The Islamic State's terrorist diplomacy in Trinidad and Tobago. A Geometry of Terrorism approach

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Diplomacia terrorista del Estado Islámico en Trinidad y Tobago. Aproximación desde la geometría del terrorismo

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ABSTRACT. Based on an understanding of diplomacy and foreign policy beyond the state-centered approach, terrorist diplomacy is understood as a terrorist group's rational conduct concerning international interests in terms of its specific strategic objectives. Thus, this article studies the case of Muslim radicalization in Trinidad and Tobago and the high number of militants from this country in the Islamic State. Based on the push and pull variables and the theory of the Geometry of Terrorism, as well as a review of previous studies, it is determined that the government's repression and mistrust of Muslims and the lack of governance, more than economic aspects, are factors that explain this phenomenon in the island nation.

KEYWORDS: cultural integration; international security; ISIS; jihadism; terrorism; Trinidad & Tobago

RESUMEN. A partir de una comprensión de la diplomacía y la política exterior más allá del enfoque estadocéntrico, la diplomacia terrorista se entiende como la conducción racional de los intereses internacionales de un grupo terrorista en función de sus objetivos estratégicos particulares. Así, este artículo estudia el caso de la radicalización musulmana en Trinidad y Tobago y el alto número de militantes de este país en el Estado Islámico. Con base en variables *push and pull* y en la teoría de la geometría del terrorismo, así como en la revisión de estudios precedentes, se determina que la represión y desconfianza del Gobierno hacia los musulmanes, así como la falta de gobernabilidad, más que los aspectos económicos, son factores que explican este fenómeno en el país insular.

PALABRAS CLAVE: integración cultural; ISIS; seguridad internacional; terrorismo; Trinidad y Tobago; yihadismo

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Introduction

Traditionally, studies on foreign policy and diplomacy have been represented by state-centric and conventional approaches. Despite this, proposals have emerged to understand that other actors also have foreign policy and diplomacy, motivated by certain subnational practices of this type that preserve conventional logic. From a critical perspective, this article assumes that terrorist groups, particularly the Islamic State (IS), have an established foreign action agenda with agency capacity and influence over specific objectives.

Broadly speaking, the IS is a Sunni Islamic terrorist organization that originated in Iraq close to 2003, a negative consequence of the instability that engulfed this State after Saddam Hussein's overthrow. At first, under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the IS functioned as an Al Qaeda cell in Iraqi territory. Its objective was to combat the US occupation. However, tensions between these two organizations became insurmountable between 2013 and 2014, during the entry of IS troops into Syrian territory, given the support of Al Qaeda to the Al Nusra's front (another of the militias operating in Syria), which IS had tried to absorb. It was then that this terrorist organization began to function independently (Ortiz & Caro, 2018).

It is worth noting that for several authors, like Priego, 2014 and Nadal, 2015, the IS functions as a state in every sense, controlling a large territory with an administration that is characteristically hierarchical and centralized. It also has military and police wings to guarantee compliance with Islamic law (*sharia*). It has developed bureaucratic structures for the administration of goods and services, and even without declared international recognition, it has financial support from some Arab countries (Ortiz & Caro, 2018). This circumstance brings into question the relevance of today's consideration of states only to those that have international recognition.

From this perspective, most terrorism-related studies focused on the IS observe its military and recruiting capacity both in Europe and the Middle East with concern. The main contributions in the matter are associated with a logic of constant dispute between the region's natural resources, the relationship with Al Qaeda, the convergence of counterterrorist strategies of the Western powers, and a complex geopolitical vision. Thus, the idea of the caliphate and the complicity of some political regimes in the region raise concerns about IS' territorial expansion and the configuration of an alternative order that places security at risk.

With this in mind, the classic Western concerns regarding IS terrorism are based on the radicalization of Europeans and the consequent conversion of potential terrorists attacking states on the European continent. Seemingly, the IS is the only concern of Western powers. However, from a critical tender, this research focuses on Trinidad

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and Tobago (TT), a small island country in the Caribbean, to understand why this is the country with the most representation in IS' ranks in the Middle East. This issue is addressed by expanding terrorism's analytical and classical explanatory radius to link the notion of *terrorist diplomacy* and understand the social geometry of violence.

The IS is a group with an active foreign policy for the recruitment and the campaign for the caliphate. To satisfy its interests, it has used the massive recruitment of Trinidadian individuals, making this Caribbean country one of the nations with the highest rates of radicalization of foreign IS fighters in the Western Hemisphere (Cottee, 2019). The recruitment of Trinidadians for the IS has a broad historical explanation related to the Islamic insurgency and the IS' discourse on the constant marginalization of Muslim communities in TT. Thus, the conviction has been created in the radicals that TT is the land of humiliation and injuries, as opposed to the promised paradise, where the law of Allah fully governs, materialized in the idea of the caliphate.

In turn, Trinidadian fighters who decide to return to their country from the Middle East do not lose their citizenship rights and maintain the legal conditions to return, despite having belonged to the IS. This research attempts to explain the IS' foreign policy towards TT and generate academic inputs for decision-making on this phenomenon. The article is divided as follows. First, it explains the analytical framework regarding the geometry of terrorism to understand the dimensions of IS diplomacy and Trinidadian incentives. Secondly, it explains the IS' diplomacy in Latin America, and, lastly, it offers some explanations of the incentives that TT inhabitants are offered to join the jihadist project.

Methodological approach

Multiple factors make delving into the proposed topic challenging. Among them is the lack of precise figures on the annual number of Trinidadians that join the IS ranks, given that the porosity of its borders facilitates the undetected exit of potential jihadists (McCoy & Knight, 2017, p. 15). Similarly, the recurrently emerging variety of theoretical and methodological approaches explaining this phenomenon. Therefore, far from being exhausted, the issue requires further exploration and debate to generate inputs that not only lead to understanding the phenomenon but also aid in the making of political, social, national, and regional security decisions.

With this in mind, this work assumes a structuralist approach based on the theory of social geometry, which serves two specific purposes. On the one hand, it helps explain how globalization has shortened geographical distances, allowing the overlap and, somehow, equation of worldwide political, social, cultural, and religious conflicts and developing an analytical concept of *terrorist diplomacy*. Thus, the possibility that

organizations other than the State use conventional and unconventional diplomacy mechanisms to achieve their strategic objectives.

On the other, this theory sheds light on the conflicts' causes and how violence is applied, speaking of the closeness or distance in socio-political, cultural, economic, and geographical aspects, among others, between individuals and communities. In the specific TT case, this is added to specific factors that can be grouped into *push and pull* variables to obtain a possible explanation of the incentives for Trinidadian Muslims' radicalization that diverges from the classical approaches, centered exclusively in economic inequalities.

Finally, the article uses recent works that study the causes of the problem as secondary sources, which, in turn, have been created from primary sources, namely interviews with Muslim Trinidadians and the country's authorities. It also uses an IS interview conducted in 2016 with one of the many TT jihadists. It exemplifies the theoretical dissertations on the radicalization incentives and how terrorist diplomacy operates, as well as the equalization of conflicts.

The Geometry of Terrorism

Studies on terrorism have been encoded, to a large extent, by their definition. Therefore, they are not exempt from ambiguities and, on occasions, contradictory concepts (Jore, 2020). Sageman (2014), in fact, concluded that the field of study and research on terrorism is stagnant. Nonetheless, the research agenda has made some contributions regarding the fight against terrorism, prompted by events and cases (Jackson, 2012). However, it lacks approximations on the motivations and explanations of the interactions between spatially distanced individuals, groups, and actors. From a sociological construct, it is evident that terrorism is a human behavior; thus, it can be explained with social geometry: its location and multidimensional direction in social space (Black, 2004).

This approach to the phenomenon sets off from pure sociology through the concept of social geometry, seeking to explain social behavior and disregarding psychological aspects. The agents can be positioned in various dimensions of the social space, for example, horizontal (individuals' degree of integration in a community), vertical (inequity and lack of equality), corporate (involvement between groups), cultural (shared features such as language or religion), normative (in terms of social control), geographic location (distance or spatial proximity between potential enemies), among others (Black, 2004).

Observing these dimensions can help predict the likelihood of social conflicts and the potential violent responses –and intensity– that these conflicts may incite. In this sense, the eruption of a conflict with a socially distant enemy will lead to a more intense

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violent punishment response than a close enemy. Other dimensions will also determine the degree of intensity and application of violence. The violence will be different if it is applied upwards (against a superior) or if it is applied downwards (against someone or a group considered inferior) if it is directed inwards (against someone seen as an equal), or outwards (against someone considered a "stranger," "another"). Therefore, violence is not unpredictable; instead, it follows geometric patterns (Black, 2004).

From this perspective, terrorism, as a form of organized mass violence that civilians exercise on civilians, has a specific geometry, a "geometry of terrorism." It takes place within the framework of a social long-distance (cultural, religious, economic differences, among others) between the group that sees itself as aggrieved and the one it considers its enemy. It is also exercised from the bottom up as a form of "social control" by one community that sees another as socially dominant. Now, the geographical distance must also be considered. This type of violence is only possible when communities not only have marked social differences but also geographical proximity that allows physical contact. Therefore, the advent of terrorism was only possible within a globalized world in which, paradoxically, interconnectivity made it a place of broad social differences on a very small surface (Black, 2004).

Globalization is an information and communication technologies revolution that brings about greater connectivity and affects all human activities (Castells, 2000), including violence and terrorism. Technology acts as the gear that allows the integration of peoples and cultures, breaking down geographical and temporal differences and collectivizing violence (Abrahms, 2018; Benmelech & Klor, 2020; Black, 2004). The previous may explain how local conflicts in the Middle East –geographically distant from Europe but brought closer by telecommunications –can attract individuals to become potential jihadists, despite growing up in secular and liberal environments. Similarly, it can explain how the physical space in which a terrorist act can occur or a terrorist organization moves or influences can be, literally, anywhere.

Thus, based on territorial variables and state legitimacy, states with limited governance and reduced law enforcement capacities, such as TT, characteristically have a high number of illicit activities with terrorist and criminal organizations (Perliger & Palmieri, 2019). In TT's case, these activities are related to IS, regardless of geographical distance. In this sense, within the equation of territorial power, the factors of limited state governance and an alternative or subaltern governance results in a highly perilous product in the face of any terrorist and criminal phenomenon. In the configuration of the geometry of terrorism, these factors become catalysts that enable proximity through objectives, ideals, and directions, even when they lack geographical proximity.

IS terrorist diplomacy towards Latin America

From another point of view, globalization is not only understood –as established by Castells (2000)– as a technological revolution in the field of communications. It is also a change in the international system's structure and operation. Indeed, globalization implies a weakening of the nation-state as a predominant actor; this gives way to territorial contiguity and the loss of importance of borders, as well as the presence of supranational and local actors that now play a more relevant role in world affairs (Otálvora, 2003).

Thus, the notion of *diplomacy* has been eroded in the 21ˢᵗ century. Non-state actors are now involved in "the art of responding to global problems" (Guilbaud, 2020). Based on this, and given the contemporary dynamism of global affairs, Diamond and McDonald (1996) have stated that the idea of a "*multi-track diplomacy*" makes sense. This idea refers to the construction of a system in which several types of actors carry out parallel rational interactions in different areas: governments and quasi-governmental leaders, in rebel movements and terrorist groups, among others (Guilbaud, 2020).

Therefore, it is not surprising that within the multiplicity of actors that become relevant with globalization, there are also terrorist groups, among other things, for two specific reasons. In the first place, globalization has fueled responses contrary to its universalizing and homogenizing effects. It has reinforced nationalism and cultural identities that can become fundamentalist, from which undoubtedly feed terrorism (Mercado et al., 2009). Secondly, as mentioned, globalization's interconnectivity has deterritorialized terrorist actions, allowing it to reach places that it otherwise would not have had access to. Thus, this interconnectivity has been detrimental to the filter implied by national borders, more so regarding institutionally weak states.

Therefore, the geographical distance between Iraq and TT of approximately 10,700 kilometers is merely nominal in a globalized world. Latin America has become an attractive space to increase the presence and ties between networks and groups. The Latin American region is strategic. It represents a physical corridor for the clandestine passage of individuals and carrying out illegal activities, given the scarce state control over territories and topographic complexities. Thus, it is relatively easy to understand the IS' attraction to Latin America. Even so, it is not as easy to explain why so many Trinidadians join the ranks of ISIS in the Middle East.

The interactions between groups, ethnicities, individuals, and actors under a terrorist cause involve multiple facets (Perliger & Palmieri, 2019). On the one hand, the dimensions of coordination and cooperation associated with the logic of reducing transactional costs and sharing intangible benefits represent a favorable scenario to ac-

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tivate "protodiplomacy" (Kuznetsov, 2014). Protodiplomacy has been associated with the diplomacy of local and subnational governments (Cornago, 2018); however, it is sufficiently valid to interpret the agency actions of irregular actors that seek a political design to satisfy their interests beyond the geographical locations that characterize them. On the other, the evidence reflects that the motivations of a "rebel diplomacy" (Huang, 2016) or a "terrorist diplomacy" are configured to solve geometric agency obstacles to maximize their actions.

For example, in the Sri Lankan context, the Liberation Tigers of Eelam Tamil (LTTE) established foreign offices, "alternate embassies," and sent political advisers to create the Eelam House in London. This office served as a communications center and information display for the group's decision-making in Europe (Huang, 2016). In Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) deployed a delegation to strengthen contacts in some European countries after the failure of the El Caguán negotiations (1999). During the peace process (2012-2016), this group used rebel diplomacy as a strategy of dialogue with international actors to obtain political objectives (García, 2019). Situations and models of "protodiplomacy" or rebel and terrorist diplomacy also took place with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador. This party had "ambassadors" in international organizations and a special relationship with ETA members since 1980. Another example is the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), which did its thing by *lobbying* in Washington (Huang, 2016, p. 89).

This being the case, here, *terrorist diplomacy* is defined as a terrorist group's rational management of international affairs to advance its specific strategic objectives. Like this, the terrorist group institutes a foreign policy. This implies that, although the nation-state has lost its preponderance in the international system, its operational structures and mechanisms remain relevant and are revalidated by the actors that have assumed a leading role in the globalized world. Therefore, diplomacy, understood generically from a state-centric vision a state's management of foreign affairs in regards to other states or international organizations to protect its interests, is assumed as a device used effectively by other actors, such as terrorist organizations to interact with possible allies, amplify their radius of action, and achieve their goals. In short, organizations such as the IS take advantage of the regular, established, and internationally legitimized frameworks and means to carry out irregular activities.

This way of conducting international affairs helps explain the IS' demeanor towards Latin America regarding the recruitment of foreign militants to fight for its cause, especially TT. Thus, although the IS is geographically remote from Latin America and the Caribbean, it is quite close through diplomatic channels and the generation of incentives (Chwiej, 2016). The IS' physical presence in the region is considerably low.

However, its ties and connections are growing *by proxy* because of the opportunities the region offers in terms of ungoverned spaces, criminal governance, corruption, and scarce effective state control (Chwiej, 2016; Lessing & Graham, 2019; Müller, 2018).

The region's attractiveness for the IS is also because there have been no official offensive speeches against the group.[1] Washington's policies on the Middle East, instead, have been deemed excessive. Apparently, Latin America and the Caribbean have not secured (Buzan et al., 1998; Stritzel, 2014; Williams, 2003) the IS as a threat to regional security; this becomes a window of opportunity for the extension of its ties and bridges of influence. Strategically, the region is also attractive for the IS because it provides fighters for its group, which can provide its new fighters with incentives that exceed the economic dimension of a monthly salary. The IS' terrorist diplomacy is more like that of a conventional state, as the idea of configuring a caliphate is redundant in a basic and public services-providing unitary structure. Because its foreign policy is a public policy, the IS has a state's structure, agency, and capacity for foreign action. In fact, one could perceive a nascent construction of terrorist governance.

Incentives for Trinidadian foreign fighters

The most recent studies on the motives that encourage radicalization and an individuals' potential conversion into member of terrorist organizations, such as the IS, have transcended the simplistic view attributing this phenomenon to economic causes such as poverty (Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019). This can be seen in TT's specific case. Different from the collective perception, this small Caribbean nation has shown positive economic figures since the 1990s, which are reflected in a constant increase in the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures a state's development from three dimensions: health, education, and standard or standard of living. It places the country in 63rd place out of 189 countries, sharing the spot with Serbia (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2019, p. 2).

According to the HDI, TT's exact figures (0.799) exceed the average of the other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (0.759). Of the country's 1.3 million inhabitants, only 0.6% of the population (9,000 people) are classified poor by the United Nations (UN); 3.7% (50,000 people) are classified in a situation of vulnerability (UNDP, 2019, pp. 4-6). While it is true that the numbers show good performance,

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1   The absence of official pronouncements against organizations such as the IS may also be because the region has not suffered directly from Islamist fundamentalism terrorist actions. The only significant exception was the car bomb attack against the *Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina* (AMIA) in Buenos Aires in 1994. The investigations concluded that it was a Shiite terrorism action. Accusations were made against Iran's Government for having planned the attack and the Hezbollah party of Lebanon for carrying it out. It was the worst terrorist attack in the history of Argentina; 85 people lost their lives (Smink, 2019).

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this does not mean that TT's economy is entirely stable. Given that its oil-based, it is susceptible to international variations in the price of crude oil. Therefore, it has also undergone periods of recession (Robles & Vargas, 2012, p. 9).

Thus, economic motivations seem unlikely –although not entirely improbable– to explain the rising radicalization of TT's Muslim population. So, what factors explain that approximately two out of every 1,000 Trinidadian Muslims, out of a total population of 65,000, are in the IS ranks (Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019)? Experts have leaned towards other aspects related to the socio-political situation within countries, categorized as *push and pull* variables (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2014). This explanatory model helps understand people's motivations to stay in a place or emigrate after carrying out cost-benefit calculations, choosing the most advantageous option (Micolta, 2005).

For terrorism, specifically, among the first variables (*push*) are the environment's social, cultural, and political conditions that encourage the spread of extremist violence, including government repression, corruption, impunity, and the lack of governance. The second variable group (*pull*) includes factors that affect the potential militants in a very personal way. Including easy access to terrorist organization propaganda material, the possibility of empowerment through radicalization, and the calling to defend religion against those who threaten it, among others (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2011, in Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019).

In TT, these variables play an essential role and provide insight into the radicalization that takes place there. Thus, regarding the *push* variables, the state repression felt by a minority overlaps with the notion of feeling persecuted on account of religious affiliation. Interviews carried out by Aldrich and Mahabir (2019) show that Trinidadian Muslims feel the government's mistrust. The government considers them a dangerous population and potential terrorists, exercising disproportionate repression against them. The immediate consequence of this repression would be the radicalization of its members (Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019).

The Trinidadian State's distrust and subsequent repression against its Muslim population are explained by a recent past episode starring this minority that threatened this nation's socio-political order. At the end of the sixties, Imam Yasir Abu Bakr founded the Jamaat Al Muslimeen. This Muslim organization initially provided aid, resources, and spaces for the socialization of the Muslim community. It handled a critical discourse in the face of state corruption and problems of racism, inequality, and poverty in TT's Afro-Muslim community (McCoy & Knight, 2017, p. 9). Although the government initially overlooked the group, the relationship came to a head following the group's acts of resistance and illegal actions, such as the illegal seizure of wastelands to build houses and mosques for its members (Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019).

The tensions continued to increase, reaching a climax when the Trinidadian justice ordered the Jamaat Al Muslimeen to abandon the occupied lands, allowing for the possibility of destroying the mosque. This action led the organization to commit violent actions. Although this was the triggering action, it was the underlying perception that the elites' economic and political interests continued to marginalize the Afro-Muslim population in favor of those of indigenous descent that fueled the tensions (McCoy & Knight, 2017, pp. 9-10). Thus, on July 27, 1990, Jamaat Al Muslimeen armed members seized the parliament and public television buildings, and Abu Bakr declared a coup, calling for new elections. Although this attempt failed, given the group's insufficient force to take control of the entire territory and popular support (Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019), according to the experts investigating the events, the coup had deeper ideological intentions. The desire consisted of making TT an Islamic state (Simmons et al., 2014).

Given the severity of the only insurrection attempt involving a Muslim group in the region (McCoy & Knight, 2017, p. 9), it is no surprise that the Trinidadian State continues to see the Muslim community in general with suspicion. More so, considering that there has been impunity for the members of the Jamaat Al Muslimeen. Despite being found guilty (after their amnesty was invalidated), they were not imprisoned. Many of its members, including Abu Bakr, continue to teach the ideology professed by the Jamaat Al Muslimeen (Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019). There is also evidence that this organization, and others born from it, are involved in the criminal acts of extortion and tax collection on the sale of illicit drugs (McCoy & Knight, 2017, p. 11).

On the *pull* effect variables, it can be said that globalization's interconnectivity has allowed the IS' terrorist diplomacy to break down geographical barriers, making it relatively easy for potential Trinidadian jihadists to access IS propaganda material; this is significant. As seen in the Jamaat Al Muslimeen example, TT's Muslim community has a high sense of community empowerment through organizing; this is just what terrorist groups, such as IS, are currently offering. This group operates as a "hybrid terrorist organization." Boaz Ganor (2012) describes this as an organization that works through three different but coordinated strategies: the military, in terms of terrorist actions; the political, concerning the scope of its political and ideological objectives; and the social, related to the offer of welfare services for its militants (Ganor, 2012).

This structure has made it possible to equate the religious conflicts that involve Islam around the world, creating the widespread idea of a common enemy framed in the figures of the "non-believer," the "infidel," or the "crusader." Paradoxically, it is the inverse of the same logic that underlies the war against terrorism. All those who reject the liberal political precepts are classified as a "terrorist" or "terrorist threat" through their violent actions and systematic use of terror. This aspect is prominent in the IS

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Trinidadian militants' discourse. In 2016, in an interview by the propagandist magazine *Dabiq*, Abu Sa'd at-Trinidadi –one of the hundreds of TT citizens in the IS ranks– was categorical in equating the conflicts by calling for the attack on "crusaders" in any part of the world. He did not distinguish between nationalities, implying that it is the same threat, regardless of the geographic space in question:

> Attack the interests of the closest coalition of Crusaders, including their embassies, businesses, and "civilians." Burn their government institutions just when they try to bomb our buildings, where the law of Allah is upheld. Follow the example of the lions in France and Belgium, the example of the blessed couple in California, and the example of the knights in Orlando and Nice. (Dabiq, 2016, p. 69)

In this order of ideas, at least two of the dimensions contemplated by social geometry operate to explain conflicts in TT. On the one hand, there is verticality insofar as there is a diffuse hierarchy dividing a group sharing social and religious aspects that perceives itself oppressed by a government that behaves unfairly, from its point of view, making violence a legitimate means of resistance. However, verticality also works from the top-down, in that the government assumes a position of persistent distrust and repression towards a minority, relatively remote from the rest of the population in cultural terms, which could threaten the institutions (the attempted coup) and whose religion is at the center of global religious conflicts, given the fight against terrorism's current logic.

Horizontally, the differences between a Muslim minority that feels mistreated and a Christian majority, including government leaders, intensify the lack of integration. To the point that the radicalized serving IS purposes do not consider TT the place where they belong, but rather a land that subjects them to injustice and humiliation. In this sense, Abu Sa'd at-Trinidadi's words become revealing once again when he calls his fellow Trinidadians to migrate to the IS-established caliphate, which the jihadist considers the dreamland where Allah's law truly governs:

> To those I know who have learned the good creed, I say: what is wrong with you? You have been fooled and deceived by the devil. The years have passed, and you have not yet made the *hijra* to the land of Islam, your land, the place we used to talk about and dream of. It has become a reality, and yet you have become one of those left behind. You wanted your children to live in a land where the law of Allah is the highest, but now you remain in a place where you have no honor and are forced to live in humiliation, subjugated by non-believers. (Abu Sa'd at-Trinidadi, 2019, p. 69)

Thus, seeing itself as an oppressed minority, unjustly treated by the State, this community finds a reason for a sense of solidarity and belonging that brings them

closer on the horizontal plane in terms of integration and organization. This should not be a negative aspect *per se*, as they are generic factors of community empowerment. However, although it cannot be generalized, in TT, this community's organization has also unleashed violent actions, as evidenced by the 1990 coup. The previous has recently translated into a need to take justice into its own hands when an offense or aggression against its members is perceived.

As a matter of fact, many of the Trinidadian Muslims currently in the IS ranks, such as Abu Sa'd at-Trinidadi, began their criminal life on TT streets, organized in small groups or gangs involved in minor crimes (McCoy & Knight, 2017, p. 17). Abu Sa'd at-Trinidadi refers to the first years of his militancy in the Caribbean nation in the following terms:

> I, together with my brothers in Islam, Abu 'Abdillah (another convert from Christianity), Abu 'Isa, and several other brothers from Trinidad who later, after us, made *hijra*, form a group and take care of some of the Muslim's problems that people were afraid to deal with. […] we knew we could not simply sit back and dream without doing anything, so when the non-believers in Trinidad killed or hurt a Muslim, we would take revenge. We worked to accumulate money and buy weapons and ammunition […]. (Abu Sa'd at-Trinidadi, 2016, pp. 65-66)

In light of the above, an endless cycle of mistrust and violence can be established that further widens the Trinidadian community's social differences, making radicalization more likely. Thus, from an intercultural and state approach, taking political, social, and cultural measures to close integration gaps could be the key to reducing the risks that a terrorist organization, such as IS, can achieve its mission of recruiting potential jihadists in a state as distant from the Middle East as TT. The evidence of the previous' feasibility comes from the same Muslim Trinidadians interviewed by Aldrich and Mahabir (2019). They consider that, unlike the State's repressive attitude in everyday life, they have a peaceful coexistence within local communities with their Christian neighbors and, what is more, they feel respected (p. 3).

Finally, it is also important to highlight that the various studies on radicalization in TT have shown a direct link between crime and gang violence, and the weakness of state control. These results become all the more worrying considering that the Caribbean region has the second-highest crime rate after Africa. Between 2008 and 2014, TT was among the ten countries with the highest homicide rates in the world (30-40 murders per 100,000 inhabitants); 60% of these homicides were gang violence-related (McCoy & Knight, 2017, p. 21). Therefore, intercultural measures for community integration cannot be separated from an improvement in security, national and regional. On the one hand, this implies reducing the rates of violence that afflict the population on a day-to-day basis. On the other, it implies controlling the country's borders' porosity

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more effectively to prevent the free movement of potential jihadists towards the Middle East and North Africa (mostly through Venezuela).

Conclusion

Most of the studies on diplomacy and foreign policy have focused on analyzing the state's role and the actions of conventional decision-makers. Most of the analytical frameworks have also responded to understanding the interactions of this function around the state-centric concept of national interest. However, the new dimensions on non-state actors' rationality also open the door to understanding specific logic associated with unconventional foreign policy and diplomacy.

In a globalized world, where the nation-state has lost its leading role, new actors have assumed the state mechanisms for their actions. The previous is well exemplified in the IS case. It controls a territory, has the coercive means to impose order and enforce Islamic law (*sharia*), and has also managed to consolidate structures to provide goods and services. Terrorist diplomacy, in turn, is one of the mechanisms it takes from the State and adapts to enforce its own interests, among them obtaining financing and recruiting potential jihadists. All this calls the classic state-centric view into question, which establishes that there is no state without international recognition, thus making talking about diplomacy moot.

Now, from a spontaneous perspective, there would appear to be no relationship between TT and the IS, as their distant geographic separation distorts reality. However, as shown, the IS has been conducting successful terrorist diplomacy to link Trinidadian militants to its ranks, making great use of the social conditions in which the Muslim population finds itself in the island country.

Thus, this article highlights the limitations of foreign policy studies by adopting conventional state-centered perspectives. In this sense, this work's analytical proposal and methodological approach contribute to non-traditional studies on paradiplomacy and international security, in this case, on the IS in TT. Based on the geometry of terrorism, it demonstrated that the factors analyzed under *push and pull* variables and terrorist diplomacy have broken down geographical barriers, given the globalization-stemmed interconnectivity, which has facilitated potential Trinidadian jihadists' access to IS propaganda material. Therefore, it takes on special relevance in approaching the Trinidadians' motivations to join the IS and, in turn, on the organization's foreign action capabilities to build bridges and communication vessels in a geographically remote region. Then, the geometry of terrorism constitutes a viable analytical framework to broaden the horizons of studies and research on the motivations and incentives that are at stake in this relationship.

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