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Insights: Publications

Is There a Hostage Dilemma?: A Game Theoretical Approach to U.N. Anti-Terror Financing Resolutions and State Policies on Kidnappings for Ransom

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The world is now familiar with the disturbing execution of American journalist James Foley. In August 2014, Foley was kidnapped by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria ("ISIS") while covering the Syrian War and held with other hostages from the United States and Europe for almost two years before his execution. ISIS then released a video of Foley's beheading on YouTube. Stills from the video depict an otherworldly image of Foley kneeling in the middle of the desert, accompanied only by a black-clad and masked ISIS militant. The militant blamed Foley's execution on the recent airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq before brutally beheading his captive. The video then cut to darkness. The terrorist organization had been in communication with Foley's family, to whom it relayed both political demands and ransom requests of approximately $132 million. Tracking and rescue efforts by private firms and U.S. Special Operations ultimately failed.