Title:

The Ethics of Security Research. An Ethics Framework for Contemporary Security Studies

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The Ethics of Security Research
An Ethics Framework for Contemporary Security Studies

This paper draws attention to the ethical issues accompanying empirical research on security, offering a framework for ethical assessment. Speaking to the various subfields and schools of applied security studies broadly conceived, we classify the many ethical issues specific to empirical research on security, conflict and political violence into *researcher-related problems*, *subject-related problems* and *result-related problems*, we evaluate their importance and variations, and highlight potential mitigation pathways. This effort brings together an existing but fragmented literature and builds upon the authors' own experiences in several subfields and schools of "hands-on" research on security and political violence.
Keywords: *Ethics, Research, IRB, Security, Conflict, Terrorism.*

THE CASE FOR AN ETHICS FRAMEWORK IN SECURITY STUDIES

The present article seeks to draw attention to the ethics of conducting security research, by offering a comprehensive typology of the ethical issues that accompany empirical research on conflict, security and political violence. By doing so, it seeks to fill a void in applied security studies broadly conceived: to our knowledge, the field does not yet possess *a systematic review and examination of its specific ethical challenges*. To be sure generalist ethics frameworks exist – like the Nuremberg Code (1947), the Declaration of Helsinki (1964), the Belmont Report (1979), or the guidelines more recently produced by national research bodies (e.g. ESRC in the UK, ARC in Australia, ERC in the EU) – but these generic frameworks fail to acknowledge the specificity of studying political violence, conflict and insecurity. The Uppsala Code of Ethics for Scientists (Gustafsson et al. 1984) was circulated in the *Journal of Peace Research* but it was similarly generic and extremely succinct. In addition, Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) have a historical bias towards protecting the participants and not so much the researcher, which as we will illustrate is crucial in security research. In sum, it appears that at best "[IRB's and professional bodies'] advice almost always falls short of helping the researcher successfully navigate unanticipated ethical, social and political challenges in the field" (King 2009: 8), and at worst they get "paralyzed" and refuse to give clearance (Zwi et al. 2006: 264). In this context, just like scholars who have identified the main ethical issues specifically related to research in other well-defined fields (e.g. Baele 2013 and Humphreys 2014 for development economics; Buchanan and Zimmer 2012 for Internet research), we aim to provide a discussion which is tailored to the needs of the field.

Ethics has so far mostly been understood to be a component of security studies in three important yet indirect ways, which we seek to supplement. First, contributions have been made on professional ethics, discussing topics like data transparency (e.g. Kapiszewski and Kirilova 2014; Moravcsik 2014)[1] or experiments' pre-registration (e.g. Wagenmakers et al. 2012), in line with major professional publications like APSA's *Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science* (2012). Second, many scholars have engaged with the ethical/moral character of particular security policies (e.g. Bellamy 2006 on torture in counterterrorism) in studies that build on the venerable "just war" debate. This second understanding of ethics in security research is best embodied by ISA's "Ethics" section (IETHICS). A third way to think about ethics in security studies has been to reflect on the researcher's own normative position vis-à-vis his/her object. This debate stands at the core of feminist approaches to international relations (e.g. Tickner 1988) and critical security studies (e.g. Cox 1981; Booth 1991), and is very present both within securitization theory (e.g. Aradau 2004; Floyd 2010; Roe 2012) and among scholars studying intractable conflicts from a psychological perspective (e.g. Bar-On 2002 on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict). Burkes' "Ethics" chapter in Burgess' *Routledge Handbook of New Security Studies* (2012), which discusses the normative commitments of security studies scholars, exemplifies this third understanding. Midway between these last two understandings stands Price's edited volume *Moral Limit and Possibility in World Politics* (2008). However, none of these three understandings of the role of ethics in security research directly relates to the most common conceptualization of ethics as the study of the moral "dilemmas [researchers] face in their research and academic work" (Smith 2003: 56). This classical conception of research ethics, the one embodied by IRBs, has been surprisingly neglected in security studies.[2] The present paper fills this gap by exploring the practical ethical problems associated with applied security research. Refusing to narrow the scope of the inquiry according to one or another particular theoretical approach (e.g. deontology, consequentialism, etc.), we work with a broad and common-sense understanding of what an "ethical problem" is, defining it as any research-related concern that intuitively evokes "fundamental concepts of ethics, such as fairness, justice, equity, and especially power" (Lewenstein 2006: 201). Similarly we leave open the scope of "applied security studies", so as to trigger the widest possible discussion; at most we limit the present exploration to empirical research that involves the gathering of original information on security problems, excluding more conceptual or theoretical types of research that do not include this component.

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[1] See also the "Data Access and Research Transparency (DA-RT): A Joint Statement by Political Science Journal Editors", published among others by the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and available at http://jcr.sagepub.com/content/59/6/951.full.pdf+html.

[2] It is for example very rare to find it in the main handbooks of security studies. Among others, considerations on research ethics are completely absent from Mauer and Dunn Cavelty's *Routledge Handbook of Security Studies* (2012) or from Collins' *Contemporary security studies* (2016). As mentioned, Burgess' 2012 *Handbook of New Security Studies* contains a general chapter on "security as ethics (Burke 2012) which only at times points towards properly ethical dilemmas. Salter and Mutlu's (2012) *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* only (briefly) examines one of the problems we address, in D'Aoust chapter (D'Aoust 2012).

Of course particular questions pertaining to this classical conception of ethics have already been discussed, in two main ways. First, recent initiatives from area studies associations have tried to lay down their most pressing ethical challenges – most prominently the Project on Middle East Political Science' forum on "The Ethics of Research in the Middle East"[3] (2014) and the Central Eurasian Studies Society's (CESS) "Taskforce on Fieldwork Safety" final report (2016).[4] These initiatives are excellent and their insights are integrated into the much wider framework provided here. Second, there is an already stimulating literature on the ethics of participant observation in violent settings (e.g. Sluka 1990; Wright & Bennett 1990) and conflict zone research, which re-emerged following Leaning's (2001) brief guidelines for research on refugees and Goodhand's (2000) attempt to "mapping out some of the ethical challenges and responses" of research in conflict zones. Sriram and colleagues' (2009) edited volume is arguably the pinnacle of this debate.[5] The present contribution aims to integrate and organize these important but disjointed contributions into a systematic and broader discussion that goes beyond the specificities of conflict zones.

We do not claim that academics researching on conflict, political violence and insecurity outside these two discussions are unaware of the most important ethical issues associated with their investigations, nor that their proposals go too swiftly through IRBs. On the contrary, we wish to offer a systematic exploration and organization of the growing concerns across the field over what is "right" or "wrong" to do in security research, as illustrated for example by recent posts on the IR blog *Duck of Minerva*.[6] Ethical issues triggered by the crucial task of unearthing the dynamics of security, conflict and political violence are numerous and complex, and therefore merit more than informal discussions. In this way, our framework aims to enhance researchers' ethical reflexivity, thereby fostering good ethical practice in security research by raising awareness of the full spectrum of ethical problems potentially associated with their research. If incorporated into formal ethics evaluations by IRBs, into professional associations' official codes of conducts,[7] or into research methods graduate classes, such a framework could also prevent the kind of incongruous situations produced by the blind application of generic ethics rules (e.g. obtaining participants' written informed consent, avoid deception) to research projects where these commandments are impossible or even dangerous to implement. In other words, we do not argue for either more stringent or more

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[3] http://pomeps.org/2014/06/11/the-ethics-of-research-in-the-middle-east-memos/, last accessed January 6, 2017.
[4] http://www.centraleurasia.org/assets/site/cess-task-force-on-fieldwork-safety_final-report-march-2016.pdf, last accessed January 6, 2017.
[5] It is worth noting that almost each of these contributions starts with a critique of general ethics guidelines, calling for more tailored ethical engagement. For example, Leaning (2001: 1433) argues that general frameworks "do not address the special circumstances of enlisting refugees or the internally displaced in research". Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway similarly claim that IRBs using general guidelines "find it difficult to assess how the normative principles guiding the review process should be interpreted in such settings [with refugees] and which research methods and practices best promote ethical research" (2007: 300).
[6] See for example Wibben's post "On doing 'something' … as academics", available at http://duckofminerva.com/2015/09/on-doing-something-as-academics.html#more-27704, last accessed January 6, 2017.
[7] One example is the American Psychological Association – see http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx.

lax ethical scrutiny and guidelines, but rather for more adequate and pertinent evaluations and decisions.

Offering such a tailored discussion is more pressing than ever due to the multiplication of "hands-on" research on security – experimental or quasi-experimental approaches with actors involved in coercion, conflict or security policies design (e.g. Titeca 2016 on Congolese police officers; Thomson 2016 on UK security officials; Halperin et al. 2014 or Hameiri and Halperin 2015 on peacemaking experimental workshops), field studies (e.g. Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva and Medin 2011 on violent extremism; Heathershaw 2009 on authoritarian repression in Central Asia; Wood 2003 on insurgent participation in Salvador; Beber and Blattman 2013 on child soldiering in Uganda; Ratelle 2013 on extremists in Northern Caucasus), or large-scale data collection in conflict zones or unstable regions (e.g. Humphreys and Weinstein 2006 and 2008 on Sierra Leone; D'Aoust, Sterck and Verwimp 2016 or Colombo, D'Aoust and Sterck 2015 on Burundi). Vlassenroot goes as far as claiming that conflict settings "offer opportunities to researchers" and that "successful research in conflict regions is not conditioned by the level of insecurity as such" (2006: 191).[8] This trend is more than welcome but also ethically highly hazardous, especially given the increasing pressures to publish "ground-breaking", "high-impact" research in an extremely competitive academic environment. For example, Ratelle (2013: 71) boldly explains:

> "In several cases during my fieldwork in the North Caucasus, I openly put myself in danger in order to obtain research material by accepting to meet with insurgents or immersing myself in dangerous positions. This decision was often not intentional but was the result of what I would label as academic peer pressure. In order to fulfil impossible scientific standards of research associated with field research, I put my own security at risk. Fieldwork and ethnography in conflict zones often follow an extreme pace where the researcher is not able to fully assess the risk he/she is taking. It is only when the researcher is back from the field that he or she fully realizes the extent to which his or her life was in danger"

In reaction to this and similar serious situations, we offer a clear and systematic review of the ethical issues specific to research on political violence, (in)security and conflict, classifying them into *researcher-related problems* (associated to both psychological and physical security risks), *subject-related problems* (again associated to both psychological and physical security risks), or *result-related problems*. Using examples from contemporary research including the authors' own works in several subfields of security studies, we appraise and discuss these three families of ethical problems, discerning their variants and weighing potential solutions.[9] Table 1 in annex summarizes the discussion and highlights

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[8] Mertus rightly observes that "while in the past researchers were implicitly or explicitly forbidden from entering zones of 'hot conflict', today most researchers expect to be free to go nearly anywhere and investigate nearly anything" (Mertus 2009: 165).

[9] It is not the aim of this paper to identify and advocate clear-cut solutions for any single problem. Because almost none of the issues described here has such a clear-cut solution, we rather highlight the questions that need to be addressed by

the most important questions that need to be raised by professional associations, reflected on by researchers, and subsequently addressed in ethical screening by IRBs willing to offer constructive risk mitigation strategies.

THREE TYPES OF ETHICAL PROBLEMS

1) Researcher-related problems

The first type of ethical problems that can emerge in security studies emerges out of *the researcher's own position, chiefly in terms of the negative consequences he/she might experience in conducting particular types of research on security*. Safeguarding his/her own security and wellbeing should be a central concern for researchers involved in studying political violence and conflict because the most common reason why projects are abandoned are due to the risks to the researcher himself. As previously noted, IRBs tend to have a bias towards protecting the security of subjects, so researchers' risks need to be better acknowledged (Gallaher 2009; Mertus 2009). To discuss these risks and associated ethical dilemmas, we distinguish here between those related to the physical security of researchers (including being jailed, experiencing harassment, or being expelled from a country), and those related to their psychology.

a)   Ethical problems related to researchers' physical security

Some research designs may create, when not properly considered, very real possibilities of major harm done to researchers by violent actors, including in particular cases the researchers' own government. When engaging in "hands-on" research on political violence, the probability for the researcher to get into serious trouble is not insignificant, as the examples discussed below illustrate. As Goodhand argues, there should therefore be a "need to constantly assess whether the results of the research warrant the risks involved" (Goodhand 2000: 9).

Risks are easily identifiable when it comes to research in conflict zones. Goodhand's paper and Sriram's volume review these risks, rightly highlighting direct security risks to the researcher's life when conducting interviews in conflict zones, giving for example guidelines on how/when to avoid dangerous places and individuals. However, high risks also exist for two other, non- conflict zone types of research, on which we concentrate here.

The first one is field research on violent political groups (including terrorist groups) conducted in societies not currently experiencing violent conflict. Following the legitimate demand to conduct research on extremist political actors outside the ivory tower, more and more researchers meet directly with extremists (e.g. Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva and Medin 2011). Extremist actors' reactions

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IRBs and explore the various ways through which problems can be mitigated given the specificities of each research project.

can be difficult to predict and could potentially be violent. This therefore calls for specific security provisions, chiefly refusing to meet subjects in non-public or remote areas or at their homes (e.g. Gallaher 2009: 135) and making sure no private information about the researcher (e.g. home address, private phone number) is openly available on the web.

Given these risks and the possibilities offered by online communication, the web has today become the biggest "field" for research on violent actors. This might give researchers the impression that they are safe – however, online research on violent groups brings serious security risks that also need to be mitigated. The most serious risk is to attract the attention of violent actors themselves by navigating their webpages or interacting even involuntarily with them online. Aldridge and Decary-Hetu (2015: 135) for example evoke their own experience of crawling the drugs cryptomarket, where the administrator of an illegal website discovered that it was being crawled and mined. The administrator wrongly assumed that the researchers intended to use the information for the benefits of law enforcement agencies, and was therefore so concerned that he threatened their life. The scholars also highlight the practice of "hack back" from online criminal actors, thereby advocating extensive anonymity and protection procedures for online research.

But the most likely risk is in fact for the researcher to be "flagged" by his/her own government or another government and face potentially serious criminal charges. Chiefly, carelessly mining, downloading or storing extensive amounts of terrorist or criminal material can lead to prosecution. In the UK for example, the wording of the 2006 Terrorism Acts is ambiguous and has already created problems for researchers, the most prominent one being the arrest of PhD student Rizwaan Sabir from the University of Nottingham in 2008, who was collecting primary documentation for his research on Islamic terrorism.[10] Reflecting on this and other similar cases, Reynolds (2012) asks: "Are researchers protected from prosecution under the auspices of academic freedom when conducting terrorism research?", to which he plainly answers "no", before detailing the many guarantees that scholars working on online terrorist activity should obtain before launching a research.

A second type of research where serious security risks exist is that in (or even simply on) authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes. The ongoing rise of the "competitive authoritarianism" model (Levitsky and Way 2002; see also Schedler 2013; 2015; Lewis 2013) currently attracts an increasing amount of much-needed research on these regimes and more classical autocratic ones. Yet the risks associated with conducting interviews or participant observations in authoritarian states such as Tajikistan, Kazakhstan or Saudi Arabia, or "competitive authoritarian" countries like Rwanda, Burundi or Russia, should not be underestimated. In line with the CESS taskforce report already evoked, Mertus (2009: 167) rightly argues that "the risks of relying on the state where the

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[10] For a summary of the case, see "The Nottingham Two and the War on Terror: Which of us will be next?" in the *Times Higher Education* (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/the-nottingham-two-and-the-war-on-terror-which-of-us-will-be-next/402258.article, last accessed January 6, 2017).

state is a serious perpetrator of violence and abuses cannot be overstated". The example of Cambridge PhD student Giulio Regeni, who died researching Egyptian labour unions, is the most recent case in point.[11] Another example is that of PhD student, Alex Sodiqov, who was working on a University of Exeter-led ESRC-funded project on conflict management in former Soviet republics. Conducting interviews of members of the opposition in his country, in June 2014 he was arrested and charged with treason and espionage in Tajikistan, and jailed, with high uncertainty about the potential outcome of the case. He was eventually permitted to leave the country with his family thanks to intense diplomatic action. These two cases should encourage us to seriously reconsider the risks when research takes place in (competitive) authoritarian regimes: whilst the possibility of harassment and surveillance by the government is well-known and documented,[12] life-changing and potentially life-threatening risks have not yet been sufficiently acknowledged. However, these risks do exist and are varied, for two reasons. First, because officials in these kinds of political systems have a wider range of potential responses than the direct security threats that might occur in conflict zones – e.g. deportation, retaliation on research assistants, unlimited imprisonment. Second, because a broad range of official political actors – e.g. local armed forces, security services – can use violence in a semi-autonomous way, without much control from the central authority. For example, Titeca (2016) describes how Congolese local police forces seriously threatened him while he was conducting research on their informal practices of revenue collection.[13]

The security risks brought about by these three types of research – conflict zones, field and online research on violent groups, and research in (and on) non-democratic states – can be mitigated by paying careful attention to two key factors: researcher's experience and knowledge of the field, and researcher's identity disclosure (including the issue of consent). First, research experience is a crucial factor not to be dismissed when working in dangerous contexts. Junior researchers may be unable to undertake the risk assessment suggested by Mertus (2009: 170-171). Goodhand claims that "it is unethical to involve researchers who are inexperienced and unfamiliar with working in areas of conflict" (Goodhand 2000: 9), and the same can be argued for authoritarian regimes and internet research on violent actors. This factor is often ignored: it is, for example, a common practice to send or allow inexperienced PhD students or contractual researchers to collect data or conduct interviews in dangerous settings, maybe rarely in conflict zones but certainly frequently in authoritarian

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[11] We do not claim here that Egyptian authorities are directly responsible for the murder of Regeni, but rather highlight the risk of conducting research in a state that commits or passively observes human rights violations. For an evocative summary of the role of the Egyptian authorities in this case, see
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/egypt-murder-giulio-regeni, last accessed January 6, 2017.

[12] See for example the detailed account of research in Rwanda by Thomson (2009).

[13] This risk was seriously worsened by the conditionality clauses included in the grant agreement: in this case, payment of the grant was proportionally conditioned to the delivery of results, in effect forcing the researcher to weigh his physical security against his financial security. This example illustrates the problem with results conditionality in security studies grants.

countries with a "low" level of political violence.[14] Paluck claims that even experienced researchers in conflict zones should hire a "primary local research assistant" (Paluck 2009: 54) who has first-hand experience and can therefore help to avoid problems. Yet this opens up a whole range of other problems. On one extreme, over-reliance on local assistant can lead to problems such as falsification of data, as explained in Spagat's critique of the Lancet Iraq casualties study (2010: 17). On the other hand, this can also easily lead to the exploitation of local researchers – see for example Brand (2014) for a discussion on Western scholars "treating the Egyptian scholars as helpers, rather than colleagues" when studying the 2011 uprisings. But more importantly, and even when local assistants truly recognized are co-producers of knowledge, their inclusion can create security problems, as in the Sodiqov case. A step in the right direction has been taken by the CESS taskforce, which recently listed the training and safety of junior scholars as one of its main concerns (Central Eurasian Studies Society 2016).

Second, researchers should consider the importance of full identity disclosure and transparency on their whereabouts. Any attempt from the researcher or his/her team to hide his/her identity may turn into "evidence" of an undercover agenda in the eyes of violent actors. Gallaher (2009: 138) forcefully argues that very little is actually gained – and a lot can be lost – by engaging in undercover tactics, and Brown goes as far as arguing that the first ethical principle to follow is "to represent ourselves fully and accurately to those we meet" (Brown 2014: 13). Moreover, full registration of all researchers in official documents (e.g. grant agreement, IRB certificate) can ensure a certain degree of legal and political protection to local research associates, as in the Sodiqov case. However, some may claim that in some cases there are good reasons to avoid full disclosure. For example, with regards to research on authoritarian regimes, the appropriate level of disclosure will depend on the political and security context. The research may only wish to disclose the general outline of the research project to the local authorities rather than the full research plan, and may prefer to frame the project in a strategic way. With respect to online research on violent actors, as previously noted rigorous anonymity procedures should be implemented in most cases, from the use of anonymous and encrypted web surfing software suites to the adherence to strict rules of online research (e.g. "no interaction") and privacy protection.

These variations in the degree of suitable disclosure bring about the issue of subjects' consent. Typically, generic ethical guidelines and IRBs take a hard stance on consent (and deception),[15] defined as the "autonomous authorisation by one person to permit another person to carry out an agreed procedure which affects the subject" (Hewlett 1996: 232). However, these strict consent rules

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[14] One of the main reasons for this practice is the tendency of senior scholars to exaggerate, in grant applications, their capacity to physically be present in the field during research – for example, multiple grant applications for different projects may end up being successful at the same time, forcing the principal investigator to hand over the data-gathering process to junior colleagues.
[15] For example, the APSA guidelines clearly state that "the researcher must avoid any deception or misrepresentation concerning his or her personal involvement or the involvement of respondents or subjects" (APSA 2012: 8-9).

might prove problematic in security studies as they may exacerbate some of the researchers-related risks. Whilst Thomas recommends us to "clearly explain the objectives of the research and obtain informed consent from all participants" in conflict zone (Thomas 2009: 86), Ford and colleagues contrarily warn that "a high degree of illiteracy, or mistrust of authority may mean that signing a consent form is meaningless or even dangerous " (Ford et al. 2009: 5). Scholars like Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway (2007) have innovatively found a middle ground, designing an "iterative" consent procedure for research on refugees, which has the ambition to "enable the establishment of ethical relationships between researchers and participants that are responsive to the needs, concerns and values of participants, [starting] from the assumption that ethical agreements can best be secured through a process of negotiation, which aims to develop a shared understanding of what is involved at all stages of the research process" (306-307). However, even such a procedure might not lead to a fully informed decision, and raises its own set of ethical questions. At the extreme end, informed consent may sometimes not be applicable, like for research on criminal online activity or on terrorist's propaganda on the web (Reynolds 2012).

In sum, in order to mitigate these risks related to researchers ' physical security in a way that maximizes the ethical character of the research, scholars, IRBs and other relevant authorities should together be able to provide and justify tailored, case-specific strategies on three aspects: 1) guidelines ruling researchers' interactions with potentially violent actors; 2) congruence between researchers' experience and physical risk; 3) clear and well-thought principles of identity disclosure and consent.

b) Ethical problems related to researchers ' psychology

The importance of these security risks has contributed to obfuscate a second type of ethical problems related to the researcher's role: the sometimes significant emotional and psychological impact of researching the most deadly dimensions of insecurity and political violence. This raises its own dilemmas.

As Zwi and colleagues rightly observe, a "traumatization of researchers who are exposed through eliciting stories[16] of torture and abuse, grief and loss, and crimes against humanity, may occur" (2006: 268). Apart from a short contribution from D'Aoust (2012), aptly titled "Do You Have What it Takes?", very few scholars have directly come to grips with – or even publicly acknowledged – the potentially harmful psychological effect of conducting research that involves taking security risks or simply witnessing the suffering and death of human beings.[17] Reflecting on her emotionally-distressing research on post-genocide Rwanda, Paluck laments that "committees for the protection of human subjects rarely inquire about the well-being of research teams" (Paluck 2009: 48). This type

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[16] But also, we emphasise, through direct witnessing.
[17] Other fields have started to engage with this question – see for example Lee-Treweek and Linkogle's (2000) edited volume on the emotional dimension of research on health issues.

of problem might very well be "softer" than the major challenges on research from violent actors and government, they are nonetheless far more frequent and should therefore be taken seriously. For example, Gallaher (2009: 128) clearly reflects that "perhaps the biggest problem was dealing with the emotions my research [on a far-right wing movement] unleashed in me", whilst Ratelle (2013) highlights the severity of the emotional strains that accompanied his immersion amongst radical groups in dangerous areas, and followed him back home.

And whilst conducting interviews in refugees' camps or war-torn countries inevitably create emotional shocks or strains that are far from negligible, seemingly less serious configurations can also go as far as stopping a research or preventing particular methods to be implemented. For example, Baele, Coan and Boyd's CREST project offering a comprehensive harvesting and analysis of the Islamic State's propaganda video content[18] uses unsupervised computing methods (learning algorithms) instead of arguably more efficient supervised and semi-supervised methods where researchers systematically assist the computer in coding content. Among the research team, none of the experienced researchers – each with an already extensive experience of IS' videos – felt ready to watch a large amount of highly violent content for a year on a weekly basis, for purely psychological reasons.

These kinds of psychological problems are frequent and should encourage us to include emotion management provisions into the ethical guidelines of projects studying security when pertinent. Paluck's suggestion to have "team morale building and relaxation at the end of a long day" (Paluck 2009: 49) cannot be sufficient; instead, the inclusion of mental health workshops like the "Secondary Trauma Workshops" ran at the University of Oxford is a good practice to emulate, as could in some cases be individual periodic meetings with a clinical psychologist. Local researchers should not be neglected in this process.

Therefore, to mitigate the risks related to the psychology and well-being of researchers and thereby minimise the related ethical problems, we invite scholars and IRBs to contemplate the potential benefits of tailored professional counselling interventions.

2) Subject-related problems

The second family of ethical problems associated with research on insecurity concerns the *negative impacts potentially produced by the research on its subjects*. This type of problem is commonly acknowledged in the literature on the ethical dimension of research in conflict zone, chiefly Goodhand's paper, which not only argues that "conflict zones researchers have moral responsibilities for their interventions and may inadvertently do harm by infringing on the security, privacy and well-being of the subjects of their research" (Goodhand 2000: 8-9), but also claims that "researchers are more

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[18] https://crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/isis-online-propaganda/, last accessed January 6, 2017.

likely to 'do harm' when they do not anticipate likely ethical challenges" (Goodhand 2000: 9). Some authors have even put forward the argument that research on insecurity dynamics should not only be harmless but also bring about positive outcomes to the subjects who have been involved in the research, either directly (research bringing tangible benefits to participants) or indirectly (research contributing to make more structural efforts towards the participants' population more efficient and positive). For example, Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway go as far as arguing that researchers studying refugees "should seek ways to move beyond harm minimization as a standard for ethical research and recognize an obligation to design and conduct research projects that aim to bring about reciprocal benefits for refugee participants and/or communities" (2007: 299). The following paragraphs, where we differentiate again between the ethical issues associated with risks to physical security and those associated with psychology, make clear however that this is an extremely demanding and not always wise requirement.

a) Ethical problems related to subjects' physical security

Amongst the security risks associated with the subjects we distinguish between direct and indirect risks, which we define as risks to the subjects themselves or to their wider community. These risks raise crucial ethical issues on how research should be conducted – or indeed whether or not it should be conducted at all.

First, interfering with vulnerable populations can distract them away from vital tasks. As Ford and colleagues argue, researchers' first concern should be to take "into consideration the timing and duration of assessment to avoid disruption of essential service delivery. This means, for example, avoiding the conduct of interviews during the time when food distributions occur" (Ford et al. 2009: 5). This echoes Baele's demand to "avoid [field] experiments on people who are in a situation of severe hardship or already exposed to a serious problem " (Baele 2013: 23), which casts serious limitations on research on those who are the most affected by conflict, violence and oppression.

The second direct risk emerges when research involves gathering groups of people in a single place in a zone of conflict, as this augments the possibility of an aerial strike based on misleading intelligence. Goodhand highlights that in conflict zones "participatory methods which involve large gatherings of people represent a high risk strategy in areas subject to aerial bombardment" and should therefore be avoided (Goodhand 2000: 9). A good example of a method chosen explicitly to avoid this danger is Norman's refusal to use focus groups in Palestine (2009: 79).

The third – and more frequent – way research can generate a direct security threat for subjects is through information disclosure. As Zwi and colleagues rightly note, "the hazards of broken confidences may be extreme, resulting in serious harm to individuals and risks to the safety of individuals or entire communities" (2006: 267). The involuntary disclosure of direct or indirect information about research subjects (names, locations, ethnicity, household composition, etc.) has

therefore already been discussed, especially in relation to cases where leaders of opinion or movements are identified (e.g. Goodhand 2000: 9) and in contexts of severe intergroup tensions or violence (e.g. Ford et al. 2009: 5; Thomson 2009). Researchers should be aware of the possibility of repressive governments or violent groups retrieving and using research data about interviewed/surveyed individuals to collect intelligence – including when these individuals have been killed soon after the interview/survey (Sriram 2009: 61, on her own experience in Sri Lanka). As Thomas sums up, "anonymity is particularly important for preventing hostile authorities or groups from tracing sensitive information to individual sources" (2009: 81). Maintaining anonymity goes way beyond simply masking or coding names in notebooks and publication. Indeed crucial information can for example leak from consent forms (Thomas 2009:89), "snowball sampling" (Thomas 2009: 79), focus group discussions (Zwi et al. 2006: 267), or the use of local research assistants who happen to be reporting to an oppressive regime (Thomson 2009: 113; read also Thomas 2009: 81) or carelessly collecting information (see Spagat 2010 on how poor confidentiality management created many security risks for subjects involved in the *Lancet* Iraq deaths research).

The case of the Boston College Belfast Project exemplifies that breaches of confidentiality can also lead to significant problems in Western democracies – Boston College academics and officials were forced to hand over tapes containing testimonies of former IRA operatives to US and UK authorities, who later used them in court.[19] As Parkinson rightly explains, the Boston College case demonstrates that rules of confidentiality need to be more rigidly enforced than ever in Western democracies, where a deep web of national and international legislations now make it almost impossible to guarantee data protection and confidentiality, and hence unethical to promise to subjects. The Belfast Project failure also demonstrates that anonymity and confidentiality techniques should not only be implemented during the research itself, but also later during research write-up, draft publication, final publication, and even informal discussions with colleagues (on these stages read Sriram 2009).

Therefore whilst anonymity may rarely be an adequate ethical (and, some will argue, methodological) choice as far as the researcher is concerned, anonymity is usually crucial when it comes to participants. This is also true for online research on criminal organizations, where researchers' lack of precaution can lead to serious consequences for some of the "observed subjects" – for example, Aldridge and Decary-Hetu (2015) warn against the publication of the internet pseudonyms used by members of online criminal markets, as these participants regularly engage in "doxing", i.e. exposing the real identity of other members in order to eliminate them. Yet in some cases subjects insist to have their anonymity waived, for example interviewees insisting that their voice is heard or their

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[19] For an extensive report on this case, read McMurtrie's piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* "Secrets From Belfast. How Boston College's oral history of the Troubles fell victim to an international murder investigation" (available at http://chronicle.com/interactives/belfast, last accessed January 6, 2017).

information exposed, even when it may pose a security threat for them. Some do so as they are willing to take risks for political or other reasons, but others because they have a poor understanding of the potential response by the authorities to their participation in a research project. In these difficult cases, it is therefore part of the researcher's responsibility to identify the reasons motivating this behaviour and to ensure that subjects are clearly informed on potential risks.

Besides these three direct risks, researchers have also to be aware of the more indirect consequences of their research on subjects' security, and consider the subsequent ethical dilemmas. Research on security is always an intervention on a situation characterized by a fragile equilibrium, which means that three kinds of potentially damaging effects could appear that need to be forecasted as efficiently as possible. As Goodhand rightly argues, researchers "need to be aware of how their interventions may affect the incentive systems and structures driving violent conflict" (Goodhand 2000: 8). First, research can contribute to further fixing the structures and dynamics of oppression or strengthening violent groups, chiefly because discussing with violent leaders can legitimize them in the eyes of others (e.g. Gallaher 2009: 128 on requests from leaders of a far-right wing movement to appear with her on television; Mertus 2009: 167 on requesting authorizations from warlords; Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway 2007: 304 on "community leaders" in refugee camps). Zwi and colleagues warn that "researchers must be mindful that their work does not privilege only the voices of those with the power to speak out, while silencing those already disempowered" (2006: 266).

Second, research can also conversely trigger risky contestations against these structures and hierarchies of power: subjects may hope that the research will somehow eventually alter their situation – for example by alerting a foreign government about human right violations – and consequently engage in hazardous actions, e.g. engage in a more open mode of contestation against a violent regime. Because research rarely alters policymaking, researchers may like to tame over-enthusiastic expectations by clearly disclosing to subjects the exact scope, ambition and role of the research.

Third, research projects could also trigger a chain of unexpected and potentially violent events. Baele (2013) has argued that large-scale research on social or political issues, such as big randomized-controlled experiments on political dynamics,[20] have the potential to shake precarious social-political equilibriums in fragile countries or regions, and in this way could be compared to ill-designed, unchecked foreign interventions. "The point is", he argues, "that some case-studies may have too large an impact on local populations to be considered simply as scientific research or innocent local scarcity relief" (Baele 2013: 28). From a consequentialist perspective, "artificial interventions on

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[20] Baele's argument criticizes large-scale studies like Aker, Collier and Vicente's (2000) experiment on electoral dynamics in Mozambique, where they openly "try to increase voter participation and electoral accountability" (Aker, Collier and Vicente 2010: 1-2), Fafchamps and Vicente's (2012) project that claimed to have had an impact on the 2007 Nigerian elections by conducting a randomized anti-violence campaign, or Wantchekon's (2003) experiment conducted in Benin during the 2001 presidential, which "exposed randomly selected villages to 'purely' redistributive/clientelistic or 'purely' national public-goods platforms" (Vicente and Wantchekon 2009: 298).

tension-ridden political episodes such as elections may provoke unpredictable chain reactions", and from a deontological perspective "influencing political situations in other countries – which are sometimes in a state of very precarious equilibrium, like Mozambique, Nigeria, or Benin – constitutes a breach in sovereignty if all the stakeholders do not agree in the process; […] it is the very fact that foreign people interfere with domestic politics that makes it ethically questionable" (Baele 2013: 28). Researchers initiating large-scale projects in fragile political environments should therefore try hard to forecast the various negative scenarios that could possibly unfold because of their research.

In sum, we suggest that potential ethical problems related to subjects' physical security could be mitigated by carefully establishing case-specific, tailored guidelines on the following aspects: 1) adequate congruence between the research design and the vulnerability of the subjects, with at one end of the continuum the principle that no research might simply be conducted with vulnerable publics; 2) specific confidentiality rules and techniques; 3) forecast of the violent dynamics possibly triggered by the research intervention; 4) avoidance of favourable effects of research on contestable actors; 5) avoidance of potential high-risk behaviour effects among subjects.

b) Ethical problems related to subjects' psychology

Subjects of research may also be harmed by research interventions in a psychological way, raising specific ethical issues. Above all, research designs and practice can directly trigger psychological harm among those who are interviewed and those taking part in experiments.

Fieldwork interviews constitute the most obvious example, for which Ford and colleagues (2009) highlight three types of ethical problems to be considered. First, they note that "asking someone to talk about experiences that were frightening, humiliating or degrading can increase the level of trauma associated with the event" (Ford et al. 2009: 5). For example, El-Khani and colleagues admit that the "most significant" issue they faced when conducting fieldwork on refugees "was the question of whether it is possible to ask recently displaced families about an aspect of psychological need without reactivating distressing accounts of trauma" (2013: 764). This problem of "re-traumatization" (Zwi et al. 2006: 268)[21] is also acknowledged by Goodhand who warns that "researchers may inadvertently re-open wounds by probing into areas respondents may not wish to talk about" (Goodhand 2000: 10). This is why Ross (2009: 182) argues that researchers should always assess whether conducting interviews where trauma is likely to reappear is truly necessary for the research project (and, we would add, for scientific knowledge at large). Consequently, scholars like Zwi and colleagues suggest that research designs include "follow-up structures […] to assist those in need or those who may be re-traumatized by the research experience" (2006: 268). Considering that kind of structure should be necessary when it is deemed necessary for research to engage in

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[21] Which echoes the processes of "secondary victimization" well-known in criminal justice proceedings (see e.g. Orth 2002).

interventions that potentially re-traumatize. Second, researchers might be tempted to exploit the dominant position that they can have when interacting with physically and psychologically weakened subjects. Ford and colleagues (2009: 5) warn against "the potential for exploiting a situation of 'differential power' which could lead to denying or compromising the rights of individuals is difficult to control" when researchers are dealing with "populations exposed to conflict [who] have heightened vulnerability resulting from physical and mental distress, the collapse of normal coping mechanisms, and deliberate targeting (for example because they belong to a particular ethnic group)". Zwi et al. acknowledge this problem, highlighting the "complex ethical issues" raised by "power imbalances between researchers and research participants" (2006: 266). Third, they recall that openly discussing a series of sensitive issues can, in some cultures, provoke unease and sometimes strong emotional responses (Ford et al. 2009: 5).

Apart from interviews-based field studies, experiments on security should also be carefully assessed by researchers and IRBs on their potential to be emotionally disruptive for subjects. Experimental designs can produce significant shifts in political perception, policy preferences, or even desire to actively engage in politics. When experiments attempt to uncover the dynamics at play in security, conflict and violence, these effects need to be carefully forecasted. In vignette experiments for example, participants can be profoundly moved by the messages they face, not only because most of these messages are precisely designed to provoke effects, but also because most experimental designs necessitate that the audience is unaware that it takes part in an experiment. What happens to the participants *after* the experiment – which has been called by Stanley Milgram the "subjects' reactions" problem in an article calling for more attention on this issue (1977) –[22] can have serious consequences on participants' future life. At the extreme, it has been speculated that Ted "Unabomber" Kaczynski's mental health problems and correlated violence had their roots in his participation in a series of psychological experiments (Chase 2000). At a less exceptional level, researchers running experiments precisely engineered to trigger a sense of insecurity[23] have the responsibility to imagine the kind of psychological or emotional dynamics that could be provoked by their designs, and to provide sufficient modalities to mitigate them thorough well-planned debriefing. To defend an emotionally stressful experiment by focusing on its large positive societal impact cannot be a sufficient ethical justification (cf. Zimbardo 1973 notably stressing the "indirect benefits" of his (in)famous prison experiment).

Beyond the direct impact of interviews and experiments, research designs and practices can also more indirectly trigger, reinforce or disrupt collective emotional dynamics that play an integral role in the conflict or violence being studied. Recent work has emphasised the role of group-based emotions

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[22] Milgram's call was somehow incongruous – given the highly contentious "subjects' reactions" associated with his previous famous experiments on obedience, it could be understood as a way to exonerate his research.
[23] Consider for example Baele, Sterck and Coan's (2016) experiment aiming at convincing participants that tuberculosis is an extremely important security problem, and immigrants should be blamed for the spread of the disease.

in conflict, highlighting that they depend on – and in turn constitute – group identities and thereby inform people's appraisals of events (e.g. Halperin, Sharvit and Gross 2011). Every single actor involved in the transmission of information on the conflict contributes to the diffusion of emotions and hence particular, biased appraisals of political events (Baele, Sterck and Meur 2014). The researcher is no exception: by making people talk about the conflict in one way or another, and to a lesser extent by writing on the conflict, he/she enters the circulation of emotions within conflict groups. This role has to be taken into account in ethical evaluations of research projects.

We would therefore argue that in order to minimize the risks related to subjects' psychology and subsequently mitigate potential ethical problems, tailored, case-specific guidelines should be established by researchers and IRBs together on the following aspects: 1) scrutiny of the choice (not) to include psychologically vulnerable subjects; 2) strict procedures governing researchers' interactions with weakened subjects; 3) mental health interventions that could possibly accompany the research design; 4) in case of experiments, post-experimental debriefing and mental health follow-up activities; 5) consideration and forecast of the potential impact of the research intervention on negative collective emotional dynamics.

3) Result-related problems

A third and far less discussed type of ethical problem that security researchers potentially face in a scale not known in most other disciplines is that provoked by *unexpected negative or even malevolent uses of research findings*. Research findings may trigger violent dynamics or help contestable actors to increase their efficiency and enhance their ability to reach their goals, without necessarily directly impacting either researchers or subjects.

Although the use of academic work by violent groups has a long history, it has until recently mostly been a matter of theoretical influence – from Jean-Paul Sartre or Franz Fanon on Algerian rebel groups to Herbert Marcuse on violent civil rights groups like the Black Panthers, not to mention Marx-inspired terrorist factions. Today however, rigorous empirical research increasingly produces directly useable knowledge on clearly defined puzzles, like the factors that accelerate radicalization and commitment to political violence, the determinants of public opinion on war, the intricacies of the financing of terrorist networks, or the emotional dynamics sustaining conflict, among others. Amplified by national and private research bodies' increasing emphasis on research "impact" (like the ESRC or CREST in the UK, or the Minerva scheme in the US), together with their parallel requirement to fund eventually open-access research, the possibility of seeing this turnkey type of research used in a malevolent way becomes very real. Nothing for example prevents terrorist groups to tailor recruitment practices and online propaganda in line with findings on radicalization dynamics (e.g. McCauley and Moskalenko 2011), or insurgent groups to rethink their structure in line with

research conclusions on violent groups' resilience through particular types of organization (e.g. Staniland 2014).

A less direct form of malevolent use of findings also exists when democratic and non-democratic governments pertinently use results on a particular problem to engage in potentially contestable practices to face another problem. For example, the research team of the aforementioned project on the Islamic State's online propaganda was encouraged to include in their grant proposal the promise that the advanced automated online crawling, mining and scraping techniques developed in order to extract IS content from the web, would eventually be shared in order for the secret services to use as see fit – potentially for non-IS-related endeavours (the potential application of academic techniques within the practice of the intelligence service was a key element in the grant call). Another example is that of Baele, Sterck and Coan's (2016) randomized controlled experiment which sought to identify some of the factors determining an audience's acceptance of a "securitizing move". The experiment attempted to convince individuals that tuberculosis was a security threat that therefore needed to be addressed with extraordinary policies such as the criminalization of "deviant" populations or ruling through executive orders. The sharing of preliminary results in conferences prompted several requests from government officials, yet with no information or guarantee on how these results would shape their practice. In the case of the use of results by the security services of a democratic regime, researchers might therefore be caught between a will to cooperate in the government's effort to counter threats and its potential abuse of executive power.

An even more indirect yet real kind of results or research misuse is the use of publications for purposes of contestable public diplomacy or political agendas, for example when funding has been provided by contestable political actors. As scholars are compelled to disclose their sources of funding when they publish,[24] they may well end up being engaged in a semi-voluntary promotion/image campaign for funding entities like human rights violator states or philanthropists with contestable political connections. This ethical problem of accepting research funding from contestable funding bodies is neither new nor particular to security studies, yet it takes a particular dimension when it comes to security studies, where for example research on interrogation is funded by a government involved in what many would not consider as interrogation but torture.[25]

Beyond the question of funding, scholars may find themselves in the uncomfortable position of seemingly providing scientific evidence – and thereby legitimacy – to oppressive regimes, populist groups and extremists. Paul Collier's recent book on migration policies has for example repeatedly been used by Belgian far-right party Vlaams Belang in an attempt to give a gloss of scientific

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[24] See for example the APSA guidelines: "In making grants for research, government and non-government sponsors should openly acknowledge research support and require that the grantee indicate in any published research financed by their grants the relevant sources of financial support" (APSA 2012: 7) or "the individual researcher should disclose all relevant sources of financial support" (APSA 2012: 9).

[25] The FBI for example funded research on interrogation techniques while the CIA and US DoD were implementing "enhanced interrogation techniques" that are widely seen as torture.

legitimacy to their anti-immigration agenda,[26] and his work on the causes of civil wars has been claimed to act as an alibi for oppressive regimes (Keen 2012). Work by Lewis (2010) that seeks to explain the origins and development of the Sri Lankan government's counterinsurgency campaign of 2006-09 has been cited by a former Sri Lankan ambassador as evidence in his subsequent justification of Sri Lanka's policies and its diplomatic campaigns at the UN (Silva, 2012). In general, attempts to understand and explain the security policies of authoritarian states run the risk of being interpreted or used as legitimation of such policies.

Finally, results may also significantly revive, reshape or worsen local, regional or international tensions. A recent example is Davenport and Stam's (2009) controversial analysis of the Rwanda genocide, publicised in the 2014 BBC "Rwanda's Untold Story" documentary. This research triggered not only intense intellectual and political debates, but also a hard-line official reaction from the Rwandan authorities, including a government and parliamentary decision to ban the BBC in the country[27] and a report recommending pursuing criminal charges against the documentary producers.[28] These developments have put a further strain on the already tense diplomatic relations between Rwanda and Britain. We do not advocate here constraints on academic enquiry based on diplomatic problems, but highlight the benefits of a forecasting of the possible political impacts of potentially contentious pieces of research.

Moving beyond a researcher/subject risks approach to the ethics of research, with greater attention being paid to the potential misuses of research results, is likely to become an increasingly important part of IRBs' work, given the constant pressure that scholars face today to produce research with impact. This not only privileges the publication of significant results as opposed to insignificant or null ones, but also often leads to the exaggeration of the importance and significance of these results (Sterck 2016). This environment increases the risk of hurried or multiple project submissions and creates incentives to prematurely publish studies that do not stand the test of time (or contain in extreme cases blatant fabrications),[29] which makes the various results-related effects even more unpredictable. This consideration for results' "afterlife" will inevitably trigger a difficult debate on whether or not results should not only be harmless but also somehow benefit the community (for example fostering progressive policy change), paralleling the calls to move beyond the "do not harm" principle when it comes to interacting with subjects. Since such a claim belongs to the third way of understanding ethics in security studies (as a reflexion on the researcher's own normative position

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[26] See for example http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/10500, or http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/10499. These two pages have last been accessed Janyary 6, 2017.

[27] See http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/oct/24/rwanda-bans-bbc-broadcasts-genocide-documentary (last accessed January 6, 2017).

[28] The report is available online at http://rwandabbcinquiry.rw/?page_id=55 (last accessed Janauary 6, 2017).

[29] See Kuriakose and Robbins 2016 on data fraud on public opinion research; see also Bohannon's (2016) account of the controversy triggered by Kuriakose and Robbins' paper, which identifies the risks associated with conducting surveys in dangerous environments as a major cause of data fabrication.

vis-à-vis his/her object, see introduction) it will not be examined here and therefore closes the scope of the present inquiry.

Although it is arguably more difficult to foresee potential results-related problems than those related to the people directly involved in the research, researchers and IRBs (and, in some of the most significant cases here, the governing bodies of the institution) should nonetheless make a careful assessment of the following aspects: 1) forecast of potential direct misuse of research results by violent actors; 2) forecast of potential misappropriation of research results by violent actors; 3) forecast of potential use of research results for contestable legitimation purposes; 4) detection and avoidance of potential channelling of the research question, design and expected results by an authoritarian government; 5) forecast of possibility that research results end up reviving tensions or conflicts.

CONCLUSIONS

Security studies is a broad and multifaceted research community whose expanding methodological diversity and increased focus on "hands-on" empirical research not only creates fascinating new insights on conflict and political violence, but also activates a series of serious ethical challenges that ought to be addressed more systematically by scholars and their institutions. So far, these challenges have only received a fragmented and subdiscipline-specific attention in the literature, hence the ambition of the present article to review and appraise them in a systematic and expansive way in a single contribution. To do so, we have classified ethical issues specific to research on security into the three families of problems or risks out of which they emerge – *researchers-related*, *subjects-related*, and *results-related* – in order to explore their variants and highlight some of the solutions that are advocated. This typology is detailed in Table 1 in Annex, together with the key questions that researchers and IRBs may like to have in mind when evaluating projects and providing solutions to mitigate potential problems.

Looking at Medicine, Psychology or Economics, some have argued that the construction, promotion and enforcement of tailored ethical guidelines adapted to a specific sort of research do not impede the quality or significance of potential results, but rather reinforce them (e.g. Baele 2013). We concur: by providing a security studies specific ethics framework that researchers can use when reflecting on their own practices and projects, the present article seeks to participate in the building a more reflexive and therefore scientifically stronger field.

There are two main reasons to believe in such a positive impact. First, constructing and promoting tailored guidelines instead of generic ones will contribute to countering the trend described by Hemming (2009), who argues that IRBs have recently become more dogmatic and exclusively

subject-centred in order to protect their host universities' reputation, preventing potentially disruptive yet rigorous and important research.[30] IRBs may therefore well be the structures we now "love to hate" (Brown 2014: 13), their functioning and criteria can nonetheless be shaped to better correspond to – and strengthen – our practices. Second, the implementation of more field-specific ethical guidelines will inevitably mitigate the impact of the structural factors that encourage problematic scientific practices. For example, by paying attention to the real capacity of senior researchers to lead field research, IRBs will play a role in countering the tendency to engage in too many projects at the same time; by considering unintended uses of results, IRBs can ease the pressure to obtain significant (as opposed to null), clear and ground-breaking results. In these and other ways, ethical screening can also be a way to improve social science.

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[30] On this issue of IRBs as institution's guardians, read also Zwi et al. 2006: 269.

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APPENDIX

RESEARCHER-RELATED PROBLEMS	SUBJECT-RELATED PROBLEMS	RESULTS-RELATED PROBLEMS

- **Ethical problems related to researchers' physical security:** Research design or practice creates a threatening situation for the researcher.
  ✘ War zone insecurity.
  ✘ Insecurity produced by (real and online) encounters with violent actors outside conflict zones: insecurity from violent actors and from home government.
  ✘ Insecurity in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes.
  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
    ■ Strict guidelines constraining the interactions with potentially violent actors.
    ■ Assessment of experience-risk match.
    ■ Clear and well-thought principles of identity disclosure and consent.
 	
- **Ethical problems related to researcher's psychology:** Research design or practice creates an impairing psychological impact for the researcher.
  ✘ Emotional strains due to the sustained witnessing of violence and suffering (real and online).
  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
    ■ Inclusion of adequate mental health interventions.
	- **Ethical problems related to subjects' physical security:**
	  ✘ *Direct*: Research design or practice directly creates a threatening environment for subjects.
	    ✓ Interfering with vulnerable populations can distract them away from vital tasks.
	    ✓ Group gathering increases risk and lethality of attack.
	    ✓ Violent groups may use information produced by research.
	  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
	    ■ Adequate congruence between the research design and the vulnerability of the subjects.
	    ■ Specific confidentiality rules and techniques.
	
	  ✘ *Indirect*: Research as interference/intervention on a terror equilibrium.
	    ✓ Research can contribute to further fixing the structures and dynamics of oppression.
	    ✓ Research can trigger risky contestations against the structures and dynamics of oppression.
	    ✓ Research could trigger a chain of unexpected, potentially violent events.
	  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
	    ■ Forecast of violent dynamics possibly triggered by the research intervention.
	    ■ Avoidance of favourable effects of research on contestable actors.
	    ■ Avoidance of potential high-risk behaviour effects among subjects.
	
	- **Ethical problems related to subjects' psychology**
	  ✘ *Direct*: triggering negative psychological dynamics among those who are interviewed or take part in experiments.
	    ✓ Fieldwork: 1) re-traumatization; 2) Abusing dominant position; 3) Ignoring cultural sensitivities.
	    ✓ Experiments: 1) Shocking participants; 2) Shaping participant's beliefs and political preferences in problematic ways.
	  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
	    ■ Scrutiny of the choice to include or include psychologically vulnerable subjects.
	    ■ Strict procedures governing researchers' interactions with weakened subjects.
	    ■ Mental health interventions accompanying the research design.
	    ■ In the case of experiments, post-experimental debriefing and mental health follow-up activities.
	
	  ✘ *Indirect*: triggering, reinforcing or disrupting collective emotional dynamics that play an integral role in conflict or violence.
	  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
	    ■ Consideration and forecast of the impact of research intervention on negative collective emotional dynamics.
		- **Direct:**
		  ✘ Turnkey type of research used in a malevolent way by violent actors.
		  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
		    ■ Forecast of potential direct misuse of research results by violent actors.
		
		- **Indirect:**
		  ✘ Governments use results on a particular problem to engage in unrelated contestable practices.
		  ✘ Publications and findings being used for purposes of contestable public diplomacy and legitimation (including authoritarian regimes supporting research on particular questions to promote specific agendas).
		  ✘ Results instrumentalized to revive, reshape or worsen local, regional or international tensions.
		  ⇨ MITIGATION STRATEGIES:
		    ■ Forecast of potential misappropriation of research results by violent actors.
		    ■ Forecast of potential use of research results for contestable legitimation purposes.
		    ■ Detection and avoidance of potential channelling of the research question, design and expected results by an authoritarian government.
		    ■ Forecast of potential research results ending up reviving tensions or conflicts.

TABLE1: *Ethical issues in security research*