

# Cold and Calculated Faith

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*Religion and Intra-State Conflict in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*

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## **Abstract**

*The former USSR and the Eastern Bloc contain a plethora of ethnicities, religions, and languages that make up nations. However, the nations are not concurrent with their state boundaries, and separatist conflicts are common. This thesis demonstrates that when the conflicts are drawn around religious cleavages, tactics used by both sides result in a greater loss of life. This is due, it suggests, to the ability of religious institutions to solve intragroup collective action problems, and in the case of post-communist states in particular, to serve as a surrogate and more potent form of nationalism for groups disenchanted with nationalist discourse. Additionally, the thesis explores whether, in cases where the two sides have drastically different religious preferences, separatists are less likely to accept a compromise as resolution, such as federal autonomy within the parent state or economic, civil and political rights concessions. Thus, the duration of the conflict will be extended. Case studies support both claims, while regression analysis supports the conflict intensity claim.*

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## Sec 1: Introduction

Prior to the secularization of Europe and the rise of nationalism in the 1700s, it was religion, not nationalism and patriotism, that often served as the mobilizing agent for politics, including movements of violence. In the 1700s, divinely ordained rule was invalidated and power became vested in the state and people, de jure through constitutions and de facto through nationalism tying the people to the fatherland or motherland. Religion in Western Europe became removed from politics as the world industrialized. It was an element of private rather than public life, heralded off by scholars such as Marx. While treating it as a characteristic as of ethnicity and nationalism, academic discourse assigned religion to an apolitical role and eventual obsolescence as an explanatory variable.

However, in modern times it is obvious that religion has again become relevant, both as a response to encroaching westernization and as an acceptable basis for government. One would be hard pressed to find a day that a story related to religion does not show up in newspaper headlines. These stories are often about violence; since the 1980s religious nationalist groups have become increasingly responsible for violent conflicts compared to their secular alternatives (Fox 2004). In the United States, the focus is usually on Islam, but when an international perspective is adopted it is evident that Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and many other religions have their own violent clashes, often in the form of violent separatism. A veritable hotbed of both religious and secular separatist conflicts

exists in the former Soviet Union and its satellite states. The most heated of these conflicts appear to occur along cultural fault lines drawn by religion.

Samuel Huntington (1993; 1997) has argued that the end of the Cold War released the previously muffled potential of religion to cause violence, enabling the “clash of civilizations” that will take place along the fault lines of ten civilizations, in large part separated by religion (Islam and Orthodoxy get their own civilizations, which share a border in the southern part of the former Eastern Bloc). Islam, one of Huntington’s civilizations that will be examined in this study is a “challenger civilization”, or one to which economic, political, and military power is shifting and thus is primed for conflict. The salience of Huntington’s argument is clear; Google Scholar marks Huntington’s 1992 article as being cited 10472 times in the academic literature. His book has been translated into 33 languages. Despite the massive amount of criticism that Huntington has received, his work has been instrumental in bringing religion back into the academic discourse as a potential cause for violence.

On the surface, Huntington’s thesis seems to be obviously applicable in the former USSR itself, where the past bond of communism has dissolved, leaving Orthodox Christians and Muslim groups rubbing shoulders. Despite 70 years of religious repression and low levels of religious freedom throughout the region, there has been a clear religious resurgence, seemingly going against the religious markets theory (Cipriani 1994; Greeley 1994; Norris and Inglehart 2004). There is little question that this plethora of identities placed within arbitrarily drawn geographic territories has led to many separatist movements, including those in

Nagorno-Karabakh, Srpska Krajina, Abkhazia, Adzharia, South Ossetia, Transdnistria, Gagauzia, Gorno-Badakhshan, Chechnya, Republika Srpska, Kosovo and more. Yet, no sharp dichotomy exists between Orthodoxy and Islam. Moscow has supported Muslim Abkhazia, Georgia has harbored Chechen Jihadists, Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh relies on Iran economically, and there have been intra-religious conflicts, such as when Orthodox Gagauzia attempting to secede from their Orthodox neighbors, the Moldovans, over liturgical, linguistic and ethnic fault lines (Marsh 2007). Additionally, the literature on the topic (including Huntington) has neglected to sufficiently analyze the effect that religion has *within* and *after* conflicts, instead looking at religion as a catalyst for the outbreak of conflict.

It seems that the conditions created by the fall of the Soviet Union create unique circumstances that allow forces such as religion to fill an institutional and sociological vacuum of power and control. The former communist bloc, however, is not unique in providing these conditions, and the results of this study have implications for civil conflict after the fall of other major states and empires.

This thesis will explore the relationship between religion and intrastate conflict in the former communist bloc. Do religious cleavages increase violence in intrastate conflicts? Do religious cleavages protract conflicts? How does the fall of empire, particularly the Soviet Union, alter the role of religion in conflict?

## Sec. 2: Literature Critique

Are religious conflicts more violent than secular conflicts? Are religious belligerents less likely to compromise and abate their aims to find a peaceable end to conflict? These are questions with worldwide significance during the modern religious resurgence. However, they are especially salient in Eastern Europe, where secular states, Islamic groups, and some of the most ancient Orthodox Christian and Jewish communities in the world suddenly share borders after decades of religious repression under communist rule. Ethnic groups, finding themselves within a state that is not congruent with their nation, resort to violence to fight perceived oppression and gain autonomy. That many of the violent civil wars and conflicts within the former Eastern Bloc since the early 1990s have been ethnic is not debated within the literature. However, the specific effect of religion—an element of ethnicity that is often drawn upon rhetorically, has a complex institutional structure that permeates daily life, and presents lofty propositions of eternal reward for adherents—has barely received any attention as a explanatory variable for the levels of violence and the outcomes of these conflicts. Rather, for decades and up until very recently, academics have largely shied away from paying any attention to the role of religion in conflict.

Relegating religion to eventual obsolescence dates back to scholars ranging from Karl Marx to Max Weber (Appleby 1994). Some contend that this is a natural result of the now outdated modernization and secularization theories. Others



acknowledge that more attention should be paid to religion but as a secondary correlating factor that is a component of nationalism, rather than as an explanatory variable in and of itself. However, even within the literature that acknowledges religion as a political force, little has been done empirically, and what has been done often lacks credibility, most often by failing to adequately define religious differences between groups. The qualitative literature also tends to ignore religion; entire books have been written on ethnic conflict in the Eastern Europe, and religion may not even be found in the indices.

This thesis will attempt to separate religion from ethno-nationalism, showing that it can provide utility for behavior within conflict separate from secular nationalism. Further, it will attempt to go further than most of the literature on ethnic conflict by demonstrating that religion does increase violence within conflict as it becomes a locus for mobilization and a banner that people fight behind, even if it is not the original *casus belli*.

The former Soviet Union and its satellite states form a prime region for testing this theory. Under the open policies of *glasnost* instituted under Mikhail Gorbachev, nationalist parties began to win elections throughout the Union. As new nationalist politicians and their constituents began demanding independence, they influenced each other, resulting in a violent tidal wave of ethnification<sup>1</sup> across the

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<sup>1</sup> Ethnification, or the permeation of ethnicity and ethnic differences into political discourse and elections, in this case also refers to the literal creation of imagined ethnic nations and the symbolism required to support nationalism and the nation

region. This resulted in the rise of nationalisms that contributed to the downfall of the USSR (Beissinger 2002). For over 70 years prior to the differentiation that came with growing nationalist sentiments, the government had been suppressing religion and propagating “scientific atheism” (Greeley 1994). Nevertheless, since 1970 over 100 million people in the region have joined religious groups for the first time (Froese 2004). This religious resurgence has occurred under tight religious regulation and a lack of “supply” in the religious market, contradicting Iannaccone’s theory that free religious competition drives religious growth, potentially reversing the causality (Iannaccone 1996). This has created strong religious monopolies within the fledgling states that enjoy preferential treatment from their governments, a situation that greatly marginalizes minority faiths (Froese 2004). This thesis contends that this is one of the historical factors that has unlocked the potential for violence and separatism among both Islamic and Eastern Orthodox faiths in the region.

Academics who have studied the role of religion within conflicts in the Eastern Bloc fall into four broad categories. Scholars such as Svante Cornell and Valery Tishkov deny any significant role that religion plays within conflicts unless religion is the direct cause of conflict and the reason it continues to be fought (Cornell 1998). I shall label them *rejectionists*. The second stance, taken by the *ethno-centrists* and seen in Horowitz’s work, argues for the importance of religion

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state. For a prominent case study on Estonia, see Ernest Gellner’s 1996 lecture, “Do Nations Have Navels?”

but in no uniform way and subservient to the broader category of ethnicity. The third group, the *Islamic exceptionalists*, contends that fundamentalist Islam has unique qualities, separate from those exhibited by Orthodox Christianity, that allow it to supplant Marxism as a “faith” and political bond (Gellner 1995).<sup>2</sup> The final approach, evident in Christopher Marsh’s work and referred to as the *religious conflictualists*, argues that religious differences, while not necessarily a catalyst for conflict, can become a primary cause that exacerbates and *legitimizes* violence as conflict proceeds (Marsh 2007).

### Sec. 2.1: Rejectionists

Some scholars outright ignore or reject the role of religion in influencing conflict. Valery Tishkov denies that religion played a significant role in Chechnya’s war for independence from Russia, given the low levels of adherence to Islam during the Soviet era and the incompatibility of Wahhabi Arab culture and Chechen culture (Tishkov 2004, p. 179). This logic is flawed, primarily because it neglects the influence of hundreds of years of Islamic cultures on Chechnya. An additional problem is that he treats statistics of adherence to Islam during the Soviet Union at face value, whereas in reality there is great potential for preference falsification and exaggerated figures. We know that, due to official pressures, such statistics are highly inaccurate. Respondents felt pressure to underreport their religiosity and

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<sup>2</sup> Gellner speaks briefly about other religions, claiming that Islam’s resistance to secularization, among other factors, sets it apart. Generally, these scholars claim that Islam has a unique capacity for violence, and that other religions can either only match under certain conditions or not at all.

religious affiliation. Others saw results that suggested there were few religious adherents, and without the awareness that there was a common desire for change, also did not accurately report their faith (Kuran 1995).

A similar problem within the literature occurs when scholars code religion in such a strict way that it is not considered to be involved in a conflict unless it is the primary and base cause of the conflict. This is seen in the work of Kjell Nordquist and Svante Cornell, who argue that religion is not a factor in the conflicts in Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Abkhazia. The problem is that although few conflicts are *primarily* based around religion, religion often plays a strong role as a mobilizing factor that, I contend, fundamentally alters behavior within the conflict and potential outcomes. As such, it is a shallow analysis that discounts the religious variable simply because it is not always at the forefront of the conflict being analyzed.

Defining religious conflict as a situation where religion is “on the agenda of the conflict,” and in which “the issue of the conflict or the conflict [itself] must be understood in clearly religious terms, by at least one of the sides” is overly restrictive (Cornell 1998). It is easy to imagine wars in which religion is clearly important, even in a direct way to many combatants, but does not serve as a *casus belli* or appear on the official agenda of the state or rebel combatants. Utilizing an overly restrictive definition eliminates any descriptive utility of religion. To avoid such pitfalls, this study will instead focus on religious differences between belligerents.

## Sec. 2.2: Ethno-centrists

The second approach, which I will call ethno-centrism, pays attention to religion as an intensifier of violence and political institution but still subsumes it under the broader umbrella of ethnicity and nationalism. Horowitz does not provide any particular outcome or behavior that religion propagates separate from ethnic identity, arguing instead that the two can supplant each other on a case-by-case basis. What matters is that religion, much like language or color, can be used to mark one group as different from another. One unique idea that comes from Horowitz's analysis is that the timing of religious differentiation affects the role that religion plays. If differentiation is recent, it is more likely to form subgroups, rather than wholly separate conflictual groups (Horowitz 2000, p. 51).

Ben Fowkes takes a different approach, explaining how religion shows up in the background of conflict, provides symbols for combatants, and helps to demarcate the communities that become involved. Yet, he argues it does not play any role with immediacy, unlike economic inequality, which can have a huge influence on conflicts (Fowkes 2002, p. 170-72). His distinct redistributionist approach holds that the ethnicities that are richest are most likely to initiate conflict to avoid redistributive policies. Yet, this has unnoticed potential for religious causation. Ivan Katchanovski shows that economic growth in 28 post-communist countries from 1990-1998 is strongly affected by the proportion of Catholics and Protestants in the population (Katchanovski 2000).

The issue with the ethno-centrists, unlike the rejectionists and Islamic exceptionalists, is not definitional or even the denial of religion as a potent force. Their biggest flaw lies in their failure to parse out religion from ethnicity and nationalism to see if it influences conflict independently. Admittedly, this can be difficult to do, as many religions within the region have abandoned universalistic discourse for a more particularistic doctrine that accounts for local ethnicity, language, and cultural identities (Agadjanian 2004).

Within the course of this study, the length of time religious groups have existed independently will be considered when looking at rates of violence within separatist movements. However, it is doubtful that there will be many relatively new religious communities in the region (though all religious communities have experienced a renewal since the fall of communism), outside of churches split by minor doctrinal issues, such as the language that services are delivered in. Other methods of attempting to parse religion from ethnicity, such as levels of religious discrimination, will be used. Finally, it should be noted that the theory utilized relies on the institutions of religion as an explanatory factor of the intensity of violence. As such, it will attempt to show that ethnicity alone is incapable of providing the intragroup problem-solving framework that religion provides.

### **Sec. 2.3: Islamic Exceptionalists**

Ernest Gellner accepts that religion influences social movements and conflicts independent of ethnicity, but focuses on the unique ability of Islamic

fundamentalism, defined as a reactive religious movement that seeks to reinvigorate the literalness and seriousness of the religion by fighting against an enemy who is “different above all”, to do so (Gellner 1995, p. 282). He argues that Islam is unique in its capacity to fight “the other” because it offers generic salvation *for all believers* and is constantly engaged in a struggle to return to a more Durkheimian variant of the faith. This fundamentalism supplants Marxist ideology because the latter did not care for the individual and neglected to provide a “profane” routinization of life; in a sense, Marxism made everything “sacred”, even the economy, which provided no outlet for people when their faith in this secular religion ebbed. According to Gellner, more than any other religion Islam was able to fill this ideological void generated by communism’s failures and even serve as a complete substitute for nationalism in the post-Soviet states. This is because of the split between “high” and “low” forms of Islam, with the high form being very individualistic, rule-oriented, scripturalist, and puritan. He argues that this high culture has become the general culture of ex-Soviet Muslim societies, providing guidance in daily life and routinization without being overbearing and sacralizing economic life (Gellner 1995, p. 286-87).

The major pitfall of this theory is that if Islam truly performs the role that nationalism does elsewhere, it is hard to understand intra-Muslim conflicts. Additionally, it does not sufficiently account for members of religious groups who do not practice strictly, yet fight in the name of religion. In attempting to explain why religion makes separatist conflicts more violent and answering these questions,

this essay will draw on the community-centric stance of James Warhola and Eli Berman's rational-choice, institutionally based explanation of the ability of religious organizations to build high resilience and cohesion among members (Berman 2009). These scholars, who I will refer to as "institutionalists", will be addressed below.

#### **Sec. 2.4: Religious Conflictualists**

Religious Conflictualists, or those who argue that religion does intensify or cause conflict, can essentially be broken down into two categories. The first subgroup consists of those who contend that it is the divine aspect of religion that makes it such a potent tool for violence. The second includes scholars who argue that it is not the "holy" promises and claims of religion that make it unique. Rather, the institutions, social capital, pre-existing leadership structures and social networks of religion make it an efficient locus of violent mobilization. This thesis will refer to the former group as the "holy war" theorists, and the latter as the institutionalists. Ultimately, the theories presented in this thesis fall within the institutionalist camp.

##### **Sec. 2.4.1: "Holy War" Theorists**

Mark Juergensmeyer argues that religion provides the "mores and symbols" that make bloodshed possible. He contends that all religions are inherently revolutionary, with built-in ideological resources that can be used as divine justification for the violent assault of public order (Juergensmeyer 2003, p. xii). He



proceeds to examine theological justifications for violence in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. His ultimate claim is that a “strain of violence [may] be found at the deepest levels of religious imagination” (Juergensmeyer 2003, p. 6). Religious imagery of struggle and transformation are updated and used by people to view their battles as “cosmic”, in a sense divinely ordained.

A major problem with this theory is that it fails to separate motivation from effectiveness. Juergensmeyer attempts to show that religion provides justification for violence through its relatable stories and the profound effect it has on shaping the morals of its adherents. Yet, it does not sufficiently explain why these attacks are *successful*.

A second “holy war” theorist, Charles Selengut, argues that religion has a unique capacity for violence because of the “meaning, order, and security” that it infuses into people’s lives. When life is sacralized in this manner, religious leaders can call upon adherents in the defense of “religious truth”. Fervent belief, Selengut argues, can actually preclude logic within the religious sphere, and the religious sphere can quickly be modified to include acts of violence. This lack of rationality behind religious violence, he contends, is the reason that studies which attempt to discount the role of promises of the afterlife for martyrdom are unreliable. He argues that these studies assume rationality, but since there is nothing rational about violent religious activity, they cannot be analyzed in the usual manner. He

goes on to argue that the certainty of this afterlife is what draws the destitute to religious violence (Selengut 2008, p. 7).

Many problems mar Selengut's theory. Firstly, motivation is difficult to prove without survey data, which is lacking in his study. Secondly, much like Juergensmeyer, Selengut looks at the cause of conflict, but does not really explore how religion affects the conflicts it causes. Selengut criticizes the media and academics for refusing to acknowledge that "fury to champion God's will, to oppose one's religious enemies, and to insist upon the imposition of God's law" are the actual reasons for violence (Selengut 2008, p. 194). Yet, by failing to establish the actual connection between the behavior of adherents and "sacred visions, prophetic pronouncements, and eschatological expectations," the book fails to prove causation.

#### **Sec. 2.4.2: Institutionalists**

James Warhola attempts to show that during the collapse of the Soviet Union religion was able to energize and exaggerate a sense of ethnic 'Gemeinschaft'<sup>3</sup> (community) that would otherwise not exist by examining the way Soviet policies inflamed preexisting, underlying religio-nationalist sentiments (Warhola 1991). To what extent these religious convictions play a socio-political role in conflict depends on the social context: levels of economic exploitation, political autonomy, national

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<sup>3</sup> Gemeinschaft, a term coined by Ferdinand Tönnies, here means community based heavily in history. Membership in such as association implies raising the importance of the group to a level equal with if not higher than individual needs.

hatred, or feelings of cultural superiority or inferiority (Warhola 1991, p. 252). He then shows that the Soviet case is particularly unique in that 70 years of forced secularization resulted in the ability for intense politically motivated religiosity to take hold during and after *glasnost* in predominantly Muslim areas and among Russian nationalists (Warhola 1991, p. 262). This intense community, similar to Emile Durkheim's "collective consciousness", creates a unitary sense of purpose, which makes demands from these groups against their enemies unlikely to be neutralized or moderated (1991, p. 253).

This supports my hypothesis that conflicts between religiously different sides are less likely to end in compromise in part due to the "perceived threat of extinction" and doomsday rhetoric that is so easily propagated among religious adherents. The idea that religion has the unique ability to act as societal glue that pushes people towards a common cause is a major theme within the academic discourse on nationalism. Warhola was inspired by Anthony Smith, who contends that the core of ethnicity required a "portable religion, a high degree of distinctiveness from surrounding peoples", and that religion often played the crucial role in maintaining and building up ethnic distinctiveness, especially when it was flexible and adaptive (Smith 1988). It is easy to imagine how without these conditions, defining the "other" to legitimize violent tactics would prove more difficult.

Christopher Marsh uses a sample of eleven separatist conflicts within the region to show that religious difference, independent of ethnic differences, increases

the level of suffering and violence in conflict (2007). He concludes that some of these conflicts were blatantly religious, such as those in Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Bosnia, and Kosovo, where religious language and symbolism was invoked. In some Muslim cases, such as Azerbaijan,<sup>4</sup> foreign religious leaders traveled into the conflict zone to fight alongside their coreligionists. Marsh claims that it is a mistake to establish a “litmus test” that defines a conflict as religious, and the attempt to do this has resulted in religion historically being neglected as a variable.

Marsh’s theory thus states that because religion, unlike other forms of ascriptive identity, is believed, easily changed, easily substituted for the nation, and offers answers to questions of the self and hope of salvation, it can easily be used to escalate violent conflict. This is especially true on the “cognitive” and “societal” level of regions and countries that are not as influenced by realpolitik as the international sphere. This is due to the aforementioned traits and the trait of Abrahamic religions to be exclusivistic, or mutually exclusive with any other form of religious identification. It is possible to be a Shintoist and Buddhist, but not to be both a Christian and a Muslim. This makes it a prime identifier for demonizing “the other”. An example of how this functions is evident in Chechnya; an ethnic Chechen who can

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<sup>4</sup> Shamil Basayev, a Chechen Jihadist leader, arrived in Azerbaijan in the early 1990s with his unit to fight against the Karabakh army alongside Muslim Azeris in the Nagorno Karabakh War. He eventually left with his troops when he felt that the war had become about nationalism rather than Jihad. (Khatchig, M. "Terror in Karabakh." Retrieved 10/4, 2010, from <http://ermeni.hayem.org/english/chechen-terrorists-azerbaijan.htm>.)

only speak Russian and no Chechen does not bring into question their Chechen identity but being a member of the Orthodox Christian faith would (Marsh 2007, p. 823).

These assumptions do not stand up to scrutiny. While religion is a strong identifier, it is not the universally quintessential element of cultural identity. Linguistic issues certainly serve as a stronger barrier to cultural identity than religion in the US, where the constitution guarantees freedom of religion for all faiths but says nothing of language, and in Russia, where Islam is an official faith of the state, a devout Muslim can gain acceptance as Russian.<sup>5</sup> The effects actually at play are histories of discrimination and state definitions of citizenship, such as assimilationist, multicultural, segregationist, universalist, etc. In an assimilationist or segregationist area, religion may be a barrier to cultural acceptance, but it need not be so in all countries.

Marsh's argument has four other major weaknesses. Firstly, he does not provide much statistical analysis to back up his conclusions, and what is provided is

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to say there is no discrimination against Muslims in Russia; on the contrary, there are major problems with ethnic Russians refusing to accept their Muslim counterparts. Even so, Moscow is the has the largest Muslim population of any European city, the Russian Orthodox Church officially condemns discrimination against Muslims, and the majority of Russian Muslims are in actuality secular. (Mainville 2006). The problem is *not* that Muslims do not consider themselves Russian, or even that the state does not recognize them as such (Islam is an official religion of Russia), but that some Russians fear Muslims due to media portrayal and the nationalist strain of the faith that exists in Chechnya.

lacking. For example, he fails to explain how various groups are categorized as being of one faith or another. Fox provides a global study that does a better job of quantitatively proving this point by defining violent rebellious tactics on a seven-point scale and showing that religion increased the mean level of rebellion in ethnic conflict by 67% from 1995-2000 (Fox 2004, p. 728). Secondly, Marsh does little to explore what it is about religions as institutions that make violence so effective. Instead, he focuses on dated concepts of religion promising an afterlife and rewards in heaven, which does not paint a complete picture when explaining why religious conflicts are more violent. The work done by Kalyvas and Kocher provides an alternative explanation for the phenomenon of more violence in religious conflict by arguing that religious communities are easily identifiable and religious practice not easily mutable, making it so adherents are better off cooperating with their side rather than attempting to remain neutral and pacifistic.

Marsh does not explore the implications of intra-religious conflict over minor doctrinal differences sufficiently, devoting only one paragraph to the topic. Finally, he demonstrates Western bias. The idea that religion can be “easily changed” and is something that is voluntarily believed is typical of religions in the West, but not necessarily elsewhere. In many of the countries examined, you are born into your religion, and Friday prayer is a given as a social norm. Through a “reputational cascade”, religious norms are communicated and sustained by individuals imposing sanctions on each other (Kuran 1998). As individuals step up their levels of religious participation, others are compelled to do so if remaining a member of the group is

incentivized. This process can make a minor doctrinal difference a major point of contention by increasing its salience as it is practiced more and more to prove group solidarity. This is what occurred in Yugoslavia, where groups that lived side by side gradually became more and more different through reputational cascades (Kuran 1998, p. 649).

Further, lack of religious freedoms in many non-Western states precludes the idea of religious choice to begin with. Marsh could have accounted for such factors by including a religious freedom index in his study. A final concern is Marsh's claim that religion is distinct due to its ability to change. Ethnicity has this ability too; the ethnic identity modifier "American" has been totally constructed, yet it is becoming a valid method of self-identification.

Another important religious conflictualist is Jo-Eystein Lindberg (2008). Analyzing data from 241 intrastate conflicts, he attempts to demonstrate that a religious cleavage between belligerents increases both the intensity and duration of the conflict. He posits that intensity will be increased because religion can solve intragroup problems, such as defection, collective action, and defining the out-group. This is primarily due to every-day religious institutions that develop strong group cohesion, provide a large, controllable network, and act as a megaphone for preferences. Regarding duration, he argues that religious cleavages prevent trust of the out-group, hindering negotiations. This is because distrust of the out-group is often used to define the in-group. He believes that both hypotheses will be exacerbated by religious discrimination, polarization, and religious legitimacy

within the political discourse. His findings support his theory on intensity, but are more ambiguous on duration, showing that conflicts with religious cleavages are more likely to end early, but once beyond 2.5 years are more likely to persist.

There are a few problems with the study. Non-Abrahamic religions are included in the dataset, but theoretically treated in the same manner as Abrahamic faiths. The institutional structure/framework, and the way congregants and religious leaders view non-members, can be drastically different within these religions when compared to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The study provides a comprehensive dataset that could have been used to comparatively look at denominations. A second problem that should be considered is that the study in no way accounts for religiosity. To strengthen the hypothesis that institutions rather than theology is the driving force behind the causality that links religion to conflict intensity, a religiosity index as a control would have been useful.

A prominent institutionalist who focuses on post-Communist countries is Vjekoslav Perica. In *Balkan Idols*, he studies the role of Serbian Orthodox, Croatian Catholic, and Yugoslav Muslim religious organizations and comes to the conclusion that they enhanced, but did not necessarily cause, the violence in Yugoslavia by becoming vessels for passionate ethnic nationalism. He contends that there was no upsurge in religious fervor among the population, denying “holy-war” theories. Instead, the activist clergy rose up the political ranks, creating a system of “ethnoclericalism”, or a system wherein the church is actually acting as a vessel for preserving ethnic distinctions at a state level. The bond between the church and



state preserves the ethnicities, and creates the nation (Perica 2002, p. 215). The core of the argument is that religion enhances nationalistic divisions, which is in fact the true cause and intensifier of conflict; the theological content of religion itself plays only a minor role.

Perica's argument is largely sound. However, it does not draw a sufficient distinction between religious groups and ethnic groups. It would be worthwhile to explore in depth how the religious institutions of Yugoslavia directly affected secular military institutions, and how ethnic *secular* groups were less effective than their religious counterparts. Despite this, Perica does a wonderful job of showing that even if religion is not the *root cause* of a conflict, it may still change the *content* and *duration* of a conflict in a way that ethnicity cannot.

A final religious conflictualist that merits mention is Eli Berman. Berman focuses on the unique ability that Islam has to create political and violent force. Rather than focusing on the lofty promises of "purification" of the eternal soul and the ability to differentiate between the "sacred" and "profane" within fundamentalism as the unique quality that gives Islam its political utility, as Gellner does and Marsh does to an extent, Berman is an institutionalist. He uses an economic, rational choice theory based approach to demonstrate that fundamentalism finds its strength in the tight network of members who have high defection constraints, the point at which the individual would betray the group (Berman 2009). The primary deficit in Berman's work is that while he implies his results apply to religious terrorists regardless of faith, his only non-Islamic case

study is the Jewish Underground, and even this he uses as an example of the *failure* of a religious group to successfully commit acts of violence efficiently.

### Sec 2.5: Theories on Post-Communist Ethnic Conflict

General theories on ethnic conflict in post-Communist countries merit consideration. Though they are not explicitly religious in nature, these theories also work when “religion” is replaced with “ethnicity” as the explanatory factor.

The most conventional explanation for the rise of ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe after the fall of communist regimes may be referred to as “pot-lid-theories” or the “refrigerator theories” (DARC 1999). Used by journalists and some academics, these theories claim that many aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, religion, and national difference, were repressed under communist rule. This allowed for a quiet buildup of social and political tension within the “pot”, or frozen in the “refrigerator”. When communist regimes collapsed, the pot-lid came off, and the refrigerator shut off, allowing conflicts of identity to come to the forefront in the fragile new political systems. The new permissibility of these formerly outlawed forms of identity is what gave them their appeal, as well as making them a useful rallying point for preventing future repression under new regimes that were not necessarily territorially congruent with the nation.

While useful as a general theory, these explanations fail to account for why some post-Communist countries experience ethnic conflict, while others do not. The pot-lid theory also fails to explain varying levels of intensity within ethnic conflict.

Other theories of post-Communist ethnic conflict may be separated into three categories based on their levels of analysis: systematic, domestic, and perceptual (Brown 1993, p. 6).

Systematic explanations, offered by scholars such as Barry Posen, contend that if a number of preconditions are met, ethnic conflict will occur.<sup>6</sup> If these preconditions are met, a security dilemma occurs; each side fears the other will attack, so they build up their defensive and offensive capacities until conflicts break out. This often occurs in Eastern Europe, but is slowed by the presence of nuclear weapons, which makes an ethnic attack irrational (Posen 1993).

Domestic explanations, seen in Jack Snyder's work, argue that people expect the state to provide security and economic prosperity, and if the state does not meet these conditions, people turn to nationalism. Thus, nationalism often flares up in the former Soviet Union, where state institutions are weak, and minority ethnic groups are blamed for low economic development. This occurs because weak state institutions cannot be trusted as the foundation of the state, so people look to religion and ethnicity as the dividing lines of the nation (Snyder 1993). This can be exacerbated by the fact that religion was repressed under communism, and became highly salient when it was again available as a resource after the fall of communism.

Finally, perceptual explanations, often used by the politicians and clergy themselves, claim that a long history of conflict between groups in Eastern Europe

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<sup>6</sup> These conditions include at least two significant ethnic groups living in close proximity, weak national, regional, and international authorities.

naturally led to modern conflicts. The perceived history of hatred between the Croats and Serbs serves as an example of a perceptual explanation. Past conflicts can be used in political rhetoric to incite and intensify new conflict, activating an innate hatred of another ethnic or religious group that may not have wronged any individuals that are currently alive, but due to an ancient history of conflict, seem to be a legitimate concern.

Each of these theories has been incorporated into the theory presented in the next chapter. Domestic explanations in particular play a major role in my explanation of religion increasing conflict intensity. There has been a sacralization of politics across Eastern Europe, wherein religion has become a legitimate medium for nationalistic politics and mass manipulation towards the instigation and expansion of intrastate conflicts.

## Sec 2.6: Voids in the Literature

While the contemporary literature is beginning to consider the effect of religion in conflict, much work remains. In Eastern Europe in particular, the academic discourse focuses on ethnicity, while largely ignoring religion. Those studies that do consider religion in Eastern Europe neglect to include a quantitative element. Without reproducible, well-reasoned quantitative methodology, many of the studies that do give religion its due respect sometimes come off as mere speculation. Though religion has been linked to levels of violence in conflict, no study has analyzed the connection satisfactorily.

The following chapters will attempt to fill the current voids in the literature by demonstrating empirically and through qualitative case studies that religion increases levels of violence within civil, intrastate conflicts. It will also attempt to establish a connection between religious differences and the outcomes of conflicts. On both relationships, I will adopt an institutionalist approach. Specifically, I will show that it is the unique ability of religious institutions to generate tightly connected social capital through banal, everyday traditions and practices that make them influential, rather than commonly invoked factors such as rewards in the afterlife and the meaning that religion can add to people's lives.

The remainder of the essay will discuss methodology, data collection, and regression analysis. A section involving case studies will follow. A concluding section identifies broader implications for conflicts worldwide, and addresses alternative theories.

### **Sec. 3: Theory**

*"..sometimes religion motivates violence, and sometimes it is used, even manipulated, to justify violence. There also is violence unrelated to religion that gets religiously charged because the conflicting parties happen to be of different faiths."*

--Rev. Shanta Premawardhana, Interfaith Relations Director for the National Council of Churches USA

As discussed above, this thesis argues that religion increases the intensity and duration of conflict. There is very little literature that examines the role of religion in social conflict. More often, studies focus on how religion affects the

likelihood of the outbreak of conflict. There is even less literature that looks at Eastern Europe specifically. The theory presented below will attempt to fill those voids. First, I will reject the idea that doctrine plays a role in religion's capacity for violence. Then, I will examine the structure of religion within the region, particularly Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy. Next, I will outline my institution-based theory by examining how religion facilitates mass mobilization and group cohesion, thereby increasing the intensity of conflict.

Regarding duration, I will explore how religious cleavages prevent compromise by precluding opportunities for intergroup trust. Examining factors specific to the Soviet Union, I will argue that a history of religious repression and forcibly imposed nationalism has created conditions that exaggerate the effect of religion on conflict. All of these effects depend on a religious cleavage between the rebel force and the incumbents, as without religious institutions unique to either side, said institutions cannot be easily exploited to turn the people against each other.<sup>7</sup>

### **Sec 3.1: Doctrine and Religious Violence**

In attempting to find the linkage between religion and violence, it is tempting to look to religious doctrine. When asking what makes religious extremists set their lives on the line, it is easy to make the claim that promises of an afterlife for martyrdom play a role. Emile Durkheim argues that religious faith and commitment

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<sup>7</sup> For a summary of all hypotheses, including which were supported by my research, see Sec 7.

is based upon sacred and ultimate truths, and thus are moral, desirable, and good (Durkheim 1965). Juergensmeyer argues that a “culture of violence” can arise around religion, which offers up the “moral justifications” and “images of cosmic war” that allow soldiers to feel that their cause is not only divine, but ordered by God (Juergensmeyer 2003, p. xi). This is not to say that doctrine actually causes the violence, but instead provides validation. Charles Selengut argues that the cleavage of lifestyles that religions demand—gender, dress, banking, family life, media, and economic systems—and the guided interpretation of theology can both directly inspire and fuel violent conflicts (Selengut 2008). Within religions, Selengut contends that it is history and a defense of the perceived purity of religious practices that leads to violence (Selengut 2008, p. 5). He contends the convictions required by religion preclude adherents from logic, ordinary judgment, and evaluations of behavior when analyzing their own religious activities (Selengut 2008, p. 6). There are fundamental flaws with all of these arguments, and with the basic contention that religious doctrine lies at the root of the efficiency of religious violence.

First, though not an easy variable to test, these theories all make the assumption that religiosity, or the fervor of individual belief, is high in religious conflicts. Yet, religion as an institution may play a role in people’s lives without strong convictions about God or the afterlife. American Judaism offers a practical example. Within American Judaism levels of religiosity are low by the standards of most faiths, with many members even questioning the existence of God. Yet, the potential of the Jewish community to mobilize politically is undeniable (Putnam and

Campbell 2010). Secondly, such theories often fail to demonstrate scientifically that it is in fact religious cleavages creating hatred and doctrinal proclamations providing motivation for higher levels of violence. Ariel Merari, an Israeli psychologist, conducted surveys with the families and friends of suicide attackers, and the attackers themselves in cases of failure. He found that most did not seem to be motivated primarily by religious promises regarding the afterlife, but instead by a genuine altruistic desire to benefit their communities (Berman 2009, p. 11).

Additionally, if suicide bombing, generally seen as the quintessential act of religious doctrine inspiring and motivating violence, is observed statistically, it becomes apparent that assumptions about theological motivations providing believers with a unique level of inspiration prove false. Many suicide bombers have been members of secular organizations. The organization that perpetrated the most suicide bomb attacks in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam, a group that is not only secular, but neo-Marxist (Berman 2009, p. 10).

Finally, aside from the broad claim that religious promises are divinely inspired, it is difficult to prove that religious doctrine is any more potent as an inspiration for violence than nationalist doctrine and calls to preserve ethnic purity. It seems that a desire to maintain the distinctiveness of a group against the outside world creates a culture of violence. So, what seems to be religious doctrine promoting violence may actually be the nationalization of religion and sacrilization of politics. In this regard, religion is not entirely different from the nation or ethnicity.



Theology in Eastern Europe likely plays a similarly limited role. In fact, unlike Islamic militant suicide bombings elsewhere, Islamic Chechen attacks by “Black Widows”<sup>8</sup> rarely cite Islam as inspiration. A bomber in 2000, Khava Barayeva, said she attacked for Chechen independence, and encouraged others to fight for national honor (Pape, O'Rourke et al. 2010). This conflation of religion and nationalism will be further explored later in this thesis. One crucial unique element about Eastern Europe that could affect how theology influences religious adherence is the attitude of secular individuals towards religion and the number of new practicing adherents. In the former Soviet Union, the proportion of people who attend church and think religion should permeate every day life, such as being present in the school system, has been rising. Over 26% of non-believers have a positive view of religion (Borowik 1994, p. 45). The elevated opinion of religion in the former Soviet Union is likely the result of a “comeback” in response to decades of an artificial absence of religious institutions. This will have a complicated effect; on one hand, opinions of religion and thus theology are currently elevated. On the other, there are many new adherents who may not know or take the dogmatic stances of congregations seriously.

The only point where doctrine may play a role is in exacerbating the effect that religion has on conflict is in regard to conflict duration. If religious adherents have a high level of religiosity and have been taught to see the world in black and white, it will be difficult for religious leaders to legitimize any kind of compromise

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<sup>8</sup> Chechen female suicide bombers, who often lost a husband in the war.

with out-groups to their followers. This leads to failed negotiation attempts and protracted fighting.

### Sec 3.2: Religion in the Eastern Europe

The religious population in Eastern and Central Europe, particularly the former Soviet Union, is comprised primarily of Eastern Orthodox Christians (60 million affiliated in the ex-USSR states) and Muslims (47 million in the ex-USSR states). Some areas, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, are more evenly split among Christianity and Islam; in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was no religious majority in the lead up to conflict in the 1990s, with 40% Muslims, 31% Orthodox, and 15% Catholics (Cline 2011). Protestantism and Judaism make up a comparatively small, but statistically significant, portion of the total regional population (Cipriani 1994, p. 5).

#### Sec 3.2.1: Eastern Orthodox Christianity

“More so than in the rest of Catholic or Protestant Western Europe, the Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe have long been openly and actively involved in national politics and are intimately and historically connected with the region's dominant post-communist ideology—nationalism” (Radu 1998). In Eastern Europe, the church was a repository for national ideas and symbols, not so much a source of religious spirituality but national spirituality. Orthodoxy served as the *core* of nationalism in Eastern Europe, often becoming a truly nationalist, not religious, institution. This meant the church was endowed with nationalism's well-known

potential for violence. Aside from cultural tendencies to move nationalist passions into the church, Eastern Orthodoxy was institutionally organized in a manner that made it an inherently *political* institution.

Eastern Orthodoxy is a “caesaropapist” system. Thus, the highest level of leadership is national, not international, and thus there is often a great degree of organizational cohesion with the state (Stepan 2000, p. 53). As such, there is the potential for a “trickle-down” effect from secular state leadership into the clergy; the quietest, non-interventionist culture of the Church combined with the close connections between its leadership and the national leadership makes for a church that is highly influenced by state agenda. Russia itself legally recognized this relationship in a 1997 law, "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations".

On a local level, Orthodoxy permeates aspects of day-to-day life. Religious holidays, rituals, and traditions are communal rather than congregational, especially in rural areas (Lane 1978, p. 78). This local focus of the church has been exaggerated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. As new nation-states were formed, new churches made claims to caesaropapist autonomy in states including Ukraine, Moldova, Macedonia, Estonia, and Albania. This has resulted in a lack of pan-Orthodoxy, as the churches themselves are divided by “language, tradition, synod, experience, history as a ‘national church’” (Bria 1998, p. 157-58). The caesaropapist structure to which the churches aspire makes it easy for the church to make national claims in religious terms through a linkage of leadership structure to the state itself. Additionally, little emphasis is put on dogma and demanding

particular types of behavior from adherents in any incarnation of Eastern Orthodoxy; hence, it is clear that the social influence that Orthodoxy has is not centered on theological mandates.

Finally, Orthodoxy plays a particularly important role for Russians, due to the strong cultural establishment of the Church prior to the Revolution and the role it played during World War II (Lane 1978, p. 77). Nearly 90% of Russians self-identify as Russian Orthodox and so have some connection to the congregational networks.

### Sec 3.2.2: Islam

Islam is the most prominent religion in central Asia, and it is the dominant religion in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It also plays an important role in Eastern Europe, serving the primary religion in certain areas. Islam is a decentralized religion; generally speaking, there is no central hierarchy or class of priests/clergymen. Instead, individuals look to *imams*, or congregational leaders, who often provide answers to questions of theology and religious law from the community.

On the local level in the Eastern European context, Islam has the unique ability to supplant the role of nationalism through religious revivalism. Fundamentalism can be invoked by extremists in response to perceived westernization or political repression. When this occurs, the Islamic *umma* itself *becomes* the nation for believers, creating an extremely salient and exploitable religious national identity. Additionally, in the former Communist Bloc Islam

provided a welcome alternative to Marxism. Through its traditions and laws that guide everyday life, Islam becomes routine and firmly rooted in the banal, without being “excessive in its demands” by sacralizing economic life (Gellner 1995, p. 285-86). Together, these factors create a potent mix of communal commonality and a broader revolutionary ideology, which contributes to the potency of utilizing Islam and Islamic groups in violent conflicts.

### **Sec 3.2.3: Other Major Religious Traditions**

Other politically and socially relevant groups in the Eastern Europe include Catholicism, various Protestant faiths (mostly Lutheran and Calvinist), and Judaism. Catholicism provides an extremely ordered and hierarchical power structure. In part because of this power structure, it has played a disproportionately large role in violent conflict. It was a key factor in the birth of Croat nationalism, contributing to the Croats’ fighting prowess during the Yugoslav Wars. Institutional practices such as the canonization of national saints, and heavily nationalistic rallies led by politically active clergy transformed Croat Catholicism into a nationalistic variant of Roman Catholicism. The religion’s built in hierarchical and organizational networks, in addition to its intertwined relationship with politics, made it a key player in the breakup of Yugoslavia.

### **Sec 3.3: Hypotheses**

To lend credence to the hypotheses that follow, it is important to briefly examine the nature of the sociological and political problems that both rebels and

incumbents (much less so due to the preexisting structure of the state) face when organizing for violent intrastate mobilization. These can be broadly divided into intragroup and intergroup problems. In their most basic form, my hypotheses are:

- (1) By solving intragroup problems, religion increases the intensity of conflict due to increased potential for violence and more troops on the battlefield, and
- (2) Religious cleavages exacerbate the political and emotional elements of intergroup conflicts, thus lengthening the duration of violence.<sup>9</sup>

In both cases the power of religion is enhanced by a history of religious repression and political instability, which allows religion to supplant nationalism in day-to-day life. In addition to repression's more direct effect of creating a *casus belli* for directly religious conflict, religious homogeneity within each belligerent group will increase conflict intensity and duration. Religiosity itself is likely to increase conflict duration.

The first and most commonly discussed intragroup problem is collective action. In the case of violence during conflict, this means preventing defection, recruiting forces, and organizing troops. All of these become more difficult insofar as victory becomes impossible to envision and morale drops (Lindberg 2008, p. 14). Collective action becomes an issue in that the goal of violent conflict is to gain a public good, such as independent territory and religious freedom. All residents of a victorious region, regardless of their participation, will benefit from a victory. Under

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<sup>9</sup> Hypothesis 1 could skew hypothesis 2. If a conflict is intense enough, despite difficulties in finding a position of compromise, the conflict will quickly end with one side or the other victorious.

the circumstances, the risk of participating, which may include loss of life, may seem infinitely greater than any benefit from winning. This is the rebel's dilemma. During combat, a rebel can put down his weapon and leave, or stay and fight. If he attempts to maximize individual utility, he will defect. This is because the probability of a rebel's success is not significantly altered by his defection, yet the probability that he will incur massive costs is greatly reduced (Lichbach 1995).

The second major intragroup problem is trust. Combatants need guarantees that if victorious promises will be met. If they have reason to believe that leaders will behave selfishly or give up themselves, the incentives to defect rise and the motivation to take risks remains low. The required trust is enhanced through a strong leadership structure that maintains legitimacy.

The final intragroup problem is coordination. Rebel groups typically are small at the time of their establishment, implying a small chance of prevailing against a state military. Additionally, the smaller the group, the smaller the distribution of costs and risks, and thus the greater the burden on the individual (Lindberg 2008, p. 15). Accordingly, there is little incentive for anyone to join the group, as a lone individual's contribution to the likelihood of victory is minimal. This is a *coordination* problem because there may exist many people who wish to join, but since the initial visible group is small, no one will join the movement. This is due to imperfect information and lack of communication regarding the popularity of the rebel cause. Individuals interested in the movement have no real guarantee that the

group size will increase to the point that it will be effective, and so they have very little incentive to join as individuals.

Intergroup problems involve conflicts between the incumbents and rebels, as well as barriers to coordination and cooperation that could result in a negotiated settlement. These problems are all centered around the three potential outcomes for conflict: rebel victory and new state formation, incumbent victory through the restoration of the monopoly on violence, or a negotiated compromise. The last of these is the most difficult to achieve, because it requires the two sides to trust that the negotiated plan will be respected if implemented. After a civil war, this may be impossible. If the cause of the war was something essentially unchangeable, such as a religion or ethnicity, their feelings of fear will undermine trust, especially among lower-level officers and soldiers who are uninvolved in negotiations and still feel animosity towards the enemies they were recently fighting.

### Sec 3.3.1: Intensity

The intensity of conflict may be measured through the number of casualties on both sides. Based on this definition, our first hypothesis is:

**H1:** *Religious cleavages increase the intensity of conflict.*

At the simplest level, the underlying logic is that religion provides resources that mitigate intragroup conflict. Regarding the collective action and coordination



problems, religion first and foremost provides preexisting groups, in which the out-group is clearly defined, enhancing in-group solidarity. Religion is not always the primary layer of identity for individuals, and religious groups are not considered monolithic (Kalyvas 2003, p. 481). However, belief systems, religious law, common leaders, common rituals, common histories of discrimination, and even common meeting places all provide physical and social venues for the distribution of information that leads to somewhat consolidated viewpoints, and the potential for cohesive action that overcomes the coordination problem. Hence, people who engage in religious practices are more likely to know each other, to be familiar with each other's preferences, and to be part of a shared network that facilitates the spread of information. The church or mosque itself can become a logistical center for combat mobilization, quickly and efficiently spreading the same message to many people (Fox and Sandler 2005). These preexisting institutions and leadership structures are what give religion its unique capacity for violence above and beyond ethnicity.

Religion has extreme potential to curb defection. This is partly due to social norms; when religion plays a major role in day-to-day life, as Orthodoxy and Islam often do in Eastern Europe, defection from a religious cause means living among and running into people one has abandoned (Lindberg 2008, p. 25). Another reason is the capacity of religious institutions to take over the role of the state and provide social services through mutual aid (Berman 2009, p. 16). This is particularly intense in religious organizations, and it weeds out free-riders prior to conflict. The

consequent high defection constraint means that religious belligerents can be trusted to take orders in combat when religion is evoked as a reason for the fighting. With the knowledge that remaining members have a great deal of loyalty and personal investment in the *organizational structure* of the religion, it becomes an efficient instrument of violence. Accordingly, the group can afford to take what would otherwise be high-risk operations due to defection.

Religious institutions have a pre-established leadership structure. Whereas in government, particularly in democratic regimes, leaders are subject to change with the ebb and flow of public opinion, religious institutions often have a stable hierarchical structure with relatively secure leaders. This contributes to solving the trust and coordination problems by giving a large group a singular voice through its leadership. When a religious leader, whether an imam or a priest, has been in place for a great deal of time, he gains a certain degree of legitimacy. There is also often a close emotional relationship between congregational religious leaders and adherents, which does not exist between soldiers and a warlord or general (Lindberg 2008, p. 29). None of this implies that only religious leaders make religion a potent force for violence; politicians, too, evoke religion using symbolism and rhetoric to achieve violent aims. However, the established leaders still play a role, often by cooperating with politicians who look to turn religion into a mobilizing force, or simply by doing nothing, which is a form of tacit approval of the politician's usage of religion.

Finally, all of these vehicles that religion provides to solve intragroup problems are dependent on religion's ability to define the out-group and make initial contributory demands of its members. In a free religious market with many participating religions, the demands of each respective religion will tend to be much lower. If an individual does not like one religion, he can pick the next. However, when there is religious homogeneity, viewpoints can be more extreme, exclusionary, and become self-enforcing without the risk of losing members to other, more moderate religious groups.<sup>10</sup> These strict religious groups demand full commitment, and raise defection constraints within the group by creating stigma, self-sacrifice, and bizarre behavioral standards (Iannaccone 1996, p. 20). Since there are few or no other options, people will be more likely to both accept extreme faiths and become more extreme themselves to prove their dedication to the group. Thus, as Voltaire once wrote, "If you have two religions in your land, the two will cut each other's throats; but if you have thirty religions, they dwell in peace."

**H2:** *Religious diversity within the incumbent or rebel group begets tolerance, and reduces the effects of religious cleavages on the national level. By contrast, homogeneity increases intensity.*

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<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Iannaccone argues that rates of church attendance and religious belief go up when there is a diverse religious market. This may further increase the effect that lack of religious diversity has on intensity by creating more active church goers, whose lives are more dependent on and determined by church institutions (Iannaccone 1991)

### Sec 3.3.2: Duration

*"...the peace negotiations between the Orthodox [Christian] Serbs, the Catholic Croats and the Muslim Bosnians had collapsed again. And there is no doubt that the religions that are so involved here had neglected in the period of more than forty years since the Second World War to engage in mourning, honestly confess the crimes which had been committed by all sides in the course of the centuries, and ask one another for mutual forgiveness....I think there can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions!"*

--Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel, commenting in 1993 on conflict within the former Yugoslavia.

Regarding duration, the effect of religion on intergroup relations, rather than intragroup relations, becomes relevant. When religion enters into a conflict, the conflict becomes about identity. The reason religion is so effective at solving intragroup problems is that it provides a mechanism for identifying an adversary who may be characterized as against God. In other words, defining the out-group helps create the in-group. Since this is crucial to religious cohesion, religious cleavages in conflict mean that at least one side will view the other as blasphemous, godless, and the group that they define themselves against. A protracted conflict will not mitigate these feelings.

Secondly, the nature of religion is such that intergroup trust suffers. Since religion—unlike ethnicity and nationality—is easily monopolized, negotiations become much less likely, extending the conflict (Lindberg 2008, p. 33). Whereas negotiations can satisfy nationalist and ethnic groups through economic redistribution and power sharing, a state can only be governed by one religion in the absence of a church-state separation. Whichever group gets to set the religious

policy, the religious utility of the other group declines in many contexts. This is part of what prevented Catholics and Orthodox Serbs from negotiating with Muslims in Bosnia. Fear of a Muslim-ruled state, with Islamic laws that excluded the already organized Catholics and Orthodox Serbs, served as the driving force behind the violent rural population that refused any kind of Muslim state for fear of their ways of life.<sup>11</sup> Extremist politicians on both sides who were using religious cleavages to push their agenda of nothing short of absolute victory without concessions manufactured this fear, but once created, it was “real” to its believers. Thus, the negotiating table is less likely to be reached since the cost of putting down arms is perceived as greater, and once at the negotiating table a solution is less likely to be found.

All this said, due to the efficiency of violence that religion enables, religious cleavages will make conflicts end extremely early *or* extremely late. Highly efficient belligerents mean that the religious group may find victory quickly if the incumbents are weak. However, if both sides are evenly matched, conflict will be protracted by intergroup problems preventing successful negotiation.

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<sup>11</sup> It is true that less extreme cases exist, such as Russia, where the Russian Orthodox Church is given “special” legal status, but Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism and their holidays are all officially recognized by the state. Even so, the Russian media portrays Muslims as “holy war” jihadists, bent on forcing sharia law upon Russia, while Chechen rebels invoke the protection of their faith and way of life in explaining their struggle. Clearly, even when there is little real threat of domination by one religious group, the *fear* of this prevents negotiation, and thus lengthens conflict.

**H3:** *Religious cleavages will result in longer intrastate conflicts, unless the cleavage creates a high enough intensity to end the conflict swiftly.*

### Sec 3.4: Religion as a Surrogate “Banal Nationalism”

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a “Durkheimian anomie”<sup>12</sup> became visible throughout post-Soviet society (Varga 1994, p. 102). There was a great distrust of the state, politicians, and institutions after the long and difficult experience with communism. In the Baltics, 3.3% of people trusted in Communist Party of the USSR, while 47% trusted the Russian Orthodox Church (Dinello 1994, p. 92). Religion, defined by Lenin and Stalin as a direct enemy to Communism, had provided the main universal discourse against the status quo (Varga 1994, p. 101). Kinnvall argues that religion is ‘more likely than other identity constructions to provide answers to those in need’ (2004, p. 742). In Eastern Europe, where trust of nationalist discourse was at a low, religion has been able to become a dominant mobilizing force, supplanting ethno-nationalist power in many instances.

Among minority groups, these effects are particularly notable. Nations need common myths as societal glue. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, minorities lost their myths, which placed them in a position of political and social uncertainty. By identifying with religion rather than the state, that national group could be given defined parameters, along with an alleviation of political and social uncertainty from its members (Dinello 1994).

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<sup>12</sup> A mismatch between personal and societal standards, creating a vacuum of social norms that there is the compulsion to fill.

Religion already uses many of the same mechanisms as nationalism to mobilize the masses. Nationalism has anthems, while religion has hymns; nationalism uses the flag, while religion uses the cross, crescent, or star; nationalism has constitutions and ethnic myths, while religion has the Bible, Qur'an, Torah, and Tripitaka; nationalism utilizes pledges of allegiance and military pomp, while religion utilizes daily prayer, baptism, and other ritualized community reinforcement. Many of these mechanisms act in the background, reinforcing belief but also remaining entirely banal. The every-day structure of religious rites and rituals in Eastern Europe makes it a religious version of Michael Billig's banal nationalism (1995). Religion does not provide violent passion frequently, but instead creates a sleeping giant of its congregants, reinforced by seemingly unimportant traditions daily that create a coherent group that can be called upon in times of need for violence. This religious nationalism is actually *more dangerous* than secular nationalism. This is because when ethnic identity and the nation become intertwined with the clergy, the religious establishment can pursue political or military goals without fear of the electoral accountability that their politician counterparts face.

**H4:** *Due to religion acting as a surrogate for nationalism, all religious effects are enhanced if the conflict state was a post-Communist country.*

Another pertinent element is a history of religious repression. This is especially relevant in the former Soviet Union, where religious practices were more or less banned for decades. In countries with a history of discrimination that has since lessened, a religious revival is likely to take place that results in a temporary increase in openly religious individuals. In areas where religious discrimination still takes place, it contributes to grievance formation. If religious groups have common grievances in the form of discrimination, cohesion is improved, the out-group is more solidly defined, and defection diminishes as passions increase (Lindberg 2008, p. 34). Finally, religious discrimination is hard to overcome through negotiations, since the problem is often rooted in society and not just its leaders. As such, there is likely to be low trust at the negotiating table, further protracting conflicts.

**H5:** *Religious repression at the state level increases the intensity and duration of conflicts.*

A final point worth examining is religiosity. It is possible to have a great attachment to the institutions of religion, without having a strong attachment to the faith, or even a belief in God at all. We have already seen that doctrine and theology are not the driving forces behind religion's capacity for violence. By this logic, increased religious fervor need not increase the intensity of conflict. Yet, using religiosity may increase conflict duration.



Firstly, as discussed earlier, to end conflict in peace, there must be a compromise between parties. High levels of religiosity often lead to a “black and white” worldview, where little room exists for compromise on religious values. The conservative parties in Israel offer an example. They adopt a biblical viewpoint on territory in and around Jerusalem, which hinders negotiation by being immutable and closed to compromise. Since a highly religious person is more likely to view a conflict in entirely religious terms, they are also less likely to accept a negotiated outcome. To do so, in their belief, would go against God, who has provided them with a divine mandate and a just cause. Secondly, high levels of religiosity create fear in the negotiating partner. People are often skeptical, if not outright afraid, of religion entering into politics, as it often means a forced change in the daily life of the people affected who practice another faith or none at all. Politicians know this, and can exploit religiosity to incite religious hatred among citizens to eliminate any chance of concessions. A religious group marked by high religiosity is more likely to be perceived to combine church and state if given power, and as such the other side is likely to view the risk of negotiation and cost of victory as much higher than otherwise.

**H6:** *Increased religiosity will not increase intensity, but will increase the length of conflicts.*

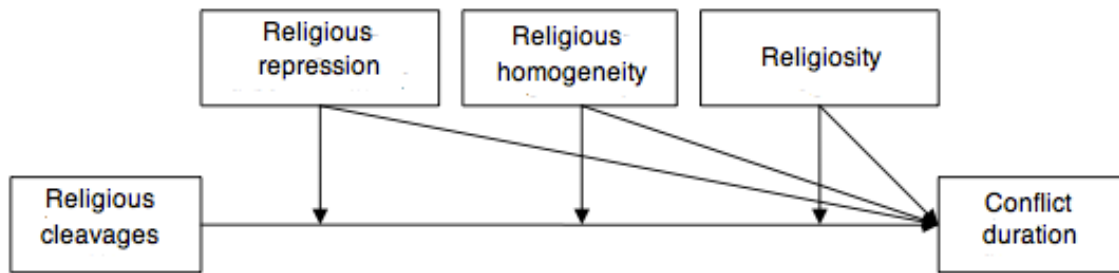


Figure 1: *Religious Effects on Conflict Duration*

## Sec 4: Methods

To test the theories outlined in the previous chapter, models were set up to show that the number of deaths and days were greater in conflicts with religious cleavages than in those without religious cleavages. The key variables used in the tests were religious indicators. A 5-point scale was used to account for religious cleavages. Religious repression, fractionalization and polarization were the other key variables. Control variables, such as GDP per capita and the Freedom House Index, were used to account for effects not caused by religious cleavages.

The purpose of the models was to determine the effects of religious cleavages on conflict intensity and duration. Regressions were run on two datasets. The core data comes from Jo-Eystein Lindberg's study on effect of religious cleavages on the intensity and duration of internal conflicts (2008). I have modified this data set to include an ordinal religious cleavage scale that was constructed based on the religious cleavages identified by Lindberg. The unit of analysis of this global dataset is years. By contrast, my Eastern European dataset used conflicts as the unit of

analysis. Additionally, new Georgian conflicts were added to the dataset that were not included in the original. For the Eastern European dataset, control variables that may have changed over the course of the conflict were locked at the value occurring at the start of the conflict; this is to account for endogeneity bias.

There are benefits and risks associated with using year or conflict as the unit of analysis. By using conflict years, control variables may be updated throughout the conflict period, and accurate data is more readily available. However, when multiple conflicts are underway at once, religious cleavages may be obfuscated. This is because a state may be fighting simultaneously multiple rebel groups of differing faiths. In situations such as these, the highest level of difference is used in the coding, though this does result in some loss of nuance. Analyzing entire conflicts as the unit of analysis overcomes some of these problems by allowing for the separation of rebel groups into individual conflict units.

It should be noted that there is incompatibility between the two data sets. Ideally, both datasets would have used the same units of analysis. As differing units were utilized, comparisons between the global and Eastern European results must be made with caution, both due to noise created in the conversion to conflict-units in the Eastern European dataset, and due to the less accurate global dataset. However, the construction of a conflict as unit of analysis global dataset, which would have been ideal, was beyond the scope of this study.

### Sec 4.1: Dependent Variables

The dependent variable used to represent intensity is battle deaths. In the Eastern European dataset, the number used is the average deaths per year for the entire duration of the conflict. In the global dataset, it is the number of deaths for the particular year being analyzed. Cases where less than 25 battle deaths occurred in a given year were not coded as conflicts. Though this creates bias against low intensity conflicts, battle death data is already difficult to collect accurately, and data for conflicts of such low intensity is sporadic anyway.

In both datasets, duration was represented as the number of days the conflict lasted. Ongoing conflicts were not included. Though this can bias the dataset against long conflicts by removing them due to their ongoing nature, the size of the dataset and the limitation of data only going through 2008 make this necessary. Additionally, including ongoing conflicts creates a problem of accuracy; conflicts that have just begun, but may last indefinitely, will appear short, whereas long conflicts that may last even longer will be undervalued. January 1st, 1960 is coded as zero, and duration is calculated as the absolute value of the difference between the end date (the final day that violence occurred) and start date (the day that violence first broke out).

### Sec 4.2: Independent Variables

The explanatory variable in all models is religious cleavage. Two separate codings are used: a binary dummy variable, and an ordinal scale. The ordinal scale

operates per the chart below, with 0 being no cleavage, and 4 the highest level of cleavage. Two separate explanatory variables are used to test whether it is the level of difference that affects duration and intensity, or simply the existence of a difference. This is necessary to attempt to disprove the theory that religiosity and divinely ordained anger over religious differences is the explanatory factor for intensity, rather than my institutionally based theory. The religious scale can be used also to prove that the level of religious differences affects the capacity for compromise, which is a determinant of conflict duration.

**Table 1: Religious Cleavage Scale**

0	1	2	3	4
<i>No religious difference</i>	<i>Minor doctrinal difference</i>	<i>Sectarian conflict</i>	<i>Different religion but shared traditions</i>	<i>Complete cleavage</i>
	Methodist v. Baptist	Sunni v. Shiite	Jewish v. Muslim	Secular v. Religious
	Georgian Orthodox v. Russian Orthodox	Catholic v. Protestant	Hindu v. Buddhist	Animist v. Christian

In the global dataset, when governments were fighting multiple rebellions of different faiths, the highest-level cleavage available is used for the data point.

Levels of religious discrimination, which were considered to account for the speed with which religion is drawn into a conflict and its importance in providing the conflict legitimacy, was measured using the Religion and State dataset (Fox 2011). This 0-34 composite scale rates states based on measures including

discriminatory policies against specific religious groups, and broader philosophical discrimination, such as the incompatibility between communism and religion. The data exists for 1990-2002. Other conflict years have been coded using extrapolation, as changes in religious discrimination levels are relatively rare.

Religious demography is also considered using two variables, representing religious fractionalization and religious polarization. These measures were taken from Mantalvo (2005). The fractionalization measure employs the following formulas:

$$FRAC = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^N \pi_i^2 = \sum_{i=1}^N \pi_i(1 - \pi_i)$$

Here,  $\pi_i$  represents the proportion of people belonging to religious group  $i$ , while  $N$  is the total number of groups. The index thus represents the probability that two random people drawn from the state being considered belong to differing religious groups. The polarization formula is as follows:

$$RQ = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^N \left( \frac{\frac{1}{2} - \pi_i}{\frac{1}{2}} \right)^2 \quad \pi_i = 4 \sum_{i=1}^N \pi_i^2(1 - \pi_i)$$

This index captures how far the religious cleavage is from a bipolar distribution.

Both indices are scaled from 0 to 1. Each index has been updated to account for all the lower-level religious cleavages in this study, as the original author did not differentiate between branches of religions in his data, such as the cleavage between Protestants and Catholics (Lindberg 2008, p. 57).

Finally, to test to see if the effect of religious cleavages on intrastate conflict is unique in Eastern Europe, supporting the theory that religion plays a special, nationalistic role in the region, the results from the Eastern European dataset were compared to the results from the global dataset.

#### **Sec 4.2.1: Control Variables**

A number of control variables are considered. First, GDP per capita is considered, as it has been shown to contribute to violence in civil wars directly and indirectly in various ways (Shayo 2004). It may cause the war itself due to relative deprivation; contributing to the military resources, and if low, limit the ability to put down a rebellion. It is hypothesized that higher levels of development, as measured by GDP, decrease the duration of the conflict and increase its intensity, as the state will have more resources to put down rebellion.

The number of conflicts going on at a time in a given state was also considered. This is to account for the assumption that a state dealing with multiple conflicts on multiple fronts will have its forces spread more thinly, thus resulting in more casualties.

A scale representing regime type is utilized. Democratic nations go to war less often than more autocratic nations, and should also theoretically have shorter durations when at war due to a greater capacity for negotiation. Also, the people most affected by conflict have a say in the settlement via the ballot, which can expedite the resolution of the conflict. The measure used is taken from the Polity IV

project (Marshall 2009). The scale is calculated by taking the autocratic measure (0-10) and subtracting it from the democratic measure (0-10). Thus, a perfectly autocratic state is coded as -10, while a perfectly democratic state is a 10.

Population size is also considered in logarhythmic form to obtain a best-fit exponential curve of the form. This is because when there is a larger population present, there are more people to kill.

A scale is also used to consider the institutional strength and political stability of the state. This scale was already adapted into the main dataset from an article by Scott Gates et al (2006).<sup>13</sup>

Finally, a variable is included to account for ethnic dominance. This dummy variable is coded as 1 if one ethnicity dominates the government, and 0 if there is a mixed ethnic group that controls the government.<sup>14</sup> This variable was used to attempt to differentiate between religious and ethnic effects.

## Sec 5: Analysis

Regressions were run on both the global and regional datasets to explore the existence of a significant regional effect. Separate regressions were run for the intensity and duration analysis.

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<sup>13</sup> It is not explicitly stated in the source dataset how this measure was adapted from the original study, and so results using the stability index should be observed carefully.

<sup>14</sup> It is implied in the source dataset that this variable is coded as a 1 if one ethnicity is holds a majority, but the coding and source material behind this variable is never explicitly discussed. Thus, results from this measure should be acknowledged as potentially flawed.



### Sec 5.1: The Models

Various specifications were used. Each regression was considered for both the regional and global dataset, to determine how the effects differed in the former Eastern Bloc. Additionally, regressions were run with RELIGDIFF, or the 0-4 ordinal scale, and CLEAVBINARY, which was a binary denoting whether a religious cleavage between belligerents existed. Both were tested to determine if the level of religious difference matters, or only the fact of having unique religious institutions from the state.

Upon first inspection, it seemed that there was a noticeable upwards u-shaped correlation between battle deaths and religious cleavages using both the global and Eastern Europe datasets. In both cases, however, the relationship started with high deaths at no religious difference, dropped down at RELIGDIFF=1, and then had a positive slope as religious differences rose. The graph points to a general positive correlation between religious differences and battle deaths. However, there are far more conflicts coded as 0, 3, and 4 than 1 and 2. As such, the drop from 0 to 1 could be the result of insufficient observations.

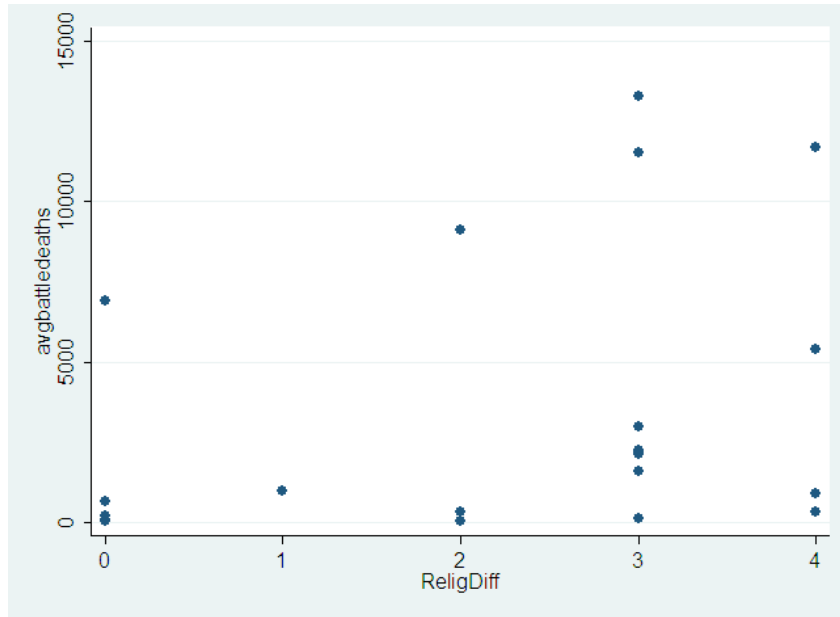


Figure 2: Eastern Intensity Distribution

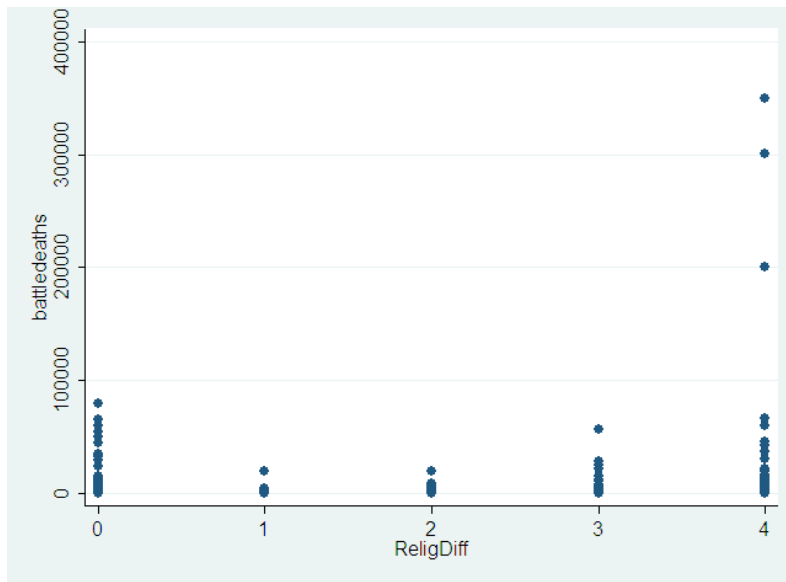


Figure 3: Global Intensity Distribution

**Sec 5.1.1: Intensity**

In both the global and the Eastern datasets, binary regressions yielded no significant results. This suggested that multivariate analyses would be necessary,

incorporating control variables, in order to best account for the complete variance in amount of battle deaths correlated with religious cleavages.

A number of regressions in the CLEAVBINARY and the RELIGDIFF tests showed nearly equal significance in the global and Eastern European tests regardless of whether the scale or the binary was used, with a strong positive correlation to intensity. This is consistent with my theory that it is institutions unique to the rebel group, rather than doctrine or religious hatred, that allows for efficiency in causing battle deaths. So long as the rebel force has religious institutions not utilized by the incumbent majority, the violence-enhancing effects will occur.

Table 2: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Eastern European Conflict Intensity (N=20)

MEAN DEATHS PER YEAR	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Religious Cleavage Scale	1233**	534.845	1275**	492.1	1203.6***	441.9
Polity IV Scale	944*	408.34	1006.8**	376.7	700.4**	365.66
State Stability	-13582.9**	7281.3	-14430.1**	6707.3	-14676.4*	6006.6
Election Year			-3062.7*	1544.5	-2846.1*	1386.5
Freedom House					-1706.8**	786.4
<i>Constant</i>	204	1485	1949.8	1624.4	9389.9**	3723.9
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.34		.47		.6
<i>Adj R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.21		.34		.47

\**p* < .10 \*\**p* < .05 \*\*\**p*<.02

Perhaps most interesting for the Eastern European dataset is the consistent significance and negative correlation of ELECTION. This suggests that conflicts that begin during an election year end up being less violent. Apparently, the electoral

process absorbs some of the violent potential of conflict, perhaps by offering an alternative and legitimate opportunity to voice grievances. There is also hope that conditions can be changed through the ballot box, delaying or preventing violence. This is especially relevant in the region due to the non-violent Color Revolutions, which were centered on electoral processes. These conflicts, a revolutionary wave of electoral change in the Balkan states, were led by students and NGOs using non-violent tactics to protest and overturn what was seen as electorally illegitimate regimes to bring in true democracy. These revolutions could have created outliers within the dataset, where an election resulted in a low-violence conflict that was quickly resolved through legal means. Additionally, the experience of the Color Revolutions may have given people more faith in their electoral institutions to solve national problems, thus giving people more hope that they can enact change through the ballot box rather than through violence.

Contrary to my hypothesis, RELDISCR and the religious demographic variables showed little significance. Religious discrimination may play a limited role because the conflicts are not truly about religion—instead, religion is simply used as an organizational institution for violence. As such, grievances against religious institutions play little role in the efficiency of their operations, and do not influence their ability to recruit and retain members. Another problem may be that the effect of religious discrimination is lagged. There were high levels of religious discrimination and repression under Soviet rule, which dropped off in the 1990s. The effect of the historical discrimination could only just now be taking effect, which

is not captured by the dataset since religious discrimination is measured at the start of the conflict. Religious polarization, fractionalization, and legitimacy all proved to be insignificant in the Eastern European dataset. This is likely due to the small sample size.

GDP per capita was also insignificant, though this may be because income disparity, rather than overall wealth, is the economic variable most relevant to the severity of intrastate conflict. A Gini coefficient of inequality could be used in a future study to account for this.

The global dataset also validated my primary hypothesis with much greater significance, probably due to the substantially larger sample size. In the model below, the coefficient for religious difference behaves as expected, and it is significant at the .04 level. The negative coefficient for POLITYIV, the autocracy scale, also behaves as expected, as the more democratic a country becomes, the less battle deaths are observed. It is also extremely significant. ETHDOM, the ethnic domination variable, also has a very significant negative correlation in the global dataset, though it proved insignificant in the Eastern European dataset. Evidently, there are less battle deaths when one ethnic group holds a majority. Hence, ethnic conflicts are more likely to be heavily violent when no ethnic group enjoys the security that comes from being a majority. This provides some support for **H2** on the global level.

**Table 3: Global Intensity Regression Summary (N=921)**

	Model 1	
DEATHS PER YEAR	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Religious Cleavage Scale	831.9**	413.3
Religious Legitimacy	-2774.2*	1663.8
Polity IV Scale	-396.8***	97.9
Ethnic Domination	-5755.1***	1656.2
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.03	

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\**p* < .10 \*\**p* < .05 \*\*\**p*<.02

Religious legitimacy has a significantly negative correlation with battle deaths in the global dataset, but has no significance in the Eastern European dataset. This does not necessarily undermine my hypothesis; a state that has an official religion will be able to limit outside religious institutions, limiting the organizational capacity of the rebels.

### Sec 5.1.2: Duration

The global duration curve behaved as expected. A U-curve distribution was apparent. This indicated that conflicts with no religious cleavage had a wide range of

durations, while a small cleavage resulted in shorter conflicts, and larger cleavages resulting in sequentially longer conflicts. Additionally, the higher cleavage conflicts had a much larger range of observations, with fewer observations near the average value, and more to either extreme. This suggests, as hypothesized, in the presence of a large religious cleavage, conflict is likely to end quickly due to highly organized forces, or to be protracted due to religious differences limiting opportunities for compromise.

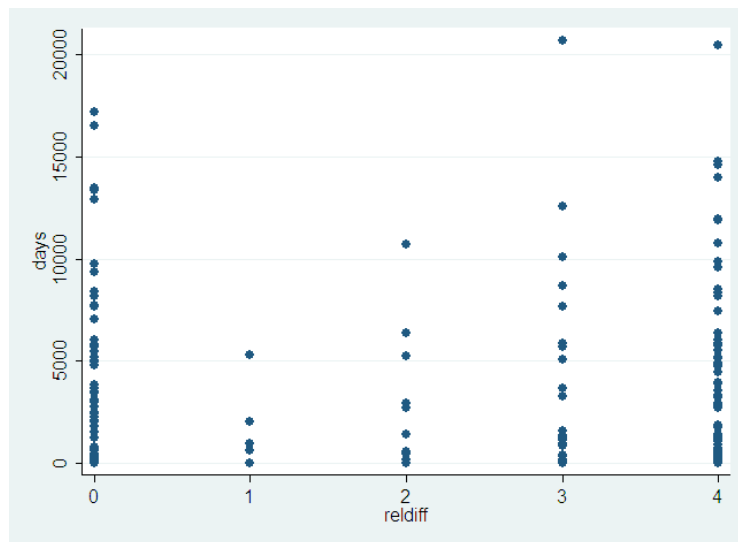


Figure 4: *Global Duration Distribution*



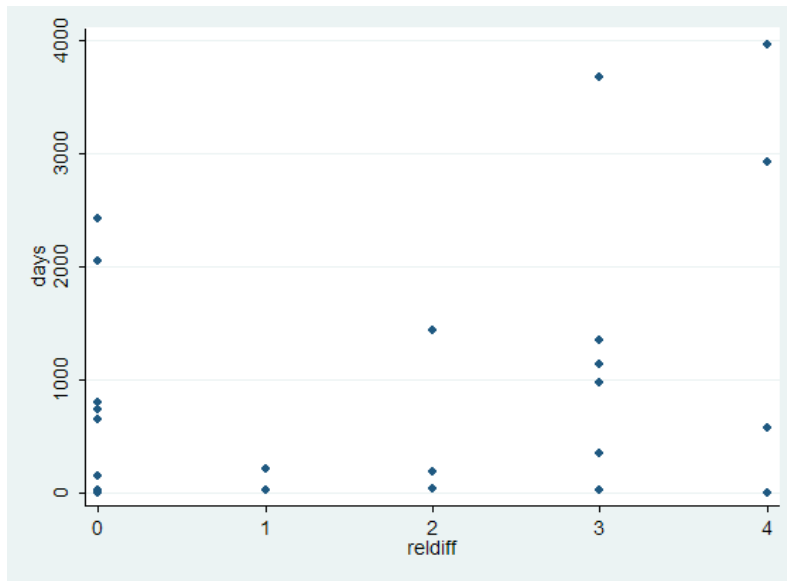


Figure 5: Eastern Duration Distribution

Table 4: Global Duration Regressions Summary (N=176)

DAYS	Model 1		Model 2	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Religious Cleavage Scale	359.8*	195.3	377.9*	193.8
State Stability	2150.2**	973.5	2317.4***	969.03
Religious Discrimination	62.5**	28.9	56.9*	28.8
Religious Frac.	-3102.7*	1850	-3080.8*	1834.5
GDP per Capita			-.35**	.176
<i>Constant</i>	2524***	980.4	3115.7***	1017
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.08		.1
<i>Adj R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.06		.07

\**p* < .10 \*\**p* < .05 \*\*\**p* < .02

It is difficult to explain the longer conflicts that appear in the absence of religious cleavages. When religious differences are not available for identity formation in intrastate conflict, other factors, such as class and ethnicity, and their related institutions may well become rallying points for identity. Apparently, when there is a large cleavage between the sides on the salient identifying category, compromise is less likely. The underlying logic is that there is less perceived overlap in interests and the future hopes for the nation-state. Georgia, where there has been an ongoing low-intensity separatist campaign for over a decade, offers an example. Georgians refuse to compromise with the separatists in part due to the Russian interest in the region, as evinced from Russian intervention in 2008, and the granting of Russian passports to South Ossetians and Abkhazians. The Russians' interest is partly political and partly economic—the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline carries oil through Georgia—and both of these interests led Russia to militarily intervene against the Georgians. The threat of having a potential hostile Russian puppet state to the north, made certain by Russian military action, prevents any kind of substantive compromise on the part of the Georgian government, drawing out the conflict indefinitely.

Regression analysis showed that religious cleavages were insignificant in the Eastern dataset, but not the global dataset. The lack of results in the Eastern Dataset is likely due to the small sample size.

Religious cleavages behaved as expected, raising the average length of each conflict by around a year for each level on the discrimination scale. State stability

increased the length of the conflicts significantly. This is likely because highly stable states cannot be outright defeated, while guerrilla rebels can also hold out indefinitely, increasing conflict length. An example of this would be Russia and Chechnya, where a highly stable state has been fighting a guerrilla force of rebels for almost a decade, with no end in sight. It is also possible that strong states have more developed mechanisms of repression, which enhances the repression effect.

Interestingly, religious fractionalization was highly significant with a large negative correlation. This is likely because when religious groups are not split into more than two large categories, the conflict is likely to be more intense, leading to a slower resolution. This is because when there are only two major groups, each will have more concentrated military resources, including manpower and weapons, allowing each side to hold out against the other longer. When the rebel group is divided into many religious factions, a large degree of cooperation and coordination in intent and strategy between each group is necessary in order to fight effectively. This has the potential to reduce the level of intensity that the rebels are capable of, and since they will be less organized. In a situation such as this, with a high level of religious fractionalization, the incumbent force may be more easily able to secure a decisive military victory, ending the conflict early. Alternatively, it may be easier to negotiate with many small religious groups, who do not have the leveraging power to make extreme demands, than one large religious group who is more wary of remaining or becoming a minority under a new government system. Finally, contact theory suggests that when people from different groups come into contact with one

another more frequently, they are less likely to make stereotypical judgments about the entire group and are more likely to compromise. Unless religious groups are territorially bound, high fractionalization implies that each group will be more likely to be in contact with and know members of the other groups. Thus, high levels of contact between groups may expedite negotiations due to pre-established levels of trust.

### Sec 5.2: Problems

The size of the Eastern European dataset, already extremely low at 25, was harmed by missing data, with some regressions coming back with as few as 17 included observations. Such a small N no doubt brings into questions the statistical validity of the observations gleaned from this dataset. Data was extrapolated using country averages when possible, but inevitably noise was introduced into the exercise.

Secondly, there are methodological problems with comparing the global dataset, in which country-year is the unit of analysis, and the Eastern dataset, in which conflict is the unit of analysis. As discussed in the methods chapter, each method is biased in different ways, and the effects may have been exaggerated in the global analysis due to autocorrelation and each conflict influencing its own control variables from year to year. Additionally, the process of using two different units of analysis in comparative regressions is imperfect, as each method will generate different amounts of noise.

Thirdly, there were likely some issues of co-linearity. For example, the Freedom House and Polity IV indices, though not quite measuring the same thing, are closely related in that autocracy correlates with low levels of freedom. The religious polarization, fractionalization, and ethnic domination variables are also closely related.

Fourthly, my religiosity scale was imperfect. The first reason for this is that, according to my theory, there is a fundamental difference between a level 4 cleavage in which both sides are religious, and a level 4 cleavage where the incumbents are religious and the rebel group is secular. This is because the rebel group will not have religious institutions to use to solve intragroup problems, but instead will have a unique set of secular institutions that may define themselves against the religion of the incumbent. The effectiveness of such institutions may not be the same as the effectiveness of religious institutions. For the purposes of this study, both of these examples were coded as a 4. However, if cleavages do behave differently in conflicts where there was one secular side and one religious side, this coding may have created noise.

Finally, the duration measurement is imperfect. Defining the end of a conflict can be difficult, particularly in cases like Chechnya or Georgia where there may be no fighting for almost a decade. The measure employed counts the end of a conflict as when a year goes by with less than 25 battle deaths. This does not necessarily reflect political realities, and thus does not adequately test my duration hypothesis.

Additionally, outliers, such as conflicts lasting a single day, may be throwing off my results.

## Sec 6: Case Studies

In attempting to understand how the data analysis applies to Eastern Europe, it is pertinent to examine the cases in detail. Three case studies will be examined: Russia/Chechnya, Yugoslavia, and Georgia/South Ossetia. Each case illustrates different aspects of the theory; the Russian case study demonstrates the duration theory particularly well, as both sides utilize religious rhetoric to both enhance their positions and prevent negotiation. In the Yugoslavia case study, the intensity theory is demonstrated, and it is shown that religion not only plays an indirect role in organizing violence, but also directly contributes to the fighting, with “warrior priests” and units steeped in religious symbols on the battlefield. Finally, the Georgia case acts as a control, where religion played a minimal role in conflict. It is shown in this case study that in the absence of a religious cleavage, intensity is reduced due to a reduction in militant organization and potential for violent mobilization.

### Sec 6.1: Russia/Chechnya

The wars between Russia and Chechnya are often cast in terms of religion. The media have tended to blame the conflicts, which have cost upwards of 9000 lives on the Russian side and 21,000 lives on the Chechen side, entirely on religion. The conflict is seen as the Russian Orthodox state fighting against the Islamist

Chechens, who wish to impose Sharia law and conquer the region. In reality, the religious dimension of the conflict, for both the Chechens and the Russians, is far more nuanced than these accounts suggest, with both sides having a majority that is atheistic. However, upon observation, it becomes apparent from an organizational standpoint that, at least for the Chechens, religion plays a crucial role in creating the conditions necessary for efficient violence.

### Sec 6.1.1: Religious History in Chechnya

Conflict in Chechnya against the Russians had been organized around religion long before the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Islam was popularized in Chechnya, and muddled with animist traditions that already existed in the region. The rebellions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were led by *mekkh-da*, or “fathers of the nation”, who were a group of famous imams (Nemtsova and Matthews 2010). The Naqshbandi Sufi brotherhoods, a group that detested hierarchy and preached resistance to ruling powers, united the Caucasian people under the banner of Islam against the Russians and Soviets (Wood 2007, p. 18). Rebellious sentiment against the tsarist regime grew out of preachers who shifted their rhetoric from Islamic piety to reform and liberation from foreign forces (Wood 2007, p. 23). The most prominent of the Islamic leaders in the 1800s was Imam Avar Ghazi Muhammad. The Imam declared holy war, or *ghazavat*, on Russia, and before he was defeated by the Russians, he innovated the military tactics and organizations of the Chechens. His eventual successor, Imam Shamil, acted as a military commander, a preacher,

and a politician, and using Qur'anic verses as legitimization for his actions, led his Islamic troops to inflict massive casualties on the Russians. After his surrender, Qadiri Sufi brotherhoods took on the mantle of rebellion against repression, which was put down by 24,000 Russian troops (Wood 2007, p. 26).

Under Soviet rule, Chechnya incurred heavy atheistic propaganda until *Glasnost*, the late-Soviet policy of "openness". However, even during the height of Soviet rule, Chechen *'adats*, or social norms, carried Islamic undertones. Weddings, funerals, and even farewell parties for the Soviet army all followed local Islamic tradition (Tishkov 2004, p. 168). With *Glasnost*, there was a major religious revival, measured in both religiosity and number of believers, especially among Chechen youth. Still, by the independence movement in 1992, Chechen Islam had shifted away from spiritual observance towards a locus for political participation.

The "new Muslims" joined the political movement, influencing the *Mehk-Khel* (which means "high court") and calling to have the leader of the separatist movement, Dzhokhar Dudayev, declared Imam. The clergy attempted to use this movement for greater power and material gain, with the religiously influenced *Mehk-Khel* making a claim for supreme power over parliament. The group ransacked government reserves and took bribes, all the while promoting radical Islamic slogans to increase the fervor of the conflict. Religion most truly entered into the conflict when the Chief Mufti of the Chechen Republic declared a jihad on Russians, claiming that "every Chechen would have to kill 150 Russians" (Webster 2007).



This action led to an inflow of the Wahhabi movement, which consisted of Islamic missionaries arriving from Arab countries, as well as Chechen students who were graduating from Islamic universities. The movement was led by Omar bin al Khattab, who had fought in Afghanistan. He brought with him both guerrillas and funding from Osama bin Laden. The combatants explicitly used Islam as their organizational principle and recruiting tool. Chechen Wahhabism positioned itself as in opposition to the more moderate Sufi Islam. In actuality, it was void of truly distinct doctrinal content, as interviews with informants demonstrated (Tishkov 2004, p. 172). However, from an institutional standpoint, Chechen Wahhabism was strong and oriented towards building solidarity, recruiting militants, and ensuring a high defection constraint.

#### **Sec 6.1.2: Religion, Intensity, and Duration in Chechnya**

Militants are unlikely to fight unless they see that support for the rebellion exists in numbers sufficient for a reasonable chance of winning, or at least influencing the outcomes of individual confrontations. To overcome this barrier to entry as a combatant, the explicitly militant Wahhabis utilized existing Islamic symbols to provide visual cues of militancy. They began wearing green headbands to identify themselves, and would cry “Allah Akbar!” Each of these acts helped members and non-members realize the size of the rebel force. To ensure that potential recruits and members recognized the explicit military aspect of the religion, members would record themselves praying in front of a video camera

immediately before going into battle (Tishkov 2004, p. 172). The Wahhabis began banning the highland *'adats*, which separated towns by cultural norms, and began standardizing the rules governing individual regions. They also began enforcing conservative Islamic dress for women and beards for men. For cancelling Sufi *zikr* ceremonies and joining the faith, adherents were rewarded with cars. These measures helped to build solidarity. They also gave status to the out-group, tempting others to join in.

The Wahhabis targeted youths for recruiting. They did this using a number of mechanisms. Firstly, Wahhabism had less time-consuming prayer practices than the Sufi alternative. This was appealing to busy and politically active youths. Secondly, Wahhabis offered as much as \$5000 for finding new recruits to the order, and paid new members as much as \$1000 for joining. These monetary benefits both solved the recruitment problem, and set defection constraints high by making alternatives to membership less appealing. Wahhabis were expected to support each other; in one case, a young Wahhabis was compelled to leave his home when his father refused to convert. His fellow adherents bought him a house, and they promised to buy him furniture and a car when he married (Tishkov 2004, p. 176). Poor Wahhabis are provided with financial aid to support their families (Giuliano 2005, p. 210). It was not uncommon for parents to disown their Wahhabi convert children. Expectations of future rewards and lack of other options made it logical for poor youth not only to join Wahhabis, but also to fight to preserve the faith, seeing as their livelihood depended on it. Even Chechen field commanders in the mid-1990s

began to convert to Wahhabism, realizing that their secessionist goals would not be supported by the West, so they were better off using a Wahhabi identity to attempt to garner support from the Middle East (Giuliano 2005, p. 211). In 1996, the president of Chechnya, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, attempted to establish a Wahhabi state to unite all the fighting clans in Chechnya. The success of these measures resulted in Islam becoming the official religion of the new power structure, as its public popularity grew despite government wishes.<sup>15</sup>

It was at this point, between the first and second war in Chechnya, that religion began to serve the role that banal nationalism normally serves in other countries, thus supporting **H4**. Religious symbols were placed in government offices and were made visible in all public places (Islamic symbols replacing state and nationalistic symbols), Qur'anic verses were recited in school (as opposed to a pledge of allegiance, or saluting the flag), the legal system began to incorporate Islamic norms, Sharia was declared the basis of the social order, and the political discourse was increasingly framed in the terms of Islam. This process was eased by the fact that "Islam [had] provided the foundation for Chechen nationalism for centuries", as it was used as the common cause that the Chechens organized around against the Russians since the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the 70 years of suppression under Soviet rule was not enough to erase the collective memory of Islamic identity (Lyon 2002, p. 114).

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<sup>15</sup> It is uncertain that militant Islam has gained *private* support in Chechnya. While anti-Russian attitudes are popular, the religious element seems to be an institutional tool, rather than the foundation for people's beliefs.

Normally, banal nationalism functions through a process of daily reinforcement that keeps people thinking about the nation; the United States does not cease to exist when it is not at war, but its imagery and symbolism are consistently invoked and reinforced to foster and fuel a strong sense of identity that can be readily drawn on to mobilize the masses (Billig 1995, p. 6). In a sense, it keeps the people primed for action, while also maintaining group identity. The specific religious-nationalistic symbols and rhetoric used by both Sufi and Wahhabi Chechens—places of worship, traditional Sufi symbolism,<sup>16</sup> religious warriors, Islamic flags, group prayer and *jihad*—served three purposes to enhance the capacity for violence in the insurrection against Russia in the early 1990s: unity, organization, and mobilization (Lyon 2002, p. 115). These are all roles that banal nationalism traditionally fulfills.

By 1998, Wahhabi symbolism and Islamic secessionism had become so entrenched in the Chechen national ideal that then-President Maskhadov, opposing attacks on Russia, was put in a position where if he did not join the anti-Russian Wahhabi faction, he would appear allied with Moscow. Islam had become an essential part of the nation, rivaled only by a desire to secede from Russia.

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<sup>16</sup> An example includes the *zikr*, wherein murids dance in a circle crying hypnotic chants, which was often seeing performed by Sufi separatist fighters in the early 1990s. Another is the new mosque being built on a pilgrimage site that will accommodate 10,000 worshipers and have four 50 meter-high fluted minarets (Parfitt 2007).

Wahhabism in particular became political currency that military leaders used to tap the poor and desperate for combat, and to garner international support.

Finally, the religious cleavage in this particular case also serves to provide validation for the extreme brutality on the part of the Russian incumbents, raising the potential for casualties on both sides. In 2000, Vladimir Putin framed the conflict against Chechen separatists in terms of global Islamic radicalism, claiming that there was a “formation of a sort of fundamentalist international, an arc of instability extending from the Philippines to Kosovo” and that “Europe should be grateful to us and offer its appreciation for our fight against terrorism even if we are, unfortunately, fighting it on our own”. He claimed further that the Chechens were “beasts in the guise of human beings” (Wood 2007, p. 123). Much as religious cleavages allow for rebel groups to solve the coordination problem by making people perceive the large group of rebels involved in the struggle, tied together by religious institutions, Putin has attempted to solve a coordination problem by bringing other countries to Russia’s aid. He sought to accomplish this by “creating” two groups: on the one hand, international rebels and terrorists driven by the ideology of global Jihad, and on the other, countries that are victims of their terrorism. This began under the Soviets, when there was a coincidental convergence of intent between rebel leaders and the Soviet regime. Both sides benefited from people thinking that militant jihad was genuine, rather than feigned. In this manner, Putin prevented the Chechen struggle from receiving Western support. He also increased the Russian forces’ potential for violence by garnering support himself.

The Chechens, on the other hand, use the idea of jihad to garner Middle Eastern support and make their forces seem more influential than they actually are.

In a nutshell, Islam has played a crucial role in the conflict in Russia—as a mobilizing agent, an organizing institution, and as a set of principles used to dehumanize the rebels. However, the Chechen people themselves are not overtly religious; relatively few support the Wahhabi movement, and those that do have anti-Russian attitudes, generally seeing the struggle as nationalistic, rather than an Islamic concern, despite the fact that Wahhabism is the primary locus of mobilization for the rebels (Giuliano 2005, p. 215). The people of Dagestan have a higher level of religiosity than the Chechen's, and maintained this level throughout Soviet rule. In the late 1990s, 95% of the heavily religious population in Dagestan considered themselves to be “religious believers”, and in the decade after Soviet rule, had built over 2000 new mosques (Giuliano 2005, p. 203). Despite this, Dagestan's Muslim community did not support Chechen rebels. Part of this may be attributed to the difference among Wahhabist groups in Dagestan and Chechnya. In Dagestan, Wahhabism is heavily connected to personal religious practices, while in Chechnya, it is used by warlords to increase their following and enhance their political goals. In Chechnya, Wahhabism has primarily attracted non-religious, poor men, who adopted an ideology of armed jihad rather than the more traditional Islamic doctrines seen in Dagestan (Giuliano 2005, p. 210). Further, international Islamist groups fund Wahhabism in Chechnya, monetarily and with the support of foreign mercenaries. Clearly, religiosity is not enough to increase the intensity of

conflict. To the nationalistic Chechens, “the kingdom of heaven is...no substitute for the right to their own earthly republic” (Wood 2007, p. 124). Even so, Islam has played a crucial role in enabling the political and violent action that the Chechens have utilized to move towards this ultimate goal. This suggests that it is the organizational capacity of religion that increases violence, not religiosity or theology, thus supporting **H6**.

The most recent rebel attacks have been organized around religion, as radical Islam and the Chechen government become synonymous. President Kadyrov, who was appointed by Vladimir Putin in the hope that he would foster a moderate brand of Sufism in the region, has shunned the title of president in favor of *mekkh-da*, invoking a history of Islamic religious struggle against the Russian authorities in Chechnya. His policies reflect this radicalization, forcing women to wear traditional Islamic dress, supporting honor killings, spending millions on new mosques, restricting the use of alcohol, and creating a “morality police” that force Islamic law on the population, particularly in the case of women (Nemtsova and Matthews 2010). Further, he has formally forced the unification 117 Chechen families--who for decades have been torn by blood feuds--under the name of Allah. While these policies are not explicitly Wahhabi, that further intensify the conflict by turning Russian perception of all Chechens towards extremism, and pushing more young men into the rebel movement. These policies also heighten defection constraints for the Wahhabis, as if they leave the movement they must return to a highly repressive

form of Islam that does not offer any of the monetary benefits—such as a \$100 per month stipend—that Wahhabism offers.

The religious cleavage has also clearly contributed to the already lengthy and ongoing nature of the conflict. Russia's favoritist treatment of the Russian Orthodox Church, combined with the aforementioned Islamophobic national political discourse, create broad feelings of distrust regarding the motives of parties on either side of the conflict. The rebels in Chechnya use similar tactics to prevent a resolution to conflict that is anything short of their own nation-state; religious rhetoric, claiming that the conflict is a struggle to preserve an Islamic way of life that is threatened by Russian rule, is used to prevent fighters from being complacent with limited autonomy under the Russians for fear of the long-term survival of Chechen Islam. In either group, preference falsification occurs among the general population; Russians are expected to be against Islam, and so they express these preferences regardless of actual opinion, while the Chechens are expected to support their Islamic history, and acknowledge their historical clashes with the Russians. Putin, seeing the rebellion as a religious insurrection wherein the Chechens will not settle for anything less than an Islamic state, refuses to negotiate with Chechen politicians (Giuliano 2005, p. 214). This plays into the hands of the rebels, who want the Russians to perceive their group as all of Islam, rather than just the Wahhabis, and do not want the Sufi establishment to be able to come to any real compromise. The Wahhabi suicide attacks on Russians further supports these



attitudes. Fear, influenced by the religious nature of the conflict, has extended it out over many years in Russia, supporting **H3**.

## Sec 6.2: Yugoslav States

*“Sacred sites are . . . the physical evidence of the perennial existence of the religious community and, by nationalist expansion, of the nation . . . . The history of shrines, as told in religious tales, and established by archeological evidence, is the history of the nation”* (Veer 1994, p. 214)

*“First came priests, then guns.”*

--Headline in the Montenegrin weekly *Monitor*, alluding to the genesis of the Yugoslav conflict of the 1990s

The academic discourse surrounding the causes of the breakup of Yugoslavia and the resultant wars that lasted throughout the 1990s attempts to explain the conflict in a variety of ways, both ethnic and economic. They generally agree, however, that decades before the breakup of Yugoslavia both Yugoslavian Christians and Muslims exploited religious cleavages for political ends.

### Sec 6.2.1: Religious History in Yugoslavia

Religion was the primary identifying factor of the three ethnicities that made up Yugoslavia: Croats, Serbs, and Bosnians. All three groups belonged to essentially the same race, sharing the same language. However, in 395 A.D., Emperor Diocletian divided the Roman Empire from the Adriatic to the Danube. This administrative divide was reinforced by varying economic, social, and ecclesiastical developments, forming the dividing line between Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, with Croats and Serbs on opposite sides of the divide (Broun 1991, p. 415). This

cleavage was exacerbated by Ottoman rule, which cut the Serbs off from the Croats and Western religious culture, with the Serbs under Ottoman rule. The Slovenes, who were located on both sides of the boundary, evolved as central Europeans due to their incorporation into Austria. In the center of this dividing line, Christianity was eroded by the Bogomil heretic sect, which converted to Islam and made Bosnia majority Muslim. These three religions—Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam—set the stage for the intensely violent conflicts that would tear apart Yugoslavia in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Serbian Orthodoxy in particular has a militaristic, political flavor to its history. As far back as Ottoman rule of Serbia from 1500-1800, the Serbian Orthodox Church actively participated in uprisings, literally becoming a “warrior church”, complete with bishop-priest-warrior heroes, who “defended the convent of Moraa with 200 men, against 20,000 Albanians” and “of majestic height, of about six feet eight inches, who can hit with a rifle a lemon thrown into the air by one of his attendants” (Wilkinson 1848, p. 472, 530-31; Jelavich 1954, p. 144-52). At the center of the religio-political fervor of Serbian Orthodox nationalism is the myth of Kosovo; in 1389, Serbia was conquered by the Turks through a battle fought in Kosovo. The Serbian Orthodox Church incorporated this symbol into its nationalist rhetoric. The importance of this symbol persists in modern times, with Kosovo often being referred to as “Serbian Jerusalem” and “Serbian Zion”. The symbol was used most rampantly by the Church during the crises in the 1980s and 1990s to mobilize support for the national cause against Albanian repression (Perica 2002, p. 8).

Though Serbian Orthodoxy was perhaps the most politically active faith in Yugoslavia, Croatian Catholicism also became politicized, and would eventually play a direct militaristic role in the intrastate conflicts that broke out. One of the first ways the Catholic Church became nationalistic was through the use of Church Slavonic language, rather than Latin, in worship services. This developed the vernacular, as priests and monks began publishing in the native tongue. Like the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Croatian Catholics were militarized early. Franciscan monk-priests guarded Croat communities under Ottoman rule, and anti-Turkish fighter priests and patriot clerics defended Croatian identity and promoted South Sea Unity through combat (Perica 2002, p.10). In the twilight of communism, as more Croats were canonized into sainthood, Croat Catholicism grew drastically and garnered a large amount of political influence, becoming the “Church of the Croat People” with 5 ecclesiastical provinces, 8 archdioceses, 13 dioceses, and 4 apostolic administraturae, with a total of 2,702 parishes, 182 monasteries, and 415 convents, all almost entirely controlled by ethnic Croats (Perica 2002, p. 11). These Croat Catholic leaders, and the highly organized structure of their Church, would play a major role in the intrastate conflicts of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, the Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs had enjoyed strong interfaith relations. All this changed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when both religious organizations began to incorporate secular nationalism into their religious identity (Roksandic 1997, p. 75).

Finally, the Bosnian Muslim community also had a long and active history of political action and community organizing that primed adherents for violent

conflict. The first step to achieving this capability was the establishment of an independent and autonomous “Muslim Community” under the Tito regime to coordinate and run Muslim affairs in Bosnia. This group was highly organized, with 1,400 professional employees and over 3,000 mosques under their jurisdiction (Perica 2002, p. 12).

Under Tito’s atheistic regime, all three religions were suppressed. However, Catholicism, due in part to the 1966 Protocol between the Government and the Vatican that guaranteed the Church autonomy, allowed the faith to recover more quickly than its counterparts. The relatively high level of depoliticized organization produced a vibrant and open church, confident in its independence. By contrast, in the face of rising atheism, Orthodoxy became dogmatic and began to limit its dialogue with the other faiths (Broun 1991, p. 416). This created a hard-line, defensive culture that left little room for compromise on any issues relating to Orthodox policy.

The apolitical strength of Catholicism, combined with a provision from the 1966 Protocol that forced the Catholic Church to stay out of politics, prevented it from becoming *too* involved with Croat nationalism in opposition to Slovenian nationalism, despite becoming the sole champion of Croat nationalism against the will of the Church (Broun 1991, p. 416). However, by 1984, it was clear that the Catholic Church had been co-opted to actually *become* the nation. The Serbian Orthodox Church also took advantage of public interest in it as a national church, becoming an official supporter of Slobodan Milosevic and his vision of recreating

Greater Serbia. As tensions rose and conflict began to break out, Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy were co-opted by the Bosnian, Croat, and Serb nationalists to become the core of nationalist discourse, if not serve the role of nationalism itself.<sup>17</sup> These trends set the stage for the civil wars of the Balkans, in which religion both allowed for a far greater intensity than otherwise would have occurred, and contributed to the long duration without any hope for compromise and preservation of the Yugoslavian union.

After the fall of Tito, religion in Yugoslavia went one step beyond being a national institution, and became directly political. In 1990, elections in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina yielded victories for directly religious and religiously supported political parties. This marked the final step from priming people for violence through banal nationalism to direct organization and support of the violent conflicts that would follow.

#### Sec 6.2.2: Religion, Intensity, and Duration in Yugoslavia

*The Serbian Orthodox Church is not only a religious organization, but also a leading national institution committed to the cause of national unity—national leadership is the Church's historical mission as a national church and national institution.*

--Slobodan Milosevic

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<sup>17</sup> In accordance with my theory, it was not *true* religion, in the sense of deity worship and strength of belief, which created the circumstances for violence. Rather, it was religion as a form of nationalism. It has been argued—in the opinion of the author correctly—that more *true* religion, that is to say, individualized religion based on pure, pacifist, apolitical doctrine untouched by nationalists, might saved lives (Broun 1991).

*The Serbian Orthodox Church is not merely a religious organization, it is a cultural institution and part of national leadership; the Church is highly important for all Serbs, and it is irrelevant whether one believes in God or not. --Radovan Karadzic*

Ironically, it was the communist dictator Tito who enabled religion as an institution capable of violent organization. Before and during his rule, religion had already become “not so much a matter of *private* conscience as of one’s public identity” that determined nationality both in the eyes of the individual and others upon conversion (Petrovic 1967, p. 217). Tito went on to institutionalize this cultural phenomenon. The 1953 census created the three “ethnic nations” by registering religion and nationality and finding a strong correlation between religious affiliation and national affiliation. After this, the major religious institutions began creating the nation of Yugoslavia via mythmaking, linguistic efforts, commemorations, and holidays by creating religious “national saints” to embody a collective memory (Perica 2002, p. 6). By 1968, the Communists had declared “Muslim” a distinct nationality, and in 1971 1,482,430 citizens declared themselves of the Muslim nation (Perica 2002, p. 75). Thus were sown the seeds of banal nationalism. This banal nationalism would later be used as the locus of the nationalist violence that would tear Yugoslavia apart. This directly supports **H4** by showing that religion can supplant nationalism, serving the same well-known role of traditional nationalism as a mobilizer for violence.

The Serbian Orthodox Church was perhaps the most active of these institutions in creating the conditions for conflict and the dormant potential for violence. The Church itself was barely a religious institution; as Serbian historian

Michael B. Petrovich has observed, “the Serbian Orthodox church was a cultural and quasi-political institution, which embodied and expressed the ethos of the Serbian people to such a degree that nationality and religion fused into a distinct ‘Serbian faith.’ This role of the Serbian church had little to do with religion either as theology or as a set of personal beliefs and convictions” (Petrovich 1976, p. 10).

To solidify this nationalistic brand of religion, church leaders built religious infrastructure along the borders of Serbian communities and the broader Serbian nation. Shrines, monuments, cemeteries, and churches were all built about state-lines, essentially demarcating the Serbian territory (Perica 2002, p. 6). Resources for such institution strengthening practices were not slight, as Western financial aid was being given in large amounts to churches repressed by communism (Perica 2002, p. 9). The most notable, much like the large mosque built in Chechnya, was a Cathedral in Belgrade larger than any other Orthodox church in the world (Perica 2002, p. 216). The church was not seen as a symbol of religious power, but instead was seen as a symbol of Serbian perseverance; the dedication in the newspaper when the church was opened stated, “[with] hope of the nearing harvest tenaciously shining, Saint Sava is rising atop the Vraar hill, and all wretched Serbia rises with him” (Perica 2002, p. 127). The politically verbal clergy in these new churches, spouting nationalist rhetoric at a grand scale and representing rather homogenous populations in their regions, satisfied **H1** and **H2** primarily through extraordinarily strong capacity for solving the coordination problem.

The Serbs had god-families (*cumovi*) that provided social norms and outlets for communication that were conducive to violent organization (Petersen 2002, p. 238). The Catholics were able to mobilize the Croats in huge numbers for nationalist causes, perhaps most notably on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989, when 400,000 assembled for the “Mass of the Century,” a service with heavily nationalistic undertones (Perica 2002, p. 71). Bosnian Muslims, whose leadership was largely drawn from partisan Veterans of the Anti-fascist People’s Liberation Struggle, were largely supportive of Tito and continued Yugoslavian unity. However, in 1989 an anti-communist movement that demanded Islamic norms for the everyday life of the people and autonomy from the Yugoslav Muslim community won out, making Bosnian Islamic nationalism a prominent political force. This resulted in national television coverage of Islamic rituals, pilgrimages of over 150,000 to Ajvatovica to celebrate the conversion to Islam in Bosnia, and the publication of Islamic nationalist rhetoric in newspapers (Petersen 2002, p. 86). In all three of these cases, the common leadership of each organization, combined with highly visible institutional networks, solved the violence coordination problem by informing members about the number of other supporters.

Aside from enhancing the potential for violence by overcoming the coordination problem, each religious group contributed directly to military capacity, supporting **H1**. As early as 1990, Alija Izetbegovic, the first President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was building up a secret Muslim militia, the Muslim Patriot League (Djilas and Gce 1995, p. 134). This militia played a serious role in the conflicts. It



created the “Guidelines on Organization and Action in the Field”, which served as a field manual for military organization. Many members of the Muslim Party and the Patriot League would go on to use their training as formal members of the military of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A notable example was Sefer Halilovic, a founder and organizer of the Patriot League, who went on to become the Chief of General Staff of the Bosnia-Herzegovina army (YCCDCAHIL 1998). The general membership in the Patriot League later formed the core membership in the formal army, and was highly organized, with covert units training in the Croatian Ministry of the Interior, had 9 regional and 103 municipal headquarter, and 98,000 soldiers preemptively trained to go to war parallel with the development of war in Croatia. All members swore “an oath to the Muslim people” (YCCDCAHIL 1998).

It is important to note that the Patriot League and its forces were not Muslim in name only. Religious leaders were directly involved. The meshihat in Serajevo sent a memo to all of the imams in the region, asking them to vote for an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina as “the future of [their] religion”, saying that, “if we fail this exam, history will not give us an opportunity to take a makeup exam for quite some time.” Muslim soldiers were given a handbook written by Islamic foundations that gave the “advice” that:

*“He who fails to send a combatant to fight ... shall be cursed by Allah with some disaster. It is also left to the military command to decide whether it is more useful and in the interest of the common cause to release, exchange or liquidate a captured enemy. A believer is not allowed to keep an enemy as POW as long as he has not won*

*the victory on the Earth. It is forbidden to kill women, children and clergymen who  
neither participate in war nor, directly or indirectly, assist the enemy  
(their own people...)"*

This “advice” not only implies that women and children are legitimate targets, but also encourages general violence and abdicates individuals of moral responsibility for killing (YCCDCAHIL 1998). Clearly, Islam was being used to both streamline and organize violence.

Orthodox and Catholic organizations also played direct roles in the violence. In 1987, Serbian Church leaders began publically demanding the partition of Yugoslavia along Serb and Croat lines. The Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church began directly contributing to the violence in the 1991 Serbo-Croat war, when both sides provoked conflict through official pronouncements against each other. Within combat, there were elite combat units referred to as the “Orthodox Army” that entered battle accompanied by clergy. Religious insignia, prayers before and during combat, religious salutes, and armed clergy in uniform were all common on both the Catholic and Orthodox sides. Targets included religious structures, and soldiers perpetrated torture by carving religious symbols into the flesh of their enemies. “Holy warriors” came from foreign nations to fight in support of their religions, and rhetoric on all sides encouraged ethnic cleansing (Perica 2002, p. 166-67). It is clear that church leaders not only organized combat units, but they themselves participated in the combat. There was little risk for the clergy in doing this due to the system of ethnoclericalism that had taken hold in Yugoslavia. Priests could make

political moves on the local and national level, without fear of having to take responsibility like their politician counterparts (Perica 2002, p. 215).

Religion also, as my theory suggests, influenced the duration of the roughly decade-long series of conflicts among Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia. The attack on Muslim Bosnians in the mid to late 1990s—an effort in which Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs cooperated—was motivated by the fear of future repression under an Islamic system, which negated any hope for compromise and drew out the conflict for years.

For a minority of Bosnian Croats and Serbs in rural areas, a new Muslim-dominated Bosnian state was unacceptable. This threat was highly visible; Bosnia was highly mixed, ethnically and religiously, and an Orthodox Serb town was often located just down the road from a heavily Muslim Bosnian community. To prevent this outcome, the Croats and Serbs began directly cooperating, coming so far as to prevent fighting amongst each other in 1993 to allow the Croatians to advance on Bosnian positions, renting each other artillery, and on May 7, 1992, staging a meeting of military leaders on either side to discuss how to perpetrate Bosnian partition (Petersen 2002, p. 234). It was not because of Muslim intransigence that ethnic cleansing occurred; Muslim politicians supported equal representation in Federation institutions, despite a population 5 times larger than that of the Croats. The Croats responded by demanding even greater separation of Croats and Muslims, with monoethnic cantons and municipalities within which they could have complete political and military control (Petersen 2002, p. 235).

It is clear that it was *religious* differences, not ethnic differences, which prevented compromise and elongated conflict in Bosnia. In the resulting conflicts, Croatians clearly targeted mosques and other targets of Muslim cultural significance. The Serbian politician Vuk Draskovic claimed the imams of Bosnia were inciting a religious nationalistic war, saying that they “want to overthrow the legitimate head of the Yugoslav Muslim organization; they would force Muslim women to wear Muslim attire like they do in Iran; they demand separate kindergartens for Muslim children, and special nutrition according to religious norms for Muslim servicemen in the Yugoslav Army...[I]f their demands are met, that would cause religious and national war...a catastrophe in Bosnia-Herzegovina” (Draškovic 7 April 1989).

Such Serb and Croatian fears of status reduction in a Muslim-majority state were not entirely unfounded; Izetbegovic had written in 1970 that the attainment of an “Islamic order is a sacrosanct goal which cannot be overridden by any vote”. In 1990, his political party became the first openly Islamic party since the Second World War in Yugoslavia, demanding a nation wherein there would be a Muslim majority (Petersen 2002, p. 239). These real concerns of a Muslim majority nation were exaggerated by Serbian elites wishing to retain power via a myth of Islamic jihad. People in rural areas, already organized into their god-families and ignorant of and separated from the Muslim population, were easily manipulated to believe skewed and false information produced by Serb politicians to prevent support for a peace with the Muslim Bosnians in a position of power (Hardin 1995, p. 162). An

example of this is seen in the treatment of the moderate Jakub Selimoski, the reis-ul-ulema elected in 1991 who the Belgrade press accused of being a fundamentalist aiming to establish an Islamic state in Sandjak, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Petersen 2002, p. 85). The fear and resentment created in the rural Bosnian population, created a situation where conflict would be ongoing as any compromise position would be untenable by politicians. It also united Serbs and Croats, to continue fighting against the new “enemy”. These factors all support **H3**.

There was also religious fear mongering that occurred between the Croats and Serbs. The Serbs drew comparisons to the Holocaust in their struggle, suggesting that if they would not have armed themselves and attacked, they would have been eradicated by the Croats (Momir 1995). The Catholic Church, in turn, held a scholarly symposium that designated the Serbian clergy as the instigators of genocide against the Croat people, and compared them to Hitler’s willing executioners (Perica 2002, p. 168). Fear of annihilation spread by the church made either side attempting to compromise political suicide, and so religion extended the duration of the conflict.

As my theory predicts, there was no upsurge in religiosity and religious fervor, and no belief in a “holy war” motivating extra violence. Rather, an activist clergy used religion to satisfy nationalist aspirations. Mass religious rituals solved the coordination problem. Military organizations directly contributed to the organization of military capacity and recruitment of troops. Regarding duration, fears of repression under a newly religious regime blocked a peaceful solution after

the conflicts in the mid 1990s. Finally, religious institutions became nationalized, with rituals and day to day religious activities gaining the double meaning of nation building and priming the members of the nation to defend it at the cost of their lives, supporting **H4**.

### Sec 6.3: Georgia

The intrastate conflicts in Georgia—largely between Georgia, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia—present an example of intrastate conflict where religion is not playing a substantive role. There is no religious cleavage, and thus this case study serves as a control. While the conflict *is* a war of ethno-nationalist minorities, it is distinctly different from the religious cases examined, both in its causes and in the process of combat itself. This case study will demonstrate that a lack of a religious cleavage can limit conflict intensity without necessarily decreasing the duration of conflict.

#### Sec 6.3.1: History of the Conflict in South Ossetia

South Ossetia is a region in the northeast of Georgia. The South Ossetians do not constitute their own ethnicity, but instead are part of the broader category of Ossetians, an ethnic group that spans the Caucasus Mountains, primarily in Russia and Georgia. North Ossetia and South Ossetia were split when Georgia declared independence, claiming South Ossetia as part of its territory.

The conflict between the South Ossetians and Georgians can be traced back to 1920, when Ossetian rebellions demanding independence first broke out. Soviet

rule followed shortly after the rebellions, under which the South Ossetians were given limited independence as an “autonomous oblast”. Under strict Soviet rule, separatist dissent was repressed until 1989, when the South Ossetians requested the Georgian Supreme Soviet grant them independence, a request that was promptly denied and that reignited tensions (Jentzsch 2009).

The conflict in its modern form began in 1990, when the Georgian Supreme Soviet adopted a new law that placed a ban on regional political parties. In 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed and Georgia gained independence, it abolished the South Ossetian autonomous republic (Lieven 2008). This effectively outlawed separatism in South Ossetia, and in protest, the Ossetians held their own elections. In response, the Georgians invalidated their election results, removed their status as an autonomous oblast, and moved several thousand troops into the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, starting the war that would last until the 1992 cease fire agreement (Jentzsch 2009, p. 3).

### **Sec 6.3.2: Explaining Conflict Intensity and Duration in Georgia**

The religious demography in the separatist regions of Georgia is similar to elsewhere in the country. South Ossetia and Georgia are both majority Eastern Orthodox. According to the 2002 census, overall, Georgia was 83.9% Orthodox Christian, with a 9.9% Muslim minority (CIA 2011). In South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Muslims constitute approximately 35% of the population, with Eastern Orthodoxy representing most of the remaining majority. This Muslim figure has been inflated

by Russia's actions in the region, which have made it "easier and more attractive for Muslim émigrés from the North Caucasus to return there and change the ethno-religious balance" (Goble 2008). Even so, there is no religious pattern among rebels; Eastern Orthodox South Ossetians and Muslims both form the ranks of the separatists, with the Orthodox Ossetians representing the majority as the demographics suggest.

While religious demographics indicate that there is no religious element, the conflict is still explicitly ethnic. Georgia is roughly 83.8% Georgian (CIA 2011). South Ossetia approximately 60% ethnically Ossetian, with around 30% ethnic Georgians (Rayfield 2008, p. 127-28).

The conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia has been low intensity and sporadic, with short spurts of violence occurring over a long period of time, rather than long and sustained combat. A large number of the few thousand deaths resulting from the struggle were incurred during the 2008 conflict, when Russian forces intervened. The relatively low number of deaths can in part be attributed to the minimal amount of organization among rebel groups. Without religious institutions playing a major role, there are lower defection constraints. Put simply, the benefits of fighting do not offset the costs, as there are few formal institutions providing welfare to participants, and there is no social penalty for not joining the struggle. Thus, in part due to the difficulty of mass violent organization and mobilization, citizens of Georgia and the South Ossetians have often resorted to civil means, such as elections, rather than direct fighting. This includes the Rose



Revolution for the Georgians, which resulted in the radical nationalist administration of Mikhail Saakashvili (Lieven 2008). For the South Ossetians, it has meant the election of a de facto government in Tskhinvali, including an executive and legislative branch. The intensity of the recent 2008 conflict largely occurred not due to South Ossetian organization and violent capacity, but instead due to Russian involvement, which served both to arm and organize the struggle (Pitalev 2010).

The first crucial difference between Georgia and the Russian/Chechen case was the high level of autonomy that the Ossetians enjoyed both *after* and during Soviet rule in the form of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (Cornell 2002, p. 2). While it is true that a “puppet” government has existed in both cases, de facto administrative power in Georgia is in the hands of the rebels, while in Chechnya, the Putin-backed government maintains a fair amount of support.<sup>18</sup> Another important difference between the Georgian cases and many other cases of ethnic intra-state conflict is the fact that the ethnic group is politically divided. The Ossetian people were split into two groups during Soviet rule: the North Ossetians, under de jure Russian rule, and the South Ossetians, who live on Georgian territory. When the Georgians abolished the Ossetian autonomous enclave, thousands of Ossetians resettled to the North. The combination of these factors led to a desire to and expectation of sovereignty over their own territory.

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that the South Ossetian government receives both Russian recognition and support. Without this endorsement, the situation in South Ossetia would likely more closely resemble the situation in Chechnya, with Georgia controlling the South Ossetian representatives.

A second major difference is the lack of manpower supporting the South Ossetian military effort. South Ossetia has a mere 2,500 soldiers on active duty (Kramnik 2008). Compared to the over 22,000 Chechen rebels and massive amounts of civilian deaths in Russia, and the tens of thousands of active troops on each side in the Yugoslav wars, it is evident that this number is insignificant (Russian Ministry of Defense 1999). While the low number of South Ossetian militants is in part due to the relatively small population size of South Ossetia, the lack of a religious cleavage to motivate and organize violent action has made the conflict in Georgia more methodological, more prone to treaties and ceasefires, and less violent than conflicts where a religious cleavage is present.

The length of the conflict in Georgia—almost 20 years if the fighting in the early 1990s is used as the start date—is misleading. While it is true that there has been political and military tension during the entire period, fighting has been highly sporadic, with little to no casualties from 1992 through 2004. This can be attributed to the “Agreement on the Principles of the Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict between Georgia and Russia”, or the Sochi Agreement, an accord which created multi-lateral peace keeping forces representing Georgian, South Ossetia, North Ossetian, and Russian troops, as well as placing Russia in the position of chief-mediator (Konig 2004, p. 241). Even so, without a religious cleavage threatening the “way of life” of both sides, another variable must contribute to the irresolution of tension and conflict.

In the case of Georgia, the other variable is the Russian government's desire to maintain hegemony in the region. For successful negotiation to occur, two conditions must be met: each side must have proportional sway based on their power/size, and there must be no threat of repression and drastically changing "ways of life" if a compromise is reached. Russian involvement undermines both of these conditions.

Firstly, by leveraging their military force behind the South Ossetians, and officially recognizing South Ossetia as an independent country, Russia creates a threatening situation for Georgians. As a de facto Russian protectorate, South Ossetia has no incentive to enter into negotiations that offer anything less than institutionalizing this relationship with Russia leading to de facto and de jure independence. This essentially places the breakaway regions and Georgia on an equal level, creating a stalemate (Welt 2005, p. 2). Russia, which desires political influence in the militarily and economically significant region, has no incentive to encourage South Ossetia to sit down at the negotiation table, and Georgian politicians cannot accept any compromise that grants Russia further influence in the region, so despite years of "frozen conflict", there is no official end to tension.

Secondly, there is a perceived threat to the Georgian "way of life" imposed by the heavy involvement of the Russians. The South Ossetians themselves pose little threat of domination to the Georgians, due to their limited population and geographic sphere of influence. The Russians, however, who are partially motivated by desire to maintain what Moscow sees as its historical sphere of influence, have

created a fear among Georgians of domination as a minority. Politicians, who desire to maintain control of South Ossetia, thus have an incentive to exploit this fear using anti-Russian rhetoric and framing the conflict as international, rather than civil. Georgian nationalism has always been framed as an anti-Russian ideology, hoping to stem off Russian hegemony in the region. Mikhail Saakashvili, who became president in the wake of the Rose Revolution, entered office with a radically nationalistic administration. In September, 2005, he claimed that there was “no Ossetian problem in Georgia,” only “a problem in Georgian-Russian relations in certain territories” (Jentzsch 2009, p. 8). Framing the problem in such a manner guaranteed that the Georgian people—who define themselves as vehemently anti-Russian but not necessarily anti-Ossetian—would support the continued struggle for maintaining territorial integrity and sovereignty over South Ossetia. Thus, by creating the perception of a threat to the future stability of the Georgian “way of life” and creating a situation where South Ossetians have more than their proportional share of leverage, Russian involvement mirrors the role of a religious cleavage in extending the duration of intrastate conflict. While the intensity of the conflict is hampered by the lack of a religious cleavage to provide institutional mechanisms for mobilizing violence, the duration of conflict is still extended by Russian economic interests and Georgian nationalistic rhetoric creating hatred and fear.

## Sec 7: Conclusions

Only six out of 28 presently existing Central and Eastern European states have a share of minorities which is below ten percent (Cornell 2002, p. 9). Due to the political nature of religious institutions in Eastern Europe—more so than elsewhere—nationalist violence was enhanced by religion. Regression analysis demonstrated this to be this case, with high significance. However, the low r-values suggest that while religion is an important element in explaining high levels of violence and long intrastate conflicts, many other factors matter substantially.

It is clear from the statistical results that conflicts with no religious cleavage display a wide range of intensity. This stands to reason; it is easy to imagine that in the absence of a religious cleavage to be exploited, alternative institutions are used for mobilization and the organization of violent movements. Just as the success of such endeavors are variable, so too are the levels of intensity found in secular conflicts.

As demonstrated by the case studies, religion has a phenomenal potential to create fear and resentment among the broader populations of countries at civil war. For that reason, it drastically limits possibilities of compromise. In post-communist countries in particular, politicians will not budge towards compromise in civil conflict when a religious cleavage is involved. Although the quantitative results do not support this theory, nor did they contradict it (there was not a negative coefficient). This does not invalidate the theory. It suggests, however, that in cases

with no religious cleavage, other factors—including demographic differences between sides, such as ethnicity, language, and class—can serve as the mediums for the fear of future policy choices and resentment that politicians can exploit to garner support and prevent compromise.

**Table 5: Summary of Hypotheses**

Hypothesis		Quant Support?	Qual Support?
<b>H1</b>	Religion increases violence in intrastate conflict	Yes	Yes
<b>H2</b>	Religious homogeneity within groups increases violence	Yes	Yes
<b>H3</b>	Religious cleavages lengthen conflicts	No	Yes
<b>H4</b>	Religion serves as a surrogate for nationalism in Eastern Europe	N/A	Yes
<b>H5</b>	Religious repression increases the intensity and duration of conflict	No	Yes
<b>H6</b>	Increased religiosity will increase the length of conflict, but not the intensity of conflict	No	Yes

**H1** was supported by both the quantitative and qualitative elements of this study. There is much evidence that religious cleavages do indeed increase the number of deaths in intrastate conflict by thousands of deaths per year. It is unclear, however, that the scope of the religious cleavage affects intensity, rather than merely the presence of a cleavage. This is likely because doctrine does not matter; all that matters are religious institutions that serve as unique points of organization for each belligerent.

**H2** was not supported by the data, but nor was it refuted. This is likely due to limited variance within the sample; most of the conflicts examined occurred in

religiously homogenous areas. Some of the regions with a greater level of religious heterogeneity, such as South Ossetia, were coded as non-religious conflicts, since the majority religion was still the same as that of the incumbents. In future studies, cases outside of Eastern Europe, where many religions exist on either side of a conflict, should be considered.

**H3** was not supported by the data. While it seemed that religion did play a role in preventing compromise when a religious cleavage was present, the data and Georgian case study suggests that when a religious cleavage is not present, other factors serve to protract the conflict. Examples include ethnicity and economic class, both of which can create the same fear of rule by an out-group that will discriminate against the in-group, preventing compromise. These fears can be based in reality, such as when the terms of compromise suggest future discrimination, or manufactured by politicians to prevent anything short of a complete victory. In both cases, the conflict is extended. Georgia provides an excellent example, where the Russian threat, rather than a religious threat, created fear among the people over the implications of a compromise that still keep the conflict alive.

**H4** was not supported by the data. This was likely due to the small sample size; the case studies strongly suggest that religion, particularly in post-Communist states, serves as a vessel for nationalism. Additionally, while some variables were related to nationalist tendencies, such as religious legitimacy, no quantitative variable is truly able to test for the link between nationalism and religion. While there are certainly other examples outside of the examples considered—Ireland and

Israel being the most prominent—it is apparent that given the long history of religious repression, corrupt political parties, inefficient political institutions, and political clergy, religion as a surrogate for nationalism is particularly strong in Eastern European post-Communist countries.

**H5** was not proven significant by the data. However, this is likely due to a lag effect in the data; religious repression was extremely high during the Soviet years, and then lessened after the fall of the Soviet Union. The effect that repression had during that time period, causing resentment and building up tensions between religious groups, may have needed the repression to have been released for a few years to finally take effect. This is essentially the freezer theory, or the idea that the sudden permissibility of ethnic and religious identity after decades of impermissibility resulted in sociopolitical tension and conflict. Since the dataset measured the level of religious freedom during the conflict, rather than during the decade before conflict, this theory could not be tested statistically. In a future study, a different religious freedom index could be developed, using data from sources such as the United States Department of State Annual Religious Freedom Report, and an average value for the level of religious freedom in the decades *before* the outbreak of conflict could be used.

**H6** was not explored due to a lack of a suitable dataset. Data on religiosity, particularly in Eastern Europe, is difficult to come by. It should be noted that the case studies supported an institutional explanation for the increase of violence in religiously divided intrastate conflict, suggesting that doctrine and religious beliefs



play a secondary role to politico-clergy manipulation and church organizational capacity. The case studies also suggest that religiosity plays a role in duration; people who saw their religion as a fundamental part of their way of life were more likely to fear another religious group coming to power. This increased conflict duration by limiting incentives to come to a negotiated solution.

There are other possible explanations for the relationship between religion and intrastate conflicts that deserve attention. The first of these is the argument that the religious cleavage index is in actuality a proxy for religious hatred, which is the true variable influencing conflict intensity and duration. In regards to duration, this is compatible with my theory; it is evident from both the Russia and Yugoslavia case studies that religious fears and hatreds were exploited to maintain public support for each conflict. However, religious hatred did not play a role in increasing the intensity of these conflicts. In the Russian case, many of the rebels only converted to Wahhabism after realizing that it could benefit them militarily (in the case of rebel officers) or economically (in the case of poor young Chechens). The decision to join the Wahhabi movement and fight had nothing to do with hating the Russian Orthodox Church. Yugoslavia presents more of a problem. The often-cited high rates of intermarriage are generally exaggerated, and in reality marriage and social interactions in Yugoslavia after World War II occurred along religious lines (Botev 1994). In fact, hatreds between each group and conflicts run back as far as the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. with the split of the Roman Empire (Doder 1993, p. 6). However, studies have suggested that intolerance and hatred predating the conflict was far

greater in ethno-religious enclaves, where members of the in-group did not have to interact with members of the out-group (Massey, Hodson et al. 1999). As the contact theory<sup>19</sup> suggests, in mixed religion communities there was friendly and cooperative interaction until the outbreak of conflict. Once conflict began, neighbors were killing neighbors, and friends were killing friends. It seems clear that for most people, any religious hatreds or fears only became salient when activated and called for by religious institutions, rather than causing and fueling the conflict on their own.

One might respond to these contentions by arguing that this thesis is flawed in that it incorrectly identifies the source of causality. Perhaps religious differences are *created by conflict intensity*, rather than religious cleavages increasing the intensity of conflict. This reversal of the causal arrow does not stand up to scrutiny. While there is little doubt that religious differences become more salient during conflict, the statistics and case studies both suggest that the cleavages play a fundamental role in influencing conflict once it has begun. There is little question that Muslims in Chechnya had religious institutions unique from the Eastern Orthodox institutions of Russia, even if these institutions did not play an active role in tensions between either side until conflict began. This thesis does not make a claim, one way or the other, regarding whether religion *causes* conflict, but only that once conflict begins, religious institutions increase levels of violence and prevent compromise, protracting the conflict.

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<sup>19</sup> Contact theory states that people will be less likely to stereotype and more likely to cooperate with members of an out-group if they are often exposed to members of the out-group in a substantive way.

One might also argue that since religious communities are easily identifiable and religious practice not easily mutable, people are forced to cooperate and fight with their co-adherents rather than remain pacifistic. This is refuted by the data, which suggests that religious discrimination is insignificant in affecting levels of violence, and by the case studies, which suggest that many people deliberately convert to religions involved in conflicts to reap social and economic benefits.

The findings of this thesis have broad implications for conflict prevention and intervention globally. Religious institutions raise the defection constraints by providing welfare services that the state cannot; competing with religion to provide these benefits will reduce the organizational capacity of religious institutions. Therefore, to reduce the potential to increase violence, intervening powers should offer humanitarian aid and strengthen state welfare capacity.<sup>20</sup> Regarding the duration of conflicts with religious cleavages, it is important that peacemakers on either side work extremely closely with the religious establishment of the other to offset fears of religious domination on either side. By doing this in a transparent and collaborative manner, the political risks of working with the others side's religious institutions may be offset.

It should be noted that this study has the most important implications for conflict after the fall of empires. The fall of the Soviet Union after years of deterioration created unique conditions that allowed religion to fulfill the role of

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<sup>20</sup> State strength was shown to be highly significant with a strong negative correlation to violence.

banal nationalism as well as providing social services that the government would normally be better able to provide. Future studies on the subject should observe the role of religion in conflict throughout history after the fall of empires and states, ranging from the Roman Empire to the colonies of the British Empire, to determine if the power and institution void is the factor that allows religion to behave actively in violent conflict. This study also suggests that public disenchantment with government institutions from the gradual fall of communism created greater trust in religious institutions; it would be worthwhile to test to see if the same effect occurs after the gradual fall of other empires.

Though this thesis suggests that religion increases violence in conflicts, it does not claim that religion cannot also alleviate conflict. On the contrary, religious organizations and ethics have the potential to save countless lives if utilized by the right individuals. Just War Theory, which derives from Augustinian Christianity, serves as the primary system of ethics that the West uses when determining whether or not to exercise restraint in war. Just as this thesis has shown many examples of clergy using their religious institutions to organize violence, many examples may be found of religious groups attempting to minimize destruction in conflicts. The word “Islam” itself may be translated to mean “way to peace”, and Islamic doctrine is used to promote both peace and violence. Further work needs to be done examining individual examples contrary to this thesis, where religious institutions and individuals save lives during wartime. Such work would probably find that dogma and theology matter more when religious institutions engage in

peace making, whereas the institutions themselves play a larger role in violence. This effect is not statistically apparent as the institutional war mongering outweighs the theological peace making in net lives, so work on this topic should utilize a case study based approach.

Another outlet for future work would be a similar thesis that examines Asia. Eastern Europe religious cleavages are largely between Abrahamic faiths, or between one religious belligerent and one secular belligerent. Eastern faiths, including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Shinto, all have drastically different institutional structures than the religions examined in this study. Examining intra-state conflict in countries where these religions are present could drastically different results. Thus, the findings of this study should not be taken to be universally applicable to conflicts where a religious cleavage is present.

This thesis has outlined and defined the relationship between religion and the intensity and duration of intrastate conflict. The primary hypothesis, that religious cleavages increase the intensity of conflict, was supported by the statistics and case studies. The secondary hypothesis, that religious cleavages protract conflict, was not supported by the data for Eastern Europe, though it was weakly supported by the global dataset and was supported by the case studies. Further work remains to be done to understand the varying ways that religion influences conflict in other regions. Additionally, the role of religious cleavages in interstate conflict should also be explored in future work.

## Appendix 1: Regional Tables

All tables from Marsh 2007.

### Table 6

Human suffering due to ethnic conflicts

State	Conflict zone	Casualties	Displaced persons
Azerbaijan	Nagorno-Karabakh	20,000	575,000
Croatia	Krajina	80,000	280,000
Georgia	Abkhazia, Adzharia, South Ossetia	6,000	240,000
Moldova	Transdnistria, Gagauzia	< 1,000	131,000
Tajikistan	Gorno-Badakhshan	20,000 <sup>a</sup>	800,000 <sup>a</sup>
Russia	Chechnya	50,000	340,000
Yugoslavia	Bosnia, Croatia	250,000	1,300,000
Yugoslavia	Kosovo	12,000	200,000

<sup>a</sup>Figures are for entire civil war, of which Gorno-Badakhshan's secession was only a part.  
*Source:* Center for Defense Information, Global IDP Project; Human Rights Watch; UNHCR.

### Table 7

Ethnic and religious dimension of ethnic conflicts

Separatist movement	Ethnic dimension	Religious dimension
Nagorno-Karabakh	Armenians versus Turkic Azeris	Orthodox versus Muslim
Srpska Krajina	Serbs versus Croats	Orthodox versus Catholic
Abkhazia	Abkhaz versus Georgians	Muslim versus Orthodox
Adzharia	Georgians versus Georgians	Muslim versus Orthodox Christian
South Ossetia	Ossetians versus Georgians	Orthodox Christian versus Orthodox Christian
Transdnistria	Slavs versus Moldovans	Orthodox Christian <sup>a</sup> (MP and UP) versus Orthodox Christian <sup>a</sup> (ROC)
Gagauzia	Turkic Gagauz versus Moldovans	Orthodox Christian versus Orthodox Christian
Gorno-Badakhshan	Pamiris versus Tajiks	Shiite Muslim versus Sunni Muslim
Chechnya	Chechens versus Russians	Muslim versus Orthodox Christian
Republika Srpska	Serbs versus Bosniaks	Orthodox Christian versus Muslim
Kosovo	Kosovar Albanians versus Serbs	Muslim versus Orthodox Christian

<sup>a</sup>Orthodox Christian (Moscow Patriarchate) versus Orthodox Christian (Romanian Orthodox Church).

Table 8

Religion, ethnicity, and conflict			
Separatist movement	Religious difference <sup>a</sup>	Ethnic difference <sup>b</sup>	Level of suffering <sup>c</sup>
Chechnya	Great	Great	Massive
Republika Srpska	Great	Significant	Massive
Srpska Krajina	Significant	Significant	Massive
Nagorno-Karabakh	Great	Great	Extensive
Kosovo	Great	Great	Extensive
Abkhazia	Great	Great	Moderate
Adzharia	Great	None	Moderate
Transdnistria	Minor	Great	Low
Gagauzia	Minor	Great	Low
South Ossetia	Minor	Great	Low
Gorno-Badakhshan	Significant	Significant	<i>Indirect</i>

<sup>a</sup>Religious difference: great = only commonality is Abrahamic tradition (Muslims and Christians); significant = only commonality is larger religious tradition (Catholics and Orthodox, Shi'ia and Sunni); minor = only distinction is ecclesiastical (e.g. Russian Orthodox versus Romanian Orthodox).

<sup>b</sup>Ethnic difference: great = different ethno-linguistic family; significant = different ethno-linguistic sub-family (Tajiks versus Pamiris) *or* perceived ethnic difference (Serb versus Croat); minor: no ethno-linguistic difference (Serbs and Montenegrins).

<sup>c</sup>Level of suffering: massive =  $\geq 50,000$  deaths; extensive = 10,000–50,000 deaths; moderate = 1,000–10,000 deaths; low =  $\leq 1,000$  deaths.

## Appendix 2: Additional Statistics

*Table 9: Eastern European Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	M	SD	Min	Max
Average Battle Deaths	3052.9	4218.5	60	13264
Conflict Days	947.7	1184.2	1	3960
Religious Cleavage Scale	2	1.6	0	4
Religious Cleavage	.708	.464	0	1
Religious Fractionalization	.44	.13	.17	.59
Religious Polarization	.69	.18	.35	.92
Religious Discrimination	9	11.3	0	34
Ethnic Domination	.8	.39	0	1
Freedom House Index	4.83	1.23	3	7
State Stability	-.23	.25	-.5	.24
GDP per Capita	4497.2	2598.16	679.35	8780
Polity IV Scale	-2.14	4.94	-9	6



Table 10: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Global Intensity (N=921)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
DEATHS IN CONFLICT YEAR	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Religious Cleavage Scale	783.53*	400.3	866.6**	403.4	767.1*	403.9
Polity IV Scale	-376.78***	98.1	-408.2***	97.5	-308***	104.4
Religious Frac			11216***	3521.7	11728.06***	3515.8
Ethnic Domination			-4542***	1424.9	-4568.9***	1420.3
Religious Discrimination					157.4***	59.8
<i>Constant</i>	2133.8*	1189.6	1040.4	1800.4	-588.7	1898.4
<i>R</i>		.02		.04		.04
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.02		.03		.04

\**p* < .10 \*\**p* < .05 \*\*\**p* < .02

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