

VIOLENTLY PURSUING THE SACRED

Reconceptualizing the religion/terrorism nexus:
A comparative analysis of right-wing and jihadist terrorism



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Abstract

This thesis tests the applicability of an alternative approach to analyze the ideological motivations of terrorists: the sacred values approach. After critically analyzing the label of “religious terrorism”, the sacred values approach is proposed as a way out of the problematic debate on the role of religion in terrorism. This entails a new focus on non-negotiable values, instead of a total focus on ideology or religion. To see whether it is a useful approach, the sacred values theoretical framework is applied to two groups with different ideological backgrounds: a religious (Islamic State) and a secular (National Alliance). Sacred values are extracted from primary sources from the two groups and are analyzed together with corresponding sacred practices. Finally, the sacred values and practices are compared and underlying processes and overlapping mechanisms are put forward. With this approach and an evaluation of it, this thesis aims to make a contribution to the debate about the role of religion in terrorism by finding patterns of sacred values that transcend different ideological backgrounds of terrorist groups. This is done in order to relativize and nuance the uniqueness of religion as motivation ideology for terrorists, going against scholars that do claim this uniqueness of religion.

Key words: *terrorism, the sacred, comparative research, right-wing terrorism, jihadi terrorism, religion*

Preface

During my studies, the combination of religion and violence has always been a field of interest. As an undergraduate student, I majored in religious studies, with a minor in conflict studies. When I, as an undergraduate, told about my study at family parties or to other acquaintances I usually got a response along the lines of: “Well, there is certainly enough religion and conflict around the world today for you to study!”. Or statements like: “If only there was no religion in this world, then there would be no terrorism or war!”. After suppressing a sigh, I was always happy to engage in the argument and tried to change people’s perspective. I still notice many people holding these ideas and this ignorance inspires me to expand my knowledge about the topic so that they can be countered.

Thus, when I had to come up with a topic for my MA thesis in international relations in the context of the research seminar on terrorism (taught by professor Beatrice de Graaf), it did not take me long to decide I wanted my thesis to be on religion and terrorism. I was very excited to combine insights I gained during religious studies courses on religion and violence with the knowledge I gained at professor de Graaf’s class. Once I started reading about “the sacred” (thank you prof. Lucien van Liere for encouraging me to do this), I thought it was a very interesting concept to work with in order to find patterns in different ideological motivations of terrorists. Because no: religion is not the main instigator of terrorism and sacred values can be held by secular groups as well. But you can read more on that in the rest of this thesis.

For the remains of this preface, I want to take the opportunity to thank those that made the result of this thesis possible. First of all, my supervisor Beatrice de Graaf: thank you for the insightful talks we had and a pleasant thesis writing process. Next, I want to thank Jelle Bakker for our inspiring peer review sessions, mainly in the first weeks of this project. And finally, my brother Felix: I could not have wished for a better final editor in correcting my English, even though you think most Dutch student should write his or her thesis in Dutch.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The current social and academic debate about terrorism seems to be in a deadlock when it comes to the question of the role of religion as the motivation for terrorists to commit attacks. According to international security expert Teun van Dongen, the public and political debate about motivations for terrorists are divided into two camps.¹ The first camp emphasizes the role of religion, claiming that religious fanaticism is the cause of today's terrorism. At the same time, many people in this emphasis-on-religion-camp claim that these terrorists misinterpret their religion, which results in a simple classification of "good" and "bad" Islam. Many political leaders, like Tony Blair, Barack Obama and François Hollande, expressed in their speeches after terrorist attacks carried out by jihadist extremists, that they were dealing with an evil ideology, but that this ideology has nothing to do with real Islam. Obama said in a speech in 2014 that "ISIL is not Islamic" and that "no religion can go into the killing of innocents".² However, within this first camp, there are also public figures who claim that Islamic terrorism is a logical consequence of being religious, or that violence and hatred are inherent to Islam.³ An interview with the Canadian "atheist Muslim" Ali Rizvi, who publicly proclaims his abandonment of Islam by writing books about his atheism, is a particularly striking example:

Interviewer: Do you believe that terrorism has something to do with Islam?
AR: "Most certainly! Terrorists legitimize their deeds by appealing to Allah and the Qur'an. Before they start murdering they shout *Allahu Akbar*, 'Allah is the greatest'. Then the connection seems pretty clear to me."⁴

Rizvi is very critical of Islam; he clearly sees a causal relation between Islam and terrorism. For him it is a reason to leave his Islamic faith behind. For others, that also see a causal link between Islam and terrorism, it is a reason for wanting to prohibit Islamic public institutes altogether. Some Dutch politicians advocate for closing down Salafī mosques in the Netherlands, one of the reasons being that it would be a dangerous ideology and that some of these Salafis are not afraid to use violence.⁵ However, the fact that terrorists shout *Allahu Akbar* before committing an attack would automatically make it Islamic is a simplistic deduction,

¹ Teun van Dongen, *Radicalisering ontrafeld: tien redenen om een terroristische aanslag te plegen* (Amsterdam 2017) 9-17.

² CNN, "President Obama: 'ISIL is not Islamic'". Filmed [September 2014]. YouTube video, 1:51. Posted [September 2014]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwp8qKvE-0g>.

³ For example in the Netherlands: publicists like Afshin Ellian, Paul Cliteur and on a political level: Geert Wilders. Publications like: Paul Cliteur and Dirk Verhofstadt, *In naam van God*, (Antwerpen 2018). And Paul Cliteur, *Het monotheïstische dilemma*, (Amsterdam 2010). And Afshin Ellian, 'De Europese zelf-Islamisering is een sluipend gevaar', *de Elsevier*, 9 April 2018.

⁴ Marco Visscher, 'Kritiek op de Islam zal de wereld vrijer maken', *de Volkskrant*, 9 March 2018.

⁵ Laura de Jong, 'Achmed Marcouch: er moet een verbod komen op Salafistische organisaties', *de Volkskrant*, 17 June 2017.

because it goes beyond the question what it actually means to be Islamic or a Muslim and the different interpretations that exist within this belief. Islam means different things to different observers. It is easily refutable that the reason for a terrorist to commit an attack is to be found in Islam because it cannot explain the Muslims who do not commit terror attacks. At the same time, Obama's remark (noted above) that ISIL has nothing to do with Islam is also unfair, given the fact that members of ISIL do call themselves Muslim. The struggle of finding what the place of religion is in the discussion about terrorism becomes apparent in this first camp.

The second camp in this debate mentioned by van Dongen adheres to the "breeding ground thesis". This theory explains the motivations behind terrorism with poverty, discrimination and lack of job prospect, which all lead to frustrated Muslims being receptive to radical ideas and interpretations of Islam. This camp leaves no role for religion in the analysis of the motivations for terrorists, except that it is something to fall back on in times of deprivation. Adherence to this theory is also reflected in political policy that aims to prevent terrorism: in the Netherlands, but also in the UK and other Western countries, funds are made available to improve socioeconomic circumstances, in order to prevent the breeding ground of poverty.⁶ But also many academic articles contend terrorism can be viewed in terms of lack of human rights and secure living circumstances.⁷ Also, the "quest for emotional and social support" and "resistance to foreign occupation" are seen as crucial motivating forces for terrorists within the second camp: religion does not seem to have a place at all.⁸ However, "the breeding ground thesis", cannot explain terrorists that are from "higher" socioeconomic classes, which a substantial part of the terrorists still seems to be.

On a semi-academic level, a similar debate took place between two French political scientists, specialized in Islam: Olivier Roy and Gilles Kepel. Following the terror attacks in Paris, in November 2015, a polemic in French newspapers such as *Le Monde* evolved between Roy and Kepel, revealing again the search for a right place for religion in understanding terrorism as well.⁹ Their insights and ideas have implications for public policy, or they in any way uncover the question of what should be the appropriate response to terrorism, and therefore it is important to highlight here. Roy explicitly downplays the role of religion, saying that we should

⁶ Van Dongen, *Radicalisering ontrafeld*, 12.

⁷ See Rhonda Callaway & Julie Harrelson-Stephens, 'Toward a Theory of Terrorism: Human Security as a Determinant of Terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29 (2006) 7, 679-702 and Andreas Freytaga et al 'The origins of terrorism: cross-country estimates of socio-economic determinants of terrorism' *European Journal of Political Economy* 27 (2011) 1, s5-s16.

⁸ Arie W. Kruglanski et al., 'Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance', *Political Psychology* 30 (2009) 3, 331-357, here 332.

⁹ Olivier Roy, 'Le djihadisme est une révolte générationnelle et nihiliste', *Le Monde*, 24 November 2015

not be speaking of radicalized Islam, but rather Islamized radicalism.¹⁰ He sees terrorists not as an expression of a radicalized Muslim population, rather as a generational revolt that affects a specific category of youth. Kepel argues against this by saying that religion does have a central role in understanding jihadist terrorism. He says that to understand terrorism, academics should listen to Friday sermons and in this way, it is related to Salafism.¹¹ Additionally, Kepel sees the social, economic and political marginalization of Muslims born in France as driving force in becoming a radicalized Islamist. Their marginalization in society pushes them toward radicalization, resulting in, for example, turning Salafī. This strict and conservative strand of Islam has a fundamental, extremist part that does not renounce violence. The existence of religious beliefs, according to Kepel, thus creates conditions for being drawn into terrorism.¹² These two camps that dominate the debate about religion and terrorism, on a societal level but also on an academic level, contain some serious shortcomings. Although these theories all have some merit in understanding why some people choose to commit terrorist attacks, a focus on religion or socioeconomic environment alone does not create a constructive approach to generally understand and counter terrorism. Historian and terrorism expert Beatrice de Graaf has coined this impasse in the debate on the role of religion in terrorism the “religion fallacy”.¹³ This fallacy exists of two biases. The religious bias: religion as the main instigator in terrorism (leading to ideas like “when there is no religion, there would be no war”) and the secular bias: religion has nothing to do with it at all. These biases need to be overturned, which means that religious motivations should be taken seriously in researching religious terrorism, while at the same time it should not be emphasized too much. Transcendence, sacredness and reaching for a higher goal are all things that matter in religion but as it will be seen also in secular ideologies. In other words, giving the right place to religion in terrorism research is desired, in order to have a constructive academic and societal debate about it.

In this thesis, a way out of this debate is proposed with the help of an alternative approach to terrorism: *the sacred values* approach. Religious studies scholars Matthew Francis and Kim Knott have put forward *the sacred* as a useful concept to bridge the dichotomy of the secular

¹⁰ Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State*. Translated by Cynthia Schoch. (London 2017) 41.

¹¹ Cécile Daumas, ‘Gilles Kepel: Il faut écouter les prêches du vendredi’, *Libération*, 14 April 2018

¹² Timothy Peace, ‘Who becomes a terrorist, and why?’ *The Washington Post*, May 10 2018.

¹³ Beatrice de Graaf, lectures at Research Seminar in International Relations in Historical Perspective: ‘Fifth Wave terrorism & radical redemption’ and ‘Fourth wave terrorism & radical redemption’, Utrecht University, October – November 2017.

and the religious, and this thesis elaborates further on this idea.¹⁴ The sacred values approach is aimed at finding out about the convictions of terrorist that are non-negotiable, essential core values such as the welfare of family and country, commitment to religion, honor and justice. These values are perceived to be absolute and inviolable.¹⁵ The approach to terrorism through the concept of the sacred is a way to look beyond the specific concept of religion and its role in terrorism as it is proposed in the first camp in the terrorism debate (e.g. religion is the root cause of terrorism or religion has nothing to do with terrorism at all). The sacred can still have religious connotations, but there is no need to search within the ideology or religion for terrorist motivations anymore. According to Francis, focusing on sacred values allows us to see what aspects may be problematic about a group. Examining the construction of values, beliefs and the language used for the defending it, are better indicators of a move to violence than assuming that all people who identify with the same tradition as suspicious, which often is the case with Muslims.¹⁶

Using the approach of sacred values bridges a gap between religious studies and the international relations approach to terrorism, since it sometimes seems as if insights from these disciplines are not always integrated into the field of terrorism studies. An interdisciplinary approach seems imperative when it comes to researching a complex phenomenon like terrorism. Insights from the field of religious studies are useful in trying to find out what the role of religion is in terrorism. In this thesis, therefore, theories from religious studies will be integrated with existing approaches to terrorism from historians and international relations in order to provide a richer understanding of terrorism.

1.1 Academic historiography on the role of religion

According to historian David Rapoport's wave theory, modern terrorism is now in its fourth wave: the religious wave. The three prior waves were: anarchist wave (1880-1920), anti-colonial wave (1920-1960) and the New Left wave (1960-ca 2000).¹⁷ As their names suggest, a different energy drives each wave. The religious wave started in 1979 (Iranian revolution)

¹⁴ Matthew Francis and Kim Knott, 'Return? It never left. Exploring the 'sacred' as a resource for bridging the gap between the religious and the secular', *Religious Norms in the Public Sphere: proceedings of a conference held at UC Berkeley on May 6-7, 2011*. (2015), 44-48.

¹⁵ Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod. 'Reframing Sacred Values', *Negotiation Journal (Harvard)*, 24 (2008) 3, 221-246, here 221.

¹⁶ Matthew Francis, 'Why the "Sacred" is a better resource than "religion" for understanding terrorism', *Terrorism and political violence*, 28 (2016) 5, 912-927, here 917.

¹⁷ David Rapoport, 'The four waves of modern terrorism', in: John Horgan and Kurt Braddock (eds.), *Terrorism studies: A Reader*. (London 2013), 46-73, here 47.

and is ongoing. Rapoport puts forward religion as the common denominator of the majority of the terrorist groups between 1979 to the present. It is said that religion provided more hope than the prevailing revolutionary ethos (than earlier waves of terrorism) did.¹⁸ Many scholars in the terrorism studies field see religious terrorism as a new type of terrorism, with “radically different value systems, mechanisms of legitimation and justification, concepts of morality and, worldviews. As a consequence, religious terrorism represents a very different and possibly far more lethal threat than that posed by more familiar, traditional terrorist adversaries.”¹⁹

However, some critics problematize this way of linking religion causally to violence and the observation that religious terrorists have been more violent than their secular counterparts in recent decades. Gunning and Jackson argue that we should not speak of “religious terrorism” because it privileges the religious dimension and it, therefore, would downplay the wider context within movements and operating actors. By doing that, religion is essentialized and the role of beliefs more generally.²⁰ By speaking of “religious terrorism”, it is implied that it is only beliefs that determine actual goals, attitudes and overall behavior, though religion can be interpreted and lived in countless different manners. Gunning and Jackson said: “Even if groups proclaim similar beliefs, their behavior may be radically different, depending upon organizational dynamics and the political opportunity structure within which they operate.”²¹ Others wonder what it actually means to be a “religious terrorist”, when if the religious behavior of the terrorist is examined closely, they are not even that “religious” in their practices. Many of the Muslims that are convicted for terrorist activities (for example, people who joined IS, leaving their country behind in Western Europe) have inadequate knowledge of Islam. The famous story that illustrates this is the news of the two jihadis who ordered *Islam for Dummies* from Amazon, before they left the UK for Syria in May 2014.²² With the unproblematic use of the label of “religious terrorism”, it not only ends up creating the illusion of being a separate category of violence that is very different from secular groups, but also stigmatizing a group, creating the idea that the terrorists have the same worldview as other believers from their group.

¹⁸ David Rapoport, ‘The fourth wave: September 11 in the history of terrorism’, *Current History* 100 (2001) 650, 419- 424, here 421.

¹⁹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside terrorism: revised and expanded edition* (New York 2006) 88.

²⁰ Jeroen Gunning and Richard Jackson, ‘What’s so ‘religious’ about ‘religious terrorism?’’, *Critical studies on terrorism*, 4 (2011) 3, 369-388, here 381.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 378.

²² Karen Armstrong, *Fields of blood: Religion and the history of violence* (New York 2015), 368.

Someone who does explicitly research religious terrorism as a distinct group is sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer, in his book *Terror in the mind of God*.²³ A book about “public acts of violence at the turn of the century for which religion has provided the motivation, the justification, the organization, and the worldview”.²⁴ According to Juergensmeyer, when terrorist groups have a religious character, it does make a difference. This is for example to be seen in the transcendent moralism with which acts are justified by terrorists. Juergensmeyer coined the concept of *cosmic war*, a divine warfare in which terrorist perceive to be entangled. This struggle is conceived as larger than life – employed in worldly social struggles - and it evokes great battles of the legendary past, relating to metaphysical conflicts between good and evil.²⁵ However, one might wonder if this really is inherent to religion. Gunning and Jackson claim that most terrorist groups have both religious and secular characteristics, meaning that labelling a group as religious is an empty label.²⁶ For example, Al-Qaeda, one of the most obvious religious groups, displays secular characteristics as well: from strategic aims to targets and secular professional personnel. Furthermore, terrorist groups classified as secular can be involved in a Juergensmeyer-like cosmic war as well. For example, the German Red Army Faction and the Italian Red Brigades each pursued a radically different world order, describing their enemies in similar eschatological terms as al-Qaeda did.²⁷ Characteristics that are perceived as being unique to religion can also be traced in perceived secular groups. Thus, seeing religion as a unique specific group might not be that helpful, and therefore, a need for a new focus arises.

The sacred values approach is an alternative way to analyze terrorist motivations, already explored to some extent by Matthew Francis and Kim Knott. By focusing on the sacred values of terrorists in the search of their motivation, it is possible to leave the emphasis on religion behind, but it will at the same time still play a role. This approach will, however, nuance the uniqueness of religion as ideological motivator in finding similar processes of the sacred between different ideological backgrounds. This thesis provides a test of this approach and resulted in the following research question, that is answered in the conclusion (chapter 5):

²³ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2003).

²⁴ Juergensmeyer, 7.

²⁵ Ibid., 149.

²⁶ Gunning and Jackson, ‘What’s so ‘religious’ about ‘religious terrorism?’, 377.

²⁷ Ibid, 378.

What are the sacred values put forward in ideological publications by National Alliance and Islamic State and how does the sacred values approach help understand terrorist practices?

This question will be answered by comparing the analysis of primary sources in the search of sacred values of a secular group (National Alliance) and a religious terrorist group (Islamic State). In the end, this approach will be evaluated, including its implication for the religion and terrorism debate and further terrorism research.

1.2 Theory and conceptualization

This thesis will theoretically conceptualize *the sacred*, in response to the need for an alternative approach to the ideological motivations of terrorists, giving a rightful place for the role of religion. The sacred values approach is seen as a useful approach because of two reasons. Firstly, the use of the concept of the sacred helps to bridge the apparent division between religious and secular groups, because sacred values are found equally in national and other secular ideological belief systems, and not just religions. Therefore, it is a useful concept for comparisons across different ideologies. Secondly, by focusing on beliefs that are held sacred by terrorists, this research relies less on problematic issues of generalizing religious identity and on beliefs and values that are shared with non-violent believers from the same group, as is problematized by President Obama at the beginning of this introduction. Thus, by looking at terrorism through the lens of the sacred, it takes into account a critical analysis of the label “religious terrorism” and it is made possible to nuance the strict divide between ideological backgrounds of different waves of terrorism (for example secular versus religious differences). The use of the concept of the sacred will make a valuable contribution to the field of researching the impact of ideologies on the motivation of terrorists and this thesis will provide as a test for this approach.

Religious studies scholar Matthew Francis proposes that the “sacred” is a better concept to focus on than “religion” for understanding the motivations of terrorist groups.²⁸ He is convinced of the sacred as a methodological tool:

“The use of the sacred as a methodological tool is based on the values of groups themselves, rather than externally applied labels. Rather than calling a group “extremist” and therefore bad, or “Salafist” and therefore evil, working from the sacred values of the groups themselves and assessing them in a consistent manner helps avoid the worst of normative excesses in judgements about the group.”²⁹

²⁸ Matthew Francis, ‘Why the “sacred” is a better resource than “religion” for understanding terrorism’, *Terrorism and political violence*, 28 (2016) 5, 912-927.

²⁹ Francis, ‘Why the “sacred” is a better resource than religion’, 924.

He says that the focus of terrorism research should be on beliefs and values that are non-negotiable, or sacred, as alternative means to understand the ideological motivations and justification which play a role in violence and terrorism. Although the concept of the sacred seems to have a religious connotation, Francis defines it as “a thing, place, time or concept that is special and non-negotiable, and that is separated of protected from everyday ideas”.³⁰ Kruglanski and Gelfand say that a crucial characteristic of the significance quest of terrorists is its anchorage in *sacred values*: “these define what is worthwhile, moral, and admirable; what constitutes the “good life” that one should aspire to; and what actions individuals should undertake in given circumstances”.³¹ Thus, sacred values matter in understanding terrorism and this thesis provides a test for how this can be done. This thesis is indebted to Knott and Francis in their idea of the sacred as bridge between the secular and the religious and this thesis elaborates on it further, by placing it in the debate about the role of religion in terrorism and adding a theoretical framework with which the sacred values approach can be carried out on case studies. Furthermore, the thesis links the idea of sacred values to sacred practices and how these aspects are influencing each other.

1.3 Design of the research

The use of the theoretical concept of “the sacred” will be expanded upon in the next chapter (2). This chapter will set out the theoretical basis of the concept of the sacred and how it is a useful concept for understanding terrorism. Quite some literature has been dedicated to the concept of the sacred, for example by Matthew Francis, Aida Arosoaie, Kim Knott, Scott Atran, but on a more philosophical level – an entire social ontology of the sacred –, the sacred is set out by sociologist Emile Durkheim in his famous work *The elementary forms of religious life*.³² On the base of these theories, a theoretical framework will be formulated, with several indicators of sacred values which subsequently are applied to the ideological publications of National Alliance and IS. The methodology on how the sacred values will be extracted will be elaborated upon in chapter two as well.

To find out why the sacred is a useful approach for understanding terrorist motivations, expanding upon earlier research on this by Matthew Francis, this thesis will undertake two extreme ideologies and within these ideologies two terrorist groups as case studies in chapter

³⁰ Francis, 913.

³¹ Arie W. Kruglanski and Michele J. Gelfand, ‘Motivation, Ideology and the Social Process in Radicalization’, *Observer* 26 (2013) 4, <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/motivation-ideology-and-the-social-process-in-radicalization>

³² Durkheim, Émile, *The elementary forms of the religious life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. (London 1976).

three and four: National Alliance (NA) and Islamic State (IS). These particular groups were chosen because it is insightful to compare a religious to a secular group when “testing” the sacred approach. In addition to that, the selection of the two ideological strands of terrorism (right-wing extremism and jihadist extremism) for the analysis also has to do with the fact they are both relevant types of terrorism in our present day. This means that more insights about these types of terrorism are welcoming insights in both academics and policy for combatting it.

Chapter three is dedicated to right-wing extremism, with National Alliance as a case study. NA is not officially appointed as a terrorist group – but rather as a hate group – however, the influential novel *The Turner Diaries*, written by National Alliance founder William Pierce, has been regarded as an inspiration for many right-wing extremists to commit a terror attack. According to Berger, it is arguably “the most important single work of white nationalist propaganda in the English language”.³³ The most famous example of a terrorist that was inspired by the Turner Diaries would be Timothy McVeigh and his bomb attack at a federal building in Oklahoma City. Photocopied pages from the Turner Diaries were found in his car. Chapter three will further elaborate on the motivation of choosing NA as a case study group and will also go into two right-wing terrorists who are in some way connected to NA or the Turner Diaries (Thomas Mair and Dylann Roof). In this chapter, the distinguished sacred values of National Alliance and how they correspond with related terrorist practices will be put forward.

Chapter four is dedicated to jihadist terrorism, with the case study IS, which is a more distinct terrorist organization. IS has many published texts on their ideological ideas, worldviews and legitimization of terrorist acts, which will be subject to analysis in the search for sacred values. These sacred values will be put forward in the same way as has been done in chapter three. Accordingly, the testament of Khalid el-Bakraoui (one of the terrorists of the attack in Brussels in 2016) will be analyzed as a corresponding sacred practice.

The terrorist groups will be analyzed on the base of their ideological writings. For NA, this is for example *The Turner Diaries*, but also other publications by NA key members. For IS, their propaganda material will be analyzed, which is the in English written magazine *Dabiq* and speech by caliphate leader al-Baghdadi. After analyzing texts from both groups, the sacred values of the right-wing terrorists and IS are put forward. Subsequently, corresponding

³³ J.M. Berger, ‘The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism’s Deadly Bible’, *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* 7 (2016) 8, 1-50, here 1.

practices (terrorist attacks) are subject to analysis to see in how far they correspond with the sacred values and how they are perceived as sacred making practices. In figure 1 below, the levels of analysis described here are represented in a figurative way.

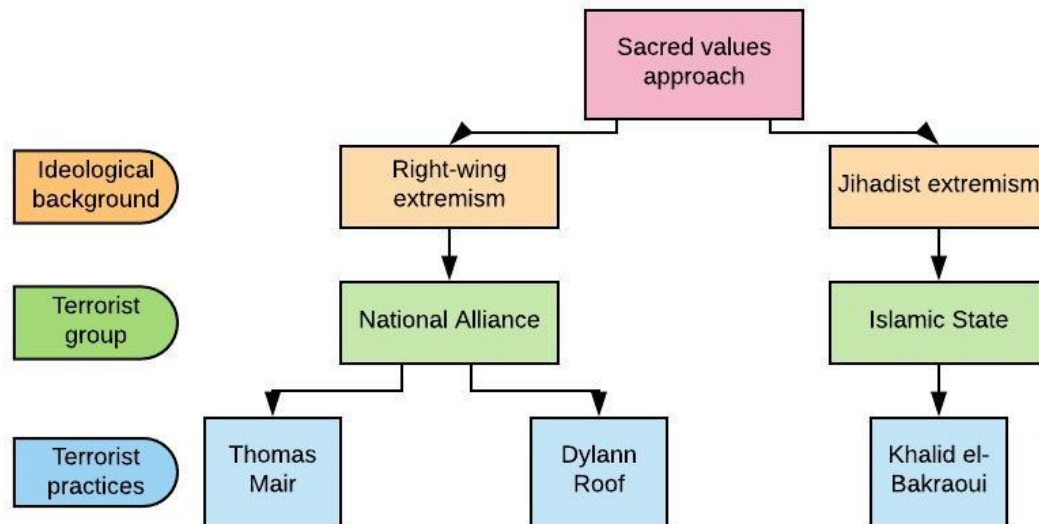


Figure 1: *Figurative representation of the levels of analysis for the sacred values approach*

After analyzing the case studies in chapter three and four, a comparison between the two will take place in the conclusion (chapter five). Patterns of sacred values are traced and it will be demonstrated that processes of sacred values can be similar, even when coming from different ideological backgrounds. For example, both terrorist groups have sacred values that they feel are being undermined and need to be restored, which results in dichotomous worldviews and the feeling of being part of a cosmic war. Within the sacred values approach, it might be possible to extract sacred values from two ideologically different terrorist groups that actually overlap. This implies that the sacred values can transgress different waves of terrorism, that are distinguished by Rapoport. This thesis does not try to relativize the drama that terrorists from the religious wave bring forward and it is not denied that there are unique features within the religious wave, compared to the previous waves. Rather, the aim is to single out identified patterns and traces that connect different waves. This means that there is no use for only searching within the particular ideology of the terrorist when looking for motivations, as for example Juergensmeyer does by discussing religious terrorism as unique. By focusing on sacred values, it can be demonstrated how terrorist motives show resemblances through time and transgress different ideological backgrounds. Next to the comparison in the conclusion, the

sacred values approach and what the implications are for researching terrorism in the future will be reflected upon.

The hypothesis is thus, that while looking at sacred values, differences in motivations are to be found between individual terrorists more than between terrorist organizations and movements. The role of religion will without a doubt be present in the IS narrative, but the role of religion can always be connected to overarching processes of having sacred values, which can also be found in the National Alliance narrative. Finding overarching sacred values has implications for counterterrorism strategies. The way former terrorist organizations were countered can be used to inform countering current day terrorism, instead of focusing on or stigmatizing a particular ideology of a terrorist.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework: The Sacred Values approach to terrorism

*To regard something as sacred implies something about how it should be treated: that it must not be destroyed except for the most urgent kind of reason, for example: perhaps only to protect something else that is sacred.*³⁴

*Many can't quite stop talking about things being 'sacred' or 'sacrosanct' (and relatedly, mundane or profane) because these quasi-religious concepts offer them another powerful way to articulate this fundamental distinction between different forms of worth. These distinctions are a necessary feature of any ethics we would recognize as human.*³⁵

In Rapoport's wave theory of terrorism, the focus on the ideological background of each wave immediately stands out. There are different factors that make these waves distinct from each other, for example in their terrorist tactics but also their targets. Rapoport: "Each wave has its own special character, purpose and tactics".³⁶ However, the four waves are classified by their ideological background: anarchist terrorism, ethno-nationalist terrorism, radical left revolutionary terrorism and religious terrorism. This implies that the different terrorists coming from the different waves have inherently different motivations in committing terrorist attacks. With the sacred values approach, it is aimed to find underlying processes in sacred values that terrorists have, so that it is possible to transgress the different waves of terrorism. Interpretations of and commitment to sacred values contribute to countless dramatic acts of violence and the sacred seems an instructive starting point to understand the step to violence, more than specifically searching for motivations within a particular ideological background.

2.1 Conceptualizing the sacred

First, the views of several scholars on the concept of the sacred shall be given, a concept that initially has very religious connotations. Then it will be explained how the sacred can also apply within secular convictions, which Kim Knott has coined as "the secular sacred". This will lead to the definition of the sacred that is used in this argument. The secular sacred is an important concept in this thesis because it proves to be a fruitful concept in transgressing the dichotomy of secular versus religious, a dichotomy which many religious studies scholars regard as problematic.³⁷ The distinction between religion and secular is in practice not easy to make (for example in trying to set out the differences between ideologies and religions), and this

³⁴ Richard Dworkin in Ben Rogers, *Is nothing sacred*, (New York 2006), 142.

³⁵ Rogers, *'Is nothing sacred?'*, 4

³⁶ David Rapoport, 'The fourth wave: September 11 in the history of terrorism', *Current History* 100 (2001) 650, 419- 424, here 420.

³⁷ For example: Timothy Fitzgerald, 'Theology, Religious Studies and the Secular Academy: Rhetoric and the Control of Meanings.' *Temenos - Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 43 (2013) 2. and Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity* (Stanford 2003).

dichotomy also influences how we see different waves of terrorism (resulting in labels as religious terrorism and secular ideological terrorism). The (secular) sacred proves to be present in all of these waves. After explaining the concept of secular sacred, it is put forward a useful concept for researching terrorist motivations and subsequently, a framework of how to extract sacred values from terrorist ideological writings will be provided. This framework will be used in analyzing the National Alliance and Islamic State in chapter 3 and 4.

A key figure in conceptualizing the sacred is the famous sociologist Émile Durkheim, who used the sacred as the central concept in his analysis of religion in society in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Many academic writings about the sacred build on Durkheim's conception of the sacred. He defines the sacred as opposed to the profane, but he mostly sees it as "an essential element in the constitution of moral force".³⁸ He gives social practice an important place in the creation of the sacred: the sacred is a sociological phenomenon that is always enacted through social practices. He makes a strong connection between the sacred and the moral: "without the enacted "feeling of the sacred", moral force cannot be created, categories of reasons cannot be developed, and society, as a consequence, cannot exist".³⁹ In this way, sacred-making activity, whatever its ideological origin, is that which separates things, creating a place for those things of supreme value and distinguishing them from profane or impure things that are negotiable or may contaminate. The sacred, expressed in ideas and values, is integrated into someone's core identity and in that way, it can become something worth fighting, or even die for.

Durkheim's work on the sacred offers a starting point for thinking about values that people take to be fundamental moral realities, which include unquestionable claims over society. He deemed it necessary to understand and categorize the deep moral forces of social life so that these could be worked with in constructive ways in society, since these moral forces obviously can conflict.⁴⁰ By building on Durkheim's theories of the sacred, it is possible to develop a clear way of understanding the roots and patterns of these moral forces (e.g. sacred values) and how they still affect society today.

³⁸ Anne Warfield Rawls, *Epistemology and Practice: Durkheim's The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Cambridge 2005) 111.

³⁹ Ibid, 108.

⁴⁰ Gordon Lynch, 'Émile Durkheim: religion – the very idea, part 2: new forms of the sacred', *The Guardian*, (version 17 December 2012), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/17/emile-durkheim-religion-sacred> (4 April 2018).

2.2 Undoing the sacred from its religious connotations

The sacred seems to have a religious connotation, especially since it is normally opposed to the profane or mundane, but Durkheim says that the sacred certainly can also have secular forms. Durkheim's identification of the moral forces in society with the help of the concept of the sacred is not an attempt to constitute social phenomena as religious phenomena. "On the contrary, it allows him to secularize religion, essentially turning it into a laboratory for the development and study of moral reasoning in society."⁴¹ New forms of the sacred keep emerging and they do not necessarily need to have a religious background. Kim Knott devoted an article on decoupling the sacred from religion by coining it with the term the 'secular sacred' in order to highlight the break with the commonly-expressed view that the 'sacred' is an exclusively religious category.⁴² This is important to stress, as the sacred values approach is used for a religious and a non-religious terrorist group in this thesis. She remarks that most of the (atheist or humanist) authors that contributed to the book "Is nothing sacred?"⁴³ take the view that the concept is freed from its religious roots and given a place in a secular ethics. "Most can get on just fine without believing in the divine godhead, the devil, or the existence of supernatural or transcendent realms ... they do not find it easy to jettison the concept of the sacred."⁴⁴ As noted in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, it is seen as a powerful way to articulate fundamentally different forms of worth. So even in Western-Europe, we might be living in a more secularized age – in the sense of living without a fixed system of a deity or deities and corresponding religious rules - we certainly do not live in a desacralized one.

Atran points out that the 'secularized sacred' also is exemplified in political notions of human rights or in 'the transcendent ideological *isms* that have dominated political life ever since the Enlightenment's secularization of the universal religious mission to redeem and save "humanity" through political revolution (colonialism, liberalism, socialism, anarchism, communism, fascism etc.)'.⁴⁵ This means that human rights also can be regarded as sacred values and this underlines the idea that sacred values can have secular manifestations. Even

⁴¹ Rawls, *Epistemology and Practice*, 138.

⁴² Kim Knott. 'The Secular sacred: in between or both/and?' *Social Identities Between the Sacred and the Secular* (2013), 1.

⁴³ Editor: Ben Rogers (2004).

⁴⁴ Rogers, *Is nothing sacred?* (New York 2004) 1.

⁴⁵ Scott Atran, 'The role of the devoted actor in war' in: James r. Lewis (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to religion and terrorism*, (Cambridge 2017), 71.

Thomas Jefferson spoke of “sacred an inalienable” rights of life and liberty in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence.⁴⁶

2.3 Coming to a definition of the sacred

Sacred values are mainly used by people and groups in order to mark boundaries in accordance with their beliefs, values and practices, which makes the sacred ultimately culturally dependent. There is a certain scale of matters that are deemed important, and this scale can be used to differentiate degrees of value people attribute to things, events, places and so on and the sacred would be at the top of the scale. Sometimes, people are required to make a choice on the basis of things they value. For some of those values, people are willing to negotiate, but for other values, they are not willing to negotiate at all: they are considered inviolable. According to Atran, sacred values refer to any preferences regarding objects, beliefs, or practices that people treat as both incompatible or non-fungible with profane issues or economic goods.⁴⁷ Atran’s view of the sacred can be related to Francis’ definition of the sacred. He sees the sacred as a thing, place, time or concept that is special and non-negotiable; it is separated and protected from everyday ideas. The sacred is directly and indirectly expressed in ideas and values that are seen to be core or essential to identities and beliefs.⁴⁸ The sacred is that which people take as unquestionable moral realities. However, it is important to note that nothing is inherently sacred, but that everything has the potential to be designated as such. It is the social process of setting things apart that makes actions, beliefs, or values sacred, not the things in and of themselves. A certain belief system can make certain ideas sacred or non-negotiable for the way life should be lived.⁴⁹ This means that sacred making *practices* matter in creating sacred values. Bringing sacred values into practice is a process of meaning-making and the sacredness of the practices appoints to the exclusivity of it.⁵⁰ Francis’ definition of the sacred is my working definition in this thesis: it builds upon Durkheim and Knott. The focus of the definition is on that which separate things and having a special place for those things of *supreme* value,

⁴⁶ ‘Jefferson’s “original Rough draught” of the Declaration of Independence’ *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 1: 1760-1776* (Princeton University Press, 1950), 423-28, <https://jeffersonpapers.princeton.edu/selected-documents/jefferson%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9COriginal-rough-draught%E2%80%9D-declaration-independence> (6 April 2018).

⁴⁷ Atran, ‘The role of the devoted actor in war’, 71.

⁴⁸ Francis, ‘Why the sacred is a better resource than religion’, 913.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 915.

⁵⁰ Joel Day, ‘Terrorist Practices: Sketching a New Research Agenda’, *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (2015) 6, 85-94, here 88.

distinguishing it from the profane and negotiable things. In this definition, the sacred is seen as non-negotiable, unquestionable moral reality and essential to the identity and belief.

2.4 The connection between sacred values and researching terrorism

It seems evident that terrorists are carrying out violent attacks for an (in their view) sacred cause and that their attacks and deeds of violence are practices intended to bestow holiness or sacredness upon someone or something. The sacred, as it is defined by Durkheim, Knott and Francis in the first part of this chapter, definitely plays a role in the motivation of a terrorist. Sacred values can act as moral imperatives (or as Durkheim calls it: moral force) that inspire seemingly non-rational sacrifices. Analyzing sacred values is a way of thinking about values that people take to be fundamental moral realities, including their unquestionable claims over society. This is exactly what many terrorist groups have. Terrorist groups flourish in a narrative of injustice and violations of sacred values, in which the step to violence is more easily justified. When people act in defense of sacred values, they act in ways that cannot be reliably predicted by assessing material risks and rewards, costs, and consequences.⁵¹ This should compel researchers to pay more attention to the (perceived) injustices and the nature and depth of terrorists' commitment to their sacred values. Sacred values usually become more relevant once they are threatened. The threats to sacred values are most apparent when different moral communities come into conflict. To gain insight into the sacred values put forward by terrorists therefore seems step one in preventing the step to violence. According to Atran, we need more knowledge or theoretical discussion on the "so-called essential or sacred values, which a moral community implicitly or explicitly treats as possessing transcendental significance that precludes tradeoffs or mingling with mundane or secular values".⁵² When values are perceived as sacred, they become existential struggles, which contributes to their non-negotiability. These values can become transcendent and emotionally charged over time.

However, as is suggested by Atran and Axelrod, sacred values may motivate extreme behavior particularly to the extent that they combine with being merged in a group that shares such sacred values.⁵³ In other words, for an individual to carry out attacks in the name of these sacred values, he needs to have a strong connection to a group that is also committed to the sacred values. This group connection influences the way sacred values are articulated. For the case studies that will

⁵¹ Atran, 'The role of the devoted actor in war', 71

⁵² Scott Atran, 'Sacred Values, Terrorism, and the Limits of Rational Choice' *French National centre for scientific research* (2006), 1.

⁵³ Atran and Axelrod. 'Reframing Sacred Values', 234.

be discussed in chapter 3 and 4 there is a difference in embedding sacred values in an institutionalized and recognizable idea of religion versus a less distinctive, more idiosyncratic way of formulating sacred values. This is a big difference between right-wing extremist movements and jihadist movements in the way that sacred values can be linked to an already existing, general narrative. With religion, the repertoires are simply more present and recognizable and more enacted in a group context. With right-wing extremism, terrorists tend to act upon their sacred values on an individual basis. Thus, group involvement or fusion influence the way sacred values are articulated and enacted. The use of the sacred to analyze the impact of ideologies should therefore always be part of a broader toolkit of studying terrorist motivations, like taking into account the group interactions and psychological factors. There are more obstacles and challenges to the sacred values approach, as will be pointed out at the end of this chapter.

When researching the sacred in the context of terrorism, it is important to emphasize the pivotal role of praxis in the construction of the sacred. For a terrorist, carrying out violent attacks or sacrificing something (a life, or even money for that matter) bestows meaning and can have a sacred making outcome. This means that there is an interaction between sacred values and sacred practices. Some practices can strengthen the sacredness, but also the other way around; sacredness can strengthen the impact of a certain practice. Practices are a way to actualize a belief system or in this context: your sacred values. Carrying out a terrorist attack can be a meaning-making practice that corresponds with your sacred values. To see how sacred values correspond with sacred practices, I developed a theoretical framework with which the primary sources will be analyzed in the next chapters.

2.5 Searching for sacred values: how to extract sacred values and corresponding practices from ideological primary sources (methodology)

At this point, a different set of markers on how the sacred can manifest itself will be put forward. It is on these levels that the different sacred values and corresponding practices of the two terrorist groups will be extracted. In the primary ideological texts of NA (right-wing terrorists) and IS (jihadi terrorists), the beliefs and values that are in no way negotiable are researched; the values are considered inviolable, unquestionable and the willingness to sacrifice, i.e. to kill or die for it, for these sacred values is clearly present. It is thus a qualitative research on primary sources of terrorist groups. The extraction of sacred values from the primary sources is done by doing close reading and looking for key concepts and words that are part of the underlying

processes, such as cosmic war, dichotomous worldview and conspiracy against anyone that is not part of the in-group.

From the literature about terrorist motivations discussed before, a set of markers and themes of sacred values is identified. By coming up with markers and concepts (especially the underlying processes) for this framework, it is indebted to Francis and Knott's exploration of the sacred as a concept for bridging the secular and the religious.⁵⁴ They suggested the sacred as a concept to approach convictions with on which this thesis builds further and explicitly makes the connection with terrorism and terrorist *practices*. In the current framework, the markers are associated with terrorist actions, which are to be found below (figure 2). However, it should be noted that this framework is also the result of an iterative process, that formed itself also during the analysis of the primary sources of the terrorist groups. This means that the underlying processes are already visible in the framework (to be seen on the left), even though they are also a result of the analysis. The framework below will be used as an analytical model with which the sources of ideological writings of the terrorist groups will be analyzed. Conducted from the literature about sacred values and terrorism (Atran, Knott and Francis), the following three categories of sacred practices that function as a realization of sacred values came forward:

1. Violence against the enemy
2. Violence in order to realize the utopian scenario
3. Violence against the collaborators
4. A particular way of justifying the violence

The three types of violence are also to be seen back in the terrorist acts that are analyzed in chapter 3 and 4. The three underlying processes for these categories are: having a dichotomous worldview (1), being involved in a cosmic war for a new world order (2) and thinking that there are no "innocent people", resulting in a conspiracy against all the people who are not part of the in-group and targeting the collaborators (3). The fourth level in the framework is about how violence is justified by an external leader or source. This says something about how violence is justified, not what kind of practice it is, although a particular way of justifying violence certainly can bestow extra sacredness to a practice.

⁵⁴ Matthew Francis and Kim Knott, 'Return? It never left. Exploring the 'sacred' as a resource for bridging the gap between the religious and the secular', in: European University Institute, *Religious Norms in the Public Sphere: proceedings of a conference held at UC Berkeley on May 6-7, 2011*. (Florence 2015), 48-57. And: Knott, Kim, McFadyen, Alistair and McLoughlin, Seán, *The Roots, Practices and Consequences of Terrorism: A Literature Review of Research in the Arts & Humanities Final Report* (Leeds 2006).

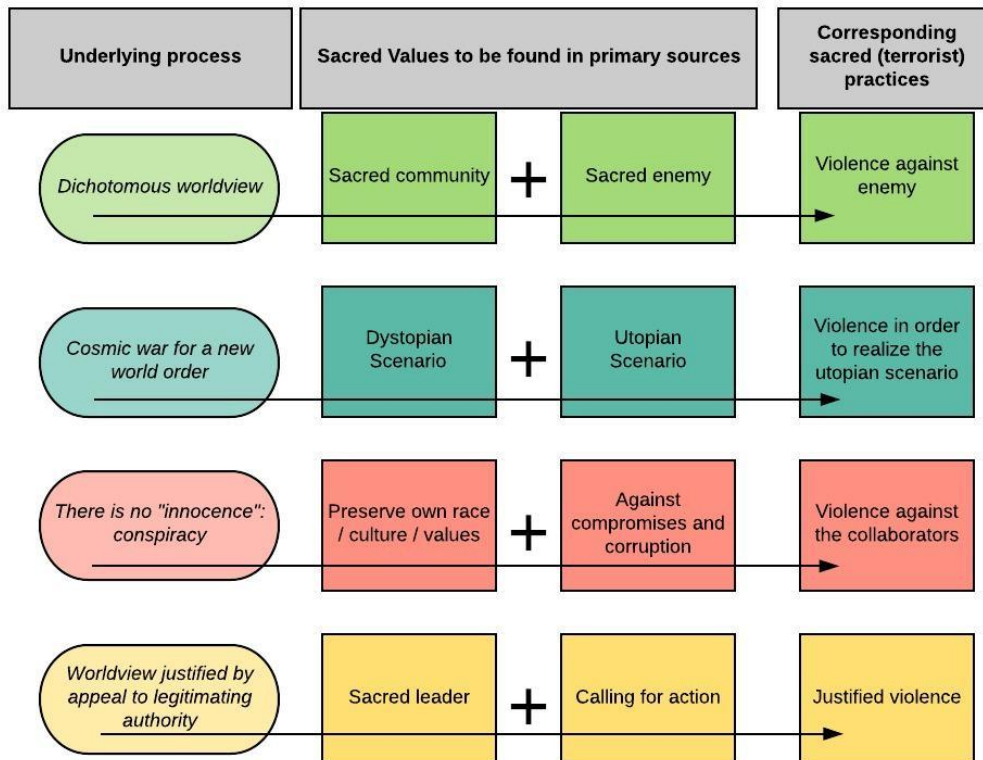


Figure 2: Theoretical framework for extracting sacred values and practices, created by the author.

In the first column, the underlying processes that play a role in the emergence of sacred values are put forward. The first three underlying processes have corresponding sacred values that are searched for in the primary sources. The (to be) identified sacred values are to be found in the second and third columns. With the help of key concepts like community, enemy, dystopian and utopian scenario, the specific sacred values (that differ per terrorist group) are extracted. These sacred values, in their turn, correspond with a certain type of practice, to be found in the fourth column. More concrete, these practices can result in an attack on symbolic targets or the killing of enemies and collaborators. These practices or sacrifices are being done by terrorists in order to restore, revenge or actively pursue their sacred values. By acting violently, they enact and advance their sacred values. This reveals the interplay between sacred values and sacred practices. Fighting for the sacred values of the group can result in personal spiritual gain, restoring justice, realizing the ideal state, welfare of family / country and honor.⁵⁵ However, the practice of violence is not the only way to react to the sacred. Many people can share these sacred values without having a violent sacred practice as a result; there is no necessary causal

⁵⁵ Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod. 'Reframing Sacred Values', *Negotiation Journal (Harvard)*, 24 (2008) 3, 221-246, here 222.

relation. But since the focus of this research is on the sacred in combination with terrorism, the relation between sacred values and corresponding sacred practices is important to research.

While reading the primary sources of the terrorist groups, the sacred, non-negotiable values of the groups will be extracted in the way described above and it will become clear how they are portrayed and related to, which can eventually motivate the step to sacred violence. During the analysis of the primary sources, the sacred values and practices will be identified more specifically than in the more general framework above. In this thesis, it is hopefully proved that the sacred is a useful concept that helps to bridge the perceived gap between religious and non-religious values. In the analysis, similarities between groups will hopefully be found, allowing patterns to emerge, which results in nuancing the importance of a specific ideological background in explaining terrorism.

2.6 Challenges and obstacles

In the framework, different types of sacred values are set out as if they are all very separate categories. However, the distinctions are artificial as part of an academic analysis. These categories actually are very much interrelated and entangled, but for the sake of clarity and this analysis, they will be labelled as separate categories. Also, it might be true that this framework lacks certain types of sacred values, but at this point, it is impossible to include all the existing sacred values and corresponding practices that terrorists can have in one framework. The most frequently occurring sacred values are in the framework, and it is also based on what has been found in the primary sources that will be discussed. A challenge for further research would be to create a framework that is all-inclusive for every type of terrorism in the world.

Another important aspect to highlight is the fact that the sacred values approach does not provide the only answer to understanding motivations of terrorists. As pointed out before, it can be part of a broader toolkit in analyzing terrorist motives. For example, Atran emphasizes the importance of having sacred values in combination with identity fusion and group dynamics. It is however in the scope of this thesis not possible to analyze every aspect of the motivation of a terrorist in this thesis. For example, psychological dynamics that underlie the motivations are not taken into account. This thesis solely focuses on one aspect that should be taken into account in future research, namely: the sacred values and how they are related to.

Chapter 3. Sacred values and practices of right-wing terrorists

There has been a serious lack of attention for right-wing terrorism, e.g. white supremacist, racist and neo-Nazi groups, in the field of terrorism studies. According to Simi, since 9/11, studies of terrorism have almost exclusively focused on radical Islamic fundamentalism, neglecting other types of terror groups.⁵⁶ This is remarkable, since it is an ideological type of terrorism that actually transgresses the four waves of terrorism put forward by Rapoport, being present during every wave. The terrorist campaigns that are waged by groups on the far right of the political spectrum do not appear to fit easily under any of Rapoport's wave categories of modern terrorism. They have rather been seemingly present, to a greater or lesser extent, in the background of every time era since the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan in 1860 (in reaction to the official abolition of slavery in the United States). It is actually one of the most sustained forms of terrorism and it is thus accompanied with violence as well. Caspi states that American law enforcement and policymakers are overlooking a realistic and grave threat which is called the domestic far-right. He says that there is substantial evidence that domestic extremists pose as much of a terrorist threat as do foreign extremists.⁵⁷

Because of this call for attention for right-wing terrorists, a designated right-wing terror group is chosen for applying the sacred values to and corresponding practices of right-wing terrorists will be analyzed.

Firstly, in this chapter, right-wing extremism will be defined (with the help of secondary literature), the historical development of right-wing extremism will be touched upon and the reason why there is a lack of attention for it within the field of terrorism studies is highlighted. After this historical perspective on right-wing extremism, the designated group discussed in the thesis will be introduced: William Pierce, his *Turner Diaries* and his right-wing group National Alliance. The sacred values put forward in the primary sources will be extracted. Thereafter, the corresponding practices of right-wing terrorists that are related to the extracted sacred values will be explored. However, right-wing terror groups are not as straightforward in organizing violence and setting out propaganda that encourages committing terror attacks, like IS does. Instead, there are many organized right-wing white supremacist groups that *inspire* people to commit violent attacks, without actively encouraging it. There are however encouraging

⁵⁶ Pete Simi, 'Why Study White Supremacist Terror? A Research Note', *Deviant Behavior*, 31 (2010) 3, 251-273, here 252.

⁵⁷ David J. Caspi, *Ideologically Motivated Murder: The Threat Posed by White Supremacist Groups* (El Paso 2013) 4.

statements to be found to do something about threatened sacred values (as we will see later on in the book *The Turner Diaries*), but it does not have to be explicitly in the name of a group. That is why many right-wing terrorists are considered a “lone wolf”. Kallis et al. point out that the term “lone wolf” can be misleading because it creates the false impression that there is no relationship to a larger political movement.⁵⁸ As will be demonstrated by the case studies, perceived lone wolves are rarely, truly “alone”. Right-wing extremists are more inclined to commit a terror attack inspired by the ideology, rather than in the name of an actual group. Examples of this are Timothy McVeigh, Dylann Roof and Anders Breivik. They did not carry out an attack in the name of a terrorist group, but they were certainly motivated by a right-wing extremist ideology. They had their sacred values and acted upon them accordingly, in the way that they thought was right, which in their case was violence. For the particular case study in the search of practices related to sacred values, two relatively recent right-wing terrorist attacks illustrate the sacred practices. These are:

- Thomas Mair, the killer of British parliamentarian Jo Cox on 16th of June, 2016;
- Dylann Roof, who attacked an African-American Methodist church in Charleston, 17 June 2015

Which sacred values are defended, restored or avenged in these attacks? And vice versa: how does the sacred bestow meaning on these attacks?

3.1 Right-wing extremism through time

At this point, it is helpful to put forward a definition of right-wing extremism, here formulated by START (Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism). In their research on ideological motivations of terrorist attacks in the US, right-wing extremism is defined as follows:

“Violence in support of the belief that personal and/or national way of life is under attack and is either already lost or that the threat is imminent. Characterized by anti-globalism, racial or ethnic supremacy or nationalism, suspicion of centralized federal authority, reverence for individual liberty, and/or belief in conspiracy theories that involve grave threat to national sovereignty and/or personal liberty.”⁵⁹

In this definition it becomes clear that right-wing terrorism entails a wide range of characterizations: from anti-globalism to racial and ethnic supremacy, but it always sees outsiders as a threat to the own values and personal liberty. Xenophobia is therefore a characteristic to be found in any kind of right-wing movement. When looking at right-wing

⁵⁸ A. Kallis, S. Zeiger, and B. Öztürk, *Violent Radicalisation & Far-right extremism in Europe* (Ankara 2018) 42.

⁵⁹ START, *Ideological Motivations of terrorism in the United States, 1970-2016* (Maryland 2017).

extremism through time, it becomes clear that it has taken many different forms, also in different cultural contexts.

Blee and Creasap wrote a historical overview article about conservative and right-wing movements, mainly in the US context.⁶⁰ According to the two sociologists, right-wing extremism did gain more attention in the late twentieth century in the field of sociology, because in that time the political presence of right-wing movements increased, especially in the US. Far-right movements influenced public policy, elections and discourse on issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion, taxes and gun ownership. Timothy McVeigh's terrorist attack in Oklahoma City demonstrated the violent potential of these movements. There is a continuity between white supremacist groups like the KKK (founded in 1865) and modern movements of today like the National Alliance. Right-wing movements today embrace racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and sometimes promote violence as much as Klan members did in the 19th century. In the European context, "classic" right-wing extremism in Europe was pursued by 1930s Nazis and fascists. Jews were their sacred enemy and were perceived as a threat to the white Aryan values. After World War II, neo-Fascist groups continued to exist and right-wing terrorist groups in for example Italy caused many casualties.⁶¹ The historical orientations of these groups vary: the KKK focused on the Confederacy of the Civil War era, while neo-Nazis focused on WW II era of Nazi Germany.⁶² But eventually, white supremacists all around the world unite around genocidal fantasies against Jews, blacks, Hispanics, gays and anyone else opposed to white power.⁶³ The more modern wave of right-wing extremism takes upon ideas like ultra-nationalism, anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism and anti-globalization identity politics.⁶⁴ In general, right-wing extremist violence or terrorism is mostly carried out by representatives of the ethnic majority population against the weaker minorities, which is a distinctive characteristic from other types of extremism and terrorism. The aim of the violence is that members of the particular targeted group at any time expect to become victims of terror. Violence is directed against those considered 'unequal' (groups of aliens or those who are

⁶⁰ Kathleen Blee and Kimberly Creasap, 'Conservative and Right-Wing movements', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36 (2010), 269-286.

⁶¹ W. Heitmeyer, 'Right-wing terrorism', in: Bjørge Tore (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward* (London 2005), 141-153, here 145.

⁶² Blee and Creasap, 'Conservative and Right-Wing movements', 275.

⁶³ Pete Simi and Bryan Bubolz, 'Far Right Terrorism in the United States', in: Gary LaFree, Joshua Freilich (eds.), *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism, First Edition* (New Jersey 2017), 297-309, here 298.

⁶⁴ Kallis et al., *Violent radicalisation & Far-right extremism in Europe*, 22.

weak), against political opponents (like trade unionists or journalists) but also against the state and its representatives.⁶⁵ The last two groups are seen as a collaborator of the first group.

Some scholars point to the fact that the Christian identity movement takes on a substantial part in right-wing extremist movements. Bob de Graaff for example points out that Christian Identity believers (who believe eventually they are on their way to an Armageddon and a cosmic battle will take place between Christian Aryans and unbelievers) are susceptible to right-wing ideas and vice versa.⁶⁶ For example, the anti-abortion lobby, anti-LGBT rights but also anti-Semitism are convictions that prevail in both extreme Christian groups as well as right-wing extremist movements. Christianity takes on an ambivalent position in the movement of right-wing extremism. For example, William Pierce from the National Alliance, who will be discussed later, wanted to move away from Christianity but at the same time created his own religion “cosmotheism”. His book *The Turner Diaries* was regarded as some sort of bible for this “religion”. There is certainly an overlap between extreme or fundamental Christian movements and extreme-right groups, but they can however not be equalized.

Concluding this paragraph, many of the historical and classical forms of right-wing extremism still influence right-wing extremism today. It is important to be clear that right-wing extremism does not take on a universal form; every right-wing extremist or terrorist has a different focus and different types of sacred values to defend, restore or pursue. However, the classical ideas of white supremacy still are present in modern-day right-wing terrorism. Realizing this continuity in right-wing extremism, the more one might wonder why it is not regarded as substantial terror threat as much as Islamic fundamentalism is. This is discussed in the next section.

3.2 The lack of research on right-wing terror; terror versus hate crime

There are some reasons to think of that explain why right-wing extremism has been to some extent neglected in the field of terrorism studies. First of all, the notion of ‘extreme-right wing’ is problematic and somewhat ambiguous. According to Tore Bjørgo, Norwegian expert in the field of the extreme right, many researchers in the field are uncomfortable with the label of ‘extreme right-wing’ due to its lack of precision and the one-sided emphasis of the left-right dimension. The term right-wing *terrorism* is applicable to groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Christian Identity sects, neo-Nazis but also racist skin-heads, which all have their own angle

⁶⁵ Heitmeyer, ‘Right-wing terrorism’, 146.

⁶⁶ Bob de Graaff, *Op weg naar Armageddon: de evolutie van fanatisme* (Amsterdam 2012), 437.

under the umbrella-term of right-wing extremism.⁶⁷ They all fight their own cultural war on the terrain of ultra-nationalism, anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism, white-supremacy or anti-globalization identity politics. They all utilize a variety of tactics to realize their worldview: from forming political parties to organizing public marches and rallies, but also distributing extremist literature to the extreme of bombing abortion clinics and violent attacks aimed at the ‘out-group’. This out-group also can take different forms: Jews; people of non-white ethnicities; people who have an abortion; immigrants. However, “the far right” (another way to label the right-wing extremists) is not by definition violent, but it spans a political space where violent repertoire may become justified or normalized.⁶⁸ Because right-wing extremism concerns a large and diverse group with a variety of convictions, it is a problematic label.

Another difficult aspect is that there are individuals who carry out acts of violence, who are perceived as right-wing or racist, but they, in the end, turn out to have no connections with extreme political organizations and only have very basic ideas of any ideology.⁶⁹ When there is no clear connection between the individual that carries out a violent attack and a group with a certain ideology, is it even possible to label it as terrorism? This is related to another reason why it has been neglected in terrorism studies: there seems to be a fine line between right-wing terrorism and hate crimes, especially in the United States. For example, the attack carried out by white-supremacist Dylann Roof in an African-American church in Charleston in 2015 has officially not been acknowledged as an act of terrorism by different departments of the American government, like the FBI and the Department of Justice, but as a “hate crime”.⁷⁰ This resulted in Roof not being charged with terrorism (obviously, he was nevertheless still severely sentenced for his attack). However, hate crimes, unlike terrorism, tend to refer to attacks that are unplanned and unconnected to broader ideological objectives, which actually does not seem to be the appropriate description of Roof’s act. His attack was certainly connected to a higher ideology of racism and white supremacy, even though there was no link with an actual right-wing terrorist *group*. It is true that labelling some violent acts carried out by for example criminal youth gangs as right-wing extremism gives it an overly strong political and ideological emphasis, but that does not mean that there are no right-wing terrorist groups to be designated. Many right-wing hate crimes lack strong political affiliations or ideological commitments, and

⁶⁷ Simi, ‘Why Study White Supremacist Terror?’, 253

⁶⁸ Kallis et al., *Violent radicalisation & Far-right extremism in Europe*, 22.

⁶⁹ Tore Bjørgo, *Terror from the extreme right* (New York 1995) 2.

⁷⁰ Jesse J. Norris, ‘Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters’, *54 Harvard Journal on Legislation* 259 (2017) 54, 259-299, here 265-266.

could therefore not be designated as terrorism, but once a “hate crime” is planned and part of a sustained effort, it should be labelled as terrorism. According to Deloughery et al., a terrorist act can be conceptually thought of as an “upward crime”, meaning that the perpetrators come from a lower social standing than the victim. This is in contrast with a hate crime, that more often knows the perpetrator as a member of the majority or powerful group in society: committing a “downward offense”.⁷¹ In this conception of hate crime versus terrorism, violent attacks in the name of right-wing white supremacy ideology is a downward offense, which would make it a hate crime, more than an act of terror. However, the categories of hate crime and terrorism can certainly overlap. This overlap often results in terrorist acts not being labelled as terrorism, but as hate crime instead.

A final reason for the general underestimation of right-wing terrorism is the fact that the lethality does not seem to be as high as other types of terrorist groups. The graph below, assembled by START (Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland), shows that the percentage of the death toll in the United States as result of right-wing terrorism is significantly lower than religious terrorism. The graph on *death toll* shows that religious terrorism takes up almost the whole graph in the 2000s. However, the percentage religious terrorism has in the first graph on *terror attacks* is not that high in the 2000s. This is explained by the event of 9/11 alone, which was one extreme attack with many casualties, influencing the general statistics. However, right-wing terrorism takes a constant part in terrorist attacks of the past decades. For that reason only, it would merit more attention in the field of terrorism studies. In the graphs below, the percentages in every time era sum up to a higher percentage than 100%. This is because some terror attacks also overlap and have multiple ideological backgrounds. For example, some Christian militant anti-abortion terrorists can be labelled as right-wing and religious at the same time.

The frequency and lethality of right-wing terrorism have increased in the 1990s (the Oklahoma City bombing explains that peak). Right-wing terrorism has always made up a constant and substantial portion of the total number of terrorist attacks by ideological background.

⁷¹ Kathleen Deloughery, Ryan King and Victor Asal, ‘Close cousins or distant relatives? The relationship between terrorism and hate crime’, *Crime & Delinquency* 58 (2012) 5, 663-688, here 665.

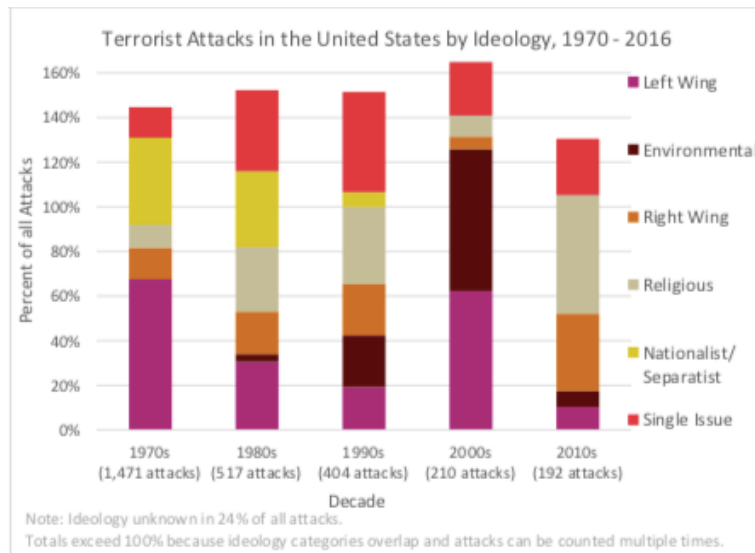


Figure 3: Percentages of terrorist attacks classified by ideological background

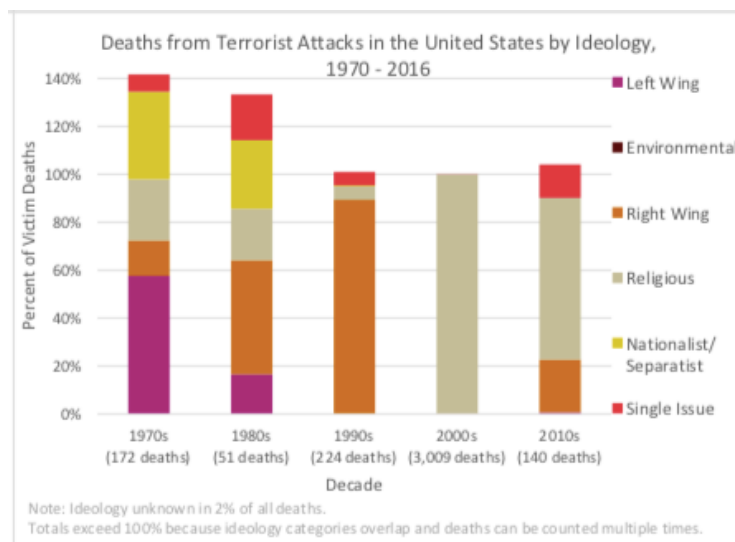


Figure 4: Percentages of deaths from terrorist attacks classified by ideological background⁷²

At the end of the overview article by Blee and Creasap, they call for more integration of insights from the field of terrorism and religion studies, when researching the radical right. There is a growing tendency of right-wing groups to adopt the organization, goals and strategies that are commonly associated with terrorism, but studies of right-wing groups make little use of findings and concepts of terrorism studies.⁷³ This is one of the aims of the current study.

3.3 Applying the sacred values approach to right-wing terrorism

The fact that there seems to be an underestimation and even neglect in researching right-wing terrorism is one of the reasons a right-wing extremist terrorist group was chosen to apply the

⁷² START, *Ideological Motivations of terrorism in the United States, 1970-2016* (Maryland 2017).

⁷³ Blee and Creasap, 'Conservative and Right-Wing movements', 280.

sacred values approach to. It can be clarifying to compare a right-wing terrorist group to an Islamic terrorist group in the search for patterns in different types of terrorist groups. Also, this type of terrorism seems to be on the rise in countries like the United States but also in European countries.⁷⁴ In the US, it has been a constant factor in domestic terrorism for a long time, but a rise has been detected since the election of President Obama in 2008, and even more so since the election of President Trump.⁷⁵ In European countries, right-wing extremism is also on the rise. Some regard it as a reaction to jihadist terror attacks in big European cities, but it is also seen as a reaction to the arrival of refugees from the Middle East and African countries. The fear for immigrants, Islam and terror attacks in multiple European countries contributed to the growth of extreme-right sentiments and groups in various European countries. The accompanying violence carried out by these groups to make victims and to terrify people make some of these right-wing groups more of a terrorist nature than just hate groups. The Dutch national coordinator of terrorism therefore deems more attention for the rise of right-wing extremists in the field of terrorism studies necessary.⁷⁶ Also in the UK, right-wing extremism seems to gain attention within counterterrorism programs, where it has been said that “almost one-third of all referral to an anti-extremism program is for people feared to have extreme rightwing views that could turn into violence”.⁷⁷

According to the hate-watch platform Southern Poverty Law Center: “Groups like the National Alliance have had a direct and catastrophic influence on some of the most violent lone-wolf attacks in the U.K. and the European continent over the past few years.”⁷⁸ This includes the case of Thomas Mair, which will be discussed later on in the chapter.

The aim of the remains of this chapter is to set out clearly what the sacred values and practices of right-wing ideology and terrorists are (with the help of the framework set out in chapter 2, see figure below). The sacred values will be extracted from the primary sources of the group National Alliance (Turner Diaries and other NA primary sources). Then the practices of the

⁷⁴ Clingendael, ‘Terrorisme monitor 2017’, via <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2017/monitor2017/terrorisme/> and also: START, ‘Proportion of terrorist attacks by religious and right-wing extremists on the rise in the United States’ 2 November 2017, via <http://www.start.umd.edu/news/proportion-terrorist-attacks-religious-and-right-wing-extremists-rise-united-states>

⁷⁵ Guus Valk, ‘Het terrorisme in de VS komt van rechts, niet van buiten’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 24 June 2015.

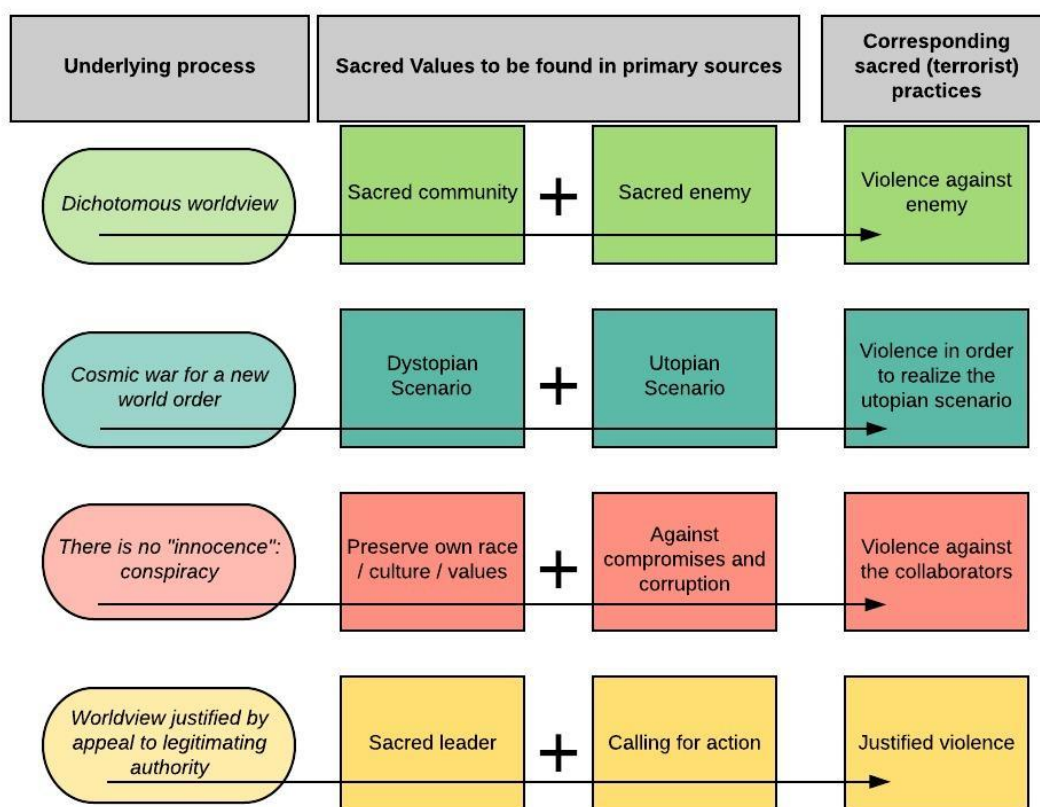
⁷⁶ NCTV, *Nationale contraterorismestrategie 2016-2020* (Den Haag 2016)

⁷⁷ Vicram Dodd et al., ‘Rightwing extremists make up nearly a third of terror referrals’, *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/20/rightwing-extremists-make-up-nearly-third-of-prevent-referrals> (18 April 2018)

⁷⁸ Heidi Beirick, ‘Thomas Mair, Brexit and US-UK neo-Nazi connection’, *SPL Center*, 21 June 2016, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/06/21/thomas-mair-brexit-and-us-uk-neo-nazi-connection> (18 April 2018).

terrorists (Thomas Mair and Dylann Roof) will be discussed to see how sacred values and practices are related.

Figure 5. The framework with which the sacred values will be extracted from the sources



3.3.1 The Turner diaries and its sacred values

Influencing multiple right-extremist terror attacks⁷⁹, this 1978 novel by William Pierce (the founder of National Alliance) can be seen as a landmark within right-wing ideology. This book has been tied to at least 200 murders in at least 40 terrorist attacks and hate crimes, since its release in 1978 and this influence continues in the present day.⁸⁰ It is written under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald. The book is a window story: a future historian looks back on “the Great Revolution” by reflecting upon his discovery of *the Turner Diaries*, with key figure Earl Turner. This Great Revolution refers to the (fictional) time that the white race was saved in its time of greatest peril. In the world of Turner’s diary, “The Organization” (the fictional

⁷⁹ From Timothy McVeigh to David Copeland. According to J.M. Berger, ‘The Turner Legacy: the Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism’s Deadly Bible’, *ICCT: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, 7 (2016) 8, 1-49.

⁸⁰ Berger, J.M. ‘The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism’s Deadly Bible’, *ICCT Research Paper*, 7 (2016) 8, 1-49, here 3.

racist right-wing terror group to which Turner belongs to) is rebelling against “the System” (government and para-governmental minority organizations). Turner is convinced of the fact that the government is controlled by a Jewish conspiracy where also blacks and other minorities are getting more and more important positions of power. The Organization is, according to Turner, the only group that is actually resisting the threat to the white race by doing more than the “talkers” who do not act at all. The Organization’s resistance is obviously violent, and the planning of the bombings of for example FBI buildings and the public hangings of enemies are described in a very detailed manner. After these initial bomb attacks, the Organization changes its tactics in becoming underground cell-units. Their new goal is assassinating law enforcement officials and politicians with shotguns and axes. The Organizations targets mostly non-white persons in power, but it eventually is also directed towards “white collaborators”: the people that are traitors to the white race by “collaborating” with non-whites. In the book, Turner gets imprisoned at some point, but his compatriots break him out. Towards the end, the Organization even seizes a significant amount of territory in California, which becomes ethnically cleansed: non-whites are killed or “evacuated”.⁸¹

At the end of the book, the fictional historian reflects upon the revolution by the Organization and the diary of Earl Turner. The historian says that the struggle of the Organization in the 1980s and Earl Turner's role herein is a prelude to the turning point for the Organization in 1999, when the Organization definitely takes control over the United States and realizes a total white enclave. By the dawn of 2000, the entire world is in the hands of the Organization, after taking some additional undertakings (nuclear bombings) to exterminate all non-whites on the planet.

The genre of the book is *dystopian fiction*, which are stories that deal with the corruption of human society and a future idea about how there should be a turn in this corrupted world.⁸² This genre contributes to the extreme worldview and the associated call to (violent) action.

Copies of *the Turner Diaries* have been found in possession of many perpetrators of hate crimes and terrorists.⁸³ For example, Timothy McVeigh and the National Socialist Underground in Germany.⁸⁴ Therefore, it is considered a primary source for analyzing the sacred values of right-wing terrorists. To these sacred values will be turned now. In text they are to be recognized by their underlinement.

⁸¹ Ibid., 12.

⁸² Ibid., 16.

⁸³ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 31.

Sacred community versus sacred enemy (dichotomous worldview)

In the *Turner Diaries*, a clear image is painted in which a dichotomous worldview is entailed, including a sacred community and a sacred enemy. The obvious sacred value number one in the *Turner Diaries* would be: the white race is the best race and any person with another skin color is threatening this superior race. Thus, people with a white skin form the sacred community, but they should also be part of the Organization that is fighting the racial threat. Violence against non-whites is allowed and encouraged. Interestingly enough, the sacred enemies are not only the non-white or Jewish people, but also the people that are seen as collaborators, i.e. white people that do not resist against the racial threat (this would include the government). The sacred community are those that adhere to Aryan values and they are considered as sacred because they should live in their own white living space, as is happening in the book. First there are some white enclaves in certain parts of the US; eventually the white enclave takes over the whole world. The people that are part of the Organization are also regarded as the best and highest moral people. It is almost as if they feel like “the chosen people”:

“It is really only a minority of a minority which led our race out of the jungle and along the first few steps toward true civilization. We owe everything to those few of our ancestors who had both the sensitivity to *feel* what needed doing and the ability to do it. (...) The Organization has selected from the great mass of humanity those of our present generation who possess this rare combination. Now we must do whatever is necessary to prevail.”⁸⁵

All the white people that are not joining the revolution of the Organization are portrayed as lazy people who do not have this great combination of sensitivity and ability. This is a typical way of peer pressure against members of the same (race) group. At some point in the book, Turner sorrows that the Organization has failed to convince the great bulk of white Americans to join their revolution. He had counted on a positive, imitative response to their propaganda of the deed, but for the most part: “the bastards just sat on their asses”.⁸⁶ By portraying the bulk of white Americans as lazy and ignorant of the threat their race is under, the author is also appealing to the white reader of the book. This is a classic dichotomous worldview with the idea of: you are either with us or against us.

Fighting for a sacred utopian scenario (involved in a cosmic war)

The next step for this dichotomous worldview is the perception of being involved in a cosmic war, to prevent a dystopian scenario from happening. While reading *The Turner Diaries*, it

⁸⁵ Andrew Macdonald [William Pierce], *The Turner Diaries* (Fort Lee 1978), 87.

⁸⁶ Macdonald, 100.

becomes clear that Earl Turner and his Organization are involved in some sort of an ideological cosmic war. Active participation is required in creating the utopian scenario. There is a clear fear of a dystopian *racial* future. The white race is threatened with extinction due to miscegenation (for example racially mixed couples having children). The threat of other races mixing up with the white race is part of this dystopian scenario, which by all means should be prevented.

“If the Organization fails in its task now, *everything* will be lost – our history, our heritage, all the blood and sacrifices and upward striving of countless thousands of years. The Enemy we are fighting fully intends to destroy the racial basis of our existence.”⁸⁷

Turner describes how it is necessary for the Organization to *protect* and *restore* society as it was and that since the beginning of the abolition of slavery and apartheid rules, the white race came under threat. “Why didn’t we rebel 35 years ago, when they took our schools away from us and began converting them into racially mixed jungles?”⁸⁸

It is not a matter of restoring sacred values from before: it is a matter of imposing the only right values on to the rest of the world. The sacred values of the Organization are in so far threatened (there is an actual perceived war) that the only way out seems that the whole world should follow their values. This becomes very clear in the following quote from the book:

“We are forging the nucleus of a new society, a whole new civilization, which will rise from the ashes of the old. And it is because our new civilization will be based on an entirely different worldview than the present one that it can only replace the other in a revolutionary manner. There is no way a society based on Aryan values and an Aryan outlook can evolve peacefully from a society which has succumbed to Jewish spiritual corruption. Thus, our present struggle is unavoidable, completely aside from the fact that it was forced on us by the System and was not of our choosing.”⁸⁹

The aim of the Organization is to forge a new society based on Aryan values and at this point, it does not seem this could evolve in a peaceful manner. The struggle is *unavoidable*, as is imposing the Organization’s sacred values on to the rest of the world. This matches Kruglanski et al. ’s idea of the motivating power of ideology: it uncovers a discrepancy from an ideal state and offers a means of removing the discrepancy through action.⁹⁰ An enemy is established (blacks, Jews and white collaborators) and they should be fought in order to win the cosmic war. Violence against this enemy is definitely allowed as a means to moving toward the ideal state or utopian scenario.

⁸⁷ Macdonald, *The Turner Diaries*, 34.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 33.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 111.

⁹⁰ Kruglanski et al., ‘Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers: Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance’, *Political Psychology*, 30 (2009) 3, 333.

Preserving own sacred values: against compromises, corruption and the collaborators

In the battle of preventing the dystopian scenario from happening, a revolution needs to be waged. According to Turner, the main character of the book, all white people have a moral duty of preventing this dystopian racial scenario and have an obligation to restore the sacred values of the white race and remove the threat of non-whites. This means that all white people that do not share this idea of revolution are “spineless” and “eager to please the oppressors”, in other words: they are collaborators.⁹¹ According to Turner, they are the people that “just sit around watching TV and letting the world go by when so much needs to be done. It’s a difference of human quality.”⁹² After the Organization carried out an attack on the FBI’s national headquarters building, resulting in around 700 casualties, Turner justifies the many deaths by saying:

“[T]here is no way we can destroy the System without hurting many thousands of innocent people – no way. It is a cancer too deeply rooted in our flesh. And if we don’t destroy the System before it destroys us – if we don’t cut this cancer out of our living flesh – our whole race will die.”⁹³

Thus, all whites have the moral obligation to be actively involved in preserving the own race. Engaged white readers of the book should feel the critique of cowardice and complacency. When a white person does not participate in this battle, he or she can be regarded as a *race-criminal*.

Sacred leader and legitimizing authority

The Turner Diaries is very much a book of propaganda. It sparks the reader to see him or herself as part of this group and he or she might share the vision of the sacred values that are being portrayed as under threat. According to Berger, the book resonates most dangerously with people who have reached the self-critique stage of radicalization.⁹⁴ No wonder that this book has sparked many lone wolves and National Alliance related terrorists to commit an attack.

Concluding on *the Turner Diaries*, it is a book where sacred values of the white race, the racist Organization and the ideological motivations for carrying out violent attacks are clearly set out. It is a straight call to action. The different relations to these sacred values put forward in the framework are all to be found in the book. This makes the book a piece of outright propaganda for people who find themselves already in the right-wing spectrum of political convictions. It

⁹¹ Ibid, 79.

⁹² Ibid, 86.

⁹³ Ibid, 42.

⁹⁴ Berger, ‘The Turner Legacy’, 40.

is probably because of this reason, that on the front of the book it says in red letters: “THIS BOOK CONTAINS RACIST PROPAGANDA. THE FBI SAID IT WAS THE BLUEPRINT FOR THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING. MANY WOULD LIKE IT BANNED. IT IS BEING PUBLISHED TO ALERT AND WARN AMERICA.”

The book is thus considered as a dangerous book, calling to terrorist action, but it is still printed to create awareness around people who still support these ideas.

3.3.2 National Alliance and its sacred values

“We believe that no multi-racial society can be a truly healthy society, and no government which is not wholly responsible to a single racial entity can be a good government. America’s present deterioration stems from her loss of racial homogeneity and racial consciousness, and from the consequent alienation of most of our fellow citizens. (...) We believe that our people must be united by the common goal of building a better race.”⁹⁵

This quote is from the National Alliance current website and it is in a nutshell what the group stands for: eradication of all other races and the creation of racial homogeneity resulting in an all-white homeland. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), National Alliance has been for a long time the most dangerous and well-organized neo-Nazi group. The US-based group was founded in 1970 by William Pierce, as National Youth Alliance, that in 1974 officially became the National Alliance. Pierce would lead the group until his sudden death in 2002. Under Pierce, the group “flourished”: according to Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the National Alliance was during that time the strongest white supremacist presence and largest neo-Nazi group in the United States.⁹⁶ After Pierce’s death, the leadership was taken over by Erich Gliebe, which resulted in a decline of the group activity and connection. According to ADL, this is also because of lack of charisma and leadership and inability to attract new members. However, the influence of the National Alliance on the right-extremist thinkers and groups all over the world has been enormous and still is.

National Alliance spreads its message and ideology through different canals and activities (from where the sacred values will be extracted). First, there is the National Vanguard Magazine, the NA’s publishing imprint which until 1978 was a tabloid titled “Attack!”.⁹⁷ Now it is an online platform with multiple publications and articles about Nazi literature, anti-Semitic ideas and creating awareness about the problem of “the systematic destruction of human biological and cultural diversity”.

⁹⁵ National Alliance, ‘What we believe’, <https://natall.com/about/what-we-believe/> (12 May 2018).

⁹⁶ Anti-Defamation League, ‘National Alliance: A Backgrounder’, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/national-alliance-a-backgrounder> (12 May 2018)

⁹⁷ Articles of the magazine are online to be found on <https://nationalvanguard.org/>

Second, as many white supremacist neo-Nazi groups have, the NA has a white power music company: *Resistance Records*. The music played on this (internet)station is coined as “hatecore”: loud and fast music, like hardcore, with lyrics that preach hatred, violence and white supremacy. Founder William Pierce has said that the use of music as a canal was very tactical in attracting new members. Because of the racist, anti-Semitic and anti-government messages that the hate music entails it is effectively used to attract troubled youths. The themes of chaos and rebellion, themes that are very present within hatecore, are appealing for a new generation of haters, which was the exact goal of Pierce in finding new members to join the National Alliance.⁹⁸ Next to the music, there is also an online 24/7 radio station, called *American Dissident Voices*, on which the same topics as on the platform of the National Vanguard are discussed.

A third activity of committed group members that want to spread the message is organizing conferences and spreading flyers and information on different events, for example gun shows. The National Alliance hosted a huge Holocaust denial event in 2007, which hosted well-known white supremacist, anti-Semitic publishers and professors from all over the world.

These types of activities make clear that National Alliance is a group that spreads hate, especially towards non-white minorities. The question remains, however, whether it can be seen as a terrorist group. This links back to the fine line between hate groups and terrorist groups that was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The National Alliance can without a doubt be labelled as a hate group: members carry out downward offenses (majority versus minority) and the group advocates and practices hatred towards groups specifically because of their race or ethnicity.⁹⁹ If National Alliance took the organized step to violence, it would definitely be a terrorist group as well. However, National Alliance has in its history never been recognized as a terrorist group, unlike for example its British sister group “National Action”, which has been designated as terror group since December 2016.¹⁰⁰ The reason why National Alliance has not been officially designated as a terrorist group is because it does not explicitly encourage committing terror attacks or carrying out violent crimes in the name of the ideology. Nonetheless, the group certainly does not renounce violence either. In an essay on their website, it is stated that the NA would do “whatever is necessary to achieve a white living space” and

⁹⁸ Anti-Defamation League, ‘Deafening Hate: The revival of resistance records’ (New York 2012), <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/combating-hate/Deafening-Hate-The-Revival-of-Resistance-Records.pdf>

⁹⁹ This is part of the FBI definition of a hate group: <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>

¹⁰⁰ Jessica Elgot, ‘Neo-nazi group National Action banned by UK home security’, *The Guardian*, 12 December 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/12/neo-nazi-group-national-action-banned-by-uk-home-secretary> (23 April 2018)

that it would not be deterred by any “temporary unpleasantness”.¹⁰¹ On the website of the NA, there is nowhere to be found that violence is renounced, even though the ideology does seem to inspire people to commit violent attacks. It is undeniable that the NA ideology inspired people to commit violent attacks, most famously Timothy McVeigh, who read the earlier mentioned *Turner Diaries*, before he committed a bomb attack in Oklahoma City in 1995, leaving 168 people dead. There are also some other reported violent crimes committed by NA members. In March 2011, an NA member was arrested for placing a deadly explosive device along a Martin Luther King Day parade in Washington. More members were caught in trying to build bombs in the years before. And finally, the assassinator of Jo Cox (Thomas Mair) is alleged to have ties to National Alliance as well, to whom is turned in paragraph 3.4.1. It is in any way clear that the NA ideology inspires terrorists to commit attacks and it does not try to discourage or renounce it.

In an article written by William Pierce in 1998, he writes about the importance of loyalty to an ideology, more than the loyalty towards your “buddies”, meaning the other members of the group. He says that “it would behove every member to re-read the *Membership Handbook* now”, because this membership handbook is not merely a theoretical matter: “it is something which affects us whenever we engage in any activity with other members, and every day we can see the destructive consequences of ignoring it”.¹⁰² This membership handbook is therefore chosen as subject to analysis in search of sacred values of the National Alliance. It is to be found on www.natall.com.

Members of the National Alliance have a very clear view of what the world should look like and what is wrong with it now. *The Turner Diaries* could hide in the fact that it is a fictional book, so some might think it should not be taken too seriously in the research of right-wing extremism. However, the ideological statements of “what we believe” of the National Alliance is rather striking. This is actually a real-life *Turner Diaries* ideology, and unfortunately, there is no fiction to be found on their website. This should not surprise too much since the author of the *Turner Diaries* is also the founder of National Alliance, but it still is striking to see how fiction becomes a reality on the NA website. NA members see many threats to their sacred values. The world, society and government are far away from how they are supposed to be. They hold values that are core or essential to their identities and beliefs, including

¹⁰¹ Mark Potok, ‘From Canada with Love’, *SPL Center*, 19 August 2014, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2014/canada-love> (26 April 2018)

¹⁰² William L. Pierce, ‘Dr William Pierce on The Meaning and Importance of Loyalty’, *National Vanguard*, 1997, <https://nationalvanguard.org/2015/04/dr-pierce-on-the-meaning-and-importance-of-loyalty/> (16 May 2018)

unquestionable claims over society, i.e. their sacred values. When values are perceived as sacred, they become existential struggles, which contributes to their non-negotiability and the willingness to fight or kill for it. The sacred values are the following:

Sacred community versus sacred enemy (dichotomous worldview)

In the “about us” on their website, the NA states: “The European race is uniquely beautiful and creative. It is imperative that we survive and progress”. Members of NA have sincere worries that the white race is threatened because of racial mixing. In order to have a safe, sacred community, a “white living space” is necessary, so that there is no interference from the sacred enemy. This is illustrated by pictures on the website, to be seen below: this resembles the idea of the white enclave in the US, described at the beginning of the *Turner Diaries*.



Figure 6. Picture on the NA website, in the statement 'What is the National Alliance?'

The sacred values that can be found on the NA website are more grounded in a historical “evolvment of the white race”. It is said that the races vary today in their capabilities to build and to sustain a civilized society. They basically say: white people have evolved in the best way and that is why it should be protected, it is the sacred race. National Alliance member should accept their responsibilities as Aryan men and women who strive for the advancement of their race, as it is the most evolved and civilized race. In their perception, the Aryan values of white people are in no way reconcilable with non-white values, resulting in a dichotomous worldview.

Utopian versus dystopian scenario (involved in cosmic war)

On the National Alliance website, a very concrete picture of the utopian scenario for which NA is striving is painted. It contains of five very concrete essentials for the new world “after our

enemies have been vanquished, the strife of revolution has subsided, and the spiritual and physical debris of this era has been cleared away”.¹⁰³ The NA thus seems to be involved in a cosmic war as well, and it is speaking in matters of a dystopian world that they are living in right now. They speak of an old world (the current world) versus the new world, a world that does contain the essential values that the NA is striving for. An essential part would be a white living space: “After the sickness of “multiculturalism,” which is destroying America, Britain, and every other Aryan nation in which it is being promoted, has been swept away, we must again have a racially clean area of the earth for the further development of our people.” The NA speaks of a long-term demographic trend towards a darker world, caused by disastrous policies of the last century. Restoring the white living spaces is not enough: it should be actively reversed.

Do everything to preserve own sacred values: no room for compromises and collaborators

The banning out of the sickness of multiculturalism also points to repelling any compromises and people that advance or promote racial mixing (collaborators). That is why the NA also demands “a responsible government”, meaning: “It must be structured and organized in a way suited to its purpose of safeguarding and advancing the race, and it must be as immune to corruption and subversion as human genius can make it.” The non-Aryan influence should be kept out as much as possible. An Aryan society “should provide the people with a sense of shared heritage and shared destiny.” Music, art, architecture, literature, philosophy and scholarship should all be produced by white people. “It means pop music without rap overtones and art galleries without Jewish-inspired ugliness and sickness”.¹⁰⁴ Non-white faces in films are only appropriate in the context of historical lessons. It could be “archival newsreels, foreign news, or scientific footage – or a historical drama about the bad, old days.”¹⁰⁵ The most fundamental principal underlying for the government must be to serve the needs of the race and to defend the race from its enemies. The purpose should be to make the race healthy and strong again. There are no innocent people and there is much conspiracy against people who would be willing to give in some of the sacred white values: they are collaborators. The ultimate goal of the NA is to “regain control of our governments”, meaning attainment of governmental power. It is said on their website:

¹⁰³ National Alliance, ‘What is the National Alliance’, <https://natall.com/about/what-is-the-national-alliance/> (4 May 2018)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

“unfortunately, since the end of the Second World War, no White government has been under the control of White men with our values and our ideology. White governments everywhere are terminally corrupt, led by collaborators with the Jews. No solution to our demographic problem can be implemented – and, therefore, no future for our race can be secured – until we regain control of our governments.”

Thus, they see corruption and collaborators everywhere until NA has governmental power. This is accompanied by conspiracy theories and seeing the enemy everywhere.

Sacred leader calling for action (legitimizing authority)

The NA does not necessarily promote the use of violence in reaching its goals. It does however not explicitly renounce violence either. The late leader of the NA, William Pierce, who has been the most important figure within the group explained in a lecture the NA ideas, first broadcasted on *American Dissident Voices*, but now to be found on YouTube. In this lecture he concludes with an appeal for action.¹⁰⁶ He is very explicit in this video about how the current world, society and government needs to change. He admits that at this point in time it is not possible to begin building a new race-based educational system, economy or government. But what we can do at this time is: “Communicate, educate and inspire. We catch people’s attention, give them information they wouldn’t have otherwise and inspire them to do something about it.” Thus, Pierce sees the NA and its ideas as an inspiration for “doing something about it”, but it remains unclear *how* you can actually do something about it. It is left open for own interpretation. In an article by Pierce in the *National Vanguard*, he states “we intend to do something about these things [what Jews and collaborators are doing to our world and our people], *even if we have to do it the Timothy McVeigh’s way*”.¹⁰⁷ He ends the video by saying:

“Support us, work with us, help us continue to grow stronger and more effective. So that eventually the day will come when we will be able to begin implementing our plans for a new society, a new world for our people. Everything depends on everything.”

This quote is a straight call to join the struggle and subsequently “do something” about the dystopian state the world is in now. The last words are very insisting and compelling.

3.4 Right-wing terrorist attacks: sacred practices

Now that the right-wing extremist sacred values have been extracted, it can be related to corresponding sacred practices. How do these sacred values resonate in terrorist practices? How

¹⁰⁶ ‘Dr. William Luther Pierce – America is a changing country’ via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRay4Ee_ORc

¹⁰⁷ William Pierce, ‘The Evil Among Us’, *National Vanguard*, <https://nationalvanguard.org/2017/03/the-evil-among-us/> (5 May 2018). Italics are mine.

do they see their practice of committing a terrorist attack as a way to restore, avenge or pursue their sacred values?

3.4.1 Thomas Mair

In the week of the referendum on Brexit, June 2016, British Labour Member of Parliament Jo Cox was campaigning for a remain vote in a library in Birstall, West-Yorkshire. Outside of the library, 52-year old Thomas Mair was waiting for her and as soon as Cox appeared, he immediately started shooting and brutally stabbing her. Cox died at the scene. During his attack, Mair uttered phrases like “This is for Britain” and “Britain first!”. Mair was sentenced to prison for the rest of his life, because of the “exceptional high seriousness” of the crime. Judge Wilkie said in his verdict: “this murder was done for the purpose of advancing a political, racial and ideological cause namely that of violent white supremacism and exclusive nationalism most associated with Nazism and its modern forms”.¹⁰⁸

Labour member Jo Cox was known to be a passionate politician and parliament member. She was a strong defender of British membership of the European Union and also advocating a more lenient policy on allowing refugees into the UK. Also, she was critical of British foreign policy in the Middle East and said that more efforts should be made in ending the conflict in Syria. Finally, she was an advocate for diversity and proud to see that the Labour party constituency was such a diverse and still united group, including people from different ethnic and social backgrounds.¹⁰⁹

The characteristics of Cox’ political affiliations make it all the more clear why Thomas Mair decided to choose her as his victim in his battle against “traitors”, or: white people who betray their race, i.e. “collaborators”. After police investigation in his house, it appeared that Mair had much right-wing extremist literature and Nazi memorabilia, that fed his sentiments on that the white race was facing an existential threat. He was active on right-wing extremist internet fora and had subscriptions on far-right magazines, like S.A. Patriot, a South-African magazine which is part of a pro-apartheid group. Also, the Southern Poverty Law Centre found out about his record of purchased literature and manuals from the National Alliance and its bookstore: National Vanguard Books, already in 1999. The manual included instructions on how to build a pistol and instructions on the use of chemistry of powder and explosives.¹¹⁰ Mair had a great

¹⁰⁸Judiciary of England and Wales, ‘Sentencing remarks of Mr Justice Wilkie’, (2016), <https://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/sentencing-remarks-r-v-thomas-mair.pdf>

¹⁰⁹Julia Langdon, ‘Jo Cox obituary’, *The Guardian*, (version 16 June 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/jo-cox-obituary> (7 May 2018).

¹¹⁰ Hatewatch Staff (Southern Poverty Law Centre), ‘Alleged killer British MP was a longtime supporter of the neo-Nazi National Alliance’, (version 16 June 2016), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/06/16/alleged-killer-british-mp-was-longtime-supporter-neo-nazi-national-alliance>, (May 6th 2018)

obsession with white people whom he condemned in his writings as “the collaborators”. When he was asked to state his name in court, he said “Death to traitors, freedom for Britain”.¹¹¹ There has been found substantial evidence in Mair’s home that pointed towards a planned killing of Cox for a political and ideological cause. At his house, many literature was found, but also cut out newspaper articles on far-right extremists like Anders Breivik. Decades before his attack, he developed an interest in right-wing extremist ideology and he ordered multiple magazines from the National Vanguard. He spent hundreds of dollars on purchases on the National Alliance website.¹¹² In the courtroom, it became clear how he searched on a public library computer for white supremacists, Nazis and public shootings, and also the day before the attack he consulted Jo Cox her Wikipedia page.

05/13/99

NATIONAL VANGUARD BOOKS
Post Office Box 330
HILLSBORO, WV 24946

PACKING SLIP

THOMAS MAIR 12/99
LOWOOD LN, BATLEY
WEST YORKSHIRE, WF17 9DL
ENGLAND UK, 2

513

NT	TITLE	LOC	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
1	CHEMISTRY OF POWDER & EXPLOSIVES	11-4	\$12.95	\$12.95
1	IMPROVISED MUNITIONS HANDBOOK	11-5	\$9.95	\$9.95
1	INCENDIARIES	12-7	\$5.95	\$5.95
1	FREE SPEECH - 6 BACK ISSUES		\$6.75	\$6.75
1	ICH KAMPFE	6-3	\$19.95	\$19.95
1	FLASHPOINT	6-5	\$7.95	\$7.95
1			\$4.40	\$4.40
				\$68.10
			Postage & Handling	\$7.00
			Total Cost	\$75.10
			Amount Remitted	\$75.10
			Balance Due	\$0.00

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ORDER

Figure 7: Receipt of order by Mair. Notice the date on the top: 13 May 1999.¹¹³

It remains a mystery why it took him so much time to actually carry out the assassination since he already ordered information on how to build his own arms in 1999. However, it is clear that he planned this attack and that it is connected to a right-wing, white-supremacist, neo-Nazi ideology. Mair had a clear connection with the earlier described group National Alliance. In that way, his murder fits many definitions of terrorism. He carried out an assassination in order to advance his ideology. His attack was on a public representative with the intention of terrorizing all that she and others like her represented.

¹¹¹ Robert Booth et al., ‘Jo Cox murder suspect tells court his name is ‘death to traitors, freedom for Britain’, (version 18 June 2016), *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/18/thomas-mair-charged-with-of-mp-jo-cox> (15 May 2018).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

By murdering Jo Cox, Thomas Mair acted upon his sacred value of wanting to preserve his own culture and race and thereby having collaborators as a sacred enemy, which resulted in violence against the collaborators. Jo Cox was a collaborator because she was an advocate of multiculturalism and did not appear to “put Britain first”, as Mair demanded. The violence against collaborators is for him a sacred practice because according to him, collaborators cause a racial threat and this is for Mair unacceptable. Murdering a collaborator is thus a way of restoring his sacred value of protecting the white race.

3.4.2 Dylann Roof

On June 17th, 2015, 21-year old Dylann Roof opened fire on African-American churchgoers at a Methodist African American church in Charleston, South Carolina. He killed nine people, one of them being the church pastor. The Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church is founded already more than 200 years ago, by former slaves. This makes the church one of the oldest churches in southern United States. The church is famous for its history as a community organization, committed to civil and human rights. This was especially the case in the 1960s when the racial struggle was rampant. The church in Charleston was thus a very symbolic place for the African American community, making Roof’s choice to attack it even more loaded with symbolism. Roof himself stated in his FBI hearing that he chose the city of Charleston because it used to have the highest ratio black people to white people.¹¹⁴ Roof was arrested right away and pledged guilt to his deeds in a hearing right after. From his (court) hearings, it does not appear that Roof feels any remorse at all for his deeds. He has stated multiple times that he “had to do it. Because somebody had to do something”.¹¹⁵

Roof has been charged with hate crime and he is awaiting his death sentence in jail at the moment.¹¹⁶ As pointed out earlier in this chapter, there are also scholars that claim this should definitely be regarded as domestic terrorism.¹¹⁷ His attack was connected to a higher ideology of racism and white supremacy, even though there was no link with an actual right-wing terrorist group, like National Alliance. Roof is therefore generally seen as a lone wolf, meaning

¹¹⁴ ‘Dylann Roof full confession tape with caption’, *Charleston Church Massacre* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwlSWFvd0U0>. [00.17.00]

¹¹⁵ Matt Zapotosky, ‘Charleston church shooter: ‘I would like to make it crystal clear, I did not regret what I did’, version 4 January 2017 *The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/charleston-church-shooter-i-would-like-to-make-it-crystal-clear-i-do-not-regret-what-i-did/2017/01/04/05b0061e-d1da-11e6-a783-cd3fa950f2fd_story.html?utm_term=.ce0cdc19c7e9 (20 June 2018)

¹¹⁶ The Guardian, ‘Charleston church shooter Dylann Roof pleads guilty to state murder charges’, version 10 April 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/apr/10/charleston-church-shooter-dylann-roof-pleads-guilty-murder-charges> (20 June 2018).

¹¹⁷ Jesse J. Norris, ‘Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters’, *54 Harvard Journal on Legislation* 259 (2017) 54, 259-299

that he radicalized in his ideas alone and acted individually upon them. There are sources that claim Roof has read pages of the *Turner Diaries*, but this remains a suspicion. He has said himself that he got all his information on the topics of race and whites being under threat from the internet: ‘It’s all pretty much on the Internet you know, all the information is there for you’.¹¹⁸ The motivations for his attack are clear because Roof has been open about it in his confessions and he also uploaded a testament on the internet, called ‘The last Rhodesian’, in which he states why he did what he did.¹¹⁹ Also, his full confession tape of two hours in front of the FBI, which was showed in his court hearing, is to be found on YouTube. These two sources are used in extracting Roof’s sacred values and they explain Roof’s perception that his act was the only fair response to his values.

Sacred community versus sacred enemy

His attack was a clear example of ‘violence against the enemy’, justified by his dichotomous worldview of sacred community versus sacred enemy. He deliberately went to an African American church, a historical church in Charleston and he only wanted to kill black people. Roof is a self-identified white supremacist. In his testament, he discusses different ethnicities or groups and explains why they are enemies of white people (or why they are not necessarily enemies, in the case of East-Asians). He discusses “blacks” the most extensively of all, then Jews and Hispanics and finally East-Asians and even patriots. He sees blacks as “the group that is the biggest problem for Americans”, and he clearly connects racial differences to behavior and intelligence.

“Anyone who thinks that White and black people look as different as we do on the outside, but are somehow magically the same on the inside, is delusional. How could our faces, skin, hair, and body structure all be different, but our brains be exactly the same? This is the nonsense we are led to believe.”¹²⁰

Roof sees blacks as substantially different from white people and he thinks that whites should be more “racially aware” of this. He thinks the white culture is the best culture, because according to him it has been adopted all over the world. In his testament, he says “I don’t deny that we are in fact superior” and that “niggers are stupid and violent”. The one bad thing about white people is that they are not racial aware enough and that they should realize that their race is under threat. There is one event that sparked Roof’s racial awareness, according to himself.

¹¹⁸ Dylann Roof full confession tape with caption’, *Charleston Church Massacre* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwlSWFvd0U0> [01.05.00]

¹¹⁹ To be found on: www.lastrhodesian.com/data/documents/rtf88.txt

¹²⁰ Dylann Roof, *The Last Rhodesian* (2015), 2.

He mentions this in both his testament and his confession towards the FBI. At some point, Roof read about the case of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American, who was shot by a neighborhood watch volunteer in 2012. This sparked much discussion in the media regarding white on innocent black-crime, but Roof was outraged with this: “why is the news blowing up the Trayvon Martin case while hundreds of these black on White murders got ignored?”¹²¹ He was obsessed with the fact that there is much crime and murder committed by black people, where white people are the innocent victim and that these cases never got any attention. This is to be related to the next type of sacred value that justifies the practice of violence in order to prevent a dystopian scenario from happening, discussed below.

Dystopian scenario: involved in a cosmic war

In the confession in which Roof explained why he carried out the attack, Roof stated the following:

“Well, I had to do it. Because, somebody had to do something. Because, you know... Black people are killing white people every day on the streets. They rape a hundred white women a day, that’s an FBI statistic from 2005. That is ten years ago. It might even be more today, who knows? It sounds unrealistic, but if you break it down it is two a state, it’s really not unrealistic at all. The fact of the matter is, what I did is so miniscule to what they’re doing to white people every day. All the time. Just because that it is not getting on the news, doesn’t mean it’s not happening. Everybody knows that the news is biased toward black people. We can pretend it’s not, but it is. I had to do it because nobody else was going to do it. Nobody else is brave enough to do anything about it.”¹²²

Roof describes here that he is simply striking back at black people because they are killing and raping white people every day. Therefore, he perceives the white race as being involved in a global war: his dichotomous worldview made the step to violence possible. He also deliberately targeted innocent people in a church, who are as he said, probably not criminal. But he did this because black criminals are also attacking white innocents. In his view, this is legitimate revenge. The dystopian scenario is thus that black people are committing many crimes and white people have to deal with that because blacks and whites are living amongst each other. Blacks living amongst whites is for him a dystopian scenario and he wants to return to the times of segregation (a utopian scenario):

“Segregation was not a bad thing. It was defensive measure. Segregation did not exist to hold back negroes. It existed to protect us from them. Not only did it protect us from having to interact with them, and from being physically harmed by them, but it protected us from being brought

¹²¹ Roof, *The Last Rhodesian*, 1.

¹²² Dylann Roof full confession tape with caption’, *Charleston Church Massacre*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwlSWFvd0U0> [00.13.45]

down to their level. Integration has done nothing but bring Whites down to the level of brute animals.”¹²³

Multiple times, Roof states he wants to reinstate segregation in the United States. This would make the living conditions for white people much more bearable. Segregation, which can be the outcome of a racial war first, is therefore his utopian scenario. He probably hoped to spark ideas on this by committing his attack. But he mainly just wanted to ask attention for the dystopian scenario in which white people are victims to black criminals every day. He actually stated in his confession that “Unfortunately, white people are now second-class citizens. We are inferior [to blacks].”¹²⁴ He thinks this because there is no attention for the crimes blacks are committing on whites. Fighting back is the only way out of this, in his view, wrongful inferior position.

Collaborators

Roof is not involved in violence aimed at the collaborators; he really only wants to target black people. He is very disappointed in the fact that other white people are not doing anything and sees this as an extra encouragement that he is the one that should be doing something. He does have some conspiracy ideas about black people having a privileged position in society, since he feels that their crime is not getting as much attention as white crime is. He thinks the news is biased towards black people. However, these conspiracy theories do, for Roof, not result in violence against collaborators. The same goes for his suspicion towards white people who are not “racially aware”; they for Roof, do not become part of his sacred enemy.

Legitimizing authority

Roof has radicalized on an individual level, thus he does not refer to a sacred leader that is calling for action. He acted upon the facts that were presented to him on the Internet, which became his sacred truths. Roof can be placed in a larger narrative of right-wing extremists and white supremacist thinking and information from this narrative became sacred to him, resulting in this violent attack. Although there are suspicions of him reading *The Turner Diaries*, there is no explicit link between him and the National Alliance, while it has not been ruled out either.¹²⁵

¹²³ Roof, *The Last Rhodesian*, 2.

¹²⁴ Dylann Roof full confession tape with caption’, *Charleston Church Massacre*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwlSWFvd0U0>

¹²⁵ Julian Kossof, ‘Charleston shooting: Did a trashy novel inspire Dylann Roof’s racist massacre?’, *International Business Times*, 19 June 2015, <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/charleston-shooting-did-trashy-novel-inspire-dylann-roofs-racist-massacre-1507019> (21 June 2018).

3.5 Concluding on right-wing sacred values and practices

In this chapter, sacred values were extracted from primary sources on three different levels: the ideology (*The Turner Diaries*), extreme group level (National Alliance) and terrorist practice level (Thomas Mair and Dylann Roof). On all of these levels, unquestionable, non-negotiable moral realities came forward and its underlying processes. The most important one being: the survival and progress of the white (but non-Jewish) race. White supremacists experience the white race as better than other races as an undeniable fact. While in *The Turner Diaries* this is simply put as a moral fact with little explanation for the reasons the author has for its views – it is rather a call to immediate violent action – the National Alliance does set out on its website why it has this view. They place the white race at the end of the evolution of mankind, it is the best evolved and civilized people, and that is why white people should accept their responsibilities of striving for the advancement of the white race. Any other race is bringing the white race down, or any white person mixing up with non-whites is seen as an equal threat. The white race is in *the Turner Diaries*, but also by the NA, portrayed as being stuck in a dystopian scenario in which increasing diversity and racial mixing is threatening the own sacred community. This makes them participants of a cosmic war. Thomas Mair and Dylann Roof also saw it this way and they could not stay inactive about it anymore. They really felt they had to do something. In Mair's case, this resulted in the murder of a collaborator and in Roof's case, this resulted in violence against his sacred enemy: African-Americans. By acting violently, the sacred values are acted upon, advanced and actively pursued.

By close reading the primary sources and searching for the four types of violence of the framework – violence against the enemy, violence in order to realize the utopian scenario, violence against the collaborators and justification of violence – from chapter 2 (page 23), only violence in order to realize the utopian scenario was a practice that mattered for both Mair and Roof. Mair carried out violence against the collaborator and Roof carried out violence against the enemy, although for Mair, the collaborator became part of his sacred enemy. This means that the underlying processes of having a dichotomous worldview, being involved in a cosmic war for a new world order are apparent for both terrorists. The “there is no innocence” conspiracy is apparent for both terrorists as well, but does for Roof not result in violence against the collaborators, while this is for Mair the main reason for his attack.

Finally, the process of having a worldview that is justified by appealing to an external legitimating authority is mainly idiosyncratic. Both terrorists are embedded in a right-wing narrative, but they cut and paste their worldview together with the help of sources from the

internet, in order to construct the values that they hold sacred. Neither of the terrorists will say they have committed the attack in the name of a terrorist group, or in this case the National Alliance. The difference between the call to violence to be found *The Turner Diaries* and publications by the NA also stands out. National Alliance seems to have changed their tone and are not directly calling to carry out attacks, although Pierce made some vague insinuations about that all means are justified in his speeches. This is very different from *The Turner Diaries*, which is a straight call to action. Thus, NA remains within the bounds of legality, but the underlying sacred values are the same as extracted in *The Turner Diaries*. The difference in the call to action also explains why the terrorists that were discussed did not carry out their attack in the name of a group, rather they individually came to their worldview and sacred values, being inspired by the available literature.

The outcomes of this analysis will be reflected upon more extensively in the conclusion, when it is compared to jihadi extremism.

Chapter 4. Sacred values and practices of Islamic State terrorists

4.1 The current threat of IS

Since 1979 (Iranian revolution), modern terrorism is now in its fourth wave, according to David Rapoport's wave theory of terrorism. In this wave, "religious justification is the crucial ingredient."¹²⁶ In the 1980s, ex-soldiers of the war in Afghanistan were armed with will, confidence and training to begin terrorist operations against weak domestic governments and Sunni terrorism appeared in many Islamic populated states. After touching upon some other outbursts of religious terrorism, like Sikh terrorists in the Punjab, Jewish terror in Israel/Palestinian territories and Christian terrorism in the United States, Rapoport states that "obviously, Islam produced the most active and potentially appealing religious groups".¹²⁷ Within Islam, there is the appealing ideal – something which has been realized in the past – to have a single state for all Muslims, in which Islamic law (*sharia*) would prevail. For many jihadists, violence is also justified because Muslims and Islamic values are under threat because of Western influence or they are dominated by American presence in the Middle East.

The most recent terrorist outcome of violent Islamic jihadism is the Islamic State. Despite the relatively brief existence of the Islamic State *caliphate* in Syria and Iraq (2014-2017), the terrorist group is in general still seen as the biggest contemporary terrorist threat to world security.¹²⁸ The IS caliphate is practically defeated from a military perspective (major cities like Raqqa and Mosul are not in IS hands anymore), but this does not entail a defeat of IS as a movement, which can still persist in many locations, including the underground. According to a report from The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, the "ISIS ideology" will continue to hold sway in many parts of the Middle East. It is also said in this report that the decline of IS in Syria and Iraq could lead to an increase of attacks on European soil, or in any way lead to more jihadists returning to Europe (although numbers are likely to be small).¹²⁹ Most people seem to be familiar in some way with the horrific images of IS propaganda, which worked well as a recruitment tool in attracting individuals from all over the world to join the quest for an Islamic State. In the years 2015-2017, attacks on Western European soil, carried out by IS terrorists shocked the world and attacks in Northern Africa, the Middle East and Indonesia continue to do

¹²⁶David Rapoport, 'The fourth wave: September 11 in the history of terrorism', *Current History* 100 (2001) 650, 419- 424, here 421.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 422.

¹²⁸J. Katarzyna et al, 'ISIS: It's History, Ideology and Psychology.' In: M. Woodward, R. Lukens-Bull (eds.) *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*. (New York 2018), 31.

¹²⁹ Willem Theo Oosterveld and Willem Bloem, 'The Rise and Fall of ISIS: From Evitability to Inevitability', *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies* (2017), 18.

so. Thus, although the composition, tactics and military strength of IS are continuously subject to change, the ideology, conviction and thus the sacred values seem to be quite constant. Because in this thesis, the sacred values approach is regarded as a way out of the debate on the role of religion in terrorism, the argument makes a stronger case if it is also applied to a religious terrorist group, in comparison to a non-religious group (chapter 3). This chapter is dedicated to the sacred values within Islamic jihadi terrorism; the terrorist group IS and the corresponding practices of IS terrorists. These sacred values and practices will be put forward in this chapter before they are compared to right-wing extremists in the conclusion (chapter 5).

Whereas right-wing extremism knows a lack of attention (explained in chapter 3), IS does not have this “problem”. Much academic research has been dedicated to understanding the motivations of jihadi terrorists, foreign fighters and the fall and rise of the Islamic state. For the sake of this abundance of attention but also because of a lack of space, jihadi terrorism will not be introduced as extensively as has been done with right-wing extremism in chapter 3. This is also because there is not much debate on whether IS can be seen as a terrorist group or not: it undeniably is a terrorist group. Therefore, this chapter straight away discusses the sacred values put forward in jihadist primary sources and a terror attack that was carried out by IS, to see how the sacred values are acted upon by terrorists. The following primary sources will be analyzed in the search for sacred values within jihadi terrorism and IS:

- A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan, speech by Abu Bakr Al-Husayni Al-Qurashi Al-Baghdadi
- Dabiq magazine #1 and #2

The reason that these particular sources are chosen as subject to analysis is that they give an indication of what the convictions are that inspired the creation of a caliphate, what reasons they see for Muslims to commit terror attacks and not unimportantly, they are written in English. The terror attack that will be analyzed in finding corresponding sacred practices is:

- Brussels attack on 22nd of March, 2016 (Khalid El Bakraoui)

4.2 Applying the sacred values approach to jihadist extremism (Al-Baghdadi statement and Dabiq magazines)

“A message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan” was published on the internet in the beginning of July, as a transcript from an audio file, alleged to be a speech by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, leader of IS and self-proclaimed caliph. In this speech, al Baghdadi proclaimed the Islamic State, of which he was the caliph and thus “the leader for Muslims

everywhere”.¹³⁰ In his speech, he addresses the legitimacy of this state and why every Muslim should come to Iraq or Syria to support IS and join the global jihad. He puts forward different reasons for this and these reasons are related to the sacred values of violent jihadism, which are discussed below. The first two Dabiq magazines are also subject to analysis. Many of al-Baghdadi’s statements are repetitioned in Dabiq 1. The magazines are the official propaganda magazines of the Islamic State, also written in English to have the biggest outreach possible. The magazines are drenched in theological explanations and references to Qur’an verses, to have a clear religious justification. Explicit pictures of victims and enemies take on a substantial part of Dabiq magazines in order to shock the audience, but it is also very important for the winner’s narrative that IS is trying to propagate. Now, the sacred values are extracted in the section below and they will be discussed with the help of the theoretical framework from chapter 2 (page 23).

Sacred community versus sacred enemy

Al Baghdadi’s speech is very explicit in dividing the world into two camps, emphasizing how everyone should join the good camp and fight the bad camp. “The world today has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present: the camps of Islam and faith and the camp of kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy”.¹³¹ He then specifies the good camp, the sacred community, as the camp of the Muslims and *mujahidin* everywhere and the bad camp, the sacred enemy, as the camp of the Jews, the crusaders and their allies (i.e. the West). There is much distrust against America and Russia, countries that are seen as led by the Jews. By dividing the world into two camps (without anything in between), he appeals to Muslims everywhere as part of the sacred community (the *ummah*) to be part of the good camp and help their brothers and sisters out. There is a perceived threat to the sacred community: Muslims everywhere are not able to live their lives according to the laws of Islam when they live in Western countries. Al-Baghdadi: “the disbelievers were able to weaken and humiliate the Muslims, dominate them in every region, plunder their wealth and resources, and rob them of their rights.” Western countries come to the Middle East and spread “dazzling and deceptive slogans” such as civilization, peace, co-existence, freedom, democracy, secularism, etcetera.¹³²

¹³⁰Al Jazeera, ‘Sunni rebels declare new ‘Islamic caliphate’’, *Al Jazeera*, June 30 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isil-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html> (May 20 2018).

¹³¹ Al-Hayat Media Center, *A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan* (Islamic State 2014), 4.

¹³² Ibid, 4

These Western values are portrayed as 180 degrees different from the IS values and these Western values are unwantedly spreading and pushing out “real Muslim” values. These Western versus Muslim values are in an extreme manner illustrated in the next quote from Al-Baghdadi’s speech, in which terrorism is equated with Muslim values and all of the things that are harming Muslim values fall under the umbrella of freedom, democracy, peace, security and tolerance:

Terrorism does not include the insulting of the Lord of Mightiness, the cursing of the religion, and the mockery of our Prophet (peace be upon him). Terrorism does not include the slaughtering of Muslims in Central Africa like sheep, while no one weeps for them and denounces their slaughter. All this is not terrorism. Rather it is freedom, democracy, peace, security, and tolerance¹³³

In this quote, two parties are presented: Muslim terrorists who fight for the Muslim sacred values and the people who are against the religion because of “Western values” like freedom, democracy, peace, security and tolerance.

The fact that Muslims in Western countries are not able to live their Islamic life is something that interferes with the sacred value of being able to express the own identity. Being Muslim is so essential to the own identity; it is a moral reality. Al-Baghdadi portrays the Islamic State as the only place in the world where a Muslim live according to their non-negotiable sacred values, in the rest of the world these sacred values are negotiated and made less important. That makes the rest of the world or the people that infringe upon your sacred values as the sacred enemy (i.e. Jews, the West, crusaders, unbelievers).

Having this dichotomous worldview is necessary for having the idea of being involved in a cosmic war for a new world order. This is the next process of defending sacred values that is discussed.

Preventing a dystopian scenario by means of battling in a cosmic war

Realizing the Islamic State, by proclaiming a caliphate, is the ultimate way of preventing a dystopian scenario from happening and turn it into a utopian scenario. The Islamic State is presented as the only place where Muslims can live their religious lives and live according to their sacred values. Everything is allowed when protecting the Islamic State – presented as a utopian state – and the values that are lived by in the Islamic State need to be fought for and protected. The Islamic State is presented as a serious alternative for Western Muslims because it is seen as the only place in the world where the correct religious convictions are respected.

¹³³ Al-Hayat Media Center, *A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan* (Islamic State 2014), 5.

Because for example, in Western democracies it is almost made impossible to, as a Muslim, pursue sacred activity such as praying five times a day. Homosexuality, gambling and alcohol are forbidden in the Islamic State. And, in contrast to Western countries, in the Islamic State there is nobody who stops people from treating women as inferior to men. Muslims that do not feel a connection with the Western secular society might feel attracted to the idea of the Islamic State. There is thus a battle going on, which every Muslim must face in order to defend his creed, society, values, honor, dignity, wealth and power. The Muslims who do not join this cosmic battle are steadily addressed as traitors of their own religion and their brothers and sisters, and complicit to the fall of Islam in the world. The *ummah* is threatened by dark, satanic powers that try to bring down Islam and the Islamic State is portrayed as the answer to combat these threats. The threat of Islam becoming deteriorated into the deplorable state of decadence, submission and apostasy exists because Islam opened up for Western influence. The only way to restore this is to go back to the Islamic values and lifestyle of the days of the prophet Muhammed, which is fully possible in the Islamic State. This makes the Islamic State a state of salvation.

The two options of a dystopian versus a utopian scenario are also very explicitly portrayed in the Dabiq magazines. For example, in Dabiq #2, a long theological essay is dedicated to how there is a parallel between the rise of the Islamic State and the story in the Qur'an of Nuh's ark (in the Bible known as Noah's ark): "It is either the Islamic State or the flood".¹³⁴ The point of the essay is that the idea of free choice does not make sense when there is only one good choice to make. In the story of Nuh's ark, it means the good choice was joining Nuh in building his ship and supporting him and in the current day the good choice would be joining IS and supporting the proclaimed caliphate. Otherwise, one might end up in the flood of our times.

In order to defend this sacred community with its sacred values in a sacred state and thus preventing a dystopian scenario from happening; terrorism is most certainly allowed.

"Terrorism is to refer to Allah's law for judgment. Terrorism is to worship Allah as He ordered you. Terrorism is to refuse humiliation, subjugation, and subordination [to the kuffar – infidels]. Terrorism is for the Muslim to live as a Muslim, honorably with might and freedom. Terrorism is to insist upon your rights and not give them up."¹³⁵

As seen before, terrorism is literally equated with sacred values of being able to worship Allah, refuse humiliation and to just be able to live as a Muslim.

¹³⁴ Al-Hayat Media Center, *Dabiq #2: The Flood* (Islamic State 2014), 5-11.

¹³⁵ Al-Hayat Media Center, *A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan* (Islamic State 2014), 4.

Another way in which Muslims are portrayed as being involved in a cosmic war is referring to how people of the sacred community of Muslims are being harmed:

“you have brothers in many parts of the world being inflicted with the worst kinds of torture. Their honor is being violated. Their blood is being spilt. (...) Women who have lost their children are weeping. Masajid are desecrated and sanctities are violated.”¹³⁶

Here, al-Baghdadi says that Muslims all over the world are under threat, they are being killed and deprived of their basic rights. The only correct response to this would be to fight back! Sacred values like honor, women or even life in itself are inflicted upon and thus every Muslim has the right to act against this by using violence. That is why for example the issue of Palestine is frequently referred to by al-Baghdadi and the Dabiq magazines. And when a Muslims is not fighting back as part of the solution to the inflicted values, he or she is part of the problem.

Against compromises and corruption: collaborators

Because the sacred values of being able to preserve the own culture (Islam), community (ummah) and seeing in this only two options (being part of the good or the bad camp), there is no room for compromises and corruption that in any way could violate these sacred values. Every Muslim has the moral obligation to prevent the dystopian scenario from happening and to help the brothers and sisters of the Ummah when their sacred values are inflicted upon. There is no innocent in between, for example being a Muslim and not joining the battle of IS. For example, in the case of Palestine the following is said in Dabiq #2:

“As for the massacres taking place in Gaza against the Muslim men, women, and children, then the Islamic State will do everything within its means to continue striking down every apostate who stands as an obstacle on its path towards Palestine. It is not the manner of the Islamic State to throw empty, dry, and hypocritical words of condemnation and condolences like the Arab tawāghīt do in the UN and Arab League.”¹³⁷

In this quote, it is said that the only way to help the Muslim men, women and children in Gaza is to take up the arms and *act* instead of talk “hypocritical words of condemnation in the UN”. According to the quote, talking is something that tawāghīt do, a term used for anti-Islamic thinking and therefore people who are seen as agents of Western cultural imperialism. Muslims, or Arabs for that matter, that participate in the UN or Arab league in order to reach justice for Palestinians are seen as collaborators and anti-Islamic thinkers. They are hypocrites and not

¹³⁶ Ibid, 4.

¹³⁷ Dabiq #2, 4.

taking enough action to help their brothers and sisters in despair. By doing nothing or just utter words of condemnation, one becomes a traitor.

“The West” is seen as an important sacred enemy; they are the biggest infringer upon Islamic sacred values and they try to have influence in the Middle East region with for example military presence. This results in the fact that everyone who works together with “the West”, is seen as a collaborator and also becomes an enemy. But also the people who do nothing and see themselves as innocent are actually guilty because of their inaction. It is difficult to be innocent in the view of IS. Therefore, violence against the innocent is justified as well.

Legitimizing authority

In the view of IS, all violence is legitimized when it protects or restores sacred values, avenges infringements on sacred values or when it is a way of actively pursuing the sacred values. When reading propaganda like Dabiq or the speech by al-Baghdadi, references to the Qur'an or Allah are constantly to be found. Someone who calls himself the new caliph (al-Baghdadi) is encouraging all Muslims to join the battle and otherwise they are no good Muslim. For some Muslims, this is a very convincing message, especially because it comes from an Islamic authority. Terrorism is embedded in an Islamic narrative and it is stated what it entails to be a good Muslim: Allah wants you to act this way. The perceived humiliation of Muslims all around the world is portrayed as a very important incentive to start acting against these infringements on Muslim sacred values. Especially the fact that Muslims cannot live their lives in the way their religions asks of them is seen as something that Muslims should go against, and a good reason why one should join IS. Because the jihadist terrorists feel justified and legitimized by Islamic authorities and holy scriptures, these acts of violence become framed as religious actions. The message of the worldwide war against Islam and the faithful few defending it is very powerful in attracting new followers. This makes the violence symbolically loaded and a way to act upon the sacred values one has. In the next part, these sacred practices are discussed by analyzing a practice of a jihadist terrorists. How do sacred values bestow meaning on this act of terror?

4.3 Jihadist terrorist attack: sacred practice

4.3.1 Brussels attacks 2016 (Khalid El Bakraoui)

In the morning of March 22nd, 2016, three suicide bombers attacked the international airport Zaventem and a metro in Maalbeek, a neighborhood in Brussels. The death toll was 35 casualties (including the terrorists) and more than 300 people were injured. Initially, there were five suicide bombers who prepared the attack and were planning to blow themselves up. In the end, three of them stuck to the plan, while the other two changed their minds. All of them were returning jihadists from Syria, who had fought there. There were thus clear connections between this attack and IS, the latter also claiming the attack on the same day. The suicide bombers were Najim Laachraoui and the brothers Ibrahim and Khalid El Bakraoui. These three terrorists have left some insightful information on their motivations for carrying out the attack, which was found on their laptop.¹³⁸ They have written a claim to the attack beforehand. The information on the laptop also included audio files of their communication with their *emir* Aboe Ahmed in Raqqa, who is alleged to have given orders for the attack. From this information, it becomes clear that the terrorists initially planned an attack during one of the football matches of the European Championship, taking place in France that year. However, because many of their partners were caught, killed or imprisoned in a short time in March 2016 and one of their safe houses was found as well, the terrorists felt rushed to take action earlier than summer 2016 (when the football matches would start). One of the brothers, Khalid El Bakraoui, has left an actual testament about his motivations and ideas behind the attack (written in French). However, it cannot be 100 per cent verified that the testament is of his writing, but it is published by *Furat*, the media channel of IS. Regardless the certainty of the realness of the testament, it will be subject to analysis to see how sacred values of jihadism resonate in the sacred practice of the terrorist since IS did want to get this message across as motivation behind the attack.

Sacred community and sacred enemy

Khalid El Bakraoui's testament addresses two parties in his testament: the Muslims ("*oh Musulman*") and the enemies (killers) of the Muslims ("*oh génocidaires de Musulmans*"). This underlines the dichotomous worldview that terrorists have, divided into a sacred community and sacred enemy. Bakraoui claims that Western countries, "the crusaders"¹³⁹, allies of France (Belgium, the Netherlands, United States) are carrying out a barbaric genocide against Muslims

¹³⁸ Mark Eeckhaut, 'Dit gebeurde in de laatste dagen voor de aanslag op Zaventem', *NRC Handelsblad*, 21 March 2017.

¹³⁹ In French: *Les croisés*

worldwide. He also refers to the enemy as “polytheists” or disbelievers, to frame it more as another Islamic extreme. The entire population of these countries are seen as guilty and as an enemy of the Muslims because they are “followers of genocide”. They are also sometimes portrayed as pigs and monkeys. The problem is, according to El Bakraoui, that in all those years, Muslims have never fought back against this barbaric genocide. The terrorist, at least the writer of this document, is obviously trying to change that.

The other extreme of the dichotomous worldview is the sacred community: “the community of Mohammed”.¹⁴⁰ Many times in the testament it is repeated how Muslims worldwide are victims of massacres carried out by Western allies (by bombings from the sky). “How can we forget Palestine, Bosnia, Burma, Chechnya, Philippines, China, or the chemical bombings against the population of Morocco? Have you not seen the million shredded corpses of *your* little brothers and little sisters”?¹⁴¹ In this way, being a Muslim makes you co-responsible for the killings of Muslims elsewhere. They are, after all, *your* little brothers and sisters. The fact that people from your community, the community of Muhammad, are attacked and killed, is unacceptable. They identify so strongly with that community, that an attack on them becomes an attack on themselves. The sacred community should be protected, since it is part of the Muslim identity. Thus, acting against this massacre becomes a mere obligation and it results in violence against the enemy. In the Brussels attack, the airport and metro were targeted. In the audio file (the communication between the terrorists in Brussels and Syria) it was said they chose the airport because they heard there would be Russian, American and Israeli flights departing, meaning that many people with those nationalities would be present at the airport. It is mainly these people that they try to target in their attacks because they are seen as the sacred enemy.

Dystopian versus utopian scenario (cosmic war)

As is seen before in this analysis, the dichotomous worldview is closely related to the feeling of being involved in a cosmic war (between the sacred community and the sacred enemy described above). The dystopian scenario is that Muslims are under attack by Western powers and that Muslims have no option but to fight back against this in order to create the utopian scenario. They feel they are involved in an “asymmetric war” and by striking back, it is made more symmetric. “The only thing we want is to terrorize those that commit genocide on us”.¹⁴² The terrorists see the use of violence as the only way to stop the dystopian scenario, a scenario

¹⁴⁰ In French: La Communauté de Muhammad

¹⁴¹ Khalid El-Bakraoui, ‘Testament du frère Abû Walid al-Baljîkî’ *Furat* (2016), 5. Italics are mine.

¹⁴² Ibid, 3.

in which Muslims are being killed on a daily base. To create a new world order, the clash between the two extremes needs to come to an ultimate battle, and this is what the terrorists are preparing for. “We promise you horror and fear until you quit the bombing and when you liberate our brothers and sisters that are imprisoned by you.”¹⁴³ Thus, the dystopian scenario (of the brothers and sisters that are imprisoned and the bombings by Western powers) needs to be stopped before the terrorist will stop their continuation of horror and fear. The terrorists feel that they can realize their utopian scenario in the Islamic State and the dystopian scenario elsewhere can be fought by striking back in their perceived cosmic battle.

Protecting the own values: against compromises and collaborators

At some point in his testament, El Bakraoui goes into how he experiences certain Western values as intrusive on the Muslim values. For example, El Bakraoui experiences the way women are portrayed in a shampoo commercial as disrespectful. He says women are objectified in a vulgar manner and he says it is not good for the position of women and that it is not necessary to have so much nudity in a picture for a shampoo commercial.¹⁴⁴ Western countries are treating their women in a humiliating manner. He also disagrees on Western ideas on homosexuality, pornography and prostitution. He feels bad for the children who have to ask their gay fathers “where their mother is”. These, according to El Bakraoui, bad values such as homosexuality are corrupting the good Islamic values and Muslims should not be exposed to it. He, however, does say that terrorists do not kill because of unjust values (yet), referring to the fact that they now only kill as revenge.

Another important aspect is the idea of the collaborator. “You know who are worse than the children of the Crusaders? The Muslims who do nothing against the massacre of the crusaders against the Muslims, but are just living in peace between them.”¹⁴⁵ He addresses the Muslims who are doing nothing against the fact that “Crusaders” are attacking Muslims on a global scale and that they should perform their obligated jihad as terrorists do. He disavows the Muslims who say that they want to live in peace and love with the non-Muslims, saying that they are sick in their hearts and hypocrites. “Believers should not want to be loved by the unbelievers and even less by unbelievers who massacre Muslims”. This makes the inactive, peaceful Muslims just as bad as the crusaders and they are thus seen as collaborators. “The only response you should have [at the genocidaires of the Muslims] is putting a knife on their throats, having

¹⁴³ Ibid, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 3.

a belt with explosives that explode on them or a wind of Kalashnikovs, or another way of throwing fear at their hearts.”¹⁴⁶

According to El Bakraoui, this is the only response that is rightful, and it is thus the sacred practice that corresponds with the conviction. The act of terror is sacred for the terrorist because it is related to defending the sacred (Muslim) community that is under attack. The writing of this testament bestows meaning upon the act as well and can be seen as a sacred making practice too.

Legitimizing authority

In his testament, El Bakraoui refers to the Islamic State only once, saying he believes in the continuance of the state by the promise of Allah. He pledges alliance to the leader of the Islamic State, as the “commander of the believers”, who should not yield in pressuring the enemies of Islam. However, he does not refer to it as a legitimating authority per se. He does not seem to need a sacred leader in justifying his violence. The described attack of the “genocidaires” on the Muslim community is for him enough justification to carry out his terrorist attacks.

Concluding on this attack, we see that the terrorist attack in Brussels was a highly performative act, trying to convey a message about what the caliphate is about and the testament of El Bakraoui makes clear that he perceives the sacred Muslim community under threat. Therefore, he sees any type of violence wholly justified and even as a moral obligation. His testament is an explicit legitimization of his act and it bestows extra meaning upon his act, offering him an empowering role as a member of the sacred caliphate. The terrorists also communicated their message and plans to IS leaders (emirs), so that they could subsequently communicate their message.

4.4 Concluding: Religion as the main driver behind IS?

In an article on the role of religion in IS, Nanninga stated:

“The Islamic State’s dramatic acts of violence comprise more than acts of terror. By focusing on their theatrical, expressive aspects and cultural meanings, we [see] that they can also be approached as performances through which the actors display for others what their caliphate is about. (...)”¹⁴⁷

The violence carried out by jihadi terrorists offer a model for reality. It is a way of taking action against the sacred values that are threatened and need to be restored or pursued. The acts of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 3. [This quote is very literally translated from French by myself.]

¹⁴⁷ Pieter Nanninga, ‘Meanings of Savagery: Terror, Religion and the Islamic State’, in: James r. Lewis (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to religion and terrorism* (Cambridge 2017), 184.

terror offer them an empowering role as a member of the sacred caliphate, which is legitimized by a prophetic methodology in for example the propaganda. It is easy to frame this act of terror as religious terrorism, seeing Islam as the main driver behind this type of terrorism. It is true that it is carried out by a Muslim and the terrorists legitimize themselves with the help of religious authorities. IS benefits from framing the conflict as a religious conflict, particularly in addressing the Muslim community worldwide in saying that there is a worldwide war waged against the community of Islam. And it is true that the terrorists in Brussels draw attention to their Islamic belief system, sacred Muslim values and Muslim community. They publicly show their preparedness to suffer and die for the Muslim community, values and belief system. They do not want their religion, which is part of their core identity, to be in disgrace; they rather restore the honour of Islam by humiliating the unbelievers in return. However, simply framing it as religious terrorism goes beyond the historical, political, social and cultural dimensions of their ideological motivation behind the attack. The religion of Islam is something that gives shape to someone's identity, and terrorists perceive this identity to be under attack. The label of religious terrorism also does not explain why some Muslims become violent while others are peaceful. It is rather insightful instead to look at values so inherent and important to these communities and terrorists that they are willing to die for it. These values are used to give shape and give meaning to violence. Just like any other culture, or any other person for that matter, Islam and Muslims have particular values they do not want to exchange for anything; they are non-negotiable. Once these values like being able to profess your religion or having honour, are in fact negotiated or violated, people might rise up (violently) against the violators and negotiators. And when this set of non-negotiable values is linked with a merged group of people that is very passionate about protecting those values, the willingness to die for it reaches a maximum.

However, as we have seen in chapter three, the willingness to die for non-negotiable values is not unique for religious groups, secular groups do it as well. Now that the sacred values approach has been applied to both types of terrorist groups, they will be compared in the next chapter; the conclusion.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

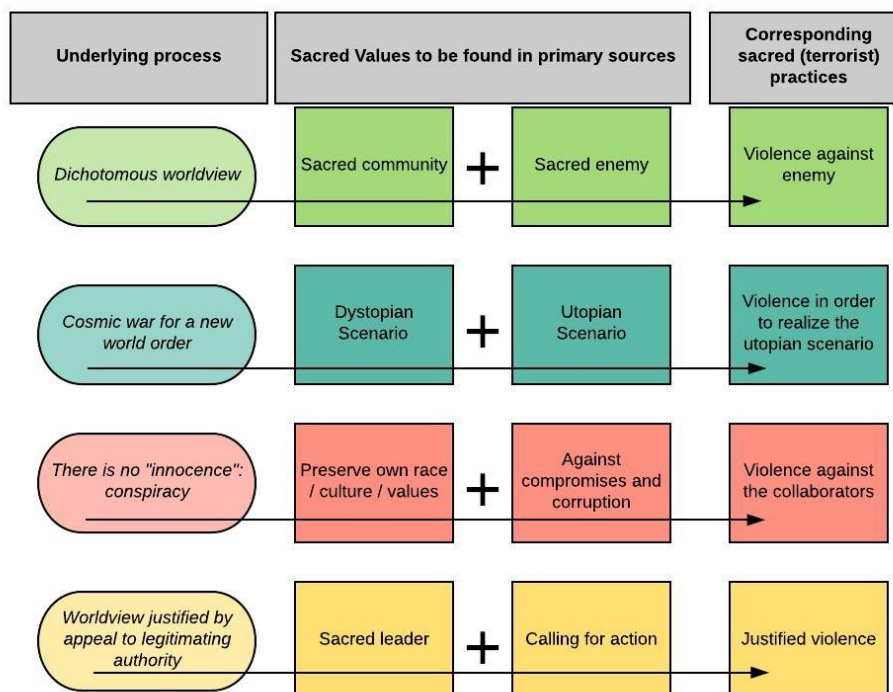
In the introduction, the debate on the role of religion in terrorism studies has been set out. This historiography describes how there are different “camps” within this debate on a societal and an academic level: some claim that religion has nothing to do with terrorism, others claim that religion is the main factor in explaining current day terrorism like the Islamic State. The position that is taken in this thesis is more towards the camp that problematizes framing terrorism as “religious” and this means that the uniqueness of religion as motivating ideology is relativized. This thesis aims to prove that the fourth wave of terrorism, put forward by Rapoport’s wave theory on modern terrorism, labeled as the *religious* wave has many overlapping characteristics with other types or waves of terrorism. These overlapping characteristics are explored with the help of the concept of the sacred. The sacred is a thing, place, time or concept that is special and non-negotiable; it is separated and protected from everyday ideas. The sacred is directly and indirectly expressed in ideas and values that are seen to be core or essential to identities and beliefs.¹⁴⁸ The sacred is that which people take as unquestionable moral realities, and these moral realities can be part of secular convictions too.

This does not mean that religion does not have a place at all in researching terrorism, it should however not be emphasized and essentialized. In order to do this, this thesis proposed, with the help of multiple literature on this topic, an alternative approach to analyze the ideological motivation of terrorists: the sacred values approach. This approach builds upon earlier research done by Matthew Francis on the sacred and terrorism and it entails a new focus on non-negotiable values, instead of a total focus on ideology or religion. To see whether it is a useful approach, the sacred values theoretical framework is applied to two extremist/terrorist groups with different ideological backgrounds: a religious and a secular. With this approach and an evaluation of it, this thesis aims to make a contribution to the debate about the role of religion in terrorism by finding patterns of sacred values that transcend different ideological backgrounds of terrorist groups. This thesis makes the claim that secular movements, like the National Alliance, also have transcendental principles that some extremists are willing to fight or make sacrifices for. To find out whether this is true, the following research question was formulated in the introduction:

¹⁴⁸ Francis, ‘Why the sacred is a better resource than religion’, 913.

What are the sacred values put forward in ideological publications by National Alliance and Islamic State and how does the sacred values approach help understand terrorist practices?

The terrorists that are connected to both groups all have their sacred, non-negotiable values that are considered as moral realities. Once these sacred values are threatened, or they are thwarted (resulting in perceived dystopian circumstances), extremists can rise up violently, wanting to protect or restore the sacred values. The corresponding practice of restoring or protecting the sacred values subsequently results in one (or multiple) of the distinct sacred making practices, to be found in the right column in the framework below. These practices are seen as an endeavor of the sacred values. Chapter three focused on right-wing extremism and analyzed multiple primary sources in the search for right-wing sacred values. In chapter four, jihadist extremism was analyzed in a similar way, though in a less extensive manner than chapter two. Now, the analyses of primary sources done in chapter two and three are compared below, in order to answer the research question and to see which patterns emerged. The analysis was carried out by close reading primary sources and searching for key concepts formulated in the framework below and underlined in the text of the analysis.



National Alliance

By close reading *The Turner Diaries* and publications by NA founder and other members, the following sacred values were extracted (while using the concepts of the theoretical framework

and searching for key terms that are related to the general sacred values themes, underlined below):

The sacred community is the white *Aryan* race: the people of European descent. White supremacists see the white race as the best-evolved people, which makes it a sacred race, worth protecting. All the people that do not belong to the white race are automatically seen as the enemy, because of possible racial mixing. Sacred enemies are therefore, Jews, blacks, people who cooperate with the threat of racial mixing and defenders of multiculturalism. The white people who do not join the battle against the sacred enemy, eventually also become part of the enemy. They are called the collaborators, because they are not preventing the compromises and corruption of the sacred community. Within the NA, William Pierce is a key figure, giving many ideas on how action should be taken against the racial threat. His book, *The Turner Diaries*, was an inspiration to many right-wing terrorists, who have committed attacks in the name of the ideology, rather than in the name of a terrorist group. Thus, Pierce was not a legitimizing authority, rather an inspirator.

The encompassing sacred value for right-wing extremists is thus the idea of white supremacy: that the white race (with the best values, culture and development) is under threat. For right-wing extremists from the NA, this is so inherently true that it is a moral reality and part of their core identity. Therefore, the corresponding sacred practices with these values are: violence against the sacred enemy, violence in order to remove the threat of the dystopian scenario that the white race becomes racially mixed and finally, violence against the collaborators: the people that do not actively go against the threat. These violent practices are a way to actualize the sacred values. Carrying out a terrorist attack can be a meaning-making practice, in correspondence with your sacred values. Thomas Mair and Dylann Roof were practitioners of these sacred values, and they both carried out attacks that fall under the four categories of sacred practices.

Islamic State

By analyzing *Dabiq* magazines, a speech by the leader of the caliphate Al-Baghdadi and the testament from one of the Brussels attacks terrorists in 2016, the following sacred values were extracted:

The dichotomous worldview of good versus bad is very clearly presented in *Dabiq* and the speech by al-Baghdadi. The good, sacred community is the *ummah*, the Muslim community that is under attack. Several times, it is put forward in *Dabiq*, speeches and terrorist testaments

how Muslims in the Middle East are killed by bombings carried out by Western armies and that terrorist attacks are therefore a very legitimized manner to strike back. There is subsequently called upon Muslim solidarity and an obligation to help out Muslim brothers and sisters. The sacred enemy, on the other hand, is the camp of the disbelievers; the West, the crusaders, the Jews. Realizing an actual Islamic State is in reaction to the dystopian scenario that is evolving in which Muslim values are under threat everywhere. It is thought that Western influence is deteriorating Islam into a state of apostasy, submission and decadence and Muslims are not able to confess their religion as they should. In addition, violence against collaborators is justified as well because everyone that does not join the battle against the West, but instead is living amongst them peacefully, is guilty because of their inaction. And finally, these values are all justified by external Islamic authorities, writings in *Dabiq* and speeches by al Baghdadi. It is clearly implemented in a religious narrative.

All of these elements returned in the testament of Khalid El Bakraoui, he saw his terrorist attack in Brussels as the only rightful way to deal with the threat to the Muslim sacred values. By carrying out this attack, he conveyed the message that Muslim believers have suffered injustice. Next to that, a religious language is inserted into this perceived injustice. The terrorists experience a situation of threat to their identity, their non-negotiable values, and membership in a religious community can be transformed into a community that is seen as the ultimate haven of rescue and salvation. By inserting it into a religious framework, the struggle against injustice against Muslims – which is actually a worldly political battle – becomes larger than life. For IS terrorists, the cause of religion is fused with the vision of a caliphate, while not having actual substantive knowledge of their religion. This is often illustrated by research investigations of former IS soldiers or radicalized jihadists: they know little about the Quran or Islamic history, other than what they have heard from IS propaganda (as pointed out before: *Dabiq* is drenched in theological references).¹⁴⁹

The encompassing sacred value is the idea that Muslims and the Muslim way of life are under threat. Thus any violent practice against those that are threatening the sacred community is justified. This results in violence against the sacred enemy, violence in order to realize the utopian scenario and violence against collaborators. These types of violence are exactly what

¹⁴⁹ Scott Atran, 'The role of the devoted actor in war' in James r. Lewis (ed), *The Cambridge companion to religion and terrorism*, (Cambridge 2017), 79

El Bakraoui aims to do when carrying out his attack in Brussels. IS terrorists tell the story of a group that successfully retaliates against the Western-led war against Islam. By committing terror attacks, they make sacrifices to defend the oppressed Muslims all over the world.

Comparative analysis right-wing extremism (NA) to jihadist extremism (IS)

Comparing two very different ideologies exposes many differences, content and context wise, but focusing on patterns of sacred values, there are many similarities to be exposed as well. First the differences, that are already apparent in the degree of attention both ideologies beget in the field of terrorism research. This is also because right-wing extremism has been present to a greater or lesser extent and in different forms for a longer time than jihadist extremism. Through time, right-wing extremists had varying enemies. Classic right-wing extremists were more focused on blacks and Jews and modern-day right-wing extremism extended the group of enemies with Arabs, refugees and is also very much focused on nationalism. This means that right-wing extremism has already been around since the time of the KKK (19th century US) and it thus transgresses the waves of terrorism put forward by Rapoport. Jihadist extremism as we know it now, on the other hand, is part of the fourth wave of terrorism, which started in 1979. This makes jihadist extremism more acute and relevant for current research, even though right-wing extremism has been looming in the background all this time as well. More and more governments and research institutes are starting to indicate that right-wing extremism does deserve more attention, since the threat it poses seems to grow.

The content of the sacred values (obviously) differs, which is apparent in the analysis above. Another important difference between NA and IS is their call to violent action. Even though the relation and processes between the sacred values and the terrorists are similar, it is an undeniable fact that IS has stronger terrorist group commitment than NA has. This results in a difference of how the violence is justified by an external legitimating authority. Whereas *The Turner Diaries* does call for violent action throughout the whole book, the NA does not do that in such an explicit way. Violence is however not renounced either by the NA. The call to action is very different within IS narrative, it is apparent everywhere in all the sources, resulting in a more explicit link between sacred values and violence for IS terrorists. This means that there is a gradual difference in the extent of linking violence to the sacred values, which is in the IS narrative way more explicit than in the right-wing extremist movement. A religious ideology is more embedded in a bounded narrative, which makes it easier to call for violent actions. Idiosyncratic right-wing terrorists like Roof and Mair radicalize on a more individual level, while El Bakraoui radicalized within a group. Mair and Roof were definitely connected to right-

wing extremists thinking, including explicit links that were found with the NA, but they both would never state they committed the attack in the name of the NA. Thus, the way terrorists from different ideological backgrounds legitimize themselves with the help of external authorities differs. This assumingly also has its effect on the willingness to commit violence, which could be subject to further research. However, terrorists from both ideologies harbor sacred values with similar patterns, to which will be turned now.

Overlapping underlying processes

The analysis of two very different ideologies, two associated terrorist groups and terrorist practices shows that no matter the background, terrorists have similar processes underlying the emergence of having sacred values, which can result in corresponding practices. These are: having a dichotomous worldview, being part of a cosmic war for a new world order and acting as if there is no innocence, meaning that those who do not join the sacred battle are collaborators. Whereas the ideologies of extreme-right and jihadist movements differ content-wise, on a higher abstract level there are actually many similarities, which have to do with the radical character of the extremists of both ideologies. Terrorists from both ideologies firmly believe that they are threatened in their existence, and that violence is the only fair response. Sacred values occur on the ideological level, group level and individual terrorist level and they are all connected in the underlying processes described before. These processes underlying the construction of sacred values seem necessary in the willingness to commit an attack, regardless of the ideological background. These processes become apparent when focusing on the sacred values of groups, which means that it is a useful approach in understanding terrorism, because it focuses on more neutral processes than on a certain ideology or religion.

Why sacred values matter

Every culture or individual has different values they would not want to exchange for anything in the world. Speaking for myself, this would be for example my loved ones, or maybe even my house or access to decent food. These non-negotiable things are so important, that once they are threatened or violated, a response is inevitable. Different possible responses to the violation of sacred values exist, violence being one of them, depending on the radicalization of someone's worldview. According to Atran, when a specific set of non-negotiable values is combined with a merged group, a maximum willingness to fight or die for these values arises. Via religion is one way to formulate non-negotiable values for yourself, but it is indeed not the only way. Secular movements can also be based on sacred, or even transcendental values. As we have seen with the National Alliance and the rise of white supremacist extremists, that is

currently to be witnessed; secular movements can also experience being part of a cosmic war and are thus willing to fight for a utopian scenario.

What is held to be sacred and how it is acted upon is not set in stone. This is why there is no use in searching in the ideology or a religion in itself for reasons to commit terror attacks. It is more useful to work from the values of groups and their expressions in discourse to see what motivates terrorists, because these values can vary between members. Consequently, one can research individual sacred values as well. Once values are perceived as sacred, they become existential struggles, and this can happen to both secular as religious groups. These values can become transcendent and emotionally charged over time. Subsequently, the practices that are supposed to correspond with the values, which also give shape to the values, might be predicted. Practising one's values is a way to perform boundaries between in- and outgroup. Once researchers and policy makers understand the underlying processes of terrorist ideological motivation, as put forward in the analysis of this thesis, they can start thinking about how to tackle these worldviews and things that are held sacred. The concept of sacred can be used to highlight discourses that shed light on what is non-negotiable to a group, reveal how it feels threatened and subsequently it can be thought of how to counter these threats. Atran suggests that sacred values are best countered with other sacred values that inspire devotion. And finally, assessing sacred values in a consistent manner helps to avoid stereotypical judgements about a group.

Discussion

This thesis puts forward an analytical framework for what motivates terrorist to commit attacks *on an ideological level*. There are however multiple other levels to take into account when researching the motivations of terrorists. An analysis of ideology, conviction and more specific sacred values does not suffice for understanding why someone commits a terrorist attack. Other factors matter, for example to what extent someone is involved in a group, the constituency, but also psychological, individual aspects influence the willingness to commit violent attacks or to make life sacrifices. These aspects did not receive any attention in this thesis, but that does not mean they are not equally important. The goal of this thesis was, however, to focus on the ideological level, to gain more insight on how to tackle this particular level of researching terrorism. Thus, the use of the sacred values approach should always be part of a broader toolkit of studying terrorist motivations.

Another point of discussion for this thesis is the fact that the analysis is slightly unbalanced, making the comparison therefore also a bit disproportionate. Chapter three, on right-wing

extremism, is more extensive: it includes a historical background and development of the movement, something that is lacking in chapter four on jihadi extremism and IS. One of the reasons for this is that jihadi extremism already receives sufficient attention in terrorism research, while right-wing extremism lacks this urgent attention. While answering to the call for more research on right-wing extremism, the information on right-wing extremism is more extensive in this thesis.

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