

Getting Religion? *Monica Duffy Toft*

The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War

In 42 religious civil wars from 1940 to 2000,¹ incumbent governments and rebels who identified with Islam were involved in 34 (81 percent), far more than those identifying with other religions, such as Christianity (21, or 50 percent) or Hinduism (7, or 16 percent).² In addition, civil wars in which key actors identify as Islamic are more likely to escalate into religious civil wars than civil wars in which key actors identify with other religions.

In this article I argue that overlapping historical, geographical, and, in particular, structural factors account for Islam's higher representation in religious civil wars. Together, the historical absence of an internecine religious war similar to the Thirty Years' War in Europe (1618–48), the geographic proximity of Islam's holiest sites to Israel and large petroleum reserves, and jihad—a structural feature of Islam—explain why so many civil wars include Islamic participants. When political elites come under immediate threat, they will work to reframe issues of contention as religious issues, essentially attempting to out-

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For helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article, the author would like to thank Ivan Arreguín-Toft, Marie Besançon, Francis Deng, Daniel Philpott, Timothy Shah, and Jack Snyder, as well as the participants of the John M. Olin Institute National Security Seminar at Harvard University and two anonymous reviewers. For research assistance, the author thanks Assaf Moghadam and Todd Sescher. This article is part of a larger research project, Religion and Global Politics, that received generous funding from the Smith Richardson Foundation and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.

1. I define a “religious civil war” as a war in which religious belief or practice is either a central or peripheral issue in the conflict. For religion to count as “central,” combatants had to be fighting over whether the state or a region of the state would be ruled according to a specific religious tradition—as in the cases of Afghanistan, Chad, and Sudan. For religion to count as “peripheral,” combatants had to identify with a specific religious tradition and group themselves accordingly, but the rule of a specific religious tradition could not be the object of contention. An example would be the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, which involved Bosnian Muslims (Islam), Croats (Catholicism), and Serbs (Orthodox Christianity). This leaves open the question of conflation of ethnicity and religion: if ethnicity and religion generally covaried, then Orthodox Christianity may have been a central issue in the Serb campaign to hold Yugoslavia together under Serb rule. But ethnicity and religion did not covary. Although most ethnic Serbs, for example, are Orthodox Christian, not all are. Moreover, local leaders made nationalist rather than religious bids, which underscores the low profile of religion compared to other issues of contention.

2. See Monica Duffy Toft, “Religion, Civil War, and International Order,” Discussion Paper, No. 2006-03 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, July 2006), p. 12.

International Security, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Spring 2007), pp. 97–131
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bid each other in an effort to establish religious credibility and thus attract domestic and external support.

A recent empirical survey of civil wars from 1940 to 2000 revealed two findings. First, the percentage of civil wars in which religion has become a central issue has increased over time. Second, these religious civil wars are much more destructive than wars fought over other issues: they result in more casualties and more noncombatant deaths, and they last longer.³

I begin by introducing the subject of religion in civil wars and then offer a definition of religion. Next I put forth a theory of religious outbidding to help explain why religion becomes a central issue in some civil wars but not in others. I then offer three hypotheses on the role of religion in civil wars and examine the problem of Islam's disproportionate representation in religious civil wars from 1940 to 2000.⁴ After testing these hypotheses against a statistical data set of civil wars, I examine the case of Sudan's two civil wars. I conclude with a discussion of some of the theoretical and foreign policy implications of religion and civil war that follow from this analysis.

Religion in Civil Wars

In recent years, organized religion has experienced a worldwide resurgence,⁵ and with it an increase in religiously inspired violence and war. Examples include al-Qaida's attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, as well as civil wars raging between Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lanka, between Hindus and Muslims in India, and among Muslims in Iraq. Partly as a result, policymakers have focused greater attention on the subject of religion and organized violence.⁶ Yet more than five years after al-Qaida's attack on New

3. Ibid., pp. 17–18.

4. I selected this time period for three reasons. First, it permits comparison of the maximum data (civil wars) possible. Second, it does so in the time period closest to our own. Third, it allows inferences to be drawn without as much risk of perturbation from World War I and World War II (only one war carried over from 1940). In sum, conclusions drawn from this data set have the highest potential to yield both general and statistically significant findings.

5. Ibid.; and Timothy Samuel Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, "Why God Is Winning," *Foreign Policy*, No. 155 (July/August 2006), pp. 39–43.

6. See Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); the special issue of *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (December 2000); and Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). For recent works that assess the resurgence of religion in public life, see Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the Modern World* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1994); David Westerlund, ed., *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence*

York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the academic literature on this topic remains relatively undeveloped. Much of it focuses on religiously inspired terrorism (in particular, the idea that suicide terrorism is an artifact of religious fanaticism),⁷ or it tests Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis (essentially, the notion that identification with a particular religious faith causes some groups to form transnational communities that are, ipso facto, existentially opposed to one another's existence).⁸

Defining Religion

"Religion" is a complex concept.⁹ Definitions typically include some or all of the following elements: a belief in a supernatural being (or beings); prayers and communication with that being; transcendent realities that might include some form of heaven, paradise, or hell; a distinction between the sacred and the profane and between ritual acts and sacred objects; a view that explains both the world as a whole and a person's proper role in it; a code of conduct in line with that worldview; and a community bound by its adherence to these elements.¹⁰

In the West, religion and violence are generally associated with the Abrahamic religions, or "peoples of the book" (e.g., Judaism/Old Testament, Christianity/New Testament, and Islam/Quran), and to a lesser extent, Hinduism and Buddhism. Each faith has its own beliefs and prescribed and

of *Religion in Politics* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996); Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and Politics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999); and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997).

7. Three of the best works are Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Ecco/HarperCollins, 2003).

8. See, for example, Jonathan Fox, *Religion, Civilization, and Civil War: 1945 through the New Millennium* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2004); Bruce M. Russett, John R. Oneal, and Michaelene Cox, "Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà Vu? Some Evidence," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (September 2000), pp. 583–608; Ted Robert Gurr, "People against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System: 1994 Presidential Address," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 347–377; and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

9. As philosopher of religion William P. Alston illustrates, defining religion is difficult and controversial. The definition I offer here is not intended to stand as comprehensive. Instead, it helps clarify the arguments tested in this article. Alston, "Religion," in Paul Edwards, ed., *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 7 (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 140–145.

10. This definition follows Alston's. *Ibid.*

proscribed practices. Yet it is what Judaism, Christianity, and Islam may have in common that makes them of such interest to scholars who study religion and violence, as well as to policymakers grappling with ending or preventing religious civil wars. As practiced today, the Abrahamic religions share two key aspects relevant to the likelihood that conflict between competing groups may escalate into violence. First, they tend to be uncompromising; that is, even given some liberty in interpretation over time, the texts of the Old Testament, New Testament, and Quran place important limits on the conduct of believers.¹¹ Each text serves as a guide to conduct approved or mandated by a supreme being. Considerable rewards follow good conduct, and dire punishment (either individually or collectively) follows prohibited conduct. As a result, when believers are asked to violate key tenets of their faith as laid down in holy scripture, they are less likely to do so, even when it might result in what most would consider a better outcome, such as peace. Second, both Christianity and Islam encourage followers to discount their physical survival.¹² The logic is simple: the physical self is mortal, and hence temporary; the religious self, however, is potentially immortal and eternal. Thus, sacrificing the temporary and mortal to obtain the eternal and immortal is not only rational but also desirable.¹³ And “sacrifice” is the operational word. Because there is no way to empirically verify the existence of a divine being (and by such means establish the validity of holy texts), physical self-sacrifice in defending one’s faith becomes itself a test of faith, one particularly respected in Christian and Muslim traditions.¹⁴

Contemporary policymakers worry about the combination of religion and violence for at least three reasons. First, taken together, the indivisibility of religious doctrine and the promise of martyrdom threaten the two key pillars of

11. One should therefore expect theocracies to be more authoritarian than nontheocracies, because when church and state are fused, opposition to state policy becomes tantamount to opposition to God. On the other hand, a 2002 study of the alleged relationship between Islam and “authoritarianism” found only one causal link between the antidemocratic character of Islamic states and Islam as a religion: the subordination of women. See M. Steven Fish, “Islam and Authoritarianism,” *World Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (October 2002), pp. 4–37. On religion, political values, and women, see also Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

12. My descriptions of religion, religious practice, and religious motivations refer only to ideal types. As such, I do not claim that they are literally descriptive of the practice or motivation of a majority of the followers of any particular religion.

13. As a system of beliefs, nationalism can also have this effect. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 9–12.

14. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

the state system as established in Europe following the end of the Thirty Years' War:¹⁵ bargaining and deterrence. In any bargaining exchange, a rational person (or state) calculates the tangible costs and benefits of action or inaction, and then maximizes his or her utility by choosing the course of action that will result in the highest likelihood of benefit with the lowest risk or cost.¹⁶ In contrast, religious followers often choose to sacrifice tangible benefits for intangible ones, even to the point of sacrificing their lives.¹⁷ Similarly, a rational person (or state) will be systematically deterred from action that credibly threatens harm—especially physical harm—and that is not redeemed by some greater benefit. Thus, a more secular person (or state) can be coerced or deterred by the threat of physical destruction, whereas a less secular actor (or state) may be impossible to coerce or deter with the same threat.¹⁸

A second source of policymakers' deep concern with religious civil wars is that, on average, they are far more destructive than civil wars fought over other issues (e.g., ideology or ethnicity). Religious civil wars result in higher combatant deaths; they last longer; they are more likely to recur once "ended"; and they are four times as deadly for noncombatants.¹⁹

When religion becomes a central issue of contention, therefore, it poses a potential threat to both domestic and international order just as much today as it did in the seventeenth century. The logic is straightforward: when religion hinders the ability of the state to bargain, the combatants may go on killing each other long after there is any political, economic, or social utility in doing so

15. See Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*; and Daniel Philpott, "The Challenges of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (October 2002), pp. 66–95.

16. On the history of the rational state more generally, see Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

17. According to prominent neorealists such as Kenneth N. Waltz, the domestic preferences of substate actors disappear at the interstate system level. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 76–78. Policymakers in the real world, however, are less convinced, as the debate over Iran's nuclearization makes clear. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

18. See Monica Duffy Toft, "Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War," *Security Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (January–March 2006), pp. 34–69. On the neglect of religion and the fear of it in U.S. foreign policy during Bill Clinton's administration, see Madeleine Albright, *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

19. Toft, "Religion, Civil War, and International Order."

(religious motivation is not necessary for this to be true, but depending on the religion, it may well be sufficient).²⁰ And in religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, violent conflict is often considered a manifestation of God's will (a judgment); such conflict can therefore become a test of religious faith.²¹

A third concern among policymakers is that religiously motivated violence tends to fuse temporal and religious authority, which in turn can produce more authoritarian forms of government. When government and religion are mixed, criticism of, or resistance to, government policy becomes tantamount to criticism of, or resistance to, God—an intolerable religious crime. Although much controversy about a causal link between regime type and interstate aggression remains,²² to the extent that authoritarian regimes are more aggressive neighbors, the tendency of religious fundamentalism to make governments more authoritarian implies a more violent world.

These three concerns underpin the view that religious fundamentalism is a threat to peace, whether in the form of civil or interstate war.

Religious Outbidding: A Theory of Religious Civil Wars

My argument about the role of religion in civil wars builds on Jack Snyder's model of nationalist outbidding.²³ In *From Voting to Violence*, Snyder posited that political elites will attempt to outbid each other to enhance their national-

20. This pattern characterizes the dynamics of conflict bargaining in the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War. After Iraq's first series of offensives failed and it became clear that Iran could not easily be beaten in a conventional conflict, Iraq offered Iran peace terms. Iraq acted as a secular European state might have done in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Once the tangible costs exceeded the expected benefits, Iraq was ready to quit. Iran, however, acted irrationally by those same standards: even though continued fighting was unlikely to result in victory (or victory at an acceptable cost), Iran refused to accept Iraq's increasingly favorable peace terms. As a result, a war that should have been over in two years lasted nearly a decade. For a concise history of this war, see Efraim Karsh, *The Iran–Iraq War, 1980–1988* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002).

21. Moreover, God's punishments can be expected to be collective as well as individual, especially in the Jewish and Muslim contexts; that is, Jewish or Muslim civilization can be harmed by deviations from proper conduct by even a minority of the community's members. For a statement of this in Islam, see Marc Sageman, "The Global Salafi Jihad," Statement of Marc Sageman to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, July 9, 2003, <http://www.globalsecurity.org>.

22. For an overview of the competing arguments and evidence, see "Forum on the Democratic Peace," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (August 2005), pp. 453–472.

23. Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

ist credentials with a key domestic political audience (these audiences being most important in democratic states, in which publics have at least some capacity to influence a state's domestic and foreign policies). Elites who win this contest and establish themselves as the most credible defender of the nation will then gain the support and resources needed either to maintain their tenure as leaders (assuming they are incumbents) or, in a conflict, to be victorious.

In religious outbidding, the process is similar; elites attempt to outbid each other to enhance their religious credentials and thereby gain the support they need to counter an immediate threat. In this process, however, regime type is not as important as it is in nationalist outbidding. I argue that a civil war is likely to become a religious civil war when four conditions hold: (1) government or rebel leaders are immediately threatened; (2) resources (e.g., small arms, cash, skilled fighters, and logistical support) needed to reduce or eliminate the threat may be acquired by framing a conflict in religious terms; (3) the society has preexisting, though not necessarily deep, religious cleavages; and (4) the government controls public access to information. The second condition is particularly important because unlike nationalism, which by its nature tends to be a local issue,²⁴ religion (i.e., Christianity before the Thirty Years' War and Islam since its inception) tends to be transnational. In other words, appeals to religion may attract support as a form of religious obligation from outside the area of the conflict. This is true of some religions more than others (e.g., Islam more than Buddhism), and of some religions in certain historical periods more than in others (e.g., Christianity before the Thirty Years' War).

These four conditions highlight the significant role of resources in achieving victory and give rise to two key questions: Where are the internal or external resources necessary to counter a threat located? And what type of bid is most likely to result in the acquisition of those resources? Variation in location will help explain variation in the type of bid, but the outbidding process is similar in all cases.

From 1940 to 2000, there were 42 religious civil wars: in 25 of these, religion was a central issue; in 17 it was a peripheral issue. In the next section I introduce three hypotheses to help explain why religion becomes a central issue of contention in some civil wars but not in others.

24. The various "pan" movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stand as notable exceptions that prove the rule. In pan-Slavism, for example, ethnic Serbs were able to gain diplomatic support from the Russian Empire by appealing to a shared Slavic identity.

Hypotheses on Religion in Civil Wars

The logic of bargaining intransigence, religious outbidding, and conflict escalation can be reduced to three hypotheses that link the centrality of religion to the quality and outcomes of civil wars.

HYPOTHESIS 1: RELIGION AND CONFLICT

Hypothesis 1 states that religious bids have higher utility for Islamic elites than for non-Islamic elites.

This hypothesis compares the utility of religious bids across religions. Political elites under immediate threat will make legitimacy bids: that is, bids calculated to enhance their reputation and, by extension, their chances of survival.²⁵ The nature of those bids—ideological, ethnic, nationalist, or religious—depends on leaders' assessments of the appeal most likely to provide access to needed resources. In places with preexisting religious cleavages or large numbers of people who strongly identify with a given religion, religious bids can both enhance local support (e.g., from army officers, key union leaders or other interest groups, and the population more generally) and attract foreign support from fellow adherents. Although a combination of internal and external support is generally desirable, external support will matter only when (1) it results in an influx of resources capable of altering the outcome of a local power struggle; and (2) the resources in question (say, a particular type of explosive or firearm or an especially charismatic fighter) are not available locally.

In many cases, an inflow of arms or fighters will influence the outcome of a local power struggle. This creates an obvious risk for nationalist-based insurgencies, because the coin of legitimacy in such contests precludes foreign intervention (which is anathema to nationalist insurgencies).²⁶ Thus, even in cases where an influx of foreign weapons or fighters might be able to break a stalemate in a local conflict, embattled elites would be unwise to make nationalist bids, except in cases when (1) the local government or insurgent group has ac-

25. This assumption is not intended to be descriptive so much as ideal type. Some threatened elites will advance religious bids not for instrumental reasons, but because a profession of faith is what is called for when one is threatened. On balance, however, a cause-and-effect relationship is a reasonable assumption to make: actors respond to threats by advancing a religious (or other) bid to defend themselves or advance their rule; such conduct is therefore instrumental in the way assumed here.

26. On the role of outside actors in nationalist wars, see Stephen M. Saideman, *Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

cess to a large pool of nationals living outside the country, (2) those nationals reside in states with access to resources capable of increasing the chances of victory, and (3) appeals for money and other forms of support are restricted to these nationals. By contrast, in the same circumstances religious bids are less risky because communities of faith are not tethered to specific physical places the way nations are. Believers are therefore free to cross temporal boundaries or send aid without diminishing the legitimacy of the elites who have appealed to them for help.

To the extent that this ideal-type model (i.e., threatened elites seeking support by means of legitimacy bids) approaches reality, the process of religious outbidding would explain why Islam is so much more likely to be involved in religious civil wars than other religions: Islam has a specific (and today very active) obligation-to-defend-by-force component. Examples since World War II include Afghan mujahideen appeals for cash and Muslim fighters from Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia during the Soviet intervention from 1979 to 1989; Shiite calls for cash and fighters from Iran during the first and second wars with Iraq (1990–91 and 2003); and Chechen calls for support from Muslims during Chechnya's two most recent wars with Russia (1994–96 and 1999–present). In all three cases, embattled local elites worked to establish their credibility as Muslims, and then used that legitimacy to summon external help from Muslims of different races and nationalities. Young men answered these calls by traveling to the areas of conflict, often bringing cash and arms with them, to satisfy what they believed to be a religious obligation to defend Islam against attacks from nonbelievers. In the most recent case, Iraqi Shiites, who are predominately Arab, have highlighted shared religious ties with Iranian Shiites (who are predominately Persian) as a way to gain cash, weapons, and fighters to defend themselves from attacks by Sunnis and Christians.

HYPOTHESIS 2: CENTRALITY OF RELIGION IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

The second hypothesis posits that the more religious outbidding that occurs, the more likely religion is to move from a peripheral to a central issue in a conflict.

This hypothesis focuses on the conditions under which religion will move from a peripheral to a central issue in a conflict. The logic of this hypothesis is grounded in the notion that issues are constructed or framed in an interactive process that begins with elites. For example, the political status of Kosovo in former Yugoslavia could be seen as an issue of religious legitimacy, because several sites considered holy by Orthodox Serbs are located there. On the other

hand, by 1998, ethnic Albanians constituted more than 90 percent of Kosovo's population. Thus, Serb political elites were unlikely to frame the issue of Kosovo's status in terms of ethnic population distribution and more likely to frame it as a question of cultural and religious heritage. By contrast, ethnic Albanian Kosovars were apt to frame the issue of Kosovo's political status in terms of both the democratic principle of majority rule and the norm of national self-determination.²⁷ This hypothesis is tricky, however, because the arrow of causality can also point in the other direction: once religion becomes central to a conflict, elites are likely to compete to enhance their religious credentials and legitimacy.

HYPOTHESES 3A AND 3B: THE CONSEQUENCES OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

Hypothesis 3a states that the more central religion is to a violent conflict, the less likely that conflict will be resolved through negotiations. Hypothesis 3b holds that the more central religion is to a conflict, the less likely combatants are to restrain themselves from using force against noncombatants who are nonbelievers.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b focus on the consequences of religion moving from the periphery to the center. Hypothesis 3a tests the proposition that religious issues are less amenable to compromise than most other issues. Every conflict involves some error in anticipating the costs and benefits of escalation. After the violence starts, however, the relative balance between costs and benefits becomes progressively clearer, and this clarity presents opportunities for bargaining to end the violence (though not necessarily the dispute).²⁸ Hypothesis 3a posits that, having framed an issue of conflict as a religious issue, elites will support (1) escalating nonviolent conflicts to violence, and (2) continuing or escalating a violent conflict beyond the point where the benefits exceed the costs. This is another way of saying that religious issues have an uncompromising character, such that even rational actors may find it difficult to arrive at a nonviolent resolution.²⁹ If this is true, then one should also expect religious civil wars that end short of a decisive outcome to be more prone to reignite than civil wars fought over other issues.

Hypothesis 3b gets at a problem not restricted to religious belief but closely associated with it historically: the treatment of noncombatants. When Spain

27. On principles used in ethnic bargaining, see Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), especially chap. 2.

28. Geoffrey Blainey, *Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

29. Toft, "Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War."

encountered the New World in the fifteenth century, for example, the Catholic Church had to decide the status of peoples indigenous to America: Were they human, and thus entitled to due process and fair treatment? Or were they “savages” to be treated as a special category of animal?³⁰ After considerable debate, the distinction turned on the process of conversion: those who converted to Christianity would be considered humans (albeit conquered humans) and therefore entitled to humane treatment. The unconverted could be treated as any other natural resource: killed, made slaves, and so on (it was, for example, impossible to murder a “savage”). Thus in some religions, only adherents gain the full protection of the law.

Islam in Civil Wars

Three factors in addition to the transnational aspect of religious outbidding help to explain why Islam has played a larger role in contemporary religious civil wars than either Christianity or Judaism. The first factor is historical: the timing of the emergence of the state system and the subsequent development of an international system that made industrialized states the most lethal form of political association.³¹ The second is geographical: the co-location of Islamic holy sites and concentrated petroleum reserves. The third is structural: a component of Islam known as jihad that has been interpreted and practiced since ancient times.

THE THIRTY YEARS’ WAR AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE STATE SYSTEM

The notion that political communities are best organized into states is not universal across time or space. It is neither natural nor inevitable that people should choose to live in states. The contemporary state system had its birth in Europe following thirty years of religious war.³² The Treaties of Westphalia in 1648 marked the end of the era of the unfettered prince as sovereign and ush-

30. See Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

31. Industrialization is the most common explanation for the success of the West in overcoming resistance from beyond the boundaries of Europe, but plague and culture also contributed to this success. See, for example, Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); and Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

32. Some controversy remains over the claim that the Thirty Years’ War was in fact a “religious” war. Certainly no one disputes that the war began as a fight between Protestants and Catholics, and that much of its intensity and cruelty resulted from its religious character. For my purposes, it is sufficient to note the war’s religious origins, destructiveness, and political consequences (which are not in dispute).

ered in a progressively more secularized system of leadership. Princes no longer acted as agents of religious authority (or on an equal basis with regard to temporal authority), and they increasingly came to view religious authority as a resource (in terms of legitimacy, tangible assets, or both). Even before the Thirty Years' War, princes had come to rely less on religious approval for their actions and more on divine right as a source of legitimacy. But the extreme barbarity of the war and philosophical reaction to it—for example, the pervasiveness of the theme of “reason over faith” during the Enlightenment—persuaded most survivors that a secular form of government and some sort of power-sharing arrangement should supersede the power of the formerly unfettered prince (whether an agent of religious authority or not).³³ Worship would become a private matter distinct from the practice of ruling.

In addition, the nature of warfare itself underwent significant change during this period.³⁴ Much of the destructiveness of the Thirty Years' War, especially in the early years, was wrought by the necessity of quartering troops in areas with accessible food supplies. The process of foraging and counterforaging—as armies fought over the same lands season after season—soon left much of the European heartland incapable of supporting military operations (and eventually noncombatants). In addition, poor diet and constant movement made soldiers more susceptible to disease and more capable of spreading it. Europe was beset by plagues even more lethal than losses from starvation and combat. Princes turned increasingly to mercenaries to supplement their military power, which led to a dramatic increase in the demand for cash to pay them. Princes found that to raise enough money to continue the fight, they had to bargain with merchants and bankers (i.e., their social subordinates). Such subordinates were thus positioned to advance their own agendas in exchange for funding the princes. By the end of the war, mutual exhaustion and cross-class bargaining combined to make the previous century's ideal of a religiously sanctioned, all-powerful prince nearly extinct (it survived only in Russia).

33. Europeans had other great struggles to endure, including the struggle over the proper system of government for the state. Separating the cleric from the prince was not enough. If clerics were uncompromising, princes were capricious. Dissatisfaction with absolute monarchy led to a widespread struggle to overcome institutionalized aristocracy (the rule of blood over merit), which ended in the nineteenth century with the triumph of the bourgeoisie. On this theme, see Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*; and Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

34. For a general introduction, see John Childs, *Warfare in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Cassell, 2001).

As a result, emerging European states progressively abandoned the model of countries being ruled by God, save perhaps for the Russian Empire and the vestigial “state” of Vatican City in Rome. The Islamic world, however, has not undergone a similar experience. The 1980–88 Iran-Iraq War is its only major internecine conflict, and horrific as this war was, it never approached the scale or intensity of the Thirty Years’ War.³⁵ Like Christianity, Islam is a religion supported and constrained by holy texts. But unlike Christian polities, Islamic polities have not had sufficient incentives to separate religion and state.³⁶ Instead, in almost every country that identifies itself as Islamic, religion and state are fused; and rather than address schisms between, for example, Sunnis and Shiites, most contemporary interpretations of the Quran focus on the conduct of Muslims vis-à-vis Jews and Christians.³⁷

CO-LOCATION OF HOLY ISLAMIC SITES AND PETROLEUM RESERVES

A second factor that helps to explain Islam’s greater involvement in religious civil wars is the co-location of Islam’s holiest sites and accessible petroleum reserves. Since the oil crisis of the 1970s, large oil reserves have been discovered outside the Middle East; and today the Russian Federation controls a significant supply of those reserves. But until recently, petroleum as a strategic resource was closely identified with the Arabian Peninsula. Importantly, petroleum would not have been so important had the West (and Japan) not industrialized. Indeed, industrial production under conditions of interstate competition produced the most lethal form of the state: the advanced-industrial state (of which there are still relatively few).

35. For an overview of the war’s causes, course, and consequences, see Richard Bonney, *The Thirty Years’ War, 1618–1648* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002). In the German territories alone, an estimated 15 percent of the prewar population perished due to both military action and disease exacerbated by military action. It would be another 300 years before the industrial revolution–fed world wars would result in losses on this scale.

36. The literature on the connection between Islam and the state is vast. For an overview of the tension between Islam, the state, and individual liberty, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, “Islam and the Challenge of Democracy,” *Boston Review*, Vol. 28 (April/May 2003). See also Bernard Lewis, “Islam and Liberal Democracy: A Historical Overview,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April 1996), pp. 52–63; and John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). For an empirical evaluation that finds that Islamic countries are “democratically challenged,” see Fish, “Islam and Authoritarianism.”

37. The data below support this argument: almost no difference exists between the number of states with an Islamic orientation and those whose official religion is Islam (27 and 25, respectively). For Christian states, the proportions are very different: 32 states have a distinctly Christian orientation, yet only 13 claim Christianity as a state religion. Moreover, there are more Christians worldwide than Muslims and more states whose populations contain a majority of Christians; yet Christianity is much less prevalent in religious civil wars than is Islam.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century and through two world wars, Western advanced-industrial states, with their secular governments and highly developed killing technology, came into increasing (and increasingly violent) contact with the Middle East. In their interstate depredations, and later export of the concept of nationalism as a high form of legitimacy, the West became a force for inadvertently unifying and radicalizing Islam.³⁸ The colonial and postcolonial periods, marked by the paradoxical mix of good intentions, on the one hand, and lies and naked exploitation, on the other hand, helped to re-create the concept of Arab (and Islamic) unity.³⁹ In addition, both Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism received a strong boost from the establishment—with some Western help—of a Jewish state in 1948 on territory predominantly populated by Arabs and Muslims. More important, Mecca, Islam's holiest site, is located on the Arabian Peninsula. It follows that the West's increasing dependence on petroleum and the growing antipathy between Jews, Arabs, and Persians after World War II would combine to make conflict more likely in this region, and that as a result of faith and resource co-location, Islam would play a disproportionately greater role.

ISLAM AND JIHAD

A third factor that has contributed to Islam's disproportionate role in religious civil wars is jihad.⁴⁰ The best translation of the Arabic "jihad" is generally given as "struggle." Traditionally, the term refers to the defense of faith when faith is threatened, and it has an internal and an external aspect. The internal

38. The main cause of disunity had been the machinations of European colonial powers, which had long ago mastered the concept of "divide and rule." Colonial borders served no other purpose than to make it more difficult for the organic polities of North Africa, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, and Turkey to act as unified polities. For a cogent example of this process—Russian conquest of the Caucasus in the nineteenth century—see Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 4.

39. This is a concept that predates the advent of the European states system and has endured ever since. For early manifestations of nationalism against first the Ottomans and then the British, see George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: Simon Publications, 2001); and T.E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York: Anchor, 1991). For a more scholarly account, see Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva S. Simon, eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). See also Ernest Gellner, ed., *Islamic Dilemmas: Reformers, Nationalists, and Industrialization* (New York: Mouton, 1985); Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

40. The literature on jihad is vast. See Noor Mohammad, "The Doctrine of Jihad, an Introduction," *Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1985), pp. 381–397; Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (New York: Belknap, 2003); and Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

aspect involves personal struggle, that is, coming to see the wisdom of God through the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. Many religions embrace a similar concept, which often involves challenging believers to strengthen their faith in God by means of meditation and prayer, fasting, and so forth.

The external aspect involves the defense of the community of believers from unbelievers—from those who, having come to adulthood, have consciously rejected the teachings of the Prophet and, by extension, the commandments of God. This external defense-of-the-faith component of Islam has parallels in other religions, including Christianity. In contemporary states whose histories include participation in the Thirty Years' War, however, this component has remained dormant for centuries. In the Islamic world, the external aspect of jihad was revived during the Soviet Union's ill-fated attempt in the 1980s to preserve an unpopular Marxist regime in Afghanistan. It gave license to young men to travel great distances to Afghanistan to defend Islam by killing Soviet troops and the Soviet Union's local allies. This effort was thus characterized by a sense of religious obligation; and combined with a never-ending stream of cash and weapons across Afghanistan's notoriously porous borders, these young men prevented the Soviets from achieving their political objectives at an acceptable cost. Although military analysts in the West were apt to credit high technology (specifically, U.S.-made Stinger surface-to-air missiles) with the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, to Islam's more conservative clerics and to many Muslims, jihad's external aspect was responsible for defeating a nuclear-armed, advanced-industrial Christian state.⁴¹ This accounts for why, since the end of the Cold War, external jihad has become the legitimizing principle of choice for Islam's most conservative clerics—many of whom either personally satisfied their religious obligation to defend the faith from “godless communists” or sanctioned others to do so. This explains why the term “jihad,” as used today in both the West and the Islamic world, tends to be reduced to this external aspect.

By contrast, the emergence of a similar appeal in a contemporary Christian context is highly unlikely,⁴² not because Christianity is free of its own versions

41. On Islamic strategic thinkers' views about how to defeat the West, see Jarret M. Brachman and William F. McCants, “Stealing al-Qa'ida's Playbook,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (June 2006), pp. 309–321.

42. On the contrary, the most useful type of argument a beleaguered combatant—be it an incumbent government or a rebel group—could make to gain Western support today is that of an ally in the war against Islamic fundamentalist terror. There is nothing, however, to prevent Christianity, or even Judaism, from reactivating this aspect of faith and practice. In Judaism's case, because only a single state is Jewish, when threatened, Jewish elites will not tender religious bids for external support because no other state exists that could come to Israel's aid on religious grounds. Never-

of jihad—the Crusades are only the most notorious reminder that it is not—but because as inheritors of the state system that came out of the Thirty Years' War, Western elites have long since secularized their political leadership.⁴³

In sum, although a combination of historical, geographical, and structural factors are necessary to explain Islam's disproportionately high role in religious civil wars from 1940 to 2000, they are not sufficient. For that we will need to include the phenomenon of religious outbidding. Since World War II, Arab leaders from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia have attempted to outdo one another in claiming their dedication to Arabs as an ethnic group, adhering to Islam as their chosen faith, and (at least until Egypt's stunning defection in 1979 with the signing of the Camp David accords) seeking to annihilate the state of Israel. Embattled elites who succeed in establishing religious credibility (e.g., contemporary Iraqi Sunni and Shiite clerics) gain support at home, as well as cash, weapons, and fighters from abroad. Leaders who neglect religion—for example, the shah of Iran in the 1970s—may be ousted from power or, like Anwar el-Sadat, lose their lives when seeking to suppress it.

Islam and Civil War: A Statistical Overview

This section begins with a statistical overview of the relationship between religion and some civil wars. It then offers tests of hypotheses 1 and 3 and the plausibility of the theory of religious outbidding. A case study of Sudan's two civil wars serves as a test of hypothesis 2 in the following section.

The data analyzed below were collected in a data set that includes all civil wars fought from 1940 to 2000. To be part of the data set, a civil war had to meet six criteria.⁴⁴ First, the focus of the war was control over which group

theless, when powerful states have significant numbers of nationals living outside the state (or when in powerful states they have a strong lobby—for example, the Jewish-Israel lobby in the United States), religious appeals may make more sense. See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby," *London Review of Books*, March 23, 2006, pp. 3–12.

43. This is not a teleological argument. Christianity could again become the focus of internecine fighting, but today—especially in Europe—this remains unlikely. On the subject of global religious resurgence, see Shah and Toft, "Why God Is Winning," pp. 38–43.

44. These six criteria are an amalgamation of those used by other scholars to define civil wars. For example, Roy Licklider and Nicholas Sambanis use a death threshold of 1,000 total, as opposed to a yearly average. Furthermore, this data set includes wars that involved colonial struggles. Other data sets are inconsistent on this score. Take, for example, the case of Russia and Chechnya, which is included in most data sets, whereas the war for Algerian independence is not. Licklider would probably argue that this war fails to meet part of his third criterion that "each side must have significant numbers of troops made up of local residents." Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945–1993," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (Sep-

would govern, as each contender rejects the legitimacy of the claims of other contenders for control of the government. Second, there were at least two groups of organized combatants. This criterion therefore excludes spontaneous mob actions or riots, such as occurred during the Albanian pyramid scheme crisis in 1997. Third, the state was one of the combatants. This excludes communal conflicts in which the government is not one of the warring parties. Fourth, there were at least 1,000 battle deaths per year on average. This excludes other types of violence such as crime, riots, and smaller-scale insurgencies. It also excludes cases such as the fight for Northern Ireland (although the long-term costs of that conflict have been high). Fifth, the ratio of total deaths was at least 95 to 5, meaning that the stronger side had to have suffered at least 5 percent of the total casualties. This criterion excludes massacres and genocides. Sixth, the war had to start within the boundaries of an internationally recognized state or entity. This excludes wars between two sovereign states. The total number of wars that qualified for inclusion in the data set was 133;⁴⁵ of this, 42 (32 percent) were religious civil wars (see Table 1).

According to hypothesis 1, religious outbidding should be more prevalent in Islamic states than in non-Islamic states. If this is true, then Islam should be disproportionately involved in religious civil wars, as elites propound religious identities, beliefs, and traditions to advance their political position vis-à-vis both a domestic and an international audience. Of the 42 religious civil wars fought from 1940 to 2000, one or both parties adhered to Islam in a striking 34 cases (81 percent),⁴⁶ and 34 (26 percent) of the civil wars during this period had an Islamic component. Christianity was involved in 21 (50 percent) of the 42 religious civil wars and 21 (16 percent) of the 133 civil wars examined.

Another way to examine the connection between religion and civil war is to

tember 1995), p. 682. The problem here is not with the criterion, but in its application across potential cases. In the case of Chechnya, most of the fighting on the side of the Russian government was done by federal troops sent down to Chechnya from Moscow. Local Russians did not fight in the war; rather, they fell victim to the violence or fled. In Algeria, by contrast, French settlers engaged Algerians during the war for independence. Algeria better meets Licklider's criterion than does Chechnya, yet it is excluded from his data set. To be consistent, wars that are commonly thought of as colonial wars are included in this data set. There are a total of 10 such wars included here. See Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars"; Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 4 (December 2000), pp. 779–802; and James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 2003), pp. 75–90.

45. The data set is available from the author.

46. For a similar finding about ethnic conflicts in the early 1990s, see Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, p. 269.

Table 1. Religious Civil Wars, 1940–2000

State	Start Year	Name/Combatants
Afghanistan	1978	Mujahideen/Taliban
Algeria	1992	Fundamentalists
Azerbaijan/Soviet Union	1988	Nagorno Karabakh
Bangladesh	1972	Chittagong Hill
Burma	1948	Karens
Burma	1960	Kachins
Chad	1965	National Liberation Front of Chad
China	1950	Tibet
China	1954	Tibet
Cyprus	1963	Greek/Turk clashes
Cyprus	1974	Coup/Turkey invasion
Ethiopia	1977	Ogaden
Georgia	1992	Abkhazia
India	1946	Partition
India	1948	Hyderabad
India	1956	Naga revolt
India	1965	Kashmir
India	1982	Sikh insurrection
India	1988	Kashmir
Indonesia	1950	Ambon/Moluccans
Indonesia	1953	Aceh revolt
Indonesia	1975	East Timor
Iran	1978	Revolution
Iran	1981	National Council of Resistance of Iran/Mojahedin
Iraq	1991	Shiite insurrection
Israel/Palestine	1945	Independence
Lebanon	1958	First civil war
Lebanon	1975	Second civil war
Nigeria	1967	Biafra
Nigeria	1980	Maitatsine
Philippines	1972	Moro rebellion
Philippines	2000	Moro rebellion
Russia	1994	First Chechen war
Russia	1999	Second Chechen war
Sri Lanka	1983	Tamil insurgency
Sudan	1955	Any-Nya
Sudan	1983	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
Syria	1979	Sunnis versus Alawites
Tajikistan	1992	Civil war
Yugoslavia	1991	Croatian secession
Yugoslavia	1992	Bosnian civil war
Yugoslavia	1998	Kosovo

look at the religious makeup of the states involved. Table 2 reveals that in 14 of the 24 (58 percent) states that experienced religious civil wars, Islam was the dominant religion (where “dominant” refers to the majority of the population with a given religious identity). To fully appreciate Islam’s disproportionate involvement in such wars, consider the global distribution of Islamic states

Table 2. Dominant Religion of States Experiencing Religious Civil War

State	Dominant Religion	Percentage of Population
Afghanistan	Islam/Sunni	80
Algeria	Islam/Sunni	99
Azerbaijan	Islam/Shiite/maj	93
Bangladesh	Islam/Sunni	83
Burma	Buddhist	89
Chad	Islam/Sunni	51
China	Taoist	95
Cyprus	Christian/Greek Orthodox	78
Ethiopia	Islam/Sunni	45–50
Georgia	Christian/Georgian Orthodox	84
India	Hindu	81
Indonesia	Islam	88
Iran	Islam/Shiite	89
Iraq	Islam/Shiite	60
Israel	Judaism	76
Lebanon	Islam	60
Nigeria	Islam	50
Philippines	Christian/Catholic	81
Russia	Christian/Russian Orthodox	15–20 ²
Sri Lanka	Buddhist	69
Sudan	Islam/Sunni	70
Syria	Islam/Sunni	74
Tajikistan	Islam/Sunni	85
Yugoslavia	Christian/Eastern Orthodox	39 ³

¹Unless otherwise indicated, figures are from the *CIA World Factbook, 2007*, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>.

²This figure represents practicing worshipers and therefore underestimates the number of adherents who have an Orthodox background. Ethnic Russians, most of whom are Orthodox, make up 80 percent of the population.

³Because the last census in former Yugoslavia to ask about religion was conducted in 1953, this figure is only an estimate and includes ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins from the 1991 census. Ruza Petrović, "The National Composition of Yugoslavia's Population," *Yugoslav Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1992), pp. 3–24; and Dusan Breznik and Nada Raduski, "Demographic Characteristics of the Population of FR Yugoslavia by Nationality," *Yugoslav Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (1993) pp. 3–44.

and adherents of Islam. Of the 191 states worldwide, only 27 (14 percent) have a clear orientation toward Islam,⁴⁷ while only 25 (13 percent) have regimes in which Islam is defined as the state religion.⁴⁸ Yet Islam is represented in 81 per-

47. Assaf Moghadam, "A Global Resurgence of Religion?" Working Paper, No. 03-03 (Cambridge, Mass.: Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, August 2003), pp. 46–54. I define "orientation" as the preferential treatment of a given religion within a state over others, such that the distribution of state funds to one religion's institutions or members compares disproportionately to other religions or groups.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

cent of religious civil wars and 26 percent of all civil wars. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

Hypothesis 3 proposes that religious civil wars are more intractable and more destructive than other kinds of civil war. To test this hypothesis, I examined the following four factors: war duration, war termination type, recurrence, and noncombatant deaths. The data show that whereas nonreligious civil wars last on average 76 months, religious civil wars last 103 months, or about two years longer.⁴⁹ The same holds true if one compares civil wars in which religion is central with all other civil wars; the former last on average 91 months and the latter about 76 months. These data reveal that civil wars in which religion is peripheral are the longest, lasting 119 months on average. These findings, however, are not statistically significant and do not take into account other reasons for the peripheral wars, such as level of economic development.

Civil wars in which religion is central do seem to be more intractable than nonreligious civil wars, and they are less likely to be resolved by a negotiated settlement; 19 percent of civil wars from 1940 to 2000 ended in negotiated settlements, whereas only 12 percent of civil wars in which religion was central did.⁵⁰ Civil wars in which religion was peripheral were twice as likely to be resolved in this manner.⁵¹

Furthermore, civil wars in which religion was central were nearly twice as likely as nonreligious civil wars to recur: 6 of 25 (24 percent) of these wars recurred, compared with 11 of 91 (12 percent) nonreligious wars.⁵² Civil wars in which religion was peripheral were slightly more likely to recur than civil wars without a religious dimension.

Finally, civil wars in which religion was central were four times deadlier to noncombatants than civil wars in which religion was peripheral (28,000 versus 7,000 average deaths per year for central and peripheral religious involvement, respectively).⁵³ All war is brutal, but this finding shows that in terms of non-

49. The overall mean is 84 months.

50. Pearson $\chi^2(3) = 5.1549$; $Pr = 0.161$. Note that it is barely insignificant. The problem here is that the number of cases is limited. There are only 25 central religious conflicts to compare against only 23 negotiated settlements.

51. Pearson $\chi^2(3) = 11.0024$; $Pr = 0.012$.

52. Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 2.23$; $Pr = 0.14$. This statistic compares religious civil wars when religion was central against nonreligious civil wars. Wars in which religion is peripheral were excluded in this calculation.

53. To calculate whether religious civil wars are more brutal toward civilians, I subtracted the average number of battlefield deaths per year for each war from the total deaths per year, thereby obtaining an average nonbattlefield annual death count. Nonreligious civil wars seem to brutalize

combatant mortality, the greater the centrality of religion, the more brutal the war.

Sudan's Civil Wars

I have argued that religious outbidding is an important factor in explaining why religion moves from a peripheral to a central issue of conflict in some civil wars. Hypotheses 1 and 3 have been tested and supported by statistical data analysis. In this section I test hypothesis 2, as well as hypotheses 1 and 3, in the case of Sudan's civil wars. I chose this case because it can be used to illustrate and test arguments about the role of religion in war. In addition, it includes important variation along the "centralization of religion" variable. I begin with a brief historical background, before moving on to explore each of the three hypotheses on religion and civil war.

BACKGROUND

Save for eleven years between 1972 and 1983, Sudan (from the Arabic *bilad as-Sudan*, or "land of the blacks") has been ravaged by civil war since gaining independence on January 1, 1956. The war has pitted predominantly black African, non-Muslim southerners against largely Arab, Muslim northerners. Since 1983 this war and related causes (such as war-induced famine) have left more than 2 million Sudanese dead and displaced nearly 4.5 million.⁵⁴ In 2002 a task force report published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies described the situation as follows: "Adding to the outrage is the government's aerial bombardment of humanitarian relief sites; the systematic denial and manipulation by Khartoum and opposition forces of relief to imperiled civilian populations; religious persecution; failure by the government to combat slavery and abductions of children and women into servitude by Arab tribal militias; and mounting allegations that the aggregate consequence of this pattern of violence is genocidal." The task force concluded that

civilians even more than central religious wars, accounting for an average of 42,000 nonbattle deaths per year.

54. See, for example, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, "Country Report: Sudan," *World Refugee Survey, 2002* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2002). For statistics on internally displaced persons (IDPs), see "Profile of Internal Displacement: Sudan," Global IDP Database, Global IDP Project, Norwegian Refugee Council, <http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/4059b7044.pdf>, updated March 24, 2005. Sudan has the largest concentration of IDPs in the world. Freedom House cites a figure of 4.5 million displaced persons. See "Sudan Campaign," Center for Religious Freedom, Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion/sudan/index.htm>.

the central problem on which “virtually everything hinges is the devastating war that has raged in Sudan since 1983,” and it urged the next U.S. administration to exert great effort to end the conflict.⁵⁵

Sudan is the largest country on the African continent. With an area of roughly 2.5 million square kilometers, it is slightly more than one-quarter the size of the United States.⁵⁶ In 2006 Sudan’s population was estimated at 41 million, 70 percent of whom were Sunni Muslims, 25 percent adherents of indigenous traditional religions, and 5 percent Christians.⁵⁷ Muslims dominate the northern part of the country, while Sudanese who practice Christianity and traditional religions tend to live in the south. Nearly 2 million Christian southern Sudanese reside in or around the capital, Khartoum. As of July 2006, the ethnic division of Sudanese was 52 percent black and 39 percent Arab.⁵⁸ The number of tribes is estimated at 450, and some 132 languages are spoken across the country.⁵⁹

According to Francis Deng, former Sudanese ambassador to the United States and a preeminent scholar of Sudan, the country’s civil war “culminates a long history in which the North has tried to spread its religion and language to the South, which has resisted these efforts.”⁶⁰ Christianity and Islam appeared in Sudan in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., respectively. The arrival of Islam in North Africa led to a gradual decline of Christian influence, including in northern Sudan where, in 1504, an Arab-Muslim alliance overthrew the Christian kingdoms. With Islam established in the north, Islamic Arabs tried to assert control over the south.⁶¹

The Arab incursions from the north, however, proved neither deep nor permanent. They were halted in the southern parts of today’s Sudan by a combination of impassable swamps and fierce resistance by southern Sudanese. Consequently, the Arabization and Islamization of the north failed to take root in the south.⁶²

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–3.

56. *CIA World Factbook, 2007*, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>.

57. *Ibid.*

58. The Beja ethnic group formed 6 percent of the population, foreigners 2 percent, and other ethnic groups 1 percent. *Ibid.*

59. Donald Petterson, *Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict, and Catastrophe* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1999), p. 5.

60. Francis M. Deng, “Sudan—Civil War and Genocide: Disappearing Christians of the Middle East,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 2001), p. 13.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Deng notes that the Arabs were interested in the material value of blacks as slaves and thus

In the late nineteenth century, Muhammad Ahmad bin Abdallah, a boat builder's son, proclaimed himself the Mahdi, the second prophet and restorer of the Islamic faith. The Mahdist regime lasted until 1899, when it was destroyed by British and Egyptian forces, which subsequently established "condominium rule."⁶³

Islam survived in the north, but during the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, the British sought to reduce the chances of a future Islamic uprising by replacing Arab officials in the south with black Africans and preventing northerners from entering this region.⁶⁴ Use of the English language was encouraged, and conversion to Christianity was vigorously pursued.⁶⁵ To make unified Sudanese resistance to condominium rule more difficult, the British systematically neglected the south's economic development and undermined creation of an effective administrative infrastructure.⁶⁶ In the north, by contrast, the British invested in creating an educated Arab and Muslim Sudanese elite, while advancing the region's economic and social development. At the same time, Egypt, one of Sudan's neighbors, encouraged Islamic values and beliefs. As a result, condominium rule promoted cultural and religious separateness of the north and the south.

The British united the separately ruled zones in 1947, following signs of growing Sudanese nationalism in the north and increasing awareness of the inevitability of Sudanese independence. In the Juba conference of the same year, southern chiefs cooperated with northern nationalists to pursue independence from colonial rule. As the British troops began to withdraw, however, and as most administrative posts were filled by better educated northerners, southerners came to feel that the fusion between government and religion placed

had no wish to integrate with them. He also notes that had the Arabs and Muslims successfully converted southern black Africans to Islam, they could no longer have engaged in legal slave raids against them, given Islam's prohibition of enslaving fellow Muslims. *Ibid.* Besides the slave trade, an additional incentive for northerners to dominate the south was that the Nile flows from south to north.

63. Petterson, *Inside Sudan*, pp. 6–8. In condominium rule, a given state is jointly governed by two sovereign powers.

64. Milton Viorst, "Fundamentalism in Power: Sudan's Islamic Experiment," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (May/June 1995), pp. 45–58.

65. Francis M. Deng, "Scramble for Souls: Religious Intervention among the Dinka in Sudan," in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, ed., *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa* (New York: Orbis, 1999).

66. D. Michelle Domke, "Civil War in the Sudan: Resources or Religion?" Inventory of Conflict and Environment Case Study, No. 3 (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1997), <http://www.american.edu/ted/ice/sudan.htm>.

them at a disadvantage. Southerners were at an additional disadvantage because few of them spoke Arabic, which had become the official language of the north. In the south, "Sudanization" became tantamount to "northernization." According to Deng, for southerners, "independence was to prove merely a change of outside masters, with the northerners taking over from the British and defining the nation in accordance with the symbols of their Arab-Islamic identity."⁶⁷

SUDAN'S FIRST CIVIL WAR, 1955-72

By the mid-1950s, the divisions between northern and southern Sudan had taken on a multilayered complexity. Differences of geography, race, language, education, and economic development added to differences in religion to make conflict between the two regions all but inevitable.

On August 18, 1955, several months before Sudan's independence, violent conflict broke out when soldiers of the army's Southern Corps mutinied after hearing rumors that they were to be disarmed and taken northward. Led by Lt. Reynaldo Loyela, a group of southern soldiers at Torit refused to comply with orders given to them by their superiors. On the same day, another 190 southern soldiers mutinied in the districts of Juba, Maridi, Yambio, and Yei. The government in Khartoum declared a state of emergency, and on August 21, the Royal Air Force airlifted some 8,000 Sudanese army troops into the south.⁶⁸ The civil war had begun.

In 1958, following a short period of democratic rule under Sudan's first prime minister, Ismail al-Azhari, the fluctuation between civilian and military rule began. In November 1958 the military, led by Gen. Ibrahim Abboud, assumed power, quickly suppressing the opposition and speeding up the Islamization of the south through aggressive proselytizing.⁶⁹

Abboud's military campaign forced thousands of southerners into exile in neighboring countries, where they soon established opposition organizations. The remnants of the mutiny of 1955 formed the most violent of southern Sudanese opposition groups, the Anya-Nya ("snake poison"), which enjoyed

67. Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1995), quoted in International Crisis Group, "God, Oil, and Country: Changing the Logic of War in Sudan," Africa Report, No. 39 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 2002), p. 8.

68. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan, 1955-1972* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1977), p. 41.

69. International Crisis Group, "God, Oil, and Country," p. 9.

widespread support in the south. General Abboud's full-scale military campaign against the Anya-Nya and other southern opposition movements generated some 500,000 refugees.⁷⁰

On May 25, 1969, a military junta headed by Jaafar Muhammad al-Nimeiri overthrew a civilian caretaker government that had ruled since October 1964. Nimeiri strengthened the relationship between the Sudanese government and the Soviet Union, already the main financial and military backer of Khartoum. He also increased his country's support of and identification with Arab states vis-à-vis Israel.⁷¹

In July 1971 a failed communist coup led to the termination of Soviet support. Ruling a Sudan now bereft of its strongest military supporter, and leading a weakened army, Nimeiri made peace overtures to the southern rebels. In March 1972 his government signed the Addis Ababa agreement. Its clauses contained power-sharing and security guarantees for southerners and granted the south political and economic autonomy.⁷² The first civil war was over.

SUDAN'S SECOND CIVIL WAR, 1983-?

Sudan's first civil war was halted by the promise of social, religious, and economic autonomy for the south. So long as that promise held, there was no incentive for the south to fight. But neither Sudan nor the rest of North Africa and the Middle East could escape the outside world or its pressures. Their states having proven unable to defeat Israel militarily, Islamic leaders throughout the region engaged in fierce rhetoric against Israel and advocated an increasingly conservative brand of Islam at home. Frustrated on the battlefield, many of the region's leaders took to supporting terrorism against Israel and repressing non-Muslim minorities within their own countries.

In Sudan, Nimeiri came under constant pressure from conservative army

70. The largest opposition movement was the Sudan African National Union, which initially sought a peaceful solution to the southern Sudan problem. As the civil war intensified, the Sudan African National Union itself took up arms. See Dunstan M. Wai, *The African-Arab Conflict in the Sudan* (New York: Africana, 1981), p. 90. For more on the Anya-Nya, see Cecil Eprile, *War and Peace in the Sudan: 1955-1972* (London: David and Charles, 1974), pp. 90-102; and O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan*, pp. 57-67.

71. After the June 1967 Six-Day War, Israel supported Anya-Nya troops militarily and financially. See, for example, Eprile, *War and Peace in the Sudan*, pp. 140-141; O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan*, pp. 126-128; and International Crisis Group, "God, Oil, and Country," p. 10.

72. International Crisis Group, "God, Oil, and Country," p. 11.

officers and clerics to abrogate the Addis Ababa treaty and begin the work of securing all of Sudan for "God." This pressure became especially intense following the discovery of oil in the south in the 1970s.

In January 1983, in an act of defiance similar in nature and effect to the mutiny of August 1955, southern troops of the 105th Battalion refused orders to disarm and be transferred north. After several months of fruitless negotiations, Nimeiri ordered an attack on the mutineers in May. Members of the unit fled to neighboring Ethiopia, where they formed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the main southern rebel faction led by John Garang.⁷³ Ethiopia, Uganda, and later Eritrea each supported the overthrow of the Sudanese government, and as a result, each gave considerable logistical support (e.g., training facilities, arms, and intelligence) to various rebel groups opposing the Sudanese government.

The Addis Ababa agreement was officially abrogated in June 1983, when Nimeiri issued presidential decree number 1, which returned regional powers to the central government, ended the autonomy of the south, and divided the latter into three separate and powerless administrative provinces (Upper Nile, Bahr al-Ghazal, and Equatoria).⁷⁴ The semi-independent budgetary authority of the south was abolished, and fiscal authority was transferred to Khartoum. Arabic was declared the country's official language. And the central government seized control of the south's armed forces.⁷⁵

In September 1983 Nimeiri promulgated the so-called September Laws, which imposed Islamic religious law (sharia) on the Sudanese people and sanctioned the use of *hudud* (e.g., physical punishment such as flogging, amputation and cross amputation—the simultaneous amputation of a person's right hand and left foot—stoning, and execution for various crimes). Southerners labeled the imposition of the harsh laws a "rising tide of Muslim fundamentalism," which "threatened to unsettle the spirit of tolerance characteristic of the Addis Ababa decade."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the SPLM/A, which had unified

73. The SPLA is the armed movement of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Henceforth, the two entities are referred to as SPLM/A. In 1991 the leadership of the SPLA split, with a new faction led by an ethnic Nuer, Riek Machar, dubbing itself SPLA-United, which itself split several times thereafter.

74. Given the lack of sufficient personnel to manage even a single administrative unit, this redivision of the south made little sense. See J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins, *Requiem for the Sudan: War, Drought, and Disaster Relief on the Nile* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), p. 15.

75. *Ibid.* See also International Crisis Group, "God, Oil, and Country," p. 13.

76. R.K. Badal, "The Addis Ababa Agreement Ten Years After: An Assessment," in Mom Kou Nhail Arou and Benaiah Yongo-Bure, eds., *North-South Relations in the Sudan since the Addis Ababa*

behind Garang, declared that it would fight until the September Laws were revoked. The SPLM/A's objectives were defined more broadly than just southern autonomy, and included a call to transform Sudan into a multiracial, multireligious, and multiethnic democratic state.⁷⁷

In 1985 Nimeiri was replaced by Sadiq al-Mahdi, who stood as the democratically elected prime minister of Sudan until 1989. Al-Mahdi had responded to increasing SPLM/A successes in the field by attempting to negotiate another peace.

On June 30, 1989, Brig. Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir seized power in a bloodless coup, toppling al-Mahdi's government. President al-Bashir, who was born in 1944 about 150 miles south of Khartoum, is a devout Muslim and career soldier who fought in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, as well as in Sudan's first civil war.

The new regime immediately canceled the agreements reached by the al-Mahdi government, which had begun to negotiate with the SPLM/A and even met preconditions for a constitutional conference.⁷⁸ Al-Bashir's coup against al-Mahdi was supported, and perhaps planned by, the National Islamic Front (NIF), a group that expounded a radical Islamic vision and was determined to transform Sudan into a religious society.⁷⁹ The NIF's leader, Hassan al-Turabi, is widely believed to have been the key figure behind most of Sudan's policy initiatives until his arrest in 2001.⁸⁰

The new regime moved quickly to destroy all political opposition by abolishing parliament, banning political parties, and imprisoning all other party leaders. It imposed a state of emergency and created the Revolutionary Command Council, which served as a cabinet and was chaired by President al-Bashir. It also closed the newspapers. Leaders of student groups, unions, professional associations, and political parties were arrested, with many disap-

Agreement (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1988), p. 32, quoted in Burr and Collins, *Requiem for the Sudan*, p. 16.

77. International Crisis Group, "God, Oil, and Country," p. 13.

78. Burr and Collins, *Requiem for the Sudan*, p. 157.

79. Prior to the 1989 coup, the NIF had not fared particularly well in the country's only national election of 1986, gaining only 6 percent of the vote. See Randolph Martin, "Sudan's Perfect War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (March/April 2002), p. 111.

80. After mid-1993, U.S. embassy reporting explicitly acknowledged Turabi's preeminence in the power structure. See Petterson, *Inside Sudan*, p. 85. Millard Burr and Robert Collins, writing about the 1989 coup, say that it was carried out by "unsophisticated brigadiers of the Sudanese army, supported financially by members of the National Islamic Front. They were soldiers, but the policy decisions were made by the Islamic politicians and polemicists led by Hassan al-Turabi." Burr and Collins, *Requiem for the Sudan*, pp. 2-3.

pearing into “ghost houses” and prisons, where they were tortured or murdered.⁸¹ Undeterred by the SPLM/A’s recent military gains, which had in part prompted the al-Mahdi government’s more conciliatory stance, the al-Bashir regime intensified the civil war.

Al-Bashir refused to consider revoking sharia law and, with NIF support and guidance, intensified efforts to force Islam on all Sudanese. As in the 1955–72 civil war, religion was not the only issue of contention between north and south. But increasingly, the al-Bashir regime described the war as a jihad and northern Muslim fighters as martyrs.⁸² Although the al-Bashir government signed a peace agreement with the SPLM/A in January 2005, Sudan’s civil war is effectively ongoing.

ANALYSIS: HYPOTHESES ON RELIGIOUS CIVIL WAR AND SUDAN’S CIVIL WARS

Sudan’s civil wars lend support to hypotheses 2 and 3. Hypothesis 2 holds that religion will shift from being a peripheral to a central issue when local elites attempt to outbid each other in an effort to increase their religious legitimacy with an internal and, in many but not all cases, an external audience. In Sudan’s first civil war, although the sides identified with different religions, the imposition of Islam by the north was not a source of the south’s resistance. By all accounts, the proximate cause of the first outbreak of violence (the 1955 mutiny) was southern concern over the systematic denial of civil service posts in the national government (including the army). In fact, even six years after General Abboud’s so-called Islamization campaign, southern resistance groups focused their grievances on economic hardship rather than on religious discrimination. The prioritization of southern grievances is reflected in a memorandum sent to the Organization for African Unity, in which the Sudan African National Union complained that the north had denied southerners participation in the administration, stunted southern economic development, and hampered educational progress. Religious persecution was virtually unmentioned. Moreover, a detailed account of the motivations of Abboud’s Islamization campaign reveals that the campaign itself did not constitute a religious bid. Abboud’s leadership was not threatened; and the north, by its own calculations, was not feeling seriously threatened by the Anya-Nya.

In the face of increasing SPLM/A victories, and weakened by the loss of

81. International Crisis Group, “God, Oil, and Country,” p. 14.

82. “Islam’s Dark Side: The Orwellian State of Sudan,” *Economist*, June 24, 1995, p. 21.

Soviet patronage after 1971, Nimeiri essentially sued for peace, and the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement was followed by eleven years of calm. This raises the question: Why did he not make a religious bid instead of suing for peace?

In 1972 Nimeiri and many Arab leaders were bidding for Soviet support both to counter Western support for Israel and to modernize their countries (and their militaries, in particular). The disappearance of Soviet patronage put Sudan's northern leaders at a loss as to how to proceed. At the same time, it strengthened the position of the SPLM/A: once the Soviet Union turned against Sudan, its client states in Africa—Mengistu's Ethiopia, in particular—were both willing and able to host Garang. The new type of legitimacy that religion provided was soon to emerge, however. The increased advantages of tightened economic control over the south grew exponentially after the discovery of oil there in the early 1970s, and the potential costs of continuing to permit southern autonomy—exemplified for Nimeiri by al-Mahdi's attempted coup in 1976—led to Nimeiri's complete conversion to an Islamic justification for northern aggression in the south. He made Islam the central issue of conflict when he issued the September Laws in 1983, and full-scale civil war resumed.

The problem for Nimeiri was not that his religious bids were ill timed or the wrong sort, but that his history (after 1971) of repressing Islamic groups made it relatively easy for his rivals (e.g., al-Mahdi and al-Bashir) to criticize him as a fair-weather friend of Islam. How could such a man be trusted? Even al-Mahdi's credibility was eventually called into question by Sudan's current leader, al-Bashir. Aided by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent split of the rebel forces opposing northern imposition of Islam in the south, al-Bashir has led a radicalized Islamic campaign of genocidal war in the south. In addition, his regime has gained increasing support from other Islamic states (e.g., Saudi Arabia) in the form of fighters, cash, and arms, while continuing to deflect Western concerns over human rights abuses encouraged by the north in the south.

Hypothesis 2 is therefore supported in the case of Sudan: a succession of northern leaders, threatened with defeat by the military advances of the SPLM/A, tendered competing religious bids to enhance their legitimacy (and attract support) at home and abroad. The bidding process forced religion to the center of what had started as a conflict over the distribution of offices and economic resources. The result was a civil war that proved to be one of the twentieth century's longest and most brutal. More case studies will be needed

to determine the extent to which this pattern holds true in other civil wars. Nevertheless, a cursory review of other cases involving Islam and civil war reveals religion moving from a peripheral to central issue as a result of religious outbidding. Consider Afghanistan from 1979 to the present, Chechnya from 1994 to the present, and today's Iraq.

Hypothesis 3a, which holds that the more central religion is to a conflict, the less likely the conflict will end short of a decisive victory, would have received strong support in the Sudan case, had it not been for the January 2005 signing of the Naivasha (North-South) Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The logic of hypothesis 3a is that because a direct commandment from God would be necessary to stop a war previously justified as God's will, civil wars in which religion has become a central issue will be unlikely to end short of a decisive outcome.⁸³ The corollary to hypothesis 3a is that when religion moves from being a central to a peripheral issue, negotiations for lasting peace (such as the Addis Ababa agreement) become much more likely. What then should one make of the Naivasha agreement? Is this a real peace, resulting from a shift of religion from the center to the periphery? Or is it an armistice whose real purpose is to allow unreconciled combatants to continue fighting at a future date?

These questions are difficult to answer. On the one hand, the influence of the radical Islamists in Khartoum has diminished since 2005. On the other hand, Khartoum's agenda appears to remain fixed on Islamization of the south. A statement by Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi reflects this puzzling ambiguity: "Ideologically and politically," he told the International Crisis Group, "the form of fundamentalism that was ascendant from 1989 to 1996 in Khartoum is defeated. However, Islamic values are still there, and will be a political factor for a long time. But the virulent, messianic, export-oriented Islamism has dwindled in significance and has become inward-looking."⁸⁴

Given more recent statements by al-Bashir and his government, however, Zenawi's characterization of religion as less central in Khartoum's calculations is questionable. Al-Bashir and Vice President Ali Osman Taha have been quoted as saying that a secular Sudan is out of the question and that Islam is

83. One should not be surprised, however, by "tactical" cease-fires, whose real aim is either to carry on the violence under a different name (or to a different degree) or to gather the resources necessary to achieve complete victory at some future date.

84. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, interview with the International Crisis Group, Addis Ababa, July 16, 2001, quoted in International Crisis Group, "God, Oil, and Country," p. 23.

the religion of the land.⁸⁵ One high-ranking Sudanese government official told the International Crisis Group, “We need to add other religions and approaches, not remove Islam from the law and constitution. We simply can’t take it out: it’s life or death.”⁸⁶ Al-Bashir himself considers Islam to be the “cornerstone of our policy.”⁸⁷ And the U.S. State Department’s Report on Religious Freedom of 2002 noted that “[Sudan’s] government continued to insist that sharia law form the basis of a unified state.”⁸⁸

Support for hypothesis 3a is therefore mixed in the Sudan case. On the basis of my research, I would argue that, the Naivasha agreement notwithstanding, Sudan’s civil war is not over. Furthermore, it will not end until either the north’s leaders are replaced by leaders who repudiate the war’s religious objectives, or the south votes to secede as outlined in the agreement.⁸⁹

In contrast, support for hypothesis 3b is strong in the Sudan case. As religion became more central, the number of civilian casualties grew. Although Sudan’s first civil war did not spare noncombatants, noncombatants were much worse off during the height of the second civil war—which lasted from 1989 until 1996—when the al-Bashir government began to moderate its stance on religion (though sharia law is still formally the law of the land).⁹⁰

In sum, Sudan’s long civil war is effectively two distinct civil wars with two overlapping sets of actors and causes. In the first civil war, religion was no more important than any other issue, including conflicts over economic autonomy, the distribution of government offices, social practices (e.g., education), and political liberties. But this civil war, though destructive and costly, was nevertheless stoppable. Religion had not become the central issue of conflict, and when feeling threatened and unsure of what sort of bid to make, Nimeiri

85. The Sudanese newspaper *Al-Ray al-Amm* quoted al-Bashir as saying “no to secularism.” The Egyptian news service MENA quoted the vice president as saying, “We do not see that our call to enforce Islam and abide by the Islamic sharia would undermine the rights of others or endanger the country’s unity.” Quoted in International Crisis Group, “Oil, God, and Country,” p. 96.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Sudan: Contested National Identities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 125, quoted in International Crisis Group, “God, Oil, and Country,” p. 19.

88. U.S. Department of State, *International Religious Freedom Report, 2002*, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/>.

89. For an assessment of the agreement and the factors likely to lead to its collapse, see *Sudanreeves.org*, “The Slow Collapse of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for South Sudan,” September 24, 2005, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=70>.

90. The average number of noncombatant deaths in the second war was three times greater than the average number of noncombatant deaths in the first war.

opted to compromise. In addition, the government and insurgents were able to negotiate a peace treaty that left both better off. The terms of the Addis Ababa agreement were followed until religious intolerance combined with simple greed to destroy it.

In Sudan's second civil war, religion moved from a peripheral issue to become the central issue. The north unilaterally declared the whole of Sudan to be Islamic, and then sought to make that declaration true by means of violence. The north's religious intolerance made it unwilling to compromise on otherwise divisible issues of conflict with the south (as it had previously) until the south had no recourse but to respond by force of arms. The civil war that followed the north's abrogation of the Addis Ababa agreement was far more brutal than the one before. In it, civilians became the systematic targets of a host of abuses, ranging from forced slavery and mass murder to starvation. Millions were killed or forced to flee their homes.

Conclusion

Religious civil wars pose an increasingly important local, regional, and interstate problem. Religious outbidding has played a key role in this trend, especially since the 1990s, when the end of the Cold War arguably shifted the utility of different types of bids from secular, ideological issues to ethnonational and religious issues. The deadliness of religious civil wars, combined with the salience of religiously inspired terror (in particular, suicide bombings), explains why the subject of religion and violence continues to capture the attention of policymakers in both the developed and developing worlds.

From 1940 to 2000, Islam was involved in a disproportionately high number of civil wars compared with other religions. This overrepresentation is likely the result of the high utility of religious outbidding for political elites seeking the resources they need to stay in power, combined with certain historical, geographic, and structural factors.

The theory of religious outbidding, as presented in this article, isolates the conditions under which civil wars become religious civil wars. Essentially, embattled political elites will tender religious bids when and where they calculate that increasing their religious legitimacy can help them survive (or achieve an objective that would otherwise remain out of reach). Embattled leaders can expect to obtain relatively higher utility from appeals to religion when a domestic constituency favors that religion (and possesses resources that may be

transferred to the leader as a result of the religious appeal), and when the religion in question has significant extrastate constituencies—such as Islam, which predominates in a broad belt of states ranging from North Africa to Indonesia.

Additionally, in states that identify as Islamic, church and state are much more likely to be fused. In contrast, after the Thirty Years' War, "Christian" states abandoned this model of political authority. Moreover, the co-location of key holy sites (e.g., Mecca and Jerusalem) and the world's most accessible petroleum reserves made countries that identify as Islamic more likely to be the site of conflict, especially after petroleum became a vital component of post-World War II industrial and military power. Finally, Islam has jihad, an aspect of which conceives of defense of the faith from external threats as a religious obligation. This aspect of jihad makes travel over long distances and the risk of death in conflicts over defense of the faith not only rational, but desirable.

This research suggests at least two major implications. First, in theoretical terms, if religious fervor generally undermines compromise, then religious belief should be incorporated into bargaining theory rather than shunted aside as a category of irrational action. Religious preferences are rational (at least procedurally), but they operate under a different conception of costs and benefits than do secular preferences.⁹¹

Second, in policy terms, if the underlying objective of Western intervention in Islamic countries is secure access to cheap petroleum, then Western countries are progressively undermining their security by refusing to seriously reduce their consumption of petroleum. Saudi Arabia is only the most important of several states with large Muslim populations (including, for example, Iraq and Iran) that sit astride most of the world's known (or more easily accessible) petroleum reserves. Excessive demand for petroleum only accelerates the transfer of wealth from the developed world to oil-rich states, many of which are represented by Islamic governments. These states then have the financial resources to buy arms and train fighters. They are also in a position to transfer these resources to threatened Islamic political elites in poorer countries, thus fueling the process of religious outbidding and increasing the likelihood that

91. Some scholars have advocated this already. See, for example, Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); and Harold Coward and Gordon S. Smith, eds., *Religion and Peacebuilding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

what begins as a civil war may spill over into a regional or even an interstate war.

How then should this cycle of threat, religious outbidding, and conflict escalation be stopped? This study suggests two broad strategies: one that addresses the supply of resources to embattled elites and another that addresses elites' demand for such resources.

On the supply side, a reduction in the number of religious civil wars would require a reduction in the utility of religious bids. Yet as long as states that identify as Islamic control such vast wealth, the utility of religious bids will remain high.

This "conflict resources dynamic" may also solve the puzzle of why there appears to be a gap between a widely reported Muslim majority, which rejects conservative interpretations of the Quran and Hadith, and what appears to be an increase in Islamic fundamentalism. If, as I have shown, the only appeals likely to gain resources (e.g., cash, arms, fighters, and sanctuary) incorporate the most conservative interpretations of Islamic holy texts, two predictions follow. First, all else being equal, the proportion of extreme religious bids will increase. Second, elites who acquire resources as a result of these bids will be associated with violent conflict, which will then attract much more attention from global media than religious or secular disputes that do not escalate into violence. This explains why Islam so often appears to be growing more conservative even though its most conservative adherents remain a minority.

On the demand side, it may be possible to reduce the threat that some leaders feel. In many cases, this threat will emanate from local competition, and there is not much an outside power can do to help. But in other cases, the source of the threat will be external. The dramatic cultural, religious, economic, and military interventions in states with Muslim majorities that began in the colonial era, continued into the Cold War, and have been repeated in the post-Cold War era. Many governments that rule countries with Muslim majorities (e.g., Iran, Libya, and Syria) feel directly threatened by non-Islamic states (e.g., the United States), and at least some of this threat perception lies within the power of non-Islamic states to change. For example, the United States could rationalize its foreign policies toward Pakistan (a military dictatorship that continues to benefit from U.S. economic and military support) and Israel (a democracy, but one that continues to violate United Nations resolution 242 in defiance of international law). By making its continued support of Pakistan and Israel contingent on Pakistani political liberalization and Israeli compli-

ance with international law, the United States could reduce the demand for resources by embattled Islamic political elites, thus disrupting the cycle of escalation and reducing the likelihood of conflict spillover.

Both strategies are fraught with danger and would be expensive to pursue. For countries such as the United States, however, the alternatives to energy independence and foreign policy rationalization may be far more costly in the coming decades in terms of wealth, economic growth, and national security.