

European Jihadism and the Religious Congruence Fallacy

The Religious Violence Thesis Revisited

Frank Oostindie

-

1871234

Faculteit Godgeleerdheid en Godsdienstwetenschap

Master Thesis: Religion, Conflict and Globalization

2018

Thesis supervisor: C.E. Wilde

Abstract

The idea that religion causes violence finds resonance in both the public and academic discourse. However, relationship between violence and religion is characterized by ambiguity. Religion and violence interact in ways that are not well understood. Unsurprisingly, scholars have reached contrasting conclusions regarding the violent nature of religion. This raises the question to what extent religion and violence are connected. In this thesis, I will revisit the religious violence thesis by studying the motives, backgrounds and ideologies of European jihadists. A review of the literature on jihadism makes clear that the motives, backgrounds and ideologies of jihadists vary considerably. Jihadists defy a single profile. More importantly, most jihadists act in ways that suggest their actions do not (directly) stem from their religious beliefs. By using Mark Chaves's theory on religious incongruence, I am able to reflect on the role that religion plays in relation to violent behavior. As Chaves's theory on religious incongruence illustrates, most behavior does not logically follow from people's religious beliefs, views, rituals and practices. Jihadists are not exclusively inspired by Islam. Instead, their acts of violence are the product of several socio-psychological factors.

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Chapter I. Religion and Violence | |
| I. 1.1 The Religious Violence Thesis: Secularism and Religion | 8 |
| I. 1.2 Analyzing Violence and Religion | 15 |
| Chapter II. Islam and Violence | |
| II. 2.1 Islam, Jihad and Violence | 18 |
| II. 2.2 The Profile of a Jihadist | 24 |
| Chapter III. Religious Incongruence and Religious Violence | |
| III. 3.1 Religious Violence: A Cheshire-Cat Logic | 31 |
| III. 3.2 The Religious Congruence Fallacy and Religious Violence..... | 34 |
| Chapter IV. The Religious Violence Thesis Revisited | |
| IV. 4.1 Religious Congruence and Jihadism | 36 |
| IV. 4.2 Religious Violence: An Alternative Perspective | 41 |
| IV. 4.3 Exiting the Twilight Region of 'Religious Pathology' | 43 |
| Conclusion | 47 |
| Bibliography | 49 |

Word count: 19, 995

It can be very difficult, however, to see beyond the common myths and assumptions that are often offered as explanations for terrorist violence. Partly this is because the process of involvement is, in many respects, at odds with our understanding of the development and course of other types of offending.

Andrew Silke *Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization*

Introduction

In his book *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*, William Cavanaugh challenges the widespread view that religion causes violence.¹ The central argument of his book is that religious violence is a myth because it is based on the secularist perception that religion is something absolutist, divisive, and irrational.² In Cavanaugh's view religion is not a unique institutional force different from other 'secular' aspects of human life.³ He argues there is no essential difference between the secular and religion and both are inventions by the modern West. He tries to illustrate this by replacing *religion* with the concept of *politics*. Cavanaugh writes, "There is a certain initial plausibility to this idea—wars have usually been instigated by kings, princes, and so on—but when we ask 'Politics, as opposed to what?' we quickly see how pointless the claim is."⁴

However, as Cavanaugh himself notes elsewhere, "The idea that religion has a peculiar tendency to promote violence has achieved the status of truism."⁵ The idea that religion causes violence finds resonance in both the public and academic discourse. Especially Islam has attracted significant attention. Terrorism in the name of Islam has become a topical issue.⁶ In addition, attacks by organizations such as Abu Sayyaf, Boko Haram and Islamic State (IS) are seen as clear manifestations of contemporary 'Islamic terrorism'.⁷ Concepts such as jihadism and Salafism have been labeled as examples of violent and radical ideas/ideologies spread by Islam.⁸ Furthermore, there is a widespread conception that religious-orientated terrorist groups, in particular Islamist groups, are more deadly in their attacks than 'secular' terrorist groups.⁹

Scholars hold conflicting views regarding the (violent) nature of religion. The debate itself has been the object of considerable controversy and polemics and most discussions surrounding this topic are highly polarized and politicized.¹⁰ Whereas some argue that the two are

¹ William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 15.

² Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 17.

³ *Ibid.*, 17-57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵ William T. Cavanaugh, "Religious Violence as Modern Myth," *Political Theology* 15 no. 6 (2014): 486.

⁶ Lorne L. Dawson, "Discounting Religion in the Explanation of Homegrown Terrorism: A Critique," in *Cambridge Companion to Religion and Terrorism* ed., James R. Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 32-33.

⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, "Thinking Sociologically about Religion and Violence: The Case of ISIS," *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 79, no. 1 (2018): 28.

⁸ Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "Islam Is a Religion of Violence," *Foreign Policy*, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/09/islam-is-a-religion-of-violence-ayaan-hirsi-ali-debate-islamic-state/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

⁹ James A. Piazza, "Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous?: An Empirical Study of Group Ideology, Organization, and Goal Structure," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 1 (2009): 64.

¹⁰ Nicole le Fever, "Kritiek experts: aanpak Nederlandse jihadisten werkt niet," *Nederlandse Omroepen Stichting*, <http://nos.nl/artikel/2165513-kritiek-experts-aanpak-nederlandse-jihadisten-werkt-niet.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.

intrinsically connected, others refute this claim altogether. Even those who agree that religion causes violence seem to disagree about how the two are connected.¹¹ This raises the question what is true about the 'myth'. Empirical evidence on this topic has produced puzzling outcomes.

The nature of the relationship between violence and religion is surrounded by ambiguity. First and foremost, religion is portrayed as having two faces, one of promoting violence and one of endorsing reconciliation and peace.¹² This has led to the paradoxical situation whereby religion bans and promotes violence at the same time.¹³ Second, religion cannot be seen in isolation from other social trends, relationships and dynamics.¹⁴ During episodes of violence, religious identity structures often overlap with other identities (e.g. ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location).¹⁵ In addition, religion and violence interact in ways that are not well understood. Some studies even suggest that there is some 'endogeneity' in the relationship between violence and religion, which would suggest the two are mutually reinforcing.¹⁶ Lastly, empirical research has produced conflicting findings regarding the 'root causes' of violence. For example, in one study on religion and suicide attacks it was found that regular attendance of religious services positively predicted a combination of willing martyrdom and out-group hostility, whereas regular prayer did not. Even though only one of these factors was found to be statistical significant, the researchers still concluded that there was a "real relationship" between religion and support for suicide attacks.¹⁷ Simultaneously, other scholars have concluded that such a link between suicide attacks and religion does not exist.¹⁸ In short, then, the ambiguity in the relationship between religion and violence makes it difficult to draw any clear conclusions. Or as some have put it, "Religion and violence are often seen together, but it remains unclear whether they are close friends sharing a journey or just chance companions brought together by circumstance."¹⁹ It is this ambiguity in the study of religious violence that serves as a point of departure for this paper.

In this thesis, I will revisit the religious violence thesis by focusing on the phenomenon of European jihadism. The phenomenon of

¹¹ James R. Lewis and Lorne L. Dawson, "Introduction: Religion and Terrorism," *Numen* 65, no. 2-3 (2018): 123-124.

¹² John D. Brewer, Gareth I. Higgins, and Francis Teeney, "Religion and Peacemaking: A Conceptualization," *Sociology* 44, no. 6 (2010): 1020.

¹³ Ilja Srubar, "Religion and Violence: Paradoxes of Religious Communication," *Human Studies* 40, no. 4 (2017): 502.

¹⁴ Henry Munson, "Religion and Violence," *Religion* 35, no. 4 (2005): 243.

¹⁵ Matthias Basedau, Birte Pfeiffer, and Johannes Vüllers, "Bad Religion? Religion, Collective Action, and the Onset of Armed Conflict in Developing Countries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60, no. 2 (2016): 227-250.

¹⁶ Matthew Isaacs, "Sacred Violence or Strategic Faith? Disentangling the Relationship between religion and Violence in Armed Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 2 (2016): 211-222.

¹⁷ Jeremy Ginges, Ian Hansen, and Ara Norenzayan, "Religion and Support for Suicide Attacks," *Psychological science* 20, no. 2 (2009): 230.

¹⁸ Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343-360.

¹⁹ Lewis and Dawson, "Introduction," 117-124.

European jihadists committing attacks in the West and/or joining a jihadist struggle abroad (mostly to Syria and Iraq) is one of the main themes within the debate on religion and violence. Scholars differ as to what motivates people to join such a jihadist struggle. As I will discuss in more detail below, jihadists use religious rhetoric and refer to Islamic teachings which could imply they are motivated by Islam (or its doctrines).²⁰ Conversely, recent empirical studies find that the two phenomena are largely unrelated. The aim of this paper will be to examine to what extent the backgrounds, motives and ideological/religious views of European jihadists support the religious violence thesis.²¹ Although this may appear to be somewhat counter-intuitive, the existing debate provides conflicting explanations regarding the nature of European jihadism.²² In other words, it is unclear to what extent their jihadist struggle is an outcome of Islam or other non-religious factors.²³

In order to demarcate the scope of this research, I will focus on jihadists from European countries. Although jihadism is not limited to a European context, I do think that European jihadism provides a valuable case study. The presence of (significant) Muslim minorities in Europe makes it possible to compare who are involved in jihadism and if these are mainly religious 'zealots' or also less devout or even non-religious individuals. In addition, this specific focus on Europe also has a more practical reason. Most of the available data focus on jihadism in the West. Furthermore, in this paper, I will focus mainly on literature in relation to terrorism and to a lesser extent on intrastate conflict. Both relate to the two types of jihadists and their involvement in violence (foreign fighters and homegrown attacks).²⁴

The paper itself will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter will consist of a critical reflection on the origin of the debate on religion and violence, followed by a discussion on the shortcomings of this debate. In the second chapter, I continue along the same lines by reflecting on the relationship between Islam, jihadism and violence. Furthermore, I will discuss the profile of a jihadist by considering the backgrounds, motives and religious beliefs of jihadists. This analysis will be based on a cross-study comparison of a number of studies and reports which have only recently

²⁰ Garry Gutting, "How Religion Can Lead to Violence," *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/01/opinion/how-religion-can-lead-to-violence.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.

²¹ In this thesis, religious violence denotes the idea that if religion does not cause violence, it is at least a significant contributing factor. See Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 15.

²² Although not all will be discussed in this thesis, several scholars have argued that religion causes violence. John Hick, Charles Kimball, Richard Wentz, Martin Marty, Mark Juergensmeyer, David Rapoport, Scott Appleby, Bhikhu Parekh, and Charles Selengut are some of the main proponents of the religious violence thesis. William Cavanaugh, Karen Armstrong and John Esposito are on the opposite side of the spectrum. For an overview of some of the (other) scholars involved in the debate, see Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 16-56.

²³ See for my definition of religion section 1.1.

²⁴ I will use a narrow definition of violence as the intentional physical harm of the body. See for a discussion on violence: Keith Krause, "Beyond Definition: Violence in a Global Perspective," *Global Crime* 10, no. 4 (2009): 338-339.

become available.²⁵ These studies provide empirical data which in the past had not been possible to obtain. In comparing these empirical findings it becomes possible to deconstruct the profiles (e.g. backgrounds, views and motives) of these jihadists and to analyze if these correlate with their religious beliefs, views, rituals or practices. Examining the 'profiles' of jihadists will enable me to uncover the dynamics of this compound phenomenon, as well as to understand the role that religion might play. In the third chapter, I will introduce Mark Chaves's theory on 'religious congruence' and reflect on the role it plays within the study of religion. I believe Mark Chaves's argument on religious incongruence provides a valuable framework to test to what extent jihadists act on the basis of their religious beliefs as well as to reflect on religious violence in a more general sense.²⁶ Lastly, in the fourth chapter, I will combine the insights and findings of the previous chapters to assess the analytical value of the religious violence thesis.

On a final note, this thesis contributes to literature on religion and violence by studying its nexus at a fundamental level. The broader purpose of this thesis is therefore to critically assess the way we study religion.

Chapter I. Religion and Violence

1.1 The Religious Violence Thesis: Secularism and Religion

The debate on religion and violence is the outcome of two separate dynamics, both of which emerged at the end of the Cold War period. First, it is part of a wider discourse on secularization and the position of religion in the public domain.²⁷ Second, it is the outcome of a growing concern with terrorism.²⁸

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, scholars from different academic disciplines began to notice a 'religious resurgence'.²⁹ These scholars argued that religion had 'survived' modernity, secularism and the political ideologies of the 20th century and would again resurface as a significant institutional force.³⁰ One of the main reasons for this conclusion was that these early scholars noticed an upsurge in what they identified as

²⁵ The analysis in this thesis will be based on a wide variety of sources, including (recent) academic studies (e.g. on radicalization, fundamentalism, terrorism, criminology, psychology, sociology, jihadism, Salafism and Islam), reports by think tanks, government (funded) reports, reports by intelligence agencies and, to a lesser extent, news reports.

²⁶ Mark Chaves, "Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 1 (2010): 1-13.

²⁷ Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," *Social Forces* 65, no. 3 (1987): 605-607.

²⁸ Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 227.

²⁹ Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in international Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 137-138.

³⁰ James K. Wellman and Kyoko Tokuno, "Is Religious Violence Inevitable?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 3 (2004): 291.

'religious violence'. They believed these examples of religious violence signified a revival of religion.³¹ Perhaps one of the most prominent examples of this view is Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations'. Huntington believed that the end of the Cold War meant that ideological and separatist struggles would be replaced by religious (and cultural) conflicts. He thought that future conflicts would take place at the fault lines of civilizations with different religious and cultural orientations. In support of his theory, Huntington gave the example of so-called 'fundamentalist movements'. He claimed that all major religions (Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam) had fundamentalist movements which were the outcome of economic modernization, social change and a search for (religious) identity. Huntington assumed these movements would fill the gap left by pre-Cold War ideologies and would be used to unite civilizations across borders. Huntington asserted that these religious 'fundamentalists' would become a major source of conflict.³²

Nonetheless, Huntington was not the first to draw such a connection. In 1984, another political scientist David Rapoport conducted the first comparative study of what he described as examples of 'sacred or holy terrorism'. In his article, Rapoport compares three historical examples of religious groups and their parent religions: Thugs (Hinduism), the Assassins (Islam) and the Zealots-Sicarii (Judaism). Although these examples are obviously well-chosen —the phenomenon of terrorism is reflected in the etymology of the words *zealot*, *assassin* and *thug*— this was not the main reason why Rapoport chose these examples. He selected these three historical cases not only because they illustrated "the ancient lineage of terrorism", but also because he believed they would again become relevant.³³ Rapoport argued that until the nineteenth century religion provided the sole justification for acts of terrorism and that these historical examples would again become helpful in understanding modern acts of terrorism. For Rapoport, these three religious groups were indicative of how religious rituals, practices and beliefs promote acts of violence and terror.³⁴ He writes, "Sacred terror, on the other hand, never disappeared altogether, and there are signs that it is reviving in new and unusual forms."³⁵

Four years after his first article, Rapoport wrote a second article on what he saw as the reemergence of theological justifications for terrorism.³⁶ In this second article, Rapoport claimed that so-called 'messianic movements' provided a solid example of how religious violence had resurfaced. In his view, messianic movements have in common that their

³¹ Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (2002): 70.

³² Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 26.

³³ David C. Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (1984): 659.

³⁴ Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling," 658.

³⁵ Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling," 659.

³⁶ David C. Rapoport, "Messianic Sanctions for Terror," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 2 (1988): 195.

visions and paradigms sometimes incite violence because they convince believer to 'force the end'. These movements try to reach a "higher consciousness" and use both nonviolent and violent means to reach this higher state.³⁷ He adds, for 'messianic terror' to occur, "Believers must think that the day of deliverance is near or imminent, and they must also think that their actions can or must consummate the process."³⁸

After Rapoport, most scholars studying the link between religious violence have used 'desecularization' as their main explanation. Mark Juergensmeyer, for instance, is one of many scholars, who argue the contemporary upsurge in terrorism can be attributed to tensions between religion and the secular West. Juergensmeyer notices a steady increase in the number of terrorist groups with a religious signature.³⁹ He claimed that religion provides the ideology, motivation and the organizational framework for conflict, violence and terrorism.⁴⁰ Juergensmeyer argues that religious terrorism is, in essence, a confrontation between religion and the secular state. These religious terrorists not only have a political objective, but have a religious mission. Religion challenges the position of the secular state by attacking its monopoly on violence. He argues secularism has come under pressure from religious groups and their resentment against modernity and post-enlightenment Western culture and politics.⁴¹

Unsurprisingly, most of the contributions to the debate are from the field of terrorism studies.⁴² In his seminal work, *Inside Terrorism*, political analyst and terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman comes to similar conclusions. He agrees with Rapoport in asserting that religion has reemerged as a cause of terrorism.⁴³ As did Huntington, Rapoport and Juergensmeyer before him, Hoffman argues that the upsurge in terrorism can be traced back to the 'resurgence' of religion. However, more so than these other scholars Hoffman gives a detailed analyses of how 'holy terror' resurfaced. According to Hoffman, at the beginning of the nineteenth century a 'secularization' of terrorism took place. The end of divine and monarchical rule led to redefined roles of citizens and state. Simultaneously, the emergence of concepts such as nationalism and self-determination resulted in a shift in the emergence of other radical political schools. For most of the twentieth century religious inspired terrorism remained largely absent. It was not until after the end of the Cold War that these movements of ethno-nationalist/separatist and ideologically motivated terrorism moved to the background and were again replaced by what Hoffman describes as religious terrorist groups.⁴⁴

Hoffman argues that

³⁷ Rapoport, "Messianic," 204.

³⁸ Ibid., 197.

³⁹ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2003), 6.

⁴⁰ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind*, 121-147.

⁴¹ Mark Juergensmeyer, "Terror Mandated by God," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 2 (1997): 16.

⁴² Lewis and Dawson, "Introduction," 117.

⁴³ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006): 83-84.

⁴⁴ Hoffman, *Inside*, 84.

after the Cold War, religious terrorism quickly began to exceed other ideologies as a motive for terrorism. He traces the reemergence of the first modern religious terrorist groups to repercussions associated with the Iranian revolution. Hoffman contends that in the beginning religious terrorism was mainly limited to Islamist (Iranian Shi'a dominated) organizations. It was not until the 1990s that the number of religious terrorist groups began to grow exponentially. Hoffman suggests that the upsurge of what he calls 'Shia Islamic terrorism' later spread to other major religions and smaller sects and cults. He claims the number of religious terrorist groups in relation to the total number of terrorist groups increased from a third in 1994 to nearly half of them in 2004.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, although the distinction religion/secularism is arguably at the heart of the debate, it is questionable to what extent the narrative of 'desecularization' provides a convincing explanation for 'religious violence'. Hoffman's definition of terrorism, like that of the other three scholars mentioned above, is very clearly based on a secularist approach. In most cases this comes down to the view that religion has some unique characteristics that make it particularly prone to violence.

Over the years, several reasons have been put forward as to why religion incites violence, including a claim to an ultimate truth, moral authority over society, the inability to share power with other stakeholders in society, the promises of rewards for those who follow its rituals and morals, the inclination towards charismatic religious leaders and the ability to mobilize the masses.⁴⁶ In addition, it has been argued that methods of worship closely associated with religious practices such as hymns, anthems, prayers, confessions, sermons and scriptures could provoke violence and animosity between different (religious) groups. In some cases, these methods of worship have even been suggested to facilitate extreme forms of violence such as genocide.⁴⁷ What these reasons have in common is that they are all based on the assertion that religion is a unique institutional force capable of (negatively) influencing people's behavior.⁴⁸ As expressed by Cavanaugh, this is based on the view that religion is something absolutist, divisive, and irrational.⁴⁹

Religion is seen as more prone to violence than non-religious or secular aspects of human life, or as Erin Wilson aptly stresses, "This argument rests on a basic assumption that is also at the heart of contemporary liberal democratic orders —religion is the thing that will disagree about most vehemently and violently, the thing that they will be most unwilling to compromise over, that they hold absolutist views on and that will ultimately lead them giving their own lives and taking the lives

⁴⁵ Ibid., 85-88.

⁴⁶ Wellman and Kyoko Tokuno, "Is Religious," 295.

⁴⁷ James Moore, "Religion and Violence: Thinking again about the Link," ed. Steven Leonard Jacobs *Religions* 8, no. 6 (2017): 111.

⁴⁸ Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 17-57.

⁴⁹ Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 17.

of others to defend and protect.”⁵⁰

This assumption is also clearly visible in the texts of Rapoport, Huntington, Juergensmeyer and Hoffman. In addition, their arguments are based on the same artificial separation between ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ violence. For instance, Hoffman defines terrorism as, “the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change.”⁵¹ Yet, in relation to religious terrorism, he states,

*Whereas secular terrorists regard violence either as a way of instigating the correction of a flaw in a system that is basically good or as means to foment the creation of a new system, religious terrorists see themselves not as components of a system worth preserving but as “outsiders” seeking fundamental changes in the existing order. This sense of alienation also enables the religious terrorist to contemplate far more destructive and deadly types of terrorist operations than secular terrorists, indeed to embrace a far more open-ended category of “enemies” for attack –that is, anyone who is not a member of the terrorists’ religion or religious sect.*⁵²

Hoffman finds religious terrorism to be markedly different from ‘secular’ terrorism. He claims that religious violence is not only more violent, but it also differs in terms of legitimation and justification. Hoffmann attributes this to “radically different value systems, mechanisms of legitimation and justification, concepts of morality, and worldviews embraced by the religious terrorist.”⁵³

The problem with his distinction between secular and religious terrorism is that it is misguided. For instance, the element of ‘pursuit of political change’ is central to Hoffman’s general definition of terrorism, but this presupposes that all forms of terrorism are in essence ‘political’. However, Hoffman contradicts himself. He depicts religious terrorism as “first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative.”⁵⁴ This is at odds with his general definition. Hoffman himself adds, “[these religious] perpetrators disregard the political, moral, or practical constraints that may affect other terrorists.”⁵⁵ This suggests that religious violence is essentially different or at least ‘non-political’.

The labelling of violence as either secular or religious presupposes an either/or logic. In essence, this dichotomy makes both positions overly deterministic. Most articles dealing with religion and violence struggle with this duality. For instance, Islamist terrorism has been identified as “terrorist attacks committed by groups that are

⁵⁰ Erin Wilson, “The Problem is Religion – But Not in The Way We Think,” Centre for Religion, Conflict and Globalisation, <https://religionfactor.net/2016/03/23/the-problem-is-religion-but-not-in-the-way-we-think/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

⁵¹ Hoffman, *Inside*, 40.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁵⁴ Hoffman, *Inside*, 88.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

primarily motivated by interpretations of Islamic political principles or by a Muslim religious and communal identity.”⁵⁶ This raises the question to what extent religion and politics represent two different factors. In practice, the distinction between secular/religious or political/religious is not so clear. Religious and political views are not easily separable.

Interestingly, Hoffman gives several examples of what he considers to be examples of ‘religious’ terrorism. In Hoffman’s view, the Tokyo nerve gas attacks by the Japanese Aum Shinrokyo cult in 1995, the murder of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, a young orthodox Jewish man, in 1995, the Oklahoma City federal office building bombing in 1998, the bombings and suicide attacks on the United States embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania by Islamists belonging to al Qaida in 1998 are all examples of acts of violence with a ‘significant religious dimensions and/or motivation’.⁵⁷ Yet, all these attacks have in common that they were aimed at government institutions/employees which suggest a political motive. Conversely, despite acknowledging a religious component, Hoffman sees the Muslim-dominated Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in Algeria, the Catholic Irish Republican Army (IRA), Protestant Ulster Freedom Fighters and the Muslim Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as predominantly political terrorist organizations inspired by ethno-nationalist or ‘irredentist’ motives.⁵⁸ Yet, these organizations also have religious dimensions and are also known for attacking government institutions.

That said, the opposing argument put forward by Cavanaugh is perhaps no more compelling than the ‘secularist’ argument. Cavanaugh focusses extensively on the definition of religion. The question of what is meant by religion is a key component of his argument.⁵⁹ Cavanaugh acknowledges the difficulty of providing a definition of religion. His main point of critique on other scholars is their inability to separate religious causes from what would be non-religious causes.⁶⁰ He argues the ‘essence of religion’ or the way the concept of religion is context dependent and has been different both historically and culturally.⁶¹ However, the absence of a clear definition in Cavanaugh’s own work is equally problematic. As Ronald Weed remarks, in reflection on Cavanaugh’s book, “Cavanaugh’s considerable reservations about defining ‘religion’ itself are reasonable in substance, but problematic in their implications.”⁶² Although the secular-religious distinction may to some extent be, as Cavanaugh argues, an ‘invention of the modern West’, secularism is not the same as politics.

Politics and religion,

⁵⁶ Piazza, “Is Islamist Terrorism,” 64.

⁵⁷ Hoffman, *Inside*, 86-88.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁹ Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 17-57.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶¹ Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 59.

⁶² Ronald Weed, “Putting Religion First?: Diagnosing Division and Conflict in the Religious Violence Thesis,” *Political Theology* 15, no. 6 (2014): 537-538.

even when seen as social constructs, may still be used to designate different institutional forces. Politics like religion is a broad category and often ill-defined. A better question would therefore be to ask *why* these kings, princes, politicians and religious leaders would opt for war. Cavanaugh ignores that certain aspects of politics and religion, such as autocratic leadership, repression of minority groups, ideological opposition between political parties, expansionism, dogmatism, radical religious beliefs and a lack of political/religious freedom could still be plausible reasons for conflict and violence. His argument that the Wars of Religion in France were not about religion is flawed. Although other factors such as politics and economics did play a role, religion was still a central cleavage. To ignore the role of religion is historically inaccurate and somewhat overstates the role of secular causes.⁶³ An alternative explanation would therefore be that religion is still a distinct institutional force, but that it interacts with other social forces in society. In order to analyze to what extent religion causes violence it will be necessary to define what religion *is* and to what extent it is a unique and distinct social phenomenon different from other 'secular' social phenomena. Jonathan Fox who has studied the effect of religion on ethnic conflict has argued that religion is also a form of ideology. He summarizes, "Both [religion and ideology] provide a meaningful framework for understanding the world. Both provide guidelines for proper behavior based on these frameworks. Both are often associated with institutions. Both have the ability to legitimize actions and institutions."⁶⁴ Fox focusses on the influence of religion on human behavior, rather than its origin or meaning.⁶⁵ Alternatively, it has been suggested that terrorism is better understood from a perspective of the 'sacred' than 'religion'.⁶⁶ The 'sacred' would include secular values and beliefs, such as flags, borders and ideological principles and can be understood as "a thing, place, time, or concept that is special and non-negotiable, and that is separated or protected from everyday ideas. It is directly and indirectly expressed in ideas and values that are seen to be core or essential to identities and beliefs."⁶⁷ However, religion is more than ideology, culture or the sacred.⁶⁸ Both these approaches fail to grasp the concept of religion as a separate institutional force. A more fruitful approach would therefore be to abandon an 'essentialist' understanding of religion and to adopt a more practical approach. Andrew McKinnon points out that in the fields of sociology and theology scholars have unsuccessfully tried to formulate

⁶³ Barbara Diefendorf, "Were the Wars of Religion about Religion?" *Political Theology* 15 no. 6 (2014): 552–563.

⁶⁴ Jonathan Fox, "The Ethnic-Religious Nexus: The Impact of Religion on Ethnic Conflict," *Civil Wars* 3, no. 3 (2000): 3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

⁶⁶ Matthew D. M. Francis, "Why the "Sacred" Is a Better Resource Than 'Religion' for Understanding Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 5 (2016): 912-924.

⁶⁷ Francis, "Why the," 913.

⁶⁸ Rhys H. Williams, "Religion as Political Resource: Culture or Ideology?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35, no. 4 (1996): 368-378.

a substantive and all-encompassing conception of religion.⁶⁹ However, although McKinnon demonstrates that although religion is a historical and social construction, this does not mean that the concept is irrelevant. He uses Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of (language) games to explain that there is a hidden consensus about religion. As with games there is no real 'essence', but there is a general notion of it (similar to a colloquial meaning). E.g. some games are board games, some are about winning and some are about competition with other players. Although there is a wide variety of games, there is some consensus on what is seen as a game. This idea of what Wittgenstein describes as "family resemblances" can also be applied to religion.⁷⁰ Beliefs, rituals, practices, could be seen as part of what we *call* religion. Hence, this is why McKinnon argues that the monotheistic traditions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are 'prototypes' of religion.⁷¹ They are not all-encompassing examples of religion, but all share many of the same characteristics. In the context of Islam, *religion* can be described as a system of beliefs, rituals, practices, worships of a single god, involving sacred texts, prayer and a place of worship (mosque). Although perhaps more elements could be added, it are these elements that are often associated with violence.

1.2 Analyzing Violence and Religion

The academic debate on religious violence has been plagued by a number of analytical problems. First and foremost, studies of radicalization, conflict and terrorism are beset by a lack of empirical data. This creates the risk of circular reasoning. Much of the research is based on a limited collection of available (often secondary) data.⁷² To a large extent, this can be attributed to the challenges of studying religion and violence. Violent milieus of closed and clandestine radical groups, often with antagonistic worldviews, seriously complicate any effort to study the religious violence thesis. Individuals are in some cases subject to prosecution or awaiting trial. Practical, legal and ethical issues can therefore pose a serious challenge when trying to gain access to these individuals. Furthermore, the reluctance of some to cooperate in interviews can make it difficult to acquire sufficient and reliable data. Interviewees may defend violence, but this does not mean they themselves are also willing to use violence.⁷³ In other cases those interviewed may have tried to hide their true violent persuasions. This makes research vulnerable to a social desirability bias.⁷⁴ Secondly, perhaps even more

⁶⁹ Andrew M. McKinnon, "Sociological Definitions, Language Games, and The 'Essence' of Religion," *Method Theory in the Study of Religion* 14, 1 (2002): 61-81.

⁷⁰ McKinnon, "Sociological," 71

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁷² Edwin Bakker, "Zin en onzin van de zoektocht naar oorzaken van terrorisme," *International Spectator* 58 no, 11 (2004): 543-546.

⁷³ Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 809-812.

⁷⁴ Thomas Hegghamer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *The American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 8.

problematic is the abundance of terminology used to denote seemingly related phenomena. For example, 'jihadists', 'Salafi Jihadists', 'fundamentalists,' 'extremists,' Islamism, 'Salafi militants', 'radical Muslims', 'Muslim extremists' have all been used to denote people who are involved in acts of 'Islamic violence'. The main problem with these terms is that they often have been used interchangeably and their application in the debate frequently lacks a critical approach. Scholars use a variety of concepts and terms to study phenomena which appear similar, but are not always exactly the same. The lack of a consistent usage of concepts and definitions has made any cross-study comparison challenging. This latter aspect is important because it can be difficult to measure the role of faith in conflict.⁷⁵ Labeling something as 'extremist' or 'militant' could result in a hasty generalization and simplification of complex social phenomena. The moral connotation given to these definitions creates the risk of a reader making assumptions based on social judgement rather than the descriptive value of these terms.⁷⁶ Concepts like extremism, fundamentalism, Islamism and jihadism have often been used as describing the same phenomena. As argued this has led to situations where, "Thus the 'extremist', ipso facto, is at once considered a 'fundamentalist', an 'Islamist' and a 'jihadist'."⁷⁷

One way to solve this is to see these terms as subsets. In this context, jihadism could a subset of Islamism, Islamism is a subset of fundamentalism, and fundamentalism is a subset of extremism. Extremism thereby serves as an 'ideological prerequisite' for fundamentalism, Islamism and jihadism.⁷⁸ However, this does not explain if these concepts incite violence. Apart from problems with definitions, most of these terms such as Islamism may reflect 'extremist' or 'fundamentalist' views of religion, but not necessarily violent ones.⁷⁹ That is, 'extremist', 'radical' or 'orthodox' beliefs do not equal violence. Cases in point are Amish, Hasidim, Sufis and Jains, who have often been portrayed as 'religious extremists', but "have not cornered the market on egregious violence."⁸⁰ A more fruitful approach would therefore to focus on the (religious/non-religious) nature of the act. Thirdly, the academic debate, like the public debate, has not been free from polemics and controversy. Bukay remarks with some bitterness, "It is fashionable among Western analysts and academics to explain away suicide bombing with discussion of 'root causes' that omit religion."⁸¹ In addition, the idea of a connection between religion and violence is sometimes too easily denounced. Paul Cliteur contends, "There is, apparently, a great reluctance among scholars and the public at large to acknowledge that

⁷⁵ Shane Joshua Barter and Ian Zatzkin-Osborn, "Measuring Religion in War: A Response," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 55, no. 1 (2016): 190-192.

⁷⁶ Charlie Winter, and Usama Hasan, "The Balanced Nation: Islam and the Challenges of Extremism, Fundamentalism, Islamism and Jihadism," *Philosophia : Philosophical Quarterly of Israel* 44, no. 3 (2016): 668.

⁷⁷ Winter and Hasan, "The Balanced," 668.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 668-680.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 680.

⁸⁰ Sean F. Everton, "Social Networks and Religious violence," *Review of Religious Research* 58, no. 2 (2016): 191.

⁸¹ David Bukay, "The Religious Foundations of Suicide Bombings Islamist Ideology," *Middle East Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (2006): 36.

there could be such a connection.⁸² Although Cliteur and Bukay take a clear stance within the debate, there may be some validity to their claims. Many arguments on religion are indeed somewhat apologetic.⁸³ In particular, the apologetic understanding of faith being ‘hijacked’ does little justice to the complexity of the relationship. The problem with this is that academics or outsiders are making essentialist claims of what they think constitutes Islam or ought to be seen as part of a certain religious tradition.⁸⁴ This may ignore less peaceful aspects of religion.⁸⁵ Relatedly, comparing what is ‘legitimate’, ‘good’, ‘true’, ‘just’ or ‘right’ under Islamic law can be challenging. Scholars face the risk of creating an artificial and arbitrary distinction between a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Islam. As summarized by Matthew Francis, “This particularly myopic view of religion clearly requires a complex juggling act in order to maintain a distinction between good/just-violent religious behaviour and bad/illegitimate-violent and therefore false religious behaviour.”⁸⁶ More importantly, the fact that a certain act is profane does not mean that elements of religion could not have played a role. For instance, some jihadists may self-identify as religious or they could consider it their religious duty to join the jihadist movements in Syria and Iraq. The fact that their struggle would be considered an illegitimate fight under Islamic law, does not mean that Islam could not have influenced this process. Jihadists may draw upon ‘paradigms’ offered by Islam, such as the concepts of *Kuffar* (fight against unbelievers) or (defense of the) *Ummah*, although these may not have been their primary motives to fight. Even when religious concepts are being (consciously) misinterpreted, this does not exclude the possibility that religion could have been a source of inspiration or influence.

In short, a selective understanding of religion or the misuse of its concepts does not mean that any jihadist is therefore not guided by religion or its principles. This is not to imply that profanity is irrelevant. On the contrary, it could help to indicate a non-religious motive. But the central question should not be if violent behavior is ‘illegitimate’ or ‘bad’, but if certain behavior is in some way an outcome of religion. Terms like ‘extremism’, ‘radicalism’ and ‘militancy’ do not help to disentangle this relationship. In order to test the religious violence thesis, it is important to determine to what extent elements of religion can be separated from non-religious factors. In the next section, I will use these three elements to analyse the relationship between jihadism, Islam and violence.

⁸² Paul. B. Cliteur, “Religion and Violence or the Reluctance to Study this Relationship,” *Forum Philosophicum* 15, no. 1 (2010): 206.

⁸³ See for an example on jihad: Munson, “Religion,” 235.

⁸⁴ Christopher J. van der Krogt, “Jihād without apologetics,” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 21, no. 2, (2010): 139-140.

⁸⁵ Munson, “Religion,” 235.

⁸⁶ Francis, “Why the,” 916.

Chapter II. Islam and Violence

2.1 Islam, Jihad and Violence

The debate on whether Islam has a tendency to promote violence can be traced back to the beginning of the twenty-first century. The failure of the Oslo Peace process in September 2000, the attacks on the United States a year later on September 11, 2001 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have all strengthened the perception that Islam is inherently violent.⁸⁷ Like the general debate, the debate on Islam and violence can be divided into two opposing strands. Scholars from

the first strand argue that Islam spreads violence. This strand sees Islam and many of its related concepts as inherently violent. For instance, Raymond Ibrahim is critical of what he sees as an 'apologetic' approach towards Islam. He finds that Western scholars erroneously consider the Judeo-Christian tradition to be equally violent. Ibrahim claims that Islam is far more prone to violence than Judaism or Christianity and that Qur'anic verses have inspired collective and violent doctrines like jihad.⁸⁸

However, the problem with this argument is its premises: that Islam (and its doctrines) would have a similar (violent/negative) influence on all of its followers. Ibrahim oversimplifies the complexity of Islam and its teachings. For instance, he does not specify which branches of Islam these Muslims belong to, and if they, for example, adhere to Sunni or Shi'a Islam. The term Muslim itself has religious as well as cultural connotations. Some may merely self-identify as a Muslim based on a specific traditional identity.⁸⁹ As Daniel Blumberg notes, "To say that someone is Muslim tells us little regarding that person's views on politics."⁹⁰ In addition, most Muslim communities have an informal structure. Islamic communities have no formal clergy and often no official records are kept.⁹¹ This makes it difficult to determine who is part of this community and if they are in fact 'religious'. Not all Muslims are practicing their faith or are pious or bigoted.⁹²

Moreover, Ibrahim's argument is based on the assertion that Muslims (Salafists and/or jihadists) will have a single and coherent idea of Islam, its doctrines and concepts. In practice, believers hold different views of what these concepts mean and their understanding of those concepts changes over time. Not all Muslims adhere to the same Islamic traditions in a similar fashion. The concepts of jihad and Salafism help to illustrate this point.

⁸⁷ A. Rashied Omar, "Islam and violence," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 52, no. 1 (2017): 158.

⁸⁸ Raymond Ibrahim, "Are Judaism and Christianity as Violent as Islam?," *Middle East Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2009): 3-12.

⁸⁹ Emmanuel Karagiannis, "European Converts to Islam: Mechanisms of Radicalization," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 13, no. 1 (2012): 99-100.

⁹⁰ Daniel Brumberg, "Islamists and the Politics of Consensus," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 3 (2002): 109.

⁹¹ Milena Uhlmann, "European Converts to Terrorism: Security Officials Worry About a New Breed of Radical Islamists," *Middle East quarterly* 15, no. 3, (2008): 31.

⁹² Bruno Etienne, "Islam and Violence," *History and Anthropology* 18, no. 3 (2007): 238.

For instance, the concept of jihad has been explained as a “basic criterion for any struggle considered to be godly against the forces of unbelief which is understood not only as a denial or truth but also as a threat to religion and public order.”⁹³ The word itself is derived from the Arabic root and, depending on the context, meaning ‘to strive,’ ‘to exert,’ ‘to fight.’⁹⁴ In essence, jihad has multiple meanings, it could be a “struggle against one’s evil inclinations, an exertion to convert unbelievers, or a struggle for the moral betterment of the Islamic community.”⁹⁵ In most cases, a distinction is made between *lesser/inner Jihad* of purifying one’s sole or inner state – and an *outer/greater* jihad of purifying society itself (if necessary with military force). Although both serve the purpose of becoming in “harmony with God”, the lesser jihad has traditionally been a ‘precondition’ for the outer/greater jihad.⁹⁶

Apart from the fact that jihad has several meanings, its interpretations and application also differ, “contemporary thinking about jihad offers a wide spectrum of views, including conservatives who look to classical Islamic law on the subject and radicals who promote a violent jihad against Muslim and non-Muslim rulers.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, the principle of ‘holy war’ does not exist in the Islamic tradition and a Muslim identity is not enough to make a war ‘just’.⁹⁸ Jihad in terms of warfare/use of force is carefully regulated in Islamic law, “it must be called by a duly constituted state authority, it must be preceded by a call to Islam or treaty, noncombatants must not be attacked, and so on.”⁹⁹ However, again, interpretations on jihad vary considerable. While some see this authority (in lieu of a caliph) or a ‘mandate by the *‘ulama* (Islamic scholars) as a precondition for jihad, others do not consider it a necessity.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the definition and understanding of jihad itself has changed over time. The formulations of the concept of *Jihad* have changed substantially and have been influenced by a changing socio-historical context.¹⁰¹

Similarly, Salafism can be defined as, “a branch of Sunni Islam whose modern-day adherents claim to emulate ‘the pious predecessors’ (al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ; often equated with the first three generations of Muslims) as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible.”¹⁰² In addition, Salafism can be seen as a “restoration of Islamic doctrines to pure form,

⁹³ Paul L. Heck, “Jihad Revisited,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32, no. 1 (2004): 95-123.

⁹⁴ “Jihad,” Oxford Islamic Studies, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1199>, accessed April 10, 2018.

⁹⁵ “Jihad.”

⁹⁶ Heck, “Jihad,” 99.

⁹⁷ “Jihad.”

⁹⁸ Khaled Abou El Fadl, “The Place of Tolerance in Islam: On reading the Qur’an—and misreading it,” Boston Review, <http://bostonreview.net/archives/BR26.6/elfadl.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.

⁹⁹ “Jihad.”

¹⁰⁰ David Cook, “Islamism and Jihadism: The Transformation of Classical Notions of Jihad into an Ideology of Terrorism,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (2009): 180.

¹⁰¹ Heck, “Jihad,” 122.

¹⁰² Joas Wagemakers “Salafism,” Oxford Research Encyclopedia, <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-255?print=pdf>, accessed April 10, 2018, 1.

adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah, rejection of the authority of later interpretations, and maintenance of the unity of ummah."¹⁰³ However, both are still very broad categories and Salafism, like jihadism, is not a static branch or ideology.

Although the concepts of Salafism is frequently linked to violence, it is a misconception that all Salafists are jihadists or seek to restore Islamic doctrines with an armed struggle. Only a small percentage of the total Muslim population are Salafists (and even less resorts to violent Salafi-jihadism).¹⁰⁴ Salafists as well as jihadists only make up a small percentage of the total Muslim population living in western Europe today. Moreover, a study of Salafi organizations in the Netherlands found that there are significant differences between these organizations. Salafi groups vary in their orientations and leadership and Salafists hold different views of the same Salafi ideology. For instance, the concepts of *tawhid* (the uniqueness of Allah as creator and legislator) and the prohibition of *shirk* (idol worship) are central to the Salafist ideology, but Salafists disagree over how these concepts should be interpreted. In particular, what the meaning of this concepts is in a contemporary context and for Muslims living in the West.¹⁰⁵

In general, most scholars claiming a link between Islam and violence fail to define what separates Islam from other non-religious factors. For example, several scholars traces the roots of modern religious and Islamist terrorism to the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the support it gained from Shi'a Islamist terrorist groups.¹⁰⁶ Rapoport states, "The most notorious instance has occurred among the Shi'a, where the attempt to revive jihad (holy war) doctrines has produced some remarkable incidents in Lebanon and elsewhere."¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Hoffman finds that the Iranian Revolution had a profound impact on Muslims elsewhere in the world. He claims that these early examples of Shi'a terrorist groups, under the auspice of Ayatollah Khomeini, tried to expand fundamental teachings of the Qur'an to other Muslim countries. Iran's goal to bring other Muslim countries the "fundamentalist interpretations of Islamic Law."¹⁰⁸ According to Hoffman, the Iranian regime and these Shi'a organizations became involved in terrorism because they are a minority group within Islam, encircled by Sunni Islamic countries.¹⁰⁹ It was only after these Shi'a organizations gained some success that Sunni organization began to adopt similar tactics.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, this argument only strengthens the idea that that religious terrorism is also influenced by other factors,

¹⁰³ "Salafi," Oxford Islamic Studies, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2072#>, accessed April 10, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Ineke Roex, "Should we be scared of all salafists in Europe?: A Dutch case study," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 8, no. 3 (2014): 59.

¹⁰⁵ Roex, "Should we be scared," 51-59.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis and Dawson, "Introduction," 117.

¹⁰⁷ Rapoport, "Messianic," 195.

¹⁰⁸ Hoffman, *Inside*, 89.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 89-97.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

such as political, cultural or ethnic struggles. Hoffman himself argues that Iran and these Shi'a groups also tried to reduce the influence of the West –in particular the United States- in the Middle East.¹¹¹ This latter element suggest a more (geo)political motive. Hoffman's and Rapoport both refer to Shi'a Islam in regard to its broader geopolitical context. In most cases, the relationship between violence and Islam cannot be seen in isolation from other factors. Hence, there is some validity to Cavanaugh claim that "Muslim radicalism is best understood as a theopolitical project, which means that any attempt to isolate religion from the political and social contexts of Muslim radicalism will fail to grasp the full reality of Muslim anti-Western sentiment."¹¹² Islamist terrorism is not a "monolithic phenomenon" that is easily explained by Islam alone.¹¹³

Scholars from the second strand refute the idea that Islam causes violence. They see violence as the outcome of 'secular' dynamics and argue that religion and violence are often too ill-defined to offer any valuable meaning. Consequently, scholars in this strand see Islam and violence as two largely unrelated phenomena. For example, Graham Fuller has argued that conflicts in a world without Islam would not be vastly different from the ones we face today. In his view, even in a world without religion, people will most likely continue to strife over other things such as power, wealth and influence.¹¹⁴

Some empirical evidence seems supports Fuller's claim. A study on the prevalence of intrastate conflict in Islamic countries for the 1981-2009 period, did not find Islam to be statistically significant for the onset of intrastate conflict. Although Islamic countries appeared to be more prone to intrastate conflict, it was found that these conflicts were more likely caused by other factors such as the social, economic and political conditions in these countries. In other words, the onset of conflict in these countries seem to be better explained by lower GDP per capita, oil dependency, state repression, autocracy, and youth bulges than Islam.¹¹⁵

Unfortunately, this kind of reasoning is indeed somewhat 'apologetic'. Fuller's argument rests on the idea that violence has many different causes. Although this may be true, it is not a convincing way of demonstrating that Islam cannot incite violence. Economic aspects and demographics alone often fall short in explaining violence. These factors are often intertwined with other factors such as culture and religion.¹¹⁶ Moreover, people's religious and cultural identities plays

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Cavanaugh, *The Myth*, 229.

¹¹³ Piazza, "Is Islamist Terrorism," 77.

¹¹⁴ Graham E. Fuller, "A World Without Islam," *Foreign Policy* (2008): 46-53.

¹¹⁵ Süveyda Karakaya, "Religion and Conflict: Explaining the Puzzling Case of 'Islamic Violence'," *International Interactions* 41, no 3 (2015): 509-538.

¹¹⁶ Benedikt Korf, "Rethinking the Greed-Grievance Nexus: Property Rights and the Political Economy of War in Sri Lanka," *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 2 (2005): 214-215.

an important role in the onset of conflict.¹¹⁷

This 'apologetic' approach is widespread. Scholars have identified several possible 'root causes' as to explain 'Europe's angry Muslims', including an alienated population of 'second generation' Muslim youth, who struggle with their identity, resentment against Western dominance and anti-imperialism, the failure of integrating Muslim immigrants into EU countries, the pitfalls of multiculturalism, the changing demographics in EU countries due to mass migration by Muslims, and, lastly, resentment against the participation of EU countries in the war against Iraq dubbed as the 'Iraq effect'.¹¹⁸ However, although these factors could have been part of the reason why some resort to violent jihadism, they too quickly denounce the role of Islam. For instance, there is evidence to suggest that jihad is now most commonly associated with a military struggle against unbelievers.¹¹⁹ Some even go as far as to say that the military has always been the dominant interpretation.¹²⁰ Islam may still have elements that could inspire its followers to commit acts of violence (e.g. sacred texts) even though not all Muslims may adhere to those violent principles.¹²¹

Closely

related to this point is that over the last few years, scholars have developed new frameworks that largely omit the role of religion such as 'radicalization' and 'alienation'. The problem with these frameworks is that their explanatory value is limited. Radicalization is a relatively new framework developed in a post-9/11 world used to explain why some adopt increasingly 'extreme' religious ideas. This concept is fraught with deficiencies. As Daniela Psoiu summarizes, "Islamist radicalization in Europe is a research child born prematurely marked by political pressure, social change, and global unrest. At the dawn of the jihadi campaigns on European soil and increasingly targeting it, insecurity, insufficient knowledge of the 'other', and a wish for quick fixes had an impact on the research agenda."¹²² Another problem is that the term radicalization has in most cases been applied to a context of Muslims in Western-Europe and ignores other groups. For instance, during the 1970s and 1980s there were no references to members of the IRA who 'radicalized'.¹²³ This narrow implementation challenges its contemporary value and accuracy. Moreover, scholars have argued that the process of radicalization is the outcome of different 'pathways'. The narrative of 'pathways' is based on a combination of factors, including social-economic dynamics, identity, religious dynamics and personal

¹¹⁷ Frances Stewart, "Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities," *Oxford Development Studies* 28, no. 3 (2000): 247-248.

¹¹⁸ Robert S. Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims," *Foreign Affairs* 84, No. 4 (2005): 120-134.

¹¹⁹ Shireen Khan Burki, "Haram or Halal?: Islamists' Use of Suicide Attacks as 'Jihad'," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 584.

¹²⁰ Munson, "Religion," 235.

¹²¹ Omar, "Islam," 158-162.

¹²² Daniela Psoiu, "Radicalization," in *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, ed. Jocelyne Cesari, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 770-775.

¹²³ Andrew Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists," *CTC Sentinel* 4, no. 1 (2011): 19-20.

dynamics.¹²⁴ However, these explanations are so broad that they lack any valuable meaning. Many people with similar backgrounds do not radicalize or become involved in violent activities.¹²⁵ In addition, as these scholars themselves acknowledge, radicalization does not automatically lead to violent behavior.¹²⁶

In comparison, the analytical strength of the framework of 'alienation' is equally shallow. The framework of alienation is used to explain factors such as economic deprivation, ethnic exclusion, political dissatisfaction and a search for identity. However, like radicalization, it is almost exclusively applied to young Muslims living in the West.¹²⁷ In addition, like radicalization, the framework of radicalization alienation has several shortcomings, including "the application of alienation with an ambiguity that renders the reader the determinant of its meaning; weak empirical evidence to support claims of alienation; the a priori belief that alienation must be a factor; the reduction of militant Salafism solely to a voice of protest; and the applicability of alienation to a broader constituency than militants."¹²⁸

In sum, the problem with both views is that they are overly deterministic. Most discussions on Islam have resulted in desperate attempts to either accuse or vindicate Islam of provoking violence.¹²⁹ However, in practice, aspects of Islam interact with other non-religious aspects of social life. Religion is not the only factor constituting the social world. Islamic theology interacts with historical and political factors and the two cannot be seen in isolation.¹³⁰ Social order is not exclusively based on religion or Islam, but also influenced by ethnicity, customs, values, political views, status, political ties and economic opportunities.¹³¹ At the same time, Islam is still a significant factor influencing people's lives.¹³²

In the next section, I will study the profiles of jihadists to analyze to what extent profiles reflect a devout lifestyle and adherence to the principles of Islam. This analysis will allow me to uncover to what extent 'religiosity' plays a role in jihadism.

2.2 The Profile of a Jihadist

¹²⁴ Royce Hutson, Taylor Long, and Michael Page, "Pathways to Violent Radicalisation in the Middle East: A Model for Future Studies of Transnational Jihad," *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 2 (2009): 18-25.

¹²⁵ Bart Schuurman, Peter Grol, and Scott Flower, "Converts and Islamist Terrorism: An Introduction," published June 2016, ICCT, <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ICCT-Schuurman-Grol-Flower-Converts-June-2016.pdf>, accessed April 10, 2018, 11.

¹²⁶ Hutson, "Pathways," 24.

¹²⁷ Frazer Egerton, "Alienation and its Discontents," *European Journal of International Relations* 17 no. 3 (2010): 453-474.

¹²⁸ Egerton, "Alienation," 463.

¹²⁹ Munson, "Religion," 254-256.

¹³⁰ John L. Esposito, "Islam and Political Violence," *Religions* 6, no. 3 (2015): 1079.

¹³¹ Brumberg, "Islamists," 109-114.

¹³² Russell Powell and Steve Clarke, "Religion, Tolerance, and Intolerance: Views from Across the Disciplines," in *Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*, eds. Steve Clarke, Russell Powell, and Julian Savulescu. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18-24.

In spite of a growing body of literature on the phenomenon of jihadism in the EU, knowledge on this topic has remained marginal, fragmented and unexamined. Research on jihadism has long been restricted by the limited availability of empirical data and these studies often lack a coherent approach and a uniform methodology. In addition, confusing terminology and significant differences in scope, duration and focus have made it difficult to compare findings across studies. Nonetheless, over the last five years, there has been an improvement in both the number and quality of studies on the topic of jihadism. Scholars have begun to study a range of different characteristics, such as age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, motives, employment, criminal records, marital status, social affiliation, conversion, place of residence and social-economic status. These characteristics help to uncover some of the commonalities within the literature. Several conclusions can be obtained from these studies.

1)

First of all, not all jihadists travel overseas. Although most Western jihadists prefer to fight abroad, there is some variation in jihadists' choice to travel abroad (foreign fighters/FFs) or fight at home (domestic fighters).¹³³ A small number of jihadists chooses to commit attacks at 'home' (i.e. the West).¹³⁴ There seem to be two reasons for this. First, there is a 'veteran effect'. In most cases they are committed by jihadists who either gained experience with FFs or stayed in contact with a veteran.¹³⁵ Second, there appears to be more practical reason. The increase in the number of domestic attacks began after 2003 (after the 'War on Terror') when it became more difficult for jihadists to travel abroad.¹³⁶ Both these findings, however, suggest that the decision to commit attacks (in the West) is not made solely on religious grounds; it is, at least in part, also the outcome of practical issues and social dynamics.

2) Most,

although not all, jihadists tend to be young (adult) men in their in their mid-twenties. A joint research effort by the George Washington University's Program on Extremism, the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) found that most perpetrators involved in 'homegrown' attacks (65%) are men between the age of 18 and 30.¹³⁷ According to this study five perpetrators (8%) were under the age of 18 and fifteen perpetrators (27%) were 30 years or older. The youngest attacker was 15, while the oldest was 52. The

¹³³ Hegghamer, "Should I Stay," 1.

¹³⁴ Manni Crone and Martin Harrow, "Homegrown Terrorism in the West," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 533.

¹³⁵ Hegghamer, "Should I Stay," 12-13.

¹³⁶ Crone and Harrow, "Homegrown," 521-522.

¹³⁷ Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone, and Eva Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor: Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West*, Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) / Program on Extremism at George Washington University (PoE-GWU) / International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), Published June 2017, Ledizioni LediPublishing Milano, <https://icct.nl/publication/fear-thy-neighbor-radicalization-and-jihadist-attacks-in-the-west/>, accessed April 10, 2018, 42.

average age of a perpetrator involved in these attacks was 27.3.¹³⁸ In total, only 2 out of the 65 attackers were female. The two identified women were Safia Smitter, who stabbed a police officer at a train station in Hannover in 2016, and Tashfeen Malik, who, together with her husband, was involved in the San Bernardino shooting in 2015.¹³⁹

Another study by the ICCT, which focus instead on the FF phenomenon, came to a similar conclusion. This study showed that most EU FFs are somewhere between the ages of eighteen and their mid-to-late twenties. Nonetheless, the average age differs per country. In some EU member countries between 4-10% of the FFs were under the age of eighteen. In addition, remarkably, in four eastern and southern European countries 50% of the FFs were 30 or older.¹⁴⁰ The total number of women EU FFs varied more than it did in the case of 'homegrown' acts of terrorism, it ranged between 6% and 30%.¹⁴¹

In comparison, a case study of Belgian or Dutch jihadist FFs found the average age to be slightly younger (23.5). Furthermore, the statistical distribution of these jihadists was more spread out (the youngest being 13 and the oldest being 67).¹⁴² A comparison with the period 1990-2009 showed that the current group of Belgian and Dutch FF is younger than before. The average age of a Jihadi FFs increased during these two decades, while the current group is again younger. In earlier studies on both global jihad and jihadists from Europe the average age was around 26 years of age.¹⁴³ For the EU at large, most jihadi FFs traveling to Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan or Somalia are younger than the generation who left before them (and less trained in Islam).¹⁴⁴

Another remarkable finding was that the percentage of female jihadists in the Netherlands appeared to be higher (24%) than in Belgium (16%).¹⁴⁵ Relatedly, the joint report on 'homegrown' terrorism found support for the claim that the role of women in jihadist terrorist organizations is mostly confined to non-combat roles.¹⁴⁶ In the case of female FFs it is not known what percentage of them actually took up arms and it therefore remains unclear to what extent these jihadist women are strictly speaking foreign 'fighters'.

¹³⁸ The report analyzed the profiles of 65 identified perpetrators involved in a total of 51 'jihadist homegrown' terrorist attacks in Europe and North America, committed between June 2014 (when the IS Caliphate was declared) and June 2017. It focuses exclusively on those who "intentionally and physically carried out such attacks by personally using a weapon". See Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 42.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-53.

¹⁴⁰ Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), published April 2016, eds., Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf, accessed April 10, 2018, 51.

¹⁴¹ Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters*, 51.

¹⁴² Edwin Bakker and Roel de Bont, "Belgian and Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters (2012–2015): Characteristics, Motivations, and Roles in the War in Syria and Iraq," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (2016): 841.

¹⁴³ Bakker and De Bont, "Belgian and Dutch," 841-842.

¹⁴⁴ Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters*, 54.

¹⁴⁵ Bakker and De Bont, "Belgian and Dutch," 842-845.

¹⁴⁶ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 51.

3) Most 'homegrown' jihadist terror plots are committed in northern and western European countries and most EU FFs also seem to originate from this same region. The geographical distribution of both FFs and terrorist plots is heavily clustered. Scandinavian countries and western European countries have a higher number of FFs than the southern European countries and, in particular, than eastern European countries. Most countries in the south or eastern part of Europe did neither experience a jihadist attack, nor did they see an outflow of jihadi FFs. The vast majority of all jihadist FFs come from just four countries: Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In total, 66.1% of all EU FFs originate from northern and western Europe.¹⁴⁷

The ten EU countries with the most jihadist FFs in absolute numbers, in descending order, are France (<900), Germany (720-760), the UK (700-760), Belgium (420-516), Sweden (250-300), Austria (230-300), the Netherlands (220), Spain (120-139), Denmark (125), Italy (87).¹⁴⁸ In comparison, Italy, Portugal, Latvia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Estonia, Poland Czech Republic, Romania, Lithuania and Malta had only a few or none FFs.¹⁴⁹ When compensated for the size of the population the distribution is different. The top ten of countries with the most FFs per capita (jihadists per million) in descending order are Belgium (41), Austria (31), Sweden (28), Denmark (22), France (14), Finland (13), the Netherlands (13), Luxembourg (11), the United Kingdom (11) and Germany (9).¹⁵⁰ Somewhat similar statistics can be observed concerning homegrown attacks. The joint study on 51 jihadist attacks in North America and Europe indicates that most of these attacks took place in France (17), followed by the United States (16), Germany (6), the United Kingdom (4), Belgium (3), Canada (3), Denmark (1) and Sweden (1).¹⁵¹

However, to put these figures in perspective, it may also be relevant to see how they compare with the estimated percentage of Muslims per country. The Washington D.C. based think-tank PEW Research Center, provides one of the only available studies on the number and spreading of Muslims in Europe. According to PEW the EU countries with the largest Muslim populations in descending order (2016) are France, Germany, the UK, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain.¹⁵² If the total number of Muslims is expressed as an estimated percentage of the total population (based on 2010), the EU countries with the most Muslims are Bulgaria (13,7%), France (7,5%), the Netherlands (6,0%), Belgium (5.9%), Germany (5.8%), Austria (5,4%), Greece (5,3%), the UK (4,6%), Sweden (4,6%) and Denmark (4,1%).¹⁵³ These figures roughly correspond with the above mentioned data on FFs and jihadist 'homegrown'

¹⁴⁷ Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters*, 49.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵¹ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 45-46.

¹⁵² "Europe's Growing Muslim Population," PEW Research Center, <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

¹⁵³ "Europe's Growing Muslim Population."

attacks.¹⁵⁴ This suggests that jihadists mostly come from EU countries with a large Muslim population.

4) The motives of jihadists are diverse and not all of them are devout followers of Islam.¹⁵⁵ Although motives will be discussed in more detail in the next chapters, evidence suggests jihadists are not overly religious. The reasons for Belgian and Dutch jihadists FFs to join organizations such as Jabhat al-Nusra and IS vary from, “a lack of meaningfulness to social exclusion and (perceived) discrimination.”¹⁵⁶ Likewise, jihadists involved in ‘homegrown’ terror plots also appeared to be motivated by a variety of different reasons that often had little to do with religion. Their motives included personal issues, vengeance, mental issues, problems at work, hatred, Black Nationalism and other ideologies. Although in some cases religion appeared to be the prevailing motive, in most cases motives were either ambiguous or unclear.¹⁵⁷ Profiles from those involved in the 9/11 attacks and the 2005 London bombings revealed that some were devout, while others were not. These London bombers were from different backgrounds. Several of them held university degrees from Western universities and were not particularly religious and some regularly visited bars and red light districts.¹⁵⁸

A report on the actual terrorist threat in the Netherlands (*Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland*) the Dutch counter-terrorism unit (*Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid/NCTV*) argued that ‘jihadist community’ in the Netherlands continues to attract new often relatively young jihadists. According to the NCTV these young individuals hold little knowledge of jihadism and they did not share a strong religious-ideological motivation for Jihadism.¹⁵⁹

5) A disproportionately high number of jihadists are (recent) converts. In addition, these converts differ in some regards from the overall group. In total, 17% percent of all perpetrators who carried out attacks in the West were converts to Islam. This exceeds the average number of converts found amongst the general population. Nonetheless, the percentage of converts in the US and Canada was significantly higher than the percentage of converts in the EU (14% versus 3%). Furthermore, the percentage of converts differs per country. For example, in France 4% of the perpetrators were converts. While none of the perpetrator involved in the attacks

¹⁵⁴ It should be said that these are estimates. Despite being based on a broad variety of sources including censuses, demographic surveys, general population surveys and other studies, the definition of a Muslim is based on a sociological rather than a theological identity frame. In other words, the PEW dataset considers someone a Muslim, when a persona self-identifies as such. The levels of religious adherence, belonging to different religious schools, or the frequency of prayer or mosque attendance are not considered. See “Europe’s Growing Muslim Population,” PEW Research Center.

¹⁵⁵ Le Fever, “Kritiek experts.”

¹⁵⁶ Bakker, “Belgian,” 851.

¹⁵⁷ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 67-68.

¹⁵⁸ Esposito, “Islam,” 1077.

¹⁵⁹ “Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 44,” NCTV, published April 2017 https://www.nctv.nl/binaries/DTN44%20Samenvatting%206%20april%202017_tcm31-254139.pdf, accessed April 10, 2018, 2-9.

in Belgium, Sweden, Germany and Denmark had converted. Thus, in relation to the homegrown attacks the overrepresentation of converts can only be partially confirmed.¹⁶⁰

Amongst the EU FFs the number of converts was much higher.¹⁶¹ A relatively high percentage of Dutch Jihadists who travel to Syria and Iraq seem to consist of recent converts. In total, 13.6% of the 206 Dutch Jihadist who traveled to Syria and Iraq had recently been converted to Islam. This is a significantly higher than the estimated percentage of converts of the total population of Muslims in the Netherlands, which is estimated to be less than 1.9%. The disproportionate high number of recent converts amongst FFs can also be found in neighboring countries. In Germany it is similar at 12%, while in France it is a much higher 23%.¹⁶² In addition, converts appeared to differ from non-convert perpetrators. A significant number of them had a criminal record compared to the overall group of perpetrators (73% versus 57%) and 55% had served a jail sentence compared to 34% of the overall perpetrators.¹⁶³ The converts in the data set had not travelled to areas which were controlled by jihadists groups and held fewer connections with jihadists groups compared to the overall group of perpetrators (27% versus 42%). Lastly, converts caused an average of less than one victim, while the average attacker caused 5.7 fatalities per attack.¹⁶⁴ These latter findings could suggest that converts are an unbalanced group in relation to the other jihadists. That said, a number of reservations should be made. The overrepresentation may not be the norm in all Western countries and it may be a relatively recent development. Moreover, as has been argued “a comprehensive, theoretically sound and empirically grounded understanding of how and why converts become involved in Islamist militancy is absent.”¹⁶⁵

6) A substantial number of jihadists has a migrant background. Although data on the ethnic background and nationality of those involved in jihadism is somewhat scarce, evidence suggests that most jihadists have a migrant background. In addition, in many cases they themselves or one of their parents were born in a country with a predominant Muslim population.

The ICCT on FFs study shows that in a number of EU countries FFs have a double or so-called hyphenated identity or nationality, several FFs held Chechen, Turkish, and Balkan roots.¹⁶⁶ In Italy, twelve jihadists only held the Italian nationality and in six cases they held a double nationality. One example includes an Italian-Moroccan man who joined the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) in Syria.¹⁶⁷ In comparison, most Belgian and Dutch jihadists had a migrant background. A significant number of them had parents who were

¹⁶⁰ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 54-58.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁶² Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters*, 51.

¹⁶³ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 56.

¹⁶⁴ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 55-58

¹⁶⁵ Schuurman, Grol, and Flower, “Converts,” 1.

¹⁶⁶ Boutin et al., *The Foreign*, ICCT Annex 3: Additional Information on EU Member States, 1.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

born in Morocco (46%).¹⁶⁸ The ICCT report on FFs found that Dutch FFs came from traditional religious immigrant of Moroccan, Somali, Antillean, Turkish origin, as well as in ethnically Dutch settings.¹⁶⁹ In the case of Spain, a number had been Moroccans living in Spain (most from the Spanish enclave Ceuta in North Africa, Morocco).¹⁷⁰ These examples are however somewhat anecdotal and it remains uncertain how they relate to the overall group. In some Western European countries FFs hold nationalities other than the countries they departed from, while in other Western European countries they hold single or dual citizenship of the country they left.¹⁷¹

Most jihadists involved in ‘homegrown’ attacks are nationals of the countries in which they commit their attack. The study on homegrown attacks found that the 73% of the perpetrators were citizens of the country in which they committed the attack. In the other cases, these attackers were legal residents or legitimate visitors from neighboring (14%), were refugee or asylum seeker (5%) or were illegal in the country in which they carried out their attack (6%).¹⁷² Although the nationalities of these individuals differs somewhat, several individuals involved in homegrown attacks were from Tunisian or Moroccan descent.¹⁷³

7) Social affiliations play an important role in jihadism (and recruitment). Most jihadists are from the same area and are either friends, family or both. The majority of the EU FFs are from large metropolitan areas or surrounding suburbs.¹⁷⁴ Although research found that patters differ significantly from case to case, the presence (or absence) of what they describe as ‘radicalization hubs’ seems to play a significant role in explaining variations between the number of jihadists. Radicalization hubs often form around ‘organized structures’, such as certain Salafi groups, radical mosques, charismatic personalities and sometimes even groups of friends.¹⁷⁵ In terms of marital status, the ICCT report provides little data. Information collected from five EU countries, indicates that about half of the FFs were married. Although in at least one southern European country the majority of FFs were unmarried.¹⁷⁶ This latter finding is not in line with a study on Belgian and Dutch jihadist FF over the period of 2012-2015. This study indicates that 78% percent of the Belgian jihadists and 64% of the Dutch jihadists were married prior to their departure.¹⁷⁷ In many cases women travelled together with their husband or followed their husbands at a later stage.¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁸ Bakker and De Bont, “Belgian and Dutch,” 850-851.

¹⁶⁹ Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters*, 35.

¹⁷⁰ Boutin et al., *The Foreign*, ICCT Annex 3: Additional Information on EU Member States, 44.

¹⁷¹ Boutin et al., *The Foreign*, 52.

¹⁷² Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 16.

¹⁷³ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 41, 54, 94.

¹⁷⁴ Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters*, 52.

¹⁷⁵ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 17.

¹⁷⁶ Bérénice Boutin et al., *The Foreign Fighters*, 51.

¹⁷⁷ Bakker and De Bont, “Belgian and Dutch,” 844.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 844-845.

8) Most EU jihadists are attracted to IS or one of its affiliated groups. In 42% of all terrorist attacks the perpetrators had an 'operational connection' to an established jihadist group, mostly IS. In 63% the perpetrators displayed their allegiance to a specific jihadist group (almost always IS) either during or before the attack. In total, 8% of the attacks were directly based on directives received from IS. In 26% of the attacks, the perpetrators were inspired by IS, but did not receive direct orders. In the majority of cases (66%) the perpetrators acted independently and only held a more loose connection with IS (or sometimes al Qaeda). In 38% of the cases these attacks were claimed by a jihadist group, again mainly by IS.¹⁷⁹

9) A substantial number of jihadists from Western Europe have criminal backgrounds ranging from one-time crimes to petty crime to gang membership and career criminals. Although it is unclear if terrorist organizations use criminal records as a recruiting strategy, a database of EU jihadist with criminal backgrounds showed that terrorist and criminal activities frequently merge.¹⁸⁰ In some cases a religious justification was given for their crimes, some referred to crime as *halal*, permissible in the context of jihad, or referred to the concept of *ghanimah* as spoils of war.¹⁸¹

In sum, the findings discussed above indicate that a single profile of a jihadist cannot be identified. A review of literature on jihadism indicates that the backgrounds of European jihadists are diverse. Only a number of very general observations can be made. The vast majority of all jihadists are young adult men. In most cases these jihadist refer to travel abroad, are from urban settings, with a migrant background, predominantly from northern or western Europe. A significant number is (recent) convert, married or has a criminal background. Most support IS or an affiliated group.

A report from the British intelligence and security agency MI5 supports these conclusions. According to this MI5 report on radicalization, terrorism and extremism, most British nationals involved in terrorism are not overly religious. Most are not "religious zealots" and "do not practise their faith regularly" and could even be considered religious "novices."¹⁸² The majority of them are in their early-twenties, but a substantial number are over the age of 30. They often are in a relationship or have children. Some use drugs, alcohol and visit prostitutes and many are converts. In addition, the report shows that most are British nationals and their ethnic composition is similar to that of the UK Muslim population as a whole. Finally, the report found no evidence that these individuals were more often mentally ill than the general population.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 62-76.

¹⁸⁰ Rajan Basra, Peter R. Neumann and Claudia Brunner, "Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus," The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/crime-terror-report_20171214_web.pdf, accessed April 10, 2018, 23-26.

¹⁸¹ Basra, Neumann and Brunner, "Criminal Pasts," 53.

¹⁸² Alan Travis, "MI5 Report Challenges Views on Terrorism in Britain," *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism1>, accessed April 10, 2018.

¹⁸³ Travis, "MI5 Report".

Chapter III. Religious Incongruence and Religious Violence

3.1 Religious Violence: A Cheshire-Cat Logic

Terrorism has long been linked to mental illness and irrational behavior.¹⁸⁴ Two decades ago, Andrew Silke criticized the tendency of many psychologists to label terrorists with a form of psychopathology. He found that the recurring theme in most psychological research at the time was the widespread idea that terrorism could only be explained as a clinical disorder.¹⁸⁵ According to Silke, these psychologists had been blinded by what could be identified as an ‘attribution error’ or the human tendency “to view our own behavior as stemming from situational or environmental forces, but that we see the behavior of other people as stemming from internal forces, such as stable personality traits.”¹⁸⁶

In his article, Silke draws an analogy with the Cheshire-Cat found in Lewis Carroll’s book *Alice in Wonderland*. In one notable scene in the novel, the Cheshire-Cat tells Alice that, like everyone else who is residing in Wonderland, she is mad. When Alice asks why the cat believes she is mad, the cat replies by saying that since only mad figures inhabit Wonderland, Alice *must* be mad as well. The cat thereby commits an attribution error by considering Alice to be mad merely on the basis of her presence in Wonderland. The term ‘Cheshire-Cat logic’ is thus used to signify a specific type of attribution error “where observers develop expectations about an individual’s personality based on what the individual does or, as in Alice’s case, where the individual is located.”¹⁸⁷ Silke uses the Cheshire-Cat analogy to demonstrate that psychological abnormality had become a prerequisite for understanding terrorism. These psychologists wrongfully asserted that anyone willing to commit an act as shocking and unsettling as terrorism *must* have logically suffered from some sort of clinical disorder.¹⁸⁸

In the end, most of the psychological research supporting terrorist abnormality had been of poor quality, anecdotal and of questionable validity.¹⁸⁹ In comparison, more recent studies challenge the idea that terrorists are mentally unstable individuals.¹⁹⁰ The root causes of terrorism are not easily identified and the motives of the perpetrators vary greatly. Contrary to what these earlier studies suggested, terrorists were not

¹⁸⁴ David Weatherston and Jonathan Moran, “Terrorism and Mental Illness: Is There a Relationship?,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 47, no. 6 (2003): 698-710.

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Silke, “Cheshire-Cat logic: The Recurring Theme of Terrorist Abnormality in Psychological Research,” *Psychology, Crime & Law* 4, no. 1 (1998): 51-53.

¹⁸⁶ Silke, “Cheshire-Cat,” 52.

¹⁸⁷ Silke, “Cheshire-Cat,” 52.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-53.

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Silke, “The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4, (2001): 4-10.

¹⁹⁰ Weatherston and Jonathan Moran, “Terrorism,” 698.

found to be disproportionately irrational or mentally ill.¹⁹¹ Remarkably, the clear lack of empirical evidence (even at the time) did not persuade these scholars to revise their position. Instead, many of these researchers began to speculate that although these terrorist did not suffer from any clinical disorders, they were still in a “twilight region bordering on pathology.”¹⁹²

Unfortunately, attribution errors are not exclusive to the study of terrorism. The same Cheshire-Cat logic could equally well be applied to the study of religion. Both in research on terrorism and religion this idea of pathology and irrationality has been persistent and widespread. Silke argues that the trend of considering terrorists as mentally ill “has effectively tainted terrorists with a pathology aura, without offering any way to easily test or refute the accusations.”¹⁹³ This resembles the statement made by Cavanaugh that religious violence has reached “the status of truism.”¹⁹⁴ Religion is frequently portrayed as a negative social force that opposes modernity, science and rationality.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, aspects of religion have more than once been linked to clinical disorder. A strong example of this is the concept of fundamentalism. The idea of ‘excessive’ or ‘fundamentalist’ religious devotion as a cause of insanity could be traced back to the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁶ Fundamentalism has been associated with insanity and the negative outcomes of religious devotion and this idea is still present in the same manner today.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, religious devoutness has been understood and described as pathology and ‘mania’.¹⁹⁸ For instance, Craig Martin criticizes the normative tendency to perceive religion as a bodily condition which has to be normalized. He states, “There is something of a metaphorical medicalization of religious violence in the literature.”¹⁹⁹ Thus, in some ways the ‘madness’ of psychopathology has been replaced by the ‘madness’ of religion. In the context of religion, the attribution error is frequently based on the assertion that an act of violence with a possible religious connection or dimension *must* be the outcome of ‘terrorists’ acting on the basis of their ‘radical’, ‘extremist’ or ‘orthodox’ religious beliefs.

Indeed, the study of religion may suffer from its own type of attribution error. The tendency to view people and their actions as an outcome of their religious beliefs is indicative of what Mark Chaves describes as the ‘religious congruence fallacy’.²⁰⁰ People make assertions about how others

¹⁹¹ Bakker, “Zin en onzin,” 546.

¹⁹² Silke, “Cheshire-Cat,” 64.

¹⁹³ Silke, “Cheshire-Cat,” 51.

¹⁹⁴ Cavanaugh, “Religious Violence,” 486.

¹⁹⁵ Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, “Introduction” in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, eds., Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁹⁶ Michael Barkun, “Religious Violence and the Myth of Fundamentalism,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 4, no. 3 (2003): 57-58.

¹⁹⁷ Barkun, “Religious violence,” 68.

¹⁹⁸ Robert E. Bartholomew and Julian D. O’Dea, “Religious Devoutness Construed as Pathology: the Myth of ‘Religious Mania,’” *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 8, no. 1 (1998): 1-13.

¹⁹⁹ Craig Martin, “What is Religion?,” *Political Theology* 15, no. 6. (2014): 506.

²⁰⁰ Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 1.

behave based on their religious affiliation. The ‘attribution error’, or fallacy in this case, is the *a priori* belief that people’s actions and behavior logically, directly and unequivocally follow from their religious beliefs, ideas, practices. As argued by Chaves, “Almost every claim of the form, ‘People act in a certain way because they are in a particular religion or because they attend religious services or because they hold this or that religious belief,’ commits the religious congruence fallacy.”²⁰¹ Chaves remarks how decades of sociological, anthropological and psychological research have shown that religious congruence is the exception rather than the norm.²⁰² In most cases, cultural and religious behavior is *incongruent*. Individuals do not hold coherent and consistent religious ideas and beliefs, people’s attitudes are not coherent or uniform over time, neither are they similar across individuals and situations. In sort, religion is not an “integrated network of internally consistent beliefs and values”, and it is erroneous to assume that “religious and other practices and actions follow directly from those beliefs and values.”²⁰³ As Chaves contends, “Rather, people’s religious ideas and practices generally are fragmented, compartmentalized, loosely connected, unexamined, and context dependent.”²⁰⁴

3.2 The Religious Congruence Fallacy and Religious Violence

The congruence fallacy has had a major impact on the study of religion. Both the academic and public debates on religion are also deeply influenced by the common perception that there must be consistency between people’s religious beliefs and their (violent) behavior. That is, religious congruence has become a comfortable “default interpretation.”²⁰⁵ Cliteur, for example, argues that Holy Scriptures of Christianity, Islam or Judaism could convince believers to commit acts of violence. He suggests that some believers will take scriptures literal because they consider them to be holy and ‘the word of God’. In his view, a few violent passages are enough to convince some to behave violently.²⁰⁶ Unfortunately, Cliteur does not provide any empirical evidence to substantiate his claims. He only quotes two passages, one from the Qur’an and one from the Old Testament, to illustrate that those religious texts provide a moral justification for violence.²⁰⁷ This, however, does not tell anything about how these texts are being read. In addition, it does not exclude the possibility that other motivators could be involved. His argument that believers consider every passage to be ‘holy’ and will (consistently) act on the basis of those passages is itself a good example of the religious congruence fallacy.²⁰⁸

By the same

²⁰¹ Ibid., 6.

²⁰² Ibid., 1-3.

²⁰³ Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 1-3.

²⁰⁴ Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 7

²⁰⁶ Cliteur, “Religion and Violence,” 205-224.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 224.

token, Ibrahim's argument on the violent "Qur'anic injunctions" as compared to what he sees as the less violent Judeo-Christian scriptures is equally problematic.²⁰⁹ In short, this line of reasoning causes one conjecture leading to another. His claim that the Qur'an has more violent passages than the Bible is an unproven explanation of why Islam would be more violent. Furthermore, his view that Islam in general would be more violent is based on the assumption that the Qur'an provides more space for violent interpretations. In turn, this is based on the assumption that most Muslims would take these verses in a literal way. Apart from the fact that these arguments are based on speculation, scriptures are generally not a convincing proxy for explaining violence. The reason for this is that they are constantly being reinterpreted. People develop different interpretations of the same religious teachings, texts, hymns and rituals due to constantly changing socio-historical context.²¹⁰

The vast majority of examples found in the literature are examples of religious *incongruence*. For example, in her book *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, Karen Armstrong concludes,

*We have seen that, like the weather, religion 'does lots of different things.' To claim that it has a single, unchanging, and inherently violent essence is not accurate. Identical religious beliefs and practices have inspired diametrically opposed courses of action.*²¹¹

Armstrong gives a number of examples of how different groups or individuals belonging to one parent religion frequently adopt completely different interpretations of the same teachings. In relation to Islam she refers to Islamic scholars Ahmed ibn Taymiyyah and Jalal ad-Din Rumi, who were both victims of the Mongol Invasions, but held different interpretations of the same teachings. Rumi embraced the Mongols and argued Muslims should open towards other faiths. In contrast, Ibn Taymiyyah considered the Mongol converts as *Kufar* (infidels). He called for a greater jihad against the Mongols and urged a return to Islam of the prophet's time. In 1299, he issued a *Fatwa* (legal ruling) against the Mongol invaders despite the fact that they had begun to convert to Islam.²¹² Similarly, in both Rapaport's articles, examples of religious incongruence can be found. In both his texts there seems to be incoherence and inconsistencies in what he describes as 'holy terror'. On the essence of 'messianic terror' he states,

Messianic beliefs, it should be stressed, rarely form a coherent whole and are usually sufficiently ambiguous to allow participants to choose between alternatives or abandon one course for another

²⁰⁹ Ibrahim, "Are Judaism," 3-12.

²¹⁰ Munson, "Religion," 237.

²¹¹ Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, 1st ed. (Anchor Books: New York, 2015): 393.

²¹² Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, 222.

*when this appears more productive. Finally, a particular religious culture often has a variety of paradigms to choose from.*²¹³

Rapoport's mention of the incoherence of messianic beliefs, the variety of paradigms and his own syncretistic blending of religion and culture are all indication of religious incongruence. These same examples are also present in his first article,

*Obviously there are enormous variations in its expressions which extend to purposes, methods, responses, and differences that derive from the ingenuity of the individual terror cult which in turn is limited by boundaries established by the original religion. In an odd, interesting way, the terrorist as a deviant highlights unique features of the parent religion that distinguish it from other religions, e.g., concepts of the relation of the divine to history and to social structure.*²¹⁴

What Rapoport labels as 'variations in expression' are examples of how religion is not always the main factor. Although religion provides 'boundaries', cults and other groups adopt their own views, visions and practices. The main point of contention in relation to Rapoport's articles is therefore that he sees these variations, but does not link them to other schemes than religious. In

much of the literature on Islam and violence something similar happens. The religious congruence fallacy in the case of jihadism is straightforward; Islam and/or Salafism are seen as the explanation for certain violent behavior. For some, the Arabic phrase *Allāhu akbar* ('God is most great') is enough to serve as a strong indication of a religious (Islamic) 'motive' and signals of "theoterrorism."²¹⁵ But the question then becomes: in what capacity this phrase is being used and, more importantly, to what extent it actually demonstrates 'religiosity'? An alternative explanation could be that religious ideas may also serve a more practical, facilitating role and/or could help to deal with the anxiety of the moment (the attack).²¹⁶ Moreover, the phrase itself may tell very little about the motive or the nature of the act. An example of this are suicide attacks. Although 'martyrdom' has often been justified or glorified in reference to religious views and values. Many suicide terrorists appear to be primarily motivated by political goals and are not (overly) religious (or adhere to other religions than Islam).²¹⁷

Chapter IV. The Religious Violence Thesis Revisited

²¹³ Rapoport, "Messianic," 198.

²¹⁴ Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling," 673.

²¹⁵ Geerten Waling, "Neem de motieven van terroristen serieus," Elsevier, <https://www.elsevierweekblad.nl/opinie/opinie/2018/04/elke-dag-een-aanslag-in-naam-van-een-religie-603699/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

²¹⁶ Megan K. McBride, "The Logic of Terrorism: Existential Anxiety, the Search for Meaning, and Terrorist Ideologies, Terrorism and Political Violence," 23, no. 4, (2011): 565.

²¹⁷ Bakker, "Zin en onzin," 546.

4.1 Religious Congruence and Jihadism

Chaves does not deny that religious congruence exists. However, he does argue that it is relatively rare. In his view scholars should be careful in asserting religious congruence, “If we want to claim religious internalization, we would have to show that people have had enough relevant, reinforcing religious experiences to forge an internalized connection strong enough to produce an automatic habitual response in a particular situation.”²¹⁸ Chaves identifies three conditions through which religious congruence can be achieved.²¹⁹ He argues that in addition to an “internalized response” and a “conscious cognitive effort”, religious congruence can be realized “through immersion in a homogeneous religious culture or through intense involvement with an all-encompassing group.”²²⁰

In the case of jihadism, these three conditions are also largely absent. The findings discussed above indicate that violence committed by European jihadists is not produced by ‘religious internalization’ or any of the other two conditions. Empirical evidence shows that most European jihadists hold little prior knowledge of Islam and in many cases they are (recent) converts to Islam. Their knowledge of Islam and jihadism is ill-examined and loosely connected with their other views. In addition, the wide variety in profiles, backgrounds and motives of European jihadists challenge the idea that their violent behavior is in any way congruent with their religious beliefs. Jihadists often behave or act in ways that suggest they are not in accordance with classical and/or modern Islamic teachings. That is, their violent actions do not seem to follow (directly) from adherence to Islamic principles, Qur’anic verses or Hadith literature.

For example, Western jihadists often commit themselves to multiple groups and they are more inspired by global jihadism in general than particular jihadist organizations or their religious orientations. A study of 79 cases of individuals charged in the U.S. with jihadist inspired terrorism showed that many ‘homegrown’ jihadists are inconsistent in their selection of jihadist organizations. These researchers wrote, “But in many cases, it is apparent that Americans who radicalize are attracted to Salafi-jihadist ideology at large, and often care little about the philosophical or tactical differences among jihadist organizations. Which organization they identify with is often a function of circumstance, opportunity, and serendipity.”²²¹ Far from being isolated examples, many Western jihadists pledge allegiance to multiple groups. The idea of jihadism itself seems to be more appealing than choosing a

²¹⁸ Chaves “Rain Dances,” 11.

²¹⁹ Although Chaves considers ‘internalization’ to be the most ‘powerful’ condition of the three, he argues that all three conditions difficult to achieve. This is mainly because they all involve specific circumstances such as frequent repetition or an intense experience. See: Chaves “Rain Dances,” 7.

²²⁰ Chaves “Rain Dances,” 7.

²²¹ Sarah Gilkes, Not Just the Caliphate: Non-Islamic State-Related Jihadist Terrorism in America, Program on Extremism, The George Washington University, Washington D.C., <https://abcnews.go.com/images/US/gwu-program-extremism-not-just-caliphate-20161206.pdf>, accessed April, 2018, 1.

particular jihadist group. In several cases this has led to the contradictory situations where Western jihadist pledge alliance to organizations belonging to two sides of the Sunni-Shi'a divide.²²² An example of this is Omar Mateen, who attacked a nightclub in Orlando in 2015. Mateen pledged support for Sunni organizations including IS and Jabhat al-Nusra (the latter which also is in conflict with IS) and called himself a member of Hezbollah (a Shi'a group).²²³ Furthermore, many jihadists are inconsistent in the way they express their beliefs. Their religious practices do not logically, consistently or directly follow from their religious ideas and practices. Jihadists often act in ways that have more to do with politics and military strategy than piety. For instance, many jihadists have supported and actively encouraged self-martyrdom. Yet, the Qu'ran, Hadith, Sunnah do not provide a historical or legal justification for suicide attacks or martyrdom operations.²²⁴ Support for these types of jihadist operations has only recently grown due to propaganda campaigns by some terrorist groups and the absence or contradictory opinions by some Islamic scholars.²²⁵ In the same way, classical Islamic sources are generally negative about the role of female fighters. However, over the last years, there has been an increase in the number of female jihadist fighters. The leadership of numerous Islamist organizations allowed women in more active combat roles and there has been a rise in women being involved in suicide attacks.²²⁶ Even though there is some historical evidence of female Muslim fighters and some mentions of them in the Hadith, it is clear that traditionally women did not fight. The discussion on women as active fighting jihadists (or martyrs) is fairly new in Islam and only began during the early 1990s. Most classical and modern Islamic scholars are reluctant to embrace the idea of female jihadists.²²⁷ The position to allow female fighters therefore marks a shift in relation to classical and even modern sources and suggests a more practical/strategic reason.²²⁸

In addition, the views of jihadists are often loosely connected and unexamined. For example, the concept of *ghanimah* is controversial concept in Islam. Classical Islamic jurists differ considerably over the 'rights to' and the 'possession of' this particular type of wealth, but they do agree that this wealth should be distributed according to the Qur'anic directive in

²²² Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 69-72.

²²³ Adam Taylor, "Omar Mateen May Not Have Understood the Difference between ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah," *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/06/13/omar-mateen-may-not-have-understood-the-difference-between-isis-al-qaeda-and-hezbollah/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

²²⁴ Asma Afsaruddin, "Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and History," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, accessed April 10, 2018, <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-46>.

²²⁵ Burki, "Haram or Halal," 582-601.

²²⁶ Farahnaz Ispahani, "Women and Islamist Extremism: Gender Rights Under the Shadow of Jihad," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 14, no. 2 (2016): 102.

²²⁷ David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 5 (2005): 375-384.

²²⁸ Ispahani, "Women," 102.

surah 8:41.²²⁹ Notwithstanding that jihad could be used as a way to seek redemption, most jihadists have used the concept of *ghanimah* to legitimize crime or a criminal past.²³⁰ The argument that these were legitimate spoils of war is fraught and there is little evidence to suggest that these (petty) crimes have been ‘internalized’ as legitimate spoils of war.

Furthermore, jihadists often claim to protect the *ummah* or wider Islamic community, but their attacks predominantly affect fellow Muslims.²³¹ Rapoport therefore seems to be right when he notes that what he sees as ‘holy terrorist’ often victimize those of the parent religion.²³² Jihadists do not fight one struggle against unbelievers, but also target fellow Muslim’s. Although this may be inconsistent with the concept of jihad (or at least with defense of the *ummah*), it is in agreement with theories on civil war. The reality of civil war is that these are highly complex and a convergence of local/private disputes with the central cleavage.²³³ Most terrorist attacks, including those labeled as jihadist or Islamist, occur outside Europe. Despite a strong increase in terrorist violence since 2015, resulting from a series of IS related attacks, Europe is not the most violent region. In 2016, 2% of all attacks and less than 1% of all deaths worldwide related to terrorism occurred in Western Europe.²³⁴ The majority of the terrorist attacks take place in Nigeria (Boko Haram), Somalia (al-Shabaab) and Syria and Iraq (ISIL) and Afghanistan (ISIL and Taliban).²³⁵ These countries all experience internal conflict and all of them are either Muslim majority countries or have a significant Muslim populations. Civil wars are involve all sorts of cleavages. Jihadists who travel to Syria and Iraq (or any other of the countries) will become part of all sorts of local/private disputes which do not always involve religion.²³⁶ The presence of these other ‘smaller’ non-religious disputes is another indication that violent behavior is seldom the outcome of religious congruence.

Lastly, it is not said that all jihadists act in the same way or even continue to hold the same (religious) views. A report on Salafism by the NCTV together with the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) acknowledge the diversity and dynamics within the Salafist movement.²³⁷ These Salafists differed significantly in their orientations and it is not said that their ideas are fixed. By the same token, returning jihadists do not

²²⁹ “Ghanimah,” Oxford University Press, accessed April 10, 2018, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e709>, accessed April 10, 2018.

²³⁰ Rajan Basra, Peter R. Neumann, and Claudia Brunner, “Criminal Pasts,” 24-26.

²³¹ Burki, “Haram or Halal,” 593.

²³² Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling,” 673-674.

²³³ Stathis N. Kalyvas, “The Ontology of “Political Violence”: Action and Identity in Civil Wars,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475.

²³⁴ Erin Miller, “Overview: Terrorism in 2016,” National Consortium for the Study on Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_OverviewTerrorism2016_August2017.pdf, accessed April 10, 2018, 7.

²³⁵ Miller, “Overview,” 3-9.

²³⁶ Kalyvas, “The Ontology,” 475.

²³⁷ “Salafism in the Netherlands: Diversity and dynamics,” General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), https://english.nctv.nl/binaries/publicatie-salafisme-eng-web_tcm32-84283.pdf, accessed April 10 2018, 14.

necessarily continue their armed struggle. Research shows that jihadist FFs, who returned to the West after earlier episodes of conflict, such as after the Soviet-Afghan War, the War in Bosnia and the Somalian Civil War, did not automatically become involved in terrorist activities in their country of origin. Although these contingents of FFs were smaller and evidence of their lives based on a small number of cases, available data does not support the idea that returning FFs will continue to commit attacks in the West. In practice, different pathways exist for what happens to FFs after they return. Some may get involved in terrorist activities in their country of origin, or travel to another conflict, while in other cases FFs peacefully reintegrate in society. The pathways for those who are not killed may therefore range from returning to staying or even leaving for yet another country.²³⁸

The actions and views of jihadists are not always a logical outcome of their religious affiliations, practices and beliefs. Religious beliefs could relate differently to other beliefs and actions. Chaves gives the example of how theological beliefs relate different or even opposite to other beliefs and actions for African Americans than for whites (e.g. in terms of political views, social engagement, sexual activity, etc).²³⁹ These kinds of examples can also be found in the context of jihadism. Despite a smaller (Muslim) population Belgium has almost twice as many jihadists in comparison to the Netherlands, even though the percentage of women is higher amongst Dutch jihadists.²⁴⁰ Furthermore, the report on attacks carried out in the West observes how southern European countries have seen lower levels of radicalization than central and northern European countries, even though they performed worse in integrating their Muslim populations.²⁴¹ Meanwhile, jihadists from Eastern Europe tend to be older than their western European counterparts. Although further research will be necessary to explain what causes these differences, it is clear that these ‘differences’ cannot be understood without considering additional factors other than religion.

In sum, religious incongruence is far more common than religious congruence. Chaves argues that behavior is incongruent because, in addition to religious beliefs, people’s actions are also shaped by other mental states, including perceptions, expectations, feelings, wishes, attitudes and intentions.²⁴² This may explain why Salafists belonging to different mosques or Salafi organizations can develop vastly different views over concepts such as *tawhid* and *shirk* and why not all jihadists continue fighting after they have returned from their jihadist struggle abroad. The Dutch Hofstadgroup help to illustrate this point. Participants of the Hofstadgroup were not necessarily acting on the basis

²³⁸ Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn and Edwin Bakker, “Returning Western foreign fighters: The Case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia,” ICCT, <https://icct.nl/publication/returning-western-foreign-fighters-the-case-of-afghanistan-bosnia-and-somalia/>, accessed April 10, 2018, 10-11.

²³⁹ Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 5-6.

²⁴⁰ Bakker, “Belgian and Dutch Jihadist,” 851.

²⁴¹ Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, 17.

²⁴² Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 12.

of their religious beliefs; only in a small number of cases was Islam the primary motivation to participate. Participants were allowed to hold different interpretations of Islam, at least as long as they were somewhat consistent with a Salafist ideology. In addition, the willingness to commit acts of violence was not considered to be a precondition.²⁴³ Their reasons to participate varied considerably.²⁴⁴

4.2 Religious Violence: An Alternative Perspective

Religious congruence is rare and people's actions seldom stem from their religious beliefs. Chaves notes that *incongruence* does not mean that these people are religious hypocrites or insincere.²⁴⁵ It simply means that behavior is rarely the direct outcome of someone's religious beliefs, practices and rituals. This implies that there should be other factors that motivate violence. Research on the phenomenon of violent jihadism underscores this conclusion. Not only do jihadists hold different and potentially conflicting views, but there are several indications that people become involved in violent jihadism in ways that have little to do with religion. For example, there is strong evidence to suggest that people's social context is more important than their religious beliefs.

Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, who studied a small number of trials of Danish Salafi jihadists, argues that this should be one of the main reasons why the phenomenon of Salafi jihadism should be studied in relation to what she describes as their *milieu*.²⁴⁶ According to Hemmingsen, these Salafi Jihadists have in common that they refer to each other in the manner of a 'shared we'. She argues that these individuals often were part of close group, already knew each other or shared acquaintances. Overall, Hemmingsen found that neither Islam nor a poor integration necessarily played a key role. Instead, she maintains that the incentives and motives to become involved in Salafi-jihadism were related to "indignation over injustices, social inequality, unequal distribution of goods and power, exploitation, destruction of the environment and the materialistic and capitalist world order -in short, indignation over the current state of affairs."²⁴⁷

Likewise, a literature review of empirical studies on violent radicalization and militant Islamism in Europe published between 2001 and 2008, also found that peer groups, friends or family members played a key role in the radicalization process.²⁴⁸ Charismatic leaders, family members or peers frequently

²⁴³ Bart Schuurman, "Becoming a European Homegrown Jihadist: A Multilevel Analysis of Involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005: Summary in Dutch," Phd diss. Universiteit Leiden, 2017, 229-233.

²⁴⁴ "Unieke inkijk in ontstaan Hofstadgroep," Universiteit Leiden, published January 24, 2017, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/nieuws/2017/01/unieke-inkijk-in-ontstaan-hofstadgroep>, accessed April 10, 2018.

²⁴⁵ Chaves, "Rain Dances," 2.

²⁴⁶ Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, "Relying on Fieldwork to Study Unorganized and Clandestine Phenomena," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 7 (2011): 1202.

²⁴⁷ Hemmingsen, "Salafi," 1211.

²⁴⁸ Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent Radicalization," 810.

instigate the process and drive these individuals towards radicalization. Especially the outreach and recruitment by peer group leaders seems to be a relevant aspect found in many cases of radicalization. In addition, progressive isolation from the rest of society appeared to be another recurring factor. Remarkably, the role of online propaganda and internet preachers seem to be secondary to actual daily social relationships.²⁴⁹ Other empirical studies came to similar conclusions. For instance, the Hofstadgroup began as a group of people who had known each other because they had grown up in the same neighborhoods, attended the same schools or went to the same local mosques.²⁵⁰ In general, both Dutch and Belgians who travelled to Syria and Iraq did so because of ‘chain migration’ or ‘peer recruitment’.²⁵¹ Social dynamics had a significant impact on their decision to leave. These individuals often knew people who had already travelled to Syria or Iraq, mostly friends or family and they stayed in contact with ‘ideologically like-minded people’ in person or over the internet. In addition, in some cases, recruitment by jihadist networks also played an important role.²⁵²

Although these arguments may resemble what Chaves describes as “through intense involvement with an all-encompassing group,” religion is not (necessarily) an important factor in these group dynamics.²⁵³ Instead, religion is often only marginally involved. A case study on the 2005 London bombers, as examples of individuals being ‘self-starters’ or ‘indigenously radicalized’ found that non-religious schemes was only part of several factors.

*Their rejection of both British society, and Western society more generally, was sealed through the progressively more intimate relationships they shared—rather than through any institutionalized or organized indoctrination program. The ideology to which they had all gravitated individually (a global militant salafist vision—very much the Al Qaeda brand) was then nurtured through a common alienation from British society. It ultimately provided both a binding element for the group and a powerful idiom to express their frustration and rage.*²⁵⁴

The key role that social dynamics play in violent jihadism is perhaps best illustrated by violence itself, which is understood to be ‘socially contagious’,

Violence, like other social phenomena (adolescent alcohol and drug use, trends in fashion), is spread socially, shaping preferences and actions in different spheres of individual and community life (family,

²⁴⁹ Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Violent Radicalization,” 810.

²⁵⁰ Schuurman, Bart, Quirine Eijkman, and Edwin Bakker, “A History of the Hofstadgroup,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 4 (2014): 64-80.

²⁵¹ Bakker and De Bont, “Belgian and Dutch,” 847-848

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 7.

²⁵⁴ Aidan Kirby, “The London Bombers as ‘Self-Starters’: A Case Study in Indigenous Radicalization and the Emergence of Autonomous Cliques,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 5 (2007): 424.

*peer group, interaction between different social groups), in ways that are not well captured by individualistic and rational action models.*²⁵⁵

The sudden emergence of the phenomenon of jihadism in the West provides a strong example of this. Jihadi FFs from the West are a relatively recent phenomenon and began during the 1990s when individuals and small groups of friends traveled to places such as Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, and Somalia to join the jihad.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, the vast majority are young adult men of which most seem to support IS. This is in line with theories on political violence and youth bulges. Young men are socially more inclined to violence than other groups.²⁵⁷ Moreover, the rapid proliferation of the number of FFs and the increasing number of jihadist attacks in the West provide another indication that this phenomenon is spread socially. In the Netherlands and Belgium the sudden increase in the number of FFs began in 2012-2013. This upsurge in the number of FFs coincided with to more media and internet coverage for the conflict in Syria.²⁵⁸ In addition, Salafist organizations may also have had a profound impact on the rapid growth of FFs. For example, despite its short existence (2010-2015) the Belgian Salafi organization Sharia4Belgium managed to convince many to fight in Syria and Iraq.²⁵⁹

Here a parallel can be drawn with other non-religious examples: Young Dutch and Belgian Catholics fought as Papal Zouaves for pope Pius IX against the Italian Unificationists, Dutch and Belgians joined international brigades during the Spanish Civil War and during the Second World War a few thousand Dutch and Belgians fought in the ranks of the Waffen-SS.²⁶⁰ These examples indicate that contingent of foreign fighters leaving together is not unique to jihadism. The 'social contagion' of violence is not limited to religious groups.

4.3 Exiting the Twilight Region of 'Religious Pathology'

Religion is often assumed to be a causal force responsible for individual behavior and actions. However, religious congruence is rare. Even when people share the same religious affiliation, this does not mean that they will behave or act in the same way. Not all Muslims are jihadists and/or Salafists, not every Muslim supports the jihadist cause in Syria and Iraq and not all Salafists become jihadists or are willing to use violence. The above performed analysis confirms that the backgrounds, motives, ideologies and orientations of jihadists are so diverse that they defy a single profile. In addition, jihadist networks are

²⁵⁵ Krause, "Beyond," 354.

²⁵⁶ Bakker and De Bont, "Belgian and Dutch," 839.

²⁵⁷ Henrik Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2006): 607-629.

²⁵⁸ Bakker and De Bont, "Belgian and Dutch," 839.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 839-850.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 839.

composed of people who hold vastly different beliefs and views. These examples are indicative of the “ubiquity of religious incongruence.”²⁶¹ Rather than having a consistent understanding of Islam (or Salafism) these jihadists hold views and beliefs that are fragmented, loosely connected and unexamined.

This is not to say that religion and violent behavior cannot be linked, but that we should be careful in asserting causality. Religious incongruence does not exclude the possibility that some (violent) behavior is the outcome of their religious beliefs, practices or rituals. Certain violent behavior may still be congruent with people’s religious orientations. Even when behavior is based on a ‘selective’ interpretation of sacred texts, it could still be an ‘internalized’ religious belief. Yet, in most cases it is achieved by other mental states that have little to do with religion. Cavanaugh’s claim that religion does not differ from the secular therefore misses the point. Religion may still be unique institutional force with the capacity to influence people’s behavior. However, a religious schema alone is not enough to make it congruent. Most religious practices are context specific; religious congruence would therefore involve considerable cognitive effort, internalization or intense involvement with a religious all-encompassing group.²⁶²

In the context of contemporary jihadism, this seems unlikely. Again, a significant number of jihadists are recent converts or do not actively practice their faith. These individuals did not have time to internalize religious practices, beliefs or rituals. Furthermore, even when these jihadists would have internalized their beliefs, this does not automatically mean that they will act solely on the basis of those beliefs. The Qur'an and other Islamic sources do not unequivocally shape (violent) behavior, people would still give their own normative values to these texts. The interpretations of sacred texts differ per person, or as Khaled Abou El Fadl argues, “Ultimately, the Qur'an, or any text, speaks through its reader.”²⁶³ People’s perceptions, expectations, feelings, wishes, attitudes and intentions shape the way these texts are read and understood.²⁶⁴ Even when sacred texts contain commands to kill or hate ‘the other’, this does not mean that believers will do so. The interpretation given to religious teaching cannot be seen in isolation from other social dynamics. The social and historical meaning of sacred texts is itself subject to change and the religious dimensions of a conflict do not necessarily relate to scripture.²⁶⁵ As argued, a powerful example of this is the concept of jihad.²⁶⁶

Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that there is some evidence that historical examples of terrorism (Thugs, Assassins, Zealots-Sicarii) might actually have had more

²⁶¹ Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 2-3.

²⁶² Chaves, “Rain Dances,” 8.

²⁶³ Abou El Fadl, “The Place of Tolerance.”

²⁶⁴ Chaves “Rain Dances,” 11-12.

²⁶⁵ Munson, “Religion,” 243.

²⁶⁶ Heck, “Jihad,” 95-123.

to do with religion than more contemporary examples. In contrast to the current phenomenon of jihadism, these earlier groups appeared to be more congruent in their behavior. As argued by Rapoport, the practices, beliefs and teachings of Thugs, Assassins and Zealots-Sicarii were also clearly reflected in their acts of violence. Moreover, Rapoport observed that these early terrorist groups differed from modern terrorists in two unique and distinct ways: their organizations and tactics did not constantly change or were modified for increased effectiveness and their use of terror was used for different ends. In earlier forms of terrorism, the end seemed predetermined and not changed by alternate views from within or outside of the group.²⁶⁷

On the whole, the theory of religious incongruence helps to understand why scholars have come to such contrasting conclusions regarding the relationship between violence and religion. Those involved in suicide attacks, terrorism and other forms of violence may still be religious, but in many cases their (violent) acts are the outcome of other mental state (not beliefs). The attribution error is that the religion is wrongfully seen as the main determinant for violent behavior. This is also why several of the studies discussed earlier found that a small number of jihadists appeared to be mainly motivated by their religious beliefs, whereas the majority of them are not. Religious schemes and value structures are clearly visible, but this creates the misconception that behavior is also the (sole) outcome of those beliefs. In reality, multiple schemes, ideas and views interact. Several examples drawn from the Dutch Hofstadgroup help to illustrate this point.

Despite its small size and its common Salafi-ideology, participants of the Hofstadgroup did not think and act alike. They gave different interpretations to the same teachings.²⁶⁸ For instance, not all members were willing to use violence. Whereas some expressed their support for violent jihadism, others had become dismissive of those same ideas. In one instance, two of its participants sought the advice of a Dutch Salafist imam because they had become wary of some of the views held by others within the group.²⁶⁹ In other cases, participants displayed little support for Salafi interpretations of Islam or they expressed views that appeared to be more political than religious. For example, when questioned by police, two other participants unequivocally stated that they would support the introduction of Islamic law, but only if a majority of Dutch citizens would vote for it.²⁷⁰

Only in a small number of cases did religious beliefs play a more dominant role. For example, some of the participants belonging to the inner circle of the Hofstadgroup did seem to be more engaged with their religious

²⁶⁷ Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling," 672-675.

²⁶⁸ Schuurman, Bart, Quirine Eijkman, and Edwin Bakker, "The Hofstadgroup Revisited: Questioning its Status as a 'Quintessential' Homegrown Jihadist Network," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 5 (2015): 912.

²⁶⁹ Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker, "The Hofstadgroup Revisited," 912.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

beliefs than the rest of the group.²⁷¹ Two of them, Jason Walters and Mohammed Bouyeri, also used violence. Jason Walters, who had thrown a grenade at police officers, described how religion dominated his entire world view and left no place for other views or schemes. He stated that it was not until his prison sentence that his views and conceptions of the world began to change. Walters argued that during his time in prison, he developed an interest in science and read the work of philosophers such as Plato, Nietzsche and Heidegger which helped him to adopt new perspectives on life.²⁷² Furthermore, another participant of the Hofstadgroup, Mohammed Bouyeri, showed similar signs of a strong religious devotion. He criticized fellow Muslims for drinking alcohol and he frantically studied Islamic readings.²⁷³ Bouyeri would later murder Dutch filmmaker and author Theo van Gogh for insulting the Prophet Mohammed. In the months prior to the murder, Bouyeri had expressed the belief that those who insulted the prophet Muhammad should be killed.²⁷⁴

The question, however, is if these acts of violence were congruent with their religious beliefs. Apart from the fact that many would argue these actions are illegitimate under Islamic law (or any of its doctrines for that matter), there is ample evidence to suggest that these acts of violence were, at least in part, inspired by other schemes and dynamics. That is, non-religious beliefs, views, and perspectives also influence their (violent) behavior. For instance, most participants of the Hofstadgroup combined geopolitical with religious motives.²⁷⁵ An example of this is the letter Bouyeri left on the body of van Gogh after the murder. In this letter, Bouyeri makes several references to Dutch politicians and political parties and combines them with Islamic texts and teachings. Although the letter is full of religious references it also displays Bouyeri's personal views and (geopolitical) motives.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, Walters's violence against the police could also be seen as an attempt to evade capture. Walters had anticipated his arrest and prepared himself by barricading the door.²⁷⁷ In addition, shortly before his arrest, Walters and another participant had called family and friends to announce their imminent martyrdom, made several mock calls to the emergency services and hastily wrote their last wills. Yet, in the end Walters and the other

²⁷¹ Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker, "The Hofstadgroup Revisited," 914-915.

²⁷² Nikki Sterkenberg, "Moslimextremisme," Elsevier, <https://www.elsevierweekblad.nl/nederland/achtergrond/2018/06/ex-hofstadgroep-lid-jason-walters-ik-zie-te-veel-wegkijken-620412/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

²⁷³ Lorenzo Vidino, "The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 7 (2007): 580-584.

²⁷⁴ Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker, "A History," 70.

²⁷⁵ Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker, "The Hofstadgroup Revisited," 912.

²⁷⁶ "Letterlijke tekst dreigbrief op lichaam Van Gogh," Nu.nl, <https://www.nu.nl/algemeen/436941/letterlijke-tekst-dreigbrief-op-lichaam-van-gogh.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.

²⁷⁷ On November 10, 2004, Walters and other participant came under siege from police forces for several hours. This event took place a few days after Bouyeri killed Van Gogh. The first attempt to arrest them failed after Walters had thrown a grenade at the police. See for more information Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker, "A History," 66-67.

participant decided to surrender.²⁷⁸ Although their intentions are difficult to discern, their decision to make mock phone calls and to surrender serve as indications that different schemes, views and expectations do interact. Lastly, participants of the Hofstadgroup excommunicated (declaring *takfir* on) most other Muslims outside of their own group (including other jihadists) and sometimes even each other. Yet for this very reason, it becomes difficult to place them in a Salafi-jihadi tradition.²⁷⁹ Their extreme practice of *takfir* indicates that they mixed personal views with religious beliefs. This latter finding is in conjunction with recent insights on terrorism. Religious ‘elements’ do feature in terrorism, but this does not mean that terrorism is the single outcome of religion.²⁸⁰ Silke, who also studied jihadists, argues that religion does play a role and that jihadists are religious, but that their violent behavior is not explained by their beliefs. He states, “Ultimately, ordinary psychological processes and small group dynamics play a major role in understanding Islamist radicalization.”²⁸¹

Conclusion

In this paper, I have revisited the religious violence thesis by analyzing the backgrounds, motives, ideologies of European jihadists. A comparison of different empirical studies provides limited support for the conclusion that jihadists are acting on the basis of their religious beliefs. Recent studies on the backgrounds, motives and ideologies of jihadists have shown that their reasons to fight are diverse. These jihadists do not fit a single profile and they often act in ways that are inconsistent with Islamic teachings. These findings are in line with what theories on religious congruence would suggest.

Although, at first, the variety in profiles and motives of jihadists may appear to be inconsistent with their religious beliefs, in practice, as illustrated by the ‘congruence fallacy’, this is not at odds with how religion is generally experienced by people. Religious beliefs, rituals, practices and views rarely form a unified, coherent and logical structure. Religious beliefs overlap and intersect with a wide variety of other mental states, including personal perceptions, expectations, feelings, wishes, attitudes and intentions. Like with other social phenomena, people are influenced by a multiple schemes, values and ideas.

Jihadists are not an exception to the idea that most behavior is incongruent with people’s religious beliefs. Although the scope of this research is limited to the phenomenon of European jihadism, this analysis finds little support for the conclusion that jihadists are *religious* ‘zealots’. Even (Saafi-)jihadists who participate in the same

²⁷⁸ Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker, “A History,” 72.

²⁷⁹ Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker, “The Hofstadgroup Revisited,” 914.

²⁸⁰ Brooke M. Rogers, Kate M. Loewenthal, Christopher Alan Lewis, Richard Amlôt, Marco Cinnirella, and Humayan Ansari, “The Role of Religious Fundamentalism in Terrorist Violence: A Social Psychological Analysis,” *International Review of Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (2007): 253-262.

²⁸¹ Andrew Silke, “Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization,” *European Journal of Criminology* 5, no. 1: (2008): 119.

organizations hold vastly different views of the same Islamic teachings. Furthermore, scriptures, rituals and other religious practices are subject to a constantly changing socio-historical context. This means that elements of religion interact with non-religious aspects of social life.

Religious violence is not a 'myth' because it cannot be defined, but because it cannot be seen in isolation from other socio-psychological conditions. Hence, the reason why scholars studying the relationship between violence and religion reach such contrasting conclusions is because they do not consider the possibility of religious incongruence. Some scholars commit the 'attribution error' or fallacy by assuming people's actions and behavior directly follow from their religious beliefs. At the same time, others too quickly denounce the influence that religion could have on behavior. The reality is that terrorists may still be religious, but this does not mean their acts of violence are the outcome of religion. In most cases, violence is the outcome of a synthesis of different (non-religious) beliefs, views and perceptions and other socio-psychological factors.

Silke ends his article on terrorism by reminding the reader of Alice's response to the grinning cat in the novel. His conclusion is worth citing at length.

*To her credit, Alice was not convinced by the cat's reasoning and came up with her own theory to explain her predicament. Her answering logic was that she was still a normal, rational person, but that she was trapped in a very abnormal, bizarre place (i.e. Wonderland). As far as the Cat was concerned, simply being in Wonderland was enough to guarantee that an individual was mad, but Alice knew better. It did not guarantee abnormality. It only guaranteed that others would prefer to see you as abnormal.*²⁸²

The attribution error committed by the cat makes clear why pathology falls short in explaining complex phenomena such as terrorism. Silke's analogy of Alice in Wonderland helps to illustrate how we often presume causality without considering other factors. At the same time, it demonstrates that both in the public and academic debate simple explanations are sought to shed light on often shocking and unsettling complexities of social phenomena. Even though it became increasingly clear that psychopathology could not explain terrorism, many scholars still created a 'bordering twilight region on pathology'. A similar thing can be said about religion. Despite a lack of empirical evidence, scholars have often drawn a causal link between violence and the 'irrationality' of religion. Religion is seen as something irrational and abnormal and therefore prone to violence. Chaves's argument on religious incongruence helps to explain why this view is wrong. Behavior does not logically and consistently follow from someone's religious beliefs. Most violence is not the outcome of religion, but of other mental states and schemes.

²⁸² Silke, "Cheshire-Cat," 68.

Bibliography

- Abou El Fadl, Khaled. "The Place of Tolerance in Islam: On reading the Qur'an—and misreading it." *Boston Review*. <http://bostonreview.net/archives/BR26.6/elfadl.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Afsaruddin, Asma. "Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and History." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia* accessed April 10, 2018, <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-46>.
- Armstrong, Karen, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*. 1st edition. Anchor Books: New York, 2015.
- Bakker, Edwin. "Zin en onzin van de zoektocht naar oorzaken van terrorisme." *International Spectator* 58 no, 11 (2004): 542-547.
- Bakker, Edwin, and Roel de Bont. "Belgian and Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters (2012–2015): Characteristics, Motivations, and Roles in the War in Syria and Iraq." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (2016): 837-857.
- Barter, Joshua, Shane and Ian Zarkin-Osburn. "Measuring Religion in War: A Response." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 55, no. 1 (2016): 190-193.
- Barkun, Michael. "Religious Violence and the Myth of Fundamentalism." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 4, no. 3 (2003): 55-70.
- Bartholomew, Robert E., and Julian D. O'Dea. "Religious Devoutness Construed as Pathology: the Myth of 'Religious Mania'." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 8, no. 1 (1998): 1-16.
- Basedau, Matthias, Birte Pfeiffer, and Johannes Vüllers. "Bad Religion? Religion, Collective Action, and the Onset of Armed Conflict in Developing Countries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60, no. 2 (2016): 226-255.
- Basra, Rajan, Peter R. Neumann, and Claudia Brunner. "Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus." The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), accessed April 10, 2018. http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/crime-terror-report_20171214_web.pdf.
- Boutin, Bérénice, Grégory Chauzal, Jessica Dorsey, Marjolein Jegerings, Christophe Paulussen, Johanna Pohl, Alastair Reed, and Sofia Zavagli. *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), Published April 2016, edited by Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann. https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Brewer, John D., Gareth I. Higgins, and Francis Teeney, "Religion and Peacemaking: A Conceptualization." *Sociology* 44, no. 6 (2010): 1019-1037.
- Brumberg, Daniel. "Islamists and the Politics of Consensus." *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 3 (2002): 109-115.
- Bukay, David. "The Religious Foundations of Suicide Bombings Islamist Ideology." *Middle East Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (2006): 27-36.
- Burki, Shireen Khan. "Haram or Halal?: Islamists' Use of Suicide Attacks as 'Jihad'." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 582-601.

- Buzan, Barry, and Lene Hansen. *The Evolution of International Security Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Cavanaugh, William T. "Religious Violence as Modern Myth." *Political Theology* 15 no. 6 (2014): 486-502.
- Cavanaugh, William T. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Chaves, Mark. "Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 1 (2010): 1-14.
- Cliteur, Paul. B. "Religion and Violence or the Reluctance to Study this Relationship." *Forum Philosophicum* 15, no. 1 (2010): 205-226.
- Cook, David. "Islamism and Jihadism: The Transformation of Classical Notions of Jihad into an Ideology of Terrorism." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (2009): 177-187.
- Cook, David. "Women Fighting in Jihad?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28, no. 5 (2005): 375-384.
- Crone, Manni and Martin Harrow. "Homegrown Terrorism in the West." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 521-536.
- Dalgaard-Nielsen, Anja. "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 797-814.
- Dawson, Lorne L. "Discounting Religion in the Explanation of Homegrown Terrorism: A Critique." In *Cambridge Companion to Religion and Terrorism* edited by James R. Lewis, 32-45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Diefendorf, Barbara. "Were the Wars of Religion about Religion?" *Political Theology* 15 no. 6 (2014): 552-563.
- De Roy van Zuijdewijn, Jeanine, and Edwin Bakker. "Returning Western foreign fighters: The Case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia." ICCT. <https://icct.nl/publication/returning-western-foreign-fighters-the-case-of-afghanistan-bosnia-and-somalia/>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- "Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 44." NCTV, published April 2017. https://www.nctv.nl/binaries/DTN44%20Samenvatting%206%20april%202017_tcm31-254139.pdf, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Esposito, John L. "Islam and Political Violence." *Religions* 6, no. 3 (2015): 1067-1082.
- "Europe's Growing Muslim Population." PEW Research Center. <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2010/percent/Europe/>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- "Europe's Growing Muslim Population." PEW Research Center. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Egerton, Frazer. "Alienation and its Discontents." *European Journal of International Relations* 17 no. 3 (2010): 453-474.
- Etienne, Bruno. "Islam and Violence." *History and Anthropology* 18, no. 3 (2007): 237-248.
- Everton, Sean F. "Social Networks and Religious violence." *Review of Religious Research* 58, no. 2 (2016): 191-217.

- Fox, Jonathan. "The Ethnic-Religious Nexus: The Impact of Religion on Ethnic Conflict." *Civil Wars* 3, no. 3 (2000): 1-22.
- Francis, Matthew D. M. "Why the "Sacred" Is a Better Resource Than 'Religion' for Understanding Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 5 (2016): 912-927.
- Fuller, Graham E. "A World Without Islam," *Foreign Policy* (2008): 46-53.
- "Ghanimah." Oxford University Press, accessed April 10, 2018.
<http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e709>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Ginges, Jeremy, Ian Hansen, and Ara Norenzayan. "Religion and Support for Suicide Attacks." *Psychological science* 20, no. 2 (2009): 224-230.
- Gutting, Garry. "How Religion Can Lead to Violence." The New York Times.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/01/opinion/how-religion-can-lead-to-violence.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Hadden, Jeffrey K. "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory." *Social Forces* 65, no. 3 (1987): 587-611.
- Hirsi Ali, Ayaan. "Islam Is a Religion of Violence." *Foreign Policy*. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/09/islam-is-a-religion-of-violence-ayaan-hirsi-ali-debate-islamic-state/>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Heck, Paul L. "Jihad Revisited." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32, no. 1 (2004): 95-128.
- Hegghamer, Thomas. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting." *The American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 1-15.
- Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "Salafi Jihadism: Relying on Fieldwork to Study Unorganized and Clandestine Phenomena." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 7 (2011): 1201-1215.
- Hoffman, Bruce. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Huntington Samuel P., "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-49.
- Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. *The Politics of Secularism in international Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Hutson, Royce, Taylor Long, and Michael Page. "Pathways to Violent Radicalisation in the Middle East: A Model for Future Studies of Transnational Jihad." *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 2 (2009): 18-26.
- Ibrahim, Raymond. "Are Judaism and Christianity as Violent as Islam?" *Middle East Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2009): 3-12.
- Isaacs, Matthew. "Sacred Violence or Strategic Faith? Disentangling the Relationship between religion and Violence in Armed Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 2 (2016): 211-225.
- Ispahani, Farahnaz. "Women and Islamist Extremism: Gender Rights Under the Shadow of Jihad." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 14, no. 2 (2016): 101-104.
- "Jihad." Oxford Islamic Studies. <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1199>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. "Thinking Sociologically about Religion and Violence: The Case of ISIS." *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 79, no. 1 (2018): 20-34.

- Juergensmeyer, Mark. "Terror Mandated by God." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 2 (1997): 16-23.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 2003.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. "The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars." *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475-494.
- Karakaya, Süveyda. "Religion and Conflict: Explaining the Puzzling Case of 'Islamic Violence'." *International Interactions* 41, no 3 (2015): 509–538.
- Krause, Keith. "Beyond Definition: Violence in a Global Perspective." *Global Crime* 10, no. 4 (2009): 337-355.
- Karagiannis, Emmanuel. "European Converts to Islam: Mechanisms of Radicalization." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 13, no. 1 (2012): 99-113.
- Kirby, Aidan. "The London Bombers as 'Self-Starters': A Case Study in Indigenous Radicalization and the Emergence of Autonomous Cliques." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 5 (2007): 415-428.
- Korf, Benedikt. "Rethinking the Greed-Grievance Nexus: Property Rights and the Political Economy of War in Sri Lanka." *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 2 (2005): 201-217.
- Leiken, Robert S. "Europe's Angry Muslims." *Foreign Affairs* 84, No. 4 (2005): 120-135.
- "Letterlijke tekst dreigbrief op lichaam Van Gogh." Nu.nl. <https://www.nu.nl/algemeen/436941/letterlijke-tekst-dreigbrief-op-lichaam-van-gogh.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Le Fever, Nicole. "Kritiek experts: aanpak Nederlandse jihadisten werkt niet." Nederlandse Omroepen Stichting. <http://nos.nl/artikel/2165513-kritiek-experts-aanpak-nederlandse-jihadisten-werkt-niet.html>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Lewis James R., and Lorne L. Dawson. "Introduction: Religion and Terrorism." *Numen* 65, no. 2-3 (2018): 117-124.
- Martin, Craig. "What is Religion?" *Political Theology* 15, no. 6. (2014): 503-508.
- McBride, Megan K. "The Logic of Terrorism: Existential Anxiety, the Search for Meaning, and Terrorist Ideologies, Terrorism and Political Violence." 23, no. 4, (2011): 560-581.
- McKinnon, Andrew M. "Sociological Definitions, Language Games, and The 'Essence' of Religion." *Method Theory in the Study of Religion* 14, 1 (2002): 61-83.
- Miller, Erin. "Overview: Terrorism in 2016." National Consortium for the Study on Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_OverviewTerrorism2016_August2017.pdf, accessed April 10, 2018.
- Moore, James. "Religion and Violence: Thinking again about the Link," edited by Steven Leonard Jacobs *Religions* 8, no. 6 (2017): 111.
- Munson, Henry. "Religion and Violence," *Religion* 35, no. 4 (2005): 223-246.
- Omar, A. Rashied. "Islam and violence." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 52, no. 1 (2017): 158-163.
- Pape, Robert A. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343-361.

- Philpott, Daniel. "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations." *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (2002): 66-95.
- Pisoiu, Daniela. "Radicalization." In *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, edited by Jocelyne Cesari, 770-801. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Piazza, James A. "Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous?: An Empirical Study of Group Ideology, Organization, and Goal Structure." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 1 (2009): 62-88.
- Powell, Russell, and Steve Clarke. "Religion, Tolerance, and Intolerance: Views from Across the Disciplines." In *Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*, edited by Steve Clarke, Russell Powell, and Julian Savulescu, 2-36. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Rapoport, David C. "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions." *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (1984): 658-677.
- Rapoport, David C. "Messianic Sanctions for Terror." *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 2 (1988): 195-213.
- Roex, Ineke. "Should we be scared of all salafists in Europe?: A Dutch case study." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 8, no. 3 (2014): 51-63.
- Rogers, Brooke M., Kate M. Loewenthal, Christopher Alan Lewis, Richard Amlôt, Marco Cinnirella, and Humayan Ansari. "The Role of Religious Fundamentalism in Terrorist Violence: A Social Psychological Analysis." *International Review of Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (2007): 253-262.
- Stewart, Frances. "Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities." *Oxford Development Studies* 28, no. 3 (2000): 245-262.
- "Salafi." Oxford Islamic Studies. <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2072#>, accessed April 10, 2018.
- "Salafism in the Netherlands: Diversity and dynamics." General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV). https://english.nctv.nl/binaries/publicatie-salafisme-eng-web_tcm32-84283.pdf, accessed April 10 2018.
- Gilkes, Sarah. Not Just the Caliphate: Non-Islamic State-Related Jihadist Terrorism in America, Program on Extremism. The George Washington University, Washington D.C. <https://abcnews.go.com/images/US/gwu-program-extremism-not-just-caliphate-20161206.pdf>, accessed April, 2018.
- Silke, Andrew. "Cheshire-Cat logic: The Recurring Theme of Terrorist Abnormality in Psychological Research." *Psychology, Crime & Law* 4, no. 1 (1998): 51-69.
- Silke, Andrew. "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists." *CTC Sentinel* 4, no. 1 (2011): 18-21.
- Silke, Andrew. "Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization." *European Journal of Criminology* 5, no. 1: (2008): 99-123.
- Silke, Andrew. "The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4, (2001): 1-14.
- Schuurman, Bart. "Becoming a European Homegrown Jihadist: A Multilevel Analysis of Involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup. 2002-2005: Summary in Dutch," Phd diss. Universiteit Leiden, 2017, 229-233.

Schuurman, Bart, Peter Grol, and Scott Flower. "Converts and Islamist Terrorism: An Introduction." Published June 2016. ICCT. <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ICCT-Schuurman-Grol-Flower-Converts-June-2016.pdf>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Schuurman, Bart, Quirine Eijkman, and Edwin Bakker, "A History of the Hofstadgroup," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 4 (2014): 64-81.

Schuurman, Bart, Quirine Eijkman, and Edwin Bakker. "The Hofstadgroup Revisited: Questioning its Status as a 'Quintessential Homegrown Jihadist Network.'" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 5 (2015): 906-925.

Srubar, Ilja. "Religion and Violence: Paradoxes of Religious Communication." *Human Studies* 40, no. 4 (2017): 501-518.

Sterkenberg, Nikki. "Moslimextremisme." Elsevier. <https://www.elsevierweekblad.nl/nederland/achtergrond/2018/06/ex-hofstadgroep-lid-jason-walters-ik-zie-te-veel-wegkijken-620412/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Travis, Alan. "MI5 Report Challenges Views on Terrorism in Britain." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism1>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Taylor, Adam. "Omar Mateen May Not Have Understood the Difference between ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah." *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/06/13/omar-mateen-may-not-have-understood-the-difference-between-isis-al-qaeda-and-hezbollah/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Uhlmann, Milena. "European Converts to Terrorism: Security Officials Worry About a New Breed of Radical Islamists." *Middle East quarterly* 15, no. 3, (2008): 31-37.

Urdal, Henrik. "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence." *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2006): 607-629.

"Unieke inkijk in ontstaan Hofstadgroep." Universiteit Leiden, published January 24, 2017. <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/nieuws/2017/01/unieke-inkijk-in-ontstaan-hofstadgroep>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Van der Krogt, Christopher J. "Jihād without apologetics." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 21, no. 2, (2010): 127-142.

Van der Veer, Peter, and Hartmut Lehmann. "Introduction" In *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, edited by Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, 3-14. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Vidino, Lorenzo, Francesco Marone, and Eva Entenmann. *Fear Thy Neighbor: Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) / Program on Extremism at George Washington University (PoE-GWU) / International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), published June 2017, Ledizioni LediPublishing Milano. <https://icct.nl/publication/fear-thy-neighbor-radicalization-and-jihadist-attacks-in-the-west/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Vidino, Lorenzo. "The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 7 (2007): 579–592.

Wagemakers, Joas. "Salafism," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*. <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-255?print=pdf>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Waling, Geerten. "Neem de motieven van terroristen serieus." Elsevier. <https://www.elsevierweekblad.nl/opinie/opinie/2018/04/elke-dag-een-aanslag-in-naam-van-een-religie-603699/>, accessed April 10, 2018.

Weatherston, David, and Jonathan Moran. "Terrorism and Mental Illness: Is There a Relationship?" *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 47, no. 6 (2003): 698-713.

Weed, Ronald. "Putting Religion First?: Diagnosing Division and Conflict in the Religious Violence Thesis." *Political Theology* 15, no. 6 (2014): 536-551.

Wellman, James K. and Kyoko Tokuno. "Is Religious Violence Inevitable?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 3 (2004): 291-296.

Winter, Charlie, and Usama Hasan, "The Balanced Nation: Islam and the Challenges of Extremism, Fundamentalism, Islamism and Jihadism." *Philosophia : Philosophical Quarterly of Israel* 44, no. 3 (2016): 667-688

Williams, Rhys H. "Religion as Political Resource: Culture or Ideology?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35, no. 4 (1996): 368-378.

Wilson, Erin. "The Problem is Religion – But Not in The Way We Think," Centre for Religion, Conflict and Globalisation. <https://religionfactor.net/2016/03/23/the-problem-is-religion-but-not-in-the-way-we-think/>, accessed April 10, 2018.