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The Islamic Fundamentalist that Could Have Been? Parallels between the Rhetoric of Joseph de Maistre and Contemporary Islamic Fundamentalist Movements

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Abstract

This article is a work of comparative political theory and looks at how much of Joseph de Maistre's writings parallel the worldview held by ISIS and Al Qaeda, specifically in regard to the central role of absolute authority, the general rejection of modern rationalism, and the openly accepted use of violence in order to attain their desired ends. The last section of this paper will look at similarities between the general tone and style of rhetoric utilized by Maistre and ISIS/al Qaeda. This paper shows that the Schmittian language used by Maistre and the aforementioned groups is similar despite their outward doctrinal differences. This paper is an original comparative case study that fits within the emerging body of literature that shows that there is a common underlying language that can be ascribed to all religious extremist movements, regardless of their actual ideological orientation.

Keywords: Joseph de Maistre, Religious Extremism, ISIS, Al Qaeda, Terrorism, Comparative Political Theory

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Öz

Bu makale, Joseph de Maistre'nin yazıları ile IŞİD ve El-Kaide tarafından savunulan dünya görüşü arasındaki, özellikle mutlak otoritenin başlıca rolü, modern rasyonalitenin genel olarak reddedilmesi ve arzu edilen amaçlara ulaşmada şiddet kullanımının açıkça kabul edilmesi konularında ne kadar paralellik bulunduğunu inceleyen bir karşılaştırmalı siyasi kuram çalışmasıdır. Makalenin son bölümünde Maistre ve IŞİD/El-Kaide tarafından kullanılan retorikğin genel ton ve stilindeki benzerlikler

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irdelenecektir. Bu makale, doktrinler arasındaki farklılıklara rağmen Maistre ve yukarıda bahsedilen gruplar tarafından kullanılan Schmittçi dilin benzer olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu makale, ideolojik yönelimlerinden bağımsız olarak tüm dini aşırılıkçı hareketlerin sahip olduğu ortak bir dilin olduğunu gösteren literatür bünyesinde yer alan özgün bir karşılaştırmalı vaka çalışmasıdır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Joseph de Maistre, Dini Aşırılık, İŞİD, El Kaide, Terörizm, Karşılaştırmalı Siyasi Kuram

Introduction

Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821) was a Savoyard Enlightenment Era personality who is still widely read today in many graduate level seminars on the French Revolution or Counter-Enlightenment Thought. Maistre's main point throughout his corpus is clear; absolute authority must be vested in one source: the Papacy. This was actually a moral obligation in Maistre's eyes. The political function of the Papacy and the topic of absolute authority have been meticulously examined in much of the previous research on Maistre. (Mazlish, 1955; Lombard, 1976; LeBrun, 1988; Kochin, 2002 and Wolin, 2004) However, scholars have yet to connect Maistre's ideas to a different set of religious values; that of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism. Indeed, while Maistre was most certainly not a Muslim or Muslim sympathizer, this paper argues that the rhetoric and language used in his writings is quite similar to the contemporary rhetoric and language used by al Qaeda and ISIS.

The Comparative Theory Methodology and its Application

This paper is an exercise in comparative political theory that explores the intersection of politics, religion, and ideology. Andrew March argues that, "Comparison must be, in the first place, a method, not just an expedient term vaguely suggesting the focus of one's research interests (e.g., non-Western texts) or substantive concerns and commitments (e.g., critiquing Western hegemony)" (2009:537). According to Fred Dallmayr,

"Comparative political theory] as a subfield of political theory, it concentrates not so much on governmental structures and empirical political processes (the concern of 'comparative politics') but rather on ideas, perspectives, and theoretical frameworks as they have been formulated in the past, and continue to be articulated today, in different parts of the world." (Dallmayr, quoted in March, 2009:553)

This paper will show similarities between Maistre and al Qaeda and ISIS, specifically in regard to the central role of absolute authority, the general rejection of modernity, and most importantly, the openly accepted use of violence in order to realize their vision of the world. This paper will also show how the rhetorical style and *point-blankness* of the writings and audio statements produced

by al Qaeda and ISIS both share striking similarities with Maistre's style. While al Qaeda and ISIS most certainly did not actually read the writings of Joseph de Maistre for inspiration, this paper argues that their style fits within a larger, well established tradition of reactionary theo-political thought. This article will strengthen its larger theoretical claims by referencing multiple relevant secondary scholarly sources and expert testimony given before governmental panels.

March argues that the intersection of religious doctrine and political thought is a relevant and essential theme within comparative political theory (2009). Roxanne Euben's groundbreaking work, *Enemy in the Mirror* (Princeton, 1999), is an example of such scholarship. Euben convincingly argues that scholarship in the West has internalized the belief that antifoundationalist political discourses are the only *legitimate* approaches to political theorizing in a postmodern world. However, taking antifoundationalism as an *a priori* assumption in contemporary theorizing often means scholars in the West fail to account for the popularity and significance of ideologies such as Islamic fundamentalism that are staunchly grounded in a foundationalist metaphysical and epistemological discourse. In making the assumption that 'respectable' political theory does not concern itself with questions of *the good* anymore, Western scholars have often ignored contemporary works that are concerned with this question.

Euben's work goes on to explore in depth Sayyid Qutb's belief that modern rationalism is in direct opposition to an Islamic conception of the world. According to Euben, Qutb's vision "entails a rejection of the Western-inspired measurement of civilization in terms of material, scientific, and technological progress. The only civilized community, to Qutb, is the moral one; real freedom is moral freedom, and true justice is Islamic justice" (1999:58). She argues that Qutb's writings should not be seen as idiosyncratic; rather Qutb's ideas can be seen as compatible with other strands of Western thought that are critical of modern rationalism and the liberal project in general.

"This suggests that political theory can be enriched by hearing Qutb's voice not only because of the ways it speaks to our concerns but also because of the ways it mirrors, challenges, enlarges, and transforms them. Indeed, given these arguments, I want to suggest that this cross-cultural comparison may ultimately undermine the very opposition between "Islam" and "the West."
(Euben, 1999:12)

One of the broader points that this paper makes is that the ideas, values, and rhetorical strategy of groups like al Qaeda and ISIS are hardly novel. Such ideas can be traced back to a discourse far less alien to a Western audience - just as Qutb's ideas can be seen as interwoven within larger fabric of ideas produced by Western thinkers who are critical of modern rationalism or liberalism.

Comparative political theory must avoid judging non-Western ideas within a Western analytic framework. Even some of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century like Max Weber were guilty of this (Kaminski, 2016). One of the important things about comparative political theory for March was "that it does not seek to prejudge non-Western thought or impose Western judgments" (March, 2009:551). March goes on to argue that comparative political theory has an interest in evaluating

and comparing thinkers whose ideas transcend their own cultural, religious, and/or civilizational identity. This echoes the sentiment of Megan Thomas who argues that comparative political theory “has often aimed to correct what it sees as European and North American chauvinism, by highlighting commonalities between that “Western” world and those outside of it” (2010:665). Thomas quotes Euben who argues that comparative political theory ought to highlight the similar dilemmas and questions shared by different cultural traditions. In Euben’s words, “This, in turn, establishes the possibility of and conditions for conversations across cultures” (Euben, quoted in Thomas, 2010:10). The long term goal of comparative political theory is the continual democratization of the political theory discourse, freeing it from Eurocentric scholarship that still, inadvertently or perhaps even purposefully, mitigates the unique contribution of non-Western thought.

Comparative political theory ought not to prejudge non-Western cultures and ideas, however this does not mean comparative political theorists should avoid making normative claims altogether. Dallmayr believes that there is room for both normative and non-normative comparative political theory and that one of the most important things to consider “is whether critique proceeds from a presumed self-righteousness or hegemonic arrogance, or else from a shared engagement and a willingness to engage in a mutually transforming learning process” (2004:254). Good comparative political theorizing will point out inconsistencies and deviations from the generally accepted norms and values within a larger discourse.

I believe that contemporary comparative political theorists ought not to attack the ideas of groups like ISIS and al Qaeda because they are in violation of Western notions of justice, democracy, and gender rights - this should be left to politicians, journalists, and activists. Instead, contemporary comparative political theorists ought to criticize the ideas of groups like ISIS and al Qaeda because they are inconsistent with Islam’s more generally accepted discursive framework. This is a more philosophically worthwhile enterprise and avoids the immediate suspicion of Orientalism or *hegemonic arrogance* that comes with criticizing a discourse from an analytic framework outside that discourse being criticized. Throughout this article, it will be shown that the ideas held by al Qaeda and ISIS are not only are inconsistent within Islam, but that in reality, their ideas share more in common with the writings of Joseph de Maistre than anything else.

Finally, comparative political theory must justify why comparing thinkers operating within different intellectual traditions is important and relevant. “Exploring the normative implications for us of principled value-conflict is an appropriate task of engaged political theory and could be made the centerpiece of the comparative political theory project. Thus, comparative political theory may be conceived of as “justificatory” comparative political theory” (March, 2009:560). In an email exchange with Professor March asking for further clarification on this point he explained that there should be some type of general claim or recommendation pushed forward when doing comparative political theory - in his view, comparing different writers just for the

sake of ‘comparison’ is not enough.¹ Comparing the writings of Joseph de Maistre and groups like al Qaeda and ISIS serve a very practical, real world function; such scholarship can help scholars and policy makers understand attitudes held by individuals or groups situated within other reactionary discourses.

Future research should continue to engage with writers of the past and make efforts to connect these thinkers’ worldviews and statements with more recent forms of extremism. Such research will help create a scholarly database that can be readily accessed to analyze and understand future extremist movements that may not exist today but might in the near future. The emergence of an extremist movement is difficult forecast. Such research can also provide ideas for ways political actors can modify their own behaviors and policies that often illicit fundamentalist backlash.

Framing Contemporary Islamic Fundamentalism

Islamic Fundamentalism does not have a universally accepted definition. Roxanne Euben argues that fundamentalism in general, “refers to contemporary religio-political movements that attempt to return to the scriptural foundations of the community, excavating and reinterpreting these foundations for application to the contemporary social and political world” (Euben, 1999:17). It is best understood as a reaction to dilemmas facing the modern world. At the core of fundamentalist discourses is a belief in directly engaging with the outside world; it should not be understood as a retreat into inward-looking mysticism. Ira Lapidus argues that fundamentalism is not just a reaction against modernity; rather it should be understood as an alternative expression of it (1997). Oliver Roy echoes this sentiment in arguing that “[r]ather than a reaction against the modernization of Muslim societies, Islamism is a product of it” (2007:50). According to Euben, “It is thus perhaps more accurate to say that fundamentalism is profoundly critical of as well as constituted by assumptions regarding the requirements of modernity and modern politics” (1999:18). Nikolas Kompridis describes one of the essential elements of the modern worldview as being open “to the novelty of the future [that] keeps perpetually open the possibility of a future different from the past, a possibility that contains the promise of a break with the past, and the promise of a new beginning” (2006:38). This is the notion of modernity al Qaeda and ISIS are at odds with - both groups are not looking for a *future different from the past*; both groups seek a return to it. Rather than *the promise of a new beginning*, both seek to rekindle a past that ended with the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924. It is important to remember that al Qaeda and ISIS are opposed to the philosophical notion of modernity; this should not be misunderstood as

1 In an e-mail correspondence with Prof. March, I asked what he meant by, ‘examining thoroughly what first-order implication the normative dispute has.’ He responded, “I definitely meant something like “to connect the normative dispute to something in a more real world, practical sense.” For example, there are normative disputes about the scope of rights (like free speech or bodily autonomy) that are approached differently from different traditions but are a common object of concern or dispute. One role for comparative political theory is to explore what it would mean to justify one resolution or another from within alternative traditions.” (March 2015, *personal correspondence*) I sincerely appreciate his kindness in taking the time meticulously answer my question.

implying fundamentalist groups are opposed to all things modern. Both terrorist groups have embraced modern weaponry and state-of-the-art communications technology as a fundamental part of their long-term strategies.

The rise in Islamic fundamentalism is also linked to economic and political failures in the Muslim world. Rapid urban migration along with economic poverty in rural areas and high levels economic inequality have all been key contributing factors to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Rather than just dismissing Islamic fundamentalism as irrational, Euben references Amartya Sen who makes the point that if one is acting in their own self interests, whatever they may be - economic, emotional, or spiritual - then they can be said to acting rationally. Euben believes that “perhaps most peculiar about the rational actor model is the insistence that all behavior can be explained simply by recasting each action as an instance of rational behavior “properly understood,” that is, intelligible to market logic” (1999:12). The rational actor model in the Western context has mistakenly been universalized to incorporate all global actors. Euben’s point is that rationality can only be understood in terms of the local discourse it is situated within. A seriously devout Muslim who prioritizes spiritual obligations over worldly ends would view someone in the West maximizing their economic well being at the expense of their spiritual well being as irrational. Economic rationality as understood in the West cannot simply be the ubiquitous understanding rationality in general.

All forms of fundamentalism have a praxeological dimension. This harkens back to the earlier point that such movements should not be understood a retreat into mysticism. One essential element of Islamic fundamentalism is a belief in the necessity of making Islam politically relevant again. “The philosophical roots of Islamic fundamentalism are largely the result of a conscious attempt to revive and restate the theoretical relevance of Islam in the modern world” (1998:38). As a political movement, Islamic fundamentalism is on the right of the political spectrum within the larger umbrella of political Islam. However, this is not always the case for other Islamist political movements (March, 2015). Contemporary Islamic fundamentalist movements seek to restore lost moral purity. These movements often utilize propaganda about the threats of hedonism and seek to integrate social classes into a more universal group that transcends class. Rarely does one hear serious critiques from groups like al Qaeda or ISIS about economic systems or racial discrimination. These problems are seen as by-products of Western imperialism and decadence. Such ‘Western problems’ would not exist in their ideal vision of society. Populist appeals to a united *ummah*, or community of believers, has been a central theme of al Qaeda and ISIS.

Al Qaeda and ISIS fundamentalism can be further understood as being situated at a historical/geo-political level and at a doctrinal level. These two differing explanatory levels are not mutually exclusive, and in many cases overlap. At the historical/geo-political level, contemporary Islamic fundamentalism can be best described as a reaction by those Muslims who view the nation state model as a by-product of Western imperialism that sought to divide and conquer Muslim lands. Abrogating the 1916 Franco-British crafted, Sykes-Picot Agreement that carved the Arab world into the general picture one sees on the map today has been repeatedly referenced by al Qaeda

and ISIS as a primary goal. According to a statement by Osama Bin Laden that was released on 13 February 2003, “We still suffer from the injuries inflicted by the Crusaders’ wars on the Islamic world in the last century and by the Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France which divided the Muslim world into fragments” (Bin Laden, quoted in Bergen, 2006:373). ISIS has also included references to the Sykes-Picot in their own recent propaganda. On 29 June 2014, ISIS published videos titled “Breaking the Borders” and “The End of Sykes-Picot” that showed the physical destruction of a land barrier demarcating the Syria-Iraq border (Lister, 2015). The map drawn by the European powers permanently fragmented and weakened the Muslim world allowing for decades of economic and cultural exploitation that continues to this day. The abrogation of the Sykes-Picot agreement and restoration of the Caliphate have been central themes in contemporary Fundamentalist intellectual circles despite the major obstacles to achieving these goals.

The second level at which al Qaeda and ISIS fundamentalism can be understood is at a doctrinal level. Both represent a politicized version of Salafism. This is a deviation from most other movements within the Salafist discourse that tend to be apolitical. For example, the version of Salafism that is based on the writings of controversial Saudi Imam, Rabee Al-Madkhali, often referred to as *Madkhalism*, is opposed to political engagement and believes that the Saudi Monarchy is divinely ordained and opposition to it is tantamount to heresy. Political or apolitical: Salafism is associated with literalist, strict, and puritanical approaches to Islam within the Sunni discourse.

“The Salafi movement is united by a commitment to a particular version of the Muslim creed, an unyielding focus on purifying Muslim belief and practice from any imaginable form of idolatry (shirk), and an obsession with mastering the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad for the purposes of both knowledge and emulation in practice” (Haykel 2009).²
(March, 2015:2014)

The Salafist method is rooted in an essentialist worldview in which individuals and society at large are imbued with certain innate qualities and attributes that transcend space and time. As a result of the unchanging nature of man, the values and laws expressed in the 7th century are considered not only valid today, but the only legitimate set of laws that should govern society at any time and place. This is a deviation from the writings of previous Islamic scholars such as the 19th century Egyptian reformer, Mohammad Abduh, and his teacher, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani who both believed that Islam must recognize that people change with time, and that laws and political processes must accommodate for these changes.

Shari’a is interpreted in a very conservative and literalist way by fundamentalist groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS that are far stricter than the way they were interpreted in the Middle Ages. Joseph Lowry notes that “[t]he doctrines formulated by Muslims jurists in the Middle Ages made it very difficult to convict, either because they defined the crimes extremely narrowly or because

2 The other work mentioned in this reference is, B. Haykel, “On the nature of Salafi thought and action,” in R. Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2009), 33-35.

the requirement for evidence was extremely high” (Lowry, quoted in Atkinson and Donaghy, 2015). While many of the laws and penalties utilized by ISIS for certain crimes are similar to the penalties utilized in Saudi Arabia today, the implementation of these penalties is far different. Saudi Arabia’s approach “to implementing these punishments is very different - Saudi Arabia rarely, if ever, carries out executions for blasphemy or adultery” (Lowry, quoted in Atkinson and Donaghy, 2015). This strict interpretation of scripture, laws, and punishments all differentiate mainstream Islamic political and social movements from fundamentalist movements.

Finally, I need to point out that I am not trying to argue that al Qaeda and ISIS are one in the same; the two movements have some critical fundamental differences. ISIS has declared a Caliphate whereas Al Qaeda has not, nor appears to be doing so anytime in the foreseeable future. Also, Al Qaeda generally posits the United States and the West as its primary enemy, whereas until very recently ISIS has generally focused its attention on local enemies. ISIS has most specifically targeted Shi’a and other Arab groups that deviate from its norms. In testimony presented before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence of the House Committee on Homeland Security, Daniel Byman commented,

“The Islamic State does not follow Al Qaeda’s “far enemy” strategy, preferring instead the “near enemy” strategy, albeit on a regional level. As such, the primary target of the Islamic State has not been the United States, but rather “apostate” regimes in the Arab world-namely, the Asad regime in Syria and the Abadi regime in Iraq.” (Byman, 2015:4)

The same testimony goes on to argue that ISIS has more of an interest territorial control, whereas al Qaeda remains more interested in large scale, dramatic attacks against strategic or symbolic targets. Things have changed since Byman’s testimony. ISIS has moved more towards the al Qaeda model of large scale, dramatic attacks in recent months as illustrated by the terrorist attacks in France, Turkey, and Belgium. My point is that despite some major tactical differences, al Qaeda and ISIS both fit within the rubric of transnational Islamist movements that are firmly entrenched within an anti-rationalist discourse just as Euben argues Qutb’s writings were. Both movements are in opposition to the modern historical outlook as mentioned by Kompridis, and in this regard share many similarities with Joseph de Maistre as this paper will now go on to argue.

Reactions to Modernity

The French Revolution that Joseph de Maistre so detested represented a radical shift in political alliances and power. Alberto Spektorowski argued that the thought of Joseph de Maistre “was thus paradigmatic of a Catholic concept of political power that reflected a particular view of the relationship between the social and the political” (2008:456). Maistre was a complicated figure. Owen Bradley argued that Maistre’s traditionalism was surprisingly “forward-looking, something more than the threadbare ideology of an impotent aristocracy” (Bradley, 2001:xiii). Maistre himself was a far more cosmopolitan figure than much of his writings suggest. He was by all accounts an urbane and refined man who regularly frequented the elegant salons of Saint

Petersburg. His personal manners stood in staunch opposition to his vehement diatribes against Protestantism and the French Revolution. Cara Camcastle argued that in spite of his attachment to monarchy and his deep seeded skepticism towards written constitutions, Maistre himself opposed despotism and was a great admirer of the English unwritten constitution (2005). Many people to this day still debate whether Maistre was a simple provocateur (or what is commonly referred to today as ‘a troll’), whether his soul belonged to the Inquisition, or whether he was little more than an *aesthete* lost in Catholicism. Despite the more recently published moderate re-evaluations of Maistre offered by Bradley and Camcastle, the deeply reactionary elements scattered throughout his writings cannot be dismissed.

The folly of the Reformation for Maistre was that it gave people access to the scriptures, thus mitigating the overall monopoly of doctrinal interpretive authority held by Church for so many centuries. “According to Maistre, the Reformation had propagated the idea that Scripture was common property and should be distributed without mediation to all and sundry. But if authority was effectively dispersed in this manner, what became of doctrinal truth?” (Thurston, 2010:81). In his classic polemical style of writing, Maistre writes early in the first chapter of, *The Pope; Considered in his Relations with the Church* (Howard Fertig Publishers, 1975), “So all Catholic writers, worthy of the name, agree unanimously that the rule of the church is monarchical, but sufficiently tempered with aristocracy, to be the best and most perfect of governments” (1975:2). The role of the aristocracy was to make sure the Pope’s power was ‘sufficiently tempered,’ but it is quite apparent that Maistre does not really take this point seriously. He does not give any explanation about this would actually be done. In actuality, Maistre argues that councils within the church have no authority to go against the will of the Pope.

“Wherever there is a Sovereign, and in the Catholic economy his existence is undeniable, there can be no legitimate national assemblies without him. No sooner is his veto pronounced, than the assembly is dissolved, or its co-legislative power is suspended; if it resists, there is revolution.” (Maistre, 1975:11)

The events of 1789 were a direct by-product of the modernity that Maistre openly opposed. The writings of the *philosophes* did not just penetrate the minds of the general public. The ideas of the *philosophes* even were incorporated into the ongoing struggles within the church. According to George Rudé,

“The ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau and many others were widely disseminated and were absorbed by an eager reading public, both aristocratic and plebian. It had become fashionable even among the clergy to be skeptical and ‘irreligious’ and the writings of Voltaire had combined with the struggles within the Church itself (above all, the resentment of the parish clergy over the wealth and increasing authority of the Bishops) to expose the church to indifference, contempt or hostility.” (1988:7)

For Maistre, the French Revolution was literally the physical manifestation of the world’s evil and corruption all in one place at one time. Regular, God-fearing Christians were led astray by the sophists. “In his [Maistre’s] eyes the revolution signified providential retribution for

France's sacrilegious flirtation with "enlightened" ideas: her wanton indulgence in atheism and materialism, culminating in the sin of regicide" (Wolin, 2004:285). The *anti-philosophes* regularly made indictments against what the end results would be if the *philosophes* ideas became widely adopted. According to Carolina Armenteros, in Maistre's eyes, "the Revolution was 'Satanic' because it was the consummation of history, of the sins and miseries of which Bayle insisted the human narrative was composed" (Armenteros in Lebrun and Armenteros, 2010:100-01). On the disastrous results of the French Revolution, Maistre comments,

"The Revolution has plundered, exiled, massacred the priesthood; it has practiced [sp] every species of cruelty against the natural defenders of the maxims which it held in abhorrence. The ancient warriors of the sacred camp have departed to their rest; young recruits are indeed coming forward to fill their places, but they are still necessarily few in number, the enemy having, by anticipation, cut off their supplies with the most fatal ability." (1975:XX)

If one substituted the word 'priesthood' with 'ulema,' and 'ancient warriors' with 'jihadi martyrs' this would sound similar to something plagiarized from some recent statement issued by ISIS or Al Qaeda. In a statement found by the Manchester, UK Police in 2000 in an Al Qaeda recruitment manual, Al Qaeda's sentiment towards modernity is quite clear.

"Colonialism and its followers, the apostate rulers, then start to openly erect crusader centers, societies, and organizations like Masonic Lodges, Lions and Rotary clubs, and foreign schools. They aimed at producing a wasted generation that pursued everything that is western and produced rulers, ministers, leaders, physicians, engineers, businessmen, politicians, journalists, and information specialists." ("The Al Qaeda Manual", 7)

Al Qaeda sees things like Masonic Lodges and similar civic clubs as corrupting. Even the most banal occupations today such as businessmen and information specialists are corrupted. These entities have all been permanently tainted by not only colonialism, but by modernity in general. Such rigidity is largely absent from earlier Islamic worldviews. As a matter of historical fact, Mohammed Abduh was a freemason himself. Other Muslim freemasons along with Abduh included Prince Tawfiq, the Khedive's son and heir and other well known figures within the Muslim political elite of the time such as Muhammad Sharif Pasha who had been a minister, Sulayman Abaza Pasha and Saad Zaghlul.

ISIS also criticizes modernity. "The modern day slavery of employment, work hours, wages, etc. is one that leaves the Muslim in a constant feeling of subjugation to a kâfir master. He does not live [with] the might and honor that every Muslim should live and experience" (*Dabiq*, Issue 3:29). Maistre, Al Qaeda, and ISIS all see modernity as destroying young minds and creating an enthralled and decadent, *wasted generation* that spends its time in pursuit of worldly pleasures.

Like Maistre, Al Qaeda and ISIS also glorify the role of holy warriors. All 3 discourses recognize them as the cornerstone and defenders of their respective societal orders. Maistre explicitly saw war as possessing a cleansing and purifying function.

“War is therefore divine in itself, since it is a law of the world. [...] War is divine in the mysterious glory that surrounds it and in the no less inexplicable attraction that draws us to it. [...] War is divine by the manner in which it breaks out.” (1993:218)

According to a statement issued by al Qaeda’s current leader, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, “The best people, then, are those who are prepared for *jihad* in the path of Allah Most High, requesting martyrdom at any time or place. Whenever he hears the call to *jihad* he flies to it until Allah’s authority is established” (al-Zawahiri, quoted in Ibrahim (ed.), 2007:145-46). Maistre’s, ‘ancient warriors of the sacred camp,’ and Zawahiri’s warrior who, ‘hears the call to *jihad*’ and ‘flies to it until Allah’s authority is established,’ are one in the same - these warriors are young, courageous, and most importantly, unquestioning fighters who place their theological missions ahead of all other worldly things.

According to the *Al Qaeda Manual* confiscated in the UK shortly after 9/11, “[t]he young came to prepare themselves for Jihad [holy war], commanded by the majestic Allah’s order in the holy Koran” (8-9). For Al Qaeda, the youth who fight in these holy battles that survive will ultimately become the moral bedrock and authority of their respective society; those who die will be remembered as martyrs and will become legends.

ISIS has also glorified the role of young holy warriors in their own writings and statements. One particular call for immigration to ISIS controlled territory that appeared in *Dabiq*, the new online magazine of ISIS, stated, “Jihād not only grants life on the larger scale of the Ummah, it also grants a fuller life on the scale of the individual. This life of Jihād is not possible until you pack and move to the khilāfah” (*Dabiq*, Issue 3:29). Maistre, al Qaeda, and ISIS see the youth as being divinely ordained to bring forth the revolution.

“The Infidel”

Maistre invokes a term in his writings over 200 years ago that today conjure up images of contemporary radical Islam rather than Roman Catholicism: the *infidel*. According to Maistre, “The *infidel*, on the other hand, laughs at all dissenters, makes use of them *all*, quite sure that *all*, more or less, and each one of them is in his way, will forward *his great work*, the destruction of Christianity” (1975:34). Maistre’s sentiment towards religious toleration and pluralism were in line with the general sentiment on the topic held by other reactionary thinkers of the era. On the view of religious toleration and pluralism held by reactionary thinkers of Maistre’s time, McMahon writes,

“On the one hand, anti-philosophes charged that the plea for tolerance merely confirmed their enemies’ indifference to religious truth, laying bare a deeper, more sinister design. By treating all faiths equally, the philosophes sought to water down the one true faith in a deluge of relativism, drowning Catholicism in an endless sea of competing beliefs.” (2001:45)

Maistre did not view the infidel as one who merely rejected or disbelieved in the teachings of the church; rather he saw the infidel as an individual who was constantly engaged in a plot to destroy the Christian, specifically Roman Catholic, way of life. For Maistre, the infidel was a transgenerational problem. Maistre, like Nietzsche, believed that the moral and emotional traits of the parent passed down to their offspring. Ferdinand Caussy writes that in Nietzsche's view, "man benefits from all the good things that have been handed down by ancestors and divinities; he thus becomes accountable to them, he inherits a debt that he must pay by offerings and sacrifices" (Caussy, 2009:247). For Maistre and Nietzsche, put simply; moral parents make moral children - immoral parents make immoral children. Maistre argues "*that all beings with the faculty of reproduction will produce beings similar to themselves*. The rule suffers no exception; it is written everywhere in the universe" (1993:34). For Maistre, a generation of infidels not only sought to destroy Christianity in their own generation, but that such infidels will also eventually sow the seeds of destruction through their offspring to destroy future generations as well.

This hostile attitude towards *the infidel* deeply resonates with Islamic fundamentalist attitudes towards non-Muslims. In the words of Al Qaeda on infidels,

"There are only three choice in Islam: either willing submission; or payment of the jizya, thereby physical, though not spiritual, submission to the authority of Islam; or the sword—for it is not right to let him [an infidel] live. The matter is summed up for every person alive: either submit, or live under the suzerainty of Islam, or die." (Al Qaeda, quoted in Ibrahim (ed.), 2007:19-20)

The Fundamentalist attitude towards non-Muslims is primarily based on a misunderstood verse from the Qur'an that warns Muslims of befriending non-Muslims. "O ye who believe! Choose not for friends such of those who received the Scripture before you, and of the disbelievers, as make a jest and sport of your religion. But keep your duty to Allah if ye are true believers" (Qur'an 5:57). According to the respected 21st century Indian Islamic scholar, Mawlana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, this verse warns Muslims to be cautious around non-Muslims, but in no way calls for rudeness or hostility and most certainly does not call for violence.

"Aulia is the plural of wali. Wali means a friend, some one [sp] close, as well as a helper. What it means is that Muslims are expected not to make Jews, Christians, and all other disbelievers (kuffar) their protecting friends, as has been clarified in [S]urah Nisaa. However, to deal with them with justice, politeness, generosity, and decency is quite another matter." (Usmani, 1959:154)

Maistre unwittingly echoes in a similar way how al Qaeda and ISIS interpret this Qur'anic reference in his own warning about infidels. Very similar phrases are utilized by Maistre on the disbeliever that 'laughs at all dissenters,' and the Qur'anic injunction warning of the disbeliever who, 'make a jest and sport of your religion.'

Like Maistre, Al Qaeda and ISIS envision a world ruled under the absolute authority of a specific religious source - for Maistre it was the Catholic Church; for al Qaeda and ISIS it is a very strict version of Wahhabism. According to a statement made by Osama bin Laden in 2001 shortly after 9/11;

“Our concern is that our ummah unites either under the Words of the Book of God or His Prophet, and that this nations [sp] should establish the righteous caliphate of our ummah, which has been prophesied by our Prophet in his authentic hadith: that the righteous caliph will return with the permission of God.” (Bin Laden, quoted in Lawrence (ed.), 2005:121)

Those who choose to live outside the framework of that source have limited options. To not live by the rules of Islam as interpreted by al Qaeda, or at the least physically submit to these rules, warrants death.

While Al Qaeda envisions a world that is ultimately ruled under the authority of one source, ISIS actually believes that it *is* that source. On 1 July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi issued an audio statement declaring the creation of the Caliphate and the first video emerged of him as the Caliph four days later. “O Muslims everywhere, glad tidings to you and expect good. Raise your head high, for today - by Allah’s grace - you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership” (*Dabiq*, Issue 1:4) Maistre, like Al Qaeda and ISIS, view those who live outside the fold of their religious purview as dangerous and potentially treacherous. According to the opening statement in the 1st issue of *Dabiq*, “Anyone who dares to offend him will be disciplined, and any hand that reaches out to harm him will be cut off” (8).

Al Qaeda and ISIS also share Maistre’s belief that the values and morals of parents get passed down to their children, however they are more optimistic about the possibility of changing these values via propaganda and indoctrination. These groups have made serious efforts at converting and ultimately recruiting impressionable non-Muslim teenagers and young adults into their fold. Both have created highly professional looking magazines to promote their agendas. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula launched *Inspire* in 2010 and ISIS launched *Dabiq* in 2014. *Inspire* focuses on encouraging its readers to carry out lone-wolf attacks on the West, while *Dabiq* is more concerned with establishing the religious legitimacy of ISIL and its self-proclaimed Caliphate, and encouraging Muslims to emigrate there (Gambhir, 2014). It would be interesting to consider if Maistre would have been more successful if he could have harnessed the power of the internet and social media that is available for extremists of all types today.

The Vanguard and the Return to Past Glory and Greatness

Maistre hoped that his writings would be a sort of ‘message in a bottle’ for future generations that may have the capacity to actually carry out the counter revolution that he envisioned. According to Michael Kochin, “Maistre’s defence [sp] of divine providence was not intended for a remnant of believers in an atheistic world, but for a counterrevolutionary élite that would save the states of Europe, from Russia to Ireland, for Catholic Christianity” (2002:39). This attitude of defending *divine providence* with the hope that eventually counter revolutionary elites would save Christianity is precisely the attitude ISIS has adopted, except in the ISIS case, the purpose is to save Islam. ISIS literally has been calling for ‘the elites’ in its most concrete sense throughout the world to join its ranks. Another recruitment call that appeared in *Daqib* stated,

"Therefore, every Muslim professional who delayed his jihad in the past under the pretense of studying Shari'ah, medicine, or engineering, etc., claiming he would contribute to Islam later with his expertise, should now make his number one priority to repent and answer the call to hijrah, especially after the establishment of the Khilafah [caliphate]. This Khilafah is more in need than ever before for experts, professionals, and specialists, who can help contribute in strengthening its structure and tending to the needs of their Muslim brothers." (Issue 3:26)

The uncritical glorification of the past, or a romantic 'return to past glories,' is a common element within reactionary thought. (Bronner, 1999) The Nazi's sought to return to an era of Teutonic Knights while the Italian Fascist movement under Mussolini sought a return to its glory days of the Roman Empire under the Caesars. Within the language of al Qaeda and ISIS is a desire for a return to the age of the Prophet Mohammed. Like al Qaeda and ISIS, Maistre also sought to return to a previous epoch - one of purity and piety, free from the contemporary worldly evils that had all but consumed humanity by the 18th century in his mind. It is not surprising then that Maistre looks back to the glory days when the Catholic Church's authority in France was absolute and unquestioned only a few generations earlier: the Crusades.

In Maistre's worldview, the Middle Ages in Europe were an era in which Christian souls were unified against the common threats of foreign religious influences. For Maistre, the paragon of piety was embodied in the 'noble mission' of the crusaders a few centuries earlier. "When in the Middle Ages, we repaired to Asia, and endeavored, sword in hand, to break on its own territory, that formidable crescent which threatened all the liberties of Europe, the French were likewise at the head of this immortal enterprise" (Maistre, 1975, xxviii). Credit for such 'repairs' goes to the Papacy. "As to wars that were just, holy even, and necessary, as were the crusades, if the Popes *provoked* them, and sustained them with all their might, then they did well, and we owe them our unfailing gratitude" (Maistre, 1975:214). If the Papacy actually *did* provoke the Crusades, which Maistre clearly knows they did despite the rhetorical question as to whether they actually did or not, then the Papacy ought to be venerated for being the impetus behind such a 'just, holy even, and necessary' war. Political and religious violence is a paragon for Maistre, and it is the head of the Catholic Church that most effectively organizes and inspires such *immortal enterprises*.

Within the Maistrean and al Qaeda/ISIS worldview, only an elite vanguard of martyrs who are willing to unquestioningly go into battle and die under the banner of their faiths can ever hope to recreate a 'pristine and authentic' form of that faith that has long since disappeared. While ISIS argues that it is the new Islamic State that will be the vanguard state in which a larger *jihad* against secularism and atheism will be based, Joseph de Maistre explicitly argued that France was the heart and soul of the Crusades, and that it was the French Catholics who actually led the Crusades against the Muslims and other religions deemed false. Maistre commented that "[t]he French scepter was both illustrious at Jerusalem and Constantinople. What great things was there not reason to expect of it?" (1975:xxviii) Maistre goes on to state,

"The French name made so great an impression in the east, that it there has remained synonymous, as it were, with that of Europe; and the greatest poet in Italy writing in the sixteenth century hesitates not to employ the same expression." (1975:xxviii)

Once again we see a nationalistic chauvinism in Maistre's writings; yes, the Crusaders in general were heroic, but *specifically* it was the French Crusaders and French clerical authorities who were the true heroes throughout the various Crusades. The key point here is that both ISIS and Maistre employ a specific 'chosen nation' as the ultimate bringer of truth, similar to how Hegel posits certain nation-states as the vehicle in which *geist* travels; a state that stands head and shoulders above others terms of cultural and historical importance (Hegel, 1981).

Reductionism and the Schmittian Rhetoric of 'Us-versus-Them'

The writing style of Joseph de Maistre has been of interest to literary critics since the 19th century. Alphonse de Lamartine, on Maistre's writing style comments,

"That brief, nervous, lucid style, stripped of phrases, robust of limb, did not at all recall the softness of the eighteenth century, nor the declamations of the latest French books: it was born and steeped in the breath of the Alps; it was virgin, it was young, it was harsh and savage; it had no human respect, it felt its solitude; it improvised depth and form all at once... That man was new among the enfants du siècle." (Lebrun in Lebrun and Armenteros (eds.), 2010:4)

Even though Lamartine shared some of Maistre's views, he still saw Maistre as a man who was not a great thinker.

"This was a crude soul, but a great soul; an uncivilized intelligence, but a vast intelligence; a rude style, but a strong style. Thus delivered to himself, all his philosophy was only the theory of his religious instincts. [...] the writer in him was quite superior to the thinker, but the man was very superior to the thinker and to the writer." (Lebrun in Lebrun and Armenteros (eds.), 2010:6)

Another, better known literary figures assessment of Maistre is similar - Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve in regards to Maistre and his rhetorical style commented,

"One of his favourite expressions, and one which he often used was point-blank. This was the secret of his tactics, this was his gesture; this was the way he acted; he advanced alone against a whole enemy army, mouthing his challenge, and shooting the leader point-blank. He attacks in glory, to triumph, and earns an excess of reprisals. In Rome's spiritual distress, this was the Christian Scaevola, and the three hundred others did not follow." (Lebrun in Lebrun and Armenteros (ed.), 2010:8)

Both Lamartine and Sainte-Beuve recognized the power of Maistre's 'strong style' and 'point-blank' words, and the way he chose to incorporate them in his writings. Even Charles Baudelaire showed deep admiration for Maistre's writing abilities. Baudelaire responding to a criticism of Maistre made by his own contemporary, Alphonse Toussenel, stated, "And a man like you! One who will go by the way, as a simple writer of the century, insults de Maistre, the great genius of our time - a luminary!"³ (Baudelaire, 1966:337). Baudelaire's infatuation with Maistre's style was during his own transition towards prose poetry (Mills, 2003).

3 I translated this quote into English. The original quote was, "Et un homme comme vous! lâcher en passant, comme un simple rédacteur du siècle, des injures à de Maistre, le grand génie de notre temps, - un voyant!"

Maistre's philosophical views generally offered an oversimplified and reductionist analysis of the world. In *The St. Petersburg Dialogues*, the Count, the character who represents Maistre's views, condescendingly categorizes the entire philosophical enterprise as being a *feeble legislator*. "And although philosophy is a feeble legislator whose best laws may even be ridiculed because it lacks the power to make itself obeyed, nevertheless we must be fair and give it credit for the truth that it has published" (Maistre, 1993:24). The Count goes on to comment that unlike philosophy however, Christianity avoided the trappings of being a feeble legislator.

"But the Christian law, which is nothing but the revealed will of him who knows everything and can do everything, does not limit itself to vain counsels. It has made of abstinence, of habitual victory over our desires, a capital precept that must regulate man's entire life." (Maistre, 1993:24)

The ideas Christian law derives directly from the revealed will of God and that Christian law is not limited to *vain counsels* are both categorically false. These beliefs show either a serious lack of understanding of the basic historical development of the Catholic Church and Canon law, or are actually part of Maistre's rhetorical strategy of to provide a cursory explanation of Christian Law that would appeal to a semi-literate audience whom lacked the intellectual tools and material resources to counter his claims.

Canonical legal theory is situated within an Aristotelean-Thomistic legal philosophy that is largely based in reason. §1976 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes St. Thomas Aquinas as stating, "*Law is an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by the one who is in charge of the community.*" (Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 3) §1986 directly mentions the role of evangelical councils that Maistre claims do not exist in his Church. "*Besides its precepts the New Law includes the evangelical counsels. 'The Church's holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels which the Lord proposes to his disciples in the Gospel.'*" (Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 3) These protocols also it make clear that Jesus was the one who created the law and then transmitted it to his disciples who then wrote what he said in the various Gospels. §1977 states, "*Christ is the end of the law (cf ⇒ Rom 10:4); only he teaches and bestows the justice of God.*" (Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 3) This is hardly the same as a jurisprudential theory whose authority is solely based on 'the revealed will of him who knows everything and can do everything.' The Gospels are understood in Christianity to be *inspired* by God, but not the actual *words* written by God in the sense of the 10 Commandments described in the Book of Exodus which were engraved by God on stone tablets that were then given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Maistre in his next sentence does seem to recognize that councils within the Church actually do exist, seemingly contradicting his previous statement.

"Moreover, it [Christian law] has made the more or less severe, more or less frequent, privation of the permitted pleasures of the table a fundamental law that can be modified according to the circumstances, but that always remains invariable in its essence." (Maistre, 1993:24)

It is deeply problematic to argue that Christian Law is nothing but the revealed law of God, but at the same time, its fundamental laws can be modified according to circumstances. Maistre

does not go on to give any example of how a fundamental law can be modified while entire legal system remains ‘invariable in its essence.’ Changing a fundamental law, would by default alter at least part of the overall jurisprudential framework, especially if the changed law was a part of legal framework based on revelation, which unless directly abrogated by the source itself - in this case God - ought not to change.

Maistre’s reductionism and misrepresentations about Catholicism parallel what many scholars and religious figures have said about movements like al Qaeda and ISIS; its followers do not really understand Islam and Islamic principles, and if they do, they are purposely distorting meanings for their own purposes. The widely accepted consensus within the Sunni discourse is that a group like ISIS cannot appoint a Caliph and then claim it as the representative of all Muslims.

“They may have been entitled to declare an “Islamic emirate” (as the Taliban did in Afghanistan) or even an “Islamic state,” just as Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Mauritania are “Islamic republics.” But to declare a caliphate for all Muslims when they rule over, at best, a few tens of millions Syrians and Iraqis out of a worldwide Muslim population of 1.2–1.5 billion, is to destroy any notion of Muslim representation or unity.” (Lister, 2015:22-23)

Like Maistre, ISIS seems to be making up their own rules that go against the generally accepted doctrines of their respective religious systems.

Similar to Maistre’s worldview, at the heart of the al Qaeda and ISIS ideological narrative is a Manichean struggle between good and evil-one is either with their movement or against it. In 1927, Carl Schmitt wrote that *us-versus-them* language, also known as the *friend-enemy distinction*, is at the heart of politics in general. (Schmitt, 1996 and Oprisko, 2012) States achieve unity by defining themselves as what they are not. In Schmitt’s words,

“The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible.” (Schmitt, 1996:26-27)

Maistre, al Qaeda, and ISIS each apply Schmitt’s notion of the political to their own religious purviews. In the initial issue of *Dabiq*, Abu Bakr-al Baghdadi declares to the world,

“O Ummah of Islam, indeed the world today has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present: The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy – the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the jews [sic], the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the jews [sic].” (Issue 1:10)

ISIS’s Schmittian/Manichean approach to Judaism and Christianity stands in stark contrast with famous Qur’an quote that calls for toleration between people of the book.

“Lo! Those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muhammad), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans - whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doeth right - surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.” (Qur’an 2:62)

In a later edition of *Dabiq*, Abu Mus’ab az-Zarqawi, the one time leader of al Qaeda of Iraq who was killed in a by a Joint U.S. force on 7 June, 2006 was quoted as saying,

“So we warn the tribes, that any tribe of party or assembly whose involvement and collaboration with the crusaders and their apostate agents are confirmed, then by He who sent Muhammad with the truth, we will target them just as we target the crusaders, and we will eradicate and distinguish them, for there are only two camps: the camp of truth and its followers, and the camp of falsehood and its factions.” (Issue 3:12)

Similar *us-versus-them* rhetoric can be seen in earlier al Qaeda statements as well. Al Qaeda tried to make two *point-blank* statements within a period of 3 years in an effort to condemn the American people as a whole and to gain support. In an al Qaeda statement that was released in December 1998, it was made clear that all American’s were the enemy of Islam. “Every American is an enemy - whether he fights us directly or pays his taxes” (Al Qaeda statement, quoted in Ibrahim (ed.), 2007:281). Just a few months after the 9/11 attacks, al Qaeda reiterated their earlier condemnation of not just the policies of the American government, but of the American people in general, by issuing a similar statement. This time however, they employed a syllogistic type of reasoning to back their claims.

“The American people should remember that they pay taxes to their government, they elect their president, their government manufactures arms and gives them to Israel and Israel uses them to massacre Palestinians. The American Congress endorses all government measures, and this proves that all America is responsible for the atrocities perpetrated against Muslims. All of America, because they elect the Congress.” (Al Qaeda statement, quoted in Ibrahim (ed.), 2007:282)

At first glance, the second statement seems reasonable enough deduce.

P1: Americans vote for their political leaders

P2: Americans pay taxes to their government that is run by the political leaders whom they voted for

P3: That government then uses those taxes to build arms that are given to Israel

P4: Israel then use that uses those weapons to wage war against the Palestinians

C: Therefore, Americans are also responsible for waging war against Palestinians

However when taking into consideration the complexities of tax distribution (Americans do not get to pick and choose precisely how their taxes are allocated) and foreign military aid, not to mention the fact that most working Americans are forced to pay taxes - whether they vote for

their political leaders or not - it becomes quite obvious that this kind reductionist reasoning does not make sense.

Nonetheless, someone already hostile to US foreign policy and the United States in general is more likely to ignore this over simplification. These are the types of people groups like al Qaeda and ISIS target. Four days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Saudi Arabia's Chief Mufti, Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh called upon the *ulema* and other religious leaders to teach young Muslims that these extremist groups are wrong and operate outside the fold of Islam. Al-Ashaikh declared that, "it is the duty of the Muslim *ulema* (religious scholars) to make facts clear in this respect, and to clarify that Islam never accepts such acts" (KSA Press Release, 2001:online). Maistre, ISIS and al Qaeda's rhetoric and propaganda - while polished, *point blank*, and often even poetic - nonetheless, remains intellectually deficient.

Conclusion

This paper showed that there are many similarities in the ideas and language used by Joseph de Maistre in the past and contemporary Islamic fundamentalist movements today. It is important to note however that Maistre was never specifically a 'Christian fundamentalist.' He actually believed that Catholic dogmas were an evolutive truth and that; in his opinion, the progressive character of the Catholic Church excluded any type of return to the 'primitive times' of Christianity. Ultimately, he believed fundamentalism was a Protestant, rather than Catholic mistake. Nonetheless his many of reactionary attitudes do share some undeniable similarities with fundamentalist discourses.

Following in the vein of Roxanne Euben, this paper also supports the claim that more comparative transgenerational scholarship is necessary to show how ideas that may seem foreign to the West might actually not be as alien as one thinks. Further research on fundamentalism can help synthesize the ideas of fringe movements that may not be violent yet, into a more coherent set of axioms and recognizable patterns. Most importantly, as mentioned in the beginning of this article, such comparative transgenerational research can contribute to the creation of more effective long term policy strategies to deal with such movements that pose serious threats to the general public well-being.

The similarities between Maistre's writings in the 18th century and Al Qaeda/ISIS in the 20th and 21st centuries transcend religious boundaries and time. Mark Juergensmeyer's in depth look at contemporary manifestations of religious violence, *Terror in the Mind of God: the Global Rise of Religious Violence* (University of California Press, 2000), discussed certain similarities that are present in all contemporary religious extremist movements.

"What they have in common are three things. First, they have rejected the compromises with liberal values and secular institutions that were made by most mainstream religious leaders and organizations. Second, they refuse to observe the boundaries that secular society has

imposed around religion keeping it private rather than allowing it to intrude into public spaces. And third, they have replaced what they regard as weak modern substitutes with the more vibrant and demanding forms of religion that they imagine to be a part of their tradition's beginnings." (Juergensmeyer, 2000:221)

Much of Maistre, al Qaeda, and ISIS's views' nicely fit into Juergensmeyer's characterization of religious extremism. I do not agree with Isaiah Berlin's conclusion that Maistre was a proto-fascist. "In Berlin's reading, Maistre was "at one with German irrationalism and fideism" and even held the dubious honor of being an intellectual forefather of fascism" (McMahon, 2001:9). In reality, as earlier members of the Frankfurt school have argued, fascism is a uniquely modern phenomenon that can be directly attributed to the Enlightenment (Horkheimer, 2002). Maistre was not a fascist because fascism places ontological primacy on the state as the sole source of authority. According to Spektorowski,

"Not only was de Maistre and Donoso Cortés's authoritarianism non-fascist but it also attempted to create a theoretical barrier against fascism. Indeed, these writers advanced a model of legitimate authoritarianism designed to offer an alternative to liberal politics and to fascist amoral decisionism." (Spektorowski, 2008:456)

Maistre places ontological primacy on religion and views the state as the ideal vehicle to promote its discourse. This is to suggest that that state is ultimately a puppet of Papal authority.

In regards to the bond between the Papacy and the European monarchy, Maistre comments that the papacy "created *European monarchy*, that wonderful work of more than human workmanship, which we coldly admire, like the sun, because we behold it every day" (1975:213). The monarchy was a creation of the papacy, therefore it was also subservient to it when it came to pressing moral and ethical issues of the time. I believe that it is more reasonable to label Maistre as more of an absolutist theocrat rather than a proto-fascist. I believe this can be applied to the worldviews of ISIS and al Qaeda as well-both movements offer an authoritarian model of politics, designed to be in opposition to liberalism and the amoral decisionism that is an inherent feature of fascism.

Maistre does directly mention Islam in his writings. In his comments on the power of the French scepter and what it could have accomplished, he states, "It would have aggrandized Europe, vanquished Islamism, and extinguished schism; unfortunately, however, it was not able to keep its ground" (1975:xxviii). It is ironic that Maistre's own language and ideology are more in line with contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, rather than the more moderate interpretations of Islam that existed during his own lifetime; an *Islamism* that the French scepter could have vanquished if it just were 'able to keep its ground'.

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