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Three Theories of Religious Activism and Violence: Social Movements, Fundamentalists, and Apocalyptic Warriors

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Numerous scholars have investigated religiously motivated violence, particularly in the wake of September 11, including discussions on the role of modernity in triggering religious violence, the increasing presence of religion in politics, the violence-prone nature of certain religions, and religion's correlation with ethnicity and other conflict-intensifying variables. However, religious activism and violence are not new phenomena. Few theories have been advanced that move across time and space and, broadly, seek to explain the conditions under which religion becomes involved in activism and violence. This article argues that three broad causal arguments for religious activism—social movements, fundamentalism, and apocalyptic warriors—help explain the conditions under which religiously motivated violence occurs across time and space. These three causal arguments offer a spectrum of goals within religious activism, ranging from challenging social practices and government policies, to defending specific interpretations and practices of the faith, to hastening the apocalypse. Furthermore, each of these theories proposes different ways that religion becomes involved in social, political, and religious activism and the conditions under which groups use violence to further their goals. The article concludes by suggesting countermeasures for each type of religious activism.

Keywords apocalypse, fundamentalism, religion, social movements, terrorism, violence

In 1994, sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer argued in *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* that, despite expectations that religion would retreat further and further from mainstream society and politics to the private lives of individuals, a new era of religious activism—what he calls religious nationalism—is on the rise.¹ These claims are further stated by Toft, Philpott, and Shaw, who assert that—despite the predictions of the “secularization thesis” that religion would become less and less relevant as science and technology increased—

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religious activism has been on the rise for the last forty years.² Some but not all of this religious activism uses violence as a means of reasserting itself into public life.

Alongside these investigations of modern causes of religious activism, several scholars note that religiously motivated violence is not a new phenomenon. Historic examples abound, including the Jewish Zealots, the Christian Crusades, Shia Muslim Assassins, Sunni apocalyptic Mahdis, and even ancient tales that have perpetrated violence in the name of Buddhism.³ These classic examples of religiously motivated violence are typically jettisoned by scholars seeking to understand current religious activism and bellicosity, suggesting that contemporary causes are distinct from historic cases.

This article argues that three broad causal arguments for religious activism—social movements, fundamentalism, and apocalyptic war—help explain the conditions under which religion becomes involved in activism and violence occurs across time and space. These three causal arguments offer a spectrum of goals within religious activism, ranging from challenging social practices and government policies relating to religion, to defending specific interpretations and practices of the faith, to hastening the apocalypse. Furthermore, each of these theories proposes different ways that religion becomes involved in activism and the conditions under which groups use violence to further their goals. Finally, these theories transcend time and space and seek to explain common historic and contemporary causes of religiously motivated violence.

The article continues in four parts. The first section outlines examples of literature on contemporary religious activism and violence, noting that progress has been made in identifying correlates and contemporary causes of religious activism and violence, but not necessarily identifying the conditions under which religious activism and violence occur across time and space. The second section develops three theories for religious activism and posits the conditions under which they turn violent: Social Movement Theory and religion's involvement in mass mobilization, a theory of fundamentalism based off of numerous scholars' works, and apocalyptic warriors, based off of Mark Juergensmeyer's concept of Cosmic War. The third section compares these different lenses and offers key questions for identifying the different types of religious activism. And the fourth section proposes countermeasures for each type of activism.

Literature on Contemporary Religious Activism and Violence

The focus of literature on contemporary causes of religiously motivated activism and violence are understandable. Religious terrorism, particularly Islamic terrorism, appears to be on the rise and has persisted despite over a decade of U.S. military and covert operations against Al Qaeda and its affiliates. The Arab Spring has ushered in Islamist parties to power through democratic elections in Egypt and Tunisia. Sectarian conflict has plagued numerous countries around the globe, including Nigeria, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia. And, in the United States, religion appears to be asserting itself into political life, informing debates on policies relating to reproduction, stem cell research, and evolution.

Several scholars have conducted research aimed at understanding these contemporary causes of religious activism and violence. Perhaps the premier example of a modern causal argument for religious activism and violence is Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis. Huntington posits that the end of the Cold War will usher

in a new era in global politics marked by battles between civilizations, which—at their roots—are based on religion. Huntington states: “For forty-five years the Iron Curtain was the central dividing line in Europe. That line has moved several hundred miles east. It is now the line separating the peoples of Western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslim and Orthodox people on the other.”⁴ However, despite his lengthy discussion on the historical roots of civilizations, his argument is concerned with explaining what he perceives to be the current rise of religious activism and militancy, particularly Islamic bellicosity. In his words: “Islam’s borders are bloody and so are its innards.”⁵

Toft, Philpott, and Shaw also are concerned with the current rise of religious activism and violence. They posit that two variables are critical for understanding contemporary assertions of religious activism, what they call “political theology”: the rise of democracy and the desire for religious freedom; and the relationship between religious groups and their governments.⁶ The authors state: “The resurgent faiths have benefited from, rather than been hindered by, those forces that are most distinctive to the modern world—democracy, modernization in communication and technology, and globalization.”⁷ They further assert: “The relationship that a religious actor enjoys with its government, along with its political theology, explain a great deal about what kind of politics it pursues. . . .”⁸ Toft, Philpott, and Shaw’s argument is clearly focused on a modern resurgence of religious activism. However, the authors are also quick to note that religious activism and violence has existed in the past; it went through a period of “three centuries of decline,” and then began to reassert itself in the 1960s.⁹ Their causal argument, while useful for explaining current causes, does not address the previous waves of religious activism nor adequately investigate their decline.

David C. Rapoport provides valuable insights into the rise of religiously motivated terrorism in the modern era. In “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” he describes anarchism, anti-colonialism, “new left” Marxism, and the current wave of religious terrorism with the aim of better understanding the unique attributes that religiously motivated terrorism may play in the modern era.¹⁰ Rapoport argues that religious terrorism has unique goals from its counterparts, namely the aim to organize the state around religion. Rapoport also notes that this wave of terrorism aims to destroy targets, rather than to use violence to garner attention and support.¹¹ He further observes that the first three waves of terrorism lasted around forty years apiece; this insight may suggest that religious terrorism, which began in 1979 and primarily involves Islam, would ebb around 2025. However, Rapoport also asserts that this current wave of terrorism shows signs of being “more durable” and it may outlast the lifespan of its predecessors. Specifically, religious terrorist groups are fewer in number but more deadly, and many of the groups have persisted beyond two decades, suggesting persistence and resilience. Rapoport’s observations provide a useful foundation upon which to further investigate the conditions under which religious terrorists emerge, their different motivations, and how they relate to and are unique from religious activists that may use other means for changing the status quo.

Several key quantitative studies also have sought to better understand contemporary trends in religious activism and violence. For example, political scientist Jonathan Fox has written extensively on religiously motivated violence. Building off of the Minorities at Risk dataset for his analyses, he investigates the claims that Islam is a more violence-prone religion, finding that, statistically speaking, it is not but that “religion tends to be a more important factor in conflicts involving Islamic

ethnoreligious groups.”¹² He also tests Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” hypothesis and finds that generally “there has been little change in the ratio of civilizational versus non-civilizational ethnic conflict since the start of the Cold War” but that clashes between Western civilization and Islam have increased dramatically.¹³ Fox further uses quantitative analysis to test the separation of religion and state in the West and the Middle East, and the influence of religion on grievance formation.¹⁴ All of these inquiries provide valuable insights into correlations of religion and conflict, but they do not advance causal arguments, nor do they look back in time.

In *Ethnoreligious Conflict in the Late Twentieth Century*, Fox posits that religion provides four social functions: it offers a meaningful framework for understanding the world; it creates rules and norms that link individuals to the wider movement; it links individuals together; and it legitimizes behavior. These four functions help shape ethnic conflict.¹⁵ Fox’s identification of these variables is a useful step towards creating a theory of religiously motivated violence. Furthermore, Fox proposes hypotheses with each of these variables that suggest the conditions under which they lead to religiously motivated conflict. This article will contend, however, that not all religiously motivated violence is rooted in ethnic conflict. Some religious violence is transnational in its goals and crosses ethnic bounds. Therefore more than one causal argument is needed to explain religiously motivated violence.

Basedau, Struever, Juellers, and Wegenast use a database on Sub-Saharan African countries to quantitatively investigate whether religion contributes to armed conflict in this region. Similar to Fox, their study finds that, particularly when overlapping with ethnic identities, religion does contribute to conflict in these countries.¹⁶ Another article stresses the importance of “religious actors and institutions” as escalating effects on conflict in Africa; yet, at the same time, religious groups can also be catalysts for peace.¹⁷ These studies are important for understanding religion’s role as an accelerator in ethnic conflict, but leaves unanswered exactly how religion contributes to ethnic conflict, if there are missing variables in the dataset that may also be important for understanding the rise of religious activism and violence, and if these findings move across time and space. In other words, more work is needed to create a theory from this research with broad explanatory power.

There is also a healthy body of literature on religion’s involvement in mobilization, primarily for political ends. For example, Wald, Owen, and Hill build off of social influence processes—which argue that formal organizations that provide “face-to-face” interactions are more likely to promote consensus—to test the effects of church attendance on “theological and political conservatism.” Their research finds a strong link between conservative theological views and political views in the United States.¹⁸ Wald, Silverman, and Fridy further investigate the role that religion plays in social movements, looking particularly at how religion shapes the motives for political action, the resources it brings to movements, and how religion affects and is affected by political action. They contend that greater systematic and scientific inquiry into religion’s contribution to the interplay of these variables will help illuminate its contribution to social movements.¹⁹

Driskell, Embry, and Lyon use a unique survey instrument to measure religious beliefs—as opposed to practices such as church attendance—and their impact on voting in the United States. They find that, “although some macro religious beliefs significantly increase macro political behavior, believers in an involved God are less likely to participate politically.”²⁰ Outside of U.S. politics, Trejo looks at the role of the Catholic Church in aiding mobilization of indigenous

populations in Mexico. He finds that religious competition with expanding protestant movements has compelled the Church to become involved in indigenous politics and social services as a means of competing for parishioners' loyalty, not changes in ecclesiastical doctrine.²¹

Scholarship that connects religious beliefs and practices to social and political mobilization is useful for understanding the conditions under which religion becomes involved in political activism; but as will be argued, mobilization is just one way that religion affects activism, and mobilization alone does not explain the conditions under which religious groups resort to violence.

Three Theories for Religious Activism and Violence

Adapting Wiktorowicz's definition of Islamic activism, this article defines religious activism as *the mobilization of contention to support religious causes*. Religious activism includes, but is not limited to, the use of violence.²² Three broad theories—social movements, a theory of fundamentalism, and apocalyptic war—offer a range of conditions under which religion becomes involved in activism, in addition to providing a spectrum of goals of religious activism, ranging from challenging social practices and government policies concerning religion, to defending specific interpretations and practices of the faith, to hastening the apocalypse. Furthermore, these theories move beyond just modern causes of religious activism and violence; they transcend time and space and seek to explain common historic and contemporary causes of religiously motivated violence and activism. Taken together, these three theories cover the bulk of religious activism and violence, both historically and in contemporary times.

Religious Social Movements

Social Movement Theory (SMT) posits the conditions under which grievances, which are plentiful, transform into mass movements aimed at social or political change, which are rarer. McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald offer a particularly useful summary of the theory, including its evolution and its causal logic. The authors describe three variables that scholars of SMT have identified as necessary conditions for social movements to emerge: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes.²³

The political opportunities variable considers how political constraints and opportunities, particularly institutionalized politics, shape the emergence and success of social movements. Building off of work by Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow, and European scholars, the political opportunity variable focuses specifically on how changes in both institutionalized politics and informal groups with political power explain the emergence of social movements.²⁴ While necessary for understanding social movements, particularly the timing of their emergence, the political opportunity variable is not sufficient for explaining the rise of all movements and particularly their success or failure.

Mobilizing structures, the second variable, are “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal through which people mobilize and engage in collective action.”²⁵ This variable builds off of two sub-theories: resource mobilization theory, which investigates the types of resources available to a group and how they are employed for mobilization; and social movement organizations, or how formal and informal groups and networks facilitate social movements.²⁶ This variable

focuses heavily on the process of mobilization, rather than opportunities, as an explanation for the conditions under which social movements emerge.

The third variable, framing processes, considers the role that narratives and a sense of common purpose play in the formation of social movements and success. David Snow defines framing as “the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action.”²⁷ This variable includes difficult-to-measure aspects of social movements such as identity, symbols, cultural values and norms, ideology, and shared meaning. McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald contend, “At a minimum people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem.”²⁸ Furthermore, McAdam hypothesizes that “cognitive liberation,” or the hope that change is possible, is necessary for social movements to emerge and is part of successful framing.²⁹ Framing processes, in other words, seek to understand how participants in collective action understand the problem and its solution.

Taken together, SMT posits that political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes explain the necessary conditions that transform grievances into activism. As they take shape, social movements are highly visible collectives that aim to mobilize large numbers in order to effect change. Social movements tend to draw on preexisting groups and their networks to mobilize individuals into loosely affiliated collectives. Given their size and loose organizational structure, social movements usually have porous borders and individuals can join and leave the cause with relatively little cost. Framing processes create the conditions through which individuals who join the movement share common meaning and purpose. If done correctly, framing creates a form of collective peer pressure, where individuals feel compelled to join up to be part of the experience.³⁰ This point is further echoed by Williams, who contends that the ideology of social movements needs to be rooted and understood in the wider society’s culture in order to be effective.³¹

It is important to note that not all social movements are violent; in fact many successful movements have been purposefully non-violent, such as Gandhi’s Quit India movement, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s approach to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, Bishop Desmond Tutu’s call for the non-violent resolution of apartheid, and the Dalai Lama’s non-violent protest against Chinese occupation. Non-violent social movements also exist in Islam, although less well-known, and include the 20th-century Pashtun Badshah Khan’s creation of 100,000 non-violent *Khudai Khidmatgars* to oppose British rule in the frontier region of South Asia, and the current-day non-violent philosophy of Sheikh Jawdat Saeed.³² All of these movements have used religion to shape their non-violent social movements.³³

When social movements turn violent, it is typically for a few key reasons. First, political opportunities may be blocked, such as changing a policy or a country’s leader through elections. In such cases, violence becomes one of the few remaining options for change. Second, social movements may turn to violence if the movement has become frustrated and some of its members feel violence is necessary to realize its goal. Third, violence can also be a tool used to push for negotiations with the opposition. Finally, violence may also be used as a means to draw attention to the cause and inspire recruits.

The goals of social movements are varied. They can range from mobilization to change a specific government policy to revolution. They can also mobilize to challenge social issues within a country or region. Regardless of the goal, social

movements typically have specific objectives that draw the attention and support of elites, formal and informal organizations, and large numbers of individuals that agree with that immediate objective. Typically, once a social movement has achieved its goal, it demobilizes.

Religious social movements, a specific type of social movement, involve contention and mass mobilization that draw from religious resources and, in some cases, further religious goals. Christian Smith argues that not only is religion useful for mobilization—as is observed by Wald et al., Driskell et al., and Trejo—religion also informs framing and the goals for which social movements fight more broadly. Resources include trained, legitimate leaders; preexisting networks, organizational structures, and communications channels; and material resources such as money, buildings, schools, and hospitals.³⁴ Framing resources in religion include a moral framework to which adherents can relate; group cohesion and common identity; symbols and scripture that can be interpreted to justify the cause; and stories of persecution and perseverance that can create fortitude in difficult times.³⁵ These observations are echoed by Billings, who uses a Gramscian approach to consider the conditions under which religion becomes an oppositional force for change, noting that religion not only provides leadership and resources of mobilization, but also beliefs that help unite opposition movements.³⁶ Williams further notes that religion can provide cultural resonance for framing wider social movements.³⁷

Several scholars have used SMT to explain the rise of recent religious social movements around the globe. The edited volume *Islamic Activism* highlights the role that Islam has played in fostering social movements, particularly in the Middle East. The volume considers cases where violence has been instrumental to the movement—such as the GIA in Algeria, groups within Egypt, and Hamas in Palestine—and cases where violence has not played a predominant role in mobilization, specifically Saudi Arabia and Turkey.³⁸ Scholars have also used SMT to explain the emergence of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (led by a Christian minister, utilizing church networks and scripture to frame activism for equality);³⁹ and the 1979 Iranian Revolution (led by a cleric, mobilizing various groups throughout the country to oust the Shah, and using Islam to justify revolt and frame the solution).⁴⁰ More recently, scholars have used SMT to explain the rise of the 2010–2011 Arab Spring, and the different roles that religion played in uprisings throughout several countries, including movements aimed at including religion in the goals for which groups are mobilizing.⁴¹ Finally, it is important to note that social movements may draw on religious resources for mobilization, but the goals for which the movement is directed may not be religious. An example of this would be the Polish Solidarity movement in the 1980s, which used the Catholic Church as a source of mobilization and legitimacy, but did not have overtly religious goals.⁴²

Fundamentalism Theory and Violence

Fundamentalism is a poorly defined phenomenon and, unlike SMT, there is no clearly articulated fundamentalism theory. The term *fundamentalism* was originally used to explain a new conservative form of Christianity that emerged in the United States in the early 1900s, and that formed as a counterpoint to modernism. Therefore, for some, fundamentalism carries an inherently Christian connotation. More broadly the term has come to denote any individual or group that believes in the

literal nature of scripture, clear-cut religious practices and beliefs, and the perception that there is an urgent need to get back to basics—the “fundamentals of the faith”—which are being corrupted or have been lost, and to reassert religion into society and, in some cases, political life.

Several scholars note that the term fundamentalism is also problematic because it carries negative connotations, suggesting that fundamentalists are by definition militant, extremist, irrational, unyielding, and even violent.⁴³ Furthermore, rarely do those associated with fundamentalism self-identify as such.⁴⁴ However, despite the Christian origins of fundamentalism and its lack of specificity, the term does point to an important trend occurring across religious traditions and a phenomenon that has become entangled with violent action. Therefore, for lack of a better term, a theory of fundamentalism is proposed here.

Building off of several works on fundamentalism, including the authors of the five volume series *Fundamentalism Project*, Mark Juergensmeyer’s work in *The New Cold War* and *Global Rebellion*, Fox’s work on fundamentalism, and the ideas of Gabriel Almond and R. Scott Appleby, it is possible to identify the causal logic of fundamentalism and the conditions under which fundamentalist movements turn to violence.

Overall, fundamentalists are different from their mainstream adherents in the sense of threat that they perceive to their faith and religious way of life. This sense of threat compels fundamentalists to take actions aimed at preserving what they believe to be the correct interpretation and practice of their religion. Literature on fundamentalism identifies two triggers that produce a religious reaction in particular. First, fundamentalists react to the rise of secularism. Fundamentalists perceive secularism encroaching on religion and forcing it to the margins of society and political life, and that secularism is leading to moral decay. Fox contends: “the two characteristics that define fundamentalism are its origins as a defensive reaction to modernity and the attempt to impose fundamentalist rules and standards of behavior on society as a whole in order to actualize this defense.”⁴⁵ Juergensmeyer argues that secularism and fundamentalism (what he calls religious nationalism) are both ideologies, complex systems of beliefs that aspire to shape political and social action. As such, secularism and fundamentalism are in direct competition with one another.⁴⁶ For example, “creationists” (creationism is also referred to as *intelligent design*) are a form of Christian fundamentalists who see evolution as false teaching and in direct competition with their beliefs about how the world began. Some creationists feel that their beliefs are being marginalized in public schools and national discourse within the United States, prompting them to push for greater inclusion of the creationist perspective in schools through the courts, or to remove their children from public schools altogether.⁴⁷

It is important to note that, while some within religious groups feel secularism is threatening their faith, not all religious adherents are fundamentalists. The vast majority of those practicing religion do not see secularism as incompatible with faith, and continue to live in a world with secularist and modernist ideals as well as religious beliefs. However, for a minority, the rise of secularism is understood as a threat to the faith, and this threat requires the need for direct action to prevent the further erosion of religion from public life. Most scholars would agree that fundamentalism, including the violence it invokes, is defensive in nature.

A second distinct trigger of fundamentalism, one that is less discussed in the literature but as important, is new interpretations and practices that emerge from

within a particular religious tradition and that challenge more conservative understandings of the faith. For example, source criticism—the practice of using historical evidence to identify the human sources of scripture in Christianity—ignited conflicts and schisms within several denominations between those that see Christian scriptures as the literal word of God and those that understand it to be divinely inspired, but also the product of humans. Source criticism caused a schism within the Lutheran church in America, creating what became the larger Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which uses source criticism, and several smaller Synods, which do not.⁴⁸ More recent examples of new interpretations and practices within religious traditions include ordaining women as clerics and sanctioning gay marriage. Fundamentalist reactions to new interpretations and practices within a religious tradition aim to prevent what they believe to be false and destructive beliefs and practices from taking hold. This type of fundamentalist response looks more like a civil war within a tradition, rather than a religious reaction against wider society or a government's policies.

Fundamentalists react in at least three distinct ways to the perceived threats from secularism and new interpretations of the faith. First, fundamentalists may choose to isolate themselves from the threat. This course of action could include physically isolating by creating separate communities, breaking off from the mainstream religion and forming new sects or denominations, or socially isolating the group from wider society by creating parallel institutions, such as schools, clinics, stores, and so on. Groups may also choose to isolate by creating distinct and highly visible forms of dress—such as clothing, head gear, beards, and so on—that distinguish them from others within the faith and wider society. Isolation is a possible course of action for either threats from secularization or new interpretations within the faith.

Second, groups may attempt to change policies or other aspects of governance through political action, including through elections or pressuring the government for change through demonstrations and other means. The previously mentioned debate over teaching evolution or creationism in school is an example of groups using political action to change laws in their favor. Religious groups have also used political action in attempts to change laws on abortion, gay marriage, and stem cell research in the United States.

Third, fundamentalists may choose violence as a course of action in an attempt to push back the perceived threat, either from society or from within the faith. Rapoport notes that a fundamentalist group “is characterized as militant because it pursues causes so aggressively that it breaks laws made by the state.”⁴⁹ As with social movements, violence for fundamentalists is primarily instrumental; it is a means for realizing larger goals. Also similar to social movements, fundamentalists may turn to violence if they feel they do not have adequate political avenues to affect change, or if the political process is taking too long; violence becomes necessary to stem the perceived tide against a growing threat. Second, fundamentalists may resort to violence if they feel betrayed by their political leaders. For example, in the 1956 elections in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) campaigned on promises of preferential treatment for the island's majority Sinhalese Buddhists. When Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike failed to deliver on these promises, he was assassinated by a Buddhist monk in 1959.⁵⁰ Third, violence can be a tool to clarify who is in the group and who is not; in this case it is an instrument to purify the movement from within and make examples of those that are not truly committed. *Takfiri* violence, killing apostate or wayward Muslims, is an example

of this form of violence. Finally, fundamentalists may resort to violence if they feel threatened by society or government. Overall, fundamentalist violence is reactive, not proactive. This form of violence stands in sharp contrast to apocalyptic war, which will be described in the next section.

It is worth noting that these three courses of action are not mutually exclusive, and groups can change strategies over time or as the perception of threat changes. For example, the anti-abortion movement in the United States, which is overwhelmingly driven by religious adherents, has gone through periods of violent and non-violent action in its bid to reverse the legality of abortion. Beginning in the 1980s, the anti-abortion movement, especially the Army of God, believed (paradoxically) that violence and even murder was necessary to uphold the commandment “thou shall not kill” and prevent abortion. The organization carried out clinic bombings and assassinations of doctors and nurses. When this approach to countering abortion began to turn supporters away from the movement, violence was largely abandoned and political action resumed as the primary course of action, although a small minority still engages in violent acts against abortion today.⁵¹

The goals of fundamentalists are to return the faith to what they believe is its pristine and correct state. This goal therefore suggests that the faith was practiced correctly at some point in its history—a “golden age”—but that this correct interpretation has been lost or corrupted and there is a need to get back to the fundamentals of the faith. This goal further suggests that fundamentalists believe there is only one right practice (orthopraxy) and belief (orthodoxy) of the faith; all other interpretations are wrong. Furthermore, fundamentalists aim to create clear borders that separate the true and faithful from the misguided and corrupt.

Almond, Appleby, and Sivan identify nine characteristics, five ideological and four organizational, associated with fundamentalist movements: reactivity to the marginalization of the faith; selectivity in scripture and practices; moral Manichaeism (dividing the world between right and wrong, good and bad); absolutism and inerrancy of scriptures, beliefs, and practices; millennialist thinking; elect and chosen membership; sharp boundaries; authoritarian organizations; and specific behavioral requirements.⁵²

These nine characteristics reveal interesting paradoxes in fundamentalist thinking and behavior. Fundamentalists claim to be returning to the pure form of their faith, yet they are selective with scriptures and the practices they emphasize. They reject secularism and claim to be upholding the founding practices of the faith, yet often use modern tools of technology to further their goals, such as computers, the internet, and social media. They are millennialist, meaning that they long for life beyond this one, yet are deeply concerned with the world in the here and now. These paradoxes make negotiating with fundamentalists more difficult than with social movements, but still possible, as will be discussed in the final section.

Fundamentalism is not unique to one religion; rather it can be found as a particular interpretation across religious traditions. Examples of fundamentalist movements include the ultra-Orthodox, or *Haredi*, within Judaism. The *Haredi* have strict regulations in both practices and beliefs of their Jewish faith. They have chosen to self-segregate into communities of like-minded adherents. In Israel, they have an enclave in Jerusalem, Meir Sharim, which includes its own schools and synagogues. The Haredim traditionally have not served in the Israeli military and, until recently, have eschewed political participation. They consider the state of Israel a secular abomination that has failed to keep the true tenets of the faith.⁵³ They do not use violence to further their goals.

Another example of a fundamentalist movement is the *salafi* interpretation of Islam. *Salafi* believe that Islam was at its most pure state during the time of the Prophet Mohammed and, following his death, the leadership of his companions (*Salaf as-Saleh* or “Pious Predecessors”), who knew the Prophet personally and could guide the community by his example. *Salafi* believe that the Qur’an and the example of the Prophet provide a complete guide for Islam today. Wictorowicz summarizes *Salafism* as follows:

Salafis are united by a common religious creed, which provides principles and a method for applying religious beliefs to contemporary issues and problems. This creed revolves around strict adherence to the concept of tawhid (the oneness of God) and ardent rejection of a role for human reason, logic, and desire. Salafis believe that by strictly following the rules and guidance in the Qur’an and Sunna (path or example of the Prophet Muhammad) they eliminate the biases of human subjectivity and self-interest, thereby allowing them to identify the singular truth of God’s commands. From this perspective, there is only one legitimate religious interpretation; Islamic pluralism does not exist.⁵⁴

Salafism, therefore, aims at a return to what they believe was the golden age of Islam, where the faith was correctly understood and practiced. Wictorowicz notes that *Salafi* use different means to realize this goal; most are quietist, eschewing political involvement; some are “politicos” and work through government (including democracy) to realize their goals or aim to seize the state by other means; and some are jihadis, believing that violence is the necessary path for change.⁵⁵

Apocalyptic War

Cosmic War—what this article will call apocalyptic war—is perhaps the form of activism that is most commonly associated with religious violence. In “Sacrifice and Cosmic War,” Juergensmeyer argues that virtually all of the world’s religious traditions contain scriptures and beliefs that describe divine battles between the forces of Good and Evil and that these battles are struggles to create “ultimate order” and conquer “ultimate disorder,” which is eternal death and damnation.⁵⁶ For many religions, the culmination of this battle is the belief in the end of times (such as the Apocalypse in Christianity, the End of Days in Judaism, the Last Judgment in Islam, and the arrival of Kalki, the tenth avatar of Vishnu in Hinduism), in which the final battle of Good versus Evil will occur on this earth, and Good will triumph. The apocalypse is accompanied by clear signs that the end is near and that the faithful must rise up, stand firm in the face of trials and hardship, and defend the faith.

Religious adherents engage in apocalyptic war because they believe that it will hasten the apocalypse, a practice known as “catastrophic Messianism.” Apocalyptic war occurs when adherents believe that current-day events are signs that the end is here, and that their participation in the Final Battle is necessary for both Good to triumph and for their own eternal salvation. For those who participate in apocalyptic war, the promise of salvation and the millennium, a period of peace and harmony, is promised. Juergensmeyer argues that apocalyptic war is both deeply personal and collective—all who participate in it are fighting on behalf of personal and group salvation.⁵⁷

Apocalyptic war thinking is triggered by acute personal and collective trauma brought about by catastrophic events or persistent trials. For example, war, occupation, corruption, lawlessness, and natural disasters may lead some to believe that these are signs of the end of times and the war between Good and Evil is occurring in the here and now. Under these conditions, earthly battles become spiritual battles in which the faithful must participate. Juergensmeyer posits that holy battles for the conquest of Good over Evil know no specific enemy or definitive goal; rather, the battle is against amorphous disorder. Apocalyptic war, therefore, does not know incremental goals or compromise.⁵⁸

Political psychologists Robins and Post contend that charismatic leaders provide the necessary interpretation of events and direct followers through times of calamity, offering hope to the faithful.⁵⁹ They argue, "For the followers, such an inspired leader has provided a diagnosis of the ills afflicting the world and has given them a special role to play. He has made sense for them of the surrounding chaos."⁶⁰ In other words, leaders use scriptures and the expectation of the end times to offer an explanation for the suffering and trials of current situations and what individuals should do in order to liberate themselves, spiritually and literally, from these trying circumstances.

Unlike social movements and fundamentalists, violence in apocalyptic war is a necessary condition. Apocalyptic warriors expect to encounter violent opposition and to meet violence with violence. However, violence is more than just a necessary instrument for achieving apocalyptic warriors' millennialist goals; it is a sacred and necessary duty that cleanses the world of sin and Evil. Furthermore, apocalyptic warriors often depict their struggle in contradictory terms, that the world must be destroyed in order for it to be saved, or that the war cannot be lost, but may be unwinnable in this lifetime.⁶¹

It is important to note that numerous examples of apocalyptic groups exist that are eagerly awaiting final justice and the end of times, but that are not violent or willing to take the timing of the apocalypse into their own hands; in other words, they are apocalyptic but not apocalyptic warriors. For example, Judaism has a rich history of apocalyptic thinking that is captured in its mystical tradition, the Kabbalah. However, Kabbalists have been instructed through the ages to keep hope in their millennialist expectations, but that the end will not be revealed beforehand, nor will it be the result of human will; their job is to be faithful and vigilant.⁶² Another example is the Millerite Movement in the United States, in which William Miller predicted the second coming of Jesus from 1843–1845. Despite these millennialist expectations not being fulfilled, the movement did not engage in violence to hasten the apocalypse and it later led to the creation of the Seventh Day Adventist church.⁶³

The transformation of apocalyptic imagining, which is present in all religions, to apocalyptic war, which is unusual, hinges on the role of the charismatic leader. The charismatic leader is the one that identifies real-world events as signs of the end of times, and connects those events to apocalyptic expectations and necessary actions—specifically violence—for the true believer. Behind every apocalyptic war is a charismatic leader that not only identifies the problem, but the course of action required of the faithful, which is to rise up and fight for Good to triumph over Evil. Rapoport contends that, in order for apocalyptic war to take hold, signs of the end of time and the need for urgent action must be exaggerated; this exaggeration is the result of leaders.⁶⁴

Several examples illustrate the complexity of apocalyptic war thinking. For example, Pope Urban II called the Christian Crusades in 1095 to aid the Byzantine

Empire and liberate Jerusalem from “infidels.” The Pope promised salvation to those who undertook the sacred battle.⁶⁵ The First Crusade was supposed to be an organized military expedition, headed by lords from participating countries. However Peter the Hermit, a charismatic French ascetic, heard the Pope’s call and began to raise his own army of commoners bent on hastening the second coming of Jesus and securing their eternal salvation. Answering his call, average citizens marched off to Jerusalem in the spring of 1096 in search of salvation and the second coming of Jesus. This pack of apocalyptic warriors began their quest to hasten the second coming by first slaughtering Jews in the Rhine Valley on Good Friday, an act of revenge for Jews’ participation in the crucifixion of Jesus.⁶⁶ Crusading evolved into a sporadic, holy war that drew Europeans in search of fortune, adventure, and salvation. At perhaps its greatest extreme, the Children’s Crusade inspired thousands of peasants to walk over the Alps to the sea, where they believed they would be miraculously transported to Jerusalem. Nearly all died in the mountains.⁶⁷

A more recent example of apocalyptic war thinking involves the ideology of Aum Shinrikyo. Led by the semi-blind Japanese social outcast Shoko Asahara, the movement aimed to rid the world of impurities by using WMD to start World War III, which would cause massive death and destruction. Asahara promised his followers that they would be miraculously preserved from the battle, or would be reincarnated, and would live to repopulate the earth; in fact he promised paradoxically to save the world by destroying it. In 1995, Aum followers attempted to realize their apocalyptic dreams by deploying Sarin gas in the Tokyo subway, which they believed would spark World War III. The attacks killed thirteen and wounded hundreds. Asahara and 200 members were convicted for the attacks in 2000 and Asahara has been on death row since that time. At its zenith, Aum Shinrikyo was estimated to have more than 30,000 members around the globe and had succeeded in raising an estimated \$300 million to \$1 billion in cash and assets for its cause.⁶⁸

Some contemporary Islamic activism shows signs of apocalyptic war thinking. Current earthly struggles are representations of a much bigger battle between the forces of Good and Evil. These struggles are trials requiring the faithful to rise up and fight in defense of the faith and bring about not only the salvation of the world in the here and now but eternal salvation. For example, Sheikh Azzam, Osama Bin Laden’s mentor, describes a battle waging between the *dar al Islam* (the Muslim world) and the rest of the world, the *dar al harb*, literally the abode of war, and the need for all Muslims to rise up and defend the faith. In “Martyrs: the Building Block of Nations,” Azzam states:

A small group: they are the ones who carry convictions and ambitions. And an even smaller group from this small group, are the ones who flee from the worldly life in order to spread and act upon these ambitions. And an even smaller group from this elite group, are the ones who sacrifice their souls and their blood in order to bring victory to these ambitions and principles. . . . It is not possible to reach glory except by traversing this Path. And glory cannot be architected except by traversing this Path: the Path of the Blessed Jihad.⁶⁹

As will be described, current Islamic activism runs the gamut of social movements, to fundamentalists, to apocalyptic warriors. It is essential to differentiate one type from another because they each carry distinct countermeasures.

Comparing the Three Theories, Dynamical Change, and Key Questions

Social movements, fundamentalists, and apocalyptic warriors present a range of conditions under which religious groups engage in social and political activism and use violence to further social, political, and religious goals. A brief comparison of the three lenses illustrates the different characteristics of each form of activism.

First, social movements tend to be large in size and are highly visible. They typically are comprised of multiple groups and networks that are united around a specific and limited goal, such as changing a policy, a particular social practice, or (at its most extreme) revolution. Once achieved, the movement usually breaks up and groups continue to act on their own agendas. Social movements draw on various resources to mobilize and organize participants, including material resources, networks, narratives, symbols, and other forms of communication. Participants in social movements may be highly motivated but, due to their size, individuals may come and go with relative ease. Historically, social movements have had a charismatic leader who helps to unify different groups, provide inspiration, and direct participants towards a specific goal. However, recent examples of social movements, particularly in the Arab Spring uprisings, suggest that social movements may not need charismatic leaders to form or prosper. Religion provides useful resources to social movements, such as leadership, networks, moral legitimacy, material resources, and unifying symbols. Violence, if used at all, is an instrument that furthers the movement's goals.

Fundamentalists emerge in response to two perceived or actual threats to the faith: secularism, which threatens to erode religion from public life; and new interpretations within the faith, which threaten more traditional understandings of the religion. Fundamentalists aim to create clear distinctions between the faithful and the rest by reinforcing specific beliefs and practices (orthodoxism and orthopraxis), which they claim to be the original, pure, and true practice of the faith. Despite describing their actions in terms of authenticity, fundamentalists are usually selective with their use of scripture, symbols, practices, and history. Fundamentalists do not accept multiple interpretations of the faith, nor is debate welcome; there is only one correct understanding, which they possess. Fundamentalists choose different means for reinforcing and defending their interpretation of the faith, including isolation, political activism, and violence. When violence is used, it is a means for realizing the group's goals.

Apocalyptic warriors believe that current calamities are signs that the end of times is near, and that it is incumbent on all the faithful to rise up and fight on behalf of God. In extreme cases, apocalyptic warriors aim to foster "apocalyptic messianism"—to create the conditions for the end of times, such as wars, mass famine, and destruction—which will be followed by a new era of peace and prosperity. Apocalyptic warriors are usually few in number and highly committed; their presence initially may not be visible to wider society. Apocalyptic warriors mobilize around a charismatic leader who helps to make sense of the chaos and directs the faithful in the right course of action. Apocalyptic warriors believe that violence is not only necessary to bring about cataclysmic change, but that it is a sacred duty and will help to cleanse the world of sin and pave the way for the millennium. Self-sacrifice and martyrdom, giving one's life for the cause, are necessary actions that will help realize the promise of salvation.

The conditions that lead to social movements, fundamentalism, and apocalyptic war are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Three lenses of religious activism

Type	Goal	Size	Leadership and structure	Members	Use of religion	Violence
Social movements	Specific and limited	Large, highly visible	Charismatic leader, possibly leaderless	Loose affiliation, porous borders	Mobilization legitimacy framing (not necessary)	Instrument (not necessary)
Fundamentalists	Limited but less specific	Small to medium with clear borders	Charismatic leader, authoritarian	Committed	Religion is the core issue (orthodoxy and orthopraxy)	Instrument (not necessary)
Apocalyptic warriors	Vague and conflating spiritual with earthly	Small, can be clandestine	Charismatic leader, prophetic	Highly committed	Apocalypse and millennium	Necessary sacred duty

In theory, these three causal arguments for religious activism are distinct but, in practice, they are less clear and groups may contain elements of more than one type. For example, social movements may use apocalyptic imagery and thinking to mobilize segments of the population. The promise of the return of the 12th Imam—a messianic leader that Shias believe will restore justice in the world—helped to mobilize the population against the Shah. This tactic helped create one of the largest mass protests of the 20th century.

Groups may also change over time and according to shifts in political circumstances, frustrations within a group, or unfulfilled prophecies. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, has the distinctly fundamentalist goals of realizing what they believe to be the correct interpretation of the faith and to reject new innovations in Muslim thinking. However, the Muslim Brotherhood, especially in Egypt, has also sought to create a social movement with the aim of bringing all Muslims “back” to the faith. The Muslim Brotherhood has also widened its scope by running for office, which requires mobilizing mass support in the form of votes and, if elected, requires compromise and working with secular and other religious groups.

A group may also become frustrated with their progress, which could cause it to shift from one type of activism to another. For example, fundamentalists who are unable to persuade those within their faith of their beliefs and practices, and who may actually be losing supporters, could turn to apocalyptic war thinking to explain their trials as a sign of the apocalypse, to stay the course, and to engage in violence. Fundamentalists who isolate themselves may move towards paranoia, which could also fuel apocalyptic war thinking and justify violence and martyrdom.

Several key questions can help identify the different causal paths of social movements, fundamentalism, and apocalyptic war. First, what does victory look like to the group or movement? In other words, what are the goals for which the group is fighting? Social movements typically have specific and limited goals, such as changing a policy, and victory is measured by the degree to which these goals are met. Fundamentalists may also have specific goals, such as to preserve what they believe to be the correct interpretation of the faith, but these goals are significantly broader than changing a policy or even a head of state. Victory for a fundamentalist, therefore, is less clear than for social movements. Apocalyptic warriors’ goals transcend this world to include fostering the conditions of the apocalypse and the hope of salvation.

Within the question of the group’s goals, it is also important to consider both what the group says and what it does, which offers interesting clues about a group and its organization. Specifically, do rhetoric and actions mirror each other, or not? For example, around the time of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Al Qaeda’s senior leadership expressed frustration over the affiliate Al Qaeda in Iraq’s brutal tactics and high casualty rates among Iraqi civilians, which was driving the population away from the movement. The senior leadership, in other words, wanted to win large segments of the population over to their movement, but the actions of their affiliate were losing support among the people.⁷⁰ This disconnect between the rhetoric and goals of senior leaders, and the goals and actions of their subordinates, suggests that organizational control was not tight with Al Qaeda at this time, and that there were disagreements between what Stout calls the “strategists” and the “foot soldiers.”⁷¹ This disconnect offers opportunities for countermeasures, which will be discussed below.

Second, who are the leaders and followers? Leadership will most likely look different depending on the type of group. Social movements require leaders that various

segments of society see as legitimate to successfully foster mass mobilization. If religion is involved, social movements will most likely draw from well-known religious leaders from within the clergy. Examples of these leaders include Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the U.S. Civil Rights movement, Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu in the anti-apartheid movement, and the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership in the Iranian revolution. Fundamentalist leaders may come from within the established religious leadership, or may be from outside the leadership and in direct opposition to it. The U.S. anti-abortion initiative drew from ordained ministers of a variety of Christian denominations. However, the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership is not typically from the trained Islamic leadership (the Ulama) in Egypt, and stands in direct criticism of what they see as the Ulama's failed leadership. Apocalyptic warriors also tend to have leaders that are not part of the trained clergy and therefore cannot easily be censured by religious hierarchy. Prior to the start of the First Crusade in 1096, Peter the Hermit—a self-proclaimed religious leader—whipped up popular sentiment for the Crusade, promising the second coming of Jesus and salvation for its participants. His legitimacy stemmed from his charisma and believed connection to the divine, not his ties to the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

Social movements will likely have a wide array of participants from a variety of groups all unified around a common purpose, such as changing a policy or ousting a country's leader. Adherents within a fundamentalist movement will look much more uniform and will likely conform to a clear-cut and rigid set of beliefs and practices. Apocalyptic warriors tend to be relatively few in number and highly committed. Apocalyptic warriors may keep their group hidden from mainstream society as they fight to bring about the conditions of the apocalypse.

Also within this question, it is important to ask if leaders and followers want the same thing. Primary documents from Al Qaeda following the 9/11 attacks suggest that the senior leadership wanted to create a social movement aimed at bringing the entire Muslim world to what they believed to be the correct interpretation of the faith. However, some rank and file were joining the movement with the desire to hasten the apocalypse and earn salvation for themselves and their family. This disconnect between leaders and followers created problems for organizational unity and purpose.

Third, it is important to ask: What does the group's organization look like? Each of these types of religious activism has different organizational structures. Social movements tend to be open and porous; participants can come or go from the movement and it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell how many are part of the movement once it takes root and grows within the population. Furthermore, social movements can be relatively flat structures, as was the case in the Arab Spring, or could be composed of a multitude of smaller hierarchical organizations that are only loosely affiliated with one another. Fundamentalist groups tend to be closed movements with clear distinctions of who is in and who is out, along with authoritative leadership and hierarchy. This type of organizational structure creates the necessary control over beliefs and behavior. Apocalyptic warriors also tend to have closed organizations with hierarchy to impose control over its followers. But apocalyptic thinking can spin out of control and leaders can lose control over their followers, as was the case with Peter the Hermit and the People's Crusade and some of Al Qaeda's apocalyptic thinking and martyrdom operations that have killed more Muslims than foreigners.

These three principal questions for identifying religious activism—the goals, the leaders and followers, and the organizational structure of the group—are important

for formulating countermeasures for containing violent religious activism. As the composition, tactics, and goals of social movements, fundamentalists, and apocalyptic warriors vary, so do countermeasures against these groups.

Countermeasures in Religiously Motivated Violence

Not all religious activism requires measures aimed at countering its effects; some religious activism has goals that are productive to society and governance. The U.S. Civil Rights movement, the anti-apartheid movement, Bishop Desmond Tutu's anti-apartheid mobilization, the Dalai Lama's non-violent bid for Tibetan independence, and Gandhi's Quit India movement are all examples of religious activism that have spurred societies to become more just and equitable. Therefore, the first consideration when confronted with religious activism should be the goals for which the movement is fighting and the extent to which these goals promote greater liberty to all within a society, country, or region.⁷² If they do, then measures aimed at countering the movement are most likely unnecessary.

However, not all religious activism serves the greater good and much of it does require a reaction from the state. Therefore, countermeasures for each of the three variants are proposed below.

Social movements, including religious social movements, tend to have specific and limited goals; therefore countermeasures should focus on negotiation and compromise between the state and the movement. Negotiations and compromise could allow for the state and the movement to come to common ground and understanding, specifically on goals relating to changing a policy or practice. For social movements that aim to oust a leader or change a government, compromise on either side is unlikely, given the objective. However, negotiations could help facilitate a peaceful change of leadership, depending on the nature of the state.

If popular, embedded in society, and viewed as legitimate, the state's use of violence to counter a social movement may be counterproductive, especially if the movement is focused on upending the regime. The state's use of violence to counter a social movement, therefore, has a limited but potentially useful role. The state could use the threat of violence or its actual employment to bring the movement to the negotiation table or keep it from leaving. It could also use force to contain fringe movements bent on using terrorist tactics or other forms of violence to further the cause. Overall, however, the state's use of force to counter social movements should be minimal.

Fundamentalists are highly reactionary, particularly to perceived or actual threats to their understanding of the faith. Overall, the goal in confronting fundamentalism should be to prevent the group from further radicalizing, and to bring it back into a more mainstream understanding of the religion. Therefore, countermeasures should focus on reducing the sense of threat these groups feel. One approach states could employ to reducing fundamentalists' sense of threat is to give the group space to retreat and practice their interpretation of the faith. For example, the 2002 school voucher program in the No Child Left Behind Act made it easier for parents to opt out of public education and use their tax dollars to pay for enrollment in private schools or home schooling. Although controversial, this piece of legislation gave creationists space to adhere to their beliefs and practices.⁷³ However, if the state were to employ this approach, it would be necessary to monitor the group for signs of further radicalization, which could occur if isolated.⁷⁴

Perhaps even more so than with social movements, the use of force as a countermeasure against fundamentalists has severe limitations; using force against a group that has a heightened sense of threat would most likely exacerbate these anxieties. Force could be useful to contain or eliminate groups that have become severely isolated and pose a threat to wider society, but this approach would most likely be useful under the direst of circumstances. Space, monitoring, and the use of law enforcement to contain fundamentalists and reduce their sense of threat is a better approach.

Finally, apocalyptic warriors require special countermeasures and perhaps are the most difficult group for states to neutralize. Unlike social movements and fundamentalists, all apocalyptic warriors who direct their violence outside the group are a threat to wider society. Furthermore, apocalyptic warriors anticipate confrontation and trials; it is written into their expectations of the apocalypse. Therefore directly confronting apocalyptic warriors, especially with force, could feed their ideology and potentially grow the movement. Juergensmeyer argues that Cosmic War has two solutions: the first is the total defeat of the group, the second is “redirecting the mythology,” or challenging the group’s interpretation of the faith.⁷⁵ With Juergensmeyer’s second solution, Cosmic War’s zeal could be reduced by sparking a debate within a religious tradition over the immanency of the apocalypse. A debate over this interpretation throws into question the inerrancy of the leader and his or her views, which opens the door for an adjustment of the ideology. For example, the Saudi government has helped facilitate an internet chat room that draws jihadis into a debate with rehabilitated terrorists about the religious necessity and justification of their actions.⁷⁶ The idea is to get potential recruits and those within the organization to question the ideology. Within this approach, it is important that the state does not engage the group directly in a theological debate, because the state is most likely seen as illegitimate and incapable of having a theological discussion. Similarly, using the religion’s mainstream clergy may be counterproductive because apocalyptic warriors often stand in critique of clergy for failing to see the signs of the apocalypse. Rather, much can be gained from engaging former apocalyptic warriors that have had a change of heart, as has been done in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and London.⁷⁷ In this case, the messenger is as important as the message.

The use of force as a potential countermeasure to apocalyptic warriors has a limited, but useful role. Force could be used to go after a group that is small, isolated, and contained. In this case, the state’s use of force would most likely fulfill apocalyptic warriors’ ideology, but wider society would not be in agreement with this worldview, and therefore would not join the fight. Similarly, force could be used to take out an apocalyptic warrior’s leader if the group’s organization is well understood and the state has an understanding of how that would affect the group. As previously argued, apocalyptic thinking transforms into apocalyptic violence by a charismatic leader, and removing that leader could end the threat.

Finally, it is worth noting that, in the case of Islamically motivated apocalyptic war, the early days of the Arab Spring stood as a sharp critique to its worldview. Rather than fight on a spiritual plane and focus on salvation in the hereafter, masses took to the streets in several countries demanding the right to choose government leaders, ensure greater liberties, such as freedom of speech and assembly, and to establish civil society independent from governmental interference. The first protests of the Arab Spring, in other words, demanded earthly change and rights rather than apocalyptic visions of final judgment. Initially, these developments appeared to be good news for the ideological battle against apocalyptic war thinking.

However, religiously motivated groups also mobilized to run in elections and promote their specific interpretations of the faith and for their greater inclusion in government and public life. These groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Nour parties in Egypt and the Ennahda Party in Tunisia, conform to fundamentalist thinking and pose challenges for intra-Muslim, inter-religious, and religious-secular dynamics in these countries. As these countries continue to struggle with transitioning from years of authoritarian rule to democracy, the fundamentalist agendas of these groups will pose considerable challenges to shared power and democratic norms.

Moreover, despite the early optimism of participants and spectators of the Arab Spring, apocalyptic warriors have not gone away in the region; their ideology persists as one of many critiques against earthly goals and failed social and political experiments. The festering conflict in Syria has become a bellwether for a new generation of apocalyptic warriors, including groups aligned with Al Qaeda, that see jihad as necessary and desirable for earthly and spiritual change and who have made the conflict their training grounds for recruits from throughout the Muslim world. Similar groups with apocalyptic mindsets exist in Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and beyond. Therefore, the battle against apocalyptic warriors and violent fundamentalists has not diminished, despite the early optimism of the Arab Spring. These mindsets are not new and are unlikely to ever be eradicated.

Acknowledgment

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

Notes

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theory is further described in Ch. 2 of Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?* (see note 1 above), in *Terror in the Mind of God* (see note 51 above), and in *Global Rebellion* (see note 1 above). However, the best articulation of this form of religious violence, including its causal logic, comes from “Sacrifice and Cosmic War” (see note 56 above).

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