INTRODUCTION

During the first year of my transition from military service to staffing US Senate leaders on Capitol Hill, I began working on how to counter acts of terrorism. The year was 1996, and I had served on active duty as a Surface Warfare Officer in the US Navy since 1988. I understood important military concepts such as the capabilities of various Russian-made weapons systems and the impact of Tomahawk cruise missile technology on air superiority. Still, my experience did not help me comprehend how to tackle suicide terrorism. In July of 1997, two people walked into the Mahane Yehuda Market carrying backpacks full of explosives and nails, detonating the bombs and killing themselves and 15 people around them, wounding 170 more. Just a few months later, in September 1997, the horrors were repeated on Ben Yehuda street, where three suicide bombers killed seven people, including three 14-year-old girls, and wounded more than 190 others.[1] The people who killed themselves and others created horrific spectacles. I read of both events from my desk in the Senate Hart Office Building in Washington, DC, feeling angry and frustrated that my national security training had not prepared me for dealing with these acts of terrorism. This launched my search to understand organized non-state violence. By "organized" I mean non-random – the ability of some person or group to produce acts of violence over time. By "non-state" I mean groups of people we don't traditionally think of in the context of state-on-state warfare: global terrorist groups, insurgents, and criminal groups such as drug traffickers and mafias.

I began my academic career studying psychology, reflecting my interest in human behavior. I began my professional career by serving in the military, reflecting my belief in the importance of public service. In 1996, after eight years on active duty in the US Navy, during which I served in the Gulf War during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and earned a graduate degree in Security Studies from Georgetown University in Washington, DC, I began working on national security issues in the US Senate. I had moved from military combat operations to national security policymaking at the highest levels of the US government. My psychology and military backgrounds gave me a perspective that was well suited to combatting the issues of war where the belligerents were clearly identified by the uniforms worn and the turf occupied. However, when faced with the issue of suicide bombings and terrorism, I felt underprepared, and I found myself in the midst of a national security community facing the same struggle.

I accepted a position working for Senator Connie Mack, who served on the Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, the Banking Committee, and the Joint Economic Committee, and who chaired the Republican Conference – the third-most-senior position in Senate leadership. I was his National Security Advisor, and I was not going to waste a moment of this opportunity. I dug into US–Cuba relations following Fidel Castro's shooting down of two unarmed Cessna aircraft in the Florida Strait, leading to legislative and policy changes to the Foreign Sovereign Immunity Act. I developed plans to support the peace processes in the Middle East and Northern Ireland, and to support democratic leaders in Hong Kong during the process of reversion of Hong Kong from UK sovereignty to the People's Republic of China. As a war veteran with a graduate degree from Georgetown University, I possessed experience, knowledge, and motivation; however, at my Senate desk in 1997, I struggled with my inability to address non-state violence. One cannot stop a suicide terrorist in a crowded market by launching cruise missiles at that same crowded market. As a member of the national security policymaking community, I was unprepared.

In the two decades since my transition from the Navy to the Senate, I've worked in industry, government, and academia, and I've learned a great deal from these experiences. I ran an operational business unit at L-3 Communications, a large defense and government contractor. During the administration of President George W. Bush, I was

appointed Chief of Staff of US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS); CBP is the largest law enforcement agency in the world and has the responsibility of securing the country's borders while facilitating trade and travel. I have also had the great privilege of leading research initiatives sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) and the DHS Science and Technology directorate (DHS S&T). During the transition from thinking about Tomahawks to thinking about terrorism, I have explored and grown skeptical of many popular theories of non-state organized violence. For example, I question policies based on slogans such as "radical Islam" and other national or religious identities. Instead, I've come to appreciate science-based approaches to national security, particularly those based on social science and economics.

One thing I've learned, and a major theme of this book, is that assigning identity labels to groups who commit violence hinders effective policymaking. My experience leading government-funded research has allowed me to realize that we need more scientific work on human behavior as it relates to organized violence. While massive investments dating back to at least 1914 have profoundly transformed the world, we've focused on engineering and weapons technologies and not on human behavior. My experience has convinced me that violence does not emanate from religion, ethnicity, or poverty, and that entire groups of people do not act as a mass. I've also learned that military operations do not always lead to successes over violent adversaries.

Throughout history and throughout the world we witness violent acts committed by members of the secular, the sectarian, the majority, the minority, the poor, and the wealthy. Of the countless stories of violence we read about, it is important to note that only a limited number of individuals, and not an entire identity group, commits the acts. One person carried the explosive backpack into the crowded Israeli marketplace, but the other thousands of Palestinian people did not. If only a small fraction of Muslims commits acts of terrorism, then it is inaccurate to conclude that those who do engage in violence do so as a result of Islamic doctrine. Dylann Roof claimed that he shot and killed nine people in a Charleston church in 2015 in order to start a race war. His act of violence against civilians for political reasons undoubtedly meets the generally accepted definition of terrorism, even though his skin color and religion do not resemble the popular media portrayal of a terrorist. Despite this, Dylann Roof's

proclaimed ideology was hardly unique: the bulk of the Southern Poverty Law Center's designated hate groups similarly advocate for violence against minority groups.[2] Hardly anyone would argue that white supremacist groups represent the majority of white Americans. As we invest in science in support of national security, we need to look beyond simple markers of identity and better understand and examine the human decision-making process behind all those who engage in violence.

Interestingly, piercing the veil of the common identity language of national security allows for new perspectives of organized violence – new categories for organizing and understanding. For example, if we see a person selling drugs in order to make money, purchase weapons, and kill innocents in order to raise more money, buy more weapons, and take on a state militia, have we seen a "terrorist," "insurgent," or "criminal"? If that person is Catholic or Muslim, Mexican or Pakistani, do we know if that fact of identity influenced the violent acts? These terms, "terrorist," "insurgent," and "criminal," simplify the chaos of the world, allowing us to organize what we see and read about in buckets that seem orderly. At the same time, however, these simplifications also mislead us. Our long wars since September 11, 2001, in part, can be explained by this misleading simplification. We are not at war with Radical Islam.

Over the past decade, while engaged in armed conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya, members of US national security leadership have witnessed debates over proper strategies: *counter-terrorism* (CT), *counterinsurgency* (COIN), or *law enforcement* (LE) with respect to *transnational criminal organizations* (TCOs). When we add these terms to identity labels, we get digestible news but, perhaps, flawed policy. That is, the term *Islamic terrorism* describes what we see, but when we conflate the term with the causes of violence, we have confused correlation with causation. The killers were Muslim and did engage in an act of terror (correlation), but did Islam cause the act of terror?

Readers of this book will hear a perspective of organized violence that is different from what is popular in the media and among national security intellectuals. This perspective matters because we err when policymakers or pundits assign a label to an act and then refer to the associated library of policy responses. We fight a terrorist as if the person is not also an insurgent, criminal, spouse, parent, business

person, consumer, and friend. We bypass the individual when we rush to create a story about the group. This book asks you, the reader, to consider one idea at the outset: violence does not emanate from a person's group identity. Because policies of the past decade have been based on the faulty logic of identity-based collective violence, they have been wrong.

To better keep us safe, we've got to ask, "where does violence come from?" Organized violence lies along a spectrum of human actions and human choices – a continuum of possible decisions made by individuals within competitive markets, by people with goals and ambitions, and also by individuals confronting scarcity of time, wealth, information, and freedom. This book will explore the lines that separate crime, insurgency, and terrorism, as well as the role of identity in understanding organized violence. The result of this exploration will have significant consequences for policymakers: by better understanding the nature of human violence, we can better understand threats to our safety and security and make the world a more difficult place for illicit actors and groups to operate.

In addition to anecdotes from recent history, this book uses narratives from fictional stories to help unpack theories and material that can be dense and fact-laden. When pursuing my graduate degree in National Security Studies in the early 1990s, I felt the need to give up on fiction; I believed that I could not afford time off for the luxury of a novel or a movie. Over time, however, I've come to appreciate the value and relevance of literature. As ascribed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "fiction reveals truth that reality obscures." A good book or film help can help us understand complex issues and thereby provide valuable insight to people concerned with national security. In my work, I've explored how literature can illuminate organized violence in ways that are relevant to my day jobs. By weaving in references to fiction throughout this book, the reader will join this exploration of the value of a tale well told.

Understanding terrorism helps us to understand insurgency, civil wars, and criminal violence. Rather than separate, unrelated categories, these forms of violence share common drivers. By looking beyond the labels often ascribed to these acts of violence, such as "religious sect" or "ethnic tribe," a different and powerful story of organized violence emerges. By peering orthogonally at the long-held canons of national security, we can begin to understand the story behind horrific

market bombings. Viewing violence as a human choice, rather than an inevitable result of religion or ethnicity, is essential to countering it. This book was written with the goal of articulating a new social-science-based analysis of violence and inspiring readers to seek out new approaches to national security.

1 VIOLENCE

Imagine a man taking a moment, between the first dance and the cutting of the cake at his daughter's wedding, to order an act of extreme violence. In the opening scene of Mario Puzzo's *The Godfather*, we see the Sicilian-American immigrant named Amerigo Bonasera, a legitimate business owner, asking Don Vito Corleone, the boss of the Corleone crime family, to commit murder.

Bonasera offers to pay cash in exchange for the murder of two boys who assaulted his daughter. Don Vito negotiates with him in the library of the family home, where just through the window we see and hear the music and dancing of Connie Corleone's wedding party. Steeped in culture and highly stylized, this moment reinforces Puzo's statement that "no Sicilian can refuse any request on his daughter's wedding day." Bonasera requests revenge for two young men's violent actions against his daughter after a New York City courtroom acquitted the culprits, humiliating and enraging Bonasera. Failed by the official system, he turns to the Mafia and seeks to hire Don Corleone to kill the boys.

The head of the Corleone crime family sees this as an opportunity to pick up a loyal constituent and negotiates on two fronts. He counter-proposes to cause the boys "to suffer," but refuses to "do murder." In exchange for this act "of justice," Don Vito requests Bonasera's loyalty, not his cash. Bonasera agrees and demonstrates his assent in Sicilian style – with a bow and a kiss on Don Vito's ring.

Now, imagine that the Governor of New York tasks you with bringing an end to Don Vito and the Corleone crime family. You might

take the generally accepted approach to addressing organized violence: identify the associated identities by race, religion, ethnicity or tribe; then ascribe a category to the act such as crime, insurgency, or terrorism; then, finally, ascribe motive to identity-category before responding. You might first try to understand the Sicilian Mafia, the Cosa Nostra, then compare and contrast with the Corleone family specifically. You might examine how the Catholic religion and Sicilian culture, as practiced by Italian-American crime bosses, impacts their organizations. You would likely build an organizational chart highlighting familial and other relationships.

Like the Senator Pat Geary character in *The Godfather: Part II*, you might make generalizations about Italian-Americans and the crime syndicates that they run. You might target the leadership of the Corleone family, arresting Don Vito himself. Those familiar with Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* story understand the likely unintended consequences of taking out Don Vito, either making way for Sonny to rise to leadership and perhaps expand into the heroin trade, or allowing the other crime families to take over more of the New York marketplace. Through your thoughtful and respectable approach, you may have exacerbated and worsened the public safety and security of the people of New York.

This example of organized crime abstracts well to insurgencies and terrorism. If one were to counter actors in these other categories, one would use kinetic force (law enforcement or military) to take key targets out of action. In the national security profession, we assiduously measure numbers of key targets killed or captured, and acts of violence occurring in specific geographic areas. At some point, based upon these metrics, we declare victory. The standard of victory can be as low as *no acts of known violence in a location on a map*, or at least none that we observe. But what "victory" did we actually accomplish? Did we allow for a next-in-line to rise up, a new, more dangerous leader? Did we clear out one boss to the advantage of others? Judging by recent history, such as policy responses following the 9/11 attacks on the United States, and responses to the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban, we seem to do exactly this. We have some metric of violent acts committed and look for a change in those measures so we can feel good about our contribution, only to feel pangs of anxiety when the near-future headlines admonish us: the same people are back, but following a different leader.

This generally accepted identity-category approach (e.g., Sicilian crime syndicate, Islamic terrorism) to understanding organized violence jeopardizes our safety and security by neglecting the stories of individual people and the markets in which they make decisions. Explaining an individual's behavior must require more than a label or two – Arab, Jew, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, black, white, Hispanic, Russian, American, etc. The war in Afghanistan provides a great example of why it is dangerous for us to use these terms to define a conflict. The way in which we went to war was impeded by a fixation on terms like *drug trafficker*, *terrorist*, and *insurgent*. Policy leaders at the most senior levels of US government could not agree on whether we were fighting a criminal organization, an insurgency, or a terrorist group, and this debate bogged down the establishment of a comprehensive military and policy approach to the conflict. This is because different federal agencies are set up to combat different kinds of threats based on the terminology used. The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), for example, combats global drug trafficking. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) combat criminals, weapons, drugs, and cash moving across borders into the United States. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) exerts preeminence on counter-terrorism cases from a law enforcement perspective. US Special Operations Command claims the same alpha status within the US Department of Defense. Assigning tasks to a particular agency within the government often follows which terms one uses to describe the task: crime, insurgency, or terrorism. Avoiding this language and turning to the language of economics instead will better inform our decision-making.

By moving to the language of markets, we can see conflict more clearly. For example, instead of seeing Islamic terrorism, a Mexican cartel, or a white supremacist, can we see entrepreneurs using force and coercion, as well as other goods and services, in competition, to exert dominance in efforts to capture markets? Seeing the conflict from this perspective allows us to better understand the nature of the violence, the source of the violence, and the methods to undermine and deter the violence.

As human beings, we share something seemingly basic, yet more powerful and profound than the different colors of our skin and the languages we speak. We share a desire to thrive and to find meaning as individuals and betterment for ourselves and for our kin.

Our behaviors, although often correlated with the aforementioned identity-category labels, ultimately take shape at a much more fundamental level; that is, we make choices based on our goals, resources, constraints, threats, and concerns. Observing violent conflicts while appreciating and even embracing the complexity of individual human behaviors in this way reveals a powerful perspective on organized acts of violence.

As wars between states decline, violence within states (e.g., insurgents like the Taliban) and across states (e.g., transnational movements like Al Qaeda and ISIS) evolves, seemingly complicating the national security landscape. More and more, sub-state actors like organized criminals, insurgents, and terrorists threaten national security. Status quo policymakers and scholars attempt to divide the response to the threat into self-contained fields of: (1) law enforcement (LE) (e.g., to counter TCOs), (2) counterinsurgency (COIN), and (3) counter-terrorism (CT), with the well-intentioned goal of imposing order and context on the messiness of violent relations below the state level. However, in so doing, these elites of the national security institutions, lamenting the lost simplicity of the bipolar world, introduce misleading analytical tendencies. This clean dissection of organized violence into self-contained identity-categories and response categories (LE, COIN, CT) leads to a comforting conclusion. What feels like knowledge is misunderstanding, and subsequently jeopardizes our own safety and security. We gain simplicity but give up insight. We address nothing short of life and death for ourselves, our families, and our communities when we combat organized violence. With conflicts resurging in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, with racial violence in the United States spiking in prominence, and with organized criminal groups globalizing, now seems an appropriate time to reconsider the way in which we view organized violence.

By seeking to impose an identity-category order on violence using broad terms, scholars and policymakers bypass the relevance and role of the individual in a market – behind every act of sub-state violence lie individuals making decisions in a world of scarcity. Each violent actor is motivated by individual goals, constrained by circumstances, and has determined that his or her interests would be best served through violence. In essence, sub-state violence is an economic problem – not in the sense that all violent actors seek monetary gains, but, rather, in the sense that organized violence, when it occurs, results from a market in which individuals rationally pursue their self-interests. Violent groups