

Religion and Violence

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Does religion cause war?

- Religion-fueled riots, religion-fueled intolerance, religion-fueled murder — history is filled with chilling examples of the “righteous” driven to acts of savagery in the name of their chosen gods. In fact, the number of people killed in the name of religion through the centuries surely rivals the toll of all of humanity’s “political” wars combined.
- By Ben Cosgrove, May 26, 2014 1:20 PM EDT, <https://time.com/3879963/vultures-of-calcutta-the-gruesome-aftermath-of-indias-1946-hindu-muslim-riots/>.



IS RELIGION NO. 1 CAUSE OF WAR?

HISTORY'S GREAT
MISCONCEPTIONS



Causation

- Types of causes
 - Necessary cause – the exposure must be present for the outcome to occur
 - Sufficient cause – if the exposure is present, the outcome will occur
 - Risk factor – exposure makes the outcome more likely
- Examples
 - Exposure to the rabies virus is the necessary and sufficient cause to develop rabies disease.
 - Having one's head in a guillotine is not a necessary cause of death (there are other ways to die) but is a sufficient cause (having one's head chopped off is certain death).
 - Cigarette smoking (exposure) is neither necessary nor sufficient for death (outcome) but is a risk factor (people who smoke are ten times more likely to die than those who don't)

The Chain of Causation

- A chain of many links causes every outcome
- Example - A man dies and a physician completes his death certificate. He had the following conditions:
 - Ventricular fibrillation (minutes before death)
 - Heart attack (hours before death)
 - Occluded cardiac arteries (months and years before death)
 - Obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol (years before death)
 - Poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, and alcohol use (decades before death)
 - Depression, loneliness, anxiety
- What was his cause of death?

So, does religion cause war?

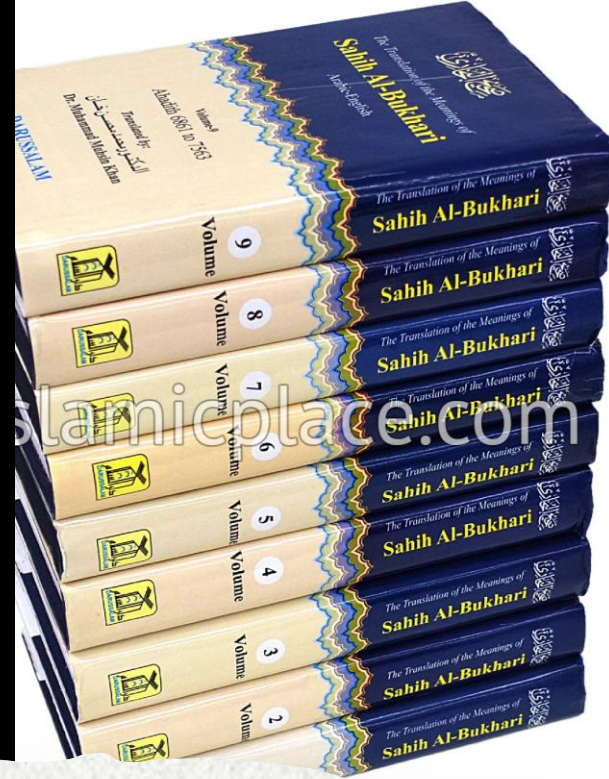
- Religion is not a necessary cause – wars happen without religion
- Religion is not a sufficient cause – religion happens without war
- Is religion a risk factor for war, meaning that societies with “religion” are more likely to go to war than societies without religion?
 - No society in history has ever been without religion, so studying a purely non-religious culture is impossible.
 - Religion never occurs in the abstract, but rather in the details of each religion.
 - My PhD dissertation, *Echoes of War*, demonstrates that religion is no more than a weak risk factor and that the nature of the religion matters greatly.

Echoes of War - What is the comparative militancy of each major religion?

- Identify key scriptures
- Identify key words suggesting militancy
- Count militancy related words in the fundamental scriptures of each religion.
- Consider context by reviewing relevant commentators.
- Assign a value to each militancy related word
 - 5 points – command violence
 - 4 points – allow violence
 - 3 points – neutral
 - 2 points – discourage violence
 - 1 point – forbid violence
- Total points to get a doctrinal militancy score
- Compare scores with a qualitative review of historical militancy in each religion

The Holy Vedas

Rig Veda
Yajur Veda
Sama Veda
Atharva Veda



Holy Books

Fundamental Scriptures

- Christianity – the Bible
- Islam – Quran, Sahih al Bukhari
- Hinduism – Vedas, 10 Principal Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita
- Buddhism – Tipitaka
- Judaism – Tanakh, Talmud



Key Words

- Words used – war, conquer, fight, sword, battle, along with their common English extensions (plural, progressive, past).
- Battle of Yarmuk, AD 636

Buddhist Militancy

- Doctrinal Militancy Score – 2.64
 - Action of the Founder – There is no evidence that the Buddha personally engaged in physical combat or led armies. However, he collaborated with kings (Bimbisara and Pasanedi) and did not include military service in his prohibition of Right Livelihood.
- Historical Militancy review
 - Actions of early leaders (first 10 generations) - Ashoka
 - Actions of later leaders (until today) – Japan in WWII, Vietnam
 - Current situation – Myanmar

Buddhism and War



THE PARADOX OF THE BUDDHIST SOLDIER



Christian Militancy

- Doctrinal Militancy Score – 2.72
 - Action of the Founder – Jesus never engaged in physical violence, led no armies, and collaborated with no kings or other rulers
- Historical Militancy review
 - Actions of early leaders (first 10 generations) – neither the apostles nor the church fathers affiliated with the military
 - Actions of later leaders (until today) – Christians have taken part extensively in military vocations and activities
 - Current situation – Christianity seems as militant as other major religions, but that statement is an impression, not a study.



The Crusades

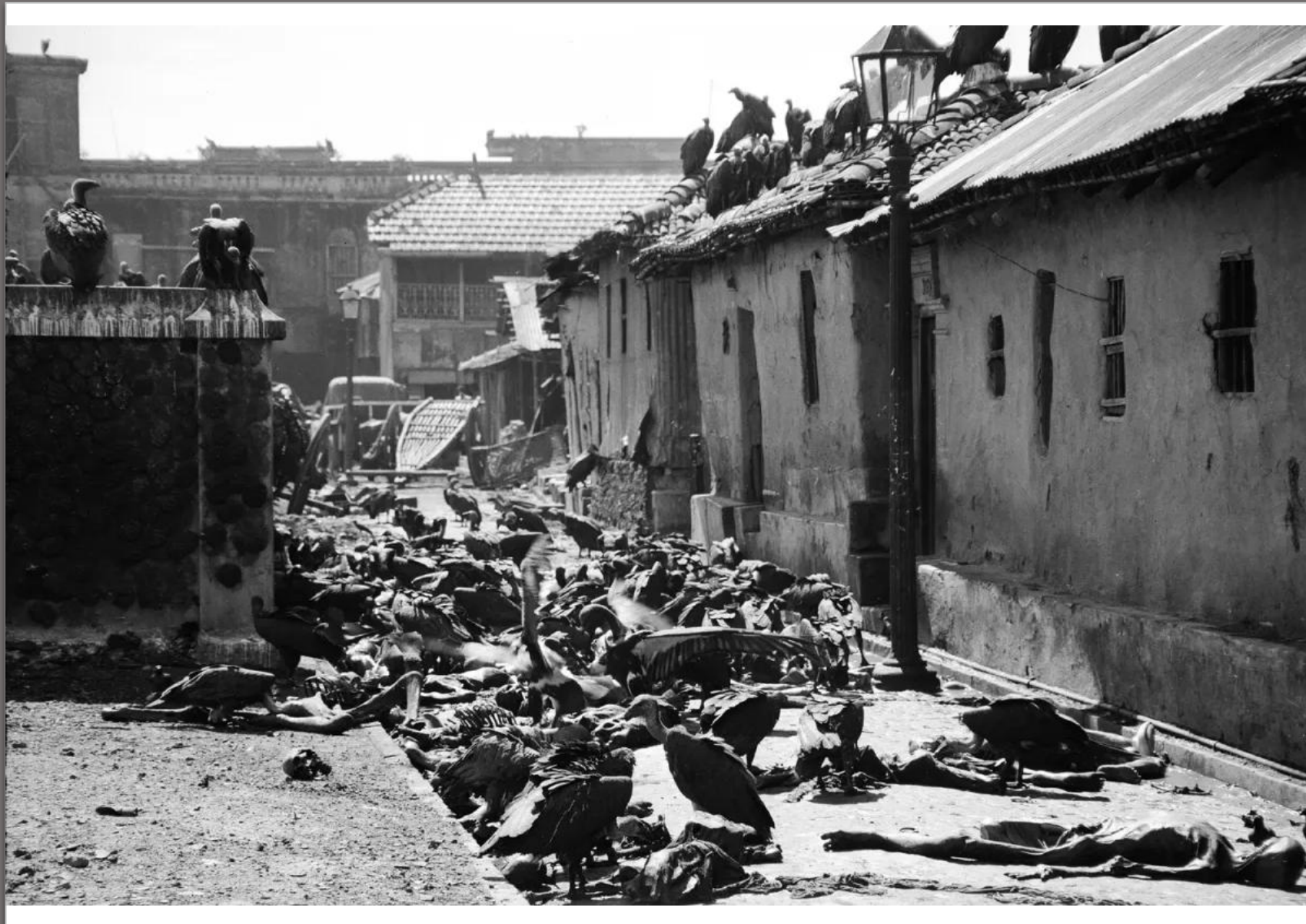
- * A long overdue counter-attack against Islam
- * Muslims had conquered almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of originally Christian lands

Judaism Militancy

- Doctrinal Militancy Score – 3.03
 - Action of the Founder – Moses fought personally and led armies (Amalek, Sihon, Og)
- Historical Militancy review
 - Actions of early leaders (first 10 generations) – war making was common
 - Actions of later leaders (until today) – Having not had an independent state from about 100 BC until AD 1948, Judaism lacked opportunity to engage as a state. However, the Zionist rebellion in the early 1900s is illustrative
 - Current situation – Israel is frequently at war.

Hindu Militancy

- Doctrinal Militancy Score – 3.61
 - Action of the Founder – No one knows the founder of Hinduism, if one exists.
- Historical Militancy review
 - Actions of early leaders (first 10 generations) – dating from the writing of the Rig Veda (about 1500 BC), the Hindus subjectively have average levels of militancy
 - Actions of later leaders (until today) – Mahatma Gandhi is a famous example of Hindu non-violence (ahimsa), but he is an aberration. Most Hindu leaders have behaved militantly.
 - Current situation – BJP and Hindutva suggest notable militancy.



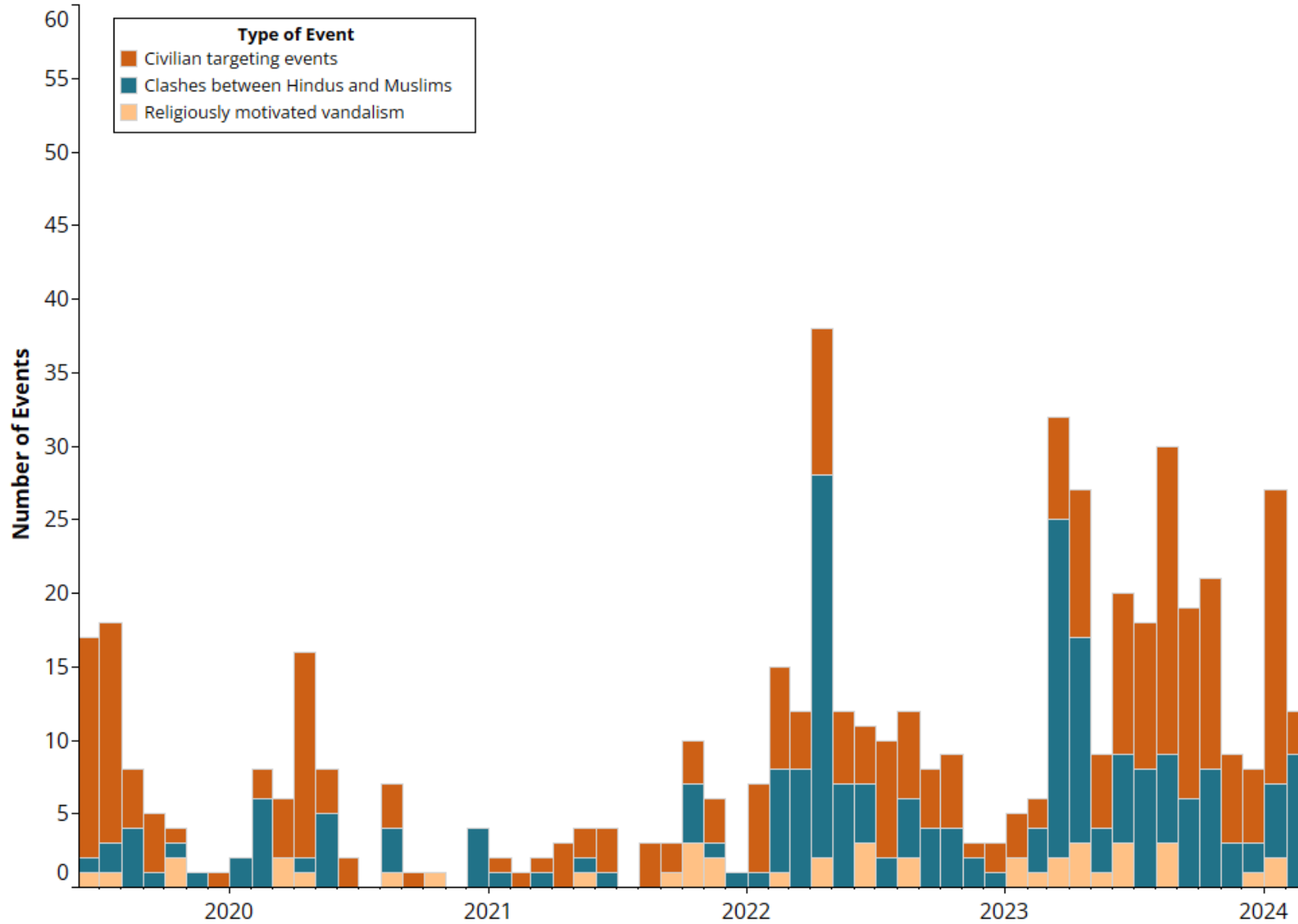
1946 Hindu-
Muslim Riots
(Calcutta)
4,000-20,000
died



Hindu anti-
Muslim
picture

Violence Between Hindus and Muslims in India

June 2019 - March 2024



India

Islamic Militancy

- Doctrinal Militancy Score – 3.73
 - Action of the Founder – Mohammad engaged in physical violence, led many armies, and collaborated with kings and other rulers.
- Historical Militancy review
 - Actions of early leaders (first 10 generations) – Mohammad's immediate successors, the Rashidun, led armies and conquered empires
 - Actions of later leaders (until today) – Subjectively above average levels of military
 - Current situation



Political Islam and Violence



Four Views on War

- Christians must never participate in war. It is never justified, as our citizenship is in heaven, not in any land on earth.
- Christians may participate but only in non-violent activities. Believers may be in the army, for example, but only as chaplains, doctors, and in non-fighting positions.
- Christians may fight in a just war
- Christians may fight in any war in any position not only to stop but to prevent evil.

Augustinian Just War Theory – Jus ad bellum

- **Competent authority** - Only duly constituted public authorities may wage war. "A just war must be initiated by a political authority within a political system that allows distinctions of justice. Dictatorships (e.g. Hitler's regime) or deceptive military actions (e.g. the 1968 US bombing of Cambodia) are typically considered as violations of this criterion. The importance of this condition is key. Plainly, we cannot have a genuine process of judging a just war within a system that represses the process of genuine justice. A just war must be initiated by a political authority within a political system that allows distinctions of justice".[58]
- **Probability of success** - According to this principle, there must be good grounds for concluding that aims of the just war are achievable.[59] This principle emphasizes that mass violence must not be undertaken if it is unlikely to secure the just cause.[60] This criterion is to avoid invasion for invasion's sake and links to the proportionality criteria. One cannot invade if there is no chance of actually winning. However, wars are fought with imperfect knowledge, so one must simply be able to make a logical case that one can win; there is no way to know this in advance. These criteria move the conversation from moral and theoretical grounds to practical grounds.[61] Essentially, this is meant to gather coalition building and win approval of other state actors.
- **Last resort** - The principle of last resort stipulates that all non-violent options must first be exhausted before the use of force can be justified. Diplomatic options, sanctions, and other non-military methods must be attempted or validly ruled out before the engagement of hostilities. Further, in regard to the amount of harm—proportionally—the principle of last resort would support using small intervention forces first and then escalating rather than starting a war with massive force such as carpet bombing or nuclear warfare.[62]
- **Just cause** - The reason for going to war needs to be just and cannot, therefore, be solely for recapturing things taken or punishing people who have done wrong; innocent life must be in imminent danger and intervention must be to protect life. A contemporary view of just cause was expressed in 1993 when the US Catholic Conference said: "Force may be used only to correct a grave, public evil, i.e., aggression or massive violation of the basic human rights of whole populations."

Augustinian Just War - Jus in bello

- **Distinction** - Just war conduct is governed by the principle of distinction. The acts of war should be directed towards enemy combatants, and not towards non-combatants caught in circumstances that they did not create. The prohibited acts include bombing civilian residential areas that include no legitimate military targets, committing acts of terrorism or reprisal against civilians or prisoners of war (POWs), and attacking neutral targets. Moreover, combatants are not permitted to attack enemy combatants who have surrendered, or who have been captured, or who are injured and not presenting an immediate lethal threat, or who are parachuting from disabled aircraft and are not airborne forces, or who are shipwrecked.
- **Proportionality** - Just war conduct is governed by the principle of proportionality. Combatants must make sure that the harm caused to civilians or civilian property is not excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated by an attack on a legitimate military objective. This principle is meant to discern the correct balance between the restriction imposed by a corrective measure and the severity of the nature of the prohibited act.
- **Military necessity** - Just war conduct is governed by the principle of military necessity. An attack or action must be intended to help in the defeat of the enemy; it must be an attack on a legitimate military objective, and the harm caused to civilians or civilian property must be proportional and not excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. Jus in bello allows for military necessity and does not favor a specific justification in allowing for counter-attack recourse.[63] This principle is meant to limit excessive and unnecessary death and destruction.
- **Fair treatment of prisoners of war** - Enemy combatants who surrendered or who are captured no longer pose a threat. It is therefore wrong to torture them or otherwise mistreat them.
- **No means malum in se** - Combatants may not use weapons or other methods of warfare that are considered evil, such as mass rape, forcing enemy combatants to fight against their own side or using weapons whose effects cannot be controlled (e.g., nuclear/biological weapons).



Discussion

Conclusion

References

- Mark D. Harris, *Echoes of War*, SBTS Dissertation, 2021
- Sultan-Shahin - October 10, 2016, <https://sabrangindia.in/if-islam-means-peace-how-did-so-many-its-revered-ulema-preach-hatred-and-violence/>