Class 6: Politically Violent Activity

Leadership

Dr. Michael C. Zeller

Agenda for the day

- Opening notes
- Leadership
- Poll: leadership
- Research closer look
- Any questions, concerns, feedback for this class?

Opening notes

Presentation groups

Presentations line-up

Date	Presenters	Method
4 Dec:	Shahadaan, Kristine, Daichi	ethnography
11 Dec:	Bérénice, Zorka, Victoria, Katharina	TBD
18 Dec:	Shoam, Aidan, Tara, Sebastian	QCA

Leadership

- theories of leadership

  - Weber

  - Nepstad and Bob (2006)

  - Earl (2007)

- an example from far-right movements

You guys can't follow a leader all your lives...

Can you?

Theories of leadership

- Max Weber (1922): three ideal types: **legal**, **traditional**, **charismatic**

  - shifting denotation of 'charisma' (away from divinity)

    - McDonnell (2016): 'unique qualities, the unconditional acceptance of authority, and strong emotional attachment to leadership.'

  - examples from this framework?

Theories of leadership

- Earl (2007): 'leading tasks' (in movements):

  1. articulating vision and ideology,

  2. engaging the political environment,

  3. framing the movement and its issues,

  4. managing relations with non-movement actors,

  5. making strategic and tactical decisions,

  6. organizing specific actions,

  7. managing the internal life of the movement,

  8. innovating and entrepreneurial activity, and
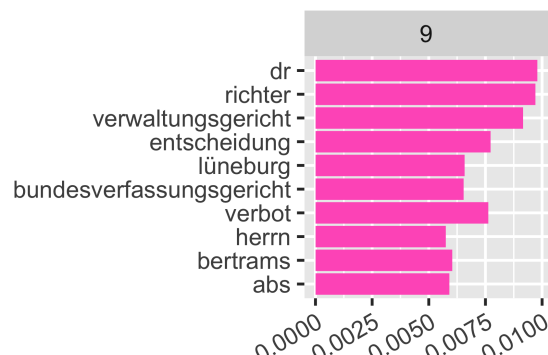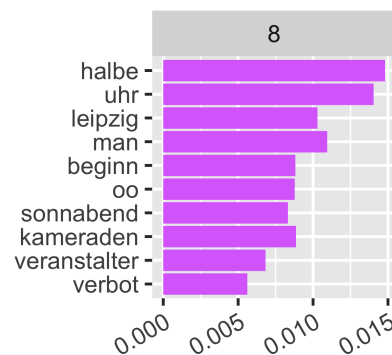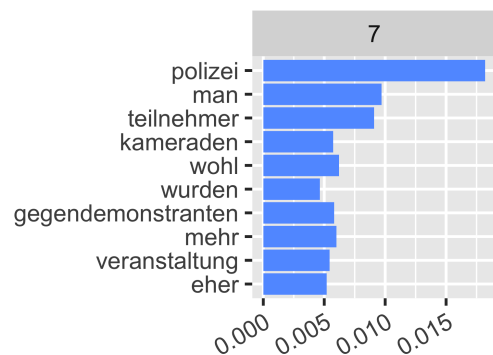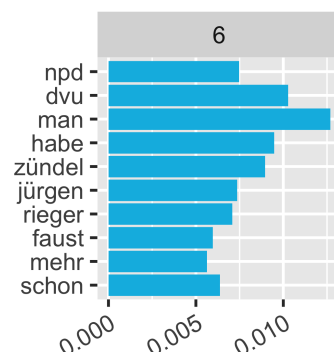
  9. providing social capital

Far-right movement leadership (Zeller and Virchow 2...

- *RQs*: (1) How can we characterise recent and contemporary far-right movement leadership? (2) Has leadership changed significantly with the advent of social media?

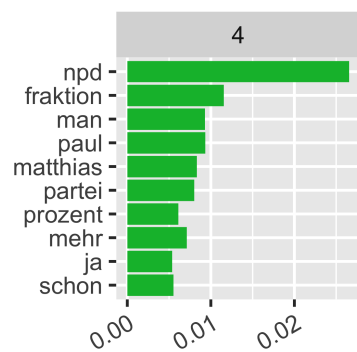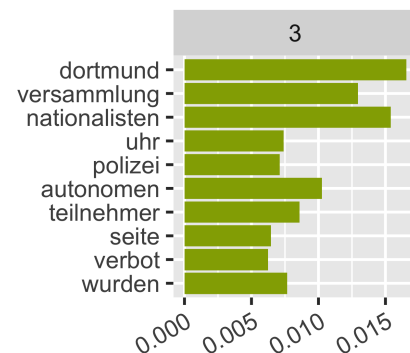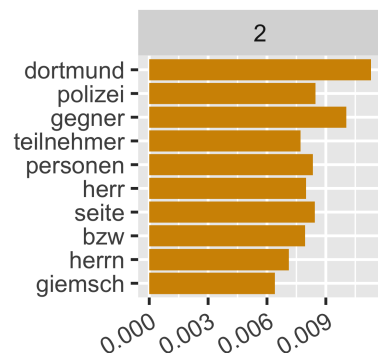- *Theory*: modern far-right leadership studies (Virchow 2013; Busher, Harris, and Macklin 2018; Cleland 2020; Macklin 2020)

- *Methods*: comparative case study in adjacent eras of FR activism
  - quantitative text analysis on web-scraped (*rvest*) texts
  - follow-up qualitative analysis: themes and campaign examples

Author	Source	Years	Total.texts	Total.words
Worch	Rundbriefe	2005–2012	260	209041
Sellner	Sezession	2015–2022	100	354255
Sellner	Compact	2016–2021	54	34926

FR leadership - Worch topics
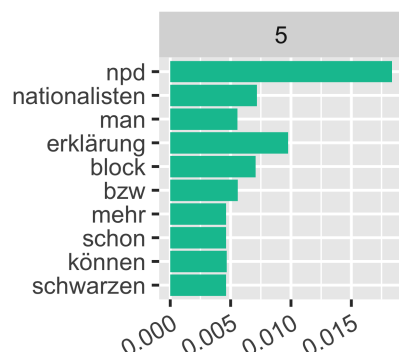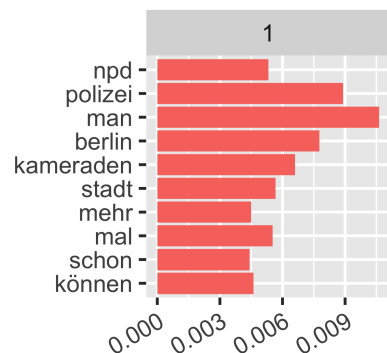
FR leadership tasks

Leadership tasks performed by Sellner and Worch
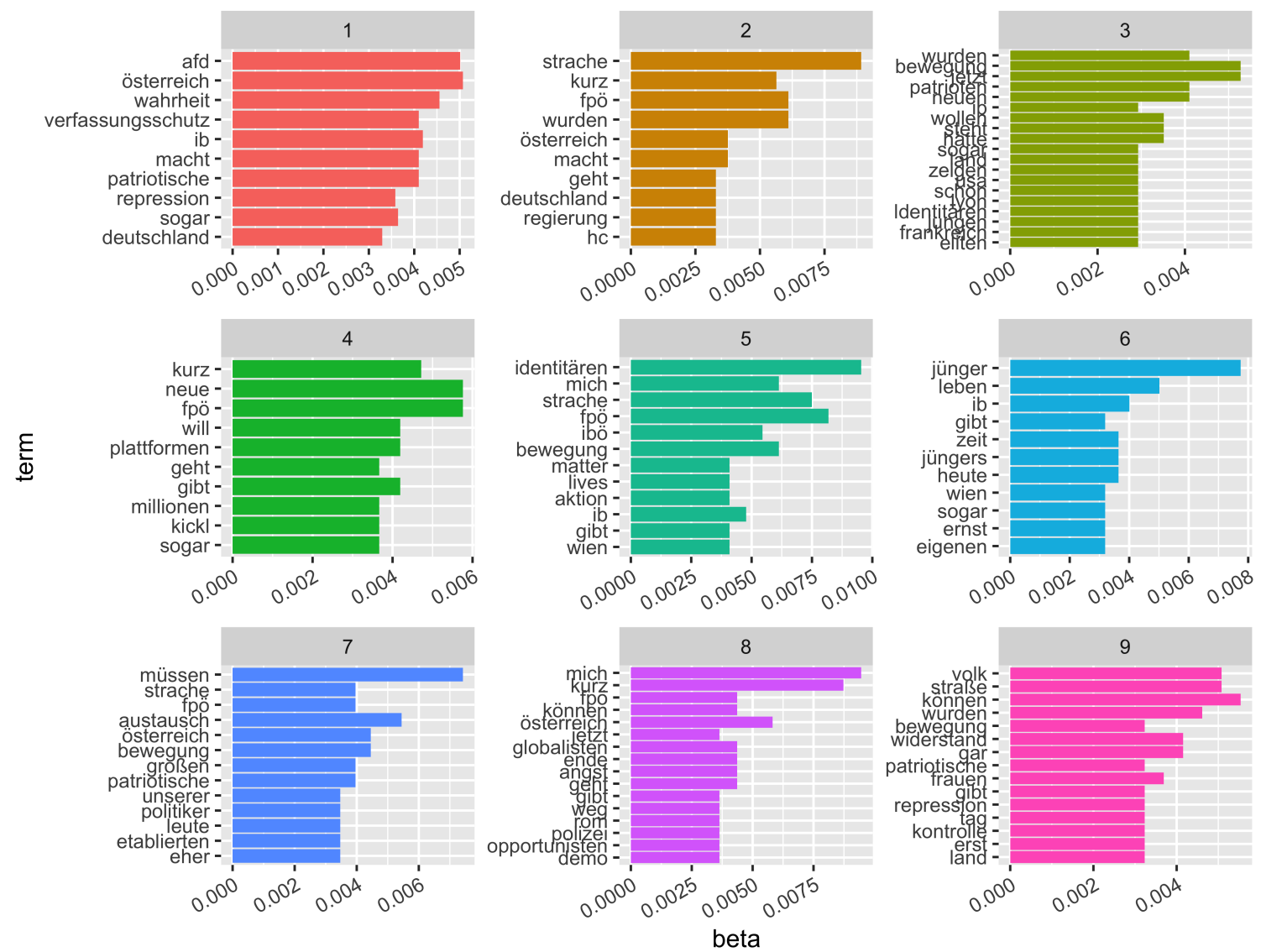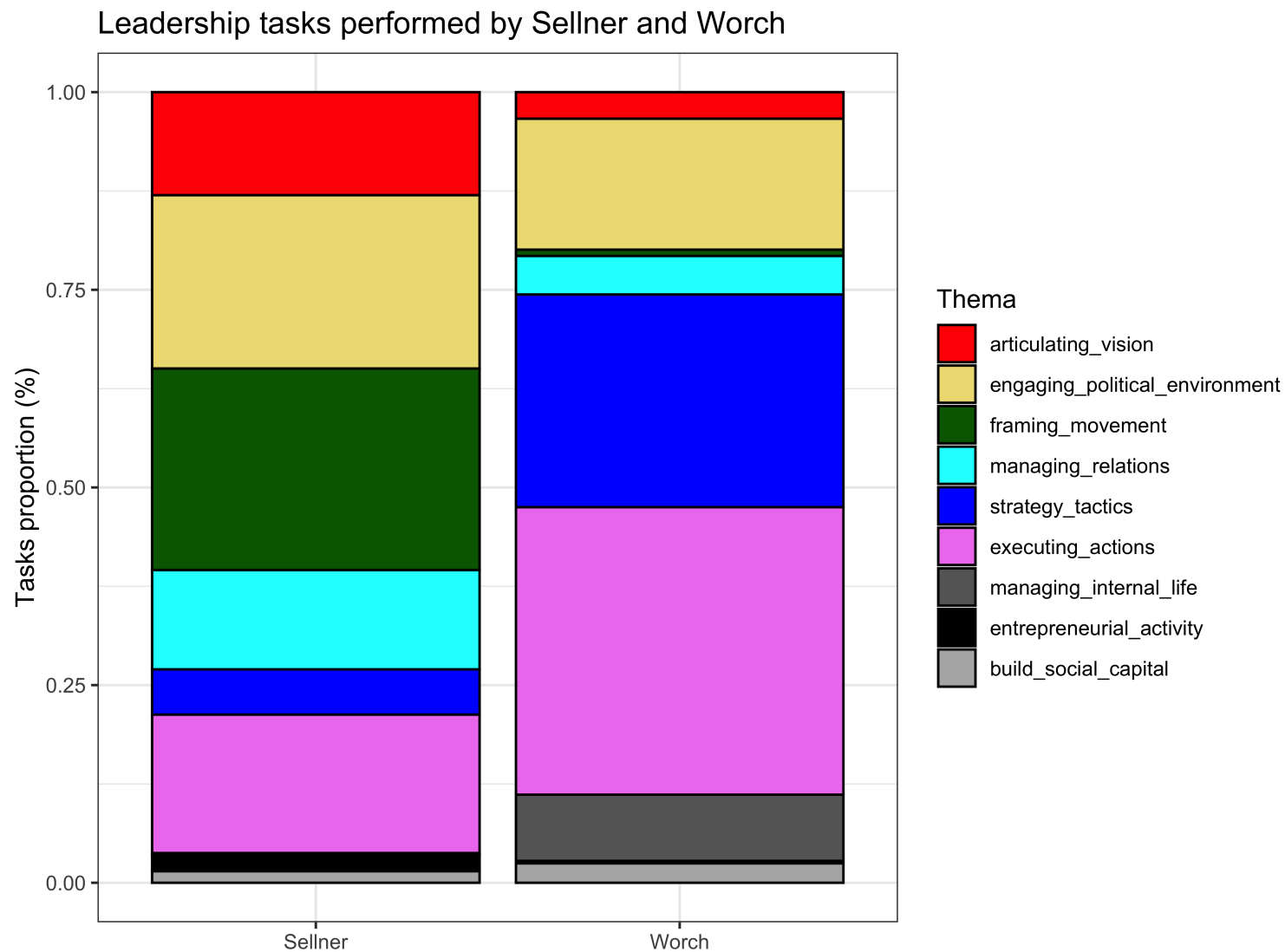
FR leadership tasks by year

Leadership tasks performed by Worch and Sellner
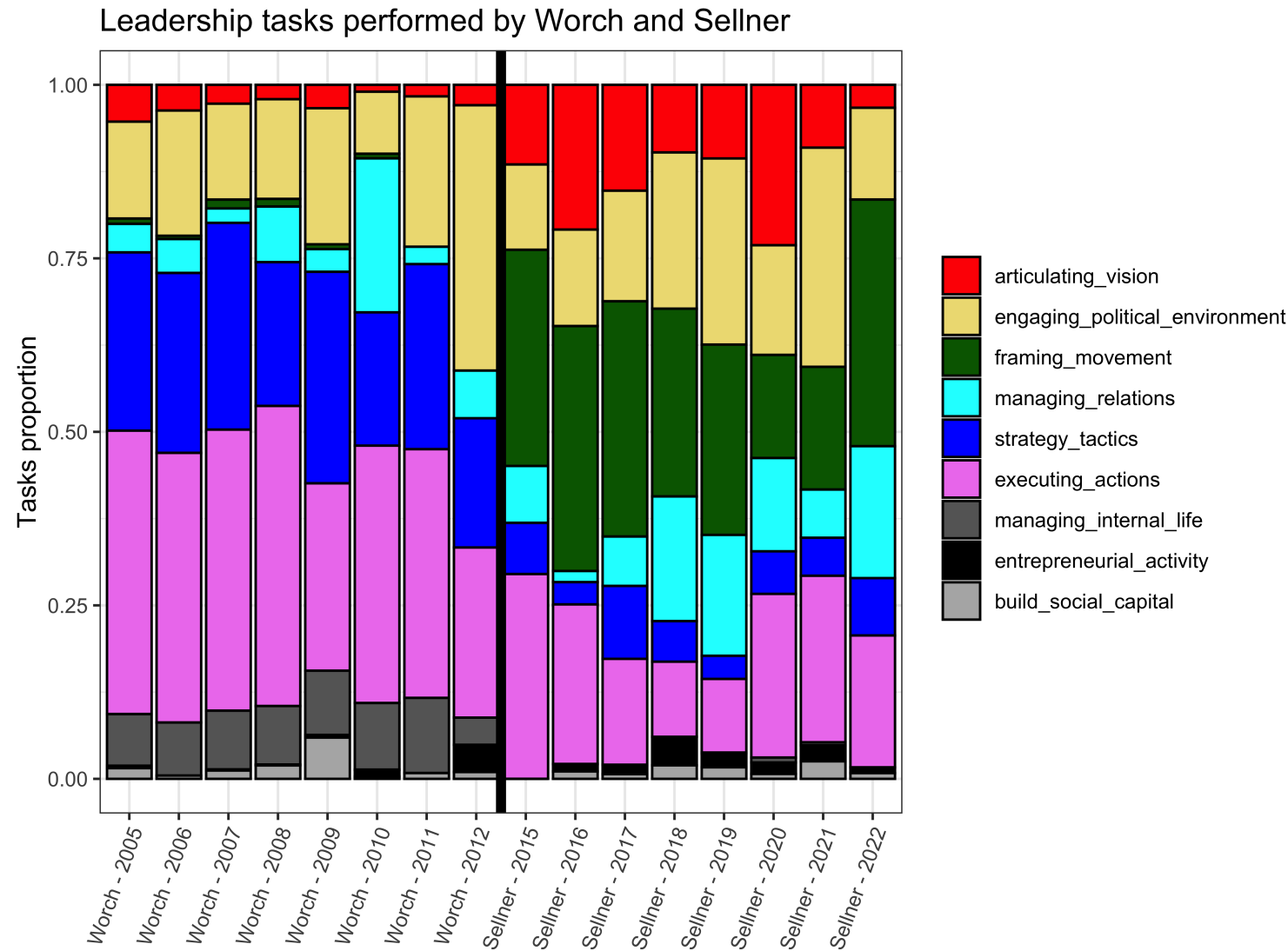
- Shared belief in street politics

  - social media are new tools—but both Worch and Sellner ie in change through mobilisation

  - mirroring left-wing tactics (imitation): IB as 'right-wing clone' of leftist movement organisations (at least according to Sellner); Worch's *autonome Nationalisten*

- But Sellner is broader in his scope of activism, transnational if not global outlook

- Sellner more ideological: articulating vision and framing the movmement, `metapolitik' (e.g., 'Defend Europa' cruise)

- Worch more practical: strategy and tactics and executing actions, emphasis on demonstrations and courts—punishing cities (e.g., Leipzig)

Poll: leadership

Take the survey at
https://forms.gle/QxENrdB3qNp~~LMU~~

- militants more shaped by leaders than 'ideologies'?
- *charismatic* leaders more likely to lead to violence?
- more horizontally organised groups less likely to be violent?

- leaders responsible/liable for violence of their followers?
- incitement through rhetoric similar to explicit orders?
- leaders' ability to control ongoing violence overstated?

Poll results (Respondents: 2)

Militant movements are more shaped by their leaders than by their ideologies.

Poll results
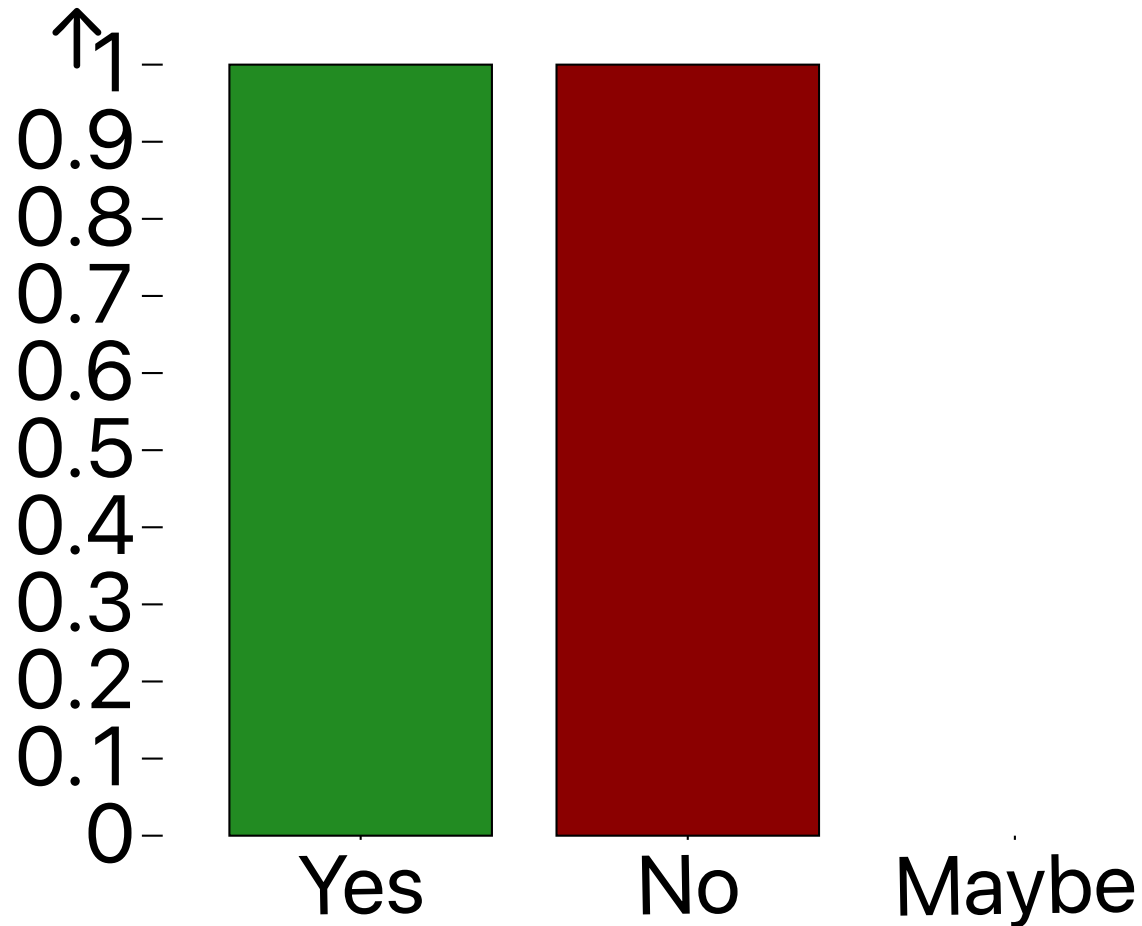
Research closer look

- Choi (2022) - Leader Nationalism, Ethnic Identity, and Terrorist Violence
  - key concept - *terrorism*
  - research design
  - results and findings

- Metodieva (2021) - The Radical Milieu and Radical Influencers of Bosnian Foreign Fighters
  - concepts, research design
  - results and findings

Key concept (Choi 2022)

Terrorism - 'the threatened or actual use of illegal force, directed against civilian targets, by nonstate actors, in order to attain a political goal, through fear, coercion or intimidation' (LaFree and Ackerman 2009, 348).

Research design (Choi 2022, 1153)

Ooof! – what do we take from this?

Since the dependent variable is the count of terrorist incidents carried out by related ethnic groups per country-year, I consider a Poisson regression model as the estimation technique. But I find the Pearson goodness-of-fit x^2 test to be statistically significant (x^2 = 1,842,103, p< 0.001). This suggests that a Poisson regression estimation fails to fit the data correctly. I instead use multilevel mixed-effects negative binomial regression as an alternative estimation method. Because negative binomial regression adds a dispersion parameter to model the unobserved heterogeneity among observations, it can control for the overdispersion found in a Poisson regression model (Hilbe 2007). In addition, given the clustered nature of the data, with ethnic groups nested within year nested within country, I employ a multilevel mixed-effects negative binomial regression in which the ethnic groups comprise the first level, the years comprise the second level, and the countries comprise the third. In doing so, I assume that observations in the same cluster are correlated because they share common-level random effects.

Research design (Choi 2022, 1153)

Since the **dependent variable is the count** [initial technique selection criterion] of terrorist incidents carried out by related ethnic groups per country-year, I consider a Poisson regression model as the estimation technique. But I find the Pearson goodness-of-fit x^2 test to be statistically significant (x^2 = 1,842,103, p< 0.001) [technique diagnostic tool]. This suggests that a **Poisson regression estimation fails to fit the data correctly** [technique reselection]. I instead use multilevel mixed-effects negative binomial regression as an alternative estimation method. Because negative binomial regression **adds a dispersion parameter to model the unobserved heterogeneity among observations, it can control for the overdispersion found in a Poisson regression model** [technical adjustment] (Hilbe 2007). In addition, given the **clustered nature of the data**, with ethnic groups nested within year nested within country, I employ a multilevel mixed-effects negative binomial regression in which the ethnic groups comprise the first level, the years comprise the second level, and the countries comprise the third. In doing so, I assume that observations in the same cluster are correlated because they share common-level random effects.

- sample of 766 ethnic groups from 163 countries during t... ... from 1970 to 2009

- sample data structured by ethnic group and year-country

  - unit of analysis is **group-year-country**

- terrorist attacks executed by ethnic groups in response to nationalist leaders

  - DV: *Ethnic Terrorism* - the total number of terrorist attacks carried out by related ethnic groups per year

- multilevel mixed-effects negative binomial regression analysis

  - multilevel: hierarchic data structure

  - mixed-effects: typically, *fixed* and *random* effects

    - **fixed**: estimation of regression coefficients of the covariates

    - **random**: used to estimate the effect of individual-specific characteristics that are typically unmeasurable

Reading a regression table

Remember: regression is a tool for understanding a phenomenon as a linear function (generally) → (y = mx + b)

Regression results (Choi 2022, 1153)

	Mixed-Effects Negative Binomial
	Model 1
Leader Nationalism	1.008** (0.312)
Political Environment	
Democracy	0.046* (0.018)
Regional Autonomy	0.354 (0.303)
Powerless	0.057 (0.222)
Discriminated	0.987*** (0.237)
Separatist	1.203** (0.434)
Security Environment	
Political Instability	0.107*** (0.014)
Civil War	2.466*** (0.134)
Economic Environment	
Economic Development	0.742*** (0.134)
Religious Environment	
Muslims	0.012* (0.006)
Group Environment	
Group Size	−0.529 (0.814)
Terrorist Outbidding	−0.045* (0.018)
Lagged Ethnic Terrorism	
Constant	−17.541*** (1.418)
Wald χ^2	527.05
Prob $> \chi^2$	0.001
Log likelihood	−6448.42
Observations	22,754

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, and * $p < 0.05$, two-tailed tests

Plotting average marginal effects (AME) (Choi 2022,

AME: average change in the predicted counts when predictor increases by one unit. E.g., a one-unit increase in nationalism is predicted to prompt 1.5 terrorist attacks, all else equal.
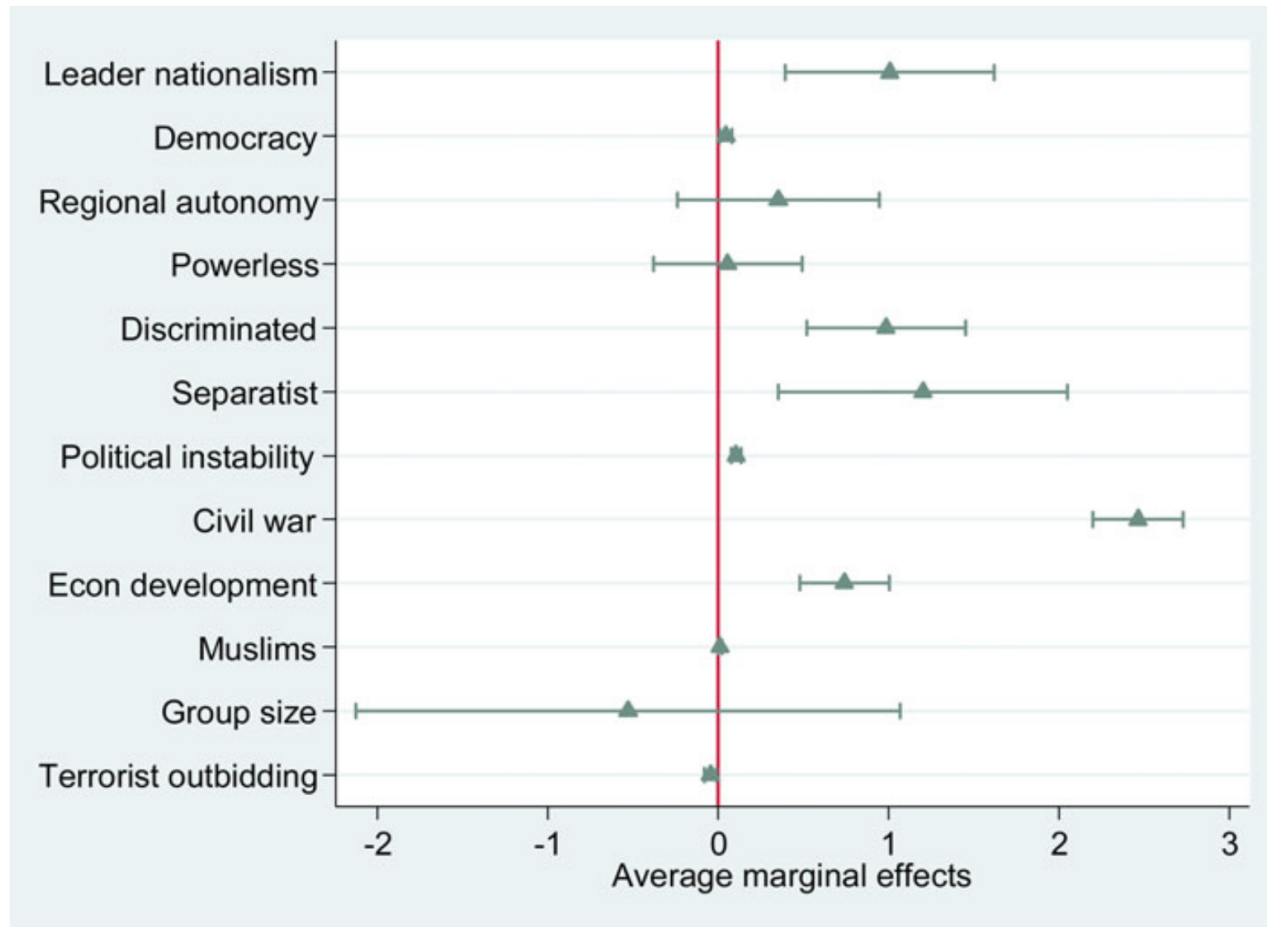
<mark>**Figure 1.** Average marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals</mark>

Sri Lanka: Sinhalese-LTTE case (Choi 2022, 1153)

Findings (Choi 2022, 1153)

- hardline nationalist leaders → more likely to provoke violence from disfavoured ethnic groups

- Political environment matters (remember concept from last class: **opportunity structure**). Democracy allows "disfavored ethnic groups to exploit the opportunities of political institutions such as freedom of association and freedom of the press to garner support for terrorist activity." (cf. Jenne 2007)

Concepts (Metodieva 2021)

- **radical milieu** - conducive environments for radicalisation, recruitment, and eventual engagement in violent extremism (Malthaner and Zeller 2022) (a *family resemblance* concept, many different types and manifestations)

- **parajamaats** - illegal praying congregations ('parallel mosque')

- **power centres** - hotspots of radical activism, centred on influencers, who pushed followers to become foreign fighters

- **radical influencers** - prominent, often charismatic individuals capable of attracting followers

  - various functions: e.g., *ruqya* (spiritual healing)

  - parallels to cases you know of?

- **foreign fighters** - indiviuals who travel to a conflict zone from another territory (prima facie evidence of radicalism → *engagement* in political violence; a 'security failure' by authority of origin state?)
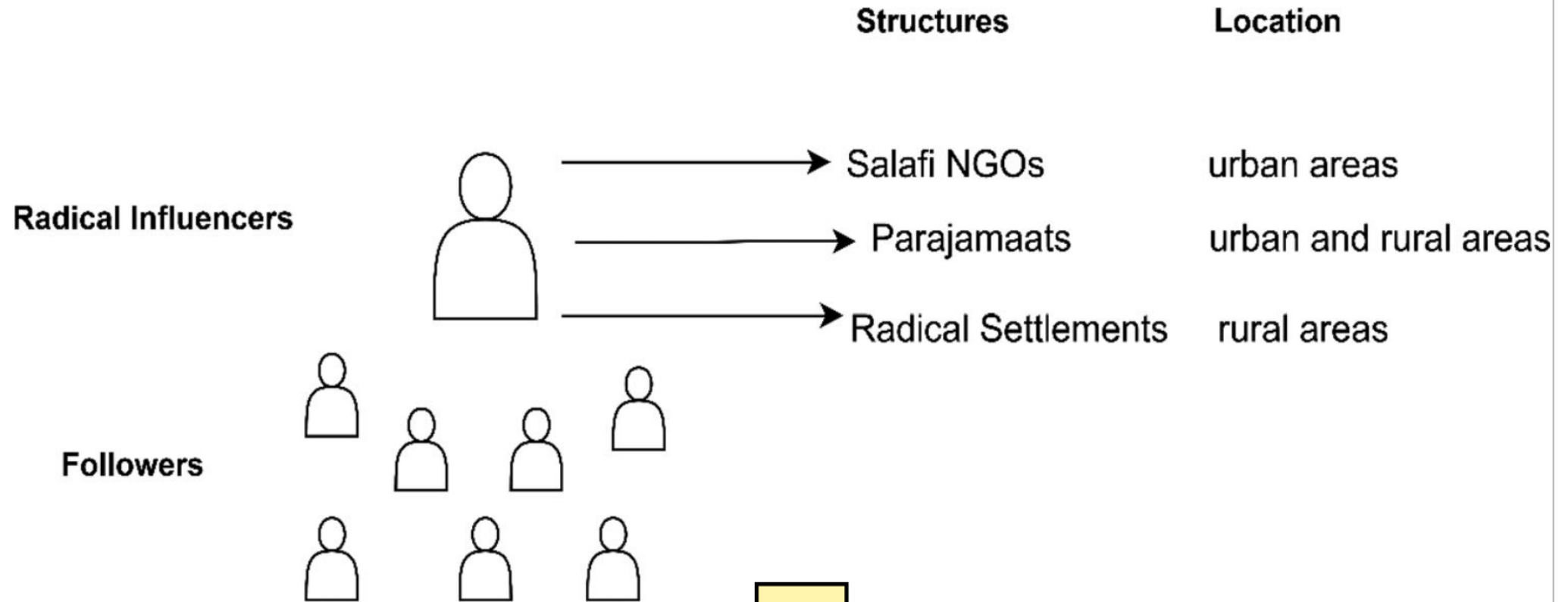
Figure 1. Structures built around radical influencer

Balkans particularly important for IS (Metodieva 202...

three reasons:

1. linked to large diaspora communities in western Europe

2. societies with historical ties to Islam

3. region is marked by recent wars, and thus also by frozen but unresolved political and ethnic disputes

Research design (Metodieva 2021)

- aim: "in what way leadership networks and authority affect how recruitment is done at the local level"; two claims

  1. wartime fuelled the growth of the Salafist movement in BiH (**creation and maintenance of radical milieu**–context! structure!)

  2. radical influencers who emerged had an ideological and organizational impact on the foreign fighter recruitment (**meso –> micro level** recruitment processes—agency!)

- case-based research: 11 radical influencers

  - purposive selection: *advocated violence* (17 nonviolent cases)

    - selecting on the DV (a no-no in inferential statistics—often desirable in case-based research where explaining outcomes [**not 'explaining variation'**] is the objective)

Data

- biographical data for 28 Salafi influencers

  - selected based on their (prominent) radical activism (videos, sermons, organising events)

  - 8 categorical variables: (1) influencer's place of origin, (2) role in the radical milieu, (3) promotion/non-promotion of violence, (4) online and offline activism, (5) background in religious studies, (6) participation in the Bosnian War, (7) power center of influence, and (8) current status

- issues here? omissions?
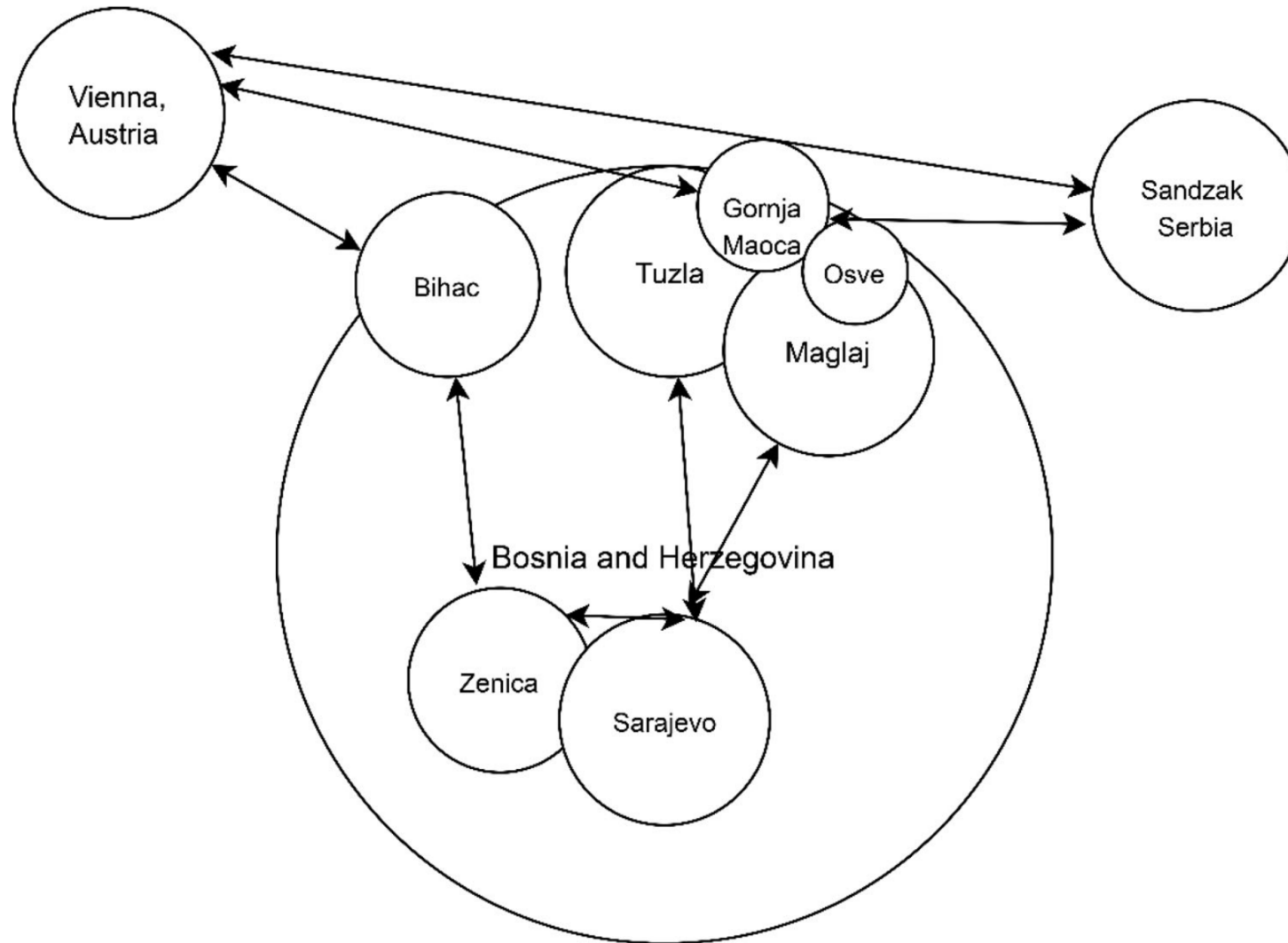
Figure 2. Power centers of foreign fighter recruitment.

Profiles of key influencers (Metodieva 2021, 13)

Nusret Imamović

Shared characteristics

Bilal Bosnić

Advocated for al-Nusra Front

Travelled to Syria

Advocated for IS

Sentenced in BiH

- ideological influence on parts of radical milieu
- 'jihad' in speeches/sermons
- opposed state and religious institutions
- recruited foreign fighters
- lectures, preaching around radical milieu
- Educated in Shariah law
- personal connections to Saudi Islamic centre in Vienna
- Former members of El Mudzahid in the Bosnian War

Conclusion (Metodieva 2021, 17)

Radical influencers may have **different pathways** and histories across cases of foreign fighter recruitment. They may vary in the resources they rely on. **In the postwar context of BiH, radical influencers shape** the recruitment of foreign fighters by managing preexisting "institutions" of the radical milieu. Influencers may fill a variety of power gaps and thus be able to access and target their followers. The reference to influencers instead of "recruiters" or "radical imams", points to the finding that radical authority figures may have both ideological and (sometimes) operational functions in recruitment. Although they may lack strategic links to the centralized leadership of a terror organization, they have the power to influence the "bottom," where prospective foreign fighters are situated.

Any questions, concerns, feedback for this class?

Anonymous feedback here:
https://forms.gle/NfF1pCfYMbkAT3WP6

Alternatively, please send me an email: m.zeller@lmu.de

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