TACtical Intelligence:
Disrupting the Terrorist Attack Cycle by Analysing Terrorists' Intelligence Operations

Keywords: terrorism, intelligence, confidence, intelligence competition, violent non-state actors

Abstract: Commensurate with prevailing Realist influence in military and security studies, the majority of academic literature on topics of intelligence are from state-centric perspectives, failing to sufficiently address other actors who are taking on greater and more salient roles on the international security stage. In particular, the use of intelligence by violent non-state actors is a premature subject matter in the academic discourse, as literature at the intersection of the two disciplines tends to evaluate the ways in which state intelligence succeeds or fails with regards to, or acts upon violent non-state actors. Rarely are violent non-state actors perceived of as intelligence actors of their own respect. Nevertheless, an intelligence competition persists between the rivals. The intelligence competition between terrorist organisations, seeking to instigate attacks, and state agencies, seeking to thwart them, is underdeveloped in both terrorism and intelligence studies. This study finds terrorist organisations engage in an intelligence competition with their state adversaries—a pursuit to understand their opponent's vulnerabilities (to be exploited) and capabilities (to be negated or challenged) as well as their own vulnerabilities (to be minimised) and capabilities (to be expounded or maximised). The intelligence competition—*know thy self* and *know thy enemy*—reveals opportunities and fosters confidence through which terrorists leverage their power to engage in the struggle and assert their control towards the fulfilment of the dream. This study proposes a model of *Terrorists Intelligence and Confidence* as a theory conceptualising terrorists' intelligence techniques and methods, as well as their uses and purposes, as terrorists seek to challenge their rivals and fulfil their dreams.