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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-87708-4 — Origins of Political Extremism
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Introduction

In his acclaimed book *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991*, Eric Hobsbawm writes of the date January 30, 1933 when Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Hobsbawm was a 15-year-old boy of Jewish origin in Berlin walking with his younger sister from school when he saw the newspaper headline that he still sees "as in a dream."[1] His overall period of concern begins at World War I and ends with the collapse of communism in Europe, the beginning and presumed end of political extremism, with the advent of Hitler as its apotheosis. The rise of communism, fascism (Nazism as an especially malign form), rampant Japanese, Pakistani, and Indonesian militarism, as well as varieties of extreme nationalism such as the Polish and Serbian, together constituted an "age of extremes." Indeed, these cases will form a substantial portion of this book's empirical inquiry.

Although unlike Francis Fukuyama, Hobsbawm did not predict anything like "an end to history," in his work there is a sense that humankind, at least that portion living in the West, had reached a watershed. The possibility existed that the twentieth century extremes were a thing of the past.

Yet just one year prior to the 1994 publication of Hobsbawm's book, the first World Trade Center bombing occurred, Osama bin Laden "declared war" on America in 1998, and a form of extremism not even listed in Hobsbawm's index – radical Islamism – emerged full force, especially after 9/11. The question is not whether radical Islamism exists in many (although certainly not all) Muslim societies, but the depth of that penetration.

Also in 1993, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in response to the euphoria attending the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union, in a rare public address warned that all was not well. Anticipating the persistence of the old Communist Party and KGB officers in Russia, Vladimir Putin among them, Solzhenitsyn declared: "We were recently entertained by a naïve fable of the happy arrival at the 'end of history,' of the overflowing triumph of an all-democratic bliss; the ultimate global arrangement had supposedly been attained. But we all see and sense that something very different is coming, something new, and perhaps

[1] Hobsbawm 1994, 4.

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quite stern. No, tranquility does not promise to descend on our planet, and will not be granted us so easily."[2]

If radical Islamism and extreme Russian nationalism are unlike any other forms of extremism, then Hobsbawm's ending the short twentieth century in 1991 is appropriate. But if in their origins they demonstrate similarities with other extremist movements such as the fascist or communist, then the "age of extremes" has been extended, at least for the foreseeable future. This is the major issue at stake in this book: whether there exists a common etiology that allows us to understand the origins of a variety of ostensibly unique political behaviors. And if there exists such an etiology, are there specific pathways to extremist behavior from a common origin that nevertheless later develop in different ways?

The age of extremes is also called by Hobsbawm "the age of catastrophe," understandably given the cataclysmic effect on him and his family and indeed, his entire society. Another near-apocalyptical lexicon is found in the Turkish reference to the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–22 as the "War of National Salvation," as is the Greek reference to it as the "Asia Minor Disaster." Hitler's reference to the "calamity" of 1919 and the loss of the Great War is another case in point, as is bin Laden's frequent mention of the "humiliation" of 1924 and the dissolution of the Muslim Caliphate in that year.

Yet each of the concerned individuals took different paths. Hobsbawm emigrated to England and became a distinguished historian, indeed according to the *New Republic* "one of the few genuinely great historians of our century." His was a creative response to personal and societal fears; in many respects his career has been devoted to explaining these momentous events. An adopted country, and a new, richer vocabulary of expression (English has many more words than German) were used to ascend from the abyss.

Mustapha Kemal (later Atatürk), military leader of a victorious but devastated Turkey, and soon to be its political head, adopted policies that were to fitfully secularize and modernize the nascent Turkish state that had emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Although subject to recurrent interventions of the military into politics, and human rights abuses (albeit on a scale that is massively dwarfed by those of Nazism and communism), the recent sustained economic development of Turkey and its relatively stable democracy have been impressive enough to warrant consideration for admission to the European Union (EU). The eventual outcome may be in doubt, but the successes thus far are not.

Despite suffering the major losses of the Greco-Turkish War that entailed abandonment of all of conquered Anatolia, Greece retreated within its territory governed prior to 1919. Most important, it did not succumb to the temptations of fascism that engulfed so many other European states during the interwar period.

[2] Quoted in Remnick 2008, 21.

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At most, it was governed by a military dictatorship under General Mataxas after 1936 that took on certain trappings of fascism (as did so many other non-fascist states like pre-*Anschluss* Austria, Franco's Spain, or Salazar's Portugal), but at bottom was a right-wing military government that indeed maintained its strong alliance with Britain right up to and during World War II.

Hitler, of course, followed a very different path of revanche, conquest, and the brutality of a war yielding 20 million dead, most of them innocent civilians or prisoners of war. Despite Mussolini's relatively decent behavior towards Jews during the Holocaust prior to the invasions of Sicily and mainland Italy by Allied forces, Italian Fascism was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of native North and East Africans. Osama bin Laden also has chosen an extremist direction that justifies the murder of innocents. And communism, of course, was responsible for the deaths of many millions, especially after Stalin's brutal reign provided a template for the future to be adopted by Mao's China and Pol Pot's Cambodia.

Why these major differences between those who adopted a constructive path of personal development or nation building on the one hand, and those who chose extremist positions that included justifications for mass murder? This is one of the questions that frame this inquiry. At the same time, an answer will be provided to the frequently asked question: Why did European countries like Britain and France that also suffered so much from the World War I experience not have extremist governments during the interwar period, while Italy and especially Germany did?

History and theory

"Too much history!" I exclaimed to my wife as we drove from the Dalmatian coast of Croatia to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was in Sarajevo, of course, that the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the throne of the tottering Austro-Hungarian Empire, igniting the spark that led to World War I and the rise of extremisms of all types. And it was the loss of Fiume (today's Rijeka on the Dalmatian coast) that was to be the cause célèbre of extreme nationalists such as Gabriele D'Annunzio and ultimately Mussolini, the prototypical fascist leader of the interwar period. One of the most bloodthirsty fascist organizations of this period, the Croatian Ustaše, was to be led by the Bosnian-born ethnic Croat, Ante Pavelić.

Yet it is not "too much history" in the aggregate that yields political extremism, it is history of a certain type that we must examine in detail. This particular historical trajectory will be specified as the succeeding chapters unfold.

At times, it is equally, perhaps even more, effective to make one's claims by indirection in place of forthright assertion. And Jacques Barzun, the Columbia

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dean, historian, cultural critic, and genuine polymath, presents a marvelously lucid foil against which I can frame my theoretical intent. According to Barzun:

> History, like a vast river, propels logs, vegetation, rafts, and debris; it is full of live and dead things, some destined for resurrection; it mingles many waters and holds in solution invisible substances stolen from distant soils. Anything may become part of it; that is why it can be an image of the continuity of mankind. And it is also why some of its freight turns up again in the social sciences: they were constructed out of the contents of history in the same way as houses in medieval Rome were made out of stones taken from the Coliseum. But the [social] sciences based on sorted facts cannot be mistaken for rivers flowing in time and full of persons and events. They are systems fashioned with concepts, numbers, and abstract relations. *For history, the reward of eluding method is to escape abstraction*.[3]

I am not concerned here with the infinitely variegated events that so intrigue historians like Barzun. For him, the abstractions of the social sciences temper the propulsion of the "vast river" of history, damming it in places, and sorting through its myriad pathways in order to capture only those of theoretical interest to the analyst. And this is precisely what I intend to do in the most concrete sense: examine only those historical trajectories that are deemed to be theoretically important, discarding those that are not, but at the same time allowing for the discovery of instances where the expected national trajectory is *not* found, but extremism *is*, thereby remaining open to the possibility of theoretical disconfirmation or emendation. The presence of that trajectory, but absence of political extremism, also would suggest disconfirmation or a required emendation. As we shall see, elements of context dependency will generate new causal pathways not initially postulated, which arise from the theoretically mandated historical trajectory associated with extremism. The historical context of Greece, in particular, will prove to be fertile ground for theoretical expansion.

From the outset let me make clear my theoretical intent. I am concerned with how individual persons become extremists in their behavior, whether as leaders of political parties, the military, or in social movements. To this extent I am not interested in extremist group formation or socialization, ably described by scholars such as Marc Sageman.[4] My image of the individual is one born into a particular historical configuration having a past, present, and anticipated future. The interface between that individual and his/her national trajectory is the focus of study. Although this may appear to be an analytical leap from aggregate to individual behavior, I hope that the following analyses will support my argument. In any event, inferences drawn from combining data at different levels of analysis have been shown to be a fruitful area of inquiry as demonstrated, for example, by Gary King.[5] Of course, the validity of the theoretical arguments put

[3] Emphasis added; quoted in Krystal 2007, 103. [4] 2004. [5] 1997.

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forward here will have to stand or fall on the evidentiary base. That base consists of a wide range of cases, with some unexpected findings, at least to this writer. The intersection of historical trajectory and personal biography, for example, will reveal unforeseen aspects of the lives of political extremists who, in seeking to establish or reinforce their political programs, were responsible for the deaths of millions. In differing contexts, Joseph Stalin and the Young Turk leaders of the Armenian genocide are cases in point, as are 1,581 Nazi war criminals.

The study of political extremism

Why study political extremism? Well, extremists typically kill people in large numbers, as will be denoted in the definition of political extremism. Clearly this should be a sufficient reason to justify the study of its origins. Yet, there are also some non-obvious reasons to study this phenomenon, not included in the definition. Extremists tend to be disruptive not only to states but also to international regions. Hitler and Stalin are but two illustrations of extremist leaders who not only massively destroyed elements of their national cultures and state infrastructures, but also wreaked havoc on their international surroundings. After World War II, enormous rebuilding and restructuring were required, which, of course, assumed different forms in both East and West. In a real sense, it may be said that these new domestic and international structures were built on the corpses of the nearly 50 million people who died in that war.

When viewed in their totality, political extremism, mass death, and physical destruction form a seamless whole. This is especially true when ideologies associated with modern extremism make universal claims, which clearly apply beyond their points of national origin. Fascism, communism, and radical Islamism share this property.

As we shall see, even when truth claims are not framed in universal language, the international effects can be severe. The chapter on the rampaging military demonstrates the international consequences of military extremism in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, involving the deaths of millions of people and the restructuring of entire societies. Without the Japanese invasion of China and its associated atrocities, we cannot fully understand the hardening American stance against Japan and the consequent Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The Pakistani army's atrocities in East Pakistan triggered the Indian invasion of 1971 and consequent formation of the new state of Bangladesh. And the mass murders by the Indonesian military in1965 became part of a complete reorientation of Indonesian foreign policy away from the communist world, and set the stage for the later massacres in East Timor and its emergence as an independent state.

Serbian extremism in Bosnia and Kosovo vastly increased the probability of international intervention by the European Union and United States diplomatically, and by NATO militarily. The Rwandan genocide resulting from Hutu

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extremism led to diplomatic intervention by African states, followed by the extraordinary violence in Zaire (today's Democratic Republic of the Congo) leading to the additional deaths of up to 5.4 million people.[6]

Underpinnings

This book is based largely on diachronic change – that history matters because inescapably it molds our current circumstances either materially or more crucially in our perceptions. Critical events in national history often are the touchstones against which our present and future actions are evaluated both in their planning and in their subsequent retelling. American policy deliberations before the 1991 Gulf War for example, in emphasizing the need for overwhelming force, were heavily influenced by the Vietnam debacle, as are current debates (at the time of this writing) about the wisdom of remaining in Afghanistan. At the same time, World War II has been seen as an exemplar of the "correct" conduct of a war.

Most important, the extremist impulse typically arises in opposition to existing state policy. Hence, that policy and preceding policies even stretching far back into national history become fuel for deliberation on the desirability of future courses of action. Frequently, early national exemplars are found to contrast with existing state policy, or even the current condition of the polity, typically deemed to be execrable by extremist opponents. Why are political extremists so thoroughly opposed to the existing state of affairs? Some major event such as defeat in war, and/or a perceived national humiliation has sparked a grievance-based movement that seeks to rectify matters, often in extreme fashion. Various manifestations of this effort will be analyzed in the coming chapters.

But the study of extremism has an additional advantage beyond the face validity of arguments in favor of that enterprise. It addresses a problem that has existed in the study of genocide and other forms of mass murder – that of incommensurate cases. In writing *The Killing Trap*,[7] this difficulty puzzled me, but I had no preferred solution at that time. Large-N cross-national studies using aggregate data yielded valuable findings that have greatly enriched our understanding of the sources of genocide.[8] Yet in studies of this type, genocides incurring millions of deaths are included along with the Bosnian mass murders (only Srebrenica with its 8,000 Muslim male deaths has been deemed a genocide by the United Nations) that in the most recent authoritative estimate have totaled approximately 55,000 predominantly Muslim civilian victims of war or massacre.[9] The case of Srebrenica meets the United Nations' criterion of the destruction of an ethnic group "in whole or in part," yet elides the whole issue of magnitude that does indeed distinguish among individual cases. Instead of country-level units

[6] McGreal 2008. [7] Midlarsky 2005b.
[8] See, for example, Krain (1997, 2005). [9] Tabeau and Bijak 2006, 235.

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of analysis used by these studies, a focus on the interface between the individual and society, frequently occurring at lower levels of aggregation (as in Ottoman or German city/provincial birthplace) can yield additional explanatory power.

In one sense, however, we can compare the seemingly incommensurate, if the unit of analysis is changed to political extremism. This change of unit lays the foundation for understanding how political extremism arises, which then can be enacted in the form of mass murder. Here we shift the emphasis to the category of people most likely to commit the most egregious cases of mass murder. And for the most part, they are political extremists.

Political extremism is defined as the will to power by a social movement in the service of a political program typically at variance with that supported by existing state authorities, and for which individual liberties are to be curtailed in the name of collective goals, including the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program. Restrictions on individual freedom in the interests of the collectivity and the willingness to kill massively are central to this definition; these elements characterize all of the extremist groups considered here. This definition is consistent with others put forward by scholars of fascism, say, and are found in a succeeding chapter.

This change in the unit of analysis to political extremism seems to me to be potentially valuable, both analytically in its own right, and in resolving what appear to be anomalies in prior data sets such as those stemming from the State Failure Task Force (renamed the Political Instability Task Force) used by systematic studies. As we shall see, the historical trajectory of Serbia reveals ephemeral gains that distinguish it from other European states; at the same time, it is the only European country to have abetted genocide after 1945, the mass murder of Muslim males at Srebrenica in 1995. Bulgaria, also an Eastern Orthodox Balkan state and, like Serbia, a former Ottoman colony, did not follow the genocidal path, despite the opportunity to do so during World War II. Even during that war, when the majority of Nazi occupied or Nazi allied European countries were complicit in the Holocaust, Bulgaria stands out as one of the few that saved the vast majority of its Jewish citizens from annihilation. Why these vastly different trajectories?

An answer will be found in the sources of extremism in Serbia, the Chetniks (in both earlier and latter-day versions), and the extremist policies of the Milošević government. The twentieth-century histories of Serbia and Bulgaria differ dramatically, despite their apparent similarities of major battlefield losses in World War I, communist governance after World War II, and often shaky, even dismal economic performance both before and after the retreat of communism. Culturally, their Slavic ethnicity and language, and Eastern Orthodox faith, including the public use of the Cyrillic alphabet represent additional commonalities between the two societies. Political extremism never really took root in Bulgaria, while it was episodically manifest in Serbia, especially during the Milošević period. In other words, although both Serbia and Bulgaria emerged

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from one of the empires (Ottoman) in decline that is cited as a principal source of massive twentieth-century political violence,[10] and suffered from another of these sources – ethnic conflict – their tendencies toward extremism fundamentally differed. The theory of ephemeral gains will point to the fundamental differences in historical trajectories that can make extremist ideation and behavior common in one country, but not in another.

Political extremisms of all sorts share a propensity towards the mass murder of actual or potential opponents of their political programs. For this reason, among others, these political regimes have led to greater loss of life during the past century than almost any other social construction of human beings. A recent authoritative estimate of the number of people murdered by the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1987 is 61,911,000; that for the Chinese Communist government between 1923 and 1987 is 76,692,000.[11]

An important focus of this work is mass violence, which has two major components. The first is the mass murder of innocents that is a frequent consequence of political extremism. But the second is mass murder on the battlefield during major wars that, as a consequence of mortality salience (see Chapter 2), makes later political extremism more likely. Thus, mass violence in one form – mortality salience on the battlefield – serves as an independent or explanatory variable in understanding the later rise of political extremism, but in another form is the dependent variable, or that which is to be explained, the mass murder of civilians.

Fascist governments have fewer victims on their records than their communist counterparts. However, during their shorter existence they accounted for millions wantonly murdered, in addition to the battle deaths induced by their military aggressions. In its even briefer existence, radical Islamism also has demonstrated its propensity towards mass murder. These losses of human life, in addition to the intrinsic fascination of understanding why human beings are attracted to these noxious forms of political organization, make the proposed analyses imperative.

This volume examines the origins of political extremism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, concentrating on the four most commonly occurring forms: fascism, communism, radical Islamism, and extreme nationalism (with rampant militarism and genocide as especially sanguinary forms). All of these "isms" are at the same time "totalisms" in that they pursue a singular view of the human being that is total in its conception. (I am avoiding use of the term "totalitarian" because of its implication of coercion. Totalisms can be coercive, but under conditions of a steady peaceful socialization over a long period of time, do not have to be.) All aspects of the person: cognitions, beliefs, daily activities, and worldview are conditioned, even dictated by the total ideational

[10] Ferguson 2006, xli. [11] Rudolph Rummel, personal communication.

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system, whether secular in origin or derived from sacred scripture. Although extreme nationalists, including rampant militarists, typically do not dictate a worldview per se, in the matter of military supremacy they are total, brooking no opposition to their governance. Even *potential* enemies can be murdered, as in the mass murder of Chinese civilians (Japan), Hindu and Muslim Bengalis in East Pakistan (Pakistan), or Communists and those even dimly suspected of communism (Indonesia). Extreme nationalists subscribe to the totality of their governance, frequently employing ethnic cleansing or even genocide to achieve complete political control.

All of these "isms" – fascism, communism, radical Islamism, and extreme nationalism including rampant militarism as an especially virulent form – have at their core "an attempt to embody the Enlightenment ideal of a world without…conflict."[12] According to James C. Scott,[13] high modernism in authoritarian form lies at the root of these political programs. The core of these efforts is anti-liberal, for the vast reordering of society needed to effect the elimination of future conflict must necessarily deny many individuals their civil rights that lie at the heart of liberalism. Elsewhere, commenting on religion in the political philosophy of Leszek Koltakowski, the British philosopher John Gray,[14] examines ostensibly secular ideologies such as communism or even democratic capitalism (especially as seen by Fukuyama). "Presupposing as they do a teleological view of history that cannot be stated in empirical terms, all such theories are religious narratives translated into secular language." Although apparently based on religious doctrine, al-Qaeda is a terrorist organization that hopes to achieve permanent peace through the re-establishment of the Caliphate as a supreme supranational entity. The essentially secular goal of establishing a new (revived) political entity to more effectively counter and ultimately dominate the West has a religion-based teleology. Thus, whether political action is motivated principally by religion or by secular goals is an essentially meaningless question, because the two sources often are so intertwined as to be frequently indistinguishable. Indeed, as we shall see, "concrete images, metaphors, and narratives,"[15] common to both secular and religion-based movements are an important part of the experiential system of information processing. At the same time, however, because these elements are already found in ancient belief systems, not requiring their establishment anew, religion can be adapted as a vehicle for extremist behavior.

The contemporary use of terror of course finds earlier European antecedents in the writings and activities of Russian revolutionaries such as Sergei Nechayev and Mikhail Bakunin. When asked which Romanovs (tsarist dynasts) were to be marked for death, Nechayev replied, "All of them."[16] Bakunin the anarchist famously remarked that, "The passion for destruction is also a creative passion."[17] Or

[12] Gray 2003, 2. [13] 1998. [14] 2008. [15] Epstein 1994, 711.
[16] Quoted in Gray 2003, 22. [17] Quoted in Gray 2003, 21.

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more recently, as the Hungarian communist György Lukács put it, "Communist ethics makes it the highest duty to act wickedly…This is the greatest sacrifice revolution asks from us."[18] Describing these efforts by communists and Nazis, Edmund Stillman and William Pfaff[19] averred:

> To destroy a city, a state, an empire even, is an essentially finite act; but to attempt the total annihilation – the liquidation – of so ubiquitous but so theoretically or ideologically defined an entity as a social class or racial abstraction is quite another, and one impossible even in conception to a mind not conditioned by Western habits of thought.

Referring to al-Qaeda, Gray[20] comments, "Self-evidently, the belief that terror can remake the world is not a result of any kind of scientific inquiry. It is faith, pure and simple. No less incontrovertibly, the faith is uniquely western [sic]."

The contraction of authority space

This book advances the basic idea that the origins of political extremism are to be found in the contraction of authority space. The concept of authority space is a companion to one coined by Juan Linz[21] – that of political space. Whereas fascist political parties, according to Linz, require the political space (generally found in democracies and moderate autocracies)[22] to recruit new adherents, an authority space is required for governments to continue to exercise legitimate influence over the populations they govern. Authority space is understood to be the proportion of society over which governmental influence legitimately extends.

Hence, authority space can refer to the intrastate societal sectors that recognize governmental influence as legitimate; alternatively, it can also mean territories incorporated within the polity, therefore subject to governmental influence. If for some reason, say loss in interstate war, territories are excluded from specific regime governance, then contraction of authority space has occurred. Most spectacular were the contractions of authority space occurring after World War I when the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated, the Ottoman Empire was shorn of much of its territory, and imperial Germany was truncated. But important varieties of authority space exist in which societal groups have "captured" a particular governmental authority space, and based on long custom, expect to continue occupying an authoritative position within a governmental sector. As we shall see, the disproportionately large representation of Tamils within the

[18] Quoted in "Marx after Communism" 2002. [19] Quoted in Gray 2003, 117–18.
[20] Gray 2003, 118. [21] 1980.
[22] Historically, multiparty systems in new democracies have provided that political space, as in Weimar Germany. For an analysis of the stability of party systems, see Midlarsky 1984, while the insecurity of new democracies is treated in Midlarsky 1999 and 2002.

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