

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The present journal represents the initial issue of the second volume of the *Journal of Religion and Violence*. We are happy to say that this periodical has been well received, with many subscribers telling us that it 'was about time' for a specialty journal on this topic. We would like to thank all our contributors and reviewers. The current issue touches on a wide range of topics, from an analysis of discussions of counterterrorist approaches among Catholic intellectuals to an essay on Palestinian Martyrdom Operations. Hopefully this wide spectrum of content will serve to indicate something of the broad scope of the journal.

In the first article, "Catholic Thought as Soft-Counter- terrorism: *La Civiltà Cattolica* on non-Violent Solutions to Islamic Terrorism," Marco Ceccarelli analyses the Jesuit Journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, and its discourse on Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first century. Despite the many studies of Islamic terrorism that have appeared since 9/11, little attention has been paid to the debate that has taken place among Catholic intellectuals on this issue. Ceccarelli's analysis focuses on three writers, Edmond Farahian S.J., Giovanni Sale S.J. and Enrico Cattaneo S.J. as well as on the discourse of certain prominent Catholic religious leaders, such as Pope Francis.

In the second article, "Absence of Evidence: How Chen Tao Became a 'Suicide Cult,'" Ryan J. Cook examines the process through which the Chen Tao UFO religion was inaccurately portrayed as potentially suicidal by the news media. After a review of the group's cosmology and migration from Taiwan to the United States, Cook describes the group's interactions with news media personnel at several key points between the mid-1990s and the 2010s. He then marshals the scholarship treating minority religions, inwardly-directed violence, and the media to understand why this happened to Chen Tao.

The primary focus of Benson Ohihoun Igboin's "Boko Haram Radicalism and National Insecurity: Beyond Normal Politics" is to interrogate the security challenges that Boko Haram has posed to the Nigerian nation, and how the government has responded to these challenges. Although many positions have been articulated with regard to

JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1 2014

how best to tackle the insurgency, the thrust of this article, however, is to argue that instead of the “normal politics” of security, the government needs to invoke the doctrine of “emergency politics,” which involves the full concentration of state apparatuses in order to restore peace and order. This argument will be of special interest to government agencies, law enforcement and specialists in the field of security studies.

As the turn of the millennium approached, a number of religious enthusiasts popped up in Jerusalem and were frequently noted in the daily press. In “Apocalyptic Management by Monte Kim Miller,” Maria Leppäkari discusses Monte Kim Miller’s ‘Concerned Christians,’ an American, Denver-based congregation that, according to news reports, had in mind committing mass suicide in the streets of Jerusalem, as well as plans to provoke bloodshed by attacking policemen in Jerusalem and in the Old City. Members of the group were also accused of plotting violent acts near religious centers, including the Temple Mount. As a result, the group’s members were arrested and deported from Israel.

In “States of Mind and Exception,” Timothy Rackett looks at some of the interconnections and interdependencies between religion, identity politics and political violence in Thailand, an exemplary Buddhist nation. Anti-government demonstrators, ‘communists’ in the 1970’s, Muslims in 2004 and ‘Red Shirts’ in 2010, were killed in the name of defending sacred Thai institutions of Nation, Religion and Monarchy. This article suggests that Buddhism is translated, qua transformed and betrayed, by the Thai State and politics, including turning Buddhist monks into national policy enforcers. Buddhist truth, in the thrall of nationalist ideology in times of emergency and national insecurity, can legitimate ‘states of exception,’ which suspend the law and moral constraint, making it permissible to kill impure enemies in defense and with good intentions.

In “To sacrifice the lives of the altar of liberty: on suicide attacks and patriotic heroes,” which examines suicide attacks as resistance strategy, Mattias Gardell discusses how the method is perceived in the environments from which the players come. The empirical data was collected mainly from Palestine, where he conducted field studies in the West Bank during the second intifada, but he also includes data of other kinds. What drives a person to use their lives as a weapon? After an initial

JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1 2014

reflection on the method in modern history, the essay turns to Palestine and the differences between the first and the second wave of suicide bombings or “martyrdom operations,” as it is known in Palestine. The essay concludes with a discussion of resurrection which the method obviously raises. Why are we horrified more by a suicide attack that requires dozens of deaths over a bomb attack that takes immensely many more lives?