

Making and Mobilizing Moderates: Rhetorical Strategy, Political Networks, and Counterterrorism

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Studies of counterterrorism have argued for the importance of bolstering, or “mobilizing,” moderates in the confrontation with violent extremists. Yet the literature has not elucidated when states seek to mobilize moderates and marginalize extremists, how they do so, or when they prove successful. The received wisdom is that states should cultivate and strengthen moderate allies by reaching out to them. This approach, however, fails to grasp the political challenges confronting potential moderates, whose priority is to build and retain legitimacy within their political community. Inspired by network approaches, we maintain that moderates can more easily emerge when their political interactions with the authorities are relatively sparse. We further argue that the state’s strategies, including crucially its rhetorical moves, can bolster the moderates’ local

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legitimacy. At times, this will entail not reaching out to moderates but isolating them. Before moderates can be mobilized, they must be made, and the state's criticism, more than its love, may do much to help moderate political forces emerge. This article explains why mobilizing moderates is critical, when it is difficult, and how authorities can nevertheless play a productive role in moderates' emergence. We establish our theoretical framework's plausibility by examining two cases—India's ultimately triumphant campaign against Sikh extremists and Spain's gradual marginalization of Basque extremists. We then suggest what lessons these campaigns against ethnonational terrorism hold for the so-called War on Terror.

Since September 11, 2001, terrorism, once a subject consigned to the margins of academic study, has burst into the mainstream. Seeking to reduce the likelihood of future mass-casualty attacks, scholars have studied counterterrorist experiences across time and space for their policy lessons.¹ Among them is the importance of “mobilizing moderates” in the confrontation with extremists who employ terrorist tactics. Yet the literature has not elucidated when states seek to mobilize moderates and marginalize extremists, how they do so, or when their efforts prove successful. This article begins to fill that gap: it explains why mobilizing moderates is critical, when it is difficult, and how authorities can nevertheless play a productive role in moderates' emergence. It establishes these claims' plausibility by examining two cases of ethnonational terrorism—India's campaign against Sikh extremists in the Punjab, and Spain's against the Basque extremist group Euskadi ta Askatasuna, commonly known as ETA.

The intuitive received wisdom is that states pursuing counterterrorist campaigns should reach out to likely allies—emphasizing common values, offering material support, making substantive concessions, and engaging in deliberative dialogue. In his confirmation hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Admiral Dennis Blair, President Barack Obama's choice for Director of National Intelligence, gave voice to this logic in calling for “engag[ing] and work[ing] with Arab and Muslim leaders who are striving for a progressive and peaceful future for their religion and their countries.”² Yet, we argue, this seeming common sense fails to grasp the political challenges confronting potential moderates. Their main concern is to build and retain legitimacy within their political community, and thus they cannot openly

¹ Recent important collections include Yonah Alexander, ed. *Combating Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); and Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, ed., *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2007).

² Dennis C. Blair, statement to Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 22 January 2009, 111th Cong., 1st sess., available at <http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/Nomination.1.pdf>.

ally themselves with the authorities. Before moderates can be mobilized, they must emerge as legitimate and distinct political actors—credible representatives of their community, but also committed adherents to a politics of nonviolence—and a close relationship with the state undercuts this priority. Relatedly, the notion of “mobilizing moderates” presumes that moderates are a preexisting, well-defined, and stable group. If, however, moderates are identified not by their privately held preferences but, as we suggest, by their public self-presentation, that group is anything but preexisting, well-defined, and stable.³ The state can, however, help create the conditions in which moderates produce themselves, and, under certain circumstances, its criticism, more than its love, may be crucial to the emergence of moderate voices.

Inspired by network approaches, we argue that existing social structures condition the articulation of an openly moderate politics.⁴ The sparser the political interaction between potential moderates and authorities, the more easily the former can give voice to nonextremist positions: the Spanish center’s meager ties with the moderate Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) meant that the latter could condemn extremist violence and participate in parliamentary politics without losing legitimacy in the Basque Country. The thicker the ties between potential moderates and authorities, the greater the difficulty the former have in establishing their communal credentials and the greater the pressure they feel to blur the boundaries with extremists: substantial ties between the Congress Party and the Sikh nationalist Akali Dal rendered the latter suspect in the eyes of their fellow Sikhs and compelled Akalis to pay homage to extremists. Networks are not a fixed constraint on behavior, however, but may be transformed through interaction. By rhetorically inserting distance between itself and potential moderates, and thereby mobilizing weak ties between these actors and the communal populace, the state can help legitimate moderates produce themselves. Sikh moderates eventually came to the fore in the festering Punjab—not because the Indian government soothed Akali feathers, but because the government accused Akali leaders of having jumped into bed with the extremists and, by implication, with Pakistan. Such rhetoric not only bolstered the Akalis’ legitimacy, but thereby surprisingly facilitated counterinsurgency operations and made possible Punjab’s subsequent reintegration.

³ We do necessarily presume that there are politicians open to articulating a moderate stance. But this is based on assumptions regarding the nature of politicians, not their substantive preferences or political ideology.

⁴ Network approaches have recently been employed to good effect in international relations. See Stacie E. Goddard, “Uncommon Ground: Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy,” *International Organization* 60, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 35–68; Emilie Hafner-Burton and Alexander H. Montgomery, “Power Positions: International Organizations, Social Networks, and Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 1 (2006): 3–27; and Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate?” *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (May 2007): 253–72.

The article proceeds in five sections. First, we present our minimalist definition of the “moderate” and explain why minimal moderates are valuable to states confronting terrorist insurgencies. Second, our theoretical discussion explores the reasons that states have difficulty mobilizing even minimal moderates; elaborates how and when political network structures impede or facilitate the production of moderate brokers; and suggests how and when state rhetorical strategies can transform network structures and make possible moderates’ emergence. In the next two sections, we evaluate our claims’ plausibility through case studies of the Sikh and Basque campaigns for independence. Finally, we conclude with observations on this study’s import for the contemporary challenge of transnational Islamist terrorism.

MINIMAL MODERATES AND COUNTERTERRORISM’S TASKS

In confronting insurgents engaged in terrorist violence, states have at least four strategic options.⁵ First, repression alone might be deployed against insurgent forces.⁶ If the chief determinant of local allegiances is military control,⁷ this might be sufficient. But even advocates of the “Roman Way” recognize that liberal democracies, at least in the twentieth century, either have been reluctant to employ the requisite force or have found extreme repression unsustainable.⁸ Moreover, while brute force may undermine insurgents’ capacity to fight, it has also “made martyrs of terrorists, rallied recruits to the terrorist cause, and caused the uncommitted to lose confidence in the government.”⁹ For this reason, Henri Barkey labels Turkey’s

⁵ On the strategic logic of terrorism, see Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, “Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 49–80; and Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977). For other typologies of counterterrorism, see Daniel A. Byman, “U.S. Counter-Terrorism Options: A Taxonomy,” *Survival* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 2007): 121–50; and Gregory D. Miller, “Confronting Terrorisms: Group Motivation and Successful State Policies,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2007): 331–50.

⁶ Laqueur, *Terrorism*; Nathan C. Leites and Charles Wolf Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Chicago: Markham, 1970); and John J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War: The Strategy of Counter-Insurgency* (London: Faber, 1966). See also Ivan Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Edward Luttwak, “Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice,” *Harper’s*, February 2007, 33–42.

⁷ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chaps. 4–5.

⁸ In addition to the previously cited, see Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹ Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, “Conclusion,” in *Democracy and Counterterrorism*, 570–72, quote on 571. See also Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, 151–60. But, on intervening factors, see Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew Adam Kocher, “How ‘Free’ is Free Riding in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem,” *World Politics* 59 (January 2007): 190.

defeat of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) a “pyrrhic victory,”¹⁰ and the French discovered in Algeria that a brutal counterinsurgency, while tactically crippling the nationalist National Liberation Front (FLN), had strengthened it politically.

Second, states might prioritize winning “hearts and minds” through discriminate counterinsurgency and the protection of populations.¹¹ But the discriminate use of force is easier said than done. Even if governments and armed forces are well-intentioned and well-informed and even if security forces work together effectively, the killing of innocents is inevitable, especially in counterinsurgency operations, in which friend and foe often seem indistinguishable. State violence normally appears indiscriminate to its victims.¹² The U.S. experience in Iraq is instructive: although U.S. military operations there have, in relative terms, been discriminate, and although U.S. forces have sought to reduce the harm to noncombatants,¹³ the United States has acquired a reputation as a human-rights violator of immense proportions. Defense of targets could also effectively disarm terrorists, but shielding the populace from predation is very hard, given the wealth of soft targets and the low cost of terrorism.¹⁴ Nor is deterrence by punishment promising because terrorists are typically highly motivated and lack punishable assets.¹⁵

Third, states might offer substantial policy concessions, satisfying insurgents and undermining their will to fight. However, insurgents often lack clearly articulated goals, and thus it is often not obvious what would assuage them. Further, concessions can embolden insurgents, producing never-ending goal expansion. Finally, states often fear that concessions will signal weakness to others. The fear is not unreasonable—Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon inspired Hamas and other Palestinian nationalists, leading them to imitate Hezbollah’s tactics—and this logic underpins India’s hard-line in Kashmir. The cases in which concessions brought terrorism to an end—Mandatory Palestine and South Africa—are unusual, in that the authorities were willing to concede maximal ends and relinquish power.

Fourth—and the focus of this article—states can bolster political moderates, as an alternative to coercive measures or as a complement. Many

¹⁰ Henri Barkey, “Turkey and the PKK: A Pyrrhic Victory?” in *Democracy and Counterterrorism*.

¹¹ The classic text is David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964). See also Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). For an official statement, see *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

¹² Kalyvas and Kocher, “How ‘Free’ is Free Riding,” 186–87.

¹³ Colin H. Kahl, “In the Crossfire or the Crosshairs? Norms, Civilian Casualties, and U.S. Conduct in Iraq,” *International Security* 32, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 7–46.

¹⁴ Richard K. Betts, “The Soft Underbelly of American Primacy: Tactical Advantages of Terror,” *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 19–36.

¹⁵ This is true only of those in the terrorist core. See Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, “Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done,” *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2005/2006): 87–123.

scholars have seen this as a critical task for counterterrorism,¹⁶ and, in the form of the “Battle of Ideas,” it has been central to the “War on Terror.” We adopt a minimal definition of “moderates”: those willing publicly to forswear violence, even when it would further their goals, and to uphold the rule of law. Minimal moderates differ from extremists in their avowed means, as the latter reject nonviolent conflict resolution,¹⁷ but moderates and extremists may endorse the same ends.¹⁸ Thus moderates cannot be expected to support the state or even to refrain from attacking its policies.

If this is what moderate politics looks like, state leaders may respond, who needs it? States confronting political violence are often open in principle to mobilizing moderates, but they typically imagine such moderates as “allies” who share their substantive political commitments and who will support them in battle (political if not military) against extremists. In other words, states—as well as much of the scholarly and policy literature—normally conceive of moderates in “maximal” terms, identified by their less radical political goals.¹⁹ Maximal moderates, however, suffer from deep problems of legitimacy. Overt support for the state and its agenda erodes such moderates’ popular standing and thus renders them less valuable.

Minimal moderates can play a crucial role in containing and ending a terrorist insurgency. This is not because strong moderate forces necessarily reduce the population’s grievances or alienation, nor is it because tolerance for moderates will signal to the communal population the government’s non-threatening type. Rather, minimal moderates are potentially well-positioned to deprive extremists of legitimacy. They can help facilitate state violence against extremists without its usual attendant costs, without alienating the population and rendering extremists more attractive. The success of repression hinges not only on how discriminately the repressive apparatus is applied, but on whether its declared targets are widely perceived as patriots or as misguided youth, greedy criminals, or even communal traitors. State authorities exert little direct control over how extremists are perceived locally. This is where minimal moderates come in.

¹⁶ Max Abrahms, “Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists,” *Security Studies* 16, no. 2 (April-June 2007): 243–44; Art and Richardson, “Conclusion,” 575–76, 594; Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 96–100; Daniel A. Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (New York: Wiley, 2008), chap. 7; and Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 189–90.

¹⁷ Whether moderates endorse nonviolence because they view terrorism as morally abhorrent or strategically ineffective is not relevant to our analysis or conclusions.

¹⁸ For related views, see Marc Lynch, “Taking Arabs Seriously,” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 5 (September/October 2003): 81–94; and *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006), 3 and passim.

¹⁹ For this view, see George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006); Brian Michael Jenkins, *Unconquerable Nation: Knowing Our Enemy, Strengthening Ourselves* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2006), 120–32; and Angel Rabasa et al., *Building Moderate Muslim Networks* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2007).

Minimal moderates are crucial because they have the potential to play the part of broker. Brokers, who link social sites more directly than they were previously connected, need not be moderates—brokers have transformed local conflicts into large-scale violence, as in Rwanda—and moderates need not be positioned as brokers—for example, when they lack local standing.²⁰ But moderate brokers can prove crucial to counterterrorist campaigns. When their ties to their community—defined in ethnonational, religious, or other terms—are strong, they can reintegrate the populace into the political system and distance it from extremists. In the absence of a credible political alternative, extremists may enjoy popular support, but because they often terrorize their communal fellows, that support collapses once moderates emerge. When terrorists do not enjoy local support, military force is more readily applied and at a lower cost, terrorist leaders are more easily captured, competent replacements are more scarce, and terrorists are more easily brought to the negotiating table or crushed.²¹ The state therefore has an interest in bolstering legitimate moderates, in constructing an environment within which moderates can articulate a distinct political identity while retaining popular legitimacy—that is, within which moderate brokers can thrive.²²

Facilitating the emergence of moderate brokers—what we mean by “mobilizing moderates”—is profitable wherever extremists enjoy a “natural” base of support. That base exists when extremists’ legitimating rhetoric overlaps with the political community’s self-definition. Communal populations then often find the extremists’ goals appealing, even if their methods are not. The resonance of the extremist agenda complicates the state’s use of force: deploying violence discriminately is then more challenging, and the prospect of alienating the communal populace greater. In short, mobilizing moderates is then especially attractive, if not necessary. This article focuses empirically on ethnonational violence because these cases unquestionably fall within its scope: the “natural” appeal of ethnonational extremists may explain why their organizations have proven resilient,²³ and it is revealing that those cases cited as ones in which mobilizing moderates might have been productive but was not assayed—for example, Chechnya and Sri Lanka—fall into this category.²⁴ But the logic also yields insight into the contemporary struggle against Islamist terrorism, as we suggest in the conclusion. Cultivating

²⁰ Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21 and passim.

²¹ These are all important ways in which terrorism can be brought to an end. See Audrey Kurth Cronin, “How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 7–48.

²² The importance of moderate brokers has not been properly recognized by the “hearts and minds” counterinsurgency literature. That literature focuses on “the people” as a whole, presumed to be politically moderate in orientation, and it imagines an unmediated relationship between the state and the populace.

²³ Cronin, “How al-Qaida Ends,” 13; and Laqueur, *Terrorism*, 223 and passim.

²⁴ Art and Richardson, “Conclusion,” 575–76.

moderates, it follows, is not always necessary for effective counterterrorism. Discriminate repression crushed left-wing terrorists in France, Japan, and Peru because these organizations' agendas did not provide a common ground for legitimation with the local population.

THE CHALLENGE OF ENLISTING MODERATES

Despite the prevalence of references to mobilizing moderates, what this entails and why it is so difficult have not been fully grasped. Mobilizing moderates is challenging because moderates are Janus-faced political actors, with one eye trained on the powerful state and the other focused on intracommunal political competition. They share with the state an interest in differentiating themselves from extremists: if they become indistinguishable from their more violent compatriots, they consign themselves to political irrelevance and may lose their singular structural position, bridging between the authorities and their community. However, moderates also do not have an interest in completely delegitimizing the extremists: the latter make them seem more palatable and keep the pressure on the authorities to compromise;²⁵ moderates wish to avoid alienating extremist sympathizers; and, most importantly, an assault on the extremists might run afoul of the discourse that serves as their own basis for legitimation. This seems to explain why Yassir Arafat regularly turned a blind eye to the activities of Palestinian extremists. Indeed, when Arafat did crack down on Hamas activists in 2001, his popularity collapsed under charges that he was a traitor to the Palestinian cause who was doing the Israelis' dirty work. Islamic Jihad pointedly characterized the Palestinian Authority as "a police force that defends Israeli security and is directing its fire at the holy warriors in Palestine."²⁶

The Moderates' Dilemma

Moderates can, in principle, be mobilized, but communal politics demand that they not be seen as having been mobilized. This imperative guides political dynamics in the Middle East today, where "the various radical Islamists . . . paint their liberal rivals and opponents as traitors to Muslim civilization, stooges of crusader or Zionist aggression."²⁷ Islamist critics of al Qaeda have not been impervious to such charges: when a leading Islamist ideologue, writing from an Egyptian prison, released a manifesto renouncing violence,

²⁵ Byman, "Logic of Ethnic Terrorism," 159–60. This dynamic has been well noted in the literature on social movements, as the "radical flank effect." See Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 147–50.

²⁶ "A Crackdown May Backfire on Arafat," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 October 2001.

²⁷ Paul Berman, "Why Radical Islam Just Won't Die," *New York Times*, 23 March 2008.

al Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri alleged that his former colleague had channeled "the spirit of the Minister of the Interior."²⁸

Moderates can serve as brokers when they occupy a central position in the network, when they maintain ties with both the government and the populace, but the perception that moderates have been co-opted erodes their ties with the latter. Moderates must be viewed as sincere advocates for communal causes and must consequently explain why, if they are communal loyalists, they do not also risk their lives for the community. To that end, the distinctive politics of the moderate are characterized by rhetorical ambivalence. Moderates hail extremists' fervor, appropriating prominent elements of extremists' rhetoric—for instance, launching broadsides against the state for its failure to address communal grievances. But they also distinguish themselves from extremists by appropriating elements of the authorities' rhetoric. Specifically they condemn extremists' violent ways, typically attributing them to nonstrategic and nonnationalist causes, such as immaturity or poverty, thereby undercutting extremists' standing. In both cases examined in detail below, moderates employed an infantilizing rhetoric that labeled the terrorists as "misguided youth," whose admirable enthusiasm needed to be channeled more effectively, and that in contrast positioned the moderates as adults, as worthy communal leaders. By depicting Palestinian militant groups as fostering "armed chaos," Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas similarly suggested that, though undeniably nationalist, they were irresponsible actors in whom Palestinians eager for order, stability, and progress could not place their trust.²⁹ Such ambivalence, or partial delegitimation, permits moderates simultaneously to burnish their communal credentials and to weaken their extremist rivals.

Moderates seek to retain credibility with both the government and their communal fellows, but they do so only with difficulty. Some network theorists would find this surprising: they have argued that brokers enjoy flexibility because they sit at the interstices of networks, and thus have the capacity to issue "multivocal" or "polyvalent" appeals—that is, to use language in ways that can be interpreted sympathetically by multiple audiences.³⁰ But with centrality, we argue, comes vulnerability as well as opportunity: inscrutability is as likely to lend itself to suspicion. The conclusion that audiences necessarily give multivocal performances the benefit of the doubt rests on the presumption either that wishful thinking is rampant or that audiences cannot gain entrance to other stages. While there is nothing strictly contradictory in such dextrous rhetorical performances, to state leaders buffeted

²⁸ Lawrence Wright, "The Rebellion Within," *New Yorker*, 2 June 2008.

²⁹ "Palestinian Cabinet Voted In, Militants are Warned," *Irish Times*, 30 April 2003.

³⁰ John F. Padgett and Christopher K. Ansell, "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400–1434," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 6 (May 1993): 1,259–1,319. On centrality and multivocality, see also Nexon and Wright, "American Empire Debate."

by terrorist violence and to extremists on the run from state violence, moderates' middle ground may seem contradictory, even perfidious. For leaders eager to mobilize moderates, however, such ambivalence is the price to be paid.

It should now be clear why moderates do not profit politically from government overtures. The conventional wisdom fails to consider the effect the mobilization of center-moderate ties has on the moderates' legitimacy and thus on their relations with the population they claim to represent. When that dynamic is taken into account, the center's touch may not turn everything to gold—just the opposite. In the Arab and Muslim world today, explicit or even implicit support from the United States is “the kiss of death” for politicians. A Saudi reformer noted, after former Lebanese president Amin Gemayel's 2007 electoral upset by a relative unknown, “The minute you are counted on or backed by the Americans, kiss it goodbye, you'll never win.”³¹

Our argument presumes a political environment already structured around communal lines of cleavage. Actors must pass above some (locally determined) threshold to be politically relevant. There are of course other bases for legitimacy, such as the provision of public goods. Located in polities where state corruption or incompetence reigns, Hamas and Hezbollah have both garnered local support by establishing a social safety net. But these two groups also have strong nationalist credentials, and their nationalist fervor serves as the primary basis for their public legitimation. Where the ethnonational constitutes the dominant axis, actors must organize themselves around it, and only then does their ability to “deliver the goods” come into play.

Network Structures and the Emergence of Moderates

What conditions are conducive to or impede moderates' emergence? We focus here on the strength of the political interactions, or ties, among the relevant political elites—extremists, potential moderates (hereafter, for the sake of simplicity, moderates), and the state.³² Strong ties are relatively frequent, sustained, and emotionally intense.³³ We presume that political interaction between extremists and the state is sparse: terrorism is a risky and costly tactic that groups would not employ if they were integrated into the political system. We also exclude cases in which political interaction between moderates and extremists is sparse. The interesting, and all too common, cases

³¹ Hassan M. Fattah, “U.S. Backs Free Elections, Only to See Allies Lose,” *New York Times*, 10 August 2007.

³² We are interested here in politically relevant interactions. We are not interested in whether the parties go bowling together, have business dealings, or marry—though these may correlate with political ties.

³³ Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, “Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 6 (May 1994): 1,448–49.

are those in which the ties between moderates and extremists are strong, for counterterrorism is then most challenging.

Of greatest consequence is the strength of the political interactions between moderates and state representatives. Recall that the state needs moderates, not stooges—that is, moderate brokers—if they are to help repair its damaged relationship with the communal masses. The more frequent, sustained, and intense the interactions between moderates and the state, the more likely charges of co-optation are to stick, and thus the greater the pressure moderates will feel to prove their communal credentials—by rejecting compromise, adopting extremist rhetoric, and generally blurring the lines between themselves and extremists. Moreover, state inducements are then less valuable, since moderates who accept them thereby signal to an attentive populace that they have been co-opted. In short, the harder the production of moderates. The weaker those ties—that is, the less frequent, sustained, and intense those interactions—the less moderates have to fear for their reputation, the less likely charges of co-optation are to stick, and the more easily moderates can differentiate themselves: in short, the easier the production of moderates. This, we will argue, explains why Akali leaders were long reluctant to criticize Sikh extremists, took on key extremist demands, and emphasized more what they shared with, than what separated them from, extremist Sikhs, and it explains why the PNV was comparatively free to express disapproval of ETA. This logic applies even when moderate-government interactions are generally competitive. After Indian independence, Akalis competed keenly with the nationally dominant Congress Party, and over decades of playing within the rules of the political game, they acquired a stake in the status quo. Moderates deeply embedded in conventional politics are especially vulnerable to the allegation that they are not fully loyal to their people.

This logic, however, cannot be reversed to compel or induce moderates to break fully with extremists. One might have thought that strong political interactions would give the state a lever it could employ to force moderates to join the campaign against extremists. Where there is interaction, even competitive interaction, there is a relationship. Power derives from the parties' relative capacity to weather a disruption of that relationship.³⁴ Yet moderates' political future hinges primarily on their local legitimacy. They cannot afford to sacrifice that legitimacy for the sake of a relationship with the state. Throughout the second intifada, Israelis were frustrated by what they perceived as Palestinian moderates' mealy-mouthed criticism of attacks on Israeli civilians. Arafat's statement in April 2002 was representative: released ostensibly to denounce the previous day's attack on a Jerusalem market, it focused on "the massacre that was committed by the Israeli occupation

³⁴ Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945).

troops against our refugees in Jenin and against our people in Ramallah, Nablus, and Tulkarm.”³⁵ Arafat publicly condemned attacks on civilians on both sides, but his speeches in Arabic also trafficked in the rhetoric of jihad, martyrdom, and the eternal struggle for Jerusalem.³⁶ Israeli leaders failed to tolerate his rhetorical ambivalence, and they seemed unable to grasp that, because the organizations shared a nationalist language of legitimation, Fatah could not fully break with Hamas, let alone its own al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, without undermining its own standing among Palestinians. India and Spain also had little success in persuading respectively the Akali Dal and the PNV to sever their ties with extremists.

The discussion has so far treated network structures as stable, but they are not impervious to change. Through their interventions, intended and unintended, actors can rework structures and the opportunities, challenges, and dilemmas they sustain. When the existing structure is constituted by strong ties between moderates and the center, and relatively weak ties between moderates and the populace—that is, an environment in which the emergence of moderate brokers is problematic—facilitating moderates’ self-production requires strengthening the ties between moderate elites and communal masses. Governing authorities’ overtures—mobilizing moderate ties with the center—would likely weaken, not strengthen, the latter relationship. Counterintuitively, mobilizing ties between moderates and the communal population may require “polarizing” the state-moderate relationship. Polarization entails “the widening of political and social space between claimants in a contentious episode and the gravitation of previously uncommitted or moderate actors toward one or both extremes.” This process is normally seen as promoting collective violence, because it renders communal boundaries more salient.³⁷ But polarization may also boost moderates’ local legitimacy and mobilize their ties with the population. By some accounts, the Pakistani leader Nawaz Sharif has profited politically from U.S. officials’ well-known doubts and the resulting severing of ties that, a decade before in the Clinton administration, had been quite strong: according to a former Pakistani ambassador to the United States, the result is that Sharif “is sufficiently distanced from the United States to be a credible partner in the eyes of Pakistanis.”³⁸ Among our surprising contentions is that, in moderation (so to speak), boundary activation and polarization can contribute to political stability and effective counterterrorism.

Network-transforming interventions often have a material or behavioral component—think of military action or negotiation—but they are also necessarily rhetorical. Rhetorical deployments can have structural effects,

³⁵ “Arafat’s Stand on Terror; U.S. Reaction,” *New York Times*, 14 April 2002.

³⁶ Thomas Friedman, “Footprints in the Sand,” *New York Times*, 7 November 2004.

³⁷ Tilly, *Politics of Collective Violence*, 76.

³⁸ Jane Perlez, “Rise of Pakistani Raises Questions in U.S.,” *New York Times*, 25 March 2009.

rendering some ties stronger, weakening others, even creating new actors and ties.³⁹ Talk imparts meaning to action, and the designers of counterterrorist policy, like moderates and extremists, devote effort to the war of words not only because they wish to maintain morale and signal resolve, but because they recognize that rhetoric can potentially change the game's structure, the players' identities, and the resulting choices. Western criticism of moderate Islamists appears to have had structural effects and ironically to have helped, not hurt, the latter's cause. According to a British counterterrorism official, moderate Islamist preachers "who are attacked by both Al Qaeda supporters and by commentators who oppose engagement [with any Islamists] . . . are in a useful position."⁴⁰ Were these preachers embraced by British conservatives as allies in the "War on Terror," they could not occupy that same "useful position" in the Muslim community. Authenticity is the coin of the realm, and Westerners' critical rhetoric helps supply it. A similar dynamic, we will show, was at work in India. The government's turn in the late 1980s to a rhetoric suggesting that all Sikh nationalists were Pakistani agents altered the network structure: it polarized the center-Akali relationship, drove Akalis toward the extremists, thereby undercut allegations that Akalis were the center's lackeys, and thus mobilized Akalis' ties with rural Sikhs.

Case Selection

The cases were selected not only because they are prominent and oft-cited but, more importantly, because they exhibit useful variation on the key variable of network structure, specifically the strength of ties between moderates and the state. In India, moderate Sikh nationalists (Akali Dal) retained strong ties to the other two sites (center, Sikh extremists). In Spain, moderate Basque nationalists (PNV) had strong ties with extremists (ETA), but weaker ties with the state. If the earlier hypotheses have merit, we should observe that the production of legitimate moderates was easier in the Basque Country than in Punjab, that the Akali Dal felt less free to articulate the politics of moderation than did the PNV, and that allegations of moderate co-optation were more common in Punjab.

The cases in this "diverse" research design differ along a number of other dimensions, but not in ways that affect our analysis.⁴¹ First, India is far more ethnically varied than Spain. While this may explain why India is

³⁹ We agree with Goddard, "Uncommon Ground."

⁴⁰ Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling: The Jihadist Revolt Against Bin Laden," *New Republic*, 11 June 2008.

⁴¹ In a "diverse" design, the cases are selected to "illuminate the full range of variation" on the relevant variable(s), here the strength of moderate-government ties. John Gerring warns that, in such designs, cases "should not focus on an atypical member of a subgroup," with regard to "all respects that might affect the causal relationship of interest." While all states are distinctive, we have no reason to think India or Spain is unusual among democracies confronting ethnonational secessionist violence. See

so sensitive to secessionist threats, it cannot explain why the production of moderate brokers was more difficult in Punjab than in the Basque region, especially because India formally celebrates its ethnolinguistic and religious diversity. Second, India is a poorer nation and weaker state. Yet this might lead one to expect that India would be more reluctant to confront and deploy force against challengers—exactly the opposite of what transpired. Third, Indian counterterrorist policy was more militarized than Spain's. While this may explain some of the difficulties Sikh moderate nationalists faced compared to their Basque equivalents, as indiscriminate force radicalized the Sikh populace, it cannot account for why the Akalis ultimately emerged as a legitimate moderate political force and why Sikh support for the militants plummeted, precisely as the Indian security forces ramped up their campaign.

With only two cases (given space constraints), we cannot ascertain whether our hypotheses are generally applicable. Given the lack of well-defined theoretical alternatives, our goals are more modest: seeking to establish our claims' plausibility. By exploring the two cases in some depth, we can trace the hypothesized dynamics and carefully assess whether and how officials' rhetorical deployments transform network structures. Demonstrating that the asserted causal relationships hold requires us to answer the following empirically-demanding questions:

- What are the state's rhetorical strategies?
- What effects does this rhetoric have on moderates' relationships with the state, with extremists, and with the communal masses?
- What implications does the transformed network structure have for the state's use of force and for the fate of violent extremist organizations?

The case studies are structured in parallel. First, we show the network structure at the beginning of the period. We then determine whether the theoretical expectations regarding the emergence of moderate nationalists are borne out. Third, we examine how state officials sought to cope with the peculiar challenges and opportunities that their respective network structures presented. Each case study ends by exploring how the state's rhetorical choices facilitated or impeded its efforts to eliminate ethnonational violence.

THE MAKING OF AKALI MODERATES

Network Structure and Its Implications

Throughout its long history, the Akali Dal had cultivated relatively strong ties with both more extreme Sikhs and the national political parties, known

Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 97–101. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing us on this point.

collectively as “the center.” It maintained strong ties with the former through informal and formal Sikh social, religious, and political networks and institutions. With the rise of the extremist preacher Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in the late 1970s, the Akalis were compelled to compete for religious legitimacy, specifically for control over the organization responsible for maintaining Sikh places of worship. However, the Akalis collaborated with Bhindranwale and his fellow extremists as well. Even though the Congress Party had promoted his ascendance, Bhindranwale joined the Akalis in agitating against the center.⁴² Frequent interaction rendered plausible the authorities’ claims that the Akalis were themselves secessionists, and dozens of top Akalis were imprisoned for sedition.⁴³ After Bhindranwale’s death in 1984, the extremist camp fractured, but relations with the Akalis remained strong. A salient example, albeit unusual in the depth of the collaboration, is that the dominant Akali faction after 1989, headed by S. S. Mann, was publicly supported by and tailored its agenda and rhetoric to appeal to one of the major extremist organizations.⁴⁴

Yet the Akalis also interacted intensely, in competition and in cooperation, with the Congress Party. The Akali Dal’s chief competitor in state politics was the Congress, and it was a small but significant player in national politics. As the representative of Sikh national aspirations since the 1920s, the Akali Dal had developed close ties with the center to lobby for Sikh goals, including communal autonomy. Long-time proponents of increased devolution of federal power, the Akalis were prominent critics of Indira Gandhi’s centralizing ventures, and they were in the mid-1970s among the leading critics of “the Emergency,” when Gandhi suspended elections and arrested political opponents to forestall her prosecution on charges of electoral fraud. Their steadfast opposition led the party to substantial gains in national and state elections in 1977.⁴⁵

Given this network structure, the Akalis were, not surprisingly, regularly accused of being “agents of the Congress.” Bhindranwale’s supporters leveled this charge throughout the 1980s—both when Akali leaders were receptive to center overtures and when they were not—and they sought to have individual Akalis excommunicated.⁴⁶ Suspect in the eyes of their fellow Sikhs, the spokesmen for a nonviolent Sikh nationalist politics responded by

⁴² See Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 195; and K. S. Brar, *Operation Bluestar: The True Story* (New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1993), 24.

⁴³ M.S. Deora, *Akali Agitation to Operation Bluestar* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1992), 541–42; and Human Rights Watch/Asia, *Dead Silence: The Legacy of Human Rights Abuses in Punjab* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), 9.

⁴⁴ Vipul Mudgal, “Return of the Prodigal,” *India Today*, 31 January 1989, 74–75; and Kanwar Sandhu, “Flicker of Hope,” *India Today*, 31 December 1989, 58–61.

⁴⁵ Kuldeep Kaur, *Akali Dal in Punjab Politics: Splits and Mergers* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publishers, 1999), 62.

⁴⁶ Deora, *Akali Agitation*, 524, 515.

seeking to prove that they were legitimate Sikh nationalists and by softening publicly the differences between themselves and more extreme nationalists. In 1981 Akali Dal (L) president Harchand Singh Longowal, along with other Akali leaders, threatened to initiate a civil disobedience campaign if the center did not release Bhindranwale, who had been arrested on murder charges. That same year, amidst negotiations between the Congress and the Akalis, Bhindranwale regularly issued demands, which the Akalis immediately adopted as their own. Akali calls for “*panthic* [communal] unity” included Bhindranwale, and they formally led a *morcha* (protest), in which Bhindranwale was the prime mover, out of “political necessity.”⁴⁷

The State Responds: Sticks, Carrots, and the Challenge of Akali Legitimacy

At first, the center sought to deal with the problem of Sikh extremism not by cultivating moderate nationalists but by clamping down brutally. Its heavily militarized response culminated in Operation Blue Star, the bloody 1984 assault on the holiest Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The assassination later that year of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards led to Congress-orchestrated riots that killed another 2,000 Sikhs. During the ensuing elections, the new Congress leader, Rajiv Gandhi, rode anti-Sikh rhetoric to the prime minister’s office. These sticks had the predictable effect of radicalizing the Sikh population.

After ascending to office, Rajiv swung in the other direction, trying to bolster Sikh moderates by opening negotiations with the Akali Dal and offering substantial concessions. The Rajiv-Longowal Accord, concluded in 1985, stipulated that the contested city of Chandigarh would be transferred to Punjab within a year, that a fair process would resolve longstanding water disputes with neighboring states, that the families of Sikh innocents killed in the violence would receive compensation, and that Sikh army veterans would be rehabilitated. But the accord further undercut the Akalis’ already tarnished credibility. It unquestionably differentiated moderates from extremists, but the Akalis’ willingness to talk to Congress murderers, as Sikhs commonly perceived them, gained them no legitimacy—even though the accord addressed long-standing Sikh grievances. Fellow Akalis immediately railed against the accord as a “total sell-out” and “anti-Sikh,” and the accord fractured the party.⁴⁸ When an Akali-led state government took office in 1985, Sikhs generally believed that it “was a government in name only . . . the actual

⁴⁷ Deora, *Akali Agitation*, 46, 267; Kaur, *Akali Dal*, 73–74; Harish K. Puri et al., *Terrorism in Punjab: Understanding Grassroots Reality* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1999), 43; and Ram Narayan Kumar, *The Sikh Unrest and the Indian State: Politics, Personalities, and Historical Retrospective* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1997), 69, 119.

⁴⁸ Kaur, *Akali Dal*, 97–101.

administration was run by Delhi." Chief Minister S. S. Barnala was burdened with the reputation of being "the center's man," which seemed especially warranted after he dispatched security forces to the Golden Temple.⁴⁹ The center's failure to implement much of the accord compounded the moderates' disadvantageous position. The resulting mass displeasure led, in January 1986, to an unusual Sikh meeting attended by as many as half a million and, in April, to the declaration of an independent Sikh state, Khalistan. In short, post-Bluestar efforts to mobilize Sikh moderates were misguided and counterproductive. The proffered carrots enticed some *maximal* moderates to come forward, but they could not occupy the structural position of brokers. Carrots alone could not facilitate the production of moderate brokers.

In 1987, with Punjab descending deeper into chaos, an emergency regime (President's Rule) was imposed, and it would remain in place for five years. Periodically the center initiated short-lived, half-hearted efforts at political dialogue, sometimes even with extremists, but with skepticism of center intentions rampant and with weak governments the norm, these efforts came to naught. Moreover, center representatives dismissed the Akalis as impossibly fractured and increasingly irrelevant to events on the ground in the troubled state. By the end of the decade, Akali leaders were regularly incarcerated, and Akali political mobilization was suppressed.⁵⁰

From 1988 on, the dominant strain in state policy was one of unremitting pressure, on extremists and moderates alike. Yet, even as many extremists behaved like criminals terrorizing the Sikh countryside and even as others imposed an unpopular code of religious and personal conduct, the center made little headway. It was widely observed, even just months before the insurgency suddenly waned, that for every extremist killed many more sprang up, and police excesses in rural areas received much of the blame. State police chief Julio Francis Ribeiro, notorious for asserting that the police would defeat terrorism by exchanging "bullet for bullet," ultimately disavowed that stance, insisting that he had always recognized the need to win hearts and minds, affirming that Punjab required a political solution, and attributing police misdeeds to his deputy and successor K. P. S. Gill.⁵¹ Yet, we argue, the center's hard-line had an unintended, and ultimately salutary, consequence: it helped boost the Akalis' local legitimacy and thus helped produce Sikh moderate brokers.

⁴⁹ Iqbal Narain and Nilma Datta, "India in 1986: The Continuing Struggle," *Asian Survey*, 27, no. 2 (February 1987): 181–93.

⁵⁰ Gurharpal Singh, "Re-examining the Punjab Problem," in *Punjabi Identity: Continuity and Change*, eds., Singh and Ian Talbot, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), 130; and Vipul Mudgal, "Madness without Method," *India Today*, 15 November 1988, 28–30.

⁵¹ Julio Ribeiro, *Bullet for Bullet: My Life as a Police Officer* (New Delhi: Viking, 1998), 282, 300–306. See also Mudgal, "Madness Without Method"; Kanwar Sandhu, "A Disputed Legacy," *India Today*, 31 October 1989, 65–71.

The State Responds: Rhetoric and the Transformation of the Network

Beginning at the end of the 1980s, elites at the center suggested that the violence in Punjab was the product of international, specifically Pakistani, forces, not criminality or youthful error, as they had previously claimed.⁵² Equally important, they pointed to signs that prominent Akalis had “cast their lot” with the extremists, “mouthing an increasingly shrill militancy.”⁵³ In 1989, at a Congress (I) rally, Rajiv Gandhi equated the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (the 1973 statement of the Sikh nationalist vision and a focal point in Sikh communal politics) with the 1940 Muslim League resolution demanding the establishment of an independent Muslim state of Pakistan, and in Parliament he accused all who sympathized with the Resolution of being coconspirators in his mother’s assassination.⁵⁴ By 1992 intelligence officers would term the Akali Dal the militants’ “political voice” and “overground apparatus.”⁵⁵ Such rhetoric, positioning Sikh nationalists of all stripes in opposition to loyal Indians, and implicitly casting even Akalis as true Sikhs, reworked social boundaries. Such boundary activation, in network language, altered the connections among India’s social units.

They were not, however, altered as Indian decision makers necessarily hoped or expected. Indian leaders presumably thought that allegations that extremists and fellow travelers were doing the bidding of India’s arch-enemy would compel the Akalis to disavow and distance themselves from extremists, but the opposite occurred as Akalis felt compelled to affirm their loyalty to the panth. The reason: it was well known in 1989 that “practically every [Akali] faction [has] . . . hidden links with the Centre,” and those “links discredited] the Akalis among large sections of Punjabis.”⁵⁶ The center’s rhetoric required the Akalis to clarify where their loyalties lay, and Akali leaders moved closer rhetorically to extremists, as a way of rebuilding their local legitimacy. In 1988 longtime Akali leader Parkash Singh Badal—who had been Punjab’s chief minister between 1977 and 1980 and would return to the post in 1997 and again in 2007—declared the militants to be “engaged in a struggle of the Panth,” and his cooptation of extremist rhetoric would be regularly noted.⁵⁷ The most popular Akali leader, S. S. Mann, moved gradually from advocating autonomy to self-determination to independence—“We

⁵² We have systematically analyzed all articles contained in the U.S. government’s FBI translation service databanks relating to terrorism in India, Sikhs, and Punjab. This shift in representational strategy comes across very clearly in these documents. See also Vipul Mudgal, “Remote Control Terrorism,” *India Today*, 15 July 1988, 47–48; and Kalyan Rudra, *Rise and Fall of Punjab Terrorism (1978–1993)* (Delhi: Bright Law House, 2005), 55–61.

⁵³ Kanwar Sandhu, “The Malaise Deepens,” *India Today*, 30 June 1990, 32–34.

⁵⁴ Pankaj Pachauri, “Another Step Backward,” *India Today*, 15 May 1989, 59.

⁵⁵ Ramesh Vinayak and Harinder Baweja, “Accelerating Alienation,” *India Today*, 15 March 1992, 49.

⁵⁶ Mudgal, “Return of the Prodigal,” 75.

⁵⁷ Vipul Mudgal, “Moving Apart,” *India Today*, 15 March 1988, 63. See also, among others, Sandhu, “Malaise Deepens”; and Sandhu, “Rejecting the Sops,” *India Today*, 31 October 1990, 60.

have to decide whether to remain as slaves in India or have our own 'Khalsa Raj,'" he declared in 1991—though he insisted that even secession was, by virtue of India's acceptance of international law, fully constitutional.⁵⁸ In 1990 the leaders of the party's various factions jointly announced that "they supported the struggle launched by [the] terrorists" (though pointedly not the terrorists or their means), and Mann's numerous pro-Khalistan addresses the following year resulted in his indictment on antiterrorism charges.⁵⁹ The center's allegations succeeded not in mobilizing center-moderate ties but in producing a partial blurring of moderate and extremist positionalities and in polarizing the center-moderate relationship. This outcome, however, had a silver lining, in that the Akalis began shucking off their reputation as servants of the center.

The Akalis, however, did not fully identify with the extremists. They deployed the latter's rhetoric to criticize the center, but they also deployed the center's rhetoric to criticize the latter, contrasting wanton terrorist violence with their commitment to democracy and peaceful conflict resolution. They echoed the government's terms of condemnation, labeling the extremists "disruptive forces." They forthrightly condemned terrorism, saying "nothing can be achieved through senseless violence" and urging "militant organizations to stop killing innocent people."⁶⁰ They reaffirmed their "commitment for [sic] waging a struggle within democratic norms for the creation of such a separate region for the Sikhs."⁶¹ Finally, they sought to discredit the extremists, not as Pakistani pawns, but as "misguided youth" or commonly "boys," ill-suited to the manly game of politics. In other words, the Akalis' rhetorical stance was ambivalent, as moderates' rhetoric must be. Center elites often missed it, but Akali leaders were finally articulating the politics of moderation, and the center's hard-line rhetoric had helped them embark down that path.

This interpretation of the Akali Dal departs from the conventional wisdom. Brass writes that, for much of the 1980s, the Akali Dal had either "been captured by militants or . . . factionalized, neutralized, and displaced from playing any effective moderate role in Punjab politics." It is true that the Akalis were deeply divided and that the Akali Dal (Mann) was closely aligned with a prominent extremist organization. Punjab police chief K. P. S. Gill viewed the Akali Dal as thoroughly infiltrated by extremists well into

⁵⁸ Sandhu, "Flicker of Hope"; Sandhu, "Seeking Solutions," *India Today*, 31 January 1990, 40–44; Sandhu, "Malaise Deepens"; and Sandhu, "Dangerous Overtures," *India Today*, 31 January 1991, 54–57.

⁵⁹ Kaur, *Akali Dal*, 118; and Guharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case-Study of Punjab* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 139.

⁶⁰ "More Forces Sent to Increase Punjab Security," Delhi Domestic Service, 21 May 1988 (FBIS-NES-88-099); "Terrorist Attempt on Sikh Leader's Life Fails," Delhi Domestic Service, 14 May 1990 (FBIS-NES-90-094); and "Sikh Factions Decide Not To Participate in Polls," All India Radio, 2 September 1991 (FBIS-NES-91-170).

⁶¹ Kaur, *Akali Dal*, 194.

the 1990s.⁶² But Brass and Gill miss the essence of moderate politics. No moderate who wishes to retain legitimacy can completely renounce the resonant agenda of his extremist co-ethnics, and both Brass and Gill mistake the Akalis' ambivalence for an embrace of extremism. Center elites viewed Akali behavior and rhetoric in the early 1990s as confirming the suspicions they had long harbored. Ironically, however, they helped restore the Akalis' damaged credibility with the population that most mattered: the Sikhs of Punjab, sympathetic to the nationalist dream, alienated by extremist terror, yet disgruntled by the security forces' atrocities.

Consequences: Moderate Brokers and the Fate of Force

The emergence of Sikh moderate brokers constituted a critical turning point in the center's struggle with Sikh extremism. With the Akalis increasingly positioned as legitimate Sikh democratic nationalists, India's security forces could crack down with less chance of radicalizing the Sikh populace, as the military had in the mid-1980s. Even as the Indian police, paramilitaries, home guards, and commandos were escalating their counterterrorist efforts,⁶³ popular support for extremists plummeted. The extremists' cruel discipline in rural areas had not endeared them to the locals, but the latter remained passive supporters, partly because of their vulnerability to further predation and partly because there seemed no legitimate Sikh alternative.⁶⁴ As the Akalis successfully staked out a moderate stance, and as the extensive police presence hindered extremists from persecuting the rural populace, extremists lost even this passive following. In this indirect yet crucial way, the emergence of Akali moderates helped defeat the insurgency.⁶⁵ By 1993 the insurgency that had raged for over a decade had come to an end.

The value of Akali moderate brokers was even more apparent after the insurgency had died down, the emergency regime had been rescinded, and elections had been conducted. With the extremists dead, in prison, or in exile, there might have been a political void, which would have left Sikh ambitions without a spokesman and which might have laid the groundwork for the eventual revival of extremism, as in Turkey after the PKK's defeat in 1998. Instead no void materialized, as the Akalis returned to center stage just as the extremists exited. The Akalis provided the institutional machinery for the

⁶² Brass, *Politics of India*, 199; and K. P. S. Gill, "Endgame in Punjab, 1988–1993," in *Terror and Containment: Perspectives of India's Internal Security*, ed. Gill (New Delhi: Gyan, 2001).

⁶³ For relevant statistics, see Paul Wallace, "Countering Terrorist Movements in India: Kashmir and Khalistan," in *Democracy and Counterterrorism*, 446–47; and Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 166.

⁶⁴ See especially Mudgal, "Terrorists' Terrain"; and Shekhar Gupta, "The Rule of the Gun," *India Today*, 15 January 1992, 24–32.

⁶⁵ This is not to deny, however, that improved tactics and counterterrorist doctrine, better intelligence-sharing, and greater police as opposed to army involvement, among other factors, played a significant role in the defeat of extremist forces in Punjab. They undoubtedly did.

political expression of Sikhism, reintegrating Punjabi Sikhs into democratic politics, highlighting the advantages of playing within the rules of the political game, and providing the foundation for Punjab's long-term stability. This reintegration was partly institutional, but also discursive. The Akalis reworked Sikh nationalism to accentuate its consistency with dominant Indian tropes. Demands for increased state autonomy replaced calls for Khalistan, and the Akalis led the charge for greater decentralization nationwide. Only in this way, they claimed, could "the unity and integrity of the country" be assured—a formulation that invoked Indian rhetorical conventions.⁶⁶ At the same time, the Akalis legitimated themselves through symbolic gestures, such as the elevation of Bhindranwale to sainthood in 2003.

More surgical Indian counterterror is often credited with ending the insurgency.⁶⁷ Black Thunder (1988) is cited as an exemplary counterterrorist assault that, in contrast to Bluestar, used lighter forces, exploited better intelligence, evinced greater preparation, and led to almost no civilian deaths. Yet even Black Thunder "strengthened the militants [and] disarmed the moderates," and extremist recruitment continued unabated and even swelled.⁶⁸ Moreover, allegations of police abuse in rural areas were widespread. Gill's protestations of his forces' innocence notwithstanding, Human Rights Watch claimed that "most of those killed [during the insurgency] were summarily executed in police custody in staged 'encounters' . . . Hundreds of Sikh men also disappeared at the hands of the police, and countless more men and women were tortured."⁶⁹ For the average Punjabi Sikh, it seems implausible that regular contact with such protectors would have attracted them to the government's side—just the opposite. As the Punjab Inspector General of Police, who resigned in protest of indiscriminate police repression, observed in 1988, "It is certain that the people are not with the terrorists. But unfortunately they are not with us either." A Punjabi farmer put it well in 1992: the chief minister "has provided us respite from terrorists but the police has replaced them."⁷⁰ Defeating the extremists apparently had little to do with a more discriminate counterterrorist approach.

Why did extremists grow unpopular, even as police abuse remained rampant? By the late 1980s extremists were more feared than loved, and rural Sikhs were eager for a less repressive yet still nationalist political voice. When

⁶⁶ Kaur, *Akali Dal*, 154. See also the 1994 Amritsar Declaration, signed by a variety of Akali leaders.

⁶⁷ K. P. S. Gill, *Punjab: The Knights of Falsehood* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1997); and Wallace, "Countering Terrorist Movements," 440–52. For critical views, see Satyapal Dang, *Terrorism in Punjab* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2000); and Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerilla Violence* (London: Zed Books, 1995).

⁶⁸ Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India*, 135.

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch/Asia, *Dead Silence*, ix. The security forces' excessive violence was well covered in the popular press. See, for example, Kanwar Sandhu, "Official Excesses," *India Today*, 15 October 1992, 82–89.

⁷⁰ Mudgal, "Madness Without Method," 30; and Kanwar Sandhu, "A Golden Opportunity," *India Today*, 30 November 1992, 76.

the Akalis thrust themselves into this space, extremists lost their appeal. The state's coercive efforts were effective, but not because they came at less human cost. The emergence of the Akalis as moderate brokers was the key to those efforts' success.

MOBILIZING MODERATES IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

Network Structure and the Production of Basque Moderates

Whereas in India moderate Sikhs engaged in vigorous political interaction with all sites, in Spain moderate Basques maintained strong ties with extremists but comparatively sparse ties with the center. We would expect the production of moderate nationalists to be relatively unproblematic given this network structure, and indeed the PNV escaped the legitimacy problems that bedeviled their Akali counterparts. The rhetoric of nationalist betrayal was common in Punjab, but allegations that moderates were *Españolistas* were rare in the Basque Country.⁷¹ The PNV's local legitimacy cannot be explained solely on the basis of its past activism. Although PNV activists had worked secretly and in exile for decades against Franco's regime, the Akali Dal had an equally, if not more, impressive history of nationalist agitation and sacrifice and nevertheless was seen as suspect.

Accusations that the PNV had been co-opted were less easily sustained because its ties to the center were comparatively sparse.⁷² It has been a regional party with limited involvement in national politics. While the national Spanish parties competed in Basque elections, the PNV consistently received the largest fraction of the vote in the thirty years after Spain's democratization: serving as the linchpin of the ruling coalition, it headed every Basque regional government before 2009.⁷³ In short, it was "hegemonic" in regional politics.⁷⁴ While the PNV did at times partner with non-nationalists, in general nationalist and non-nationalist political blocs in the Basque Country were highly polarized, with that cleavage sharpening further in the late 1990s.⁷⁵ The region's autonomy also rendered the PNV less dependent on the center

⁷¹ Extremists, however, charged the PNV with credulousness for its willingness to work within the Spanish constitution. See John Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism: The Fight for Euskadi, 1890–1986* (London: Routledge, 1988), chap. 8.

⁷² Basque non-nationalist capitalist elites had developed strong ties with the state, but the nationalists' social base originally lay in the lower middle classes. See Juan Diez Medrano, *Divided Nations: Class, Politics, and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁷³ In May 2009 a Socialist-led government took office—the first non-nationalist government in the Basque Country since the transition to democracy.

⁷⁴ For this characterization of the PNV, see Fernando Reinares and Rogelio Alonso, "Confronting Ethnonationalist Terrorism in Spain: Political and Coercive Measures Against ETA," in *Democracy and Counterterrorism*, 112; and Ludger Mees, *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy: The Basque Clash of Identities* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 45–47.

⁷⁵ Diego Muro, *Ethnicity and Violence: The Case of Radical Basque Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2008), 5 and passim; Mees, *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy*, 107.

than were the Akalis: largely free to design their own laws, draw up their own budgets, and levy taxes, Basque nationalists had few incentives to involve themselves in national politics. Renegotiating the basic terms of autonomy would have required the approval of both houses of the Spanish Parliament, but there the prospects were never particularly good, and thus they did not become a site of intense PNV lobbying.⁷⁶ The ties between moderate Basque nationalists and the Spanish governing classes were by no means nonexistent, but they were sparse compared both to the ties linking moderates and extremists and to those connecting the Akali Dal to the Indian center.

With its nationalist status secure, the PNV could vocally distinguish its moderate political vision from that of its extremist co-ethnics in ETA, and it did not hesitate to criticize ETA's methods from the inception of Spanish democracy. Especially as ETA grew more desperate toward the end of the 1980s, the PNV took it to task for visiting violence upon the region and Spain as a whole, for threatening Spain's still-young democracy, and for imperiling the Basque dream by provoking a crackdown—and the PNV exploited growing Basque disillusion with ETA, calling on the Basque masses to embrace conventional politics to achieve their communal ends.⁷⁷ Akali leaders, desperate to win their nationalist carrying cards, adopted rhetorical forms and forged political alliances that raised questions in the center about their commitment to democratic politics. Spanish politicians at times lost patience with the nationalist PNV, whose commitment to Spain's territorial integrity was less than clear, but they could not seriously question its respect for the rule of law and democratic processes.

The Frustration of Spanish Counterterrorism

If sustaining a legitimate moderate nationalist politics was not particularly difficult in the Basque Country, forcing the PNV to break unambiguously from ETA and its political wing, Herri Batasuna (HB), was.⁷⁸ Spanish politicians hoped to enlist mainstream Basque nationalism in clear opposition to the extremists' agenda, but the PNV would not adopt a stance critical of ETA and HB's separatist dreams, only of the former's methods.⁷⁹ Even though the PNV

⁷⁶ On regional autonomy, see Michael Newton and Peter Donaghy, *Institutions of Modern Spain: A Political and Economic Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 123–30.

⁷⁷ See, among many others, "Basque Parliament Approves Report Condemning Violence," Madrid Domestic Service, 19 July 1980 (FBIS VII, 21 July 1980, N1); "Basque Party Leader Repudiates ETA Actions," Madrid Domestic Service, 3 May 1985 (FBIS VII, 8 May 1985, N8); and "Basque Interior Minister Atutxa Discusses ETA," *Tiempo*, 19 July 1993 (FBIS-WEU-93-164).

⁷⁸ The party later went by different names, and since 2003 it has been legally barred from putting forward candidates. On HB, see Cynthia L. Irvin, *Militant Nationalism: Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁷⁹ Díez Medrano, *Divided Nations*, 144–49; and Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*.

was politically stronger than the Akali Dal, it too did not treat its extremist brethren as pariahs. ETA and HB were, like Sikh extremists, represented as sincere expressions of Basque nationalism and thus deserving of a seat at the political table. The PNV regularly blamed the Spanish authorities for ETA's persistence, asserting that the terrorist organization would disappear if greater autonomy were granted—that is, if nationalist demands were conceded. Its leaders declared that, in one scholar's paraphrase, "although ETA-M's strategy was mistaken and many of its actions were indefensible, most of its members were motivated by genuine patriotism."⁸⁰ In 1988, as Basque opinion began to turn decisively against ETA,⁸¹ the PNV joined other local actors in condemning terrorist violence, but that agreement treated ETA's political ends as well within the pale: "we call on those who continue to use or who legitimate violence to abandon arms out of respect for the popular will and to integrate into institutional activity *through which they can legitimately defend their platforms*."⁸² In the early 1990s, after that pact had collapsed, the PNV gave serious consideration to an alliance with HB, despite the latter's questionable stance on political violence. In 1998 it joined a nationalist front that included HB, as a prelude to ETA's announcement of a ceasefire, and it may even have secretly negotiated an agreement with ETA on shared goals and political strategy.⁸³ The PNV's ambivalent posture and its refusal to condemn ETA outright, was deeply frustrating to Spanish conservatives, who charged it with helping to sustain the wounded terrorist organization.⁸⁴ But the PNV had differentiated itself from ETA and thus could not easily be tarred with the extremist label, which Indian center politicians hurled at the Akalis. Basque nationalists, extremists and moderates alike, portrayed each other as members of the same often-quarrelsome family.⁸⁵

Unlike the Akali Dal, which could not have distanced itself from the extremists, the PNV seemingly had the political capacity: why did it lack the will, and why was the Spanish government so powerless? The answer returns us to the mixed-motive game that moderate nationalists and states play and to the existing social structural conditions. Regarding the latter, the network structure was not conducive to the political hardball that might have yielded an outcome favorable to Madrid. The Spanish government and national parties did not have a well-developed relationship with the

⁸⁰ Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 266.

⁸¹ For opinion data, see Reinares and Alonso, "Confronting Ethnonationalist Terrorism," 123; Goldie Shabad and Francisco Llera, "Political Violence in a Democratic State: Basque Terrorism in Spain," in *Terrorism in Context*, 456–57; and Muro, *Ethnicity and Violence*, 160–163.

⁸² Pact of Ajuria Enea, 12 January 1988, available at http://www.mir.es/DGRIS/Terrorismo_de_ETA/esp/ajuria.htm; emphasis added. Thanks to Margot Krebs for translation of this document.

⁸³ Ludger Mees, "Between Votes and Bullets: Conflicting Ethnic Identities in the Basque Country," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 5 (September 2001): 813–14.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Martin C. Arostegui, "Battle of the Basques," *Time Europe*, 12 June 2000. See also Muro, *Ethnicity and Violence*, 167–68; and Mees, *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy*, 118.

⁸⁵ Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 268.

PNV that they might parlay into influence. Pushing the PNV too hard might, given the network structure and given the PNV's dependence on a nationalist rhetoric of legitimation, have dissolved already weak moderate-center ties and mobilized already strong moderate-extremist ties. No matter which party was in power, the Spanish government lacked substantial levers to prod the PNV. The PNV did not hesitate to remind the Spanish government that hard-line rhetoric and repressive policies would only redound to the extremists' benefit.⁸⁶ In fact, when the conservative Popular Party tried to ramp up the pressure on the PNV in the late 1990s, the result was to alienate moderate Basque nationalists, nurturing the perception that they, as much as their more radical colleagues, were "under siege."⁸⁷

The PNV also refrained from an across-the-board assault on ETA because ETA's survival was in its interest. First, ETA's periodic activities kept the pressure on the Spanish government, making the PNV seem comparatively attractive. Madrid often offered compromises to the nationalist agenda to bolster the PNV, and the party was reportedly "glad to have a constant threat of violence as a lever to extort concessions from the Spanish government." At a private meeting in 1981, the PNV's leader even allegedly urged ETA-PM representatives to continue their reign of terror.⁸⁸ In the late 1990s leading PNV members feared that ETA's difficulties would eventually render their party "insignificant."⁸⁹ Second, a substantial minority in the Basque Country—typically ranging between 15 and 18 percent, based on the vote for HB in Basque parliamentary elections—remained sympathetic to ETA, and the PNV did not wish to alienate these natural supporters. Finally, ETA and the PNV shared a common language of legitimation, and the PNV was hard-pressed to deny ETA's essential legitimacy without undermining its own. In the words of one PNV official, "as long as the Spanish state does not take effective and clear steps designed towards reversing discrimination against Basque culture, it will be very difficult for us to explain to ETA why they should lay down their guns." The PNV believed ETA's members needed to be rehabilitated, not crushed or eliminated.⁹⁰ As in Punjab, where the extremists were patronizingly infantilized, ETA too was rhetorically represented as Basque nationalism's wayward and impatient child: it may have strayed from the proper path, but its misguided yet sincere passion reflected how Basques' aspirations were being denied.⁹¹

⁸⁶ "PNV Spokesman: PP Bolsters Herri Batasuna," *El País*, 28 April 1995 (FBIS-WEU-95-083).

⁸⁷ Muro, *Ethnicity and Violence*, 164.

⁸⁸ Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 230–31, 241, 247; and Robert P. Clark, *Negotiating with ETA: Obstacles to Peace in the Basque Country, 1975–1988* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1990), 98–102.

⁸⁹ Reinares and Alonso, "Confronting Ethnonationalist Terrorism," 112–13.

⁹⁰ Shabad and Llera, "Political Violence," 453; and "PNV To Encourage Negotiations with ETA 'Complex,'" *ABC*, 13 October 1994 (FBIS-WEU-94-203).

⁹¹ Mees, *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy*, 27, 36; Shabad and Llera, "Political Violence," 459; and Sullivan, *ETA and Basque Nationalism*, 35.

The PNV's ambivalence toward ETA—condemning its terrorist ways, but legitimating the grievances that motivated them—may have had fateful consequences. According to two Spanish experts, it “contributed to the continuation of terrorism . . . [by] strengthening ETA's will to carry on with its campaign” and helping the organization retain some measure of legitimacy. This may further help explain why in the 1990s Spanish public opinion, though critical of ETA, also supported negotiations with the organization, despite its repugnant means.⁹² It may also help explain why Spanish governments across the ideological spectrum, despite regular public denials, reached out to ETA: open talks were held in 1985 and 1989, overtures were extended through backchannels throughout the 1990s, a conservative government opened formal negotiations in 1999 after having long declared it would never talk with ETA, and a left-wing government did the same in 2004.⁹³ But, contrary to those same experts, the PNV's stance was not “the radicalization of constitutional nationalism in the Basque region,” but good politics, more typical of moderate nationalists than an aberration.⁹⁴

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CAVEATS

The growing literature on counterterrorism—less extensive than its burgeoning counterpart on terrorism—has emphasized the importance of mobilizing moderates, but has not explained how this can be done. This article has explained why and when mobilizing moderates is difficult, and how and when states can nevertheless succeed. It has also sought to demonstrate the value of network approaches to theorizing counterterrorism: political scientists have only recently begun to exploit this set of theoretical tools, and they have not yet been applied to the problem of counterterrorism in general or to mobilizing moderates in particular.

Can moderates, however, always be made? Are some polities simply too polarized to sustain moderate politics?⁹⁵ We agree that compromise is not always achievable: actors' win-sets may not overlap, and issues may be constructed as indivisible. But moderation, as we define it, refers to means, not ends, and, as long as the actors can conceive of compromise solutions, it would be surprising if there were no constituency for a less costly mode of

⁹² See “Poll: Spaniards Favor Continuing Talks With ETA,” RNE-1 Radio, 23 January 2000 (FBIS-WEU-2000-0123).

⁹³ On the 1980s, see Clark, *Negotiating with ETA*. On backchannel negotiations in the 1990s, see “Spain: Mediator Alludes to ETA-Government Talks,” *El Mundo*, 31 December 1999 (FBIS-WEU-1999-1231); and “Spain: Prime Minister Aznar: No Negotiations With Terrorists,” RNE-1 Radio, 11 February 1997 (FBIS-WEU-97-029). The Popular Party's criticism of the Socialists for negotiating with ETA is thus seen as hypocritical; see “Talking Peace,” *Economist*, 8 July 2006.

⁹⁴ Reinares and Alonso, “Confronting Ethnonationalist Terrorism,” 128. It is worth noting that one of these two scholars has served as a key adviser to the Spanish government.

⁹⁵ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for challenging us on this point.

conflict resolution. We also recognize that past strife may harden perceptions of the other's preferences and credibility, making nonviolence seem naïve and tilting the political battleground in favor of violence. But if perceptions can be made, they can also be unmade through words and deeds. Moderates are not always present in politics, and even when they are, they may not gain traction. But those outcomes, in our view, are not natural or inevitable.

Moreover, we do not think that hard-line rhetoric, as in the Indian case, is a sure path to success. To conclude otherwise would be to ignore the role of social context in shaping the capacity for action. In India, dense Akali-center interactions had rendered the former suspect, and thus the central problem was bolstering the Akalis' nationalist credentials. Hard-line center rhetoric that failed to distinguish among Sikh nationalists validated the Akalis' claims to genuine nationalism. In Spain, where the PNV's nationalist authenticity was never in doubt, occasional aggressive rhetoric on the part of the Spanish government proved counterproductive, and if sustained, it might have driven moderate Basques into the extremist camp. The typical Spanish configuration—combining an increasingly discriminate counterterrorist campaign with the legitimization of Basque nationalism—may have been the best possible under the circumstances. Although, thirty years after the fall of the authoritarian regime, Basque terrorism continues, ETA was by the 1990s a marginalized political force, capable only of mobilizing street chaos in the Basque Country and of planting the occasional bomb elsewhere. Like all policy instruments, hard-line rhetoric has its dangers even when social structural conditions are ripe, and its use requires judgment as well as sensitivity to local context. At this level of abstraction, we can only suggest broad guidance, and more specific recommendations hinge on more detailed local inputs.

Finally, we do not expect that implementing such a policy will prove simple. Democratic governments in particular may have difficulty speaking with a single voice and maintaining a consistent rhetorical strategy.⁹⁶ Yet, while this concern, drawing on classic realist themes, has some bite, it may underestimate democracies' capacity for policy coherence. Recent research, especially in a rationalist vein, has found that democracies can issue clearer signals and make more credible commitments than realist critics would anticipate.⁹⁷ Moreover, the Indian experience suggests that success may be achievable even when implementation departs far from the ideal. The center clearly went wrong in sponsoring Bhindranwale and in releasing the extremist genie. It then mistakenly employed first sticks and then carrots in trying to return the genie to the lamp. Even these repeated errors, however, did not preclude the subsequent creation of conditions more conducive to the emergence of a legitimate moderate Sikh politics. The fact that the

⁹⁶ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.

⁹⁷ For a useful synthesis, with application to the democratic peace, see Charles Lipson, *Reliable Partners: How Democracies Have Made a Separate Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Indian government seems to have blundered into this useful rhetorical tack does not mean that other states might not employ it more consciously and strategically.

This article has focused empirically on how states combat ethnonational insurgency, but its insights travel to the dominant concern of recent years—transnational Islamist terrorism.⁹⁸ A basic purpose of counterterrorism is shared across national and transnational milieus: to nurture an environment in which moderate co-ethnics (or Muslims), voicing nationalist (or Islamist) goals, can offer a credible alternative to extremists, leading to the latter's eventual delegitimation. However, the transnational nature of the contemporary challenge suggests two differences of significance. First, the target audience for counterterrorist rhetoric is foreign. U.S. authorities and Muslim publics do not share a common language or symbolic field, and thus the former's capacity to play a constructive role is limited. Second, and related, the U.S. government rarely has direct ties with these Muslim target audiences. This absence of direct engagement elevates the need for a space within which a moderate interlocutor can emerge. In other words, mobilizing moderates is even more important and even more difficult.

What lessons can Western states, as they confront transnational Islamist terrorism, learn from states' experiences with ethnonational terrorism?⁹⁹ Indiscriminate Islamist violence in London in 2005, the foiled attacks in Saudi Arabia targeting the 2007 hajj, and regular violence in Iraq has turned many Muslims against al Qaeda and its local franchises,¹⁰⁰ but Islamist radicals' political agenda still resonates. Like ethnonational extremists, their rhetoric is in tune with their community's heritage and experiences, bequeathing to Islamists an abiding power that many analysts have underestimated.¹⁰¹ But "waging war" on the West's irreconcilable Islamist enemies is both insufficient and misguided. Political victory requires a legitimate moderate Islamist politics.

The architects of U.S. counterterrorist policy know this. They have devoted increasingly coordinated thought and action to cultivating Muslim moderates in the Battle of Ideas. But their approach is flawed. They have sought to reach out to moderates—often only secular, more occasionally Islamist—by offering material support and by adopting an inclusive rhetoric

⁹⁸ However, see Jeremy Pressman, "Rethinking Transnational Counterterrorism: Beyond a National Framework," *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (Autumn 2007): 63–73.

⁹⁹ For a more full discussion, see Ronald R. Krebs, "Rethinking the Battle of Ideas: How the United States Can Help Muslim Moderates," *Orbis* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 332–46; and Ronald R. Krebs, "Cruel to be Kind: Why Washington Should Not Reach Out to Muslim Moderates," *Slate*, posted 3 January 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Bergen and Cruickshank, "The Unraveling"; Thanassis Cambanis, "In Arab World, Zarqawi's Tactics Bred Disgust," *Boston Globe*, 12 June 2006; "Global Unease with Major World Powers," 27 June 2007, and "A Rising Tide Lifts Mood in Developing World," 24 July 2007, Pew Global Attitudes Project, Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

¹⁰¹ Berman, "Why Radical Islam Just Won't Die."

that suggests areas of commonality. Indeed, the 9/11 Commission called for forging a “moderate consensus” among the like-minded.¹⁰²

But the United States is “radioactive” among Muslims (in one official’s words), and association with it may prove fatal to Muslim moderates and their cause.¹⁰³ Liberal Muslims, often secular and Western-educated, are, like the Akalis in Punjab, suspect in the eyes of many of their coreligionists. Despite the constant stream of products from the “public diplomacy” industry, serious proposals for overcoming this problem are few and far between. Marc Lynch creatively suggests that the United States should engage a broad range of nonviolent Muslims in open dialogue, in the spirit of Habermasian “communicative action.”¹⁰⁴ But, if the United States is widely perceived as evil incarnate, as opinion surveys indicate, those willing to enter into dialogue with it will be tainted. The participants in such a dialogue may occasionally succeed in leaving power and rank at the door, but they cannot leave history behind. Given the long history of suspicion and the present situation of occupation, it is hard to imagine that Arab and Muslim observers would not be deeply skeptical of U.S. motives and that America’s Arab and Muslim interlocutors would retain much legitimacy. The West needs Arab and Muslim moderates that are respected in their communities as authentic voices—that is, moderate brokers, not stooges. They need local legitimacy even more than they need Western financial support.

The West, it is universally agreed, has made little progress in the Battle of Ideas. Muslim moderates may, like the Akalis, be most effectively bolstered by a hard-line rhetoric that allows them to distance themselves from the West. Once they have earned their fellow Muslims’ trust, they may serve as crucial brokers between what now seem to be warring civilizations. This will not be easy for either side, and it can be a dangerous game. Western publics will have to tolerate the emergence of a moderate Muslim voice that is deeply critical of the West, even as it is also not sparing toward the penchant for political violence that has infected the Muslim world. Those publics have so far shown little patience for anything other than a full-throated partnership. Moderate, nonviolent Muslims will have to accept that, in the short-to-medium run, their best friends in the West may not sound all that different from their worst enemies. They will have to be far-sighted enough to realize that a rhetoric that elides differences among Islamists may, in the long run, help their cause. In our current predicament, this approach to the Islamist politics of moderation may, to paraphrase Churchill, be the worst—except for all the others.

¹⁰² National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, authorized ed. (New York: Norton, 2004), 376–77. For similar pleas, see the sources cited in n19.

¹⁰³ David E. Kaplan, “Hearts, Minds, and Dollars,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 17 April 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Lynch, “Taking Arabs Seriously.” See, relatedly, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Political Islam and Foreign Policy in Europe and the United States,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3, no. 4 (October 2007): 345–67.