Everyday Indivisibility: How Exclusive Religious Practices Explain Variation in Subnational Violence Outcomes

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Everyday Indivisibility:
How Exclusive Religious Practices Explain
Variation in Subnational Violence Outcomes

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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August 2015
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Abstract

This project explores the puzzle of religious violence variation. Religious actors initiate conflict at a higher rate than their secular counterparts, last longer, are more deadly, and are less prone to negotiated termination. Yet the legacy of religious peacemakers on the reduction of violence is undeniable. Under what conditions does religion contribute to escalated violence and under what conditions does it contribute to peace?

I argue that more intense everyday practices of group members, or high levels of orthopraxy, create dispositional indivisibilities that make violence a natural alternative to bargaining. Subnational armed groups with members whose practices are exclusive and isolating bind together through ritual practice, limit the acceptable decisions of leaders, and have prolonged timeframes, all of which result in higher levels of intensity, intransigence and resolve during violent conflict. The theory challenges both instrumentalist and constructivist understandings of social identity and violence.

To support this argument, I construct an original cross-national data-set that employs ethnographic data on micro-level religious practices for 724 subnational armed groups in both civil wars and terror campaigns. Using this data, I build an explanatory “religious practice index” for each observation and examine its relationship with conflict outcomes. Findings suggest that exclusive practice groups fight significantly longer with
more intensity and negotiate less. I also apply the practice model to qualitative cases. Fieldwork in the West Bank and Sierra Leone reveals that groups with more exclusive religious practicing membership are principle contributors to violence, whereas those with inclusive practices can contribute to peace. The project concludes with a discussion about several avenues for future research and identifies the practical policy applications to better identify and combat religious extremism.
Acknowledgments

Many people played key roles through my graduate education and the process of completing this dissertation in particular. I was fortunate to have a supportive committee: Jack Donnelly introduced me to practice-based social theory, while Nader Hashemi, and Monica Duffy Toft provided excellent advice and counsel. My advisor, Erica Chenoweth, is an unparalleled scholar and an even better mentor. Erica's model of excellence will remain with me forever.

A Faculty Research Grant at the University of Denver provided funding for fieldwork in Israel. I am grateful for Allyson Hodges, Daren Fisher, and Laura Dugan for their companionship and assistance in Israel. My life-long friend, Grace Newman, suggested Sierra Leone as a case-study and proved instrumental during my fieldwork. The Josef Korbel School's Ph.D. program generously supported fieldwork in Salone.

I am grateful to Mandi Donahoe, Pauline Moore, Kyleanne Hunter, Jonathan and Kandyce Pinckney, Jonathan Moyer, and Kevin Archer for being constant sounding-boards and true friends. I am also thankful for the Sollenbergers, Zoey DeWolf, Cris Huerta, Michael Hemmingway, the Decker-Smiths, and friends at First Plymouth UCC.

This could not have been completed without my family. My parents supported my dreams and passions. My in-laws, Bob and Debi, tirelessly provided material and spiritual support. Lauren Ries, my partner, uniquely enabled this project, listened to my complaints with grace, and pushed me to be a better scholar and person. This project is dedicated to my “thesis-baby,” Robert Adlai Day, that he may live in a world where “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and neither shall they learn war no more.”
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Puzzle, Argument, Outline, and Contributions ............................... 1
- Competing Explanations ........................................................................................................ 5
- Disaggregated Measures of Religion .................................................................................. 13
- Practice Theory and Observable Implications ...................................................................... 14
- Layout of the Dissertation ........................................................................................................ 19
- Scope of the Study .................................................................................................................. 25
- Contributions ......................................................................................................................... 27

Chapter 2: A Practice Approach to Religion and Violence ................................................................. 34
- What are Practices? ................................................................................................................. 36
- Propositional vs. Dispositional Approaches ........................................................................ 41
- Religion as Practice .............................................................................................................. 42
- The Site of the Religious Everyday ....................................................................................... 48
- Conceiving of Practices as Inclusive/Exclusive ...................................................................... 52
- Elements of Religious Practice .............................................................................................. 55
- Indivisibility as TeleoAffective Structure ........................................................................... 65
- Indivisibility and Conflict Dynamics ................................................................................... 73
- Practice Disaggregation as Preferable to Propositional Alternatives ................................ 80
- Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 96

Chapter 3: Quantitative Research Design and Analysis ................................................................. 98
- A Methodological Turn To Practice ...................................................................................... 99
- Indivisibility and Practice ..................................................................................................... 101
- Research Design .................................................................................................................. 105
- Unit of Analysis .................................................................................................................... 116
- Methods ................................................................................................................................. 123
- Summary, Advantages and Limitations of Quantitative Analysis .................................................................................. 135

Chapter 4: Qualitative Research Design ......................................................................................... 141
- Tracing Practices .................................................................................................................... 143
- Case Selection and Design .................................................................................................. 146
- Research Tactics ................................................................................................................... 159
- Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 165

Chapter 5: Spoiling for a Fight: Jewish Vigilantism in the West Bank .......................................... 167
- Case A: The Hilltop Youth ...................................................................................................... 174
- Case B: Religious Zionists ...................................................................................................... 207
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Ideal Types of Affirmative Coding.................................................................114
Table 3.2: Coding Examples..........................................................................................115
Table 3.3: Exclusivity and Intensity............................................................................127
Table 3.4: Exclusivity and Peace Agreement Termination ...............................130
Table 3.5: Exclusivity and Die..................................................................................134
Table 4.1: Case Description.........................................................................................157
Table 4.2: Ideal Boolean Truth Table for Cases .......................................................158
Table 5.1: Summary of Practices Observed...............................................................170
Table 5.2: Summary of Competing Explanations and Outcomes.........................171
Table 6.1: Summary of Practices Observed...............................................................272
Table 6.2: Summary of Competing Explanations and Outcomes.........................273
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Chart of Exclusive Practice Process in Conflict Environments......................79
Figure 2.2: Chart of Inclusive Practice Process in Conflict Environments......................79
Figure 2.3: Chart of Secular Community Process in Conflict Environments.........................80
Figure 3.1: Government Practice Distribution ........................................................................117
Figure 3.2: Rebel Practice Distribution of All Groups...............................................................117
Figure 3.3: Practice Distribution of Groups with “Secular Goals”........................................118
Figure 3.4: The Marginal Effects of ERPI on Conflict Intensity.............................................125
Figure 3.5: The Marginal Effects of ERPI on Peaceful Termination........................................129
Figure 3.6: Marginal Effects of ERPI on Die Out..................................................................133
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Puzzle, Argument, Outline, and Contributions

In 2011, a civil war began in Syria. The armed opposition, styling itself the Free Syrian Army (FSA), consisted largely of military defectors and young men who had taken up arms to defend their families and villages from intensifying state violence. The war had developed out of a political crisis created by a standoff between Bashar al-Assad, the country’s leader, and a multi-sectarian, multi-ethnic, largely nonviolent uprising with secular aims. At its outset, the struggle to remove Assad from power featured a large degree of cooperation between the country’s Sunni majority and its minority Christians, Kurds, Druze, and Alawites.

Yet by 2012, Syria’s civil war had taken a decidedly sectarian turn. Although the major combatants still included Assad’s army and the Free Syrian Army, the war expanded to include the participation of the al–Nusra Front, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and a number of other Al Qaeda affiliated groups. These extreme religious groups attacked civilians of different faiths as well as Assad's forces. In short, the war became highly sectarian in nature. Now in 2015, the war has cost over 200,000 lives and is grinding on into its fifth year, with little end in sight.

How does a civil conflict go from a multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian, largely secular conflict to a religious war? Are groups with religious members more likely to
“sectarianize” a conflict and why? What impact does religion have on conflict intensity, duration, and outcome?

These are the questions I seek to take up in this dissertation. Contrary to prior studies, I find that it is not the religious affiliation of different actors that explains patterns of wartime violence per se. Rather, it is patterns of exclusive religious practices that have the greatest explanatory power in how substate conflicts escalate to war and endure long after they should.

Religious actors not only initiate conflict at a higher rate than their secular counterparts (e.g. ideological, political, ethnic;) but religious conflicts last longer, are more than four times more deadly, and are less likely to reach a negotiated termination. Religion is uniquely dangerous, many argue, precisely because its fabric of cosmic values and beliefs regulate human behavior in ways that other social cleavages do not. However, while such trends suggest that religion generally contributes to increases in violence, the relationship is not nearly so straightforward. On the contrary, we can also see many cases where religion has led to conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation.


Isak Svensson, “Fighting with Faith Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 6 (December 2007)
traditions have unmatched spiritual wells of generosity and love of neighbor. The variation in religious actor participation in violent conflict leads to several key puzzles.

First, in some circumstances, religious actors are more intense, intransigent, and stubborn than others in violent environments. This variation is apparent in West Africa. In Mali and Nigeria, for instance, religious cleavages are de-facto fault lines. The 2015 elections in Nigeria showed that when political or social conflict does break out, religious actors are principle agents of escalation. But in Sierra Leone, religion has served as a basis for bargaining and coalition-building. In the years after the civil war, the Interfaith Council of Sierra Leone has played a crucial role in tamping down post-election riots, legitimizing shared Muslim-Christian governance and has proven a voice for including minorities in the Cabinet. Since all of these states share post-conflict histories, majority Muslim populations, staggeringly low GDP, and fragile state institutions, such characteristics alone cannot explain the variation observed in religious actor conflict patterns.

Second, religious actors that believe in radical ideologies are not always found to instigate or prolong conflict, which indicates the conditions for violence are more complex than a group espousing violent language. Scholars interested in Combating Violent Extremism (CVE) are puzzled as to why some extreme beliefs fail to regularly correlate with violence. Huge majorities of apocalyptic “Twelver” Shia, who believe that


6 Paul Kamara, Minister of Sport, May 9, 2014.
Imams have sole legitimacy to govern, do not involve themselves in violence, though their rhetoric and public theology railing against Western states indicate they would. Furthermore, variance exists within religious groups that believe generally the same ideological propositions. For instance, the Army of God terror organization and the Southern Baptist Convention share belief profiles concerning abortion, but only the former actively uses violence. This leaves unanswered whether or not certain types of religious traditions add to a process of sectarianization though increasing the duration or intensity of conflict.7

Third, some religious groups may prove resistant to violence and more inclined to interfaith bargaining and reconciliation than others. Eboo Patel's Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Corps offers one such example of a religious group committed to reducing conflict outcomes. Identifying these bargainers and the context where they arise is, however, quite difficult with the tools used in today's social science approaches. Existing studies on religion and political violence tend to aggregate groups into unhelpful categories - “Muslim/Christian/Pagan, etc.” - which is unhelpful at teasing out which actors within religious traditions are pursuing violence or peace.

Each of these three puzzles sums into one central question at the core of this volume: Under what conditions do groups with religious members act differently from one another in violent environments, specifically in terms of the conflict dynamics of intensity, intransigence and resolve?

To examine the puzzle of religious violence variation, this dissertation addresses the shortcomings of existing research, offers an alternative theory, and tests that theory with a mixed research design featuring both quantitative and qualitative methods. This project evaluates a new cross-national data-set of conflicts to test new theory and then utilizes ethnographic methods and qualitative interviews in the conflict environments of the West Bank and Sierra Leone. While conventional wisdom might suggest that religion is ancillary to international security, or that religion is inherently problematic, I maintain that certain types of religiosity in fact contribute to peace and identify those practices that contribute to escalation. Specifically, this project argues that there are patterns of everyday life in religious communities that impact conflict processes in divergent ways.

**Competing Explanations**

There are competing explanations in the literature on religion and violence: what I call essentialist, instrumentalist, and constructivist approaches. Each of these schools of thought have interdisciplinary adherents, with strains present in comparative religious studies, sociology of religion, politics, psychology, and conflict studies. My claim is that existing scholarship in these veins cannot explain all the variation observed in how religion contributes to extant conflict.

**Essentialist Approaches**

The essentialist argument centers around broad categorizations of religious groups. Several highly cited texts offer examples of this broad approach including Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations, Niall Feruson's treatise on Western Civilization, and
Robert Kaplan's work on religious motivation. Volumes like these offer observations on religious actors, but actually say very little about the constitutive nature of those actors. Instead of investigating differences, the model here is like that of a game of billiards: religions bump up against one another, causing conflict, but the internal motivations, doctrines, and organizational structure go unexamined. What exactly do these actors believe? The delineation among “believers” in Huntington and Barber is hardly anything more than a way to differentiate sides of a conflict. These sorts of catch-all approaches “essentialize” religion, making claims about entire groups without regard for internal difference.

Other essentialists root their argument in analysis of sacred texts and cosmic beliefs. Hector Avalos, a scholar of comparative religion, argues that violence becomes part of the religious experience insofar as it is prescribed by ancient holy texts. According to this view, one need look no further than those plethora of scriptures authorizing killing to explain motivation. Esteemed sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer similarly argues that beliefs in cosmic war between good and evil uniquely lead people of faith towards violence.


Just like the broad essentialists mentioned above, neither Avalos' nor Juergensmeyer's approaches can explain observed variation of religious behavior in conflict. There are many peace-makers that are inspired by holy texts and many who believe in cosmic war - ideological extremists even - who never raise their hand against another.

The problem is that all of these essentialist approaches make it very difficult to determine the causal mechanism for conflict escalation, resulting in overly broad claims by public intellectuals about religion “causing” violence.\textsuperscript{12} The same causal mechanisms explaining violence can \textit{also} explain proclivity towards non-violence. If the essentialists were correct, then we should expect no variation in how religious persons participate in violence. Religion should, in all cases feed into longer, bloodier conflicts. The fact that religion does not always serve as an escalatory mechanism is a puzzle for essentialists.

If the essentialists were right, the central finding of this study would be the null – not finding that variation in practices (or beliefs) leads to variation in violent outcomes would lead us to conclude that religion could be intrinsically problematic not matter how it is practiced. This null-finding is countered in Chapters 3, 5 and 6.

\textit{Instrumentalist Approaches}

Instrumental scholarship on religious violence is skeptical of ideology or identity being a principle motivating factor. Instead, religion is a secondary or tertiary factor


behind sociopolitical drivers like poverty or social structure.\textsuperscript{13} This position seeks to explain why leaders so often pivot to religious rhetoric to motivate constituents towards a political goal. For example, Robert Pape's often-cited work on suicide terrorism argues against the idea that Islam (or any other religion) \textit{causes} suicide terrorism, but rather that foreign occupation explains the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{14} The allure of Pape's argument is parsimony – that scholars need not look deeply into types of religious motivation, rhetorics, or practices, since the principle driver of suicide terrorism is entirely political.

Furthermore, scholars like William Cavanaugh and Karen Armstrong argue that religious violence is a “myth” insofar as it is methodologically difficult to separate religious identity from class, ethnicity, and relative deprivation.\textsuperscript{15} If the instrumentalist and “myth” scholars are right, then we should see religious violence escalation co-varying with a host of other variables.

A range of findings casts doubt on this hypothesis. Many studies in civil war have \textit{not} found a significant link between religious affiliation and conflict outbreak. Fearon and Laitin have shown that identity cleavages offer far less explanatory power than material factors like mountainous terrain.\textsuperscript{16} Collier and Hoeffler have argued similarly

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Mia Bloom, \textit{Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Robert Pape, \textit{Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism}, Reprint edition (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006).
\end{itemize}
that material opportunity to rebel is a far better indicator than social demography.\textsuperscript{17} Recent work has also shown that overlapping ethno-economic cleavages and deprivation are better predictors of civil war than identity fractionalization alone.\textsuperscript{18} However, others have found religious identity-cleavages to be a crucial explanation for conflict onset,\textsuperscript{19} intractability,\textsuperscript{20} and bargaining.\textsuperscript{21} One key reason for these inconsistent findings is that extant data fails to disaggregate what is meant by “religious actor” leading to a general lack of focus on the causal mechanisms within religion that might account for variation in violent action. Let's return to Robert Pape's work as an example of this over-aggregation. On a methodological level, Pape has been widely criticised for case selection bias, essentially selecting on the dependent variable of suicide bombing incidents and then determines whether or not the country in question was occupied or not. This selection bias results in strong corelation between occupation and suicide bombing, but ignores the dynamics of religious justification, language and rhetoric, elite legitimacy, and countless other religio-cultural dynamics.\textsuperscript{22} This enables Pape to sumarily dismiss religious

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Pearce, “Religious Rage: A Quantitative Analysis of the Intensity of Religious Conflicts.”
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ron Hassner, “The Path to Indivisibility: The Role of Ideas in the Resolution of Intractable Territorial Disputes” (Stanford University, 2003).
\item \textsuperscript{21} Svensson, “Fighting with Faith Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars.”
\end{itemize}
dynamics as anything more than elite instrumental manipulation. Yet, as Jonathan Fine notes, disaggregating the data further into religious and secular instances of suicide terrorism reveals a strong corelation between religious terror organizations and suicide bombing.23

Instrumental approaches, in sum, argue that elites mobilize religious violence in the context of weak state capacity or relative group need, creating incentives and opportunities for violence.24 Religion is a calculated instrument within socio-political dynamics where leaders expect a payoff from religious group mobilization. Stated in a hypothesis:

H4: Religious elites within a weak state, or with relative deprivation, will use religious affiliations and rhetoric to mobilize violent dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve to secure better social position. Elites within a strong state or strong economic position will have less incentive to use religion for violent social mobilization.

If the instrumentalists are correct, we should see leaders using religion to further their group in the context of weak political or economic position. This hypothesis is largely disconfirmed in both quantitative and qualitative chapters. Further, I present


ontological justifications for rejecting this hypothesis in favor of practice-based indivisibility theory.

**Constructivist Approaches**

Constructivist scholars place emphasis on identity and ideological factors in explaining why actors fight.²⁵ Yet, statistical examinations have “not developed theories for which contextual factors matter and how they matter.”²⁶ Critics of the constructivist approach, such as Brubaker, go on to argue that “identity” is a poor way to describe social phenomena.²⁷ Social identity theories imply that groups have boundedness and homogeniety – people are *identical* and thus can be explained the same way. If this were correct, then we should see aggregated groups engaged in enduring rivalries with very low variation in sub-group participation. Yet, this is not observed: variation in conflict exists at the sub-group level, which cannot be explained by strong theories of identity.

Likewise, “weak” social identity theory - that identity is multiple, contingent, and fluid - is problematic for the variation question because it implies that no generalizable claims can be made about religion and violence outcomes. Much of this weak social identity theory focuses on language and “public theologies” as mechanisms of justification for violence. Peter Henne has argued that language serves as a principle mechanism of outbidding and spoiling, while Nukhet Sandal claims that entrepreneurial


public theologies act as an escalatory frame. As Henne states, “[framing] is a crucial part of a social [religious] movement...an attempt to both win public support for its cause and convince potential supporters of the worthiness of the group's approach...”. The problem with this rhetoric-centered theory is that it conflates relations among individuals for constitution of individuals, which makes the causal mechanism unclear. The speech act is a problematic place to focus attention because “talking” is itself a practice that is contingent upon other unspoken practices within a proscribed field. Such a formulation of linguistic-based cause and effect is problematic in that it assumes an entire fabric of socialized meaning construction, made behind the scenes, in the daily life of the speakers.

In sum, these scholars maintain that the role of rhetoric, belief, and ideology are important in explaining why some settlers engage in violence differently from others. Constructivists would posit that violent ideology and language will prove a justificatory resource for more intense and intractable violence. To state in a hypothesis:

H5: Religious groups with extreme religious beliefs will have higher levels of intensity, intransigence and resolve in violent environments than groups in the same environment without extreme beliefs.


29 Henne, “The Ancient Fire: Religion and Suicide Terrorism,” 42.

Evidence in support of the constructivist alternative would be that which demonstrates how groups with the same beliefs engage in similar levels of violence. I demonstrate in Chapter 5 and 6 how groups with similar belief profiles yet differences in practice contribute to violence in profoundly different ways.

**Disaggregated Measures of Religion**

The common problem among essentialists, instrumentalists, and constructivists is that they fail to disaggregate religion in any meaningful way, lumping together divergent religious activities. Talking about religion without a basic level of disaggregation is like lumping the Civil Rights Movement and the Klu Klux Klan into the same category because they both shared a Christian theological orientation.

Attempts to bring religion variables into international relations, from all three of the above perspectives, have produced studies that simply assign broad religious labels to actors in conflict. Several studies attempt to show a statistical correlation between religious identity and conflict. Yet, the label “religious” often comes with no discussion about salience, daily reification of belief through ritual, piety among lay and clergy, or theological divisions within the same denomination. Lived applications of orthodoxy and orthopraxy are typically absent from such studies. For example, a recent quantitative study of religion and conflict finds that religious actors engage in conflict longer, yet fails to actually define features of the religious belief systems in question. This reductionism

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32 Hassner, “Religion and International Affairs: The State of the Art.”

33 Horowitz, “Long Time Going: Religion and the Duration of Crusading.”
is problematic because it leads researchers to reify “belief systems” that may not actually reflect religious life as practiced.

Because of this over-aggregation, status quo literature is in danger of mis-specifying the main explanatory variable. How, using categories like “Christian/Muslim/Hindu,” can we separate what we mean by “religion” from a host of other variables like politics, family hierarchies, ethnic identity, territorial claims, and economics? This is precisely Cavenaugh's theoretical argument when he disputes the ability to say anything important about “Christian/Muslim/Hindu” categories, casting serious doubt upon statistical models that treat religion categories as anything close to an independent variable.

It is time for more cross-fertilization of theory and method. Security studies should pay close attention to “actual social practices and adopt a more empirical attitude toward the object of analysis.”34 While it is not feasible to conduct formal survey analysis of every terror/resistance organization, there are, I suggest, alternative means that disaggregate religious identity. I present this theoretical and methodological alternative below and expand it in Chapter 2.

**Practice Theory and Observable Implications**

I have argued above that social life, as it is lived by religious persons, hardly factors into the framework of existing explanations, giving evidence to Ted Hopf's claim

that academic IR has virtually ignored what “most people do most of the time in their social lives.” Recent work in religious studies and anthropology have argued for an approach that “allows for a more complex and pluralistic understanding of how people attach and belong to religious communities, and how religious subjectification affects cultural and individual practice.” Neumann has likewise urged students of international politics to put aside “armchair analysis” - we might here include constructivist and rational actor theories – to instead privilege social action on its own terms. I argue, therefore, that we should focus on practices as done by practitioners, letting their activities serve as the principle analytic category. This approach joins a chorus of other works on “practice” as a way to help scholars understand international relations, including gendered dimensions of diplomacy, political bargaining, security communities, deterrence, and peacekeeping.


Practice theory turns our attention away from logics of consequence and appropriateness, and instead points scholars towards a logic of habit, ritual and communal action. Here, I follow Pouliot who argues “what we do together defines the question of who we are” together. Practice theory instructs those interested in social outcomes to pay special attention to the manifestations of how one goes about performing what is expected of them in their day to day life. To state more precisely, a practice-oriented approach seeks to “do justice to the practical nature of action by rooting human activity in a nonrepresentational stratum.” This means taking a step back from the rhetoric employed by elites and instead spending time with people going on with their lives, living as religious persons. Religion is precisely a powerful orientating “identity” because most of the essence of religion is bound up in practices that are so part of the every-day, they are almost forgotten. As Foucault argues, the forgotten elements of social arrangements – that which is done so often that it goes without reflection - are the essences of ontology. Practices are thus “knowledge that does not know itself.”


44 Ibid., 39.


Practices are patterned actions that are inherently embedded in institutional and organizational sinews, and as such, are evident and observable in learning and training. In this way, religion is a specialized, socialized field of knowledge with standards of performance. Religion in particular, is an obvious field to examine practice since it requires one to not only profess, but practice that profession in an applied, bodily way. Thus, in the field of religion, we should be trying to observe practices that are products of relationship and hierarchy which are internalized. I argue that there are patterns of everyday life in religious communities that impact conflict processes in divergent ways. 

The theory takes three parts.

First, relying on ethnographically rich data from the *Encyclopedia of Religious Practice*, the *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movement*, and other expert commentaries of how religion is practiced by populations, I develop an original index composed of eight generalizable ways that religious groups “do” religion. Together, these form a bundle of observable behaviors that can be compared among actors.

Second, I argue that if particular group practices exclusive restrictions within these eight dimensions, they will engage in conflict differently from those groups who do not claim a monopoly upon the way that everyday life is to be lived. This theory builds upon the work of theologian Hector Avalos and terror expert Jessica Stern, who maintain that the principle connection between violence and religion is whether a group has

constructed a firm monopoly in orthopraxy (ways that a religion can be rightly practiced). The notion that scripture, afterlife, prayer, etc. must be done in one prescribed way and not another is a principle indicator that its adherents will engage in more intense violence and have a hard time stopping a violent campaign once it has begun. Our attention is therefore on the bodily manifestations of exclusion and indivisibility of practice.

Third, I argue that exclusivist religious practices produce violence because they foster dispositions of indivisibility in everyday life. Just as Durkheim wrote about the “extraordinary contagiousness of the sacred,” ritual practice permeates the lived experience of practitioners. Knowing how to engage in exclusive religious practices says something about the way that knowledge is processed and framed for an actor. Schatzki writes that practices embed “teleoffective structures” - bundles of cognitive rules and emotional states into the daily life experience of the individual. Through practicing exclusion in religious ritual, a person literally “embodies” the monopolistic teleoffective structure to the point that it becomes a “forgotten ontology” that disciplines and frames all other social interactions. I argue that the reason why a religious claim is

50 Note that Stern and Avalos use “Scarcity” as the theoretical lynchpin for their argument. This is probably an inappropriate use of the term because categories like “afterlife” are not scarce if they can be bypassed by conversion. A better economic analogy is that of a monopoly. Monopolies in religion are produced 1) through exclusivism which treats contrary views or lifestyles as unacceptable and 2) through indivisibility, which is where a practice cannot be compromised without harming the integrity of that practice.


52 Schatzki, The Site of the Social, 117.
commonly seen as an “indivisible good” is precisely because actors live indivisible lives.\(^{54}\) The causal mechanism giving rise to the indivisibility problem in religious conflict is indivisible practices.\(^{55}\) Those who practice indivisibility are not only unlikely to bargain, but they are more likely prolong and intensify conflict.

This theory offers observable implications, namely that we should account for variation in conflict escalation with variation in exclusive practice: Groups that practice exclusivist religion are likely to approach extant violent environments with more intensity, intransigence and resolve. I seek to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Groups with higher levels of exclusive practices fight more intensely than those with more inclusive or contested practices.

H2: Groups with higher levels of exclusive practices are less likely to negotiate a peaceful termination of a conflict than those with more inclusive or contested practices.

H3: Groups with higher levels of exclusive practice are less likely to “die-out” or give up their fight than those with more inclusive or contested practices.


\(^{54}\) Hassner, “The Path to Indivisibility: The Role of Ideas in the Resolution of Intractable Territorial Disputes”; Toft, “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War.”

\(^{55}\) This specifies the internal mechanism not discussed by other indivisibility scholars like Toft, Hassner, and Svensson.
Each of these hypotheses are observable implications of a practice approach to religion that challenge extant alternative hypotheses. I will further define and discuss these observable implications in the next seven chapters.

**Layout of the Dissertation**

The project proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 extends the theoretical grounding for the project and elaborates on how religious practices operate as the site of indivisibility. This chapter expounds on how practical theology should inform the disaggregation of religious identity based on what people do, rather than their goals or rhetoric. The conceptual move made here is to explicitly link exclusivist religious practices with processes of indivisibility, which serves as the internal link or causal mechanism of conflict escalation. I also explicitly outline how a practice approach theoretically compares to competing explanations.

Chapter 3 presents a quantitative study, where I test the claim that exclusive religious practice is an important explanation for religious violence. I construct a new dataset which updates and combines Upsalla data on civil wars with Asal's BAAD data on terror campaigns.\(^{56}\) The unit of analysis is a conflict dyad comprised of a government and an armed group – rebels in the case of civil war, and a terror group in the case of

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\(^{56}\) Svensson, “Fighting with Faith Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars”; Victor H. Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer, “The Nature of the Beast: Terrorist Organizational Characteristics and Organizational Lethality,” *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008): 437–49. Anything we say about religious practice requires some sort of leap, or, slicing into the “variable” at an arbitrary time and space. I follow Andersen and Neumann (2011), who argue for constructing practices as “as-if” models, with practices taken to mean “what people do.” Yet, as Andersen and Neumenn explain, “models will always ‘freeze’ an array of phenomena for analysis. This is appropriate, as long as one keeps firmly in mind that models are always ‘utopian,’ in the sense that they are tools to facilitate investigations of a messy world” (Andersen and Neumann 461).
terror campaigns. The universe of cases spans from 1970 through 2014, yielding 724 observations.

My Exclusive Religious Practice Index serves as the primary explanatory factor in evaluating how religion impacts conflict outcomes. I construct an additive index for each side of the dyad observed. Using this practice index, I investigate conflict outcomes of intensity (death rate), peaceful termination, and die-out rate. A number of control variables are added to test alternative hypotheses.57

Logistic regression estimations support each hypothesis. The data suggest that armed groups that score higher on the exclusive religious practice index are more likely to fight more intensely, prolong the conflict, and bargain less often, while groups with religious members that have inclusive or contested practice are more likely to restrict violence, die out more quickly, and are more likely negotiate an end to the conflict. Moreover, practices offer a much more robust explanation for variation than any of the alternative theories tested.

Since the quantitative study is an “as-if” model that can only demonstrate correlation, I turn to two case studies, which allow evaluation of change over time, better illustrate the causal mechanisms suggested by my theory, and allow me to evaluate alternative explanations. In Chapter 4, I design a plan for evaluating qualitative data,

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57 To test the instrumentalist claims, I include logged GDP per capita at onset year. Also included are controls for other types of conflict motivation: ethnic, leftist/anarchist, territorial. These controls seek to test the common instrumentalist alternative explanation, that structural and socio-political factors outperform religious indicators. I control for religious group difference, in order to see whether simple in-group/out-group divisions explain outcomes as identity-centered constructivists claim. I control for regime type with PolityIV scores.
collected over several months of field research. I employ a “practice tracing” technique, similar to process-tracing, following ethnographic methodologies suggested by Pouliot\textsuperscript{58} and modeled by Autesserre.\textsuperscript{59}

I am interested in extant conflict dynamics—not conflict onset—and thus I chose cases with vibrant conflict environments and traced how practices contributed (or didn't) to conflict dynamics. Two cases test the theory developed in Chapter 2 and seek to further evaluate the theoretical mechanisms linking exclusive religious practice to violence during war time.\textsuperscript{60} For the first study, I address the puzzle of why some Jewish Settlers engage in elevated violence dynamics while others do not. I evaluate setter communities in the West Bank, contrasting Religious Zionist, Ultra-orthodox, and Hilltop-Youth settlements. These follow a “most similar” case comparison logic, with all three operating in the same state structure, same geographical area, same contemporary time period, and same side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict environment. In the second study, I speak to the puzzle of why religious actors in Sierra Leone contributed to peace during the civil war, yet seemingly contribute to violence during peacetime. The Sierra Leone study first examines how the Interfaith Council of Sierra Leone intervened to reduce violence and foster negotiations in the Civil War, then turns to a contemporary

\textsuperscript{58} Pouliot, \textit{International Security in Practice}.

\textsuperscript{59} Autesserre, \textit{Peaceland}.

\textsuperscript{60} The cases employ micro-level versions of intensity, intransigence, and resolve dependent variables. For example, I cannot use “negotiated termination” as a dependent variable for intransigence in ongoing cases (as done in the quantitative model). The modified measurement used in the case studies is group participation in negotiations. These modified versions of intensity, intransigence, and resolve nevertheless test the mechanisms through which exclusive religious practices lead to the outcomes observed in Chapter 3. For an expanded discussion of the modified dependent variables, see Chapter 4.
case of violence outbursts between Christian evangelicals and Salafi mosques. The cases are dissimilar in time, government capacity, economic stability, and conflict environment: the first occurred at the height of the civil war, while the second after many years into state-building. The approach to the Sierra Leone cases allows me to show how inclusive religious practices led to the counter-intuitive result of negotiation, and then pin-point the rise of exclusive practices in the post-war years, tracing how they came to complicate extant political conflicts. The variation in cases also serves as a robustness check for alternative explanations that center on the causal role of constructed beliefs, state capacity, and economic vitality.

Each case uses interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis to explain why certain religious actors chose violence in some instances, while others did not.61 Throughout my fieldwork, I conducted formal and informal interviews, engaged in several dozen field observations of practice in process, including bar debates, car accidents, funerals, marriages, religious organizational meetings, and prayer services – each in current or recent conflict zones. I attended formal meetings of national security and religious elites explicitly discussing motivations of religiously driven groups, and was able to interview bishops and archbishops, imams, cabinet members and parliamentarians, as well as a good number of “regular” people engaged in various religious practices. For a robustness check on the qualitative methods, I cross-checked

fieldwork findings with Agence France Press and Associated Press coverage of conflict periods, as well as scholarly texts on each case.

Chapter 5 presents findings from fieldwork in Israel focused on variation in Jewish settler vigilantism in the West Bank. I focus intently on the recent “Price Tag” campaign of intimidation and violence, finding a variation in participation in vigilante violence between settlement groups. Over 60 high-level interviews are conducted with Jewish counter-terror practitioners and experts as well as settlers in West Jerusalem, Yitz-Har, Itamar, Biet Shemeh, Ariel, Shilo, Hebron, and East Jerusalem. I find that highly exclusive third-generation settlers, known as the Hilltop Youth, that participate in vigilante violence at a much higher rate than secular Zionists, ultra-orthodox, or religious Zionists. The Hilltop Youth view the conflict with Palestinians as an indivisible issue, and have a much more rigid demarcation of group privilege, a more dogmatic practice of interpreting scripture, and a much more exclusive orientation towards sacred space than any other settler group. They are also much less likely to have cross-cutting allegiances or participate in the state. This leads them to participate in vigilantism, where other groups do not. I conclude that if left unabated, the Hilltop settler movement will push the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to new levels of religious sectarianization.

Chapter 6 investigates the fascinating case of Sierra Leone. Over the course of a month there, I found evidence that contradicted common understandings of the civil war's termination and pointed to the powerful role played by inclusive religious practices in leading to that outcome. While most scholars and news coverage point towards UN involvement as a causal mechanism in forcing the parties to negotiation, I found another
salient narrative. In over 40 interviews in every district in the country, I find that “without the interfaith council, there would have been no peace.” I personally talked with dozens of imams, pastors, and traditional faith leaders in the “Interfaith Council” who physically took the Lome Peace Accords into the bush to the RUF forces, acting as the moral guarantors of the process. According to many, this peace overture worked because of the way that Sierra Leonians practice religion – notoriously inclusive and ecumenical. This contrasts markedly with post-war evangelical, exclusivist Islamist and Christian movements on the rise in the country, whose adherents have caused some of the only inter-communal violence seen in area since the civil war. I particularly focus on recent clashes between Sunni Mosques and Christian evangelical churches in on the Eastern edge of Freetown. This chapter offers empirical evidence that groups with low exclusivity levels are more conciliatory and that groups with rigid orthopraxies approach conflict with indivisible frames, which leads to conflict intensity, non-negotiability, and increased stubbornness. The findings in this chapter suggest a path for countering violent extremism, confronting sectarian dynamics, and preventing exclusivist cleavages from dominating political contention.

Chapter 7 concludes with a summary of the argument and findings, discusses four policy implications in-depth, and suggests future applications and avenues of inquiry.

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62 Subject 200A, Author Interview, April 23, 2014.
Scope of the Study

This study looks at armed substate actors, defined as civil war, rebel, insurgency, or terror campaigns, and the role that religion plays within those organizations. While broadly concerned with subnational violent actors, I use the terms “religious conflict” and “religious violence” when talking about the impact that an organization's religious constituency has upon the conflict environment. This diverges from other definitions of religious conflict, where religious goals are a central or periphery motivating factor for a group's violence. Since this study aims to evaluate the extent that unspoken dispositions contribute to violence dynamics, it would be inappropriate to isolate only cases of religious motivation. I cast the net broadly, referring to religious violence as a process where religious practices influence violence dynamics, regardless of group aims.

The scope of this study explicitly focuses on how existing conflicts are approached differently based on the practices of a group's membership. This is to say that conflict onset is outside of the scope of inquiry. There are a host of reasons for violence outbreak, which probably cannot be explained by one theory alone. By looking at conflict dynamics, such as intensity and negotiated termination, I seek to isolate religious practices as a key contributory element. This means that when groups with more exclusivist membership find themselves in any sort of conflict, they are more likely to approach it with more intensity and resolve – a process of sectarianization akin to what


64 Erica Chenoweth and Adria Lawrence, Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict (MIT Press, 2010).
we observe going on in the Syrian civil war. Conversely, practices that are more open and fungible cultivate dispositions within the armed organization conducive to the restriction of violence and the possibility of effective negotiation.

In addition, the scope of this study does not include analysis of so-called “Lone Wolf” violence. In both the quantitative data-set and the qualitative case studies, I investigate practices of religious group activity, which implies organizational hierarchies. I investigate the ways that collective practices influence collective behavior in conflict.

In talking about practice, I am not necessarily arguing that logics of consequences or appropriateness are not present – the almost certainly are – but, rather that they fail to explain the variations observed in conflict dynamics involving religious actors. I am arguing that practice matters for explaining particular types of conflict and cooperation and we should expect a practice explanation to do more work in these conflicts than either consequentialist (instrumental) or appropriateness (constructivist) frameworks.

Contributions

This project makes theoretical, methodological, and policy contributions. These are examined in order below.

Theoretical Contributions

First and foremost, a focus on practice begins to help answer the puzzle of variation in intensity, duration, and negotiated termination of religious conflicts, which

65 I do, however, make the argument in the next chapter that the teleo-affective structures discipline adherents, but also attract persons who “feel at home” with indivisibility frames, perhaps explaining the self-selection of radicals into radical groups.
extant approaches cannot address. The project furthers the conversation in several disciplines on how religion matters for conflict. My operationalization of practice in the next chapter provides a point of convergence between Sociology, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Political Science, and Anthropology so that, in this one area, scholars studying conflict can have a conversation about the same occurrences of practice. To date, it has been difficult to bring together various humanities and social science approaches due to their ontological and epistemological divides.66

As other scholars have noted, practice approaches avoid the dichotomies in social science that plague theory-building.67 These dichotomies include material/ideal, stability/change, and agent/structure debates. Practice approaches are a theoretical bridge between these categories. Of these, I want to especially point to the role of practice theory in getting us past agent/structure and principle/agent problems, which are especially troublesome when attempting to determine causal stories about conflict. The core question in ongoing cases of violence, is whether leadership or followers are to blame. Or, from a structural perspective, low GDP per capita, failed state institutions, and high levels of unemployment, might be causing violence. Each attribution would certainly lead to differing policy recommendations. Holding practice as the unit of

66 In the social sciences, concern with variable specification has led scholars to value conceptual categories that they can compare in large statistical analysis. In religious studies, that generalizability is contested in favor of a local and contingent access to knowledge. This debate is displayed well in the exchange between Ron Hassner and Michael Horowitz, “Correspondence: Debating the Role of Religion in War,” International Security 35, no. 1 (2010): 201–8. This study makes a conscious effort to use local and contingent ethnographic detail to build generalizable theories – what I call Large-N Ethnography. See conclusion.

analysis collapses all of these categories into one unit. Notions of act and structure completely collapse since a performer's capacity to succeed and be judged as competent at the performance is “grounded in the very structures that constrain them.”\textsuperscript{68} This is akin to saying, in Sidnell's words, “there are no 'social actors' only brides and grooms, witnesses and lawyers, judges and juries, speakers and hearers.”\textsuperscript{69} Similarly, the distinction between principal and agent collapses since the language used by a principle to instigate violence must be embedded in social practice in order for it to inspire agents.

Next, the project furthers the indivisibility hypothesis by defining how social practice produces three distinct mechanisms of intractability. I show how indivisibility becomes part of everyday life through exclusionary practices and rituals, which in turn frames conflict and contributes to sectarianization processes. The project gives a theoretical foundation for radicalization studies, which trace how a conflict, like Syria's civil war, transforms from a political into a religious conflict.

Finally, this thesis takes IR scholarship beyond the widely used rationalist “club model” of religious violence, imported from economic theory.\textsuperscript{70} While the club model posits that an extremist religious organization or armed groups can be defeated by replacing the social services it supplies with state-services, I argue that this formulation actually feeds the problem: exclusive practice organizations react violently when


challenged by state institutions and fail to negotiate with the state because they live daily lives that are not negotiable. Practice theory holds the counter-intuitive opposite of the club model: we should put more resources into bringing religious groups to the governance table. Saddling religious leadership with governance and representational expectations can act to tamp down exclusive adherence, making religious practices fungible and divisible. Additionally, this project suggests that interfaith groups and multifaith peace initiatives, such as those that supported the Lome Peace Accords in Sierra Leone, hold the power to reduce conflict because they bring all parties to the same bargaining table and act as moral guarantors.

Methodological Contributions

Methodologies employed to test practice theory push quantitative and qualitative research closer to one another in new ways. Practices are methodologically important because they “offer a way of analyzing global politics empirically.”71 I construct a quantitative dataset that formally brings ethnographic data from religious studies into a model with conflict outcomes of intensity, negotiation, and group die-out rate. The data on religious organizations presents a realistic “as if” model for practices as followed by armed substate actors, the first such model of its kind. Few others in IR have employed quantitative models of practice, and this study presents a type of methodological innovation that could be helpful for those wanting to use a quantitative index of other practices such as gender or class.

71 Neumann, “Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy.”
The data employed by the *Exclusive Religious Practice Index (ERP-Index)* moves the conversation beyond aggregate and awkward data-sets on religion. Unlike Svensson's work, which lumps groups into Christian, Muslim, Buddhist etc. categories, or Asal's work, which dichotomously determines whether a group is “religious” or not, the *ERP-Index* disaggregates measures of exclusive religious practice into eight dimensions for each side of a conflict dyad. This tells us far more about the daily life and activities that serve to provide context and frames for conflict.

Disaggregating religion on the level of practice is preferable to alternatives because it does not require “peering into the heads” of actors, assuming motivations where there may be none. If we understand religious identity as a site of practice, as opposed to a series of propositional idea-cleavages, then we are on better epistemological ground to make claims about the process of meaning making for those actors. Many current theories of religious identity are bundles of meaning, abstracted, to be interpreted. The implications of this project are that we must focus upon observable activities of actors and that this scholarly focus is not only a better framework for testable replication, but that it actually observes the causal mechanism doing the work in interpretive theories. A focus on practice offers a real theoretical alternative for empirically-minded scholars interested in observing the effects of “identity” on conflict outcomes. This approach can be applied much more broadly to projects on other types of identity cleavages.

Finally, the practice agenda is an exciting avenue for future research at the juncture of religion and conflict. The observation-centered framework enables

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72 It also opens up the field of identity politics to more material approaches.
researchers to reconceptualize and empirically examine the religio-cultural production of violence. By disaggregating practices in the manner suggested by this study, future scholars can isolate micro and meso practices (prayer, baptism rituals, etc.) and empirically test their relationship with any number of outcomes. Likewise, the relationships can be flipped to build theory of how conflict environments push and shove identity practices, transform orthopraxy, and interact with religious doings and sayings.

Policy Contributions

The research is instructive for US foreign policy, diplomacy, and the global task of combating violent extremism. The findings suggest that interfaith dialogues and religious diplomacy could prove useful in breaking down exclusivist practices. Practices can be foregrounded and broken down over time with repeated dialogue with different sincere faith practices. The principle take-away is that preventing religious violence escalation takes a long-term approach. Often acts of violence by religious actors are provocative – intending to draw an adversary into a “holy war.” The international community, and the US in particular as a global leader, must thus have a policy of proactive engagement with exclusivist communities of faith, which takes the form of five policy suggestions.

First, aid and development programs could focus on funding programs with inter-religious cooperation requirements, mandating that exclusive-practicing leaders work together as a condition of aid. Second, global security agencies must improve their ability to map hot-spot areas susceptible to “sectarianization” dynamics. This dissertation makes it possible to develop such a strategy using the tools developed in the ERP-Index. Third,
the US office of faith-based initiatives and the Ambassador At-Large for Religious Freedom must prioritize combating sectarianization at the top of the foreign policy agenda, instead of merely ensuring the safety of US missionaries abroad. This would include developing strategies based on specific religious proclivities within armed groups. Fourth, prioritizing interfaith cooperation would include a module on interfaith bargaining for new foreign service officers. Fifth, the US must emphasize religious-based track-two diplomacy in potential problem areas – areas where exclusivist populations might add to violent dynamics. This could be done with the office of faith based initiatives adopting a preferential partnering system for interfaith organizations over those groups with an evangelical mission. Such policies could go a long way in preventing habitats of indivisibility from taking hold in a community and foster practices that lead to religiously-led bargaining and reconciliation.
Chapter 2: A Practice Approach to Religion and Violence

This chapter introduces a theory to explain how exclusive religious practices create social dispositions of indivisibility. After a conflict onset, these dispositional indivisibilities cause religious actors to approach violent environments with higher rates of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. This chapter attempts to explain the observed variation in how religious actors behave in conflict by studying their practices in violent environments like civil war and terror campaigns. This theory-building chapter makes no attempt to explain the onset of religious violence, the onset of violence in general, or who participates in violence. Rather, the chapter is interested in explaining how exclusive-practice communities engage in violence longer and with more resolve during wartime. Even in campaigns with secular goals such as territorial secession, secular groups with members that engage in exclusive practices are more likely to contribute to extreme violence dynamics.

The argument is developed in four sections. First, I outline what I mean by a practice approach to religion, borrowing most heavily from Bourdieu, De Certeau, and Schatzki in Sociology, Bell in Religious Studies, and Pouliot, Neumann, and Autesserre in International Relations. I trace the historical trajectory of the practice school from Aristotle and bring it fully into dialogue with contemporary conflict studies.
Second, I show how the logic of practice is analytically different from the sort of arguments made by most in the social sciences. The central argument of the practice approach is that *dispositional* knowledge, found in how people go about everyday activities, can sometimes better explain social life than *propositional* knowledge like argumentation or cost-benefit analysis. The relationship between religion and dynamics of violence has sometimes been poorly examined because of a propositional bias inherent in both instrumentalist and constructivist theory.

Third, I show how religion is a field of practice by outlining eight dimensions of religious practice that are the “sites of the social” - sites of meaning-making and knowledge construction. These sites of the social are examined in eight dimensions: 1) orientations towards scripture, 2) hierarchies of groups, 3) practice and rituals concerning an afterlife, 4) demarcations of sacred space, 5) practices of diet, 6) dress habits, 7) rites of passage, and 8) prayer rituals. Examining these eight dimensions answer Ron Hassner's call in international relations to take “thick” approaches to religion seriously, as well as the need to use identity content and contestation as explanatory variables. The work here establishes “a baseline against which to compare identities.”


are a kind of typology of religious practice and a cut at how scholars can observe religious actors in action.⁵

Finally, the central argument is that particularly exclusive boundedness within religious practice create dispositions of indivisibility that actors take with them into conflict environments. Unlike indivisibility theories in economics and IR, which focus on legitimation strategies in the process of bargaining, I argue that religious actors approach conflict with dispositional indivisibility frames. In violent environments, exclusive religious practices impose cultural constraints on actors, which manifest in the dynamics of intensity, intransigence and resolve. I explain the link between cultural indivisibility and each of these separate dynamics of violence.

I conclude by outlining how a theory of religious practice compares to instrumental and constructivist approaches.⁶

What are Practices?

Practices are meaningful and patterned actions, revealing in their performance socially established ways of knowing and being in the world.⁷ The basic assumption of

⁵ The very use of the term “actor” which is predominate in IR, implies less interest in the individual and more concern with the action being taken. The noun is described in terms of the verb that it does. A methodological turn to practice puts the verb front and center in how one observes social phenomenon.

⁶ The third school of thought, the “essentialists” are dealt with elsewhere in the paper. Since their proposition can be refuted with any finding that is not null, less serious work needs to be done comparing it to practice-based approaches.

practice theory is that culture is a “real” thing in the world and can be observed through the bodily patterns, rituals, and habits of people.

The practice turn in social theory builds on the work of a diverse set of social theorists ranging from Wittgenstein and Dewey, to Bourdieu, Giddens, Foucault, and Taylor. These authors present an account of human life that holds practices as a central human phenomenon where meaning is made and other, conscious aspects of life come to be understood. Though each of these theoretical strains diverge, they share “one important trait: the idea that practices are the site where understanding is structured and intelligibility (Verstandlichkeit and Bedeuten) articulated (gegleidert).”


Practice theory points us towards a scholarship of the everyday. De Certeau aims to establish a theory of action rooted in how persons engage everyday life. To do this he focuses on the tacit knowledge that goes into agents performing the seemingly mundane. De Certeau is concerned with those tricks, tactics, and modes of navigating daily life which are often read out of both instrumentalist and constructivist social analysis. Instead of focusing either on rationality or discourse, an analysis of everyday practice is interested in the modes of performance that significantly influence one's life with “a maximum number of effects form minimum force.”

Humans go about their life in fields like sport, fashion, or religion without necessarily creating memory or significance at every moment. Thus, the drudgery of the everyday points us to those habits and rituals that are normalized and thus forgotten – perhaps even to the point where the brain cannot “form memories of events transpiring in front of us.”

A focus on everyday life gets us past those very few propositional, reflective moments in life and directs our attention to the habits that are part of everyday life.

Practice theory goes as far back as Aristotle when he wrote of *phronesis* or “practical wisdom” being a form of knowledge. Aristotle posited that practical wisdom is a form of action where one *does* the “right thing” as part of her disposition, not merely due to belief or cost/benefit analysis. Practice theory turns our attention to this sort of

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“acting out” the “right thing” and instructs those interested in social outcomes to pay special attention to the embodied, dispositional manifestations of how one goes about performing in their day-to-day life.\textsuperscript{15}

Practical wisdom - senses of the social - perform on a relational stage and thus are a cluster of ways that others judge one as competent. If interested in practices of religion, we should examine culturally mandated performances of competence within the field of religion.\textsuperscript{16} Practice as competency means that “socially meaningful patterns of action” are pursued by an individual in a particular social setting with a practical logic. Habitus is not an act that stands in isolation of structure: the very idea of practice gets past the linear notions of structure and agency, and instead points scholars towards the interplay: agents act from structure by competently carrying out background knowledge and simultaneously transform and evolves structures over time.\textsuperscript{17} As such, practice is not only about competence, but about ways that competence is judged in a collective, subsumed in the agency of individual, and reified back to that collective.

\textsuperscript{15} Pierre Bourdieu elaborates a compelling theory of practice which mirrors Aristotalian \textit{phronesis}. Using the term \textit{habitus}, Bourdieu refers to a set of habit-based dispositions (as opposed to thought-based propositions), where objective structures realize in prescribed actions of subjective agents. Here Bourdieu is interested in the principles that generate and organize. As he states, “the socially informed body, with its tastes and distastes, its compulsions, and repulsions, with in a word, all it's senses... [including] the traditional five senses – which never escape the structuring action of social determinisms – but also the sense of necessity and the sense of duty, the sense of direction and the sense of reality, the sense of balance and the sense of beauty, common sense and the sense of the sacred, tactical sense and the sense of responsibility, business sense and the sense of propriety, the sens of humor and the sense of absurdity, moral sense and the sense of practicality, and so on.”


\textsuperscript{17} Adler and Pouliot, \textit{International Practices}.
One way of thinking about practice is through the difference between knowing “that” and knowing “how.” Knowing how to do something turns our gaze away from the justification for doing an action and towards the notion that practices actually enable and instantiate discourse, belief, or rationality. Knowing how to do X activity also means that the patterns of that activity are predictable and sanctioned by past actions. Adler and Pouliot argue that as practices are repeated, they are reproductions (or encore performances) of behaviors that gain meaning over time as they structure and frame human interaction. Through iteration after iteration, “know-how” performance becomes what we might call old fashion “common sense.”

It is precisely the manifestation of intuitive “common sense” that Foucault points to as evidence that bodies exist in a process of social “disciplining.” To judge a person as competent or incompetent is making a claim regarding the character of their performance within a social expectation, vis-a-vis some shared standard, and thus incompetence at a practice (religiosity, sport, baking, etc.) is a deeply social phenomenon, not individual experience.

19 Here I mean that practices are stable places for conducting social life. As such, they create predictable and patterned ways of interaction between humans that are done with such ease that it contributes to the “taken-for-grandedness” of those very practices. As Swidler suggests, “they remain stable not only because habit ingrains standard ways of doing things, but because the need to engage one another forces people to return to common structures.”
Propositional vs. Dispositional Approaches

The basic claim of practice theory – that we should evaluate what people think from rather than what they think about – contrasts markedly with Weber's notion of instrumental rationality or value rationality, which requires an actor to think through a cost-benefit proposition and take an action based upon it. The logic of practice contests that social action is significantly determined by agents engaging in life from unreflectively utilized viewpoints. Actors come into social scenarios with a pre-set menu of dispositions forged by practice: this is what they “think from.”

Pouliot builds an in-depth theory of a logic of practice, which critiques the “representational bias” inherent in the types of rationalities used by both rationalist and constructivist scholars. The harms of this bias are legion, not least of which is that “what scientists see from their ivory tower is often miles away from the practical logics enacted on the ground.” Traditional philosophies that conceive of the mind as the ontological site for human understanding are not necessarily wrong, but mis-specify how meaning is made. For instance, Pouliot argues that “security practitioners think from, instead of about, diplomacy” which is why many conflicts are not understood as conflicts, but as “diplomatic challenges.” Practices of diplomacy in this instance are not thought about, they are dispositions that practitioners think from.


If the ontological state of human affairs - “how things stand for someone” - are expressed in collective bodily activities, then the most appropriate epistemological grounding would evaluate performance of practice. If we are to understand how religion is going for someone, while a Cartisian may say to simply ask them, practice theory would instruct one to observe social activities which in themselves constitute and give meaning to the activities of the “mind.”

Practices as disposition-forging anchors are powerfully orienting, centering powers in human life. They are powerful as “relations of force” between individuals, not controlled by any one person. It is from this ontological position that Foucault argues that one must “conduct and ascending analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics.”²⁵ Practices are those micro-level mechanisms that forge social dispositions that operate as ontological starting places for agents in conflict. We thus turn to the everyday religious body as the site of the religious social, imbued with social senses and acts in ways that are meaningful and observable.

_Religion as Practice_

As famed Anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes, “we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives.”²⁶ He goes on to claim that culture

²⁵ Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 90.

is not a general, catch-all force, but specific points of human activity. The cultural pattern of religion, for instance, is “not just religion, but belief in the wheel of karma, the observance of a month of fasting, or the practice of cattle sacrifice.” Therefore, defining religion as a belief system or collection of believers misses out on a portion of what is going on in the world. And yet, most work in the humanistic social sciences define religion as a set of “beliefs, belongings and behaviors” that orient an actor or community towards a transcendent reality. Still others have argued for a “thick” typology of religion, emphasizing theology, hierarchy, iconography, culture, and ways of knowing the world. Each of these approaches treats religion as an “integrated, systematized set of beliefs, behaviors, values, institutions, modes of communication, and leadership... moreover, it derives from an external framework, linking individuals to the greater whole.” The purpose of this study is, on the other hand, to treat religion as a bundle of activities: “beliefs” “behaviors” and “belongings” are bundles of socialization that are better understood collectively as practice.

The problem is that definitions of “belief, behavior, belonging” tend to prioritize the justifications and explanations of religious life over the day-to-day practices that actors engage in. Recent scholarship in international relations for example, has sought to


28 Hassner, “Religion and International Affairs: The State of the Art.”

use “public theology,” religious “rhetoric,” and “rhetorical justifications” as mechanisms to understand why some groups commit violence and others do not. The problem with this operationalization is that it does nothing to capture the dispositional elements of religion that actually may be working to link religious actors with dynamics of violence. Propositional notions of religion (belief, goal-seeking) suffer from an emphasis on meaning created through purposive knowledge.

A focus on practice intentionally recasts belief into the material world. This is not to say that belief is unimportant, but that there is a material basis for belief. Belief is less a place of “right thought,” but a place of being, producing, and living. Persons mutate belief to make it “habitable, like a rented apartment.” If this is the case, the appropriate way to understand religion is not belief prima facia, but what persons do with that belief in daily routine to make that belief work. This is done through a believer coming into contact with things in the world, which she then appropriates, much as a lawyer practices law by applying the legal system in a courtroom. The site of “law” is not found in a legal document, but is established in the arguments, interpretations, and “facts” of a situation, just as “belief” does not exist as analytically independent of the actions that believers


When a believer comes into contact with a conflict environment, she appropriates that conflict into a system of practices.

As a believer comes into contact with externality (e.g. conflict), she attempts to reconcile material interactions with structural menus. Many times this is done in a belief community, where, because a believer cannot reconcile huge quantities of material internally, she borrows from the experience of the neighbor, the rabbi, the family. She insinuates, poaches, observes, and makes her neighbor or brother, or teacher's reconciliation part of her own being, living and learning from many simultaneous material interactions. Amplified by choruses of this process, practicing religion is not an individual goal-seeking or discursive experience, as simple “belief” may be, but a profoundly social location. In this location, an actor learns to perform the appropriate doing and saying based upon the lives that others have lived that the believer then makes habitable for themselves. Acting out these performances reifies the background system and makes it real, applicable, and indeed believable. One's identity as a believer is thus profoundly not propositional, but a series of doings and sayings that come from a dispositional knowledge of performance.

Religious identity is intrinsically linked to practices. Being seen and seeing someone do X (e.g. participate in prayer) is the basis on which a subject is judged as competent at the activity of X (e.g. praying). It is in the practice of praying that one is judged as an identity category member, whereas not performing, or performing at the


34 Seligman et al., Ritual and Its Consequences.
wrong place or wrong time, is noticeable, judgeable, and grounds for “questioning someone's moral integrity as a category member.” This process is evident in the book of Judges 12:6 when an out-group member is identified and thousands killed, due to an inability to competently perform a linguistic practice:

“they said to him, “Then say Shibboleth,” and he said, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it right. Then they seized him and slaughtered him at the fords of the Jordan. At that time 42,000 of the Ephraimites fell.”

The implication here is that practices are not stable “cognitive structures” that are “inside one's head,” - as beliefs might be - but are forged at the site of material interaction and performance. Rituals and practices are not so much “belief events” as they are ways that persons negotiate their existence in a particular world and enable themselves to “go on” with their lives in a competent way.

Practices are actions that are inherently embedded in institutional and organizational sinew, and, as such, are evident and observable in member performance. Religion is an area of human activity that requires one to not only profess, but practice that profession in an applied, bodily way. Analogous are fields of cooking, sport, medicine, and law, each of which require dispositional knowledge for one to be judged as competent by peers. Practicing law, cooking, medicine, sport, or religion is, in many

37 Seligman et al., Ritual and Its Consequences, 8; Schatzki, Social Practices.
ways, is less about what one knows, and far more about application and performance. These performances are judged not against a fixed standard, but against social convention. Practices are therein individual acts of social structures. This social convention is even embodied in model examples: Cooking has Bobby Flay; Sport has Peyton Manning; Catholicism has the embodiment of social requirements in the Pope. To be competent at a social performance means to have a set of dispositions that are practiced by one's body, perhaps even practiced to the extent that they are forgotten, unthought modes of being. For instance, Bobby Flay does not have to recite his cookbook to himself in order to cook well and be judged as competent by patrons.³⁹ Foucault similarly argues that “micro-power” is the orchestrating factor of daily life which “disciplines” the individual body with structural requirements.⁴⁰ Everyday life of a religious person is, in many ways, “continually invaded by a certain scrutiny for the effective governance of social subjects.”⁴¹ It is in this way that religion is a contested playing field, where individual agency and social structure are both seen in the day-to-day practices of religious actors, which are judged as competent by fellow practitioners.

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³⁹ Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*.


Religion is, as sociologist Riesebrodt argues, “a complex of religious practices.” John Milbank joins this thesis with the claim that “postmodern theology can only proceed by explicating Christian practice.” And, according to Durkheim, 

“[A religious group] is not a simple group of ritual precautions which a man is held to take in certain circumstances; it is a system of diverse rites, festivals, and ceremonies which all have the characteristic that they reappear periodically. They fulfill the need which the believer feels of strengthening and affirming, at regular intervals of time, the bond which unites him to the sacred beings upon which he depends.”

Durkheim's argument is that collective rituals arouse emotions and bond people together. It is this process – ritual, emotion, performance together that one might call practice. Again, these practices are often described as “beliefs” but actually are not “propositions” at all. Ethnographic research in practical theology has found that persons participate from a dispositional “urge” often saying that, “We don’t think about our rituals, we just do them,” or simply: ‘It’s always been done that way.’ Practice approaches capitalize upon ritual and routines of the everyday and explain social outcomes by looking at bundles of everyday activities.

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Anthropologist Clifford Geertz joins Durkheim's emphasis on ritual, saying: “Religious belief and ritual confront and mutually confirm one another...the meaningful relation between the values a people holds and the general order of existence within which it finds itself is an essential element in all religions, however those values or that order is conceived.” Religion is thus not only a way the think about the world, but provides an individual a cognitive framework or menu by which to organize her conduct and experience meaning.46

There are many contending ways that one might disaggregate religion based on practice. I have chosen to follow the trends in the field of religious studies, specifically the subfield of practical theology. This subfield has developed to argue for the centrality of everyday life in understanding religion. According to a leading doctoral program in the sub-field,

“Practical theology is the theologically positioned, interdisciplinary study of the practices of religious communities and of the traditions and social contexts that shape and challenge those practices... Religious practices appear in all faith traditions, though with their own unique histories and institutional settings and in relation to their own distinctive sacred texts, rituals, symbols, and theological understandings.”47

The turn to practice collapses the distinction between orthodoxy (belief) and orthopraxy (practice), and instead, treats “theology as ethnography”48 and “biography as

46 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, 127.


Theology.” The turn to practice is not isolated to Christianity. A recent collection of essays highlights the importance of ethnographic methodology in observing and understanding Islam. A turn to practice also punctuates recent Buddhist scholarly literature. Iver Neumann's recent exploration of how religious practice constitutes society in Battlestar Galatica even shows how the bonds of practice work in science fiction.

The practical theology turn in religious studies parallel's sociology's practice theory in that it emphasizes bodily actions. Bourdieu argues that every social group “entrusts to bodily automatism” those principles that are central to the perpetuation of the group – making the body and the ways it is disciplined a key referent for social theory. For Foucault, the body is the area where social power is organized – the body is the medium by which power is perfected via technology, performed and empirically observed, giving rise to the term biopower as a central component of Foucault work. From this perspective there is nothing less than a whole cosmology inside the protestant practices of baptism or Sufi dietary practices. Putting on a headscarf is, in this reading of practice, less a symbolic recognition of God's call to purity, and more of a body being


pure in itself. The distinction is important because on the one reading, a person puts on a headscarf as an act of belief, as an act of putting on an external identity and forcing it onto the body of an autonomous and rational individual. The alternative presented by Bourdieu and Foucault is one where the body is the site of identity and the act itself is a constitutive event that *creates* purity. The site of the religious every-day is the body, so that knowing how to engage in religion is to know how to participate in various bodily practices.\(^53\) For an example of the importance of bodily practices as religious identity, we need to look no further than Mohammed's Sunna – the “way he did things” in everyday life. In the Sunna, the prophet's words and deeds are recorded and passed on in *hadith* or “narrative.” Even the stories Muslims tell about the prophet are deeply rooted in the everyday doings in which he engaged.

To be religious is to practice a religion competently. Dimensions of practice are thus key aspects of understanding the function of religion in social organization.

\(^{53}\) On the other hand, those not performing the bodily rituals and practices are judged as incomplete, incompetent, and even idiotic. Geertz points out that the more a group is insular, the more likely they are to look strangely upon non-practitioners: “Particularly where these symbols are uncriticized, historically or philosophically, as they are in most of the world's culture, individuals who ignore the moreal-aesthetic norms the symbols formulate, who follow a discordant style of life, are regarded not so much as evil as stupid, insensitive, unlearned, or in the case of extreme dereliction, mad.” In Sierra Leone, where I have done fieldwork, those who identify as atheist are regarded as not only odd, but flatly boorish – the idea is anathema to people. While there is complete acceptance of multiple faiths (as will be discussed in a following chapter), there is no room in “civilized” Salone society for the god-less. To practice religion is to be competent.
Conceiving of Practices as Inclusive/Exclusive

The Durkheimian definition of religion as a separation of the sacred from the profane is not only methodologically useful, but is also descriptive of a process of practice.\(^{54}\) Participating in ritualized life is fundamentally asserting difference between communities, lifestyles, worldviews.\(^{55}\) Ritualization is the production of differentiation between in-groups and out-groups as practicing one's religion is a way of acting in a particular way that establishes a contrast of privileged being. By being a religious person, one draws boundaries between groups in a physical way, demarcating not simply differences of beliefs and ideology, but differences in ways of assessing competence and characteristics. This differentiation gives power to ones social group. Rituals acts can become not only symbols, but beings of domination – domination tied to the ways that a human regards themselves or others.\(^{56}\) Thus, the way to correctly categorize “extremist” groups like ISIS/ISIL is not “literalist” but rather “exclusivist” in that they appropriate their religion in a particular sort of way in conflict.\(^{57}\)

The tension between inclusive approaches to religion and exclusive control over religiosity is at the core of the 21\(^{st}\) Century religious experience. In Islam for instance, Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi writes on how ancient texts can inform modern

\(^{54}\) Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.*


concerns. Mernissi finds that Islam “is not a religion built on violence and war, but rather a revolutionary set of beliefs that supported equality for women and democratic change.”

This interpretation builds upon the Quranic verse “to each among you, We have prescribed a set of rules of practical conduct and a spiritual way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single community...”. This has been read by many as an indication that there will be many ummahs (not one), who are to follow their own laws and moral paths, paving way for religious diversity and pluralism. According to renown theologian Osman bin Bakar, “Islam recognizes the collective rights of all religious communities to exist and their equality before the law.” The revolutionary reclamation of sharia as inclusive stands as a challenge to elitist control, opening up a wealth of new interpretive possibilities, while groups like ISIS and AQ are “closing down and restricting interpretation. Reformers find both inspiration and variety of opinion in the medieval texts; extremists find only their own perceptions.”

Brockopp goes on to make the argument that

“Extremists like bin Laden are marked by their rejection of the pluralism embedded in the Islamic tradition. They argue that their version of history is the only one that preserves the heart of the tradition. As a result, they are both highly selective in representing this tradition and also intolerant of contrary voices.”


59 The Qur’an: Sura 5:51, n.d.


Campbell's work on Bosnia suggests that looking at identity as inclusive or exclusive is helpful in understanding violence outcomes. He argues convincingly that NATO and the UN allowed for the creation of cultural enclaves led by groups with an exclusivist understanding of ethnicity and religion, leading directly to ethnic cleansing.\textsuperscript{63} Further evidence has shown that the accord at Dayton, which rewarded exclusive boundaries of ethnicity, has laid the groundwork for future conflict.\textsuperscript{64}

Conceiving of religious practice as a function of exclusivity demarcation, or insularity, following Durkheim and Campbell, means that we should be principally interested in classifying religious practices on a binary scale, whether the practice has exclusionary boundaries or not. However, it is also important to not only classify practices that fall within an inclusive/exclusive label, but those that are contested or mixed. Classifying identity as a combination of content and contestation is a major step forward in using identity as a variable.\textsuperscript{65} In the next chapter I outline a three-tiered measurement of exclusion/inclusion/contestation.

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item 62 Ibid., 145.
  \item 65 Abdelal et al., “Identity as a Variable.”
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Elements of Religious Practice

There are eight dimensions of religious practice that are widely comparable and which vary considerably in exclusionary boundaries from group to group. These are not arbitrary categories, but are core ways of describing the practical theologies as played out by religious communities. Almost every element takes into account in the most popularly cited texts on religious practice, such as the *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practice*, which includes analysis on almost every religious community from 245 religious scholars.\(^66\) From commentaries such as these, religious communities can be compared along eight elements of practice. These dimensions are outlined below, highlighting the variation that could theoretically exist between groups, which becomes important when they are used in Chapter 3 as explanatory variables.

**Scripture**

Sacred texts are regularly the cornerstone of religious practice and are frequently the baseline for exclusion. Sacred scripture, a divinely ordained account of human purpose that is authoritative for human behavior, is monopolized by groups that claim special access to the divine through them.\(^67\) Whether the New Testament, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Talmud, the Book of Mormon, the Koran, the Upanishads, or the Buddhist Pali canon, every religious tradition grapples with the status of sacred text in modernity. Literal reliance on text is problematic in that “when divine communication is believed to reside in one book… and not other books” a sacred exclusivity is created by the treatment

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In particular, we see how limited and narrow interpretations of scripture are linked to violence. According to a preeminent religious scholar,

“What distinguishes the interpretive approach of groups like ISIS from others is (...) its narrowness and rigidity: for the adherents of ISIS, the Quran means exactly one thing, and other levels of meaning or alternate interpretations are ruled out a priori. This is not literalism. It is exclusivism.”

Exclusive approaches to texts are often seen though many proxies, including punishments for sinners, missionary activity, and pilgrimages. These sorts of activities are indicative of taking seriously the authority of scripture. While taking scripture seriously, there are variations in how exclusive that authority is. A prime example of the variation in scriptural practice in Islam is in the doctrine of *ijtihad* versus a literal interpretation of the Koran. Ijtihad is the notion that an individual is intellectually responsible for interpreting the Koran and puts questions of earthly policy directly in the hands of the people. This view would maintain that ijtihad is an Islamic basis for Muslims to tackle new issues with a modern lens, not rigid old formulas. If one firmly commits to the doctrine of ijtihad, which many Sufis and liberal sects have, it means that one particular group has no right to determine the “correct” interpretation of scripture. Scripture in other words, is no longer an exclusive property of one group.

*Afterlife*

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68 Ibid.

69 Dagli, “The Phony Islam of ISIS.”
Religious ritual in almost every tradition, both cult and mainstream, connects to transcendental states after human existence. Even those traditions that regard the afterlife with skepticism engage in elaborate practices at a follower’s death. Religions create afterlife exclusivity through practices of burial or living life in a way that takes into consideration afterlife salvation, damnation, reincarnation, or other forms of transcendental states of post-mortality. In Islam, salvation and entry into the afterlife is often linked to the notion of God’s satisfaction. Satisfaction, and thus pleasure in the afterlife, are contingent upon behaving in one way or another. Christian scripture mirrors this with imagery of the “path” to heaven being “narrow” and gate to heaven “small.” The notion of eternal punishment even “indicates that the defenders of religion found it necessary to balance the attraction of its promise with the threat for the “others”, who rejected it or failed to meet its tests.”

On the other hand, salvation narratives have increasingly been opened in many traditions. Evangelical theologians have begun to argue against the doctrine of Hell and advocate getting rid of Christian practices of burial that treat people differently based upon their spiritual group membership. Very recently, Pope Francis has made strides to pull the Catholic Church against such exclusivity, stating that “even atheists” will find their way to heaven, if they “continue to do good,” making afterlife belief contingent on orthopraxy instead of orthodoxy.


Group Privilege

Hassner speaks of hierarchical structures being critical to a proper classification of religious life. Hierarchies not only set the organizational climate, but are reified in how everyday life is lived, not through setting “beliefs” but through the posture that one takes with one of privileged or higher holiness.

Religion creates exclusivity through selective “group privileging” and resulting “relative status deprivation” where a particular sect gains rights and powers not granted to those outside of the group. Being part of a holy group is often treated as a scarce and limited resource. One of the clearest examples of group privilege is found in the ritual practice of excommunication. In Islam, powerful clerics frequently use *takfir* to draw lines between sects, where they “declare ‘non-Muslim’ every Muslim who [doesn’t] follow the path of the vanguard.” The Roman Catholic tradition has frequently used excommunication as a means of medicinal censure, an attempt to leverage the rewards of compliance over those of acting defiantly of doctrine. St. Peter, the story goes in 1 Timothy 1:20, delivered “blasphemers” over to Satan through excommunication. The supposition is that the rewards of Holy Communion are inherently scarce and limited to particular actors behaving in particularly circumscribed ways, and not to blasphemers (or those with alternative interpretations of the divine).

72 Hassner, “Religion and International Affairs: The State of the Art.”


Yet at the same time, group privilege can also be transformed into universally unbounded inclusion. Emmanuel Levinas, for example, took pains to reorient the notion of “children of Abraham” to include “those to whom their ancestor bequeathed a difficult tradition of duties toward the other man.”

Levinas’ Jewish political theology is thus not about a blood-group’s claim to exclusive privilege, but radically inclusive of all traditions that struggle for care and justice.

Space

Sacred space” defines a bounded place that has greater, solely cosmic value compared to other neighboring places. Sacred places are approached with reverence and a bodily posture markedly different than secular locations.

Sacred space is not only inherently limited in quantity and exclusively owned, but it is simultaneously attractive, coveted, and threatening. The space is attractive to those who ascribe cosmic meaning to it and therefore coveted by those who believe there to be power in the place, but do not possess it. Sacred spaces become areas of competition as each group wishes to assert it’s practices at one and the same site.

There is variance in religious practice regarding scarce space. Down the street from my university in Denver, Colorado, a United Methodist Church and Buddhist congregation co-operate and worship in the same building. Friends of mine currently


76 Ron Hassner, “The Path to Indivisibility: The Role of Ideas in the Resolution of Intractable Territorial Disputes” (Stanford University, 2003).

77 Ibid.
worship at a Christian evangelical church that shares space with a Muslim congregation. My own Congregationalist church regularly shares services and space with a local Jewish congregation. There are wellsprings of inclusivity in sacred spaces, not simply exclusivity.

_Dress_

Dress is an object infused with meaning and “identity,” as the performance of dress is simultaneously physiological and psychological.78 Dress is a practice exemplar because it is in the individual act of dressing that structural constraints are revealed – dressing is literally embodying culture and performing it. The cultural contest over appropriate public displays of religion via dress has caused much friction in the modern West, resulting in isolation of communities who would rather hide than publicly alter their practice.79 Dress is a fundamentally differentiating activity, one that in a religious context, demarcates in-groups from out-groups. Dress and adornment (or lack thereof) are key signals of trust and comparability, and those without such demarcation are sometimes held with suspicion. In the Jewish community for example, differentiations in dress demarcate not just in-groups, but sub-groups such as Hasidic and Sephardic traditions.


One of the ways that religion sets itself apart from the modern world is through dress practices – shawls, head-coverings, beards, etc. - all indicate a set-apartness in daily routine. However, many reform traditions have sought to break down dress as a cultural barrier between in-groups and others, perhaps as an evangelical ploy, but nevertheless to mainstream the religious life and make it accessible to converts. Thus, while some Mennonite cleavages have retained special dress codes, liberal, less exclusivist sects are indistinguishable from secular people. Note here that while the differences in state “belief” might be remarkably minute, the differences in practice produce variation in the explanatory framework.

**Diet**

Dietary practices are key to understanding a group's religious identity and fundamental demarcations of religious variation between sub-groups. Mormons also avoid alcohol and caffeine, though progressive strands of the LDS Church have relaxed these practices. While many Buddhists are vegetarian, vegetarianism is rare among Tibetan and Japanese Buddhists. This tells us that though belief may be constant, variation in practice says something important about the difference in the social construction of individual believers. That bounded dietary practices are part of everyday life shows how practice conditions, frames, and anchors an actor's interactions with other environments. This theoretical proposition leads to the empirical claim that upon conflict breakout, those with more exclusive practices – including dietary restrictions – will be less inclined to negotiate due to frames of indivisibility forged by exclusion in daily life.

**Rites of Passage**
Rites of passage are ceremonial events that exist in all historically known societies, that mark the passage from one religious status to another. Rites of passage are socialization mechanisms to induct new agents into their role as principles. The event itself is significant as a symbolic marker of the individual publicly being disciplined by the culture they are part of. The rituals of recitation and memorization, for instance in a Jewish bar mitzvah, are performances of culture coming from the individual actor – a paramount example of a practice as described above. And while the most recognizable rites of passage affiliate with the five major religions, rites have perhaps even more centrality in folk religions that are largely devoid of holy text or sacred space.

Rites of passage function to erect barriers of entry to joining a group, which both demarcates exclusive boundaries and prevents recidivism. But there is tension between sets of rites in communities with overlapping or contested memberships. In Sierra Leone, I witnessed fierce debates among religious elite at the fact that “baptized” converts participated in pagan induction ceremonies of traditional African religion. “These cannot coexist” a Bishop of the African Wesleyan Church told me. Policing these boundaries between sacred and profane is key to the perpetuation of their group. Yet, at the same time, a member of Catholic clergy indicated a more passive acceptance of traditional rituals – that they could coexist. The same Wesleyan Bishop, on another occasion, told me that the reason why there has not been more infighting between religious groups is


81 Usman Fornah, Interview with Rev. Dr. Usman Fornah, May 11, 2014.
that “no matter if Muslim or Catholic or Anglican, everyone participates in the same
traditional religious rituals.” I make the argument in Chapter 7 that the low barriers of
exclusion in Sierra Leone have far-reaching implications for security in the country.

Prayer

The act of praying is constitutive for the subject and a practice that is unique to
religious life. Entire seminars in practical theology center on the act of prayer and how
religious organizations perpetuate ideology through the practice of prayer. But there is
wide variation within religious groups as to what constitutes valid prayer techniques and
what sort of relationship one cultivates with the divine through the prayer ritual. There
are some prayer activities that are held loosely (i.e. liberal Christians that emphasize
“mindfulness” in lieu of “communication”). The nuances of prayer exclusivity are lost in
over-aggregation of religious actors. Thus, separating out whether groups rigidly
demarcate prayer orthopraxy is an important step in understanding if practices influence
conflict intensity, intransigence and resolve.

8 Dimensions as Anchoring and Reinforcing of One Another

One might say that these elements of practice are “anchoring” - they dominate and
organize other practices: religious anchoring practices are perhaps anchoring to other
practices of violence and retribution.\textsuperscript{82} Swidler sees anchoring practices as “enactments of
'constitutive rules' [that acquire] their power to structure related discourses and patterns
of activity because they implicitly define the basic entities or agents in the relative

\textsuperscript{82} Sending and Neumann, “Banking on Power: How Some Practice in an International Organizat

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domain of social action.”

Certainly practices of scriptural interpretation or afterlife organize ways that communities engage actions like marriage or charging interest on a loan. In contrast to Swidler's notion of anchoring, I hold that many religious practices are “nested” in one another, informing and reifying one another. A scriptural tradition that mandates, for instance, baptism is reinforced by the rites of passage that includes baptism. Practices have reinforcing relationships with one another and, together, they anchor other social interactions. Geertz similarly makes the claim that religion is a general framework that impacts how an actor engages in other aspects of the world, give them “meaningful form,” and to “root” social dispositions about the world. We could say that exclusive practices of religion create a rigid and exclusive “worldview” that frames all other aspects of an agent's social life. It is an exclusive worldview that generates indivisibility in conflict.

It is worth noting here that these eight reinforcing practices are not bracketed for actors involved in organizations with secular goals. Practice theory maintains that groups are influenced by the everyday practices of the membership, not just by the institutional objectives of an organization. Thus, while avowedly atheistic groups may purge daily religious ritual from their membership, many other groups with secular goals that have religious members. For example the Tamil Tigers or PKK both have secular goals, yet


85 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, 123.
their membership are affiliated with some sort of religious group that mandates practice. These religious affiliations of secular group membership can be captured by evaluating how life is lived on the ground where these groups operate. Looking at everyday practice allows one the leverage to see that even though a group like the United Liberation Front of Assam are fighting for territory and ethnic secession, they are also coded based on how the membership practices religion. In some of these cases, like I outline, I abstract this based on the most micro data of where the group operates – i.e. for instance, mixed Muslim and Baptist in the case of the ULFA.

**Indivisibility as TeleoAffective Structure**

The key argument is that exclusive practices create dispositions of indivisibility that groups take with them into existing conflicts. Once a group with indivisible dispositions finds itself in a conflict, they are more likely to fight with more intensity, intransigence, and resolve. In a world where sacred rituals are embodied, “not as subjective human preferences but as the imposed conditions for life,” religious actors are conditioned to perform within certain boundaries. If those pre-set social expectations of “competence” are insular and exclusive, the entire structure of a religious group is bound to react to world events through the imposed condition of insularity and exclusivity. Exclusive religion creates, in Schatzki's language, a “TeleoAffective Structure,” while Geertz uses the term “worldview” - either term refers to how exclusive groups receive the world through a preset menu of exclusive practice.

86 Ibid., 131.
This theory is in contention with both rational choice approaches to bargaining as well as constructivists. I first outline how indivisibility has formed as a concept in the literature. Second, I tackle the three explanations doing the work in explaining how indivisibility forms. I critique these mechanisms and then third, offer an alternative of indivisibility from the view of practice.

Indivisible issues are those that “cannot be split (physically) and/or allocated (easily, widely) among parties, at least not without losing much of [its] intrinsic value or utility.” Economists have used the concept of indivisibility to explain convexity of markets and distribution problems. Such theories usually are solved by re-imagining access to goods, through lottery or auction. Yet, these models leave unanswered the puzzle as to why some fundamentally malleable or fungible disputes become intractable.

International relations scholars have employed the notion of divisibility in bargaining theory. Unfortunately, many studies treat conflict issues as if they were perfectly divisible. Foundational works in game theory take infinite divisibility as a core assumption for producing multiple outcomes. Those rational choice theorists who factor

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in indivisibility often ignore the problem inherent in the issue, and instead explain indivisibility as an external element of losing face in a reputation game.\textsuperscript{91}

Alternative approaches to indivisibility in international relations overwhelmingly focus on the role that territorial values play in instigating and prolonging conflict. Toft has shown how ethnic claims over territory make bargains over the division of territory problematic.\textsuperscript{92} Hassner makes a strong argument that religious sacred sites, which cannot be divided without losing value, are tender-boxes for conflict.\textsuperscript{93} However, the singular focus on territory disregards the constitutive nature of territorial meaning-making. Sacred space, for instance, is given irreducible value because of its relationship to other aspects of a religious practice. For the faiths that lay claim to Jerusalem, the land itself is holy not merely because of activities that have gone on there, but because of the tight hold those traditions have on scripture and the “sacredness” of the stories told about the land. “Land is holy because God gave the land,” which tells us that other aspects of indivisibility are at work.\textsuperscript{94} Much more work needs to be done teasing out how indivisibility is constructed.

The most thoughtful discussion of the mechanisms that lead to indivisibility come from social constructivists that place principle emphasis on rhetorical tools employed in conflict bargaining. Some argue that framing-language prove to signal a group's position


\textsuperscript{93} Hassner, “The Path to Indivisibility: The Role of Ideas in the Resolution of Intractable Territorial Disputes.”

\textsuperscript{94} Josef, Interview with Hebron Settler A, June 9, 2014.
and explain itself to outsiders.\textsuperscript{95} Other work on public theology contributes by arguing that statements of religiosity push groups in particular ideological directions, which also serve as the site of contest and clash.\textsuperscript{96} The most robust explanation of indivisibility construction comes from Stacie Goddard, who argues that groups employ “public and recognized reasons to justify a claim to an issue.”\textsuperscript{97} These public “legitimation” strategies functionally construct indivisibilities as adversaries attempt to establish superlative claims: \textit{first, holy, greatest}. In this formulation, Goddard treats indivisibility as a product of “actors' representations of the territory.”\textsuperscript{98}

There are three reasons why the rhetorical constructivist model for indivisibility should be reconsidered.

First, the formulation that indivisibility is a product of an actor's representations focuses our attention on a very limited and specific set of actors (the bargainers). While the activities and sayings of those doing the bargaining are perhaps more observable, there is nothing that should lead us to believe that the only important framers are those engaged in public framing via bargaining. Both an external interlocutor and an internal audience are critical for the framer's public theologies to function. Those doing the framing are in constant conversation with both of these other social agents. Only focusing on the action of the bargaining table ignores much of the socialization that the bargainers

\textsuperscript{95} Henne, “The Ancient Fire: Religion and Suicide Terrorism.”

\textsuperscript{96} Sandal, “The Clash of Public Theologies?: Rethinking the Concept of Religion in Global Politics.”

\textsuperscript{97} Goddard, “Uncommon Ground: Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy,” 40.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 36.
come to the table with. Goddard herself argues that “legitimacy is positional: whether or not actors can make a claim depends on how they embed in surrounding social and cultural institutions.”98 It is therefore odd that she does not include analysis of cultural institutions in her theory of indivisibility construction. If indivisibility is a relational phenomenon, it does a disservice to not include analysis of how relationality functions in conflict environments.

Second, the rhetoric-centered approach assumes that propositional knowledge can explain action and motivation. The idea that “actors choose their legitimations strategically” as “users” of discourse to bolster political interests, is deeply flawed.99 The biggest problem is that “use” of legitimation in no way indicates a causal mechanism for “constructing” indivisibility. Note especially that the core claim is that “indivisibility is constructed from the mutually incompatible claims of actors.”100 Use of rhetorical outbidding implies that there are pre-existing referents for that use. Legitimation, using superlative or divine-mandate language, for instance, requires that one have a prior construction for it to actually legitimate actions. Take for example a conversation I had recently with Neftali Bennett, leader of a far right party in Israel. When asked about the right of Palestinian to land in the West Bank, he responded, that this was the land of “Ruth and Boaz... how can you say that the land of Ruth and Boaz is not Jewish?”101

99 Ibid., 42.
100 Ibid., 62
101 Bennett Neftali, Interview, June 9, 2014.
Putting aside the fact that neither Ruth nor Boaz was Jewish, Bennett's “legitimation” game here is not the thing doing the work to create indivisibility. Far more fundamental is the idea that Torah is divinely inspired truth, where it stipulates that Israel was given land by Yahweh. Bennett's language game is a proxy for a scriptural indivisibility, and his use of that language only operates well due to that pre-existing religious practice that it makes reference to. The causal mechanism here is not the language used, but the practices that the language references. When Bennett talks about Ruth, he is not constructing, but is using prior practices that go completely neglected in the discourse itself. His audience's dispositions towards scripture designate “a way of being, a habitual state, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination” that he taps into, perhaps without even being strategic about it. These dispositions are formed at the site of practice – in this case at the site of interaction with scripture. Searle claims that the site of practice gives “the set of non-intentional or pre-intentional capacities that enable intentional states to function.” Thus, these practices are foundational mechanisms for any theory of indivisibility.

Finally, a mechanism must explain how indivisibility frames “lock in” to social consciousness, causing intractability in conflict. Goddard claims that rhetoric employed actually binds the hands of bargainers, locking them into positions, especially as their

102 They were Moabites. See Ruth 4:17-22.


issue-coalition shrinks. This is very counter-intuitive. Rhetorical positions reverse constantly in political bargaining, as horse-trade politics show that rhetorical positions are fungible. While certain types of rhetoric may produce intractability, that does not mean that it produces indivisibility, per se. The fact that some, but not other, legitimations produce indivisibility is a puzzle for a rhetoric-centered approach to indivisibility.

The outcome of a strategy of legitimation is largely contingent upon audience, not actor. A focus on the bargainer's audience takes social construction seriously by asking “how is this language capable of being a frame of conflict for the larger group?” Actors come to the bargaining table with deep cultural dispositions that their audience shares. What makes rhetoric powerful is whether or not it taps into this shared dispositional root. Bargaining frames are powerful as they foreground and capitalize upon the background knowledge and practices that form audiences. In the case of religious conflict, indivisibility is something that a bargainer walks into a conflict with, not something created on the spot. Habits or practices permit rapid categorizations of people and events, allowing audiences to fill in information about the other actor that is missing from her actual behavior and make ambiguous evidence unambiguously supportive of the habitual categorization. In this manner, exclusive practices determine how one confronts the “other” and whether or not an issue becomes divisible or not.

Thus, while Goddard sees indivisibility resulting from legitimation strategies in bargaining, what is actually occurring is that the process of bargaining itself is confronting prior indivisibility, built into the actors through cultural practice. Bargaining
itself could increase indivisibility because of interactions of prior, culturally stipulated indivisibility.

Practices are sites of shared actions that create rigid and ossified structures that, in turn, promote those practices in loop. This is important because it explains how intractability is kept alive in the midst of grotesque violence. The causal mechanism at work within religious practice (indeed all practice) is that practices “carry metaphorical systems, each forming a treasury of associations transmitted over time.”105 Through embedded “teleoffective structures” of exclusivity, a person literally “embodies” the monopolistic structure to the point that it becomes a “forgotten ontology” that disciplines and frames all other social interactions.106 The reason why a religious claim is commonly seen as an “indivisible good” is precisely because actors live indivisible lives.107 The causal mechanism giving rise to the indivisibility problem is indivisible practices. Those who practice indivisibility, are not only unlikely to bargain, but they are more likely to engage in acts of outbidding and spoiling, which prolong and intensify conflict.

In sum, practice is an alternative theory of indivisibility because it provides 1) attention to relationalism, 2) a story that explains the construction (as opposed to “use”) of indivisibilities, and 3) it takes social constructions seriously as a formal mechanism of violent conflict dynamics. Below, these dynamics are examined in order.


106 Foucault, “Two Lectures.”

Indivisibility and Conflict Dynamics

In violent environments, exclusive religious practices impose indivisible cultural constraints on actors, which manifest in the dynamics of intensity, intransigence and resolve. This theory stands in contrast to many existing approaches to violence dynamics, which do not go far enough in explaining the link between a proposed mechanism and outcome variable. For example, most attempts to disaggregate civil war have focused on ethnic war and principally look at violence onset.\textsuperscript{108} Dynamics of violence after onset, such as intensity, intransigence, and resolve of actors have received less attention, and very few studies have questioned how religious actors uniquely contribute to such dynamics. Horowitz introduced a pioneering study on religious actors engaged in violence longer and with more resolve, but it lacked any discussion of why religious actors vary in these dynamics.\textsuperscript{109} Nor did Horowitz offer a theory for how religion functions to bring about these results, other than simply “ideological” (non-material) forces. While Horowitz argues for taking a more serious look at ideology, he nevertheless reduces religious factors to a structural variable for the sake a parsimony, which is a common treatment of ideological variable in the literature. Ron Hassner has argued in response that one should view religion as a constitutive and contingent force that frames actors. He advocates that researchers investigate theology, hierarchy, iconography, and

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other ultra-specific grounds for parsing how actors are constituted. Yet such micro-level analysis still lacks a generalizable theory for explaining how religious actors contribute to violence dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve.

The following paragraphs pinpoint how indivisibility operates as the causal mechanism linking exclusive practices and dynamics of violence.

*Intensity.* Conflicts are often classified on the basis of death count. Since body counts are notoriously unreliable, many prefer to treat conflicts dichotomously, differentiating between war-like levels of violence (1,000+ battle deaths) and less intense conflicts. Other measurements could include belligerent participation levels or numbers of government troops. I prefer the dichotomous treatment here because it an easy test for evaluating whether exclusive religious practices contributes to violence with high body counts, while not requiring me to rely on questionably precise counts of fatalities themselves.

Dispositions of indivisibility within a community contribute to more lethal conflicts in two ways. First, indivisibility cultures bind actors together, bridge collective action problems, and prevent free-riding (e.g. apostates go to Hell, etc). This

10 Hassner, ““Religion and International Affairs: The State of the Art.””


13 This is not to say that material factors are not important, or, indeed, more important in the intensity of violence. Practices are a way of understanding how culture impacts violence dynamics, among a host of other factors.
binding mechanism roots in public displays of competence at practice: as one sees another behaving “competently” the practice itself “disciplines” the viewer's sense of what it means to function as a part of that group. More specifically, a competent performance can trigger an onlooker's episodic memory, such that seeing other's in one's group perform in a way they remember as competent, constructs the essential aspects of one’s identity as a member of the group. This identity formation via ritual builds on the theory presented by Whitehouse, who maintains that everyday ritual “fuse” actors to their community so that group members are not perceived as mere cooperators; they are psychological kin.114

Once a conflict sets on, religious communities with indivisible dispositions are more likely to feel that an attack on one of their own is an attack on the ontological basis of the meaning of life itself – what some scholars have called frames of “cosmic war.”115 The reliance of groups on this transcendent significance of their struggle delineates this otherization process from that seen in ethnic or political conflicts. While ethnic groups may perceive an attack on one member as an existential/physical threat to the group, religious groups see attacks on members as cosmic threats to not the group, not merely on their “psychological kin,” but on God herself. Attacks against an individual member are threats to the entire community's foundation of existence. Quite simply, when a conflict is “not against flesh and blood,” as in ethnic conflicts, “but against the principalities of


evil,” one is more likely to engage more intensely.\textsuperscript{116} Such existential threats to a “teleoaffective structure” are not met half-heatedly.\textsuperscript{117} It is for this reason that we see Kahanist religious Zionist fighters (the most exclusivist), in the Lebanese-Israeli war, fighting and winning in the security zone long after secular IDF troops died or retreated.\textsuperscript{118}

Inclusive practices, or non-practicing secular groups, are likely to experience conflict differently. Since these groups approach religious practice with less conviction (or no conviction), there is no indivisibility frame created by which to interpret conflict. Intensity of violence, for these groups, is a product of situational dynamics, but not based on religious indivisibility frames.

*Intransigence.* Indivisible cultures based on exclusivity make bargaining problematic. Quite simply, exclusive practices create limited menus of actor behavior. Exclusive adherence to one's religious practices forges dispositions that do not interact with debate, confrontation, or compromise. Once conflict breaks out, communities are unable to make concessions because everyday rituals demand intransigence. As Denny and Walter argue, ideological forces restrict the bargaining menu and actors thus have “less elasticity” by which to come to a settlement.\textsuperscript{119} Indeed, those with exclusive

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{116}] “Ephesians 6:12,” in *The Bible* (New English Standard Version, 2015).
\item[\textsuperscript{117}] Schatzki, *Social Practices*.
\end{itemize}
practices are possibly the least elastic actors. Unlike threats to “beliefs” which are propositional and housed in the individual heads of “believers,” threats to exclusivist practice communities target dispositional elements of identity, those very aspects of being that often occur frequently as part of the everyday that they are forgotten and part of a community's background knowledge. Attacks on a community of practice are thus holistic threats to social existence, amplified in the chorus of the social rather than isolated in an individual's belief system. I posit that it is for this reason that a majority of studies on religion and violence reveal high correlations between religion and lack of negotiated settlement.  

Secular and inclusive groups have a wider menu of conflict behaviors available to them, making them more elastic in settlement options and hence more flexible. Furthermore, inclusive groups, who welcome alternative practices of religiosity, can actually promote paths of reconciliation as a moral or spiritual mandate. I explore this phenomenon thoroughly in Chapter 6.

Resolve. Like the Kahanist fighters mentioned above, communities with dispositional indivisibility are less likely to give up fighting, even at great loss. Toft holds that a product of religious indivisibility is likely to “lengthen time horizons” of a conflict by factoring in the cosmic struggle of eternal good versus evil. A practice approach concurs with this finding, but revises the central mechanism at work. Rather than a


121 Toft, “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War.”
community propositionally thinking through violence with a cosmic cost-benefit analysis, practice posits that the discipline of exclusive practices frame everyday life (not just the conflict at hand) in terms of cosmic time. Rights of passage like baptism, for example, are mile-markers in a cosmic performance. Thus, extended time horizons are not limited to cost-benefit analysis, but are part of everyday telo-affective structure. Once conflict breaks out, those groups with dispositions of indivisibility are likely to bring their extended time horizons with them and interpret violence with these time-frames. Everyday life sets the conditions for extended time-frames, they do not just appear when an actor suffers loss. This stands in contrast to the theory of “mutually hurting stalemate,” which holds that once both sides have suffered extensive losses, they would be more likely to negotiate an end to the conflict. Those with everyday extended time horizons are less likely to give up their fight because their life is not lived in realm of the immediate.

This stands in contrast to inclusive religious groups that have contested practices or emphasize non-literal approaches to practices like scripture, group privilege, or after life. Groups like Quakers or the Hare Krishna, for instance, are significantly more inclusive in their approach to religious practice than other Christian and Hindu counterparts. Everyday life, for these actors, is not defined in cosmic terms and conflict is often interpreted as a challenge for humanity in general, not their group in particular.

Furthermore, secular groups are unlikely to stand as resolved in the face of overwhelming adversity. Secular groups are not conditioned in ritualized time-frame extension and are more likely to weigh participation in a movement based on cost-benefit analysis. Secular groups certainly do not engage in everyday rituals with transcendental meaning and thus have no site of socialization for lengthened dispositional time horizons.

Figure 2.1: Chart of Exclusive Practice Process in Conflict Environments

Figure 2.2: Chart of Inclusive Practice Process in Conflict Environments
**Practice Disaggregation as Preferable to Propositional Alternatives**

My argument is that classic approaches to analyzing religious identity “both dismiss the implicit, tacit or unconscious layer of knowledge which enables a symbolic organization of reality.” I will illustrate why choosing to disaggregate religious identity based upon practices is a good alternative to both instrumentalist and constructivist approaches, namely, because both approaches ignore the ways that practices structure dispositional responses to violence onset.

*Instrumentalist*

Instrumental theorists are devotees of the kind of propositional equations “(desire + belief = action), where ideas factor in an individual calculation informed by intentionality.” I argue that practice theory is a better way to disaggregate categories of religion on both a theoretical and empirical level.

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On a theoretical level, we should prefer practice theory because it collapses the mind/body distinction and thus makes human activity one unit of analysis, not a causal sequence of two. Instrumentalists assume that actors chose behaviors based on a mental calculation of goods provided by that action. Operating within the logic of instrumentalism requires one to logically deliberate costs and benefits of particular actions in particular environments, then proceed with a strategy of action. Separating out the desires of the mind and the performances of the body is an epistemological mistake. Take for instance the game of hockey, which consists of both routine bodily know-how and the desire to execute those in a particular pattern. Both the mental and bodily activities are part of the practice of “playing hockey” and to attempt to separate them does nothing to help us understand hockey any better. To conceptualize goal-seeking (literally in this case) behavior as a mere mental state takes out of consideration the way that bodily training constitutes the desire to score in the first place.\textsuperscript{125} Furthermore, the instrumentalist would have a hard time explaining why many hockey players cannot articulate why they pursued particular behaviors, whereas practice theory is very comfortable with “that's just what I did” because most action occurs in the implicit, routine, and unthinking dispositional realm. The hockey analogy shows that what some might see as the result of rational calculation, “might in fact have been derived from practical hunches under time pressure” - gut instinct verses risk and reward.\textsuperscript{126} Schatzki's reading of Wittgenstein is instructive here, suggesting that mental states are “conditions


of life” that are self-articulations of “how things stand and are going for someone.”

This interpretation of mental states places our focus upon the “bodily doings and sayings” of a person that is present in the world through these activities and, thus, is mentally at work in the world through their social condition and the ways in which they are judged as competent at their activities. Mental states are inherently contingent upon practice, since practice is the site of social competence. As Schatzki summarizes, “connections and orders among mental conditions, consequently, are laid down in practices” such that the structure of mental being is established not by intrinsic substance, but by social practices. Furthermore, bodies are the places where these conditions are played out and therefore mental states “and their interrelations and patterning” should be conceived of as “socially instituted,” via social practice. Furthermore, Bourdieusian and Wittgensteinian approaches to practice theory would instruct the methodologist to stop asking about ideas and goals (contra instrumentalists), and instead start observing bodily practices as the central object of meaning-making in the world.

On an empirical level, practice theory is better positioned to explain variation observed than the leading instrumentalist approaches. For example, the Club Model of

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127 Schatzki, *Social Practices*, 22. Although Wittgenstein does not explicitly talk about observable states of the mind as methodology per se, his repeated use of *Erscheinungen* and *Phanomene* (phenomena, appearances) suggests that the mind is something that can be empirically seen to operate in the world.

128 Ibid., 23

religious violence argues that groups have incentive to participate in violence when their individual survival strategies are contingent on group success. The problem is that variation persists in areas with strong welfare states, high per capita GDP, and small organizational capability. Why do terror groups thrive in developed states when they serve no resource-providing function? Even the most prolific religious terror group in history, ISIS/ISIL, undermines the club model. While their touted provision of marriage, blenders, electricity, a salary, and other worldly provision like its own currency, initially seemed to support the Club Model theory, it quickly turned out as an elaborate ruse. Captured documents show “no evidence that the IS is unusually good at public service provision” and that fighters were not there for the money: “the monthly wage for the average ISI fighter in 2007 was less than half what the average illiterate Iraqi male reported earning.”\textsuperscript{130} One could literally provide for their family better by panhandling on the street in Baghdad. By ignoring the constitutive frameworks of practice that enable persons to function more or less competently within the club, Berman's model ignores the mechanism that allows the club to go on in the world.

A common argument by instrumentalists against the practice approach is that practice merely is an outcome of micro-level instrumental behavior by elites. De Certeau has even conceded that “the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices.”\textsuperscript{131} In the context of religious

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practice, this gives the vision of minor actors, using the elaborate orthopraxy of the powerful, in order to rival and ambitiously appropriate practice for one's own instrumental use. This is problematic because it bleeds into the arguments of the instrumentalists: Are practices merely tools in a propositional game between rival political factions? If so, then practice is hardly worth using as a unit of analysis because it no longer helps us understand religious behavior and conflict.

I take issue with De Certeau's characterization that “everyday practices... are tactical in nature.”132 Tactical implies goal-seeking behavior, which is instrumental and propositional. Rather, practices are those points of social and agential convergence. They are sites of structure in the performance of an individual. They are less political in terms of conscious, tactical struggle, but rather political in terms of structural power reification. Practices are inherently political because they are an observable site of structure framing, limiting, and empowering modes of individual behavior. It might therefore be appropriate to talk about practices as conservative locations, or habits in a conservative habitat. By limiting the menu of actions available to individuals, structure promotes itself and reifies extant power relationships – the very “disciplining process” that concerns Foucault. Practices are sticky. They pull agents towards standardization, which is political, but decidedly not instrumental. Practices can thus explain why, in the midst of hemoclysm and holocaust, human activity stays stagnant and non-revolutionary.133 The whole project of the Frankfurt school - Adorno, Marcuse, et. al. - is a struggle with the non-change seen

131 De Certeau, “General Introduction to the Practice of Everyday Life,” 68.
132 Ibid., 70.
in the world in the face of atrocity. The whole concern of the constructivist school in social theory and IR in particular is explaining change and progress, while the more prevalent social phenomenon is just the opposite: the more things change, the more they stay the same. Practice theory explains the molasses-slow pace of change and the tendency for social stagnation in the face of overwhelming instrumental desires.

Constructivism

“If personhood is narrative, the body is the narrator.”134

Following Brubaker and Cooper, I argue that “identity” is an unreliable way to disaggregate social phenomenon.135 It is problematic in that it cannot fundamentally explain variation in religious participation in violence. Instead of talking about identity as either 1) an actual thing in the world or 2) an analytic tool, I present practice as an alternative on both an ontological and epistemological level.

Chantel Mouffe's work holds that identity is not an inherent property of a subject, in that those very “identities” are social positions (within a field) that are “made available to people by the practices in which they participate.”136 This means that as a person hops from field to field, competency to competency, capital shifts, habitus morphs, making


“identity” unstable and hardly a place for a monopoly of meaning. Identity, as a human tool for meaning, has no anchoring device which unifies the amalgam of human experience and is thus an inherently problematic way for scholars to understand activities. At best, the picture will be one of an individual lurching from field to field, trying to push their “identity” frame onto areas of life that fit poorly. At worst, scholars are forcing an illusory academic category of “social identity” onto human life. As Schatzki goes on to argue,

> “there may be no general identity “woman” shared by all individuals that qualify as woman... such individuals are of course women, but this biological fact guarantees neither that “woman” is a subject position nor that being a woman is a significant component of their identities. Each woman assumes an amalgam of nodal points and subject positions defining who she is (as a woman), the particular ensemble depending on circumstances and on the particular social conditions and practices that encompass her. This means that nationality, ethnicity, religion, class, and the like almost always more strongly compose her identity than does the mere fact that she, like others, is a woman. [sic] This implies, in turn, that there is no single, unified “woman's” movement relevant to all women, but a plethora of interrelated “woman's” movements, each taking up the cause of the collection of women who share a particular subordinated subject position.”

There can be no supposition of wholeness or coherence in one's identity, but rather it is played out in performance. Again, in the field of gender studies, Judith Butler offers a performance-based interpretation of gender:

> “To what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? … The appearance of an abiding substance or gendered self, what psychiatrists Robert

137 Schatzki, Social Practices, 8.
Stoller refers a “gender core,” is thus produced by the regulation of attributes along culturally established lines of coherence.”

In other words, gender, or identity more widely, is a performative process where individual attributes each attribute and judged as more or less competent by culture. This process is embodied in the dispositional mannerisms and beings of a human such that it “disciplines” their body without necessarily becoming part of the daily thoughts and musings of that individual. Butler is explicit – we should conceptualize “identity” not as be-ings, but as do-ings: behaviors that are meaningless without corporeal social conditionality.

In the field of religion, religious “identity” is also inherently unstable. Like the woman described in Schatzki’s and Buter's formulations, there is no general identity “religious” shared by all individuals that qualify as religious. Though persons could exist that are religious by the definitions put upon them by scholars like me, what that means in their daily life is contingent upon a wide variety of external constraints – nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. This implies that they study of religious identity - “Catholic, Jew, Druze” - misses how practice forms the core of who one is at a particular moment. Social practices are those nodes of human life that pull together both external constraints and internal roles; they display in social life, proscribed and regulated by the particular institution that one finds themselves tied to. One does not have a religious identity, per


say, but a religious actor has practices that are stable, institutionally regulated, and observable.

A person acquires their collection of doings and sayings through socially instilled learning and training, over time. A “stylized repetition of acts” produces the effect of identity, but this does not mean that identity is an unmediated thing doing work in the world.¹⁴⁰

A strong sense of identity implies a rigid sameness across time, space, and individuals and cannot therefore examine variation problems except with factors exogenous to identity. A weak sense of identity, like discourse or rhetoric, cannot explain the generalizable patterns seen by essentialist or instrumentalists. Identity then cannot explain ranges of action within social groups: it is either too rigid or too elastic to be analytically useful.

In place of “social identity,” I offer practice as an alternative. Practices, conceived especially as Schatzki uses it: “ways to go on in the world,” is useful for several reasons. First, this concept actually does most of the work that social identity theorists attribute to identity: to explain action in a particularistic and non-instrumentalist way.¹⁴¹ In the work of Brubaker and Cooper, they describe this as “as dispositional term that designates what might be called 'situational subjectivity’” which coincides with Pierre Bourdieu's sens

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¹⁴¹ Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond Identity,” 17.
pratique – the practical ways that one positions themselves to go on in their social world.142

“Social Identity” theory is not useful for examining religious violence variation on multiple levels. First, strong theories of identity imply that groups have boundedness and homogeneity – people are identical and explained the same way.

Likewise, the insistence of weak social identity theory that identity is multiple, contingent, and fluid is problematic for the variation question because it implies that social phenomena are not conducive to generalizable claims. Post-structural constructivism, from the outset, has simply conceded too much right from the start: “by submitting the world to a form of textualization, it renders the 'real' simply out of reach 134“Post-isms” are thus too limiting and not ambitious enough. The point of practice is to say, yes, human life is social construction “all the way down,” but that there are real sites operating in the world where we can observe that construction happening. There are construction zones where agents and structures actually come into being together and exist in the world.

A second and equally popular constructivist approach treats rhetoric, identity, ideology, and public belief as central. The problem with such a rhetorical centered approach is that it conflates relations among individuals for constitution of individuals, which makes the causal mechanism unclear.143 The speech act is a problematic place to focus attention on face because talking is itself a practice that is contingent upon the

142 Ibid.
habitus and capital within a proscribed field. For instance, Sanin and Wood claim that “the content of ideology may help explain” the variation in the dynamics of violent insurgency.144 “That is,” they maintain, “institutions and overarching strategies are embedded in some ideologies.”145 And yet, the process of “embedding” itself requires a significant amount of prior construction. What mechanism exactly does the embedding? At best, this formulation of ideology requires a laborious amount of cognitive work for each and every actor in a violent environment. It is highly improbable that actors search through the ideological “blueprint” (theological in this case) for each and every action they take. For example, in a town in the district of Kono in Sierra Leone, after the war, the only two buildings left standing were the church and the mosque. When I asked former combatants about why they failed to raze the buildings, they responded that nobody burned churches – it just wasn't done. The justification given was about organizational dispositions “that's just what we did”, not from consulting any prescribed cognitive blueprint for action. The point is that while ideology may indeed “embed” institutions, practice provides a deeper constitutive framework that can explain violence dynamics when “ideological blueprints” simply are not there.

Discursive models go further and assume that social realities are constructed through individual language utterances, where a person experiences something done to them, which somehow causes something else. Take for instance Henne's formulation of


145 Ibid.
religious conflict dynamics, which contests that “[framing] is a crucial part of a social movement...an attempt to both win public support for its cause and convince potential supporters of the worthiness of the group's approach...”. Such a formulation of linguistic-based cause and effect is problematic in that it assumes an entire fabric of socialized meaning construction, made behind the scenes, in the daily life of the speakers.

Constructivist theories of social identities informing action are problematic in that they require individuals to think through normative actions in a logic of appropriateness. The practice turn in social theory challenges this notion by stressing that actions are rarely instrumentally or normatively deliberative. But further, rhetorical models privilege the coherence of belief over other modes of meaning-making, which is random and positional. The leading light in this school of thought is Clifford Geertz, who's approach to religion is conceptually one-dimensional, prioritizing a post-protestant view of religion as a universal and the expression of ritual as agreement and coherence. Geertz's anthropological argument, which subtly privileges thought, sets aside performance and ritual as secondary and dependent upon interpretation of some outside “belief” in order to make sense. Geertz and others following his lead cannot explain why two groups expressing the same universal belief engage violence in different ways.

The constructivist agenda goes a step further to suggest that norms and logics of appropriateness are constitutive of the human condition. Take Jeffrey Checkel or Martha Finnemore's work as examples, which attempt to explain how state norm compliance

146 Henne, “The Ancient Fire: Religion and Suicide Terrorism,” 42
147 Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, 77
moves from “rule following” to socialized “taken-for-grantedness” so that we approach future iterations of action through a logic of appropriateness. Yet, this formulation is problematic if the “taken for granted” norms that inform the logic of appropriateness are bound up in an agent thinking through norms, working them out consciously, and intentionally making them a part of international culture. My argument joins Alasdair MacIntyre who points out that most of what we see as goal-seeking behavior (after the fact) is actually carried on unformulated and improvised ways.

Constructivist emphasis upon discourse and rhetoric is deeply problematic in that it buys completely into a representational bias, paying no attention to the ways in which actors perform in structure. Wittgenstein would tell us that studying “language” as a system of signs entirely misses the point of the language game: meaning is made not in abstract, but in use and socialized context. The most central weakness of the identity/constructivist approach is its reliance on theological understandings of religion. The tendency is what we might call “theological over-attribution.” Simply put, all religions offer some sort of transcendental justification that can be used for violence. But focusing on religious justification and public theology belies the fact that cultural application of religious theology is found in the practices of adherents, not in abstract.

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152 Avalos, *Fighting Words*; Clarke, *The Justification of Religious Violence*. 92
Thus, while it may be easier to blame a foreign and exotic ideology, such explanations are poor models. The cultural interactions of structure and agency as played out in practices are probably a better theoretical and methodological starting point for teasing out the impact of religion on conflict.

This gets at a seldom-explored foundational question for constructivists – the “issues of why and how certain 'opinions' (doxai) become authoritative has to be investigated.”\(^\text{153}\) When constructivists talk about identity or rhetoric, or even “see” identity and rhetoric pushing the interests of institutions, it could very well be that what they are witnessing are social practices. Practices could be doing the real work in constructivist theory in that “social fields where practices may play themselves out may be narrated into existence” so that what we see as discursive is actually brought into being by what we do together.\(^\text{154}\) The more fundamental problem for constructivists is that their basic claim of human behavior - that identity constitutes interests, driving action - might very well be backwards. I follow Pouliot who posits the opposite: “what we do together defines the question of who we are” together.\(^\text{155}\)

Bourdieu goes so far as to reject that there is anything beyond practice as a motivator for human activity. *Habitus* for Bourdieu is an irreducible unit of culture that is not made up of anything more atomistic – in essence asserting that action and structure

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are themselves analytically forced concepts that have no ontological priority. The act of practice itself is just that, an act that is the embodiment of social reality, which is then dissected into convenient categories of “agency” and “structure” for the analyst to parse. We can leave it at the same place as Frits Staal, who argues that the meaning of religious ritual resides in the structure of the act itself, not in anything beyond it. 156 Again, Ryle's notion of the cook reciting recipes to himself calls the discursive model of human action into question. 157 Does super-chef Bobby Flay have to recite recipes to himself before cooking, or does “efficient practice precede the theory of it”? 158 Knowing that pork and apple pair well together is different from knowing how to create a five-star dish with pork and apple. Again, language alone cannot capture the way that persons are judged as competent or incompetent at a socially prescribed performance.

A constructivist critique of practice might hold that what people do and how they talk about their motivations are disparate. Observing someone doing something may not, according to that individual, be their motivating “reason” for action. Hence, when this study observes actions, they may have nothing to do with why communities engage in violent . My claim is that practices are appropriate, first, on a methodological level, which evades trying to “get into people's heads” and instead prioritizes observable doings and sayings. That the practice turn requires attention to micro-level evidence might mean

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158 Ibid., 30.
that it is not well suited for *ex ante* predictions.\(^{159}\) This methodological limitation is serious and will be dealt with more extensively in the research designs of the next two chapters – qualitatively and quantitatively. But briefly I will say that to the extent they can be observed, religious practices are a far better basis on which to predict action than theoretical alternatives, which are inherently propositional and require one to magically peer into the heads and hearts of actors.

Another constructivist response to practice theory might be concerned with using practice an ontological starting place, arguing that religious practice merely proxies for belief and propositional realities. Here it is important to consider the theoretical foundations provided cultural studies and the sociology of religion: ritual and practice are not only products of belief but are constitutive of belief. More importantly, practices are sites where belief “systems” or structures are played out in the bodies of believers, in a fundamental way constructing a subjunctive universe. As argued by Seligman et. al.:

> “the truth value of such ritual invocations (like saying “please” and “thank you”) is not very important. We are inviting our interlocutor to join us in imagining a particular symbolic universe within which to construe our actions. When I frame my requests with please and thank you, I am not giving a command (to pass the salt), but I am very much recognizing your agency (your ability to decline my request). Hence, saying please and thank you communicates in a formal and invariant manner – to both of us – that we understand our interaction as the voluntary actions of free and equal individuals.”\(^{160}\)

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The site of the practice of politeness in this example, is the thing structuring the menu of actions “acceptable” to persons if they are to be considered polite. While politeness is ontologically prior to a particular instance of persons being polite, it is reified and restructured every time an engagement occurs. This is what Bourdieu means when he talks of “structured structuring structures” - politeness is both prior and created by practice, rendering the constructivist argument of ontological priority relatively inconsequential.

**Conclusion**

Following scholarship in both social theory and practical theology, this chapter argues that practice is an appropriate basis for disaggregation and comparison of religious actors. Additionally, we find from Durkheim that the guarded boundaries of exclusion within a religious group are important for determining the nature of practice: High levels of exclusionary practice create dispositional social indivisibilities that may explain why some religious groups approach violent environments with more intensity, intransigence, and resolve. Indivisibility has previously provided the theoretical foundation for Toft, Hassner, and Svensson's work on religion and violence, but the theory provided here aims to help explain the variation observed for religious actors in violent environments, after onset. Unlike prior theories of indivisibility, my theory of linking exclusionary practices to indivisibility might explain why some religious actors approach violent conflict with more intensity, intransigence and resolve: indivisibility is the causal mechanism for each of these three dynamics of violence and explains even those environments that are not
principally driven by religious issues. The next chapter tests the theory of practice-based indivisibility, offers three observable implications, builds a unique dataset, and ultimately finds preliminary empirical support for the theory outlined here.
Chapter 3: Quantitative Research Design and Analysis

In previous chapters I introduced the puzzle: Why does religion increase violence in some instances of social conflict, but serve as a peace-building mechanism in others? Are certain religious traditions especially prone to bloody conflicts? Which religious groups are more resistant to violence and more inclined to reconciliation? This chapter builds on a theory of religious practice to quantitatively test my argument that exclusive practices impact conflict outcomes.

In Chapter 2, I laid out an argument suggesting that exclusive religious practices create dispositional indivisibilities that actors take with them into conflict, which lead to intraconflict dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. In order to test this argument, I use a sequenced mixed methodology.¹ This strategy employs both a large-n statistical analysis and small-n qualitative case-study analysis. The large-n approach will allow me to test the correlation between exclusive practices and conflict outcomes before assessing the causal mechanisms further with case study analysis.

In the following sections, I summarize how current research on religious groups fails to answer the puzzle of variation, offer a practice-based alternative, and then test it

with three separate measures of escalation. I design and conduct an original cross-national study of governments verses armed substate groups in over 100 countries for the period 1970-2014, offering 724 observations. The unit of analysis is the conflict dyad and the conflict outcomes observed include intensity, negotiated termination, and group die-out rate. Logistic regression models estimate the correlation between religious practices and these three outcome variables. I further test the robustness of the practice model by controlling for rationalist and constructivist alternative explanations. The chapter concludes with a summary and discussion of the model's limitations.

A Methodological Turn To Practice

Existing scholarship has severe limitations that problematically limit our understanding of religion and conflict.

Instrumental scholarship holds that religion is a secondary or tertiary factor behind sociopolitical drivers like poverty or social structure.² This position is used to explain why leaders so often pivot to religious rhetoric to motivate constituents towards a political goal. Others have argued that religious groups operate as “clubs” that offer “survival strategies” for adherents that the state cannot.³ A range of findings casts doubt on this hypothesis. Fearon and Laitin, and Collier and Hoeffler have not found a

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significant link between religious affiliation and conflict outbreak.\(^4\) However, others such as Toft and Hassner have found religious affiliation to be a crucial explanations of conflict.\(^5\) One key reason for these inconsistent findings is that extant data fail to disaggregate what is meant by “religious actor” leading to a general lack of focus on the salient mechanisms within religion that might account for variation in violent action.

There is a missing element in research on religious conflict processes. Social scientists tend to concentrate on exogenous social factors – institutions, ethnicity, economics, politics – while taking for granted how life is lived by religious actors and how daily life constitutes daily actions. Religion is not a natural object, but a contested playing field, which is taken for granted by research designs that merely compare big-tent religious categories.\(^6\)

Recent work in religious studies have argued for an approach that takes day-to-day life more seriously than categorical labels, one that “allows for a more complex and pluralistic understanding of how people attach and belong to religious communities, and how religious subjectification affects cultural and individual practices”\(^7\) Therefore, we

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should focus on ethnographic approaches that observe practices as done by practitioners, letting their activities speak, rather than labeled affiliations.

As outlined in the previous chapter, I start with the general premise that most human activity does not derive from conscious deliberation, but result from practical knowledge. These aspects of practical knowledge involve one knowing how to perform social expectations, meaning that social practices are sites of relational power, internalized into daily routine by a process of bodily “disciplining.” This theory adjoins the growing trends in social sciences that utilize a practice-based approach to social phenomenon. I seek to introduce a practice-based approach to religion and conflict studies by disaggregating measurements of religion into how groups go about doing religion in routine and daily practice.

**Indivisibility and Practice**

The theoretical proposition here is that more exclusive practices of religious life lead to dispositions of indivisibility. Indivisible issues are those that “cannot be split (physically) and/or allocated (easily, widely) among parties, at least not without losing much of [its] intrinsic value or utility.” Economists have used the concept of indivisibility to explain convexity of markets and distribution problems. Such theories usually are solved by re-imagining access to goods, through lottery or auction. Yet, these

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models leave unanswered the puzzle as to why some fundamentally malleable or fungible disputes become intractable.10

Religious practices make the “cosmic” or transcendental part of everyday life. These practices are sites of shared actions that create rigid and ossified social structures that, in turn, promote those practices in loop. The causal mechanism at work within religious practice (indeed all practice) is that practices “carry metaphorical systems, each forming a treasury of associations transmitted over time”11 Schatzki writes that practices embed “teleaffective structures” - bundles of cognitive rules and emotional states into the daily life experience of the individual.12 Through practicing exclusion in religious ritual, a person literally “embodies” the monopolistic structure to the point that it becomes a “forgotten ontology” that disciplines and frames all other social interactions.13 The reason why a religious claim is commonly seen as an “indivisible good” is precisely because actors live indivisible lives.14 Those who practice cosmic indivisibility are not only unlikely to bargain, but also they are more likely to engage in acts of outbidding and spoiling, which prolong and escalate conflict


13 Foucault, “Two Lectures.”


102
This theory offers observable implications, namely that we should be able to account for variation in violent dynamics with variation in exclusive practice: Groups that practice exclusivist religion are likely to fight harder and bargain less.

The first observable implication of the practice approach concerns the intensity of conflict. The social nature of practices bind people together in a unique way. Those sharing practices with an actor are not just sharing “identity” with her. Shared social practices create a feedback loop so that as Actor A performs competently according to Actor B in Time 1, that performance also informs how Actor B performs in Time 2. Practices thus become less about “thinking” and more about how life reifies in a community. When a community practice is exclusivist, the bonds between members become the daily ritual of excluding the other. When an exogenous conflict erupts, whether over politics or economics, these groups are more likely to interpret attacks on community members not as isolated to the political, but as a threat to an entire cosmology. An attack on a group member is also an attack on a group's meaning-making mechanism. Thus, the fight can take on an air of holy war and cosmic struggle. In these conflicts, as Juergensmeyer finds, committed “holy warriors” want to kill more people. I test this implication with the following hypothesis:

H1: Groups with higher levels of exclusive practices fight more intensely.

The second observable implication of exclusive practice concerns the intransigence of actors in conflict. Exclusive practice not only bind agents together, but also reduce the elasticity of positions, making negotiation very difficult. Groups with dispositional indivisibility are not conditioned to bargain in the fundamental part of their life that creates meaning. Thus, when actors find themselves in a violent environment, they lack the dispositional bandwidth to engage in hard negotiations. This implication can be tested with the following hypothesis:

H2: Groups with higher levels of exclusive practices are less likely to negotiate a peaceful termination of a conflict.

The third observable implication of a practice approach is that more exclusivist groups fight with more resolve or have more “sticking power.” By engaging in everyday rituals with transcendental time horizons, exclusivist actors are conditioned to live beyond the immediate. Once violence breaks out, exclusivist actors are thus more inclined to view defeats as marginal in a long arc of spiritual victory. Furthermore, exclusivist practices of afterlife and scriptural interpretation are key to forging extended time horizons: If one's “battle is not against flesh and blood” but against the “cosmic forces of evil in heavenly places,” then giving up the fight is hardly an option, even in the face of severe opposition.\textsuperscript{16} This implication is tested with the following hypothesis:

Groups with higher levels of exclusive practice are less likely to “die-out” or give up their fight than secular counterparts.

Research Design

The problem with asking about the practice armed groups engaged in civil conflict is that one cannot simply walk up and observe their day-to-day practices of indivisibility: there are too many groups and it is often too dangerous. Therefore anything we say about religious practice requires some sort of leap, or, slicing into the concept at an arbitrary time and space. Many may challenge an empirical application of practice theory, claiming that it “is not understood in neo-positivist terms as a set of causal laws or 'if-then' propositions linking independent, intervening and dependent variables.” However, if practice is a mechanism that can actually explain social conditions, then there are observable implications of an “ideal” theory. First, I test the correlative relationship between groups of religious practices and conflict outcomes. Following Andersen and Neumann, I do this by theorizing practices in an 'as-if' empirical model. Andersen and Nuemenn argue that one should construct practices as “as-if” models, with practices taken to mean “what people do.” As Andersen and Neumann explain, “models will always ‘freeze’ an array of phenomena for analysis” because they are “tools to facilitate investigations of a messy world.” My claim here is that practice theorists can actually use quantitative methods of inference to establish relationships for case studies.

and field work. Note that this does not mean forsaking the kind of ethnographic empirical work that actually produces practice data. But after ethnographic data collection, one can code and interpret it in transparent and replicable ways that are useful for large-N methodologies. Causal analysis in terms of if-then hypothesis testing can further be evaluated in qualitative process-tracing style research designs.

In this set of statistical tests, the main explanatory variable is an original index, the Exclusive Religious Practice Index (ERP-Index), a measure of the level of exclusive practices engaged in by both sides of a conflict dyad. My proposition is that the higher the level of practiced religious exclusion in a group, the more indivisibility in their daily life, leading to the actors being more likely to contribute to violence escalation.

**Explanatory Variable: Exclusive Religious Practice Index (ERP-Index)**

An Exclusive Religious Practice Index serves as the primary model for evaluating how religion impacts conflict outcomes.\(^{18}\) I construct an additive index for each side of the dyad observed. As indicated above, the model attempts to be ethnographic and empirical, relying upon information in the *The Encyclopedia of Religious Practice*, the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Religious Violence*, and *the Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements* for general information on the way populations practice religion. These sources are ethnographic in nature and outline general ways that religious groups “do”

\(^{18}\) The index includes groups that are religious and groups that are not. This is the entire universe of violent cases, not just the religious subset. Including cases of groups with secular organizational goals is important since it is the daily practice of members, not organizational goals alone, that frames dispositional indivisibilities.
religion. Following trends in “practical theology,” I am particularly interested in eight categories that are relatively consistent and comparable across sects. These refer to member's reliance upon scripture, hierarchy of social groups, notions of afterlife, demarcations of sacred space, practices of diet, dress habits, rites of passage, and prayer rituals.

I code each dimension of exclusive religious practice using 0/.5/1 scale. I code a practice as (0) when there is very little frequency, salience, or distribution of the practice within the members of a group. I code a group this way when there is definitive evidence that membership explicitly rejects the practice. For instance, many neo-Marxist groups explicitly prohibit public prayer. While some membership may still engage in prayer, the frequency, group-wide salience and distribution is negligible. In cases where I find mixed group practices I code the variable as (0.5). Instances in this category will have evidence of some members participating in the practice while others may not, or will have contending practices (i.e. some Christian, some traditional religion). If specific percentiles are available, I code as "mixed" any membership levels from 10%-50% engaging in the practice. I code the variable as (1) when there is high frequency, salience, and distribution of a practice. Cases in this category include if there is definitive evidence that majority of membership practices, if the practice is explicitly talked about is group memorandum, or if group leadership explicitly demands such orthopraxy.

Within all of these categories there is an assumption that the state institution reflects the personality of the regime in power. This is an important step, since disaggregating the membership of many states would give an inaccurate picture of state
activity. For example, categorizing the state of Syria with Sunni practices obfuscates the Assad regime's role in regulating religious activity. I thus code the regime in control of the state institution for one half of the dyad and the membership of the armed substate actor for the other half.

Group membership can score between 0-8 in the index. Creating an index is helpful because the practices themselves are highly interdependent. The index is additive and unweighted for the sake of transparency and simplicity – no extant literature suggests a reason why one practice reason more “rooting” than others, nor is there a natural hierarchy among practices. To maximize replicability and construct validity, each discrete practice is coded following the below rules for disaggregating group membership:

Scripture: (1) if group membership practices include a rigid interpretation of scripture. This is manifest in the state if civic law are based on textual mandate. Armed substate groups are coded 1 if group narratives make reference to scriptural mandates, or if group leadership justifies action based on scriptural mandates. (0) if sacred writings are not used, or, if a group's religious practice regards scripture as not divinely inspired, non-literal, or is intentional about re-interpreting scriptures about exclusion and dehumanization, including homosexuality, the role of women, slavery, and violence. (.5) if the practice is mixed or contested.
Afterlife: (1) if group member's religious practices include rigid demarcations of who gains access to the afterlife. Included here are notions of messianic figures or salvation. I code States as 1 if leadership are members of a sect that makes reference to stratified salvation/damnation or strong transcendental reward/punishment narratives. Armed substate groups are 1 if members of a religious sect that makes any reference to transcendental reward/punishment narratives. (0) if group members are dubious about afterlife, de-emphasize afterlife theology, or are universalist. (.5) if mixed or contested in the practice.

Space: (1) if group member's religious practices include a firm, physical demarcation between sacred and profane places; must identify a particular place. States are coded 1 if leadership are members of a religious sect with stated demarcations of space or if the state subsidizes a particular type of space. Armed substate groups are coded 1 if members of a sect with stated demarcations of space, or if the group targets symbolically profane objects or buildings. (0) if group members practices shared worship space, emphasizes universal sacristy, or has no notion of sacred vs. profane space. (.5) if mixed or contested in the practice.

Groups: (1) if the group member's religious practice notes groups with special, divinely ordained privileges. States are coded 1 if the state severely restricts religious freedom and if public holidays are exclusively on days of religious observance – indicating that the state institution is favoring one religious group over another. Armed substate groups are coded 1 if their narrative includes any
reference to divine-mandate for a particular group, or if the group systematically targets other religious groups. (0) if no demarcation between privileged groups and non-privileged. (.5) if mixed or contested in the practice.

**Strict Dress:** (1) if the group member's religious practices emphasizes modes of dress. States are 1 if the regime or state-supporting organization enforce dress codes. Armed substate groups are (1) if their members dress in a way prescribed by a religious mandate. (0) if not. (.5) if mixed or contested in the practice.

**Rites of Passage:** (1) if the group member's religious practice emphasizes ritual or rites of passage throughout life. States are coded as 1 if rules about one of the following are enforced according to a religious tradition, or if the state gives preference to a sect or religious group to execute the ceremony: marriage, death, birth, circumcision, or initiation ceremonies. Armed substate groups are 1 if the organization can be seen regulating the same life milestones. (0) if no meaningful rites or rituals within the organization. (.5) if mixed or contested in practice.

**Strict Diet:** (1) if the group member's religious practice emphasizes dietary restrictions. The State is (1) if leadership belongs to a sect that emphasizes abstaining from any sort of food or drink. Armed substate groups are (1) if the organization composes persons that abstain from any sort of food or drink (0) if no meaningful restrictions on diet. (.5) if mixed or contested in practice.
*Prayer Rituals:* (1) if the group member's religious practice emphasizes prayer as part of everyday life. The State is coded 1 if leadership belongs to a sect that emphasizes specific ritualized prayer. Armed substate groups are coded 1 if the organization is composed of persons that engage in ritualized prayer. (0) if no meaningful prayer practices in the group. (.5) if mixed or contested in the practice.

This is an as-if model, based upon what we know about the institutional affiliations of each side of the dyad. There are some drawbacks from the model. First, religious practice encyclopedias many times refer specifically to how the faithful practice religion, not in “everyday life” of the masses, thus perhaps biasing the reported frequency of religious practices upwards. Second, encyclopedic entries almost completely ignore population distributions within geographic areas. Thus when it says a population like CAR is only 50% Christian, it neglects that there are areas of demographic concentration of up to 90%, and routinely, exclusivist practicing groups come from these religiously dense areas.

To correct for these issues, I chooses to attribute organizational profiles with their own set of religious practices, or, base the coding on the most detailed, micro-level data available. I do my best to balance general practice information about the population with what is know about the specific terror/resistance groups and state regime, which requires going beyond the encyclopedias to databases like the GTD, the NCTC, and TrackingTerrorism, and even the websites of these actors. From these additional sources,
I assess whether the organization is exclusive, open, or mixed/moderate in its religious ritual and practice, based on the rules outlined above. I then return to the encyclopedias to code what a exclusive, open, or moderate practices looks like in each particular area. The goal is to get as close as possible to representing practices as they are on the ground. In some remote areas, there is very little known about practices. I start at a macro level and get a picture of major religious practices throughout the country. This is pulled from the encyclopedia. I then check affiliation of the organization from other sources, and pair the two together. In the instance where organizational profiles are not available, I abstract from what I know of the smallest sub-area where a group is concentrated and active, and use that population information in the place of organizational information.

The most pressing concern for creating a practice-based dataset for conflict dyads is the reliability and replicability of the information. These challenges are not unique to this explanatory model. Svensson's 2007 study, for instance, assigns wide labels to individual violent organizations based upon the majority religion in the state. For instance, in Chad, Sunni Islam is the label given to the MDJT in Chad, which is a leftist and avowedly secular organization with no ties to Islam. Similarly, the Svensson data oscillates randomly between attributing religious profiles to organizational beliefs in some cases, and just labeling based on majority beliefs in others. In India, for example, some communist organizations list as Hindu, but others list as secular/Maoist. The People’s War Group on the other hand, marks as Hindu, while it actually professes atheism. The ERP index is consistent in that it attempts to deliver organizational practice profiles based on the most micro data available.
Similarly, it is questionable to attribute the “government” side of the dyad with an index that reflects the majority practice. This method would label Syria a “moderate Sunni state” which is clearly an inaccurate picture of Assad's Alawi regime. In Eritrea, coding the government as Sunni would also be incorrect because, in reality, those in control of institutions are overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian. The most reasonable way to move forward is to look at the practices, as best as they are known, of the individual groups in control of the state. See the Tables 3.1 and 3.2 for ideal coding examples:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Component</th>
<th>State Example of ERP = 1</th>
<th>Armed Group Example of ERP = 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>religious practice include a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rigid interpretation of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scripture?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterlife: Does a group's</td>
<td>Gbagbo Ivory Coast: Use of apocalyptic language in presidential race, presented regime as “Kingdom of</td>
<td>Mungiki Sect (Kenya): Teaches members that ancestors are fighting for their cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious practice include rigid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demarcations of who gains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access to the afterlife?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space: Does a group's</td>
<td>Drukpa Kagyu Bhutan: Kagyu has used the state to fund the building of monasteries and purging of both Christian and Muslim shrines.</td>
<td>Price Tag / Hilltop Settler Campaign (Israel): Practice of West Bank as Holy Site, bestowed by God to Jews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious practice includes a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>firm, physical demarcation</td>
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<tr>
<td>between sacred and profane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>places?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Privilege: Does a group's</td>
<td>MPS / Deby Chad: Public holidays under Deby all correspond with Islamic Holidays and alternative practices are discriminated against by the state.</td>
<td>Al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM): Public statements indicate that the Maghreb should be run only by Caliphate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious practice bestow groups with special, divinely ordained privileges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress: Does a group's</td>
<td>Al Saud Saudi Arabia: Religious police, funded by the state, publicly flog women and men not practicing appropriate dress.</td>
<td>Ansar Dine (Mali): Roving militia in Timbuktu publicly flog women and execute those deemed as dressed “Western.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious practice emphasize a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>particular modes of dress?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diet: Does a group's religious</td>
<td>Taliban Afghanistan: Strict state enforced ban on alcohol and pork. Those breaking the taboo are punished/executed by the state.</td>
<td>Nepal Defense Army (Nepal): Hardline Hindu militia that enforces vegetarian practices in ranks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice emphasize dietary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrictions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rites: Does a group's religious</td>
<td>Netanyahu Israel: Orthodox Chief Rabbinate is sanctioned by the state to conduct marriage and burial rites. Alternatives are illegal.</td>
<td>Lords Resistance Army (Uganda): Abducted soldiers into the cult are initiated into the force through a killing ritual that includes prayers and oaths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice emphasize unique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritual or rites of passage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throughout life?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer: Does a group's religious</td>
<td>Dawa Party Iraq: Leadership in Dawa are strict in daily prayers (3-5x) according to Shia tradition.</td>
<td>God's army (Myanmar): A Baptist resistance organization that forces daily devotions while attempting to overthrow government to establish a Christian regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice emphasize specific</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prayers as part of everyday life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2: Coding Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Combined ERP Index Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kenyatta Kenya:</strong> Contested/mixed Catholic/Traditional practices of afterlife, scripture, space; Christian holidays privileged by the state in certain parts of the country; Kenyatta often seen publicly praying; no dress or diet practices.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taliban Afghanistan:</strong> High-level exclusivity on every dimension of practice.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amazigh Islamic Front (Libya):</strong> A group with secular (secessionist) goals. Kharijite (highly exclusivist) sect of Islam, which is moderate in their goal of Berber secession, opening their ranks to some non-Kharijites.</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christian Reform Netherlands:</strong> Less than 10% of the population in Norway participate in the Church, and almost all would self-describe as atheist. But a majority, including those in the government, sometimes attend rites of passage like Church-sanctioned marriages, and some state-holidays are still religiously affiliated.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red Guerrillas (Russia):</strong> Marxist group with avowedly atheist membership. Known for attacking Orthodox sites.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka):</strong> While known as a separatist group, a super-majority of membership practiced Hinduism or Islam. The result was a majority engaged in strict prayer, burial ritual, diet, and dress practices, while the organization made efforts to downplay group privilege, sacred space, and exclusivist rites in favor of establishing a “secular state.”</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated above, in some cases lacking micro-level data, I must abstract from what is known of the sub-area where a group concentrates. For example, in Assam, most followers adhere to Vaishnavism, compared to Kali Venkatesvara. Knowing that a “Hindu separatist group” is from Assam, worships Vishnu and diminishes the role of Kali, is key in being able to determine practices of that group as indicated in the
encyclopedias. The goal is to get as close as possible to representing practices as they are on the ground. When specific practices of a group are unknown, I code based on majority practices in the area where the group locates, then coded as weak, so that they might be removed as scholars wish. Finally, I include a narrative about each coding choice in the data-set so that scholars can replicate, modify, or drop coding decisions they disagree with.

Unit of Analysis

To explore the relationship between religious practices and conflict outcomes, I construct a new dataset which combines Uppsala data on civil violence (as used by Svensson 2007) with Asal's BAAD data on terror campaigns. Cases that overlap between the two collapse together so as to not double count them. The unit of analysis is a conflict dyad composed of a state and an aggressor actor. The universe of cases includes all interactions from 1970 through 2014, yielding 724 contentious campaigns. Note the distribution in Figure 3.1 and 3.2. The distribution of armed groups with explicitly secular goals (ethnic, territorial, leftist) displays in Figure 3.3, demonstrating variation in members’ practices even when the prevailing group ideology is secular in nature.

Figure 3.1: Government Practice Distribution

Figure 3.2: Rebel Practice Distribution of All Groups
In Figure 3.2, the distribution skews towards both ends. With the rise of both global Islamic terrorism and right-wing Christian groups, we see just over 200 of the 724 cases scoring very high on the Index. The huge explosion of anarchist leftist groups in the 70s and 80s in Europe accounts for many of the 220 cases scoring on the low end. Over 40% of all other cases, about 300 cases, fall in the 16-point spectrum between the two tails. Note that an even distribution among independent or dependent variables is not a critical assumption for a logistic regression.

**Outcome Variables**

Data for the dependent variables comes from a variety of sources, most predominantly Svensson and Asal. Each observation is cross-checked with Wikipedia, Associate Press news-wires, and public data-bases on terror campaigns such as the Global Terrorism Database. As the hypotheses suggest, I am interested in the outcomes
of conflict intensity, negotiated termination, and die-out rate. These outcomes are defined and expanded further in the models below.

Controls for Alternative Explanations

In testing each hypothesis, I included a standard set of additional covariates that serve either as control variables of variables that test the alternative explanations discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

The baseline covariate in much of the literature is religious “differences” between two sides in a conflict. Scholars like Svensson, Fox, Henne, and others examine the impact of religious difference on conflict. Measuring “difference” does some work for the constructivist camp, serving as a proxy for public theology differences, or, more precisely, differences in “beliefs.” I construct a variable to measure differences in public theology. Rel_Dif indicates dichotomously whether the two sides of the conflict dyad are of a different religious tradition. Current literature maintains, for instance, that elites will use difference in ideology as the principle mechanism to recruit and motivate.20 Difference in public theology could theoretically impact violence intensity and willingness to use extreme tactics (such as suicide attacks) if that difference becomes the key resource that leaders utilize.21 Likewise, difference in belief systems could prove the fault-line for rhetorical outbidding and spoiling, employed to ruin chances at negotiated

termination. Furthermore, if groups frame the conflict as a “primarily” religious one, they may be willing to fight longer. This contending observable implication can be observed as follows:

H4: Dyads with actors from different belief systems will have higher rates of intensity, intransigence, and resolve than groups from within the same belief system.

Next, I control for other sorts of identity conflicts. I create three dichotomous variables for whether or not the conflict is ethnic, leftist/anarchist, or territorial/secessionist. These controls help control for instrumentalist expectations about other social factors and helps isolate the effects of religious practice uniquely. It could be that once groups with overlapping incompatibilities are isolated, religious practices are only significant in combination with ethnic and territorial cleavages. Each of these conflict types could effect violence dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. Extant literature shows that ethnic groups are very problematic for conflict duration, intensity, and lack of negotiated termination. Similarly, control over territory allows rebel groups sanctuary and support, prolonging conflict and eschewing negotiations by offering hope of victory. However, leftist groups are prone to crop up in democracies and countries with higher GDP, providing governments with support and resources to

22 Svensson, “Fighting with Faith Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars.”

23 Toft, “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War.”

quickly react and suppress terrorism. Thus, die out rates should be positively correlated. Additionally, since leftists are often competing for ideological support, as opposed to insular ethnic or secessionist movements, they are unlikely to use the most extreme types of violence that lead to higher body counts. Furthermore, since leftist groups successes are rare, the rate of governments engaging in negotiations with them is few and far between.

H5a: Ethnic groups will positively correlate with violence intensity, while negatively correlating with negotiated termination and group die out.

H5b: Territorial groups will positively correlate with violence intensity, while negatively correlating with negotiated termination and group die out.

H5c: Leftist groups will negatively contribute to violence intensity and negotiation rate, and positively correlate with group die out.

I control for the effect of regime type, using PolityIV data at the country onset year. It could be that religious practices are only an important variables in certain types of regimes, as extant literature has shown that authoritarian state repression of religious minorities causes violence.25 More democratic counties should theoretically provide more robust protections of minority religion rights, spurring the following hypotheses:


121
H6: Democratic countries will correlate less with violence intensity, positively correlate with negotiated termination, and positively correlate with group die out rate.

I also control for the impact of relative wealth, since poverty has been found to contribute to various violence dynamics. To the extent that religion operates to motivate violence, it could be an intervening variable to provide group needs with resources they otherwise could not. A log of GDP per capita at conflict onset year controls for the degree to which groups should respond to economic incentives of religious groups, as the Club Model would suggest is most important. The data are taken from the World Bank. Wealthier countries, where survival strategies are met by the state, should stymie intense forms of violence. Wealthy countries should also have the resources to fend off serious challengers to state authority, making negotiated terminations very rare in favor of outright wins or forcing rebel groups to die out.

H7: Higher levels of GDP will correlate with lower intensity levels of violence, correlate negatively with negotiated termination, and positively correlated with rebel group die out.


28 Ibid.
Methods

Using a logistic regression, I treat each dependent variable separately with seven models that test the full model as well as including several control variables, variables for contending hypotheses, and robustness checks. Due to the binary dependent variables and the lack of information to create time series data, I opted for a cross-sectional Logistic Regression as the principle estimation tool, over a Hazard Model. Additionally, normal distribution of data is not a requirement of logistic regressions, making it particularly useful for the data at hand. I conducted probit regression tests as a robustness check and found concurrent results.

For each hypothesis, Model 1 tests all observations for how the ERP-Index performs with the respective dependent variable. This basic test refutes the null hypothesis and is designed to observe variation in religious actor participation. Model 2 includes controls for ethnic, leftist, and territorial based conflicts to test alternative arguments about religion being a secondary factor to these other cleavages. Model 3 adds controls for regime type and logged GDP per capita at onset year, which tests rationalist and instrumentalist suppositions. The full model, Model 4, assess the idea that differences in religious beliefs, or public theology, serves as a escalatory mechanism. For a robustness check, Model 5 isolates government-rebel civil war dyads, and excludes terror incidents, while Model 6 tests government-terror dyads, excluding civil war. Model 7 is a temporal analysis, dropping cases 2007-2014 and isolating just the Svensson and Asal
data to ensure the observed outcomes are not dependent on new onsets which may feature higher levels of exclusive practices.

**Model A: The Effect of Religious Exclusion on Conflict Intensity**

In this set of statistical tests, *Conflict Intensity* is dichotomously coded, based on estimations of death-count. Following Svensson's 2007 treatment, if a death count reaches 1,000 or more battle-related deaths in any year, the conflict is a “war” and coded (1). Less than 1,000 deaths is (0).\(^{29}\) Full results display in Table 3.3.

The results in Model 1.A indicate a positive and highly significant correlation between rebel religious practices and conflicts with battle deaths over 1,000. Surprisingly, the findings show that the practices of the state institution are not correlated with conflict intensity.

Model 2.A shows that controlling for other identity cleavages does not reduce the explanatory power of ERPI, which refute voices from the “myth of religious violence” school of thought. Model 3.A shows the importance of structural considerations – higher GDP per capita and democratic regime type both negatively contribute to higher intensity, as expected by *Hypothesis 6* and 7. Unexpected by rationalist models is the role that exclusive religious practices play even when controlling for these structural elements. Note additionally that these controls vary in significance in each model and the slope of regime interaction is very slight.

\(^{29}\) Svensson, “Fighting with Faith Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars.”
Model 4.A adds the control for religious belief difference, testing the strong identity claim that ideological differences between in-groups and out-groups are inherently pressure points for conflict escalation. We see that arguments about the role of belief in conflict are mis-specified. Controlling for belief differences shows that they bear no significant relationship with conflict intensity. This strongly refutes the idea that public theology and theology/belief models can explain escalation.\textsuperscript{30}

The logit from the full model, Model 4.A, check in Figure 3.4 to examine the predictive marginal effects of rebel group practice on the likelihood of conflict intensity. For each index point change in rebel group practice, we see a corresponding rise in the likelihood of war-levels of violence.

\textbf{Figure 3.4: The Marginal Effects of ERPI on Conflict Intensity}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.4.png}
\caption{The Marginal Effects of ERPI on Conflict Intensity}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{30} It may prove useful to interact the ERP index with the Rel_Dif variable to see the combined effect of both. Additionally, it might prove important to isolate different sorts of sub-sects as a greater degree of religious difference, which could be added as a new interacting variable. Both are avenues for future research.
The marginal impact is substantively important. The higher levels of practice are associated with a 30% higher probability of higher intensity violence.

The remaining models test various conflict types and time periods. Most interesting is that when isolating civil war conflicts, significance of ERPI drops out, while in the model isolating terror groups, the practices of the group is a good indicator for higher violence levels. I will discuss this finding, along with the lack of government practice significance, in the summary section.

Overall, I find that hypothesis 1 is supported by the data: *Groups with higher levels of exclusive practices fight more intensely.* Moreover, alternative hypotheses do not perform as convincingly here.
Table 3.3: Exclusivity and Intensity

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Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Model B: The Effect of Religious Exclusion on Negotiated Termination

Peaceful Termination is dichotomously coded based upon whether a dyad reaches a verbal or written agreement to cease hostility. The agreement must lead to permanent cessation of formal hostilities, otherwise it is (0) and indicated as ongoing. The logit result displays in Table 3.4.

Model 1.B shows that rebel groups with a higher index are slightly less likely to reach a negotiated settlement. As in the previous section, the findings show that the practices of the state institution are not correlated with negotiated termination.

When relative to ethnic, leftist, or territorial claims, exclusive religious groups are much less likely to negotiate, as indicated in the Model 2.B. Interestingly, ethnic civil wars are much more likely to reach a negotiated termination than any other type of conflict. The negative relationship between leftist organizations and peace is a product of the dichotomous coding scheme – most leftist organizations give up and die out before negotiations, which contributes to hardly any negotiated terminations.

Model 3.B again controls for structural considerations of wealth and regime type. Unlike the set of tests examining intensity levels, there is no relationship between regime type and negotiated termination. There is an unexpected significant negative relationship between per capita GDP and negotiated termination. This is most likely due to the ability for rich states to crush small resistance organizations, especially leftist and anarchist groups who disappear after the arrest of leaders. Additionally, rich states may be less
prone to bargaining with rebel groups than poorer states who have less ability to bear mutually hurting stalemate.\textsuperscript{31}

Model 4.B adds the control for religious belief difference, again testing the identity-centered claim that ideological differences between in-groups and out-groups are inherently pressure points for conflict escalation. This is not born out by the data. Public differences in “beliefs” or theology are not significant. Additionally, Figure 3.5 shows the logit from Model 4.B to examine the predictive marginal effects of rebel group practice on the likelihood of a peace agreement that terminates the conflict. For each ERPI point change in rebel group practice, we see a definitive decline of about 40\% in the likelihood of peaceful termination of conflict, while holding other covariates constant. These results show support for hypothesis 2: Groups with higher levels of exclusive practices are less likely to negotiate a peaceful termination of a conflict.

**Figure 3.5: The Marginal Effects of ERPI on Peaceful Termination**

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Table 3.4: Exclusivity and Peace Agreement Termination

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Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Model C: The Effect of Religious Exclusion on Group Die Out

Another way of testing the argument about religious indivisibility is to see whether or not a group simply gives up their fight. Current literature would lead us to believe that the more extreme the religious group, the less likely they are to give up in a conflict since they view it as a cosmic struggle. To date however, no studies have examined whether or not groups with higher levels of religious practices are actually more likely to “stick out” a conflict than those with lower levels of religious practice. Both the Svensson and Asal data offers no category for a group dying out and instead keeps conflicts as ongoing if not formally resolved. This theoretically skews the data for active groups upwards. I place a five year limit of inaction, according to GTD and other publicly available records, then code as died out. Die Out is a dichotomous variable, coded positively when a group ceases to participate in the conflict, but does not win, lose, reach a pact, or join another group. This is an interesting and new variable as Svensson and Asal both code such outcomes as “no termination,” skewing the number of active campaigns upwards. If a group has not committed an offensive action in the last five years, I code it as a (1) for Die Out. Otherwise, I code this variable as (0). Results are found in Table 3.5.

32 Juergensmeyer, Terror in the Mind of God.

The findings confirm the hypothesis that groups with higher levels of exclusive practices are less likely to disappear or give up. As with the other two conflict outcomes, findings show that the practices of the state are not correlated with group die out rates.

When controlling for other types of identity cleavages, only territorial claims are significant. The negative relationship between territorial groups and “sticking power” is intuitive since if a group controls territory, it is likely to be insulated from government attack, distant from central government power, and more embedded in the local population. Once again, controlling for the effects of theological difference reveals that public beliefs have no relationship on conflict outcomes.

There is, as expected, a positive and significant relationship between per-capita GDP and group die-out rates. This is the inverse of the findings from the previous section on negotiated termination. State capacity can be mobilized to arrest and detain leadership and force group to cease operations.

Hypothesis 3 finds support: *Groups with higher levels of practice are less likely to “die-out” or give up their fight.* The logit from Model 4.C displays in Figure 3.6 to examine the predictive marginal effects of rebel group practice on the likelihood of rebel group die-out. For each ERPI point change in rebel group practice, we see a definitive decline in the likelihood of group die out, holding other covariates constant.
Figure 3.6: Marginal Effects of ERPI on Die Out
Table 3.5: Exclusivity and Die

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Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

134
Summary, Advantages and Limitations of Quantitative Analysis

The findings above show a convincing correlation between exclusive religious practice and conflict intensity, negotiated termination, and die-out rate. The findings suggest that a practice theory of indivisibility has some preliminary support. Interestingly, the role that state-organization religious practice plays is insignificant. This finding supports this project's underlying theory of indivisibility insofar as we recognize that the interests of the state out-compete practice-based logic of religious exclusion. State leadership is consistently presented with competing modes of “everyday life,” forced to confront a pluralist set of preferences and practices, which makes an exclusive adherence to exclusive religious boundaries unrealistic.34 Similarly, it makes sense that the only model where exclusive practices are insignificant for rebel groups is in examining conflict intensity in civil wars alone. In these few cases – full-blown civil war – the logic of governance is out-competing dispositions of indivisibility forged by practice. The everyday life that state institutional leaders live is fraught with competition, compromise, and divisibility. Thus, the unexpected finding that state practices are insignificant fits well within the theoretical framework of practice-based indivisibility.

There are a few reasons why a practice approach is methodologically advantageous.

34 States do, however, participate in any number of other practices – even exclusionary ones. For instance, the legitimate use of force and the practice of military capability is closely guarded and exclusively in possession of the state. The practice of diplomacy, that Neumann has investigated, is a uniquely state practice. This study says nothing about the types of non-religious practices that regimes engage in, leaving that project for future investigations.
With the control variables, we are able to see how practice theory stands up against essentialist, instrumentalist and constructivist accounts of religion and violence. When we control for structural factors, alternative claims, and for identity markers, practice still performs as hypothesized: higher levels of practice are positively and significantly contributing to violence. Hypothesis 4, that religious difference alone can explain violence dynamics, is robustly rejected. Hypothesis 5 presents inconclusive results. While occasionally significant, leftist, ethnic, and territorial campaigns are not conclusively tied to the directionality of violence intensity, negotiation, or resolve. The role of democratic regimes, in Hypothesis 6, seems to negatively impacting violence intensity, but is not a significant contributor to negotiated termination or group die out rates. Hypothesis 7, the role of per capita GDP, finds support most of the time: higher GDP contributes to lower levels of conflict intensity, lower levels of negotiated termination and higher rates of group die out. Unlike other studies that have argued that relative poverty reduced the statistical significance of identity variables, the significance of the ERP-Index remains robust, regardless of the inclusion of these covariates. This signals that more work should explore the connection between economic variables and religious variables, as was recently accomplished at the nexus of ethnicity and economics.33

A perceived major deficit is that one cannot see the directionality of causation: Are practices causing particular violence dynamics, or, when people find themselves in conflict, do they become more religious? The only way to actually test this reverse causality issue is by developing fine-grained data before, during, and after conflict. An
ideal research design would show that actors enter the conflict with these practices. Without this fine-grained data, the best one can do is to hold that if these practices are present in the conflict, combatants very likely bring these practices into the conflict. Unlike "beliefs" which can be a conversion experience in the height of battle fatigue, practices are not something that one just turns on - practices are learned over time. If this is true, then this is not a reverse causality problem at all, but actually reinforces the argument. As Horowitz writes in his study of religious violence duration, “that some Crusaders “turned to religion for reassurance” when Crusades did not go well... is evidence that religious belief increased their duration.”

35 For this study, intensity, intransigence, and resolve variables tell this same story - that people tap into exclusivity/indivisibility practices in conflict shows how central the practice is to actor dispositions. Furthermore, the idea that lethal conflicts push people to exclusivist behavior is probably right to some extent. Yet claiming that social identities are principally created by people shooting at your group is, I think, a dubious theory of identity formation. Rather, the resources which a group taps into in the process of violence are far more revealing about the resources that actors use, as the practice theorists say, “to go on.” Thus, the argument that we are actually observing actors becoming more exclusivist over the length of an intense conflict actually reinforces the basic claim of the theory.

Formulating practices as a model has some distinct advantages over both rhetorical and instrumental alternatives. Namely, one can avoid making assumptions about the effect of rhetoric or rationalism on mobilizing persons towards extremism, which are entirely unobservable theories. The model of practice presented here is based upon ethnographic data, applied as precisely as possible to each side of the conflictual dyad – we need say nothing about 1) what actors are thinking or 2) what motivates actors. The practice model is concerned with what actors are doing. In order for religious rhetoric to “work” on a population, causing outbidding and spoiling to occur, there has to be some sort of framing device that triggers rhetorical effectiveness. The same is true of instrumental mobilizing. My central claim is that investigations on the constitutive role that religion has on physical violence must be thoroughly historical and relational. Practice gets closer to embedding the study of violence in the relational context of religion. These contexts, I claim, provide the necessary foundations for rhetorical and rationalist models to function. For these reasons, it is preferable to construct practice-based models.

Additionally, the choice to disaggregate based upon practices enables scholars to empirically examine “what people are doing on the ground” as the basis for categorizing religion. Taking practice theory seriously allows scholars to set aside assumptions built into rhetorical or rationalist models, and instead correlate everyday life with conflict outcomes. While considerable additional work remains, this project serves as an answer to the call to bring “scholarly debates down to the ground of world politics in order to
empirically scrutinize the processes whereby certain competent performances produce effects of a world political nature.”

There are several limitations inherent in the large-n design, however. First, the data is not disaggregated enough to see the escalation of conflict over time. Future iterations could take one specific case from beginning to end with a more nuanced unit of analysis like the dyad day or year. This is what I attempt to accomplish with ethnographic field work in Israel and Sierra Leone in the following chapters.

Second, the residual error in large-n studies like this one are problematic. This error may hide much of the interesting causal nuances that make religious conflict tick. Using large-n analysis gives a way to assess the plausibility of these mechanisms, but hardly identifies necessary or sufficient conditions for an outcome.

Third, part of the problem with tracking practices as static explanatory variables is that they cannot be seen except in snapshots – frozen moments in time. While arguably better than treating religion as a billiard ball bumping around in the world, models like the one presented here are starting points. It is clear that the data itself is heuristic, which means that in-depth case studies are a necessary step the religious violence research agenda.

To address these limitations, the next several chapters design and conduct theoretically informed small-n case studies. Through a technique of “practice-tracing” I more thoroughly investigate whether religious practices or alternative theories better explain violence dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve.

Chapter 4: Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative case studies bolster causal inferences from statistical models and draw connections between variables or sets of variables.\(^1\) Investigating the processes of “the mechanisms hypothesized in statistical models can greatly increase the confidence in the causal significance of the correlations identified in them.”\(^2\) As noted in the previous chapter, qualitative investigations are necessary to tease out inferences and witness how practice influence violence patterns. Explanations for how religious actors contribute to violent habitats requires explication of dynamic and local contexts that cannot be revealed with large-n data, no matter how fine-grained it might be.

This chapter outlines the strategy of qualitative investigation employed in two case studies that follow in forthcoming chapters. I employ this strategy for two reasons. The first is practical – a chapter here saves repetition over two separate case study chapters. Second, the methodological strategy employed here offers an nontraditional spin on the classic “process tracing” approach to case study research. Instead of following “processes,” the case studies here focus on tracing practices as articulated in Chapter 2 and 3. The method of “practice tracing” has quite recently been articulated in theoretical

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literature, and has only been carried out by a handful of researchers – to my knowledge this is the first application of practice tracing to religion and variation in conflict outcomes. At the core, I combine the hypothesis-testing approach of inquiry with interpretive, locally contingent investigations. The case studies are a way to more fully test the positive findings in the large-N study, examine nuance, and examine how practices construct actors in conflict environments. To do this, the chapter on Israeli settlers compares three types of settler movements in the West Bank. This employs a “most similar” model, where groups with varying practices all engage in the same Israeli-Palestinian conflict environment, with the same government capacity and same time period. The chapter on Sierra Leone takes a different approach, examining variation in religious practice over time and in different conflict conditions. By showing the trajectory of practices before, during, and after the war, I show how exclusive orthopraxy uniquely contributed to violence dynamics compared to a religious movement with inclusive practices. These two strategies reinforce one another and demonstrate the broad generalizability of the theory.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First I outline a strategy for tracing practices, which includes both epistemological and methodological discussions. In this section I differentiate my approach from both positivist oriented “process” approaches as well as interpretive approaches. I argue for a middle ground which uses ethnographic data along with theoretical causal mechanisms to make inferences about how a particular bundle of

3 Pouliot, “Practice Tracing.” Pouliot's 2014 piece is the first to articulate a coherent strategy for tracing practices for within-case studies. I draw substantially on his guidance here.
practices impacts a conflict environment. This approach to small-n investigations is the natural compliment to the sort of “large-N ethnography” introduced in the preceding chapter.

Second, I follow Bennett and George's recommendations on case selection. In so doing, I identify the various alternative hypotheses that are “controlled” for in each respective case. Each case not only contains within-case variation on the explanatory variables, but maintains a relatively consistent set of other variables that do not show significant variation between the temporal periods analyzed.

Third, I describe the various strategies I employ for each case study, which as Bennett and George indicate, is crucial for performing a “structured focused comparison.” These strategies include observational methods, structured, semi-structured, and informal interviews, content analysis, and historical narratives. These approaches to collecting data are each discussed from the viewpoint of practice theory. In all, the various approaches triangulate to provide set of robust qualitative results.

Finally, I address concerns levied against a practice-informed methodology including questions about reliability and reproducibility.

Tracing Practices

Religion is a “system of beliefs, a collection of symbols and practices, and a social structure” tied together and observed through the organized and patterned ways that religious actors go about everyday activities. Religion, as a bundle of beliefs, symbols,

4 Bennet and George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.

5 Ibid. See especially chapter 3.
and structures, are embodied in groups performing patterns of action more or less competently.\textsuperscript{6} To engage in practice tracing is to follow these performances, patterns, and embodied behaviors to see how they constitute actors in particular ways and influence particular actions.

Practice-tracing, is an interpretive sub-genra of process-tracing aimed at systematically organizing ethnographic data to reveal causal connections between social phenomena. I have already discussed what practices are and how to think about them in the field of religion, so my goal here is to outline how we might think about practices from a case-study oriented methodological position.

Like process-tracing, tracing practices involves using evidence from within a case to make inferences about causal explanations within that case.\textsuperscript{7} Practice-tracing takes the process-tracing menu deeper, and grounds it in ontological theory about how the world works. I maintain that practices are real forces in the world that constitute identity and are at work when one sees “processes” playing out. By “real forces” I mean that practices are not ethereal connections to make the leap from IV to DV more plausible, as is often the case for “processes.” While process tracing identifies a theoretically-informed causal chain “between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” practice-tracing is interested in how bundles of activities construct actors in particular ways.\textsuperscript{8} While in the last chapter I was content creating an “as-if” variable-

\textsuperscript{7} Pouliot, “Practice Tracing,” 4.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 6.
centric model, a more precise study should identify particular practices, pair them with theoretically solid causal mechanisms, and then trace how actors embedded in practices perform in certain ways instead of others.

Three assumptions guide the qualitative investigations. First, practices are performances that unfold over time. Snapshots, like the ones taken in the previous chapter are inconclusive and nothing more than an “as-if” model. Local knowledge is necessary to reveal the constitutive process of the social, or, as Schatzki says, the site at which the social roots. The main difference here between practice and process-tracing is that practices are not causal, but constitutive of actors.

Second, related to the above, practices produce effects in the world, but they do not fully indicate “cause.” It is difficult to observe how a real practice goes about producing social effects. Studies looking for cause and effect neglect that “the primary effect of religion on war is the constitutive, not causal: religion principally shapes the identity of the actors and how they conceive of war, its meaning and content.”

Practices are sites of the social environment that are real and observed, which contrasts with the notion of “causal mechanism” which are theoretical and unobservable. Causal mechanisms are theoretical abstractions that serve to draw connections between “real” practices and “real” social events. In this study, that mechanism is indivisibility via exclusionary dispositions forged via practice.

With both of these first two points in mind, third, the job of the practice ethnographer is to find singular, local “causality” within the analytically general categories established in the theory and qualitative chapter. This brings practice, as a unit of analysis, sequentially down from the ladder of abstraction from highest rung of theory, to large-N “as-if” models, and then to micro-level specific contexts.\(^\text{10}\) Pouliot instructs practice tracers that “once the interpretive boundaries of context have been set, patterns become easier to grasp.”\(^\text{11}\) But I argue that if patterns have emerged already from theory or larger statistical analysis, there is good reason to utilize the patterns as a basis on which to judge interpretive boundaries of context against. The particularities of context can be tamed via the conceptual boundaries of theory and the patterned findings of statistical analysis.

To summarize: “studying practice implies ordering, dissecting, and organizing them in a way that ultimately constructs them as units of analysis within an analytical narrative.”\(^\text{12}\) Practices, as units of analysis functioning within an analytical narrative can help create deeper understanding of social processes – in this case the violence dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve.

*Case Selection and Design*

The examined unit of analysis is religious actors in ongoing violent environments. This unit of analysis differs from extant studies of “religious violence” which involves a

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10 Ibid., 252. According to Pouliot “practices are perfect units of analysis to travel up and down the ladder of abstraction.”

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 250.
religious issue as the primary or secondary aspect of the conflict.¹³ Cases were selected based on their within-case variation of religious practices among actors. This theory-testing comparative design allows for maximum control over structural variables (Regime; GDP) and enables special focus on tracing practices from emergence to outcome. I have selected two locations for comparison, and each location has multiple cases for focused comparison. According the Bennett and George, “structured, focused comparison” strategies must meet three parameters.¹⁴ First, cases must be a subset of a larger universe of cases in order to draw generalizable inferences. Cases here draw from the universe of conflictual events, 1970-2014. Second, structured focused comparisons must employ a set research strategy that applies equally to the cases in question. The objective is to structure a research design to investigate similar phenomena in a similar way. Third, the investigation is “focused” in that it deals with “only certain aspects of the historical cases examined.”¹⁵ To do this, a researcher must “employ variables of theoretical interest” that they believe influence outcomes. Each of these tasks is taken in succession below.

**Cases**

According to Bennett and George, “cases should also be selected to provide the kind of control and variation required by the research problem.” The following cases

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¹⁴ Bennet and George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 69.

¹⁵ Ibid., 67.
attempt to specify variation within the puzzle at hand (which groups engage in violence dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve?) while maximally controlling for alternative hypotheses. I analyze cases where groups are active in the midst of extant conflict environments, to evaluate how variation in practice contributes to variation in violent dynamics. The three Israel settler groups and evangelical groups in Sierra Leone are contemporary cases within ongoing civil conflict. Although the Israeli case is ongoing, the Interfaith Council Sierra Leone is a recent historical case within a wartime environment. The variation in the conflict environments corresponds with the large-N study, which includes conflicts ranging from one-off bombings with one casualty to coordinated war campaigns with massive casualties. The large-N sample also contains a mixture of ongoing and historical cases. In short the qualitative case selection is a relatively good cross-section of the types of conflict environments in the Large-N data. Evaluating violence dynamics in both ongoing and historical cases in two very different country environments allows for broader generalizability of findings.

Chapter 5 analyzes variation in settler behavior in the West Bank. All settler groups are present in an ongoing low-level conflict between the State of Israel and Palestine. Under the theory of practice-based indivisibility, we should expect that the more a settlement operates as a community of exclusive practice, the more likely they are to contribute to the ongoing conflict with more intensity, intransigence, and resolve. The goal is to isolate the explanatory variables by asking how groups with different practices contribute differently to the same conflict. I focus explicitly on three types of religious settler communities – ultra-orthodox Haradi, Religious Zionist, and third generation
settlers that have come to be known as the Hilltop Youth. Out of these three, the Hilltop Youth are the most exclusive in their practices and are objectively more intense, intransigent and resolved than other groups observed.

Chapter 6 analyzes the role of religious actors in Sierra Leone's civil war termination compared to the recent rise of sectarian conflict in 2013-2014. Specifically, I chart how members of the Interfaith Council of Sierra Leone, with staggeringly high levels of inclusive practices between Muslim, Christian, and Traditional religious leaders, actively restricted violence among their parishioners in the Civil War. The Interfaith Council leadership further served as a moral guarantor of the peace process, serving as a key facilitator for the conflict's negotiated termination. Finally, the interfaith council acted to reduce the resolve of both sides of the civil war by refusing to give any spiritual legitimation to the use of violence. These group conflict dynamics differ strongly from those observed in the post-war rise of evangelical Islam and Christianity. The boom of such communities in Freetown in particular has become a principal security concern, as these groups have regularly “sectarianized” political conflicts over public policy. Christian Evangelical groups have armed themselves in violent confrontation with Muslim armed groups and leaders have rejected calls for reconciliation. The growing evangelical movement is examined as an “exclusivist” phenomena unique to the post-war era. Although it has not yet resulted in war-levels of violence, we can trace the rise of particular practices as a mechanism for conflict intensity, intransigence and resolve.
A key attribute of structured, focused comparisons is focusing on particular variables of interest. This includes specifying three sets of variables: outcomes or dependent variables, explanatory variables, and control variables. I discuss each below.

**Outcomes of Interest**

As in the quantitative investigation, I map group violence dynamics within an existing conflict environment. While I argue that religious actors have a different causal mechanism at work feeding into intensity, intransigence, and resolve, than other actors, I am not arguing that these dynamics are mono-causal or even that religion is a principle factor. Rather, the case studies attempt to show how religion can sometimes - perhaps regularly - influence patterns of violence.

In each case, I evaluate how a group contributes to the dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. These variables mirror those used in the quantitative chapter, but are modified in three ways to collect local level information from singular sources.

First, I compare groups on their contribution to the intensity of conflict. Unlike the large-N study which proxies for intensity using a 1,000 battle-death binary variable, my work in the West Bank and Sierra Leone treats group intensity as patterns of increased violence outside of major war settings. This definition differentiates the outcome of intensity in conflict from wartime violence. In the West Bank, for example, vigilantism lies outside of the normal tactics used by the IDF or Israeli State in their

16 Ibid., 79.

17 This level of DV disaggregation is uniquely possible with case studies, while challenging at the large-N level.
conflict with the Palestinian population. In Sierra Leone, I treat armed attacks that occur between rival groups as a more “intense” rivalry than groups that compete through non-violent tactics.

Second, while the large-N study treats the “intransigence” variable based on whether a group negotiates an end to the conflict, the case studies offer an alternative measurement of that variable since all but one of the groups are involved in ongoing conflict. Intransigence in these cases is better measured by community participation in negotiations to end the larger extant conflict. I observed how various groups pursued negotiations or argued for them within their community, while other groups flatly rejected negotiations and thus foreclosed on any negotiated termination to conflict. The goal here is to see if more inclusive or exclusive religious communities engage in negotiated termination at different rates. This is seen most clearly in Sierra Leone: in the interfaith campaign to end the civil war, negotiation was the central outcome, whereas recent exclusivist denominations have instructed followers to cease talking with adherents of other faiths. In the West Bank, the Hilltop Youth have flatly rejected a negotiated termination of the conflict, while other settler groups are partially open to some sort of negotiated compromise.

Third, I sought out evidence of group resolve. The variable called “Die-Out” in the quantitative study evaluated whether a group just gave up the fight without a clear victory, loss, alliance, or negotiated end. Since one case ended through negotiation, and others are ongoing, treating resolve in this manner is not possible. To access this information, I look at a group's willingness to go on with activity in the face of
opposition, which gets at a comparable outcome. In the West Bank, for instance, this manifests in Hilltop Youth rebuilding settlements after IDF forces tear it down, while other settlers might just relocate. In Sierra Leone, evangelical churches and mosques that participate in violence are overwhelmingly maligned from society.

Explanatory Variables

The argument is that exclusive practices function to create dispositions of indivisibility, which are the causal mechanisms of intense, intransigent, and resolved behavior in violent environments. While I did not press respondents on each of the eight dimensions of practice that make up the ERP-Index in the previous chapter, I did question and observe the ways in which local practices were inclusive, exclusive, or contested within a group. Many times, in a church service for example, I would indeed observe each of the eight dimensions of practice. I create a narrative of local group practices based on my ethnographic investigations, and then, once familiar with that context, begin to trace how those practices inform and frame conflict environments.

Causal Mechanisms

As argued in Chapter 2, within the larger framework of indivisibility, there are several mechanisms in these cases that connect exclusive orthopraxy with elevated dynamics of violence. First, groups with particularly exclusivist membership are bonded together in ways that bridge collective action problems and frame all conflict as “cosmic war.” This creates particularly fierce and intense reactions to conflict environments.
Second, groups with exclusivist membership are likely to limit the menu of actions that leadership can legitimately take. With less elasticity, leaders who might in other situations seek negotiated peace are restricted by their membership who will out-bid and spoil negotiations. Third, groups with exclusivist membership have trouble with lengthened time horizons. Rather than a community propositionally thinking through violence with a cosmic cost-benefit analysis, practice posits that the discipline of exclusive practices frame everyday life (not just the conflict at hand) in terms of cosmic time.

On the other hand, groups with membership who practice less exclusively are much more likely to push for conflict resolution and reject sectarianization of a conflict environment. Further, a secular membership base should allow for conflict resolution, lower intensity, and lower levels of resolve if it makes strategic sense, entirely devoid of sectarian violence dynamics.

Each of these displays of indivisibility link exclusive orthopraxy to elevated conflict dynamics, or, what I have called sectarianization. If the theory is correct, we should not only observe the correlation between exclusive practice and intensity, intransigence, and resolve, but also the internal mechanisms of intra-group binding, limited menus of action, and extended time horizons.

Alternative Explanations

Selecting cases should ideally allow one to control for alternative or competing explanations. Case selection would ideally hold as many of these explanations constant so as to better pinpoint the actual effects of the explanatory framework.
According to Pouliot, “good practice tracing should aspire not to (dis)confirm theories. Rather, it should explain, first, why practice X (as opposed to Y and Z) is considered to lie behind an object of interest...”\textsuperscript{18} For this study, the practices of religious exclusivity are explanatory, but I also seek to explain how instrumentalist and constructivist expectations fail to answer why some religious actors approach violence with intensity, intransigence and resolve while others do not. Arnson and Zartman claim that violence draws from three sources – need (deprivation), greed (private gain), and creed (identity). In the field of religious politics in particular, these arguments bear out in three counter-arguments that I seek to test.

First, the instrumentalist school of thought holds that religious violence can be explained by a model of Club/Service provisions.\textsuperscript{19} According to Berman and Laitin, religious organizations are powerful tools because they provide for survival strategies of members in a way that the state cannot. This is why club-provisions are particularly powerful in impoverished states that cannot give basic goods to citizens. The observable implications of the club model hold that religious groups contribute to violence intensity, intransigence and resolve for instrumental reasons – actors are seeking the shelter, healthcare, food, employment that a group can procure and thus solve a relative deprivation. To control for this explanation, I carefully examined the types of resources provided members by their groups. Additionally, in both Israel and Sierra Leone, very

\textsuperscript{18} Pouliot, “Practice Tracing,” 240.

little variation was present in the types of goods provided by religious groups. Where variation did surface, it actually produced results counter to the expectations of Berman and Laitin.

Second, variance in state capacity is a common instrumentalist explanation for violence dynamics of all types. Failed states provide the impetus and opportunity that violence entrepreneurs capitalize on.\textsuperscript{20} The findings in the previous chapter indicate that there may indeed be a link between poor states and religious violence in particular, but that link is somewhat inconsistent. While controlling for GDP is one proxy for capacity, and the Polity IV data control for public participation in the state, Robert Rotberg has argued that no single indicator of weakness can explain failure or violence.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, to control for state weakness, I have selected within-case variations: in Israel three divergent groups operate in a strong state capacity. In Sierra Leone, there is wide difference in state capacity in the first evaluation period – the period of civil war – compared to 2013-2014, where there was higher GDP and robust democratic institutions. However, the finding here is the opposite of the observable implications of the state-capacity school of thought: in the weakest state in the world (by any measure), religious actors facilitated negotiations during wartime, and after 15 years of GDP growth and institutional capacity-building, violence erupted from religious actors. While state-capacity may indeed explain


opportunities for violence escalation, the theory is less helpful in answering the puzzle of religious group violence variation.

Third, constructivist scholars like Clarke and Sandal would instruct us to look to public rhetoric as the principle route of escalation by religious groups. As mentioned before, in order for rhetoric to “succeed” in its aims, there must be some underlying practices that give meaning to the signals themselves. Thus, it seems that any explanation of rhetorical outbidding is nothing more than a type of dependent variable, not a causal mechanism in any meaningful way. The way I account for public theology is by focusing on “belief” as a variable. In each case comparison, actors belong to the same “belief” group, whether it be Orthodox in the case of the West Bank or Christian, Muslim, and Traditionalist in the case of Sierra Leone. These cases were selected due to groups having similar “belief” profiles, yet diverging on the explanatory variable of exclusivist practices.

Table 4.1: Case Description

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<th>Case</th>
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<td>Israel West Bank Youth</td>
<td>Intensity: Attacks more; willing to put self in prolonged danger; higher rate of bodily harm within this population seen in vigilantism. Intransigence: Will not engage in negotiation; spoils any negotiations between others. Resolve: Will not abandon post if ordered; will rebuild if IDF relocates.</td>
<td>Exclusive practices that are unique to Hilltop are producing indivisibilities resulting in intensity, intransigence, and resolve, seen in vigilante action within extant Israeli-Palestinian conflict.</td>
<td>Instrumental: Settlers are poor groups within a weak state. Intense and intransigent conflicts are caused by elite manipulation within a) relative deprivation, b) state weakness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.B</td>
<td>Israel Orthodox Settlers</td>
<td>Intensity: Low rates of bodily harm. No vigilantism within extant conflict. Intransigence: Highly engaged in peace process. Resolve: Not likely to build outside of sanctioned zones; unlikely to resist IDF relocation; more likely to move to safer locals.</td>
<td>Key exclusive practices not present. Exclusive practices that are present are moderated by 1) reliance on state; 2) expert understanding of rabbinical tradition. This should result in lower intensity, intransigence, resolve.</td>
<td>Constructivist: Settler ideology (rhetoric + beliefs) provide resources for more intense and intransigent violent dynamics. Violent ideology explains violence dynamics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C</td>
<td>Israel Religious Zionist Settlers</td>
<td>Intensity: Low rates of bodily harm. No vigilantism, but provides network for Hilltop Youth. Intransigence: Low engagement in peace process, non-negotiation over Settlement policy. Resolve: Not likely to build outside of sanctioned zones; Unlikely to resist IDF orders; more likely to move to safer locals.</td>
<td>Key exclusive practices not present. Exclusive practices that are present are moderated by 1) reliance on state; 2) economic ties outside of West Bank. This should result in lower intensity, intransigence, resolve.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Salone Interfaith Council</td>
<td>Intensity: Unarmed actors in midst of war. Intransigence: Principals in negotiated termination of civil war. Resolve: Highly resolved to end war in spite of some danger, but no real social opposition to activity.</td>
<td>Inclusive practices, such as intermarriage, produce religious actors that reduce violence dynamics.</td>
<td>Instrumental: Interfaith Council should not have relative deprivation. Evangelical groups should be poor within a weak state. Intensity and intransigence dynamics are caused by elite manipulation in a) relative deprivation, b) state weakness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Evangelical Christian</td>
<td>Intensity: Actors arm themselves in conflict; higher rate of bodily harm. Intransigence: Not engage in negotiations over political matters, framing as spiritual. Resolve: Continued participation even when confronted with mass social opposition.</td>
<td>The rise of exclusive practice churches/mosques produces actors more likely to approach conflict with higher intensity, intransigence, resolve.</td>
<td>Constructivist: Evangelical ideology provide resources for more intense and intransigent violent dynamics. Violent ideology explains violence dynamics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Evangelical Muslim</td>
<td>Intensity: Actors arm themselves in conflict; higher rate of bodily harm. Intransigence: Not engage in negotiations over political matters, framing as spiritual. Resolve: Continued participation even when opposed.</td>
<td>The rise of exclusive practice churches/mosques produces actors more likely to approach conflict with higher intensity, intransigence, resolve.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

156
Table 4.2: Ideal Boolean Truth Table for Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Exclusive Practice</th>
<th>Instrumentalist A: Deprivation</th>
<th>Instrumentalist B: Low Capacity</th>
<th>Construc...</th>
<th>Outcome: Intensity</th>
<th>Outcome: Intransigence</th>
<th>Outcome: Resolve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.A Outpost Movement</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.B Orthodox Settlers</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C Religious Zionist Settlers</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A Salone Interfaith Council</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B Evg. Christian</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.C Evg. Muslim</td>
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</table>
Research Tactics

Practice tracing is best accessed through the triangulation of many methods, all aimed at following the same unit of analysis – exclusive practices in this case. I employ observational methods, formal interviews, informal interviews, content analysis and historical narrative to uncover religious practices.

Tactic 1: Observational Methods

First, I immersed myself in the everyday life of small social groups for extended periods of time, an approach known as participant observation or, in the words of the US anthropologist Clifford Geertz, ‘deep hanging out.’\(^{23}\) I stayed in smaller hostels on the outskirts of Jerusalem, close to local restaurants, cafes, and bars. These provide the small network for me to engage a local population.\(^{24}\) I got my bearings in these communities and lots of information, just by asking a lot of questions. Similarly, I stayed near hubs of activity throughout Sierra Leone. To quote Geertz again on ethnography, “There are three characteristics of ethnographic description: it is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of discourse; and the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms.”\(^{25}\) While the interpretive approach is useful here, a Bourdieusian emphasis on practice would take us behind the veil of “discourse” and instead place “said” things within a field of practice.


\(^{25}\) Ibid., 123. He continues: The ethnographer “inscribes” social discourse; he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it form a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted.”
The event of an utterance is not the context of the social itself, but rather a propositional result of a dispositional background knowledge—practical knowledge. Practice knowledge is the cite that gives discourses their consistent meaning so that they may be used appropriately, in context. Thus, the more meaningful work of the ethnographer must go beyond “rescu(ing) “said” discourse from perishing occasions,” and instead, rescue the unsaid practices from their place of ontological fixity.

Second, my research was a process of “deep hanging out,” in that I often took advantage of opportunities when they came my way. In both the West Bank and Sierra Leone I was able to observe burial and marriage ceremonies, key rites of passage. As I will explain in further chapters, much of my work in Sierra Leone took place at a corner taxi stand and market of “Spur Loop.” In this location I could sit around and talk with hundreds of low-wage motorcycle taxis—almost all of whom had memories of the war, how it ended, and would tell me stories of their participation in it. Several times, when the crowd of drivers would thin out, a driver would volunteer to drive me down a few miles to a different taxi stand to chat. These served as my home base. By the end of my time there, taxi workers from all over Freetown would come to see if I needed their perspective on religious life.

Because practices are, at their core, interpretive enterprises, the kind of ethnography I engage in guesses at meanings, assessing the guesses based on evidence collected, and draws conclusions about the unseen mechanisms at work.26 The methodology of observation is a direct compliment to the theory of practice, as opposed

26 Ibid., 20.
to “process,” because it requires the observer to interpret cultures that are unarticulated. As Gusterson argues, participant observation is the difference between “idealized accounts of culture and the messy divergences of actual practice.”27 These give access to “the private, the whispered, the half crystallized on the edge of consciousness.”28

**Tactic 2: Formal Interviews**

Even when practices are not observed directly, they are often talked about or seen in other iterations.29 If done correctly, formal interviews can serve as a proxy for direct practice observation. In over 100 interviews, I posed “what if” situational questions to respondents (e.g. what if Boko Haram tried to recruit you?). This enabled me to assess what respondents drew upon to “go on” in the world – a key element of practice theory. Hypothetical questions enabled respondents and I to talk openly about how and why they would act a certain way.

In the West Bank and Sierra Leone, I took strategic opportunities to be social with expat and specialist communities, often who had deep connections with top officials. These resulted in the classic “snowball” effect, where initial respondents assisted my gaining further contacts. The weaknesses of snowball sampling is that respondents are not random, but part of a network.30 I attempted to bolster my findings by broadening the


28 Ibid., 106.

29 Pouliot, “Practice Tracing,” 246

30 Gusterson, “Ethnographic Research.”
network to distant locations and by continually asking my respondents for additional contacts.

*Tactic 3: Informal Interviews*

I rarely was given permission by sheiks and Imams to audio record, and had I approached settlers in the West Bank with a consent form, some of them would have attacked me. In one instance, after identifying myself as an American conflict researcher, I was physically assaulted and driven out of a village under a rain of stones. When I felt unable to capture formal interviews, I defaulted to informal conversations, and collected well over 100 semi-structured interviews. Every effort was made to write down verbal interactions as immediately as possible – many times this included me walking back to a tiny, beat up rental car, writing down responses, then venturing back into a bar, farm, or coffee shop to gather more data.

Taking a conversational style makes comparability and reproducibility a hazy task. But insisting on comparability loses details, makes one seem superficial, and sacrifices trust necessary for quality data. This being said, Bennett and George have emphasized the need to systematically treat respondents with the same sort of approach, lest one collects such disparate data that it cannot be used together in the same study. This is almost impossible if a respondent will not cooperate: For instance, I interviewed a high-ranking Israeli official, who, after I had asked him to give me ordinal rankings in his response, said to “knock it off, that numbers bull-shit.” I maintained the focused structured comparison design by conscientiously attempting to keep interactions “focused” on variation in religious practices or ways that people talked about conflict.
From the ways that people answered hypothetical questions, I was able to interpret the foundational practices that they drew upon.

*Tactic 4: Content Analysis and Historical Narrative*

There are, of course, gaps in the data I collected. Pouliot maintains that “when practitioners are not available to talk, textual analysis can be put to work in order to trace practices and interpret the context in which they are performed.”31 I thus set to the task of content analysis. I turned to content analysis and review of secondary sources to triangulate against observational video analysis and historical narrative. For Israel and Sierra Leone I reviewed every AP and AFP news story with keywords “conflict” and “violence” for each from 1955-2014. These stories were used to validate findings after data collection. The rise of vigilantism from certain groups and not others is validated in news stories, and is especially correlated with the rise of militant messianic settlement activity after the 1967 war. In Sierra Leone on the other hand, the causal role of the interfaith council in bringing about the negotiated peace was not mentioned at all in international media coverage. While triangulation did not support my findings necessarily, it highlights the disconnect between contemporary global narratives and local stories about violence termination.

*Data Reliability and Reproducibility*

A data-collection effort is reliable to the extent that the results would be the same if another researcher followed the same research design. The data collected, discussed in

these next chapters is a game of interpretation and subjectivity, not simply coding numerical values. What makes practices produce social effects (violence, in this case), are the “practical logics that are bound up in it and intersubjectively negotiated” which makes the central task of the researcher parsing those intersubjective and sometimes unspoken bundles of doings and sayings. The job of the practice-tracer is therefore to get very close to local contexts, witness the intersubjective meaning made through practice, and see if that relates to observed outcomes. I explore patterns and practices, but I come to the enterprise with my own blind spots and weaknesses. But this does not imply that reliability is entirely sacrificed. I ground my research heavily in the hypotheses of the large-n study, which narrows the objects of study to the extent that it should indeed be reproducible. I am not exploring everything, but I am deeply exploring some things, which is the entire point of structured focused comparisons.

Unlike interpretive work that operates more like “fact-finding,” a practice tracing investigation is concerned with explaining why certain practices produce certain outcomes. This theory-informed hypothesis acts to focus the entire research enterprise – questions, observations, conversations.

It is hard to reproduce any data, no matter the collection process. However, for those concerned about the reproducibility of practice-based analysis, I answer that the process articulated above is on firmer ground than many other strategies in international relations. The study of international “norms” for instance, has over-attribution and underspecification issues. It seems that many studies of normative movements in IR are

32 Ibid., 240.
unable to parse out the explanatory norm from the outcomes of behavior they are trying to explain. Norms, to explain action, but stand analytically separate from the behaviors they illicit, but as Charli Carpenter writes, compliance with norms is not an indicator that said norm exists or what it produces in the world.\textsuperscript{33}

The unique proposition of practice tracing is that it separates out the observable data from the unobservable causal mechanisms. This work documents religious practices of exclusion in a straightforward (if interpretive) way. The connection between the data and observed outcomes is found in the theoretical mechanism – in this case exclusivity creating dispositional social structures of indivisibility.

\textit{Conclusion}

Practice-tracing holds that “social causality is to be established locally, but with an eye to producing analytically general insights.”\textsuperscript{34} The next three chapters show how practice-based qualitative research is a productive enterprise in security studies. This chapter has outlined a comprehensive strategy for tracing practices for within-case structured focused comparison. I follow Bennett and George's instruction in selecting cases and determining variables of interest. First, I select cases as a subset of a larger universe of cases in order to draw generalizable inferences. Violence in the West Bank and Sierra Leone provide the empirical foundation for investigation, each with two cases


\textsuperscript{34} Pouliot, “Practice Tracing,” 237.
to compare how exclusive religious practices produce particular behaviors in violent conflict. Selecting on within-case variations on the explanatory variable controls for alternative instrumentalist and constructivist explanations. Second, I follow a set research strategy that applies equally to the cases in question so as to investigate similar phenomena in a similar way. The research strategy that applies across cases is to focus on practices of communities. Third, the investigation is “focused” in that it deals with “only certain aspects of the historical cases examined.” 35 I employ explanatory, outcome, and control variables that have theoretical interest and explicitly track their variation in cases to determine which practices help researchers better understand how religious actors contribute to violence dynamics in unique ways.

Chapter 5: Spoiling for a Fight: Jewish Vigilantism in the West Bank

On a scorching hot summer afternoon in the West Bank, I rolled down my rental-car window at a Israeli Defense Force security check point near the Palestinian town of Jenin. “American?” asked the guard as I displayed my passport. I responded that I was a researcher interested in talking to a couple IDF officers, perhaps when they were on break. After being waved over to the side of the road, I was led to the backside of a one-room office, where three young IDF officers were smoking, taking a break just feet from the infamous “security fence” that cuts through Palestine. After speaking at length about the “improvements” in security since the wall was erected, I ventured into taboo territory: “what about settler violence? That seems to be increasing, right?” All three looked away. “It's not the same [as Palestinian violence], but yes, it is a problem,” replied one female officer, no older than 20. Another continued, “the settlers are fine, but a few... a few are spoiling for a fight.”

This chapter investigates why settlers engage in different dynamics of violence – why some, but not all, are “spoiling for a fight.” Recent campaigns of extralegal intimidation, kidnapping, arson, and murder – vigilantism against both Palestinians and the Israeli State (IDF patrols) – have accompanied a surge of settlement building beyond the 1967 Green Line. According to the United Nations, settler vigilantism has increased some two hundred percent in the past two years, with an estimated 315,000 people in 110
Palestinian communities at high or moderate risk of settler-initiated violence.¹ During the first six months of 2013, settler-related incidents hit an all-time high: Nablus reported 96 incidents, almost all near the Itamar and Yitzhar settlements; Hebron reported 48 incidents near the Kiryat Arba settlement; and Ramallah reported 40 incidents of violence near Beit El settlement.² These cases of settler violence reveal higher levels of intensity than the conflict generally. In the midst of relative stability and the lowest conflict-death levels in years,³ “some settlers seem intent on spoiling ongoing peace talks through means of sabotage – real, dangerous sabotage.”⁴

Yet many commentaries about settler violence lump religious-Zionist, Ultra Orthodox, and other settlers together into the same categories, implying that all West Bank settlers are equally complicit in vigilantism.⁵ This disregards the fact that most Jews regard it acceptable that Israelis live in some settlements, yet consider living in other settlements abnormal.⁶ Not all settlers are “colonizing” - some are just there because the “frontier” offers a higher quality of life at about half the cost of Tel Aviv. Others are in the West Bank to force Palestinian migration as a mandate from God. But even within

¹ “Update on Settler Violence in the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, October 2014).
² Ibid.
⁵ “Update on Settler Violence in the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem.”
this fundamentalist approach to the territories, there are diversities. Not all settlers engage in the same type of activity – most have never engaged in violence against a Palestinian neighbor – and thus disaggregating among types of settlement membership is key to understanding dynamics of violence in the territories.

In this focused within-case comparison, I evaluate the religious practice of settlement communities in Jerusalem, Hebron, Shiloh, Yitzhar, Itamar, Beit Shemesh, and Ariel, as well as talk to people throughout Israel in Galilee, Tel Aviv, Nazareth, and Herzliya. I compare how the practices of various settlements produce local indivisibilities within the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict that results in more intense, longstanding conflicts. Groups with members who have highly exclusive religious practices will approach a conflict environment with levels of indivisibly that are absent in groups with members who have more inclusive practices. The practices of interest, their variation in each community, and outcomes of interest are illustrated in Table 5.1. Similarly, Table 5.2 offers a Boolean summary of my theory contrasted with alternative explanations.

I focus on the intersection many types of practices which overlap and reinforce one another. As Table 5.1 notes, each group evaluated maintains (relative to entire universe of cases) a high composite score on the ERP index, and vary only slightly in dietary, prayer, and rites of passage. These are therefore bracketed for brevity and so as to focus on more salient aspects of the comparison. Rather than itemizing how each of the eight dimensions of practice function in order, I isolate three sets of salient practices that reinforce one another and that vary significantly between settlement communities examined. First, I unpack how a community understands, teaches and ritualizes
messianism and the kingdom of God. Second, I evaluate how group privilege and scriptural traditions reinforce one another to create open or exclusivist group dynamics. Third, I illustrate divergences in how each group engages in sacred space.

Table 5.1: Summary of Practices Observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Afterlife</th>
<th>Group P</th>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Dress</th>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Rites</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>DV-Inten</th>
<th>DV-Intran</th>
<th>DV-Resolve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.A</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Hilltop (8)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1.C</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2: Summary of Competing Explanations and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Exclusive Practice</th>
<th>Instrumentalist A: Relative Deprivation</th>
<th>Instrumentalist B: Low State Capacity</th>
<th>Constructivist</th>
<th>Outcome: Intensity</th>
<th>Outcome: Intransigence</th>
<th>Outcome: Resolve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.A West Bank Hilltop Youth Movement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.B Religious Zionist Settlers</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C Orthodox Settlers</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Group indivisibility can be observed in the causal mechanisms of 1) intragroup binding, 2) limited negotiation platforms, and 3) lengthened time-frames. Therefore, in addition to attention on the correlative connection between practice and violence dynamics, this chapter demonstrates the linking connections between the two. If I am correct, we should see three observable implications following from each of these causal mechanism.

First, practices forge intragroup binding between members that cause groups to fight more intensely. I expect that more exclusive practicing groups bind together around religious ritual, even though the conflict may be ostensibly secular. This explains how exclusivist groups perceive a struggle as inherently more indivisible and consequentially fight more intensely. I compare groups on their contribution to the intensity of conflict.
Unlike the large-N study which proxies for intensity using a 1,000 battle-death binary variable, this chapter evaluates patterns of increased violence outside of major war settings. For example, settler vigilantism is outside of the normal tactics used by the Israeli state, and indicates that some settlers are approaching the extant conflict with higher levels of intensity. The hypothesis follows:

H1: Settlers with more exclusive religious practices will fight more intensely than settlers in the same conflict environment with moderate or contested religious practices.

Second, groups with exclusivist membership will severely limit the acceptable actions of leadership, leading to lack of bargaining and general intransigence. Intransigence in the settlements is measured by community participation in negotiations to end the larger extant conflict. I hypothesize:

H2: Settlers with more exclusivist religious practices will be less inclined to negotiate than settlers in the same conflict environment with moderate or contested religious practices.

Third, I expect that lengthened time frames, forged by everyday practice and ritual, serve as the causal mechanism that inspires membership to push their organization to fight, even in the face of a “lost cause” or significant state repression. The dependent variable of resolve is evaluated by a group's willingness to go on with activity in the face of opposition. The hypothesis follows:
H3: Settlers with more exclusivist religious practices will show more resolve in violent opposition than settlers in the same conflict environment with moderate or contested religious practices.

These three hypotheses are unique observable implications of practice-based indivisibility theory. They contrast with alternative explanations from instrumentalist and constructivist scholars, which have their own observable implications. For example, if instrumentalist theory is correct, we should observe elites mobilizing hardline religious rhetoric to further some relative political or economic position. Stated as a contending hypothesis:

H4: Settler elites within a weak state, or with relative deprivation, will use extreme religious rhetoric to mobilize violent dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve to secure better social positions. Elites within a strong state or strong economic position will have less incentive to use religious rhetoric for violent social mobilization.

If constructivists theory is right, then the content of belief itself is the central explanation of violence dynamics. To state in a hypothesis:

H5: Settlers with extreme religious beliefs will have higher levels of intensity, intransigence and resolve in violent environments than settlers in the same environment without extreme beliefs.
The chapter proceeds in three main sections, each investigating a mini-case within the West Bank settler movement: the outpost settlers commonly known as the Hilltop Youth, religious Zionist settlers, and Ultra Orthodox or Haredi settlers. In each section, I engage in the following order of argument. First, I outline how the settlement operates as a community of practice. I isolate religious social practices as important constitutive factors of settlement identity. Second, I trace how exclusive practices create the causal mechanisms of cosmic binding, decision limiting, and time-frame extending, which produce violent conflict dynamics. Third, I discuss how the dependent variables of intensity, intransigence, and resolve are present or absent within a community. Each case draws upon direct participant observation, over 100 formal and informal interviews in East Jerusalem (Beit Shemesh, Givat Zeev, and Maale Adumim), Tel Aviv, Ariel, Hebron, Shiloh, Yitzhar, Bracha, and Itamar, as well as secondary source historical narrative.

After the substantive sections laying out my argument and evidence to support Hypothesis 1-3, I present and refute evidence of alternative instrumentalist and constructivist observable implications. The evidence suggests that neither hypothesis 4 or 5 can fully explain the variation observed in West Bank settlement communities. Concluding remarks outline counter-intuitive policy prescriptions based on the findings.

Case A: The Hilltop Youth

I pulled over on Highway 60 on route to Nablus. Precariously poised between the Israeli settlements of Bracha to the East, Yizhar to the West, and Itamar to the South, is
the village of Burin. The Palestinian town of less than 2,500 is poised in a valley, surrounded by over a dozen illegal outposts in the hills constructed by a group known as the Hilltop Youth. As I drove along, I noticed that streetlight after streetlight had Palestinian flags flying proudly. However, as Yitzhar became more clear in the distance, one of the green, red, and white national flags was torn down, replaced by another flag – the Black Standard.

As I took pictures of the black flag flying awkwardly – the flag was tied to the pole - a young man approached from across the street.

“You American?” He questioned. After I affirmed, he smiled and said “You Bush, or Obama?”

“Neither,” I said – “I'm Joel.” Pleased with this answer, my new friend asked if I wanted a car wash. Instead of a car wash, I asked to talk. Khalid and I spoke for an hour about the precarious situation of Burin. He regaled me with stories of men wearing white-knitted skull caps, throwing stones at his auto-body shop – once a customer was hit by a hail of stones. Surrounded by three of the most extreme settlements, he said Burin is becoming increasingly “like... Afghanistan... We are cut off from the world! Everywhere I go, I'm attacked, because of them. It is worse than war, and what are we supposed to do? Mostly, my friends are wanting to go to Nablus, farther away. But then what? Burin will be Jewish!” I asked Khalid if there was anything special about the settlements around him that distinguishes them from settlements like Ariel. “I don't know... I have never been to Ariel. But I know that these settlers are hard, they are fighters.” Are they
religious? “Well, they have the hair,” he said, making a curling motion in the place where side-locks would be. “And [...] all of them wear the caps, and all of them carry guns.”

Then, suddenly, Khalid looked at the time and grew uncomfortable. “You must go... I have friends coming and they would not like it you here.” I pressed: who are these guys and why wouldn't they like me? He wouldn't answer. Then it occurred to me that his auto-shop stood across from the Black Standard that originally caused me to pull over to the side of the road.

“Do you know who put up that flag?”

“Yes, we did.”

I tried to stick around to meet Khalid's friends and talk to them, but he insisted that I leave. Unfortunately, as I tried to leave Burin, I got lost. With no map of the town and no GPS signal, I ended up making three loops around the town, each time passing Khalid's shop. The first time I drove by, Khalid was greeting 8-10 men, and they all peered icily at me as I slowed down to observe from my car with a “Thrifty” logo and Israeli plates. I drove by a second time and all the men stopped talking. I began to become afraid when I realized that in order to find my way back to the highway, I would need to drive by Khalid's friends again. As I approached, all the men (including Khalid) began picking up stones and rocks. Most of the shots missed - my car was small. But as I sped away, one large rock hit the rear window, leaving a giant crack.

My argument, illustrated in this strange exchange with a man who was probably a supporter of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, is that there are important generational differences between the settlers. According to the new settlers on the hills: “The Holocaust survivors
are the slave generation in Egypt, the Gush Emunim generation is the desert generation, and Hilltop Settlers are the generation that conquers the land.”⁷ Hilltop youth, as they are known, are in many ways reclaiming the mantel of Joshua and the divine mandate of ethnic cleansing.⁸

These differences are, I claim, about the degree of exclusivity in religious practice. The level of exclusivity of their daily routine, frames and undermines their trust in fellow citizens and the Israeli government.⁹ This young generation – teenagers really – has cut association with the second generation settler elite and often times are devotedly against the religious Zionists that engage in moderate practices, which I discuss below in Case B. The Outpost settlers are anti-Gush Emunim, anti-Jewish Home, and anti-Yesha Council – they are the fringe of the religious right that rejects the very institutions that promote settlement in the West Bank. The youngsters live a life that rejects the easy, bourgeoisie life of settlements like Ariel, Itamar, and East Jerusalem.¹⁰ The division between the outpost generation and their parents is found in their innovative poaching of Ultra Orthodox rejection of the the modern nation-state, in combination with emphasis 1) messianism and settlement as afterlife ritual, 2) extraordinary practices of group privilege, 3) textual exclusivism, and 4) a new, more exclusive practice of sacred space.

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⁸ Deuteronomy 20:16-18

⁹ Susskind et al., “Religious and Ideological Dimensions of the Israeli Settlements Issue: Reframing the Narrative?,” 175.

This third generation is as exclusivist and allergic to secularism as their Ultra Orthodox counterparts and more messianic than their religious Zionist parents. I outline each of these shifts in practice below, followed by a discussion of causal mechanisms linking the practices to violent outcomes.

*Practices*

This section traces how exclusivist practices within the Hilltop communities set them apart from both the Ultra Orthodox and their religious Zionist parents. Surprisingly, I found that there is a new overlap between the Hasidic rejection of the state and the messianic vision of the Zionists that has cultivated a distinct new type of religious extremist in the Outposts. These settlers simultaneously promote Jewish presence in Palestine, but reject the authority of the Israeli state. The importing of Hasidic suspicion of the state and the economy acts to unhinge deeply problematic religious Zionist beliefs. While mainstream religious Zionists have extreme beliefs, their daily practice and ritual comes nowhere close to the messianism, group privilege, textual exclusivity, and sacred space that are engaged in by the Outposts.

I sat at a bar in Tel Aviv late one night after a day in the territories. I struck up a conversation with a fellow patron who, upon learning of my interest in settlers said,

“It's like, I cannot believe what they say, because they targeted my brother. They threw rocks at my brother, who is in the IDF, protecting THEM! They can go to the territories and build all they want, but why do
they have to drag the IDF there? And then they don't even appreciate being protected! They blame the IDF for not helping them burn down mosques. Like they were better Jews. You know? It is, at its heart, a very selfish Judaism, it is selfish and self-obsessed."

“Exclusive in how they do things?” I asked.

“Exclusive! Ha, yes! That is a word for it. It is totally and completely secluded from the real world.”

1. Messianism

Messianism of the Outpost Settlements differs in important ways from others. The Hilltop Youth are both messianic and self-referential in their role of materially bringing about the messiah. One older settler, referencing the secular Zionism of Jabotinsky remarked “we are the revisionist revisionists.”12 By this he meant that while the revisionists were secular Zionists committed to liberating the entire land of Eretz Yisrael (“from both banks of the Jordan”), the “revisionist revisionists” take the same aim, but from a messianic stance.13 In this formulation, the practice of taking the land itself is a fulfillment of prophesy that has very little to do with military or political power, but the spiritual power of the act of settlement itself.

11 Tel Aviv Interview 6, May 27, 2014.

12 Yoel, Interview with Shilo Settler Yoel, June 11, 2014.

The idea of the Hilltop Youth being “the Joshua generation” comes with unique messianic meaning. By this I mean that Messianism only has meaning in the context of the Joshua ideal: to settle the land, violently if necessary. Joshua, after all, was given a direct command for ethnic cleansing, noted in Deuteronomy 20: 16-18:

“Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord your God.”

In this reading, settlement is a cleansing ritual necessary to usher in the coming of the Messiah. Messianism for the Hilltop Youth is thus not just an ideal about time and divinely inspired action. Rather, the promise of the Messiah is tied directly to the ritual action of “utterly destroying” those non-Jews dwelling in the land.

Furthermore, by settling in illegal areas, against state edict, Hilltop Youth are defying and disregarding the very agent that Religious Zionist sees as bringing the Messiah. According to one of the few studies of the Outposts, “The Hilltop Settlers believe Zionism [both secular and religious] is ended and there is a need for new goals. They are searching for a new train. They define democracy as a religion, which is contrary to the Jewish religion.”14 The alternative is the establishment of a Sanhedrin state, with rabbis as the executive, Torah as the foundation of law, and yeomen as the

citizenry. The core mission of this Sanhedrin theocracy would be to follow the blueprint set by the outposts: to take over all of the historical land of Israel, and live off of the land itself as worship to God. According to many in the hills, this action would bring about the promised messiah.

Remarkably, the Outpost groups reject the Zionist-led Yesha Council – the mouthpiece of settlements in Samaria, Judea, and Gaza. The phrase respondents used when talking about Yesha leadership was “Yotzim Leshe’elah” - which is to say heretical, or “those who have left.” In this framing, it is not the Hilltop Youth who have become more extreme, leaving the religious Zionist core, but the bulk of Zionists who have left the settler movement since they are not constantly seeking to cultivate the land itself, but merely believe in messianic concepts. Frequently, Outpost settlers derided Yesha, Jewish Home (and Bennett in particular) as being “bourgeoisie,” “from the coast,” and disconnected from the “real” settler movement. I was repeatedly told that HaBayit HaYehudi (Jewish Home), Likhud, and the religious parties “don't know what a real Arab looks like” - implying that their position in the West Bank gives unique legitimacy. The seemingly corrupt influence of politics, with its compromises and horse-trading, is absent in the Outposts. Evidence is in an official memorandum circulated around Hebron that “Collaborators within the mainstream settler movement” should also be targeted – especially those who were observant, but who still co-operated with policies to limit settlements. The document suggested targeting the Yesha Council offices in Beit El: “if they bulldoze our homes, we'll bulldoze their office. That corrupt body must be revealed
for what it is: an aggressive, conquering force.” I found the rejection of the mainstream settlement movement to be very strong among my respondents based on their understanding of “correct” messianic practice. In Itamar, an Outpost builder referenced Deuteronomy 17:14 in talking about Yesha and the Israeli government: “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me’.” His point was that Israel, to be a truly messianic state, must reject the pull to “be like the nations around them” and flatly reject anything except halachic law and the quest to build more settlements in historical Israel.

In sum, the state and even mainstream settlement activities are not the principle agents of the Messiah. Rather, it is in the isolated, remote hills of Palestine that sacred activities take place which honor the Messiah-readying ritual of Deuteronomy – to settle the land and drive out all of the prior inhabitants, making the path clean for the Messiah.

2. Group Privilege and Textual Exclusivity

The Hilltop Youth practice a very exclusivist version of groupism, far more extreme than that of either the Ultra Orthodox or religious Zionist settlers. They are more exclusive in two ways. First, membership within Judaism is restricted to those actually engaged in settling the land. This practice of group privilege results in a full abandonment of the Israeli state as a legitimate representative of their interests. This means that Hilltop Youth are solely accountable to themselves and not dependent on

mainstream politics for their survival, leading to deepened isolation. Second, the theological core of these settlements goes much further than religious Zionists or Ultra Orthodox in that they reject the basic humanity of non-Jews. And since they are the only “real” Jews, the Outpost's extremely exclusivist scriptural tradition leads to sanctioning crimes against both Arabs and Israelis who they consider less than human.

On first sight, Itamar seems more like a hipster collective than extremist violence hub. I fit in with my skinny-jeans and taste for craft coffee. Almost everyone in Itamar was my age, and I was even given music recommendations for an Orthodox hipster band. Respondents in Itamar repeatedly told me how I had been eating their organic fruits and vegetables in Tel Aviv – they are indeed one of the largest producers of organic produce in the country. Each settler had their own tales of being a part of building teams – rebuilding shacks on privately-owned Palestinian land, taken down by the IDF. Even in dress, the Hilltop Youth are highly differentiated: in the settlement community of Itamar, Yitzhar, and Kiryat Arba, the beards and sidelocks are much longer than in the city. The Youth have a fervor that can be even be seen in intimate rights of passage like weddings and bar mitzvahs. For example, I was told of how the wedding of a Hebron Hilltop leader's son recently made national news because of the threats made to Palestinians and violence even reflected in the ceremony. A video produced by a local Israeli TV station documents the Hilltop leader threatening to kill any Arab found at the wedding. In the festivities after the ceremony, dozens of teenagers danced with knives singing together “Kahane Tzadak! Kahane Tzadak!” (Kahane lives! Kahane lives), rejoicing over their

continuation of the far-right leader's advocacy of ethnic cleansing and forced removal of Palestinians. While Kahane's racist rhetoric and sanction of ethnic cleansing are dutifully embraced by the Outposts, unlike Kahane who ran for office in the Kach party, the Hilltopers see themselves as separate from the rest of Israel. For them, it is settling on the sacred space of Eretz Yisrael that serves as a litmus test for being authentically Jewish. As Pedahzur and Perliger state, while

“the principles of the Hilltop Youth can be regarded as a further radicalization of the Kahanist ideology...Whereas the Kahanist movement operated from within Israeli society and Israel's political system and by the same token rejected revolutionary sentiments, the Hilltop Youth are implementing their worldview by creating isolated communities completely detached from the state authorities and mainstream culture.”

Rabbi Yair Dryfus, a household name in the Outpost settlements, remarks on the new pro-settlement, post-Zionist trend:

“The true Jews, desirous to live as Jews, will have no choice but to separate themselves in ghettos. The new, sinful Canaanite-Palestinian state (referring to Israel after Oslo) will soon be established upon the ruins of the genuine Jewish-Zionist state. It will not be, as Israel was expected to become by being true to the word of God, a foundation of God's throne on earth. God may even make war against this polluted throne of his. The Jews who lead us into that sin no longer deserve any divine protection. We must fight those who separated themselves from the true Israel, not just its present government. Our cooperation with its agencies can only be based upon new covenant. Without it, we are going to surrender supinely to a government of sin. Instead of doing so, we shall pursue a merciless struggle against the Canaanite-Palestinian entity.”


18 Pedahzur and Perliger, Jewish Terrorism in Israel, 114. Emphasis mine.
Like the Ultra Orthodox, the Hilltop Youth have no faith in the state as a vehicle of proper Judaism and “instead, they see it as an obstacle to God's will.”

This is reinforced in a conversation I had in Itamar with a young settler who regularly helps build (and rebuild) Outposts:

“The state and Torah are not the same,” he said. “This is where we come down. We come down on the side of Torah, Torah's Land, Torah's People.”

I pressed him further, as he was clearly not Hasidic from his dress: “But do people like Avri Ran (a patron of Hilltop Youth) agree that the state is not to be respected – they are not anti-Zionists.”

“Not anti-Zionist, but they understand how the (Israeli) state is no better than a gentile (state). The state has as much value as any other state – and no spiritual authority.”

I pressed with a hypothetical, “What if a Rabb asked you to leave for the sake of peace?”

“That would not be my Rabbi. Peace is nothing if not Kadush Hashem [pleasing to God] and my family here is Kadush Hashem,” he said.

“But some rabbis in Shas and in Yahadut ha'Torah are interested in bargaining with Palestinians,” I said. I went on to talk about how even the

19 Shahak, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, 89.

Religious Zionist parties had conceded the Sinai area after the Six Day War.

“Let them. They can bargain in Tel Aviv. We will stay here. Right here.”

This sentiment aligns with Yitzhar's' radical Rabbi Yitzak Ginsburgh, who has called for a revolutionary replacement of the Israeli government with a theocracy ruled by a Sanhedrin council: “The secular basis of Israel must be changed,” and he has called for a "new Jewish country" under which halacha would replace Israeli civil law.”

However, this new Sanhedrin state does not follow the same rabbinical tradition as the Ultra Orthodox. Rabbis Ginsburgh (Nablus), Lior (Hebron), Shapiro (Yitzhar) and almost every other spiritual leader in the Outpost movement are a small, but vocal, minority within Kaballah neo-orthodoxy. The basic tenets follow a subset of Kabbalah literature in the Zohar (a collection of Torah interpretations) that describes the people of Israel, as occupying a higher metaphysical plane than Gentiles. The writings of Mendel Schneerson, famed Lubovitch Rabbi, for example, often frame the purpose of creation itself as the making of the Chosen People, not of humanity as a whole. Schneerson explains, “Two contrary types of souls exist, a non—Jewish soul comes from three Satanic spheres, while the Jewish soul stems from holiness.” In later writings he says, that this “is the general difference between Jews and non-Jews: A Jew was not created as a means for some [other] purpose; he himself is the purpose, since the substance of all

21 Itamar Interview Number 2, June 9, 2014.

[divine] emanations was created only to serve the Jews... a non-Jew's entire reality is only vanity. It is written, “and strangers shall stand and feed your flocks.” It is in this extreme practice of group privilege that all of creation exists only for the sake of Jews.

Esteemed among the Haredi, many of Schneerson's writings are used (out of context) as the foundational interpretive framework for preferring Outpost settlement groups above other types of Jews. Scripture taught through the lens of exclusivity orients communities toward accepting dehumanization of both secular Jews and Palestinian neighbors. Referring to Schneerson regularly, Outpost leader Ginsburgh emphasizes the “cosmic otherness” of non-Jews as a means to disregard crimes committed against them. In Ginsburgh's strange mixture of Schneerson Kabbalah and messianism, the Outpost leader has said that every non-Jew is the “embodiment of Satanic forces” and therefore, killing non-Jews is Kadush Hashem (pleasing to God) when they threaten the territory of God. Ginsburgh has additionally testified in an Israeli court after dozens from his yeshiva rampaged through Nablus and shot a 13-year-old Palestinian girl, declaring: “It should be recognized that Jewish blood and a goy's blood are not the same ... Any trial that assumes that Jews and goyim are equal is a travesty of justice.”

The Outpost settlers rely heavily on a small, isolated group of rabbis who each emphasize settlement as a principal mitzvah for the Jewish people. I spoke to a former

23 Shahak, Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel. p.
24 Ibid., 58.
leader in the IDF and asked if the Hilltop believe themselves as role-models in Israel. He responded,

“I’m not sure. Maybe this is in some way some sort of avant-garde that will eventually lead the way, but I’m not sure they are even…I’m not very familiar with their writings and how they explain…they have their own rabbis, which, you know, legitimize to some extent. They are very insular. Also they are afraid that they may be infiltrated by the Shabak, so they very suspicious.”

The reliance on a select group of rabbis to assist in everyday rituals and yeshiva training is a distinctive element of Hilltop practice. In the Ultra Orthodox community, students are separated from broader life – their religious schools do not teach basic language or mathematics. They are however given a wide range of rabbinical and interpretive frameworks to master. In the hills, there are actually high schools that teach “extracurricular” activities, including basic language, math, and skills. However, the content of the religious instruction is what remains problematic. While the Ultra Orthodox are studying minute details of multiple rabbinical traditions, yeshivot in the hills of the West Bank present students with a limited textual tradition. Just as I asked in orthodox communities, in each West Bank settlement I went to, I asked for respondents

26 SUBJECT 702_0016, May 27, 2014, 702.

to tell me who should be Chief Rabbi of Israel. Many sorts of answers emerged. There were overwhelmingly diverse opinions within the Jerusalem suburbs, ranging dozens of sects, to “I don't care.” Orthodox respondents would sit in contemplative silence and then offer several names, often debating with themselves why one Haredi rabbi might be a better leader than another based on discrete nuances of rabbinical interpretation. But in the hills, the range of names was significantly fewer. Respondents overwhelmingly said Ginsburgh, Shapiro, and Levinger. One young man in Kiryat Arba, who apparently didn't speak English, upon hearing the translation of my question about who should be Chief Rabbi of Israel, jokingly remarked, “Rabbi Baruch Goldstein” - the infamous mass murderer of Hebron.28

I approached a former IDF commander about the belief systems of Jewish terrorists, and asked which beliefs might be especially violent. His response was revealed how problematic it is for these groups to rely on a few narrow-minded rabbis:

“My concerns, yeah, interesting. I am not as concerned about the group then about the insider. About the Rabbi, the power of the Rabbi. So like this guy who is mentioned a lot, Ginsburgh, uhm, or the guy from Kiryak Arba (Lior) who is, I mean these are just racists and there is just no, they are just violent racists and they they have a group that listens to them, so they have a community in those settlements. The name of settlement … Yitzhar, is the most radical and has been for years, the most radical

settlement in the West Bank. They are just violent. They are Jewish terrorists and they would behoove the Prime Minister to define as terrorists, go arrest them, prosecute them, put them in jail. Just like as if they are Palestinian terrorist, you know? And they are clearly, I don’t know what the word religious zealot means, but for me they are religious extremists who are convinced by the insider, this guy Ginsburgh, to go act against uh Palestinians, Palestinian Arabs, Palestinian Christians, and I know there was great concern on when the Pope was here last week, right?"**29**

The social role of the rabbi is quite clearly present, illustrated in the above section on group privilege and reading of sacred texts – the rabbis in these communities are cornerstones enforcing and promulgating particularly rigid social practices.**30**

This myopic exclusivity of group privilege and sacred text means that the Outpost Settlements are less constrained by moderate scriptural or rabbinical tradition and more likely to approach conflict with Palestinians through a very limited scope of actions that make sense within their field of practice. In fact, Ginsburgh has taught his followers that thinking through how to best act towards gentiles is in itself problematic. Instead, Ginsburgh has spiritualized “impulsive revenge,” where the “simple Jew” - not the

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29 Subject 702_0013, May 29, 2014

30 This is not to say however, that the charismatic leadership is the causal factor. Rather, as I make the case in Chapter 2, practices are sites of social power, not individual power. The effect of a charismatic leader is thus as the model of practice – as Bobby Flay is for many cooks – and as the enforcer of community codes. Practices must be in place in order for the individual leader to have social legitimacy.
learned scholar – is the best representative of God in Eretz Yisrael. The argument, which is reflected in the lifestyles of the Hilltop Youth, is that Halakhic discipline can be overburdening and confusing. As one scholar of Ginsburgh's theology writes:

“Ginsburgh praises the actions of Shimon and Levi in murdering every male in the town in which their sister Dinah was raped. They acted, he says, from an urge of the heart to restore family honor, a natural impulse of 'blessed wrath'. The biblical passage in question makes no reference to God, nor is it suggested that the entire town was guilty. The focus is the honour of, and devotion to, the Jewish family.”

Thus, the most pure form of Judaism (not that heady Yeshiva stuff), is found in the “rage” of common everyday life within the settlements. 'The vengeance the Jews are expected to take is, according to him, not simply a personal act but God's revenge.' He goes on to call for Jewish violence against Palestinians since, “A Jewish fist in the face of an astonished Gentile world that had not seen it for two millennial, this is Kiddush Hashem'.

Living a life as “a simple Jew” was a common theme in from respondents in the West Bank. The message is indeed compatible with the Yeoman lifestyle, where one is rewarded with spiritual blessing for producing vegetation from the land, not from halachic study as in Ultra Orthodox settlements. Leah Goldstien, a leader in Itamar, emphasizes this approach to the land: “we're actually making prophesy come true by digging this rich land that was blessed and given to Joseph – he was given a double blessing – his earth is fertile two-fold, so that we are turning rocks and sand into

31 Satherley, “‘The Simple Jew.’”


33 Sprinzak, Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics From Altalena to the Rabin Assassination.
productive farms." The action of settlement is thus the fulfillment of scripture, truly a practice unique to the Outposts, not found in any other type of settlement.

3. A More Sacred Space

While Gush Emunim and even the far more confrontational Kach were proponents of military service and political activism, the post-Oslo generation of settlers has shown itself to be far more insular and suspicious of the state. For instance, I stood in a small market in Itamar – a large illegal settlement outside of Nablus – and spoke with a group of settlers, one of whom recently immigrated from America. “We don't do politics,” he said. “We don't read newspapers. I came here after doing all that in America, and then the Yesha Settlements. I've had enough of speculation and enough politics. We are here to work the land.”

The root of this frustration is directly linked to the Gaza disengagement, which the Hilltop Youth see as giving away sacred land. While a majority of Israelis - “traditional Jews” - see the Temple Mount and other Jerusalem holy sites as sacred, the Hilltop Youth practice a Judaism which treats the entirety of Eretz Yisrael as holy ground. As reported by a Hilltop sympathizer in Bar Ilan,

“I think the main thing is the connection to the land, to the Israeli … to the … what it … what is the land of Israel. There are some who are willing to


35 Itamar Interview Number 1, June 9, 2014.
… I forgot the word … who are willing to give some territories, and not seeing that is something which is wrong. And there are some (pointing to himself) who are willing to die for the territory.”36

The differences in how the Hilltopers treat the land is a main fault-line between them and everyone else. The disengagement from Gaza provided the impetus for the “new,” post-Zionist national-religious generation to claim the ant-state rhetoric employed by Torah authorities in the Ultra Orthodox community. Thus, the main fracture between even the extreme religious Zionists and the Hilltop Youth is the abandonment of the state as a vehicle of holy-land redemption. No longer would serving in the military or running for office be a holy quest, and instead, living as an isolated community in Eretz Yisrael would become the highest calling of a “simple Jew.”

Nowhere is the emphasis on the entire land of Israel as “holy” more stark than in the small outpost settlement of Hebron. I arrived in Hebron via shared taxi from Nablus – a much easier and safer journey than it would have been had I driven in my Israeli-plated rental car. The city itself is divided into two districts one Palestinian and much smaller Jewish enclave in the Old City. In the H1 market I spoke to 12 Palestinians who each had their own story about the knitted-skull cap “regime” in H2. Several told me of their families being stoned and their houses set on fire around the Outpost settlement of Kiryat Arba or Gi’vat Harisna. After the hustle and bustle of the Palestinian H1, the transition to H2 was alarming. I entered the old city through an alleyway blocked by concrete and a

36 Subject 702_0019, June 19, 2014.
trailer position in the middle of the road – a low tech DMZ. I was immediately struck by
the desolation of H2. The former downtown lay utterly empty and a mere 40 families are
said to live in an area that used to occupy thousands. The isolation of the settlement is a
physical representation of the exclusion of religious practice.

The rabbi affiliated with Hebron, Kiryat Arba and Givat Harsina Hilltop
movement is Dov Lior, a notorious thorn in the side of the mainstream religious Zionist
movement. My visit to Hebron coincided with the abduction and killing of three young
Hasidic men, an event that spiraled into the 2014 Gaza conflict known as “Operation
Protective Edge.” Lior claimed the kidnapping was God’s punishment for “anti-religious”
legislation pushed by the Likhud Knesset, and for Israel’s willingness to abandon Judea
and Samaria.37 The same claim was made by Lior early in his career, arguing in 1982 that
Israel's failure in the invasion of Lebanon was due to “giving the inheritance of our
ancestors [Sinai] to strangers.”38 The solution, according to Lior and the Hilltop Youth to
whom he is called “Chief Rabbi,” is is to “cleanse the country of Arabs and resettle them
in the countries where they came from.”39

May 14, 2015, http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/rav-dov-lior-abduction-was-divine-
punishment/2014/06/19/.

38 Shahak, Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel, 66.

39 Dov Lior, “Dov Lior Facebook Page,” 2007. “Unfortunately, we are witness to a severe decline in the
government's dealings with the Jewish character of the state… There has been a spate of new laws
whose common denominator is the undermining of the Jewish quality of our public life, including harm
to the family structure, harm to the procedures for conversion according to the Torah, and an attempt to
dilute the requirement that the convert observe Torah and keep the mitzvot and other laws. The goal of
these laws is to blur the distinctiveness of the nation of Israel and make it like all the gentile nations."
For the Outpost settlers, following the lead of Lior and Ginsburgh who pull heavily from Hasidic tradition, there is no redemption in simply participating in the statehood of Israel. The “normal assimilation” that Ben Gurion visioned for the state is downright off-putting for these groups. Redemption for them is not found in assimilation but in the uniqueness of the land itself – in the digging, planting, taming, harvesting of Eretz Yisrael. The young settlers are devoted to tilling the dust of the West Bank as farmers and yeomen – contrasted to the middle class Zionists of Israel and the non-working Ultra Orthodox.

The practice I noted as unique in Itamar, Hebron, Kiryat Arba, and in the language of Outpost supporters is the elevation of the settlement of the entire Promised Land to a 'positive commandment.' In Judaism, a positive commandment indeed demands everyday action and lifestyle of observance. According to a settler who's brother helped found Hill 777 outside if Itamar, settlement is “a mitzvah to supersede all other lifestyles” and “life in Eretz Yisrael is the heart of all the Torah.” In addition to the edicts of Lior, Ginsburgh has said that the duty to settle Eretz Yisrael was a 'practical and unambiguous commandment' - for all Jews, and for all time.

In contrast with their parent's generation which named settlements after biblical cities (e.g., Shiloh), Hilltop communities springing from Itamar are named simply “Hill 782” or “Hill 777,” founded as an offshoot from the main settlement. When I asked why just numbers are used, a settler from Itamar said this was to emphasize how all the land is

40 Itamar Interview Number 1.
41 Satherley, “‘The Simple Jew.”’
Jewish, not just the ones with Biblical names. This further emphasizes that while rhetoric is important, it cannot capture the intricacies necessary to fully understand how settlement communities are constituted. The banal naming of Outposts illustrates that it is not in the mantle of belief that grants legitimacy to a settlement. Rather, it is in the act itself that Eretz Yisrael is restored and sanctified.

One of the most stark displays of dispositional exclusion was found through simple observation. In almost every community I visited, I was able to witness the saying of the Shema by the observant. The Shema is the most foundational and frequently said prayer in Judaism. It is the prayer that most children learn first, and sections are often the scripture that the Ultra Orthodox place in boxes and tie to their body. The prayer seemed to follow me as I moved from community to community, congregants joining together at breakfast and at dusk in a sing-song, “Shema Yisrael Adonai eloheinu Adonai ehad.” The Shema is said every day, multiple times, serving to create a practice-dispositional menu for congregants. Two distinctions between communities stuck with me as I observed this practice over 20 times. In Beit Schemesh and Jerusalem, I observed how the Haredim frequently kissed the tzazit fringes they wore, which I learned later was to symbolize one's love for Torah and God's Law. The Haredim also said the prayer sitting, in the position of study. While some in the Outpost settlements did this, it was not as uniform as within the Orthodox community – indeed few held their tzazit and many stood. Instead, in both Hebron and Itamar, I witnessed the tonal emphasis placed on a part of the prayer that was not present in Haredim communities. While saying the prayer at normal volume

42 Itamar Interview Number 2.
through the first several stanzas, many would begin shouting, lifting their voice at the stanza, “L'ma'an yirbu y'maychem vi-y'may v'naychem al ha-adamah asher nishba Adonai la-avotaychem latayt lahem ki-y'may ha-shamayim al ha-aretz.” I was so startled at the difference in approach to the same foundational prayer, I asked for a translation of part that was so loudly emphasized. In English the settlers were emphasizing, “In order to prolong your days and the days of your children on the land that the Lord promised your fathers that he would give them, as long as the days that the heavens are over the earth.”

Mechanisms of Indivisibility

The violence within the settlements is a conflict at the intersection of sacred space, textual exclusivity, group privilege, and messianic zeal. Together, these practices produce actors that are constituted with ritualized group binding, narrowed menus of negotiability, and extended time frames. These mechanisms of indivisibility, in turn, produce elevated intensity, intransigence, and resolve.

1. Binding

It is the practice of remote, isolated living in itself that binds Outpost Settlers together over their cosmic struggle to bring about the messiah. This means that Hilltop Youth are solely accountable to themselves and not dependent on mainstream politics for their survival strategies. Furthermore, teachings of exclusivism by fringe rabbis bind groups together with cosmic identities, making protecting and fighting for one's group a sacred act akin to protecting the Divine itself. Finally, the core element of Hilltop
practices, in messianism, textual interpretation, group privilege, and notions of sacred space, is that of the settlement itself. Settling is a holy endeavor that embodies the essence of Judaism. For one to be judged by others as competent at the religion – the essence of social practice – one must practice their religion in particular ways. In the Hilltops, settlements are the site of social formation and social binding through ritual. Group binding is an observed causal mechanism that should thus produce elevated intensity in this case.

2. Limited Platforms For Negotiation

Exclusive interpretation of text and reliance on so few rabbinical sources is a troubling development in the hilltop outposts. Settlers in the outposts entirely delegitimize mainstream Hasidic, conservative, or modern Orthodox interpretive frameworks. This means that Hilltop Youth are unlikely to back any sort of leadership that does not meet a litmus test of exclusivity – practicing such exclusivity is, as argued in Chapter 2, a barometer of social competence in these communities. Thus, to maintain legitimacy within a community, a leader must maintain a narrow and limited menu of acceptable engagements with the outside world. One such example is the fractionalization of the far-right movement in the 2015 elections. Dov Lior and many Outpost rabbis defected from Jewish Home to support the Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Strength) party. Many consider this party the intellectual heir of the Kach Party and it is solely supported by the Outpost community. In the 2015 elections, Otzma Yehudit received only about 9,000 votes (from Yitzhar, Hebron, and other outposts hubs), far under the threshold to place a representative in the Knesset. Nevertheless, the explicit
goal of the new party was to punish the right-leaning Likhud and Jewish Home coalition for engaging in peace talks in 2014.

Despite assurances from security elite in Israel, I found very little evidence that the political elite were doing anything to quell the upsurge of Outpost building advances. Instead, it seems as if the members of Outposts are pushing their leadership further and further towards indivisibility, as evidenced by the splintering of Otzma Yehudit Party from the mainstream religious Zionist parties. The most profound example is the political evolution of Neftali Bennett, who claims to represent the Outpost settlements. A major in the IDF reserve, Bennett was questioned directly if he would follow an army order to evacuate a Hilltop Settlement, or if he would rather be held in contempt. After displaying his unease with the question, it came out that he would indeed go to jail and refuse to follow orders.43 After an uproar from Israeli’s moderate center, Bennett later said that all soldiers must obey orders, and reiterated his position that soldiers should not be ordered to ever evacuate Jewish land.44

The overlapping practices of textual interpretation and group privilege also also inherently limit the bargaining ability of leadership by dehumanizing all outside of the cohort, making negotiating with them insulting and demeaning. Limited platforms of


negotiation are an observed causal mechanism that should thus produce reduced bargaining in this case.

3. Lengthened time frames

The practices outlined above lead to higher levels of resolve, as giving up against “satanic forces” (those outside the Outposts) puts members in danger of relinquishing ground to evil. I found the logic of re-building Outposts after IDF dismantling to be deeply rooted in an understanding of the entirety of the land as sacred, relating to expanded practices of sacred space. A leading settlement advocate explained, “these youth are simply making life difficult for those who desecrate the land that God gave us... and to make it impossible to give up the land of the Messiah.”45 The resolve to stay in the land – despite serious opposition from one's own government – is directly related to practices of sacred space. The above remark indicates that prolonged time-frames result from exclusivist spacial practices in both past and future directionalities. On the one hand, the land is connected to a deep sense of divine history. God gave the land to his people and settlement honors that historical, divine right. On the other hand, the land is connected to divine future - “the land of the Messiah.” Settlement thus honors the promise of the messiah's coming, and indeed ushers his arrival along.

Within this framework, the basic practice of settlement reveals two of the theorized causal mechanisms linking settlement and violence. The emphasis on the sacred space of the West Bank simultaneously cosmically binds settlers together with the

45 Yisrael Medad, Interview with Yisrael Medad in Jerusalem, June 11, 2014.
mission of Joshua, Elijah, and the future messiah, while elongating the time frame for action. With extended time horizons stretching back and forth indefinitely, group suffering in the present is disregarded as insignificant, trivial, temporary, or even honored as a necessary step to some eventual paradise. Extended time frames are an observed causal mechanism that should thus produce elevated resolve in this case.

Outcomes

1. Intensity

The Palestinian areas around the Outpost settlements operate within a much more intense environment. This is due largely to the expansion of extralegal violence known as the Price Tag campaign. Just days before I arrived in Israel to begin field work, the Deir Rafat Monastery in Palestine was attacked, ransacked, and tagged with the words, ‘Jesus is an ape and Mary is a cow.’ The Price Tag campaign generally refers to an opponent paying a “price” for an event that settlers dislike. A ‘tag’, is commonly left in graffiti as a signature and warning at vandalized sites, to indicate that the act is the price to be paid for the government's transgressions; hence the appellation. In an anonymous May 2011 interview with the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth, a leader in the movement explained

“One evening, about three years ago, a few people sat in a small settlement in Samaria [the northern West Bank] and looked for a solution.


47 Satherley, “The Simple Jew.”
The IDF would demolish settlement Outposts without a response, because people simply weren't able to reach the [sites slated for] evacuation. So for these people, who did not have the privilege to oppose the demolition, the concept of "mutual responsibility" was born that evening, and later on, the media decided to call it the "price tag."\textsuperscript{48}

The goal is to simultaneously deter government-led construction freezes and gradually "force Arabs out of holy areas"\textsuperscript{49} a project that many have labeled as ethnic cleansing.\textsuperscript{50} Vandalism and violence most often target Palestinians and their property, but recently the homes of Jewish public figures and IDF facilities have also fallen victim.

The rise of threats to mainstream religious Zionist settler leaders (Yesha Council) and Orthodox communities in Biet Shemesh and East Jerusalem is particularly surprising. The Yesha Council, Haredi, and religious Zionist leaders have been accused by Outpost rabbis of being complicit in policies to uproot Jews from Eretz Yisrael such as enforcing settlement freezes in particular zones. While I was in the West Bank, a string of vandalism was reported within the religious Zionist settlement of Shiloh – due to Palestinian laborers working on new settlement homes.\textsuperscript{51} The message was clear: it is not enough to settle the land, one must make an effort to cleanse the area as Joshua did. One of my respondents in Shiloh, a leader in the Yesha movement, indicated that attacks rose


\textsuperscript{49} Medad, Interview with Yisrael Medad in Jerusalem.


as Shiloh leadership prohibited new Outposts from being built in the hills around them. Other settlement communities, such as Itamar, Yitzhar, and Hebron, have declined to reign in Outposts, perhaps explaining increases of vigilantism in those areas.

To further investigate the intensity of settler violence – violence outside the established conflict – I pulled over on the side of the road well outside of Ramallah, in the village of al-Mughayyeer, and had a cheese and lamb pie dinner at a roadside stand. The meal gave me occasion to speak to a family about settler violence. I learned later that this village outside of Ramallah was the target of a settler attack from the hills surrounding Itamar, a settlement affiliated with the Hilltop Youth. Beginning in 2003 and 2004, the sons and daughters of the religious Zionists in Itamar began to leave the Yesha sanctioned settlement to forge out on their own. These settlers build the equivalent of one or two bedroom shacks, designed to be built by a crew of 4-5 in less than 24 hours. The expansion of up to a dozen “Outposts” around Itamar corresponded to a huge spike in vigilantism and price tag attacks. As witnessed to by a victim, “In November, a group of Israeli settlers broke in and torched a mosque in the Palestinian village of al-Mughayyir near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. Witnesses said the settlers burnt 12 copies of the Qur’an, Islam’s holy book, and set the carpets of the first floor of the two-story building on fire. Racist slogans were also sprayed on the walls of the mosque.”

Finally, in Nablus, I heard a story of a Palestinian boy who attackers dragged naked by a mule until he lost consciousness. Witnesses claimed they saw 9-10 Israeli

teenagers, wearing knit-kippas and tzitzit attacking the boy, and left him to die after beating him. These are not one-off events, but designed to force Palestinians from neighboring lands and inflict intense levels of collective punishment. One of the main rabbis in Itamar – Rabbi Ronski, has publicly advocated for collective punishment:

“[they] must suffer as a village. A situation must be created whereby the inhabitants prevent anyone in this village from harming Jews. Yes, it is collective punishment. They must not be allowed to sleep at night, they must not be allowed to go to work, they must not be allowed to drive their cars. There are many ways.”

These kinds of violence are distinctly not a “normal” part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict environment, suggesting that perpetrators are engaging the conflict at a much more intense level than their neighbors.

2. Intransigence

The dynamic of intransigence is perhaps even more problematic in these communities. In 2014, as the United States and Secretary John Kerry embarked on an extensive diplomatic mission to reset peace talks between the Likud government and Palestinian Authority, a number of vigilante price tag attacks arose to directly challenge the proposed bargain. In March, directly after Kerry's visit, a site in Beit Shemesh was vandalized with an Israeli Star of David and the words 'America is Nazi Germany'.


54 Respondents in Biet Shemesh assured me that no Hasidic person would do this and that the perpetrators were from “the hills outside.” They indicated that the use of Haredim would never use an Israeli star. Beit Shemesh Interview 2, June 12, 2014.
bombings and other attacks on Palestinian cars were left with the tag ‘Price to pay for the peace agreement.’

Aside from price tags, settlers are intent on disturbing basic requirements for the peace talks to continue. The US has repeatedly said that a settlement freeze in the West Bank would be a crucial precondition to beginning talks. Hilltop activists are actively trying “to deter the Israeli government from construction freezes in the settlements and/or demolitions of unauthorized Outposts by retaliating with vandalism and sometimes violence.” In the long term, Outpost settlements are directly spoiling the peace process and building a deterrence against future peace deals in two ways. First, by continually sowing fears within the Palestinian population, they ensure that the government has no status to ensure violence would be curbed in the wake of a deal. Second, the Outpost settlements deter the Israeli government from acting boldly. Considering the spate of violence caused by just a handful of youth now, just think of the uncontrollable violence if a peace agreement committed to the removal of dozens of established settlements. These groups are fighting to spoil all hope for future peace.

3. Resolve

Outpost settlers also have greater resolve in conflict environments. Not only do Outpost settlements attack and degrade nearby Palestinian towns, the settlers regularly


56 Satherley, “‘The Simple Jew.’”
oppose IDF efforts to halt illegal settlements. In the face of overwhelming public and state backlash against their activity, the Hilltop Youth engage in “new building seemingly all the time.”  

There are many cases where the IDF has taken down settlements, just for them to crop back up hours or days later. Those Price Tag instances against IDF officers and bases are often committed concurrently or in response to the government forcing evacuation from illegal Outposts. In Hebron, I asked a settler from Kiryat Arba and Gi’vat Harsina about the tactics that target soldiers. His response was, “If there are attacks [on] Palestinians as a distraction for the IDF, this is a good tactic. I do no want Jews to be cruel to Jews, and [by attacking Palestinians] they might avoid IDF coming here, because they must go there.”

The largest such instance was the Biblically-named Outpost of Migron, which was evacuated by orders of the Supreme Court. Though the IDF built a new legal settlement a mere 500 meters away from the former village, local IDF bases were extensively vandalized and left with the tag “greetings from Migron.” I sat with the former civilian administrator of the West Bank – and the longest serving Israeli in enemy territory, who explained how group's resolve is heading to elevated danger. I asked, “Is there any concern about militant Jewish organizations?” He continued:

57 Josef, Interview with Hebron Settler A, June 9, 2014.

58 Itamar Interview Number 2.

“Yes, there is some. Today, it has become much more than in the past. Because now they are much more intensive. Uh, the government is currently dealing with it much more than in the past. But the government is explicitly fighting this phenomenon. It increased because they don't have responsibility, they don't know what are the limits that should be put and they could endanger our security.”

“Not knowing what the limits should be” (ie. attacking the IDF) is a dangerous element of sectarianization in the settlements.

In sum, the Hilltop Outposts in the West Bank are displaying heightened levels of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. The membership of the Outposts are pushing political leaders deeper into indivisibility. Unlike both Hasidic and Zionists discussed prior, there is very little indication that the Hilltop Youth have any other social ties to moderate membership's indivisibility.

Case B: Religious Zionists

Religious Zionists, who combine religion and nationalism, are far and away the largest group of settlers, and command top positions in the conservative Likhud and Jewish Home parties. While recently powerful, the trend is relatively new in Israeli politics, burgeoning after the 1967 War and coming of age after Oslo. After the opening of new frontier, post-1967 settlements became a principle vehicle for this project.

60 Subject z190, June 9, 2014.
Numerous settlement campaigns with religious-Zionist membership emerged – most prominent of which were the Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful, founded by Rabbi Kook) and the Yesha Council, whose mission is to represent the settlers and settlements of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, in the public political arena. The modern political movement of Jewish Home also advances a pro-settlement agenda based on religious-Zionism. All of these movements are examined below. A more radical, fringe group emerged in the Kach movement, led by Mier Kahane, which will be discussed in depth as well. I conducted field work in the religious Zionist settlement communities of Shiloh, Ariel, Bracha, Itamar, Hebron, in addition to interviews in Tel Aviv, Bar Ilan, Ra'anana, Galilee, Nazareth, Hertzilya, and Jerusalem.

Practices

In contrast to Haredim, religious Zionists at peace with modernity. Modern Orthodox Judaism – from which religious Zionists hail - is immediately distinguishable from Haredim in dress, which is modern except for the kippah prominently displayed on their heads. Even so, Religious Zionists “believe,” but do not always practice Halachic law from the same rabbinical sources as Haredim. The belief profile of religious Zionists is remarkably similar to that of the Hilltop Youth, but the main point of departure concerns the ways in which everyday life is lived. 61 I outline divergences in their messianic emphasis on the land (Afterlife), their relationship with the state and other Jews (Group Privilege and Textual Exclusivity), and the relationship of that democratic

61 Shahak, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*. p. 8

207
Jewish state the with land (Sacred Space). These divergences in practice are explored in order below.

1. Messianism

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook gave Religious Zionism a spiritual endorsement, regarding settlement in the Land of Israel as the beginning of “Redemption,” paving the way for the messianic age. Religious Zionists hold that all Jewish people should concentrate on bringing the Messiah into the world through the practice of settling the land under the “holy governance” of the the Jewish state. The 1967 war imbued the religious Zionists with a sense of inevitability and entirely changed the way that Judaism was practiced by a large swath of Zionists. For the Zionists, the 1967 war was a metaphysical transformation and Israeli conquests transferred land from the power of Satan to the divine sphere – the Six Day War supposedly proved that the “messianic era” had arrived. According to one observer, “religious thought and practice were messianic; politics, ritual, and, of course, rhetoric were charged with imminent redemption.”

Gush Emunim's call to expand into the newly “liberated” Eretz Yisrael fundamentally transformed observance in the Modern Orthodox communities. By elevating settlement to a participatory act of faithfulness to the Messiah, a community

62 Itamar Interview Number 2.

63 Shahak, Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel, 64

64 Susskind et al., “Religious and Ideological Dimensions of the Israeli Settlements Issue: Reframing the Narrative?,” 184.
was to not be judged just by keeping shabbat or kosher, but by the way their presence
drove out the Arabs to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Driving out non-Jews therein
became a central performative act of messianism. It is in the action - the daily practice of
settling the land – that God would restore Israel and reveal the Messiah. According to
Kahane, “the state of Israeli is in G-d's hands, that we are in the final messianic era... that
the Jewish state rose to sanctify G-d's name among the nations that mocked his name.”65

Throughout the West Bank settlements, the promise of the Messiah still hangs in
the air. The peace movement is derided as a satanic ploy to prevent the Kingdom of God.
And, while the language of “ushering in the Messiah” has mostly fallen by the wayside in
Likhud and Jewish Home's leadership, religious-Zionists are still “not willing to trade the
promise of the Messiah for a temporary peace.”66 Thus, participation in the settlement
movement is an everyday participation with God's divine purpose, a central practice
which produces virulent opposition to any peace deal that might give away the Messiah's
land.

Yet unlike the Hilltop Generation, the post Six Day War settlers have largely
remained inside of the main “Jerusalem Envelope” and Ariel settlements, which serve as
suburbs to more developed areas. Settling, while a key part of the messianic vision, is
only one element. Other elements of messianic practice include investing in the state and
the military.

65 Shahak, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, xiv.
66 Itamar Interview Number 1.
The relationship that religious-Zionists have with the state institution is far more central to their daily lives than it is for the Hilltop Youth. According to a religious Zionist settler, “every single man here takes their [military] duty very seriously.” Not only is every resident observant of Torah law and custom, every male participates in IDF reserve duty. The Hesder-yeshivot arrangements with the military allow for combat service while engaging in rabbinical studies – a luxury that almost every Zionist settler has taken advantage of. Another settler told me that this arrangement allows for him to be “really Jewish” even though he immigrated from the U.S. after aliyah. For the settlers in Itamar, the most authentically “Jewish” practices are those that further the Israeli state's control over territory. As with Kook, Kahane, and other Religious-Zionist teachings, the control of the historical land of Eretz Yisrael by the State is the fulfillment of prophesy that will usher in a new Kingdom of God.

This twin devotion to Talmud and the military is not without its detractors, both from secular and Orthodox sources. I interviewed a former IDF administrator in Herzliya, at a coffee shop. She told me,

“these are the people who show up once a month to Army – I know because I was IDF administrator for paychecks – they show up once a month and they get a paycheck for 300 shekels because they are

67 Ibid.
68 Itamar Interview Number 2.
extremists, and they have kids, and our taxes are paying for them to get a fat paycheck on us.”

Similarly, the turn to serving the state is a significant divide between Ultra Orthodox and religious Zionists. The late Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg, head of the Siah Yitzhak hesder yeshiva, castigates the generation attending religious-Zionist yeshiva high schools:

“The clash between the precepts of the Torah and values external to it has caused what I call a “permissive religious” concept. Religiosity as a real factor, as fervor and devotion [to God], is being discarded. What is left is the social connection, the affiliation with the folks in the knitted skullcaps. National Religious youth have become alienated from the Torah, due to the failure of their rabbis to effect the reversal that we spoke of above. This frequently leads to worse results: it makes people materialistic. For example, take a look at the percentage of hesder yeshiva graduates who enrich the faculties of law and economics in the universities. The failure to organize evening yeshivas for hesder yeshiva graduates is proof of this. At best, the Torah just doesn’t interest them.”

Even the most virulent wing of Gush and the Kach consistently argued that the State is divinely-mandated and a version of God's Kingdom on Earth – a stand in for the Messiah. For the Ultra Orthodox this seemed like utter abandonment of Judaism - substituting Western law in place of halachic observance. But for the religious Zionists I spoke to, the State of Israel is not a replacement of Torah, but a fulfillment of God's promise to the Jewish people. Participating in the state, such as serving in the IDF and

69 Hertzliya Coffee Shop Interview, June 9, 2014.

running for office, is thus a religious practice that assists God in setting Israel apart from the world. The emphasis on the role of the state in everyday life is a core element of how religious Zionists construct their messianic vision: The state is the fulfillment of God's unique commitment to Israel and to participate in that state is a practice “kadush Hashem” - pleasing to God.

2. Group Privilege and Textual Exclusivity

In the settlements I visited, I found wide variation in scriptural interpretation and demarcations of in-groups and out-groups. While all that I interviewed in the religious Zionist community were concerned with generally advancing settlements, their commitment was obviously in expanding the footprint of the Israeli state, not their own Yeshivas or farms. Thus, quite unlike the Outposts, practices of groupism and textual exclusivity are not paramount in broader Zionist settlements. Rather, religious Zionists cast a very wide tent in terms of representing all types of Jews – from orthodox to Haredi to traditional and secular, the Zionist movement is far more inclusive in who is allowed to participate in the movement. The litmus test for competent inclusion in the group is largely just a commitment to Jews living in Eretz Yisrael and serving the purposes of the state.

Largely until the war of 1967, Israel's liberal and secular labor government paid “cultural” lip service to the religious parties, but governed as a “normal state.”71 For example, Israel's Declaration of Independence, forced by secularists like Herzl,

Weizmann and Ben Gurion displayed inherent secularism: “The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.”

Israel would thus stand among the worlds nations as a legitimate homeland for the Jewish people, based upon the cultural heritage and historical claim. This nod to the biblical heritage of the Land of Israel fundamentally white-washes the more extreme religious interpretation. Israel, in a religious view, must honor its covenant with God and establish a Holy State for a Holy People in a Holy Land. According to this view, secular Zionism commits a basic error, turning the Jewish people into something which they are not—a normal nation.

Transforming the secular state and honoring the divine calling of Eretz Yisrael is the project of Religious Zionists. In wide-ranging interviews throughout Israel, I was told of the cultural notion of messianism— that the entirety of the Hebrew language, Jewish practice (all ranges of practice), and living on the land were actually elements of the messianic age itself. Jewish tradition actually speaks of two Messiahs: ben Yosef and ben David, each with their own roles of redemption. According to one respondent, “the First Messiah (ben Yosef) is the process.” The process he spoke of is the series of financial, military, and political necessities that “paves the way” and sustains the Promised Land. This process, as Kook the Elder regularly said, is “the beginning of the redemption,” and the essence of the messianic age which sets the stage for Messiah ben-David.

72 Ariel Interview 1, June 10, 2014.
The Zionist notion of “two messiahs” is critically important to their construction of groupism and open textual tradition, delineated from the “post-Zionist” Hilltop Youth. The rabbinical teaching of messiah ben Yosef functions to open a space for cultural Judaism, rather than observant Judaism. In Jerusalem, I spoke with a Gush Emunim and Yesha Council activist who talked about the core of the ben Yosef messianic process being observed in the nation-wide revival of Hebrew as the common language of everyday life, the establishment of the Knesset, growth and success of the military, and any number of other national achievements. Israel's fantastic state-building project over less than a century is nothing less than evidence of messianic providence.

The result of this broad, cultural messianism is a broad, inclusive notion of group privilege and textual interpretation. Unlike the Hilltop rabbis who teach a narrow and dehumanizing exclusion of “traditional” Jews, mainstream Zionists welcome all stripes of Jews into the “process of redemption.”

To investigate the extent of exclusivity within the religious Zionist community, I ventured onto the campus of Bar Ilan University, founded and maintained by religious Zionists. The six students I spoke to, three of whom were officers in the IDF, had no strong opinions about who should be the next Chief Rabbi. This was surprising to me since, at the time, there were rumors of a religious Zionist replacing the Haredim Chief Rabbi. When I asked about who they consider part of their group, uniformly they responded that all Jews who contributed to Israeli state though service and settlement

73 The University is named after Rabbi Meir Bar Ilan, the founder of the Mizrachi nationalist movement.
74 Arye Stern indeed became Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, over Haredi protest.
were part of their movement. As I discuss below, this has lead to a popular revitalization of the religious Zionist parties like Jewish Home and Likhud as they build out their constituencies accepting all types of Jews under the banner of nationalism. It should thus be no surprise that settlers in Hebron I spoke to derided these parties as not observant, and barely “traditional” Jews.

3. Sacred Space

As noted by Rubenstein, “All Zionist movements, with exception of the (secular) Revisionists, have consecrated the attachment to the soil as a hallowed commandment.”75

The Six Day War was a true opening for these groups, who suddenly had seemingly boundless land to restore through settlements. I sat with one older generation Zionist settler from Shiloh, a former spokesperson for Gush Emunim, who told me wistfully of where he was when he first heard Commander Motta Gur yelling joyfully into the army radio: “The Temple Mount is in our hands! The Temple Mount is in our hands!”76 For these religious Zionists, the stunning victory was not historic – it was prophetic. The Almighty had blessed the military to crush its opposition which was for them, invariably a sign that the State was God's hand operating in the world. The win meant that thousands of new acres of land around Jerusalem, in Samaria, in Gaza, in Judea, was now under the control of God's people, who, as commanded in Numbers 33:53, have a religious


76 Interview with Yisrael Medad in Jerusalem.
obligation to settle the land: “Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess.”

The practical emphasis here is on Israel as a place of settlement, where for the Ultra Orthodox, Israel is a place for ultra-observance. 77 For the religious Zionists, the fundamental aspect of “being Jewish” is not simply following Halachic law (as with the Ultra Orthodox), but one is judged as quintessentially Jewish in the very act of “taking possession” and subduing the land. I was repeatedly told by Religious Zionists that “the most authentically Jewish thing to do is be in Israel, and to make it fertile.” 78 And thus, while Hasidic settlers are there for a cheaper quality of life to facilitate the practice of study and prayer, Religious Zionists are settlers as a point of religious practice. In a conversation I had with Neftali Bennett, leader of the Religious Zionist party Jewish Home, he made a direct link between Torah and the justification for settling telling me, “This is the land of Ruth and Boaz, how can you say it is not ours?” 79 This injunction, for Jewish Home, is also taken into political routine of promoting and funding settlements.

Yet, while the Religious Zionists practice a Judaism that treats the land as sacred, there are competing social cleavages that vie for status. Unlike both the Ultra Orthodox and the Hilltop Youth,

“religious Zionists moved to affluent urban areas in central Israel. There are many examples of this. It suffices to look at the large new

78 Itamar Interview Number 2.
79 Neftali Bennett, Bennett at Hertzliya, June 8, 2014.
neighborhoods in Jerusalem, Givat Shmuel, Ra’anana (where Bennett is from), Petah Tikva, Holon, Modi’in, Shoham, and elsewhere. All these towns (West of the 1967 Green Line) have large religious-Zionist populations organized in dozens of local communities built around schools and synagogues. Many of these communities are part of the new middle class.\(^{80}\)

Even those living in Ariel, Itamar, and other settlements are not there to facilitate study of Torah – they have occupations, usually in industrial or commercial towns in the valley. Villages as isolated as Mishor Adumim\(^{81}\) are nevertheless havens of industry and trade – produces massive amounts of products used in Israel and around the world. As we will explore below, this is a main point of contention between Religious-Zionists and the Hilltop Youth, who deride their fellow settlers as cosmopolitan, vain, and bourgeoisie.

Thus, while Religious Zionists see settlement as a biblical mandate, it is recognized that life in settlements is hard and the life of a yeomen is not for everyone. While the fundamental belief in settling as mitzvah may be present, carrying out a religious practice of subduing the land is something different altogether. This disconnect between belief and practice, is a causal mechanism that keeps many religious-Zionists from ever interacting with Palestinians.

*Mechanisms of Indivisibility*

1. Binding

\(^{80}\) Leon, “The Transformation of Israel’s Religious-Zionist Middle Class,” 63.

\(^{81}\) The Transnational Corporation Soda Stream is based in this Religious-Zionist settlement.
When simply learning the Hebrew language is a practice of redemption, then the types of acceptable people within the group is far more expansive than the yeoman lifestyle of the Outposts. If every Jew living in the land has escatological significance, expanded notions of messianism is a process that broadens the base of the religious Zionist group.

Furthermore, as the settlements have turned from the “wild West Bank” into suburban metro centers, the spectrum of those admitted into the Zionist fold has loosened even more. The broad-based coalition has translated into there being a strong sense of political empowerment within the main settlement blocks. This means that their agenda, within the larger environment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, can be dealt with in political arenas – the ballot box and IDF participation – rather than vigilantism. The political power of Yesha, Likhud, and Jewish Home means that their constituency's worldview are not under direct threat. Thus, the critical mechanism of ritual binding is absent, while hardline beliefs about the sacred land are present.

I saw very little evidence of rituals linking together the community or building an identity other than a general cultural ideology of settlement as legitimate. According to my theory, this should result in group members having “beliefs” about the importance of the land, but not taking up extralegal measures to increase the intensity of conflict.

2. Limited Platforms For Negotiation

There is broad rejection of dealing away any part of the historical land of Israel within the religious Zionist settlements. Outside of the elected class, the last round of
talks was met with stiff opposition by the Yesha council leadership, the committee representing religious Zionist settlers. This, in turn, severely limited the bargaining ability of the Likhud government in the latest round of peace talks.

In an op-ed circulated around the world entitled “Israel's Settlers Are Here To Stay” the spokesperson for Yesha outlined a plan that many compared to South Africa's apartheid regime. According to Dayan, the Israeli government should actively seek to normalize the settlements, secure their perimeters, and abandon the peace process. Under the guise of normalcy Dyan writes: “While the status quo is not anyone’s ideal, it is immeasurably better than any other feasible alternative.” Abandoning talks is thus justified by the normalcy of Israelis living in territory they consider sacred. Religious Zionists like Dyan and the Yesha council restrict the ability for their elected representatives to do anything other than perpetuate the status quo and not negotiate.

Messianism also plays a central role in restricting leader's actions in negotiations. For example, the newly installed Deputy Foreign Minister Hotovely has used messianic language when talking about settlements, ending a recent speech to Israeli diplomats saying, “We need to return to the basic truth of our rights to this country,” she said. “This land is ours. All of it is ours. We did not come here to apologize for that.” Hotovely, a Modern Orthodox Jew, laced her speech with biblical commentaries in which God promised the land of Israel to the Jews. Speaking later in English, she said: “We expect as


83 Ibid.
a matter of principle of the international community to recognize Israel’s right to build homes for Jews in their homeland, everywhere."

As a result, the right-leaning coalition has turned more hesitant to negotiate in recent years. As Stacie Godard's work illustrates, the legitimation of secular governments was brought into serious question after Begin's coalition dealt away the Sinai. More recently, the Oslo Accords and disengagement from Gaza completely isolated the political center and bolstered the claims of the religious Zionists: that giving away land for the sake of peace would not bring peace. Rather, as the ancient Israelites found – by letting foreigners settle in the land, they would raise the ire of Yahwe and cause far more strife in the long run. After Sharon's decision to leave Gaza, his Likud party took a rightward turn from his centrist plan, bringing in dozens of new Knesset Members who promised not to negotiate on the status of the West Bank. This process of limiting the legitimate menu of actions of decision-makers culminated in the most recent campaign, where Prime Minister Netanyahu flipped his position and told an audience of religious Zionist settlers that “there will never be a two-state solution.”

According to one of my respondents, this religious-Zionist led condemnation of negotiations was a principle consideration for Netanyahu's abandonment of the talks:


85 Stacie E. Goddard, Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy: Jerusalem and Northern Ireland (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
I asked, “And do you think the religious extremists are pushing that agenda, uhm, electorally. He is trying to capture their votes…”

“No, I mean the religious extremists, I mean you need to be careful there, there the mandate that they have, the extremists, it’s small. But that said, he panders to them. That’s the word. Netanyahu, he’s a contradiction in terms, right? Because he is as secular as I am. Uhm, members of, what’s it called in English, of uhm, the party that put... uh, Israeli is our home (Jewish Home)...So for him (Bennett), I think, he is not an extremist, but he, uh, he couches a lot of these things in religious terms, even though his number two is secular right, uhm, but for the religious members of those parties, uhm, the issues are clearly viewed through the context of scripture.”

Yet even with the religious language, the respondent notes a point of divergence in terms of respecting the state and civil law. While the Hilltop has no regard for the State as an instrument, the Zionist certainly do:

“I would like to think that, that for them civil law is above religious law, uhm…but I think [...] that they feel that they are constantly pushing Netanyahu. I mean Netanyahu positions himself, or seeks to position himself, uhm, that he is the left wing of the Likud, right? Whatever that means. And there are people to the right of him who are more tuned to
religion, because they are religious, he is not religious at all. But he fully panders to them.”

In order to win the election, many commentators noted Netanyahu had to make a direct appeal to religious Zionist settlers in his anti-Two-State remarks. The 80% turnout rate in religious Zionist communities in 2015 turned out thousands of more votes for Netanyahu than in prior years.

3. Lengthened Time Frames

The notion of eternal time is certainly present in the language of religious Zionist leadership. Like in the Hilltop movement, that God divinely granted land elongates the collective time frame from Moses to the Messiah, with the settlements serving to connect the two. However, while this belief in eternal time may situate Zionist rhetoric, it does very little to alter moderate action. A super-majority of Zionist settlers live everyday life in the Israeli middle class with settlements operating as suburban centers providing a higher quality of life. Most Zionists I met in Bracha, Beit Shemesh, and throughout the Galilee region had jobs in service, tourism, and technology. Ariel and Hebrew Universities, both technically on the East side of the 1967 Armistice Line, are full of

86 Subject 702_0013, 702.
religious Zionist students who will have promising careers on the West side of the separation barrier.

prolonged time frames thus do not serve as an internal mechanism of indivisibility for religious Zionists. If the community does not participate in elevated levels of resolve (outlined below), it indicates that belief in messianism and sacred space is not as important as exclusivist practices that police in-groups and out-groups.

Outcomes

1. Intensity

Relying on the teachings of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, a charismatic Kabbalah-inspired Orthodox rabbi and founder of the Gush Emunim settler movement, most religious Zionists took it upon themselves to join the military. Kook preached that military service was a spiritual mandate and thousands of kippah srugasruga (knitted skullcaps) eagerly joined the IDF.90 So many joined that in the aftermath of the 1967 war, the Kookist movement Israeli military establishment rewarded the movement by establishing dozens of hesder yeshivut to allow for soldiers to enroll in separate part-time seminaries. These special arrangement seminaries produced soldiers literate in Zionist Halacha and who were willing to serve as the hands and feet of God on the land. The fierce willingness of these Torah-Soldiers to fight longer and harder shown in the three years of the Lebanon War (1982-1985), where Hesder Yeshivut students kept fighting (and winning) in the security zone, even as other IDF forces had given up the fight, been injured, or killed.91 Hesder Yeshivut students also distinguished themselves in the first
intifada, gaining notoriety for being particularly cruel to the Palestinian population. We thus see a tentative support for the notion that religious-Zionists are more prone to more intense levels of violence, though this action occurs strictly within the confines of state sanctioning.

The role of the religious Zionists was not confined to the military, but was also evident in the political sphere. Gush Emunim became a major force, from margins to mainstream, after the 1967 war. While Gush was devout – and extreme – they sought appeal among the political establishment and moderated their positions to get elected to the Knesset. Gush launched extensive press coverage and tried to get its message in mainstream forums. The Israeli public witnessed commercials with scenes of settlers ascending the hills of Judea and Samaria and “television viewers can recite Gush Emunim slogans by heart and are almost intimately acquainted with the movement's spokesmen and activists, settlements, and institutions.” Using these tools, Gush Emunim stood as a unique political force in Israeli politics that pushed the right away from secular Zionist nationalism towards the religious Zionism seen today manifest by parties like Jewish Home.

While hardliners insist upon Israel's rights over the territory of Judea and Samaria, and are willing to fight for it, there is very little evidence that Gush Emunim or the Yesha council have officially sanctioned extra-legal violence. The official organizations have

not been linked to extralegal violence such as the price tag campaign and have indeed actively discouraged the establishment of illegal Outposts. For instance, Shiloh, established by the YESHA council with the blessing of the Israeli state, has actively prevented “youngsters from going off and causing trouble in the hills” and has been ruthlessly attacked for it.91

In its heyday, Gush Emunim may have opposed government policy but always avoided vigilante attacks.92 The notable exception is the rise of Kahanism or the Kach Movement and the Jewish underground. According to Ian Lustick's account,

“Meir Kahane (was) a fiery American-born rabbi, who founded the Brooklyn-based Jewish Defense League. Under investigation by the FBI, he left the United States in 1971 and created another movement in Israel-Kach. In 1980 he was arrested and held in administrative detention by the Israeli authorities for six months, reportedly on suspicion of participating in a plot to destroy the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount. He endorsed and is suspected of having been behind the activities of a shadowy group or groups known as TNT (Terror against Terror), which claimed responsibility for a long series of violent attacks against West Bank Arabs, Christian missionaries in Jerusalem, and dovish Israeli Jews. [He] publicly praised violent attacks against Arabs and [led] his followers repeatedly to Arab villages, addressing the residents as "dogs" and warning them to leave the country.”93

Yet, Gush Emunim leadership forcefully condemned such inflammatory rhetoric and vigilantism. After a particularly violent bout of Jewish Underground violence (most likely supported by Kach), one of the founders of the Gush Emunim, Hannan Porat, proclaimed that Gush would undertake “an educational and information campaign”

91 Medad, Interview with Yisrael Medad in Jerusalem.

92 Byman and Sachs, “The Rise of Settler Terrorism: The West Bank’s Other Violent Extremists,” 77

93 Lustick, For the Land and the Lord, 67.
within and outside the movement and would” purge those who would take the law into their own hands.” In a television interview after the attacks, he sought to distance the Gush Emunim from what he implied was an extremist fringe. “Every great idea, such as the settlement movement inevitably draws to its margins those who deviate from the ideal.”

I spoke with a veteran of IDF operations in the West Bank about Gush in particular, since it was the most vocal settler group for so long:

“Which groups have you interfaced with?” I asked.

“Right, so I spent the 19-or 20 years that I, 19 or 20, anyway, I spent the IDF, I spent 5 years as the legal advisor to the Home Front Command which is the Israeli equivalent to the Department of Homeland Security and there I dealt with uhm…with Jewish groups.”

“Probably Kahane and Kach and Gush?”

“No, not Gush Emunim. I am talking about some bad people. Alright?”

While religious-Zionists are hardline on settlements, they are not contributing to increased levels of violence outside of the state-sanctioned norm.

2. Intransigence

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95 Subject 702_0013.
Negotiation and peace talks are very unpopular in the community. During my fieldwork in 2014, US Secretary of State John Kerry led a massive dialogue effort to jump-start Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. At a conference in Hertzlya, the head of the Jewish Home party which represents Religions Zionists publicly called the diplomatic push “Kerry's Folly.” I brought up the US-led effort in over 30 conversations in the West Bank with settlers and not a single one was in favor of it, from Shiloh to Hebron. When I asked them what the negotiation consisted of – what were they against – almost every respondent said “we shouldn't be negotiating over land that is ours to begin with.”

Jewish Home and the Yesha council have done far more that simply “not negotiate” - they have sought to derail talks on all fronts. In 2013, as the US and Europe pressed for a settlement freeze, Jewish Home leadership began a campaign to finance new building beyond the Green Line. The effect was to signal future non-compliance by religious Zionists for any deal reached. When the Palestinians walked away from negotiations, Neftali Bennent responded that this ensured that there would never be a Palestinian State. Pro-settlement Civil Defense Minister and Zionist Gilad Erda in June of 2014 indicated that the Israeli state, instead of negotiating, should “make preparations begin to annex Area C territory where the Jewish population lives.” Such annexation of Shiloh, Itamar, and Kiryat Arba, in addition to the main blocks, would effectively be the end to the two-state solution and established “roadmap to peace.” And, in what was a

96 Subject 80A - Galilee, June 1, 2014.
97 “Israel’s Livni Accuses Jewish Home Party of Sabotaging Talks with Palestinians | The National.”
final blow to the 2014 round of diplomacy, the Housing Minister and head of the Yesha council, himself a religious Zionist, declared that the abduction and killing of three young men (which sparked Operation Protective Edge), was actually caused by peace talks.99

3. Resolve

While resolved to carry on “settling” in the face of Palestinian opposition, the dependent variable “resolve” in the face of state repression is not present. For all of the rhetoric surrounding negotiations, there has been a marked timidity in terms of actually defying IDF and the state. I found that higher levels of resolve cannot be attributed to religious nationalists. The disengagement from Gaza is a prime example:

“I think there’s much soul-searching in this community and they are very statist now. Basically, we cannot do things that the state is against.”

I asked, “So a little bit more law and order than those in the Outposts?”

“…Yeah, and the big test when they let go of Gaza. It was and there was this great fear that there would be violence – no violence.”100

Furthermore, while the boundaries of a supposed two-state solution are contested, religious Zionists affiliated with Yesha and supported by Jewish Home have steered clear of building settlements outside of designated zones, obeying IDF and government orders that constrain building activities. The Yesha council has repeatedly, for example,

100Subject 702_0013, 700.
condemned the price-tag campaign which targets any Israeli citizen.101 Talking to a former Brigadier General in the IDF, I asked whether he would classify Gush Emunim, as many do, as a “fundamentalist” organization.

“Gush Emunim, No! They are much more realist...Gush Emunim ... they know that the land of Israel was given to the Jewish Nation by the League of Nations. You know? Convention, clear documents which were adopted by the United Nations later. Um, give grant the land to the Jewish PEOPLE not to any Arab people. This is international, eh, abiding DOCUMENT. Nobody can erase them, nobody can deny them. And they were also adopted by the United Nations after the United Nations hired the roll of the League of Nations. So until this very day, the Conventions 1920 you can read it, um, grants the land of Israel to the Jewish people and this is fact accompli, this is DONE. It’s already GIVEN. OK? So, Gush Emunim actually bases its claim to Judaism on international LAW! Which nobody can deny. So, they are much more realistic. They are not going to annex, eh, Gaza, or to annex, eh (Nablus) or the Arab part of Hebron, because they don’t – it’s full of Arabs – they don’t want them, they don’t want us. We are not them. We are on the hills (in Judea and Samaria) because the hills belong to US! They bought and the Arabs SOLD them! We know money. And now they live in Canada and the

101Medad, Interview with Yisrael Medad in Jerusalem.
United with the money which they got from Gush Emunim. No, Gush Emunim are very realistic. They have their political agenda based on international law. They are not hallucinated...”

Indeed, religious Zionists are “not hallucinated” - they have a stake in maintaining their now mainstream positions, tamping down violence and unlawful activity. While contributing to the outcome of intransigence, religious-Zionists do not seem to contribute to either abnormally intense levels of violence, nor do they have such resolve that they defy orders of the state. This lack of intense vigilante behavior and lack of resolve provides important outcome variation with other cases.

Case C: Ultra Orthodox

Israel's Hasidic population is only 10% of the national total, but their birthrate is approaching 6%, making Haredi families the fastest growing demographic in Israel. Due to the size of families and men's full-time Torah studies, the Haredim lack the money to live in high-priced urban centers like Herzliya, Haifa, Tel Aviv, or even many neighborhoods in Jerusalem. Instead, Hasidic communities have recently erected in the area in East Jerusalem, in the post-1967 neighborhoods of Beit Shemesh, Givat Zeev, and Maale Adumim as well as in the established block of Ariel. I spoke with Ultra Orthodox in each of these locations, hearing stories of how the community may contribute to


heightened intensity, intransigence, and resolve, while also learning about their practices and looking for evidence of alternative theories.\textsuperscript{104}

\textit{Practices}

At first glance, the Hasidic community is the quintessential exclusivist and insular cohort. With strict dress codes, ultra-kosher food requirements, prayer, and rites of passage practices, this is a group that scores relatively high on a measurement of exclusive practice. One Shabbat evening I stood at the Western Wall in Jerusalem with a group of tourists and researchers, led by a former Israeli General. As the sun set, a column of 100 Sephardic worshipers came whirling, chanting, and singing past us. The former General said gleefully, “Oooh, let's move out of the way – here come the extremists.”

Yet closer evaluation reveals an interesting level of nuance that moderates the daily practices of the Ultra Orthodox substantially. Three practices are far more open and moderate in the Hasidic community than in other Jewish settler communities: 1) messianic/afterlife exclusivity, 2) group privilege and interpretation of sacred texts, and 3) sacred space exclusivity. Nuanced moderation in these practices significantly reduces group violence dynamics, even as they practice exclusivity in dietary and dress habits, rites of passage, and prayer rituals. I also show how an economic reliance on the state moderates and tempers the dispositional indivisibility that comes with such insular and exclusionary practices, a finding that compliments quantitative results in Chapter 3, and

\textsuperscript{104}For more on methodology, see Chapter 4.
indicates the interactive effects that robust GDP and state strength have on radical religious groups.

1. Messianism

I met Chaim at a small cafe just blocks from the King David Hotel. I was drawn to him immediately – a Hasidic Jew who sat down with a glass of water at the table across from me and began to peruse through his pockets. Trolling from here and there in his black suit, he first pulled out a thin strip of paper, then matches, then a small pouch of tobacco. He gently rolled the tobacco in his fingers and spread it over the paper, and then in what seemed like one motion, completed his task, lit the cigarette with a match, and breathed deeply. I let the smoke roll out off his lips twice before drawing out my own (boxed, pre-rolled) cigarette. I carried them for times like this, where I could strike up a conversation with the strike of a match. And though it may have continued a streak of selection bias - many of my informal talks were had over the span of a cigarette or two - I began talking to him. At first I asked for a match, then took a seat across from him, abandoning my former post. After a minute of chatting about my travels, asking for brief directions, I startled him by asking, “So what do you do everyday?” The question, out of no where, confronts the subject with a guttural, dispositional response. “I study Torah... and I smoke,” he said, smiling at the last part. He went on to explain that his life is simple and that he took joy in small, unobtrusive, humble activities. “What is your favorite part of life” I asked. “Weddings.”

The emphasis on simplicity is what struck me particularly hard for he was not the first or last Hasidic interviewee to answer in a similar fashion. Taking joy in everyday
mundane and simple activities was in direct contrast with many answers I got in the more insular settlements, which focused on struggle and toil. Hasids, like Chaim, are not change-agents. They are simple.

I asked Chaim about is politics: “If you were going to vote today, who is your party?”

“I'm for Agudat Yisrael, but I don't vote. My parents emigrated here to get away from the politics, to study and to pray in Israel.”

“And not a Zionist, normal nation?” I asked.

“Yes, precisely. Zion will come, but the state is not Israel and it is not Zion, is the thought. But there are those –

“Who?”

“Those in the scullcaps – they are intent on forcing the Messiah to come.” He said with strain on the word. “I am against this and think it is very dangerous for peace – we saw this after Oslo – they made things worse.”

The reference to Oslo is important here because it speaks to the difference in how the Ultra Orthodox disengaged from Gaza, while others threatened retaliation and indeed went into the West Bank and began new settlements.

“So what do you recommend?”
“Israeli passport, Palestinian passport, it doesn't matter to me,” echoing the stance of many Hasidic rabbis.105 “My goal is to study Torah and until the Messiah comes, I am still diaspora.”

“So this is just a normal time, not a messianic time?

“[laughs] No. A simple, normal time.”

The emphasis on it being a “normal” not “Messianic” time is an important way to understand the practices of the Ultra Orthodox. Living in “normal times” means that one is obligated to pray, live a simple life, and pursue Halachic understanding. There is no divine mandate, as the religious Zionists claim, to settle Eretz Yisrael since there is no messianic ownership of the land, and, instead, settling the land for a democratic, secular government is acting to put holy land under non-Halachic authority. Thus, the practice of prayer is in direct tension with Zionist settlement activity in many cases. In fact, as seen in the most recent explosion of violence in Operation Protective Edge, the Ultra Orthodox publicly called for prayer and fasting as a response, not the State-led invasions of Gaza. According to leaders of Haredi political parties, divine punishment of sin is to blame for ongoing strife in Israel. It is therefore critical to national security that the state purge “sin” from society through “mitzvot” or keeping God's commandments. For example, one of the more comical Orthodox initiatives to bring peace to Israel after the June 2014 abduction and killing of three young men, was Project EDEN (Eat ice cream Defend Eretz Yisroel Now). This campaign rewarded modestly attired female Chabad campers

105Subject 702_0036, June 11, 2014.
with ice cream, based on the understanding that having women dress modestly will bring Israel divine protection.¹⁰⁶

The conversation with Chaim ended as I asked him about the benefits that the religious parties get for being a part of the government. “It is important to have the separate yeshuva education system – this is a national priority.” And with that, his cigarette was put out and he left with a brisk “shalom.” But the point must be stressed: activity in the government, being represented and having a stake in education, housing, and religious ceremony may push Israel towards a more hardline religious norm, but it also pulls the religious orthodox towards pragmatism and moderation in many regards. For example, the Ultra Orthodox parties have widely steered clear of contentious foreign policy debates, preferring instead to remain ambivalent to anything not directly impacting their version of Jewish practice, which does not place a premium on settlement.¹⁰⁷

2. Group Privilege and Textual Exclusivity

In the many interviews I had with both Sephardim and Ashkenazim, I would ask who, if they could choose, should be elected Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel – the one who embodies what it means to be an observant Jew in Israel. This hypothetical situation served as a proxy to understanding the degree of exclusivity built into practices of group privilege and scriptural interpretation. Time and again, respondents would pause and talk about the merits of multiple leaders in the Rabbinical council – the advisory group to the


¹⁰⁷Elizur and Malkin, The War Within.
extant Oriental and Ashkenazi Haredim rabbis. Depending on my location, such as in the Ashkenazi neighborhoods in Beit Shemesh, many names were circulated, such as Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman and Chaim Kanievsky, Rabbi Weissburd, and many others. In East Jerusalem the story was the same – respondents would often debate merits of many Rabbis, with strong debates about Halachic law tossed in the mix. Respondents would often discuss strains of teaching in rabbinical traditions with great gusto. While no Ashkenazim suggested a Sephardic leader, the diversity within the groups was obvious. Many also had suggestions for the other group's chief rabbi (both sects are represented in the Chief Rabbinate). This illustrates that though the Ultra Orthodox are indeed exclusivist in everyday dress, diet, prayer, and rites of passage, they are contingent and introspective about the various perspectives of Talmund and halachic interpretation. This moderate approach to scriptural interpretation is a core attribute of the community that contrasts sharply with the Hilltop Youth movement.

3. Sacred Space

The Ultra Orthodox are skeptical of religious Zionist attempts to make the State of Israel sovereign over the land. In response to the 2014 conflict in Gaza, Rabbi Shalom Cohen of the Sephardic Orthodox Shas party said Israel doesn’t need an army because “It is God almighty who fights for Israel.”108 Settlers in Beit Shemesh, Gi’vat Zeev, and Ma'ale Adumim informed me that while they were living in Judea and Samaria, they viewed the settlements as more economic necessity than a spiritual mandate.

108“The Gaza War Through Ultra Orthodox Eyes - Israel.”
While resolved to maintain their subsidies, “being a settler” is not a priority for a majority of Ultra Orthodox any more than it is a priority to “be Israeli.” Unlike the Zionists talked about below, the Ultra Orthodox population reject the whole idea of a Jewish state without a Messiah to govern it. Indeed, the quest for Zion is in fact evil when the Jewish people dwelling in the land are not a holy people. According to a leading anti-Zionist:

“From the time of the Temple ’s destruction and throughout Jewish history our people always regarded their exile as a Divine punishment. Indeed, no Jews ever dared suggest in the thousands of years of our exile that the Romans had destroyed the Temple due to a lack of Jewish military preparedness or resources. Rather, the Temple was lost physically because of the Jewish people’s failure to live up to their spiritual obligations to God.[...] The attempt to explain the exile in this-worldly terms is not simply an error of doctrine or a distortion of Jewish history. It strikes at the core of Jewish belief. In fact, the Maharal of Prague (Czechoslovakian Rabbi and pivotal medieval Jewish leader, 1525 – 1609) writes that a Jew should rather give up his life than attempt to end exile by conquering the Holy Land.”

Thus, it is common for the Ultra Orthodox to describe themselves as Israeli-Diaspora: Jews in the State of Israel waiting to establish Zion when there is a Messiah. Furthermore, the Hasidic population largely discourages activity that may delay the Messiah’s coming, advocating a type of quietest Judaism.

Mechanisms of Indivisibility


110Rubenstein, The Zionist Dream Revisted.
The seemingly exclusive practices of the Hasidic community should lead us to think that they would approach extant conflict with the Palestinians with religiously framed indivisibilities. The Hasidic population poses a hard challenge to practice theory, in that they are highly insular but do not seem to be engaged in increased violence dynamics. While a surface-level look at the Haredim might indicate they are highly exclusive, there are moderating tendencies that keep escalatory activities in check. First, by maintaining that they live in “normal” not “Messianic” time, the Haredim largely bracket questions of divine justice and cosmic war, which contrasts markedly with Religious Zionists and the Hilltop Youth. Second, the Hasidic community does not privilege the state as a religious vehicle and thus they are not terribly concerned with broadening the mandate of a secular, democratic state over Eretz Yisrael. Third, the manner in which the Ultra Orthodox community does support settlement is by taking advantage of the generous subsidies in the blocks. But this is done alongside of United Torah and Shas also playing major roles in garnering economic benefits for their respective communities in the Knessett. Playing the horse-trade game of politics is an inherently pragmatic activity. Religious parties are forced therein to select a few salient policies to champion in government, such as marriage and kosher laws, and economic benefits for yeshiva students, while sacrificing preferences in other spheres.

1. Binding

Ultra Orthodox settlers place a different emphasis on cultural redemption than the religious Zionists, advocating for seeking to be a holy people, rather than ending the exile
from Zion. While for the Zionists, being a part of the nation of Zion is itself a redemptive process of Messiah ben Yosef, the Haredim are rather focused on their internal practice and observance being the “correct” Judaism which will end the exile and usher in the Kingdom of God. For them, Judaism is relatively incompatible with a democratic state, and this approach has been largely imported into the Hilltop as a halachic basis for rejecting the IDF and state policy in the West Bank. But the key for the Ultra Orthodox is neither being Israeli or living on particular land, but keeping the law and honoring Torah through single-minded study and reflection.

And yet, counterintuitively, I found that this inward exclusivity of practice and focus on orthopraxy to be remarkably open and not exclusivist in the same way as the isolated and remote practices of the Hilltop. Devotion to study, interestingly, opens new doors for diverse interpretation, many readings of holy text, and numerous rabbinical traditions. Diversities exist within Haredim – one observer noted that within the Haredi community, there are “50 shades of Black.”\footnote{111} Sects of Haredim include Breslov, Lubavitch (Chabad), Satmar, Ger, Belz, Bobov, Skver, Sans, Vizhnitz, Puppa, Munkacz, and Spinka, with perhaps up to two dozen more sub-strains. The textual-interpretive lineage of these sub-groups is simultaneously distinct and overlapping – the strains have their own interpretive framework and rabbis, but, as I learned in Beit Shemesh, the strains are often taught in each other's rabbinical schools. When I asked about Chief Rabbinate nominations in Beit Shemesh, many rabbis from different sects were discussed and

debated. Thus, while the Ultra Orthodox are indeed very insular, the mechanism of group
binding are more elastic than I expected due to mixed scriptural interpretive frameworks.
Since the Ultra Orthodox largely reject the spiritual legitimacy of the state, they are far
more open to dissenting views outside of their community, as long as they have
autonomy within it.

The identity-binding is, however, pronounced vis-a-vis external secular communities. Hence, the Ultra Orthodox have regularly instigated conflict with secularists who publicly desecrate the Sabbath or dress immodestly. The Orthodox have put up signs, for instance, in their insular communities warning women to cover their bodies lest they cause the entire community grief. In this formulation, violations against a dress practice are incredibly binding – threats to that practice threaten the entire group's cosmology. But the Ultra Orthodox behavior in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict environment is decidedly different. Because the Ultra settlers are there for economic, not spiritual reasons, there seems to be no binding effect around their identity as settlers.

2. Limited Platforms For Negotiation

The lack of messianism, sacred space, and scriptural exclusion creates interesting avenues for bargaining in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Parties like SHAS and United Torah nominate their rabbis as MK representatives, meaning that their political and religious voice act in unison. The result is that some areas of practice are salient in the political arena while others are not. In recent years, dress, diet, and rites of passage have been the center of great Ultra Orthodox political concern.
3. Lengthened Time Frames

The Ultra Orthodox operate without messianic time-frames that religious Zionists and the Hilltop Youth find so central. As one respondent indicated, this is “just a normal time.” Instead of prolonged time frames, I found the lifestyle of simplicity within the Haredim to emphasize the present conditions of their group. The Ultra Orthodox are concerned with how the state protects their enclave and promotes Haredi Judaism. They are concerned that the practices such as dress, diet, and rites of passage be strictly observed within their group, but are largely ambivalent about the status of Palestine or the settlement project as a whole. Without messianic time-frames linking the present act of settlement to a historical promised land to a future redeemed Kingdom of God, there is very little resolve to maintain settlements aside from the fast that they offer high quality of life. We should thus expect that if that quality of life were preserved, there would be no effort to attempt to remain in an illegal settlement.

Outcomes

1. Intensity

The Ultra Orthodox community has had a tenuous relationship with the larger population throughout the young history of the State of Israel. Fellow citizens have been attacked with a hail of rocks on Shabbat Saturdays for going to the movies or driving a car close to Ultra Orthodox neighborhoods. Recently, an eight-year old girl was spit upon and called a prostitute by Haradi men on public transport in Beit Shemesh for perceived
immodesty. And while the Haredim are confrontational in social situations like these, there is a puzzle: While the Haredi community has recently expanded prolifically into settlements East of the 1967 “Green Line,” they have not directly exacerbated tensions with Palestinians, not engaged in extralegal vigilantism, and have not built illegal settlements.

Haredim have not contributed to higher levels of violence intensity against Palestinians. In fact, due to Haredim exemption from national military service, one might say that the Ultra Orthodox contribute the least to ongoing conflict environment.

Similarly, I met a woman in Tel Aviv whose entire extended family gradually moved to settlement blocks for better quality of life, and ended up living alongside many Ultra Orthodox families. Instead of a two bedroom flat in Tel Aviv, for half the price, a family can get a three-level house with a garden. The suburbanization of Ariel and East Jerusalem have brought in thousands of new settlers, keen on taking advantage of government subsidized housing. On average, settlers in major blocks like these can get up to 70% of their housing expenses compensated, making the choice easy for anyone


113 Haredim rarely engage in military service, but in the case where they do, one might say that their IDF service contributes to systemic violence against the Palestinians. To operationalize “intensity,” I evaluate whether a community contributes to violence outside of the mainstream violence as employed by the state institution.

114 Tel Aviv Interview 5, May 27, 2014.

willing to give up life on the coast for a more expansive home. The same woman, a waitress in a Diezengoff bar, scoffed at the idea that her family would go further than the “blocks,” out into the hills of Judea. She explained,

“That whole thing about settlements is bullshit, you know? The idea that people have a right to land just because they believe something more radical and oppressive is not Jewish. In my mind, being Jewish is not about violence – which is what their faith tells them to do – but being Jewish is about the values of neighborliness and inclusion. This is why peace is more important than land, because God is not a God of land, God is a God of Peace and this is why I tell you, you should not go to these places. They will not talk to you. They will not talk to anyone.”

Surprised at the virulent opposition she expressed towards the Outposts, I asked her whether her family's ultra-Orthodox neighbors in Gi'vat Zeev would feel the same way as those in the outposts – exclusionary and perhaps violent. Raising her eyebrows, she said,

“This is what I thought – that these people were going to be terrible. And yes, they don't like, for example, that I work in a bar in Tel Aviv. But they are reasonable. My father has talks with the men, who have no interest in violence against Palestinians. None of this violence, the 'price tag' that you

116 Elizur and Malkin, The War Within, 2
117 Tel Aviv Interview 5. People in the outposts did talk to me, but there was an occasion in Yitzhar where I was asked to leave.
call it, has ever been traced to the Haredim. It is somebody else. They are crazy, but not violent.**118

2. Intransigence

Haredi groups are also not intransigent when it comes to brokering peace with the Palestinians. I spoke with dozens of members in Beit Shemesh, Jerusalem, and Ariel, who repeatedly pointed me to the role that their own rabbis have had in promoting 2014 peace talks, their role in the Oslo accords and their advocacy of the “Two-State Solution.” From trash to housing subsidies, the Ultra Orthodox community relies on the state for group survival strategies, and has therefore sought to organize politically. Agudat Yisrael, the most prominent Hasidic party in the Knessett, will often side with pro-two-state solution left wing politicians to ensure that subsidies for Torah education continue. Indeed, the Agudat Yisrael was in Ben Gurion's Labor government and many of the Labor governments that advocated withdraw from post-1967 settlements. In conversations with Hasidic men in and around Jerusalem, I asked not only about their daily practices, but presented a hypothetical peace deal that ordered the withdraw of many settlements. Almost all I talked with indicated indifference or support for such agreements as long as they could still visit the Temple Mount and maintain a separate yeshuva educational system.

I met with a man named Fadi, a central player in the interfaith peace movement in Israel. While himself a Palestinian Christian, Fadi talked extensively about the role the

118 Ibid.
Haredi community played in the peace process. Indeed, an official interfaith council made up of the Chief Rabbinate, Christian and Muslim leaders has been the longest standing ecumenical peace organization in the Middle East.\footnote{Subject 702_0036, 00.} This is of note especially since the Chief Rabbinate includes both Ashkenazim and Sephardim Haredi leaders, indicating a unified Ultra Orthodox agenda around peace-making.

A story from the New York Jewish Weekly in 1978 illustrates how the Ultra Orthodox can serve as a force for peace negotiations. In the late 1970s, Simon, an Ultra Orthodox Jew began an organization called OzV'Shalom, advocating a two state solution. Simon said,

“A Divine promise, cannot be used as a legal document in international relations[...] What if the Moslems come and claim that they have Divine authority to conquer the world in the name of Islam? Their theology claims such a right -- the Jihad, the Holy War. We may respect, we should respect, the integrity of their belief. But we will never think, never agree, that this belief binds us, or that it should be incorporated in an argument for negotiations[...] It would be revolting for us if we should have to bow our heads to their belief which actually diminishes our rights. So we have to behave to other nations just as we want them to behave towards us. That is the basis of Biblical ethics -- that we shouldn't do to others what is hateful to us.”\footnote{“Orthodox Group in Israel Forming Peace Movement to Oppose Gush Emunim,” \textit{The Jewish Weekly}, June 11, 1978.}

Oz V'Shalom here displays the essence of the practice explanation over belief. Note that while a hardline belief in God's divine promise is present in the Haredi community, the belief itself is simultaneously moderated by practices of Biblical interpretation of ethnics which allows flexibility determining courses of action. Similar
belief profiles are clearly present in the Hilltop Youth, but the Outpost movement lacks the same moderation in scriptural interpretation.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the former Chief Sephardic rabbi and leader of SHAS had another interpretation that lead to him supporting negotiations. In his opinion, Israelis are not obliged to occupy lands over which they do not have full control. He stated that the commandment to settle the Land cannot actually be fulfilled in those places where sovereignty is weak. In cases where Jews are unable to get a firm political foothold (Nablus, Jenin, Ramallah), then he held the foreigners could not be expelled from their homes and cities.¹²¹

3. Resolve

While displaying community fortitude on many levels, the Ultra Orthodox community shows little willingness to resist the state or go on with settlement activity in the face of state pressure to disengage. I often posed hypothetical questions to see what kinds of ideological resources respondents drew from. Such “gut reaction” offers a glimmer of the dispositional basis of life in the community. I asked several Haredi men how they would respond if their settlement block in East Jerusalem were to be ordered evacuated. I was surprised that the questions was met with indifference. “So, put us in the King David (hotel), then. [Laughter]. When they move us, we must make sure they compensate.”¹²² In Beit Shemesh – one of the most hardline sectors, I tracked down an

¹²²Subject R Scopus, 6/9/2014, n.d
English-speaking Shas member and asked “Are you committed to a Zionist state? Why do you vote in democratic elections?” He responded,

“there are thousands of orthodox who are concerned with the religious nature of what's going on. However, there [are] real problems in terms of resources. Who gets them? Who? The European influence... And Shas is growing, but on religious issues, there are not divisions, just economic.”

A second respondent joined in the conversation,

“and this is why there is always representation in government, both in Labor and in Likhud. There are very important matters of army service, and religious service, for example

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“By praying for the community, for Eretz Yisreal, we are doing more of a service than any secular Jew working in Tel Aviv. It is the foundation of national security, of economic blessing...”

“And without being represented in Knesset, you would not pray?”

“I would pray, but I would starve! No, God provides! But it is an obligation for the state as much as it is obligation for me.”

123Beit Shemesh Interview 1, June 12, 2014.
124Beit Shemesh Interview 2, June 12, 2014.
The goal for these men was far more about maintaining their subsidized study benefits than attachment to a particular piece of ground. This lack of nationalist zeal has resulted in a unique relationship with the Israeli State. Ultra Orthodox consider the democratic state of Israel as a “normal” government, not a spiritually significant one, since it has no divine mandate without a Messiah to lead it. In the 1970s, after the government of Jerusalem faced huge budget shortfalls and strikes of basic service providers, the Ultra Orthodox quarter of Mea Shearim in fact declared autonomy from the Zionist state in the wake of failed trash services in Jerusalem. "My family has been here 130 years," said one resident. "My ancestors had their garbage picked up by the Turks and by the British. I have mine picked up by the Zionists. What's the difference?"

In Israeli politics this relationship has played out by the government – Likud and Labor – buying orthodox allegiance through subsidized living and military exemption. If asked to disengage from a settlement at the threat of losing these benefits, most Ultra Orthodox I spoke to would seek accommodations elsewhere.

**Alternative Explanations**

**Instrumentalist Alternatives**

Instrumental approaches argue that elites mobilize religious violence in the context of weak state capacity or relative group need, creating incentives and opportunities for violence. Religion is used as a calculated instrument within socio-

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political dynamics where leaders expect a payoff from religious group mobilization. Stated in a hypothesis:

H4: Settler elites within a weak state, or with relative deprivation, will use extreme religious rhetoric to mobilize violent dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve to secure better social positions. Elites within a strong state or strong economic position will have less incentive to use religious rhetoric for violent social mobilization.

If the instrumentalists are correct, we should see leaders using religion to further their group in the context of weak political or economic position.

On face, the Outpost settlements are geographically distant from the strong capacity of the state, which could explain why radical rabbis concentrate there. Evidence of the instrumental argument in the Hilltop would be if rabbis indeed gravitated away from the state structure to establish their radical camps outside the purview of a strong state institution. In this scenario, the radical rabbis could provide for followers where the state could not. And yet, constitutionally, the IDF must protect and secure Israeli citizens regardless of the legal or illegal status of their settlement. While weak states provide an opportunity for violent leaders to mobilize, the Israeli State, particularly through military and economic control over the West Bank settlements, has extraordinary capacity. Functionally, this means that the state has a near constant presence in the settlements,
placing officers on weekly shifts in illegal Outposts.\textsuperscript{126} Even in the hills outside of Yizhar, under the risk of price tagging, the IDF established a base.\textsuperscript{127} It is unlikely therefore that Outpost settlers are able to use religion as a means to provide something the state cannot. The constant struggle in evacuation and rebuilding of settlements indicates that Outpost settlers are indeed engaged with the state. There is also some evidence that the security service, the Shaback, are constantly trying to infiltrate the Outposts, though the Jewish groups tactfully resist.\textsuperscript{128} It therefore seems that with all of the attention paid by the state, that the increase in violence in the hills is a remaining puzzle for the instrumentalist position.

As far as the broad religious Zionist settlements are concerned, there is indeed some evidence that leaders utilize religious rhetoric to better the position within the state. But saying that politics is instrumental is something entirely different than the hypothesis that leaders use religion to mobilize violence. In Zionist settlements, there is no evidence that leaders are using religion to stir up vigilantism as there is in the Outposts, and I saw clear evidence of leadership discouraging extralegal building and targeting of Palestinians. The outcome variable of intransigence manifests in the political realm, but there is no evidence that of settlers taking it upon themselves to ruin the peace process as there is in the Hilltop settlements.

\textsuperscript{126}“IDF Provides Security for All West Bank Settlements - regardless of Legal Status,” \textit{The Jerusalem Fund}, accessed May 16, 2015, \url{http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/ht/display/ContentDetails/i/39027/pid/895}.


\textsuperscript{128}Subject M.
It seems that religious Zionists are not interested in using religion to challenge the state so much as they are interested in infusing the state apparatus into daily religious devotion. In the case of the military yeshivut, the state's capacity is thoroughly bolstered by the participation of religious Zionists. On the political front, Jewish Home, Likhud and other rightist parties have sought to promote settlements, providing them with vast resources and protection. It would thus seem that the opposite of the instrumentalist prediction is occurring: religion is not being used to secure the settler's social position in society. Rather, the public domain is being used to further a religious agenda. Religious Zionists run for office and join the military as religious practice itself, the military and political areas are not the end goal. Thus, the state is being used as an instrument of religious ends.

The case that best supports the instrumentalist formulation is that of Ultra Orthodox settlers. The community thrives being linked in a special way to the Israeli state and has been part of one of the most robust state-building projects in history. From Ben Gurion's labor coalition up to Netanyahu's Likhud government, Ultra Orthodox parties have played a critical role in governing coalition. There is therefore some evidence that the later prediction of Hypothesis Four has merit in this case: radical groups have little incentive to incite violence when they are strongly positioned within a capable state.

Instrumental scholars would also find support if there were evidence that elevated violence dynamics followed leaders using religion to mobilize a group to capture resources they had been deprived of. The Hilltop Youth, often teenagers, make a
consciousness choice to leave high quality settlements for poverty. While many religious Zionists are middle-class workers taking large suburban dwellings, the Outposts – literally plywood and cinder-block houses – are the poorest of the poor. In my visits in the hills around Nablus, I counted settlement communities of no more than five families in some locations, living without running water or any sanitation system. Some live in tents. Outpost settlers indeed see themselves a symbol of rugged work ethic, and they are not interested in the material wealth they left behind with their parents. The core driver remains their religious commitment to who is allowed access to land. From this motivation, a majority of Hilltop Youth I spoke to want to be sustenance farmers left alone from the outside world.

Additionally, the Club Model maintains that individuals join violent groups because they provide services and survival strategies. Elites then mobilize those “clubs” to suit their needs. The exact opposite is occurring in these communities, as it is the state, through subsidies and IDF protection, is by far the main entity guaranteeing survival. The goods and services provided by mainstream Zionist settlements should lead to groups staying in the main blocks. This is not the case for the Hilltop Youth: individuals are leaving groups that provide club-like services and instead joining settlements with virtually no service provision. The elite rabbis in these communities in fact shun the extravagance they see in places like Jerusalem, mobilizing groups toward more deprivation, not less. The extreme austerity essentially asks settlers to commit to the vigilante lifestyle – high risk, with extraordinarily little material reward. Joining orthodox
and Zionist settlers actually produces instrumental outcomes in housing and education subsidies, whereas being in Outposts do not. It therefore seems as though if there is a correlation between poverty and violence, the causal arrow is pointing in the direction opposite of majority expectations and refuting Hypothesis Four.

Relative deprivation is also not present for religious Zionists, who are well-secured in the middle class. Most of the settlements evaluated here share a relatively equal access to wealth opportunity – Ariel has a large university and industrial center and the East Jerusalem “envelope” offers ease of access to Jerusalem commerce and even Tel Aviv. This allows for many religious-Zionists to work in Israel's vibrant technology and service sectors by day and maintain a top-level quality of life in cheaper settlements, all while fulfilling God's commandment to live in Eretz Yizrael. Without these economic connections in daily life, the highly exclusivist religious practices of religious Zionists could present a real problem. Untethered from military, economic, and political power, it is unlikely that the Zionist agenda (as advanced by Jewish Home and Likhud) would remain peaceful, which is exactly what we see in the case of the Hilltop Youth below. One can thus imagine a scenario where IDF hesder yeshivut and the settlement blocks were simultaneously disassembled under a Labor coalition: the result would probably push thousands of Zionists from their moderate practice toward lifestyles akin to those in the outposts. Once again we observe the importance strong economic ties have in restraining groups with radical beliefs, partially supporting Hypothesis Four.

The relative deprivation theory of instrumental action is also problematic in the case of the Ultra Orthodox. The Ultra Orthodox are very poor, relative to secular groups.
Even with state subsidized living, families bring in NIS 3,700 a month on average compared to over 12,000 a month for the average non-Haredi family. It thus shouldn’t come as a surprise that three-quarters of Haredi children live under the poverty line.\textsuperscript{129} Yet living in poverty remains an element of sacred practice – a point of identity and a marker of a life devoted to Torah. The Haradi community thus poses a puzzle for instrumentalists as the presence of deprivation has not resulted in violent outbursts against their Palestinian neighbors. While poor, they are not disenfranchised. While poor, they are not predatory. There is no evidence to suggest that the relative deprivation argument holds: Haredim are poor and do not contribute to higher levels of conflict intensity, intransigence, or resolve.

Finally, this project serves as an ontological rejoinder to the instrumentalist school of thought. In order for dog-whistle politics to function – for the rhetoric to have power – there must be an underlying common social fabric which supports the demands of the elite. For example, Bashir Al Asad made an overt attempt to “sectarianize” the civil conflict when he state to a room of supporters, “Those are the enemies of the people and the enemies of God. And the enemies of God will go to hell.”\textsuperscript{130} In order for that rhetoric to serve Asad as an instrument, it has to connect to the social fabric of his audience. Instrumentalists tell us nothing about this constitutive nature of religion. As I have


argued, this social fabric is forged in the everyday practices of religious life. Instrumental use of religion is thus not useful in explaining where religious action originate.

*Constructivist Alternatives*

Many maintain that the role of rhetoric, belief, and ideology are important in explaining why some settlers engage in violence differently from others. Constructivists would instruct scholars to review the rhetoric and ideological basis of the group, positing that violent ideology and language will prove a justificatory resource for more intense and intractable violence. To restate the hypothesis:

H5: Settlers with extreme religious beliefs will have higher levels of intensity, intransigence and resolve in violent environments than settlers in the same environment without extreme beliefs.

The evidence challenges this hypothesis in three ways.

First, when settlers share huge swaths of beliefs and ideology, those beliefs become less helpful at explaining variation in behavior. Such is the case in West Bank settlement communities: Core religious beliefs are shared by almost all settlers, but only some engage in higher levels of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. For example, all three types of settlements believe in messianic redemption. All three rely on similar rabbinical traditions, all have an ideological commitment to promoting Judaism, all say the same Shema, all pray at the Western Wall, and all observe the same religious holidays. Where the groups diverge is not in their ideology, but in the social practices that create the framework for judging the performance of Judaism. The most radical group –
the Hilltop Youth – infuse the ideology with basic standards of behavior relating to settlement. The practice of messianism, textual readings, and even the shema prayers are judged in at the site of bodily practice of settlement. To be competent at the practice of saying the shema in the Hilltop, one must display fervor about the land. Yet in the orthodox community, I observed no fervor for the land, but members sitting in postures of study. This posture for study relates to the practice of textual mastery, which counter-intuitively is less exclusivist in the Ultra Orthodox Yeshivas than in the Outposts.

Note additionally that religious Zionists share an almost identical belief profile as their children who have ventured out into settlements. Beliefs in the importance of settlement and messianic redemption are present in both communities. The difference rests in the degree of exclusionary practice between the two groups. While the Outposts embrace a racist network of five or six main rabbis, mainstream religious Zionists invite membership from a broad base of Jews who culturally further the process of messianic redemption. The division is also seen in the types of activities group members embrace. Where the Zionists engage in the IDF, politics, and the broader economy as tools of furthering the messianic promise, the Hilltop are post-Zionist, and narrow the criteria of Judaism to exclude participation in state and economic institutions.

Furthermore, religious Zionists maintain all of the core belief profiles that scholars like Kimball, Jurgensmeyer, and Clark expect to cause elevated levels of
violence, such as sacred time, space, and messianic figures. In this framework, settlement groups with these beliefs should engage Palestinians more intensely, stubbornly, and with more resolve. The fact that religious-Zionists do not contribute to all of these conflict dynamics is a puzzle. While they are stubborn, they engage though normal political channels, not extralegal Cosmic beliefs joined with dehumanizing rhetoric is not enough to push actors to hard-core vigilantism or community-wide defiance of IDF orders.

The importance constructivist approaches place on religious rhetoric and belief as a contributing explanation for violence is questionable in the Ultra Orthodox settlements as well. While moderate in practices of textual interpretation, messianism, and group privilege, the ideological platform of the Ultra Orthodox share similar profiles as those who do commit violence. Language about spiritual law trumping civic law, for example, is a critical justification framework for violence which is shared by Haredim and Hilltopper alike. Such language, we expect, should provide religious entrepreneurs with “rhetorical resources” to amplify a cause into holy war. This should be especially compounded with Orthodox beliefs in Jews being “set apart” people, who believe in a God who collectively punishes transgressions and a messiah who will come, judge and

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132Clarke, *The Justifications of Religious Violence*.

dispose of the unrighteous. For famed religion scholar Charles Kimball, each of these components supposedly explain “when a religion becomes evil.”¹³⁴ But as illustrated above, the presence of rhetorical extremism or radical beliefs in no way pushes this community towards elevated dynamics of violence. Beliefs alone cannot explain variation in violence dynamics.

Finally, as with the instrumentalist argument, I object to the constructivist position for ontological reasons. The difference between a belief-based approach and practice theory is nuanced and important. While belief is something that goes on inside of an individual's head, a practice is a bundle of beliefs and activities that are shared within a community and are observable. While a belief has no outside referent, a social practice is entirely outside reference. Thus on an ontological level, my argument is that beliefs can only be talked about as having any causal effect by one observing social practice.

**Conclusion**

The practices of messianism, textual interpretation, two dimensions of group privilege, and of sacred space are all deeply problematic in their exclusivity. Unlike other settlers, the Hilltop Youth have very few economic or political connections to keep them in check. The physical and ideological isolation that pervades the Outposts also insulates the groups from the kinds of overlapping cleavages that provide moderation in other settlements.

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¹³⁴Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*. 

258
Interestingly, I found that the last decade has morphed the practice of Judaism in the West Bank. After Oslo, the Hilltop Youth began to appropriate an anti-Zionist and anti-state posture borrowed from the Haredim. While not Ultra Orthodox, the Outposts were so betrayed by the Gaza disengagement that they essentially moved beyond Zionism. Unlike the religious Zionists of the Gush Emunim era, the Hilltop Youth are interested in establishing a Sanhedrin Theocracy, run by rabbis who advocate ethnic cleansing as “Kadush Hashem.” A process of settlement “sectarianization” has developed from a youth disaffected by both religious Zionism and Haredi Orthodoxy. Their vision is instead a simple orthopraxy, which places settlement of Palestinian land as the ultimate religious ritual.

Tracing these practices assists in disaggregating not only which actors contribute to elevated dynamics of violence, but provides a constitutive context for why some actors elevate and extend dynamics while others do not. I have also argued that practices in the Hilltop constitute actors in such a way that the community constructs indivisibilities around issues that other settlers do not. Three types of indivisibility emerge from practice, each operating as a mechanism linking practice and violence outcome. First, exclusive practices create social identities that are bound to the transcendental. As seen with the Hilltop Youth, being a member of the settler community not only involves shared space, but shared identity in Eretz Yisrael and in bringing about the Messiah. The cosmic binding leads to dispositional group indivisibility in conflict, resulting in elevated violence outside of the normal conflict environment.
Second, exclusive practices create organizational dynamics that punish negotiation. In fact, in the territories I found the most right-leaning political leaders regularly disparaged for negotiation with the left. Hebron settlement leader Dov Lior’s condemnation of the Netanyahu government included scorn for leaders of Jewish Home and many that I spoke with referred to both Bennett and the Yesha council as bourgeoisie and out of touch. Exclusive practice among the membership pushes the movement towards extraordinary intransigence, resulting in less negotiation and prolonged violence.

Third, exclusive practices lengthen time horizons. A community where one's competence is judged by exclusivist scriptural traditions and settling as fulfilling messianic prophecies, frames everyday life as a transcendent part of God's arc of history. A “simple act of rage” as Ginsburgh advocates for, is not a one-off event, but a profoundly cosmic experience. Similarly, while the IDF may tear down an Outpost, rebuilding is not just an act of defiance against a powerful state, it is a divine mandate that pleases the eternal God. Such lengthened time frames link exclusivist practices to the dynamics of resolve observed uniquely in the Outpost communities.

The focus on religious practice in the settlements helps us understand how actors are constituted to respond in divergent ways in conflict environments. Disaggregation not only reveals both the actors principally contributing to the dependent variables of intensity, intransigence, and resolve, but also helps create understanding for how actors are constituted to produce elevated violence dynamics. Such understanding can be helpful to peace. Even Palestinian victims over-aggregate, lumping IDF and the Israeli state together with those committing attacks. For example, after a March 28, 2015 attack
outside of Bethlehem, Faraj al-Naasan, the head of the village’s local council said, “Zionist settlers stormed al-Mughayir village, spray-painted racist slogans on several walls and torched two cars.” The slogans, written in Hebrew, included the phrases ‘Death to Arabs,’ ‘Glory to Jews,’ as well as ‘Price Tag.’ But placing blame at the feet of “Zionists” would be to blame a majority of Israelis, when obviously the acts are committed by only a handful of participants. Today, it is normal that the only Israelis that Palestinians interact with are settlers and the IDF forces protecting them – which feeds back into a Palestinian narrative that all Israelis would engage in such vigilantism. A Palestinian understanding that only a minority of Hilltop settlers participate in violence could be an important aspect of future peace since the disaggregation could frame mainstream, secular Israelis and even the Haredim and Zionists in West Bank settlements as legitimate bargaining partners compared to the Hilltop.

The project thus offers more than ivory tower queries - there are very real aspects of social-political life at stake. Exclusivist/Extremist religious practice presents a somber challenge to Israeli public policy officials – many of whom indicated to me that there was nothing they could do in the face of Jewish extremism. I found severe lack of vision among the nation's leading counter-terror experts, perhaps reflecting a global glut of answers to the process of sectarianization overall. For instance, one high ranking respondent in the security service told me “[What can you do] with the terrorist group themselves? Nothing. Simply to deter them, you know wait in it might disappear, maybe second generation might be different, I mean, look after them. Very little can be done

135“Israeli Settlers Torch Cars, Spray-Paint Racist Slogans In West Bank.”
about it. Of course try to look for the support and why people chose them and why people support them, this is a way you need simply to wait in this way, to disappear.”

I asked another military leader: Which types of terrorism motivations seem especially dangerous to you and why? He responded, “I mean, again, it’s largely religious, but those are hard because you can’t deter them.”

Unlike these pessimistic practitioners, I offer two broad recommendations to address extralegal violence in the West Bank.

First, there should be general concern about practice-based sectarianization in the settlements. While there are many radical beliefs operating in Israel, there is little evidence to suggest that elevated intensity, intransigence, and resolve directly result from ideology alone. The biggest threat to peace in the settlements are in communities where exclusive practice can be observed, indicating that policymakers should place less emphasis on those within mainstream practice who may have intense ideologies. Disaggregating settlers on their practice allows for scholars and policymakers alike to map the geographic areas of group intransigence, indicating predictive “hot-spots” for violence intensity, intransigence and resolve. I model this in the conclusion with a predictive map of potential problem areas in 2015.

Sectarianization, in other words, can be observed as a process of spreading exclusivist practices. The more intense, intransigent, and resolved settlers expand their West Bank footprint, the more exacerbated the overarching conflict becomes. The

136Subject BD Tel Aviv, June 1, 2014.
137SUBJECT B12IS, July 1, 2014, 12.
Outposts severely handicap Israeli bargaining power with Palestine. As the growth of Outposts far outpaces IDF evacuation, it signals a lack of credibility when discussing a two-state solution. Even more problematic, the Outpost settlements are increasingly drawing defectors from religious Zionist circles. Membership of the IDF itself has become more religiously observant in recent years. Those religious Zionist soldiers trained in hesder yeshivut may be more inclined to turn a blind eye to Hilltop violence. Throughout Israel, there is general concern that religious Zionists in the IDF will not act to constrain the radical Outposts. There is indeed some evidence of this already, as IDF in some Zionist settlements like Itamar have actually provided aid and comfort to the Youth by delaying removal of fringe Outposts. The question is whether hesder yeshivut educated members of the IDF could restrict military autonomy in exercising force in politically and religiously disputable missions such as settlement withdrawal.138

Family linkages could also be a force of sectarianization. Religious Zionists parents in Ariel, East Jerusalem, Itamar, Shiloh, and beyond and funding their settlement-raised children venturing out into Hilltop communities. While the parent generation still maintains ties in the military, economy, and politics, I found many cases where parents would literally pack their children lunch for their day of building illegal Outposts. Thus, while not directly promoting Hilltop activity, the familial connections between the older and younger generations is a form of material support. Further work on the family network between “legal” settlements and illegal settlements could prove useful for

visualizing the pull of resources from the center to the fringe. On a policy level, Israeli
decision-makers must provide educational, occupational and other quality of life
incentives early on to prevent the spread of radicals to Outposts.

Second, more governance and more economic connection are key to limiting the
ability for exclusive religious practice to lead to elevated dynamics of violence. A
community's role in politics, military, and economic spheres provided cross-cutting
priorities, which the data show can restrict the instrumental use of religion by elites.
Orthodox and Zionist settlers are by and large well positioned within the state and
economic structure, which may disincent their leaders from taking extralegal steps that
their social dispositions might otherwise push them towards. The Hilltop Youth
movement is so problematic precisely because they simultaneously have more exclusive
everyday practices of religion and they share none of the cross-cutting cleavages as the
Ultra Orthodox or religious Zionists. Developing cross-cutting cleavages is thus one
policy avenue that might forge long-term economic and political constraints on the
Outposts.

In an influential Foreign Affairs article on the Hilltop Youth, Byman and Sachs
argue for a three-fold strategy to combat hilltop extremism, including 1) targeting the
Hilltop Youth as “terrorists”; 2) Encouraging moderate rabbis to ostracize and cut off
radicals; and 3) isolating the Outpost movement from Yesheva leadership. The findings
of this chapter would indicate that this is exactly the wrong approach. First, calling the
Outposts “terrorists” does nothing to reduce the mistrust between the young settlement
generation and the government. In fact, the label would create a further divide between
the moderate center and the fringe settlers. Instead, the Israeli public would be wise to target the practice that produce extralegal violence – engaging and refuting racist interpretations of scripture, rabbinical isolation, and distortions of halacha, would go much further than applying labels. Second, the Hilltop Youth are already insulated and self-ostracized. The suggestion for moderate rabbis to cut off radicals ignores the reality that the radicals are the ones who call the moderates heretical. The Yesha council has itself received attacks from the Hilltop, so it is unlikely that further isolation from Yesha is going to have an impact. Instead, Israel should be looking for opportunities to bring the stray sheep back to the mainstream fold. There are openings for this, such as emphasizing the holy-yeomen lifestyle they could have in Golan or Galilee. Liberals should make concessions to Jewish Home and other settler parties in exchange for their buy-in to reign in the Outpost movement. The state must engage with negotiations offering incentives, not just threats of arrest and exclusion which have only resulted in further sectarian divides.

This chapter is only a first step in tracking violence dynamics by disaggregating actor practices. Based on the findings here, new research can go in several directions. Future studies of settlement violence should pay special attention to the networks of settlements, enabling visualization about how both human and monetary capital from religious-Zionist settlements is connected to Outpost campaign. A network analysis could also be used to map ideological overlap between settler Outposts, based on the connections between their rabbis. Mapping the ideological terrain could prove useful for disengagement plans that might prioritize evacuation in order of least-networked,
targeting the most isolated settlements like Kiryat Arba and Yitzhar before tackling more developed networks.
Chapter 6: Sierra Leone's Inter-Religious Council and Rising Violence

On my third day in Sierra Leone a friend and I hopped on the back of a motorcycle taxi and sped across town. Muhammad the young bike driver picked us up, and, as we sped through the Freetown suburb of Aberdeen, I heard the call for Islamic prayers ring out from a mosque. My friend shouted over the hum of the motorcycle:

“Muhammad, why you drive now? Shouldn't you be at prayers?”

“Oh, my mother was a Muslim, so I'm Muhammad. But my father – he was a Christian.”

“And what does that make you?”

“Well... Both,” he laughed.

Sierra Leone (Salone) presents a fascinating case where many people indeed not only believe, but practice, a mixture of Islam, Christianity and Traditional African Religion (TAR). “Despite their spiritual differences, the two faiths have coexisted in a spirit of tolerance and harmony to a degree rarely seen elsewhere and setting an example for other countries to follow.”¹ Official estimates put the Muslim population at 77 percent and 21 percent Christian and yet even the US State Department notes that “many persons

¹Peter Penfold, “Faith in Resolving Sierra Leone’s Bloody Conflict,” The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs 94, no. 382 (October 2005): 54
combine Islam or Christianity with indigenous religious beliefs.”

My exchange with the motorcycle taxi driver contrasts markedly with others who I spoke to that advocated the establishment of Sharia, or the expulsion of all Muslims from around the area of Christian churches.

Such a range of practice begs the question of how diverse groups participated in the conflict environment of the civil war and post-war period. Through an investigation of three mini-cases, I show how practices of “both” - radical inclusion and inclusive practice produced actors that decreased the intensity of their violent environment, and played a decisive role in negotiated termination of the conflict. The three cases evaluated, their observed practice variation, and outcome variables are summarized in Table 6.1. Table 6.2 shows a Boolean truth table for how disaggregation of practice compares to alternative explanations for conflict outcomes. Rather than itemizing how each of the eight dimensions of practice function in order, I isolate six comparable sets of salient practices that reinforce one another and that vary significantly between religious communities examined.

Group indivisibility is observed in the causal mechanisms of 1) intragroup binding, 2) limited negotiation platforms, and 3) lengthened time-frames. Therefore, in addition to attention on the correlative connection between practice and violence dynamics, this chapter demonstrates the linking connections between the two. If I am


3 I combine textual exclusivity and group privilege for brevity. Among the groups, diet proves a nonfactor. See Table 6.1
correct, we should see three observable implications following from each of these causal mechanisms.

First, I expect that less exclusive practices produce less intragroup binding which results in decrease intensity levels. Groups who bridge between disparate memberships are more likely to stem intense levels of conflict. As a formal hypothesis:

H1: Religious groups with more exclusive religious practices will fight more intensely than groups in the same conflict environment with moderate or contested religious practices.

Second, I expect that exclusive practices produce groups that place limitations on elites, which prevents bargaining and increases indivisibility. On the other hand, groups with inclusive or contested practices are likely to bargain:

H2: Religious groups with more exclusivist religious practices will be less inclined to negotiate in a violent conflict where, in the same conflict environment, those with moderate or contested religious practices are more likely to seek out bargaining-based solutions.

Finally, I expect that lengthened time-frames, forged through exclusive practice, will compel groups to fight longer in the face of strong social, political, or military opposition:

H3: Religious groups with more exclusivist religious practices will show more resolve in violent opposition than those in the same conflict environment with moderate or contested religious practices.
Hypotheses 1-3 contrast with alternative explanations from instrumentalist and constructivist scholars, which have their own observable implications. First, instrumentalists would expect that elites would use religious rhetoric to mobilize for relative political or social gain. Stated as a contending hypothesis:

H4: Religious elites within a weak state, or with relative deprivation, will use extreme religious rhetoric to mobilize violent dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve to secure better social positions. Elites within a strong state or strong economic position will have less incentive to use religious rhetoric for violent social mobilization.

And if constructivist theory is right, then the content of belief itself is the central explanation of violence dynamics. To state in a hypothesis:

H5: Groups with extreme religious beliefs will have higher levels of intensity, intransigence and resolve in violent environments than groups in the same environment without extreme beliefs.

The chapter proceeds in three main sections, each investigating a mini-case within Salone: the case of the Inter-Religious Council before, during, and after the civil war, Evangelical Christians who began to come into Salone after the war, and Salafist Islamic groups, who also proliferated in the post war period. In each section, I engage in the following order of argument. First, I outline how the group operates as a community of practice. I isolate religious social practices as important constitutive factors of religious
group identity. Second, I trace how exclusive practices create the causal mechanisms of cosmic binding, decision limiting, and time-frame extending, which produce violent conflict dynamics. Third, I discuss how the dependent variables of intensity, intransigence, and resolve are present or absent within a community. Each case draws upon direct participant observation, over 60 formal and informal interviews in Freetown (Aberdeen, Congo Cross, Kissy, Forah Bay), Makeni, Waterloo, Koidu, focus groups with Christian and Muslim leaders from every district in the country, as well as secondary source historical narrative.
Table 6.1: Summary of Practices Observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Afterlife</th>
<th>Group P</th>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Dress</th>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Rites</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
<th>DV-Inten</th>
<th>DV-Intran</th>
<th>DV-Resol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.A Inter Religious Council Sierra Leone (2.5)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B Evangelical Christian Groups (7)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C Evangelical Salafi Groups (7.5)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.2: Summary of Competing Explanations and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Exclusive Practice</th>
<th>Instrumentalist A: Relative Deprivation</th>
<th>Instrumentalist B: Low State Capacity</th>
<th>Constructivist</th>
<th>Outcome: Intensity</th>
<th>Outcome: Intransigence</th>
<th>Outcome: Resolve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.A IRC-SL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B Evangelical Christians</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.C Evangelical Muslims</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
After the substantive sections laying out my argument and evidence to support Hypothesis 1-3, I present and refute evidence of alternative instrumentalist and constructivist observable implications. The evidence suggests that neither Hypothesis 4 or 5 can fully explain the variation observed in Salone's religious communities. Concluding remarks outline policy prescriptions based on the findings.

Case A: Interfaith Council of Sierra Leone

April 1997 was a watershed moment in the midst of a terrible civil war. With the support of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, religious leaders in Sierra Leone came together to establish the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC). Founding Muslim members included the Supreme Islamic Council, the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress, the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Sierra Leone, the Council of Imams and the Sierra Leone Islamic Missionary Union, along with the Christian Council of Churches, the Catholic Church, then Anglican Church, and the Wesleyan and United Methodist denominations.4 These groups, funded by member contributions and donations from nongovernmental organizations, helped maintain harmony between Christians and Muslims, expressed support for peace and good governance, and provided development assistance.5 The Pentecostal Churches Council was an early member, but at the end of the war became increasingly against interfaith dialogue, resulting in members breaking away from the IRC – a process discussed further in Case 2.B.

4 Penfold, “Faith in Resolving Sierra Leone’s Bloody Conflict,” 551.
5 “Sierra Leone 2013 International Religious Freedom Report.”
The IRC stands out as a shining example of effective religious-inspired reconciliation and peacebuilding, for in the midst of one of the worst wars of the Twenty First Century, it was religious leaders who stemmed the intensity of violence, ushered in negotiated termination of hostilities, and convinced armed groups to give up their fight in the face of local and international pressure.

This section examines the constitutive forces of practice that formed the actors who participated in stemming the civil war. I argue that despite differences in belief and ideology between Muslims, Christians, and traditional African religions, that tolerance and interfaith cooperation through shared ritual and practice constitute actors in a way reduces violent dynamics. These practices are discussed below.

*Group Practices*

Salone's Poda-Poda, or public transport buses, are universally painted with religious slogans. “God Bless The Owner” / “Islam is True” / “Love Thy Enemies” are examples. Usually such slogans are painted on the window or bumper in large letters, closely beside a smaller ode to the driver's favorite football team. It is common to see “God is True, Go Chelsea.” My personal favorite was a Fur Loop neighborhood local with the painted-on phrase “God Bless Allah.”

As the poda-saying indicates, quite unlike their neighbors in Mali, Guinea, and Liberia, Sierra Leoneans are known for their radical incorporation of Traditional African Religion (TAR), Christianity, and Islam. The IRC maintains membership from each of these groups, and itself has developed practices of sycretism and multiple practice, which
spill over into their respective communities. My argument is that the practices developed within the IRC created an opening for disengagement and negotiation in the civil war. Further, these practices were then appropriated back within culture to establish a baseline for how one is to behave competently as a person of faith “in Salone.”

1. Group Privilege and Textual Interpretation

While other majority-Muslim countries have problems of groups wishing to establish Sharia law and regulate the behavior of the minority, Salone's Islamic leaders have instead actively promoted the presence of Christian schools and orphanages in their areas. Based on this goodwill and friendship, leaders from around the country came together in the first meeting of Islamic and Christian leaders in the fall of 1989.

As the story goes, the meeting opened with both a Christian invocation and a Muslim prayer, and then alternated speakers. This meeting was so widely hailed as a success, leaders promised one another that follow-on meetings would follow this convention. Such was the practice throughout the last several decades of the group's existence, even when it formalized itself into the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone in 1997. Built into the fabric of the organization was thus a pluralistic emphasis on deference and respect to the other, with absolutely no privilege paid to one group over another.

I witnessed the interfaith movement first-hand, when I attended a formal conference of the IFC in Makeni in 2014. Seated in a sticky-hot gymnasium, about halfway through the conference, an elder Catholic priest marched up to the podium, and before his speech to his peers, ordered all to stand up and stretch. For 15 minutes, I
exercised with the top Islamic and Christian leaders in the country, all together doing arm 'windmills,' jumping jacks, and side-lunges. After we all sat down, the priest began a lecture: “Muslim friends, A salam alaikum! [Alaikum a salam]. Christian friends, may the peace of the Lord be with you! [And also with you]. We must not take it [pluralism] for granted, we must build on it.” The message continued around the theme: “there is no compulsion in religion”6 which the priest continued by talking about how God, “created man into nations and tribes so you can better understand [God]... we know God better by knowing each other. The Universal Ummah, and the Body of Christ are hallmarks of universal welcome. Because religion is a religious prerogative, we must watch out for each other's freedom. We should be each other's keeper. We should inspire people to show love and reject discrimination.”

After breaking into applause, the priest led the audience in a series of songs – to which each group knew the words of the other's. First, he began with an Islamic incantation (which he led), then Christian anthem, which each of the Muslim leaders also knew by heart.

Afterward, I assembled an hour-long focus group totaling about 15 leaders from differing denominations. I asked about the types of groups that would be allowed into the

6 The reference is Islamic, coming from Surat al-Baqarah 2:256: “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.”
IRC, and almost all laughed or giggled at me, saying that all Buddhists, Bahai, and “even Jews” would be welcome, “even if there were only one.” The group expressed a general welcome for all types of traditions, as illustrated by a one group leader, using 'God' and 'Allah' interchangeably in the focus group, “God has as many faces as there are people in the world... we see Allah through the conscious of our own hearts. If we cannot accept our differences, then we hate God who created us.”

In over a dozen separate interviews with IRC leadership, I was told how a majority of people in Salone interpret scripture in a way that gives credence to both traditions. Indeed, I found some evidence that the Koran is read as a legitimate liturgical source in Christian services. This radical overlap in scriptural practice between Muslim and Christian groups is evidenced by the general ways in which educated locals talk about central elements of their faith:

“The two faiths, the two books. The Koran and the Bible share so much in common. There are very, very, few, few differences, it is almost the same. The Old Testament and the Koran. It is only the New Testament that is different, 'cause you know, the New Testament is all about Christ. And the Apostles. And for the Old Testament, it talks all about the Prophet. And it is the same that you find in the Koran.”

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7 Focus Group in Makeni, May 11, 2014.

8 “Jason,” Interview A200 - Port Loko, April 21, 2014.
I approached a local Christian priest to ask about this phenomenon, who responded with an even deeper layer of sycretism. I asked, “How do you think that happened? How come there is such a strong inter-religious, special nature of Sierra Leone?”

“That is a good question. Maybe I will say the dynamics of how we have integrated traditional African religion into the mainline religions.”

“Can you give me an example?”

“Yes. You have people who are Christians, but they are not afraid to go to the witch doctor. (laughs). They will go to the Mass on Sunday, then they will go to the Ju Ju man, and the Ju Ju man will pray for them, and they will see nothing wrong in that. Then they will go back to their church and they will pray and give thanks to God. To put it crudely, whatever works for them and their god. I mean, polygamy in terms of Islam, has woven itself firmly into Islam as far as traditions. So you go to weddings, Islamic marriages, you think of Islam, but it is traditional religion, woven into Islam. I mean, they have been able to integrate that. [...]”

“Do you think that there is truth in the Koran, too?” I asked to see the priest's reaction and willingness to incorporate other texts into his worldview. He didn't pause:

“Yes definitely. Its about God's reign. Which I presume, even in the Koran, is a reign of peace. Its a reign of Justice. It is the reign of God.

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9 Joe Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni, May 7, 2014.
But again, it depends on how people interpret the reign of God. We can impose that and give people our own kingdom instead of the word of God.”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this same Catholic priest was the convener and host of the IRC’s 2014 annual meeting in Makeni. The priest then explained to me how being a part of the IRC made him think about how to preach, teach and “how to behave a Christian in Salone.” Thus, we see that the liberal, non-exclusive interpretation of scripture that predominates among the people is accepted and taught by leaders of the IRC, who were the principle institutional architects of mutual tolerance and respect dating back before the war.

2. Sacred Space

Sierra Leone culture has no clear demarcations of sacred space between Christian, Muslim, or TAR boundaries. Leaders within the IRC regularly invite congregants of alternative religions to practice within the halls of their own churches. For example, when I visited the town of Port Loko, one man told me that the local Church was burnt down in the war and the Imam then hosted weekly Christian services in the mosque every week. Leaders from the IRC – Archbishop, pastor, Imam and Shiek alike – all told me that they regularly open their houses of worship to one another.

I came to Bambuna with a local educational supervisor, asking the Paramount Chief about school population. This particular Chief was incorporated into the IRC's

10 Ibid.
peace process and we discussed at length how religion is practiced in the remote area.
“You have both Christian and Islamic schools,” he said. “We all go to each school –
Islam and Christian, Anglican, Catholic. We all get along because we all worship the
same God. God is God, who is different in different paces. Shia in some, Baptist in other.
But we say, be as you are.” The Chief then told a story: His father, the former Paramount
Chief was a devout Muslim, but he allowed the Baptists to build their church and allowed
locals to go to church. “When I became Chief,” he smiled and pointed across the street
from his house, “I built a Mosque, but I am a Christian – I went to school at the Baptist
church that my father let be built.”

The same leaders who promote and encourage interfaith sharing of space – even
coopracticing in the same buildings – are the exact leaders in the IRC who played a
crucial role in stemming the conflict dynamics of civil war.

3. Afterlife Rituals

At some point between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, clerics, traders,
pastors and armed conquerors brought Islamic practices to the West African coastal sub-
region, and my respondents in Temne and Limba tribes in Northern Salone indicated that
their oral tradition quickly incorporated the new faith into a range of local religions and
tribal rituals, especially those relating to the afterlife, the spiritual role of ancestors, death
and witchcraft. Similar phenomenon occurred with the Krio people appropriating
Christian doctrine within extant TAR. According to a Makeni Catholic priest, his own
mother would both pray on Sunday and see witches and tribal faith healers:

11 Interview with Bumbuna Tribal Chief, April 30, 2014.

281
“The Christian faith and the traditional African Religion, the dynamics between the two, we see it playing out in our own lives in our own families. My own brother (laughs) he had sickle cell anemia. My mother, would go to the Ju Ju man, and ask him to pray for my brother, and he would use the African incantation, and I mean, combine everything. And at that age, I was frowning at my other, saying “how can you, you are a Christian.” - and then I learn to be sympathetic to my mother. She is bringing her own worldview to Christianity and who am I to condemn?”

Thus, in afterlife practice, traditional beliefs are broadly tied together with Christian Mainline denominational practice, in addition to widespread TAR infusion with Muslim practices of death and divination. In every community I visited, respondents within the Churches and Mosques led by IRC-affiliated pastors and Sheiks, would tell me that “debuls” or jinn, explain windfalls or failures of both the individual and community. There is the widespread practice of honoring ancestors, who are the owners of the village, not the living. It is thus common to see people paying homage to dead relatives no matter their faith: they leave rice at the door for an ancestor to show respect. And this is seen as entirely consistent with the major religions.

Within this context, I asked a young man (who attends a church whose pastor is in IRC leadership) whether his church taught about judgment of non-believers:

12 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni.
“The problem is that both books talk about judgment. Both books talk about resurrection. You go to the Muslim faith and they tell you that judgment after. The only difference seems to be the traditionalists they don’t believe in these things. When somebody dies, that’s it. They are dead. But for these two religions: the Christian religion, the Muslim religion, for sure. They will tell you about resurrection and they will tell you about judgment...”

Here the practice of inclusion within the area of afterlife is apparent even as the respondent talks about social “beliefs.” The respondent's own beliefs are framed within a socio-cultural practice of inclusion, which impacts how one competently talks about personal beliefs. In further conversation with almost 20 pastors and Sheikhs from around Salone who each participated in the IRC during the war, not a single one told me that they believed a member of the other religious tradition would go to hell or was an infidel. The closest that one Wesleyan member of the IRC came to this was to remark, off the cuff, that Christians should not participate in TAR, but when I pressed him on which practices should be avoided, he just smiled and said,

“Yes, God does work in mysterious ways. God is in mysterious things. It is divine, there are holy purposes through things that He has created. That is why when you go to these villages, there is things, where people go to big trees. And at these big trees, people pray and think they relay

13 Interview A200 - Port Loko.

283
messages to the supreme being who is above them. They have the belief in somebody. We have few of them that belong to this group. They believe that there is God and that we should worship through trees, through streams, fine!"^{14}

4. Rites of Passage

IRC leadership were very quick to point out to me how the important moments in life – holidays, baptisms, births and burials, are all shared by the community regardless of one's particular faith. As a pastor told me,

“before the war, Christians and Muslims were together, living together. Living in common. When its time for Christmas, you see the Muslims patronizing, you see them (Christians) cook, prepare food to give to their neighbors who are Muslim And the feast of fasting, of Ramadan, the Muslims will also cook and give to the Christians This culture is common, practiced almost every year. At Easter, you see Muslims going to the beach, together with Christians, to celebrate together. The same thing happens at the end of the fasting period, where there is occasion for Muslims to invite the Christians. It happens even for marriages. When it comes to marrying you see a Muslim – they come to church. And when

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^{14} Interview with Wesleyan Pastor from Bo, May 13, 2014.
a Muslim marries, you see a Christian they come to church (mosque).

Before the war, this is how things were happening.”

Catholic Priest, Joe Turay, like all IRC pastors, will preside over the weddings of Muslim and Christian couples. “So the priests who come from Muslim parents, though people will criticize and say its our own type of Muslim-Christian religion, that we are not strict, that is what people will say. But I would, yeah, say, it is our own brand of religion. Our own brand of Christianity and Islam. And it is a tolerant Christianity.”

Other rites, like baptism, are incredibly fluid. “Early on, before the war, there was a real problem with religious groups forcing conversion. In order to attend school, children had to convert.” This posed quite a problem, since the closest school might be more than a day's walk away. A Christian teenager thus living, eating, sleeping, bathing, talking, being in a Muslim community, away from one's support network and family was hardly a christian for long. The daily practices and rituals of religious school provided social incentive of conversion. Yet, once the rainy season ended, and school-kids were expected back in the farming commune, they might very easily still practice the local traditional faith or Christianity. This was neither a secretive or forbidden process, it was pragmatic.

15 Ibid.
16 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni.
17 Interview with Peter Anderson in Freetown, April 28, 2014.
As schools became more prevalent, especially in the West, the choice was less about travel time, and more about which nearby school's fee structures were most cost effective. Often school-children converted back and forth from Islam to Christianity from academic year to academic year. Local boy Fasluku might come home “Andrew” and continue living a double life: Fasluku to Muslims and Andrew to Christians. Such was the case with my own gate-keeper at my house – to me he spoke as “Lawrence,” but to the local neighbors in the flat below me, he was “Abado.”

The fluidity of religious rites of passage, like conversion, indicates an incredibly inclusive set of social practices. Throughout the 2014 meeting of the IRC and in my focus groups, pastors and imams both kept referring back to the high levels of intermarriage between their two faiths. Over and over, respondents would say that violence can be prevented by the practice of intermarriage – indicating that the practice of “intermarriage is at the very core of the Inter-Religious Council Sierra Leone.”

5. Prayer

In a recent visit to Salone, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion, Heiner Bielefeldt, recalled how he was amazed at the level of shared prayer and public tolerance. He noted in awe that a Christian person, when their church is overcrowded he might well decide to go to a mosque to pray. "Such a statement, which in many countries would be fairly unusual or even unthinkable, seems rather indicative of

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18 Focus Group in Makeni
the tolerant situation in Sierra Leone," he stated. "Likewise, Muslims told me they have no difficulty to pray in a Christian church."19

Regarding the IRC, leaders embrace and promote the practice of shared prayer. I noted in their meetings that Muslim leaders would bow their heads during Christian invocations. So, during the focus group I conducted, I asked the Sheiks from around the country whether they were actually praying or just showing respect. Of the 10 Muslim leaders in the group, nine indicated they were praying following the Christian's lead, while one said he was just being respectful. Joe Turay, a Catholic priest confirmed this trend in mainstream religious circles: “Well I would say that even now, we even see that at Christmas, during festivities, our Muslim neighbors will come and pray with us in our church. And then during their own festivals, during month of Ramadan, will will come pray with them.” You will go pray in the Mosque? I asked. Laughing, he exclaimed, “Yeah!”20

I also found evidence that parishioners also practice a liberal faith, following their IRC leadership. According to a catholic congregant: “even if you are six in a community if you believe a particular denomination, you are free to go about your worship. Nobody questions you. Even if you are six, if there is a program that you want the majority, the Muslims or the Christians denominations, and you want them to join you in a prayer, in a


20 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni.
worship, in a ceremony, they will join you! You will pray together. And when you are praying they will go to their different churches or different mosques.”

6. Dress

Standards of dress vary widely within communities, largely based on their regional heritage. Demarcations within leadership of the IRC, however, cannot be made upon dress. Usman Fornah, President of the IRC stood up to speak at the 2014 meeting wearing traditional African lappa clothes, which many Sheikhs wore as well. Many of the male leaders from both Christian and Muslim sides wore simple trousers and button ups – a standard outfit for business proceedings.

I conducted my focus groups over breaks during a three day IRC meeting and each day a meal was served for respondents. Before each focus group, the religious leaders would line up to be served by a group of 5-6 women, all of whom were Muslim, but unveiled, wearing traditional garb. I asked the Sheikhs and Imams about the practice of veiling women. Sheikh Ikarbo from Kenema, responded in wonder: “di uman? Dis dun hot” as if other majority-Muslim countries had more temperate climates. Not a single Sunni or Shia leader in the IRC said that they enforced rules on women's garb. This stance is markedly different from the practices I observed in Freetown, where on many occasions I witnessed women in full burkah, even at the beech. More on this rare phenomenon is discussed in Case C, below.

21 Interview A200 - Port Loko.

22 Translated: The women? It has been hot!
There was one woman was represented in the group. She wore a traditional African lappa skirt, but a black clergy shirt, complete with the white collar. As an ordained United Methodist, she said “it is up to me” regarding her clothing. As if to offset the presence of only one woman in the cohort, the Christians in the IRC meeting talked about their history of including women in IRC activities. Regularly, females are represented within leadership, often as the Secretary of the proceedings. “I talked to the rebels as a mother” says Mrs. Simihafū Kassim, IRC treasurer in 1999. She added that she prayed for the rebels and they invite such interactions.23 “The time we say, watch yourself, to the women is in the bush […] they go out to see the rebels, and ask for the children. So, we say, dress in a way they know you are with us (the IRC).”24 From this injunction, the Christian women that accompanied IRC delegations into the bush often wore crucifixes and habit-like head coverings, but were unconcerned about socially proscribed dress practices.

Mechanisms of Indivisibility

The practices maintained by the IRC before and during the war stitched together three mechanisms which proved to reduce violence dynamics. Practices within the IRC 1) broadened group inclusion instead of binding identity together, 2) opened channels of negotiation instead of restricting leadership, and 3) dampened fighter resolve.


24 Focus Group in Makeni.
1. Binding

Shared practices prohibit the ritual intragroup binding that occurs in exclusive groups. The fact that the IRC is made up of over a dozen sects and denominations meant that the core organizing principle was not around group sameness, but around tolerance and diversity. Binding – the process where groups see those fitting within their worldview as inherently set apart – could not take hold since the practice of inclusion radically prohibited it. In this manner, one might conclude that the mechanism as work was one of bridging, rather than binding.

My interview with Catholic Archbishop Tamba-Charles succinctly captures the connection between inclusive practice and the bridging mechanism, leading to reduced intensity:

“it made a big difference when the religious leaders came from different backgrounds. The Muslim leaders made a greater impact when... a greater impact when the religious leaders come from different backgrounds. [...] we respect one another. We exchange feast days, on Muslim feast days, on Christian feast days. On some occasions Muslims accompany Christians to church. On their feast days and celebrations like weddings and, uh, some of us have Muslim relatives. So maybe that is the background, the root of our religious tolerance - because there are people whose family members are different religions. And when their family meets, they have Muslim prayers and Christian prayers. Its not just in
official meetings, it is embedded in our life and that makes a big difference.”

Since the mechanism of binding is not present due to how inclusivity is “embedded” in how the IRC “does life,” we should expect that the IRC members would not contribute to elevated intensity levels, even if they were attacked.

2. Limited Platforms For Negotiation

Similar to the bridging mechanism illustrated above, groups like IRC, which emphasize diverse practices, are unlikely to limit the platform that leadership has to negotiate. Rather, diverse and inclusive practices create dispositions that foster imminent divisibility and bargaining within a paradigm of pragmatism. Just as one approaches where one prays – a Mosque or a Church – based on seating capacity, so too the IRC approached solutions to the civil war conflict environment.

The broadened menu for leaders to negotiate with is evidenced in the type of relationship Christian and Muslim leaders developed with traditional African religious leaders during the course of the war. The collapse of the government in 1997 meant that several ethnic defense groups formed on a ad-hoc basis in the hinterland. These groups, known as Tamaboro (“traditional warriors”) formed by peoples in the north and later joined by Limba tribe fighters. The Gbeti and Kapra groups were formed by the Temne in the north, while the Kamajor was formed by the Mende people and the Donsa was

established by the Kono in the east. Members of these groups sprang from secret society membership, and the combatants were believed to be adept in spiritual battle. On the battlefield, they used not only conventional arms, but “witch guns” and supposedly, “killer bees.” Many of my respondents from Kono talked about how bee-stings were a cause of many rebel deaths in their area.

In the first weeks of the IRC’s formal existence in 1997, the Christian and Muslim leaders went first to the tribal and paramount Chiefs, who act as the symbolic heads and custodians of the traditional African religion. The first convening of the paramount chiefs in years occurred under the auspices of the IRC, who allowed the TAR representatives to express their views and strategies for overcoming the RUF. The cover of the IRC allowed them to do this without reprisals from either side of the conflict. Many contemporary leaders in the IRC saw this a crucial moment in broadening the base of social support behind the IRC's negotiation agenda.

That the religious leaders in the IRC not only accepted, but jointly practiced marriage rituals and death rites with the TAR leaders they interfaced with, meant that consulting the paramount chiefs was not irregular, but seen as a highly intuitive first step at campaign-building. The fact that most of these chiefs were overtly sanctioning


27 Interview with Bumbuna Tribal Chief.

28 Focus Group in Makeni.
witchcraft as a form of armed mobilizations was immaterial, since, as priest Joe Turay put it, TAR is practiced alongside Christianity without conflict.

Religious leaders within the IRC actually opened up the menu of options to bargain, based on shared ritual, instead of closing off conversations for the sake of ideological or exclusive practice-based purity. Further, the fact that traditional African religious chiefs were included in IRC deliberation strategy was a significant signal to the whole population that the IRC was representative of the way that Sierra Leoneans lived life. As a survivor of the war in Makeni told me: “The war was not about religion, but we get peace because the people trust the leaders. Because they are together, we trust them.”

3. Lengthened Time Frames

In a wide-ranging discussion among Islamic and Christian leaders that I witnessed at Makeni University in the Bombali District, an elderly priest, well-respected in the Sierra Leonean Catholic Church opined on the roots of religious conflict in Nigeria. “People say they have 'absolute truth'” said the priest with a tone of scorn. He slowly began again, “...absolute truth is God. And we are not God. It is not possible for us to have this absolute truth. So they say, 'I am right, everyone else is wrong: we know heaven, we know how to pray,' No! There must be a [religious] educational community that teaches humility. This will deescalate tensions.”

29 Interview with JoJo in Makeni, May 12, 2014.
Speaking from his experience, the same priest told me in a focus group that if people were convinced of “absolute truth” during the war, “it would have been much, much harder to make peace […] because then they fight for that idea, not for peace.”\(^{30}\)

While we expect that exclusive practice results in the causal mechanism of elongating time-frames, the practices of inclusion I traced in afterlife, scriptural interpretation, and prayer rituals all illustrated how radical inclusion mitigate the notion of eternal reward. Ultimate inclusion in time frames effectively nullifies any power those time-frames might have as a mechanism to inspire actors to fight longer in a losing battle. For example, the practice of ancestral worship may lengthen one's time horizons, but since the practice includes all actors – not just one's insular group - the time horizon is lengthened for all participants, canceling out any eternal benefit one might receive in fighting longer and harder in the present.

Without the causal mechanism of lengthened time horizons, the theory predicts that groups like the IRC will push fighters to give up their fight, or, fight with less resolve than those encouraged by groups that engage in exclusive rituals.

**Dependent Variables**

1. Intensity

While the civil war engulfed every tribe and region of Salone, the IRC stands out as a bright spot. Not only did IRC actors refuse to contribute to elevated levels of violence, they acted to reduce violence of others. They acted to strategically reduce levels

\(^{30}\) Focus Group in Makeni.
of intensity of the conflict by, first, launching a campaign of nonviolent civil resistance against both the AFRC junta as well as the RUF rebels. Second, by refusing to take up arms, leaders and congregants within the IRC campaign actively reduced the levels of violence in their areas of operation. While no figures exist to corroborate the claim, I was told by many IRC leaders that death rates radically slowed in areas where religious leaders played a role in the peace process.

The most dangerous period of the war came as the government fell to a rag-tag group of disaffected soldiers called the AFRC, led by Johnny Koroma. Koroma’s junta-style government invited the rebel factions into Freetown, which the RUF then looted. In the face of this intense increase in violence, the IRC persuaded their communities to engage in a campaign of nonviolent civil resistance, which isolated the AFRC regime both at home and abroad. “Led by various civil society groups such as teachers, students, trade unionists and market women,” the resistance campaign refused to acknowledge the AFRC junta as a government and actively resisted support to the RUF. Throughout Freetown, banks, businesses, and schools remained closed. For instance, students in Foroh Bay College and elsewhere “passed a resolution saying that they would not return to their studies until the junta stepped down and the legitimate government returned.”

Many people in mainstream churches and mosques, inspired by their ordained leader's example, stayed home from work and refused participation in the regime. The action trickled from the streets of Aberdeen, Bo and Kono to the halls of Geneva and New York. Ultimately, pastors and imams came together and called on the international community

31 Penfold, “Faith in Resolving Sierra Leone’s Bloody Conflict,” 551.
to refuse recognition of AFRC. Every single country in the world complied with the IRC's request.

The delegitimation strategy not only worked to prevent Koroma's government from gaining resources, it proved that citizens need not abandon their religious practices of inclusion and neighborliness in order to stamp out violence. Rather, by Christian, Muslim, and traditional religions working together, civilians were able to reduce violence. Simultaneously to the resistance campaign, the IRC pressured groups to give up child soldiers and return prisoners of war. Throughout Salone, there is very little doubt that this engagement with the junta and rebels prevented intensification of the violence. Indeed, the council's engagement seemed to actually reduce the levels of intensity and abuses against civilians. I met a man in Koidu Town who, though a lay leader, marched Christian school-children over 50 miles to escape the rebels in 2001, near the end of the campaign. On one occasion a small band of rebels came across the group and the man said to them, “hey, these are God's children. You need to let us go, or the Council will just come free them and you will be in great trouble.” The rebels let the entire group be on their way.

In the dozens of towns I visited, the reminders of war were everywhere. In a remote village outside of Lunsar, only a handful of buildings remained standing, each charred with bullet holes. Yet, standing proudly in the middle of the village was an old mosque, which survived the war unscathed. Similarly, I was told about how every single building burned down in Koidu, except for the churches and the mosques. When I asked

32 Subject A300 in Koidu, May 9, 2014.

296
about why those particular buildings were left standing, I was told that there was a “special madness” that came over the rebels who attacked sacred sites. Unthinkable levels of brutality could only be done by someone who's mind had been possessed as a result of desecrating churches or mosques. Religious sites thus were zones of reduced violence dynamics – islands of peace in the midst of a terrible conflict environment.

Even though the IRC was largely successful at reducing violence intensity in certain areas, there was backlash directed against interfaith leaders. As the war spiral out of control, there were cases where “madness” prevailed and the junta and rebels targeted churches where civilians gathered for shelter. The founding IRC Anglican church in Freetown - the beautiful Anglican Holy Trinity Church built in 1877 on Kissy Street - was totally destroyed by the junta. The rebels attacked the Church of the Brotherhood in Wellington and murdered over a dozen people hiding there, including children. A terrible massacre also took place at the Rogbalen Mosque in Kissy, where rebels killed 66 people who were sheltering in the sacred space.33

In the face of such violence, I wondered at how Christian and Muslim groups didn't take up arms themselves – as the defense forces seen in Nigeria, Chad, or Congo, which actively protect sacred sites. As one pastor remarked: “The voice of God is one of non-violence. Jesus always resisted evil and so must we. We turn the other cheek when attacked. We put hate away...”

“But didn't many Christians take up violence in the war?” I asked.

33 Penfold, “Faith in Resolving Sierra Leone’s Bloody Conflict,” 552.
“Yes, but the church was there to provide comfort and love, even to the unlovable. Even to those that kill our friends. The church was not part of the violence – it resisted evil in that way. My congregation held services for rebel and government alike. It was a safe place for peace.”

“What was the result?”

“Well, it should be not a surprise that the trust was there in the church. The trust for the church, and even Muslims, was the foundation for peace. And that respect and trust is still part of Sierra Leone today.”

A conversation with Archbishop Timba-Charles supported this pastor's take on the war, emphasizing that increases in violence was not a socially acceptable proposition with the IRC community.

“And this is not a, ‘we don't take our religion seriously' – we do! We believe that theologically the God who made us is a God who respects diversity. Therefore it would be against the spirit of that God to go and look at the other person and cut his throat or harm him in the name of God. That is not acceptable. That is our message. This is our export. But we don't yet have the container to carry it, or the vessel to take it across!”

34 Focus Group in Makeni.

35 Interview with Rev. Dr. Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown.
The act of welcoming oppressors in the very spaces that they targeted was a radical strategy that reaped rewards in the long run. Opening the doors of the church simultaneously to rebels and the military created a space for dialogue between the fighters and their civilian victims, which resulted in fewer and fewer conflicts around the churches. By the 2002 armistice, holy sites provided almost all of the food and shelter for ex-fighters throughout the country. As explained by Usman Fornah, head of the IRC:

“[without the IRC] the war was going to go on longer because the rebels, they didn't have any confidence in the government. And the government had no confidence in the rebels.”

Fornah continued to tell me about his life behind rebel lines in Makeni, where he witnessed child abduction, torture, maiming, sexual abuse, and predatory looting. He would regularly reported these facts to Freetown and the IRC secretariat. He talked specifically about the IRC’s role in advocating for reducing violence:

“And because I was here, I was playing that role among the rebels. You know, where they had (unintelligible) among themselves, I was there. When they were captured and sentenced to execution, I would go and appeal on their behalf. I would say, you know, “these are not rebels – these are not bad guys in the community.” If they (rebels) then want to set the town on fire, I would go to them and tell them, no this is not right. We conducted prayers sessions and they came to our prayer meetings, you know, of course I suffered along the road, but for me, I am thankful I live
2. Intransigence

While informal relations between religious leaders had been going on for almost a decade, the IRC’s culminating moment was a one-day multi-religious national conference that convened in the capital city of Freetown on April 1, 1997. The conference attracted over two hundred Muslim and Christian delegates from the areas of Sierra Leone and together, they forged a pact to end the war – the statement is noted in the Appendix.

Bishop Biguzzi, the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Makeni Diocese, played a key role in the founding of the IRC, and was the principle agent of the IRC's aproachments to the violent factions. I spoke with Lutheran Bishop Tom Barnett of Aberdeen, who accompanied Biguzzi on several missions into “the bush” to speak with the rebels and negotiate the peace. According to the Bishop, “we knew that we were the only ones that they could trust. So, Biguzzi, myself, and several Imams all took ourselves into the bush. We sat on the ground, brought food, cared for their sick, and then we talked to leaders.”

It was the interfaith nature of the IRC that swayed leaders from all sides to trust the IRC as guarantors of the peace process. According to priest Joe Turay, “So we get together, Christians and Muslims, and they knew they were mutual in the sense that I mean, they could talk on behalf of their people, their constituency. Both sides of the

story, both the RUF and the government forces trust them. That they have no interest .... they're interest is common good.” Turay continued: “And as moral guarantors to the peace process, their role was crucial to bring both sides to dialogue and talk about issues. And that is exactly what they did.”

These talks proved so effective that the RUF invited the IRC to its preliminary meetings before the formal Lome negotiations. As the formal talks got underway, the Council’s main strategy was to remain neutral and act as facilitator. “During negotiating impasses Council members became ‘go-betweens’ to convince the parties to return to the table. In moments when the parties failed to see eye to eye on certain issues, such as power sharing and the withdrawal of ECOMOG, the Council members turned to prayer and preaching.” Barnett told me of how, when the RUF was about to walk away from the talks, he stood up and just began preaching to them, saying “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven! Not Salone, Heaven!”

After the SLPP government was reinstated in March 1998, the IRCSL held a joint Muslim-Christian service, where thousands of people gathered in the National Stadium to praise God for the restoration of the SLPP government. Per IRC tradition, alternating Muslim and Christian incantations and prayers were offered.

38 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni.
39 Penfold, “Faith in Resolving Sierra Leone’s Bloody Conflict,” 554.
40 Barnett, Interview with Lutheran Bishop Tom Barnett.
41 Conteh, “The Role of Religion During and After the Civil War in Sierra Leone,” 68.
I posed an obvious question to a young man named Jason in Port Loco: “do you think without the religious leaders there would be peace?” He responded, “It was going to be difficult. It was really going to be difficult. They used all of their might while the war was still going on, and the soldiers were supported, they were highly motivated, but the war was still going on. It was only these religious people that fast-tracked the end of this war.”

The signing of the Lome accords meant that the IRC leaders were able to return to their congregants victorious in their mission, but the bargain was bittersweet. Religious leaders advocated the agreement from the pulpit within a message of peace and reconciliation...In every church and mosque in Salone, every member of the congregation had experienced a personal tragedy at the hands of the rebels. In the mosques, countless faithful followers could no longer hold out both hands for the Fatwa. And in Christian churches many congregants had to learn how to make the sign of the cross with an unaccustomed hand. Yet, at the end, all were able to say, 'Di wor don don’ thanks to the intervention of the Inter Religious Council Sierra Leone.

3. Resolve

The IRC worked tirelessly to reduce the will of fighters on all sides of the war. While they themselves remained resolved, their goal was to “let the rebels know” that their “quest would not be welcome in our homes.” Perhaps, the IRC thought, if the

42 Interview A200 - Port Loko. Emphasis mine.
43 Penfold, “Faith in Resolving Sierra Leone’s Bloody Conflict,” 555.
44 Focus Group in Makeni.
rebels new they would not join the fight, the rebels would know they would not succeed and give up their fight.45

To facilitate this goal, the IRC leadership took steps to eat away at the morale of the RUF's fighters. Many times in Makeni – the RUF's headquarters, Imams and Pastors would preach together in the town to itinerant fighters. “We would tell them, hey, you are not doing God's work, or Allah's work, you are just a fraud!” said one Sheikh in a focus group.

This interfaith degradation of RUF morale, while simultaneously feeding their hungry and caring for their sick, was key to reducing their will to fight. “So the inter-religious council made a series of gestures to the RUF...” said Turay, referring to the numerous deals that church-leaders made with the RUF in Makeni and beyond. “They began with liberation of the children and they could bring them food, talk to the government to suspend invasion.” Turay himself took part in the “kindness campaign” to be supportive of RUF “spiritual needs” so that they would think twice before harming civilians.46 Fornah, spoke of how the United Methodist Church, in conjunction with the IRC, took a major role in reducing the will for the rebels to fight: “We built a very strong community among the rebels here and it took the support of the inter-religious people to be genuine – we are not condemning them, we try to encourage them and console them, and convince them that they should lay down their arms and give peace a chance, so that they themselves can live in the community and live with the people.”

45 Subject A300 in Koidu.
46 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni.
This action was explicitly geared at reducing the willing-ness of RUF to carry out brutal attacks against the population, reducing the resolve of fighters, and reward fighters with mercy, food, and healthcare in return.

Case B: Christian Evangelical Churches

On a damp Thursday I took the short walk from my house, past the market and a small Islamic school, to “the junction” where I would normally catch a motorcycle taxi to a meeting. But on this rainy day, I had no meetings, and thus went to the junction to simply talk with cab and motorcycle drivers during their downtime. In the days prior I had befriended several local drivers – Ibrahim, Fouday, and Samuel – and I intended to spend some time hearing their stories and asking them to introduce me to their co-workers who had come from all around the country during the civil war.

“Have you heard about the new witch?” Samuel asked me.

Obviously I had not, so Samuel pointed to a shack about 30 yards away and explained: “dis old wumen noh live here.” He paused, then remembered to talk slowly in English to me, “Yesterday, we heard her killing all of [the] chickens. Was chanting too. [She] only came out this morning after we called her to come out. Wumen de... very old and we think she is a witch.”

And so I sat with my driver friends for about an hour speculating about the witch, smoking cigarettes, and fixing bikes. They had a thorough conversation about where witches come from, how they get their powers, and the morality of one seeking out the assistance of a witch.
“My brohda (brother) shot bai dem witch gun,” said Fouday confidently. He explained how his brother was a very strong, handsome, Christian young man, who fell on hard times after he married one woman, but impregnated another. Fouday's speculation was that both of the women went to village jujuman who hired a witch-assassin to plague his life by “shooting him with a witch gun.” I asked, “would you use a witch to get what you want?” Taking a deep sigh, Fouday took my hand and said, “dis [is] fine. All de difkoht (all are different) dis [is] fine.”

Ibrahim, laughing interrupted Fouday - “Padi, padi, padi (friend, friend, friend) dis noh witch. In de mind (in your mind).” Ibrahim went on to say that many in his village outside of Koidu went to the witch doctor to gain protection or healing during the war, but, “di wa don come.” I pressed Samuel, who was quite. “What about you what do you think?” He hesitated, then closing his eyes to find the correct English, he explained that he prayed against all of the satanic powers in Freetown. He went on to say that at his congregation – the “Gift of Life Church” - that they were against the evil spirits and that one needed to pray to God everyday to “keep the juju away.” I asked, “and does praying work?” “Yes. [But] you pray hard, say no [to] de Poro (local traditional society), and de no chois de dehbul (not choose the devil). Dis wumen, de dehbul, A se go.” The young men eventually became bored with the speculation and stories, and with rain coming, went about on their way.

The stories of witchcraft in Salone are deeper and richer than my fieldwork could ever uncover. Nevertheless, the story reveals ways that diverse communities – men from diverse districts and both major religions- dealt with an apparent intrusion into their daily
life. The witch was more than a symbol of tolerance, but an actual practice of tolerance that the players reached back to their prior grounding practices to gauge how they should proceed: for Fouday, who attended a small Anglican Church nearby, the presence of the witchdoctor was simultaneously fearful, interesting, and something that he would avail himself of if need-be. Ibrahim's rejection was not born out of Muslim doctrine, but from personal pragmatic experience. For Samuel, who attended a new, charismatic evangelical church, the encounter was with evil and one keeps evil away from oneself by rejecting traditional religion (the Poro) and praying earnestly. Such responses indicate that the grounding practices of religion for the first two respondents were not incompatible with the confrontation of the supposed witch, where for Samuel, the witch embodied conflict with the way he lived as a Christian.

At the end of the war, heavy flows of international aid came into Salone, often under the auspices of evangelical groups from the United States and larger African countries, like Nigeria and South Africa. But the influx of aid came with a new brand of Christianity foreign to the type of practices forged by the Inter-Religious Council. According to a Wesleyan congregant named Kelfa, “I would say that it was the end of the war. I think the first extremist church we start experiencing was the uhhh, how you call this, “Jesus is Lord Ministries.” It was the first like, moving … starting doing extremists. [...] And end of the war, you have other churches coming in. And we started experiencing high extremism in practice, when you have Nigeria coming in with their own denominations – very extremist.”

Kelfa then proceeded to illustrate how new, extremist

47 Interview with Kelfa in Freetown, May 9, 2014.
denominations engage in their daily life in much more rigid and exclusivist ways than mainline Christian congregations who helped end the war.

I personally observed these new churches in action, noting a principle difference between the new evangelicals and mainline interfaith leaders: Interfaith leaders have a grasp no only on complexities within their own tradition, but they also have a sincere respect for the theology of the other. The evangelicals, on the other hand, seem to be working from a “church-in-a-box” format, parroting entire messages heard from American missionaries, without depth and with more than a tinge of exclusion. I note how this new type of religious exclusivity functions in the section below, followed by a discussion of causal mechanisms of indivisibility, which produce conflict outcomes that vary significantly from those observed in Case A.

*Group Practices*

The group's divergence illustrates the divergence in the country as a whole – while many are open and accepting of different faith traditions, “new” and entrepreneurial Christian groups are increasingly enforcing a practice that is narrow, exclusionary, and on many occasions, has prompted violence. This section illustrates rising exclusion in group privilege and scriptural interpretation, sacred space, afterlife rituals, prayer routines, and dress habits.

1. Group Privilege and Scripture

On one occasion, I ventured to a new Pentecostal church near Congo Cross, one of the areas where I was told inter-group violence had recently broken out. The church
services I observed were short on canonical or liturgical structure, similar to new evangelical services seen on 10 other occasions. At the “Flaming Bible Church” which hosted a four day “revival” during my visit, there were very few scriptural lessons, yet every few minutes a minister would shout loudly about the power of the word. As if almost overcompensating, these churches were more impassioned (charismatic), and far more concerned about preaching against witchcraft than in fostering the beatitudes.

In this manner, the churches that I found on the extreme end of Christianity were inherently concerned with whole other matters than IRC affiliated churches I observed. While Catholics, Anglicans, etc. are positioned to speak to state institutions and work for social justice, the Pentecostal's project power over demons, witchcraft, and “one's enemies” so that their congregants can magically “enter another exodus and break the yoke.” The vapid Biblical imagery aside, what these churches preach is not the example, mercy, grace, and convictions of Jesus, but a message of deliverance from occult oppression, spirit-world blockades (or yokes) that prevent one from “reaching your personal promise land.”

What is particularly dangerous about the evangelical turn is the all or nothing conviction that their way of praying, reading scripture, and observing rites of passage are the only spiritually informed way of living. In an informal interview with a police official, he proudly showed me the business card of the minister of his church. The card abbreviated “Evangelist” as “Evng.” after the pastor's name, as though it were an

48 From an evangelical church sign on display May 2, 2014 in Freetown (Downtown).

49 From an evangelical church sign on display April 22, 2014 in Freetown (Aberdeen).
advanced degree. The mission of the church, the card proclaimed, was “To Win The Lost At All Cost.” I asked the police officer what exactly that meant. “Well... it simply means that everyone needs to be saved, and I have to not drink, not smoke, not cheat, give money, live well, and show them the life of someone saved.” Neverminding the fact that he was drinking a stout beer during this conversation, the emphasis on individual congregant sacrificial practice for divine salvation struck me as inherently rare in Salone political theology. Here was a church, a popular one, that called upon its congregants to give up personal satisfaction in order to save lost souls. The church mission was tied up with both the notion of external otherization (those nonbelievers out there are lost), but also with internal requirements that make autonomy and self-satisfaction non-godly. Neither such practice was identified in IRC affiliated Christian Churches.

In fact, many of the IRC leaders explicitly link the new forms of evangelical Protestantism with violent inclinations due to their exclusivity group practices and limitations on scriptural interpretation. As told to me by Archbishop Timba Charles,

“and when you talk about extremism, please, also talk about Christian extremism. Because there was that story on CNN about that guy burning a Bible, I mean a Koran, in one of the southern states. And I said to myself, 'don't they know how much damage he is inflicting on his brother-sister Christians somewhere, … in countries where Christians are a minority – he is on his own turf, nobody will touch him there.' And it happened, Christians were shot. Ahhhh (Exasperated exhale).
“Has that happened here?” I asked.

“ [...] One sees that kind of attitude. We have evangelicals who do not have, who don't want anything to do with Muslims. Sometimes we are accused in the inter-religious council that we are a “sellout” - that we should be evangelizing everybody, converting everyone to Christ.”

I wondered about the root-cause of the exclusivity coming from new American and Nigerian “style” denominations. Was it necessarily their daily practice, or was there some new type of belief or ideology being introduced? I listened to many different types of teachings, read several sermons, and attempted to observe some sort of new ideology present. Instead, I found that though the belief profile was very similar to IRC-affiliated liberals, the ways that they taught and displayed social competence within the community were entirely different. Especially in regard to sacred text, it was as though preaching against sin, divination, and Islam were the only requirements practice reading scripture competently. Explaining this phenomenon, catholic priest Joe Turay remarked,

“Let me be honest with you without sounding arrogant. Most of those that are starting these new churches, they haven't studied the Bible. They have not done an exegetical approach to the Bible within its own context. They don't know the Greek, the Hebrew, the Jewish context. They have not done serious theological studies. I mean because that is not in the bible.

50 Interview with Rev. Dr. Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown.
You ever see Jesus Christ, what did he say? He said, in the Bible, the Father will say at the end, “whatever you do to the least: when I was Hungary, you gave me food to eat. You gave me drink.” Did he say the father will see the rabbi, the Levite - no he didn't. God is beyond all categories. Jesus did not even talk about places in Heaven, he didn’t get into that. Not at all. The theological formation of some of these pastors is rudimentary.  

2. Sacred Space

Within Salone's growing number of fringe churches, there has been a radical turn from inclusion in worship, to literal demonizing of people and practices of other faiths. Talking about this shift, a local nonprofit director indicated that the doors of these churches are closing to outsiders for the first time in Salone's history. He noted the recent shift from inclusion to exclusion in Christian ritual:

“Its only recent years, around the height of the war, in which you have the evangelical churches coming in. And they are mainly extremists.”

I asked, “and how do you know they are extremists?”

“Well.... they practice religion in the extreme: there is no room for compromise. You are either a Christian or you are not a Christian.”

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51 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni.
“And if you are not a christian, do they say people are going to go to hell...”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. They have their very, very strong doctrines that religion dominates over people's own practice. Believing their own way. And for us, that is the biggest luck, lucky side of things we have in Sierra Leone. That extremism in religious practice only came in maybe few years back. Even in the Muslim religion, no you don't have extremism. We see ourselves as line – you can invite a Christian to the mosque, he goes there with no complaint. You can ask the Muslims to go to church, they go there with no complaint. And there – you can rent a house from the Muslim and then you go there and organize a church service, nobody complains. But there are, after the end of the war, when we started having these evangelical churches that are coming up with different different kinds of doctrines, Sierra Leone is almost gradually becoming extremist in terms of religious practice.52

New forms of exclusion are taking place within the notions of sacred space. One local priest indicated that the “Nigerian Pentecostals” mandate that no-one in their congregation participate in Secret Societies (TAR) and preach that they will be “possessed if they do these things.” Indeed, in the several trips I made to local churches, there was not a single sermon that went by without blaming worldly sorrows such as

52 Interview with Kelfa in Freetown.
sickness and pain on the community's involvement in TAR and Islam. While not a single Muslim could be found in the congregation (quite unlike IRC member churches), the pastor would rail against the Muslims and “jujumen” in the city or village. On three separate occasions, I visited a Pentecostal Church down the street from my flat, and each time, the message ended by the pastor calling for a “crusade” against the evil forces of the whole area and ordered the congregants to pray that “Islam and the Poro leave Freetown forever” because it was “Jesus Land now.”

The tension between majority, mainline Christianity and the new crop of evangelicals was confirmed over and over again, as mainline Christian's nostalgically remembered bygone days of practices of sacred space inclusion that they said ended the war. As told by Kelfa in Freetown:

“Lets see, ah, before the 2000s, I would say Sierra Leone is the best in religious tolerance. No problems, you could have a Christian session in this compound, the Muslims would give their chairs and benches, you would use them. But the way we are going with things. But the way people are preaching, the Christians and Muslims... we are losing the value of religious tolerance. It is still something we pride ourselves in, but it is something also that the sooner we recognize that we are losing that quality, the better it will be for this nation.”

3. Afterlife Rituals

53 Ibid.

313
New charismatic churches regularly preach about who is able to enter the afterlife and who is not. For the first time in Salone's history, preachers are actively attempting to convert persons of different faiths, based on the notion of hell, which was never present before. A Wesleyan from Bo indicated to me that the most extreme end of this occurs in poor neighborhoods of Freetown, where “Nigerian evangelists” will launch weekend-long revivals. Many of these revivals will charge money at the door, and in return, congregants will hear a message about the “wages of sin” and the “blessings of belief”.

I attended a funeral for a program manager for a local education-based NGO. “Mama Tida” as she was known, was a huge figure in the community, having been a pioneer for education in Sierra Leone.

Despite the service taking place in Makeni's large Pentecostal Church, there were both Muslim and Christian attendees at the funeral. The temperature soared over 100 degrees and the steel corrugated roof baked the 600 mourners inside the church. The hard wooden pews were only used on occasion, as most of the activity involved standing and singing. All in attendance seemed intent upon belting songs of praise as loudly as they could – shouts of “SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT” amplified for over two hours, intermixed with scripture reading.

The first scripture selected seemed relatively consistent what might be read at any Christian funeral in the west. Revelation 21:4 reads,

54 Interview with Wesleyan Pastor from Bo.
55 Quotes from a giant poster erected in Congo-Cross to advertize a coming evangelist revival.
“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Although this particular verse, in context, is referring not to heaven, but about the New Jerusalem and New Earth to be established upon Christ's return, it serves the purpose of consoling those who remain - their loved one is in a place with no more pain or tears.

I was more surprised with the second verse selection, since it has less to do with consoling the mourning and more to do with a rapture message: First Thessalonians 4:13-18 reads:

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

These words proved essential to the message that was to come, where the minister mentioned the diseased only once or twice, but chose to concentrate upon the “hope of the resurrection” and “hope of the rapture.”

As the eulogies began, the tone shifted. The service changed from being a spiritual practice to being a remembrance. Eulogies were delivered from family, friends,
coworkers, and church-members. Far less structured than the liturgical practices and
funeral rites, the speaker's scripts diverged sharply from the traditional scripture-based
liturgy.

Most instructive was a five minute speech by the husband of the deceased, who
began the eulogy by noting that Tida's father was “an Islamic scholar” who “had four
wives” and lived a very decent life where he “wanted all of children to be educated... he
knew that she (Tida) should be educated.” This education, he demurred, was central to
her being who she was: not just a wife and mother, but cornerstone of a community. He
went on, “She *chose* to work for Christ,” putting emphasis on the choice, implying that it
could have gone either way. Her father, the speaker went on, “was very proud of Tida, as
was everyone in the family,” whether Muslim or Christian. Other eulogies went on and
on about Tida's good works and indomitable effort to educate children, but said
absolutely nothing about heaven, hell, resurrection, or religion.

The discourse swung back the other way after the eulogies, when the senior
minister arose to give a message based entirely on the First Thessalonians passage. “The
rapture...” he said, pausing for effect, “will come as a surprise!” He then painted a picture
of Jesus appearing in the clouds, bringing up “Christian people” with him and leaving
“all of the others” on earth. This is why, “being a Christian is the right choice,” he
exclaimed, hearkening back to Tida's husband's eulogy. “Tida *chose* to be a Christian,
and did not choose foolishness.” The otherization hung in the hot, sticky air. This sermon
certainly seemed to confound every other interview and observation I had collected to
date. Here was a stark practice of cosmic boundaries affirming group privilege and
demarcated afterlife narratives. The sermon ended not with a recognition of Tida, but with the warning: “The rapture will be a selective day, for a selective people.”

4. Rites of Passage

In addition to an exclusivist notion of the afterlife imported from foreign missionaries, rites of passage such as marriage and baptism are also changing. Once again, Kelfa from Freetown illustrates the exclusivity practiced by evangelical Christians since the end of the war:

“Gradually Sierra Leone, even though we have long practiced religious tolerance, but I think that very fabric is being broken down gradually. And if we continue here, in the not too distant future, Sierra Leone will really going to blows with one another. [...] There are some churches that say “we are really not wed a Christian and Muslim. Now you have churches who say, no they will not do it. Extremists. We are almost rewriting our disciplines.”

I heard about the practice of baptismal exclusion first hand on the corner where I picked up a motorcycle taxi every day. One of the local boys was being baptized that night, but his father, whom I was talking to, indicated to me that only “spirit filled” Christians were to come. I asked if his son had any Muslim friends that might join, as I heard this was common. Seemingly exasperated, the father said that there are many Muslims that were invited, but they have to profess belief in Christ to come into his

56 Interview with Kelfa in Freetown.
Church – a church I found out later was founded by a Nigerian charismatic evangelist just a year prior.

Furthermore, Christian churches such as these are very quick to prohibit congregant activity in local secret societies or TAR. Congregants at a Congo-Cross evangelical church, for example, are actively tracked by other church members, and if they are caught participating in Poro or other societies, they are rebuked by the minister. This is particularly counter-culture, since Society initiation is the traditional rite of passage for both sexes in their communities.

While churches that exclude participation of Muslims or chastise TAR participation are few and far between, there is a very small sect that enforces an extreme exclusivity in rite observance.

5. Prayer

Communication with the divine is a cornerstone of Salone religious practice. Notoriously inclusive, many churches allow Muslim congregants to say daily prayers within their church and many Christians will utilize one of the local pastel-colored mosques to pray. But some Christian communities around Freetown, Kenema, and Bo, have markedly shifted the level of exclusivity for prayer rituals.

I asked Peter Anderson of the Limba tribe how practice changed over the last years and he highlighted how the style and mode of prayer has been reconstructed to draw in-group/out-group lines.

“Yes, the war seems to have opened a space for evangelicals. Before the war, mainline churches were part of resettling slaves – Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic missionaries were involved here.” The Krio-speaking population, as a result of how missionaries did their work, are mostly Anglican. In the South, they are Catholic. A change occurred after the war with Nigerian-Style 'Born Again' Christianity. These are Pentecostal churches, which are turn-key operations. They uses a cliff-notes Bible, relying on John and Revelation mostly, and other non-canonical texts. You know, if you shout this stuff loudly, people listen. And it is the fastest growing groups.”

“And why the expansion after the war?,” I asked.

“These groups, the Nigerian-style evangelicals expand because the mainline churches... they didn't prevent the war. There was a sense of failure. Like the church failed. And these evangelicals, they will pray for anything – a car, a bike, a visa, health, fortune.”

Indeed, driving down the road confirmed these sentiments: Large posters, taped to buildings in Freetown, Makeni, Bo, Waterloo, Lunsar, and other major towns, proclaimed the evangelical message. “Experiencing the resurrection in employment” read one, taped next to another advertising a four-day “Revival” with the theme “God's Gifts for Your

58 Interview with Peter Anderson in Freetown.
Family.” These 'revivals' are often a recycled messages from missionaries' that promise that if one is faithful, they will get what their heart desires. “And here, in Sierra Leone,” Anderson added, “there is certainly a lot to be desired.”

In these revivals, many hundreds of people can come together searching for answers to poverty, death, or general direction in life. Father Turay noted, “the other churches coming up, they charismatic churches they allow people to sing to dance, to speak in tongues.[...] These are people who want an answer to everything. You are sick? Troubles in school? You need a visa to go to America? You pray for it.” But this emphatic prayer ritual has a dark side. In the prayer-times that I observed in Freetown churches, the pastor or evangelist would regularly shout about his God “delivering” people from “the bondage of Islam.” Dozens of people would flock to the front to be “set free” from their wicked past of being Muslim or for participating in TAR societies. The fundamental building block of these revivals, as Anderson notes above, is the systemic blaming of worldly misfortune on participation in other, non evangelical groups: “it all boils down to the concept, if I am not making progress in life, somebody is responsible. And the only way that I can get rid of the person who is responsible is by going to one of these extreme churches and [they say] 'come, we'll deliver you from oppression, from poverty, from whatever bondage they assume’” and they become very extreme.”

6. Dress

59 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni.
60 Interview with Kelfa in Freetown.
Sierra Leone is an informal place. Systemic poverty levels the playing field for a majority of the population, so owning a tie or ironing one's clothes is a luxury. It is thus surprising to find a community that emphasizes mode of dress as a demarcation for group membership. In new, charismatic church groups, dress serves as a litmus test for correctly walking as a disciple. First, dress serves as a signal of in-group privilege. While in IRC affiliated churches it is not uncommon to find someone wearing traditional African garb or even a taqiyah (head-covering for Muslim men), no such diversity is found in the Pentecostal churches I visited. According to one pastor, Men should wear clothes that are respectable and “handsome for the Lord, to accomplish everything!” Again, the emphasis on achieving spiritual gain through correct dress practice is unique to these groups, without any parallel to mainline Christian groups throughout Salone. By being “handsome” I surmised that these groups are, by and large, talking about wearing nice slacks if a man and modest coverings if a woman. T-shirts, for instance, were hardly to be found among the 1,500 parishioners at “Fire of Evangelism and Miracle Ministries Pentecostal Church” in Kissy, Freetown. There were many young men in the back – street kids – without proper attire, but by and large, every man wore a suit, and over 100 women wore matching full ankle to neck dresses.61 Pentecostal/charismatic evangelical churches are thus a rarity in a church culture that usually accepts parishioners from tribal, Islamic, and other backgrounds.

61 It is customary for women in congregations to buy the same Lappa clothes and make matching Sunday dresses for all the women in the church.
Mechanisms of Indivisibility

1. Binding

Public banners announcing evangelical church services times and dates are prevalent throughout the city, almost always with the picture of a smiling reverend, though many are labeled as “Prophet” or “Evangelist.” The picture of the local minister often accompanies a beaming, white, mentor from the United States. Not knowing local cultures and customs unfortunately has lead many new evangelists to find a fertile ground for conversion – local area non-Christians should be converted, with a message of extreme otherization: either you are with us and going to heaven, or not and going to hell. As the exclusivity of the new practice became more commonplace, Sierra Leone's Christian culture began to seem more and more insular and self-referential. Once again, Kelfa the Freetown NGO director explained the shift to these groups being more isolated:

“I would really want to believe it is something that could be traced way back to the Christian – the extremism, because they were the first who came up with this extremist ways of behaving – practicing religion to the very extreme. If you not a Christian, you doomed for hell [...] – they came up with the slogan, “take it by force” very strange, “we go into the enemy's camp and 'take it by force' - 'take back what the Devil has stolen'.”

62

62 Interview with Kelfa in Freetown.
The notion that it is “Devil” who is to blame for misfortune, or that non-Christians are “the enemy” is language entirely new to Salone discourse. Getting introspective about the Catholic Church's role in allowing these new groups a footing, a local priest also hinted at how these exclusivist groups bind their cohort together more than others:

“I mean we have big churches and these are small churches, they call each other brother and sister in the Lord. Yeah, people maybe the security, the challenges of life, and if you have a small community that supports you, that helps carry on day to day life, you have a connection, that day to day intimacy[...]

The result has been an increasingly narrowed practice of groups relying on those within their own church cohort for goods, services, and employment needs. Furthermore, the practices of demonizing those outside the cohort make one rely on one's group even if they fail to provide promised benefits. While seemingly innocuous, the trend reveals a deep rift in Salone culture which acts to bind new converts to one another in ways that were previously shared between TAR, Muslim, and Christian groups on the IRC model.

2. Limiting Legitimacy

63 Turay, Interview with Father Joe Turay in Makeni. Emphasis mine.

64 This phenomenon shows how everyday practices explain behavior far more than an actor getting resources that she otherwise would not. More discussion on this is offered below in “Alternative Explanations.”
Charismatic-style evangelical groups are limiting the available options for their leadership by condemning traditional religious activity and scorning those from alternative traditions. I spoke with a man in Makeni about the process of these new groups deligitimizing the option of living in harmony with traditional practices:

“Is is possible that Christians or Muslims go into the bush and then tell the traditional faith people to stop?” I ventured.

“Well, yes. They tell them to stop bad things, like killing other people. But, everyone is kind.”

“And who is it that is telling them to stop?”

“Most(ly) American Christians. American Christians are coming and teaching about God and want traditional to stop being bad.”

Unfortunately, this myopic focus on exclusive practices erode the very first building block that the IRC reached out to first in their quest to end the civil war. After the IRC was founded in 1997, Christian and Muslim leaders went into the bush to council with the Paramount Chiefs, to gain their perspective, and get their advice. Gaining the authority of TAR along with the main faiths opened up a dialogue with how to prevent civilian deaths and engage with the RUF that would have otherwise been missed.

3. Lengthened Time Frames

65 Interview with JoJo in Makeni.
New Christian groups prolong time-frames by emphasizing eternal rewards for immediate suffering. Evangelical preachers in Kissy and Congo-Cross that I heard would repeatedly invoke “the power of prophesy” to “speak blessing” over people, and then promptly ask for donations for the building of new churches and training of new pastors. The mantra was one of “give now, for a reward later.” The notion of future reward operates directly out of the practice of extemporaneous prayer and fire-brimstone messages, which emphasizes the Christ's power to intervene at any point on one's behalf. The goods provided from this prosperity doctrine however are based on an eternal commitment to God, largely in spite of temporary pain, poverty, and family tragedy. As I witnessed thousands of people living in slums donate weeks worth of salary to evangelist “prophets” in hope of eternal gain, I could see how the rituals of textual exclusion and prayer – prayer that railed against Muslims, Jinn, Juju, and nonbelievers- was key in constructing a population willing to use physical force to defend their group against “the forces and principalities of darkness” because they saw it not as an immediate threat, “not against flesh and blood,” but as a cosmic struggle for eternal salvation.66

Dependent Variables

1. Intensity

“In the East end of Freetown, we started having problems along these lines as a result of extremism,” a Freetown resident told me. “You had some evangelical churches,  

one of them – I can't remember who, what the denomination was, they had a crusade. And the messages they were preaching were really really extremist messages. To the level that one day during the crusade, the Muslims who were around the area felt aggrieved. And they came back stoning everybody from the place."67

Such low intensity conflict may seem trivial compared to other religious sub-state conflicts around the globe, but they are very significant for the national consciousness of a people plagued by a decade of brutal civil war. While most Salone denominations are willing to sacrifice orthodoxy for the sake of a pacific orthopraxy, new evangelical churches have instigated the only inter-religious conflict in the country's history.

I found that in isolated areas around the larger evangelical churches in Kissy, Congo-Cross, and East Freetown, there were over a dozen incidents in the last year where Christian church-goers attacked and physically harmed Muslims that they perceived as being too close to their church. Several cases involved the celebration and initiation of locals into the Poro secret society – where young men masquerade through town in masks and traditional garb – these groups where physically broken up with many injured when the activities infringed on a “crusade” being held by an evangelical church.

Due to the overwhelming public identity around the IRC-led inclusion narrative, many newspapers refuse to print such skirmishes as anything other than “gang violence.” Yet according to a local AP stinger, the the gang violence in Kissy is heavily demarcated by church-ties. The Vice President's security guard, with who I became close, with told me that his neighborhood of Congo-Cross was rife with gang violence, so I asked about

67 Interview with Kelfa in Freetown.
the demographic constitution of these gangs: “Well,” he said with a pause. “I am sad to say they are groups that are Christians or Muslim or Limba, Timbe, that sort of thing.”

The biggest pressure point for such conflict, according to a former minister in the government, is that “politics cannot deal with the issue of space.” By this he meant that the towns of Kissy and Congo-Cross are such densely populated slums, that “people just are cross with one another.” Many of the stories of conflict involved competing loud speakers, where Muslim and Christian evangelists would shout over one another in the square until a fight broke out between followers. While the issue of space may be a socio-political spark, I found that that it is how groups practice exclusivist boundaries that sustains that initial spark and expands it's deadly reach. Practices, in this case, are forging dispositions of indivisibility, so that when Poro masquerades encroach on church activity, it is not an inconvenience so much as it is a direct threat to a fragile and exclusive worldview.

2. Intransigence

Unfortunately, many of the small Pentecostal groups that assisted in the founding of the IRC have left it entirely. The abandonment of the IRC has exasperated tensions in these areas. Three of the leaders in the IRC I spoke to indicated that they have sought out the “Prophets,” “Evangelists,” and other new leaders when conflict breaks out around their churches in order to provide mediation. On no occasion have these new leaders

68 Subject 200B, May 9, 2014.

69 Interview with Rev. Dr. Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown.
accepted the help of the IRC in reducing the conflict. Indeed, there is an “unwillingness to come together to talk about these conflicts.”\textsuperscript{70}

After a round of inter-group violence in 2013, I learned that men from one of the evangelical churches put loud-speakers on top of their bus and drove throughout the town loudly proclaiming “Congo-Cross is for Jesus” and “all sinners must go.” The instigation set of the Muslim population, who came after the bus with clubs and stones.\textsuperscript{71}

Even if leaders wished to negotiate an end to such violence, it is doubtful that the membership would see the overture as acceptable. The church of Flaming Evangelism for instance, is fundamentally built on rejecting any sort of detente with TAR and Islam, and instead, Pastors invoke language in their prayer rituals such as “storm the enemy and take them by force.”\textsuperscript{71} It would therefore be entirely unacceptable for a minister on Sunday to preach such an indivisible message, and then on Monday turn around and seek reconciliation with those he demonized the day earlier. Even if a minister wished to do this, which is doubtful, his legitimacy within the congregation would be called into question based on his incompetence at the very restricted practice he promotes.

3. Resolve

When political or economic issues arise, church divisions are a social fault-line that provides conflict. While many in Salone describe these as one-off events, I noted a pattern of resolve where parties would not just give up and go home, but come out at

\textsuperscript{70} Interview with Wesleyan Pastor from Bo.

\textsuperscript{71} Interview with Kelfa in Freetown.
every opportunity they could. In Freetown, I spoke with a Muslim man who's son had been attacked near a church: “they keep coming back,” he said.

In Kenema, the secret society celebrations are repeatedly attacked by the same group of Christians. Every time a young man is initiated in the local masquerades, Christians with sticks and stones interrupt the proceedings in a riotous mob. In response to this, one Pentecostal follower told me “they [the societies] are the ones causing problems. They should worship God in the Church, but they are playing a devil.” Tied up in this statement are implicit appeals to practices of sacred space, prayer rituals, and rites of passage that construct a social idea of lengthened time frames. These group's emphasis on the after means that they would rather keep attacking local TAR activities and causing temporary violence than risk damnation in the life to come.

Case C: Muslim Evangelical Mosques

As in the Evangelical Christian community, post-civil war Salone experienced a re-invigoration of Islamic practice and piety after the war. The combination of systemic impoverishment, the trauma of war, and, perhaps most prominent, foreign assistance with religious undertones, resulted in a type of Islamic practice new to Sierra Leone. Saudi Salafism (Wahabism) and Iranian Shiism72 have proliferated in recent years, resulting in dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. These “two sectarian strands that are

72 For the most part, this section refers to the activities of Sunni groups, as Shia are less than 2% of the total population. The Iranian Embassy seems to be the only institution promoting evangelical Shiism.
slowly reshaping the interpretation and practice of the religion in Sierra Leone with potentially radical implications for the future.”

While promoting new doctrine and practice, the rise of extremist Islam has historical precedent in Salone. Idara Konhorfili, a militant Soso-clan Imam campaigned for the expansion of Islam throughout Salone during British colonial rule. Idara was very harsh against TAR, “humiliating them and destructing their religious paraphernalia.” He concerned himself with the en masse conversion of the Soso people, and demanded that his followers follow Sharia in every aspect of life. After refusing to pay taxes to a non-Muslim government, the cleric was killed in a clash with British troops in 1931.

While an isolated historical example, the story-line from Idara is transforming into the present. More and more Muslim clerics are preaching a hardline message of violent resistance to the state, anti-Christian and anti-TAR practices, closing off the doors of Mosques that used to be open. Below, I highlight how practices of group privilege and scriptural interpretation, sacred space, afterlife rituals, rites of passage, prayer, and dress rituals have all recently changed in hardline Muslim communities. I then outline three mechanisms of indivisibility that produce elevated violence outcomes.

Group Practices


74 Ibid., 172.
The core of new Islamic practice seeks to eradicate “bida” or the inclusion of non-canonical cultural innovation into the everyday life of Muslims. This is an uphill battle for these evangelical Islamic groups, as bida is a core point of shared identity for Salone Muslims. The result is a confrontational and exclusivist militancy which threatens to erode the fabric of religious tolerance that the IRC built throughout wartime Salone.

1. Group Privilege and Sacred Text

Despite the persistence of mixed practices between TAR and Islam, new Mosques have cropped up throughout Freetown and other large cities which emphasize Islam as a set apart, distinct, and holy religion. The goal sought by Salafist-oriented Muslims, according to Imam Kallon of Masjid Salaba, is the observance of ‘strict Sharia practices and the traditional teaching of the prophet.’

In a series of focus groups I conducted in Makeni, over a dozen Islamic leaders from every district talked about “new” types of missionaries coming in and setting up mosques that do not allow Christians to pray, do not allow intermarriages, and enforce a particularly hard-interpretation of the Koran, Sharia, and Hadith. “There are sources of religious intolerance in this country,” said an elderly Shiek from Waterloo. “These are the Islamic missionaries.” Another continued the thought “Salafi extremists are saying that Sufi and Shia practices are not Muslim. I am Sunni, but this is not right!” This is statement excited the crowd in agreement, almost all of whom indicated that they had interacted with missionaries from Iran or Saudi Arabia who were establishing mosques that Christians would not be able to attend. Between bites of local fish and rice stew, this

75 O’Brien and Rashid, “Islamist Militancy in Sierra Leone.”

331
group of ICR Muslims told me tales of how they were offered money to build new buildings if they would work to establish Sharia in the government.

The quest to infuse Islam more thoroughly into the state has only crept into the public lexicon in recent years. One of my favorite source of information about Islam was at a Freetown auto-repair shop, which alternatively operated as a mosque – the mechanics were also Imams. So I stopped in and asked about how the new missionaries have changed practices of scriptural interpretation that allowed followers to also practice local traditional religion. The mechanic-Imams were adamant that the new strain was few in number, but that they were “tired of seeing Islam not respected” in the public life of Muslims themselves. The move to install Sharia courts for instance, would permanently put Islam in a higher esteem in public law than any other religion, and “this is a big goal of these guys, yeah.”

2. Sacred Space

New Islamic missionaries emphasize the mosque as a place for Muslims only, quite unlike traditional practices inherited from the IRC. In Kissy, where over half-a-dozen new mosques have been erected in the last two years, new imams are prohibiting Christians from participation. Farther away, in the town of Kenema, I was told that young Muslim men had set up a perimeter around a Mosque, and then proceeded to attack a secret society gathering nearby, enforcing the social expectation that the Mosque was a set apart and unique place of worship.

3. Afterlife Rituals

76 Subject 200C, Interview 200C, May 1, 2014.
Many of the mosques I visited were founded in the Basharia movement, which places special emphasis in West Africa upon rooting out sycretism and mixing of ritual activity. Imam Yillah, who founded Basharia, challenged the flexible Sufist Islam of those around him (and who a principally active in the IRC), and offered a much more rigid Salafist version. Yillah and his followers publicly criticized practices that he deemed *bida* (innovation), including textual interpretive (*wird*) practices, the universal commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday (*rabbi-ul lawal*), which was frequently combined with Poro society activity, and also attempted to eliminate syncretic funeral rites.\(^77\)

Syncretic rituals of the afterlife are particularly customary in Salone. Since every member of a town is generally inducted into a secret society, they are engrained with the understanding that the town is “owned” by ancestor's spirits. The principal custom across ethnic groups is thus to welcome a deceased spirit into the town, as a rite of passage for that individual, an inheritance initiated with their initiation into TAR. Thus, even though a Muslim may indeed have Koranic verses recited, the preparation of the body, for instance, may be executed according to local custom, not Sharia.

Such customs are unfamiliar and offensive to Sunni missionaries coming from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. They have therefore sought to create social groups that condemn and fight back against the impulse to incorporate other traditions into proper observant Islam. Many young Muslims in Freetown have sworn to not participate in TAR at all, and regularly will instruct their friends that they will be punished in the

\(^{77}\) O’Brien and Rashid, “Islamist Militancy in Sierra Leone,” 173.
afterlife they are buried according to secret society custom. I spoke to a man in Freetown about these groups, asking, “Would you ever say to a Christian, “you are going to hell?” He responded: “These judgments have been said, but they are not so strong. […] It should not be done on a loud speaker, going telling people that Muslims and Christians are enemies and should not live together, no. But the people who are saying it are more common now. […] These are said by youth (referring to groups in East Freetown).”

4. Rites of Passage

Salafism, as practiced in Kissy mosques, emphasizes the unity of the Ummah, purity of the people, and living with simplicity. This is done while shunning *bida* innovations or local cultural accretions. As other scholars have noted, “For Salafist-oriented Muslims, a more purist Islam has also meant the shunning of syncretic religious practices, which has affected the performances of marriage, circumcision, funerary practices and leisure. In place of elaborate indigenous cultural rites, there has been a push towards much more simplistic and orthodox Islamic practices.”

This push towards orthodox/orthoprax living has radically shifted social behavior in some Freetown neighborhoods. While it is customary for Christians to accompany Muslim neighbors to Mosque during Ramadan, this is becoming a point of contention as Imams have begun preaching hardline messages against the Christian visitors, seeking conversions. According to a police officer I spoke with at a local dance festival “these

78 Subject 200B.
79 Interview A200 - Port Loko.
people can't tell me that I cannot say Adhan when there is a birth, say, next to me in my house.” *Adhan*, the traditional prayer when a child is born in an Islamic household, is frequently said together with neighbors and friends. “And these people go and say, 'no,' you cannot do this.” Sounding indignant, the officer continued, “and so there is problems coming.”

5. Prayer

Far more strict practices of prayer exist in new communities compared to IRC-affiliated groups. It would be impossible to see many Saudi-educated or funded groups praying along with Christian prayers or singing the Doxology, as was the case at the IRC meeting. Those Muslim leaders in my focus group laughed at the idea that the “Kissy Imams” would say the Lord's prayer as they had just done. Instead, I was told that in order to enforce the notion of purity within a mosque, these new groups enforce the prayer of the al fatiha, just so that all participants speak the key tenets of Islam in a service.

6. Dress

I visited several Islamic schools, all of which require a hijab, which I learned was an innovation mandated in the last two years. Islamic schools regularly display their religiosity by marching around town. In the opening of the new mountain road (a “technological marvel”), it was almost every day that one Islamic school or another

81 Interview with “Aaron” from the Vice President’s Security Detail, May 5, 2014.

82 Focus Group in Makeni.
marched their children for miles, with banners exclaiming “Allah is One” and school-children announcing their adherence to his prophet, Mohamed.

As O’Brian and Rashid have noted, “There are Muslims who perceive the ‘social decadence copied from the West’, apparent in the behavior and attire of young people, as one of the major problems plaguing Islam in Sierra Leone.”83 As a result, Fulani and Temne women in the North are known to wear full burquas to show their rejection of western decadence.84 Full covering for women is fairly common to see in Freetown, something that the Muslim leaders in my focus group indicated was a real drastic shift that occurred in practice in just a few years since the war ended in 2002.

Mechanisms of Indivisibility

1. Binding

For many Muslims still wedded to practices like Bundo, Sande and Poro, it has been “very difficult to abandon their cultural practices for religion.”85 But those Muslims who are willing to abandon TAR will find a community which is bound together through ritual exclusion that demonizes outsiders and rewards competence at a prescribed set of practices. This binding mechanism is based on public displays of competence at practice: as a Muslim sees another behaving “competently,” at prayer or narrow Koranic


84 However, I did note several occasions where women wore full coverings of bright indigenous lappa cloth.

interpretation, the practice itself “disciplines” the viewer's sense of what it means to be a part of that group, and even part of history and the universe itself.

The process of evangelical Islam in Salone – and East Freetown in particular – has constricted what it means to be a “competent” Muslim into smaller and smaller menus of acceptable ritual action and Christian and TAR practitioners are systematically excluded from being able to join the Muslim community in its celebrations. For some of the younger men in Kissy, this means that there are fewer and fewer interactions with persons outside of their narrow view of the world and the meaningful life events of prayer and rites of passage and all constructed to exclude other groups.

Thus, as conflict erupts over issues of space or political representation of Islam, no inter-group foundation exists on which to build common agendas. Instead, groups are bound together so that political confrontations are somehow more meaningfully about the religious difference between communities. This conflictual interaction reifies the trust one has in one's own community, while justifying the demonizations of the other constructed in exclusionary ritual.

There is new evidence that this binding process is becoming more pronounced as, “much more recently, Muslims in Sierra Leone have generally interpreted the crises in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Somalia through the lens of a common spiritual bond and shared membership within the umma.” In the only other focus groups on radicalization in Salone's Muslim population, O'Brian and Rashid found a similar trend

86 Focus Group in Makeni.
that I did: Muslims are becoming more likely “to have ‘sympathy with’ and ‘strong support’ for their fellow Muslims.”

2. Limiting Decision-makers

Just as with the evangelical Christians, new Muslim communities with Imams educated and funded from Saudi Arabia preach a message of exclusion and are therein severely limited in actions they could take once conflict does break out. For the Imam to be competent at the exclusionary, non-yielding practices of purity and fortitude, he must publicly avoid capitulation to forces of evil that he has railed against in Friday prayers.

For this reason, it is quite rare to see these new Imams engaging in public dialogue on stemming violence or civil society organizations aimed at building interfaith bridges. The proposition that IRC Muslims can continue healing divides caused by sectarian divisions is untenable, especially since over time, the trust that the community has in the IRC itself may evaporate based on the binding mechanism discussed above.

3. Lengthened Time-frames

Wahhabi practices in certain Salone mosques are problematically extending the time-frame of human activity in two key ways. First, Saudi-trained clerics regularly emphasize, just as the Nigerian Christians do, that the temporal pains of conflict and contention are but momentary blips on the radar of eternal history. Suffering in the earthy sense is actually a blessing if one is experiencing it in the name of God. Therefore, if this

is the practiced response to conflict, once embroiled, the actor is unlikely to simply give up their fight.

Secondarily, I found that Wahhabi strains of Islam in Kissy, Congo-Cross, Koidu, and Waterloo produced actors willing to fight, since (again as with their Christian counterparts), they interpret conflictual activity within the frame of Islam vs. outside evil. Within this dispositional frame, conflict becomes an indivisible battle for the entire religion's survival in the cosmic realm, rather than an immediate issue between two people groups.

**Dependent Variable**

Reinvigorated purist, exclusivist tendencies within Salone's Muslim population has resulted in group dispositions of indivisibility as observed in group binding, limiting elite bargaining platforms, and elongating time-frames of conflict. The result of such indivisibility mechanisms are higher levels of conflict intensity, intransigence, and resolve.

1. Intensity

The Catholic leader opening the Inter-Religious Council's 2014 meeting spoke in broken English and Krio, every slowly so as to not be misunderstood: “We must be boucoup [very] careful of new sects. I go to Nigeria. I see extreme groups change dynamics... Ya could not rent a house if ya Christian in a Muslim area. That intolerance was there. So extremists come in, they find it easy! They find it easy. Boko Haram done na (was thus) made underground and come up. Please,” he paused and directed his
attention at the Muslim leaders gathered. “Please, do not let them come in and copy here.” Muslim leaders responded by pointing to the fact that intermarriages and interfaith renting is at an all time high, thus showing that practices were different in Sierra Leone than were present in Nigeria. The Muslim respondents became less defensive as time wore on, eventually admitting to me during a focus group that areas of Kissy, Koidu and others were concerning them. As Peter Anderson, a longtime American resident of Freetown told me: “The only danger I have seen is in Kissy, there is a Kaddafi Mosque there where a journalist was held hostage for a while after Kaddafi was killed... there were T-shirts with support for 9/11.”

As I continued investigations around such hot-spots, it became clear that it was not merely global events that were causing concern, but small, localized violent skirmishes over political conflict between Salafist groups, evangelical Christians, and secret societies of traditional religion. Periodic communal clashes with local masked groups in Fourah Bay have principally occurred around mosques that ban their congregants from participating in TAR practice. While political disagreement abounds, the gang-like outbursts are a feature unique to new exclusivist groups.

In one prominent clash, a group of Muslims attacked a series of cultural organizations throughout the country that they perceived as unIslamic and heretical. I met

88 Interview with Peter Anderson in Freetown. This corroborate the finds of O'Brien and Rashid: “A few Sierra Leonean imams and educated Muslim students, especially those who are Shiites, have joined in some of the global Muslim protests against the West. For example, the Sierra Leone Muslim Students Association and the jamaat of the Freetown Central Mosque, supported by the Iranians, organised a demonstration against the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. Israeli military actions against the Palestinians have also generated protests.” O’Brien and Rashid, “Islamist Militancy in Sierra Leone.”
a young man on the East side of Freetown at an old gasoline station now used as a massive taxi-stand to go into the Eastern side of the country. As we both stood waiting for a ride through the mountains, he told me how he ended up caught in the middle of a street fight between Muslims and Christians back in 2012. He said that a veiled Muslim woman was crossing the street when a bunch of young Christian men began taunting her calling her a “debul” - the local name for a masquerade character in secret society celebrations. As the woman crossed the street, a man put out his arm to block her path and this action was taken as an attack, as though he were reaching out to unveil her. Profoundly humiliated, the women ran to her mosque and returned with several dozen men, who began to attack every Christian man they could find. Christians began picking up rocks and bottles, attacking in turn. The incident followed on a very similar one in 2005, where a woman was indeed physically attacked and 100 Muslims attempted to torch a Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{89}

“One other instance, it was in Kambia district” said my friend Kelfa in Freetown, a group “started practicing extremism, this time from the Muslim side of things.” According to Kelfa, these evangelist Muslims preached “hard doctrines.” They went to a small village and began to preach on a Friday night against the presence of Christians in the area, specifically advocating for hardcore Sharia as the basis of public law. The following day, a group of new followers torched the only Christian church for miles - “That was the first time a church was burnt down as a result of this.”\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{89} O’Brien and Rashid, “Islamist Militancy in Sierra Leone,” 182.
\textsuperscript{90} Interview with Kelfa in Freetown.
Stories such as these abound. The real danger is that these incidents of intense political violence along religious lines escalate even further. In their complimentary research O'Brien and Rashid find that “Sierra Leonean Muslims had mixed attitudes to suicide bombings.” Some Sunni Muslims in their response groups maintained, ‘that suicide bombing is the only weapon against the oppressor’.\(^91\)

2. Intransigence

One of the earliest hardline clerics was named Sheikh Mujtabah, who publicly advocated for a turn to Sharia law in Salone. In what has now become somewhat of a taboo subject in IRC circles, Mujtabah initially joined the Council only to leave it once it began to become serious about establishing a national peacemaking campaign. When the IRC advocated approaching tribal paramount Chiefs, Mujtabah publicly reprimanded the IRC, and instead backed the AFRC/RUF alliance because he said they would do better to advance Islam, where Kabbah and the international community would not.\(^92\)

The legacy of Mujtabah is present throughout Eastern Freetown, including at the famed Kaddafi mosque, the central site of social clashes and rejection of the IRC's interfaith tradition. Many groups funded externally – from Saudi and Iran – have followed Mujtabah's example and refused to join the IRC since it does not formally pursue an agenda of placing Sharia in the public sphere. The result is a handful of mosques that fail to act to reduce interfaith violence. Rather, I was told by IRC leaders that when fights break out among Muslims from these communities and other groups, it


\(^92\) Ibid., 174.
is not the extreme Imams who engage in reconciliation, but the IRC who reaches out to establish peace: “Where are they? I cannot say. It is a big mystery,” said one Sheikh in a focus group. The result is recurrences of violence with no formal mechanism to address the growing problem.

3. Resolve

Finally, it seems as if new Muslim groups have high levels of resolve. In their quest to purge Salone of traditional African practice, they have repeatedly been shamed and maligned by a super-majority of citizens. Nevertheless, the attacks continue at a faster pace than ever. In the face of extreme cultural resistance, attacks are getting closer and closer together, indicating an organized campaign of bullying at best and domestic terrorism at worst.

These events, have not, however, been seriously met with the proprietorial or police power of the state. A former police officer laughed off the rising, repeated clashes as due to “hot headed Muslim boys who need to grow up,” rather than recognizing the pattern of resolve that these groups display. Without a serious state response, it is clear to many observes of Salone politics that these are clashes that will not merely fizzle out, but follow on from over a decade of exclusivist practices which have lengthened actor time-frames to the point where temporary public scorn is not enough to deter violent activity in the name of Allah.

93 Interview with “Aaron” from the Vice President’s Security Detail.
Alternative Explanations

The case of Sierra Leone presents an opportunity to test the claims of both instrumentalist and constructivist approaches. It is plausible that both schools of thought could explain the Inter-Religious Council's activities as well as the increase of exclusivist evangelical groups. I tackle each alternative approach below, beginning with the instrumental claim. I explain how practice operates as the “background knowledge” that enables goal-seeking or elite manipulation to function within society, thus functioning as ontologically prior to alternative explanations. I then unpack the constructivist explanation, arguing that the similarity of belief profiles between IRC and evangelical groups is not enough to explain outcomes observed. Rather, I argue that ideology is profoundly situated within social practices of exclusion and inclusion, trained through constitutive practices, and not merely about the salience of belief within an individual's head.

Instrumentalist Alternative

Instrumental approaches argue that elites mobilize religious violence in the context of weak state capacity or relative group need, creating incentives and opportunities for violence.94 Religion is used as a calculated instrument within socio-political dynamics where leaders expect a payoff from religious group mobilization. If the instrumentalists are correct, then Hypothesis 4 should have support and we should see

leaders using religion to further their group in the context of weak political or economic position.

The evidence does not support this hypothesis in the Salone cases. Largely this is due to how groups practiced their faith, preventing elite predation and manipulation. According to the Archbishop of Freetown, the people would have rejected RUF attempts to sectarianize the conflict:

I asked, “Why didn't something like Syria's sectarianization happen in SL? Why didn't someone in the RUF say now this is a religious war and try to inspire people using religion?”

“Well, maybe they (were) wise enough to realize that nobody would have bought that kind of story...Very few people would have accepted such a story [...] we all knew that he [Foday Senkoh] was not a religious leader, so it would have been very difficult for him to tell this story and we accept it. And thank God it did not go down that way.”\textsuperscript{95}

The head of the Wesleyan Church, corroborates this story, highlighting the many other issues which mobilized rebellion.

“No, that did not happen here. The war in Sierra Leone had no religious connotation. Nothing absolutely. The causes of the war in Sierra Leone were illicit politics. The educated people were too poor for too long.

\textsuperscript{95} Interview with Rev. Dr. Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown.
Marginalization of the young people. Young people, when they are marginalized. You will never be included in the direction of this country.”

The issues highlighted here have indeed become rallying points for prosperity-gospel evangelists, who promise that their religion will deliver congregants from material strife. Certainly the tragedy for Sierra Leone would be the reformulation of these narratives along radical religious lines, Muslim or Christian. And current trends seem to show that Salone might head in that direction: Sierra Leonean Muslims complain of poor education, absence of jobs, and poor living conditions. Many of my respondents expressed dissatisfaction at the attention paid to “proper” Islamic teaching in schools and many told me that official recognition of Islam as a source of law was important to them and would somehow fix the economic woes of the country.

What is particularly problematic for the instrumentalist position is that, by and large, the elites using instrumental gains as justification for mobilization have failed to provide any such reward. For the Club Model to function, groups need to receive benefits they otherwise could not. It is thus puzzling for the instrumental hypothesis that evangelical groups grow despite continued poverty and failure of leaders to secure special privileges within the state.

Further, as noted in Table 6.2, the structural conditions of poverty and weak state capacity are present in all three cases. The observable implication of the instrumental hypothesis would lead us to believe that the midst of the civil war would prove the most likely condition for elite manipulation of religion, since the state was non-existent and
poverty was worse than just about anywhere in the world. Yet during the war, no elevated levels of violence were attributed to religious groups. Rather, the IRC reduced war intensity, intransigence, and resolve. This observation shows that neither poverty nor failed state conditions are enough to push groups to violence. Rather, there must be underlying social practice introduced which can then be mobilized.

Finally, as in the previous chapter, I find the instrumentalist argument ontologically problematic. In order for elites to manipulate religious members, for their political or economic advancement, there must be some underlying shared culture which makes such appeals seem competent and fulfillment natural. The instrumentalist school thus ignores the prior social disciplining which occurs at the bodily, unspoken level of ritual performance.96

*Constructivist*

Constructivists would instruct scholars to review the rhetoric and ideological basis of the group, positing that public theology proves a justificatory resource for more intense and intractable violence. The problem for this position in Salone is that while differences in beliefs are present in IRC-affiliated groups, they are not put into practice. As one respondent profoundly put it:

“That is the difference always, but this difference in Sierra Leone, in other countries they put it into practice: they go beyond the belief, they become extremists because of their faith. But in Sierra Leone, the doubt is there.

For the Muslims, they believe that God is One, but for the Christians they believe in the trinity. There is God the Father, the Spirit, and the Son of God. But for the Muslim they say no. Even the prophets, they say no, he (Jesus) was only a messenger of Allah. But for we the musl- sorry, we the Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ is the true born of God. But these are minor differences.[...] The differences are there, but we don’t let the differences become something paramount in our religion. We talk to them. We discuss the two books. And the messenger sent by God – we call him God, they say Allah – but this is all the same. The differences are there in both books about the messages, about the prophets, but the trinity, but we do not take it as something that we should put into practice. We should not act because of our beliefs. We have it internally. But we do not put it in motion, for it to control us as others are doing. And because other let it control them, they become what – extremists.”

The day after I attended a funeral at a Pentecostal church, I asked a Christian co-worker of the deceased if he believed that people who do not believe in Jesus are going to hell. He responded with a long sigh, “ehhhhh... This is not for me to say. The Muslim believe one thing, and Christian believe something else.” I probed further: “which is more important, having the correct idea about who is going to heaven, or, getting along?”

97 Interview A200 - Port Loko.
He immediately said that “peace” among people of faith “even local faith” is more important than what someone believes about the afterlife.

Such evidence indicates that Hypothesis 5 is insufficient to explain variation in conflict outcomes. Many of my liberal IRC respondents indicated that they sincerely held similar beliefs about the inerrancy of scripture, afterlife, and prayer, but they differed in how their daily life was lived in relation to people who believe differently than them. Such finding indicates that beliefs are an insufficient mechanism to explain violence dynamics.

A Christian congregant at a Methodist church profoundly illustrates the faulty constructivist claim, coming back again to the centrality of practice as a platform for social competence: “There are a whole lot of intermarriages between Christians and Muslims in this country. So you cannot come and tell me that my father is a Devil, when he is my father and he a Muslim and I am a Christian. I won't believe you. I won't follow you.” The language's violent directionality is determined not by the words, but how the words relate to broader social practices.

Conclusion and Implications

The practices of textual interpretation, group privilege, sacred space, prayer, dress, afterlife and rites of passage are all deeply problematic in their exclusivity for new, evangelical Christian and Muslim groups. The level of fluidity within Inter-Religious Council affiliate churches and mosques, however, shows that groups with less rigid practices can actively reduce violence dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve.
The rise of exclusivist practice is observable and traceable. Throughout Salone, there is a strong notion of “before the war” and “after the war” in talking about everyday lifestyles. The prior is marked by serenity between religions, embodied by the IRC. A majority of citizens retain this identity and normative commitment to tolerance. But the “after the war” narrative serves as a way of talking about the shift towards a more exclusive orthopraxy. Cases B and C illustrate the concern that leaders in IRC affiliated churches and mosques have about how religion has changed “after the war” with an influx of missionaries that reject the syncretic culture which served as a foundation for stopping it.

Instead of stemming intensity as the IRC strategically did in the war, new evangelical groups have created dispositions of indivisibility by binding group members together over cosmic struggle narratives. This contrasts with the IRC that actively bridged TAR, Muslim, and Christian religious practices to forge bridging dispositions. Similarly, IRC practices allowed for active inclusion of TAR Paramount Chiefs in building consensus for the Lome accords, whereas new evangelical groups have shut out dialogue with those otherized as heathens or apostates. Finally, where the IRC’s inclusive practice actively reduced the resolved of actors in a violent environment, new groups have lengthened time-frames of action, which reduce the salience of immediate pain and lengthen the duration groups are willing to endure violence. In sum, the internal mechanisms of indivisibility function to increase violence dynamics in the recent rise of evangelical groups in Salone, while the same practice forged mechanisms were not present in the war.
There are four policy implications from these findings. First, Sierra Leone has a burgeoning problem in the radical turn to exclusivity that must be better managed. While state capacity is still limited, there can be better oversight in the type of groups allowed to enter the country to evangelize. For their part, the IRC has recently begun to promote an extensive “Religious Code of Conduct” to reign in the proliferation of groups that they cannot influence.\textsuperscript{98} Archbishop Timba-Charles indicated that the Code of Conduct is intended to be a guide, rules of the game, so that once conflict erupts from new communities, there “will always have a common point of reference.”

I was skeptical and asked, “Wouldn't extremists, by their very nature, say “no” to a Code of Conduct?” The Archbishop continued, “Yes, but then you have something to hold onto. And the person who is bringing them into the country will tell them, 'Look, this is not something that we represent here.' And will have the courage to tell them, 'look,' - if it is a Christian who brought them, they will tell them - 'look, this is not Christianity. Your brand of Christianity is not acceptable here.'”\textsuperscript{99}

Second, the influence of the IRC seems to decline as people search for a prosperity doctrine and stronger intra-group solidarity. As evangelical groups attempt to fill this need, the IRC is unfortunately sidelined, relegated to history. The IRC should thus be assisted by domestic and international donors to bolster their outreach efforts. Funding is especially needed to assist the IRC in reaching out to remote and isolated religious establishments to “train” their leaders about the legacy of tolerance which

\textsuperscript{98} See Appendices for Full Text of the Code of Conduct, recovered during fieldwork.

\textsuperscript{99} Interview with Rev. Dr. Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown.
helped end the war. Funding would also assist in fully implementing the aforementioned Code of Conduct.

Third, the IRC should be more fully supported as an independent, yet central voice of governance. In the aftermath of the war, many envisioned the IRC as a governmental body with quasi-judicial review powers to advise lawmakers in “acceptable” religious policy. The idea of a multi-sectarian “Council of Experts” would certainly be a global first. While the council was never established with legal authority, there is still room for the government to empower the IRC with resources, legitimacy, and further provide incentive for hardline evangelicals to integrate into the IRC structure in order to gain valuable resources and authority.

Finally, the IRC should be raised as an example of effective Track-2 diplomacy. Leaders like Father Turay, Bishop Biguzzi, Bishop Humper, and Bishop Barnett all have high-level experience as moral guarantors and initiators of a peace process that helped to end the most deadly conflict in West African history. The international community should seek to facilitate these leaders telling their stories to governments and faith communities. Donor countries and organizations would be encouraged that interfaith dialogue is possible in the face of gross violence and those areas with high levels of violent extremism may find a route forward by building a coalition of churches and mosques based on the IRC-SL model.
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Implications

This study finds that subnational groups with membership with exclusivist religious practices are more likely to produce elevated levels of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. Contrary to instrumentalist and constructivist conventional wisdom, neither elite manipulation nor extremist beliefs is sufficient to explain these dynamics of violence. Everyday indivisibilities, rather, are constructed by shared social practices that regulate how one performs as a religious actor. It is exclusivist everyday practices that provide the necessary conditions for elevated violence dynamics.

I have argued that practices are the social fabric that provide meaning for communities. My theory, outlined in Chapter 2, maintains that exclusivism in ritual practice builds communities that are prone to approaching conflict with indivisibilities that lead to increased violence. Mechanisms of indivisibility – binding identities, limiting leaders, and elongating time-frames, are uniquely built by everyday practices of exclusion and group isolation.

Practice theory receives quantitative and qualitative investigations. Chapter 3 constructs an original dataset of religious practice in subnational conflict, finding that groups scoring highly on the Exclusive Religious Practice Index (ERP) are 40% more likely to engage in higher levels of intense violence, 40% less likely to reach peaceful termination of violence, and 30% less likely to give up their fight (holding other variables
constant). Chapters 5 and 6 evaluate six case studies of groups within Israel/West Bank and Sierra Leone which elaborate on the quantitative findings. The case studies find that those groups with higher levels of everyday exclusivism contribute to violence dynamics. Groups with less everyday exclusivism do not contribute to elevated levels of violence. In the case of the Inter-Religious Council Sierra Leone, inclusive practices actually acted to deflate conflict intensity, dampen the resolve of violent actors, and spur bargaining opportunities.

The dissertation's findings suggest theoretical, methodological, and policy contributions and lay the groundwork for future work at the intersection of religion and security studies.

**Theoretical Contributions**

First, these findings suggest a promising way to disaggregate identity. As I argue in Chapters 2, 5, and 6, social practice operates as ontologically prior to goals or beliefs, making it a preferable basis on which to unpack what we mean when we talk about religious actors. Once we do this, we find that there is indeed a relationship between religious cleavage and conflict, contrary to Fearon, Laitin, Collier, and others who find no connection.1 While this is a significant contribution to the literature on violence outcomes and identity, there is nothing suggesting that it need stop there. Other forms of ideology also deserve disaggregation and treatment as complex constitutive forces that


354
impact conflict.² Nationalism, ethnicity, and gendered identities are perhaps equally bound up in ritualized social practices. The model here thus provides a reach theoretical foundation for work in identity theory.

Second, I have outlined a theory of indivisibility that substantially expands upon economic, sociological, and international relations literature. Unlike prior work which roots indivisibility in rational actor theory, I have argued that practices can be unthought embodiments of culture, which act to constitute actors. Practices of religious everyday life are devices that serve as the very site of social ontology-building. Exclusive religious practices forge dispositional mechanisms of binding, limiting, and elongating, which push actors to engage in elevated violence outcomes. Ritualized, exclusive living thus produces indivisible social dynamics which interact differently in violent environments that are open and inclusive in their religious practice. On a theoretical level, indivisibility rooted in everyday ritual living outlines three explicit, testable mechanisms of indivisibility that link directly to hypothesized conflict outcomes.

Finally, this project offers a theoretical competitor to instrumentalist and constructivist explanations of religious-inspired violence. Such accounts neglect to consider how religious socialization may constitute actors. While they assume that religion is used as a tool to further political power or economic gain, it may very well be that instrumentalists have the causal arrow reversed. In the cases of both the religious Zionist settlers and evangelical groups in Freetown, elite religious engagement with the

state is far less about using religion for political purposes, and far more about using the state for religious purposes. The identity of both groups is deeply rooted in the state as an agent – an instrument – of religious ends. It is only by tracing practices groups that we can see which way the causal arrow is pointing. Further, this study suggests that in order for dog-whistle politics to function (elite manipulation), there has to be an underlying social practice functioning as “background knowledge” making the masses follow the bidding of the leader's rhetoric. It is practice which best captures this creation of “background knowledge” since groups with shared beliefs vary widely in their contribution to violent environments.

Methodological Contributions

This thesis is the first to present a practice theory of religion in conjunction with violent dynamics. I made three methodological innovations, which serve as replicable foundations for future research.

First, I maintain that social practices are observable in ways that goals and beliefs are not. While many previous works in practice have been criticized as explaining everything, thus explaining nothing, I have and effort to outline how particular practices produce specific mechanisms, and then link those mechanisms to outcomes. By focusing on action and behavior contexts, the approach captures inarticulate, assumed, and ontological worldviews and processes that discipline actor bodies and frame dispositional responses to conflict environments. The method of observing practices – both cross-nationally and locally – creates new innovative data.
Second, new large-N datasets on religious practice are the first such data created in the discipline. By constructing this large-N data from ethnographic sources, I maintain a constant connection between local contingency and broader generalizability. The turn to cross-national data and the search for generalizable trends is something largely missing from practice theory, though Bourdieu advocated for the use of statistics as a launching-pad for more local, ethnographic investigations.

Creating this new, large-N data allows for future researchers to investigate not only the impact of practice on social outcomes, but how social events impact the change of practice over time. Chronicling practice over a period of time would, for instance, allow scholars to study the impact of terrorism on how religion is lived in a particular group. For example, a future study could use a time-series ERP-index to ask how the exogenous event of 9/11 impacted the practices of Christianity in the United States. Or, we could begin to ask how different types of intervention tactics (ground invasions, peace-keeping operations, drone strikes) change group practices on the ground.\(^3\)

Finally, the qualitative studies in Israel and Sierra Leone present one of the first instances of practice-tracing as a method of social inquiry. This project puts into motion Vincent Pouliot’s recently articulated and comprehensive approach to practice-tracing.\(^4\) While perhaps too positivist in orientation for interpretive theorists and too interpretive

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3 For instance, has US targeting of funeral marches of Jihadis altered the way that the groups engage in such rites of passage?

for positivists, the project models a reasonable approach to scientifically examining social practices operating as real forces in the world.

Policy Contributions

There are several policy suggestions that stem from the findings. While perhaps not exhaustive, these policy routes offer new and exciting avenues for combating and preventing violent religious extremism and dampening sectarianism.

First, aid and development policy must prioritize and improve efforts to enlist cross-sections of religious society. Remarkably, in U.S. Foreign policy, such efforts would represent a departure from current practice. In a series of interviews at the U.S. State Department and USAID, I found no defined strategy for engaging religious groups in Track-2 diplomatic efforts or developmental schemes. The US government should develop a strategy around the ethic of inclusion, perhaps making co-investment a requirement for projects in areas with groups that practice religious exclusion. Requiring that even “exclusivist” practicing groups have a stake in local development brings their voices into the process and could broaden their horizons with political goals. Policy must focus on funding programs with inter-religious cooperation requirements, mandating that exclusivist leaders work together as a condition of aid.

Second, the US foreign policy establishment should take counter-sectarianization seriously. The Office of Faith Based Initiatives and the Ambassador At-Large for Religious Freedom should have their mandates broadened around a strategy of inclusion and dialogue. Instead of merely monitoring levels of persecution, the Ambassador's office
might seek to work with interfaith movements to build a network of religious “first-responders” who could work with local congregations in building peace-bridges. This policy implication adds weight to the growing literature that suggests US foreign policy should move “beyond religious freedom” to engage in more productive enterprises.\(^5\)

Third, this project offers tools that policy-makers could use to map and track religious activity in particularly problematic “hot-spot” areas. The ERP-Index could be broadened an applied to all sub-national areas, not simply sub-national armed conflict. Such a large-scale mapping of religious practice would show areas where practice would produce elevated violence should conflict breakout. Mapping could thus be a predictive tool for the intelligence community by indicating zones of culture where, say resource scarcity or refugee spillover, would be amplified by particularly exclusivist social practices. Though only one factor in predicting conflict patterns, such a culture-centered matrix has yet to be devised and ERP-Index could prove a valuable step in that direction. For instance, the intersection of exclusivist social practice and resource scarcity could prove a significant indicator for elevated and prolonged violence in the coming years.

Fourth, the data suggests that the burden of governance prevents groups with “extreme” beliefs from engaging in elevated violence. The Ultra-Orthodox, Religious Zionists, and Inter-Religious Council Sierra Leone show that groups with connections to political projects are more inclined towards horse-trades and pragmatism, rather than ideological purity and isolation. There is some evidence here that governance

responsibility disrupts those binding and limiting mechanisms of indivisibility. The longer-term strategy for a threat like ISIS is in reducing the isolation and exclusivity of practice within the Sunni communities from which new recruits come. We can aid ISIS's failure to transfer to the new generation by incenting local participation in government, offering monetary engagement, and a certain degree of autonomy. As we have recently learned, the flushing of Baath leadership (de-Baathification) that occurred in the post-Saddam era provided a cadre of leaders for ISIS. Such isolation and sanctions do little to prevent radicalization and instead promote it. This casts doubt upon libertarian foreign policy tactics, such as U.S. Senator Rand Paul's plan to cut foreign aid to “the haters.” In fact, such aid may be the only thing maintaining a moderate core in countries like Pakistan, Jordan, and Egypt.

Fifth, there are also policy implications for religious groups themselves. The long-term solution to ISIS, this work suggests, is not just a jobs package (as the Obama Administration has said) or extermination (as Republicans have suggested), but must come from Islamic leaders confronting their religion's exclusivist demons. Honest conversations need to originate from religious communities about how to engage and


8 However, this thesis would indeed suggest that a “Jobs Plan” would make strides at combating ISIS. As group membership maintains economic and political connections, it prevents the drawl of extreme exclusivism that ISIS thrives upon. The data in this thesis concurs with the Administration's assessment that economic activity can directly combat growth of extremism. More directly, this dissertation provides a theoretical justification for how a “jobs plan” creates dispositional alternatives and thus counters mechanisms of indivisibilities.
reign in those groups practicing isolating and exclusivist versions of the faith. Rather than settling in liberal denominational ghettos, this work suggests that a new effort must be made to reach out to exclusivist oriented churches. Liberal Muslim, Jewish Reform, or Mainline Christian denominations should focus on *intrafaith* dialogues with their evangelical, orthodox, and Salafi brothers and sisters, as opposed to just interfaith dialogues. Too often the perceived “intolerance” of the “tolerant” communities stands as a barrier to dialogue which can erode isolating practices. Community organizations interested in peacebuilding should focus on fostering such dialogues. For example, the Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Corps, lead by the ever-capable Eboo Patel, provides a good example of fostering community service projects that simply put people of difference next to one another to build a house or plant a garden. The very engagement builds cross-sectional identities between participants that can serve to broaden worldviews and expand the frames used by actors when they find themselves in conflict. This sort of *interfaith* community-service based project could provide a model for *intrafaith* dialogue. Faith leaders should embark on a new agenda of reaching out to make community with even those they so greatly disagree with. Such an agenda should be geared towards finding language to identify and combat exclusivist practices within religious communities and offer instead an open and generous orthopraxy that nevertheless affirms a groups doctrine and belief structure.

Finally, the findings here suggest that policymakers shouldn't be too worried about extremist rhetoric as an endemic threat to public safety. Politically targeting Salafi mosques or Southern Baptist churches for preaching questionably violent doctrine could
actually further isolate said communities, leading to deep exclusivism and fear of engaging the outside world. The data suggest that extremist ideology and belief is insufficient to explain increases in violent outcomes. Rather, red flags should arise as extremist groups begin to isolate themselves from social, political, religious, and economic networks. The isolation effect – as illustrated by the Outpost Settlements in the West Bank and new evangelical groups in Salone – demonstrates that groups are most dangerous when they begin to take measures to exclude “others” from their everyday life and ritual practice. Security professionals should thus focus on groups who exhibit behaviors of exclusivity alongside their extremist rhetoric and relative isolation.

Future Research Program

Of course, nothing here indicates that religion is the only causal or contributing factor to dynamics of intensity, intransigence, or resolve. Yet, the conditions of exclusivist practice are clearly contributing to the rise of causal mechanisms within communities that lead to increases in these dynamics. This leads to a research agenda that places religious practice at the front and center of the security puzzle. As others have argued, “nations that find a way to protect a principled, robust religious pluralism in civil society are the most likely to enjoy genuinely sustainable security. There is, put simply, a positive nexus between religion and security, and the international community ignores it at its considerable peril.”¹⁹ Based on the findings here, I believe there are six paths of new

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research are wide open for investigation at the intersection of security and religion. Many of these suggestions build on the original research design of this project, seeking to better clarify under what conditions religious practice impacts dynamics of conflict.

First, bivariate indicators used in this project merely scratch the surface of measuring intensity and may on occasion be subject to error. Future research should more thoroughly investigate the connection between intensity and religious practice. For example, measuring intensity of a dyad based on body count may over or under report the group’s actual contributions to violence. An easy future fix would conceptualize intensity not as death rate, but as participation, offering an ordinal scale for group members actually fighting in a conflict. One could then compare participation of groups with varied practices to get a better sense of the organizational dynamics of the group.

Second, including nonviolent civil resistance campaigns in the universe of cases could provide new insights into how movement membership push for particular resistance strategies in conflict environments. Based on the findings here, one might expect inclusive religious groups to push for nonviolent strategies and participate more in civil resistance. Such research would broaden our understanding of the role religious groups play in empowering or constraining nonviolent movements.

Third, new research should broaden the types of violence dynamics examined. For instance, campaigns that “end” by joining an alliance in the data are overwhelmingly religious, but those alliances have varying degrees of strength (i.e. ally vs. bandwagoner vs. “fan”). Future work could thus examine how the religious practices of group members impacts the nature of an alliance. The thirty plus local organizations that have pledged
allegiance to ISIS for instance could prove an interesting study: these groups gain very little material support from the act of allegiance, but may be consolidating legitimacy and binding their group together in order to strengthen organizational dynamics. We might then hypothesize that organizations that pledge allegiance to ISIS are less likely to experience organizations splits than those who do not, based on the mechanisms of indivisibility argued here.

Fourth, future research could use the ERP-Index to more fully examine how micro-level religious data interacts with resource distribution and macroeconomic trends. While poverty and relative deprivation indeed predict violence outcomes, a model based on the ERP-Index would provide the ability to evaluate how religious culture manages, accepts, morphs, or rebels within poverty conditions. The interplay between material conditions and social practice is a rich area the needs more robust research. And, while conflict studies has begun to creatively examine this intersection between ethnic identity and material inequalities, the tools have not developed to do the same with religion. Disaggregation of groups based on religious practice could prove an important tool in developing this new area of research.

Fifth, both the quantitative and qualitative studies could be modified to include non-state dyads. The state is regularly a tertiary member of religio-social conflict, and it may prove more useful to conceptualize subnational groups as competing against one

another, rather assuming the state as a principle actor. Such a conceptual move may reveal how intergroup conflict is impacted by types of practice.

Finally, this project’s entire theoretical base can be broadened to disaggregate other sorts of identity cleavages. Nationalist and ethnopolitical divisions for instance include many ritual practices that might better define group members rather than big-tent ideology labels. A robust research project, for example, could investigate the connection between practices of ethnicity and strategic choice in secessionist campaigns. Based on the research here, we might hypothesize that different types of practiced ethnicity have divergent conflict outcomes, but over-aggregation of identity cleavages has prevented rigorous testing of this claim. A longer-term agenda might attempt to empirically map how multiple practices of identity – religious, ethnic, class, gender practices – relate to conflict environments. These “practice maps” can provide observers with more accurate forecasting models for subnational areas and groups likely to escalate violence after a conflict sets on.

**Conclusion**

Under what conditions do religious groups contribute to elevated dynamics of violence? The Practice Theory of Indivisibility suggests that groups that engage in everyday rituals of exclusivity are more likely to elevate dynamics of intensity, intransigence, and resolve. Exclusive practices form social dispositions of indivisibility, observed in the mechanisms of identity binding, decision limiting, and time-frame
elongation. These internal links show the causal relationship between exclusivist practices and violence outcomes.

This thesis challenges common perceptions that elites use religion for political or economic gain or that certain group beliefs are intrinsically violent. It implies that rather than avoiding religious-based actors in violent environments, the global community should employ strategies that promote inclusivity and that burden religious groups with governance responsibilities that incentivize moderate behaviors.

Though combating violent extremism and sectarianization dynamics remains a significant challenge in the globalized era, this thesis presents academic and policy agendas that will enable the global security architecture to better understand and respond to elevated religious conflict dynamics.

Perhaps these scholarly and policy agendas can even contribute to religiously inspired peace in our world, inching closer to the prophetic words of Isaiah, “and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning-hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war no more.”

11 Isaiah 2:4. English Standard Version
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Appendix

IRCSL Establishing Document. April 1, 1997

Statement of Shared Moral Concerns
Concerned for the physical and social reconstruction of Sierra Leone and for reconciliation among all peoples in our nation, the undersigned responsible representatives of the Christian Churches and the leaders of the Islamic Community have decided to issue the following common statement:

1. The people of Sierra Leone have undergone enormous suffering. But, thanks be to God, the peace accords have been signed. Our task now is to establish a durable peace based on truth, justice and common living, and to collaborate with all people of good will in the healing tasks of reconciliation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation for Sierra Leone.

2. We, the responsible representatives of the Christian Churches and the Islamic Community in Sierra Leone recognize that our Religious Communities differ from each other, and that each of them feels called to live true to its own faith. At the same time, we recognize that our religious and spiritual traditions hold many values in common, and that these shared values can provide an authentic basis for mutual esteem, cooperation, and free common living in Sierra Leone.

3. Each of our Religious Communities recognizes that human dignity and human value is a gift of God. Our religions, each in its own way, call us to recognize the fundamental human rights of each person. Violence against persons or the violation of their basic rights are for us not only against man-made laws but also break God’s law.

4. We jointly in mutual respectful recognition of our religious differences, condemn all violence against innocent persons and any form of abuse or violation of fundamental human rights.

   Specifically, we condemn:
   (a) Acts of hatred based on political, ethnic or religious differences.
   We express our special concern at the burning of houses and property, and the destruction of religious buildings;
   (b) The obstruction of the free right return;
   (c) Any acts of revenge;
   (d) The abuse of any media by any agency or entity with the aim of spreading hatred.

5. Further, we call for respect for the fundamental human rights of all
persons, regardless of political, religious or ethnic affiliation, which must include:

(a) The freedom of all responsible representatives or leaders of Religious Communities in Sierra Leone to fulfill their mission in every part of the country;
(b) Opportunities for the free performance of religious services and all forms of pastoral care by all Christian ministers and priests, and by all Sheikhs and Imams of the Islamic community;
(c) The right of every child to religious instruction in his or her own faith.

6. Finally, we call on people of good will to take responsibility for their own acts. Let us treat others as we would wish them to treat us.

7. With this statement we appeal to all believers of our Religious Communities, and to all citizens of Sierra Leone, and to H.E. Alhaji Dr. A.T. Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Signed on 1 April 1997 by:
Al-Sheikh Ahmad Tejan Sillah, Islamic Community in Sierra Leone
Rev. Moses Benson Khanu, Council of Churches in Sierra Leone
Archbishop Joseph Ganda, Roman Catholic Community in Sierra Leone

Statement of Shared Values and Common Purpose
WHEREAS, we believe in God, and in the revealed law of God, and
WHEREAS, we believe in the natural law and the just law of man, and
WHEREAS, we believe in the equality of all people before God and the Law, and
WHEREAS, we recognize our common human destiny, and
WHEREAS, we recognize our common history with religious and cultural diversity, and
WHEREAS, we recognize our common benefit in unity with diversity, and
WHEREAS, we commit ourselves to truth, justice and common living, and
WHEREAS, we commit ourselves to the respect and protection of human rights, and
WHEREAS, we commit ourselves to peace in Sierra Leone and the world, and
WHEREAS, we trust the just Law of the land of Sierra Leone, and
WHEREAS, we feel responsible for the future of our nation, and the religious communities of Sierra Leone and beyond.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,
that the Legitimate heads of the following religious communities of Sierra Leone:
The Islamic Community in Sierra Leone
The Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, and
The Roma Catholic Community in Sierra Leone
have written their good will in the form of the Declaration for the establishment of an Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone.

Signed on 1 April 1997 by:
Al-Sheikh Ahmad Tejan Sillah, Islamic Community in Sierra Leone
Rev. Moses Benson Khanu, Council of Churches in Sierra Leone
Archbishop Joseph Ganda, Roman Catholic Community in
Sierra Leone. (Khanu 2001: 72-73)

Following Document Provided by Archbishop of Freetown, Timba Charles, April 2014
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN SIERRA LEONE

A PROVISIONAL DRAFT

A. PREMISE

1. Religious Pluralism in Sierra Leone: Sierra Leone is a religiously pluralistic country. There are, first of all, the two major missionary religions, Christianity and Islam. Then there is African Traditional Religion(s) which constitute(s) the religious stratum of the cultures in Sierra Leone. Added to these are the religions of Asian origin, whose followers are in a minority, consisting mainly of Indian and some Sierra Leonean converts. These are Hinduism, Buddhism, and Hare Krishna. Finally, there is a growing number of Rastafarians, mainly among young people, with their own religious rituals (e.g. funeral rites).

2. Internal Diversity: The two major religions, Christianity and Islam, might appear to an outsider to be single, unified blocks. However, a much closer observation soon indicates that there is an amazing diversity in those religions, in terms of origin, interpretation of their sacred books and foundational traditions, doctrinal emphasis, method of worship, cultural influences of external donors, and so on. Sometimes not only do some of the groups or currents in a particular major religion not agree with each on some doctrinal or moral matter, but even nurture animosities against each other.

3. Religious Tolerance: Nevertheless, the diverse religions and religious traditions have enjoyed peaceful and harmonious co-existence for very long time, on account of which Sierra Leone was, a few years ago, rated number one in the world in terms of religious tolerance. There are, for instance, intermarriages of Christians and Muslims, exchange of visits by Muslims to their respective places of worship on major religious feast-days and important occasions, opening prayers said by Christians and Muslims at meetings, Christians and Muslims attending the same schools, and so on.

4. Early Warning Signs of Religious Intolerance or Animosity: In spite of the aforementioned witness to religious tolerance in Sierra Leone, there have been some violent inter-religious conflicts recently (e.g. Mambolo church burning, Ujukwu Town church destruction, Fourah Bay Road area land dispute) that are of concern to many peace-loving Sierra Leoneans. Added to
these is the new phenomenon of hate speech, provocative statement, and half truths about other religions pronounced on some FM stations owned or at least used by some religious groups, the indiscriminate display of religious posters on the places of worship of other religions, the very high volume of PA systems used by some religious groups without due regard for people of other religions in the residential area.

B. TOWARDS A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN SIERRA LEONE

In light of the early warning signs of religious intolerance or animosity mentioned in No. 4 above, and as the major religions marshal their resources (material and personnel) to win as many Sierra Leoneans as possible to their side, the following are to be considered in view of a code of conduct for religions and religious practices in Sierra Leone:

1. Registration of Religious Bodies: That all religions bodies, their branches and their major leaders operating within the territory of Sierra Leone be registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare and with the Secretariat of Inter-Religious Council-Sierra Leone.

2. Construction of Places of Worship: That in the construction of new places of worship, due consideration be given to already established places of worship, ensuring that there is reasonable distance between them. In areas where places of worship exist side by side, the leaders of such places should be sensitive to the presence of the worships of religions in the area. Particular attentions should be given to the most sacred moments and days in the calendar of each religion; for instance, the month of fasting (Ramadan) for Muslims and the Lenten Season for Christians.

3. Proper Use of the Public Address Systems at Religious Services: That the public address systems be used in such a way that they do not interfere with the worship or even the sleep of other peace-loving Sierra Leoneans and non-Sierra Leoneans in the area.

4. Hate Speech, Provocative Statements and Half Truths about Other Religions: That in the use of the media, whether print or electronics, hate speeches, provocative statements and half truths about other religions and their practices be avoided completely.
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4. Hate Speech, Provocative Statements and Half Truths about Other Religions: That in the use of the media, whether print or electronics, hate speeches, provocative statements and half truths about other religions and their practices be avoided completely.
5. Proper Orientation of Incoming Religious Preachers: That religious preachers arriving for the first time in Sierra Leone be given thorough orientation about the religious pluralism, the religious tolerance and cultural sensibilities of the people of this country. (There have been incidents in some countries wherein the sermons of some visiting preachers caused religious violence, and they were spirited out of the countries, leaving behind them religious violence).

6. Religious Posters: In addition to being sensitive to the believers of other religions, all religions have a moral responsibility to protect the environment, and therefore to keep the cities and towns clean. Therefore all religious bodies are to put their posters, hand bills and banners only in those areas designated by the competent civil authorities. They are not to put them indiscriminately on the walls of private property, the places of worship of other religions, on electric poles, and facilities intended to make the cities and towns look beautiful.

7. Moments of Conflict and Misunderstanding: Even with the best of intentions, conflicts and misunderstandings are likely to develop between members of different religions. In such situations, the aggrieved group or persons, rather than taking the law into their own hands, should report the matter to the civil authorities and to the Inter-Religious Council-Sierra Leone. Every effort should be made to avoid violence of any kind, especially the burning or destruction of places of worship.

8. Association with Religious International Organizations: Christianity and Islam are global religions, as a result of which Christians and Muslims in Sierra Leone are members of international organizations of their respective religions. While this is acceptable, such memberships must be exercised in such a way that they do not undermine the peace and stability of Sierra Leone or interfere with the peaceful co-existence among the religions operating within its territory.

C. ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE REGULATION OF MASQUERADES:

Too many occasions are accorded to masquerades; the frequency of their masquerading disturbs public peace and order in many ways. They should therefore be regulated on their performances, especially on holy days. Theirs should be limited to civic holidays.
- It was suggested that this committee should recommend that a special section be set up to take charge of religious affairs in collaboration with IRCSL to monitor religious activities.
- It was suggested that entertainment centers near places of worship be made to make proper use of their loud speakers/PA Systems.
- Sanctions/enforcement of the Code of Conduct- It will be a fruitless endeavor if laws are not put in place to bring to book offenders/flouters of the code.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that matters of religious conflict are handled by IRCSL both at regional and national levels.
- Government to give subventions to religious institutions/organizations