WZB
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RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND VIOLENCE:
CAUSES AND MECHANISMS

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List of Abstracts

Session 1 – Does Religion Facilitate or Inoculate Violence?

Steffen Hertog (with Diego Gambetta):
Which Aspects of Religion can Facilitate Violent Radicalism?

The research for our 2016 book "Engineers of Jihad" was motivated by the odd finding that graduates of engineering, a modern and technical subject, are over-represented among religious extremists. But as we dug into this puzzle we found that the extremist violence attracting technically educated individuals was not linked to religious beliefs in general, but to certain elements of religious thought and practice that can be found packaged into non-religious ideologies too, notably extreme right-wing thought. Contrary to standard social science explanations of extremist violence, we found that religious ideas do matter – but these ideas are not essential to religion. Our paper will develop this argument, which is rather implicit in the book, more explicitly, with new empirical material and with reference to existing debates about the ways in which religion does or does not matter in explaining religiously framed violence. The paper will first provide a review of existing studies on religiosity and radical attitudes, complemented by our own, new analyses of survey data. We will show that by and large self-reported religiosity and religious practices do not predict self-reported radicalism (using, among others, WVS, ISSP, ESS and GSS data). We will then present our own argument that elements of specific religious ideologies can facilitate specific types of salafi-jihadi radical action. Drawing on our book, we will present our interpretation of the social model offered by salafi-jihadi ideology and of the personality traits that make individuals attracted to this model. Building on growing ethnographic literature on radical movements, the paper will show that different from what many experts on radical Islam claim, adherents of salafi-jihadi groups typically care a great deal about the specific ideological content of their religions. We then

demonstrate, however, that salafi–jihadi movements are typically not rooted in existing religious communities, hence making it easier to isolate their followers from social constraints of traditional, ideologically less purist religion. The paper ends with a discussion of recent findings and possible future research designs on the links between personality traits on one hand and political and religious ideas and behavior on the other.

Sarah Knight:
Capability, Opportunity and Motivation: Applying the COM–B Model to Understand Extremist Behavior

The media tends to portray religion and ideology (which are inextricably intertwined) as key factors underlying and driving terrorism. This has had a negative impact on public attitudes, led to a backlash against religious groups, and resulted in marginalization and prejudice (mostly against Muslims) in Western societies. Moreover, terrorism research has, in the past, failed to distinguish between violent and nonviolent extremism, and has inferred that radicalization is likely to lead to extremist–related action of some kind. However, recent research has indicated that whilst religion and ideology might be used to *justify* extremist actions, there are other key factors that *motivate and drive* behavior. Indeed, religion and ideology may actually 'inoculate' and/ or act as a protective factor against radicalization and extremism. This is reflected in the fact that the vast majority of Muslims, even those who might be categorized as 'radical', will never take part in extremist–related violence, and that many of those who join extremist groups are not necessarily radicalized. That is, radicalization is only one pathway to terrorism (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014). This presentation will summarize the Social Science literature on terrorism that investigates the (push, pull and protective) factors underlying radicalization, extremism and terrorism, and demonstrate how violent and non–violent action can be understood in relation to the COM–B model (Michie et al., 2014). This model posits that Capability, Opportunity and Motivation (C, O & M) are necessary for Behavior (B) to occur. Factors of interest here can be categorized as either C, O or M and this presentation will demonstrate how the model can help explain how, when and why violent or non–violent behavior is likely. Evidence regarding when religion and ideology is key and when it is not will be explored, and recommendations regarding future research will be outlined.

Session 2 – Religious Ideology

Heather S. Gregg:
Heroes, Martyrs and Religiously Motivated Violence

Considerable research has pointed to "push factors", such as social, economic and political hardships, that propel individuals to join extremist groups. However, these push factors affect wide numbers of society and, yet, only a relative few embrace extremism, and even fewer commit to violent action. Less studied are critical "pull" factors that draw individuals to extremist groups and their agendas, including the importance of ideology for attracting recruits and the purpose that being part of "a cause" may bring to individuals who join an extremist group. This research focuses specifically on one set of potential pull factors in religious radicalism—fighters as religious heroes and martyrs for the faith. Specifically, it proposes that extremist groups provide the opportunity for youth, especially young men, to answer the mythic call of the hero's journey and engage in self-sacrifice in the name of faith for personal and group salvation.

Friederike Sadowski (with Jérôme Endrass and Andreas Zick):
Are Authoritarianism and Militancy Key Characteristics of Religious Fundamentalism? A Latent Class Analysis of an Egyptian Muslim Sample

We investigated whether authoritarianism and militancy are essential characteristics of religious fundamentalism by exploring subtypes of religious fundamentalism in a sample of n = 152 Muslims from Egypt. We applied Hood and colleagues' intratextuality as a basic type of fundamentalism and selected a range of differentiating factors, such as closed-mindedness, militancy, and religious reflexivity, to characterize different subtypes. A survey with questionnaires was conducted in Cairo, Egypt in summer 2013. Latent class analysis was applied to the data set. A solution with three subtypes fitted the data best. Subtype 1 had flexible and open-minded characteristics, subtype 2 matched the typical characterization of religious fundamentalism with features of authoritarianism and extremist thinking, and subtype 3 was a moderate version of subtype 2 without authoritarian features but still with a high level of closed-mindedness. These results show that authoritarianism and militancy are not essential parts of religious fundamentalism and suggest that a more differentiated concept of religious fundamentalism is reasonable.

Session 3 – Religious (De)legitimization of Violence

Ruud Koopmans (with Eylem Kanol, Anselm Rink and Dietlind Stolle): Scriptural Legitimation Mobilizes Support for Religious Violence: Survey-experimental Evidence Across Three Religions and Seven Countries

Do legitimations of violence in religious scripture cause pro-violent attitudes? We implemented a survey experiment across 9,000 individuals in 7 countries with large shares of Christian, Muslim and Jewish believers across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. We find that priming individuals with isomorphic pro-violence quotes from the Bible, Torah or the Koran raises attitudinal support for religious violence significantly. Effect sizes are particularly large in religiously divided countries, among Muslims, and among those with a fundamentalist, literalist conception of their religion. The causal relationship is confirmed across respondents of different ages, education levels, incomes, and religious beliefs as well as all surveyed countries. Our results highlight that religious scripture can work as a salient driver of pro-violent attitudes. The finding thus marks a counterpoint to theoretical arguments that question the causal role of religious scripture in explaining religious violence, and has important implications for de-radicalization policies.

Kunaal Sharma:

Clerical Persuasion and Religious Extremism: An Experiment Among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Northern India

How does an anti-violence religious message by a cleric affect extremism? Do such appeals work differently across groups? I argue that exposure to such an appeal from an in-group cleric reduces extremism for members of a non-victimized group but not for members of a victimized group. The la1er retain extremism to guard against anticipated threats. I present evidence from an audio recording experiment among 2,100 Sunni and Shia young adult men in Lucknow, the Indian city where sectarian violence is highest and the Shia perceive themselves as victimized. I randomly assigned subjects to listen to an anti-violence religious argument from either an in-group cleric; out-group cleric; both; or none. Results show that the in-group message significantly reduces extremist behaviors up to 8 hours later for Sunni but not Shia subjects. Additional analyses and qualitative research emphasize the plausibility of the victimization logic. Furthermore, the out-group message and the interaction do not significantly change behavior for either group. I argue that intergroup inequalities ma1er for understanding the effectiveness of elite persuasion and discuss policy implications.

Session 4 – Mobilization Strategies: Recruitment

Christine Fair:
Gender Differences in Support for Terrorism: Two Cases from Pakistan

While there have been many scholarly inquiries about the sources of support for terrorism among Muslim publics, to date, no scholar has sought to empirically demonstrate whether or not gender predicts support for Islamist militancy. Instead, most scholars and officials assume that "men of military age" are the most important segment of interest. Gender if examined at all is usually treated as a "control variable" rather than a "study variable," reflecting the paucity of interest in this subject. This is likely an important scholarly and policy-analytic oversite. Many terrorist groups have women's wings and women-oriented publications and other outreach programs because they understand the important role that mothers, wives and sisters play in a male family member's decision to take up arms with a terrorist group. (And in some conflicts, women also join as combatants.) In this paper, we seek to address these scholarly lacunae by examining gender-wise support for two militant groups based in and operating from Pakistan: the Afghan Taliban which has no female outreach program and the sectarian Sipha-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan, which does. We leverage a large dataset drawn from a relatively large national survey of Pakistanis collected in 2011 to model support for these groups using gender as an independent variable along with other demographic and control variables. We find that females are significantly more likely to support the sectarian group with a women's outreach-wing, but less likely than men to support the Afghan Taliban. We argue, from these results, that gender deserves more attention in understanding who supports and participates in Islamist militancy.

Arie Perliger:
Analyzing the Visual Constructions that Facilitate Effectiveness of ISIS's Visual Propaganda

The Islamic State captured the world's attention with the declaration of a global caliphate in 2014. Since this announcement, the Islamic State has shown its effectiveness in attracting foreign fighters, inspiring individuals and groups to engage in violent activities and in shaping the Jihadi ideological and strategic discourse. Much of this success of the Islamic State is attributed to its vibrant online presence which is also manifested by a robust propaganda output through imagery and videos. Over the last three years, the group has produced a plethora of propaganda videos ranging from scenes of daily life in the Islamic State to graphic violence, while using professional camera and production equipment, remote-controlled unmanned aerial vehicles, and the deployment of body-worn cameras. The current study is analyzing more than 600 Jihadi propaganda videos in order to understand how the combination of specific content, symbolic motifs and rhetorical constructions facilitate the advent of

emotions and cognitive perceptions that increase empathy to Jihadi narrative and the likelihood of the observer's radicalization. While this is not the first study which utilizes analyses of propaganda videos of fundamentalist groups, the specific attention which is being given to various facets of metadata (related to the production of the videos) with integration of concepts from cognitive psychology and communication theories, help us to significantly promote our understanding of the emotional and cognitive factors which are in play in the internalization of militant ideology by individuals who are exposed to militant visual propaganda.

Session 5 – Mobilization Strategies: Violence and Lethality

Katarzyna Jaśko (with Michael Becker and Gary LaFree):
Religion, Ideology and Political Violence in the United States

Researchers studying political violence have noted that terrorist attacks are becoming deadlier over time. Perhaps the dominant explanation for this phenomenon is the rise of religiously motivated terrorism, especially associated with al Qa'ida, the Islamic State/Daesh and their affiliates. Indeed, a good deal of research shows that the casualty rate of terrorist attacks dramatically increased with the rise of radical Islamist groups. However, most research confirming a link between the lethality of terrorism and the rise of radical Islamism is based on world-wide quantitative cross-national analysis or qualitative case studies of terrorist attacks in areas strongly associated with the rise of radical Islamist religious parties, most notably, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. We could find few quantitative studies that have contrasted radical Islamist and other ideologies at the individual level within a single country. In this research, we examine the lethality of political extremism in the United States for attacks attributed to supporters of radical Islamist groups compared to individuals identified instead as supporters of Far Right or Far Left ideologies. Our analysis examines nearly 1,700 perpetrators who committed ideologically motivated illegal acts, joined a designated terrorist organization, or associated with an organization whose leaders were indicted for ideologically motivated offenses. Most of the individuals' radicalization occurred while they were residing in the United States. Our bivariate results show substantial differences between supporters of Radical Islamist and Far Right and Far Left ideologies. Based on logistic regression analysis we find that Radical Islamists in the United States produced the greatest casualties, followed by Far Right and Far Left ideologues. Moreover, individual religious background does not appear to moderate this relationship. We discuss the implications for theory, policy and future research.

Gary LaFree (with James Piazza):
Islamist Terrorism, Diaspora Links and Casualty Rates

Terrorist attacks perpetrated by Islamist organizations yield significantly higher casualty rates, compared with attacks perpetrated by terrorists motivated by other political ideologies. Generally speaking, attacks by Islamist terrorists produce between 1.7 and 3.9 more deaths or injuries than those perpetrated by other types of groups. However, the casualty rate of attacks by Islamist organizations varies considerably. In this study, we explain the diversity of casualty rates of attacks perpetrated by Islamist terrorist movements by investigating the role that movement connections with ethnic and sectarian diaspora communities plays in restraining targeting and reducing high-casualty attacks. Like other types of terrorist movements, many Islamist groups have connections with ethnic or sectarian communities that themselves have diaspora kin in other countries and rely upon these connections for financial and political support. We argue that these diaspora connections both bolster the capacity of Islamist terrorist movements, but also restrain them tactically. Islamist terrorists with diaspora links fear backlash, and potentially loss of financial and support from their diaspora, if they commit indiscriminate, high-casualty attacks. Islamist groups without such diaspora links or that make appeals to broad or abstract global constituencies, such as the Islamic State movement or the various Al Qaeda franchises, are less inhibited and therefore commit more high-casualty attacks. We test this proposition using original data on terrorist movement diaspora connections, created by the authors, along with data from the Global Terrorism Database. Using a casualty-count empirical analysis of between 78,000 and 83,000 terrorist attacks globally for the period 1970 to 2016, we find that Islamist groups with diaspora links commit, on average, attacks that yield between 1.8 and 4.8 fewer casualties per incident. Included in our estimations are host of attack, perpetrating group and venue country control variables.

Session 6 – Religious Violence: Role of Communities

La Toya Waha:
Killing and Dying for Buddhism: Buddhist Fundamentalism and Violence in Sri Lanka

The notion of Buddhism is that of a religion characterised by loving kindness, compassion and non-violence. In contradiction to this notion, the repertoire of Buddhist monks and their organisations in Sri Lanka includes violent acts, ranging from attacks on other religion's places of worship to self-immolation against the slaughter of cattle, which is considered a symbol of Muslims' disrespect for Buddhism in Sri Lanka. From 2012 to 2017, particularly the agitation against Muslims has escalated and incidents have increased in frequency and severity. In the course of the events, violent clashes between Muslim and Buddhist groups, such as in 2014, in 2017, and the latest in Kandy in March 2018 have led to death and injury. Focusing on the most important of these radical Buddhist organisations, the paper seeks to answer the question of why Buddhist monks engage in violent campaigns against Muslims in Sri Lanka. Thereby it will focus on three essential aspects, namely why Buddhist monks perpetrate violence at all, why they attack Muslims, and why they do so now. The paper draws on the analysis of interviews with the leaders of the organisation and the reconstruction of their opportunity structure in order to analyse their decisions for their campaign. The paper therefore combines methods of political science and psychology to understand the reasons and motivations of those monks.

Anselm Rink (with Kunaal Sharma):
Fostering Tolerance in a Religiously Divided Neighborhood. A Randomized Controlled Trial

How can interreligious tolerance be fostered most effectively? While the causes of religious violence have received much attention in the academic literature, little is known about ways to counteract radical religious attitudes. The present project aims to fill this gap. Our focus is on Kenya's capital Nairobi. The city has, for years, suffered from significant tensions between Muslims and Christians. We partner with a local NGO to implement and evaluate educational forums— the Umoja Community Initiative—which aims to soothe tensions between Christians and Muslims. The program invites randomly selected men aged 18 to 35 in Eastleigh, a neighborhood notorious for religious violence. The fora vary along three dimensions, which allow us to better understand the mechanisms that link education to interreligious tolerance. First, we vary the topic of the classes, randomizing whether participants are exposed to religious or economic arguments for interreligious tolerance or a placebo condition, which teaches participants about the environment. Second, we vary the composition of the group, randomizing whether Christians and Muslim attend the fora jointly or

separately. Third, we vary the authority of the instructor, randomizing whether participants are taught by youth peers (horizontal authority) or religious clerics (vertical authority).

Session 7 – Interreligious Violence

Krzysztof Krakowski (with Anselm Rink and Max Schaub):
Do Ethnic Riots lead to Religious Fundamentalism? Evidence from Kyrgyzstan

Religious extremism is a key security concern of the 21st century, but its determinants remain poorly understood. In this study, we focus on one widely overlooked determinant, namely, inter-ethnic violence. Studying the 2010 riots in Osh, Kyrgyzstan — which saw Kyrgyz kill over 400 Uzbeks — we explore whether ethnic riots increase religious extremism. Our causal identification strategy exploits variation in the distance of neighborhoods to stolen armored military vehicles, which were instrumental in orchestrating the riots. We field a preregistered representative survey and find that victimized neighborhoods witness slightly higher levels of religious fundamentalism. Specifically, we demonstrate that victimized individuals are more likely to adopt fundamentalist positions, including scriptural literalism and perceived religious superiority. We establish the robustness of our findings using a variety of permutation and falsification tests. We discuss how our results can help elucidate the process how violent ethnicization leads to religious extremism.

Alexandra Scacco:
"Rioting Together": Religious Riot Recruitment within Nigerian Neighborhoods

This book chapter focuses on the importance of a set of seemingly innocuous neighborhood-level social ties in mobilizing both willing and less willing rioters to fight. This chapter draws on original survey data and uses qualitative interviewees' stories to uncover important details about the way riot recruitment worked on the ground in both the early and later stages of the riots in Kaduna and Jos. This chapter uses multiple sources of evidence to suggest that ``ordinary'' or routine local social networks were used to exert peer pressure and overcome problems of collective action in organizing neighborhood defense. Together with the evidence from the previous chapter, this discussion moves from a discussion of who riots to a deeper exploration of why ordinary people made the decision to fight or stay on the sidelines.

Session 8 – Profiles of Jihadists

Eylem Kanol:
Jihadi Radicalization in Europe from a Comparative Perspective: Profiles, Contexts, and Grievances

What are the characteristics of the Jihadi activists in Europe? Under what circumstances do they get involved in Jihadi activism? To answer these questions, I use data collected from open sources on 800 European Jihadists from Germany, France, the Netherlands, and the UK. The individuals, who are included in the sample, are those who adhere to the Jihadist ideology and are active in furthering the cause, be it by using violent or non-violent means. To explore the determinants of joining on the individual level, I draw on a set of variables derived from sociological, criminological and psychological theories. When it comes to explaining radicalization, proponents of the disintegration theory focus on grievances and structural conditions. For these scholars, factors such as relative deprivation, poverty, and discrimination are the key driving factors behind political violence. From this theoretical point of view, European Jihadists should be disproportionately drawn from the ranks of Muslims with migrant backgrounds who have not integrated well into their respective societies as indicated by low levels of educational attainment, low rates of employment, and high rates of criminality among the perpetrators. Social movement scholars argue that such criteria alone are not enough to explain the emergence and persistence of radical groups. They argue that certain mechanisms need to be in place to translate individual grievances into (violent) activism. These mechanisms include mobilizing structures, such as mosques where radical imams preach or preexisting ties, which bring together like-minded individuals, promote peer pressure and encourage participation. In the presentation, I will discuss the findings from the ongoing data collection, focusing on characteristics of the Jihadist activists and on the contexts or settings where radicalization primarily takes place. Furthermore, using social network analysis I explore the role of pre-existing networks in the mobilization process.

Jytte Klausen (with Priyanka Renugopalakrishnan):
A Comparative Analysis of Demographic Stratification and Roles in "Homegrown" Jihadist Organizations

Studies have shown that multi-ethnic organizations rank individuals based on ethnicity and race, forming ethnic hierarchies. Such hierarchies are associated with differences in the allocation of jobs and roles, and status and power in the organization. Over the past twenty years since the expulsion of Osama Bin laden and his organization's headquarter from Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, the jihadist movement has grown in scope and reach through a global recruitment effort. A UN report estimated in 2017 that recruits to ISIL

came from 100 countries, including most Western democracies. The result is an exceptionally ethnically diverse organization. The global jihadist movement holds out the promise of a universal utopia where all Muslims are equal once they embrace the jihad. But who controls the reins? The networks are in fact ripe with ethnic hierarchies and inequalities. The proposed research will investigate the roles played by the so-called "homegrown" terrorists in jihadist organizations. Specifically, the focus is on differences in roles played by White and Black adherents, between converts to Islam and volunteers who are natural-born Muslims, and how age determines actions and propensities to violence. The proposed research builds on a previous study of American terrorism offenders extending the analysis to a larger comparative dataset. Knowledge about stratification patterns in jihadist network may help the development of approaches to the prevention of violent extremism in Europe and North America, and potentially also treatment protocols for returning fighters. The project utilizes data from the Western Jihadism Project, which includes records for 6,000 Western-origin jihadist terrorism offenders. Inclusion criteria are that an individuals has been (1) prosecuted in a Western court, (2) died committing a terrorist act, or (3) has been publicly identified as a terrorist by having been put on an international wanted list, charged while in absentia, or has self-identified as a foreign fighter on social media or in other media. The methodology is a variant of cliometrics, the quantitative analysis of micro-level data derived from narrative records, a method that is used in quantitative historical sociology to map protest movements and political violence. Here, the methodology was adapted to use data deriving from publicly available documents: primary sources ranging from court records to media coverage, reports published by government researchers or academic teams, and communications issued by extremists, such as testimonies, social media productions, and websites.

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