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SOCIO-BEHAVIORAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE ROLE OF MILITANT EXTREMISM

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SOCIO-BEHAVIORAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE ROLE OF VIOLENT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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Abstract

This paper discusses relevant findings and theories regarding the role of ideology, culture, and context in shaping the behaviors of individuals within violent social movements. Accordingly, this focus concerns the comparative weight placed on ideology and culture (expressed principles and motives) versus external factors as chief influencers for the propensity of individuals to act outside of the norms of society and politics by resorting to violent behaviors. In doing so, we have drawn upon theory from anthropology, behavioral economics, political science, psychology, and sociology to better understand how these variables give birth to and nurture militant social movements.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the role of ideology, culture, and context in shaping behaviors of individuals within violent social movements. Typically, the current body of literature puts a comparatively higher weight on ideology and culture (expressed principles and motives) over contextual factors in explaining an individual's propensity to act outside traditional norms and politics to act violently. This paper attempts to broaden this discussion by including theory from anthropology, behavioral economics, political science, psychology, and sociology to as to better understand how these variables can give birth to and nurture violent social movements.

Strong adherence to an ideology, influenced by an austere culture, is typically considered to be a prominent feature of extremist groups around the world. However, as discussed in this paper, this belief has been challenged by a number of Middle Eastern scholars (e.g., Hroub, 2012). If this is correct, the question then is what role does ideology actually play in the behaviors of individuals? For example, would individuals with similar ideologies act the same way if residing in Saudi Arabia or Russia? Saying it differently, do similar behaviors come from a common core ideology, or are similar behaviors more a response to common environmental conditions? If this is the case, then is ideology simply draped over cultural factors, which are driven by contextual features in one's environment? If so, the conditions of environmental stress, conflict, and political dysfunction would be a major factor in driving these movements. Here, strategies for better understanding and anticipating behaviors of violent social movements would benefit from a broader discussion regarding the role of ideology, culture, and context under these types of conditions.

In this paper, we assert that ideology may not be best understood as a fixed feature, but more as a set of beliefs whose content and strength interact with societal processes, influencing social movements that espouse them. Ideologies, particularly religious ideologies, have characteristics that groups can leverage to strengthen their appeal as well that impose constraints on individuals. Because of this, the distinctive properties of religious ideologies will be discussed. Moreover, the literature suggests an interaction between ideology and culture in that culture shapes ideology to meet the needs and constraints of the culture (and vice versa). Underlying all of this are contextual factors that constantly shape how individuals perceive the world. Consequently, this paper will discuss the role of ideology, culture, and how it interacts with contextual factors to influence violent social movements and their interaction within societies. As exemplars, we will focus our discussion examples on two distinct geographical areas, Russia and Saudi Arabia. In these geographical areas ideology, culture, and the confluence of contextual factors has played a very important role in shaping their current state of affairs regarding various social movements. However, the phenomena at play are generally applicable to other regions and situations as well.

In discussing these factors, we will draw upon theory from anthropology, behavioral economics, political science, psychology, and sociology to better understand how these variables give birth to and nurture militant social movements. A particular focus concerns how general psychological characteristics can influence particular behaviors associated with violent social movements. In assessing these phenomena, we seek to provide generalizations about the factors that could give rise to violent social movements. Also, to examine alternative policies for influencing violent social movements it is useful to develop an operational model to assess these processes. Such a model could identify hypotheses about these processes and designing empirical discriminators.

We therefore developed a formalism for modeling the interacting dynamics influencing group behavior and ideology. Lastly, we summarize and suggest next steps.

2. THE CONFLUENCE OF IDEOLOGY, CULTURE, AND CONTEXT

2.1. The Influence of Social Movements

Social movements are one of the principal social forms through which collectivities give voice to their grievances and concerns about the rights, welfare, and well-being of themselves and others by engaging in various types of collective action, such as protesting in the streets, that dramatize those grievances and concerns and demand that something be done about them. Although there are other more institutionalized and publicly less conspicuous venues in which collectivities can express their grievances and concerns, particularly in democratic societies, social movements have long functioned as an important vehicle for articulating and pressing a collectivity's interests and claims. Indeed, it is arguable that an understanding of many of the most significant developments and changes throughout human history – such as the ascendance of Christianity, the Reformation, and the French, American, and Russian revolutions – are partly contingent on an understanding of the workings and influence of social movements, and this is especially so during the past several centuries (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004, p. 3).

As described above, the study of social movements has a rich history, which generally includes the analysis of collective goals by various groups of individuals and how they manifest into actions that have some degree of temporal continuity. Social movements might seek to change a situation considered important by encouraging or preventing it from occurring. In doing so, social movements can assign blame or culpability to the institution or group that is considered responsible for the situation (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004). The research underlying this phenomenon is generally comprised of an interdisciplinary effort that includes various lines of research and interpretations regarding the causes underlying collective actions. As such, there is no unifying 'theory' associated with this domain, but it still can be useful in describing violent social movements. One of the relevant lines of research pertains to how religious ideologies, as well as various other ideologies, can influence social movements, especial violent ones.

2.2. Social Movements and Religious Ideology

The influence of ideologies, particularly religious ideologies, has been attributed to the rise in extremist movements (Emerson & Hartmen, 2006). An ideology can be defined as "a system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy" (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2016). An ideology can also be thought of as a specific way of conceptualizing beliefs and attitudes, which can be shared within societies. Thus, in a societal sense, ideology can underlie a common belief about the world and how individuals should behave in it.

Within all societies there is a spectrum of ideologies. A dominant ideology can serve as a common point of reference in comparison to other ideologies. This reference point can, in turn, affect the general attitudes of individuals towards those of non-conforming ideologies. When this occurs, the non-conforming (less dominate) ideology can be seen in a more negative light by the majority (Maio, Olson, Bernard, & Luke, 2003). Consequently, a dominant ideology can have

the effect of marginalizing other, less dominant ideologies. Within this spectrum, certain ideologies can also play a role in promoting certain societal movements over others. Due to their focus on behavioral ethics and standards, religious ideologies will naturally be a driver in this process (Adorno, 1950). This is especially true in societies that are more traditional and less lenient towards differing views. This can ultimately lead to marginalization and even hostility towards minority ideologies. Marginalized ideologies can respond by being more defensive and isolated. These circumstances have led to resentment towards dominant ideologies and the society that supports them. It also has produced more divergent and defensive behaviors, stemming from being perceived as being marginalized by the larger society (Maio, Olson, Bernard, & Luke, 2003).

2.2.1. Fundamentalist Movements

It has been argued that in the 20th Century there has been an increase in the dynamism and variation of religious movements throughout the world (Kniss & Burns, 2004). This is exemplified by the strength of many organizations that rely heavily on religious justification to globally challenge existing social mores and practices. However, as with all religions, membership beliefs, and the strength of those beliefs, vary across individuals. Even with these variations, there are various religious movements that tend to be associated with certain sociocultural behaviors. One of the movements that has been perceived as being marginalized by more dominant movements is the self-styled, fundamentalist movement.

The general concept of fundamentalism is somewhat amorphous and its definition has been contested, along with the groups it is supposed to include (Marty & Appleby, 1994). Fundamentalist ideology has its roots in the drive to protect its members against changes in society that are believed to be contrary to their values and belief systems. Antoun defines fundamentalism as “a religiously based cognitive and affective orientation to the world characterized by protest against change and the ideological orientation of modernism” (Antoun, 2001, p. 3). Riesebrodt defines fundamentalism as “an urban movement directed primarily against dissolution of personalistic, patriarchal notions of order and social relations and their replacement by depersonalized principles” (Riesebrodt, 1990, p. 9). Kniss and Burns (2004) refer to fundamentalism as a traditional religious movement that is politically active in contesting at least some aspects of modernity and dominance of modern (typically stemming from the West) cultural values within the prevailing global order, compared to traditional norms and social relationships. According to Kniss and Burns, fundamentalist movements are responding to social change that blurs the boundaries between public and private existence with respect to traditional mores. These movements are often characterized by appealing to those who feel left out by the modern global order. In general, fundamentalists come from less educated backgrounds (with large exceptions, such as with Protestants; Wuthnow, 1988), and thus are less likely to benefit from the modern global order. Second, these movements are organizing around their resistance to relatively new social movements, especially concerning gender and sexuality identity issues. In more extreme movements, this can be defined by the defense of patriarchy within society (Riesebrodt, 1993). While there might be larger differences between cultures, a consistent finding across studies is that fundamentalists are highly traditional on matters of family and gender relations. Patriarchal families have distinct and separate roles for males and females. These concepts are common across fundamentalist beliefs and practices (Antoun, 2001).

There are many theories that seek to explain the rise in fundamentalism around the world. The first set of theories seek to explain fundamentalism as a reaction to social stress, including such

things as economic and political crises, greater social inequality, economic stagnation, modernism, and often, influences from highly authoritarian societies. However, many of the countries that experienced fundamentalist movements were also experiencing growths in economic development and general socio-political stability (such as with Iran). Another set of theories seeks to explain fundamentalism as a reaction to the competition between the state and the religious sectors (e.g., the ulama¹ in the Middle East). Here, state-initiated modernization efforts are seen to conflict with the social, political, and economic hegemony of religious sectors to a point where they are in conflict. This is particularly true when the differences between traditional ideologies and ideologies underlying modernization are greatest. It is argued here that extreme forms of fundamentalism can be brought about not only by social stress and state/religion competition, but also by socio-cognitive factors, discussed in section 3.

To help illustrate the role of fundamentalism on social movements, Russia and Saudi Arabia are used throughout this discussion as exemplars. These countries were selected because of their religious and geographical dissimilarities, as well as their geopolitical importance. The two societies also have a history of following more fundamentalist trends.

2.2.2. Orthodox-State Movement in Russia

For much of its history Russia has exemplified how fundamentalism and social movements are intertwined. Using a recent example, the collapse of the Soviet Union affected both the state and society, along with leaving an ideological vacuum. This vacuum has been partially filled by long-existing traditional values of czarist Russia. These values promote, among other things, a fundamentalist, or “Orthodox” ideology that appeals to a sense of honor, tradition, masculinity, and long-held beliefs of Russian exceptionalism. Because of this, Orthodox ideology has been exploited by various sectors of Russian society (with explicit state support from Russian president Vladimir Putin) in an attempt to help establish a perceived rise of Russia from its humiliation after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The Russian Orthodox Church has reasserted itself to play a large role in Russian society. While this was greatly reduced during the time of the Soviet Union (particularly during the Stalinist purges of 1936 to 1938), the Russian Orthodox Church is now instrumental in both initiating and legitimizing socially-focused programs that were previously carried out by the Soviet government. This blurring of church and state is considered by some to be an attempt to turn religion into a quasi-branch of the government (Keating, 2014). At the very least, the Russian Orthodox Church serves to help unify and provide ideological guidance to a large portion of society. This has been particularly useful after the communist ideology was discarded after the fall of the Soviet Union. Having a strong, historical relationship with the state, the Russian Orthodox Church serves to provide control over many elements of society where the State cannot or will not tread. For example, some Russian Orthodox militants have formed armed units to provide both military and ideological support for pro-Moscow secessionists in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Through this effort, they have radicalized opinion among the ethnic Russian population by calling for a “crusade” not just in the East but also against all of Ukraine (Higgs, 2016). In general, the Russian Orthodox Church is helping to project, “Russia as the natural ally of all those who pine for a more secure, illiberal world free from the tradition-crushing rush of globalization, multiculturalism and women’s and gay rights” (Higgs, 2016). Russia has a long history of tension between the values and practices of traditional Russia versus Western-oriented,

¹ A body of Muslim scholars recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology.

modernistic values and practices. While Western values and practices have been associated with progress and advancement, they also have been perceived as a threat to the well-established order of the Russian State (further discussed in section 3.3). As discussed above, the conflicts between values have been exploited by the Russian government to help serve as a wedge between itself (as the defender of traditional, Russian values) and opposition forces, which are often portrayed as having Western, modernist (anti-Russian) values. This has translated to support for more militant (typically far-right) organizations that have traditionally opposed perceived modernist-oriented values, along with Western-oriented governmental institutions.

2.2.3. Islamic Religious Movements

Over the past 75 years there has been a large amount of discussion regarding the clash of more traditional versus modernist ideologies in countries such as Saudi Arabia. This clash has sparked some to push for the defense of “Islam against Western influence” (Arjomand, 1984, p. 197). Interesting, however, this push can often come from middle class intellectuals who would logically gain from modernization efforts. In fact, a surprisingly large number of the most militant fundamentalists are from more prominent, educated families (such as Osama bin Laden; Sadowski, 2006). Here, the opposition to a state sponsored ideology and policies is believed to have produced militant extremism.

According to Moaddel, state ideology is the main variable in explaining variations in the discourse and orientations of the Islamic movements in the Middle East. Moaddel contends that the rise of secular ideological state in Egypt, Iran, and Syria politicized the process of culture, providing a favorable context for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism (Moaddel, 2002). This is most exemplified with the Baathist movement. The Baathist movement began in Syria in the 1940s, but came into the forefront in the mid 1960s as a response to perceived Western colonialism and imperialism in the Arab world. It was also a response to the perceived political and economic success of authoritarian socialist regimes during this time. The Baathist (“renaissance”) movement emphasized a reemergence of Arab culture and values, rejected political pluralism to favor an authoritarian, quasi-socialist, pan-Arabism, modernist philosophy. This philosophy was later adopted by autocratic leaders such as Saddam Hussein, Hafez al-Assad, and Gamal Nasser. For example, to retain power, Nasser appealed to Egyptian pride in their society and their dislike of the West. In doing so, Nasser nationalized Western companies (which was believed to be exploiting Egyptians) and successfully confronted Israel in the 1957 Suez crisis, making him very popular. He was also a secularist, but because of his popularity he was mostly unopposed by the Islamist conservatives. This secular ideological movement would remain a powerful force for several decades until it ran its course, falling victim to corruption, perceived humiliation by the West, perceived deterioration of Middle Eastern society, and ultimately the rise of the Islamist movement.

Unlike Christianity, which tends to focus its teachings on socio-individual domains, Islam has a much broader focus that encompasses socio-individual domains, as well as governmental behaviors in the form of laws and other practices. Due to the broader teachings, it is widely believed within Islam that religious law should fully cover what is considered in the West to be religious and civil law. The general belief is that Islam can and should guide the important behaviors of society. Also, it is generally believed that the function of a government should be to promote appropriate moral behaviors. This notion is most prominent in the teachings of political Islam, which came out of an intellectual movement influenced by Islamic philosophers such as Muhammad Iqbal that were partly influenced by earlier Western philosophers such as Voltaire.

Political Islam is generally a movement that is characterized by moral conservatism and the attempt to include Islamic values within all aspect of life. It looks to Sharia law to instruct behaviors in all forms of government and society. This is to be implemented by democratic means, but by conquest or revolution if necessary. Within mainstream Islam, it is considered an extreme interpretation, conflicting with conventional Islam. Nonetheless, this militarism can readily affect local and global dynamics. The main belief underlying political Islam is that Muslims can only truly fulfill their religious obligations when public (mostly guided through Sharia) law sanctions and encourages pious behavior. Here the notion is that Allah (God) provides guidance for the most essential forms of behavior, via the Koran, that includes both religious and civil law. The Sharia laws of Allah are consequently perfect. Conversely, laws created by man (i.e., secular laws) are inherently imperfect. Thus, secular laws of the West are commonly thought of as promoting a corrupt and immoral society (Pew, 2013). Accordingly, those who strongly espouse traditional political Islam commonly see the hegemony of the West as a threat to Islamic society. They also may see other less confrontational interpretations of political Islam as ultimately a threat by their perceived appeasement to Western values. This can be perceived as potentially a greater threat to traditional Islamic society than the West itself. That is, the acceptance by Islamic groups to Western, secular values can be thought to cause internal decay that would be more virulent to Islamic society than direct confrontation by Western powers. Accordingly, it is common to see radical Islamic movements engage in fratricidal violence against other Muslims that are seen as less militant in their behavior (Sadowski 1998). For example, the Islamic State (or ISIS or ISIL) is commonly known to engage in the killings of other Muslims, often more so than Christians (Wood, 2015).

2.2.4 State Sponsored Religious Movements

As discussed above, most of the influential Middle Eastern states initially sought to adopt a more secular focus that was based on a mixture of socialism, Arab nationalism, and authoritarianism (e.g., Baathist movements). While the secular and socialistic emphasis diminished dramatically over the decades, Arab nationalism and authoritarianism continued. A converse to this movement was the full support and adoption of a brand Islam in the more rural areas of the Arab peninsula, which was called by many, Wahhabism².

This ultraconservative sect of Islam was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, an 18th-century founder of the Saudi school of Islam (Rentz, 2004). This movement seeks to return to the values and lifestyle of the very early years of Islam when the Prophet Muhammad was alive. It is also influenced by the very harsh, nomadic lifestyle of the region. During his time, Abd al-Wahhab received the protection of Muhammad bin Saud, a tribal leader in the Arabian Peninsula. The Saud family in turn, earned the endorsement of a powerful Islamic cleric. Wahhabism became highly influential when Saudi Arabia became a country. However, for the Saud royal family to remain in power it would need to continue to support this movement. Also because of Saudi Arabia's vast oil wealth, it had the opportunity to spread its form of Islam, and thus its hegemony, to other areas of the Middle East and elsewhere. What Saudi Arabia could not do is control the ideological direction of Wahhabism. The spread of Wahhabism has had the effect of overpowering local Islamic traditions across many countries, even branding them as anti-Islamic.

² Wahhabism, which is the most common term for this sect, can be viewed as derogatory by some adherents. They prefer the term "Salafism."

Both the reaction to an imposed secular regime by Baathist and other governments, the perceived failure of these governments, as well as the spread of Wahhabism, has led to a significant shift towards more traditionalist Islamic movements. According to Norwegian terrorism expert Thomas Hegghammer, “the greatest effect of Saudi-lead Wahhabism movement might be to slow the evolution of Islam, blocking its natural accommodation to a diverse and globalized world. If there was going to be an Islamic reformation in the 20th century, the Saudis probably prevented it by pumping out literalism” (Shane, 2016). This has had the effect of pushing Islamic practices in a markedly conservative direction. Examples of this push are exemplified by more traditional punishments (e.g., flogging, decapitation) and by the worldwide increase in the wearing of the burqa³ for women and more traditional clothing with long beards for men.

2.3 The Role of Culture

Another factor that is commonly credited for influencing the rise in violent social movements is the influence on individuals’ worldview from cultures that are believed to be more permissive to violence. Culture can be defined as “the force or group of forces that determines a predominant self-identity of a specific and sizable collective of people” (Huntington, 1996, p. 41-43). Thus, it is expressed by social elements such as history, religion, language, and customs, as well as the self-identification of a group of people to a common identification (Huntington, 1996). Culture defines how individuals understand and operate in their world. As such, it also provides socio-cognitive boundaries in how individuals see themselves and others. Since one is immersed in one’s own culture, it is difficult, if not impossible, to truly recognize the extent to which culture influences the behaviors of individuals. Importantly, not only does culture affect the decisions of individuals, but it also affects the process underlying how decisions are made (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005).

These factors can have the effect of creating general conformity pressures and societal strains on established cultures, which can create the potential for subcultures to form. It is these subcultures that can grow and turn antagonistic towards the more established, dominate culture (as discussed with fundamentalist movements). According to sociologist Blaine Mercer, “a society contains numerous subgroups, each with its own characteristic ways of thinking and acting. These cultures within a culture are called subcultures” (Mercer, 1958, p. 34). Subculture is defined here as a “cultural variants displayed by certain segments of the population” (Yinger, 1960, p. 625). If psychologically isolated, these subcultures can over time develop very distinct norms. For example, a subculture may have its own sense of history (e.g., grievances over some period of time), practices (e.g., emerging traditions), and norms (e.g., what is acceptable to the subculture).

Applying this notion to societies where Islam is the majority religion, we see a wide array of subcultural practices. For example, Sufism, which is a more mystical variant of Islam, is practiced in northern Africa and parts of Asia. Sufism emphasizes personal enlightenment by focusing on inner wellbeing. They believe that the path to Allah is found through meditation and self-purification. While Sufism is a certainly minority sect within Islam, it is the dominate culture within countries such as Morocco. Generally, Sufism has been seen as a moderating force to the rise in militant forms of Islam, such as practiced by terrorist organizations like ISIS. However, other sects of Islam, such as Wahhabism, are starting to take root in the rural and poor

³ A traditional loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet that is worn in public by many Muslim women.

rural areas. In this case, the Wahhabi sects are rising as a subculture within Morocco. Recently, militant Wahhabis have conducted several attacks and have desecrated a number of Sufis tombs and monuments. However, they currently pose a fairly limited influence on the overall society, even though their message continues to propagate to those who listen (Al-Alawi, 2015). Within rural areas, one of the greatest drivers affecting the behavior of individuals is the influence of poverty, crime, and unemployment. This seems to be more important than the influence of religious ideology and identity. In fact, according to Brenda Shaffer (2006), religious ideology is only weakly related to cultural influence affecting one's identity and ultimately one's behavior⁴. In the government regimes she examined, no correlation was found between common religious affinity and perceptions of threat, tendency to form alliances and strategic cooperation, or lines of conflict. However, this specification leaves out other external and internal pressures which can affect the status of a society. That is, if a regime permits subcultures to have significant influence on policy formation, then it could be affected by certain religious identities. Alternatively, if a central leader strictly controls the country or organization, it is less likely to be influenced by these factors. This simply occurs because the central leader can dictate policies without much regard to the various cultural or religious practices of the country or organization. However, when there is a lack of information or guidance regarding policy dilemmas or potential trade-offs for their actions, the country or organization might fall back on more traditional, cultural/religious factors (Shaffer, 2006). Cultural factors can also be exploited by a government to help justify and push an agenda that is of strategic interest to that country or leader. Two examples of this are discussed below, one pertaining to Russia and one pertaining to Saudi Arabia. In both examples, the countries have sought to use their cultural hegemony to align with and support extremist groups that advance their objectives.

2.3.1 State Sponsored Cultural Influences in Russia and Saudi Arabia

In Russia, the Putin government has promoted a traditional brand of culture that is aligned with the general cultural practices within Russia that have existed for centuries. This includes comfort with and support for a strong leader, a paternalistic government, a strong sense of nationalism, and a general suspicion of Western liberalism and its way of life. These cultural narratives, not surprisingly, greatly benefit leaders such as Putin in his efforts to concentrate power around him. In fact, Putin's greatest domestic popularity often occurs when he acts in an autocratic fashion to support these cultural narratives. A second benefit is that these narratives can appeal to others outside Russia that are drawn to similar beliefs and grievances. In effect, the Putin regime has ostensibly replaced the feature that, in the mind of Russian society, made it exceptional and powerful—the communist ideology—with Russia's older cultural narrative. This Russian cultural narrative can appeal to those who feel isolated from or betrayed by Western society. As the leader of this narrative, the Putin government has sought to use its influence to weaken pro-Western governments by propping up ultra conservative/nationalist political groups and to create alignments with autocratic governments that share similar views (such as Iran and Syria). This can include groups and countries that are formally highly anti-communist in their ideology. For example, France's National Front, led by Marine Le Pen, has received support and financial

⁴ As Salman Rushdie said about Islam (and religion in general), "most religious belief isn't very theological. Most Muslims are not profound Kronic analysts. For a vast number of "believing" Muslim men, "Islam" stands, in a jumbled, half-examined way, not only for the fear of God—the fear more than the love, one suspects—but also for a cluster of customs, opinions and prejudices" (Fraim, J. (2003). *Battle of symbols: Global dynamics of advertising, entertainment and media*. Daimon).

backing from the Russian government (The Economist, 2015). With respect to the Middle East and Asia, aspects of this narrative can be very attractive to social movements who reject Western culture and embrace autocratic leadership. Thus, Russia has the potential to influence social movements in ways that it could not do so in the past by taking on the mantle of being a guardian of traditional values (Higgins, 2016). Seeking to form alliances with other movements around this narrative is a way to move it closer to the Great Power status it seeks. The exploitation of cultural-religious traditions to support the Russian power structure is an example of multiple co-occurring factors, besides ideology, help produce social movements.

With regard to Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government has sought to expand its cultural influence in the Middle East (particularly areas with higher population of Sunni Muslims), Asia, and Africa by funding the construction of mosques, universities, and youth movements that promote Wahhabism. They also promote Wahhabist principles through worker programs within Saudi Arabia and through mass media. This includes children's textbooks, which were even adopted by ISIS until they could produce their own (NYT, 2016). This effort can at least partially be attributed to Saudi Arabia's desire to be a dominant power within the region (especially against Iran's Shia Islam), its perceived obligation to protect and uphold the traditions of the historic birthplace of Islam, and Saudi Arabia's desire to counter any negative perceptions within the region regarding its political, economic, and military alliances with Western countries. According to William McCants, a Brookings Institution scholar, in its extreme, "they [Saudi Arabia] promote a very toxic form of Islam that draws sharp lines between a small number of true believers and everyone else, Muslim and non-Muslim" (Shane, 2016). While there is debate regarding the true effect of promoting Wahhabist principles by Saudi Arabia, it is largely believed that it has exacerbated divisions and helped create a shift towards a more traditionalist form of Islam. This leveraging of cultural-religious traditions to support the Saudi power structure is another example where multiple factors help direct social movements.

2.3.2 Intercultural Difficulties Within Violent Social Movements

As discussed above, inter-cultural differences have the potential to create disruptions within a larger society. For example, Al-Qaeda and ISIS have sought to assimilate individuals from various nationalities around the world. This has reportedly created internal friction within and between organizations due to cultural biases favoring Arab nationalities (Byman & Williams, 2015). In addition, with differences in culture, different methods have been used to select, plan, and carry out an attack. This can serve to benefit Al-Qaeda by making them more difficult to predict, but it can also make the organization more difficult to control. In many ways, transnational terrorist organizations can be loosely run like a small nation (at least for a short period of time). The terrorist group ISIS is the best example of this attempt. Here, ISIS has an established goal (i.e., to establish itself as a caliphate, an Islamic state led by a group of religious authorities under a supreme leader, the caliph), a set of practices (i.e., an interpretation of Islam that promotes religious violence and regards those who do not agree with its interpretations as infidels), a military, court system, social services and public works, currency, and propaganda wings. It controls areas in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Nigeria (as well as affiliated groups in South Asia), but attempts to work 'above' any cultural factors associated with individuals from the various cultural regions. This is also true for al-Qaeda operating in regions such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia (in concert with the terrorist group al-Shabaab). They typically emphasize that people should rise above their specific clan, as well as any cultural differences, to support the transnational organization. Thus, in instances where they attempt to have an organized set of

behaviors, goals, and policies, they will seek to override cultural differences. As another example, both ISIS and al-Qaeda mainly consist of Sunni Muslims—ISIS from Iraq and Syria, and al-Qaeda from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other countries from the Middle East and South Asia. Thus, they represent a militant form of Sunni Islam. Hezbollah, on the other hand, is a Shia Islamist militant group that comprise mostly of individuals from Lebanon, supported by Iran. Their sectarian and geographical differences should produce differences in behaviors due to differences in their religious philosophy and culture. However, other than a deep distrust and distain for each other, their practices are generally similar—although, Hezbollah is less violent than either ISIS or al-Qaeda.

Conversely, ISIS and al-Qaeda should be closely aligned, since they are from a more similar grouping of cultures and share the same religious sect of Sunni Islam. However, from almost the beginning, ISIS and al-Qaeda have been in verbal and military conflict. For example, the al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al Nusra, and ISIS have been in fierce battles for several years. Al Qaeda disowned ISIS early in 2014 because ISIS's leader, al-Baghdadi, ignored al Qaeda's directive to stay out of Syria. Thus, an explanation for this conflict is less over ideological issues (although there are differences between the two) or cultural issues, but over power and territory. However, ideological and cultural issues can become a factor if they are great enough. For example, if the West were to become even more directly involved in this area (e.g., ground troops, etc.), there would be a strong push for these organizations to cooperate (at least as long as the West are directly involved). As a case in point, al-Qaeda's leader Al-Zawahiri stated, "unequivocally that if there is fighting between the crusaders, the Safavids [i.e., the Iranians], and the secularists, and any group from the Muslims and the mujahideen, including the group of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and those with him, then our only choice is to stand with the Muslim mujahideen, even if they are unjust to us...We call for cooperation with al-Baghdadi and his brothers to push back the attack of the enemies of Islam" (Lister, 2015).

2.4 The Role of Context

A third factor influencing decision making, and ultimately the behaviors of violent social movements, are contextual situations that help frame one's environment. Contexts are "mental constructs of participants; they are individually variable interpretations of the ongoing social situation. Thus, they may be biased, feature personal opinions, and for these reasons also embody the opinions of the participants as members of groups" (van Dijk, 1999, p. 7). A context can be perceived as "situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior" (Johns, 2006, p. 386). That is, the environment that an individual is situated in will help frame the sociocultural context of that individual. These context-effects can be both highly salient and/or very subtle, and are highly subjective, given the history of the individual. Thus, they can strongly influence an individual's perceived quality of life and sense of fairness and trust. Examples of contextual effects can be the rise in social strains caused by changes in the status quo, a perceived unequal distribution of wealth, and a lack of accountability by the government and marginalization of society, as well as many other factors. For example, in examining the events that led up to the French Revolution, many contextual factors come into play. During this time, higher standards of living had reduced the mortality rate among adults, causing the population to double. However, crop failure and unseasonably cold weather in the winter led the lack of availability of food for the average French citizen. Hungry French citizens decreased the costs of contesting the power of the status quo. At that time, the French

government had a huge debt because of France's financing of the American Revolution (and a war with Austria), which made it difficult to attend to its citizens. In addition, the writings of French and English philosophers influenced new ideas of equality and rights. This eventually led to revolts in various parts of France, which eventually contributed to the French Revolution (Burke, 2015). Thus, while ideology can help provide a means to justify and support socio-political upheavals, it is typically not the main driver in social movements. Often, main drivers include substantial economic and social disruptions, loss in faith in governmental institutions, and the burgeoning of a strong counter-establishing movement.

2.4.1 Contextual Factors within Russia and Saudi Arabia

As with France during the time of its revolution, many contextual factors contributed to Russia's revolution in 1917, including how it behaves today. In considering the 1917 Russian revolution, the heavy toll in lives and capital associated with World War I, rapid industrialization within Russia at a time with little to no worker rights, very poor distribution of wealth, and a political system (monarchy) ruled by Nicholas II—who was a very traditional as a ruler and maintained a strict authoritarian system. These factors helped create the conditions that produced violent social movements (such as anarchists, monarchists, and Bolsheviks, among others) and enabled the October coup to succeed, permitting Vladimir Lenin to gain control over Russia. A violent civil war continued between forces associated with these movements until the early 1920s. After this period, the Soviet Union continued to support communist movements using many of the same tactics they used within their country.

Regarding populations within Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East in general, many of the same contextual factors that are present today were seen during the violent social movements of the turn of the 18th and 20th centuries. Namely, as with France and Russia, conflict, poor distribution of wealth, authoritarian political systems, and loss of faith in governmental institutions helped sow the seeds for socio-political instability. It is argued here that these conditions helped foster the violent social movements that are present today.

The reversion to more traditional norms and traditions as a retrenchment from external contextual pressures is a third example where multiple contextual factors, along with ideology and culture, help direct social movements. As stated by Hroub (2012), “in understanding and explaining Islamist movements, are we better served by relying on an understanding of their context or an analysis of their ideology? The easy answer, of course is ‘both,’ because these two undertakings should not be mutually exclusive” (p. 18). According to Hroub, there are three possible explanations for the rise in more militant Islam. First is a reaction to previous colonial and imperial domination and control by Western powers. In fact, according to Hroub, “conflict with the West stems for Western foreign policies, and not from any contradiction between Western and Muslim value-systems” contributes to violent social movements (2012). A second explanation is that militant Islam is a reaction to a number of social shocks that happened within the past hundred years, such as the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1927 and the collapse of the pan-Islamic caliphate system that unified Muslims; the pressures of modernity and Westernization; and the rise of nation states in the Middle East. A third explanation takes into account social movement theory where Islamic movements are a reaction to the deep social strains within Middle Eastern society. As Hroub states, “The failure of postcolonial states in most of the Arab and Muslim world, the unjust and worsening distribution of wealth, the remoteness of ruling elites and concomitant marginalization of the masses, the failure to forge

notions of citizenship and higher levels of loyalty than those to ethnicity and sect—all of these take place within failing economic structures and authoritarian political regimes” (2012).

2.4.2 Rentier Economies

As stated above, economic conditions can affect the behavior of societies and their relationship with their government. For example, the rise in fundamentalism in some societies has been associated with rentier economies. A rentier economy substantially bases a country’s reliance on some form of external payment, such as the sale of oil and gas. According to Brynen (1992) and others (e.g., Luciani, 1988), rentier economies are dependent on international markets as opposed to domestic needs. Importantly, these economies often tend to concentrate power and wealth in the hands of those who have control over the external payments. Also, in some rentier economies where there is a great concentration of wealth within the government, basic services are often free, along with low or no income tax. The unintended consequences associated with reduced or no income tax is that the implicit contract between the government and the citizens in which the government is accountable to the citizens is severely reduced. That is, without the literal buy-in from its citizens, the government will be less accountable to those citizens and they will have less of a stake in government institutions. In these situations, the implied arrangement might be that the government will provide free services, but will expect its citizens to stay away from government policies and activities. This can produce the tendency to disenfranchise the citizens from the government and can promote corruption within the government. Both Russia and Saudi Arabia both have rentier economies in that a large majority of the countries’ income comes from the sale of oil and gas. In addition, both countries have an informal pact with their citizens that the government will help provide some form of economic wellbeing for its citizens and they will not seriously challenge the status quo of governmental institutions. However, with the general downturn in oil and gas prices, large sectors of the economy are now performing poorly. For Russia, the average Russian has seen a downturn in personal spending power. For example, in 2015 the number of Russians who believed their purchasing power improved has fallen almost twofold from 22% to 12% (Dolce Vita, 2015). In Saudi Arabia, most of the actual work is derived from foreigners as guest workers. Thus, guest workers can be deeply affected by any downturn in the economy. This can create high levels of antagonism towards the larger society, particularly if a worker has spent most of his or her life in that country. In response to the downturn in the economy, Russia and Saudi Arabia has stepped up their focus on nationalistic pursuits. In other words, a rentier economy presents overwhelming opportunities for leaders to consolidate power and wealth at the expense of increased corruption and disenfranchisement. This concoction can create an internally generated pressure on a society that can help spawn social movements and violent responses.

2.4.3 Corruption Within Societies

One of the most important factors in the rejection of governmental institutions, and often society in general, is the perceived corruption within a country. For example, Russia is considered to be one of the most corrupt countries within Europe. In the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index, Russia is ranked 117 out of 168 (1 being perceived as least corrupt by its population). Russia is ranked with Tanzania on the corruption scale (Transparency International, 2015). Corruption within Russia impacts all aspects of society, including law enforcement and healthcare. Importantly, Russia’s ranking in corruption has steadily worsened under Putin. For example, according to the Interior Ministry’s Department for Combating Economic Crimes, the average bribe amounted to 9,000 Rubles in 2008; 23,000 Rubles in 2009; 61,000 rubles in 2010; and

236,000 rubles in 2011 (Kalinina, 2013). This has occasionally led to widespread protests with Russia, with many being detained by the government (Pleitgen & Said-Moorhouse, 2017)

The Middle East also has a particularly poor record when it comes to corruption. In fact, according to the Corruption Perceptions Index (2015), five of the ten countries that are perceived to have the highest rates of corruption are from the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, nearly one in three public service users in the Middle East and North Africa had to pay a bribe to access basic services in the last year (Transparency International, 2015). Regarding Saudi Arabia, corruption is considered a widespread problem (but far less widespread than other Middle Eastern and North African countries), such as abuse of power, nepotism, and the use of well-connected middlemen that can use their influence to get things done. Furthermore, the royal family has a strong influence on major sectors of the economy and, thus, its wealth. The economy is generally based on a patronage system that merges business and politics. In the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index, Saudi Arabia is ranked 48 out of 168 countries (Transparency International, 2015). It should not be surprising, then, that countries where the population is generally detached from their government and have high rates of corruption are typically associated with societal dissatisfaction (Wiktorowicz, 2004).

3. THE USE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORY TO PROVIDE BEHAVIORAL INSIGHT INTO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Underlying ideology, culture, and context, basic psychological and socio-cognitive factors can play a large role in: 1) promoting the desire to engage in a particular social movement, 2) affecting its social direction, and 3) affecting its strength of conviction within that movement. Below is a description of some of the major psychological and socio-cognitive factors underlying social movements. These factors can also influence one's response to ideology, culture, and context.

3.1 The Sense of Loss and Grievance

In its extremes, high amounts of social dissatisfaction can promote the desire for violent change. The feeling of social dissatisfaction typically begins with a perceived sense of loss or some form of grievance. The sense of loss can include recent events or events that might have occurred generations ago. These events can, and often are, distorted through time to favor some form of narrative. Examples include loss of territory, sovereignty/hegemony (e.g., perceived Russian, Jewish, and Palestinian loss of territory), and lives (e.g., massacres against Jewish or Palestinian peoples). Grievances may stem from these losses to be considered a root cause for collective political action (Klandermans, 2004). A grievance is "an individual's belief that he or she (or a group or organization) is entitled to a resource which someone else may grant or deny" (Mille & Sarat, 1980, p. 52). A dispute exists when the purported perpetrator of the grievance rejects this claim. Grievances are typically associated with perceptions of inequality, relative deprivation, injustice, or some form of moral indignation (Klandermans 1997). As the number of people who share the same grievance grows, a sense of social solidarity can grow as well, multiplying the effects of the grievance (Useem, 1980). Thus, the strength of the perceived grievance can be leveraged for a leader and/or group to cause blame, as well as frame the situation to incite a social movement, which can serve as a catalyst for a social uprising.

With regard to violent social movements, the sense of loss and grievance, real or imagined, has been a major narrative and strong driver in the behaviors of various groups. For example, a very common and popular Russian Bolshevik slogan was "Peace, Bread, and Land," which articulated the grievances of the Russian armed forces, along with the working class and peasantry. In the Middle East, the Palestinian cause has been an extremely powerful narrative against the West and Israel in particular. This narrative of loss and grievance can serve to unite people that typically could be antagonistic each other. It can also give a movement a sense of purpose and direction. This is particularly so if there is a discrepancy between what is expected from society and the perception of what is actually being achieved. This can result in resentment, particularly if it is perceived that other groups or societies are benefitting from the exploitation of the aggrieved group.

3.2 The Violation of Expectations

When we think of the causes of social uprisings, a common assertion is that the people associated with the uprising are those who have little to lose and are on the margins of society. However, in examining social movements, and leaders associated with them, typically finds that the frustration that is felt begins with people who can address both their basic physiological

needs and have time (perhaps unemployed) to generate the type of frustration that leads to actionable behaviors. Hence, a person who is weakened by extreme poverty is less likely to think about higher ideological needs (Maslow, 1987). For example, studies have found that terrorists tend to be from higher educated and wealthier families than the average population (Krueger & Laitin, 2008). Thus, their behavior can stem from less of a desire to have basic physiological needs met than a desire to redress perceived grievances within their sphere of concern. Indeed, studies have shown that frustration tends to come less from an absolute standard of deprivation than from the perception of deprivation in comparison to an ideal (Gurr, 2015). Interestingly, the discordance between a perceived ideal and reality can come at a time when, in comparison to the past, there is a general rise in the socio-economic and/or political condition of that group, but the expectation of the group rises faster than the perceived rise in change. The idea that collective discontent can develop if there is a significant gap between expected and achieved welfare of the group is outlined in the theory of relative deprivation (Singer 1992).

Relative deprivation theory refers to the idea that the perception of deprivation and discontent occurs as a group negatively compares their perceived situation to a desired point of reference, such as with other groups, societies, etc. That is, when a group believes its expectations are legitimate and are being blocked within their society, or by other societies, relative deprivation will occur. This is particularly true for discontent arising from the status of an entire group as compared to a similar, referent group. To achieve greater social satisfaction members of that group will attempt to reduce this deprivation, often by using actions that highlight their deprivation and discontent. This type of behavior is generally considered to be a chief factor in explaining the desire for and the actions associated within social movements (Morrison, 1971). This deprivation also tends to strengthen a group's collective identity, making them more cohesive (Singer 1992).

For instance, in 1917 Russia, the main agitators against the Czarist government were not the general population of peasants but a very small group of well-traveled, educated individuals who were moved by the large-scale poverty of the populace in war-torn Russia. They believed Russia's involvement in the war and the unequal distribution of wealth was directly caused by the Czarist government's actions. Believing they represent (and act for) the populace, their discontent came from their vicarious deprivation compared to the Czarist elite class. The idea of a smaller cadre of individuals representing and acting for a much larger populace with regard to their deprivation is a common theme across many instances. History indicates that once this cadre obtains power, it is often unable to meet societal expectations. Subsequent social unrest can threaten the movement where the cadre enters a vicious cycle by consolidating power to counter public discontent, ultimately taking the role of the previous oppressor.⁵

Another example of this type of relative deprivation is found in the Middle East. Here, relative deprivation has been perceived between those representing the populace and the government (For example, Muslim Brotherhood affiliated political parties have been actively working against governments in a number of Middle Eastern countries), between religious sects (For example, Shia vs. Sunni religious factions working against each other), and between different socio-religious societies (For example, Israelis vs. Palestinians or more broadly, the Middle East vs. the

⁵ Organizations eventually only act to preserve the organization and the self-interests of the leadership. Mancur Olsen (Olsen, 2009). *The logic of collective action* (Vol. 124). Harvard University Press.)

West). In each case, one group compares its standing against the other. This is particularly true for groups that have long-standing conflicts with each other.

As with all humans, negative comparisons are more psychologically salient than positive (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Thus, in comparison to another group, any deprivation that the group perceives will be more profound than any positive comparison. This is particularly true if the comparison group is perceived to be a threat, such as an historical enemy. In the examples mentioned above, each group could consider the other group as a threat.

3.3 The Concept of Threat

The perception of threat by some external group can have strong and lasting effect on both the attitudes, and ultimately behaviors of an internal group. According to social identity theory, group members are motivated to develop and maintain biased intragroup comparisons in order to promote a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This may be particularly true if there is a perception of threat between groups.

Research suggests there are two major types of threats that can influence attitudes towards an external group. The first is the concept of realistic threat. Realistic threat refers to a perceived threat by an external group that has the potential to significantly affect one's own power, resources, and general welfare. This can take the form of military, economic, and/or other physical or material threats to the group. For example, the rise in prosperity among some states in the Middle East, such as Iran, will influence its relative power within the region, potentially being perceived as a greater realistic threat among states that consider Iran to be an adversary. This could be somewhat offset by an increase in military spending by a potential adversary state, such as Saudi Arabia. Of course, this has the potential for a tit-for-tat response, thereby increasing the perceived threat by both states.

The second type of threat, called symbolic threat, concerns the threat to a group's honor, religion, values, belief system, ideology, philosophy, morality, or worldview by another group. Here, out-groups that are perceived as having a different worldview and values can be seen as threatening the cultural identity of the in-group. This threat is particularly strong if the out-group is dominant which can lead to a heightened fear that other cultures will override the in-group's way of life. Studies that have measured both realistic and symbolic threats have shown that both types of threats can account for different portions of the variance in attitudes toward out-groups (McLaren, 2001).

Scholars studying the concept of symbolic threat have suggested that racism is often a result of conflicting values and beliefs—even more so than from material threats (Kinder & Sears, 1981). For example, studies have shown that perceived threats to an in-group's values by foreigners are related to increases in negative attitudes toward immigrants (Esses, Hodson, & Dovidio, 2003). Moreover, Riek, Mania, and Gaertner (2006) found that in-group identification had a significant impact on realistic and symbolic threat, but the impact was stronger for symbolic threat than realistic threat. Perceptions of conflict with an out-group have shown to be positively related to negative evaluations and aggressive attitudes toward the out-group. For example, the relationship between intergroup anxiety and negative out-group attitudes has been observed across a variety of natural settings, as well as in the laboratory (Brown et al., 2001). Moreover, the stronger the identification with the in-group, the stronger the reactions to group esteem threats (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). When the in-group is of low status, high identifiers increase

their contributions to the group significantly more than low identifiers, most likely in an effort to increase the in-group's status (Ouwerkerk, de Gilder, & de Vries, 2000). More specifically, this behavior might be seen in diaspora communities, such as in Europe where they are often at the margins compared to the rest of society.

Intergroup threat theory proposes that both realistic and symbolic threats can account for unique portions of the variance in attitudes toward out-groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2009). Intergroup threat theory is not as concerned with the actual threat posed by out-groups (e.g., rising rates of unemployment or immigration) as it is the degree to which threats to the in-group are perceived to exist. The perception of external threat can produce very reactive behaviors that can outweigh any ideological similarities or differences. For example, China and Vietnam and Russia and China have been in conflicts when all three were communist countries. Moreover, in the 1960s both the U.S. and China saw the USSR as a realistic threat and even shared information on Russian movements, even though the U.S. and China had very different ideologies. As discussed throughout this paper, ideology tends to be superseded by other drivers in instigating substantial behaviors.

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level in any general model of intergroup threat, the specific characteristics of a given situation may influence this relationship.

It is also unclear if intergroup anxiety acts as a threat in the same location in the casual sequence as realistic and symbolic threat or whether intergroup anxiety is the result of other intergroup threats. Perhaps realistic, symbolic, and group esteem threats increase the likelihood that an individual will experience intergroup emotions, such as anxiety, which then increases negative outgroup attitudes and behaviors. Because anxiety has been described as a more individual-level phenomenon compared the group-level threats such as realistic

(e.g., threat to a specific individual's job) or the ingroup as a whole (e.g., a loss of ingroup power) may influence the strength with which these threats impact outgroup attitudes and behavior. However, these relationships would probably be moderated by the strength of the individuals' ingroup identification. Bizman and Yinon (2001) have found that high identifiers react more strongly to group-level realistic threats than low identifiers, whereas low-identifiers' attitudes are more influenced by intergroup anxiety, which can be seen as an individual-level threat. This difference between individual-level and group-level threats could also be explored in future integrated models of intergroup threat.

Figure 1: Model outlining intergroup threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2009)

Considering the current geopolitical environment, and using Russian as an example, a majority of Russians currently perceive the West, particularly the U.S., is a military threat to its borders that affects its ability to project power within the region. Also, with the Western-imposed sanctions and the lowering of oil and gas prices, most Russians believe that the West is attempting to economically strangle Russia to force them to capitulate to the West (Lipman, 2015). The Russian leadership perpetuates this perceived realistic threat with the narrative that Russia has been encircled via NATO expansion in order to make it subservient to the West⁶, stoking the long memory of invasions by Mongols, French, Germans, and others. The belief that

⁶ According to President Putin, "When the infrastructure of a military bloc is moving toward our borders, it causes us some concerns and questions. We need to take some steps in response... Our decision on Crimea was partly due to ... considerations that if we do nothing, then at some point, guided by the same principles, NATO will drag Ukraine in and they will say: 'It doesn't have anything to do with you.'" (Reuters, April, 17, 2014).

the West (i.e., NATO) is constantly seeking to take former Soviet territory like Ukraine, and further break up what is left of the Soviet empire, is part of that narrative (Country Report: Russia, 2012).

Russians are extremely proud of their culture, believing their culture to be a driving force in the civilized world. However, today they believe that the West is using its cultural influence via the media, the Internet and the like to chip away and vilify long-standing Russian cultural norms and ways of practice. Also, the use of Western humanitarian NGOs⁷ are generally seen as attempts by the West to both weaken Russian culture and its standing in the world (Country Report: Russia, 2012)—which serve as perceived symbolic threats to Russia. It also should be emphasized that the breakup of the Soviet Union was thought of, and is still thought of, in tragic terms by a large number of Russians.⁸ The general loss in global standing and hegemonic might—having “lost” the Cold War—accompanied with an economic downturn in recent years will reduce the general esteem and confidence of Russian citizens. Together, these three types of perceived threats are believed to increase the general anxiety of the Russian population, affecting their attitudes and behaviors towards the West (Lipman, 2015).

With regard to Saudi Arabia, the West has been perceived by the Wahhabists, as well as other Islamic sects, as posing a symbolic threat against the Islamic culture. According to Salman Rushdie, there is a “loathing of modern society in general, riddled as it is with music, godlessness, and sex; and a more particularized loathing (and fear) of the prospect that their own immediate surroundings could be taken over—“Westoxicated”—by the liberal Western-style way of life” (2001, p. A21). As stated by Bernard Lewis, “when Ayatollah Khomeini denounced the US as the “Great Satan,” he referred to the well-known last verses of the Koran, which describe Satan as the “the insidious tempter who whispers in the hearts of men.” Thus “Satan is not a conqueror, imperialist, capitalist or exploiter. He is a seducer. He comes with Barbie dolls and cocktails and provocative TV programs and movies and, worst of all, emancipated women” (Lewis, 2005). It is this sense of threat that can cause the complete rejection of, and struggle against, Western culture and lifestyle. If the perceived threat is great enough, it could lead to movements against Western symbols—such as individuals and property—that could turn violent.

With respect to diaspora communities in Europe and the U.S., both these communities and the dominant society at large often consider each other a threat. Because of spillover of violence in Europe, terrorist acts, and some behaviors associated with Islamic traditions, diaspora communities have been stereotyped by many as hostile towards the West. The perception of this stereotype, along with the rejection of Western culture society by some, has led to a general distrust of Western society. This, in turn, has led to a self-reinforcing two-way threat dynamic. For example, after September 11, 2001, these communities became the targets of increased hostility across Europe (Allen & Nielsen, 2002) and the U.S. In fact, after the September 11th terrorist attack the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported a 1,700 percent increase in hate crimes against Muslim Americans between 2000 to 2001 (Anderson, 2002). While the Muslim faith pertains to a religion, not a race, racism can be seen as a factor in that they are often perceived as a monolithic ethnic group that think and act alike (Nyang, 1999). This is especially

⁷ Non-Governmental Organizations

⁸ In his Putin’s speech to the Russian parliament, Putin stated, “Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century. As for the Russian nation, it became a genuine drama. Tens of millions of our co-citizens and co-patriots found themselves outside Russian territory. Moreover, the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself” (Kremlin Archives).

true for those who bear some physical resemblance to stereotyped members of extremist organizations (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009). Generally, Muslims have been seen as a realistic and symbolic threat against the larger, more culturally dominant U.S and European society. Conversely, Muslims see many of the behaviors from the majority, non-Muslim society as a realistic and symbolic threat to themselves. These conflicting perceptions can naturally lead to animosity between the two cultures, which further exacerbate differences in their respective worldview.

3.4 One's Mental Construction of the World

To make sense of one's world, individuals create mental models regarding such things as how societies should and do behave, how their world is ordered, the nature and role of justice, as well as the nature and role of men and women. These mental models, often called schemas, provide continuity and predictableness to the world (Fiske & Linville, 1980). A schema is a type of heuristic that helps to cognitively construct and organize one's perception of the world. A schema is developed over time and can be very resistant to change. That is, schema-inconsistent information tends to be forgotten easily or simply ignored, whereas schema-consistent information is typically remembered more easily and incorporated into the schema via assimilation. This has the effect of creating mental the boundaries surrounding the "status quo." As an example, gender schemas play a powerful role in the attention and behavior of individuals. Individuals with a high masculine gender schemas tend to attend to more masculine behaviors that support their schema (Markus, Smith, & Mareland, 1985). They also tend to react negatively to violations to their gender schema. In conservative societies, such as in Russia and Saudi Arabia, this violation might be the perceived blending of traditional male versus female roles. The degree to which one reacts negatively to a schema violation is typically a function of one's culture, which often affects how "schematic" (i.e., the degree to which an individual rigidity follows their schema) a person might be across a number of contexts. Thus, behaviors are affected by schemas, which are, in turn, affected by one's culture and context.

With regard to ideology, particularly religious ideology, schemas play a large and important role. According to McIntosh (1995), "religion is more than a cognitive organization of beliefs. Religion is broader in that it exists outside the person in the form of text, symbols, and traditions, and it is narrower in that it appears in the form of individuals' rites, habits, and other behaviors" (p. 1).

Considering beliefs, one's schema about God might include such things as the existence of God, purpose and nature of God, and the degree of guidance by God, etc. Associated with these beliefs are the written texts that describe the nature of God and the behavioral directions established by God. Accordingly, one can believe that the words in a sacred text are literally directed by God or that the text is more broadly inspired via figurative representations pertaining to specific directed behaviors (McIntosh, 1995). Broadly speaking, schemas help in the construction and organization of beliefs. Beliefs are relatively stable cognitive structures that represent stimuli for individuals beyond what can be directly perceived or observed. Individuals' beliefs are formed and influenced by the external environment and personal experiences. Beliefs have been defined as basic premises or thoughts considered to be factual that guide behavior by providing a central, organizational framework. Historically, beliefs were regarded as the freely chosen result of rational deliberation. Later this definition was updated to incorporate the nature of the

relationship between beliefs, cognitive processes, and their impact on behavior. The strength of the belief may in turn influence the values and/or attitudes towards the stimuli involved.

Beliefs are activated by stimuli in the environment that includes one's experiences. However, individuals do not absorb and develop beliefs towards all stimuli; there is a selection process that individuals use to cognitively filter through incoming data to develop specific beliefs. Anchoring is one process that is used to formulate beliefs. Tversky and Kahneman (1974) stated that anchoring as a method in which "people make estimates by starting from an initial value that is adjusted to yield the final answer. The initial value, or starting point, may be suggested by the formulation of the problem, or it may be the result of a partial computation. In either case, adjustments are typically insufficient. That is, different starting points yield different estimates, which are biased toward the initial values. We call this phenomenon anchoring" (p. 216). Pepitone (1994) stated that beliefs have four primary functions: emotional, cognitive, moral, and social (p. 148). As presented by Pepitone regarding emotional function, beliefs serve to directly reduce emotional pain or stress associated with feelings of fear, anger, hope, awe, uncertainty, and so on. The cognitive function is for beliefs to provide a structure that gives a sense of control over life events. Beliefs function for moral purposes to create a sense of moral order and certainty where good comes from good and bad serves bad. Beliefs serve to enhance group solidarity by facilitating common group beliefs that construe social identity and confidence.

Across many cultures, the belief in the nature of God has a very large influence on behaviors. For example, martyrdom is the most extreme form of religious behavior and self-sacrifice. Martyrdom can also occur as group suicide. It is often the result of total devotion to a charismatic leader, one's belief in God's will, and the intensity of one's religious belief, particularly in an afterlife (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 2014). Martyrdom can also be expressed as a consequence or proactive choice due to one's religious beliefs. That is, people can choose to kill others and/or themselves in order to fulfill a religious requirement. This requires the belief that one must behave self-sacrificially to the point of death and perhaps kill others to be in the center of God's will. On the other hand, behavior can be influenced not because of one's religious beliefs but one's beliefs about the religious group they are a part of. That is, individuals in a group may be devoted to a group's requirements simply because they want to be a part of that group. Their belief is in the status and profits of the group. For instance, a recent CNN article entitled, "What is ISIS' appeal for young people" (Feb 2, 2015), discussed how both young men and young women are being drawn by ISIS's promise to provide brides to fighters. Men who are lonely obtain a bride, and women who are lonely obtain a husband. The belief in martyrdom and God's will might be less irrelevant; instead the provisions of being an ISIS member alone incur devotion and commitment to terrorist behaviors. In that case, the actions of other members can collectively serve to incite and actually increase the severity of individual behaviors for each group member. That is, in addition to the mental construction of one's social-religious attitudes toward oneself and others, beliefs can be strengthened by the mere interactions with others.

3.5 The Polarization of Groups

The concept of strengthening one's attitude from the interactions of others is called group-induced attitude polarization (Myers & Bishop, 1970). Group polarization is said to occur when an initial tendency of group members' attitudes toward a given direction is enhanced following group interactions (Isenberg, 1986). This can result in more and more extreme positions in the same attitude direction over time. For example, a slight tendency towards behaviors that involve

taking greater risks is more likely to produce a more extreme group position towards even higher risk after group interactions. Conversely a slight tendency towards caution is more likely to produce a more extreme cautious position (Myers & Bishop, 1970). To illustrate in a real-world example, Myers and Bishop (1970) found that groups with prejudice-leaning individuals became more prejudiced as a group over time, while groups with less-prejudice leaning individuals became less prejudice over time (Myers & Lamm, 1976). This polarization effect can occur for decision makers as well. In examining the decisions of Federal district court judges deliberating either alone or in groups of three found out that when judges deliberated alone, they took an extreme course of action only 30% of the time. However, when deliberating in a group of three, the judges took an extreme course of action 65% of the time (Main & Walker, 1973).

A typically cited reason for this phenomenon involves the idea of information exchange and social comparison. Specifically, when individual group members exchange concurring information, this information can serve to both strengthen and add to each member's beliefs about a specific topic. Also, through dialogue with other members, each member can discern the general group orientation towards the topic and can support the group, and bolster one's position within the group, by taking on positions that further push the position of the group in the same direction (Myers & Lamm, 1976). In fact, Myers and Lamm (1976) found that the degree to which moderate fundamentalist ideas can morph to more extremist fundamentalist ideas is at least partly due to the group polarization effect. Cultural difference can also provide a basis for group polarization and can lead to the development and expansion of ethnic and religious boundaries between groups (Kunovich & Hodson, 1999).

Examining the 1917 October Russian revolution as an example, many ideological drivers are commonly discussed, such as class differences, concentration of power, and economic shortages. These factors were prominently promoted by the Bolsheviks within Russia. The rise and the radicalization of the Bolshevik movement against less radicalized beliefs is arguably a function of the context of that time, but also could be a function of the polarization within the movement. That is, contextual variables and the competition for leadership within this movement could have further contributed to the radicalization of this movement.

Furthermore, a number of groups within the Middle East today have the characteristics of group polarization. For example, the radicalization of Islamic militant groups from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and elsewhere could certainly be influenced by group polarization effects. For instance, the ratcheting of violence coming from ISIS and al-Qaeda could, in part, be a competition between the two terrorist organizations for the dominant position and chief driver behind this violent social movement. This polarization effect can then create a shared sense of grievance for the existence of real or perceived threat by a common enemy that needs to be countered. How the West responds to these hostilities can either provide justification to those who are receptive to this perception or reduce it.

3.6 Conclusions on the Use of Psychosocial Theory to Help Provide Insight

Section three discussed various psychosocial phenomena that acting within certain contexts can serve as a catalyst to help promote more violent behaviors within social movements. Specifically, the sense of loss and grievance, the violation of expectations, the perception of threat (realistic and/or symbolic), one's mental construction of the world, and the effect of group polarization can all contribute the exacerbation of potentially violent movements. Indeed, the

more of these phenomena that are in play, the greater potential for more extreme movements. The interactions of these psychosocial phenomena, and the contexts in which they embody produce a complex social environment that is difficult to untangle without the use of analytical tools, such as computational models. Accordingly, section six attempts to provide an initial model to help address some of these phenomena in relation to various contexts.

4. PROVISIONAL MODEL

To better understand the dynamics underlying the factors discussed above, an initial model was developed. Models attempt to operationalize qualitative descriptions of the key processes hypothesized controlling system behavior. This goal is worth pursuing because it makes claims about specific processes that are potentially testable. This can lead to quantitative comparisons of possible system responses under alternative hypotheses and policies. Our goal is to understand the formation of violent social movements and to evaluate alternative approaches for changing their viability or behavior. Requirements for the model derive from this goal:

It must have the potential to produce movements within a large space of possible characteristics, in order to claim to explain the factors underlying formation of violent ideologically extreme groups. Each of the following classes of movements should be possible, for example:

- Ideologically committed violent extremists
- Ideologically committed non-violent fundamentalists (e.g. quietist Salafis)
- Non-ideological violent groups (e.g. drug cartels)
- Non-ideological non-violent groups (e.g. bowling leagues)

The trajectories of social movements over time is of special interest. Dynamical variables characterizing them should therefore include:

- Size and composition
- Disposition towards diverse external groups (states, ideological competitors)
- Availability of required resources (money, territory, popular support or forbearance)

It therefore must simulate the interdependent mechanisms and phenomena that affect the movement and produce the trajectories over time and place.

Members are an essential resource for any movement. Factors controlling the availability of this particular resource should be represented in some detail in the model because we are interested in representing the hypothesized role of ideology, along with other influences, in shaping members decisions to join or leave the group.

There are two basic approaches for modeling movements. They may be primitive entities in the model, defined by a set of parameters and state variables whose trajectories describe their dynamics, including changes in structure; or they may emerge from the behavior of modeled individuals, who are endowed with the capacity to structure their individual interactions in ways that have the potential to stabilize into persistent formal structures. The first approach takes movements of some kind as given, and focuses on the change in their character over time. The second accounts for their formation, and has the potential to produce movements with novel forms and purposes. The second approach is potentially more powerful for theory testing and insight, but is arguably not mature enough to produce a system that is relevantly similar to the specific situations we want to understand. We therefore consider movements, along with individuals, to be primitive entities.

The model must represent an individual's beliefs. The requirement is to ground notions of similarity of beliefs between individuals, conformity of beliefs to some ideological constraint, and becoming "more" or "less" radical. There are many possible approaches, however there is no evident need to track specific kinds of content, or to impose consistency constraints among beliefs, for our immediate purposes. A simple representation defines the space of possible beliefs by a set of elemental belief dimensions. An individual's belief state is simply a vector in this space of possible beliefs. The number of dimensions and composition of any elemental belief are arbitrary. For concreteness, it might be useful to think of each as the response that would be elicited by some survey question (e.g., "Governments derive their authority from God: How much do you agree or disagree on a scale from 5 to -5").

The beliefs of individual i are denoted $\vec{b}_i = \{b_{1,i}, b_{2,i}, \dots, b_{N,i}\}$ where $b_{j,i}$ is the belief in element j and N is the number of relevant elemental beliefs. Differences in beliefs between two individuals i and j can be measured by the vector $\vec{b}_i - \vec{b}_j$, however simple differences across all belief elements are unlikely to matter. Instead, when individuals are interacting in a specific context k some belief differences may matter a great deal, while others are irrelevant. This consideration can be formalized by defining some vector norm over the space of beliefs that is relevant for the context, so that the disagreement between individuals i and j in context k is denoted:

$$d_{ij}^k \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \|\vec{b}_i - \vec{b}_j\|_k$$

This method for describing individual's beliefs can be applied to make the concept of ideology precise. While the beliefs endorsed by a particular ideological system may be interconnected by logical relationships that we don't include, the effect of any underlying reasoning is to endorse some set of beliefs, discourage others, be indifferent to yet others, and to place special emphasis in some deviations from the ideal. An ideology m can therefore be modeled using a vector of reference beliefs \vec{r}_m and an associated norm $\|\cdot\|_m$. An ideology may establish a norm for actions as well as beliefs. We capture this aspect of ideologies by appending a vector of actions to an individual's beliefs and to the reference vector established by the ideology.

Formalizing ideology in this way also provides a precise definition for qualitative terms used to describe ideologies and their relationships with individuals and other ideologies. An ideology may be more or less tolerant based on the size of the belief space that falls below some threshold degree of disagreement, for example. For another, the (asymmetric) compatibility relationship between two ideologies can be evaluated by the degree of disagreement that each has for the other's reference beliefs. To the extent that the elemental beliefs used to define the belief space have a natural scale (e.g. are ordered from strong disagreement to strong agreement) there is a precise sense in which an ideology may become more or less extreme.

The proposed construct for modeling ideology – a reference vector of beliefs and actions along with a norm for scoring deviations from the reference vector – includes religious systems but is more general. Ideologies may be associated with individuals but are also commonly ascribed to groups. A group's ideology interacts with the ideology of its members. Ideas from social identity theory are used subsequently to propose specific models for this interaction.

Status, and perceived status, is hypothesized to be a contributing factor in creating resentment and possibly motivating violence. As with beliefs and ideologies, formalizing status is helpful for operationalizing theories of group behavior. The term "status" is applied both to individuals and

to group – organizational, ethnic, or demographic. Status is not a simple property: for example, an individual might have low status in their family but high status in their profession. It is evidently a relational property between some component and an embedding system. We formalize these ideas by allowing model entities that represent many individuals – specifically groups and states – to define one or more organizational hierarchies. Each hierarchy is composed of a set of distinct roles and relationships among roles. These relationships can induce a partial ordering on the roles, and this ordering defines the status of individuals placed in that role with respect to the hierarchy.

This basic structure could be extended to associate behavioral norms with roles, define rules for moving among roles, and to otherwise specify possibilities for group and individual behavior. For the current purpose the status that the hierarchy defines, and the mobility within the hierarchy afforded to members by the organization that defines it, are the only essential properties. These are enough to structure the possible responses of someone dissatisfied with their current status. They may accept the hierarchy and seek to move within it; they may challenge the hierarchy itself, seeking to redefine its roles, relationships, and rules while acceding to the authority of the defining organization; or they may reject the organization imposing the hierarchy. The form of this rejection might vary widely, from resigning from the rotary club to starting a civil war; however the strategic decision to resolve the gap in perceived status by seeking freedom from the authority of the organization imposing the hierarchy is the same.

Status dissatisfaction may come from absolute position within the hierarchy, or from relative position in comparison to a perceived rival. An individual has status directly in virtue of the groups to which he belongs, and indirectly in virtue of the status of those groups relative to those to which he does not, or from which he is excluded (for example by ethnicity).

The representation of beliefs described above leaves the content of those beliefs unspecified. This generality is well suited for some purposes however beliefs about specific entities in the model, such as groups and states, are clearly important controls on model dynamics. The disposition that an individual i has towards each aggregate entity in the model is described by a vector $\hat{c}_i = \{c_{1,i}, c_{2,i}, \dots, c_{M,i}\}$ where M is the number of entities (groups, states) in the model. In the same way that an ideology is associated with a reference set of beliefs, and a tolerance for deviations from that reference as defined by a distance norm, it is useful to define, for each group, a reference set of dispositions and disposition tolerances relating them to other groups. These reference relationships create a kind of “politics” for the group, which complement its ideology as a basis for defining itself and attracting members.

We are especially interested in the dynamics of violent actions of one group towards another. Willingness to commit violence against members of another group seems to require a kind of de-legitimation that is better modeled as a qualitative change in disposition rather than change in the (continuous) measures c_{li} . The discrete vector $\hat{w}_i = \{w_{1,i}, w_{2,i}, \dots, w_{M,i}\}$ indicates whether or not group i is willing to engage in violence against other groups.

Additional interactions that explicitly include external pressures and interactions among different elements, such as individual leaders, groups, of followers, other nations, economic/physical conditions, can be dynamically simulated using DYMATICA (Bernard et al., 2016). DYMATICA is a behavioral simulation framework that enables the generalized mapping of sociological, psychological, and physical constructs for the quantified exploration of interacting

responses over time. It explicitly accommodates the large uncertainty associated with such analysis. As such it bridges agent-based approach above with the temporal interdependencies of system dynamics modeling (Backus & Glass, 2006).

4.1 Model Elements

The model elements consist of one or several individuals exemplifying:

- Prospective members (possibly differentiated by demography, initial ideology, citizenship)
- Surrounding populace (for resource access, security estimation)
- Donors, and possibly others whose beliefs and dispositions towards groups are relevant.

Individuals have:

- Beliefs
- An ideology
- Resources
- Dispositions towards groups
- Membership in some groups (in virtue of citizenship, ethnicity, sect, etc.)
- Status with regard to the hierarchies defined in those groups and the roles they play

One or several groups, characterized by:

- A membership
- Hierarchies
- Politics
- Ideology
- Resources

One or more states, which are a kind of group. States have individuals and other groups as members, and changing membership is costly

Processes

- Evolution of beliefs within the group
- Evolution of dispositions toward other groups
- Change in group membership
- Change in group resources
- Change in individual beliefs, dispositions, resources

4.2 Representation of Proposed Theories

The processes developed to account for the rise of fundamentalist extremism in Sections I through IV above can be formalized using the proposed model constructs. For example, the

reaction to westernization proposed in cultural duality theory, which is illustrated in Figure 1, involves differential access to resources on the basis of cultural alignment with the West, a developing sense of threat based on widening differences in ideology between the state and religious leaders, and a reactive consolidation of religious ideology around a traditional core. For clarity of illustration culture is represented by compressing the vector of beliefs onto a single axis, along the top of the figure that differentiates the cluster of values typically seen as Western from those seen as Traditional. The graph schematizes the development of the distinct cultural attitudes of each of a small set of groups, shown using different colored lines, over time. Exposure to Western culture is assumed to vary among groups, for example because of members' economic activities. Initially all groups cluster around a set of traditional beliefs. Interaction causes absorption of elements of Western culture generally, with groups having greater exposure moving further from Traditional norms. Differences among the groups become more marked over time, creating inter-group tensions. These tensions might be exacerbated by differences in wealth arising from Westernizers' economic engagement. At some point, intergroup tension and differential status cause a rupture, with some group or groups explicitly rejecting the Western pole in favor of the former Traditional norms.

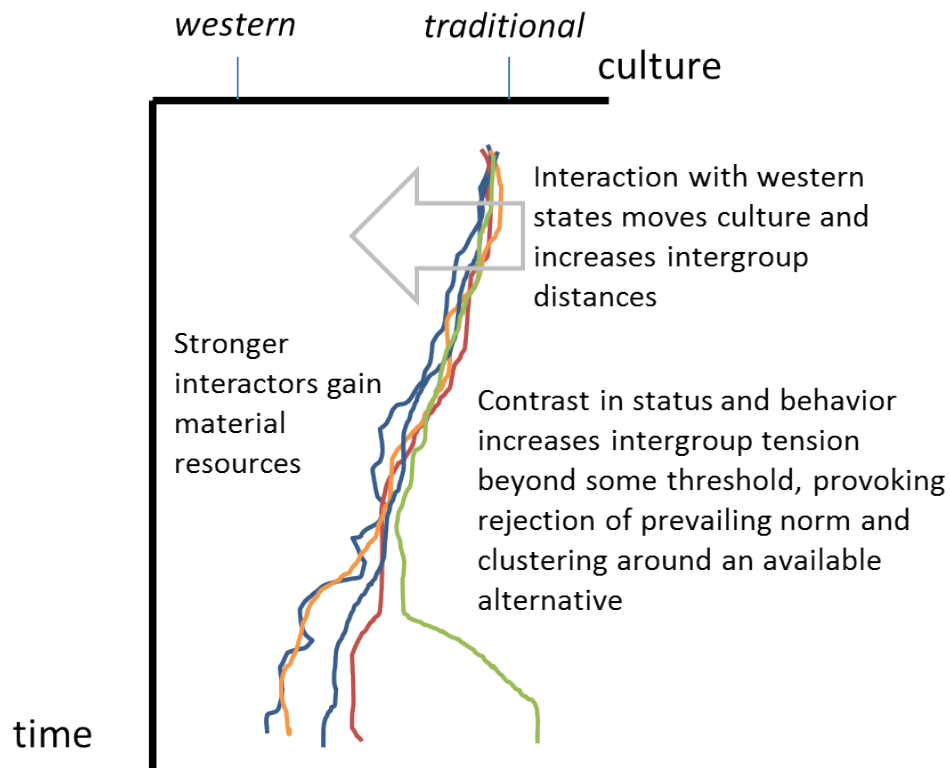


Figure 2: Graph showing the development of cultural attitudes of groups

This dynamic can be produced through the coupled evolution of resource flows, ideological alignment, status evaluation, and inter-group disposition. The following causal model sketches the relevant processes:

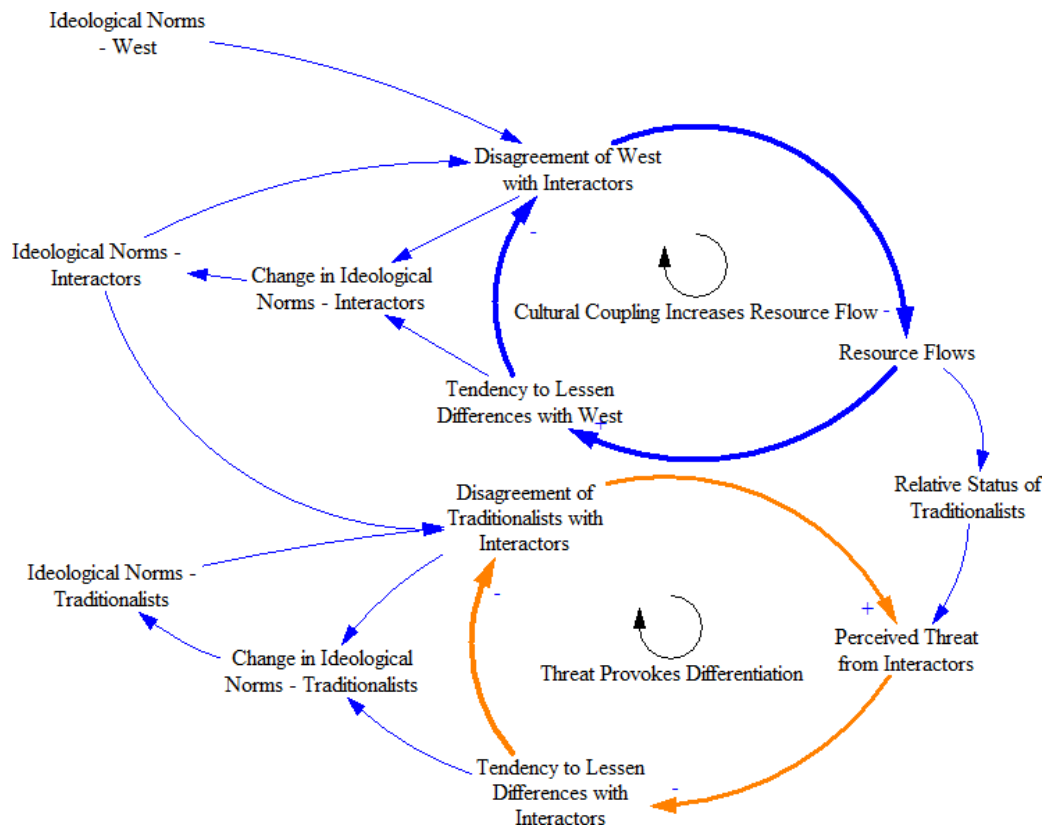


Figure 3: Diagram showing the influence of ideology on different groups

Figure 3 characterizes key relationships between two groups, Interactors and Traditionalists. The groups' beliefs are driven by distinct dynamics, shown in blue for Interactors and in gold for Traditionalists. Groups predisposed or situated to interact with western interests – Interactors – obtain resource flows through these interactions. Conformity with western norms (i.e. less Disagreement of West with Interactors) makes these interactions more frequent or productive or both. This effect reinforces the Tendency to Lessen Differences with West. Several specific mechanisms might effect this change. Strategic adoption for the purpose of fostering interaction might play a role. Or individuals or groups that happen to be more closely aligned with western norms might gain differential access to resources and status, in a kind of evolutionary dynamic. Whatever mechanism is at work, the reinforcing connections tend to drive Interactors toward reducing disagreements with western norms, and thereby to gain more resources.

A second group – Traditionalists – tend to not participate in interactions with westerners. This might be due to predisposition (i.e., initial ideological norms) or to their political or social position. They react to changes in the Interactors in two ways: the shift in Ideological Norms of Interactors norms towards a western configuration creates a Disagreement of Traditionalists with Interactors; and the increasing Resource Flows of the Interactors creates a gap in the Relative Status of Traditionalists. Both changes tend to enhance the Perceived Threat from Interactors. This threat, when it exceeds some threshold, provokes a polarization response, in which the group's norms systematically shift to heighten the contrast with those of Interactors and the

Tendency to Lessen Differences with Interactors becomes negative. This shift exacerbates Disagreement of Traditionalists with Interactors, and thereby the sense of threat, reinforcing the distinction. This model does not include a specific alternative pole for the new norm (e.g., religious fundamentalism) nor does it define a specific mechanism for changing norms. As in the Interactor group, an intentional strategic shift on the part of leaders might be involved. Or a selection processes, by which individuals in the general population who feel especially threatened because their ideology is especially far from those of the Interactors, are differentially motivated to join the group.

This schematic model seems capable of producing the kind of spontaneous differentiation shown in the preceding hypothesized timeline of Figure 1. It is notable that polarization does not depend on any initial ideological differences between Interactors and Traditionalists: they may be driven apart simply by their differential access to profitable interactions with the West.

Although the model is designed to capture cultural duality theory, the same reactionary dynamics (which include group polarization processes) might be at the core of models based on other theories. Crisis theory, for example, invokes a collection of possible economic and social stressors as precipitating fundamentalism. These might be modeled as random perturbations to the resources of diverse groups, along with a general increase in the sense of threat by each group. The reactionary dynamics would then explain how those perturbations become amplified into polarized factions.

4.3 The Need for More Assessments

A number of interacting factors have been adduced to account for violent social movements. This phenomenon can also be seen as the most recent manifestation of a more general propensity for the formation of violent groups committed to opposing established authorities, justifying their actions with reference to some ideology. While the ideological arguments, animating grievances, goals, and strategies differ across cases, a general understanding of the processes that cause groups of this kind to cohere and grow would be very useful for projecting their possible actions, for designing effective strategies to oppose them.

The economic, social, and psychological considerations discussed above with regard to violent social movements can be expressed as causal hypotheses connecting states of the movement, its constituent members, and its environment. Formalizing available understanding in this way is helpful for two reasons. First, it clarifies differences among commentators, distinguishing disagreements about the direction of causality between two factors from disagreements about the relative strength of commonly agreed causes in determining observed behavior from disputes over terminology. Second, it integrates ideas about how separate parts of the system function into a coherent system model (or more likely several alternative system models). As testable hypotheses, these models enable a scientific approach to understanding and influencing the behavior of militant groups, and for fostering their dissolution.

4.3.1 What Distinguishes the Groups of Concern?

Violent extremist groups, such as the Islamic terrorist organization ISIS, are distinguished by their willingness to engage in acts of spectacular violence against non-combatants and symbolic targets, by their recourse to Islamic history and theology to justify their actions, and by their ability to attract committed adherents. These groups generally oppose the political authority governing the territories in which they operate, or seek to establish a new political authority in an

ungoverned region. This independence from an established state distinguishes them from regimes that justify their authority in part on religious grounds, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Stateless groups have fewer resources to exploit and defend, and often have less or no responsibility to provide civic services. This freedom from the powers and responsibilities of a territorial state affords tactical flexibility and limits the effectiveness of deterrence, but also imposes resource and visibility constraints. These groups grow and survive because they are able to maintain a coherent internal structure and to obtain the resource they require – such as money and members – from their environment. Many processes interact to produce this result. Ideology does have a role here, because ideological commitment is a common feature of militant groups, both those currently active in the Middle East and more generally throughout the world.

4.3.2. Role of Ideology

The literature discussed above offers various theories for the growth of violent social movements and of the contributions of ideology, culture, and context to that process. For example, Graeme Wood (“What ISIS Really Wants”, Atlantic) emphasizes specific ideological content, especially the notion of the caliphate and apocalypse. Other authors reviewed here view groups such as ISIS as instances of a pattern with analogs in other places and historical contexts. The appeal of the caliphate and apocalypticism is seen to derive from resentment, and perceptions of injustice and embattlement. If this is the case, changing social, economic, and political conditions in ways that redress the underlying causes will eliminate the need for ideological commitment as a symbolic outlet. On this view the specific content of the ideology matters less than its ability to involve adherents in large historical or cosmic purposes, and to foster strong cooperation among adherents through their mutual commitment. For example, if Islam is particularly effective in motivating violent fundamentalists, it is because its history provides both a sense of current deprivation in comparison to past conditions, and a dramatic historical narrative that invites participation. In other words, the extensive use of ideology is an effect and not a cause.

As described above in Section I, a sense of encroachment of unfamiliar (foreign) norms can provoke a retrenchment and clarification of traditional norms and to act as an anchoring point to counter the existing oppression, frames as a deviation from the “historical” norm before the oppression. Ideology is then a potent element, emblematic of that preferred world and providing a tangible contrast with the unacceptable current conditions. In this model, which is broadly similar to State Culture theories discussed above in Section II, ideology is dynamic: while based on background beliefs and traditions, exponents select elements that clash with the foreign norms in order to highlight what is perceived to be threatened. The resulting ideology is essentially polarizing and oppositional. To the extent that the explicit contrast between the alien norm and the crystalizing ideology heighten the feeling of threat in the general population, the new ideology will be reinforced with new adherents.

In this view an oppositional ideology is employed in response to perceived external threat, and serves to consolidate and coordinate reaction to that threat around a contrasting set of ideas and norms. This process leads to an intentional cultural fission, but does not necessarily produce political or military conflict. In addition, the content of the ideology is relevant only in so far as it draws from popular beliefs and emphasizes disagreements with the alien norm. The component beliefs might be religious, cultural, or nationalistic. While the ideology need not be fundamentalist or even religious in content, this general process is clearly a model for development of religious fundamentalism.

Many of the ideological and organizational features identified by Almond (1995) as characteristic of fundamentalists groups agree with Iannoccone's description of a provoked reaction to a perceived attack on traditional norms, where the traditional norms are religious and the threat is generally described as secularizing modernism (Iannoccone, 1997). These groups are characterized by a reaction against the perceived erosion of religious values, and a selective emphasis of values that contrast with the challenging ideology. Manichaeism and inerrancy are additional ideological features (perhaps exclusive to religious ideologies) that enhance a group's isolation, distinctiveness, and solidarity. These ideological features reinforce the groups' distinctive organizational characteristics of having an elect membership, sharply set apart from general society, with an authoritarian organization. Distinctive behavioral requirements further delimit members from non-members, and may serve as a kind of costly signaling system to actively exclude weakly committed members.

In Iannoccone's view, religious fundamentalist groups become violent when the state suppresses religion, or favors one religion over others (1997). This unites opposition to the state with commitment to the (religious) ideology, thereby making the ideology political. Generalizing this idea, politicization can be expected if the state is perceived to align with an opposing ideology to the point it becomes a recognizable threat. When state support for competing ideologies is seen to be in play, politicization can lead to inter-group, rather than group-state, conflict (Sadowski). This view appears to align with those of Cultural Duality theorists discussed in Section II.

Violence may also be used as "theater, done to dramatize conditions and perspectives" (Emerson & Hartman, 2006). It is a mechanism to separate the group from the general society, and to bind members together. The power of spectacular violence to "dramatize a cause" may be useful in attracting new members.

4.3.3. Sincerity of Ideological Commitments

The prevalence of ideological content in the pronouncements of violent social movements is not certain evidence of the role of ideology in the internal governance of these movements. Ideological cant is useful for denouncing opponents, mobilizing members, and creating favorable public opinion. Its use may be sincere or cynical, with the group's leadership having more realist motivations. The possible existence of such "hidden" motivations may be important for influencing group behavior. They might be exploited directly, for example through bribery or grants of political office used to "buy off" militants. Alternatively, the need to conform to ideological commitments and the "hidden" motivations may be in tension in some circumstances, and these circumstances might be engineered and exploited. The strategy would attempt to force conformity with ideology in a way that is costly to realist goals. The value of this strategy depends on whether the group's ideological pronouncements entail exploitable constraints on behavior, or are instead sufficiently flexible to be reconciled with any future action.

4.3.4. But Why Now?

Ideologically-fueled conflicts, for example, between the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam have a very long history. These conflicts remained local and did not result in international movements against external actors. Warlords and megalomaniacs are always in oversupply. They simply need the environment and opportunity to prosper, especially an environment that limits competition and enable a winner-take-all dynamic. Additionally, disruptive threats and growing

grievances produce opportunistic environments conducive to consolidated social movement. The modern era makes both those opportunities more common.

Historically, confrontations among cultures occurred often, for example, with the opening of the Silk Road. But the change was gradual enough for local institutions to either acclimate to the change or to immunize itself from those changes it found most objectionable. The threat did not rise to a threshold requiring a strong retrenchment response. If the change came without a threshold-crossing threat, where reinforcing dynamics led to conflict, then cultures and ideologies absorbed or incorporated useful aspects of the “new” without major conflict. Rapid, extreme, forced change however only helps to entrench traditional practices. Traditional institutions simply do not have the time to adjust and, thereby feel threatened to the extent of focusing all effort on countering the threat. Ideology is readily leveraged to focus societal energy against the threat.

5. CLOSING THOUGHTS

An ideology that is central to a culture may act as the clay from which circumstance and guidance from opportunistic leaders can sculpt to produce an extremist movement. Conversely, other opportunistic cadres of individuals can use grievances to create and manipulate ideologies that further their own ends. The sustainability and globalization of these movements depends on there being an external, externally-focused threat that legitimizes the movement and its activities. Historically in the Middle East and Africa, regional problems, be they resource scarcity or cultural collisions, forced local institutions to locally redress the discord. With the imposition of Western power, Western support for repressive regimes in the name of stability, and the incursion of Western ways throughout these regions, not only were grievances left unresolved, but also were exacerbated by powerlessness in the face of changing global circumstances. The West became a ready-made common enemy—the source of all local grievances. Global shocks act as opportunities for collective action and the militant extremist who would execute those actions. Ideology merely provides a common theme that ties leader and followers together. Ideology is an intermediary element that appears to play no leading role in creating military extremism, but always plays a supporting role in sustaining military extremism.

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