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ANTH 481: Senior Thesis
Opposing Ideologies: The Function of
Sacrifice in the Contemporary Construction of
Extremist Communities
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04/27/2022

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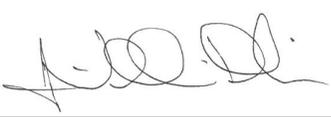
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I. Introduction

In the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance report, a dispatch designed to identify the most urgent threats to the United States of America, the Biden administration highlighted violent extremism as one of the biggest global threats the United States faces stating “...violent extremism, both domestic and international, remain significant threats” (Biden, 2021). The use of the term “extremist” and “extremism” have proliferated with the United Nations releasing a comprehensive strategy to combat what it labeled as “violent extremism” (United Nations, 2016). The Peoples Republic of China also freely uses this label. On the website for the Chinese Embassy in the United States, a state press release reads that sections of its population have founded “religious extremist groups” that launch frequent terrorist attacks (Chinese Embassy, 2021). A wide range of states and the United Nations itself clearly identify extremists and the spread of extremism as existential threats to the prosperity, safety, security, and futures of their peoples and nation.

This raises the question then of how extremism is defined? How does extremism define itself? In what way does extremism produce and reproduce its own identity? The following essay explores these questions and offers the foundation to understand extremism-more accurately defined as “oppositional ideologies”-and the key mechanism that facilitates the function of oppositional ideologies, that key mechanism being sacrifice. By applying the theoretical framework of oppositional ideologies and the cultural mechanism of sacrifice in a cross-cultural comparison of two distinct oppositional ideologies, wahhabism/salafism and white nationalism,

I will examine the universal function of sacrifice that lays at the heart of all oppositional ideologies.

II. Oppositional Ideologies

Extremism has become a frequently used term despite its meaning not being well understood as well as the boundaries between extremism and mainstream political theories and social movements being undefined. This absence of clarity is further confounded by most states lacking a legal definition of extremism (Bötticher, 2017). Despite this, rhetoric around battling, countering, and eliminating extremism is widely used by various states and political actors with a multitude of programs existing to combat the threat of extremism with a focus on “violent extremism” and “de-radicalization” (Bötticher, 2017). This new use of extremism as an explicit tool of state power to identify those opposed to its interests is best understood in the theoretical framework of “biopolitics” set out by Michel Foucault and later expanded by Giorgio Agamben’s “state of exception” and will be explored shortly. Examining extremism in this way moves the conversation forward about how to define individuals and beliefs as extremist, why we use these labels, and eventually offers up a new theoretical conception of “oppositional ideologies.”

The origin of the term “extremism” comes from Bishop Stephen Gardiner who in 1546 used the precursor term of “extremite” to describe his enemies. Joseph Worcester’s dictionary from 1846 is cited as an early source, but, in an explicitly political context, the terminology of extremism is rooted in the modern world with US Senator Daniel Webster popularizing it to describe what he viewed as the most violent proponents of the anti-slavery cause during the American Civil War (Bötticher, 2017). The terminology of extremism would be revitalized again in the US during the 1960s while in Germany the modern popularization of the term only entered

the “Duden” dictionary in 1942. It would be introduced as a scientific concept by Manfred Funke in the late seventies and gain popularity going into the 1980s as empirical approaches were developed to offer more concrete conceptualizations of extremism and its function (Bötticher, 2017).

In 1974, the Verfassungsschutz-the German domestic intelligence service-and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, introduced the term into the German political sphere using the term to denote “...a fundamental opposition to core values of the West German constitution” (Bötticher, 2017). This new categorization made Germany one of the only countries to explicitly define extremism and was further reflected and enshrined in the German state by a series of verdicts made by the federal constitutional court to target the Sozialistische Reichspartei Deutschlands, a successor party of the Hitler-era National Socialists, and the German Communist party (Bötticher, 2017). Since then, other states have begun to use the terminology of extremism to persecute “extremists,” perhaps most notably “religious extremists,” during the global war on terror. Larger conversations about extremism terminology have shifted the discussion away from why it is used to instead creating theoretical frameworks rooted in empirical and inductive research (Bötticher, 2017) so that states, academics, and researchers can better define it (Berger, 2018).

Extremism being institutionalized as a tool of the state is a uniquely modern practice that fits into the larger framework set out in Michel Foucault’s theory of “biopolitics.” Foucault’s theory of biopolitics presents an analysis and conclusion that the modern state has evolved past

historical governance to form a limited range of practices that encompass “religious guidance of the soul,” defining the religious identity of a population, and to administer on a territory holding and its inhabitants new forms of governing (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). These new forms mean governing a population through biological forms of knowledge that include statistical analysis, bio-scientific knowledge, and macro-economics to control the very life and well wellbeing of its population (Gutting & Oksala, 2018).

Foucault describes this new governance as “the way in which one conducts the conduct of men,” (Gutting & Oksala, 2018) using new, most importantly, modern, and complex “techniques of power” to control every aspect of life experienced by the governed population (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). To fully understand the methodology for how these modern techniques of power are enacted, Foucault argues that the underlying rationality of the state must be understood as these practices of governance are “...enabled, regulated, and justified by a specific form of reasoning or rationality,” that explain their goals and the methods of achieving said goals (Gutting & Oksala, 2018).

The most important aspect of Foucault’s theory is understanding power as “a set of relations,” how these relations are rationalized, how these forms of rationality reproduce themselves through “systems of practices,” and the role of relations in said systems (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). The culmination of Foucault’s theory of biopolitics is that the modern biopolitical governmental rationality encompasses two major features (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). The first is the consolidation of political power under a centralized state that possesses a highly organized

administration and bureaucracy, and the second is “individualizing power” which develops power technologies aimed at individuals so that the state can govern population conduct in “...a continuous and permanent way” (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). While all states vary in their ability to centralize state power and practice individualizing power, it is the goal they practice to differing degrees (Gutting & Oksala, 2018).

Giorgio Agamben expands on the work of Foucault. While he critiques Foucault’s specificities regarding biopolitics, Agamben’s “state of exception” fits perfectly into the larger theoretical framework of biopolitics. Agamben’s critique establishes a connection between “sovereign power and biopolitics” that a governing body consolidates and exercises its larger agenda of biopolitics through the sovereign bodies’ practice of power (Lemke, 2005). The power of the sovereign necessitates the eventual creation of biopolitical strategy as part of a larger wish to retain sovereignty over its political body (human beings), and the building of biopolitical regimes is not an upset in state power but instead a continuation of it (Lemke, 2005). An important part of this biopolitical continuum, and the part of Agamben’s critique that builds on the work of Foucault without contradicting him, is the concept that this biopolitical society relies upon the “... simultaneous exclusion of human beings who are denied full legal status” (Lemke, 2005.) This is specifically defined through a “central binary relationship of the political” that separates “natural being” and the “legal existence” of a person that Agamben asserts is part of all political processes and creates the space of exception where peoples are removed from their larger biopolitical body and “... reduced to the status of his physical existence” (Lemke, 2005). The relation of the state of exception to the larger biopolitical project creates the basis for the

political body and helps to further refine the goals and rationalities of the biopolitical project (Lemke, 2005).

Foucault's analytical framework, in conjunction with the state of exception from Agamben's critique, offers a full understanding of the rise of extremism as a term of political terminology utilized by the state. In short, extremism is the criterion for the entire basis of the new regime of biopolitics, and the label of extremism moves people out of the biopolitical project and into the state of exception. The new biopolitical state "conducts the conduct of men" through a series of relationships that are being constantly changed and updated, and it is the relationship between the state and the "extremists" that sets the parameters. Further, this relationship is a competition of rationalities, the rationality of the state and the rationality of the extremists. As the rationality of the state adjusts to reject aspects that it once held true, those aspects of rationality become part of the extreme and exorcised from the curtailed conduct reinforced by the state. In this way, the state of exception is in constant flux as the state adjusts and redefines who loses their legal existence and is reduced to their natural being. Moreover, the state of exception grows not only to encompass a way for the state to define its biopolitical project through bio-socio ideas but takes on aspects of sociocultural mechanics making culture itself a biological aspect and creating a blurred realm between bio-socio and socio-cultural identities blurring.

The relationship of extremism to the biopolitical state is what is used by the biopolitical state to refine and proliferate its rationale that leads to the creation of these opposition ideologies.

They are opposition ideologies because they exist in stark contrast to the biopolitical project perpetrated by the state. It is the exact way that the state operates the state of exception and negotiation of its relationship to extremism that is then utilized by those it is being practiced on. The subjects of these policies use it to further define their own rationale and relationship to the state observing how they themselves are inscribed into the practices and systems of the state and working to change these same systems and practices in an effort to alter the overall relationship between themselves and the state. Specifically, they focus on finding areas where they are able to upend the centralization of political power to exert their own control, reassert their own sovereignty on their individualizing power, and form new ways of living. Meaning, these opposition ideologies formulate and create their own biopolitical projects, developing new vast states of exception where everyone in the biopolitical project they are opposed to exists in.

Through this built upon analysis, we see that opposition ideologies are biopolitical projects in their own right, and the main factor that distinguishes them from state sponsored biopolitical projects is a lack of centralized political power which states use to label anything that exists beyond the biopolitical project, in the state of exception, as “extremist.” Opposition ideologies lack the structure and cohesion to enforce their own conceptions of extremism in a broad spanning political project. It can be observed that these biopolitical projects operate in conjunction with one another in a constant negation of belonging and dispossession often leading the boundaries of such projects being blurred as bio-socio and sociocultural identifications and markers adjust and change. Meaning the state of exception is undergoing constant movement.

The exact mechanisms of how the biopolitical project is conducted by these opposition ideologies remain to be explored.

III. Sacrifice and Its Mechanics

Hubert and Mauss were some of the first theorists to attempt a definition of the system of sacrifice, and together they established that the main function of sacrifice was to create a pathway to link the “sacred” and the “profane” through mediation of a victim (Edwards, 2017). Through this mediation and the complete destruction of the victim, the relationship between the profane and the sacred would take on a material form (Edwards, 2017). When a material link is created between these two spaces, the sacred is given voice and becomes reality (Edwards, 2017). The exact structure of this relationship can be understood as a “tripartite structure” of the “rite” (act of sacrifice), the “sacrificer” (the actor sponsoring the sacrifice who benefits from the sacrifice), and the “victim” (the object destroyed in the act of sacrifice) (Edwards, 2017).

This tripartite structure allows for acts of sacrifice to function across a wide continuum with “inducing a state of sanctity” on one end and “dispelling a state of sin” on the other (Edwards, 2017). The ability of sacrifice to encompass such a broad spectrum is because the perception of the sacrificer allows the conceptions of the sacred and the profane as dichotomous elements of the same reality that exist as part of a larger sociocultural structure, not forces in opposition but parts of a larger whole (Edwards, 2017). Hubert’s and Mauss’ definition of the system of sacrifice offers an initial jumping off point as they highlight the “reality of violence” (Edwards, 2017). With this concept of sacrifice, when the victim undergoes consecration, it undergoes a complete destruction (Edwards, 2017). When the victim is a human being, it is the destruction of the human being, the “act of killing,” that gives birth to the material form of the sacred and its relationship to the profane (Edwards, 2017).

Equally important to understanding the function of sacrifice is the work of René Girard. Girard put forth the theory of “mimetic desire” as the genesis of all violence (Williams, 1998). Mimetic desire is the inherent drive in human beings to “...imitate the respected and feared” (Williams, 1998). This leads to the problem of challenge. That is, if one is able to assert themselves, they will eventually displace the one they have been imitating, creating a new rival and leading to an eventual unstable social relations with no means of addressing this phenomenon (Williams, 1998). Communal order in all forms-language, status, possessions, etc.- is threatened through mimetic desire as the rivalry results in violence within the community (Williams, 1998). Girard explains that the regulatory mechanism to address said phenomenon is sacrifice through the “scapegoat,” a victim the community finds to hold responsibility for the problems of rivalry in the community (Williams, 1998).

Sacrifice of the scapegoat allows for the alleviation of violence within the community and continuing maintenance of the communal order by diverting the violence produced by rivalries in the community onto the scapegoat and away from community members (Williams, 1998). During the process of displacement, the intended purpose of alleviating violence within the community by the enacted violence against the scapegoat is actively concealed by the community through cultural rationalizations because said community cannot recognize the true purpose of the scapegoat (Williams, 1998). These cultural rationalizations create symbolic reasoning that justify the destruction of the scapegoat which, importantly, is marginalized but still related to the larger community (Williams, 1998). While this will be expanded upon later, it should be noted that the scapegoat’s marginal, yet still connected, relationship to the community

is best understood as the scapegoat existing in the state of exception. Oppositional ideologies exist explicitly in the biopolitical states's state of exception and act as its scapegoat.

Girard builds on the foundations of mimetic desire by exploring the concepts of violence, violence's relationship to the communal order, and sacrifice (Brown, 1977). Violence is the main form of conduct that humans have used to define themselves (Brown, 1977). From violence, human culture has been formed creating religious and social practices which serve to mitigate violence by condemning or externalizing it which then serves to deny the relationship between human beings and violence (Brown, 1977).

Girard develops this conception of violence with the idea of "sacrificial crisis" which is when a community is in a "crisis of distinctions," meaning a crisis that affects the cultural structure of the community, otherwise known as the communal order (Brown, 1977). The communal order itself is the system that regulates the distinctions in differences between individuals and is used to establish their identity through their relationship to one another (Brown, 1977). Thus, the crisis of distinctions is when the rivalries that arise from mimetic desire come to a head. The sacrificial crisis then occurs when these differences can no longer be clearly defined and the mechanism of the scapegoat sacrifice to alleviate violence fails leading to the proliferation of violence within the community. Sacrifice of the scapegoat must then be reasserted to ensure the longevity and continued function of the communal order (Brown, 1977).

Sacrifice thus becomes the enabling function that allows for the production and reproduction of culture, specifically in a way that the violence enacted through sacrifice is

controlled through the existing religious and social practices and reinforces the taboos and prohibitions that serve to mitigate violence in a communal order (Brown, 1977). Violence, through sacrifice, then can be understood as the way that a community builds identity and orders itself, albeit in an extremely regulated way, that confers the right to commit violence to the authorities in said community creating a monopoly on violence.

IV. Sacrifice As A Tool

The main mechanism that biopolitical projects use to define their own identities is sacrifice. The function of the state of exception-as all biopolitical projects' identity is built on its differences to those not included in the biopolitical project- is sacrifice. The sacred can be understood as the idealized identity of the biopolitical project while the profane is the opposition of the idealized identity of the biopolitical project. The range of inducing a state of sanctity and dispelling a state of sin then becomes a means to encourage behavior that aligns with the biopolitical project and to discourage behavior that is believed to be in opposition to the biopolitical project. As Hubert and Mauss explained, sacrifice creates the reality of the sacred and the profane (Edwards, 2017). It assumes that their reality already exists and through sacrifice they fulfill the prophecy of the biopolitical project. By proving their rationale and logic to be already true and making their perceptions of the larger sociocultural structure of the biopolitical project correct through the action of sacrifice, the profane and sacred come into cooperation, returning to the state of exception and the biopolitical project working in conjunction to reinforce their own identities.

Sacrifice then becomes an explicit tool of biopolitical projects in the formation of the communal order, the structure of the biopolitical project and its idealized identity, and, as stated by Hubert and Mauss, institutionalizes the reality of violence that is sacrificed as a normalized part of the biopolitical project. The biopolitical state then further cements sacrifice by exercising its characteristic centralized power and individualizing power through which it is able to restrict the act of sacrifice to specific actors and disallow the practice of sacrifice being put into action by

unauthorized individuals within the state. This returns to Girard's original point of sacrifice-the mitigation of violence in the community and the maintenance of communal order (Williams, 1998). In this way, sacrifice in biopolitical states is used to increase power over the conduct of the population to ensure that the social practices and cultural institutions that serve to condemn violence and deny the relationship between human beings and violence play an even greater role, decreasing the destruction of the human being and the act of killing.

However, the most significant way sacrifice mitigates violence is by exporting all violence that would be caused by rivalries in the biopolitical project to the scapegoat, the scapegoat in this context being any individual that exists outside of the biopolitical project meaning anyone that is found in the state of exception. The previously mentioned centralized power and individualizing of the new biopolitical state allow for the concealment of the violence being enacted on the scapegoat and the rationalizations justifying violence even more enforceable. The relationship of the scapegoat existing in the state of exception also serves an important function of keeping the scapegoat somewhat connected to the larger biopolitical project allowing the biopolitical state to be continuously negotiating the profane and sacred within itself and allowing for a flexible nature that enables adaptations and changes creating a resilient and strong communal order.

In this larger framework, one distinction must be made. Within the biopolitical project, there exist two separate forms: the biopolitical state and the oppositional ideology. While all biopolitical projects exist in opposition to one another, biopolitical states are characterized by their possession of centralized power and individualizing power over which they are able to

exercise greater control and utilization of the mechanic of sacrifice than ever before seen in human history. Oppositional ideologies lack the centralized power, and, as discussed before, they are defined mainly by their opposition to the biopolitical projects of the state, although two oppositional ideologies can engage in conflict with one another. Returning to the previous discussion of how biopolitical projects operate in conjunction with one another in a constant negation of belonging and dispossession through the state of exception, it is sacrifice that defines the state of exception, and so, ultimately, it is through sacrifice and definitions of the sacred and profane that the biopolitical state and oppositional ideologies negotiate their identities.

Ultimately, the theories on sacrifice established by Hubert, Mauss, and Girard are most coherently synthesized using David Edwards' functionalist view of sacrifice (Edwards, 2017). Edwards uses an analogue that sacrifice is a machine that is reworked, modified, and changed based on the communal order the machinery is being used in. However, the basic components (the rite, sacrificer, and victim) remain the same as does the purpose of the machine (to produce a state of sanctity or dispel a state of sin through the the destruction of the scapegoat and through this process establish one's own cultural identity and mitigate violence within the communal order). This essay will demonstrate this position through the exploration of two distinct applications of sacrifice-mass public shootings and suicide bombings-in two distinct opposition ideologies-wahhabism/salafism and white nationalism-in the next sections of the essay.

V. Suicide Bombings

The term wahhabism refers to a strain of Sunni Islam found mainly in Saudi Arabia and Qatar that takes its name from Muhammad bin Add al Wahhab, a Muslim theologian from the eighteenth century Arabian peninsula, whose puritan-teachings formed the foundation for wahhabism (Blanchard, 2008). In the contemporary world, outside Saudi Arabia and Qatar, wahhabism is used to refer to an interpretation of Sunni Islam that promotes a fundamental understanding of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions and advocates the elimination of any technologies or practices that deviate from this understanding (Blanchard, 2008). It is important to understand that in countries with a predominantly Muslim population there are Islamists who share a more literal interpretation of the Quran and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad but refer to themselves as Salafists (Unitarians), and this broader movement is referred to as “salafism.” While wahhabism and salafism both refer to movements that call for a strict adherence to a conservative teaching and practice of Islam, for the purpose of this essay, they will be used as two parts of a whole to refer to a larger conception of oppositional ideologies which both fall into the established definition of oppositional ideologies in this essay. However, they are distinct, with wahhabism emerging from Saudi Arabia and salafism serving as an identifier for more general conservative Islamic movements that have been established independently at various times in history (Blanchard, 2008).

When discussing advocated violence and perpetuated violence by adherents of wahhabism and salafism, it’s important to understand that in the larger religious context of

Islam that waging violent jihad is not inherent in Islamic beliefs or even in extremely conservative Islamic beliefs (Blanchard, 2008). Even among practitioners of conservative Islam, the promotion of violent jihad is a relatively recent occurrence that remains highly disputed even in wahhabist and salafist groups (Blanchard, 2008). Scholars date the rise of militancy within sections of the larger wahhabist and salafist communities to the 1980s when it emerged as a form of resistance during the United Soviet Socialist Republics' occupation of Afghanistan (Blanchard, 2008). Soviet occupation mobilized thousands of volunteer fighters who were exposed to new militant forms of wahhabism and salafism during the conflict (Blanchard, 2008). These ideas further spread through mosques and madrasas which were funded by Saudi Arabian, US, and European foreign aid to support anti-Soviet resistance (Blanchard, 2008). These networks of militant groups and religious institutions denounced the United States and Western European countries for imperial practices in the Middle East region along with Saudi Arabia and Egypt for their support of Western imperialism (Blanchard, 2008). Today, adherents to wahhabism and salafism advocate the overthrow of countries in the Middle East region and the establishment of new states to enforce a conservative interpretation of Islam and the removal of the US and Western European countries from the region (Blanchard, 2008).

From this historical context, it can be understood that wahhabism/salafism, not endorsed by a state, is an oppositional ideology built in direct opposition to the larger cultural imperial biopolitical entity, first of the Soviet Union and now the "West," meaning the secular, western-liberal democratic international project that's promoted and built by the US and Western Europe. The exact sacrifice mechanic within the wahhabist and salafist biopolitical project that

I will set out to explore is suicide bombing. Osama Bin Laden was the first wahhabist/salafist to promote suicide bombing as the basis of an explicit strategy which he framed as “martyrdom operations against the enemy” (Edwards, 2017). In the year after Bin Laden released his video that first introduced the concept of “martyrdom operations” (suicide bombings), only two suicide bombings occurred, but, in the following years, an average of one hundred suicide bombing attacks associated with wahhabism/salafism occurred per year (Edwards, 2017).

Suicide bombings have since become a simple but deadly strategy amongst militant wahhabists/salafists in pursuit of larger defense of the sacred values and practices of conservative Islam that exist in opposition to the biopolitical project of the greater western-liberal democratic international biopolitical project, and its state allies, and resistance to said biopolitical project, supersede traditional taboos in Islam related to suicide (Hutchins, 2017). Tala Assad, a researcher on suicide bombings, found increases in jihadism sectarian killings were closely connected (targeting/in reaction to) with US international interests in the Middle East region which touches on the important fact that biopolitical projects are both material and cultural (Mahmood, 2008). To further compound this, Assad argues that acts of violence and suicide bombers fit into the broader “...western tradition of armed conflict in defense of a free political community” and are byproducts of the modern nation state and secular liberalism (Mahmood, 2008). Meaning, the act of scapegoating by the western-liberal democratic international project that results in the planned killings of civilians fits into the theoretical context of the biopolitical state in conflict with the oppositional ideology specifically in that both are equal expressions of these forces scapegoating those in their states of exception and

exercising violence to produce a sacrificial act. Both the biopolitical state and oppositional ideology utilize the scapegoat and enact sacrificial acts of violence that target those who exist in their respective states of exception.

Suicide bombing is therefore functionally the same as the "legalized violence" sacrificial practices perpetuated by biopolitical states (Mahmood, 2008). However, suicide bombing differs from the sacrificial practices of the biopolitical state. During the act of sacrifice-the suicide bombing, the martyr willingly becomes the agent of his own demise and is consumed by the sacrifice (Edwards, 2017). In this process, the martyr committing the act takes on the roles of both the victim and the sacrificer through this process but does not take on the role of the scapegoat, when viewed in the tripartite structure set out by Hubert and Mauss (Edwards, 2017). The martyr instead takes on the role of the idealized identity of the biopolitical project, meaning that by becoming part of the sacrifice and inducing a state of sanctity for themselves and accruing for themselves and the parties they represent, the status of "the sacred," and not only the sacred but the perfect form of the sacred in accordance with their own conception (Edwards, 2017). In short through sacrifice of themselves, they become the idealized form of the sacred in their biopolitical project which is the idealized identity in said biopolitical project. In this way, the purpose of sacrifice, to produce and reproduce identity, becomes an even more direct act as adherents within the oppositional ideology work to refine it along their individualized conception of the communal order. The exact factors for this greater role in articulating the identity of the biopolitical, specifically in oppositional ideologies, will be explored in a later section.

VI. Mass Public Shootings

White nationalism in the United States advocates for the creation of a state based on white supremacist ideology which embraces the belief that the white race ranks above all other races (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). White nationalists operate using a variety of both legal and illegal activities with developed organizational structures that encompass a wide range of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, racist skinheads, Neo-Nazis and Christian identitarians (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). The ideology of white nationalists divides the world between the white race and all other races where there exists an existential threat to the white race with particular animosity directed to both African Americans and, particularly, Jews whom they believe control the government and orchestrated the civil rights movement (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). Contemporary white nationalists believe that the current US state discriminates against whites and that they have “...lost ground to other groups [races]” (CRS Report Researchers, 2017).

White nationalists aim to remedy this perceived loss by creating a society built on racial separation for which “...extreme measures are required” (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). White nationalism can most accurately be summarized in the “Fourteen Words” written by David Lane, a member of a violent white nationalist group during the 1980s, that reads “We must secure the existence of our race and a future for white children,” and remains “the most popular white supremacist slogan in the world” (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). In white nationalism, we find a case of a biological project where biological “whiteness” is an essential aspect of its idealized identity (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). The constant negotiation and adaptability of a biopolitical project is observable as important leaders within white nationalism have redefined

whiteness, expanding it beyond the “Aryan” definition supported by Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany which contemporary Neo-Nazism (a section of white nationalism) follows, to include peoples of Southern and Eastern European descent (CRS Report Researchers, 2017).

Beyond the explicit biopolitical project of the white race’s self-proclaimed biological superiority, white nationalism is shaped by two major concepts: that violent confrontation with non-white nationalists is inevitable and that these enemies are part of a larger conspiracy that controls the existing power structures (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). White nationalists “commonly anticipate” inevitable conflict in the theory of “racial holy war” that states whites must wage war against non-whites (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). The reasoning of a racial holy war stems from the acceptance of conspiracy theories that promote that the history of the world has been planned by “...vast, long-term, secret conspiracies” that, as previously discussed, work to control the United States government and establish a “new world order” that will further disenfranchise whites (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). Specifically, a Zionist conspiracy called the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) has infiltrated the federal government and works to further “international Jewish interests” (CRS Report Researchers, 2017). This underlying cultural conception demonstrates how white nationalism is directly constructed as an oppositional ideology to the multiracial biopolitical project of the American state, due to the American state articulating this multiracial biopolitical project, that has taken root and evolved over time. Within white nationalism, this distinct structuring has led to using labels of the profane and sacred and created distinct targets for sacrificial violence.

White nationalists have developed a specific form of sacrifice-mass public shootings that, from the mid-1960s, have become exponentially more fatal with white nationalism being linked to some of the deadliest “... active-shooter episodes in the United States in recent years” (Ashwal, 2021). Mass public shootings are defined as “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area” that results in “three or more individuals being killed” (Ashwal, 2021). These mass public shooters have clearly and coherently expressed their white nationalist views in a series of manifestos that accompanied their attacks that define themselves in contrast to the American state (Ashwal, 2021). This is a component of the effort by public mass shooters to link themselves to the larger oppositional ideology of white nationalism and ensure that there is no confusion regarding their motivations, in short making sure that their sacrificial act is not misinterpreted (Ashwal, 2021).

The mechanics of sacrifice again are well understood by adherents in this oppositional ideology. Adherents to white nationalism experience a significant sense of commitment to the cause (Ashwal, 2021) with their participation in the act of sacrifice and creation of a communal order a recognized part of their larger role in a biopolitical project. With the identity and creation of the sacred and profane and, similar to suicide bombing, the perpetrator taking on the idealized identity of the biopolitical project of nationalism by making themselves part of the sacrifice, the criteria of a biopolitical project is clearly met. It is reached with criteria which they themselves set out. Mass public shooters who belong to white nationalism conceptualize the killing of non-whites and the enemies of white nationalism as an act to prevent the white race from being further disenfranchised (Ashwal, 2021). Through this process of the sacredness of the white race and the idealized white nationalist being established, the idea of someone willing to kill to

protect the white race is created and reinforced. The subsequent identification of the profane-non-whites and the enemies of white nationalism-is achieved through the destruction of said non-whites, their deaths. Through their destruction, they are established as the object of sacrifice through which conflict within the white nationalist biopolitical project can be mitigated.

This same function occurs in suicide bombings where the act of sacrifice takes a dualistic role of defining the profane and sacred in a single act, most crucial through the consumption of the sacrificer during the sacrifice. While the consumption of the sacrificer is clear during a suicide bombing as the perpetrator is literally consumed through the act of using their body as a vehicle for an explosive device, the sacrifice of the sacrificer in a public mass shooting is less explicit and relates to the nature of an oppositional ideology. As previously described, oppositional ideologies exist in the context of a biopolitical state attempting to expand its own biopolitical project using its unique tools of a centralized state authority and individualizing power, both tools of power that oppositional ideologies don't possess, that the biopolitical state uses to exercise its own sacrificial acts through legalized state violence. White nationalists understand this and express it through the idea of a state run by "Jews and race traitors" and know when they carry out mass public shootings that they are going giving themselves up to the state. They are actively moving themselves to the state of exception as defined by the biopolitical state they exist in opposition to, either through "suicide by cop" (legalized violence of the state), life imprisonment (sacrifice of their personal autonomy to a form of total individualizing power), or direct suicide (recognizing they will be treated to the first two forms of sacrifice and so assert their biopolitical sovereignty) and no matter the outcome will be sacrificing themselves.

VII. Sacrifice Defined Through Profession

One of the most important aspects of sacrifice to understand is that the proponents and members of a biopolitical project are cognizant of the function of sacrifice. Meaning, those who become sacrificers understand that through sacrifice they are able to define the sacred and the profane and through these definitions are able to produce and reproduce the identity of the communal authority. In turn, they become part of the greater negotiation that takes place between biopolitical projects and help to sustain their biopolitical project by constantly adapting it to an always changing world. It is through this process that wahhabism/salafism began to modify itself and was able to transition the identity of the enemy from the Soviet Union to the United States and likewise how white nationalism was able to integrate southern and eastern Europeans into the greater project of whiteness.

The underlying factors driving these changes are not the subject of this section. Neither is the Soviet Union ending its occupation, the United States entering the Middle East Region, nor the traditional “Aryan” race becoming more integrated with southern and eastern Europeans during the 1950s further blurring conceptions of whiteness. Rather, the focus is the ability of the actors in these biopolitical projects, specifically the oppositional ideologies of wahhabism/salafism and white nationalism, to be cognizant of the function of the sacrificial act (mass public shootings and suicide bombings) and to actively articulate their specific visions of the sacred and profane of their oppositional ideology. This articulation is coherent and clear and, as will be seen, promotes an underlying broader goal that the act of sacrifice helps to achieve.

On December 30, 2009, Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, a thirty-six year old doctor from Zarqa, Jordan (also known by his alias Abu Dujaanah al-Khorasani) entered Camp Chapman, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) forward operating base on the Afghan-Pakistan border, and detonated an explosive device attached to his person that killed himself, seven employees of the CIA, and a Jordanian intelligence officer as well injuring six additional persons (Warrick, 2011). Al-Balawi had been an “online jihadi” posting on online jihadist forums and slowly rising up the ranks of the online community under his alias al-Khorasani. He claimed to have fought in Afghanistan and encouraged others to travel abroad and engage in violent jihad (Jones, 2010). His online activities were discovered by Jordanian intelligence who recruited al-Balawi to act as a spy to support US and Jordanian intelligence operations that targeted al-Qaeda (Jones, 2010). It was for this reason that al-Balawi was invited to Camp Chapman and able to gain access to CIA officers (Jones, 2010). Following this attack, the As-Sahab Media Foundation, Al-Qaida's media wing, released a video interview titled “*An Interview With The Shaheed Abu Dujaanah al-Khorasani*” that showed an As-Sahab media person interviewing al-Balawi about his upcoming “Martyrdom Operation” (suicide bombing) and was later transcribed by the CIA’s NEFA Foundation (NEFA Foundation, 2010).

In the opening of the video, the As-Sahab presenter reads out a prepared statement that clearly defines the greater conflict of the wahhabist/salafist oppositional ideology, from Al-Qaida’s perspective, citing the “second decade” of “The New Crusades” where a “battle between truth and falsehood” is fought between “the infidel West” and “apostate agents in our [Al-Qaida’s] Islamic region (NEFA Foundation, 2010). The west is led by “the empire of evil and criminality [America]” which has perpetrated “forms of lowliness, bestiality, and savagery” such

as “the Gaza Holocaust” and the killing of Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, a senior Al-Qaida leader (NEFA Foundation, 2010). Al-Balawi himself reinforced these themes later in the interview when he was asked by the As-Sahab presenter what his reasons for embarking on a mission of violent jihad, and he replied by citing events in Gaza he viewed on the Al-Jazeera news channel and describing Israeli citizens “... were watching Gaza as it was being bombed by F-16 fighter jets” and that they watched “... as if they were just observing some natural phenomenon, or as if they were watching a theatrical film or something similar” (NEFA Foundation, 2010). Here we see the construction of Al-Balawi’s conception of the oppositional ideology creating the boundaries and state of exception, for the biopolitical project with the west and its allies residing outside of it and the larger Muslim world, the umma, and, specifically, the peoples of the Middle East region as existing outside of it through setting out victims (Gaza bombing victims) and perpetrators (F-16 fighter jets and Israeli citizens).

Al-Balawi further expands on these distinctions by articulating the destruction of the profane (the west and allies) through the sacrificial act (suicide bombing) that defines the sacred/idealized identity within the biopolitical project. Al-Balawi, as a martyr, is willing to give his life for the furthering of the oppositional ideology’s goals through the sacred’s own destruction that speak to a greater effort at shaping the identity of the wahhabist/salafist oppositional ideology. When asked why a “a martyrdom action” (suicide bombing) was chosen as a strategy, he replied “This is a blessing which Allah has sent me... that I be given the opportunity to have my severed limbs be turned into shrapnel, to have my bones be turned into shrapnel, to have my teeth be turned into shrapnel which will kill these American and Jordanian infidels from the intelligence apparatuses. How could I possibly refuse?!” (NEFA Foundation, 2010). According to Al-Balawi,

this is part of a larger message that needs to be sent “...when they think that this man is a spy, but then this man turns into a bomb, turns into a missile, turns into an explosive, this weakens the enemy’s resolve and makes him understand that the sons of this religion have never bargained and will never bargain over this religion, and that this religion is more precious than everything they own” (NEFA Foundation, 2010). This is the larger goal that this section of the biopolitical project of the oppositional ideology is arguing for.

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a twenty-one year old unemployed man, entered the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in his hometown of Charleston, South Carolina and after sitting with worshippers and attending a bible study for at least an hour (Alcindor & Stanglin, 2015) then took out a .45-caliber handgun hidden under a fanny pack and opened fire with it on the congregation, killing nine African American attendees (Ashwal, 2021). After Roof completed the mass public shooting, he allegedly "uttered a racially inflammatory statement" to one of the surviving witnesses so that they could later relay his message (Alcindor & Stanglin, 2015).

Roof’s original plan was to commit suicide with the weapon he used to carry out the mass public shooting, but, upon realizing he had run out of ammunition, he fled the church and was later arrested by state law enforcement (Ashwal, 2021). Roof would later tell law enforcement that he expected to be caught in Charleston and had been traveling to Nashville before his capture (Alcindor & Stanglin, 2015). Before he committed the mass public shooting, Roof released a manifesto that highlighted his motives for carrying out the shooting and explained his hatred for black people on his website titled “The Last Rhodesian” (Ashwal, 2021). The website title was a reference to the former Republic of Rhodesia, now the country of Zimbabwe in

southern Africa, in which a bush war was fought from 1965 to 1979 by white settlers to establish a white separatist state (Siegel, 2015). Beyond his manifesto, the website included photos of Roof posing with pictures of the Confederate flag and weapons some of which featured the phrase “1488” which is a reference to David Lane’s “Fourteen Words” and the Neo-Nazi “88” that translates to “HH,” “Heil Hitler” (Neuman, 2015). These cultural symbols clearly mark Roof as an adherent to the oppositional ideology of white nationalism and proponent of its biopolitical project.

Roof’s manifesto’s main focus is on the distinction that he draws between the profane and the sacred. The majority of it is an explanation of who exists in the state of exception and his personal conceptualization of the conflict between the two. The overarching idea Roof presents is that the black population of the United States has been habitually attacking the white population which has no one to “protect it” (Ashwal, 2021). Roof labels the start of his “racial awakening” after first hearing about the killing of Trayvon Martin that led to further research of “black on white crime” in the United States and gave rise to his belief that the white race must be “defended” (Ashwal, 2021). Roof names the Council of Conservative Citizens as his point of entry that showed “brutal black on White murders” and made Roof question how the American news could be “blowing up the Trayvon Martin” while “hundreds of these black on White murders got ignored” (Roof, 2015).

The next section of Roof’s manifesto names races in the United States and then outlines race-by-race his views on their role in the United States and their threat to the white race. Roof labels African Americans as “the biggest problem for Americans,” Hispanics as a “a huge

problem for Americans,” that Jews “are white” but America must “destroy the jewish identity,” and the East Asian races as “potential allies” due to their “natural racism” (Roof, 2015). Here again, the explicitly biological framework of the white nationalist biopolitical project is shown, making whiteness sacred and non-whiteness profane. The most profane, according to Roof, is blackness and takes up the largest part of Roof’s explanation of races. However, Roof also highlights the adversarial nature of the relationship between the oppositional ideology and the biopolitical state which defines the oppositional ideology as he writes in his section of patriotism “I hate the sight of the American flag. Modern American patriotism is an absolute joke. People pretending like they have something to be proud while White people are being murdered daily in the streets” (Roof, 2015). This further reinforces the status of white nationalism as not only a biopolitical project but also as an oppositional ideology.

Just as with al-Balawi, we see how Roof expands on these distinctions of whiteness and non-whiteness by articulating the destruction of the profane (non-whites, specifically African Americans) through the the sacrificial act (public mass shooting) that also defines the sacred/idealized identity within the biopolitical project. Roof, a white nationalist willing to give his life for the advancement of the oppositional ideology’s goals through the sacred’s own destruction, directly communicates this when quoting his favorite film “Even if my life is worth less than a speck of dirt, I want to use it for the good of society,” and states “I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight” (Roof, 2015). Again, just as with al-Balawi, Roof seeks to advance an underlying broader goal that his sacrificial act will achieve which is to inspire others to take up “the direct defense of whites in America,” As Roof writes “We have no

skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me” (Roof, 2015).

According to Dylan’s individual conception of white nationalism, this is what its ultimate mission should be, and what all in the oppositional ideology of white nationalism should adhere to.

VIII. Authority Through Sacrifice

A summation of the established theory up to this point needs to be articulated before the essay proceeds. To begin, biopolitical projects operate in conjunction with one another in a constant negation of belonging and dispossession that results in the state of exception being in continual flux. Opposition ideologies are biopolitical projects in their own right, and the defining factor that distinguishes them from a biopolitical state is a lack of centralized political power. Sacrifice mitigates violence by exporting all violence to the scapegoat with the scapegoat defined as being any individual that exists outside of the biopolitical project in the state of exception. Sacrifice defines who is and isn't part of the biopolitical project and, as stated before, is in constant flux. Sacrifice can then be understood as the enabling function that allows for the production and reproduction of culture through violence. It is through this regulated violence that a community constructs its identity and orders itself. In a community, the central authority holds a monopoly on violence. Sacrifice then becomes an explicit tool of biopolitical projects in the formation of the sacred (idealized identity of the biopolitical project) and profane (the antithesis of idealized identity).

However, as previously stated, opposition ideologies lack a centralized political power, and so there is no central authority to hold a monopoly on the violence that results from sacrificial acts. As a result, the original purpose of sacrifice-to mitigate conflict within the community and uphold a communal order-comes under threat as different factions, groups, and individuals can assert their own vision of the biopolitical project within the oppositional ideology. This is seen both in wahhabist/salafist and white nationalism as you have groups such

as the Islamic State, Taliban, and Al-Qaeda all coming into conflict with one another as they argue definitions of wahhabism/salafism (Cordesman, 2016) and Neo-Nazis, skinheads, Christian identitarians, and other white nationalist groups denouncing one another and arguing over whiteness (Perliger, 2012).

As a response to this lack of a centrally enforced communal order that holds a monopoly on sacrifice and the ensuing violence, oppositional ideologies have been forced to develop new cultural technologies of sacrifice. Specifically, this means using the act of sacrifice to assert their own authority within the communal order and their vision/conception of the larger biopolitical project. The proponents and members of an oppositional ideology's biopolitical project are cognizant of the role and function of sacrifice, and they understand that it through the act of sacrifice that definitions of the sacred and the profane are developed. They then set forth their definition of the sacred, the idealized identity with the biopolitical project, and their definition of the profane which are completed when both the sacred and profane are consumed (destroyed) by the sacrificial act. The dualistic role of defining the profane and sacred in a single act is an innovation itself that is again made both possible and necessary by the lack of a central authority. The end result is these actors can utilize sacrifice to produce and reproduce the identity of the biopolitical project in accordance with their own beliefs through an act that is artificial in conception and then becomes authentic through action.

This is the reason that the act of sacrifice is so clearly articulated through messages from the authors as in the case al-Balawi and his interview with As-Sahab media as well as the case of Roof making sure he posted his personal manifesto on his website. As seen in the textual

analysis, both al-Balawi and Roof were careful to define the sacred and profane in the context of their biopolitical projects and set forth a larger goal/mission that they believe is the purpose of their entire biopolitical project. With regard to oppositional ideology, al-Balawi's is that a wahhabist/salafist conception of Islam will reign over any material reality, and Roof's is that the defense of the white race is the top priority. Both agree that these goals superseded their own lives and the lives of anyone person in their community. This innovative cultural technology then results in a communal order that does not need to be enforced by a centralized authority and mitigates conflict within a community to some degree and ensures that it will be able to sustain itself and continue to adapt to an ever changing world.

IX. Conclusion

This essay has answered the questions set forth at its beginning. Through the establishment of the Foucault & Agamben inspired biopolitical framework of the continuous negotiation/conflict between the biopolitical state and the oppositional ideology in conjunction with the theoretical conception of sacrifice begun by Hubert and Mauss and later developed by Girard, the following has been established. Sacrifice (the sacrificial act) is the mechanism in which communal order is maintained and with the development of biopolitics has become the way in which biopolitical projects adapt themselves through the production of reproduction of culture that most importantly defines who is a part of the biopolitical project (the sacred) and who is not part of the biopolitical project (the profane and larger conception of the state of exception). Both oppositional ideologies and biopolitical states engage in this activity, but oppositional ideologies lack a centralized authority to enforce a singular conception of the sacred and profane. As such, multiple sections of one oppositional ideology enter into conflict to define the sacred and profane (the larger boundaries of the biopolitical project and its relationship to the state of exception) threatening the communal order and further necessitating the need for the mechanism of sacrifice to mitigate conflict with the community (biopolitical project). As such, oppositional ideologies further develop sacrifice to assert their own authority in the biopolitical project and define it according to their conception of the biopolitical project. This is the purpose of sacrifice-to set boundaries and define the other according to one's own constructions of the biopolitical project so the other can then become a scapegoat that may be sacrificed to mitigate conflict within the community. Out of necessity, oppositional ideologies have developed to define both the sacred and profane in one sacrificial act.

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