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Introduction

It is sometimes hard to escape the dark side of religion. The support for aggressive nationalism by Orthodox Church leaders during the Balkan Wars (Sells 1996), Islamic nationalists during the Armenian Genocide (Bloxham 2005) and Christian bishops during the massacres in Rwanda (Des Forges 1999) all draw attention to how robust religious networks, in combination with absolute truth claims and tight authority structures, can produce devastating outcomes for outsiders. The Divine also has a brighter side, however. Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish and Christian leaders alike have combatted racism, created humanitarian assistance movements for excluded groups and produced some of the most influential pioneers of tolerance and empathy within nations (Allport 1966; Philpott 2007).

This book aims to shed light on this "ambivalence of the sacred" (Appleby 1999) by studying religious assistance to threatened neighbors in times of social upheaval. Why do some religious groups provide protection to victims of mass persecution while others passively condone or even support such attacks? I aim to answer this question by looking at how the Holocaust, one of the most gruesome and intellectually challenging episodes of mass persecution, played out in the Low Countries, a laboratory of denominational diversity spanning several religious fault lines. I argue that it is the interplay of church and community – and not something inherent to any individual, group or denomination itself – that determines which side of the sacred prevails. In doing so, I aim to illuminate the robustness of pluralism and inter-group relationships more broadly.

Throughout this study, I shed new light on abstract concepts such as empathy, civil society and collective action, trace the roots of intergroup solidarity back to the Reformation in the sixteenth century and discuss the argument's extension to different episodes of mass killing such as the Armenian and Rwandan genocides. However, it was in my home country where I stumbled over an empirical puzzle that formed the starting point of this research project.

1.1 PUZZLE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

About 200 kilometers from the Dutch capital Amsterdam, in the region of Twente, lie the medium-sized towns Almelo and Borne. Before the outbreak of World War II, Almelo and Borne had a similar sociocultural outlook. The population in both towns was relatively prosperous and labored in local textile factories. Ever since the turn of the nineteenth century, the towns were home to sizable Jewish communities. During the German occupation, both communities faced similar challenges and underwent identical structural transformations. From 1941 onward, Jews were no longer allowed to take part in public life. After being segregated socially and spatially, German officers, helped by local policemen, started organizing roundups to track down Jewish inhabitants and send them to the infamous extermination camps in Eastern Europe (Presser 1965). Despite the sociocultural similarity of the two towns, outcomes of these roundups differed fundamentally, as we can see in Figure 1.1. In Almelo, numerous Jews were able to evade deportation with the help of Catholic Church chaplains Bodde and Middelkoop, who temporarily sheltered Jews in Saint Gregorius Church before housing them with loyal members of their parish. As a result, 42 percent of the Jews in Almelo survived the war. Despite the presence of three Catholic congregations, no successful Catholic rescue network emerged in neighboring Borne. Consequently, only 22 percent of the Jewish population escaped deportation (Weustink 1985).

If we step back and look at the Netherlands as a whole, depicted in the back panel of Figure 1.1, we see that this pattern is not unique to Almelo and Borne. Throughout the country we can discern fine-grained pockets of evasion. This raises an important question. Why are some Christian communities willing and able to protect victims of mass persecution while others are not? It is important to note that this question is not only pertinent to how the Holocaust played out in the Netherlands. Throughout occupied Europe, Church leadership proved crucial for

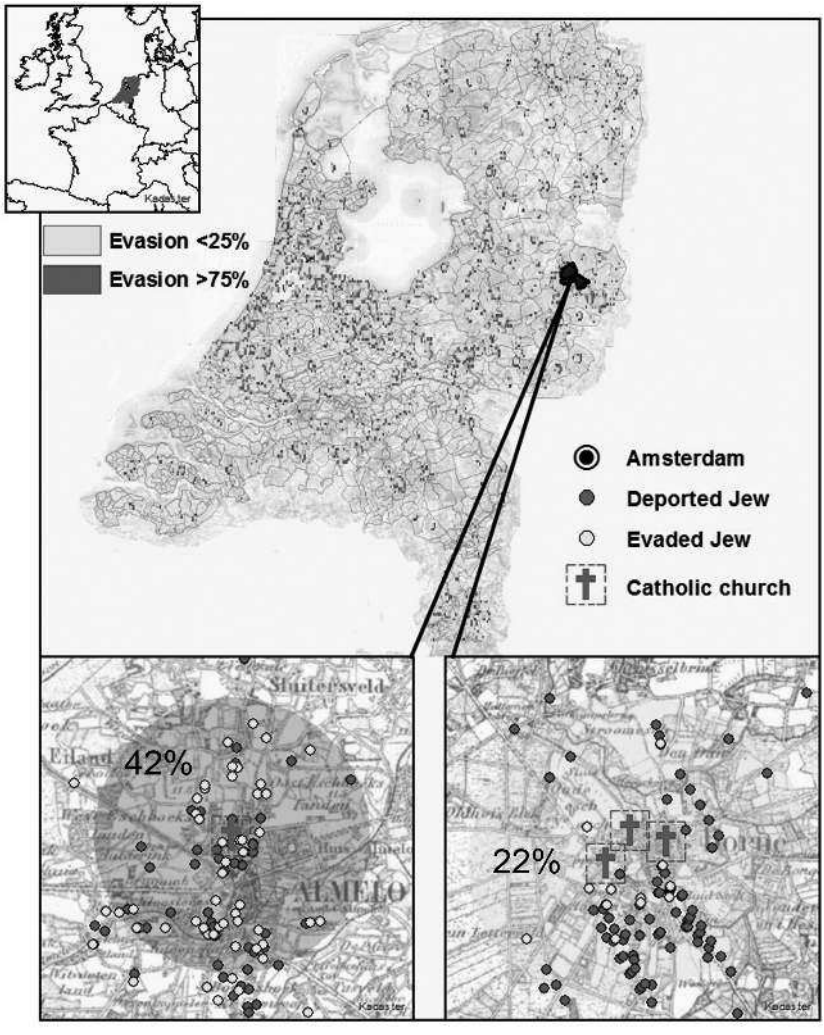


FIGURE 1.1 Evasion in Almelo, Borne and the Netherlands. A black-and-white version of this figure will appear in some formats. For the colour version, please refer to the plate section.

the emergence of defense movements that arrested the Holocaust by enabling Jewish evasion (Fein 1979). Needless to say, the Holocaust's 11 million victims attest to the reality that religious help was far from universal.

The importance of this question also travels well beyond the borders of Holocaust studies, as puzzling variation in religious resistance

to violence abounds within conflicts, nations and denominations across time and space. While clerics were key in creating defense movements that tried to protect Tutsis from Hutu massacres in the Rwandan region of Bigihu, religious help was almost absent in the rest of the country (Longman 2010). Christian protests prevented the escalation of violence in Kenya and South Africa, while the absence of such protests facilitated killings of Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia (Sells 1996). Likewise, Islamic leadership was a mobilizing force of genocide against Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Darfur, but it created pockets of protection for Tutsis in Rwanda (Ternon 2008; Viret 2008). In the United States, Protestantism was used to both legitimize and oppose the repression of African Americans (Miller 1957; Foner 2015). Even on an individual level, social psychologists have shown that religious inspiration can provide the normative justification for humanitarian assistance, passivity and violence (Fogelman 1994; Staub 2003).

1.2 EXISTING RESEARCH

The mere existence of all these contradicting patterns has forced some authors to conclude that religious protection is purely driven by idiosyncratic accidents of history or randomly distributed personality traits that fall outside the explanatory realm of the social sciences (Gilbert 2010). Indeed, existing explanations of political violence, altruism, religion and genocide seem to fall short in explaining the emergence of religious assistance to threatened neighbors.

Dominant theories of political violence focus on territorial control (Kalyvas 2006), electoral dynamics (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011) and cross-cutting civic organizations (Varshney 2003), yet these fail to explain subnational variation in Jewish rescue within the Netherlands; Nazi authority was not seriously challenged anywhere in the country, party politics were neutralized during the war, no Jewish political parties existed and interreligious associations were extremely rare (Lijphart 1968). This lack of explanatory power is due to the fact that scholars of violence prioritize the role of warring parties, rarely theorizing the capacity of local civilian bystanders to protect human rights (O. Kaplan 2013).

Although existing theories on religion, altruism and genocide recognize the importance of bystanders, they do not fare much better, because their focus is either too micro or too macro. On the macro-side of

the spectrum, researchers tend to focus on how broad social environments such as religious communities or nations produce norms that motivate rescue. Often these branches of theory treat nations and denominations as monolithic entities driven by inherent doctrines or national leaders exploiting strong hierarchies (Fein 1979; Croes and Tammes 2004). On the micro-side, scholarship focuses on how religion triggers a wide range of individual-level dispositions such as altruism, compassion, inclusive identities (Fogelman 1994), obedience (Waller 2007), conformity and antipathy toward outsiders and adventurousness (Adorno et al. 1950), which either motivate or discourage help to those in need.

The first branch of research is too broad and overlooks subnational variation in resistance altogether. Inherent doctrines, overarching institutions and national leaders are not able to explain why two nearby churches in Borne and Almelo, belonging to the same denomination and diocese, diverged completely in their response to the deportations. Work focusing on how broad environments produce the norms to rescue ignores the fact that orders by leaders are not automatically followed by everyone and that doctrine is interpreted differently by different people.

The micro branch implicitly assumes the existence of a universal religious disposition that operates the same for everyone regardless of social position, while failing to link individual dispositions back to community-level outcomes. Furthermore, this line of work is indeterminate, expecting both negative and positive effects from religion. To make this concrete, it is not clear why religion would create altruism and not xenophobia in Almelo, while the opposite would happen five kilometers to the east in Borne.

Instead of focusing on how individual dispositions, nations and denominations operate in isolation of each other, this book looks at how the interplay of all three enables the appropriation of existing networks for assistance to threatened neighbors. As such, I explore how national and religious norms, local community structures and individual dispositions interact to produce resistance by weaving together elements from the different approaches outlined earlier. In particular, I show that the ways in which environmental norms and individual dispositions shape resistance to genocide is contingent on how religious communities are embedded locally vis-à-vis other communities.

1.3 THE ARGUMENT

The central argument of this book is that local religious minorities[1] are more likely than their majority counterparts to protect victims of mass persecution, because they have both the willingness and the capacity to do so. Two distinct, but partly reinforcing, mechanisms link minority status to rescue operations.

The first mechanism focuses on the capacity to rescue. Minorities are better equipped to translate opposition to genocide into action because they have an advantage in setting up clandestine networks that are immune to individual betrayal (Brewer and Silver 2000; Berman and Laitin 2008). As a result, minorities mobilize more and are discovered less often. Throughout the book, I refer to this process as the capacity mechanism. This mechanism derives from the fact that minority enclaves are embedded in isolated hubs of commitment which:

- assure members that mobilization is possible (Elster 1979)
- make it easier for organizers to select good and diverse recruits (Marwell and Oliver 1993)
- reduce the chance that a movement gets dismantled by security forces (Aldrich 1999).

The second mechanism involves the willingness of local leaders to resist genocide. Aristotle, Homer and Rousseau taught us long ago that compassion is largely a function of understanding the shared vulnerability of human beings and recognizing that what happens to others can easily befall ourselves (Nussbaum 1992a). As leaders of religious minorities themselves depend on pluralism for group survival, they will be more likely to empathize with those targeted by violent purification campaigns, imbuing their networks with preferences to oppose genocide (Hoffman 2001). Throughout the book I refer to this process as *the empathy mechanism*.

Hence, the convergence of clandestine capacity and empathy with outsiders turns minority enclaves into bulwarks of resistance against genocide. Consequently, it is the local position of faith-based communities –

[1] Local religious minority status is produced by the intersection of denominational and spatial boundaries. I define denomination as a subgroup within a religion that operates under a common name, tradition and organizational infrastructure. Local minority denominations are all denominations within a local politically relevant space, except the largest one. Politically relevant spaces are those around which political parties and civil society are organized.

and not something inherent to any local community, individual or religion itself – that produces networks of assistance to threatened neighbors.

1.4 THE HOLOCAUST

Covert resistance poses enormous obstacles for empirical investigation. Gaining direct access to contemporary clandestine cells is next to impossible, exactly because these cells need to reduce exposure in order to survive. Archival work on historical cases can alleviate this challenge, because it enables the study of groups that are no longer under immediate threat, reducing the urgency of secrecy. Moreover, when political structures open and regimes change, former clandestine networks sometimes go public in order to gain recognition for their activities against foes from the past. This often opens up a wide array of archives and testimonies. Instead of focusing on contemporary cases, this study, therefore, focuses on an historical episode of resistance against violence: the protection of Jews in the Low Countries during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust is without doubt the most well-documented episode of mass killing. Exploiting the extraordinary array of largely unused historical sources presented by the Holocaust enables me to trace the capacity and willingness of religious actors to resist genocide on an extremely fine-grained level. In addition to secondary literature and preexisting data, I rely on:

- A unique geocoded database of German administrative records detailing the victimization of 123,000 Dutch and 52,000 Belgian Jews to explore whether Jews living close to minority churches were more likely to evade deportation.
- A content analysis of more than 1,700 prewar claims by opinion leaders to explore attitudes of different religious and secular groups toward Jews between 1930 and 1939.
- A semi-automatic content analysis of 905 clandestine Dutch newspapers that explores attitudes of different religious and secular groups toward Jews during World War II.
- An underutilized collection of postwar testimonies collected in light of an honors pension program to investigate whether and, more importantly, why minority churches in the Netherlands were better able to provide assistance to Jews.

- A collection of postwar trial data to explore why majority rescue networks were not able to stay underground and got infiltrated by the security forces.
- A collection of Nazi archives to gauge the number of police officers who did not collaborate with German security forces.
- A postwar survey conducted among Protestant and Catholic clerics in Belgium to ascertain why some church communities did provide assistance to Jews.
- Existing collections of testimonies collected by Yad Vashem from twenty-one countries to assess whether geographical patterns of evasion can be plausibly linked to church communities that form local minorities beyond the Low Countries.

Of course, the use of postwar testimonies and archival material has serious limitations as well. These data points do not throw a spotlight on a random or representative sample of war experiences as a whole, but instead overrepresent the stories of winners and survivors. Furthermore, interpretations of events are likely to be influenced by an extremely powerful post-Holocaust commemoration culture. During my archival work, several people hinted at the fact that some materials were not stored or were even destroyed when they did not fit the national narrative that the institute in question aimed to convey. Although we will probably never find out whether this is true, the possibility merits pause.

However, it is unlikely that this study is reproducing an intentionally crafted narrative as my findings go against the strains of immediate postwar discourse. Right after the war, Belgian Catholics prided themselves for protecting so many Jews, while the emphasis in the Netherlands was on how resistance transcended existing social boundaries in Dutch society and formed the starting point for a breakthrough movement that tried to overthrow religious and political segmentation (Lagrou 1997). My research, on the contrary, highlights the *relatively* limited role of the Catholic Church in Belgium and emphasizes the salience of denominational differences on a local level in the Netherlands.

1.5 THE LOW COUNTRIES

The Holocaust took place in a wide range of contexts over a relatively long period of time, enabling systematic comparative research on group-level variables and resistance. The Shoah in the Low Countries provides

a particularly unique, albeit tragic, opportunity to investigate whether religious minority status affects the production of rescue networks.

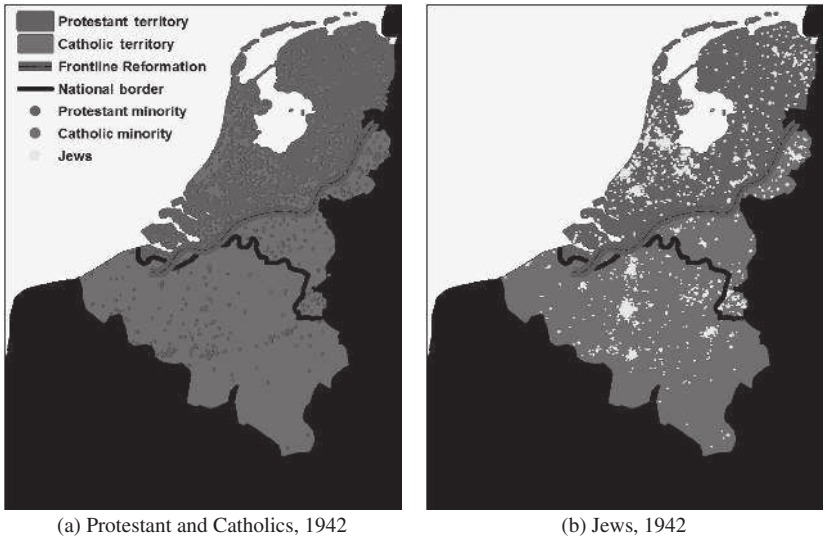
Looking to the Low Countries allows me to test the minority hypothesis in a research design that complements the strengths of a most similar systems research design (Lijphart 1975) with elements of a research design that is most different in scope conditions (Przeworski and Teune 1970). The former, employed in a subnational study of the Netherlands, compares cases that are as similar as possible, except on the key explanatory variable, enabling me to carefully investigate causal relationships while keeping alternative factors constant. The latter matches more diverse cases, here drawn from Belgium, to assess whether similar causal processes operate the same way in different contexts.

This research design makes use of the fact that the Low Countries were located at the frontline of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. As a consequence:

1. the northern part of the Netherlands is dominated by Protestantism
2. the southern part of the Netherlands is dominated by Catholicism
3. Belgium is completely dominated by Catholicism.

Despite these overarching patterns, however, missionary activities, interregional migration (of both Protestants and Catholics) and disputed scripture (mostly within the Protestant Church) created a dynamic religious landscape, resulting in pockets of religious minority communities in both Catholic and Protestant parts of the Low Countries (see Figure 1.2a). Importantly, Jews lived throughout both countries (see Figure 1.2b). This mixed landscape allows me to assess whether religious minority positions affected mobilization for both Protestant and Catholic communities, while keeping inherent characteristics of nations, local communities and religions constant. This is done by comparing the same religious groups in both minority and majority environments within the same country and different countries. In particular, if the minority thesis holds, we would expect Catholics to be more likely to rescue in Protestant parts of the Low Countries (1), while Protestants should be more likely to rescue in Catholic parts of the Low Countries (2 and 3).

This book first examines resistance activities of religious groups within the Netherlands (1 and 2) before moving on to Belgium (3). The initial focus on the Dutch case has the advantage that it controls for potentially confounding variables. First, top–down enforcement of



(a) Protestant and Catholics, 1942 (b) Jews, 1942

FIGURE 1.2 Religious minorities in the Netherlands and Belgium. A black-and-white version of this figure will appear in some formats. For the colour version, please refer to the plate section.

mobilization between congregations was kept constant as Protestant and Catholic leaders in the Netherlands protested anti-Semitic legislation collaboratively at the national level (Snoek 2005), providing all Christians, regardless of congregation, with the same moral message of how German persecutions went against the tenets of their faiths. Second, minority and majority congregations in Protestant and Catholic parts of the Netherlands were exposed to the same occupation regime and Jewish population.

At the same time, comparisons of religious rescue activities in Belgium (3) provides variation in potential scope conditions and enables us to investigate whether the minority hypothesis operates the same in diverse political contexts. Like the southern part of the Netherlands, Belgium was home to sizable Protestant minority enclaves living in the vicinity of Jews. However, there were fundamental national-level differences between the Netherlands and Belgium in occupation regime, political cleavages, religious diversity, national religious elites and Jewish populations (Kossman 1986). If religious minorities were more likely to rescue Jews in Belgium as well as the Netherlands, we can be certain that the minority mechanisms operate independently of these contextual differences.