

Case 53: Boston Marathon

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A most striking difference between the killings at the 2013 Boston Marathon and other cases in this book is that the terrorists, two young Chechen-American brothers, actually were able to assemble and detonate bombs. Many other plotters harbored visions of doing so, and in many cases they were supplied with fantasy-fulfilling, if bogus, bombs by obliging FBI informants. But until Boston, no would-be terrorists in these cases had been able to make and set one off on their own. And, except for four bombs detonated on the London transport system in 2005, neither has any in the United Kingdom. This is impressive in part because most of the hundreds of terrorist incidents in the U.S. in the 1970s, resulting in 72 deaths, were bombings.¹

In many other respects, however, the Boston Marathon bombing is less unusual. In particular, whatever their ability to fabricate and detonate bombs, the terrorists do not seem to have been much more competent than most of the others. For example, they apparently thought they could somehow get away with their deed even though they chose to detonate their bombs at the most-photographed spot on the planet at the time. Moreover, they do not seem to have had anything that could be considered a coherent plan of escape. Also commonly found: an utter inability to consider how killing a few random people would advance their cause.

The Boston perpetrators never ventured much more than a few miles from the bombing location, and they had only limited means of transport and no money. Then, when the police published photographs of them, they mindlessly blew whatever cover they had by killing a campus cop, hijacking a car, stealing money, trying to run a police blockade, and engaging in a brief Hollywood-style car chase and shoot-out. Surveillance imagery did play an important role in identifying the terrorists, but the key breakthrough came when the culprits decided to leave their lair after which the police applied standard killer-on-the-loose methodology.

The scope of the tragedy in Boston should not be minimized—nor should the costs of the several-day manhunt that followed as documented in detail by Chad Chessin. But it should also be noted that, if the terrorists' aim was to kill a large number of people, their homemade bombs, even though detonated in a crowded area, failed miserably (for a discussion of the limited capacities of such bombs, see Case 48). As instances of shootings by non-terrorists sadly demonstrate, far more fatalities have been inflicted by gunmen.

Whether “lone wolves” can logically come in pairs, the Boston perpetrators fit the category. Attacks in which only the perpetrator knows about the plans are obviously more difficult to spot and police than ones involving a great number of talkative people. In fact, previous to the Boston tragedy which resulted in three deaths, some 16 people had been killed by Islamist terrorists in

¹ Brian Michael Jenkins, *Would-Be Warriors: Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization in the United States Since September 11, 2001*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010, 8-9.

the United States in the years since 2001, and all of these were caused by people who were essentially acting entirely alone (Cases 4, 26, and 32). There are also three cases in which lone wolves carried out an attack but failed to inflict any fatalities (Cases 17, 34, and 43).

Concern about “lone wolf” attacks has grown in recent years, and a 2011 Department of Homeland Security assessment concluded that “lone offenders currently present the greatest threat.”² However, those concerned should keep in mind that, as Max Abrahms has noted, while lone wolves may be difficult to police, they have carried out only two of the 1,900 most deadly terrorist attacks over the last four decades.³

As is typical, the Boston bombers seem to have been primarily motivated by outrage at U.S. foreign policy, seeking to protect co-religionists against what is commonly seen to be a concentrated war upon it in the Middle East.

The case inspired an unusual amount of interest in the public and (therefore) in the media in part, perhaps, because of its venue, the drama of the multiple-day manhunt, and the fact that one of the perpetrators was, as one of his teachers puts out, “gorgeous.” Much of the attention, however, did fade in a few weeks.

² Associated Press, “Suspect in Seattle terror plot intent on attacking a recruiting station to ‘wake the Muslims up’,” June 23, 2011.

³ Max Abrahms, “Fear of ‘lone wolf’ misplaced,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 5, 2011. See also the Introduction to this book.

Case 53: Boston Marathon

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1. Overview

The running of the Boston Marathon kicked off for the 117th time in Hopkinton, Massachusetts on the morning of April 15, 2013. However, unlike virtually every edition past, the conclusion of the annual race was not marked by jubilation and triumph. In fact, not all runners were even afforded the opportunity to finish, as the race was cut short by tragedy: two explosions—each caused by the detonation of a pressure cooker bomb—resulted in three deaths and 264 injuries.¹

Amid the chaos and confusion, authorities were unable to immediately apprehend the culprits. In fact, the identity of any suspects remained a mystery to the public until Thursday, April 18, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released photos of two men wanted for questioning. These suspects—brothers Tamerlan, 26, and Dzhokhar, 19, Tsarnaev—ultimately turned out to be responsible for the terrorism at the Boston Marathon.² However, over the course of Thursday and Friday, April 18 and 19, the brothers would be responsible for even more crime and bloodshed, murdering an unsuspecting police officer, carjacking a man at gunpoint, and engaging police officers in a standoff that featured not only extensive rounds of gunfire, but also heavier artillery like grenades and—quite ominously—another pressure cooker bomb.³

Older brother Tamerlan was killed in the standoff, but Dzhokhar was able to flee, driving away from the site of the standoff, dumping the stolen vehicle, and continuing on foot. At this point, law enforcement began what would become an all-day search for the younger Tsarnaev, who would not be found and apprehended until late Friday night when authorities were brought to the home of a Watertown man who discovered a man bleeding in his boat in the backyard. Dzhokhar was brought to Beth-Israel Deaconess Medical Center—the same hospital where his brother and partner-in-crime was pronounced dead the day before—and at 8:45pm, Boston Police announced that the Tsarnaevs' reign of terror over Boston had ended.⁴

With one suspect dead and the other in custody, there was no longer an immediate threat to the public, but there were still many gaps to be filled in the case. In the ensuing days, investigators questioned three suspected accomplices—Robel Phillipos, Dias Kadyrbayev, and Azamat Tazhayakov. These interrogations proved integral to the case, as they led authorities to incriminating evidence against one of the Tsarnaev brothers, who, by that point, was inextricably linked

¹ Adam Gabbatt, “Boston Marathon bombing injury toll rises to 264,” *Guardian*, April 23, 2013.

² Greg Botelho, “Timeline: The Boston Marathon bombing, manhunt, and investigation,” *CNN*, May 2, 2013.

³ Mark Arsenault and Sean P. Murphy, “New details on wild shootout with bomb suspects in Watertown; chief says older brother was killed by younger brother’s desperate getaway,” *Boston Globe*, April 21, 2013.

⁴ Paul Cruickshank, Tim Lister, and CNN Staff, “Timeline: The manhunt,” *CNN*, April 26, 2013.

to the other.⁵ All three accomplices were charged with crimes on May 1.⁶ Each has been indicted, entered a non-guilty plea, and currently awaits trial.⁷ The individual role of each of the suspected accomplices will be discussed later in this case study.

Dzhokhar, who had been charged with “using and conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction resulting in death” on April 22, was formally arraigned on July 10. He pleaded not guilty to all 30 charges brought against him, including 17 that can carry life imprisonment or the death penalty.⁸ His trial date has yet to be scheduled, and his defense team is currently requesting more time to work out a case against the death penalty. Meanwhile, federal prosecutors plan to make a recommendation for the death penalty to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, who has the final say in whether to pursue the charge, by October 31.⁹

Much has unfolded in the weeks and months following the acts of terrorism. We learned of Tamerlan’s trip back to Dzhokhar’s and his homeland of Dagestan—a war-torn republic adjacent to Chechnya that is also subjected to Russian control—in which he may or may not have been further radicalized under the doctrine of fanatical Islamism. We were introduced to the mother of the two bombers, a mysterious woman who has come out with virulently anti-American statements, has insisted upon the innocence of both of her sons, and has expressed a desire to bring Dzhokhar back to Dagestan immediately.¹⁰ Finally, we watched before our eyes as Dzhokhar transformed from an individual terrorist suspect and likely culprit into a modern media spectacle due to a widely publicized and extremely controversial article published in *Rolling Stone* magazine that depicted him in the likeness of a “rockstar.”¹¹

As the country heals, Boston continues its gradual return to normalcy, and Dzhokhar awaits trial, we still seek many answers. Only time can tell if we will ever be able to fully understand what drove the Tsarnaevs to terrorism, but we can make some fairly strong guesses with the information at hand. In this case study, I will analyze the nature, motivations, goals, and connections—among many other aspects and characteristics—of the Tsarnaev brothers, hoping to facilitate an understanding of who the perpetrators were and why they did what they did.

2. Nature of the adversary

Violence was engrained in the habitus of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar from day one. Both born in Kyrgyzstan—Tamerlan in 1986 and Dzhokhar in 1993—with Chechen ethnicity, the brothers felt the ugly effects of religious and political discrimination, as well as constant warfare, for nearly all of their childhood. In

⁵ Botelho, “Timeline: The Boston Marathon bombing, manhunt, and investigation.”

⁶ Botelho, “Timeline: The Boston Marathon bombing, manhunt, and investigation.”

⁷ Associated Press, “Friends of Tsarnaev plead not guilty to impeding Boston bombing investigation,” *Guardian*, September 13, 2013.

⁸ Associated Press, “Dzhokhar Tsarnaev pleads not guilty to Boston Marathon bombing,” *ABC WJLA*, July 10, 2013.

⁹ Doug Stanglin, “Tsarnaev lawyers request more time,” *USA Today*, September 23, 2013.

¹⁰ Tim Franks, “Dagestan and the Tsarnaev brothers: The radicalisation risk,” *BBC*, June 23, 2013.

¹¹ Matt Seaton and Rabail Baig, “Is Rolling Stone’s Dzhokhar Tsarnaev ‘rock star’ cover an outrage?” *Guardian*, July 17, 2013.

1994, when Tamerlan was eight years old and Dzhokhar an infant, the First Chechen War broke out. While the Tsarnaev children were hardly affected by this first outbreak of conflict, there is no doubt that it was fresh in their memories when the Second Chechen War, a conflict that would significantly affect them despite never having visited Chechnya, erupted in 1999. In this year, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar watched their father Anzor lose his job in the Kyrgyz government merely for being Chechen, were uprooted from their homeland and forced to move to Dagestan, and despite all the changes and sacrifices they underwent, were still engulfed by turbulence, violence, and bloodshed.¹²

Finally, in spring 2002, Anzor took his wife Zubeidat and youngest son Dzhokhar—eight years old at the time—and immigrated to the United States. Tamerlan, the oldest child, and Ailina and Bella, the two middle children, remained behind in Dagestan until the family was granted political asylum in 2003. In July of that year, the full family was reunited and moved into a small, weathered home in Cambridge, Massachusetts.¹³

There is an important takeaway from this description of the early life of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar. First, Tamerlan was able to fully understand what was happening around him prior to emigration. While Dzhokhar was merely an infant when the first instance of civil war broke out, and he likely still did not fully comprehend the issues at hand when the second conflict came around, Tamerlan would have been able to fully gauge the atrocities, prejudice, and discrimination that enveloped his world in 1999. In fact, it is almost poetic that young Dzhokhar was taken to America in 2002 while Tamerlan—already on the early path to disillusionment—was left behind, as it is symbolic and illustrative of why Tamerlan would eventually take the lead in the Boston Marathon bombings plot, and why Dzhokhar, who idolized his brother,¹⁴ would follow him to the ends of the earth to achieve Tamerlan’s agenda. It is my conclusion that while both brothers are terrorists in their own right, this plot was completely dependent on the resentment and violent tendencies held by Tamerlan.

The brothers had very different upbringings in America, due to their distinct roles in the family and their varying degrees of maturation. To their mother Zubeidat, Tamerlan was a superhero and a rock for the family. On the other hand, Dzhokhar was her “dwog” —meaning “heart” —or her “Jo-Jo.” While Tamerlan was rough, tough, and a defender of the family, Dzhokhar was gentle, lovable, and carefree. While Tamerlan had grown accustomed to his life in Kyrgyzstan and Dagestan and could not easily adjust to this new Western society and culture, Dzhokhar in many respects was not only able, but also willing, to take on a new challenge. Dzhokhar was the talk of the town, and Tamerlan was nearly nowhere to be found. It should be noted that Dzhokhar, despite not coming of age in the North Caucasus region like Tamerlan, was still fiercely nationalistic and proud of his Chechen ethnicity.¹⁵

¹² Janet Reitman, “Jahar’s World,” *Rolling Stone*, July 17, 2013.

¹³ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

¹⁴ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

¹⁵ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

Looking back at Tamerlan's early adulthood, red flags were perhaps all too abundant. He possessed a variety of characteristics that, when held together, form a somewhat perfect storm in terms of being susceptible to the allure of terrorism. First, he was very violent. In 2006, he opted to drop out of school to pursue a career in Olympic boxing.¹⁶ Of course, in and of itself, being a boxer is not indicative of a person who is violent by nature. However, when we look at the full picture of Tamerlan's life, including his 2009 admission to beating his girlfriend,¹⁷ perhaps his choice of boxing over all other sports is more telling than it originally seems. Tamerlan's violence was not restricted to the ring though, where it would have been considered socially acceptable. In 2007, at age 21, he struck a Brazilian teenager who was dating his younger sister in the face. It is inconclusive why he hit the boy, but it was noted that he did not approve of the boy for his sister because he was not Muslim. In 2008, Tamerlan beat up his other sister's husband for supposedly cheating on her and beating her.¹⁸

Another red flag was Tamerlan's obsessive tendencies. When he chose boxing as his life's dream, the sport consumed him to the point where all other things he cared about had to take a backseat. For example, when prom season came around, it was Tamerlan's friends, rather than Tamerlan himself, who sought to find him a date. He trained non-stop, even going so far as to practice punching trees when all other methods were exhausted. So, it is not surprising that around the same time Tamerlan's Olympic boxing dreams came to an end—as the rules were changed in 2010 so that non-citizens of the U.S. could not compete for the title as a U.S. delegate—he picked up a new obsession: religion. Despite coming from a secular Muslim family, Tamerlan became enthralled by Islam between 2009 and 2010. Just as boxing is not indicative of being a violent person, becoming a devout Muslim is not indicative of someone who feels marginalized and resentful. However, again, when we look at the full picture of Tamerlan's life, his conversion to Islam and his obsessive tendencies combined to form a fairly substantial red flag. He would spend hours at a time reading Islamic websites, was prone to believing conspiracy theories about the U.S. government, especially those with undertones of Muslim oppression,¹⁹ and let us not forget, grew up in a region where violence, turbulence, and terror were not out-of-the-ordinary phenomena.

Tamerlan's treatment of his wife is also illustrative of his obsessiveness. Katherine Russell, or Karima Tsarnaeva as she was officially known from the time the couple wed in June 2010 until Tamerlan's death, was forbidden by Tamerlan to continue many of her previous lifestyle choices.²⁰ Not only did he make her change her name, but he also insisted upon a complete change of wardrobe—calling her “slut” and “prostitute” if she did not wear what he wanted. He also dictated her diet. One source familiar with the relationship said:

¹⁶ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

¹⁷ Julie Bykowicz, Annie Linskey, and Prashant Gopal, “Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s Family Crumbled Before Boston Bombs,” *Bloomberg*, April 23, 2013.

¹⁸ William Saletan, “The Tortured Tsarnaevs,” *Slate*, April 29, 2013.

¹⁹ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

²⁰ Daily Mail Reporter, “Boston bombing suspect began collecting food stamps and welfare shortly after his wife gave birth to their daughter,” *Daily Mail*, April 26, 2013.

“Katherine was completely subservient to him. She cowered around him.”²¹ Investigators have analyzed the possible role of the widow in the attacks, but so far no link has been established. While there was female DNA found on the debris from one of the bombs, it did not match Katherine’s. It has been confirmed that the bombs were built in Tamerlan’s and her home. However, Dzhokhar insists that his sister-in-law knew nothing of the attacks, and as Katherine provided for the family—due to Tamerlan’s unemployment—by working near 80-hour workweeks, it is possible that she was out of the house while the brothers worked.²² Since Tamerlan’s death, Katherine, who has legally changed her name back from Karima Tsarnaeva, has moved in with her parents and largely reverted back to her old life. She still, however, remains a devout Muslim.²³

So we know that Tamerlan had a history of violence—marked not only by his boxing career, but also by physical altercations with a youth, an in-law, and his eventual wife—and obsessive tendencies, was suspicious and resentful of the U.S. government, had recently become a devout Muslim, and, vitally, had a long, personal history dating back to his early childhood of feeling persecuted and wronged. We also know that in 2011, Tamerlan watched his personal hero—his father Anzor—and his number one supporter and admirer—his mother Zubeidat—obtain a mutually-agreed-upon divorce.²⁴ Incidentally, one of the main reasons for the split was that Anzor, who was never attracted by Islamic religiosity, felt “depressed” by Tamerlan’s and Zubeidat’s turn to religion—following in Tamerlan’s footsteps, Zubeidat became a devout Muslim.²⁵ Tamerlan watched as his hero, mentor, and role model moved back to Dagestan after 25 years of marriage. It would be rational for Tamerlan to blame himself for his father’s decision, as Anzor specifically told Zubeidat that the reason for divorce was the sudden turn to religion in the family, and Tamerlan was the largest influence on Zubeidat’s religiosity, as she would cite to her friends and customers at her salon.²⁶

As if the sense of isolation and abandonment was not enough, Tamerlan soon lost contact with his mother, as she, too, returned to Dagestan after getting arrested for attempting to shoplift clothing after which she skipped bail.²⁷ Later in this case study, I will discuss Tamerlan’s 2012 trip to Dagestan where his radicalization most likely occurred.²⁸ But for now, I simply want to demonstrate how things stood: Tamerlan was more alone than he had ever been before, but he still had Dzhokhar, and with both parents on the other side of the world, it would only be intuitive for Dzhokhar, who, despite being of legal age, had always been reliant upon his family, to turn to his older brother and icon for direction.

²¹ Michael Walsh, “Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s widow Katherine Russell rejects strict Muslim rules, family wants her to embrace Christianity: source,” *New York Daily News*, July 6, 2013.

²² Pete Williams and Tracy Connor, “Boston bomb suspect said widow Katherine Russell not involved: official,” *NBC News*, May 8, 2013.

²³ Walsh, “Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s widow Katherine Russell rejects strict Muslim rules.”

²⁴ Bykowicz et al., “Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s Family Crumbled Before Boston Bombs.”

²⁵ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

²⁶ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

²⁷ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

²⁸ Franks, “Dagestan and the Tsarnaev brothers: The radicalisation risk.”

In many senses, Dzhokhar was a complete foil to Tamerlan. He is without doubt the more intriguing of the two suspected perpetrators, because while Tamerlan's nature was congruent with what we might expect of a potential terrorist—demonstratively angry and obsessive—Dzhokhar, at least for most of his life, would not have appeared on anyone's "prospective terrorist" radar. As previously mentioned, Dzhokhar, or "Jahar," as he endearingly became known, was the first Tsarnaev child in America, was the youngest and thus best-suited child for acclimation to a new culture and lifestyle, and had a number of socially desirable characteristics.²⁹ Since the events of the Boston Marathon, his friends have described him as "nice," "compliant," and even "pillow soft." One teacher went so far as to say: "This was the quintessential kid from the war zone, who made total use of everything we offer so that he could remake his life. And he was gorgeous."³⁰

Dzhokhar was involved with drugs and alcohol, but not to an extent that worried anyone. Upon entering high school, he became an avid marijuana-user, and he consumed alcohol fairly often. However, friends recollect that he was always calm and collected whenever trouble was on the horizon, and he was always the friend to talk to the police. In fact, discussing these "flaws" seemed to endear Dzhokhar even more to the people in his past, as they described him as "chill," "smooth," and among the most reliable people in their times of need.³¹

Just like Tamerlan, Dzhokhar was an exceptional boxer—and wrestler, for that matter—but there is an important distinction to be made between the two brothers. Among Dzhokhar's most reiterated characteristics reported by his friends was his ability to refrain from violence. One friend put Jahar's boxing prowess in perspective: "He wasn't violent, though – that's the crazy thing. He was never violent."³² While Tamerlan's violence extended out of the ring, Dzhokhar rarely, if ever, got into physical fights that were not for sport. It is telling of Jahar's nature that he could be perceived so favorably despite participating in two violent sports, smoking an illegal substance, and consuming alcohol underage. It remains a mystery if he actually *did* have a kind disposition or if it was all a façade.

So, were there any red flags with Dzhokhar? To be sure, there were not many prior to his college years. One friend remembers an instance in high school in which Jahar seemed not only to empathize with terrorists, but also to support their cause. The comments came in light of a discussion about Islam and how Jahar hated when people equated it with terrorism. Jahar went on to defend Jihad as a "personal struggle." When prompted about the September 11 attacks of 2001, Dzhokhar, albeit reluctantly, admitted that sometimes he thinks the U.S. deserves what it gets for intervening where it does not need to.³³

In 2011, Dzhokhar graduated from Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School and moved on to study at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth.

²⁹ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

³⁰ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

³¹ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

³² Reitman, "Jahar's World."

³³ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

He received a merit-based scholarship based on his high school performance, but things began to take a turn for the worse at this point. According to a college transcript obtained by the *New York Times*,³⁴ Jahar failed seven classes in his freshman year.³⁵ Without doubt, this sudden change in Dzhokhar's performance was not fully attributable to the rigor of his college courses. During his freshman year, his beloved parents divorced, his mother got arrested, and both parents ended up back in Dagestan. With this support system gone, Dzhokhar would intuitively turn to his brother Tamerlan—a man he used to revere, but from whom Jahar distanced himself to a degree since Tamerlan's sudden development of religious zeal. To be sure, this distancing was not because of the religiosity of Tamerlan, as Dzhokhar was, in fact, a proud Muslim despite not being very active, but rather due to Tamerlan's strictness.³⁶ It is likely that the brothers became closer than they had ever been in reaction to the recent tribulations.

In analyzing the respective natures of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, we must begin with their roots. The two men were born in Kyrgyzstan, where they felt the effects of the Chechen Wars. Despite the fact that they were not devoutly religious at the time, their people were persecuted merely because of their set of beliefs. Furthermore, turbulence and violence seemed inescapable and inevitable, as war followed the family to Dagestan, where Zubeidat had grown up. Eventually, the family decided to start a new life in America. For Dzhokhar, this transition was much easier due to his youth and relative lack of painful experience. Tamerlan, on the other hand, had grown up in a far different culture and was already molded from his experiences. As a result, he was far less able to acclimate to American society. Either as a result of this distinction, or perhaps as simply an unrelated additive, Dzhokhar was perceived as non-violent, composed, and gentle, while Tamerlan was known for his violent tendencies, obsessiveness, and roughness. In 2011, when the foundation of the Tsarnaev family faltered and the parents divorced and moved back to Dagestan, I speculate that Dzhokhar likely turned back to Tamerlan for support, in the process becoming further indoctrinated by Tamerlan into radical Islam.

3. Motivation

The motivations for the Tsarnaevs' terrorism are far less cryptic, and to gain a general understanding, one has to look no further than Dzhokhar's message written on the inside of the boat in which he hid before being apprehended by law enforcement agents. In a loaded message that eliminated whatever doubt remained about the Tsarnaevs' guilt, Dzhokhar wrote: "the U.S. government is killing our civilians. I can't stand to see such evil go unpunished.... We Muslims are one body, you hurt one, you hurt us all."³⁷ He goes on to dispel the possible

³⁴ Erica Goode and Serge F. Kovaleski, "Boy at Home in U.S., Swayed by One who Wasn't, *New York Times*, April 19, 2013.

³⁵ Chris Kirk and Heather Brady, "From Wrestling Captain to Terrorism Suspect," *Slate*, April 23, 2013.

³⁶ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

³⁷ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

notion that he alone—not Tamerlan—held these sentiments with a message that states that Tamerlan is a martyr who happily laid down his life for the cause.

Thus, we are certain that the brothers were motivated by a desire to punish the U.S. for its foreign policy and intervention in notable Muslim-majority countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the question remains, if the Tsarnaevs' resentment stems from persecution of Muslims in the North Caucasus, why choose to punish the U.S. and not Russia, the perceived aggressor in the region? Sure, Dzhokhar made it clear that a violation against any Muslim is a violation against him, but would it not make more sense to punish the country that uprooted the ethnic Chechen population and that forced the Tsarnaevs into the Chechen diaspora in the first place?

Perhaps the most simplistic explanation is laid out by Tom Neer of the Soufan Group—an organization that provides governments with security intelligence services. He speculates that Tamerlan and Dzhokhar targeted the most convenient target, which in this case was the U.S. According to Neer, the brothers were in a state of flux and projected the blame onto the nearest scapegoat. In other words, for the Tsarnaev brothers, the need for action in light of their perceived unfavorable circumstances superseded the need for justification. Contributing to this crisis and angst were the divorce of the parents, Jahar's falling into extreme debt to the university, and Tamerlan's and his wife Karima Tsarnaeva's loss of housing subsidy, which was the result of decreased welfare benefits beginning in late 2012.³⁸

While Neer's contention almost certainly has a degree of validity and relevance, an even more important factor was the Tsarnaevs' subscription to "far-enemy" targeting. At first, Tamerlan was interested in joining the fight in Dagestan against the local police and Russian forces. However, soon after, his cousin dissuaded him from fighting this "near-enemy," saying that this was not a fight for someone who had lived so far away for so long. In fact, this cousin urged Tamerlan to embrace non-violence, but as we know, Tamerlan had other objectives in mind.³⁹ It seems odd that the U.S. would be considered a "far-enemy" when it was the current home of the terrorists when the attack took place, but from a lens of global Jihad, home is the site of the larger Muslim population. Thus, the U.S. and the West are the overarching "far-enemies" that support secular "near-enemies" in the Muslim-majority area. So, instead of attacking the "near-enemy" Russian forces—which incidentally are a rare "near-enemy" because of the country's large amount of influence and international stature—Tamerlan and Dzhokhar opted to go after the perceived "bigger problem." Additionally, while Dzhokhar was able to obtain U.S. citizenship, Tamerlan's lack of citizenship served as a constant reminder that his only true identity was with Islam.⁴⁰

³⁸ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

³⁹ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

⁴⁰ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

4. Goals

As is the case in almost every instance of terrorism, the paramount goal of the Boston Marathon bombings was to cause destruction, and often death, for a political purpose. It is always difficult to ascertain whether an individual terrorist truly believes that his/her actions will lead to policy concessions and change. The background of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar—being two intelligent, albeit radicalized, individuals—makes me think that they did not truly believe that killing a mass amount of Americans would lead to short-term, United States withdrawal from Muslim-majority countries. However, I do believe that the Tsarnaevs hoped to contribute to a dampening of the American spirit. Not only did they want to scare the Bostonian population into submission, but they also wanted people to become fed up with the war effort in countries such as Afghanistan. Maybe they believed that next time we would think twice before entering a war in a Muslim country. It should be noted that terrorists often misperceive how the public will respond to the act of terrorism. As was the case in Boston, I think the public's unification against the attack contributed to a sense of patriotism and nationalism that, in fact, superseded the created fear. Finally, it is likely that a goal of the Tsarnaevs was merely to obtain a voice.

5. Plans of violence

Tamerlan's trip to Dagestan in January 2012, in all likelihood, is where he was radicalized to the necessary degree to execute the acts he and Dzhokhar would eventually perform. A year earlier, Russia, worried about the prospect of a terrorist attack on their soil, asked the FBI to investigate the Tsarnaevs, because Russia had gathered intelligence that Tamerlan was an Islamist who continued to grow more radical and was planning on visiting Dagestan. The FBI heeded this request, but found no evidence of any wrongdoing. Tamerlan carried on with his trip as planned, leaving in January 2012 and returning in July of the same year.⁴¹

As has been argued, Tamerlan was likely on the path to radicalization before this trip to Dagestan. However, his actions in the immediate aftermath of the trip demonstrate that this six-week period is likely when terrorism entered his realm of possibility. Tamerlan's cousin urged him not only to turn away from the civil war in Dagestan, but also to abstain from violence altogether. However, this guidance fell upon deaf ears. When Tamerlan returned to the U.S. in July 2012, his main focus was global Jihad. He interrupted services at the local mosque to contradict favorable messages about Thanksgiving and Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and he filled his YouTube page with Jihadist recruitment videos, specifically those related to Chechnya.⁴² His influence extended onto Jahar, who was both vulnerable to Tamerlan's virulent teachings because of their parents' recent divorce and excited to see his brother after so long. Soon, both brothers were radicalized in Jihadist doctrine and well on their way to committing terrorism.

What we know of the immediate plans of violence is limited, but definitely pertinent. In all likelihood, the Tsarnaevs had decided to at least consider performing a terrorist attack in February 2013, when Tamerlan

⁴¹ CNN Staff, "Timeline: A look at Tamerlan Tsarnaev's past," *CNN*, April 22, 2013.

⁴² Reitman, "Jahar's World."

purchased mortars with explosive powder, and Dzhokhar downloaded the infamous issue of al-Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine that detailed how to make pressure cooker bombs. Approximately a month later, in late March, Jahar came to stay with Tamerlan over spring break. On April 7, Jahar sent out the following tweet: "If you have the knowledge and the inspiration all that's left is to take action."⁴³

At approximately 2:50pm local time on Monday, April 15, the first of two explosions set off by a pressure cooker bomb interrupted the running of the Boston Marathon. Ten seconds later, the second bomb exploded about 550 feet from the site of the first.⁴⁴ In total, 264 were injured and three people would ultimately die from the explosions.⁴⁵ Dzhokhar has revealed since his capture that the brothers initially planned on attacking on July 4, 2013, because of its symbolic value and potential for large casualties, but the bombs were ready far earlier than expected. It has been speculated, but not confirmed, that the Tsarnaevs may have chosen the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular, which hosts approximately 500,000 people, as the venue for attack if not for the early completion of the bombs.⁴⁶ Without doubt, the Boston Marathon was chosen as the attack site because of its proximity to the Tsarnaevs, the large number of spectators, and the fame of the event.

However, the Tsarnaevs' violence was not limited to the running of the Marathon. At approximately 10:30pm on Thursday, April 18, three days after the first attack, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Police Officer Sean Collier, 27, was found severely wounded in his police cruiser on campus in Cambridge. He was immediately taken to Massachusetts General Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.⁴⁷ According to his Police Chief John DiFava, who had ramped up campus security in light of the bombings from just three days prior, Collier had been working the 3:00 PM-11:15pm shift to which he was regularly assigned when he sustained five gunshot wounds, two to the head. Later obtained surveillance video showed the same tandem suspected of responsibility for the Boston Marathon bombings sneaking up behind the car, firing the shots that killed Collier, and attempting to take his gun, which ultimately they could not unlock from the advanced holster.⁴⁸

The date of this murder and subsequent manhunt is significant, as it was the same day that the two brothers were revealed as suspects. Police identified the pair via video camera footage at the Marathon. It seems likely that the Tsarnaevs—realizing that capture was imminent—wanted to cause as much damage as possible. Obviously, in order to do so, they needed a weapon. Their objective in killing Collier was merely to obtain his firearm, which they were not

⁴³ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

⁴⁴ "Site of the Explosions at the Boston Marathon," *New York Times*, April 15, 2013.

⁴⁵ Gabbatt, "Boston Marathon bombing injury toll rises to 264."

⁴⁶ Almasy, "Sources: Boston bombs built in older Tsarnaev's home, first target was July 4," *CNN*, May 3, 2013.

⁴⁷ Carolyn Y. Johnson, David Abel, and Kay Lazar, "MIT's fallen officer built enduring connections," *Boston Globe*, April 19, 2013.

⁴⁸ Daily Mail Reporter, "The chilling details of how the Boston bombing suspects 'crept up on MIT police officer Sean Collier and fired five bullets into him'," *Daily Mail*, April 29, 2013.

even able to remove from its holster.⁴⁹ The lack of weapon and getaway vehicle, which will be discussed later, shows that this violence was likely spur-of-the-moment and a direct result of being revealed as wanted men.

From there, the Tsarnaevs moved across the Charles River to the southwest to Allston, where Tamerlan carjacked a Mercedes-Benz SUV and held the car's owner at gunpoint. According to the victim, Tamerlan took responsibility for the violence at the Boston Marathon upon entering the car on the passenger side. The older brother's bluntness and choice to use another person's car rather than his own is convincing evidence that he did not anticipate coming out of this affair alive, or at least as a free man. Next, the older Tsarnaev forced the owner to drive around and look for an ATM. The Tsarnaevs' lack of money is further illustrative of the spontaneity of this attack. Dzhokhar followed the SUV in his green Honda Civic. At this point, Tamerlan took over as driver of the SUV, and the victim sat in the passenger seat. The trio went to Cambridge, back across the river, where a short time ago, the brothers had murdered Collier. There, the car, running low on gas, was stopped at a Shell gas station. The driver escaped out of the passenger-side door while both brothers were out of the car, and soon after, he alerted law enforcement as to what had happened.⁵⁰ Had the car not been running low on gas, the Tsarnaevs planned to drive it to Times Square in New York City and perform another attack.⁵¹

Fortuitously, the owner of the Mercedes left his cellphone behind in the carjacked SUV. As a result, police were able to track the whereabouts of the car to Watertown, a suburb of Boston due west of Cambridge, where investigators believe the brothers planned on ditching the SUV, moving explosives into the Honda Civic, and escaping.⁵² When found, per a report from a local Watertown officer, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar were driving the two separate cars.⁵³ This officer tailed the suspects until backup arrived, at which time the brothers exited their respective cars, and began a violent standoff. The Tsarnaevs started with gunfire at about 12:50am in the early morning of Friday, April 19, giving rise to what Watertown Police Chief Ed Deveau said was a five-to-ten minute gunfight between the brothers and police which he estimated to include 200 shots.⁵⁴ Then, the brothers moved on to heavier artillery: five grenades that had been in Dzhokhar's car, only three of which exploded, and a pressure cooker bomb which would not be detonated. Deveau said police believed the bomb to be "an exact duplicate" of the two bombs used on April 15 during the Boston Marathon.⁵⁵ If there was any doubt that law enforcement was dealing with the same culprits responsible for the terrorism at the marathon, it was rapidly subsiding.

⁴⁹ Daily Mail Reporter, "The chilling details of how the Boston bombing suspects."

⁵⁰ James Novograd, Tom Winter, and Michael Isikoff, "Green Honda could prove crucial if Tsarnaev charged in MIT officer's killing," *NBC News*, May 1, 2013.

⁵¹ Greg Botelho and Josh Levs, "Boston bombing suspects planned Times Square attack, Bloomberg says," *CNN*, April 26, 2013.

⁵² Novograd, Winter, and Isikoff, "Green Honda could prove crucial."

⁵³ Arsenault and Murphy, "New details on wild shootout."

⁵⁴ Cruickshank, Lister, and CNN Staff, "Timeline: The manhunt."

⁵⁵ Arsenault and Murphy, "New details on wild shootout."

The standoff neared conclusion when Tamerlan began to walk toward police while firing his gun. Several officers tackled him when he ran out of ammunition, but before they could handcuff him, Dzhokhar sped forward in the Mercedes SUV. The officers were forced to dodge the oncoming vehicle, which proceeded to run over Tamerlan, who according to a source was wearing explosives with a trigger.⁵⁶ The older brother would be pronounced dead at Beth-Israel Deaconess Medical Center at 1:35am.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Dzhokhar was on the loose, having driven a couple of streets away from the site of the standoff, dumping the stolen vehicle, and continuing on foot. At this point, law enforcement began what would become an all-day search for Dzhokhar, who was not found until late that night when authorities were brought to the home of a Watertown man who discovered a blood-covered man in his boat parked in his backyard. Police were able to confirm that the wounded Dzhokhar was alive by using a thermal imaging camera attached to an overhead helicopter to see through the tarp covering the boat. Next, a robotic arm was used to remove the tarp so as not to get too close to the suspect. An FBI negotiator was able to convince Dzhokhar to lift his shirt to reveal that he was not wearing any explosives. Finally, police moved in to apprehend Dzhokhar, who was also brought to Beth-Israel Deaconess Medical Center. At 8:45pm, Boston police took to the social media site Twitter to announce their capture of the suspect.⁵⁸ Five days after Tamerlan and Dzhokhar set off two bombs that killed three and injured 264 at the Boston Marathon, and almost a full day after they murdered a police officer, carjacked an SUV, and began an intensive manhunt featuring an extremely dangerous standoff, the Tsarnaevs' reign of terror over Boston was brought to an end.

The legal battle between federal prosecutors and Dzhokhar's defense team is just beginning. Dzhokhar, who had been charged with "using and conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction resulting in death" on April 22, 2013, was formally arraigned on July 10. He pleaded not guilty to all 30 charges brought against him, including 17 that can carry life imprisonment or the death penalty.⁵⁹ He caused quite a stir at this arraignment date by supposedly smiling, yawning, and smirking among other inappropriate behaviors, but people who know him have reported that those are his typical, often misperceived, behaviors.⁶⁰

6. Role of Informants

In this case, there were no informants in the traditional sense. However, information provided by three suspected accomplices of Dzhokhar proved pivotal in filling in the gaps of the case and finding incriminating evidence against the Tsarnaevs. Beginning on April 19, investigators questioned three suspected accomplices—Robel Phillipos, Dias Kadyrbayev, and Azamat Tazhayakov—in an effort to paint the whole picture and bring closure to the people of Boston.

⁵⁶ Cruickshank, Lister, and CNN Staff, "Timeline: The manhunt."

⁵⁷ "The Hunt for the Boston Bombing Suspects," *New York Times*, April 19, 2013.

⁵⁸ Cruickshank, Lister, and CNN Staff, "Timeline: The manhunt."

⁵⁹ Associated Press, "Dzhokhar Tsarnaev pleads not guilty to Boston Marathon bombing."

⁶⁰ Reitman, "Jahar's World."

These interrogations ultimately led to the unearthing of key evidence. All three were being held on criminal charges and relayed information only to minimize punishment.

At approximately 9:00pm on Thursday, April 18, when the Tsarnaevs were still at large, the three suspected accomplices entered Dzhokhar's dorm room on the campus of the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. When they left around an hour later, they took with them Dzhokhar's laptop and a backpack containing fireworks no longer full of gunpowder. Later, the trio placed these objects in a trash bag, which they deposited in a dumpster outside the apartment shared by Kadyrbayev and Tazhayakov. From the testimony of these three, FBI and local law enforcement agents had all the information they needed to piece together the puzzle. On Sunday, April 21, FBI agents searched Dzhokhar's dorm room and found pyrotechnics, as well as the clothes Dzhokhar wore on the day of the bombing. Five days later, on Friday, April 26, the laptop and backpack were recovered at a local landfill. All three accomplices were charged with crimes on May 1.⁶¹ It is likely that the accomplices acted mostly to protect their friend Dzhokhar, but perhaps also because of resentment against the U.S.

In early August, Kadyrbayev and Tazhayakov were indicted by a federal grand jury for obstruction of justice. The indictment increased their maximum prison sentence from five years to 25 years.⁶² At the time, representatives for Phillipos were attempting to work out a deal. However, by the end of August, he, too, was indicted, but for a different charge. Phillipos faces 16 years in prison for lying to law enforcement authorities concerning his role in the cover-up.⁶³ On September 13, 2013, all three accomplices entered not guilty pleas.⁶⁴

7. Connections

The Tsarnaev brothers—particularly Tamerlan as a result of his 2012 trip—were connected to violent, independence movements in Dagestan and Chechnya because of the strong attitudes and identities they had formed. The actors in these conflicts with whom the brothers will forever be associated—Dagestani and Chechen insurgents fighting against local and Russian police forces—can and should be classified as terrorists due to the violent tactics they employ. Neither brother had lived in Dagestan since 2003, but their increasing observance of Islam came accompanied with stronger emotional connections to their homeland and with its violence-riddled neighbor. Tamerlan had always felt some degree of connection to Dagestan because he was old enough to understand what was happening when the family resided there.

Despite the fact that the Tsarnaev family descended from generations of Chechens, neither Tamerlan nor Dzhokhar—nor their parents for that matter—

⁶¹ Botelho, "Timeline: The Boston Marathon bombing, manhunt, and investigation."

⁶² Maria Sacchetti, "Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's college friends indicted," *Boston Globe*, August 8, 2013.

⁶³ Associated Press, "Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's schoolmate faces 16 years in prison for lying to police when questioned about getting rid of possessions from the suspected terrorist's dorm room," *Daily Mail*, August 29, 2013.

⁶⁴ Associated Press, "Boston bombing suspect's friends plead not guilty," *USA Today*, September 13, 2013.

ever resided in Chechnya. However, especially due to the arduous process of obtaining U.S. citizenship—something Dzhokhar accomplished but never appreciated and something Tamerlan never achieved despite his best efforts—Tamerlan and Dzhokhar did not have concretely established identities. For this very reason, Tamerlan turned to Islam for identity, and prior to returning to Dagestan, he became invested in all the tribulations of the Muslims in the North Caucasus. Of course, the longest standing and most bloody of these conflicts is between the Chechens and Russians.⁶⁵

Finally, although the Tsarnaevs can be classified as lone-wolf operatives, there is still a connection—albeit small—to be stated between them and al-Qaeda, specifically al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, due to the manner in which the brothers learned to construct the utilized pressure cooker bombs. Dzhokhar downloaded a copy of *Inspire* magazine that outlined the process by which one could “make a bomb in the kitchen of your mom.”⁶⁶

8. Relation to the Muslim community

This case features minor relevancy of the Muslim community. Upon returning from his six-month trip to Dagestan, Tamerlan had two altercations—one on Thanksgiving and one on Martin Luther King Jr. Day—at the Islamic Society of Boston mosque in which he interrupted the service to yell at the imam. In the latter incident, Tamerlan voiced his displeasure when the imam described Martin Luther King Jr. as worthy of emulation, the problem being that he was not Muslim. Tamerlan was kicked out of the service and told he could not return if he would continue to interrupt. He continued to attend Friday night services from then until his death without interrupting.⁶⁷ This warning from the community, which Tamerlan heeded, can be understood as opposition to Tamerlan’s radicalized beliefs and eventual violence.

9. Depiction by the authorities

Authorities waited one day after the bombings to label the attack an “act of terrorism.” Interestingly, the first person to publicly label the bombings as such was not a Boston law enforcement official or FBI agent, but rather President Barack Obama in an address to the nation on April 16.⁶⁸ While he may have jumped the gun based on the amount of evidence, as days passed and more and more information was unearthed, it became even clearer that the attack was terrorist in nature. Due to the magnitude of the attacks, it was inevitable for fear to proliferate throughout the country. The authorities were responsible in limiting what information they released and protecting against public panic.

In fact, Boston locals were so satisfied with the manner in which authorities dealt with the week of turbulence and uncertainty that there was constant speculation that Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis would move

⁶⁵ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

⁶⁶ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

⁶⁷ Andrew Tangel and Ashley Powers, “FBI: Boston suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev followed ‘radical Islam,’” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2013.

⁶⁸ “Obama Calls Boston Bombings ‘An Act Of Terrorism,’” *NPR*, April 16, 2013.

on to a higher profile job. Thus, his September 23rd announcement that he will be moving on to work at Harvard University—from where he will strongly be considered for a job in federal law enforcement—came as no surprise to anyone, and Bostonians felt a strong sense of pride, not abandonment, when he announced his intentions with the same calm and collected demeanor with which he addressed Boston immediately after the Boston Marathon bombings.⁶⁹

10. Coverage by the media

The media played a prominent role in this case in a number of different ways, notably through erroneous initial coverage by television networks and news writers and a high profile, controversial magazine article published in *Rolling Stone*. On Wednesday, April 17—two days after the Boston Marathon—CNN, FOX, the AP, and the *Boston Herald* all jumped on a story that suspects had been arrested in connection with the bombings. As we now know, this story was completely incorrect, as Boston law enforcement released photos of two wanted suspects—the Tsarnaev brothers—on Thursday, April 18, by which time no arrests had been made.⁷⁰ This incorrect report may have been based on the police pursuit of a Saudi Arabian man fleeing from the scene of the Boston Marathon, but as we soon found out, this man was simply running—rationally—from a terrorist attack. There is no doubt that police actions were influenced by racial profiling, but law enforcement agents must make decisions within moments, while the media’s only rush is to be first to report, a race that often leads to harmful misinformation. In defense of the news outlets, perhaps the erroneous information was relayed in an effort to put the people of Boston at ease, but the report was as good as a lie because of the lack of proper sourcing.

However, in the future, when we look back at media reporting related to this case, there is no doubt that one article will stand at the forefront. The piece, entitled “Jahar’s World” and published in *Rolling Stone* magazine two months after the fateful week in April, is, in reality, a literary masterpiece filled with a wealth of pertinent information concerning the Tsarnaev brothers. It comprehensively details their upbringing, personalities, passions, and relevant factors that surely contributed to their ultimate choice to turn to terrorism. Unfortunately, Janet Reitman’s work was overshadowed, and continues to be overshadowed, by an unnecessarily controversial magazine cover, which features a picture of Dzhokhar wearing clothing and a facial expression that led many to believe he was being portrayed as a “rockstar.”⁷¹ With good reason, the representation of a man who was jointly responsible, along with his brother, for the injuries of 264 and the killing of three, one of whom was a child, would be unsettling and infuriating. Some compared this issue with the June 1970 issue that featured serial killer Charles Manson.⁷²

⁶⁹ Maria Cramer, “Boston police leader Edward Davis to resign,” *Boston Globe*, September 22, 2013.

⁷⁰ Rem Rieder, “On Boston bombing, media are wrong – again,” *USA Today*, April 19, 2013.

⁷¹ Seaton and Baig, “Is Rolling Stone’s Dzhokhar Tsarnaev ‘rock star’ cover.”

⁷² Rem Rieder, “Don’t stone ‘Rolling Stone’ over Boston bomber cover,” *USA Today*, July 17, 2013.

Further incensing vocal news pundits and surely many more was the caption for the cover art, which reads: “How a popular, promising student was failed by his family, fell into radical Islam, and became a monster.” Does this tagline excuse—by pushing blame onto his family and away from him—Dzhokhar for his individual choice to build pressure cooker bombs and detonate them with the intent to kill? Sure, if you choose to read it that way. In reality, I believe Reitman was going about her analysis in a different manner. Just as director Hany Abu-Assad attempted to humanize Palestinian suicide terrorists in his film *Paradise Now* which won a Golden Globe and an Academy Award, Reitman sought not to glorify and excuse the actions of the man known affectionately as “Jahar” to his friends and teachers, but to instead demonstrate how such a kind, beloved soul was *transformed* into a monster and *chose* to perform evil. Reitman wanted to illustrate that Dzhokhar was everything *but* a monster for most of his life, and that he was, in fact, a person with whom we can empathize. However, at the same time, anyone who actually *reads* her article, rather than just looking at the cover art, will know that she does not excuse his actions in the slightest.

It is understandable why *Rolling Stone* opted to use such an attention-grabbing cover. The July 2013 issue generated double the sales of the average 2012 issue.⁷³ So, the magazine succeeded in its agenda. It is tremendously unfortunate that Reitman’s brilliant journalism was eclipsed by this cover. Although certainly conveying an interesting message, the “rockstar” imagery simply asked for trouble because of the U.S.’s low tolerance for all things terrorism since 9/11 (and rightly so). The bottom-line analysis is that *Rolling Stone* published a fantastic article with an unnecessarily controversial cover, which succeeded in boosting sales yet also gave the article and its author a bad name. The issue transformed the case from merely a heinous act of terrorism into both a heinous act of terrorism *and* a media spectacle. Without doubt, history will forge a connection between the Boston Marathon bombings and this issue of *Rolling Stone*, but it will not remember Reitman’s responsible, competent reporting, but rather the misplaced, unnecessary cover art of the issue.

11. Policing costs

The policing costs of the bombings and subsequent manhunt were tremendous. Significant charges include overtime payments to police officers in the Boston area—as departments in Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk counties all had many extra hands on deck—equipment purchases like bullet-proof vests for the manhunt, and increased energy usage for surveillance purposes between Monday, when the attack took place, and Friday, when Dzhokhar was apprehended.⁷⁴ An estimate shows that the manhunt, which took place predominantly in Watertown, MA, cost the local police department alone

⁷³ Parija Kavilanz, “Rolling Stone sales double with ‘Boston Bomber’ issue,” *CNN Money*, August 1, 2013.

⁷⁴ Kathy McCabe, “Police tally costs for Marathon bombings, manhunt,” *Boston Globe*, May 30, 2013.

\$250,000.⁷⁵ Boston officials are working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to reimburse police and law enforcement departments 75% of costs. However, it is still to be decided exactly what costs FEMA will consider to be associated with the bombings and manhunt, so no exact financial figures have been released. The smaller departments—outside Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk—will seek reimbursement through the cities of Boston, Cambridge, and Watertown.⁷⁶ While policing costs are significant and may reach one million dollars, the economic costs of shutting down Boston for a day are even higher, and could potentially reach one billion dollars.⁷⁷

12. Relevance of the internet

The internet enabled the Tsarnaevs to build the pressure cooker bombs which ultimately claimed the lives of three and injured 264—some very seriously. Once in custody, Dzhokhar substantiated what law enforcement agents and counterterrorism experts already suspected: the Tsarnaev brothers learned how to construct the bombs from *Inspire* magazine, an online publication written in English produced by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. By proliferating their message over the internet, al-Qaeda has been able to augment the incidence of “lone-wolf” terrorism, whereby individual terrorists unaffiliated with al-Qaeda itself are still able to learn and be influenced by the global terrorism network.

In another way, the internet played a less concrete, but still vital role in bringing the Tsarnaevs to the brink of terrorism. As Tamerlan grew more and more religiously fanatical, he began to seek sources to support his point of view. He became a consistent follower and contributor to Jihadist websites and discussion boards, as well as websites that proliferate conspiracy theories like Alex Jones’ *InfoWars*.⁷⁸ These websites facilitated the radicalization process of Tamerlan, and consequently, his mother Zubeidat and younger brother Dzhokhar, to whom he transmitted these messages, and built up resentment toward the U.S. in all three of them.⁷⁹ Tamerlan and Zubeidat’s subscription to these theories was one factor that caused Anzor to divorce Zubeidat, as he simply had enough of what he perceived as craziness. During one session with a client at her salon, Zubeidat told the client that 9/11 was an inside job by the U.S. to make Americans hate Muslims, that she learned this from her son Tamerlan, and that “you can read on the internet.”⁸⁰ Although less influenced by Tamerlan than was Zubeidat, Dzhokhar also bought in to his brother’s message, writing once: “Idk

⁷⁵ “Boston Marathon bombing events cost Watertown PD \$250K so far,” *Fox Boston*, May 22, 2013.

⁷⁶ McCabe, “Police tally costs for Marathon bombings, manhunt.”

⁷⁷ “Manhunt likely cost Boston hundreds of millions of dollars: experts,” *New York Daily News*, April 20, 2013.

⁷⁸ David Weigal, “Tamerlan Tsarnaev Believed in Basically Every Conspiracy Theory,” *Slate*, April 23, 2013.

⁷⁹ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

⁸⁰ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

[acronym for “I don’t know] why it’s hard for many of you to accept that 9/11 was an inside job.”⁸¹

Finally, it is important to discuss Dzhokhar’s activity on the social media site Twitter leading up to the bombings. In retrospect, his tweets proved helpful in reducing doubt that he was a perpetrator of the violence and terrorism because they echoed his feelings of resentment toward the U.S. Approximately one-month prior to the attack, he tweeted: “Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.” Then, on the same day of the bombings, but after the fact, he tweeted: “Ain’t no love in the heart of the city, stay safe people” and “There are people that know the truth but stay silent and there are people that speak the truth but we don’t hear them cuz they’re the minority.”⁸²

On July 1, 2013, a Canadian couple was arrested for conspiring to plant pressure cooker bombs near the British Columbia Parliament Buildings in Victoria, Canada. The bombs and attack methodology were modeled after the Boston bombings, and the couple very likely learned how to construct the bombs from *Inspire*.⁸³

13. Are we safer?

Without doubt, we are much safer with the Tsarnaevs off the streets. The more radical brother, Tamerlan, is dead, and Dzhokhar is in custody awaiting a legal battle that is sure to be long and emotional. We can be nearly certain that Tamerlan would have devoted the rest of his life to undermining and harming the U.S., the policy of which he viewed as oppressive and evil, due to the level of radicalization he had undergone. As for the younger brother, we cannot be sure how he would live his life without the aggressive, negative influence that was Tamerlan, but Jahar still had to make his own decisions, and he chose to be a terrorist. Dzhokhar reportedly cried in the hospital upon regaining consciousness on the night of his apprehension, but as Janet Reitman puts it: “no one knows what he was crying about.”⁸⁴

Furthermore, contrary to what his friends might say, I believe that Dzhokhar’s behavior on his arraignment day—smiling, yawning, and smirking—demonstrates that he is not remorseful at all and would have no problem committing another atrocity, or else that he has attempted to rationalize the attack, which he knows was heinous, in his mind. Either way, it is better that this dangerous individual is kept off the streets. In fact, the crux of this case will be whether Dzhokhar is even permitted to live as there is no doubt he will never be a free man again. A striking detail of this case was that causing carnage at the Boston Marathon was not enough for Tamerlan and Dzhokhar. Once revealed as suspects, instead of waiting it out or turning themselves in, they had to do more. In the spur of the moment, they performed cold-blooded murder of an

⁸¹ Laura Donovan, “Dzhokhar Tsarnaev Twitter: 25 Of His Most Disturbing Tweets,” *PolicyMic*, April 2013.

⁸² Donovan, “Dzhokhar Tsarnaev Twitter: 25 Of His Most Disturbing Tweets.”

⁸³ David Trifunov, “Canada Day bomb plot ‘inspired’ by Boston, Al Qaeda or drug abuse?” *Global Post*, July 3, 2013.

⁸⁴ Reitman, “Jahar’s World.”

unsuspecting police officer, and were en route to New York City to carry out more terrorism. In sum, we are much safer because of the efforts of local police officers and federal law enforcement agents.

14. Conclusions

The Boston Marathon bombings and the subsequent murderous acts committed by the Tsarnaev brothers are concerning for a number of reasons. First, we were shown quite plainly and simply the amount of devastation and destruction that can be caused by two fanatics with access to pressure cookers, nails, fireworks, and the internet. Second, we watched firsthand as one of the country's largest metropolitan areas was shut down for a full day and crippled for some time thereafter. Although some may argue that the shutdown of Boston was not necessary, I believe governments should err on the side of caution when it comes to the safety of their citizens. Finally, we heard accurately from lauded former Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis—who led the charge against the Tsarnaevs and just recently resigned—that there was simply no way to prevent this attack from happening, as “there are not enough police officers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to lock down 26.2 miles of a marathon,” and “there is no magic bullet to deal with terrorism.”⁸⁵

All of these concerns—brought to the surface by perhaps the most frightening terrorist attack on U.S. soil since 9/11—are valid and worth consideration. At the end of the day, we must understand that terrorism is not a disappearing phenomenon. As long as there are disillusioned fanatics in the world with the means to obtain or construct weapons, terrorism will be a paramount concern for U.S. and world citizens due to the impression left upon us by devastating attacks like 9/11. However, we should take solace in the fact these attacks, although vividly etched into our memories, are few and far between. In fact, an American has about the same chance of dying from international terrorism as he/she does from a comet or meteor strike.⁸⁶ While the events that took place in Boston in mid-April rightfully put us on alert and pull at our heartstrings, by no means should they scare us into submission. After all, would that not be giving the terrorists exactly what they want?

One of my biggest takeaways from this case is the relativity of deprivation. Tamerlan, despite growing up amid war, conflict, and relative poverty in Dagestan, felt deprived and oppressed in the United States, the supposed “land of opportunity.” While this sentiment likely does not make sense to most Americans who have grown up without continual warfare and bloodshed on our soil, it is vital for each individual to understand that not all of his/her neighbors perceive their surroundings the same way. This application is less relevant to Dzhokhar because of his seemingly easy transition to American society, but his individual habitus was still permanently affected by his early youth, and there should be no doubt in our minds that his roots contributed to his

⁸⁵ David Abel, “‘No magic bullet’ to stop terrorism, Davis tells forum,” *Boston Globe*, September 24, 2013.

⁸⁶ John Mueller, “Is there still a terrorist threat? The myth of the omnipresent enemy,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2006.

decision to turn to terrorism. While Dagestan and Chechnya may seem like avoid-at-all-cost conflict zones to some, they are home to others, and the U.S. may not be all it's chalked up to be in the minds of people like Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

We can be sure that the Boston Marathon bombings will go down in history as a significant instance of Islamic terrorism in the United States. It will be remembered as a heinous act of cruelty that replaced the expected triumph and jubilation that come with the conclusion of the event. However, without doubt, the terrorism at the Boston Marathon will also be remembered in the context of its aftermath, as local and federal law enforcement authorities succeeded in quickly bringing those responsible to justice and beginning the process of returning Boston to normalcy.

Appendix: *Rolling Stone*, July 2013 issue, "The Bomber"

