

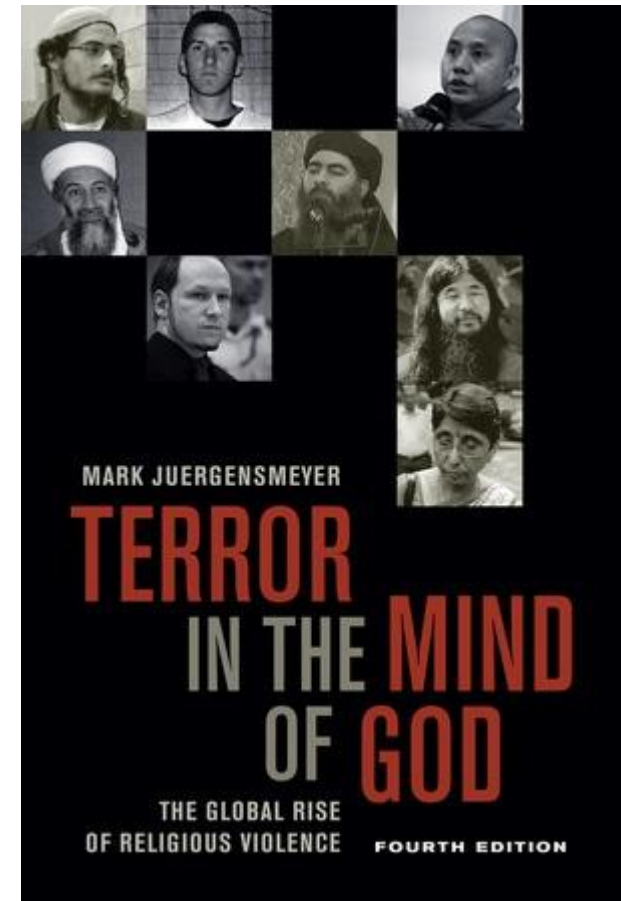
World Religions & Global Issues

Week 2 Lecture | RELS 332

Professor Chris Crews

Week 2 Readings

- *Introduction: Terror and God* - Mark Juergensmeyer
- *Soldiers for Christ* - Mark Juergensmeyer
- *Zion Betrayed* - Mark Juergensmeyer
- *The Spear of Shiva* - Mark Juergensmeyer



The Big Picture

In our readings this week we turn to a broad discussion of the links between religion and violence, followed by three case studies of religious violence among Christians, Jews, and Hindus. As our author this week argues, in order to understand these militant religious activists **we must look into the cultural background that gave rise to these individuals** as well as the larger community out of which they emerged and which continues to provide them ideological support.

One of the hallmarks of these religious militants is an absolute belief that what they are doing is not only right, **but divinely sanctioned**, even in cases that involve killing someone. Another is that **they believe their religious communities are under attack, and see their actions as defensive.**

We need to keep in mind that while most militant religious activists claim to be speaking for an entire religious community, in many cases their views are either rejected or at most indirectly supported by the larger religious community they claim to represent. **When religious extremists cross the line into acts of terror, they move from being militant religious activists to terrorists motivated by religion**, an important distinction we need to always keep in mind.



Terror and God

Juergensmeyer

Juergensmeyer – Terror & God

Juergensmeyer begins our discussion on religious violence with the terror attacks in Paris, France on November 13, 2015. As he points out, part of what makes this, and other terror attacks like it in the years before and since so instructive, is that “the wounded could have included anyone who has ever been to a sports arena, a music hall, or a café—which is to say virtually anyone in the developed world. In this sense, **the blast was an attack not only on Paris but also on normal life as most people know it.**” And as he further suggests, “Increasingly, global society must confront religious violence on a routine basis.”



Juergensmeyer – Terror & God

As Juergensmeyer notes, religious violence is not limited to any religion or part of the world, as examples from the United States, Britain, India, Japan, Uganda, Nigeria, Egypt, and Myanmar attest. More importantly, Juergensmeyer reminds us such examples **share two important characteristics**:

- They have been violent—even vicious—in a manner calculated to be terrifying.
- They have been linked in some way to religion.

These two aspects are central to understanding the role of fear and terror in such acts, whether they have a religious basis or not. As he notes, “**terrorism is meant to terrify**. The word comes from the **Latin *terrere*, “to cause to tremble,”** and came into common usage in the political sense, as an assault on civil order, during the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution at the close of the 18th century.”

Part of what makes religious terrorism so powerful, Juergensmeyer argues, is that such acts run counter to the commonly held belief that religions “should provide tranquility and peace, not terror.” As he further reminds us, “in many of these cases religion has supplied **not only the ideology** but also the **social identity and the organizational structure** for the perpetrators.”

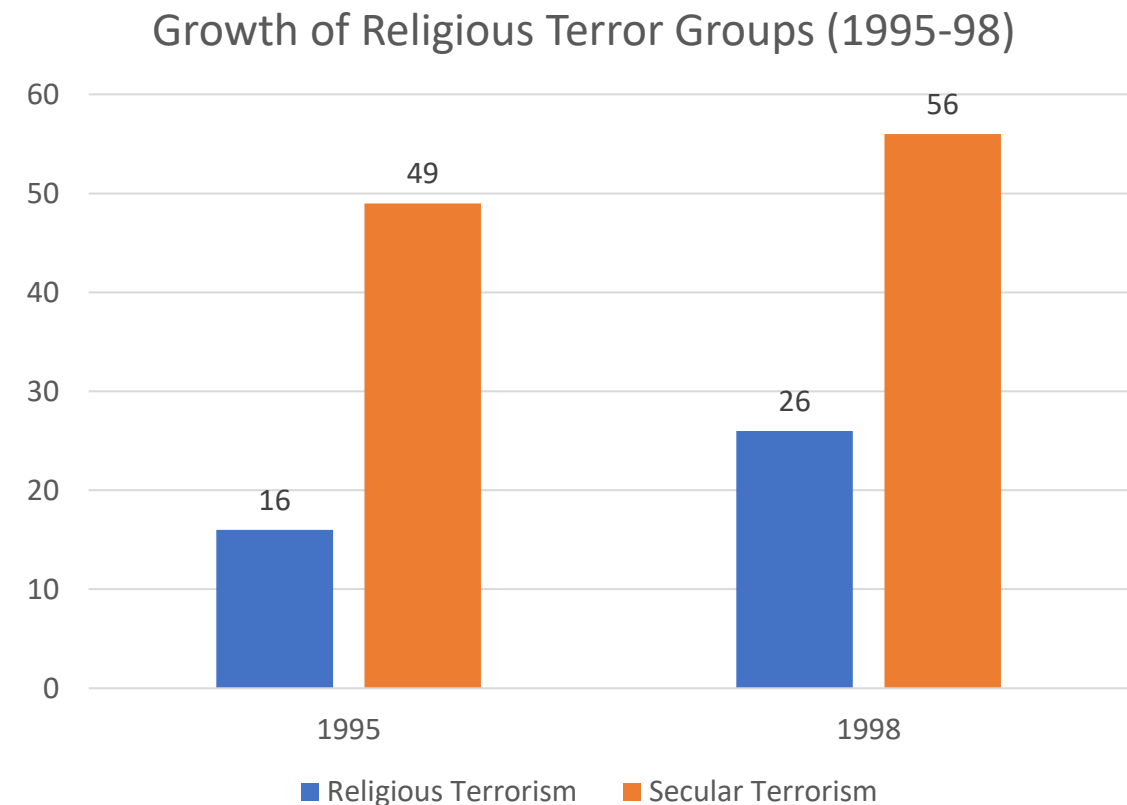
Juergensmeyer – Terror & God

While Juergensmeyer reminds us that many actors are capable of acts of terror, from governments and political parties to ethnic insurgencies and nationalist movements, and many of these would be described as secular rather than religious. Such violence often emerges from disenfranchised groups who are seeking to gain more power of influence in their given socio-political context. But as he also suggests, “more often it has been religion—often in combination with social, political, and other factors—that has been tied to terrorist acts.”

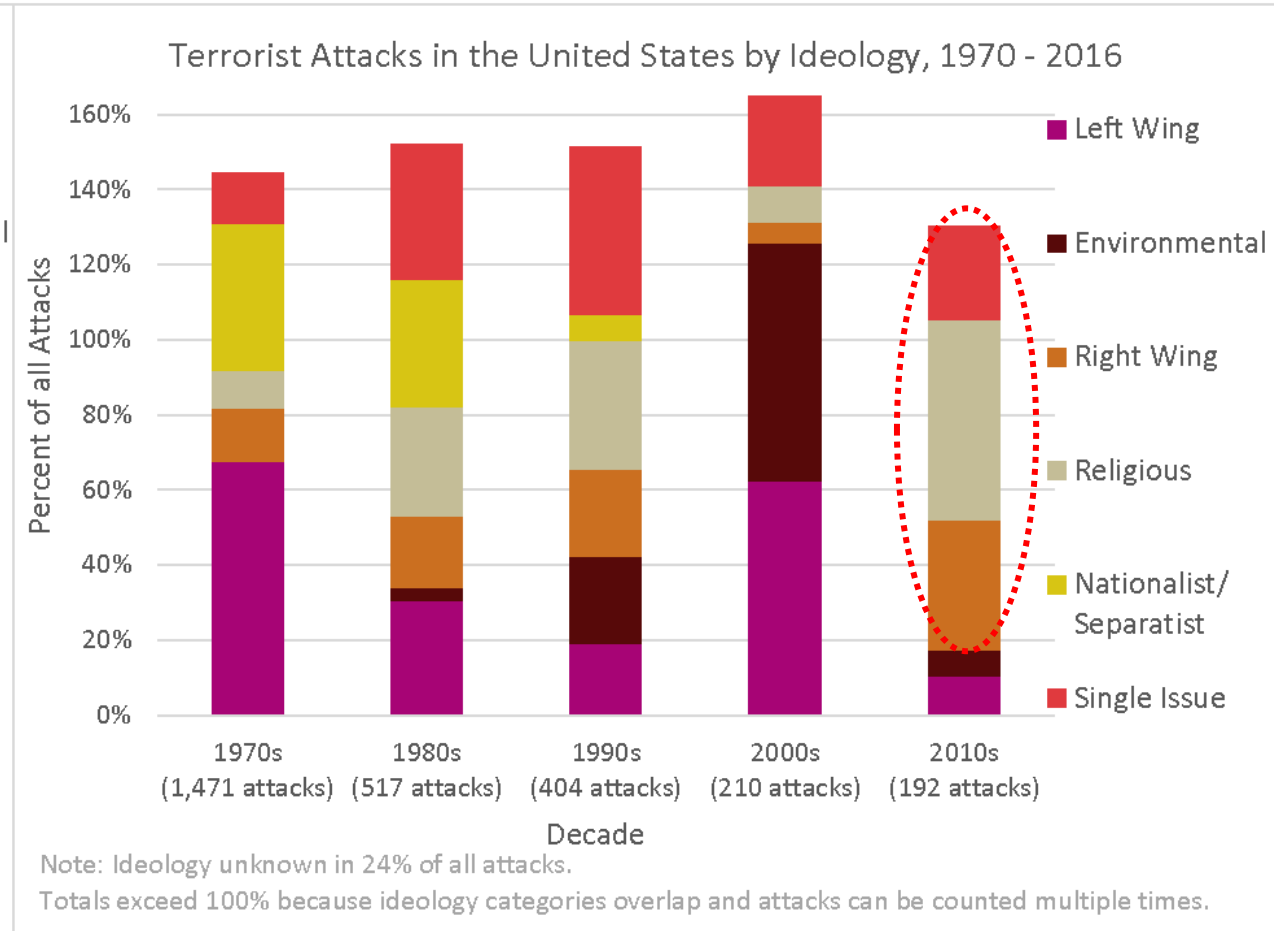
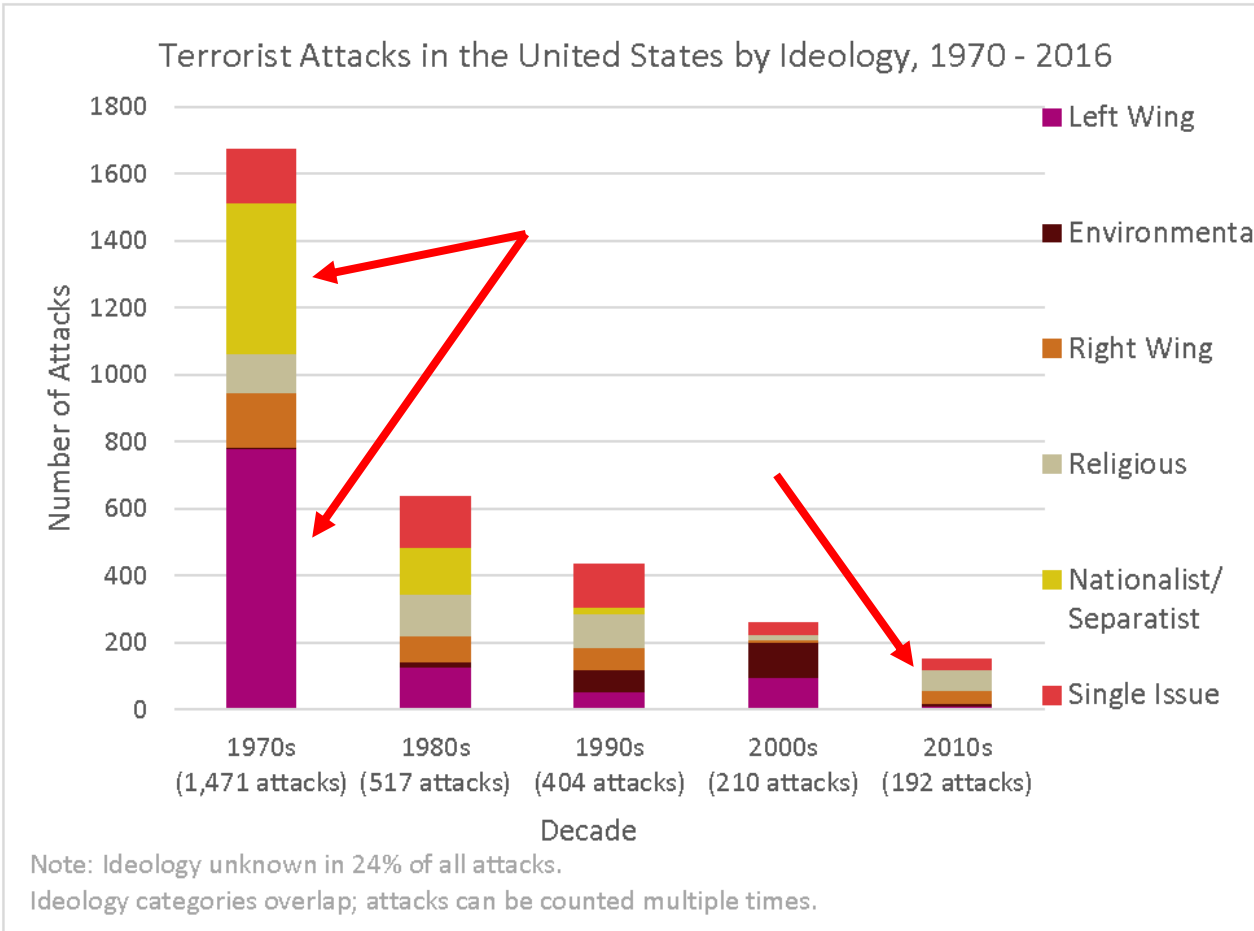
Juergensmeyer points out that “In 1980 the U.S. State Department roster of international terrorist groups listed scarcely a single religious organization. Almost twenty years later, at the end of the twentieth century, **over half were in some way related to religion.** They were Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist. If one added to this list other violent religious groups around the world, including the many Christian militia and other paramilitary organizations found domestically in the United States, the number of religious terrorist groups would be considerable. According to the RAND–St. Andrews Chronology of International Terrorism, **the proportion of religious groups in the late 1990s increased from sixteen of forty-nine terrorist groups to twenty-six of the fifty-six groups** listed the following year.”

Juergensmeyer – Terror & God

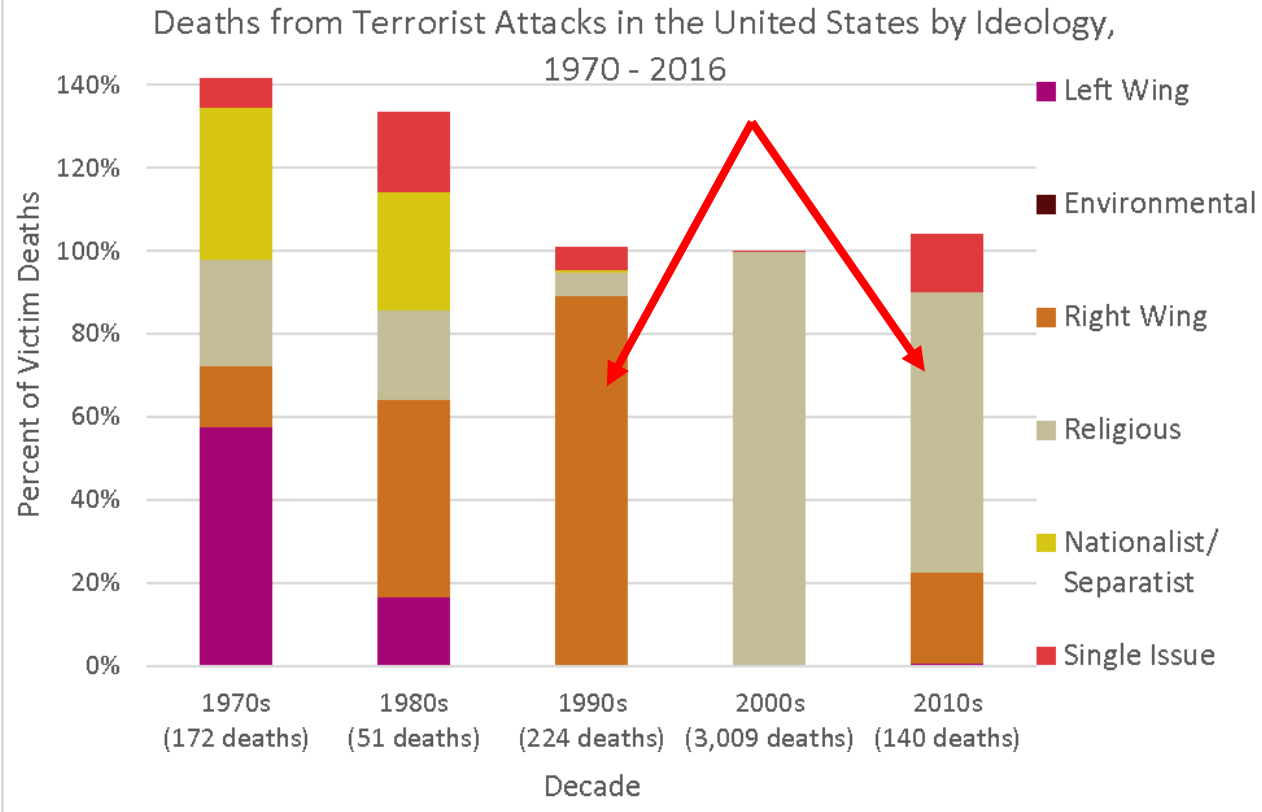
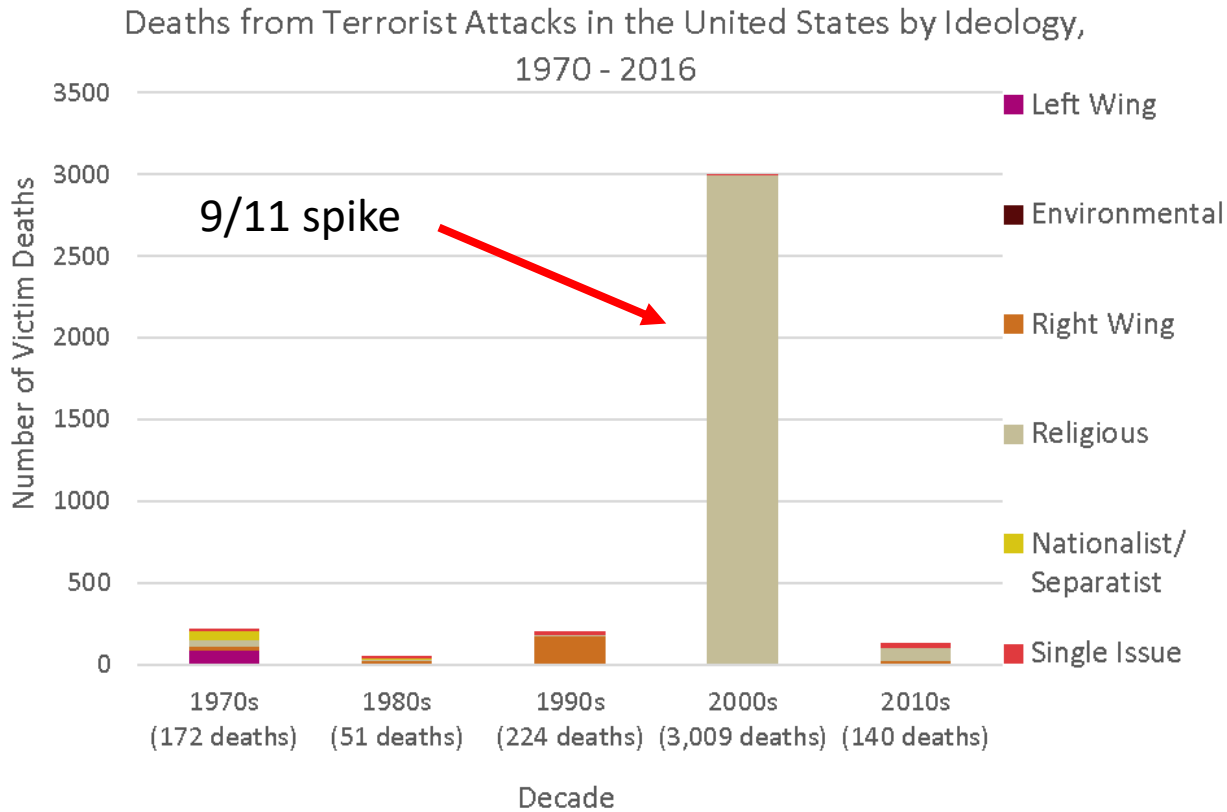
As another RAND study from 1999 noted, “...terrorism motivated in whole or in part by religious imperatives has often led to more intense acts (or attempts) of violence that have produced considerably higher levels of fatalities...**religious terrorism tends to be more lethal than secular terrorism because of the radically different value systems, mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and Manichean world views** that directly affect the “holy terrorists’” motivation. For the religious terrorist, **violence is a sacramental act or divine duty**, executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative and justified by scripture. **Religion therefore functions as a legitimizing force**, specifically sanctioning wide-scale violence against an almost open-ended category of opponents (i.e., all peoples who are not members of the religious terrorists’ religion or cult).”



Ideological Motivations of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2016



Ideological Motivations of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2016



As the 2017 START report notes, compared to the 2000s “there was a sharp increase in the proportion of attacks carried out by right-wing extremists (from 6% to 35%) and religious extremists (from 9% to 53%) in the United States.”

Juergensmeyer – Terror & God

The approach that Juergensmeyer uses to understanding religious terrorism and violence draws on cultural factors to try and better understand what gives rise to religious violence. But he also offers a word of caution when using the language of terrorism, which he argues **can often mask more than it reveals, both by focusing solely on individual actors** to the exclusion of the larger social networks that enable terrorism, and by **giving a false impression we can identify terrorists in advance**.

“This logic concludes that terrorism exists because terrorists exist, and if we just got rid of them, the world would be a more pleasant place. Although such a solution is enticing, the fact is that the line is very thin between “terrorist” and their “nonterrorist” supporters ... The old saying “One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom-fighter” has some truth to it. **The designation of terrorism is a subjective judgment about the legitimacy of certain violent acts** as much as it is a descriptive statement about them.”

As Juergensmeyer notes based on his interactions with research subjects, most individuals involved in religious violence identified themselves as **militant religious activists** and not as terrorists, with many **claiming their acts were defensive actions** undertaken within the context of a pre-existing conflict. In order to understand such views, we need to **look at the context (e.g., historical situation, social location, and worldviews)** of religious activists and the groups that support these religious ideologies.

Juergensmeyer – Terror & God

As Juergensmeyer notes, in most cases of religious terrorism, from the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the attack on the Oklahoma City federal building and 9/11, “activists thought that their acts were supported not only by other people **but by a widely shared perception that the world was already violent**: it was enmeshed in great struggles that gave their own violent actions moral meaning. This is a significant feature of these cultures: **the perception that their communities are already under attack—are being violated—and that their acts are therefore simply responses to the violence they have experienced.**”

Juergensmeyer explains how such dynamics can produce what he calls “**cultures of terrorism**,” by which he means both the ideas and the social groupings that give rise to religious violence. By using what he calls an “**epistemic worldview analysis**,” scholars can focus on how our social environments shape our worldviews and the associated cultural beliefs, actions, and systems of meaning. Taking this approach allows us to produce what he describes as a “comparative cultural study of religious terrorism.”

As he suggests, by better understanding the cultural dynamics which give rise to religious violence and terrorism we may be better equipped to respond to, and decrease, instances of religious violence.



Soldiers for Christ

Juergensmeyer

Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

In this first article on Christian religious violence, Juergensmeyer reminds us that prior to 9/11, **most acts of terrorism in the West were done by Christians**, not Muslims. As he notes, “In the years since 1990 there have been far more terrorist attacks by Christians than Muslims on European and American soil.” As he notes, this may come as a surprise to many in the west who don’t think of terrorism as linked to Christianity. In this chapter we meet three Christians terrorists, who are:

Michael Bray (US) Abortion clinic attacks (1984-85)

Timothy McVeigh (US) Oklahoma City federal building attack (1995)

Anders Breivik (Norway) Bombing and attacks on youth camp (2011)

As Juergensmeyer argues, in each case these individuals **believed their actions were justified by Christian teachings** and were seen as completely logical within their own religious worldviews. As Bray states, “I consider blowing up a place where babies are killed a justifiable act.”



Bray



McVeigh



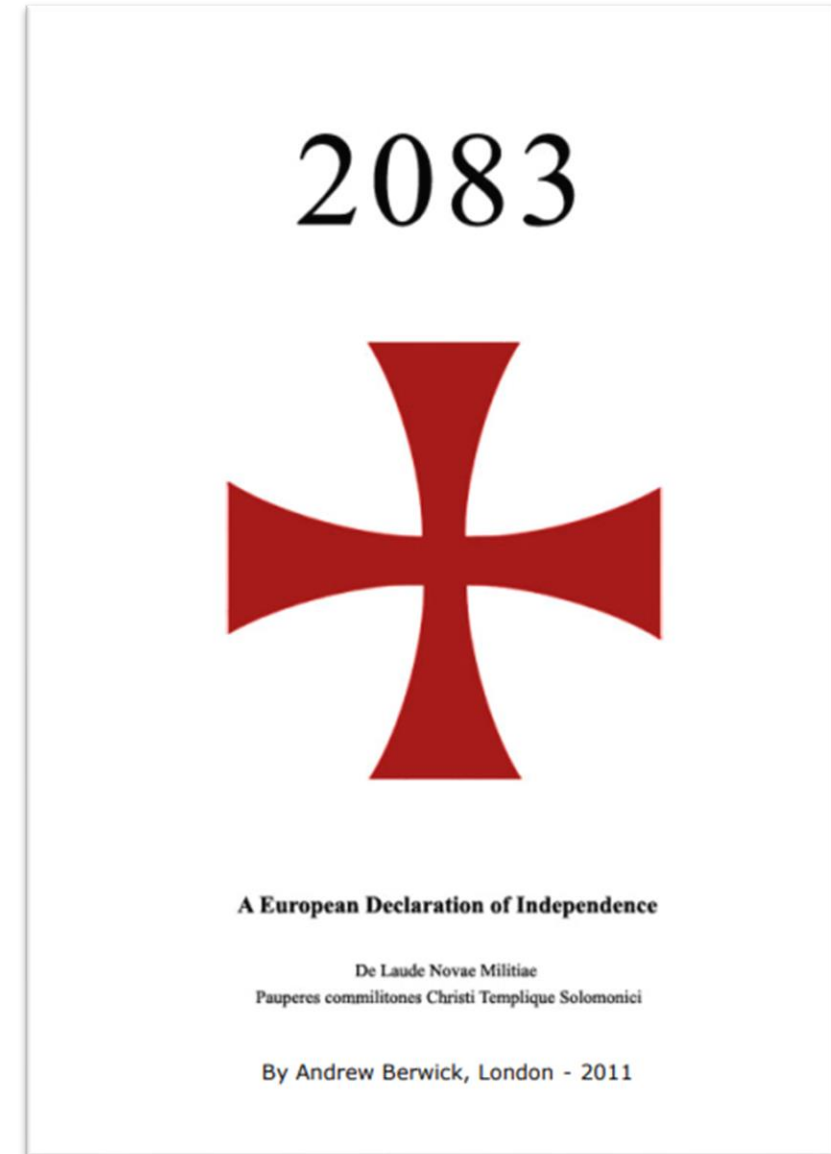
Breivik

Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

In the case of Anders Breivik, he was obsessed with the idea that Europe was being overrun by Islamic culture, liberal politics, and multiculturalism. These ideas were outlined in his manifesto, “**2083 A European Declaration of Independence**,” which focused on the following major themes:

- 1) The rise of cultural Marxism/multiculturalism in Western Europe
- 2) Islamic colonization and Islamisation of Western Europe
- 3) The current state of the Western European Resistance Movements (anti-Marxist/anti-Jihad movements)
- 4) Solutions for Western Europe to resist in the coming years

As Breivik wrote: “The compendium/book presents advanced ideological, practical, tactical, organisational and rhetorical solutions and strategies for all patriotic-minded individuals/movements. The book will be of great interest to you whether you are a moderate or a more dedicated cultural conservative/nationalist.”



Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

Anders Breivik believed his actions would help spark a new Christian crusade against Islam, a point reflected in the choice of 2083 for his manifesto—the **400th anniversary of an important defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the 1683 Battle of Vienna by armies of the Holy Roman Empire.**

As Juergensmeyer notes about Breivik, “Like many modern terrorists, **his violent act was a performance** to show the world that for the moment he was in charge. **The terrorist act was a call to arms intended for imagined circle of supporters, and a signal that a cosmic war between existential forces of good and evil had begun.** Behind the earthly conflict was the battle for Christendom...he thought he was re-creating that historical moment in which Christianity was defended against the hordes, and Islam was purged from what he imagined to be the purity of European society.”

Breivik’s call to arms did not rouse the armies of faithful Christian nationalists from across Europe that he had hoped, but with the benefit of historical hindsight we can see how **this was one in a growing string of violent white supremacist and Christian nationalist attacks** which are taking place with increasingly frequency in the US and Europe.



Similar to Breivik, Timothy McVeigh saw his actions as part of a larger cosmic war that was deeply informed by both Christian nationalist and white supremacist ideologies. And like Breivik, the date of McVeigh's attacks, **April 19, 1995**, was linked to another earlier historical event of importance, the final bloody **siege of the Branch Davidians compound in Waco, Texas in 1993** which resulted in the death of 76 people. Although Juergensmeyer does not mention it, April 19, 1985 also marked the end of another government siege of the Christian Identity group, The Covenant, The Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA).

THE TURNER DIARIES



Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

While McVeigh did not write his own manifesto like Breivik's 2083, his writings did draw heavily on *The Turner Diaries*, a fictional book written by neo-Nazi author William Pierce (under the name Andrew Macdonald) that depicts an apocalyptic battle between freedom fighters and a tyrannical US government.

“This novel explains McVeigh’s motives in a matter eerily similar to the writings of Breivik in his manifesto: McVeigh thought that liberal politicians had given in to the forces of globalization and multiculturalism, and that the “mudpeople” who were nonwhite, non-Christian, nonheterosexual, nonpatriarchal males were trying to take over the country. **To save the country for Christendom the righteous white, straight, nonfeminist Christian males had to be shocked into reality by the force of an explosion that would signal to them that the war had begun...** These ideas are also a part of a Christian subculture in Europe and the United States that imagines that Caucasians have been granted superiority by divine right. **This is an idea that is central to a specific movement, Christian Identity.**”



WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN THEY COME TO TAKE YOUR GUNS?

Earl Turner and his fellow patriots are forced underground when the U.S. government bans the private possession of firearms and stages the mass Gun Raids to round up suspected gun owners.

The hated Equality Police begin hunting them down, but the patriots fight back with a campaign of sabotage and assassination. An all-out race war occurs as the struggle escalates. Turner and his comrades suffer terribly, but their ingenuity and boldness in devising and executing new methods of guerrilla warfare lead to a victory of cataclysmic intensity and worldwide scope.

The FBI has labeled *The Turner Diaries* "the bible of the racist right." If the government had the power to ban books, this one would be at the top of the list. It is the most controversial book in America. Enjoy it now in this audio book read by the author, Dr. William Pierce, who wrote originally under the pen name Andrew Macdonald.

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THE TURNER DIARIES

AS READ BY THE AUTHOR
WILLIAM PIERCE

AUDIO BOOK • UNABRIDGED • 10 HOURS TOTAL



Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

The **Christian Identity movement** inspired Timothy McVeigh and others like Eric Robert Rudolph, who was involved in a string of abortion clinic bombings and attacks on the 1996 Atlanta Olympic. These individual, and others like Michael Bray, **saw themselves engaged in a “culture war” against modern society** and its various ills (e.g., abortion, homosexuality, multiculturalism, gun-control).

“The theology of Christian Identity is based on racial supremacy and biblical law. It has been in the background of such extremist American movements as the Posse Comitatus, the Order, the Aryan Nations [and...] is popular in many militia movements and motivated Buford Furrow in his 1999 assault on a Jewish center in Granada Hills, California.”

As Juergensmeyer notes, “Pierce and Christian Identity activists yearned for a revolution that would undo America’s separation of church and state—or rather, because they disdained the organized Church, **they wanted to merge “religion and state” in a new society governed by religious law...**They believed that the great confrontation between freedom and a government-imposed slavery was close at hand and that **their valiant, militant efforts could threaten the evil system and awaken the spirit of the freedom-loving masses.**”

Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

The Christian Identity movement has its origins in **British Israelism**, which was brought over in the early 1900s by Evangelist Gerald L.K. Smith and picked up by William Cameron, the publicist for **auto magnate Henry Ford**, whose own fascist ideas were first published in his paper *The Dearborn Independent*, and later in a 4-volume series published in 1920 called *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*.

As Juergensmeyer points out, “In recent decades the largest concentration of Christian Identity groups in the United States was in Idaho—centered on the Aryan Nations compound near Hayden Lake—and in the southern Midwest near the Oklahoma-Arkansas-Missouri borders...The American incarnation of Christian Identity incorporated many of the British movement’s paranoid views, **updated to suit the social anxieties of many contemporary Americans**. For instance, the **United Nations and the Democratic Party were alleged to be accomplices in a Jewish-Freemason conspiracy to control the world and deprive individuals of their freedom.**” QAnon echoes many of these same ideas today in its own conspiratorial views.



The article that signaled the beginning of Henry Ford's seven-year hate campaign against the Jews. (COLLECTIONS OF THE HENRY FORD MUSEUM, GREENFIELD VILLAGE)

Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

Along with the Christian Identity movement, another important Christian political group with a long history of violence is the **Christian Reconstruction movement**, a group that is especially active in attacking abortion clinics and doctors. As Juergensmeyer notes, “The activists are not just prolife, however; they support a radical agenda of refashioning America society around Calvinist notions of Christian politics, **attempts to make America a truly Christian nation.**”

Michael Bray is another example of a militant religious activists who was engaged in religiously-motivated acts of terrorism. Bray and several others were charged and found guilty of a string of abortion clinic bombings in the mid 1980s. Bray is also widely suspected to be the author of an anonymous **underground anti-abortion handbook known as the *Army of God***, which includes a mix of anti-abortion politics and extensive discussions about Christian warfare and combat tactics.

As the opening introduction states, “This is a manual for those who have come to understand that **the battle against abortion is a battle not against flesh and blood, but against the devil** and all the evil he can muster among flesh and blood to fight at his side. **It is a How-To Manual of means to disrupt and ultimately destroy Satan's power to kill our children, God's Children.**”



“If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength! Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, “But we knew nothing about this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?” -Proverbs 24:10-12



Juergensmeyer – Soldiers for Christ

As Juergensmeyer remarks about his discussion with Bray, “I found nothing sinister or intensely fanatical about him. He was a cheerful, charming, handsome man in his early forties who liked to be called Mike. Hardly the image of an ignorant, narrow-minded fundamentalist, Mike Bray enjoyed a glass of wine before dinner and talked knowledgeably about theology and politics.” Despite this outward demeanor, Bray’s politics tell a radically different story, one in which **Christian theology was used to justify and defend destroying abortion clinics and murdering doctors.**

“According to Bray, Americans live in a situation “comparable to Nazi Germany,” a state of hidden warfare, and the comforts of modern society have lulled the populace into a lack of awareness of the situation. Bray was convinced that if there were some dramatic event, such as economic collapse or social chaos, the demonic role of the government would be revealed, and people would have “the strength and the zeal to take up arms” in a revolutionary struggle. **What he envisioned as the outcome of that struggle was the establishment of a new moral order in America, one based on biblical law and a spiritual, rather than a secular, social compact.**”

When Juergensmeyer asked him how he justified abortion clinic bombings and doctor killings Bray responded that these were defensive acts, and not punitive. For Bray and others like him, **this religious defense claim is a central part of how they justify their acts of terrorism.**

Richard Dawkins & Michael Bray Interview

Boulder Street
COFFEE
ROASTERS

Boulder Street



COFFEE
ROASTERS



Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Two scholars who wrote extensively about religion and violence were German theologian and pastor **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** and Protestant theologian **Reinhold Niebuhr**. Both have been pointed to by Bray and other militant Christian religious activists as shaping their arguments about **the moral justifiability of using violence**. Bonhoeffer's Christian moral convictions led him to engage in a plot to kill Adolf Hitler, but it was revealed, and he was killed by the Nazis.

Niebuhr was well known for his reflections on Christian resistance, arguing Christians have a moral duty to fight for social justice. He "argued that **righteous force is sometimes necessary to extirpate injustice and subdue evil in a sinful world**, and that small strategic acts of violence are occasionally necessary to deter large acts of violence and injustice."

Reinhold Niebuhr



As Juergensmeyer notes, there is a rich body of literature on the question of violence and conflict in early Christian history, from the initial period when Christianity was still enmeshed in Judaism and tended towards pacifism, to the later period when the Roman state embraced Christianity as the official religion under Constantine in the 4th century CE and began to embrace early just war theories.

The **doctrine or theory of just war (*jus bellum justum*)** was first introduced by Cicero, but most famously elaborated on by **Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine)**. The doctrine of just war “justified the use of military force under certain conditions, including proportionality—the expectation that more lives would be saved by the use of force than would be lost—and legitimacy, the notion that the undertaking must be approved by an established authority.”

The idea of religiously sanctioned violence remains central to all three of the Abrahamic traditions today.



St. Augustine

As Juergensmeyer argues, “liberal Christian defenders of the just role of violence,” such as Niebuhr and Bonhoeffer, gave Bray **“the impression that Christian theology has supported his own efforts to bring about social change through violent acts.** But Bray radically differs from Niebuhr and Bonhoeffer theologically and in his interpretation of the contemporary situation—comparing America’s democratic state to Nazism and advocating a biblically based religious politics to replace the secular government.”

Bonhoeffer and Niebuhr would have rejected Bray’s political views, as most mainstream Christians do today. “Bonhoeffer and Niebuhr, like most modern theologians, accepted the principle of the separation of church and state; they felt that separation is necessary to the integrity of both institutions. **Niebuhr was especially wary of what he called “moralism”—the intrusion of religious or other ideological values into the political calculations of statecraft.**”

Michael Bray, Paul Hill, and others who embrace the Christian Identity, Christian Reconstruction movement (also called **‘theonomy’**), and Dominion Theology remind us there is an important strand of Christian politics today that is hostile to the idea of secularism and the separation of church and state.

As Juergensmeyer notes, **“They feel it necessary to “reconstruct” Christian society by turning to the Bible as the basis for a nation’s law and social order.** To propagate these views, the Reconstructionists established the Institute for Christian Economics in Tyler, Texas, and the Chalcedon Foundation in Vallecito, California. They publish a journal and a steady stream of books and booklets on the theological justification for interjecting Christian ideas into economic, legal, and political life.”

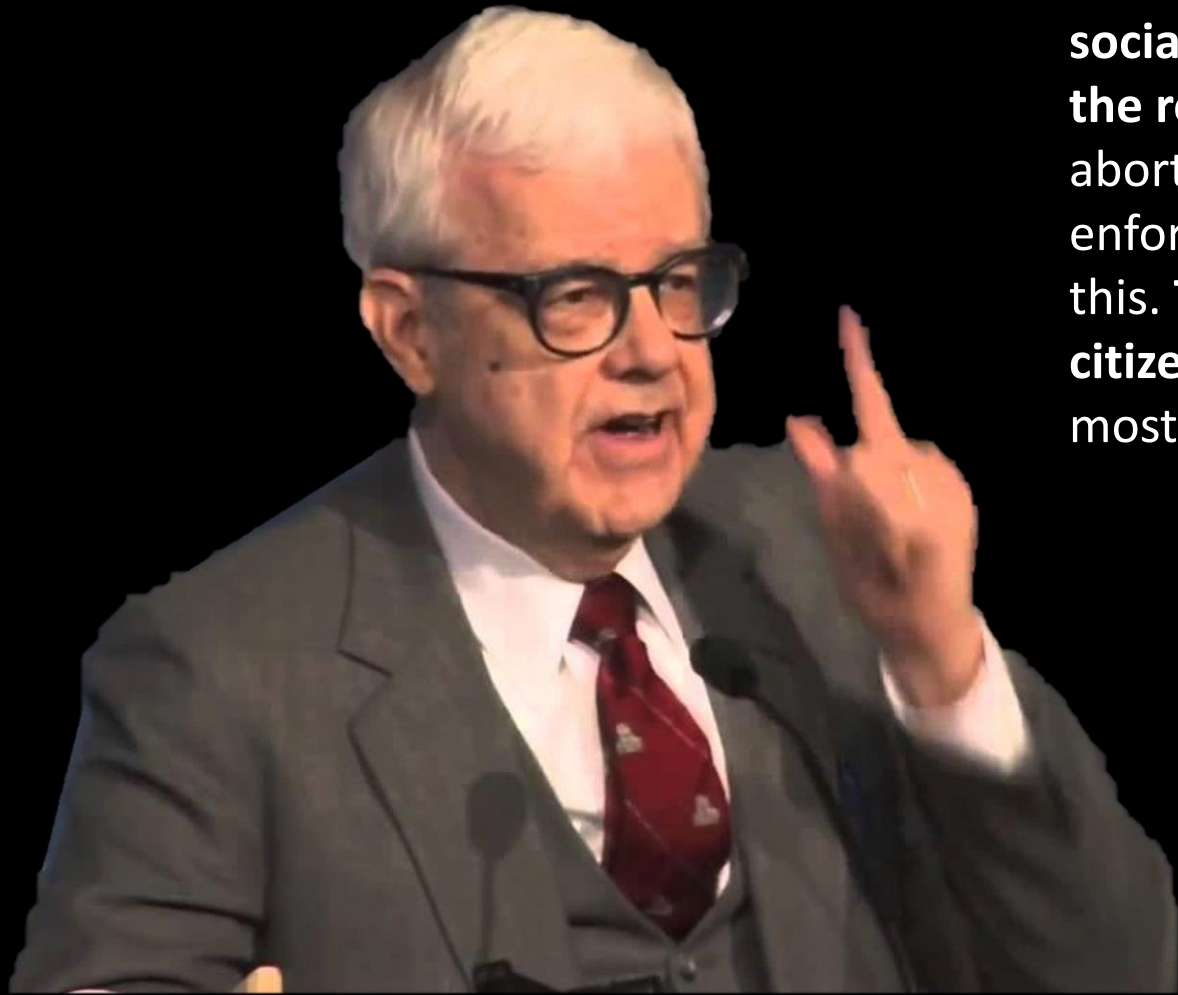
“So let us be blunt about it: we must use the doctrine of religious liberty to gain independence for Christian schools until we train up a generation of people who know that there is no religious neutrality, no neutral law, no neutral education, and no neutral civil government.

Then they will get busy in constructing a Bible-based social, political, and religious order which finally denies the religious liberty of the enemies of God. Murder, abortion, and pornography will be illegal. God’s law will be enforced. It will take time. A minority religion cannot do this. **Theocracy must flow from the hearts of a majority of citizens,** just as compulsory education came only after most people had their children in schools of some sort.”

Gary North

Christian Reconstructionist, Chalcedon Foundation
Founder of the Institute of Christian Economics

“The Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right”
Christianity and Civilization, No 1, 1982

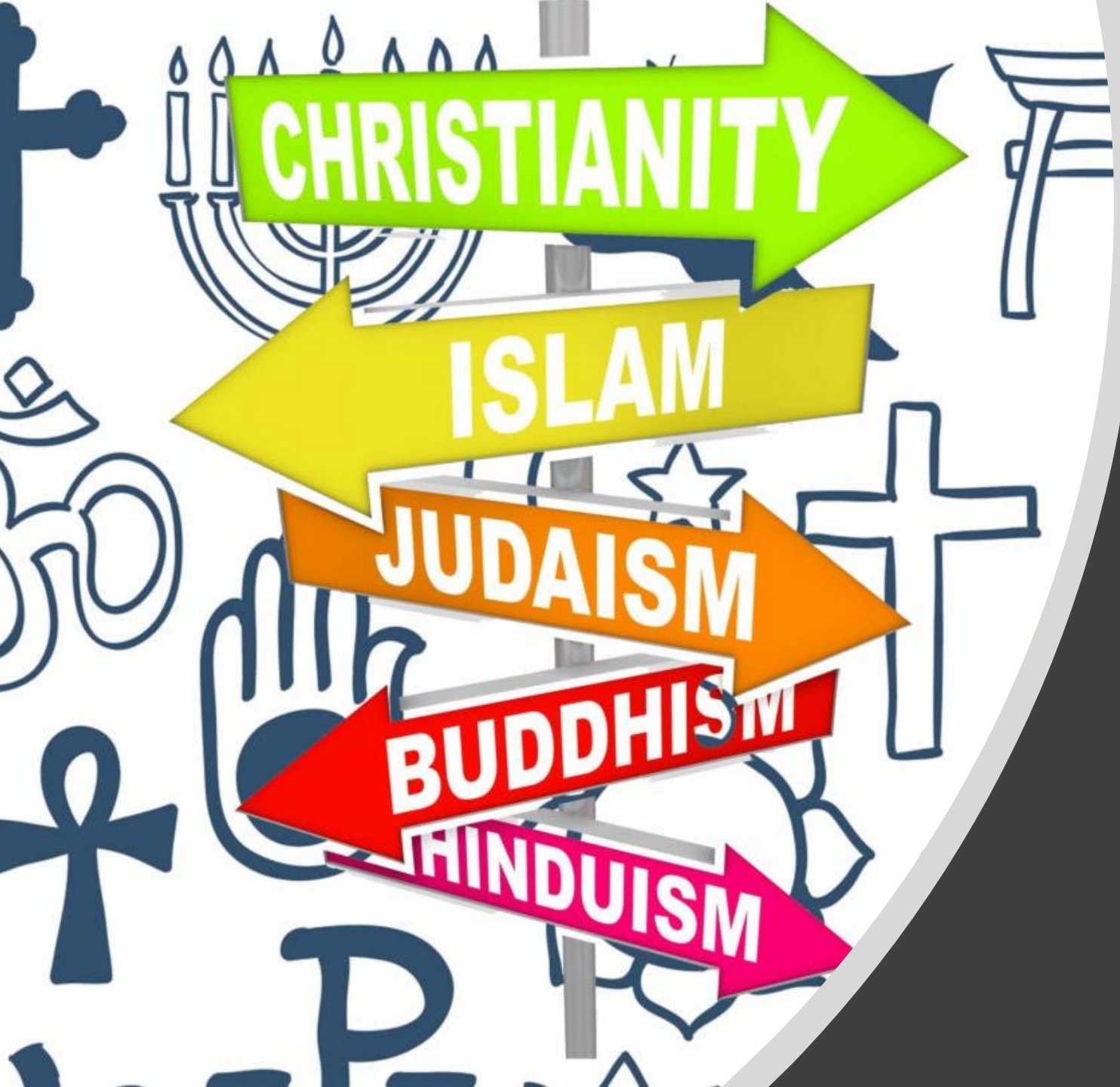


As Juergensmeyer argues, within these militant Christian religious worldviews is a subtle but important theological division that has a significant impact on whether adherents are likely to be politically engaged, and that has to do with the return date of Jesus and the end times. This split is between **those with a “postmillennial” view and those with a “premillennial” view of history**. The Christian Identity and Christian Reconstruction movement advance a postmillennial theology, as do many militant Christian activists, including Pat Robertson and members of the Christian Coalition.

Postmillennialism: “Believe that Christ will return to earth only after the thousand years of religious rule that characterizes the Christian idea of the millennium, and therefore Christians have an obligation to provide the political and social conditions that will make Christ’s return possible.”

Premillennialism: By contrast, premillennialists “hold the view that the thousand years of Christendom will come only after Christ returns, an event that will occur in a cataclysmic moment of world history. Therefore they tend to be much less active politically.”

As Juergensmeyer points out about Bray, “**His position is part of a great crusade conducted by a Christian subculture in America that considers itself at war with the larger society, and to some extent victimized by it**. Armed with the theological explanations of Reconstruction and Christian Identity writers, this subculture sees itself justified in its violent responses to a vast and violent repression waged by secular (and, in some versions of this vision, Jewish) agents of a satanic force.”



World Religions & Global Issues

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Professor Chris Crews



Zion Betrayed

Juergensmeyer

“The key is not to seek to delay the explosion, but to try to bring it on as soon as possible and on our own initiative.” – Meir Ettinger

As Juergensmeyer notes of Ettinger’s views before his arrest in 2015 on suspicion of firebombing Palestinian homes in Duma, “The implication was that the whole of biblical Israel, including the West Bank, **should be purged of Arab Muslims and Christians and ethnically cleansed to satisfy a religious vision of a Jewish state.**”

Ettinger is the grandson of **Rabbi Meir Kahane**, considered by many the father of violent, far-right Jewish political movements, including the **Kahanist religious movement** named after him.

The 2015 firebomb attack on the Arab town of Duma, as well as hundreds of other attacks on Palestinian and Arab Israeli towns and villages, have been blamed on militant Jewish religious activists and **young people active in “hilltop gangs” and other militant groups.**



Jewish extremists “claim that the **fulfillment of the vision of Israel as a Jewish state requires the appropriation of all of the biblical lands of Israel**, including the territories of ancient Israel’s Judea and Samaria which today encompasses the Palestinian West Bank region.”

Many of these views can be traced back to **Jewish extremists associated with Meir Kahane**, the grandfather and ideological guide behind Meir Ettinger’s extremist politics. As Juergensmeyer argues, old followers of Kahane saw Ettinger’s political ideas as a reincarnation of Kahane, “including the idea that Israel was intended to be not just a secular state but the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, the notion that the secular Israeli state cannot be trusted, and the conviction that Palestinian Arabs must go.”

Kahane, a Brooklyn born Jew was the co-founder of the Jewish Defense League (JDL) and **founder of the ultra-nationalist Kach party (1984-1988)** before it was banned in the Israeli Knesset. Kahane’s militant Jewish ideas came to be known as “**Kahanism**.” He was killed in New York City in 1990 by Egyptian militant El Sayyid Nosair.



Meir Kahane

1988 Israeli election ad - Meir Kahane

■ ARAB NEWS

PREACHERS OF HATE

arabnews.com



As Meir Ettinger argued in his 2013 *Rebel Manifesto*: “The idea of the rebellion is very simple. Israel has many weak points, many issues which it handles by walking on eggshells so as to not attract attention. What we’re going to do is simply fire up these powder kegs...**The aim is to bring down the state, to bring down its structure and its ability to control, and to build a new system.** To do it, we must act outside the rules of the state we seek to bring down.”

As Juergensmeyer points out, and as was made clear in the 2013 Manifesto, “Ettinger refused to participate in Israeli politics since he regarded the present state of Israel and its acceptance of multiculturalism as a hindrance to the religious vision of biblical Israel; **he advocated the destruction of the present state of Israel in order to make way for the coming religious state.** According to both Ettinger and Kahane, the true creation of a religious Israel was yet to come. Unlike other Jewish conservatives who held this point of view, however, they felt that it was going to happen fairly soon and that **they and their partisans could help bring about this messianic act.**”

Recalling his interview with Meir Kahane before his death Juergensmeyer states that “what he (and now his grandson, Meir Ettinger) **truly detested was the secular Jewish state.** Anticipating the hatred that would animate a religious Jew such as Yigal Amir into assassinating the prime minister of Israel, Kahane said that although he loved all Jews, ‘**secular government is the enemy.**’ For that reason, **supporters of the secular state must be treated as major obstacles to the coming of the Messiah.**”

This opposition to the secular Israeli state echoes closely ideas we find in the Christian Identity and Christian Reconstruction movement, as religious militants involved in these various movements all base their actions on what they believe to be biblical law and divine authority. The idea of just war that we looked at earlier with Christian militants like Michael Bray were echoed by Jewish militants.

As the Jewish religious militants that Juergensmeyer talked to reminded him, “**Jewish law allowed for two kinds of just war: obligatory and permissible.** The former was required for defense, and the latter was allowed when it seemed prudent for a state to do so. **The determination of when the conditions existed for a just war were to be made by a council of elders—the Sanhedrin—or a prophet, in the case of permissible war.** In the case of obligatory war, the determination could be made by a government ruled by Jewish law: **a Halakhic state.** Since none of these religious entities exists in the present day, the conditions were to be determined by any authoritative interpreter of Halakha, such as a rabbi. **Kahane, of course, was a rabbi and therefore felt free to pass judgment on the morality of his own movement’s actions.”**

Such interpretations look back to earlier examples in Jewish history, such as the **Maccabean Revolt (166-164 BCE) and the Revolt of Masada (73 CE)**, both of which involved Jewish partisans fighting against state agents in what were viewed as religiously sanctioned conflicts to defend Judaism. Modern Jewish religious militants looked back to such example to find modern justifications.

It was precisely such radical Jewish religious views advanced by Kahane and others like him which inspired Yigal Amir to assassinate Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. Amir, like many young radicalized Jews, felt that the **Israeli negotiations with Palestinians and other parties—in this case through the Oslo Peace Accords (1993/95) and Wye River negotiations (1998)**—were a betrayal of both Israel and radical Jewish calls for an exclusive Jewish state that included all of Palestine. These views were given a significant boost when hardline conservative Benjamin Netanyahu soon after.

Our readings also discussed Yoel Lerner, another Jewish militant religious activist who advanced a similar set of views following the death of Kahane in 1990. As Juergensmeyer suggests, “Yoel Lerner was one of those activists who **rejected any Palestinian claims on what he regarded as biblical Israel**. He hoped for the restoration of the ancient temple in Jerusalem, the exclusive right of Jews to settle on the West Bank of the Jordan River, and the **creation of a state based on biblical law**.” Lerner was involved in a series of Jewish extremist actions, **including a plot to blow of the Dome of the Rock**, the Muslim shrine adjacent to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

As Juergensmeyer relates from interviews he conducted with Lerner, he “believed in a form of messianic Zionism. In his view the prophesied Messiah would come to earth only after the temple was rebuilt and made ready for him. **Thus the issue of the temple was not only a matter of cultural nostalgia but also one of pressing religious importance**. After all, Lerner pointed out, many of the laws incumbent on Jews in the Bible are related to temple ritual, and Jews can hardly obey these laws if there is no temple in which to perform them. In Lerner’s view **the redemption of the whole world depended upon the actions of Jews in creating the conditions necessary for messianic salvation**.”



Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat with President Bill Clinton following the signing of the 1993 Oslo I Accords.

Like many Jewish religious militants and messianic Jews in the 1990s, Amir was obsessed with rebuilding the former Jewish Temple, which Jewish historians believed to be located directly under the current Muslim Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

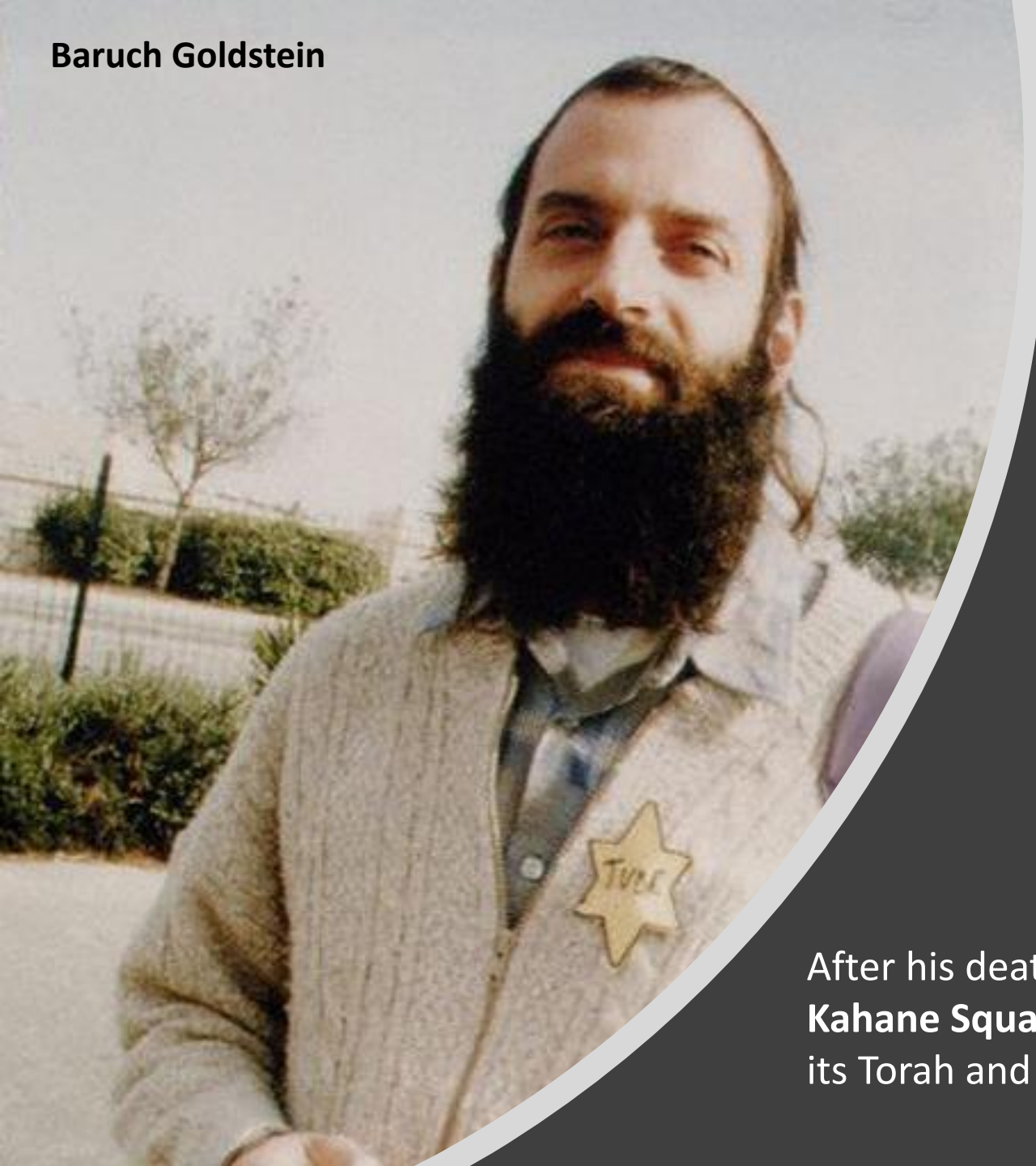
Amir, given his background as a law student at Bar-Ilan University, convinced himself and others that the actions of Rabin were a direct threat to the restoration of a religious Jewish state, and so **an assassination would be acceptable under what was called the “pursuer’s decree” in Jewish legal doctrine**, which obliges Jews to stop someone how is considered a “mortal danger” to Jews. He based this on 3 reasons:

- Rabin’s government was **illegitimate**
- Rabin’s policies were **anti-Jewish**
- Rabin committed **treason** by giving away Jewish land



Yigal Amir

Baruch Goldstein



US-born doctor and Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein's **1994 attack on Muslim worshippers at the Cave of the Patriarch in Hebron** was sparked by his anger with disruptive Arab youth who he claimed were shouting anti-Jewish slogans near the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron where he had gone to pray on the night before Purim, the Jewish holiday that celebrates their rescue from the Persians under Xerxes I.

The following day, outraged at the lack of action by Israeli soldiers, he took an assault rifle into the Cave of the Patriarch where Muslims were praying and opened fire, killing 29 and wounding 125 Palestinian Muslim worshippers. He was then beaten to death by some of the worshippers who had survived the attack.

After his death **Jewish extremists built a monument to honor him in Kahane Square**, which read: "He gave his life for the people of Israel, its Torah and land." It was removed in 1999 under a new Israeli law.



For Jewish religious militants like Meir Kahane, Meir Ettinger, Leon Yerner, Yigal Amir and Baruch Goldstein, **land was at the heart of their extremist religious claims.** For Kahane, Ettinger, and Yerner, Israel must become a state ruled by Jews for Jews under biblical law. They must also **reclaim all historical lands, which is why settlements play a central role in Jewish religious militant politics,** and why so many Jewish extremists also make up a large portion of the illegal settlers on Palestinian lands, such as those seen here in the West Bank.



The Spear of Shiva

Juergensmeyer



You might be surprised to learn that the current **Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, was banned from entering the US and UK prior to 2014** because he was seen as a vocal anti-Muslim extremist in India, and was widely believed to have played a role in the 2002 massacre of Muslims by Hindu mobs in the state of Gujarat.

Modi is leader of the **Bharatiya Janata Dal party (BJP), the ruling Hindu nationalist political party, and a former leader in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an armed Hindu militant organization.** Both the BJP and the RSS have been widely accused of fanning the flames of communal violence by encouraging Hindu attacks against Muslims, and by enacting various exclusionary policies, such as the recent Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).



As Juergensmeyer notes, “Whether the 2002 Gujarat massacre was an act of terrorism, and whether government officials—including possibly Modi himself—can be described as terrorists, are contested issues. There is no doubt about the basic facts of the case, however: perhaps as **many as twenty-five hundred innocent Muslim men, women, and children were hacked to death, stabbed, raped, and burned alive by angry Hindu mobs.** It has often been referred to as a “riot,” but this implies an equal amount of violence from both religious communities, and in this case the **Muslims were almost entirely the victims of angry Hindus.**”

The deep anti-Muslim sentiment that Hindu militant religious activists in the RSS have promoted, much of which is reflected in the current politics of Modi's ruling BJP party, have been a growing source of concern within India, which was formed after British colonization as a secular democracy.

The **Hindu mob violence in Gujarat from February 28-March 2, 2002** was sparked by a fire on a train carrying Hindu religious militants with the RSS and VHP (another Hindu nationalist group) returning from Ayodha, the site of an earlier Muslim mosque that was burned and destroyed by Hindu activists. The train was stopped for unknown reasons before reaching the final station and a fire broke out, leading to the death of 58 Hindu pilgrims. Upon hearing of the news local militants, as well as both state media and government officials—including Narendra Modi, who was chief minister of Gujarat at the time—**blamed Muslims and called the fire an act of Islamic terrorism against Hindus.**

The two Muslim areas hit hardest by the mob attacks were **Gulbarg Society and Naroda Patiya**, located on the outskirts of Gujarat, which were the main focus of the Feb 28 attacks. As our author relates, thousands of “angry young men armed with stones, clubs, knives, pipes, and cans of kerosene. By ten-thirty in the morning they had broken through the gates and were throwing bricks and stones, **dousing the houses with kerosene and setting them on fire, and catching Muslims who were trying to flee, beating them, and in some cases hacking them to death with swords.** As the violence intensified, women were captured and gang raped, then doused with kerosene and burned alive.” Witnesses later reported the Hindu mobs were chanting “**Kill the Muslims**” during the attacks.

Among those killed was **Ahsan Jafri**, an **outspoken critic of Modi and the BJP**, and a **Congress Party MP**. As Juergensmeyer and other scholars have noted, local Muslims fled to Jafri's compound in the Gulbarg Society believing they would be safe and protected by police. But as records show, the police who were there simply watched as the compound was attacked, and a larger police presence did not appear, despite repeated calls for help, until almost six hours later.

“The house was set on fire and some inside were burned alive. Many were able to escape, but some of the women who tried to flee were caught, raped, and then set on fire. Jafri himself was stripped naked, forced to parade in front of the crowd, and told to say **“Jai Shri Ram” (“Hail Lord Ram”)**. He refused, and first his fingers were chopped off, then his hands and feet, and his severed, still breathing body was dragged down the road and thrown onto an impromptu pyre where many other bodies were burning, including the women who had been gang raped.”



Similar events took place in Naroda Patiya, where “over five thousand marauding young Hindu men began a ten-hour rampage, ransacking the neighborhood, throwing rocks, slashing throats, dashing kerosene on both houses and people, burning them alive. **Some in the crowd brandished Shiva’s three-pointed spear, and used the trident to impale victims.**”

The violence here was instigated and supported by **BJP representative Maya Kodnani** and other BJP and RSS supporters. Kodnani was arrested and found guilty for her role, but later acquitted by the High Court, who claimed there was no conspiracy. As Juergensmeyer notes, Kodnani is an “ardent supporter of Hindu nationalist causes” who had “a reputation of opposing Muslims and resisting their influence in public life.”

Like Kodnani, Modi remains a controversial figure in Indian politics, both for his **embrace of Hindu nationalist politics** as well as his political support for **nationalist efforts to remake India into a Hindu religious state** that is outwardly hostile to its non-Hindu residents.



Maya Kodnani

Similar to both Christian and Jewish traditions, the Hindu Vedas and other religious texts are full of images of warfare and conflict. As Juergensmeyer points out about the Bhagavad Gita, it gives “several reasons why killing in warfare is permissible, among them **the argument that the soul can never really be killed**: ‘he who slays, slays not; he who is slain, is not slain.’ Another reason is based **on *dharma* (moral obligation)**: the duties of a member of the *ksatriya* (warrior) caste by definition involve killing, **so violence is justified in the very maintenance of social order.**”

Hindu nationalists, both in the RSS, VHP, and related parties, view armed struggle as central to defending a nationalist Hindu culture in India, a **political philosophy known as Hindutva**. The RSS, as a religious paramilitary group, dates back to the colonial period of the 1920s. An RSS member was Gandhi’s killer, and RSS members played a leading role in the 1992 destruction of the Ayodhya mosque, which led to another string of riots between Muslims and Hindus and thousands of deaths.

As Juergensmeyer argues, “**Narendra Modi and many of the other leaders of the Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, have come from the RSS, and the movement has been the breeding ground for kindred movements and ideologies** that have developed over the years. The Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) was founded in 1964 by RSS leaders in order to “**organize—consolidate the Hindu society and to serve—protect the Hindu Dharma (‘religion’)**.” Other Hindu nationalist groups that advocated similar politics include the Shiv Sena (Army of Lord Shiva), which was involved in the 1992 Ayodha mosque attacks, the Mumbai riots of 1992-93, and also the 2002 Gujarat massacre.

Religion & Religious Violence

In all of these “**cultures of terror**” that we looked at, whether Christian, Jewish, or Hindu, what we see are militant religious activists **justifying their use of violence and terror to advance what they believe to be a holy cause**—ending abortion in the US, restoring biblical territories in Israel, imposing an exclusive religious nationalist vision of who is a real Indian. In each case, **religious authority and power are given precedence over secular rules and norms.**

As Juergensmeyer argues: “One of my conclusions is that this historical moment of global transformation has provided an occasion for religion—with all its images and ideas—to be reasserted as a public force. Lurking in the background of much of religion’s unrest and the occasion for its political revival, I believe, is **the virtually global devaluation of secular authority and the need for alternative ideologies of public order.** It may be one of the paradoxes of history, graphically displayed in incidents of terrorism, that the answers to the questions of why the contemporary world still needs religion and of why it has suffered such public acts of violence, are surprisingly the same.”

Assignment Reminders

A few reminders about class assignments for this week:

Be sure to watch the 4 videos included in the Weekly Schedule to provide you more context and details about the cases we are exploring this week.

- Discussion post #2 is due Wed July 7 by 11:59 pm in discussion forum.
- Peer response posts (x2) are due Fri July 9 by 11:59 pm in discussion forum.
- Quiz #1 will open on Friday, July 9 at noon. The test will close on Sunday July 11 at 11:59 pm, covering our readings, class lecture, and related videos for Weeks 1-2.