ensure the data was picking up what I thought it was. Second, TAC provides information on the specific relationships between groups in the data. This feature allowed me to test my conclusions against the inclusion or exclusion of certain affiliate groups that are common in the Muslim world: the armed wings of political parties like Hamas, splinter factions, umbrella coalitions like al-Qaeda, and more.

In conclusion, researchers can often mitigate the pitfalls of cross-national analysis by carefully reviewing the underlying data and making appropriate modeling choices to account for potential biases. These and other data transparency measures are essential to empowering researchers to deploy context-specific knowledge and make theoretically motivated decisions around concept specification and measurement. Nowhere are these considerations more essential than in studies of subjects like Islam and terrorism, where essential concepts are contested and politicized. Applying these principles, scholars can avoid drawing simplistic or essentializing conclusions from the data.[159]

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ISLAMIST RADICALIZATION AND CIVIL WAR

By Elizabeth R. Nugent

Do war conditions radicalize Islamist political actors? If so, how? And are Islamist actors radicalized differently from non-Islamist actors under the same civil war conditions? In this piece, I explore what lessons scholars interested in studying Islamists under conditions of civil war can draw from existing literature on Islamist actors, radicalization, and use of violence.

First, it is helpful to define the terms of the question. In political science, 'radicalization' is used to refer to a variety of changes, including shifts in ideology, rhetoric, and approaches to

out-groups (Schwedler 2011). I focus here on *behavioral* radicalization, in which actors shift from engaging in politics peacefully, perhaps through elections or protest, to engaging in politics through violence. A civil war is "any armed conflict that involves (a) military action internal to the metropole, (b) the active participation of the national government, and (c) effective resistance by both sides" (Small and Singer 1982, 2010, though see Sambanis (2004) for a detailed discussion of the many complications created by this seemingly straightforward definition).

Scholars have extensively researched the causal mechanisms through which the political behavior of Islamist actors is shaped by the broader economic, social, and political environment in which they operate during periods of 'normal' (i.e. non-wartime) politics. A prominent strand of literature analyzes the way in which behavioral radicalization begins with conditions of political and social exclusion. Economic deprivation and social alienation, particularly relative to other groups, have long been identified as necessary factors for pushing actors towards violence (Gurr 1970), and studies of Islamist radicalization similarly find these elements to be important in this process (Ansari 1984, Ayubi 1991, Sivan 1985, Dekmeijan 1995).

Existing literature on Islamists has analyzed how political and social exclusion shapes these actors' ideologies and worldviews (Wickham 2013; Ashour 2009; Schwedler 2006) and politically-relevant identities (al-Anani 2016, Nugent 2020). These identities and worldviews, in turn, affect political behaviors including official rhetoric (Tezcur 2010a, 2010b; Kurzman and Naqvi 2010), political strategies (Clark 2006; Schwedler and Clark 2006; Brown 2007), affect and relative preference positioning with regards to competing groups (Nugent 2020), and internal organization (el-Ghobashy 2005; Shehata and Stacher 2006, al-Anani 2016).

While deprivation is necessary for the process of radicalization, it is alone not sufficient to cause actors to embrace violence. Deprived and excluded groups must "also feel like militant action is the

only option available to them" (White 1989). This is where repression and the broader political environment factors into the equation. Islamists embrace violence in contexts where they face "exclusionary and repressive political environments" that limit the availability of peaceful means of political contestation (Hafez 2003). This is not unique to Islamists actors; groups of various ideological persuasions are similarly radicalized by these same contexts. However, because the Muslim world is predominated by authoritarian regimes and accompanying repressive policies (Nugent 2020), Islamist actors are well represented in empirical studies of radicalization.

Do these same explanations for Islamist in periods of 'normal' politics help us understand Islamists in civil war environments, both in how they come to engage in civil war as well as how they are affected? If so, would we expect Islamist movements and organizations to respond in the same manner as non-Islamists to similar civil wartime conditions?

To begin, it appears that dominant explanations for behavioral radicalization during 'normal' politics provide significant explanatory power for understanding why Islamists turn to violence against the state or civilians in conditions of civil war. Policymakers often try to paint individuals motivated to violence, particularly those violent actors espousing religious ideologies or attached to religious groups, as having a deficient psychopathology (Silke 1998). However, the political usage of violence in civil war is a group activity (similar to arguments about terrorism summarized in Crenshaw 2000). As such, explanations of group-based grievances of economic (relative) deprivation and social exclusion, coupled with a repressive and exclusive political environment, are likely to account for the mobilization and participation of groups in civil wars. For example, the political expulsion of Islamist candidates and parties from elections accompanying the 2013 coup in Egypt correlates with subsequent patterns of anti-state and anti-Christian violence (Nugent and Brooke 2020).

The social psychological mechanisms underpinning this process explain how radicalization obtains. When groups experience violence that targets them as such, as may occur in the lead up to civil war or during it, they further distance themselves from non-targeted groups in how they define themselves and more strongly identify with that exclusive identity. This has predictable effects, such as decreasing positive affect towards non-targeted groups, polarizing preferences, and decreasing the likelihood of cooperation with non-targeted out-groups (for example: Durkheim 1912, Brewer 1979, Tajfel et al 1971, Turner 1978, Schuman and Scott 1989, Schuman et al 1997, Brewer and Brown 1998, Wagner, Kronberger, and Seifert 2002, Bastian et al. 2014). Many rebel groups started as political movements that were radicalized due to political opportunity structures, and Islamist groups are no different.

However, beyond the process of radicalization, existing Islamist scholarship leaves unanswered a number of important questions relevant to Islamism in civil war contexts. Does the sequencing of events matter for radicalization? For example, is the process and pace of adopting violence the same for a group that contested elections that were then foreclosed and a group that never had the option of contesting elections? Are Islamist groups more persistent or violent, differently or better funded, when participating in civil wars? Are they differently or better funded by international actors? Are civil wars involving Islamist groups unique in the presence or number of foreign fighter participants?

These persistent questions are likely driven by latent assumptions about Islamist exceptionalism. In early studies, analyses put forward essentialist claims that Islam's content uniquely legitimates the use of violence against other actors. However, rebellious movements inspired by secular ethnonationalist, socialist, and right-wing ideologies have all been mobilized to violence under similar conditions (Sprinzak 1990, Rabbie 1991, Della Porta 1992). Scholars would benefit from comparing Islamist and non-Islamist actors, as well as civil wars both involving and excluding Islamist groups, to determine whether Islamist radicalization is unique, or to demonstrate its similarities with other marginalized and repressed

groups.

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ISLAMIST IDENTITY POLITICS IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

By Morten Valbjørn and Jeroen Gunning

Do identities matter for explaining the behavior of Islamist actors in war zones? If yes, then what is the relative importance of identities as opposed to the structural context? Is it necessary to pay attention to the "content" of identities or can different identities basically be treated as alike? To address these questions, it can be useful to revisit similar debates in other parts of the social sciences, including International Relations, civil war studies and (critical) terrorism studies. From those well-developed literatures, we highlight four distinct ways of framing discussions on identity politics which are relevant to consider in the present context.

The first of the four frames revolves around the (relative) importance of *ideational* vs. *material* factors. This debate is often framed in "either/or" terms, so the discussion ends up being about whether material or ideational factors mean everything or nothing. This dichotomous framing can be seen in the civil war literature, where greed is juxtaposed to grievance in explaining the onset of unrest, and in some versions of the neorealist vs. poststructuralist traditions in IR.[160] These debates are frustrating; both material and ideational factors must be taken into account but each is alone insufficient. The analytical imperative is to specify the *relative importance* of material and ideational factors and on how they intersect. Illustrating this, in a discussion about the role of Arabism during the Nasser era, Raymond Hinnebusch argues that Egypt's regional influence at that time cannot be understood without taking into account Nasser's use of the

Arabist card. But at the same time, he suggests that the long-term outcome of identity-driven foreign policy depends on its congruency with the material balance of power in the region and the nature and degree of global systemic pressures.[161] In other words, the role of ideational factors is conditioned by material factors. In a similar way, Constructivists have pointed to the role of ideas in specifying the influence of material factors.

When used to explain the behavior of Islamists in conflict settings, this first framing raises the basic question about whether Islamist combatants are mainly shaped by ideology or by factors more general to wartime conditions. For instance, should Islamic State's extreme violent practices be attributed to (a specific interpretation of) Islamic doctrines or is it more relevant to pay attention to factors such as state failure, political exclusion and marginalization and how violence shapes religion?[162] Would similarly-placed groups with a different identity behave similarly, or does the unique ISIS identity produce unique behavior? Or alternatively, is it more fruitful to forge a middle way by arguing that any comprehensive account of ISIS must recognize the role of material greed and grievances as well as theology?[163]

The second framing drawn from the broader literature shifts the focus from "whether" ideational factors matter to "*why*" and "*how*" they matter. As IR Constructivists have long since established, acknowledgement of the importance of ideational factors does not necessarily translate into agreement about where they matter in the causal equation. It has also been important among scholars studying Middle East international relations, which traditionally has been perceived as "dripping with identity politics."[164] There is a considerable tradition of discussing whether identities shape actors' basic world views and inform their goals, whether their influence mainly concerns the specific ways they are pursuing their interest by enabling or constraining certain forms of behavior, or whether their role is limited to after-the-fact legitimations.[165]

In the part of the civil war literature concerned with "how" rather than "whether" ideology matters for armed groups, it is possible to find a