When Do Religious Organizations Resort to Violence? How Local Conditions Shape the Effects of Transnational Ideology[*]

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Abstract

Under what conditions do non-state actors with religious agendas resort to violence? Studies tackling this question typically examine global or local factors in isolation, while those advancing integrated arguments lack the data required for systematic tests across time and countries. We advance and test a theoretical framework combining transnational forces, domestic context, and actor-specific attributes. We argue that by 1979 a new transnational zeitgeist reached maturation, creating fertile ground for religion's violence-endorsing side. Yet, the effect of this transnational ideological shift depends on its identity linkage with religious organizations and on domestic levels of corruption and religious repression. To test our argument, we leverage a new dataset on ethno-political organizations that provides yearly codings of organizations' claims and use of violence, spanning all world regions in the years 1946-2013. The statistical analysis corroborates our hypotheses. Overall, ethno-political organizations making religious claims have been significantly more violence-prone after 1979 compared to before. Yet, this post-1979 effect of religious claims depends on local conditions. Specifically, their identity linkage with a particularly salient manifestation of the new zeitgeist – the Iranian Revolution – has made religious organizations from Muslim ethnic groups particularly susceptible to violence, whereas before 1979 they had been less violent than those without a religious agenda. Moreover, regardless of religious identity, higher levels of political corruption and repression of religious organizations entail a higher risk of anti-government violence by religious organizations after 1979, but not before.

Keywords: political violence; religion; ethno-political organizations; ideology

The notion that religion has a unique potential to cause violence is widespread among the general public (Armstrong, 2014; McPhillips, 2018), pundits (Hitchens, 2007), and policymakers of various ideological persuasions (Blair, 2014; Johnson & Hauslohner, 2017). Consistent with this view, a body of political science scholarship posits that religion removes moral constraints to the use of force and inspires martyrdom in the fight against absolute evil (Hoffman, 1998; Horowitz, 2009; Juergensmeyer, 2008) while hindering compromise solutions between conflict parties by delegitimizing concessions as a betrayal of sacred values (Hassner, 2003; Svensson, 2012). Scholars have also argued that the difficulty of escaping religious discrimination (Laitin 2000), the intensity of the ensuing grievances (Akbaba & Taydas, 2011), and the dense networks of religious institutions facilitating mobilization (Stewart, 2009; Walter, 2017) increase the risk of political violence by non-state actors.

The religion-leads-to-violence thesis, however, has not gone unchallenged. The notion of the 'ambivalence of the sacred' (Appleby, 2000) suggests that religion is Janus-faced, with a violent side coexisting with an irenic one: all major religions harbor competing discourses about the legitimacy of violence – emphasizing tolerance, reconciliation, and respect for human life, on the one hand, and injunctions to fight infidels and apostates, on the other. This perspective suggests that the analytical focus should be on the *conditions* that empower the 'darker side of religion' (Svensson, 2019, p. 3).

When do non-state actors with religious agendas use violence? Several studies tackling this question focus on global or local factors in isolation. Some scholars suggest that global ideological waves shape the relationship between religion and violence (e.g., Huntington, 1993; Kalyvas, 2018; Rapoport, 2022). Others point to transnational competition among religious actors, especially pledged allies of global 'brands' such as al-Qaeda and ISIS (Farrell, 2020), and to the rise of a global network of religious foreign fighters (Hegghammer, 2010) as drivers of

violence by religious actors. Yet, there is remarkable variation in the behaviour of religious actors operating in the same historical period and thus presumably exposed to the same global forces – while some are violent, others engage in peace activism (Orjuela, 2020; Vüllers, 2021) and civil war mediation (Johnstone and Svensson, 2013).

Various other studies focus on national and sub-national conditions as potential enablers of religion's violent side, such as the relationship between state and religion (Philpott, 2007), ethno-nationalist territorial disputes (Fox, 2004), political exclusion (Satana et al., 2013), and domestic political competition (Toft, 2007). However, in numerous cases, from Mali to the Philippines, the relationship between religion and violence has changed significantly over time, despite the fact that basic parameters of local politics, such as political exclusion and the territorial nature of disputes, have remained largely unaltered. Moreover, countries as different from one another as Egypt, Israel, India, and the United States seem to have experienced a rise in violence by organizations with religious agendas in recent decades (see, for example, Juergensmeyer, 2008) – parallel trends of sorts across diverse contexts that point to transnational causes. A third set of studies analyzes religious institutions, such as local clerics, in a single country or sub-national region (e.g., Basedau & Koos, 2015). Yet, while shedding light on the influence of specific local actors on violent conflict, their focus on a single setting inevitably obscures the effects of transnational and domestic contextual factors, held constant by design.

In this article, we present and empirically test an integrated theoretical framework that emphasizes the synergistic effects of transnational forces and local conditions, including both domestic contextual factors and actor-specific attributes. We hypothesize that the propensity of political organizations with a religious agenda (henceforth, religious organizations) to resort to violence depends both on the transnational ideological environment – the zeitgeist – and the conditions that shape its local relevance. In particular, we posit that the emergence in the late

1970s of a new transnational zeitgeist, inspiring radical transformation of the political order to ensure its consistency with religious principles, created fertile ground for the violence-endorsing side of religion and, thus, for actual violence by religious organizations. Yet, we expect the extent to which this new zeitgeist influenced actors on the ground to depend on actor-specific attributes and domestic contextual factors. The effect of the transnational ideological shift should be particularly strong for Muslim religious organizations, given that one of its most salient manifestations – the Iranian Revolution – had an openly Islamic character. Moreover, religious organizations operating in countries with highly corrupt and repressive governments should be distinctively responsive to the new zeitgeist, whose call for radical political change should resonate with the lived experiences of organizations' members and constituencies.

We test these expectations leveraging the new EPR-Organizations (EPR-O) dataset, which provides yearly codings of political demands as well as violent and non-violent actions of ethno-political organizations in a random sample of forty countries spanning all world regions in the years 1946-2013. Given that EPR-O records different types of political demands put forth by both violent and non-violent ethno-political organizations, we can assess whether organizations with a religious agenda are more violence-prone than others, whether transnational, contextual, and actor-specific factors make religious organizations more likely to become violent, and whether these 'risk factors' affect differently organizations with and without religious agendas. In contrast to country-level studies (e.g., Basedau et al., 2016), the focus on organizations allows us to explain variation across actors within a given context. Moreover, unlike studies focusing specifically on religious minorities (e.g., Fox, 1999; Basedau et al., 2017) or religious institutions and activists (Basedau & Koos, 2015; Cao et al., 2018; De Juan et al., 2015; Vüllers, 2021), our approach provides the necessary non-religious counterfactual to evaluate both the alleged 'special

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relationship between religion and violence' (Juergensmeyer, 1993, p. 153) and the conditions that might make religious organizations more violence-prone than other organizations.

Finally, while some previous studies advance arguments combining transnational and local drivers of religious violence, their empirical setup does not allow for an evaluation of the interactions between the different sets of factors. For example, Toft et al. (2011) argue that violence by religious actors is a result of the confluence of a transnational political resurgence of religion in the late 20th century with local political theology and institutional arrangements. However, their case studies of late-20th century religious violence by design treat the transnational zeitgeist as a scope condition, rather than an independent variable. By contrast, EPR-O's extensive temporal and spatial coverage offers the necessary variation in transnational and local conditions to empirically test an integrated theoretical framework.

Studying ethno-political organizations has the inherent limitation of excluding from examination organizations with a religious agenda but no ethnic affiliation (e.g., Japan's Buddhist party Komeito). Our analysis cannot directly speak to the propensity for violence of different types of religious actors (see, e.g., Henne, 2012 and Piazza, 2009), so caution should be exercised in generalizing our findings. Nonetheless, the empirical scope of our analysis is useful for various reasons. First, many iconic instances of armed groups with religious agendas (e.g., India's Sikh insurgents or Hamas in Palestine) are ethno-political organizations, which suggests a meaningful overlap between the general category of actors that the broad public, pundits, and policymakers have in mind when discussing the religion-violence nexus, and the specific type of actors we study. Second, a substantial portion of political science research on religion and violence specifically focuses on the setting of ethnic politics (e.g., Asal et al., 2015; Breslawski & Ives, 2019; Fox, 2004; Isaacs, 2016), which enables us to contribute to this body of knowledge. Third,

if our argument about the transnational zeitgeist and local conditions is correct, its implications

should be observable for a variety of actors, including ethno-political organizations.

Under What Conditions Do Religious Organizations Resort to Violence?

World religions are complex ideational systems, characterized by internal plurality and

contestation with regard to the legitimacy of violence (Appleby, 2000). Both messages of

tolerance and reconciliation and endorsements of violent defense of divine truth and the

community of the faithful can be found in a given religion. In line with recent work on ideology

in armed conflict (Gutierrez-Sanin & Wood, 2014; Leader-Maynard, 2019), we envision religious

ideas about the legitimacy of violence as influencing the behaviour of organizations through

various, mutually compatible channels. Leaders, rank and file, and supporters of organizations

may embrace normative prescriptions about violence as core commitments, adopt them as part of

their identity as organization members/supporters, or conform to them under the impression that

others expect compliance. Organization leaders may also instrumentally use religious rhetoric to

mobilize people with whom the leaders' messages resonate and to attract external support. Once

ideas reach a critical mass of adherents, they acquire substantial staying power and thus can

influence actors' behaviour over prolonged periods of time (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Regardless of whether they are 'true believers,' political entrepreneurs have incentives to couch

their appeals in terms of ideas that have already reached critical mass, which in turn contributes

to the staying power of those ideas.

      We expect the transnational zeitgeist – which facilitates the communication, acceptance,

and internalization of some ideas, while marginalizing others – to shape the effect of violence-

endorsing religious messages on the behaviour of political organizations. Yet, the influence of the

zeitgeist should depend on local conditions, that is, actor-specific attributes and domestic

contextual factors that define how actors on the ground relate to it. We focus on two sets of local conditions: (1) identity linkages between organizations and particularly salient manifestations of the transnational zeitgeist; (2) features of the domestic political context in which organizations operate that increase the local relevance of the transnational ideological environment.

Previous studies identified a global political revival of religion in the late 20th century (e.g., Casanova, 1994; Kepel, 1994; Toft et al., 2011). Across religions, and even in countries where secularization was at best a distant prospect (e.g., Saudi Arabia), governments came under sustained criticism for being insufficiently religious, with religious actors denouncing authorities for their lack of moral legitimacy. This process promoted the idea of the necessity of a radical transformation of the political order in line with religious principles. Various studies indicate that the broader trend of religious revival coincided with a transnational upsurge in violent mobilization by religious organizations, including violence by Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jewish militants in Egypt, the United States, India, Sri Lanka, and Israel, respectively (e.g., Fox, 2004; Juergensmeyer, 2008; Rapoport, 2022).

Though much religious activism over the past decades has taken nonviolent forms, we argue that the shift in transnational zeitgeist raised the probability of violence, as their aspirations for radical political transformation set religious organizations on a collision course with defenders of the status quo. On the side of religious organizations, leaders genuinely committed to radical political change should be inclined to see violence as a legitimate response to government authorities' resistance, while the new ideological environment should also make it easier for political entrepreneurs to mobilize local and external support for violent action, thus emboldening leaders that embrace the zeitgeist instrumentally for their own ambitions. For their part, governments should be more likely to repress organizations with religious agendas,

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perceived (rightly or wrongly) as unappeasable radicals in the new ideological environment, thus activating cycles of government repression and anti-government violence.

Notwithstanding differing views on when the underlying process started, there is a general agreement in the literature that a new era in the relationship between religion and violence was in full swing by the beginning of the 1980s (Kepel, 1994; Juergensmeyer, 2008; Toft et al., 2011; Rapoport, 2022). Thus, we treat 1979 as a watershed year, marking the historical moment when the ideological trend calling for radical transformation of the political order in accordance with religious principles reached maturation. This leads to ours first hypothesis:

H1: *Religious organizations are more likely to engage in political violence after 1979 than before.*

The transnational nature of the ideological trend just discussed indicates that its causes were not peculiar to any given religion. Nonetheless, we argue that Muslim religious organizations were particularly responsive to the transnational ideological shift because of their identity linkage with the avowedly Islamic Iranian Revolution. This event stands out as the 'paradigm of religious revolution' (Juergensmeyer, 2008, 47) – a protracted struggle (protests started in January 1978; the Islamic Republic was proclaimed in April 1979) that attracted worldwide media attention and culminated in the fall of a seemingly formidable, US-supported regime and the rise to power of religious opposition forces.

Though itself a *manifestation* of the underlying ideological trend, we posit that the Iranian Revolution *amplified* the impact of the global trend in Muslim-majority countries, thus contributing to an increase in the risk of violence by religious organizations. Summarizing findings on the global impact of the Iranian Revolution, Esposito and Piscatori (1990, p. 323)

note that 'across the Islamic world … Iran's example served as a catalyst to local Muslim activists whose own grievances now seemed neither unique nor insurmountable.' Thus, we argue, the Iranian Revolution strengthened genuine ideological commitment to violent struggles by Muslim activists in a similar way as the Russian and Cuban revolutions inspired communist insurgencies. In addition, the Revolution incentivized both leaders of Muslim religious institutions and Muslim political elites to strategically employ religious rhetoric to justify the use of violence in pursuit of their own agendas.

Importantly, even though the Shah's opponents succeeded through primarily nonviolent means, we argue that the Iranian Revolution increased the risk of violence by Muslim organizations in the context of the new zeitgeist by shaping the calculus of both religious organizations and governments. On the side of religious organizations, the Revolution emboldened leaders to use violence against governments that proved unresponsive to nonviolent forms of pressure, by demonstrating the feasibility of radical political transformation in the name of religion. For their part, governments reacted to the Iranian Revolution by ramping up repression of Muslim religious organizations, fearful that their countries could become 'a second Iran,' which in turn made these organizations more likely to resort to violence. In the words of Esposito and Piscatori (1990, p. 322), the Iranian Revolution provided the governments of various Muslim-majority countries with 'both the reason and the pretext … to justify control and suppression of Islamically oriented opposition movements,' unleashing cycles of repression and violent responses. For instance, the Tunisian government's repression of Islamist organizations, which it dubbed 'Khomeinists,' likely contributed to turn elements of the opposition to violence (Anderson, 1990, pp. 166-167; Boulby, 1988).

The effects of the Revolution on both governments and religious organizations were partially shaped by Tehran's actions. The new regime strove to export its revolution by example,

proselytism, and provision of material support to Islamist organizations abroad (Ramzani, 1990). Despite its efforts to portray the revolution in general Islamic, as opposed to narrowly sectarian, terms, Tehran had the most influence on the violent expression of pre-existing grievances by Shia Muslim organizations in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, which in several cases were also recipients of Iranian support (Long, 1990, pp. 104-107; Panah, 2007, pp. 93-95; Roy, 1990, pp. 228-234).

Revolutionary Iran's influence on violence by Sunni organizations was more indirect and complex. The revolution galvanized Sunni organizations in several countries by strengthening their belief in the possibility of radical political change inspired by religion; yet, Sunni militants also took distance from Iran as a model to emulate due to ideological and sectarian differences (Hamid & Grewal, 2020, pp. 181-182). As Akhavi (1990, pp. 142, 152) observed, for example, the 'Iranian Revolution … served to quicken, rather than cause, the Islamic resurgence' in Egypt, including by emboldening local 'violence-prone Islamic groups … to replicate the *spirit* [emphasis in original] of Shii revolutionaries,' rather than their specific tactics, doctrinal principles, and objectives. Similarly, in Tunisia and Libya, 'the revolution accelerated trends already present' – it made nonviolent resolution of conflict between the two regimes and their 'religiously clad opposition groups' more difficult by 'raising hopes and fears, but it did not create the issues or the parties in dispute' (Anderson, 1990, pp. 157-158).

Furthermore, Khomeini's explicit challenge to the religious legitimacy of the Saudi monarchy may have contributed to inspiring the takeover of the Grand Mosque by Sunni militants in November 1979 (Al-Rodhan et al., 2011; Maloney & Riddle, 2020). In an effort to buttress its legitimacy and counter Iranian influence, the Saudi crown started providing financial support for Salafist groups abroad, thus contributing to the growth of the global Jihadist movement (Byman, 2020). Thus, in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, the prospect of

foreign support has encouraged Muslim armed organizations from Somalia to the Philippines to cast their political struggle in religious terms.

Our second hypothesis captures this magnifying effect of the Iranian Revolution on the risk of violence by Muslim religious organizations in the new transnational ideological environment:

H2: *Muslim religious organizations are more likely to engage in political violence after 1979 than before.*

In addition to this identity linkage, the domestic context in which organizations operate may shape the impact of the transnational zeitgeist. In particular, we theorize that high levels of political corruption heighten the effect of the transnational zeitgeist on the use of violence by religious organizations. While existing studies suggest a general positive association between corruption and the risk of political violence (Fjelde, 2009; Hegre & Nygard, 2015), leaders of religious organizations should enjoy a comparative advantage in highlighting corruption to mobilize for violent anti-government action, given the centrality of theme of probity in religious discourse.

The association between political corruption and violence by religious organizations should be distinctively powerful in the post-1979 era. The new transnational zeitgeist should enhance the power of religiously inspired anti-corruption frames, while widespread corruption corroborates the ideological leitmotiv of the moral inadequacy of governments that depart from religious principles. The depiction of corruption as an intrinsic feature of insufficiently religious government implies that this evil cannot be remedied through institutional reforms. Instead, a fundamental moral renewal is required, which entails the replacement of the existing political system with one more in line with religion. Furthermore, the post-1979 ideological environment

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should increase the resonance of organization leaders' calls for violent action with members and broader constituencies, as the use of violence may appear necessary for such revolutionary change. As a result, post-1979 religious endorsements of violent resistance against morally flawed governments should gain particular traction in contexts with high levels of corruption. Our next hypothesis captures this interaction between the transnational zeitgeist and domestic political corruption.

H3: *The higher the level of corruption in the political system, the more likely are religious organizations to engage in political violence after 1979.*

Government repression of religion represents another factor that should influence the effect of the new zeitgeist on violence. As Philpott (2007, p. 518) puts it, religions tend towards political violence 'when they are faced with laws and institutions … that suppress their own practice and expression.' Existing research suggests two pathways connecting religious repression to violence against the government. First, discriminatory government policies towards religious denominations (such as legal restrictions on building places of worship and bans on religious garb and proselytization) generate powerful grievances, which in turn may prompt violence (Fox, 1999; Akbaba & Taydas, 2011; Grim & Finke, 2011; Muchlinsk, 2014; Basedau et al., 2016). Given the centrality of religion to the collective experience and worldview of many communities, mistreatment at the hands of the state can be easily portrayed as an existential threat, enhancing the influence of religious endorsements of violence (Saiya, 2018).

Second, the repression of autonomous religious actors may lead to grievance-fueled violence. This can occur even in contexts where the corresponding religion enjoys a privileged societal position, for example, in terms of official recognition and financial support. In these

cases, governments engage in a form of cooptation of religion to bolster their legitimacy (Saiya, 2018), while cracking down on religious organizations that attempt to act independently lest they become incubators of political opposition. For instance, under Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak, and now al-Sisi, the Egyptian government has ruthlessly repressed Islamist organizations, even though the country's constitution identifies Islam as the official religion and sharia as the main source of legislation.

As mentioned above, due to the perceived revolutionary threat posed by religious ideas, governments should be particularly prone to repress religious organizations in the post-1979 era. Yet, in addition, we argue that the risk of violent backlash for both pathways – discrimination of religious denominations and repression of autonomous religious actors –should also be distinctively higher in the post-1979 era than before. The new transnational zeitgeist provides repressed religious communities and actors with readily available frameworks to interpret their predicament as well as prescriptions on how to respond to repression. Specifically, intense repression facilitates leaders' task of framing insufficiently religious governments as a serious threat to religion to their followers. Moreover, the new zeitgeist likely strengthens individuals' repression-induced grievances and emotional disposition towards violent mobilization by casting armed resistance as moral. Thus, we formulate our last two hypotheses as an interaction between the transnational ideological environment and the two types of government repression of religion.

H4a: *The higher the religious discrimination in a country, the more likely are religious organizations to engage in political violence after 1979.*

H4b: *The more repressive of religious actors a government is, the more likely are religious organizations to engage in political violence after 1979.*

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Empirical Approach

We leverage a new dataset on ethno-political organizations – EPR-Organizations (EPR-O) – to

test our argument. Following previous studies of the nexus between religion and violence (e.g.,

Asal et al., 2015; Breslawski & Ives, 2019; Fox, 2004; Isaacs, 2016), we focus on the setting of

ethnic politics. Our units of analysis are organization-years. We employ ethnic group-fixed

effects to exploit variation in political agendas across different organizations *within* the same

ethnic group, as well as changes in our conditional variables over time. Ethnic group-fixed effects

allow us to isolate the influence of organization-level religious agendas by comparing

organizations that represent the same ethnic group. Moreover, they assuage concerns about

omitted variable bias by controlling for time-invariant features of countries and ethnic groups that

may affect the levels of government repression and corruption, two key independent variables.

Given our dichotomous outcome variable – organizations' resort to political violence – we

opt for linear probability models, rather than logistic regressions, as the latter would lead to the

loss of all observations of ethnic groups without variation on the dependent variable (i.e., without

any violent organization at any point in time), which might induce selection bias. Yet, following

Beck (2020), we report results for both the full sample and the restricted subset of ethnic groups

with variation in violence. To account for temporal dependence, we include a cubic polynomial

of organization-years without violence (Carter & Signorino, 2010). Since different observations

for the same organization are likely to have similar variances, we use Huber-White standard

errors clustered on organizations.

The EPR-Organizations Dataset

The EPR-O dataset (Vogt et al., 2021) identifies formal political organizations representing the interests of specific ethnic groups – both demographic majorities and minorities – listed in the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Vogt et al., 2015) at the national level, using either violent or non-violent means. Formal political organizations are defined as named non-state entities that recruit members and make political claims. The dataset includes a broad spectrum of organizations, including political parties, NGOs, self-determination organizations, and other political organizations. For a political organization to be considered as representing the interests of one or multiple ethnic groups, at least one of the following conditions needs to be met: 1) explicit ethnic claims in support of the rights, benefits, or well-being of one or more ethnic groups; 2) recruitment along ethnic lines; or, for political parties, 3) electoral support along ethnic lines. Currently, EPR-O covers a stratified random sample of 20 countries that experienced ethnic civil conflict and 20 that did not, from 1946 (or independence) to 2013. The total number of ethno-political organizations in the dataset is 667, representing 158 different ethnic groups in the countries listed in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

EPR-O offers several advantages over existing organization-level datasets for testing hypotheses about the relationship between religion and violence. First, it includes both violent and non-violent organizations, rather than just violent actors such as rebel groups (cf. Svensson & Nilsson, 2018). Second, going beyond the exclusive focus on self-determination (Cunningham, 2013) or religious claims (Isaacs, 2017) of other datasets, EPR-O codes a range of organizational claims. This allows us not only to compare organizations that make religious claims to those that

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do not, providing an appropriate non-religious counterfactual, but also to control for additional

demands made by organizations. Third, since EPR-O covers the entire post-WWII period (up to

2013) and includes a diverse set of countries spanning all world regions, it is better suited for

testing an integrated theoretical framework emphasizing the effects of transnational trends,

domestic context, and actor-specific attributes than datasets with narrower temporal and/or

geographic scope, such as the Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior dataset (Asal et al.,

2015). Fourth, the built-in link to the Family of Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) datasets allows us

to consider the role of time-variant ethnic group-level variables.

Violence against the Government

Our dependent variable records outbreaks of violence against the government committed by

individual organizations. The focus on onset, rather than duration/prevalence, heeds the

observation that violence, once it has erupted, tends to produce endogenous dynamics

complicating the study of its causes (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 82-83). EPR-O provides yearly codings

of whether an organization uses violence against the government, defined as intentional actions

against the state or state agents leading to loss of life or consciously accepting the possibility

thereof. Following a common approach in organization-level studies (e.g., Asal & Phillips, 2018;

Breslawski & Ives, 2019; Cunningham et al., 2012), we use this information to create an

organization-specific onset dummy variable, coded as 1 if a previously non-violent (or newly

founded) organization employed violence against the government in a given year. An

organization may experience several onsets of violence over the period of study. New outbreaks

are coded whenever an organization resorts to violence after at least two years without any

violence. Our sample contains 104 organizational onsets of violence against the government

(about 0.9% of all organization-years). Given that we are interested in the outbreak of violence, organization-years with ongoing violence are dropped from the analysis.

Organizations' Religious Agendas and the Conditions for Violence

In line with existing studies (e.g., Asal et al., 2015), we consider claims advanced by ethno-political organizations vis-à-vis the state as indicative of their political agendas. The yearly claim codings in EPR-O are based on public statements by organizations and their leaders as recorded in primary or secondary sources, including original documents and websites of organizations as well as scholarly and journalistic texts. Religious claims are defined as claims for the protection of the religious rights of a given ethnic group and/or the enhancement of the status of its religion. Examples include Jewish organizations in Russia demanding more religious freedom, Afro-Brazilian organizations challenging the discrimination of religions of African origin in Brazil, Tibetan and Uighur religious organizations in China, and Jathika Hela Urumaya, a Sinhalese political party aiming at turning Sri Lanka into a Buddhist state.

To capture the transnational ideological shift emphasized in our argument, we employ a dummy variable marking years after 1979. Figure 1 visualizes the time trends of religious claims and violence against the government. It plots over time the share of organizations making religious claims and the share of organizations using violence for both organizations that advanced religious claims and those that did not. The figure reveals that until about 1979 (the vertical line), there was a parallel upward trend in violence for both types of organizations. Interestingly, organizations without religious agendas were *more* violence-prone throughout this period. Yet, shortly after 1979, the relative frequency of political violence sharply increased for organizations making religious claims whereas other organizations became less prone to violence. Moreover, there was no stark increase in the relative number of ethno-political

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organizations with religious agendas after 1979. This suggests that the year 1979 marked a move

towards *violent* politicization of religion, providing preliminary support for hypothesis H1.

[Figure 1 about here]

In addition, we draw on the EPR-ED dataset (Bormann et al., 2017) to gauge the specific

effect of the transnational ideological shift on religious organizations from Muslim ethnic groups,

given their identity connection with the avowedly Islamic Iranian Revolution, as posited in

hypothesis H2. EPR-ED identifies the religions practiced by the members of EPR groups,

reporting for each group the three largest religious segments and their size (as a share of the

group population). In the statistical models below, we use a Muslim dummy variable indicating

whether a given organization represents an ethnic group with at least one Muslim religious

segment. In robustness checks, we used alternative dummy variables identifying organizations

affiliated with a Muslim-majority ethnic group, obtaining equivalent results.[1]

We rely on the time-variant, country-level indicator of regime corruption from the V-Dem

dataset (Sigman & Lindberg, 2018) to capture the level of corruption in the political system

referred to in hypothesis H3. The variable covers acts of embezzlement and bribery by

individuals holding executive positions as well as corruption in legislative and judicial

institutions, and ranges from 0 (low corruption) to 1 (high corruption).

Finally, we test hypotheses H4a and H4b with two indicators of religious repression. First,

we use an indicator of government treatment of specific religions from the Government Religious

Preference (GRP) 2.0 dataset (Brown, 2020). GRP measures government favoritism toward, or

disfavor against, thirty religious denominations and thus captures the mechanism of

discrimination of religious denominations of hypothesis H4a.[2] We linked GRP's country-year

continuous composite indicators of the treatment of specific religions to our organization-year

data through the ethnic groups represented by organizations. These groups' religions were

determined based on the EPR-ED dataset, according to their largest religious segment. For

example, if Sunni Muslims are the largest religious segment of ethnic group A, we assigned the

GRP value for the treatment of Sunnis in a given country-year to all organizations representing

group A in that country and year. The variable ranges from 0 to 4, with lower values indicating

more discriminatory government policies.

Second, we use V-Dem's time-variant, country-level indicator of government repression of

religious organizations (Pemstein et al., 2018). This variable refers to the degree of government

interference with the activities of independent/oppositional religious organizations. It ranges from

-3.7 to 2.6 in our sample, with higher values indicating *less* repression. The highest values denote

situations in which religious organizations are free to organize, express themselves, and criticize

the government, whereas the lowest values indicate severe government repression in the form of

persecution of real and imagined members of independent religious organizations. Thus, the

variable is well suited to capture the second theorized pathway about repression of autonomous

religious actors, as distinct from government treatment of specific religions. For example, while

the GRP codes Sunni Muslims as the preferred religious denomination in Nasser's Egypt, with a

median score of 3.5 during his reign, the V-Dem repression value is less than -2 for the same

period, indicating considerable repression of autonomous religious actors.

Control Variables

In addition to ethnic group-fixed effects, which absorb the effects of all time-invariant factors at

the group and country level, we control for various organization-level characteristics as well as

potential group- and country-level confounders that vary over time. At the organizational level,

first, we consider whether an organization made claims for self-determination in a given year

(with or without simultaneous religious claims).[3] A large body of literature focuses on self-

determination conflicts (e.g., Toft, 2006; Walter, 2006), and some studies suggest that religion is

particularly violence-prone in conjunction with self-determination agendas (e.g., Fox, 2004). Our

variable is taken from the EPR-O dataset and includes demands for secession or autonomy.[4]

Second, to capture whether organizations take advantage of democratic channels of political

participation, we include an electoral participation dummy, coded as 1 if an organization

participated in national elections or held seats in the national parliament in that year, according to

EPR-O. Third, we control for organizational age, based on organizations' founding year reported

in EPR-O, as a proxy for organizational resources and degree of institutionalization (Asal &

Rethemeyer, 2008; Horowitz, 2010).

At the ethnic-group level, we capture group-specific grievances with a political

discrimination variable from the EPR dataset indicating whether the ethnic group represented by

an organization was victim of active, intentional, and targeted exclusion from political power in a

given year (Vogt et al., 2015).[5] We also control for the number of previous civil conflicts

involving the ethnic group, based on the ACD2EPR dataset (Wucherpfennig et al., 2012), and the

logged number of other organizations claiming to represent the same ethnic group in a given

year. The latter is a common measure of inter-organizational competition in studies of intra-

movement fragmentation and political violence (e.g., Cunningham, 2013; Vogt et al., 2021).

The propensity to advance religious claims may depend on religious divisions between

ethnic groups in a country. Therefore, relying on the EPR-ED dataset, we created a time-variant

dummy for religious differences between the ethnic group(s) represented by an organization and

the country's 'ruling' ethnic group (i.e., the group EPR codes as 'dominant' or having a

'monopoly' over state power or, in cases of power-sharing, as the demographically largest senior

partner in a country-year). Our variable equals 1 if none of the religious segments of the ethnic group(s) represented by an organization overlaps with any of the religious segments of the ruling ethnic group, and 0 if there is overlap of at least one religious segment.

At the country level, we control for population size (logged) and economic development (measured as GDP per capita). Finally, we account for time trends using a calendar year variable. Table A1 in the appendix provides descriptive statistics for the main independent variables. All right-hand side variables are lagged one year in the analysis.

Between Transnational Zeitgeist and Local Conditions: Empirical Analysis

Table 2 presents our regression results. We first evaluate the direct effects of all key explanatory variables on ethno-political organizations' use of violence against the government. The ambivalence of the sacred thesis suggests the absence of a general relationship between organizations' religious claims and political violence. The results of Model 1 corroborate this expectation. The coefficient of the religious claims variable is positive, but far from significant. The same is true for all other key explanatory variables: the change in the transnational zeitgeist, reaching maturity at the end of the 1970s, did not generally affect ethno-political organizations' propensity to violence against the government; corruption in the political system and religious repression have no effect on the risk of violence when considering all ethno-political organizations; and we find no evidence that organizations representing Muslim ethnic groups are generally more likely to use violence.

[Table 2 about here]

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Model 2 interacts the religious claims variable with the 1979 dummy to test hypothesis H1. The coefficient of the interaction term is positive and statistically significant. This confirms the descriptive pattern shown in Figure 1: ethno-political organizations making religious claims have been significantly more violence-prone after the transnational ideological shift of the late 1970s compared to before. Figure 2 visualizes this finding, plotting the marginal effect of organizations' religious claims on the likelihood of engaging in violence in the period up to 1979 and afterwards. It shows that organizations with religious agendas have a 1.2% higher probability of violence than those without – an increase that exceeds the baseline likelihood of organizational violence in our sample. This result is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Asal et al., 2017; Vogt et al., 2021) indicating that 'radical' agendas increase the probability of organizations using violence: though religious agendas per se are not particularly radical, in the post-1979 ideological environment they are more likely to be connected to aspirations for fundamental change of the political system or to be perceived as such by government authorities.

As a placebo test, Figure 2 also plots the effects of religious claims as a function of two alternative historical cut-off points, the end of the Cold War and 9/11.[6] The figure shows that the post-1979 ideological environment had a distinct effect on the propensity of religious organizations to violence, compared to subsequent world historical events that conceivably could also have affected the transnational zeitgeist. In addition, Figure A1 in the appendix plots the coefficients of the interaction terms between the religious claims variable and additional alternative cut-off points (moving in five-year intervals), providing further evidence that the end of the 1970s represented a distinct watershed moment for violence by religious organizations.

[Figure 2 about here]

As our argument envisions the possibility of both genuine and instrumental adoption of religion by political organizations, this finding may be the result of two causal processes. In the first one, organization leaders embrace religious agendas out of genuine religious commitments, which, in the post-1979 era, makes their organizations more likely to use force in pursuit of radical political change and in response to government repression. In the second one, organization leaders with revolutionary ambitions instrumentally don the religious mantle under the expectation that, in the post-1979 ideological environment, religious agendas would be distinctively useful in an intense (and potentially violent) struggle against the government.

While not conclusive, the evidence at our disposal allows a tentative assessment of these two processes. Table A2 in the appendix lists all religious organizations in EPR-O that engaged in violence against the government after 1979, revealing two key points: first, a clear majority of these organizations (28 out of 34) were founded after 1979 and advanced religious agendas from their founding year;[7] second, none of these organizations had engaged in violence against the government prior to 1979. Thus, our finding of increased violent tendencies after 1979 for religious organizations appears to be primarily driven by the behaviour of newly founded religious organizations rather than by existing organizations that were already inclined to violence and strategically embraced religion in the new ideological environment. Moreover, using regression analysis, we find no indication that prior engagement in violence, a proxy for violent tendencies, affects the probability that organizations advance religious demands in the post-1979 era (Table A7). Taken together, this evidence casts doubt on the idea that the causal processes underpinning our findings involve merely instrumental adoption of religious agendas by violence-prone organizations.

Our integrated framework posits that the effect of the new transnational zeitgeist depends on actor-specific attributes and domestic contextual factors. Thus, Models 3-6 employ triple

interactions of the religious claims variable and the 1979 dummy with each of our local

conditional variables – the Muslim ethnic group dummy and the indicators of political corruption

and religious repression. Figure 3 depicts the results by plotting the conditional marginal effects

of organizations' religious claims on the likelihood of engaging in violence against the

government.

With respect to hypothesis H2, we find that the 1979 effect is mostly driven by religious

organizations representing Muslim ethnic groups (Model 3 and top panels of Figure 3). While

organizations from Muslim ethnic groups with religious agendas were *less* likely to engage in

violence than those *without* religious agendas before 1979, this first difference becomes positive

and statistically significant after the transnational ideological shift. In other words, the post-1979

transnational zeitgeist brought about a distinct transformation of the relationship between religion

and violence among ethno-political organizations of Muslim groups, in line with our argument

about the effect of their identity connection with the Iranian Revolution. We also find a small

increase in the risk of violence by religious organizations from non-Muslim ethnic groups after

1979, but the estimated effects of religious agendas on the risk of violence are not significantly

different from 0 for these organizations. Overall, these results lend support to hypothesis H2: the

close connection between Islam and the Iranian Revolution appears to make the new

transnational zeitgeist particularly influential for Muslim religious organizations.

[Figure 3 about here]

Furthermore, we find that the new transnational zeitgeist has changed the relationship

between political corruption and the use of violence against the government by religious

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organizations (Model 4 and second-from-top panels of Figure 3). Up to 1979, the relationship is negative, with religious organizations surprisingly being less likely to engage in violence (compared to organizations without religious agendas) at higher levels of corruption. In line with hypothesis H3, this changes after 1979, when higher levels of corruption in the political system correspond to a higher risk of religious organizations engaging in violence against the government. At the 25th percentile of the corruption variable, the effect of religious claims on anti-government violence is close to 0 in the post-1979 period. Yet, at the 75th percentile, organizations with religious agendas are 2.6% more likely to engage in violence compared to those without religious agendas – an increase almost three times as large as the baseline probability of violence in our sample.

Results on religious repression are mixed. On the one hand, there is no clear-cut evidence that the new transnational zeitgeist altered the relationship between discrimination of religious denominations and anti-government violence by ethno-religious organizations (Model 5 and second-from-bottom panels of Figure 3). The marginal effect of religious claims on violence is slightly larger for organizations representing discriminated religious denominations than for organizations of denominations favored by the state in the post-1979 period, but the confidence interval includes 0 for almost the entire the range of the conditional variable. Thus, we cannot reject the null hypothesis corresponding to hypothesis H4a.

On the other hand, Model 6 reveals a significant interaction between religious claims, the 1979 dummy, and government repression of religious organizations. The bottom panels of Figure 3 show that the relationship between repression of religious organizations and the propensity of ethno-political organizations with a religious agenda to engage in violence against the government is relatively weak and statistically insignificant in the years up to 1979. However, afterwards these organizations become more likely to use violence (compared to organizations

without a religious agenda) if governments engage in harsh repression. An intensification of repression from the 75th to the 25th percentile more than triples the risk of violence by organizations with religious agendas. Hence, we find evidence for one of the two theorized pathways leading from religious repression to political violence, corresponding to hypothesis H4b: our results suggest that the change in the transnational zeitgeist has fundamentally altered the risk of violent backlash specifically when governments repress autonomous religious organizations.[8]

The distribution of the repression of religious organizations variable (dotted line) for all observations in the sample, at the bottom of the two corresponding panels in Figure 3, does not provide a clear picture regarding the change in repression levels after 1979. However, when focusing on organization-years with religious claims, we find a statistically significant difference in the level of religious repression between the two time periods, indicating higher levels of repression of religious organizations after 1979 compared to before (average values of .75 vs. .59) precisely in those contexts where ethno-political organizations make religious claims. This amounts to suggestive evidence that governments became worried about the revolutionary threat posed by religious agendas in the new transnational ideological environment, which in turn unleashed cycles of repression and violent responses by religious organizations.[9]

Importantly, neither the corruption nor the repression effect is specific to Muslim organizations. Models A3-A6 in Table A4 in the appendix reproduce the analysis of Models 4 and 6 of Table 2 with separate samples of organizations representing Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic groups. We find similar effects of corruption and religious repression conditional on the transnational zeitgeist for both, although the standard errors are larger due to the much-reduced sample sizes. In other words, the effect of these local contextual conditions has experienced a

comparable fundamental change, as a result of the new zeitgeist, for both Muslim and non-Muslim religious organizations.

Among the control variables, we find a robust positive effect of the EPR discrimination variable on the likelihood of violence, indicating that government mistreatment of ethnic groups increases the risk of organization-level violence regardless of specific agendas. We also find a significant positive effect of self-determination claims, in line with the literature suggesting that self-determination disputes are prone to violent escalation (Toft, 2006; Walter, 2006). Taken together with existing evidence on competition and violence in self-determination movements (e.g., Cunningham, 2013), the fact that the commonly used measure of competition – the number of other organizations claiming to represent the same ethnic group – does not reach statistical significance in our broader sample of ethno-political organizations suggests that ethnic outbidding dynamics may be subdued outside the specific context of self-determination disputes. As expected, electoral participation decreases the likelihood of an organization's resort to force. Furthermore, older organizations and those representing groups with a history of civil conflict are less likely to resort to violence against the government.

The online appendix presents a series of robustness checks. We (1) use an alternative dependent variable of violence onset that includes violence against civilians (Table A5); (2) restrict the analysis to the subset of ethnic groups exhibiting variation on the dependent variable (Table A6); (3) address potential reverse causation in the relationship between repression and organizational violence (Models A21-A22 in Table A8); (4) control for countries' oil dependence (Models A23-A25 in Table A8); and (5) perform a placebo test replacing the religious claims variable with a different claims variable from EPR-O denoting organizational demands for groups' *language* rights (Table A9). Our results remain robust in all models.

Conclusions

We have introduced and tested a theoretical framework integrating transnational and local drivers of violence by religious organizations. We argue that the new transnational zeitgeist calling for radical political change in line with religious principles, which reached maturation in the late 1970s, created fertile ground for the violence-endorsing side of religion. Yet, we also posit that the effect of the ideological shift on the use of violence by religious organizations depends on actor-specific attributes and domestic contextual factors. The effect should be particularly strong for Muslim religious organizations, as one of the most salient manifestations of the new zeitgeist – the Iranian Revolution – was openly Islamic. Moreover, religious organizations facing highly corrupt and repressive governments should be distinctively responsive to the new ideological environment.

Based on new data covering a more diverse sample of ethno-political organizations and a longer time span than existing studies, our findings provide strong empirical support for the theorized interplay between transnational zeitgeist, domestic context, and actor-specific attributes. Ethno-political organizations making religious claims have been significantly more violence-prone than organizations without such agendas after 1979, but not before. As hypothesized, this post-1979 effect of religious agendas on organizations' use of violence varies according to local conditions that shape how actors on the ground relate to the new transnational ideological environment: unlike in the previous era, after 1979 higher levels of political corruption and repression of religious organizations correspond to higher risk of religious organizations engaging in violence against the government.

To our knowledge, the present study offers the first piece of large-N evidence in support of the notion that the new transnational zeitgeist bestows religious organizations a comparative advantage in highlighting widespread corruption to mobilize for violent anti-government action,

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which we theorized to be a function of the enhanced power of religious anti-corruption frames after 1979 and the fact that widespread corruption confirms the ideological theme of the moral failings of insufficiently religious governments. Moreover, our finding of an interaction effect of religious repression and the post-1979 ideological environment provides systematic evidence in support of theoretical claims about a similar interplay of local and global forces that previous studies had advanced but not systematically tested due to data limitations (e.g., Toft et al., 2011). This finding also dovetails with individual-level evidence that state control and/or repression of independent-minded religious actors can push them to embrace jihadi ideologies (Nielsen, 2017).

The results support our expectation about Muslim religious organizations, indicating that the post-1979 ideological environment has brought about a particularly sharp transformation of the relationship between religion and violence in the Muslim world. While organizations from Muslim ethnic groups with religious agendas were less likely to engage in violence than those *without* religious agendas before 1979, the opposite is true in the new transnational zeitgeist. The effect for non-Muslim organizations goes in the same direction but does not reach statistical significance. At the same time, we find that political corruption and religious repression in the post-1979 ideological climate increase the risk of violence by Muslim and non-Muslim organizations alike.

Thus, our findings challenge arguments postulating a general violent tendency for Islam due to, for example, a lack of separation between state and religion (e.g., Toft, 2007). Instead, the results are in line with the ambivalence of the sacred thesis (Appleby, 2000), positing that Islam, just like other world religions, harbours competing discourses about the legitimacy of violence. While the transnational zeitgeist influences this competition between different perspectives within the same religion, its influence on which discourse gains the upper hand varies according to local conditions. Furthermore, while our results reveal that religious agendas have inspired

violent mobilization by non-state actors in the post-1979 period, they should not be interpreted as implying that religion has disproportionately contributed to violence in this period. In fact, states continue to be responsible for the bulk of political violence worldwide, often in pursuit of secular agendas.

Our empirical focus on a sample of ethno-political organizations has enabled us to build on a large body of scholarship exploring the religion-violence relationship in the realm of ethno-politics and to leverage organization-level variation in religious agendas and violence (e.g., Asal et al., 2015; Breslawski & Ives, 2019; Isaacs, 2016). Nevertheless, future analyses should include non-ethnic organizations to assess whether the violent politicization of religion follows similar patterns outside the ethnic politics context. Moreover, future studies should empirically examine the causal mechanisms of our argument, especially about the framing and mobilization efforts of leaders of religious organizations. We posit that leaders justify endorsements of violence in the post-1979 period with references to the corrupt and repressive nature of insufficiently religious governments. Recent research relies on quantitative text analysis of the writings of religious elites on the internet to study the determinants of their ideological outlooks (Nielsen, 2017). Similar methods could be employed to analyze the use of specific frames by religious elites in mobilization processes across different contexts.

In line with existing studies, our outcome variable is the organization-level onset of violence, which captures both small- and large-scale violent outbreaks. Thus, exploring the role of religion in processes of escalation from low-level violence to outright civil war represents an interesting direction for research. Furthermore, our theoretical framework could help shed light on the peacebuilding side of religion postulated by the ambivalence of the sacred thesis. In particular, future studies may explore how local drivers of religious peace activism, highlighted in existing research (e.g., Orjuela, 2020; Vüllers, 2021), are influenced by variable global forces.

For policymakers our findings imply, first, that governments should be wary of 'profiling' religious organizations for their supposedly distinct proclivity to violence, given the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy: the expectation of violence might make governments unwilling to engage in serious dialogue and instead prompt them to adopt repressive measures, which in turn could convince organizations and their constituencies that violence is the only feasible path for achieving their political goals. Second, initiatives to reduce local levels of political corruption and religious repression, besides being desirable in and of themselves, are likely to be helpful for preventing religious organizations from turning violent in the current transnational zeitgeist.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1: EPR-Organizations sample

Ethnic civil conflict countries	Countries without ethnic civil conflicts
Angola	Algeria
Azerbaijan	Australia
Bangladesh	Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Botswana
Burundi	Brazil
China	El Salvador
Iraq	Guinea-Bissau
Israel	Lithuania
Macedonia	Madagascar
Myanmar	Malawi
Pakistan	Malaysia
Russia	Mongolia
South Sudan	Mozambique
Spain	Namibia
Sri Lanka	Paraguay
Tajikistan	Peru
Trinidad and Tobago	Serbia (2006-)
Turkey	Taiwan
Yemen	Tanzania
Zimbabwe	Turkmenistan

Note: Ethnic civil conflict countries determined based on the ACD2EPR dataset.

Table 2: Regression results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Religious claims	.005	-.025*	-.015	.039*	-.044	-.025
	(.005)	(.012)	(.014)	(.017)	(.042)	(.014)
1979 dummy	-.010	-.019*	-.019	.020	-.101**	-.025*
	(.007)	(.008)	(.010)	(.012)	(.036)	(.010)
Muslim dummy	-.012	-.010	-.014	-.013	-.010	-.011
	(.013)	(.011)	(.018)	(.013)	(.011)	(.012)
Corruption	-.001	-.006	-.005	.098*	.012	-.004
	(.016)	(.016)	(.017)	(.041)	(.017)	(.017)
Discrimination of rel. denomination	.003	.003	.002	.006	-.033*	.007
	(.012)	(.012)	(.012)	(.012)	(.016)	(.012)
Repression of rel. organizations	.002	.002	.002	.001	.002	-.003
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.007)
Religious claims * 1979 dummy		.037**	.013	-.055**	.069	.051**
		(.012)	(.013)	(.017)	(.040)	(.016)
Religious claims * Muslim dummy			-.023			
			(.022)			
1979 dummy * Muslim dummy			-.001			
			(.016)			
Religious claims * 1979 dummy * Muslim dummy			.056*			
			(.024)			
Religious claims * corruption				-.222**		
				(.070)		
1979 dummy * corruption				-.122**		
				(.042)		
Religious claims * 1979 dummy * corruption				.276***		
				(.070)		
Religious claims * discrimination					.009	
					(.020)	
1979 dummy * discrimination					.037*	
					(.015)	
Religious claims * 1979 dummy * discrimination					-.015	
					(.019)	
Religious claims * repression						.006
						(.008)
1979 dummy * repression						.008
						(.007)
Religious claims * 1979 dummy * repression						-.022*
						(.010)
N other organizations (logged)	.011	.011	.011	.013*	.008	.011
	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)	(.007)	(.006)
Self-determination claims	.019***	.018***	.018***	.018***	.018***	.018***
	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)
Discriminated ethnic group	.033**	.035**	.033**	.031**	.031**	.034**
	(.012)	(.012)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)
Ethnic group's war history	-.034***	-.034***	-.035***	-.034***	-.035***	-.033***
	(.007)	(.007)	(.007)	(.008)	(.007)	(.007)

|						
GDP per capita (logged)	.004	.003	.004	.005	.008	.001
	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)
Country population (logged)	-.007	-.014	-.015	.002	-.009	-.006
	(.010)	(.009)	(.010)	(.011)	(.010)	(.011)
Calendar year	.000	.000	.000	-.000	-.000	.000
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Religious difference to group in power	.004	.007	.010	.014	.007	.004
	(.009)	(.008)	(.008)	(.010)	(.008)	(.009)
Electoral participation	-.015***	-.015***	-.015***	-.017***	-.016***	-.016***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Organization's age	-.000*	-.000*	-.000*	-.000**	-.000	-.000**
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Cubic polynomial of years w/out violence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	.088	-.086	-.118	.218	.386	-.026
	(.483)	(.480)	(.495)	(.480)	(.501)	(.507)
Ethnic group-fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	12,092	12,092	12,092	12,092	12,092	12,092
Adjusted R^2	.082	.084	.086	.090	.086	.086

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered on organizations in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Figure 1: Temporal trends of religious claims and violence by ethno-political organizations
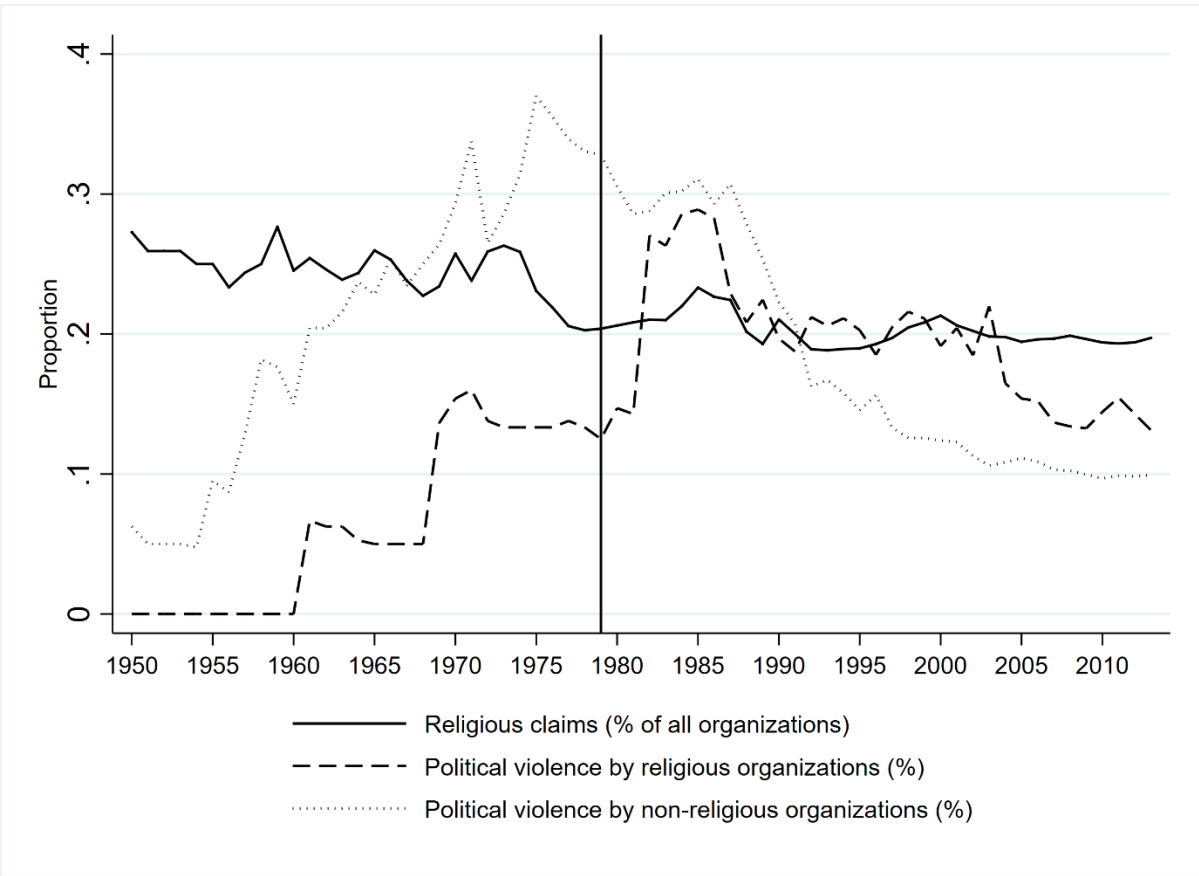

Notes: The solid line denotes the yearly proportion of organizations making religious claims. The dashed and dotted lines refer to the yearly share of organizations with and without religious claims, respectively, engaging in violence against the government.

Figure 2: Religion, ideological environments, and violence
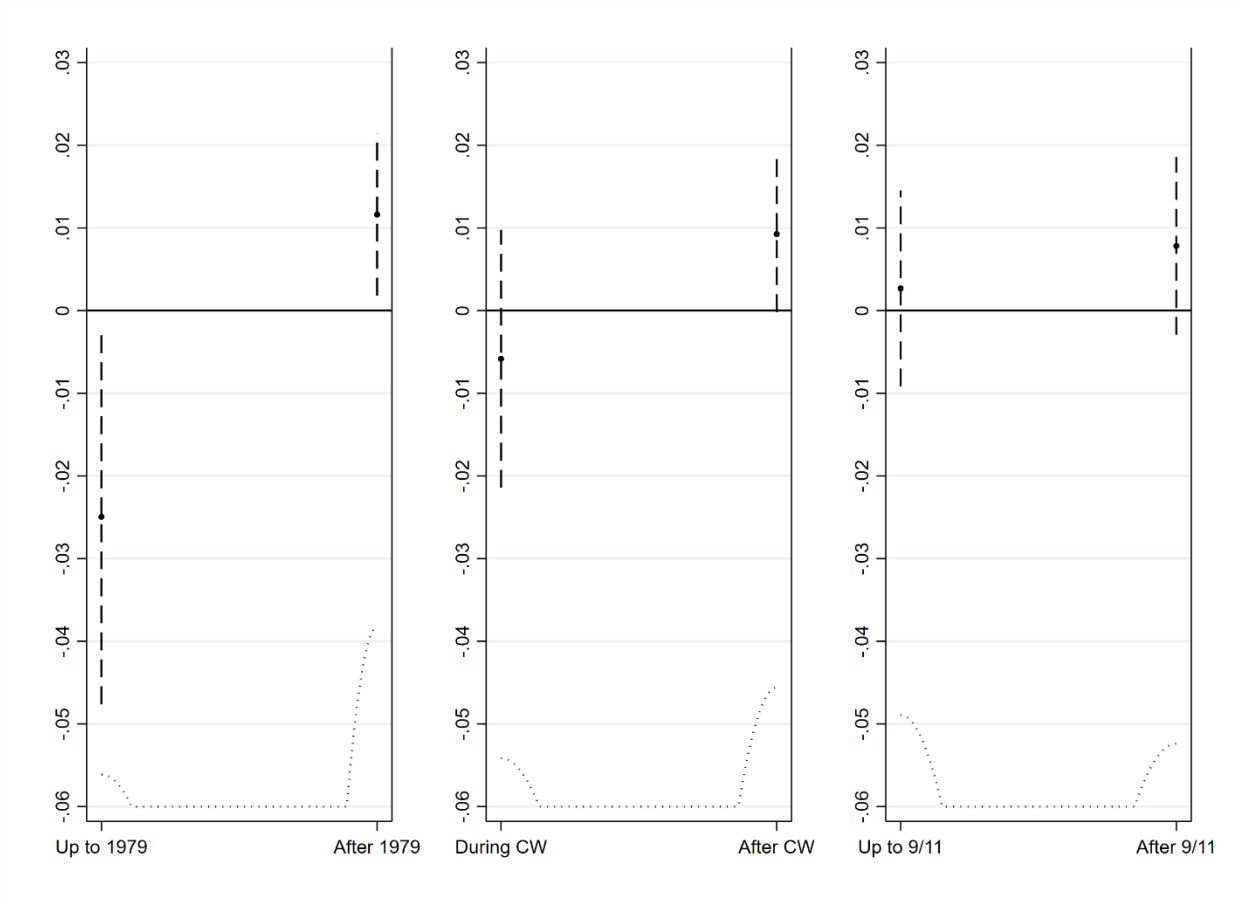
Notes: Based on Model 2 in Table 2 and Models A1-A2 in Table A3 in the appendix. The graphs show the marginal effects of religious claims by ethno-political organizations on their likelihood of using violence against the government before and after three historical turning points – 1979, the end of the Cold War ("CW"), and 9/11. Large dots denote mean effects; dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals; dotted lines show the distributions of the conditional variables on the x-axis.

Figure 3: Transnational ideological environment, local conditions, and violence by organizations with religious claims
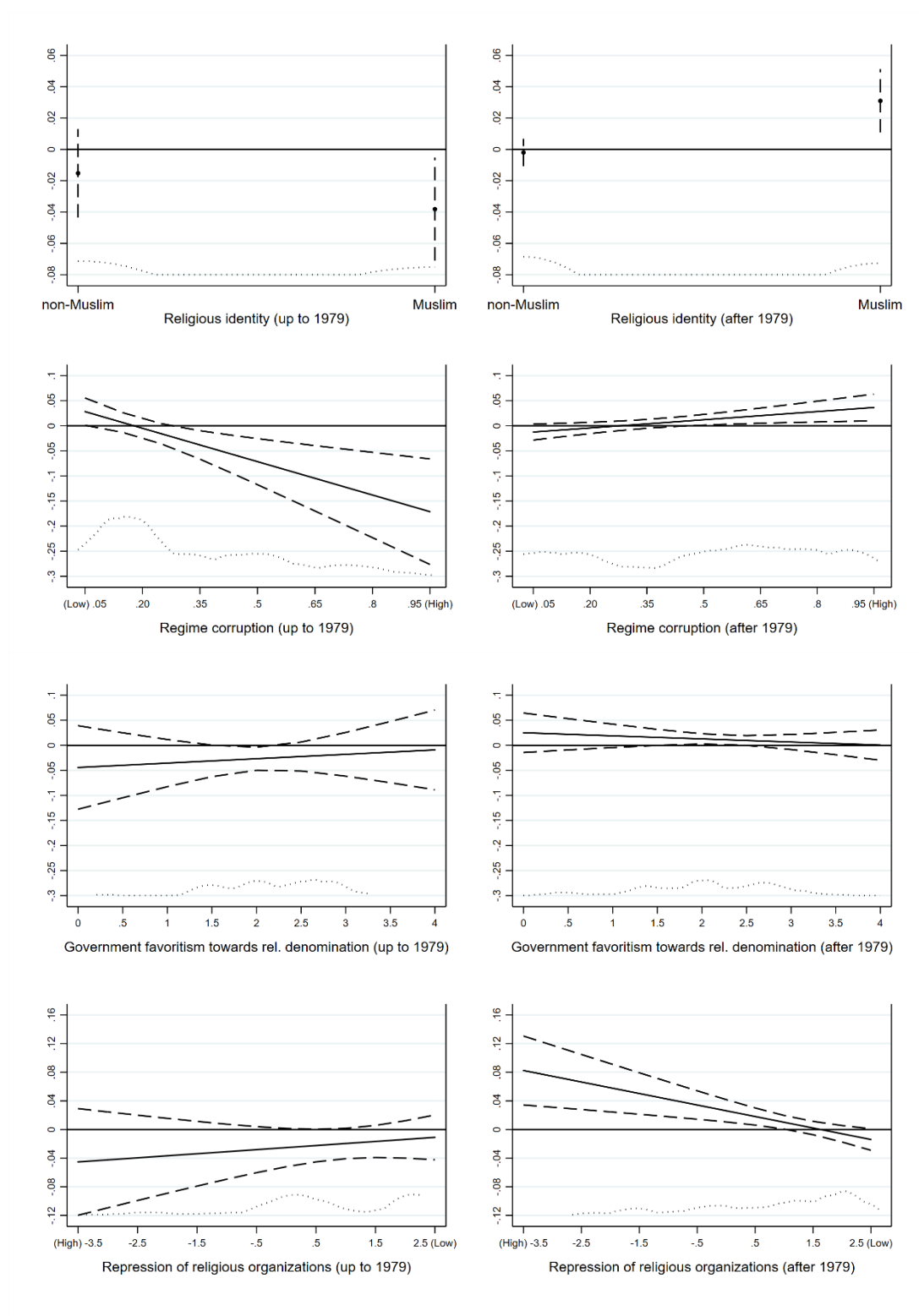
Notes: Based on Models 3-6 in Table 2. The graphs show the marginal effects of religious claims by ethno-political organizations on their likelihood of using violence against the government as a function of the conditional variables shown on the x-axis, in the years up to 1979 and afterwards. Large dots and solid lines denote mean effects; dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals; dotted lines show the distributions of the conditional variables on the x-axis.

[1] In the case of organizations representing multiple ethnic groups (about 7.5% of all observations), we tested two alternative dummy variables. The first one focuses on the largest ethnic group represented by a given organization and is coded as 1 if the total size of all Muslim segments of that group exceeds 50% of the group's population. The second alternative variable considers all ethnic groups represented by a given organization, weighting the size of the Muslim segments of all groups by these groups' sizes, and is coded as 1 if the weighted size exceeds 50%. We also tested a continuous indicator of the relative size of the Muslim population of an ethnic group.

[2] While the Religion and State Project, Minorities Module (Fox, 2020) contains fine-grained information on state treatment of religion, the dataset's limited temporal coverage (from 1990 onwards) prevents a test of the impact of the shift in the transnational zeitgeist. Moreover, the dataset exclusively focuses on religious minorities whereas our arguments apply regardless of religious groups' size.

[3] Claim codings are not mutually exclusive, i.e., an organization can pursue multiple agendas in a year. The pairwise correlation between religious and self-determination claims is close to zero (r=-0.01).

[4] The Serbian Radical Party of Republika Srpska in Bosnia and the Civic United Front in Tanzania are examples of organizations advancing demands for secession and autonomy, respectively, on behalf of their ethnic constituencies.

[5] When an organization represents multiple ethnic groups, we use the maximum group value for group-level variables. Thus, if an organization represents groups A and B, and the political discrimination dummy is coded as 1 for A and 0 for B in a given year, we assigned the value 1 to the variable for the organization in that year.

[6] See Models A1-A2 in Table A3 in the appendix.

[7] The only organization in the list founded before 1979 (in 1951) and making religious claims for the first time afterward (in 1980) is Iraq's Baath Party.

[8] This is broadly consistent with other organization-level studies' findings about a violence-inducing effect of government repression (Asal et al., 2013; Asal et al., 2017), though, notably, our results indicate that for religious organizations this effect depends on the transnational zeitgeist.

[9] Regression analysis reveals an equivalent effect of religious claim-making on religious repression in the post-1979 period. Specifically, using the repression of religious organizations indicator as dependent variable in the same model specification and interacting the religious claims variable with the 1979 dummy, we find a significant effect of religious claims on the level of repression after 1979.

Authors' bios

Costantino Pischedda is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Miami. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Columbia University and a Masters in Strategic Studies from the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. In 2015-16 he was Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Princeton University's Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance. Dr. Pischedda's research interests cover a broad range of topics at the intersection of International Relations, Security Studies, and Comparative Politics: civil war dynamics (in particular relations among rebel groups), counterinsurgency, ethnic conflict, religion and violence, civilian victimization and terrorism, non-violent resistance, natural resources and state-minority disputes, and coercive diplomacy. Dr. Pischedda is the author of a book on inter-rebel fighting with Columbia University Press and articles in various academic outlets, including *International Studies Quarterly*, *Security Studies*, *International Security*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *Contemporary Security Policy*.

Manuel Vogt holds a PhD in political science from ETH Zürich and is currently an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at University College London (UCL). Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative methods, his research stands at the intersection of international relations and comparative politics, with a particular focus on non-state actors and contentious politics in multiethnic countries. Dr. Vogt is the author of *Mobilization and Conflict in Multiethnic States* (Oxford University Press, 2019) and articles in *International Organization*,

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