State Receives Loyalty Pledge from Myanmar's Rohingya Militants*, „Terrorism Monitor” 2020, vol. 18, no. 21, <https://jamestown.org/program/briefs-339/> [accessed 17.07.2022].

³ *Fight Against Separatism – the Republic in Action: Speech by Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic, on the Fight Against Separatism (Les Mureaux, 2 Oct. 2020)*, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/secularism-and-religious-freedom-in-france-63815/article/fight-against-separatism-the-republic-in-action-speech-by-emmanuel-macron> [accessed 17.07.2022].

a conflict, separatist groups with secularist agendas gradually lose their primacy and give way to new, more radical and cruel movements which struggle for self-determination but on a religious basis.

Modern political reality demonstrates the trend in active and rapidly changing forms for manifesting and achieving political objectives. This trend is also relevant to the conflict dimension because modern conflicts take on new configurations. Researchers refer to the so-called “hybridisation of the confrontations”, a flexible concept, which is widely interpreted as a combination of formerly segregated phenomena, the transformation of the traditional models into new forms for implementing new strategies and tools. This *hybridisation of the confrontations* has already affected the sphere of the struggle for different actors for self-determination which still predominantly take the form of separating territories from sovereign states. Those conflicts classified as separatist ones by researchers are also transforming. This research focuses on the non-obvious aspect of modern separatist conflicts such as the relation between separatist and jihadist movements. Although separatism and jihadism are widely discussed in academic research,⁴ such an aspect as the impact of jihadist organisations on the strategy and tactics of separatist movements in conflict-affected countries is poorly researched. Commonalities and connections between jihadism and separatism are predominantly considered as an additional theme in conflict studies, such as the conflict in the North Caucasus or in Xinjiang, China.⁵ In these conflicts, jihadists were addressed as separate actors within the broader separatist movements. But considering the fact that jihadists and separatists have the same political goal – getting control of the territory of a sovereign state in order to establish their own political order – it is logical to assume that these political movements affect each other. Moreover, there are cases such as the Russian-Chechen wars, the conflict in the Philippines, the Kashmir case and the conflict

⁴ A. Tan, *Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications*, „Studies in Conflict & Terrorism” 2000, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 267–288; J. Wilhelmsen, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement*, „Europe-Asia Studies” 2005, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 35–59; B. Whitehouse, F. Strazzari, *Introduction: Rethinking Challenges to State Sovereignty in Mali and Northwest Africa*, „African Security” 2015, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 213–226.

⁵ Y. Shichor, *Blow Up: Internal and External Challenges of Uyghur Separatism and Islamic Radicalism to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang*, „Asian Affairs: An American Review” 2005, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 119–135; E.A. Souleimanov, *Jihad or Security? Understanding the Jihadization of Chechen Insurgency through Recruitment into Jihadist Units*, „Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies” 2014, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 86–105.

in Mali, where long-standing separatist conflicts have been replaced by a jihadist war against the government and local political rivals.

This study analyses how this connection between separatist and jihadist movements manifests itself in different countries. Using data on terrorist activity in the world from the *Global Terrorism Database*⁶ and checking this data through linear regression models and the R programming language we question the well-known concept of terrorism waves, presented by David Rapoport in his famous article *Four Waves of Modern Terrorism*.⁷ In this article, Rapoport clearly defined four waves of terrorism in the world and proposed the criteria for each one. But this model was widely criticised by researchers due to its simplicity and the ambiguity of the proposition in the wave nature of terrorism.⁸

The religious wave, the fourth one in Rapoport's model, has not only yet to finish, two decades after the 9/11 attack, but it is challenged by the oldest waves, such as the "anarchist wave" with increasing left-wing and anarchist terrorism in Europe (Greece, Italy) or the anti-colonial wave. According to Rapoport's model, we will see fluxes and refluxes in the religious wave with clear features of an oncoming fifth wave of terrorism. But this is not the case, at least based on the data from such sources as the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). Rapoport based his model on important factors for terrorists such as ideology, information and communication tools, weapons and tactics used by terrorists, etc. In contrast to this model, Steven M. Radil and Jaume Castan Pinos define territory as a crucial element for terrorists independently of ideology and tactics.⁹ As the authors wrote, territory constitutes a constant pattern that is present in each phase, irrespective of the energy that drives it. Territory as the most important factor for terrorists became a cornerstone for another

⁶ *Global Terrorism Index 2020*, Institute for Economics & Peace, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf> [accessed 17.07.2022].

⁷ D.C. Rapoport, *The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11*, „Anthropoetics” 2002, vol. 8, no. 1, <http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0801/terror/> [accessed 17.07.2022].

⁸ J. Kaplan, *A Strained Criticism of Wave Theory*, „Terrorism and Political Violence” 2016, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 228–235, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2015.1112279> [accessed 17.07.2022]; T. Parker, N. Sitter, *The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains*, „Terrorism and Political Violence” 2016, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 197–216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2015.1112277> [accessed 17.07.2022]; K. Rasler, W.R. Thompson, *Looking for Waves of Terrorism*, „Terrorism and Political Violence” 2009, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 28–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550802544425> [accessed 17.07.2022].

⁹ J.C. Pinos, S.M. Radil, *The Territorial Contours of Terrorism: A Conceptual Model of Territory for Non-state Violence*, „Terrorism and Political Violence” 2020, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 1027–1046, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1442328> [accessed 17.07.2022].

concept that sprang from Rapoport's thesis. In their research, Or Honiga and Ido Yahelb (2019) proposed a new phenomenon of terrorist semi-states (TSSs), political entities born in the 21st-century in the MENA region and Pakistan,¹⁰ The authors are seeing the beginning of a new wave and TSSs are a harbinger of this new terrorist wave. According to Honiga and Yahelb, a TSS is a rebel group that controls portions of a weak state's territory, maintaining governance there, and uses this territory as a base for launching terrorist attacks against third-party states. But the idea of a TSS just proposes a new name for a well-known but unresearched phenomenon – the interrelation between separatist and jihadist movements. This interrelation is based on the commonality of political objectives. This commonality of different ideological terrorism groups relative to the importance of the territory in their struggle not only gives prospects for overcoming the restrictions of the wave model but also points to where we can find a possible explanation for the current terrorism situation in the world. Territory and its political role as a basis for self-determination, in terms of cultural autonomy, an independent secular or religious state, is very important for current terrorist groups.

A strong desire to capture and hold their own territory for self-determination and realisation of their own political project is exactly what makes such ideologically different groups as the jihadist "Islamic State" and the separatist "Donetsk People's Republic" similar. However, it is not only that: terrorism as a tactic and strategy to achieve this political goal is also uniting separatists and jihadists in the one big terrorism "wave" (using Rapoport's terms) we witness today.

DEFINITIONS

SEPARATISM

The definition of separatism is debatable among scholars. The concept of separatism is widely interpreted as a self-determination movement for separation in order to obtain more rights and powers from a bigger group, state, community, etc. This movement has forms such as secession (separation from the state to create their own state), irredenta (voluntary unification of the ethnolnational community

¹⁰ O. Honig, I. Yahel, *A Fifth Wave of Terrorism? The Emergence of Terrorist Semi-States*, „Terrorism and Political Violence” 2019, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 1210–1228.

and the territory of its residence with another state, first of all, the historical Motherland), and autonomy (decentralisation within the existing state).¹¹ There is another approach among researchers to limit the separatism concept to demands and actions for the separation of territory, excluding the idea of autonomy. This interpretation is consistent with the definition given in UN Resolution 41 1541 (1960), where the forms of self-determination of territories were listed as “its transformation into a self-governing independent state; free association with an independent state; merger with an independent state”.¹²

The scientific uncertainty regarding the separatism concept is enhanced by the existent legal uncertainty. There are numerous legal sources, from the UN Charter of 1945 to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, which declare the right to self-determination as a legal foundation for separatism. However, there are also the legislative acts and norms which protect the principles of the inviolability of borders, territorial integrity, political independence, and state sovereignty. Moreover, in some international documents, separatism is defined as terrorism and a criminal activity, as in the Shanghai Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, signed in 2001 by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.¹³ Such legal uncertainty complicates the process of resolving conflicts with the separatism agenda and significantly limits available options to political means, not legal ones.

Separatism is closely linked to such phenomena as a crisis of statehood, state weakness, and, at the very least, governance incapacity. Modern separatism is no more limited only to the traditional demands for self-determination of ethnonational, ethnocultural, ethnoconfessional, or ethnopolitical communities within states. Today the separatist conflicts have become more internationalised. For example, the conflicts in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova have

¹¹ A. Pavković, *Secession: A much Contested Cconcept*, in: *Territorial Separatism in Global Politics: Causes, Outcomes and Resolution*, ed. Damien Kingsbury and Costas Laoutides, Routledge, London 2015, pp. 13–28, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270275527_Secession_A_much_contested_concept [accessed 17.07.2022].

¹² Resolution 1541 (XV) *Principles which should guide members in determining whether or not an obligation exists to transmit the information called for under Article 73e of the Charter*, A/RES/1541, 15.12.1960, *UN General Assembly*, [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1541\(XV\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1541(XV)) [accessed 17.07.2022].

¹³ *Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism* (Shanghai, 15.06.2001). *Official Website of the President of Russia*, <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/3405> [accessed 17.07.2022].

demonstrated that the state can be as much a victim as an active actor who uses separatism as a measure for waging an undeclared war against a neighbouring state (in these cases, Russia is such an actor). And although it is often difficult to detect and prove the internationalisation of a separatist conflict, in the analysis of such conflicts we should take into account the potential for involvement of “a third party”, whether a state or non-state entity. Such interference often escalates violence and makes the prospects for a speedy resolution unrealistic.

Thus, separatism is more a political than an ideological movement – with a defined political objective but a mosaic of ideas and motives behind it. And we assume that the intervention of religious-fundamentalist (in particular, jihadist) forces in separatist conflicts “internationalises” them, pushing aspects of ethnic identification into the background.

JIHADISM

Jihadism is an example of such a religiously motivated movement with objectives similar to those of traditional separatist movements. In this research, we define jihadism as a political movement that seeks to establish by military force a totalitarian religious state on their interpretation of Islam. Jihadism as a political movement has already become a powerful factor in conflicts in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Syria) and North and East Africa (Libya, Somalia) where the jihadist organisations and groups demonstrate as ability for capturing territory to establish their version of a state with an alternative system of security, management, taxation, justice and social protection of locals.

The central part of jihadism is the idea of a jihad. According to the definition given by Oxford Islamic Studies, *jihad* in Arabic means “aspiration” or “struggle”.¹⁴ There are different interpretations of this concept of struggle in the Islamic definition of a jihad from a spiritual struggle according to the 12th-century scholar Ibn Rushd al-Judd to a military and political one, as proposed by the author of “The Book of Jihad” Abu Zakaria Ad-Dimashki.¹⁵ For our research, we use the

¹⁴ *Jihad*, Oxford Islamic Studies online, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1199> [accessed 17.07.2022].

¹⁵ Ibn Nuhas, *The Book Of Jihad: Mashari Al-Ashwaq Ila Masari Al-Ushaaq Wa Mutheer Al-Gharaam Ila Daar Assalaam*, <https://archive.org/details/TheBookOfJihadByIbnNuhas> [accessed 17.07.2022].

political interpretation proposed by one of the fathers of the current Salafism-jihadism political movement – Saeed Qutb. He considered the jihad as a continuous war for the liberation of mankind from jahiliyyah (جاهلية), the state of ignorance that characterised the world before the advent of Islam. In his works, Qutb discussed the idea of a jihad as a political struggle for the realisation of religious agenda through the establishment of a new version of a state based on its interpretation of Islamic law.¹⁶

Ukrainian researcher of Islamism Amar Kanah in his work, *Jihadist Salafism as a new phenomenon in international politics*, defined “jihadism” as a doctrine of “militant Islamic groups which declare holy war against non-believers (including Muslim state leaders) who violate (according to their own interpretation of religion) Islam”.¹⁷ According to the researcher, jihadists “advocate the overthrow of governments and resort to violence, including terrorist acts”. It is worth noting that this definition focuses on the methodological aspect of jihadist activities, namely the use of violence, but ignores the political aim of the movement. Violence, including terrorism, is just a method to achieve the political goal. American researcher Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi defines jihadism as “an ideology that seeks the overthrow of existing rulers and regimes in the Muslim world by means of violent jihad in order to establish Islamic states and governments ruling by God’s law in the totality”.¹⁸ The key political goal of jihadists is to build their own state. Even if the ideological foundations for such a state differ from the motives of separatists, jihadists have the same political goal as separatists and pose the same threat to existing nation-states.

EXPECTATIONS

Based on information from several cases (the conflict in Chechnya 1994–2009, the uprising in Mali in 2012, the history of conflict in the Philippines, the Kashmir case, etc.), there are several reasons

¹⁶ S. Qutb, *Jihad in the Cause of Allah*, International Islamic Publishers Ltd., Karachi 1988.

¹⁷ А. Канах, *Джихадійський салафізм як нове явище у міжнародній політиці*, „Українське релігієзнавство” 2013, no. 68, pp. 109–113, <https://doi.org/10.32420/2013.68.344> [accessed 17.07.2022] [in Ukr.].

¹⁸ A.J. Al-Tamimi, *Jihadism 101: „The Neglected Duty”*, Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi’s Blog 2019, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/23451/jihadism-101-the-neglected-duty> [accessed 17.07.2022].

to think that jihadist-terrorist organisations have an impact on separatist-terrorist groups in conflicts. For example, according to Bruce Whitehouse and Francesco Strazzari in 2012 in Mali, when local Tuareg groups mobilised around the goal of an independent state, the most powerful well-known, and radical, group supported by local Tuaregs was the jihadists from “Ansar Dine”.¹⁹ The leader of the group, Iyad ag Ghali, was previously a Tuareg nationalist who took part in a political struggle for an independent state in the early 1990s. But in 2012 he and his fellows from “Ansar Dine” tried to enforce sharia law in controlled territories, including Timbuktu. After they failed to keep control of the territory, they carried out terrorist attacks on Malian security forces. The example of Iyad ag Ghali demonstrates how former separatists became jihadists to achieve the same political goal as separatists – the establishment of their own state. The interconnections between separatists and jihadists in Mali manifested itself even stronger when Ghali’s group lost the controlled territories in early 2013 and hundreds of his men defected to the *Haut Conseil pour l’Unité de l’Azawad*, a secular Tuareg militant group.

One of the largest jihadist organisations in the world, Nigeria’s Boko Haram, also has its roots in ethnonational conflict. Even before Nigeria gained its independence in 1960 there was a separatist movement in the territories inhabited by the Kanuri people to create a separate state, the Great Kanuri, on a territory of over 500,000 square kilometres. However, the failure of this movement and the systematic oppression of the Kanuri in Nigeria led to the replacement of the nationalist narrative by jihadism. The emergence of Boko Haram was the result of replacing values rooted in local African Muslim traditions with Salafist values preached by the global jihadist discourse of al-Qaida.²⁰

Another example of an interrelationship between separatists and jihadists is the Chechen conflict. Amongst the reasons why Chechen rebels applied the jihadist’s political agenda, James Hughes mentioned the attempt of some local field commanders to legitimise their claim to

¹⁹ L. Raineri, F. Strazzari, *Jihadism in Mali and the Sahel: Evolving Dynamics and Patterns*, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06851> [accessed 17.07.2022].

²⁰ M. Tanchum, *Al-Qa’ida’s West African Advance: Nigeria’s Boko Haram, Mali’s Touareg, and the Spread of Salafi Jihadism*, „Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs” 2012, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 75–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2012.11446504> [accessed 17.07.2022].

power through criticism of the secular President Maskhadov's secularist regime. Emil A. Souleimanov, who conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with Chechen refugees from the Second Chechnya War, argued that many Chechens were impressed by the "immense piety, self-constraint, and discipline of the Jihadists" in contrast to the secular groups, who had been bogged down in internecine conflicts. Jihadist ideology also proposed to locals an alternative to "tribal" nationalism which was strongly anchored within Chechen society. Also, jihadists supported their members and their relatives, protecting them from attacks by rival clans. They provided a strong sense of identity and solidarity for young Chechens, with a stable income and ensured mutual protection in the case of attack by outsiders. All these made jihadism attractive to many young Chechens and a lot of former secular separatist fighters joined jihadists who fought for the same independent state but on the basis of sharia law.²¹

Similar processes took place in the framework of the Kashmir conflict. The gradual Islamisation of the secular separatist resistance there was provoked by changes in Pakistani policy. Fearing the strengthening of the groups which wanted the independence of the whole Kashmir state, including those territories under Pakistan's administration, Pakistan, in 1989, started to support the Hizbul Mujahideen, the militant wing of the religious party the Jamaat-i-Islami. This shift provided more resources for Islamist militant groups. Moreover, after the 2005 earthquake in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, it was jihadists who first provided thousands of homeless locals with tents, blankets and food. The epicentre of the earthquake was near military camps run by jihadists and they managed to gain more influence amongst the locals due to such humanitarian assistance. Using Pakistani support, local loyalty and new opportunities to increase infiltrations through the Line of Control due to the disorder provoked by the earthquake, jihadists in the Kashmir conflict gradually displaced the separatist movements from the top positions.²²

Finally, Southeast Asia gives examples of the interrelations between separatist and jihadist groups. According to Andrew Tan, "the Islamic factor has proven to be a unifying factor and a focal point for the

²¹ E.A. Souleimanov, *Jihad or Security? Understanding the Jihadization of Chechen Insurgency through Recruitment into Jihadist Units*, „Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies” 2014, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 86–105, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2014.986375> [accessed 17.07.2022].

²² V. Schofield, *Kashmiri Separatism and Pakistan in the Current Global Environment*, „Contemporary South Asia” 2008, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 83–92.

rallying of armed resistance” in the region. Local separatists, anxious to obtain support from co-religionists in neighbouring countries and the international Muslim community, adopted a more religious agenda. Moreover, political and military failures of traditional secular separatists provoked a new generation of rebels to establish links with international Islamic terrorist groups, as for example Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.²³

The conflict in the Philippines is also characterised by the Islamisation of separatism. The conflict arose between the Muslim population of islands in the south of the country and the central government. In 1972, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), an organisation advocating an independent state for Muslims in the southern Philippines, began an armed struggle. An unsuccessful uprising and political infighting within the organisation led a group of fighters to leave and found a new organisation. Hashim Salamat, one of the founders of the MNLF, accused his comrades-in-arms of not setting religious goals for the organisation and in 1984 created the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). From then on, Islam became the central mobilising force of the separatist movement in the southern Philippines.²⁴ The goal of the MILF was to create a religious state. After a long standoff, the MILF leaders moved to settle the conflict with the government. However, the failure of negotiations in 2015 led a more radical group to break away from the MILF and form an organisation called the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BILF). In turn, a group splintered from the ranks of the BILF and joined the Islamic State in the Philippines in 2016.²⁵ Thus, as attempts to peacefully resolve the conflict failed, a group with more radical aims broke away from the dominant organisation of the period. Beginning as a political force with secular separatist goals, the Moro self-determination movement spawned radical jihadist organisations, including a branch of the Islamic State in the Philippines.

The situation is similar in Thailand. In a country with a majority Buddhist population, the political movement for self-determination

²³ A. Tan, *Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects, and Implications*, „Studies in Conflict & Terrorism” 2000, vol. 23, no 4, pp. 267–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100050174986> [accessed 17.07.2022].

²⁴ J. Stark, *Muslims in the Philippines*, „Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs” 2003, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 195–209, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602000305937> [accessed 17.07.2022].

²⁵ C. Weiss, *Islamic State-loyal Groups Claim Attacks on Filipino Military*, Threat Matrix: FDD’s Long War Journal [website], 28.05.2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/05/islamic-state-loyal-groups-claim-attacks-on-filipino-military.php> [accessed 17.07.2022].

existed in a region with a compact Muslim population. In 1948, the first Muslim rebel movements were formed. Among the most influential were the Pattani United Liberation Organisation, the Pattani National Liberation Front, and the National Revolutionary Front. As in the Philippines, the first autonomy movements in Thailand were ethno-nationalist in nature and paid little attention to religious issues.²⁶ In the late 1970s, after unsuccessful attempts to win local support, insurgent groups began to emphasise the struggle to defend Islam. The emphasis on Islam allowed them to gain external support and legitimacy. The United Liberation Organisation of Pattani, for example, initially advocated the liberation of all the people of Pattani, regardless of their religion, but as the conflict progressed, its goals changed. Its propaganda increasingly emphasised the religious nature of the struggle, calling for a jihad. As with the Philippine separatists, the failure of peace settlements and attempts at armed insurrection led to the emergence of more radical organisations with jihadist aims. Former members of the Pattani National Liberation Front founded the Pattani United Mujahideen Front, an even more radical group aimed at armed struggle for the establishment of a religious state in the south. Another organisation, the National Revolutionary Front (NRF), was initially separatist, but gradually adopted radical religious goals. Groups which then emerged from the ranks of the NRF, later became the origins of the “Islamic State” in Thailand.²⁷

HYPOTHESES

Considering these examples of interrelations between separatists and jihadists in different conflicts, given the fact that jihadists practice a more aggressive approach to achieving their political goals through using terrorism, we hypothesise that:

– contrary to Rapoport’s wave model, separatist (or anti-colonial in Rapoport terminology) terrorism is on the rise around the world (Hypothesis 1 [H1])

²⁶ W. Kadir bin Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: the Moros in Southern Philippines and the Malays in Southern Thailand*, Thesis (PhD), The Australian National University 1987, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/10146/6/Kadir%20bin%20Che%20Man%20W%20Thesis%201987.pdf> [accessed 17.07.2022].

²⁷ A. Bodetti, *How the Thai conflict is boosting Islamic State in Malaysia*, The Diplomat [website], 17.10.2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/how-the-thai-conflict-is-boosting-islamic-state-in-malaysia/> [accessed 17.07.2022].

- this trend correlates with the trend of jihadist-terrorism activity around the world (Hypothesis 2 [H2])
- in conflicts where separatist and jihadist groups practiced terrorism, the appearance of jihadists intensified the activity of separatist terrorist groups (Hypothesis 3 [H3]).

RESEARCH DESIGN

To answer these questions, we used a quantitative study of the terrorism activity of two ideological movements, jihadists and separatists, around the world. We used published data on terrorism from the GTD, and the classification of terrorism groups' ideologies proposed by the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC). As a method, we used simple and multiple linear regressions to determine the value of one dependent variable from the values of multiple independent variables. For these we created a set of models to test the hypotheses, using data on terrorist attacks around the world from 1970 to 2018. We collected the information about the terrorist groups that committed the attacks in these periods, then using the TRAC classification and media reports on attacks grouped this information in a dataset that contains separatist and jihadist terrorist groups. Based on this data we compared how the dynamics of the terrorist activity of these two ideological movements have changed over time. The result of this model gave us a picture of the trends and helped us to define the potential correlation between jihadist and separatist groups' terrorism activity.

We also tested whether there are any correlations between jihadist and separatist terrorist groups at the country level. We selected a group of countries where separatists and jihadists demonstrated some level of cooperation or competition and tried to find out how the separatists' modus operandi changed when jihadist groups appeared in the country, as well as whether the number of active separatist-terrorist groups in the country has changed, and whether their terrorist attacks became more lethal.

FIGURE 1
Separatist terrorist attacks and jihadist terrorist attacks per year in the world, 1970–2018

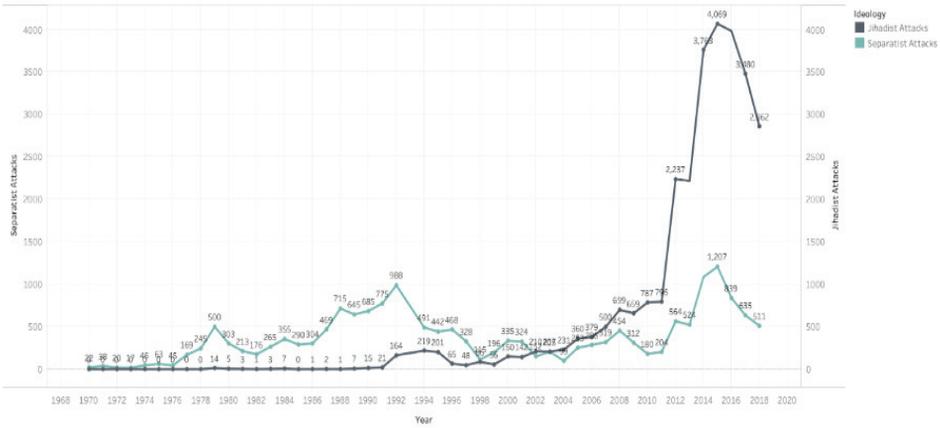


FIGURE 2
Active separatist terrorist groups and jihadist terrorist groups per year in the world, 1970–2018

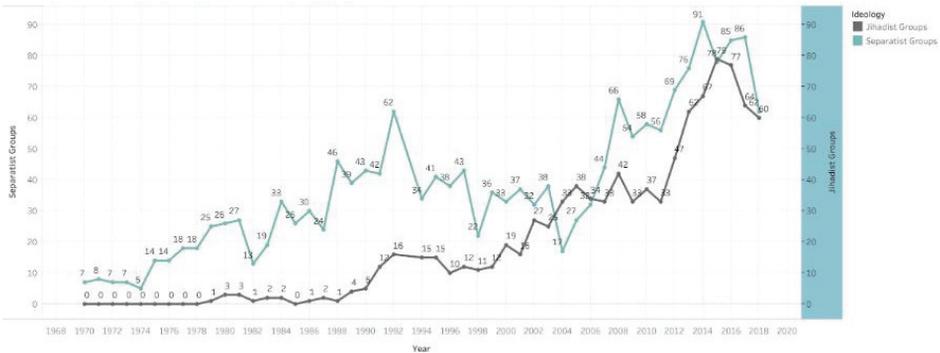
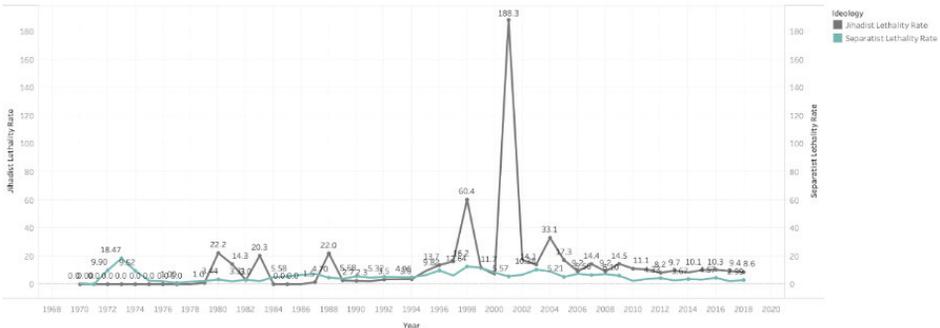


FIGURE 3
Lethality rates of separatist and jihadist terrorist attacks, 1970–2018



DEPENDENT VARIABLES

As the dependent variables measure, we used the number of terrorist attacks committed by separatist groups, the number of active groups per year (one or more terrorist attacks in a year), and the number of people killed and wounded in the terrorist attacks per year (lethality rate of terrorism).

EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

In our analysis, we used such parameters as the number of active jihadist groups, terrorist attacks and lethality rate as explanatory variables. As control variables for the multiple regression models, we used two factors which influence terrorism according to international organisations and researchers. According to the UN, conflicts and political repression remain the primary drivers of terrorism, with more than 99 per cent of all terrorism-related deaths occurring in countries involved in a violent conflict or with high levels of political terror.²⁸ This is why we proposed the number of fatalities in the country according to Uppsala conflict data as a control variable.²⁹ Another control variable which can describe the level of political violence in a country is major episodes of political violence in the world 1946–2018. This factor describes interstate, societal, and communal warfare magnitude scores for all countries. The authors of this parameter defined major episodes of political violence as the systematic and sustained use of lethal violence by organised groups that result in at least 500 directly related deaths over the course of the episode.³⁰

DATA ANALYSIS

The first step of our research was collecting data on the activity of terrorism groups in the world since 1970. For this purpose, we used open data on terrorism from the GTD, an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world since

²⁸ *A New Era of Conflict and Violence*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/un75/new-era-conflict-and-violence> [accessed 17.07.2022].

²⁹ *Uppsala Conflict Data Program*, <https://ucdp.uu.se> [accessed 17.07.2022].

³⁰ M.B. Marshall, *Major Episodes of Political Violence (MEPV) and Conflict Regions, 1946–2018*, Center for Systemic Peace 2019, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/MEPVcodebook2018.pdf> [accessed 17.07.2022].

1970. Using algorithms provided by the R programming language we collected and grouped data to get information on terrorist groups in the world and created the database.³¹ This database includes 173,264 rows of data, grouped in six columns (year of terrorist attack, country where the attack was committed, name of the group responsible for the attack, the number killed in the attack, the number wounded in the attack, and the ideology of the terrorists responsible for the attack). Using the definitions from the TRAC,³² we defined the ideology for 3,617 terrorist groups and selected those which are separatists (517 groups) and jihadist (314 groups). Then we collected information about all aspects of the terrorism activities of the separatist and jihadist groups in the second database which consists of 49 rows of information about different aspects of terrorist activity, grouped in 16 columns.³³

We categorised all data in our database into three categories: jihadist data, separatist data and total terrorism data. Each category includes four variables:

- number of attacks
- number of active groups
- number of casualties (sum of people killed and wounded due to terrorist attacks)
- lethality of attacks (number of casualties divided by number of attacks per year).

We compared the data for each variable according to the category and visualised it in line charts using the free software of Tableau Public. Then we found out the minimum and maximum, the first and third quartiles, mean and median of each variable. This summary analysis helped to find missing values and assess the normality of the data distribution.

Before assessing the association between jihadist and separatist data, we visualised the data to assess the relationship between these two categories. We produced scatterplots in R for each pair of data. In our plots, jihadist parameters (the number of attacks, the number of active groups, the lethality rate) are predictor variables on the x-axis and the separatist parameters are outcome variables on the y-axis.

³¹ *Terrorism Data from TRAC and GTD*, <https://cutt.ly/cvFxM8X> [accessed 17.07.2022].

³² TRAC (The Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium), <https://www.trackingterrorism.org> [accessed 17.07.2022].

³³ *Separatist and Terrorist Groups Database*, <https://cutt.ly/1vFxbOo> [accessed 17.07.2022].

Considering that most of the data variables in our data analysis were non-normally distributed and showed a skewness, we calculated the Spearman's correlation to determine the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between our two variables. The Spearman's correlation in our data is 0.54 and the p-value is 6.656e-05, so we reject the null hypothesis, assuming that there is a monotonic association between the variables of separatist and jihadist activity data. As the Spearman correlation did not provide any information about the strength of the relationship between two variables, we used linear regression to quantify the impact of a change in one variable on another.

First, we used simple linear regressions to check the correlations between jihadist and separatist variables regardless of countries and other explanatory variables, such as total data on terrorist activity, data from Uppsala or scores from the major episodes of political violence databases. We also checked the 95% confidence intervals and produced plots for linearity, homoscedasticity, independence, and normality estimates for each pair of variables. The next step in our analysis was multiple linear regression analysis with additional explanatory variables. Such regressions help to try out modelling interaction effects between predictors. For multiple regressions, we included two new predictive variables, the number of fatalities in the country in the considered year according to the Uppsala conflict data and the major episodes of political violence score. The first three multiple linear regression models demonstrated that both jihadist-terrorist activity and total terrorist activity regardless of ideology are statistically significant and correlate with separatist activity data. In one model the additional explanatory variable, major episodes of political violence, demonstrated strong positive correlation and statistical significance.

After that we selected for analysis only those countries where both jihadist and separatist groups were or are still active. Only 40 countries from our database matched this criterion. The total number of terrorist attacks committed by separatists and jihadists in these 40 countries ranged from 16 in Mauritania to 24,621 in Iraq. Such discrepancy in data could influence the clarity of results and we used a threshold of 1,000 and more attacks in the country to select those countries where both movements were active on a level sufficient for our research. Only 19 countries passed such a threshold. We repeated the analysis based on three multiple regression models

for these countries. Finally, we conducted case-by-case analysis for those countries where, according to the mentioned studies, examples existed of some interrelations between jihadist and separatist movements. These countries experienced combined pressure from these two movements (India, Mali), experienced cruel confrontation between these movements (Pakistan) or gradual transformation of one movement into another (the Philippines, Russia). We used the data from each of these countries to check correlations in three multiple regression models. The first model describes the correlation between the numbers of separatist, jihadist, and other terrorist attacks committed in the country. The second model compares the numbers of active terrorist groups in the country. The third model uses the information on the lethality rates of terrorist attacks committed by separatists, jihadists, and other terrorists in the country to find the correlations. Then we describe each of these countries as an individual case.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The Philippines case is unique for our analysis because almost all variables are statistically significant. The model with comparison attacks data in the Philippines demonstrates a strong correlation between separatist and jihadist activity. This is a negative correlation which means that in the case of an increase of jihadist attacks by ten, the number of separatist attacks decreases by almost two attacks. Historically, jihadist and separatist groups in this country rely on the same social base – local Muslim populations, known as Moro people. This is why we see a negative correlation in this model, which could be decoded as a sign of competition between the two movements on a limited social basis. In the second model, we again see a negative correlation between the number of active separatist- and active jihadist-terrorist groups in the country – another demonstration of competition between these two movements. The second statistically significant variable is the number of total active groups. The third model also has a statistically significant variable – the lethality rate of total terrorist attacks. However, the lethality rates show no proof of separatist–jihadist competition.

TABLE 1
Regression coefficients for the three models

Variable	Beta coefficient	95% confidence interval	p-value	Signif. codes
1	2	3	4	5
Jihadist Attacks (for Separatist Attacks) (simple regression analysis for database with all countries)	0.15	0.097; 0.21	1.886e-06	***
Jihadist Groups (for Separatist Groups) (simple regression analysis for database with all countries)	0.83	0.68; 0.99	3.057e-14	***
Jihadist Lethality Rate (for Separatist Lethality Rate) (simple regression analysis for database with all countries)	0.013	-0.023; 0.051	0.4509	
Jihadist attacks (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	2.737e-02	-0.1071; 0.1617	0.677714	
Total Attacks (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	0.0572	0.0148; 0.099	0.010367	*
Conflict Casualties Uppsala (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	-4.721e-04	-0.035; 0.0025	0.742141	
Mean Political Violence (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	663.6	348.87; 978.34	0.000216	***
Jihadist Groups (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	0.38	0.046; 0.7127	0.026	*
Total Terrorist Groups (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	0.14	0.0704; 0.213	0.0004	***
Conflict Casualties Uppsala (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	1.085e-04	-0.00063; 0.0028	0.205	
Mean Political Violence (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	-1.314e+01	-41.51; 15.23	0.349	
Jihadist Lethality Rate (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	-0.049	-0.94; -0.03	0.03647	*

1	2	3	4	5
Total Lethality Rate (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	0.73	0.26; 1.19	0.00361	**
Conflict Casualties Uppsala (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	1.325e-06	-0.000365; 0.00039	0.94299	
Mean Political Violence (multiple regression analysis for database with all countries)	3.003	-1.182; 7.188	0.15159	
Jihadist Attacks (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	-0.1231	-0.301; 0.055	0.16686	
Total Attacks (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	0.081	0.035; 0.128	0.00143	**
Conflict Casualties Uppsala (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	-0.0028	-0.0086; 0.00315	0.34565	
Mean Political Violence (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	55.598	-83.74; 194.9	0.41832	
Jihadist Groups (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	0.5791523	0.273; 0.885	0.000665	***
Total Terrorist Groups (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	0.0463032	-0.00079; 0.0934	0.053701	.
Conflict Casualties Uppsala (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	0.0001333	-0.000091; 0.00036	0.233448	
Mean Political Violence (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	1.7588294	-5.52; 9.038	0.622583	
Jihadist Lethality Rate (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	-0.0143	-0.033; 0.0045	0.1294	
Total Lethality Rate (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	0.457	0.086; 0.829	0.0180	*
Conflict Casualties Uppsala (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	-0.000023	-0.000066; 0.0000186	0.2588	
Mean Political Violence (multiple regression analysis for database with 19 countries)	-2.31	-4.81; 0.177	0.0672	.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the article we want to point out the interrelationship between separatism-terrorism and jihadism. But without defining the roots and consequences of such an interrelationship, it will be hard to prepare effective countermeasures and prevent the potential cumulative effect of cooperation between separatists and jihadists. This article aims to contribute to the growing interest in the phenomenon of interrelations between different terrorist ideological camps. By analysing data on terrorist activities in the world since 1970, we tried to find out how separatist- and jihadist-terrorist groups influence each other. We collected data from the GTD and grouped it into categories according to the ideology of terrorists. Comparing data on separatist- and jihadist-terrorist activity in the world, we found that separatist (or anti-colonial in Rapoport terminology) terrorism is on the rise around the world (*the first hypothesis*).

We also found evidence of positive correlations between jihadist-terrorism activity and separatism-terrorism activity (*the second hypothesis*). We found such a correlation in the models even with additional variables, such as total data of terrorism activity, number of fatalities according to Uppsala and major episodes of political violence. More interestingly, we found proof of a negative correlation between separatist- and jihadist-terrorists in Mali and the Philippines. These correlations allow us to assume that there is some sort of competition between these two movements. Both declare a very similar political goal – the establishment of an independent ideological state within the border of an already existing one. Both are predominantly oriented on the same social base, Muslim on Mindanao in the Philippines and Tuareg in Mali. Having a similar goal and common base, separatists and jihadists tend to overcome each other in this struggle. For example, a lot of fighters and commanders who formed the jihadist “Abu Sayyaf” group in the Philippines started their political and military careers in a moderate separatist group – the MNLF. In 1991, Abdurajik Abubakar Janjalani gathered radical former MNLF fighters and lieutenants to establish a new radical jihadist group, declaring the formation of a Muslim state in the southern Philippines as a political goal. But the absence of a correlation in our linear regression model points to a fundamental change in the dynamics of terrorist activity in the Philippines.

Finally, we have not found proof for accepting *the third hypothesis*. Instead, we found that in Mali, the appearance of jihadists weakened the activity of separatist-terrorist groups and decreased the lethality of separatist attacks. We need more research to investigate the exact causal mechanisms behind correlations on the country level to prepare adequate instruments for avoiding the cumulative effect of potential cooperation and mutual reinforcement of jihadist and separatist groups.

In this regard, we see promising directions for future research: the reasons for the growth of separatist terrorism; the study of specific mechanisms of influence of jihadist organisations on separatist movements (why in some cases the activity of the latter increases due to the intervention of jihadists, and not in others); how the objectives of actors and the idea of statehood are transformed when a separatist conflict develops into a conflict involving jihadists and how this affects the ability of the state within which it takes place.

TABLE 2
Class and description of variables from filtered databases

Variable	Class	Variable description
1	2	3
Year	numeric	the year of data for analysis
Jihadist Attacks	numeric	the number of terrorist attacks committed by jihadists in the considered year
Jihadist Groups	numeric	the number of unique jihadist-terrorist groups which were active (committed at least one terrorist attack per year) in the considered year
Jihadist Attack Casualties	numeric	the sum of those killed and wounded in attacks committed by jihadist terrorists in the considered year
Jihadist Lethality Rate	numeric	the number of casualties divided by the number of attacks committed by jihadist terrorists in the considered year
Separatist Groups	numeric	the number of unique separatist-terrorist groups which were active (committed at least one terrorist attack per year) in the considered year
Separatist Attacks	numeric	the number of terrorist attacks committed by separatist terrorists in the considered year

1	2	3
Separatist Attack Casualties	numeric	the sum of those killed and wounded in attacks committed by separatist terrorists in the considered year
Separatist Lethality Rate	numeric	the number of casualties divided by the number of attacks committed by separatist terrorists in the considered year
Total Attacks	numeric	the total number of terrorist attacks committed in the considered year regardless of the ideology of the perpetrators
Total Terrorist Casualties	numeric	the sum of those killed and wounded in attacks committed in the considered year regardless of the ideology of the perpetrators
Total Lethality Rate	numeric	the number of casualties divided by the number of attacks committed in the considered year regardless of the ideology of the perpetrators
Total Killed	numeric	the total number of those killed in terrorist attacks committed in the considered year regardless of the ideology of the perpetrators
Total Wounded	numeric	the total number of those wounded in terrorist attacks committed in the considered year regardless of the ideology of the perpetrators
Total Terrorist Groups	numeric	the number of unique terrorist groups which were active (committed at least one terrorist attack per year) in the considered year regardless of the ideology of the perpetrators
Conflict Casualties Uppsala	numeric	the number of fatalities in the country in the considered year according to Uppsala conflict data
Mean Political Violence	numeric	the major episodes of political violence score or systematic and sustained use of lethal violence by organised groups that result in at least 500 directly related deaths over the course of the episode in the considered year

TABLE 3
Countries where both separatist and jihadist groups committed
terrorist attacks

Number	Country	Total attacks
1	Azerbaijan	46
2	Bangladesh	1,635
3	Belgium	148
4	Cameroon	438
5	Chad	82
6	China	240
7	Democratic Republic of the Congo	685
8	Ethiopia	174
9	India	12,349
10	Indonesia	767
11	Iran	581
12	Iraq	24,621
13	Kazakhstan	27
14	Kenya	681
15	Lebanon	2,249
16	Libya	2,072
17	Mali	622
18	Mauritania	16
19	Morocco	33
20	Nepal	1,250
21	Netherlands	130
22	Niger	149
23	Nigeria	3,319
24	Pakistan	14,335
25	Philippines	7,157
26	Russia	2,141
27	Somalia	3,478
28	Spain	2,944
29	Sudan	742
30	Sweden	133
31	Switzerland	102
32	Syria	1,759
33	Tanzania	56
34	Thailand	3,990
35	Turkey	4,227
36	Uganda	355
37	United Kingdom	3,607
38	United States	2,832
39	West Bank and Gaza Strip	2,362
40	Yemen	3,156

TABLE 4

List of countries where both jihadists and separatists are active and the total number of attacks is equal to or more than 1,000 attacks for each movement

Number	Country	Total attacks
1	Bangladesh	1,635
2	India	12,349
3	Iraq	24,621
4	Lebanon	2,249
5	Libya	2,072
6	Nepal	1,250
7	Nigeria	3,319
8	Pakistan	14,335
9	Philippines	7,157
10	Russia	2,141
11	Somalia	3,478
12	Spain	2,944
13	Syria	1,759
14	Thailand	3,990
15	Turkey	4,227
16	United Kingdom	3,607
17	United States	2,832
18	West Bank and Gaza Strip	2,362
19	Yemen	3,156

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