

THE
DARKEST SIDES
OF POLITICS, I

POSTWAR FASCISM, COVERT OPERATIONS
AND TERRORISM

JEFFREY M. BALE



THE DARKEST SIDES OF POLITICS, I

This book examines a wide array of phenomena that arguably constitute the most noxious, extreme, terrifying, murderous, secretive, authoritarian, and/or anti-democratic aspects of national and international politics. Scholars should not ignore these “dark sides” of politics, however unpleasant they may be, since they influence the world in a multitude of harmful ways.

The first volume in this two-volume collection focuses on the history of underground neo-fascist networks in the post-World War II era; neo-fascist paramilitary and terrorist groups operating in Europe and Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s; and the manipulation of those and other terrorist organizations by the security forces of various states, both authoritarian and democratic. A range of global case studies are included, all of which focus on the lesser known activities of certain secular extremist milieus.

This collection should prove to be essential reading for students and researchers interested in understanding seemingly arcane but nonetheless important dimensions of recent historical and contemporary politics.

Jeffrey M. Bale is Professor in the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, USA.

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Postwar Fascism, Covert
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NOTES ON THE MATERIALS INCLUDED IN THESE VOLUMES

The materials collected in the two volumes of this book derive from a variety of sources. Most have already been published in academic works or journalistic magazines devoted to extremism, terrorism, and covert politics, whereas others originated as chapters from my doctoral dissertation at the University of California at Berkeley, two were especially prepared for contractors for agencies of the U.S. government and have not yet been published, and one was written initially for another book. The reader should be warned, however, that most of the materials herein are examples of “old school” historical scholarship, which means that they are densely packed with rich, empirical details, are based as much as possible on a careful evaluation of the existing corpus of primary sources, and contain very extensive reference notes. Thus those who have become accustomed to reading modern “social science” literature, with its excessive emphasis on theories and models, obsession with quantification, and embarrassingly limited use of primary sources, may find some of them rough going. On the other hand, traditional historians should feel themselves right at home. That is entirely intentional.

Volume I

The introductory chapter was mostly prepared for a separate book-length study (provisionally titled *Where the Anti-democratic Extremes Touch: Patterns of Interaction and Collaboration between Islamist Networks and Western Left- and Right-Wing Extremists*) that I had planned and begun to write. However, the emotional fallout from the sudden death of my longtime girlfriend interrupted the process of writing that book, which therefore may never be written. Hence I have added some new prefatory paragraphs to a chapter focusing on the nature and importance of extremist ideologies.

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The second chapter was first published in the 1990s in *Lobster: A Journal of Parapolitics*, and then expanded and republished in the academic journal *Patterns of Prejudice*.

Chapters 3 through 7 were all originally prepared in the early 1990s for my doctoral dissertation in Late Modern European History at the University of California at Berkeley. Although several academic publishers expressed an interest in publishing a book version of that six-hundred-plus-page dissertation, I instead moved on to work on other research topics because I felt that I would have had to add a very large chapter on the 12 December 1969 Piazza Fontana massacre, an extraordinarily complicated case. As a result, only Chapter 6 on the May 1973 attack on Milan police headquarters was subsequently published, in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence*. For this collection, I have slightly augmented Chapter 3, significantly updated sections of Chapters 4 and 5 (because a wealth of new sources has since appeared on those topics), and added a brief paragraph addendum to Chapter 6. I am very pleased and proud to say that my detailed reconstructions and close analyses of these murky events over three decades ago proved to be extremely accurate and indeed prescient, because the new information that has subsequently appeared has not only confirmed, but further reinforced, virtually all of my narrative accounts and conclusions. This goes to show, yet again, that comprehensive scholarly research generally stands the test of time, unlike the trendy, fashionable theoretical drivel that too many people in the humanities and “social sciences” have been peddling in recent decades.

Chapter 8 was originally published in the *Bulletin of the Turkish Studies Association*, and then republished sometime later in *Lobster* so that it would reach a specialized non-academic audience. It has been slightly amended.

Chapter 9 was previously published in *Patterns of Prejudice*. It has not been altered.

Volume II

Chapter 1 originally appeared in an edited volume titled *Making Sense of Proxy Wars*, edited by Michael Innes. It has not been altered.

Chapter 2 was published in the journal *Democracy and Security*. I am happy to say that the fears of many analysts (myself included) that some toxic chemical or biological agents produced in connection with “Project Coast” may have been smuggled out of South Africa appear not to have materialized. The reconstruction of the actual details of this covert program, including special operations assassinations carried out with the use of these agents, has proven to be accurate. It has not been altered.

Chapter 3 was originally written for a graduate seminar course at the University of California at Berkeley and then published in *Lobster*. It has been slightly amended and updated.

Chapter 4 is an unpublished report that I prepared under contract for a U.S. government entity. It contains no classified information.

Chapter 5 was first published as a chapter in a book titled *Jihadists and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, edited by Gary Ackerman and Jeremy Tamsett. It has been slightly altered.

Here I would like to emphasize that I would have preferred to devote most of my research efforts in recent years to reconstructing particular jihadist terrorist plots and attacks, on the basis of an in-depth examination of judicial materials and other primary sources, which is the same methodology I employed for many years while doing research on neo-fascist terrorism. I did indeed adopt those tried-and-true methods in connection with both the 1999 Ahmad Rassam “Millennium” bomb plot (see Chapter 9 in this volume) and the 2004 Madrid train bombings (in a monograph titled *Jihādīst Cells and I.E.D. Capabilities in Europe: Assessing the Present and Future Threat to the West*, which was published by the United States Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute in 2012). Unfortunately, given the proliferation of ill-informed nonsense being peddled after 9/11 by so many newly minted “terrorism experts,” most of whom had no prior academic background in the study of terrorism, Islamic history, Islamic religious and legal doctrines, or Islamist ideologies and movements, I increasingly felt compelled to try to promote more conceptual clarity about these broader issues. This seemed all the more necessary because naïve and erroneous ideas about Islam and Islamism were exerting an ever-growing influence on the counterterrorism policies adopted by the United States and other Western nations, with predictably disastrous real-world consequences.

The next three articles included herein were therefore designed to counter widespread but misleading claims that (a) Islam is inherently a “religion of peace” (despite numerous Qur’anic *suras* that explicitly enjoin warfare against non-believers, Muhammad’s own “exemplary” behavior as a warlord, and centuries of brutal Muslim conquests of “infidel” territory); that (b) Islamism, an intrinsically literalist, strict, and puritanical but in most respects orthodox interpretation of core Islamic doctrines, can be “moderate” with respect to its goals (as opposed to its methods); that (c) jihadist terrorism has “nothing to do with Islam” despite the fact that its Islamist sponsors and perpetrators correctly insist otherwise (and, indeed, obsessively cite canonical Islamic sources in order to justify every action they take); and that (d) Western counterterrorist policies should be based on promoting these absurd revisionist fictions instead of acknowledging reality. In these three chapters, my growing exasperation about the West’s stubborn refusal to recognize or acknowledge the nature of our Islamist adversaries is at times on display. Then again, this sort of denial of reality is rarely if ever a problem when one writes about fascism and neo-fascism. Although Islamist apologists are currently omnipresent in academia (and the media), as are communist apologists and cult apologists, fascist apologists have fortunately not been common there since the 1920s and 1930s. How does one explain the seemingly never-ending willingness of supposedly educated people to engage in such embarrassing apologetics for totalitarian ideologies and movements? As George Orwell once wryly noted, “[t]here are some ideas so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them.” American literary critic Lionel Trilling helped to explain why when he observed that “[t]hose members of the intellectual class who prided themselves upon their political commitment were committed not to the fact but to the abstraction.” Sadly, this is no less true today.

x Notes on the materials

Chapter 6 was published in a special issue, devoted to Islamism, of the journal *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* (now *Politics, Religion, and Ideology*), which was edited by myself and my colleague Bassam Tibi.

Chapter 7 was published in the leading online Terrorism Studies journal, *Perspectives on Terrorism*. It is now being republished, as I always prefer, in a hard copy format.

A shorter version of Chapter 8 was published as a special report for the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT) website. The longer, slightly updated version appears here for the first time.

Chapter 9 is a previously unpublished segment that I originally prepared for a larger research report for a U.S. government agency. It has been slightly modified.

Chapter 10 was first published in a 2014 McGraw-Hill e-book edited by Russell E. Howard, *The Terrorism-Trafficking Nexus: A Clear and Present Danger?*, and is now being republished in a hard copy format. It has not been altered.

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I only wish I could blame my mentors and colleagues listed above for any shortcomings found herein, but unfortunately I cannot.

1

INTRODUCTION

Ideologies, extremist ideologies, and terrorist violence

The title of this two-volume collection of scholarly materials, *The Darkest Sides of Politics*, should be more or less self-explanatory given the addition of the subtitles to those volumes. The first volume is subtitled *Postwar Fascism, Covert Operations, and Terrorism*, and the second is subtitled *State Terrorism, "Weapons of Mass Destruction," Religious Extremism, and Organized Crime*. Individually and collectively, these subjects arguably constitute the most noxious, extreme, terrifying, murderous, secretive, authoritarian, and/or anti-democratic aspects of national and international politics. For better or worse, it is precisely these grim but relatively arcane areas of politics and religion that have been the primary focus of my scholarly research for nearly four decades, long before some of them became increasingly "fashionable" in the wake of the spectacular and devastating jihadist terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. Throughout those decades, faculty colleagues, students, and acquaintances have often asked me how I managed to cope psychologically with devoting so much time and effort studying the most horrific aspects of human political behavior. One of my glib responses has been that "it's a dirty job, but someone has to do it." Yet those who know me better realize that for me it has never been a "dirty" or unpleasant task, but rather an endless source of intellectual fascination, irrespective of whether such subjects happen to be considered important within the halls of academe. In fact, I personally find it much more difficult to understand how so many people in academia can spend their entire lives studying the far more mundane, conventional, and mainstream aspects of politics, most of which I consider to be deadly dull.

In order to explain my obsession with the nastier and less conventional topics that are the focus of these volumes, perhaps a brief personal introduction is called for. I am a very unconventional person who has also had an unusual academic trajectory. It seems that nowadays most people who end up on university faculties go straight from high school into college, then straight from college into graduate

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school, and then – if they are fortunate, well-connected, brilliant, or sufficiently servile and conformist – straight into junior academic jobs, which means that they usually begin their academic careers in their late twenties or very early thirties. In marked contrast, I did not obtain my Ph.D. in modern European history from the University of California at Berkeley until I was forty-three. The reason for this long delay is directly related to the reasons why I am attracted to studying the aforementioned subjects. Far from being a “normal” academician from a comfortable upper middle class background, I came from a poor, dysfunctional single-family household, and only managed to escape from these difficult, unpleasant childhood circumstances by reading huge numbers of books, especially horror novels and volumes on military history, and listening obsessively to primitive rock ‘n’ roll. As a teenager I was a countercultural, authority-hating, rock ‘n’ roll rebel who soon became one of the first hippies, and thus “dropped out, turned on, and tuned in” as soon as I graduated from my depressing public high school. A few years later, as the ‘60s counterculture increasingly degenerated into a parody of itself, I entered college and obtained my B.A. in Middle Eastern, Islamic, and Central Asian history from the University of Michigan. Meanwhile, in 1977 I became one of the first punk rockers and again “dropped out, turned on, and tuned in” for several years, which once again interrupted and delayed the completion of my academic career. Even after I completed my doctorate and spent some years teaching, I withdrew from the academic world for a few more years in order to publish and edit an underground rock ‘n’ roll magazine. Indeed, it was only after 9/11 that I decided to return once and for all to academic life, because everyone else suddenly became interested in certain types of extremist groups that I had already increasingly been examining. As one of the professors on my dissertation committee wryly remarked after 9/11, “the rest of the world has finally caught up with your arcane interests.” In short, I have always been psychologically attracted to and intellectually interested in “extreme” phenomena, whether literary, aesthetic, musical, cultural, social, or political. To use the phrase coined in a science fiction/horror novel, I am an “extremophile,” someone who loves immersing myself in extreme phenomena.¹

This peculiar background is important for three reasons. First, it eventually caused me to gradually shift my focus from ancient and medieval to modern history, and to direct my scholarly attention to the post–World War II history of sectarian extremist political and religious groups, in particular violent paramilitary and terrorist organizations. Second, given my rebellious, anti-establishment personality, I have never shied away from bucking academic orthodoxies, rejecting “hegemonic” but often ridiculous academic fads, or openly challenging the views of influential academicians that I regarded as seriously mistaken – for which I make no apologies whatsoever. Third, and perhaps most importantly, because I myself have long been a profoundly alienated, disgruntled person, this has arguably enabled me to better understand, relate to, and empathize with – albeit, *nota bene*, *not* sympathize with – various types of ideological extremists. These extremists, almost by definition, likewise tend to be disgruntled individuals, very often from higher socio-economic classes and with more rather than less educational training, who are profoundly

alienated from key aspects of the social and political status quo, so much so that they are willing to formulate utopian, world-transformative agendas, create or join insurgent organizations that advocate the violent overthrow of that status quo, kill people whom they designate as societal villains, and even sacrifice their own lives for what they believe to be a higher cause. Having spent decades reading the ideological treatises and communiqués issued by a vast array of ideological extremists, studying their actions in detail on the basis of judicial and parliamentary investigative or archival materials, personally interacting with or interviewing quite a number of them, and also sharing their own psychological alienation from the status quo, I feel that I may have developed a clearer perspective on how their anti-establishment beliefs animate their actions than many of today's terrorism experts, who seem to spend far more time devising fanciful "social science" theories or crunching irrelevant numbers than they do conducting actual qualitative research based on the extensive use of primary sources. Of course, this admittedly partisan hypothesis will be up to readers to evaluate after examining selections from this volume.

As the table of contents indicates, this anthology will cover the following subjects. Volume 1 will concentrate on the history of underground neo-fascist networks in the post-World War II era, neo-fascist paramilitary and terrorist groups operating in Europe and Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, and the manipulation of those and other terrorist organizations by the security forces of various states, both authoritarian and democratic. Volume 2 will instead focus on state terrorism and assorted religious extremists, including apocalyptic cults, Islamism, and jihadist terrorist networks, as well as on CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) terrorism and the supposedly new "nexus" between organized criminal and extremist groups employing terrorist operational techniques. One might say, then, that the first volume is dedicated to the darkest, most unsavory dimensions of certain secular political milieus, whereas the second is dedicated largely to the darkest, most unsavory dimensions of particular religious milieus.

Some problems with the analysis of terrorism and "violent extremism"

Definitional problems

As with all broad political concepts (e.g., democracy), it has proven impossible to define the term "terrorism" to everyone's satisfaction despite the existence of tens of thousands of studies devoted to the subject. No unambiguous and universally accepted definition of terrorism yet exists, and its exact relationship to other, related concepts like political violence, guerrilla warfare, and political assassinations also remains a matter of contention. This situation is unlikely to change any time soon. Moreover, both the dramatic nature of the topic and the pejorative connotations of the term contribute to conceptual confusion by lending themselves to overly emotional assessments and political polemics. Scholars have complained for decades that no unanimously accepted definition of terrorism exists, even among specialists,

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and indeed some have become so frustrated by this that they have advocated abandoning the use of the word altogether. However, it seems unwise to stop using the term simply because not everyone can agree about its definition, just as the fact that specialists cannot fully agree on the definitions of other terms in the humanities and social sciences has not led to their wholesale abandonment. Even if not everyone can be expected to concur, it is not that difficult to identify the unique characteristics of terrorism that serve to distinguish it from other forms of collective violence.

In order to avoid the temptation of ascribing the label “terrorist” to every group which resorts to violence whom one does not like, as is all too common, it is necessary to define the term precisely and in a neutral fashion. All such formal definitions are bound to be awkward, but in this volume the word terrorism applies to *the use (or threatened imminent use) of violence, directed against victims selected for their symbolic or representative value, as a means of instilling anxiety in, transmitting one or more messages to, and thereby manipulating the perceptions and behavior of, a wider target audience (or audiences)*. Terrorist acts are thus by nature triadic rather than dyadic, in contrast to normal acts of violence. They invariably involve three parties or protagonists – the perpetrator(s), the victim(s), and the wider target audience(s) whose behavior the perpetrators hope to influence. Hence the key relationship in an act of terrorism is between the perpetrator and the target audience. Paradoxically, the persons who suffer the actual physical harm from such acts have the least intrinsic importance, and are simply the hapless instruments used by the perpetrators to send messages to wider audiences. It is precisely this feature that differentiates acts of terrorism from simple violent assaults upon political enemies. To constitute terrorism, an act of violence has to be specifically intended *by the perpetrator* to manipulate the perceptions or behavior of a wider target audience (i.e., persons beyond the actual victims of the attack). From this it follows that neither violent actions which inadvertently terrorize or alter the behavior patterns of people beyond the victims (for example, a sequence of rapes in a given neighborhood), nor those aimed merely at physically eliminating a specific enemy (for example, assassinations) are examples of terrorism in the strict sense of the term – unless, of course, the perpetrators mainly intended to deliver some sort of message to a larger audience. A certain group might, of course, try to fulfill two or more objectives at once, such as eliminating a particular police official and transmitting a warning to other such officials and/or the public, but the latter would have to take precedence for this action to be interpreted primarily as an act of terrorism.

Viewed in this way, terrorism is nothing more than a violent operational technique, specifically a violent technique of psychological manipulation. Like any other technique or tool, it can be used by anyone, whatever their ideological orientation or relationship to the state. It can be – and indeed has been – employed by a vast array of actors: by states and non-state groups; on behalf of state power and in opposition to state power; by left-wingers, right-wingers, and centrists; by the religious, the non-religious, and the anti-religious; and for an almost infinite variety of causes. It is for this reason that pithy phrases such as “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” are misleading, if not entirely mistaken, except insofar as they

reflect the generally partisan and unsystematic way that such labels are applied. First, they confuse *means*, in this case terrorism, with *ends*, in this case “freedom fighting,” ignoring the possibility that one might employ terrorist techniques in a fight for freedom. Second, they imply that the term terrorism has no objective meaning, that it is something subjective which is purely in the “eye of the beholder,” like idiosyncratic personal tastes in food or women. On the contrary, terrorism is an objectively identifiable operational technique. From a technical point of view, “one man’s terrorist” should invariably also be “another man’s terrorist,” because regardless of the cause involved a terrorist can be identified purely by the methods he or she chooses to employ. Whether or not one sympathizes with a given perpetrator’s underlying motives, be they political, religio-political, or criminal, every individual who commits an act of violence which is specifically designed to influence or manipulate a wider audience is, strictly speaking, a terrorist. All other factors are superfluous, and indeed only serve to obscure this fundamental reality. To restrict the term solely to violence committed by one’s enemies is thus an error of the first order, one which reflects either a great deal of confusion and ignorance or the thematic requirements of propaganda campaigns.

Methodological problems

In recent years, a number of important volumes have appeared highlighting several of the major methodological problems that afflict the academic literature in the field of Terrorism Studies, an interdisciplinary subfield that has metastasized – some would say like a malignant cancer – in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.² Many of the harsh recent criticisms aimed at much of that literature sadly echo criticisms that I myself made back in the early 1990s, in the introductory chapter of my doctoral dissertation. As I argued back then, from an historian’s point of view, this literature exhibits the same basic shortcomings as the “social science” literature in general – a penchant for excessive theorizing and speculation, an overabundance of abstraction and schematization at the expense of description and qualitative empirical detail, and an embarrassingly limited use of the relevant primary sources.³ To which one need only add that the obsessions with the use of quantitative methods, methods that arguably have only limited utility and applicability when one is dealing with the intangible aspects of human behavior, such as the highly important historical, cultural, and ideological factors contributing to terrorism, has only increased. These serious deficiencies are further compounded by a pronounced infusion of political bias, both unconscious and conscious. This sort of ideological contamination is perhaps to be expected, given the obvious public policy implications of the topic, but it is no less corrosive in its effects. Indeed, the terrorism literature is arguably among the least original and distinguished in all of academia, in part due to the vast influx of people without the requisite scholarly backgrounds who have entered the field in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. There is only a relatively small handful of studies that genuinely contributes to a greater conceptual understanding of the phenomenon, along with an ever-growing number of specialized

works that provide valuable information about specific terrorist groups. Even so, many works dealing with terrorism still tend to uncritically recycle many of the same superficial or misguided notions that have held sway in this field for decades, albeit in a variety of new and different contexts. Although these are rather harsh criticisms that deserve further discussion and analysis, a thorough dissection of the methodological shortcomings of this vast literature would require another book-length study.

Disciplinary biases and “mirror imaging”

The phrase “mirror imaging” is used, both within and outside of the intelligence community, to refer to a phenomenon in which analysts unconsciously project their own ways of thinking, their own values, their own frames of reference, and their own fantasies onto their adversaries, including those emanating from very different cultures with very different histories and values, instead of trying to view the world from their adversaries’ own perspectives and points of view. This sort of parochial approach is widely regarded – and rightly so – as problematic, counterproductive, harmful, and potentially catastrophic insofar as it can easily lead to serious misunderstandings of the nature of the adversary, which can in turn result in the adoption of misguided policies and ineffective responses. Sadly, this myopic, self-referential mirror imaging approach is nowadays practically the norm in the West, particularly in relation to the threat posed by jihadists, whose actions are undeniably and indeed explicitly animated primarily by their Islamist interpretations of core Islamic doctrines.

The following factors all contribute to the problem of analytical “mirror imaging” in this context:

- First, people who grow up in materialistic societies tend to ascribe materialistic motives to other people, even those from other and quite different foreign cultures – that is, they tend to believe that the “real” underlying motivations of human actors, which they identify as narrowly political goals, materialistic social or economic motives, a vulgar lust for power, and so forth, are either being intentionally concealed or unwittingly distorted in those actors’ ideological statements and justifications.
- Second, “social scientists” normally prefer to highlight various tangible supposed causal factors that they believe can be measured, quantified, and “tested,” as opposed to concerning themselves with intangible, messy, unquantifiable factors (such as the convoluted influence of beliefs, culture, and history – topics which, by the way, also require years of study to even begin to comprehend).
- Third, academicians from different disciplines not surprisingly tend to overemphasize the value of particular theories and methods deriving from their own disciplines, to minimize the importance of rival theories and methods from their own and other disciplines (especially supposedly “soft” disciplines in the humanities like political philosophy, history, and religious studies), and then to

apply their favored theories and methods, sometimes carelessly and uncritically, even to topics that are quite removed from their own areas of specialization. Here are some examples of this rather common phenomenon (albeit ones that often cite, as illustrations, some of the best rather than the worst of the existing terrorism literature):

- 1 Social scientists in general (and economists in particular) tend to promote hyper-rationalist interpretations of human behavior, as if human beings were little more than androids involved in mechanistically calculating or weighing “costs” and “benefits,” even though human behavior is in fact the product of a complex combination of rational, semi-rational, and irrational motives undergirded by often subconscious emotional drivers;⁴
- 2 Mathematicians often employ models deriving from the natural sciences to explain human behavior in the social sphere, even though the application of those models to the social sphere is generally fraught with dangers, if not fundamentally ill-conceived;⁵
- 3 Sociologists typically prioritize the impact of large impersonal social structures or the material aspects of social movements such as “resource mobilization,” in many cases without paying due attention to the beliefs and underlying emotions of social actors or the role played by influential individuals;
- 4 Economists (as well as many people on the left) tend to overemphasize the importance of economic factors (e.g., poverty, economic exploitation) and economic motives at the expense of non-material factors such as beliefs and values (which Marx erroneously characterized as epiphenomenal “superstructures” deriving from underlying “modes of production”);⁶
- 5 Social psychologists tend to exaggerate the importance of the influence of social networks to the exclusion of other factors, including individual proclivities, beliefs, and values;⁷
- 6 Psychologists tend to focus too narrowly on individual psychology, and often attribute psychopathologies to violent human actors who behave in ways that they find incomprehensible or problematic;⁸
- 7 Strategic and military analysts pay special attention to the relatively pragmatic strategic, operational, and tactical methods used by adversaries, rather than to the underlying worldviews that serve to influence those adversaries (including their selection of particular types of targets and their use of certain methods in preference to others).⁹

In short, what many people from these various disciplinary backgrounds all have in common is that they tend to overemphasize the importance of tangible, ostensibly measurable and quantifiable (i.e., economic, psychological, social psychological, sociological, or narrowly political) factors and to ignore or minimize the importance of less tangible (historical, cultural, and ideological) factors, even though the latter are often of decisive importance, especially when one is trying to understand groups animated by extremist ideologies. Surely it is both analytically and

methodologically unsound to ignore the influence or deny the importance of the fervently held beliefs of protagonists, all the more so when one is analyzing groups that *explicitly define themselves by their beliefs, generally act in accordance with those beliefs, and indeed feel compelled to justify all of their actions on the basis of those beliefs.*¹⁰ And it is even more foolish to stubbornly dismiss what the actual protagonists keep telling everyone about their own motivations, and instead to ascribe other preferred motivations to them in the absence of any verifiable evidence.

I am not suggesting, of course, that ideology or any other single factor is alone responsible for the behavior of violent ideological extremists, because all mono-causal explanations for complex social phenomena are oversimplifications inasmuch as a multiplicity of intersecting factors are always at play. But not all of those factors are equally important, no matter what the context, and *ideology is arguably the single most important factor in understanding the behavior of political and religious extremists.* That is why it is necessary at this point to undertake an extended discussion of both ideologies in general and extremist ideologies in particular.

The characteristics of ideological extremism

Ideology – that is what gives evildoing its long-sought justification and gives the evildoer the necessary steadfastness and determination. That is the social theory which helps to make his acts seem good instead of bad in his own and others’ eyes, so that he won’t hear reproaches and curses but will receive praise and honours.¹¹

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

What persuades men and women to mistake each other from time to time for gods or vermin is ideology.¹²

Terry Eagleton

One can say that what the priest is to religion, the intellectual is to ideology.¹³

Daniel Bell

Any examination of ideology makes it difficult to avoid the rueful conclusion that all views about ideology are themselves ideological. But avoided it must be – or at least modified by saying that some views are more ideological than others.¹⁴

David McLellan

Many commentators appear to believe that the terms “extremism” and “extremists” have no substantive meaning, but are simply pejorative labels used by centrist, conventional, consensus thinkers or by supporters of the existing political, social, economic, and cultural status quo as a means of delegitimizing various “anti-Establishment” political and religious groups that they view as disreputable or morally “beyond the pale” in one way or another. Emblematic of this perspective is the oft-cited comment, reportedly made by Jerome L. Himmelstein in 1998 at the American Sociological Association (ASA) convention, that “[a]t best this characterization [extremist] tells us nothing substantive about the people it labels; at worst

it paints a false picture.”¹⁵ There is certainly no denying that the terms “extremism” and “extremist” have pejorative connotations inasmuch as the members of groups that others characterize as “extremist” neither accept that characterization nor employ that term to designate themselves. Therefore, in this and other respects, these two terms are more akin to the terms “fanatic” or “terrorist,” which are also rejected even by individuals and groups that are characterized – no matter how justifiably – as fanatical or as terrorists, than they are to terms like “fascist,” “Nazi,” “racist,” or “radical,” because genuine fascists, Nazis, racists, and assorted radicals not only accept those labels but typically regard them as badges of honor.¹⁶ Indeed, it is an indisputable fact that the terms “fascist” and “Nazi” were originally created by those who enthusiastically espoused those particular ideologies, and were later adopted but given a pejorative meaning by their enemies. The terms “radicalism” and “radical” – appellations that are typically preferred and even embraced by many extremists – tend to have broadly positive connotations, because etymologically they signify that the individual or group in question is striving to understand, confront, and ultimately resolve the deeper “root causes” of existing political and social problems.

A more serious criticism of the appellation “extremist” is that the term is essentially relational – that is, that one can only be considered “extreme” in relation to something that is considered “not extreme,” as opposed to one that refers to a concrete, observable socio-political phenomenon with certain intrinsic, identifiable characteristics. For example, Peter T. Coleman and Andrea Bartoli define extremism as “activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character *far removed from the ordinary*.”¹⁷ To some extent the term “extremist” is indeed relational, because almost by definition it tends to be contrasted with terms like “mainstream,” “moderate,” or “centrist,” which are ipso facto regarded as normal, legitimate, and acceptable rather than politically, socially, or morally illegitimate. This is why radicals of various stripes have frequently criticized and condemned the label “extremist,” especially when it is applied to themselves, and why they have so often insisted that it is a loaded term with a built-in pro-Establishment bias. It follows from this perspective that people who regularly employ the term are basically endeavoring to support and defend the status quo by delegitimizing and perhaps even justifying the repression of its most fervent, intransigent opponents.¹⁸ Nevertheless, simply because a term has a built-in relational dimension does not mean that it has no substantive meaning or that it does not refer to a “really existing” phenomenon.

For that very reason, even though many pundits have employed the terms “extremism” and “extremist” in a biased, partisan fashion so as to discredit or delegitimize groups they vehemently oppose or find morally distasteful – in the same way that others apply terms like “communist,” “fascist,” “racist,” “sexist,” “homophobe,” or “Islamophobe” in similarly imprecise, inappropriate, slanderous, or propagandistic ways – a number of scholars have rightly insisted that those terms, while pejorative, have a substantive and objective meaning. Perhaps not surprisingly, however, they have not been able to agree among themselves about exactly what the defining characteristics of extremism are. For example, decades ago Eric Hoffer

provided an essentially psychological analysis of extremists, one that overemphasized the purported psychopathologies of “true believers” and arguably underestimated the crucial importance of the actual contents of their ideological beliefs, even though he was quite right to emphasize that alienated individuals who are attracted to one form of ideological extremism are also likely to find other types appealing.¹⁹ More recently, Laird Wilcox (and his collaborators) has made efforts to describe the characteristics of extremist behavior in a variety of publications dealing with American left- and right-wing extremists.²⁰ According to his analysis, those characteristics included character assassination, name-calling and labeling, making sweeping and irresponsible generalizations, providing inadequate proof for assertions, advocacy of double standards, viewing their opponents and critics as irremediably evil, a Manichean worldview, advocacy of censorship or repression, identification of themselves in terms of who they hate, a tendency toward argument by intimidation, use of slogans and buzzwords, assumption of moral superiority, doomsday thinking, the use of disreputable means is warranted to achieve noble ends, emphasis on emotions rather than reason, hypersensitivity, intolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, an inclination toward “groupthink,” and the personalization of hostility.²¹ American sociologist Neil Smelser has also recently listed some of the traits associated with ideological extremism: the vilification of enemies, the drawing of an absolutist distinction between oneself and one’s enemies (i.e., Manicheanism), the exaggeration of the “agency” (i.e., the intentionality and strategic rationality) of enemies, and the reliance on rhetorical excesses to reaffirm one’s own legitimacy.²² In a much more limited context, economist Ronald Wintrobe has argued that the extremists in HAMĀS and Jewish fundamentalist groups share various common traits, including an unwillingness to compromise, the promotion of maximalist goals, complete certainty, a willingness to utilize violence, an intolerance of dissent within their groups, and the demonization of enemies.²³ Finally, Maxwell Taylor has enumerated what he considers to be the ten primary descriptive characteristics of fanaticism, many of which overlap with the aforementioned traits ascribed to extremism, such as “excessive and all-absorbing focusing,” “personalisation” of the world (or an “exclusive concern with his own ideological construction of the world”), insensitivity to others and accepted standards of behavior, loss of critical judgment, logical inconsistency and tolerance of incompatibility, single-minded certainty, Manichean oversimplification of the world’s complexity, stubborn resistance to altering views, disdain for outsiders and enemies, and ideological filtering of outside information.²⁴

Even so, important differences in their emphases, theoretical approaches, methodologies, and de facto knowledge of actual extremist milieus have made it impossible for the aforementioned scholars to agree completely. Furthermore, much of the current conceptual confusion about the nature of extremism is attributable to a basic failure to distinguish between, or a misleading attempt to conflate or con-mingle, two distinct types of extremism. The first is *extremism of goals*, which is almost entirely the product of a group’s political or religious ideology. The second is *extremism of means*, which may or may not be linked to ideological extremism. Extremism of means refers to the employment of methods, means, or techniques

that are regarded as extraordinary, disproportionate, unnecessary under the circumstances, or morally beyond the pale within particular social and cultural contexts, such as the use of unconstrained, indiscriminate violence or the carrying out of otherwise violent, destructive, and harmful actions that explicitly or implicitly violate existing cultural taboos (as opposed to similar actions that do not violate such taboos because they are widely regarded as legitimate, such as committing acts of violence in self-defense, executing violent criminals, or carrying out military actions considered vital to national security). Among the types of means that might be considered extreme, at least in the West, would be the commission of war crimes or other atrocities in wartime, the use of torture involving severe physical mutilation (although not necessarily less damaging but nonetheless unpleasant and potentially humiliating “enhanced” interrogation techniques), the deliberate targeting of civilians, depriving people of their constitutional rights without justification, killing family members who are regarded as weak or without economic value, “honor killings,” involuntary clitoradectomies, cannibalism, physically or sexually abusing children, and carrying out mass casualty attacks in non-wartime contexts. Note, however, that what is regarded as extreme can vary significantly in different cultural contexts – not that this should ever make such actions immune from criticism, as radical cultural relativists and hypocritical “multiculturalists” have all too often argued – and that these types of “extreme” methods need not be employed by people who have embraced an extremist ideology, although in practice they frequently are. For example, democratic governments have all too often sanctioned the creation of paramilitary “death squads” as well as their employment of terrorist techniques against perceived “enemies of the state,” sometimes in their own homelands but much more often in other countries.²⁵ In such cases, “extreme means” are essentially authorized or utilized by political “centrists” rather than by ideological extremists.

However, the primary concern at this juncture is to identify the common characteristics of ideological extremism, which in turn often leads to the stubborn and destructive pursuit of delusional (in the non-clinical sense), utopian agendas or goals, rather than focusing on the use of extreme means to achieve those goals. Hence the first desideratum is to clarify what ideologies are, then to enumerate the fundamental questions that all political ideologies, extremist or otherwise, address and purport to provide an answer for.²⁶ Many scholars have argued that ideology is a particularly difficult term or concept to define, in part because of its radically varying historical interpretations. Thus David McLellan insisted that ideology was “the most elusive concept in the whole of the social sciences,” whereas Michael Freeden stated, rather more circumspectly, that “the concept of ideology has emerged as one of the most complex and debatable political ideas,” one which has been “remarkable . . . for causing confusion among scholars and political commentators.”²⁷

Despite these claims, the term has nowadays, after a very convoluted history, acquired a broadly accepted basic meaning. In popular parlance, the word ideology remains “a vague term [that] seems to denote a world-view or belief-system or creeds held by a social group about the social arrangements in society, which is

morally justified as being right.”²⁸ Similarly, among most scholars the term ideology has eventually come to refer, more or less neutrally, to *systematic, relatively coherent, well-articulated, and often all-encompassing sets of ideas about the nature of social reality, whether or not those ideas have a solid factual basis.*²⁹ Thus according to John B. Thompson, in a neutral sense ideologies are best characterized as “systems of thought” or “systems of belief” or “symbolic systems” pertaining to social thought and action, whereas Lyman Tower Sargent describes them simply as “organized or patterned beliefs. . . . that present a coherent, understandable picture of the world.”³⁰ This means that ideologies per se – contrary to the views of some analysts – are *not* equivalent to or synonymous with the vague, unarticulated, impressionistic, and often incoherent presuppositions that most people have unconsciously acquired, as a result of their socialization processes and life experiences, about the way the wider social world operates.³¹ Nor should these two very different phenomena be conflated, as some have done in their definitions of ideology.³² If they are mistakenly conflated, then virtually any thoughts about the external world, no matter how simple-minded, formless, inconsistent, incomprehensible, delusional (in the clinical sense), or absurd, would constitute a bona fide ideology, which would effectively deprive the term of any specificity, conceptual precision, or defining criteria that could serve to distinguish it from other modes of perception, understanding, and explanation. As British historian Roger Eatwell has emphasized, “there are dangers in inflating the term ‘ideology’ to cover what might be better termed ‘propaganda’, ‘socialization’, and ‘culture’.”³³ Terms other than ideology should therefore be employed to refer to the barely conscious, taken-for-granted values and attitudes that are inculcated, as if by osmosis, in members of all social groups as a result of normal processes of cultural transmission and socialization.³⁴

Others have instead tried to have their cake and eat it too by distinguishing between “forensic” ideologies, “the articulated, differentiated, well-developed political arguments put forward by informed and conscious Marxists and Fascists or liberal democrats,” and “latent” ideologies, “the loosely structured, unreflective statements of the common men.”³⁵ This is certainly an improvement, in that it avoids the aforementioned danger of complete conflation, but the real issue is whether the latter should be designated as ideologies at all. In this study, the term ideology refers essentially to Robert E. Lane’s so-called forensic ideologies, that is the ideas consciously formulated by self-styled intellectuals or political leaders, even though these ideas are then often subsequently embraced, at times uncritically or unreflectively, in an oversimplified, schematic, bastardized, or distorted form by less educated or intellectually inclined people. Indeed, the widespread diffusion of ideological concepts also tends to influence, at least in an indirect way, the unarticulated sentiments and beliefs of many others, even those who do not consciously adopt them or who have little familiarity with their explicit intellectual contents and arguments, much less with the historical contexts in which they emerged, their complex processes of elaboration, or their diverse internal currents and subcurrents.³⁶ That is why Kenneth Minogue has cleverly opined that “[l]ike sand at a picnic, [ideology] gets in everything.”³⁷

Clearly, political ideologies form one very important subset of the systematic sets of ideas that fall within the broader category of ideology, so much so that most of the intellectual debates about ideology have been concerned mainly with political ideologies.³⁸ In the words of Andrew Heywood, the author of one of the better introductory books on the subject, a political ideology is “a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organized political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power.”³⁹ He adds that “the complexity of [political] ideology derives from the fact that it straddles the conventional boundaries between descriptive and normative thought, and between political theory and political action.”⁴⁰ Concerning the first combination, political ideologies

are descriptive in that . . . they provide individuals and groups with an intellectual map of how their society works and, more broadly, with a general view of the world . . . However, such descriptive understanding is deeply embedded within a set of normative or prescriptive beliefs, both about the adequacy of present social arrangements and about the nature of any alternative of future society.⁴¹

With respect to the second, political “ideologies resemble political philosophies in that they deal with abstract ideas and theories, and their proponents may at times seem to be engaged in dispassionate enquiry . . . At an operative level, however, ideologies . . . may be expressed in sloganizing, political rhetoric, party manifestos and government policies.”⁴² Furthermore, whereas political philosophizing tends to encourage deeper intellectual introspection, political ideologies instead heighten emotions in order to promote the taking of action.⁴³ Finally, ideologies are directed toward mobilizing the masses, or at least certain segments of society whose interests the ideologues claim to represent.⁴⁴ Several of these points will be discussed further later.

That notions approximating the preceding definition of ideology have now become the standard academic view can be seen in many of the introductory textbooks devoted to political ideologies, all of which include sections on the most historically important and/or currently influential political ideologies, rather than only those that have been characterized in more restrictive, negative ways by, say, Marxists or theorists of totalitarianism. A few examples, either from other scholarly works or from those textbooks, should suffice to illustrate this point. For Eatwell, a political ideology is “a relatively coherent set of empirical and normative beliefs and thought, focusing on the problems of human nature, the process of history, and socio-political arrangements.”⁴⁵ For American political theorists Carl J. Friedrich (1901–1984) and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928–2017), an ideology is

a set of *literate* ideas – a reasonably coherent body of ideas concerning practical means of how to change and reform a society, based upon a more or less elaborate criticism of what is wrong with the existing or antecedent society.⁴⁶

For British political theorist Andrew Vincent, ideologies are

bodies of concepts, values and symbols which incorporate conceptions of human nature . . . ; critical reflections on the nature of human interaction; the values which humans ought either to reject or aspire to; and the correct technical arrangements for social, economic and political life.⁴⁷

For Roy C. Macridis, an ideology is a “set of ideas and beliefs through which we perceive the outside world and *act* upon our information.”⁴⁸ Finally, the American social scientist Robert E. Lane reportedly described political ideologies as “organized, articulated, and consciously held systems of political ideas incorporating beliefs, attitudes, and opinions.”⁴⁹ For most mainstream liberal and conservative academicians, then, the term ideology is no longer reserved exclusively for intellectual worldviews or visions – political or otherwise – that are regarded as intrinsically irrational or otherwise unsavory, which constitutes a significant conceptual advance in relation to the many previous partial, restrictive, and wholly pejorative interpretations of the word. It is now accepted by many that not all ideologies are narrowly political, and that not all political ideologies are inherently or equally problematic. It is precisely for this reason that it is necessary to distinguish conceptually between (1) political ideologies in the general sense of the term and (2) extremist political (and religious) ideologies.

However, before surveying some of the most influential interpretations of the term ideology, it is necessary to counter certain notions that have long encouraged academicians and policy analysts to ignore or underestimate the role and significance of ideas in motivating human behavior. For example, some social scientists have falsely claimed that human beliefs in general are unimportant in terms of their tangible effects on behavior, such as “radical” behaviorists like B. F. Skinner (1904–1990),⁵⁰ whereas far too many others have foolishly concluded that political conflicts are simply the product of naked struggles for power and wealth, and consequently that ideological doctrines and beliefs are little more than propaganda ploys or “window dressing” used by political actors to conceal their vulgar appetites for power behind justificatory moralistic verbiage.⁵¹ It is this widespread underlying assumption, one that is all the more appealing to some given the inherent difficulties involved in “scientifically” (i.e., quantitatively) measuring intangible causal factors like ideological beliefs, which especially accounts for the tendency of Western political analysts to ascribe political behavior mainly, if not exclusively, to the pursuit of concrete material interests. Yet such a hopelessly narrow, reductionist, and one-sided interpretation cannot even be justified when one is trying to comprehend mainstream political behavior in modern Western societies where materialist worldviews – in both senses of that term – are widely held, much less in pre-modern Western societies or non-Western societies, past and present. Stubbornly or unwittingly attempting to project one’s own frames of reference onto others instead of endeavoring to see the world from their perspective, the “mirror imaging” phenomenon discussed earlier, is usually a recipe for error if not disaster. Indeed, the

adoption of restrictive, intellectually impoverished notions of this sort has in general led to the serious neglect of, failure to understand, and ongoing underestimation of the importance of the ideological beliefs of a wide array of political and religious extremists, including those who rely heavily or primarily on the operational technique of terrorism.⁵² This has in turn seriously interfered with the West's ability to comprehend the worldviews, motives, and agendas of its terrorist adversaries, as well as to respond effectively to the threats that they pose.⁵³

In marked contrast, a case will be made herein that strongly held ideological beliefs generally exert a significant if not a decisive impact on political behavior. Anyone who has seriously studied or personally witnessed the power of ideas to inspire and mobilize people in particular historical and political contexts, such as specialists on apocalyptic millenarianism, communism, or fascism (not to mention the leaders of successful movements of these types), is very well aware of this. As American Catholic theologian George Weigel has rightly emphasized, “[i]deas have consequences, and bad ideas can have lethal consequences.”⁵⁴ American political scientist Max Lerner (1902–1999) went even further by proclaiming that “ideas are weapons.”⁵⁵ This may be an overstatement, but at the very least, ideas can potentially be used as weapons, both in personal disputes and in larger collective socio-political struggles. It should be apparent that if ideas in general so often have observable and indeed demonstrable behavioral consequences, so too must political ideologies, whose primary functions are, among other things, to inspire and provide guides for political action.⁵⁶ Indeed, Eatwell and Anthony Wright insist, quite properly, that ideologies “are major motive forces in history.”⁵⁷ This is all the more true when one is dealing with political and religious extremists, fanatics, or “true believers,” who by definition are obsessed with ideological matters, even if many of those matters seem inexplicable, picayune, or hopelessly arcane to outsiders. In short, far from espousing ideological worldviews as a mere stratagem to disguise the pursuit of narrowly materialistic interests or an atavistic hunger for power (although that phenomenon too is at times observable), an individual's or a social group's “commitment to ideology – the yearning for a cause, or the satisfaction of deep moral feelings – is *not* necessarily [even] the reflection of interests in the shape of ideas”: on the contrary, the ideology in question typically transcends or at least attenuates vulgar material interests and often constitutes something that is far more all-consuming and all-encompassing, that is “a secular religion.”⁵⁸ This is why Terry Eagleton rightly emphasizes that, while struggling for material reasons is readily comprehensible, it is “much harder to grasp how [people] may come to do so in the name of something as abstract as ideas. Yet ideas are what men live by, and will occasionally die for.”⁵⁹

Despite this, the bulk of the recent and current work in various social science fields, driven as it is by predetermined and often problematic theoretical or methodological concerns, studiously ignores the actual ideas expressed by political and social actors, and instead vainly searches for ostensibly “deeper” psychological, economic, or structural “root causes” to explain their behavior.⁶⁰ For example, how many people nowadays take the bitter and often arcane ideological disputes between various sectarian communist groups seriously, even though such disputes once had

tremendous historical importance? And how many people are currently taking the ongoing ideological disputes between different types of Islamists sufficiently seriously, despite their overriding importance and tangible influence on Islamist behavior?⁶¹ This neglect is all the more inexplicable given that *ideology is arguably the main behavioral driver of individuals who have enthusiastically embraced extremist world-views, whatever their specific beliefs may be*. This is true even though in practice both their behavior and even some of their less fixed ideas are often modified in response to changing circumstances, at least to some extent, and there are usually many other factors that likewise influence their actions.⁶² Hence one should not mistakenly go to the opposite extreme by asserting that ideas alone are the sole drivers of behavior, political or otherwise, even for ideological fanatics, if only because – as noted earlier – monocausal explanations for observable human behavior are always inadequate, if not completely false. Given the extraordinary complexity of the world we live in, our behavior will always be affected by a multiplicity of factors, many of them imperceptible, both to ourselves and to others.

It is now time to outline some of the more influential conceptions of ideology, from the time when the term was first introduced into political discourse up to the present. However, at the very outset it would be useful to highlight the important distinction, with respect to ideas about ideology, that political scientist Martin Seliger (1914–2001) made in his outstanding work, *Ideology and Politics*. Therein he rightly differentiated between what he termed “restrictive conceptions” of ideology and “inclusive conceptions” of ideology.⁶³ A very similar bipartite division has been proffered by J. B. Thompson, who refers, respectively, to “critical conceptions” and “neutral conceptions” of ideology.⁶⁴ Those who promoted the “restrictive” or “critical” conceptions characterized ideologies in essentially negative terms and therefore applied the term only to certain types of ideas that they viewed as problematic or dangerous for various reasons, as opposed to other ideas that they favored. In contrast, those who adopted the “inclusive” or “neutral” conceptions sought to define ideologies in more or less non-normative terms and hence applied the term in a less selective, partial, and partisan fashion. As noted earlier, the common tendency today, at least among most academicians and intellectuals who are not Marxists, critical theorists, or postmodernists, is to adopt an inclusive, relatively neutral conception of the term, although some of the older restrictive or critical conceptions still influence the views of certain analysts.

However that may be, the English word “ideology” is derived from the French term *idéologie*, which was first used in 1796, in the context of heated debates surrounding the French Revolution and its aftermath, by French Enlightenment philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836).⁶⁵ The latter term literally means “the science of ideas,” and De Tracy viewed it in precisely that positivist way, as a means of disaggregating and analyzing sensations and the ideas they gave rise to in a rigorous, scientific manner. The relatively recent date of the term’s first employment has led some analysts of ideology to suggest that not just the term, but ideologies themselves, first appeared in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Briefly, their argument is that ideological conflicts of the modern type

could only have emerged during a historical period in which traditional beliefs, based on widely accepted historical and religious “myths” that had an integrative socio-political function and helped to buttress the authority of existing elites, were breaking down.⁶⁶ However, others have rightly noted that this is a very ahistorical view given that periods marked by the breakdown of traditional beliefs and intensified ideological conflict are quite common, even though each individual historical case inevitably has many unique features. As such, although the substantive contents of ideologies in different historical periods and geographical regions are bound to differ, ideologies themselves are certainly not new phenomena that first appeared in modern times. On the contrary, the only “new” thing has been the coining of the term and the ongoing efforts by Western intellectuals to “conceptualize” the term ideology since the late eighteenth century.⁶⁷

In any event, De Tracy’s idiosyncratic and ostensibly scientific interpretation of the concept was never even widely understood, much less widely accepted, either by his contemporaries or by later intellectuals who wrote about ideology. Although he viewed ideology as something positive and even characterized it as the queen of the sciences, many subsequent adopters of the term instead conceptualized it in very negative terms. For example, after falling out with them as a result of his adoption of increasingly autocratic policies and his arranging of a Concordat in 1801 with the Catholic Church, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) contemptuously referred to “the ideologues” – De Tracy and other positivist, secular liberal republican philosophers – as “windbags,” by which he meant that their opinions were overly abstract, pompous, and impractical even if their goal was ultimately to undermine political authority.⁶⁸ Indeed, the French emperor subsequently adopted an even harsher and bitterer view of ideologies in the wake of his costly and humiliating retreat from Russia:

It is to ideology, this cloudy metaphysics which, by subtly searching for first causes, wishes to establish on this basis the legislation of peoples, instead of obtaining its laws from knowledge of the human heart and from the lessons of history, that we must attribute all the misfortunes of our fair France.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the counterrevolutionary right in France likewise explicitly portrayed the very same liberal republican ideologues as potential subversives.

Yet it was the main use of the term by Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) that made it increasingly common in modern political discourse.⁷⁰ Ironically, they began by characterizing the Young Hegelians in Germany in much the same way as Napoleon had characterized the ideologues in France, that is as armchair metaphysicians peddling unrealistic ideas.⁷¹ However, they soon radically altered the meaning of the word ideology itself by explicitly linking it to their views on class struggle and class consciousness, specifically by identifying it with the dominant ideas promoted by the ruling classes. According to their famous formulation,

[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time the ruling

intellectual force. The class which has the means of *material* production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.⁷²

In short, the basic notion here was that ideologies were in actuality mechanisms of mystification through which the ruling classes promoted a false, deceptive view of the world that both reflected and benefited their class interests. As a result, the proletariat was being indoctrinated by bourgeois ideologists with what Engels later referred to as a “false consciousness” that prevented them from recognizing their “objectively” revolutionary class interests. Far from agreeing with De Tracy that ideologies were scientific, then, Marx and Engels in the end argued that they were actually distorted, partisan worldviews – which only their own ostensibly “scientific socialist” analyses could unmask.

Given the ongoing failure of the proletariat to rise up and launch a successful revolution against the bourgeoisie in the most advanced capitalist countries, which belied Marx’s optimistic, teleological predictions about the looming transition to communism, his ideas were thence adopted and further elaborated upon by subsequent generations of Marxist thinkers. In contrast to Marx, Vladimir Lenin insisted that other social classes, not simply the ruling classes, possessed ideologies designed to advance their interests, including the proletariat in capitalist societies. That meant that there was nothing inherently negative about class-based ideologies, as long as they were “progressive.” Indeed, communist ideology was explicitly viewed as a weapon in the class struggle.⁷³ Alas, because Lenin also apparently believed that the proletariat was currently “enslaved” by bourgeois ideology, he argued that it could never fully achieve class consciousness or mobilize for revolution without the help of so-called vanguard parties composed of professional revolutionaries, people such as himself and his Bolshevik “comrades,” one of whose primary tasks would be to develop and disseminate an effectively combative socialist ideology.⁷⁴ Hungarian Marxist philosopher György Lukács (1885–1971) agreed with Lenin that the working class possessed an ideology, historical materialism, which he argued was different from other ideologies that embodied “false consciousness” because it was the “ideological expression of the proletariat in its effort to liberate itself.”⁷⁵ But although Lukács also saw the communist party as the representative of the proletariat’s supposed class interests, he explained the existing dominance of bourgeois ideology as being a result of the basic socio-economic organization of capitalist society. Later, French “structural Marxist” philosopher Louis Althusser (1918–1990) argued that ideology, which he thought had a quasi-material existence because it was rooted in “ideological state apparatuses” despite being antithetical to science, was nonetheless both omnipresent and indispensable for promoting social cohesion, even in communist societies.⁷⁶

However, it was Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) who especially refined and elaborated upon these Marxist notions of ideology.⁷⁷ In the first place, like Lukács he challenged the “vulgar Marxist” overemphasis on material factors by emphasizing the importance of what Marx had labeled “superstructural” forces,

that is the political, legal, and cultural institutions that supposedly emanated from and functioned to justify particular modes of production,⁷⁸ and indeed insisted that ideologies “must be analysed historically, in the terms of the philosophy of praxis, as a superstructure.”⁷⁹ Second, he argued that the capitalist bourgeoisie had thus far managed to maintain its dominant position and prevent proletarian revolution not primarily by using the coercive powers of the state, but rather mainly by attaining and maintaining what he referred to as ideological and cultural “hegemony” via subtler mechanisms of socialization and indoctrination operating within civil society, which in turn generated the seemingly “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant functional group [i.e., class].⁸⁰ Thus, in the words of Andrew Vincent, for Gramsci

[t]he ideology of the ruling class becomes vulgarized into the common sense of the average citizen. Power is not just crude legal or physical coercion but domination of language, morality, culture and common sense. The masses are quelled and co-opted by their internalization of ideational domination.⁸¹

As such, Gramsci concluded that the “organic intellectuals” emerging from the proletariat had to win over segments of the “traditional intellectuals,” who fancied themselves to be above the interests of specific social classes but in fact functioned as ideologists and functionaries who buttressed the increasingly moribund status quo, which would then enable the former to contest bourgeois hegemony in the ideological and cultural spheres by waging a “war of position” and, ultimately, to replace it with “proletarian counter-hegemony” as a necessary precursor to revolution.⁸² Hence Gramsci’s conception of the term ideology, unlike those of Lenin and Lukács, was a broad one that encompassed not only the coherent doctrines developed by intellectuals, but also their indirect manifestations in the forms of popular culture, religion, folklore, and whatever passes for “common sense.”⁸³

After World War II, certain left-wing philosophers associated with the so-called Frankfurt School, such as Herbert Marcuse, made even more extravagant claims about the influence and pervasiveness of bourgeois ideology in democratic societies which, under the guise of promoting freedom and tolerance, had instead allegedly facilitated the establishment of an even more insidious form of totalitarian control.⁸⁴ Indeed, even early critics of Marxist notions nevertheless ended up accepting some of the same problematic premises despite their efforts to develop new social science interpretations of ideology. For example, although Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) attempted to distinguish between wholly partisan “particular conceptions” and more inclusive “total conceptions” of ideology, and to transform the latter into a new “sociology of knowledge” by means of “purely empirical investigation[s] through description and structural analysis of the ways in which social relationships . . . influence thought,” he nonetheless could not fully abandon the quasi-materialist and somewhat deterministic Marxian notion that ideologies were invariably formulated by concrete social groups enmeshed in particular historical, political, and socio-economic contexts.⁸⁵

Nor was it only Marxist thinkers who formulated negative characterizations of what ideologies were. For example, French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) criticized what he called the “ideological method” for “the use of notions to govern the collation of facts rather than deriving notions from them,” an approach he viewed as an inversion of the proper scientific method.⁸⁶ No less pejorative views of ideologies were also produced by researchers from other academic disciplines. Thus, according to psychologist Abram Kardiner and his colleagues, ideologies were essentially “compounds of projective systems, in the interest of which empirical evidence is mobilized, and have therefore the same structure as rationalizations.”⁸⁷ From this perspective, ideologies were developed to provide more or less elaborate intellectual and moral justifications for the potentially problematic or illegitimate behavior of collectivities, that is to conceal their baser, more reprehensible underlying motives. In the words of political scientist David E. Apter, some analysts appeared to regard ideologies as little more than “a cloak for shabby motives and appearances.”⁸⁸ For American sociologist Lewis S. Feuer (1912–2002), instead, ideologies had a quasi-Freudian functional interpretation:

the ideological fanatic is repressing tremendous segments of his personality. . . . Ideology thus helps provide the internal energy for the repression of human impulses and external energy for aggression against others. Ideology is the instrument whereby men repress their humane responses, and shape their behavior to a political mandate.⁸⁹

However, some of the most influential negative characterizations of ideologies were produced by other Western social scientists and philosophers after World War II. Taking a new and different tack, several postwar theorists of totalitarianism tended to restrict the term “ideology” exclusively to extremist ideologies that they characterized as totalitarian, like fascism and communism. They viewed such ideologies as “closed,” dogmatic systems of thought that claimed a monopoly on truth and therefore sought to suppress all rival ideas, in contrast to “open” systems of thought like liberalism.⁹⁰ Hence totalitarian ideologies, and the movements and states they gave rise to, effectively constituted “secular religions” that aspired to achieve total control not only over the external behavior of people but, even more importantly, over their innermost thoughts. From this perspective, the Fascist regime in Italy, the Nazi regime in Germany, and the Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union were all examples of a terrible new type of ideologically based totalitarian state. For German–American political theorist Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), “the trouble with totalitarian regimes is not that they play power politics in an especially ruthless way, but that behind their politics is. . . . their unswerving faith in an ideological fictitious world.”⁹¹ Indeed, the core of her argument was that

ideological thinking becomes emancipated from the reality that we perceive with our five senses, and insists on a “truer” reality concealed behind all perceptible things, dominating them from this place of concealment and

requiring a sixth sense that enables us to become aware of it. This sixth sense is provided by precisely the ideology . . . [which] provides a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality. . . . Once it has established its premise, its point of departure, experiences no longer interfere with ideological thinking, nor can it be taught by reality.⁹²

Hence irrespective of their degree of elaboration and sophistication, totalitarian ideologies were fundamentally if not intrinsically irrational. For their part, Friedrich and Brzezinski – who did make a distinction between ideologies in general and totalitarian ideologies, even though they focused their attention exclusively on the latter in their famous work *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* – defined a totalitarian ideology as “a reasonably coherent body of ideas concerning practical means of how totally to change and reconstruct a society by force, or violence, based upon an all-inclusive or total criticism of what is wrong with the existing or antecedent society.”⁹³ In that sense such ideologies were always utopian, because they combined “moral indignation against the Today with a fiercely fanatical conviction that the Tomorrow, which is bound to come, will be a higher, indeed a near perfect, state of society.”⁹⁴ And like Arendt, they too criticized totalitarian ideologies for being based on pseudo-scientific “myths.”⁹⁵

In short, for the theorists of totalitarianism, these sorts of ideologies were not only said to represent the antithesis of liberal democratic politics, which are typically characterized by the promotion of individual freedom, pluralism, toleration of dissent, and a pragmatic willingness to compromise, but also the antithesis of rational scientific thinking. They were not alone in drawing such a sharp dichotomy. For example, in 1959 American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) opined that “deviations from [social] scientific objectivity” constituted the “essential criteria of an ideology.”⁹⁶ Meanwhile, a number of other distinguished Western social scientists, above all sociologists, went so far as to suggest that ideologies, which they too identified with extremist ideologies and hence characterized in similarly negative ways, were becoming increasingly attenuated, unattractive, and irrelevant in Western democratic consumer societies.⁹⁷ This notion was perhaps best expressed by American political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset (1922–2006) in his famous book, *Political Man*:

The fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved. The workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in over-all state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems. This very triumph of the democratic social revolution in the West ends domestic politics for those intellectuals who must have ideologies or utopias to motivate them to political action.⁹⁸

For his part, Daniel Bell (1919–2011) argued that for radical intellectuals, these developments “meant an end to chiliastic hopes, to millenarianism, to apocalyptic thinking – and to ideology,” which he understood as “an all-inclusive system of comprehensive reality . . . a set of beliefs, infused with passion, [that] seeks

to transform the whole of a way of life.”⁹⁹ In sum, “[t]oday, these ideologies are exhausted. . . . [and] the old passions are spent.”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, for French sociologist Raymond Aron (1905–1983), “[s]uch fanaticism is not for us.”¹⁰¹ Similar notions were promoted for a time by Edward Shils and Lewis Feuer. Yet this so-called end of ideology thesis was very soon undermined, if not entirely disconfirmed, by the dramatic rise of the New Left(s) in the United States and Western Europe and Third World revolutionary movements, which was marked by the enthusiastic resumption of ideological politics, above all by alienated youths from relatively privileged socio-economic strata. The same embarrassing fate later befell the naïve beliefs of Francis Fukuyama and others in the 1990s that the collapse of the Soviet Union had ushered in the “end of history,” because the Western liberal democratic model had seemingly triumphed and allegedly no longer had any significant challengers.¹⁰²

Similarly, several moderately conservative thinkers in Britain likewise consigned the term ideology exclusively to political doctrines and practices that they found objectionable. For example, political philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1901–1990) sought to draw a clear distinction between political ideas and projects stemming from an arrogant faith in “rationalism,” which he portrayed as distorted, misdirected, exquisitely ideological abstractions that grossly oversimplified the complexities of the real world, and those linked to “traditional knowledge,” that is more pragmatic, non-ideological political philosophies and practices, which had appropriately limited objectives and were supposedly grounded in reality.¹⁰³ For Minogue, ideologies were doctrines that claimed to reveal “the hidden and saving truth about the evils of the world in the form of social analysis,” and were specifically premised on the belief that “modern European civilization, beneath its cleverly contrived appearances, is the most systematically oppressive despotism the world has ever known,” because only there has oppression “begun to hide itself behind a façade of freedom.”¹⁰⁴ He therefore argued that ideology, in this narrowly specific sense, is “incompatible with the activity of politics,” first because it “assumes that mankind is enslaved” whereas politics is an activity of the free, and second because the majority of citizens cannot participate actively in politics in equal measure because “the understanding of most people has [supposedly] been fatally clouded by the experience of domination.”¹⁰⁵

Having surveyed some of the main conceptions of ideology proffered by various intellectuals, past and present, it can be seen that they are divided broadly into two contrasting camps. In the first camp, thinkers like Destutt de Tracy argued that “ideology,” the study of ideas, was itself a science, whereas most actual ideologues have been convinced that their own doctrinal tenets were intrinsically correct or even scientific, whether or not they referred to them as “ideologies.”¹⁰⁶ In the second camp, most theorists have (up until recently) argued that ideologies were world-views that were intrinsically false, distorted, illusory, and fundamentally unscientific. Those varying interpretations of ideology also clearly illustrate the distinctions that were delineated earlier between “restrictive” or “critical” conceptions on the one hand, and “inclusive” or “neutral” conceptions on the other.¹⁰⁷ However, further potentially significant differences are also noticeable, which has caused French sociologist Raymond Boudon to develop a more sophisticated scheme for categorizing

the various historical interpretations of the term ideology.¹⁰⁸ In his scheme, conceptions of ideology are not based explicitly on the distinction between “partisan” and “neutral” conceptions, but rather on other criteria. He begins by distinguishing between “traditional” *definitions* of ideology, both Marxist and non-Marxist, which portray ideologies as beliefs that are inherently false in some sense, and “modern” definitions, also both Marxist and non-Marxist, which instead insist that they are not intrinsically false, that is that ideologies can be false, true, or embody a mixture of truth and falsity. His second division is between *explanations*, both Marxist and non-Marxist, that either characterize ideologies as intrinsically irrational and as the product of forces beyond the individual’s control, or as rational in the sense that they “can be analysed as *meaningful* behavior in the [Max] Weberian sense,” without necessarily being “deliberate or calculated.”¹⁰⁹ If one combines those definitional and explanatory criteria, one ends up with four possible combinations:

- *Traditional* definition (ideology is falsehood) and *irrational* explanation (adherence to ideology is because of forces beyond the control of the subject);
- *Traditional* definition (ideology is falsehood) and *rational* explanation (adherence to ideology is meaningful);
- *Modern* definition (ideology does not derive from the criterion of true or false) and *irrational* explanation (adherence to ideology is because of forces beyond the control of the subject);
- *Modern* definition (ideology does not derive from the criterion of true or false) and *rational* explanation (adherence to ideology is meaningful).¹¹⁰

Whether this more elaborate scheme represents a significant improvement vis-à-vis the simpler division between “partisan” and “neutral” conceptions of ideology is likely to remain a matter of opinion. However, it should be noted that the first three of Raymond’s categories would all reflect “partisan” conceptions of ideology, for one reason or another, whereas only his fourth category corresponds roughly to “neutral” conceptions of ideology.

In any event, although all of the aforementioned “restrictive” notions of ideology have been widely criticized for their partial and partisan definitions of ideologies, there is much to be said for some of these critical interpretations of ideologies – provided that one qualifies them by *limiting them to extremist ideologies* rather than wrongly ascribing them to political ideologies in general. After all, liberalism and conservatism are themselves both political ideologies, albeit ones that most non-Marxist analysts would view in much more neutral, less pejorative senses of that term. However, if one restricted such negative criticisms solely to extremist ideologies, they would arguably be all too applicable, as will soon become clearer.

However that may be, all political ideologies, extremist or otherwise, perform various intellectual and social functions. First, and virtually by definition, they provide a more or less coherent explanation of how the world works, regardless of the accuracy of that explanation. In other words, they provide an *explanatory* framework for interpreting and understanding human socio-political interaction. And like all

intellectual constructs, including social science theories, mathematical models, and conspiracy theories, political ideologies invariably present only a partial picture of – and thereby inevitably oversimplify – reality, which is in fact one of the reasons for their appeal: they make the inordinately complex, extraordinarily fluid, seemingly incomprehensible, and often frightening external world seem more understandable, and thus potentially more manageable. As American sociologist Neil Smelser puts it, ideologies “structure the complex world of reality for the believer and potential believer,” and thereby “crystallize confusion and vagueness into structure and certainty.”¹¹¹ Some analysts have argued further that the explanatory frameworks provided by ideologies contain both elements of knowledge, which are subject to the rules of logic and empirical verification, and elements of belief, which are not necessarily either logical or verifiable but instead may be “accepted or adhered to on the basis of socialization, or habit, or repetition,” that is for other than rational reasons.¹¹² If that is indeed the case – and the claim is somewhat problematic, both because it reflects a positivist view that there is a clear demarcation between that which is “rational” and that which is “irrational,” and because it arguably does not differentiate political ideologies from most other human beliefs – then “all ideologies have certain elements of distortion, illusion, or myth.”¹¹³ Be that as it may, it is important to emphasize that once one intellectually (and emotionally) embraces particular sets of ideas or worldviews – narrowly political or not, extremist or not – they thenceforth function as *de facto* filters through which all information emanating from the outside world is not only screened but also filtered and even distorted to a lesser or greater degree. That is one of the most important tangible effects of the enthusiastic adoption of ideologies, and one which inevitably affects both the perceptions and the behavior of their adherents.

Second, political ideologies inevitably contain *normative* elements. They are not only formulated in such a way as to describe the world, but also in such a way as to evaluate, judge, and perhaps criticize it, implicitly if not explicitly. Thus Mostafa Rejai argues that political ideologies “make value judgments in two ways: negatively, by denouncing an existing system of social and political relationships; positively, by putting forth a set of norms according to which social and political reconstruction is to take place.”¹¹⁴ From this perspective, ideologies invariably

denounce the existing society as corrupt, immoral, and beyond reform – and they do so by appealing to high-sounding moral principles. . . . The attack against society is presented, rationalized, justified, and dignified in the light of an appeal to “higher” principles.¹¹⁵

This is not necessarily the case, however, because we have already seen in discussing interpretations of the term “ideology” – especially those of Marx, Gramsci, and Marcuse – that the goal of many political ideologies is to justify and rationalize the *maintenance of the existing socio-political arrangements in particular societies*, as opposed to transforming or overthrowing them. As examples, one can note the various counterrevolutionary ideologies that emerged in the course and immediate wake of the

French Revolution whose purposes were to justify defending or restoring the power and authority of throne and altar.¹¹⁶ Indeed, several authors have usefully divided political ideologies into (1) status quo ideologies, “which seek to conserve the existing order”; (2) reform ideologies, “which seek change within the existing order”; and (3) revolutionary ideologies, “which seek to replace the existing order.”¹¹⁷

Third, it follows that all political ideologies have an important *affective* dimension. Whether an ideology is seeking to promote the maintenance of the status quo or to justify its overthrow and replacement, it must appeal to the emotions of the individuals or social groups its exponents hope to influence, convince, or mobilize the support of. As Rejai notes, “a most distinctive feature of all ideologies is an appeal to human passion, an eliciting of emotive response.”¹¹⁸ According to Smelser, ideologies provide “a structure for the affects of anxiety, despair, indignation, hope, anticipation, and elation, and [wed] them to its selective existential picture of the world.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, some analysts have gone so far as to claim that ideologies appeal mainly to the emotions rather than to the intellect.¹²⁰ However that may be, politically influential ideologies, past and present, are both psychologically seductive and emotionally resonant, which explains why they have so often been capable of inducing certain segments of particular communities to make extraordinary sacrifices on behalf of the causes they espouse. Indeed, even scholars who have characterized ideologies in a negative, restrictive way have often recognized their tremendous emotional appeal. For example, Aron argued that such political ideologies embody

the longing for a purpose, for communion with the people, for something controlled by an idea or a will. The feeling of belonging to the elect, the security provided by a closed system in which the whole of history as well as one’s own person find their place and their meaning, the pride of joining the past to the future in present action – all this inspires and sustains the believer.¹²¹

In what ways, then, are ideologies emotionally appealing? As Aron suggests, they provide the individuals who embrace them – rich or poor, educated or illiterate, fortunate or disadvantaged, young or old, from whatever social strata or life circumstances – with a comforting degree of intellectual certainty, a higher sense of purpose in life, a conviction of their own moral superiority, a feeling of belonging to a special community with a grand historical mission and destiny, and a sense of emotional stability and security in an otherwise inhospitable, chaotic, and seemingly meaningless world.

Fourth, political and religious ideologies function as a powerful source of *social solidarity*, because they effectively divide – intellectually, psychologically, and perhaps also socially and organizationally – the “righteous” group members from all of the “dark” or “alien” forces operating outside of and allegedly against the interests of the group. They therefore help to provide both a sense of collective identity to individual group members and to bond them socially and emotionally to each other, thus offering them a profound feeling of fellowship as “comrades” or “brothers” who are all ostensibly working together harmoniously and making common (and perhaps even at time extraordinary) sacrifices for a great and noble cause. Hence unlike

most other people, such ideologically bonded group members are no longer suffering psychologically from loneliness and anomie or engaged in selfishly pursuing their own individual material interests. Indeed, one might say that the enthusiastic adherence to a common ideology constitutes the intellectual “glue” which holds socio-political organizations and movements together, and which in turn welds their members into a purposeful collectivity working toward the realization of what they regard as a glorious higher cause. Moreover, once a person embraces such an ideology and joins a particular group, especially one that espouses an extremist ideology, he or she is then typically subjected to further ideological indoctrination, authoritarian forms of charismatic leadership, intense peer group pressure, and severe sanctions for dissenting, refusing to obey, or otherwise violating the group’s norms.¹²² In the case of clandestine insurgent organizations relying on violence and terrorism, groups which are usually being actively hunted by the security forces of the incumbent regime, these processes become even more intensified, and the result is the development of a kind of insular “hothouse” environment marked by collective paranoia in which the significance and potential danger of every group member’s thoughts and actions are magnified.¹²³ In such a strained micro-social context, what were originally perceived as socially and emotionally attractive elements of belonging to the group can eventually become terribly oppressive.

Be that as it may, all political ideologies, extremist or otherwise, claim to provide the answers to three interrelated questions:

- First, what is wrong with the world?
- Second, who is responsible for those wrongs?
- Third, what needs to be done to correct those wrongs?

This means, effectively, that political ideologies all contain both *diagnostic* elements – the answers they provide to the first and second questions – and *prescriptive* elements that are intended to serve as a guide for action – the answer they provide to the third question.¹²⁴ The foregoing is a shorthand way of formulating ideas that many other scholars have discussed at greater length. For example, Smelser emphasizes these same three aspects of ideologies, among others. First, ideologies claim to “identify and explain what is wrong or threatened in the world of believers and hoped-for believers,” thereby structuring and making concrete “the more diffuse dissatisfactions experienced by a group and [lumping] the diverse reasons for these dissatisfactions into a single explanation.”¹²⁵ Second, they typically “identify one or more target groups who are responsible for the dangers to and suffering in a given group,” that is they tend to ascribe both the world’s and their own group’s problems to the actions supposedly initiated by certain designated villains.¹²⁶ Third, and more optimistically, they provide “an ideal vision of a better society and a better life.”¹²⁷

The argument herein is that all forms of ideological extremism, irrespective of their specific, variable, and unique doctrinal contents, share certain common characteristics or features that are both identifiable and easily recognizable. Some of those specific features are of course applicable, in varying degrees, to many other kinds

of beliefs and attitudes. However, it is the combination, interaction, and mutually reinforcing nature of all of these problematic individual characteristics that together serve to mark ideological extremism. These characteristics include the following:

- Manicheanism – named after a dualistic, syncretistic, gnostic Near Eastern religion founded by Mānī (216–276) in Sassanid-era Iran, this term refers more broadly to a belief that everything in the world falls into one of two clearly distinct and opposed categories: that which is good and righteous and that which is evil and immoral.¹²⁸ It is a very moralistic, black-and-white view of the world, one that fails to acknowledge the extent to which most human behavior falls along a broad moral continuum between the hypothesized poles of light (goodness) and darkness (evil), that is that human morality is better viewed in terms of shades of gray than in absolute terms of black and white, even though some shades of gray are clearly lighter or darker than others. Those who perceive the world in this stark, dualistic fashion invariably characterize themselves as representatives of the forces of righteousness who are struggling valiantly against the powerful dark forces that surround and threaten to overwhelm them. The common phrase “you are either with us or against us” epitomizes the Manichean attitude, because from this perspective no one is viewed as a neutral party or an innocent bystander.
- Monism – a term with multiple technical meanings in philosophy, but referring in this context to an attitude that is the antithesis or opposite of political pluralism.¹²⁹ According to Jaroslaw Piekalkiewicz and Alfred Wayne Penn, monism “is the doctrine that reality may be understood as one unitary, indivisible whole; thus a monistic ideology posits that this reality can be interpreted by a universally true and exhaustive system of ideas.”¹³⁰ In practice, this translates into the conviction that there is one, and only one, correct belief system, set of moral values, and/or appropriate course of action, whether this is decided upon by recognized group leaders or derived from ostensibly “eternal” theological or intrinsically “correct” political doctrines.¹³¹ The phrase “my way or the highway” epitomizes this attitude, which is extremely intolerant of alternative, contrary, or dissenting views.
- Utopianism – a term referring to the promotion of a political or religious vision, agenda, or plan for a better society that is very unlikely to be achieved, if not impossible to achieve, in the real world (as well as to fictional societies portrayed in literature).¹³² The term “utopia” derives from the Greek phrase *οὐ* (“not”) and *τόπος* (“place”), which therefore literally means “no place” or “nowhere,” and was the title of a famous novel written in 1516 by Sir Thomas More (1478–1535). Hence in political parlance it is typically applied, pejoratively, to world transformative visions concerning the creation of an idealized society, in which all existing social problems can and will be surmounted or eradicated, visions that are viewed by critics as absurdly impractical because they are premised on false ideas about human nature or about its potential malleability.¹³³ Among the many extremist ideologies that have been characterized as utopian are communism (which postulates the creation of an ostensibly just, harmonious international classless society

free of want, hardship, and exploitation), fascism (which postulates the creation of an ostensibly just, harmonious organic national community free of internal conflict and debilitating divisions), anarchism (which postulates the creation of an ostensibly just, harmonious non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian decentralized socio-political system, also free of exploitation, where decisions are made and collectively acted upon from the bottom up), and Islamism (which postulates the creation of an ostensibly just, harmonious theocratic state and society that is free of want, hardship, and strife because everyone will behave in accordance with a strict, puritanical interpretation of Muslim divine law, the *shari‘a*).

- Collectivism – a term referring to beliefs that the interests of the group as a whole, however that group is defined, must invariably take precedence over the rights of the individuals who make up the group. It is antithetical to individualism insofar as the individual is regarded as having no “natural rights” whatsoever that are distinct from his or her membership in the group, much less any intrinsic rights that cannot be abridged by the group, whose needs and interests are always granted priority. In that sense, modern collectivist ideologies have provided new intellectual justifications for suppressing individual rights, which in the West have replaced the unreflective communitarian beliefs commonly held and accepted in pre-modern or non-Western traditional societies, before certain natural rights doctrines had evolved and spread which proclaimed that individuals had certain inalienable rights of a moral, spiritual, or legal nature.¹³⁴
- Hyper-moralism – a word that refers to excessive, uncompromising moralism or self-righteousness, if not outright moral puritanism. Although their opponents have often characterized extremists as either lacking any discernable morality or being unconcerned about moral strictures, the truth is precisely the opposite. Far from consciously ignoring morality (although they may well repudiate and intentionally violate existing moral standards) or lacking a moral compass, if anything they are “moral to a fault,” in the sense that they both demand that everyone adhere to moral standards that are so strict that it is virtually impossible to achieve them and also often act to punish those who cannot meet such standards. Even when they cannot personally live up to their own unrealistic moral standards, which is all too common, they nonetheless try to impose them forcibly on everyone else. Extremists invariably believe that they are acting in the service of a higher morality, which is why they tend to be so morally rigid and intolerant of the perceived moral flaws of others and so brutal in dealing with their supposedly “immoral” opponents. Hence the horrendous atrocities and crimes against humanity that have often been committed by extremists are not generally attributable to immorality, amorality, or outright cruelty and sadism, but rather to their excessive moralism and fanatical conviction that they are struggling righteously against overwhelming odds to create a better world. In such contexts, the proverb incorrectly attributed to famed English author Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) – “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions” – is all too applicable, as is British historian Herbert Butterfield’s statement that the “greatest menace to our civilization is the conflict between giant organized systems of self-righteousness. . . .”

- Authoritarianism or Totalitarianism – terms referring to the efforts by the leaders of extremist movements and organizations (1) to tightly control the external behavior of their followers (authoritarianism), or (2) to tightly control the external behavior *and* to transform and dominate, via a combination of systematic ideological indoctrination, psychological manipulation, and the creation of all-encompassing and confining organizational webs, the very thoughts and consciousness of their followers (totalitarianism). The aim of totalitarian leaders is to get inside their followers' heads and thereby create obedient, enthusiastic, disciplined, deployable “new men” who are willing to sacrifice themselves by struggling, heroically if necessary, in order to achieve their movements' ostensibly higher, noble causes. As the name itself implies, totalitarian leaders and movements aspire to achieve *total* control over their own followers and, ultimately, their entire societies, even though in practice they are never actually able to achieve such a thoroughgoing level of control.¹³⁵
- Dehumanization or Demonization of Designated Enemies – terms referring to the characterization of opponents as intrinsically and irremediably evil or, in the case of religious extremists, as literally “satanic” or “demonic.” Given this simplistic mindset, designated enemies are never viewed as garden variety political rivals or as people who simply have contrasting perspectives or different ideas, but rather as veritable “evildoers” who are consciously doing everything in their power to prevent extremist organizations from achieving their righteous goals. After all, why would anyone who was not thoroughly evil or inhuman intentionally stand in the way of such noble goals? Of course, different types of extremist groups designate different enemies based on the specific contents of their ideological belief systems: for communists, it is “class enemies”; for anarchists, all illegitimate “authorities” and “hierarchies”; for fascists, “anti-national” elements; for Nazis (and other racial supremacists), “racial enemies”; and for Islamists, “infidels,” “hypocrites,” and “apostates.” Yet irrespective of how their enemies are actually defined, such a dehumanizing perspective easily serves as an intellectual and moral justification for the harsh persecution and physical elimination of real and imagined “enemies.” Indeed, the achievement of proclaimed utopian agendas necessitates the suppression and merciless eradication – or, at the very least, the enforced ideological conversion by means of systematic re-education – of any and all opponents.
- Conspiratorial Paranoia – this phrase refers not to clinical forms of paranoia or actual psychopathologies, but to the penchant of extremists for believing that their enemies are utterly malicious, frightfully powerful, omnipresent, and incessantly engaged in sinister plotting to destroy their own group and thereby prevent the realization of its noble goals. Indeed, from their perspective there is not only a vast array of declared enemies operating *outside* of the movement who must be vanquished, but also “subversive,” traitorous enemies operating secretly *within* the movement itself who must be ruthlessly purged lest they fatally weaken it. Such convictions easily lend themselves to the elaboration or adoption of all-encompassing conspiracy theories, which postulate that sinister cabals of evildoers are working constantly behind the scenes so as to manipulate or control the

course of events, invariably in detrimental if not catastrophic ways. Alas, because it is never possible for extremist movements to totally defeat or completely eliminate all opposition, group members are urged to remain perpetually vigilant and aggressively wage “continuous,” never-ending life-and-death struggles against a host of real or imagined external and internal enemies.

These, then, are the common characteristics of virtually all forms of ideological extremism, and it would be easy enough for anyone who was sufficiently motivated to find innumerable quotations from a diverse array of extremist ideologues or ideological treatises that would perfectly illustrate all of those characteristics.

The ultimate goal of most political and religio-political extremists is to establish some form or system of “political rule in the name of a monistic ideology,” that is an “ideocracy.”¹³⁶ This term, which combines the ancient Greek root terms *kratía* (“[political] rule”) and *idéa* (“idea”), refers to a polity or society that is in theory ruled in accordance with various ideological tenets, in this context those that embody extremist characteristics, albeit in practice one that is actually ruled by particular leaders who claim to adhere to those tenets. In the words of the American esoteric historian Arthur Versluis,

[a]n ideocracy is a form of government characterized by an inflexible adherence to a set of doctrines, or ideas, typically enforced by criminal penalties. . . . An ideocracy is monistic and totalistic; it insists on the total application of ideology to every aspect of life, and in it, pluralism is anathema. . . . In an ideocracy, the greatest criminal is imagined by ideocrats to be the dissenter, the one who by his very existence reveals the totalistic construct imposed on society to be a lie.¹³⁷

The proponents of such aims can thus be referred to generically as ideocrats, and the political systems they hope to establish can be referred to as ideocracies. Although most ideological extremists fortunately fail either to mobilize mass movements or to seize political power, those who do so typically endeavor to establish ideocratic political systems. That is precisely why one must always take the political or religio-political ideologies they espouse seriously, because those worldviews normally provide a blueprint, however vague and inconsistent it may be, for the regimes and societies they hope to establish should they succeed in coming to power.

Notes

- 1 Tess Gerritsen, *Gravity* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), p. 241, although the term is defined therein, in reference to a single-celled organism known as an *Archaeon*, as a “lover of extreme conditions.”
- 2 See, e.g., Andrew Silke, ed., *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Magnus Ranstorp, ed., *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps, and Future Direction* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Compare also Adam Dolnik, *Conducting Terrorism Field Research: A Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2013), for an

- extended discussion of conducting field research in this area. For “critical terrorism studies” approaches adopted by unabashed leftist academicians, see Richard Jackson and Marie Breen Smith, eds., *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
- 3 Jeffrey M. Bale, “The ‘Black’ Terrorist International: Neo-Fascist Paramilitary Networks and the ‘Strategy of Tension’ in Italy, 1968–1974,” (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California at Berkeley, 1994), p. 26.
 - 4 See, e.g., Eric van Um, *Evaluating the Political Rationality of Terrorist Groups* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016).
 - 5 See, e.g., Nasrullah Memon et al., eds., *Mathematical Methods in Counterterrorism* (Vienna and New York: Springer, 2009); Alexander Gutfraind, *Mathematical Terrorism: Quantitative Modeling of Sub-State Conflicts* (Saarbrücken: Lambert, 2010); Sean F. Everton, *Disrupting Dark Networks* (New York: Cambridge University, 2012); and Daniel Cunningham, Sean F. Everton, and Philip Murphy, *Dark Networks: A Strategic Framework for the Use of Social Network Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).
 - 6 See, e.g., Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, *The Political Economy of Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University, 2011); and Eli Berman, *Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2011), wherein Berman argues that religious terrorists are not primarily motivated by religious ideas or the promise of rewards in the afterlife. One wonders, then, why they are even called “religious terrorists.”
 - 7 See, e.g., the works of forensic psychologist Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004); and Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008).
 - 8 See, e.g., Bruce Bongar et al., *Psychology of Terrorism* (New York: Oxford University, 2006), especially chapters 1–5; James Jones, *Blood That Cries Out from the Earth: The Psychology of Religious Terrorism* (New York: Oxford University, 2008); and Jerrold M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to al-Qaeda* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2008).
 - 9 See, e.g., Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31:1 (Summer 2006), pp. 49–80, wherein there is not a single reference to ideology (except, inadvertently, in the title of an article cited in note 80). Indeed, in many articles dealing with terrorism and terrorists in academic social scientist journals, a word search yields *not a single reference to ideology*, which is an indication of how commonly this important aspect of terrorism has been ignored or neglected. Part of the problem, of course, is that “social science” and military analysts who have little or no prior knowledge of political philosophy or extremist ideologies, much less of the history of past revolutionary movements, simply lack the expertise necessary to understand the core beliefs of radical political or religio-political groups and regimes. Unfortunately, just as it was impossible during the Cold War to understand and effectively counteract the behavior of communist guerrillas and terrorists without understanding their ideologies, it is currently impossible to understand and effectively counteract the behavior of jihadist terrorists without understanding Islamist ideological currents. That is one key reason why so many Western counterinsurgency and counterterrorist operations have ended in failure.
 - 10 Here is an illustrative example found in an article written by Christopher Massie, “Is ISIS a Faith-Based Terrorist Group?” *Columbia Journalism Review* (17 September 2014), available at www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/is_isis_a_faith-based_terroris.php?page=all:

When I asked Marc Sageman, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, if he thought it was worthwhile to debate whether the causes of Islamic extremism were ideological, he said, “I do not. I really do not. And I stress that.” Sageman argues that political violence, from the French Revolution to modern jihad, is essentially the same: a kind of “ritual,” *not dependent on ideology* [italics added], that people act out to earn “a sense of legitimacy within the ‘in’ group.”

So it is that Sageman cavalierly dismissed, on the basis of his own preferred social network-centric psychological theories, the conclusions derived from decades, nay centuries, of serious historical scholarship on a multitude of extremist, revolutionary, and insurgent movements. Of course, there are innumerable other examples of this tendency to ignore or downplay ideological factors, such as assorted sociological, Marxist, and “world systems” theories of revolution that overemphasize impersonal structural forces and inexplicably minimize the importance of the articulated beliefs of the participants in these movements. Note that these structural approaches rely almost entirely on theoretical abstractions rather than the disconfirmatory evidence found in masses of primary sources.

- 11 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), volume 1, pp. 173–4.
- 12 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London: Verso, 1991), p. xiii.
- 13 Daniel Bell, “The End of Ideology in the West: An Epilogue,” in *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, ed. by Daniel Bell (New York: Free Press, 1962), p. 394.
- 14 David McLellen, *Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), p. 2.
- 15 Himmelstein’s remark has been cited on many websites that provide definitions of extremism. They were apparently made at a special session of the 1998 ASA convention devoted to right-wing social movements, at which he presented the findings of a paper titled “All But Sleeping with the Enemy: Studying the Radical Right Up Close.” The author would like to thank Himmelstein for providing him with a copy of the actual paper, which is quite insightful.
- 16 For the pejorative connotations of the terms “fanatic” and “fanaticism,” as well as the term “terrorism,” see Maxwell Taylor, *The Fanatics: A Behavioural Approach to Political Violence* (London: Brassey’s UK, 1991), pp. 12–14, 16. The term “fanaticism” originally had the connotation of excessive enthusiasm in religious belief – in literary contexts, the Latin word *fanaticus* means “to be put into a raging enthusiasm by a deity” – but its meaning has since been expanded to apply to similarly excessive enthusiasm in other, non-religious contexts, including political contexts. See *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 17 Peter T. Coleman and Andrea Bartoli, *Addressing Extremism* (New York and Washington, DC: International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution/Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, undated), p. 2 (emphasis added), available at www.tc.columbia.edu/i/a/document/9386_WhitePaper_2_Extremism_030809.pdf. Exactly how far removed something has to be to fall into the “extremist” category remains unclear. Note, however, that Coleman and Bartoli do not claim that extremism is not a real phenomenon, even though they acknowledge the difficulties in defining it and the biased way the term can be applied.
- 18 See, e.g., Chip Berlet, “Time to Rethink Using the Term ‘Extremism,’” Huffington Post blog, 28 December 2010, available at www.huffingtonpost.com/chip-berlet/time-to-rethink-using-the_b_802001.html. Therein Berlet argues that

[e]very time the government uses the term “extremist” it helps justify political repression against political opponents. . . . Every time the term “extremist” is used to describe a political opponent, it marginalizes political dissent across the political spectrum. . . . Every time liberals and leftists use the term “extremist” it undermines the movement for progressive social change. . . . The term “extremist” is often used by those in the political center to demonize dissidents on the political left and right.

While Berlet, the lead analyst in an “anti-fascist” watchdog organization known as Political Research Associates, is to be commended for opposing the use of the term for both right-wing radicals and left-wing radicals, he mainly opposes its use because it is so “elastic” that it has often been abusively applied against the left. It is unclear whether he believes that the term has no substantive meaning, although that is certainly the implication. Compare also William F. Jasper, “Media Jump to Smear Right with Extremist Label,” *The New American*, 1 April 2010, available at www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/

- politics/3238-media-jump-to-smear-right-with-extremist-label. *The New American* is a publication of the right-wing John Birch Society.
- 19 Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002 [1951]).
 - 20 See, e.g., John George and Laird Wilcox, *American Extremists: Militias, Supremacists, Klansmen, Communists, and Others* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), especially chapter 2.
 - 21 Laird Wilcox, *The Hoaxer Project Report: Racist and Anti-Semitic Graffiti, Harassment and Violence: An Essay on Hoaxes and Fabricated Incidents* (Olathe, KS: Laird Wilcox Editorial Research Service, 1990), pp. 39–41. This study was later updated as *Crying Wolf: Hate Crime Hoaxes in America* (Olathe, KS: Laird Wilcox Editorial Research Service, 1995). Needless to say, many of those specific characteristics appear in other contexts as well, but it is their combination with each other that allegedly marks extremism.
 - 22 Neil J. Smelser, *The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2007), pp. 80–6. Ironically, in this section he is highlighting the dangers of adopting a post-9/11 counterterrorist ideology that has “manifested a point-by-point structural correspondence with the Islamic fundamentalist ideology in the name of which the attacks were made,” although he also emphasizes that pointing out these parallels does not in any sense “connote a moral equivalence.” See *ibid.*, pp. 82, 86.
 - 23 Ronald Wintrobe, *Rational Extremism: The Political Economy of Radicalism* (New York: Cambridge University, 2006), p. 5. However, his overall argument is severely problematic inasmuch as he argues that extremism is a rational strategy in struggles for power. Therein lies yet another egregious absurdity associated with fashionable “rational choice” approaches: the claim that even non-rational human beliefs and behavior, in this case ideological fanaticism and the actions it engenders, are nonetheless somehow “rational.” Compare also the unconvincing “rationalist,” “materialist,” and “economist” explanations of extremist behavior by Eli Berman and various colleagues, for example Eli Berman, *Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2009); Eli Berman, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Joseph H. Felter, “Can Hearts and Minds Be Bought? The Economics of Counterinsurgency in Iraq,” *Journal of Political Economy* 119:4 (August 2011), pp. 766–819; and Laurence R. Iannacone and Eli Berman, “Religious Extremism: The Good, the Bad, and the Deadly,” an article prepared for a special issue of *Public Choice*. Frankly, anyone who believes that, say, Islamists, including jihadist terrorists, are not motivated primarily by puritanical religious beliefs and literalist theological interpretations has clearly never read what they have written or interacted with them. Other factors also undoubtedly affect their behavior, but they are usually of less central importance.
 - 24 Taylor, *The Fanatics*, pp. 37–56. Compare also Josef Rudin, *Fanaticism: A Psychological Analysis*, trans. by Elisabeth Reinecke and Paul C. Bailey (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1969).
 - 25 For more on “death squads,” see Bruce B. Campbell and Arthur D. Brenner, eds., *Death Squads in Comparative Perspective: Murder with Deniability* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Jeffrey A. Sluka, ed., *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000); Marie-Monique Robin, *Escadrons de la mort, l'école française* (Paris: Découverte, 2004); Cecilia Menjívar and Néstor Rodríguez, eds., *When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror* (Austin: University of Texas, 2005); Paddy Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands: ETA, the GAL and Spanish Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University, 2003); and Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson, *Inside the League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1986).
 - 26 For a brief introduction to the concept of ideology, see Michael Freedman, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University, 2003). Compare also McLellen, *Ideology*; and David Hawkes, *Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2003), although the latter adopts a literary and cultural studies approach that many will find uncongenial.

- 27 See, respectively, McLellan, *Ideology*, p. 1; and Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 13. To say that the concept of ideology itself is “essentially contested” is an understatement. Yet ironically, one of the chief aims of particular ideologies is “to end the inevitable contention over concepts by *decontesting* them, by removing their meanings from contest.” See Freeden, *Ideology*, p. 54.
- 28 Bell, “End of Ideology in the West,” p. 399. Here Bell suggests that the common understanding of the term is rather neutral. In contrast, Terry Eagleton argues that “to claim in ordinary conversation that someone is speaking ideologically is surely to hold that they are judging a particular issue through some rigid framework of preconceived ideas which distorts their understanding.” See Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 3. Compare also Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, eds., *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (London and New York: Pinter, 1999), p. vi: “In everyday usage, ‘ideology’ tends to be a pejorative term, synonymous with deceitful and fanatical. As such, it is often contrasted with pragmatism and truth.” No doubt this would depend upon whom one was talking to.
- 29 Compare Manfred B. Steger, *Globalism: Market Ideology Meets Terrorism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), p. 5:

Most social and political theorists define *ideology* as a system of widely shared ideas, patterned beliefs, guiding norms and values, and lofty ideals accepted as “fact” or “truth” by some group. Ideologies offer individuals a more or less coherent picture of the world, not only as it is, but also as it should be.

- 30 See, respectively, John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), p. 5; and Lyman Tower Sargent, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: A Comparative Analysis* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2008), pp. 2–3. Like Thompson, American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) highlighted the symbolic dimensions of ideologies by defining them, neutrally, as “systems of interacting symbols” and “patterns of interworking meanings” that were necessary due to the human need for “symbolic templates” to make sense of the external world. See his “Ideology as a Cultural System,” in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. by David E. Apter (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 56, 63. Compare also the more pithy but generic formulation of Raymond Boudon, *The Analysis of Ideology*, trans. by Malcolm Slater (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1986), p. 71: “ideologies are systems of ideas which relate to society.” They are also “socially shared ideas,” at least insofar as they aspire to have any historical or political importance. See Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage, 1998), p. 15.
- 31 Thus American sociologist Edward Shils (1910–1995) insisted that ideologies “are characterized by a *high degree of explicitness of formulation* over a very wide range of objects with which they deal.” See Edward Shils, “The Concept and Function of Ideology,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. by David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), volume 7, p. 66 (*italics added*). Compare the views of numerous other academicians, such as Noël O’Sullivan, *Conservatism* (London: Dent, 1976), p. 9: “An ideology, unlike an attitude, requires a self-conscious attempt to provide an explicit and coherent theory of man, society, and the world.” For his part, Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University, 1978), p. 109, refers to ideologies as both the “fully articulate and systematic forms” of ideas and, in contrast to hegemony writ large, as an “articulate formal system” of ideas.
- 32 For example, Willie Thompson argues that if the “taken-for-granted framework of assumptions, habits, [and] metaphysical, social, and political beliefs” falls into the category of ideology, in which case it would be “a mode of consciousness . . . which is all pervasive [that] none of us can escape,” then the term could be “applied to anyone anywhere at any time in all history.” As a result, he defines ideology as “an interconnected system or structure of basic belief applicable to particular social or cultural collectives – one which incorporates conscious beliefs, assumptions, and unthinking modes of perception – through which its adherents view the world around them.” See his *Ideologies in the Age of*

Extremes: Liberalism, Conservatism, Communism, Fascism 1914–91 (New York: Pluto Press, 2011), pp. 1–2. Thus, by including everything but the kitchen sink under the same rubric, such an approach collapses the crucial distinction between coherent doctrines and impressionistic feelings about the world.

33 Roger Eatwell, “Introduction,” in *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, ed. by Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, p. 3, and further on pp. 15–16.

34 Or, in the words of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, the “taken-for-granted shape of things, too obvious to mention.” See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2007), p. 176. One such possible term is the annoyingly postmodern phrase “the social imaginary.” Although this concept has been defined and employed in different ways, some of them unbearably pretentious, Manfred Steger has described it as “the micromappings of social and political space through which we perceive, judge, and act in the world.” Thus the social imaginary is neither a theory nor an ideology, but rather

an implicit “background” that makes possible communal practices and a widely shared sense of their legitimacy. It offers explanations of how “we” – the members of the community – fit together, how things go on between us, the expectations we have of each other, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie those expectations.

See Manfred B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary: Political Ideologies from the French Revolution to the Global War on Terror* (New York: Oxford University, 2008), p. 6.

35 See Robert E. Lane, *Political Ideology: Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does* (New York: Free Press, 1962), p. 16. Compare also George Rudé, *Ideology and Popular Protest* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 27, who similarly draws a distinction between two types of ideologies, “a structured, or relatively structured type of ideology (the only ‘ideology’ worthy of the name, according to some) and one of more simple attitudes, *mentalités* or outlooks.” Of course, given that his book is a study of “popular ideology,” it would have been impossible for him to limit himself to structured, coherent doctrines developed by intellectuals. But that does not mean that “simple attitudes” necessarily fall into the category of ideologies.

36 This distinction between consciously embracing ideologies and being unconsciously affected by them has been emphasized by Boudon, *Analysis of Ideology*, p. 71 (*italics in original*):

received ideas which go to make up ideologies can emerge *normally* in the subject’s mind, rather than being the result of arbitrary or unclear forces over which the subject has no control. In other words, we can very often analyse adherence to received ideas as a *meaningful* act in the Weberian sense of the word.

37 Kenneth Minogue, *Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1985), p. 1.

38 Some analysts have even argued that *all* ideologies are political ideologies. For example, Martin Seliger claims that ideologies are always linked to politics, and that all politics are linked to ideology. See Martin Seliger, *Ideology and Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p. 15. However, not all ideologies are focused on narrowly political matters, even if they have certain implicit political connotations, and a good deal of garden variety political behavior is not motivated primarily or explicitly by conscious adherence to political ideologies. After all, naked struggles for power between human groups or political candidates, democratic or otherwise, do not necessarily stem from concrete ideological differences. Thus, according to Steger, “[w]hat makes an ideology ‘political’ is that its concepts and claims select, privilege, or constrict social meanings related to the exercise of power in society.” See Steger, *Globalism*, p. 5.

39 Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 12.

40 *Ibid.*

36 Introduction

- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., p. 13.
- 43 Leon P. Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact* (Boston: Longman, 2012), p. 12. But compare the cautionary remarks of Andrew Vincent, who argues that ideologies are not so easily distinguishable, either from political philosophies or from scientific theories, as many suppose. See Andrew Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 13–17.
- 44 Baradat, *Political Ideologies*, p. 10.
- 45 Eatwell, “Introduction,” p. 17.
- 46 Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1965), p. 88 (italics in original).
- 47 Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, p. 16.
- 48 Roy C. Macridis, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: Movements and Regimes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983), p. 4 (emphasis in original). He reformulated his definition in later editions, but in all of the iterations there is an emphasis on the action-oriented nature of ideologies. For example, in the sixth edition of this textbook, Macridis and Mark L. Hulliung argue that, in contrast to philosophy and theory, “ideology shapes beliefs that incite people into action.” See *Contemporary Political Ideologies: Movements and Regimes* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1996), p. 3.
- 49 According to Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 15, citing Lane, *Political Ideology*, pp. 3, 14–16. However, that particular quote does not in fact appear on the cited pages of Lane’s book, at least not in the edition that I examined.
- 50 Skinner’s core argument against what he called “mentalism” was that “what is felt or introspectively observed is not some nonphysical world of consciousness, mind, or mental life but the observer’s own body.” Hence these thoughts, beliefs, and feelings are not “the causes of the behavior. An organism behaves as it does because of its current structure, but most of this is out of reach of introspection.” See B. F. Skinner, *About Behaviorism* (New York: Knopf, 1974), pp. 18–19.
- 51 Compare Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, pp. 1–2. For example, the “classical realist” school postulates that political conflicts ultimately derive from basic human nature, specifically the various protagonists’ allegedly innate drive for power and their will to dominate. “Power politics” are thus prioritized, whereas the roles of ideology and morality are minimized.
- 52 See, e.g., Andrej Zwitter, “The Anatomy of Ideology: An Analysis of the Structure of Ideology and the Mobilisation of Terrorists,” *HUMSEC Journal* 1 (2007), pp. 30–46, available at www.humsec.eu/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/humsec/Journal/Zwitter_The_Anatomy_of_Ideology.pdf. As he puts it, “ideology is overlooked and therefore underestimated and under-researched” (p. 31) in the field of terrorism studies, even though “[t]errorism exists by the [sic] virtue of the ideologies adhered to by its perpetrators” (p. 30) – unless, of course, one is talking about acts of terrorism carried out for mercenary reasons by criminal organizations. However, it is not only foolish but dangerous to neglect the ideologies of extremist groups that rely heavily on violence and terrorism, since those ideologies, by explicitly identifying who the groups’ enemies are, play a decisive role in determining their initial target selection and in providing them with the moral justifications they need for attacking their designated enemies. See C. J. M. Drake, “The Role of Ideology in Terrorists’ Target Selection,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10:2 (Summer 1998), pp. 53–85.
- 53 A particularly egregious example of this myopic attitude is evident in the influential works of Robert Pape, who continues to insist – against all evidence to the contrary – that there is no link between the disproportionate number of suicide attacks that have been carried out by jihadists (which they themselves refer to as “martyrdom operations”), explicitly on behalf of Allāh (*fi sabīl Allāh*), and their particular theological interpretations of Islamic doctrine. See Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*

- (New York: Random House, 2006); and Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010). This interpretation is manifestly absurd, as anyone familiar with the extraordinary efforts made by Islamists to justify such attacks by reference to the Qurʾān and the collections of *hadīth* (reports of what Muhammad allegedly said and did) can attest. See, e.g., Ayman al-Zawahiri, “Jihad, Martyrdom, and the Killing of Innocents,” in *The Al Qaeda Reader*, ed. and trans. by Raymond Ibrahim (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), pp. 137–71. Compare the analysis of David Cook and Olivia Alison, *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks: The Faith and Tactics of Martyrdom Operations* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007). See further David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (New York: Cambridge University, 2007); and David Cook, ed., *Jihad and Martyrdom* (New York: Routledge, 2010), a four-volume collection of previously published articles on these subjects (including Pape’s original article). This is not to claim, of course, that there are not also strategic, operational, or tactical “logics” involved in employing suicide terrorism, only that religious beliefs and cultural values are crucially important as motivating factors and should therefore not be ignored in this context.
- 54 George Weigel, *Letters to a Young Catholic* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p. 44.
- 55 Max Lerner, *Ideas Are Weapons: The History and Uses of Ideas* (New York: Viking, 1939), a collection of essays.
- 56 Hence the pithy conclusion of Lane in *Political Ideology*, p. 439: “Ideologies have consequences.” The key functions of ideologies will be further clarified later.
- 57 Eatwell and Wright, *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, p. vii.
- 58 Bell, “End of Ideology in the West,” p. 400. Compare the views of the many scholars who have analyzed and elaborated the concept of sacralized secular ideologies or “political religions,” e.g., Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, trans. by George Staunton (Princeton: Princeton University, 2006); Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, trans. by Keith Botsford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1996); and A. James Gregor, *Totalitarianism and Political Religion: An Intellectual History* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2012); the three-volume collective work edited by Hans Meier and his colleagues, *Totalitarianism and Political Religions: Concepts for the Comparison of Dictatorships* (New York: Routledge, 2005–2008); Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe, from the French Revolution to the Great War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007); Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, from the Great War to the War on Terror* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008); Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Rainer Bucher, *Hitler’s Theology: A Study in Political Religion* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011); and Walter Skya, *Japan’s Holy War: The Ideology of Radical Shinto Ultrationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2009); and many articles and special issues of the former journal *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* (which was recently renamed *Politics, Religion and Ideology*), some of which were later reissued in book format.
- 59 Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. xiii.
- 60 For critical analyses of such approaches in the context of terrorism, see Tore Bjørgo, ed., *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).
- 61 Here, of course, I am excluding the relative handful of serious scholars who have studied important aspects of Islamist ideology in an appropriately critical and non-apologetic fashion, such as David Cook, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Hillel Fradkin, Timothy Furnish, Thomas Hegghammer, Johannes J. G. Jansen, Gilles Kepel, Farhad Khosrokhavar, Nelly Lahoud, Brynjar Lia, Will McCants, Rolf Meijer, Reuven Paz, Kumar Ramakrishna, Ana Belén Soage, Anne Stenersen, Suha Taji-Farouki, Bassam Tibi, Joas Wagemakers, and Quintan Wiktorowicz.
- 62 In this context, it is worth noting Seliger’s attempt to draw an analytical distinction between the “fundamental” dimensions of ideologies and their “operative” dimensions. See Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, pp. 108–21, 175–208, and *passim*. He points out that

loyalty to a group's fundamental ideological principles is often tested by its need to confront and cope effectively with practical realities, and that those principles can be compromised in the process. As he puts it (*ibid.*, p. 120),

[c]ompromises cause ideology to bifurcate into the purer, and hence more dogmatic, fundamental dimensions of argumentation and the more diluted, and hence more pragmatic, operative dimension. In the latter, morally based prescriptions are often attenuated . . . by technical prescriptions. The tension between the two dimensions gives rise to the question of the sincerity of the valuations which are advanced, whereas out of the interaction between the two dimensions, which normally signifies an increase of ideological pluralism, arises the challenge of ideological change.

However, Seliger's focus in the preceding passage on a group's "argumentation," i.e., how it articulates its doctrines and agendas in public or in private, rather than on its core beliefs *per se* is misleading, and he fails to acknowledge that the more radical, utopian, and inflexible an ideology is, content-wise, the less willing and able its exponents usually are to compromise it in order to gain short-term political advantages. And if they do compromise it in noticeable ways, then they are likely to alienate their more purist, intransigent followers. Indeed, that is the norm, or at least the most common observable pattern, with respect to the historical evolution or trajectory of socio-political movements inspired by extremist ideologies.

63 Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, p. 14 and *passim*.

64 See Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, pp. 53–4. These neutral conceptions do not assume that ideologies are "necessarily misleading, illusory or aligned with the interests of any particular group" and instead recognize that they can be revolutionary, reformist, or restorationist, that they can aim for the transformation or preservation of the social order, and that they are as useful to subordinate as they are to dominant groups. Unfortunately, Thompson himself ends up adopting a quasi-Marxist "critical conception." See *ibid.*, pp. 56–67.

65 Although he had first introduced and discussed this concept in earlier books, De Tracy published a multi-volume work on ideology in 1817–1818 titled *Eléments d'idéologie*. All of those volumes are available in hard copy format from the Parisian publisher Hachette. Perhaps the most important of those volumes is the first, which is now accessible for free from Amazon France in Kindle format as Antoine Destutt de Tracy, *Eléments d'idéologie, I: Idéologie*. For more on De Tracy and his ideas, see Brian W. Head, ed., *Ideology and Social Science: Destutt de Tracy and French Liberalism* (Dordrecht and Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1985); Emmet Kennedy, *A Philosopher in the Age of Revolution: Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of Ideology* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978); Ulrich Lorenz, *Das Projekt der Ideologie: Studien zur Konzeption einer ersten Philosophie bei Destutt de Tracy* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994); and Steger, *Rise of the Global Imaginary*, pp. 24–32.

66 For the distinction between traditional "myths" and modern "ideologies," see Ben Halpern, "'Myth' and 'Ideology' in Modern Usage," *History and Theory* 1:2 (1961), pp. 129–49. For the view that ideologies are modern phenomena, see Jürgen Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 99, who argued that ideologies "replace traditional legitimations of power by appearing in the mantle of modern science and by [paradoxically] deriving their justification from the critique of ideology. Ideologies are coeval with the critique of ideology. In this sense there are no pre-bourgeois ideologies." Compare also Michael Oakshott, "Rationalism in Politics," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, ed. Michael Oakshott (London and New York: Methuen, 1962 [1947]), p. 21.

67 As per Alex Roberto Hybel, *The Power of Ideology: From the Roman Empire to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 9.

68 George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology, and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 5–6. Compare also the excellent short summaries in Steger, *Rise of the Global Imaginary*, pp. 33–7; and Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, pp. 2–3. For more on these so-called *idéologues* and their ideas, see Charles Hunter van Duzer, *Contributions of the*

- Idéologues to French Revolutionary Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1935); and Cheryl Welch, *Liberty and Unity: The French Ideologues and the Transformation of Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University, 1984).
- 69 Cited by Hans Barth, *Wahrheit und Ideologie* (Zurich: Rentsch, 1961), p. 27. Compare Henry D. Aiken, *The Age of Ideology: The 19th Century Philosophers* (New York: New American Library, 1956), pp. 16–17: “During the Napoleonic Era . . . ‘ideology’ came to mean virtually any belief of a republican or revolutionary sort, that is to say, any belief hostile to Napoleon himself.” Similar negative views of ideologies were later made by Michael Oakeshott and others, although it was their supposed rationality rather than their metaphysical nature that was the bone of contention.
- 70 On Marxist views of ideology, compare Martin Seliger, *The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University, 1977); Jorge Larraín, *Marxism and Ideology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983); and Walter Carlsnaes, *The Concept of Ideology and Political Analysis: A Critical Examination of Its Usage by Marx, Lenin, and Mannheim* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).
- 71 On the Young Hegelians and their disputes with Marx, see Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self* (New York: Cambridge University, 1999); David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (New York: Praeger, 1969); Harold Mah, *The End of Philosophy, the Origin of Ideology: Karl Marx and the Crisis of the Young Hegelians* (Berkeley: University of California, 1987). For a collection of Young Hegelian writings, see Lawrence S. Stepelevich, ed., *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997). The most prominent of the Young Hegelians was German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872).
- 72 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), p. 64.
- 73 Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement* (New York: International, 1960 [1902]), pp. 40–1:
- Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of their movement then *the only choice is*: Either bourgeois, or Socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a “third” ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle Socialist ideology in any way, to deviate from it in the slightest degree means strengthening bourgeois ideology.
- 74 *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33, 76–90, 105–33. Recently an extreme revisionist interpretation of Lenin’s attitudes with respect to the potential development of a revolutionary class consciousness by the workers has appeared, one which contests the standard interpretation of this notoriously polemical text: Lars P. Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is To Be Done? In Context* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008).
- 75 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1972 [1923]), p. 258. See further Roisin McDonough, “Ideology and False Consciousness: Lukacs,” in *On Ideology*, ed. by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (New York: Routledge, 2006 [1978]), pp. 33–44.
- 76 Compare Louis Althusser, *On Ideology*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2008), especially “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes toward an Investigation” (which is also available online at www.marx2mao.com/Other/LPOE70ii.html#s5); and Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 232. See further Paul Q. Hirst, “Althusser and the Theory of Ideology,” *Economy and Society* 5:4 (1976), pp. 385–412.
- 77 Compare Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, Volumes 1–3*, trans. by Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University, 2010); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971 [1935]); and Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (New York: New York University, 2000). For more on Gramsci and his ideas, see John M. Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian*

- Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1967); Alastair Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1977); Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," *Research in Political Economy* 2 (1979), pp. 1–31; Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (New York: Oxford University, 1987); and – for a cultural studies approach – Stephen J. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
- 78 According to Marx's famous formulation, "[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence [that] determines their consciousness." See Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2010 [1859]), pp. 11–12.
- 79 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 376.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 81 Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, p. 7.
- 82 Note that Gramsci's notions, sophisticated as they were in many respects, were also fragmented, occasionally rambling, and at times equivocal or contradictory, in large part due to his difficult and stressful living conditions in Fascist prisons as well as to his increasingly ill health, and that his arguments concerning hegemony are scattered throughout the *Quaderni del carcere*, but can be found especially in Part 1, in Part 2, the section on "State and Civil Society," and in Part 3, the section "The Study of Philosophy." See, e.g., Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 5–14 (intellectuals), 210–14 (crisis of hegemony), 229–39 (war of position, etc.), 258–64 (the state and civil society), 323–43 (philosophy and praxis), 375–7 (ideology).
- 83 Compare McLellan, *Ideology*, p. 31.
- 84 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991 [1964]), introduction and chapter 1, which summarize his main arguments. Note also his bizarre and frankly Orwellian notion of "repressive tolerance" in Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in the volume *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997 [1969]), pp. 81–117, which also contains contributions by Robert Paul Wolff and Barrington Moore Jr. Such sophistic ideas became even more elaborate and pronounced, and arguably even more divorced from reality, in the works of Michel Foucault and many postmodernists.
- 85 See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953 [1936]), chapters 2–5 (quote from p. 239). Indeed, his arguments carried the implication that most individuals were simply unable to transcend the historical contexts and interests of the social groups they were enmeshed by and socialized within. The only exceptions were members of what Alfred Weber called the "socially unattached intelligentsia" [*freischwebende Intelligenz*], who constituted a "relatively classless stratum" that was not "too firmly situated in the social order." *Ibid.*, pp. 137–8. This is the same sort of spurious, elitist notion that was subsequently embraced wholeheartedly by many postmodern theorists, who fancied that they alone were somehow able to see through and "deconstruct" the mystifying veils of the hegemonic ideologies that purportedly kept lesser mortals in the thrall of the powerful. For an interesting short analysis touching upon these and other issues, see Anthony Arblaster, "Ideology and Intellectuals," in *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology*, ed. by Robert Benewick et al. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), pp. 115–29. Therein he rightly criticizes Mannheim's notion but also argues (p. 126) that intellectuals, whatever their commitments, must maintain both a "degree of detachment from ideology" and at least minimal levels of "honesty, accuracy and objectivity."
- 86 Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, ed. by Stephen Lukes (New York: Free Press, 1982 [1895]), p. 86. Alas, the "ideological methods" he justly castigated, when defined in this limited way, have arguably become the norm nowadays in both the "social sciences" and some humanities. The sustained attacks on the Enlightenment intellectual tradition, including its promotion of rationalism, positivism, and the notion of objectivity – from all sides of the political spectrum – have predictably resulted in the

- widespread abandonment of serious scholarly standards, the conscious or unwitting neglect of open-ended factual research in the interests of promoting pre-selected and often fadish theoretical paradigms or narrow methodological preferences, and the increasingly blatant promotion of favored social and political agendas in academic publications. It is one thing to argue that no individual can be completely objective or disinterested, which is correct, but quite another to throw out the baby with the bathwater by advocating the abandonment of efforts to be as objective as humanly possible and/or enthusiastically embracing an unabashed activist posture oneself. Compare Eatwell and Wright, *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, p. vii. For diverse critics of the Enlightenment, compare Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, trans. by David Maisel (New Haven: Yale University, 2009); and – an excellent short survey and critique of left, right, and centrist anti-Enlightenment arguments – Dennis C. Rasmussen, “Contemporary Political Theory as an Anti-Enlightenment Project,” undated, available at www.brown.edu/Research/ppw/files/Rasmussen_PPW.pdf. For an impassioned but erudite defense of the Enlightenment against its many critics, see Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2009); for a long overdue critique of certain negative, distorted postmodern views of the Enlightenment, see Daniel Gordon, ed., *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment: New Perspectives in Eighteenth-Century French Intellectual History* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
- 87 Abram Kardiner et al., *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (New York: Columbia University, 1945), p. 34. In the context of psychology and psychiatry, the term “rationalization” has a somewhat more specific meaning than in normal discourse, where it signifies a post-facto attempt to explain and justify one’s actions, with the implication that the explanation being proffered serves to conceal one’s true motives or otherwise excuse those actions. According to the second edition (1968) of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-II)*, a handbook of mental disorders published in successive editions by the American Psychiatric Association, rationalization occurs “when the individual deals with emotional conflict or internal or external stressors by concealing the true motivations for his or her own thoughts, actions, or feelings through the elaboration of reassuring or self serving but incorrect explanations.” For Sigmund Freud, such rationalizations served to conceal the true causes of obsessional neuroses.
- 88 David E. Apter, “Introduction: Ideology and Discontent,” in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. by David E. Apter, p. 16. Although it is surely the case that individuals sometimes cloak their sordid underlying motives behind high-sounding ideological principles, such a reductionist overall interpretation reflects egregious ignorance about the essential nature and function of ideology. In contrast, Apter himself rightly emphasizes (*ibid.*) that the term ideology “refers to more than doctrine. It links particular actions and mundane practices with a wider set of meanings and, by doing so, leads a more honorable and dignified complexion to social conduct.”
- 89 Lewis S. Feuer, “Beyond Ideology,” reprinted in *The End of Ideology Debate*, ed. by Chaim I. Waxman (New York: Clarion, 1969), p. 66.
- 90 Compare Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1971 [1962]), volume 1, especially the Introduction and Chapter 10; and Milton Rokeach, *The Open and the Closed Mind: Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1960). For an analysis of Popper’s famous work, see Ian Jarvie and Sandra Pralong, eds., *Popper’s Open Society After Fifty Years: The Continuing Relevance of Karl Popper* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- 91 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest, 1973 [1951]), p. 417. For her, an “ideology is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea.” But she then expanded upon this simple notion by associating the term solely with totalitarian ideologies, whose “subject matter is history, to which the ‘idea’ is applied. Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process – the secret of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future – because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas.” *Ibid.*, p. 469.

- 92 Ibid., pp. 470–1.
- 93 Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, pp. 88–9.
- 94 Ibid., pp. 87 (quote), 89. In the quoted passage, the authors are specifically referring to communism, but the same undercurrent of apocalyptic millenarianism is also characteristic of other totalitarian ideologies (and, as will become clearer, of many extremist ideologies).
- 95 Ibid., pp. 90–4, referring to French political philosopher Georges Sorel's (1847–1922) somewhat idiosyncratic but influential conception of that term.
- 96 Talcott Parsons, "An Approach to the Sociology of Knowledge," *Transactions of the Fourth World Congress of Sociology, Milan and Stresa, 8–15 September 1959* (London: International Sociological Association, 1959), cited by Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," p. 50.
- 97 Compare Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), in the concluding chapter titled "The End of the Ideological Age?," pp. 305–24; Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Free Press, 1962), especially "The End of Ideology in the West: An Epilogue," pp. 393–407.
- 98 Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1981 [1960]), pp. 442–3. Furthermore, although he recognized that "the democratic class struggle will continue," he argued that it would be "a fight without ideologies, without red flags, without May Day parades." Ibid., p. 445. Fifty years on, it is painfully clear that such confident conclusions were decidedly premature. Nevertheless, some analysts have not been so quick to dismiss the "end of ideology" theorists. For example, Boudon has argued that, although ideologies have surely not disappeared, they have become increasingly less "general" or all-encompassing, and are instead increasingly "local" or narrowly focused. See his "Local vs General Ideologies: A Normal Ingredient of Modern Political Life," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 4:2 (1999), pp. 141–61. But that is certainly not the case with Islamism, to name only one such "general" ideology. Indeed, a number of other grand political ideologies have also made comebacks in recent years, including anarchism, fascism, and communism, albeit at times in revised forms.
- 99 Bell, *End of Ideology*, pp. 393, 399–400. Note that in this passage he was describing what he called (following Mannheim) a "total ideology," in contradistinction to a "particular ideology." And Bell did acknowledge that the "need for utopia" will not disappear. But henceforth it would allegedly need to built on a foundation of empirical reality, not ideological faith. Ibid., p. 405.
- 100 Ibid., pp. 402, 404.
- 101 Aron, *Opium of the Intellectuals*, p. 323.
- 102 See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 2006).
- 103 Perhaps not surprisingly, Oakeshott associated such "traditional" or "philosophical" politics," which were supposedly non-ideological, with his own conservative world-views. See Oakeshott, "Rationalism in Politics," pp. 5–42. Martin Seliger rightly points out that Oakeshott essentially equated "rationalism," which he characterized in very negative terms, with ideology. See Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, p. 31. For similar criticisms of ideology, compare David J. Manning, ed., *The Form of Ideology: Investigations into the Sense of Ideological Reasoning with a View to Giving an Account of Its Place in Political Life* (London and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1980).
- 104 Minogue, *Alien Powers*, pp. 2, 221. Therein he also opined, sardonically, that "[i]t is a feature of all such doctrines to incorporate a general theory of the mistakes of everyone else" (p. 2), and that "[i]deology is the purest possible expression of European civilization's capacity for self-loathing" (p. 221).
- 105 Ibid., p. 167.
- 106 For example, Marx and Engels believed that their own materialistic conceptions of historical change, and their predictions concerning the transition from capitalism to socialism as a result of the growing contradictions of the former, amounted to "scientific

socialism” (in contrast to the unscientific “utopian socialism” espoused by thinkers such as Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen), whereas they used the term “ideology” to refer to false doctrines that served to mask the class interests of the dominant social class in order to justify and facilitate its exploitation of subordinate classes.

- 107 Note that I have intentionally ignored the input of postmodernists to the academic debates about ideology, mainly because their pretentious arguments are – as per usual – largely incomprehensible and at best only tenuously related to the real world. For an illustrative example, see Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 140:

But the case of so-called “totalitarianism” demonstrates what applies to every ideology, to ideology as such: the last support of the ideological effect (of the way an ideological network of signifiers “holds” us) is the non-sensical, pre-ideological kernel of enjoyment. In ideology “all is not ideology (that is, ideological meaning),” but it is this very surplus which is the last support of ideology.

To which the baffled reader can only respond in one of two ways, either “that is really heavy, maaaaan,” or “whatever, dude” (which in this case seems far more appropriate). If truth be told, this book reads like it was written by someone who has taken far too much blotter acid. Hence I make no apologies whatsoever for neglecting pomo “discourses” of this ilk.

- 108 Boudon, *Analysis of Ideology*, chapters 2–4. Compare p. 23, Table 1.
 109 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–33, 50–7 (quote on p. 53). Compare p. 52, Table 2.
 110 *Ibid.*, p. 54. Compare p. 55, Table 3, and especially p. 57, Table 4.
 111 Smelser, *Faces of Terrorism*, p. 88. Why is this necessary? Because

[i]t is an existential fact of life that everyone is exposed to a vast array of personal experiences, influences from others, orally presented and written materials, the media, and, through all these, an inconsistent if not chaotic view of the world, morality, and oneself.

- 112 Mostafa Rejai, *Political Ideologies: A Comparative Approach* (Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 4. Some of the discussion herein concerning the functions of political ideologies have been borrowed from Rejai.
 113 *Ibid.*
 114 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 115 *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
 116 Compare Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University, 2002); and Christopher Olaf Blum, ed. and trans., *Critics of the Enlightenment: Readings in the French Counter-Revolutionary Tradition* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2003). For selections from several French counterrevolutionary thinkers, see David McClelland, ed., *The French Right from De Maistre to Maurras* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971). Note, however, that if these authors were writing in the aftermath of the Revolution, then they would no longer be defending an existing political system but rather seeking to restore one that had collapsed and been replaced by a new system.
 117 Compare Max J. Skidmore, *Ideologies: Politics in Action* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), p. 8 (quotes); and Roy C. Macridis, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: Movements and Regimes* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 16–17.
 118 Rejai, *Political Ideologies*, p. 7. However, he also emphasizes (*ibid.*, pp. 6–7) that, although “[i]n any ideology there are elements of emotionality alongside elements of rationality;” “the balance between the two . . . varies from ideology to ideology;” For his part, Freedren makes a more interesting point in *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 120:

On a more profound level, ideologies are the main form of political thought to accept passion and sentiment as legitimate, indeed ineliminable, forms of political

expression. Ideologies reflect the fact that socio-political conduct is not wholly or merely rational or calculating, but highly, centrally, and often healthily emotional.

Or, one must insist in many cases, *unhealthily* emotional.

119 Smelser, *Faces of Terrorism*, pp. 88–9.

120 Compare Bell, *End of Ideology*, p. 400: “What gives ideology its force is its passion. . . . One might say, in fact, that the most important, latent, function of ideology is to tap emotion.”

121 Aron, *Opium of the Intellectuals*, p. 323, who wrote almost longingly about the supposedly disappearing qualities of ideological extremists:

We can admire the somber grandeur of these armies of believers. We can admire their devotion, their discipline and self-sacrifice: such warrior virtues are of the kind that lead to victory. But what will remain tomorrow of the motives that led them to fight?

122 Not nearly enough research has been carried out on the intragroup dynamics, socialization processes, and peer pressures to which members of extremist groups are normally subjected. See, e.g., Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University, 1995), chapter 4; and Jerrold M. Post, “The Socio-Cultural Underpinnings of Terrorist Psychology,” in *Root Causes of Terrorism*, ed. by Bjørge, pp. 64–6. For more on the socio-psychological effects of these processes, particularly the relationship between charismatic leaders and their followers, see Jerrold M. Post and Alexander George, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behavior* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2004), especially chapter 9. Much more has been written about the psychology of violent extremists than about the socio-psychological dimensions of membership in violent extremist groups. But see, e.g., the excellent study by John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), which deals less with the alleged “psychopathology” of individual terrorists, for which there is generally no evidence, and instead develops a “process model” – “becoming” a terrorist, “being” a terrorist, and (sometimes) “disengaging” from terrorism. In his discussion of the “being” phase, he rightly emphasizes the effects on the individual of the social psychological dynamics operating within terrorist groups (especially in chapter 5).

123 For a horrifying illustration of the human impact of this combination of external pressures, ideological fanaticism, and intense intragroup social control processes, see “United Red Army,” Kōji Wakamatsu’s extraordinary 2007 film on the Rengō Sekigun (United Red Army), an ultra-left Japanese terrorist group. Compare also the analysis of Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State*, chapter 5.

124 A slightly different formulation is that of Haywood, *Political Ideologies*, p. 12:

All ideologies . . . (a) offer an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a “world view,” (b) advance a model of a desired future, a vision of the “good society,” and (c) explain how political change can and should be brought about.

125 Smelser, *Faces of Terrorism*, p. 65.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

128 Frederick M. Watkins, *The Age of Ideology: Political Thought, 1750 to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 7–8.

129 Compare Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978), p. 6: “Extremism is antipluralism or . . . monism,” whose “operational heart” is “the repression of difference and dissent, the closing down of the market place of ideas. . . . the tendency to treat cleavage and ambivalence as *illegitimate*.” Here Lipset and Raab essentially equate extremism with monism, whereas I prefer to identify the latter as one of several core characteristics of extremism.

- 130 Jaroslaw Piekalkiewicz and Alfred Wayne Penn, *Politics of Ideocracy* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1995), p. 26.
- 131 Compare Oakeshott, “Rationalism in Politics,” pp. 9–10, on the problematic combination of perfectionism and uniformity in “rationalist” (i.e., ideological) politics. However, Oakeshott ascribes negative characteristics to political ideologies in general, whereas I apply them solely to extremist ideologies.
- 132 For more on utopianism, compare Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991); Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1979); Lyman Tower Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University, 2010); and Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, eds., *The Utopia Reader* (New York: New York University, 1999). There is a vast literature on diverse examples of utopian thought as well as case studies of utopian movements, past and present, religious and secular.
- 133 Watkins, *Age of Ideology*, p. 7.
- 134 Here some readers might object that individualism can also take radically unenlightened or philosophically extreme forms, which is true, and thence conclude that collectivism is not a necessary characteristic of ideological extremism. Perhaps so. However, even the most radical forms of individualism (psychopaths and sociopaths excepted) – e.g., callous selfishness, certain interpretations of Ayn Rand’s “Objectivist” philosophies, individualist anarchism of the Max Stirner variety, or extreme “do what thou wilt” currents of Satanism – only rarely result in the carrying out of serious acts of violence or terrorism, and they have not yet led to the horrific levels of violence that various collectivistic mass movements have repeatedly carried out.
- 135 Here the reader may again object that this is not the case with anarchists who profess to hate authority and hierarchy. However, it should be pointed out that even the exponents of radically anti-authoritarian ideologies like anarchism, in particular its more collectivist forms, have all too often behaved in ways that are no less intolerant, authoritarian, and at times violent than the authoritarians they claim to hate. This has been true not only in relation to their designated authoritarian enemies, who they frequently tried to murder in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also in relation to people who obstinately promoted dissenting or contrary views, especially former “comrades” who had supposedly “betrayed” the cause. The same is true of many of today’s “alter-globalization” and “anti-fascist” activists, who despite constantly insisting upon the right of dissent and freedom of speech for themselves – and justifiably so – are typically unwilling to extend those same rights and freedoms to anyone they regard as “capitalist” or “right-wing” enemies, whom they frequently try to shout down, interrupt, intimidate, or even assault in public fora. In short, one can be a fanatically intolerant, self-righteous *anti-authoritarian* ideological extremist, just as one can be a fanatically intolerant, self-righteous authoritarian or totalitarian ideological extremist.
- 136 Piekalkiewicz and Penn, *Politics of Ideocracy*, p. 25.
- 137 Arthur Versluis, *The New Inquisitions: Heretic-Hunting and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Totalitarianism* (New York: Oxford University, 2006), pp. 7–8. Herein he specifically refers to both Italian Fascism and communist China and also favorably cites Lithuanian-Polish defector Czeslaw Milosz’s (1911–2004) classic anti-Stalinist book *The Captive Mind*, but argues that the origins of this kind of ideocratic thinking in the West can be traced to the institutionalization of the Catholic Church’s intolerant, orthodox view of heretics in the late ancient, medieval, and early modern periods.