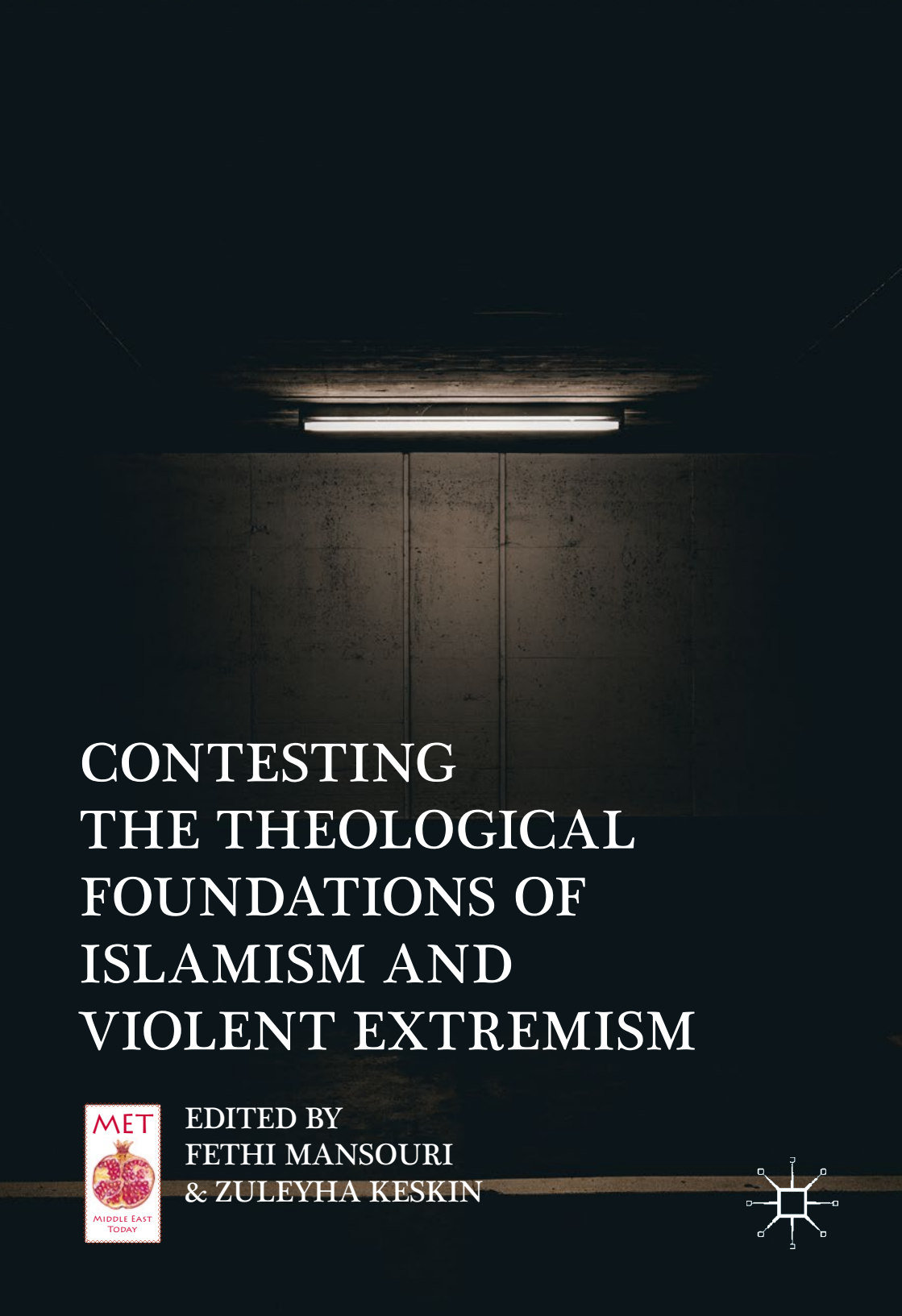

CONTESTING THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism

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Middle East Today
ISBN 978-3-030-02718-6 ISBN 978-3-030-02719-3 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018962882

Cover credit: Oleg Magni / EyeEm / Getty Images

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Framing the Debate Around Islamic Theology, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

Fethi Mansouri and Zuleyha Keskin

A Historical Context for Religious Violence

When acts of violence are committed in the name of a major faith tradition as global as Islam, there is bound to be debates from all possible intellectual and ideological perspectives on whether the two (religion and violence) are connected. Islam, of course, does not have a monopoly on minority extremist splinter groups that commit terrorist acts in its name (Akbarzadeh and Mansouri 2010). One only has to look to history as well as contemporary politics to find a plethora of such instances. Indeed, Islam's early history contains episodes of violent confrontations between different factions aligned with particular interpretations in relation to

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_1

succession, spiritual leadership and political governance. These early civil wars led to the first major schism in Islam with the emergence of sectarian divisions around Sunni and Shi'i Islam. The Crusaders' medieval religious wars are another prominent example of violent conflict in the name of God (O'Callaghan 2003). These religious wars were waged against both Muslims and Eastern Christians across the Levant whose practices and doctrinal beliefs were declared heretic by the Latin Church. Yet, while there is still debate about whether the actual conduct of Crusader forces, in particular, in committing massacres against local communities, is incongruous with the stated aims of the Crusades as sanctioned by the church, there is no doubt that religion was at the epicentre of this dark chapter in medieval European history.

When Moorish Granada fell in 1492 during the reign of Catholic monarchs, signalling the end of Islamic rule in the Iberian peninsula, the ensuing Reconquista held all the hallmarks of forced conversions, ethnic cleansing and mass exodus of Moorish communities from Spain towards North Africa and the Middle East (Watt 1992). Like the Crusades before it, the idea of the Reconquista in Spain signalled a deepening religious divide between Islam and Christendom that the Muslims of Andalusia at the time tried to confront with an equally staunch notion of jihad, or holy war. These religiously framed confrontations were further ingrained during the prolonged colonial period that beset much of the Islamic world that came under the direct military and political domination of Christian European powers during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries (Hourani 2013).

Post-independence, and as part of the ensuing Cold War, so called jihad and thus the *mujahidin* once again became central players in many proxy wars that pitted the two superpowers: the USA and the Soviet Union (Coll 2004). Indeed, in Afghanistan, local fighters self-proclaimed as waging jihad rebelled against the government of the pro-Soviet Democratic Republic of Afghanistan during the late 1970s. These rebel groups, that later morphed into the Taliban movement, were aided by foreign actors, including the governments of Saudi Arabia and the USA. Many members of the Taliban movement were taught in the Saudi-backed and inspired Wahhabi *madrasas*, which are religious schools known for teaching a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam that contained many of the ideological seeds of today's Islamist violent extremism.

Islamist Violent Extremism in the Contemporary World

The brief historical account mentioned earlier shows, in order to understand the complex manifestations and implications of violent extremism today, one has to delve deep into the history that helped shape and drive such nihilistic ideologies. The earlier discussion also shows international political order (Turner 2014), as was the case during the Cold War, also played a part in aiding and sustaining the early formations of contemporary Islamist groups, in particular, during the Afghan–Soviet War with the emergence of *mujahidin* and Taliban groups.

Yet, in a post–9/11 world, the place of Islam as a religion and Muslims in general has become the focus of public debates, security agendas and even an emerging international order where new complex alliances are being formed to confront and defeat an unconventional enemy that is spreading across many regions under different guises but similar ideological claims around misguided notions of jihad, caliphate and Islamic revival (Wright 2017).

Against this context, the place of Islam and Muslims in the world and, in particular, within Western nation-states, has become synonymous with public debates on human security and international terrorism. These debates become even more polarising when images of violent acts of terrorism performed in the name of Islam circulate in the global media. The visibility of such mediated violent extremism, in particular, since the emergence of al-Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), has created a major political and security challenge not only to the world but also to the global Muslim community. This is particularly true in relation to the way Islam is being understood and characterised in contemporary public discourse. The implication of increased problematisation of Islam and Muslims is the rise of Islamophobia as a powerful discursive practice aimed at further deepening the religious and cultural divide between Muslims and non-Muslims, in particular, within Western polities (Akbarzadeh and Mansouri 2010).

What is still missing in the emerging literature on all things Islam and violent extremism is an in-depth examination of the misguided theological notions adapted and adopted by leaders of these groups in communicating their messages to the world and in drafting their narratives for recruiting followers and members from across the globe (Ingram 2016; Rabasa and Benard 2014). While we have witnessed over the last decade an explosion

in new areas of academic studies around terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism (El-Said and Harrigan 2013), the same cannot be said of more careful historical and theological analyses of the assumed connection between the religious (doctrinal and jurisprudential) and the political (i.e. ideology and violent conflict).

This book, therefore, aims to fill this gap by exploring the causes of radicalisation from theological perspectives with an objective to offer critical epistemological responses while at the same time offering sociological understandings of literalist non-traditional (i.e. unprecedented) religious interpretations as well as a scholarly deconstruction of radical narratives.

In doing so, this book includes a number of chapters from scholars working across a multitude of academic disciplines from Islamic studies to political science, from history to international relations, and from sociology to philosophy and philology. The book's chapters were presented at the third Australasian Conference on Islam, which focused among others on examining and refuting the theological foundations of violent extremism and radicalisation. As the conference highlighted, there is a growing body of literature and discourse about the various causes of radicalisation, such as its psychological, social and political. However, there is very little focus on the theological underpinnings and framings of radicalisation; a study undertaken without negating or neglecting all the other causes discussed in the literature.

This book, therefore, offers a theological interrogation of violent extremism that includes carefully selected case studies from contemporary groups across the world. Their religio-political narrative is analysed in detail and put to the test in relation to the foundations it seeks to build on. The aim is to delve into the epistemological basis for refuting the theological justifications for radicalisation and violent extremism that many jihadists often invoke.

Book Structure

Given its ambitious nature, this volume aims to bring together critical scholarly appraisals of violent extremism from the point of view of theology, contemporary politics and circulating public discourse. To achieve this multi-faceted analytical task, the book is organised thematically around three interconnected sections: (1) contesting the theological foundations of violent extremism; (2) the socio-political currents influencing violent extremism; and (3) the role of Muslim scholars in promoting and preventing radicalism.

The first section dealing with contesting the theological foundations of violent extremism starts with Zuleyha Keskin and Fatih Tuncer's chapter, which argues that, in addition to the social, political, emotional and psychological causes attributed to radicalism, Islamist radicals have a further underlying driving force for their actions: a misinterpretation of their religion. The chapter argues that the ultimate trigger for radicalism by Muslims is the theological arguments used to endorse and encourage violent extremism. Such distorted theological arguments have an extremely destructive effect since religious texts are cited to support atrocities committed in the name of religion.

Delving more specifically into the role of misinterpretation of religious texts and traditions, Hakan Coruh's chapter focuses on specific verses from the Qur'an to refute ISIS' narrative by relying on the mainstream majority's understanding of such war- and peace-related scriptural texts. Qur'anic verse 2:256 states 'there is no compulsion in religion', and it is a sine qua non of Islamic teaching regarding freedom of religion. However, proponents of offensive jihad claim this verse was abrogated by the sword verse (*ayat al-qital*, Qur'an 9:5). Coruh's chapter analyses the verse from various traditional exegetical and juristic aspects and emphasises that certain classical jurists were influenced by ongoing war-based relationships in the medieval period. Therefore, some verses from the last stage of the Qur'anic revelation are interpreted in such a way that fighting against unbelievers unconditionally will be a continuing norm and other verses are interpreted accordingly. Coruh argues that verse 2:256 declares a final universal principle about the freedom of religion, and unconditional fighting due to faith is not a mainstream Islamic approach. The natural state of affairs in relations between Muslims and others is peace and cooperation, as many mainstream Islamic authorities emphasise.

Arguing along similar lines, Jan Ali's chapter examines the conceptualisation of human dignity and jihad in the ethical discourse of Muslim violent extremists, such as ISIS members. Ali shows that human dignity and jihad are conceptualised differently by these groups because their ethical discourse, while being coloured by the notion of seeking redress of socio-religious and political crisis of Muslim societies, is nevertheless grounded in a politically expedient interpretation of Islamic scripture. Notions of jihad and human dignity have assumed a priority status in ISIS' language with almost unique meanings and, as such, are rendered social constructs. Ali's chapter further analyses the influence of ISIS and other radical groups through the use of such concepts by considering social constructivism and the resultant power of language.

The second section of the book focuses on the socio-political currents influencing violent extremism, analysing the complexities of the interplaying causes, resulting in such violence.

In mapping an epistemological approach to Islamism and violent extremism, Mohammed Sulaiman's chapter notes the literature on Islam and violence has been examined from multiple, interdisciplinary perspectives. He concludes the consequent broad range of interpretations are characterised by deep, and at times irreconcilable, disagreements. One school of interpretations tends to emphasise that violence is intrinsic to Islam because Islamic texts, history and theology are replete with calls for Muslims to wage violent jihad against the 'infidels'. From this perspective, it seems violent Islamist manifestations, such as ISIS, are an authentic expression of the true Islam. Another school of interpretations argues Islam is a religion of peace, and violence of the ISIS sort is completely external to it, that is, un-Islamic. Therefore, violent Islamist groups and individuals are only distortions of what Islam really is. Sulaiman rejects both positions and details how recent non-essentialist scholarship has demonstrated that both approaches have serious epistemological shortcomings. Drawing on non-essentialist scholarship, Sulaiman argues that understanding Islamist violence, let alone providing a plausible explanation of it, requires careful examination of the complex, immensely varied political and socio-economic contexts in which Islam is practised and Muslims exist. More importantly, however, emphasising the polysemic nature of Islam and Muslims does not negate its relevance to the study of Islamist violence. Therefore, Sulaiman's chapter discusses the implications of the non-essentialist claim 'there is no one Islam but only many Islams' and concludes that both Islam and the political contexts of Muslims matter.

Riaz Hassan's chapter further delves into the politico-social state of Muslim countries arguing that the modern Muslim world is a pale shadow of its past. Islam's spiritual and moral egalitarianism has not bolstered some of the key benefits of modernity in the Muslim world, namely economic prosperity, democratic freedoms and the advancement of knowledge. On the contrary, an astute observer would have little difficulty in assembling volumes of data to demonstrate the acute deficits of development, freedom and knowledge in most of the Muslim countries. This has given rise to contentious debate about the causes of these deficits. Hassan's chapter examines some of these debates and explanations of the causes of development, freedom and knowledge deficits in some detail and discusses explanatory frameworks that may account for them. While not negating

the theological discourse of radicals, Hassan argues radicalism has its roots in the social and economic conditions prevalent in Muslim countries, which can then have an impact beyond the boundaries of those states at the international arena.

Halim Rane's chapter presents the findings of focus groups conducted with young Muslim Australians on the causes, consequences and counters of violent extremism and radicalisation. A range of perspectives within and beyond faith are addressed. Within the context of countering violent extremism and radicalisation, the broader question of Islam in Australia emerges as an important issue that needs to be considered within a national climate of rising Islamophobia and exclusionary discourse of identity and belonging. The impact of the discourse around radicalisation is evident among the youth, who are still forming their identity as Muslims living in the West. While many youth find violent extremism to be antithetical to their understanding of Islam, they are conscious that some youth are drawn into the narrative of groups like ISIS, highlighting the importance of education, including critical thinking and grounded knowledge, in relation to matters of religion.

The third section of the book focuses specifically on the role of leadership in influencing the response to local and global events, particular in relation to their capacity to promote as well as prevent radicalism and violent extremism within their faith communities.

Greg Barton analyses the appeal of ISIS by examining the central lines of narrative in the ISIS magazine *Dabiq*. *Dabiq*, which was published in English as well as various other European languages, provides insight into ISIS' messaging and how it influences the youth. While ISIS' message is often thought of as dark and cruel, Barton highlights that there are nine major themes in the 15 issues of *Dabiq* that were published which are seemingly good: (1) justice, (2) goodness, (3) a sense of belonging, (4) the caliphate (*khalifa*), (5) migration in the path of God (*hijra*), (6) redemption, (7) sin, (8) judgement and (9) jihad. While there are dark elements inherent in these themes, some of the darker themes are presented with a strong focus on positive messages. Using images such as happy children and villagers or warriors in combat gear tenderly cradling kittens seeks to generate a positive image. The magazine is also filled with mainstream teachings about prayer, fasting and heaven, which normalises the other messages found within the magazine. Barton argues this positive messaging needs to be considered carefully to appreciate the level of influence of groups like ISIS. That is, ISIS and other similar groups cannot really be

understood without accounting for the make-up of their religious messages, however distorted these might be.

Ihsan Yilmaz looks at the influence of unofficial political Islamic law on Muslim youth and the significant impact it can have on their radicalisation. Yilmaz explains how the Justice and Development Party (AKP) elite has increasingly resorted to Islamist legal pluralism, anti-Western rhetoric, *takfirism* (excommunication) and conspiracy theories that simultaneously try to influence global *umma* (community) and the Turkish diaspora communities that predominantly live in the West. On the basis of preliminary observations, Yilmaz discusses the potential impact of this rhetoric and production of unofficial Islamist *takfirist* and anti-Western *fatwa*s (legal rulings) on the transnational radicalisation of the Turkish Muslim youth in the West.

Mahsheed Ansari's chapter on Said Nursi's non-violent social activism examines the extent to which such activism can be seen as a basis for a refutation and response to the re-emergent neo-kharijite sects in Islam. Ansari's chapter critically examines Nursi's exegetical work, the *Risale-i Nur*, and discusses his theological argumentations and methodology that refuted the prevailing discourses of his contemporaries, particularly those of the neo-kharijites. The aim of this analysis is to distinguish between Nursi's theology-based apolitical non-violent activism, which can be contrasted to the theological arguments that endorsed an activism rooted in political Islam. The comparative analysis of these theological arguments provides a solid framework to analyse contemporary Islamic movements and their political, civic responses to the world, ranging from non-violence, to social and political activism and finally to violent extremism.

Finally, Derya Iner's chapter on proactive religious activism aimed at eradicating radicalism argues that religious views can be instrumentalised to legitimise violent actions. Yet, paradoxically, religion is also used by mainstream Muslim leaders to tame the emotional eruptions of Muslims and curb violent reactions in the face of injustices and grievances. This chapter focuses on Fethullah Gülen's sermons over a three-year period delivered right after major arrests, seizures and vandalisms targeting his followers in Turkey since 2014. The chapter analyses how Gülen guides his followers against violent reactions through his religious speeches. Examining the influence of religious rehabilitation from a real-life scenario, Iner proposes a proactive strategy that continuously and unconditionally produces positive thinking and action, thereby leaving no room for radicalism and no need for its refutation.

As the book highlights, one of the biggest challenges confronting studies of violent extremism is the multitude of theories that still cannot exhibit any level of methodological precision, let alone a clear analytical power, especially when it comes to the prevention of violent extremism. The growth in current literature on this topic is undeniably important, since violent extremism and radicalism are not diminishing. Yet, as the contributions to this book collectively argue, when studying violent extremism, understanding the world view of groups like ISIS is essential. Merely stating their claims are un-Islamic is not sufficient, while the wrong diagnosis in terms of root causes can have dramatic effects and possibly further contribute to the radicalisation process (Lindekilde 2012).

Systematic reviews of literature regarding radicalisation and violent extremism involving the review of 1280 articles identified seven key drivers conceptualised as: uncertainty-identity theory, quest for significance, devoted actor model, mindset and world view, reactive approach motivation for aggressive religious radicalisation and the two-pyramids model (Gøtzsche-Astrup 2018). The common thread linking these various drivers is the association of violent extremism to classical Islamic concepts that are used by radical groups. Therefore, regardless of how one approaches the analysis of these historical and theological drivers, religious justification seems to be at the core of discursive constructions of violent extremism. While other important factors, such as psychological and mental health, socio-economic deprivation and identity crisis among Muslim youth, can add to the risk of an individual's embrace of violent extremism, these alone and without religious narratives remain insufficient as conduits towards radicalisation. That is, religious framings and theological discourses, which have been distorted from the mainstream understanding, are at the centre of contemporary articulations of twenty-first-century violent extremism.

Conclusion

This book provides insights into the theological arguments put forward by radicals as part of their overarching narrative by scholars of the field. This is done by analysing inherent Islamic concepts, such as jihad, *hijra* (migration), *takfir* (excommunication) and caliphate, which have been misinterpreted and misused in an unprecedented way by these groups. Through the use of social media, violent Islamist groups have been able to reach far and wide to influence Muslims, especially Muslim youth (Weimann 2014; Klausen 2014)

and in many cases recruit them to their extremist aggressive agendas. The importance of reclaiming these concepts from extremists has been discussed to some degree in the literature (Abou El Fadl 2007; Yaqoubi 2016); however, very few studies or publications have sought to do this in a critical multidimensional manner, taking into consideration a number of other important factors. This book has started the conversation by delving into an analysis of some of the fundamental problems in the way Islam has been used to justify violent extremism. The mainstream understanding of concepts, Qur'anic verses and *hadith* that have been loosely invoked by radicals have been carefully analysed and in many cases refuted by experts in the interconnected fields of Islamic studies, jurisprudence, history, political science and sociology. This multi-faceted rebuttal was addressed in particular in the first section of the book.

However, this has not been done in isolation. Other factors that have played a critical role in influencing the response of Muslims to the religious narrative of radicals have also been explored in this book, particularly in the second section. The counter-narrative of radicals would have minimal effect if it took place in a socio-political vacuum. It is now a well-established fact the radical narrative has a significant impact on youth who are feeling disenfranchised and lack a sense of identity, in particular, within the Western countries where they live (Verkuyten 2018), while at the same time being affected by their Muslim brothers and sisters suffering in various parts of the world (Stern and Berger 2015). Furthermore, there is the problem of a lack of Islamic grounding in the religion, especially among second-generation Muslim migrants and Muslim converts. The latter group in particular encounters radical groups before they have accessed and been exposed to a strong foundation in mainstream Islamic teaching, which further complicates the situation in relation to overall understanding of core Islamic principles. The overall economic, political and educational state (or lack of) within many Muslim countries does not help the cause (Halliday 2003). A combination of all these factors exacerbates the way certain individuals and groups respond to the perceived injustices, and unfortunately in many cases ISIS-type narratives ensure that this becomes a violent extremist response.

The first two sections of the book converge around an emerging gap within the broad violent extremism agenda: the critical role of religious and community leadership, which was discussed in depth in the third section. How community leaders encourage individuals and groups to respond to what they perceive as injustice plays a critical role in what takes

place at grassroots level. A leader can inspire cross-cultural and transnational initiatives and in some cases social movements, which are able to respond in non-violent ways to such extremist narratives and practices. It is in this area that more research is needed in particular around the role of religious (Islamic) leadership in the West and how this might play a protective role, in particular in relation to the radicalisation of Muslim youth. The lack of clear and strong leadership has left a critical vacuum that influencers in the mould of ISIS have tried to occupy.

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PART I

Contesting the Theological Foundations of Violent Extremism

CHAPTER 2

Causes of Radicalisation: Theological Arguments as the Ultimate Trigger

Zuleyha Keskin and Fatih Tuncer

Introduction

Violent extremism has left its mark in the Western discourse in an era where radicalism continues to be a threat around the world. Since September 11, acts of violent extremism continue to play out in localities that are distant from unstable war-torn regions, making the global effects of violent extremism seem more real. This has led to the development of many theories to identify the triggers and causes of the resultant violence, such as mental health, economic deprivation, identity crisis, foreign policy, social injustice, Islamophobia and political instability (Gøtzsche-Astrup 2018). While these factors are critical contributors, rarely are they the ultimate trigger for violent actions undertaken by Muslim radicals. The distorted religious narrative rooted in Islamic theology cannot be ignored as a contributing factor to the pursuit of violent acts. Analysing the issue from a

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_2

theological perspective becomes an imperative in order to understand the mindset that exists behind these scenarios. This in no way makes a direct link between Islam and causes of violent extremism, but rather it argues that the misinterpretation of Islamic scriptures contributes to the radicalisation of Muslims, particularly Muslim youth.

When the words of radical leaders such as Bin Laden, Maqdisi and Baghdadi are analysed, it becomes apparent that religious terminology is a fundamental part of their everyday discourse. The use of such language in their verbal communication or through their media outlets, such as the *Dabiq* magazine, simply cannot be ignored since these media outlets are their mouthpieces through which the masses are reached, including Muslims in the West who are otherwise far and remote from the everyday activities of these radical leaders.

Putting aside the outreach of radical leaders for a moment, the mindset of these radicalised individuals begs the question: what causes such a distorted interpretation of Islam to be embraced by a loud minority when almost all of the 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide would not conform to such a skewed interpretation of their religion? Radicalised groups have existed throughout time. While the focus in recent times has been al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the names of radical groups change, but certain principles of such groups do not. Historically, Kharijites were the first to have a puritanical approach to religion, which created a warped understanding of Islam from its origins (Tasgin and Cam 2016). Kharijites (Khawarij, literally "those who strayed from the righteous path") are a group of Muslims who initially supported the caliphate of the fourth caliph, Ali, but later rejected him because they believed him to be guilty of compromising God's will when he agreed to arbitrate rather than continue to fight against the supporters of Mu'awiyah—the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty (Ashraf 2004). The sticking point was that Mu'awiyah did not recognise Ali's role as the caliph and declared himself to be the caliph instead. As a result, the Kharijites opposed both Ali and Mu'awiyah as caliph, as well as any Muslim who accepted their views (Antúnez and Tellidis 2013). According to the Kharijites, Ali and Mu'awiyah had strayed from the teachings of the Qur'an, which took them out of the parameters of the religion and made them apostates. To the Kharijites, this meant Ali and Mu'awiyah should be killed for their practice of "apostasy." The outcome was devastating, since Ali, the son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, was murdered, and there were attempts to murder Mu'awiyah. The division within the Muslim world had been initiated. With this backdrop in mind, groups

such as al-Qaeda and ISIS have been referred to as neo-Kharijites due to the similar traits that exist between them and the Kharijites (Sonn and Farrar 2010). The lack of recognition of the existing authority and declaring themselves as the authority is a striking similarity.

While Kharijites and neo-Kharijites are viewed as un-Islamic by mainstream Muslims, the religious narrative they use cannot go unnoticed. To the unknowing eye, the narrative of such individuals can appear very Islamic. Furthermore, the narrative has a strong authoritative tone, giving the impression it cannot be questioned since it is what God wants. Khaled Abou El Fadl (2001) analyses this style of communication in his book titled *Speaking in God's Name* where he criticises Wahhabism in particular, a group also referred to as neo-Kharijite (Sonn and Farrar 2010). According to Abou El Fadl, Wahhabism is a destructive force that has oversimplified Islamic interpretation by stripping it from its rich history of diversity to suit a particular mindset, which violates the foundations of Islamic principles. The authoritative narrative of neo-Kharijites captivates certain Muslims who are drawn to the abundant citing of Qur'anic and hadith sources by individuals of this group. For the unknowing eye, the quoting of these primary Islamic sources incorrectly will go unnoticed. The very fact that the narrative is immersed with Islamic terminology makes it appear very Islamic at face value.

In this context, this chapter explores three key theological terms used by extremists that "legitimise" violent extremism within their narrative: jihad, *takfir* (excommunication from the religion) and *dar al-harb* (land of war). Various quotes of violent extremists are cited and analysed to demonstrate how these terms are misused, which will demonstrate the serious underlying problem in the way Islam is theologically approached by such groups. The response to their claims is from the mainstream understanding of Islamic interpretation. It should be highlighted at this point that the three chosen terms are not the only religious terms that are inappropriately used by extremists, there are many more. However, the intent here is not to discredit every single claim made by extremists, but instead to demonstrate that there is an underlying flaw in the way Islam is interpreted and misinterpreted.

After having this zoomed-in analysis of how certain terms are understood by extremists, the chapter then looks at three contemporary Muslim scholars who have been vocal with their criticism of groups like ISIS and the way ISIS has interpreted the religion. Not only do these three scholars sum up the points this chapter seeks to make, but it also provides a voice

for these scholars, which often is not provided in academic discourse. Without taking note of what influential contemporary Muslim scholars have to say on this matter, the academic discussion around the causes of violent extremism would remain incomplete. Violent extremism is not just a psychological, economic, social or political phenomena, far from it. These violent acts are being undertaken in the name of religion. Therefore, the voices of mainstream Muslim scholars need to be heard in a world where the voices of violent extremists are loud and clear. At this point, however, it is important to determine whether there is a need to discuss the religious narrative, as argued in this chapter.

Religious Narratives

Graeme Wood wrote an article where he claimed Islamic State (ISIS) is Islamic, that it is actually very Islamic (Wood 2015). He added that Muslims can reject ISIS, and nearly all do, but in his view, it is absurd to deny its essential character as "a religious, millenarian group" (ibid.). Wood's view on the matter is not isolated. The general population in the West are influenced by ISIS' claim to be Islamic, concluding it therefore must be.

Wood's statements were met with a lot of intellectual criticism, as described by Cottee (2017, 441):

> Wood's article provoked fierce controversy, almost immediately. It is not difficult to see why. ISIS has become notorious for its terrible brutality and violence. Since its dramatic rise to prominence in the summer of 2014, the group has slaughtered thousands of defenceless Iraqi soldiers and Shi'ite civilians, gunning them into trenches. It has raped and enslaved hundreds of women. It has brutalized children by forcing them to watch scenes of horrific cruelty. It has presided over public crucifixions in Raqqa. It has coerced boys as young as 14 to carry out suicide missions. It has launched a campaign of murderous aggression against gay men. It has stolen and destroyed ancient and irreplaceable artefacts. And it has created a vast library of atrocity porn that degrades not only the helpless victims who appear in it but also those who watch it.

This raises the question, when someone claims to do something in the name of Islam, does this automatically make it Islamic, as ISIS certainly claims to be acting in the name of Islam. Such an assumption can be extremely destructive if ISIS' publications are to be considered. ISIS published a digital magazine titled *Dabiq* between July 2014 and July 2016

(Ingram 2016), which provides insight into ISIS' mindset. Within this magazine, ISIS' actions are always argued to be Islamic. "Justification … is always offered: by arguing that the practice is in accordance with the Qur'an, the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, or the practices of the early Muslim community" (Kibble 2016, 138).

Due to this strong association between groups like ISIS and Islamic terminology, the need to develop a counter-narrative becomes very important. Braddock and Horgan (2016, 381) argue that counter-narratives are effective in debunking radical religious beliefs and therefore are necessary to combat radicalisation. According to Jacobson, countering radical ideology is an essential component of preventing and defeating violence that can potentially emerge from such ideology (Jacobson 2009, 1). The Quilliam Foundation proposes that extremist ideology must be criticised and refuted "wherever it is found," a process that includes developing an effective counter-narrative to rebut the message put forward by radical extremist organisations (Jacobson 2009).

In the spirit of such rebuttal, an open letter to the self-proclaimed caliph of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was written and signed by numerous Muslim theologians, lawmakers and community leaders across the world and made available in ten different languages ("Open Letter to Baghdadi" 2014). In the UK, the *Haqiqah* (truth) magazine has been established as a dedicated counter-narrative publication initiated by a number of imams to counter ISIS propaganda with the intent of exposing its brutal reality (Haqiqah Magazine n.d.).

As can be seen, the need to discuss the religious narrative of violent extremist groups is seen to be a necessity and there have been some discussions taking place already. However, most of the discussions have been in non-academic environments. Muhammad Yaqoubi's book, titled *Refuting ISIS: Destroying its Religious Foundations and Proving it has Strayed from Islam and that Fighting it is an Obligation*, is a very good example of such a discussion. While the book is written with a Muslim audience in mind, it is not accessible to a wider audience due to its writing style. It is time to bring this discourse into the academic conversation where other conversations are taking place. It is with this spirit that the three Islamic concepts mentioned in the introduction are now explored.

It is important to highlight the concepts being discussed are not exclusively the problem; they are an important part of Islamic tradition, and it is not wise to try and discredit them while trying to discredit the radical narrative. After all, these concepts have played an important role in the

Muslim world when they have been used in the correct context. Therefore, what is needed is an analysis of how these concepts are manipulated and misused rather than disregarding the concepts altogether.

Jihad

Jihad is a concept that has been incorrectly defined in mainstream media as a violent struggle. A controversial definition of the term has also engrained itself in various dictionaries. According to the Oxford Dictionary, jihad means "A struggle or fight against the enemies of Islam" (English Oxford Living Dictionaries n.d.). In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, jihad is defined as "a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty; also: a personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline" but also "a crusade for a principle or belief" (Merriam-Webster 2018).

Such definitions are influenced by the way the word is used by certain individuals of today. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who is "arguably the main spiritual father of the radical ideology known as Salafi-jihadism" (al-Saud 2017, 1), refers to jihad as the "highest rank" of showing *al-bara'* (disavowal) and enmity by "striving to demise *al-nuzum al-taghutiyya* (the tyrannical or idolatrous regimes) and fighting its servants until the religion is all to God" (ibid., 3). Not only is jihad glorified according to al-Maqdisi, but it is made a point of focus as an obligation of individual jihad when some or all of the *umma*, or Muslim nation, is under threat (Stern and Berger 2015). In his speeches, ISIS leader Baghdadi also refers to jihad at every opportunity and emphasises that jihad has been made obligatory by God as "the best of deeds and the peak of Islam" (Orton 2014).

To provide an example of how the concept of jihad has been used to recruit, the story of Rauchan Gazakov, the ringleader of an al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group, is noteworthy. In his own words, Gazakov explains how he found himself in Syria. Gazakov felt it was his duty to take part in jihad by sneaking into Syria through Turkey with the assistance of al-Qaeda recruits ("Recruited by Al-Qaeda" 2013). It was his belief that going to Syria to fight against the enemy was his way of fulfilling his jihad duties; it was his driving force to leave behind everything that was familiar to him in order to fight the infidels.

Furthermore, the instrumentalisation of jihad is often linked to a sense of glorification of the act. Twenty-three-year-old Ifthekar Jaman, a British jihadi, coined the phrase "five-star jihad" to describe the fun he was having fighting in Syria, "which caught on as a rallying cry to his countrymen,

who showed up in ever-increasing numbers" (Stern and Berger 2015). The approach to jihad by radical interpretations took many people by surprise, including Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, aka Dr. Fadl, a former advocate of the Egyptian Jihad and al-Qaeda. Dr. Fadl, who considers himself to be a Salafi, wrote the longest rebuttal of modern jihadism (Sing 2016). In his 1000-page treatise, which was written in 2004, Fadl argued that *takfir* (excommunication from the religion) had been excessively applied to other Muslims, and jihad was used to kill civilians and justify bloodshed (Wright 2008). Therefore, the application of jihad was forever evolving and becoming more violent and extreme. Jihad had become a tool to fight and kill anyone who opposed a particular approach which was becoming narrower and narrower.

However, to gain better understanding of the word jihad, its use in the Qur'an needs to be examined. In Islamic lexicon, the derivatives from the root word *jhd* have the meaning of "struggling," "striving" or "exertion." In the extra-Qur'anic literature, jihad has been conjoined to the phrase *fi sabil allah* (literally, in the path of God), leading to the phrase "striving in the path of God" (*al-jihad fi sabil allah*), which can be applied to different contexts (Afsaruddin 2013, 2). Depending on the context, it could mean "to lead a virtuous life, to fight injustice and oppression, reform and create a just society and, if necessary, engage in armed struggle to defend one's community and religion" (Esposito 2015, 1069).

Therefore, jihad in the Qur'an cannot be reduced to a combative dimension only but must be realised as a broader concept. Any kind of struggle undertaken for the sake of good, including studying, working, taking care of one's parents and addressing social injustice, can be considered jihad. Yet, radicals insist on militant jihad, where the identified enemy must be fought and killed under their rules and understanding, exclusively focusing on verses of the Qur'an that have been taken out of context to serve their purpose.

The following Qur'anic verse, which has famously become the "sword verse," is often cited: "When the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush…" (Qur'an 9:5). Without an understanding of the historical context, relationship to revelation or consideration of the many works done by Muslim exegetes, this verse could give the impression it commands Muslims to kill non-Muslims wherever they may be found. However, when proper analysis is undertaken, it appears otherwise. In his exegesis work, Tabari (d. 923) explains that this

verse is regarding polytheists who broke an agreement with Prophet Muhammad before its deadline, as indicated in verse 9:4 (1982). For the idolaters who did not break their agreement, God ordered his Prophet to maintain the accord. To have a further appreciation of the context of this verse, it is worth noting what Abdel Haleem (2001, 65–66), a contemporary professor of Islamic studies, has to say on the matter:

> The full picture is given in 9:1–15, which gives many reasons for the order to fight such polytheists. They continuously broke their agreements and aided others against the Muslims, they started hostilities against the Muslims, barred others from becoming Muslims, expelled Muslims from the Holy Mosque and even from their own homes. At least eight times the passage mentions their misdeeds against the Muslims. Consistent with restrictions on war elsewhere in the Qur'an, the immediate context of this 'Sword Verse' exempts such polytheists as do not break their agreements and who keep the peace with the Muslims (9:7). It orders that those enemies seeking safe conduct should be protected and delivered to the place of safety they seek (9:6). The whole of this context to v.5, with all its restrictions, is ignored by those who simply isolate one part of a sentence to build their theory of war in Islam on what is termed 'The Sword Verse' even when the word 'sword' does not occur anywhere in the Qur'an.

From this understanding of verse 9:5, the meaning of fighting is related to events where Muslims were attacked and a treaty was betrayed. God revealed the verse to give them permission to defend themselves after a period of suffering. Although the Muslims were given this order, the Qur'an also commanded them to always seek peace, as the fundamental message of the Qur'an is peace, and fighting should be limited to "those who fight you" (Qur'an 2:190).

However, according to those with an abrogationist–expansionist view, the Prophet sought to conquer the lands of the unbelievers, and these Qur'anic verses allowed warfare to perpetually take place so this could be achieved. This meant the polytheists needed to convert or be fought according to this view (Khalil 2018). Some scholars went so far to say the sword verse abrogated all other peaceful verses of the Qur'an, including: "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also]…" (Qur'an 8:61). Yet, this view was that of a minority group who was contested by many Qur'an commentators (Afsaruddin 2013, 280).

Furthermore, the Qur'anic verse "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion…" (Qur'an, 2:256) is of paramount importance in this context. In a war scenario, where war is considered the last resort and

treaties have been violated, it is still not a licence to kill all non-believers. The next verse reads: "And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of God. Then deliver him to his place of safety…" (Qur'an 9:6). If all polytheists were to be killed, as claimed by some interpreters of verse 9:5, this next verse would be redundant which it clearly is not. Instead, "the person would be told the message of the Qur'an but not coerced into accepting that message. Thereafter, he or she would be escorted to safety regardless of his or her religion" (Hathout 2002, 53).

These types of misinterpretations encourage individuals to undertake violent extremism and justify it with Qur'anic verses. The misapplication of military warfare or killing of innocent people is unacceptable in Islam: "… whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely…" (Qur'an 5:32). The Qur'an clearly equates the killing of an innocent human to the killing of all humanity; therefore, taking of even one life cannot be simplified. Also, the Qur'an forbids commencement of violence against the enemy even in a legitimate battle and warns believers to "Fight in the way of God those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, God does not like transgressors" (Qur'an 2:190).

Another very important point with regard to declaring military jihad is that it needs to be declared by an established government; it cannot be declared by individuals (Knapp 2003, 87). This is a well-established understanding of jihad throughout history and is further discussed with its nuances in Chap. 3. It suffices for now to say that jihad has been understood in ways which are not aligned with contextual and mainstream understanding. Furthermore, radicals overcome the hurdle of speaking against current Muslim leaders by declaring *takfir* (excommunication) of Muslim leaders who they disagree with, arguing that jihad becomes an individual responsibility since it is not being undertaken by the *takfiri* state. This brings the discussion to the second misused concept.

Takfir (Excommunication)

Takfir has become one of the key theological concepts manipulated by contemporary jihadist radicals to serve their mission of establishing a caliphate or Islamic state. Linguistically, *takfir* stems from the root word *kufr* and means charging someone with being an unbeliever in God. Theologically, and in the context of jihadism, "*Takfir* is to pass a judgement that a Muslim has left Islam or is at its opposite in unbelief" (Yaqoubi

2016, 61). Excommunication of Muslims is common in radical groups. Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and ISIS all follow *takfiri* schools, although with varying severity and application. Boko Haram has a stance where those who do not join *Jamaat Ahl as-Sunnah Lid-dawa wa al-Jihad* (Sunni Group for Proselytization and Jihad), including mainstream Muslims and Salafists who have "sold out" to the Nigerian state, are not part of *Ahl al-Sunna* (on the path of Sunnah) and therefore are classified as *kafir* (infidels) (Zenn and Pieri 2017).

ISIS has become infamous for taking *takfir* to a new level, excommunicating the majority of Muslims around the world (Yaqoubi 2016), so much so that al-Qaeda accuses ISIS of too much *takfir*ism (Zenn and Pieri 2017). Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was mentored by Maqdisi, took this interpretation of *takfir* to such an extreme level that it led him to excommunicate Muslims and kill them, for which he was rebuked even by Maqdisi (Wood 2015).

Takfir remains a very sensitive issue in Islamic theology and was not invoked so easily in the historical context, where in a few instances it was pronounced by qualified Islamic scholars under extremely specific circumstances (Hegghammer 2009). God warns believers in the Qur'an "O you who have believed … and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer,'…" (Qur'an 4:94). This verse clearly forbids the excommunication of any Muslim even if they do not practise their religious obligations, so long as they utter Muslim salutation and thus claim to be a Muslim.

In one important *hadith*, Prophet Muhammad prohibited Muslims from practising excommunication by explaining: "If somebody accuses another of *fusuq* (by calling him '*fasiq*' i.e. a wicked person) or accuses him of *kufr*, such an accusation will revert to him (i.e. the accuser) if his companion (the accused) is innocent" (Sahih Bukhari). Classical jurists such as the founder of the Sunni Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence, Abu Hanifa, explained even the worst of sinners cannot be called *kafir* so long as they do not consider the sin as lawful (Yaqoubi 2016).

In light of such evidence, the practice of excommunication of Muslims is not a simple matter in Islam, and even the major Islamic schools of thought shied away from engaging in the practice. However, today, radicals excommunicate *en masse* to justify the killing of Muslims, while avoiding ideological opposition from their followers and the wider Muslim community. Such killings are also closely connected to the understanding of *dar al-harb* (land of war), which is addressed in the next section.

Dar al-harb (Land of War)

Dar al-harb and *dar al-Islam* are historic terms that continue to be used by radical Islamist groups. In July 2014, ISIS declared its so-called caliphate and formulated an answer to the question, "why join?" In his first sermon as a self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi responded to this question and called believers around the world to make *hijra* (pilgrimage) to the land of Islam (*dar al-Islam*), declaring it a religious obligation (Stern and Berger 2015). In this respect, the land of ISIS was claimed to be *dar al-Islam* and everywhere else was by default *dar al-harb*. That is, land with which ISIS was at war.

On this point, an influential propaganda video was also released by ISIS' Al Hayat Media Centre. *The Chosen Few of Different Lands* was the title of the video that featured a Canadian fighter named Andre Poulin (Stern and Berger 2015) who explains: "I had money, I had good family. But at the end of the day, it's still *dar al-kufr* [a land of disbelief] and at the end of the day you cannot obey Allah fully as you can by living in a Muslim country, in an Islamic state" (Bell 2014). The desire to live in a land of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) was the driving force for Poulin to leave everything behind, including family, to make his way to Syria so that he no longer had to be exposed to a *dar al-kufr* (land of disbelief), which is almost synonymous with *dar al-harb*. As evidenced from this case, the belief in such lands (*dar*) is a very strong drive to leave everything one has and migrate (*hijra*) to the land one is being called to.

Furthermore, the notion of *dar al-harb* feeds the radical mindset by justifying the attacking of non-Muslims anywhere at any time (Abou El Fadl 2005). On this point, ISIS' official spokesman, Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami, acknowledged not everyone will be able to make *hijra* to the "Islamic state"; therefore, they had another duty upon them:

> If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military …. (*Dabiq* 2014–2016)

There are clear instructions here that a person living in the West is living in *dar al-harb* which mean all non-Muslims can be targeted and killed.

When the concept of *dar al-harb* is explored, it is noted to be a medieval concept that had a specific purpose in the particular era in which it was developed. Historically, the notions of *dar al-harb* and *dar al-Islam* were used to map out the geopolitical situation of the world in which they lived (Ramadan 2005). It was a means to know which powers were at play and identify dangers based on allegiances that existed or did not exist for that matter. Therefore, *dar al-Islam* was a place where Muslims were safe and able to freely practise their religion. On the other hand, *dar al-harb* was a territory where Muslims were not protected and therefore unsafe for Muslims to live (Ramadan 2005).

This dichotomous approach to the world is telling of the circumstances that existed when Muslim jurists developed such concepts. Based on the norms of international relations at the time, unless there was a peace treaty or agreement signed, "every nation or empire in existence assumed itself to be in a belligerent relationship with the rest of the world" (Abou El Fadl 2005, 226). Thus, this context heavily influenced the division of territories into two different camps: fellow co-religionists in *dar al-Islam* and non-Muslims occupying *dar al-harb*.

While the notion that the world should be divided into two dichotomous abodes or territories has had a significant impact on Islamic jurisprudence, there is nothing in the Qur'an or Sunnah to support such a division (Abou El Fadl 2005; Ramadan 2005). The Qur'an and Sunnah say Muslims should see themselves as one nation (*umma*), but they do not say the world should be divided into two camps and Muslims should be in a state of war with non-Muslim territories.

Scholars felt the need to develop a third concept to better describe a situation that did not fit into the first two categories: *dar al-sulh* (abode of peace) or *dar al-ahd* (abode of truce) (Parvin and Sommer 1980). This was an abode that was not Muslim but had a peaceful relationship with the Muslim world, either through a formal peace treaty or through an established customary practice (Abou El Fadl 2005). The non-Muslim Nubia and Abyssinia in the first century are examples of this as they had friendly relationships with the Islamic empire at the time. Such peace treaties can be found throughout the history of the Muslim world. With such abodes, under no circumstances could the territory be negatively impinged upon by any Muslim individual or group. Such peace treaties are common today between the world's nations. According to classical law, no Muslim can attack countries with which there are peace treaties, due to personal justifications (Abou El Fadl 2005).

Traditionally and jurisprudentially, *dar al-harb* would be occupied by a nation declaring war. The manifestation would be very similar to what is observed in today's world where a country can declare war on another country. However, since radicals believe Muslim nations are corrupt, any peace treaties that Muslim countries may have with other nations are no longer binding. Therefore, jihad against *dar al-harb* is no longer seen as a collective duty undertaken by a nation. This is a complete severance from the past as it introduces an act that goes against long-standing tradition and is now interpreted as an individual responsibility (Knapp 2003). Furthermore, the radical groups are aware they do not have the power to take on a nation's armed military. Through radical behaviour and by undertaking random terror acts on individuals, they seek to bring nations to their knees (Abou El Fadl 2005).

With the *dar al-harb* worldview, trust in the local context is minimal. "The result, extremists fear, is that Muslim youth will fail to understand the imperatives upon them to work toward establishing Islam as the dominant power in society" (Barclay 2011, 77). Thus, there is a mindset that there is ongoing warfare taking place. The notion of *dar al-harb* also removes any loyalty one would have to the country of residence and citizenship. Anwar al-Awlaqi (2010, 56) states:

> Muslims are not bound by the covenants of citizenship and visa that exist between them and nations of *dar al-harb* [the non-Muslim world]. It is the consensus of our scholars that the property of the disbelievers in *dar al-harb* is halal [permissible] for the Muslims and is a legitimate target for the *mujahidin* [jihad fighters].

The notion of *dar al-harb* impacts on the worldview and actions of an individual in multiple ways. It is a key contributor to radical behaviour, since it is a means of justifying violence towards innocent people. *Dar al-harb* can be pursued as part of violent jihadism as a result of the radical misdiagnosis that the Muslim world is suffering because of the West; therefore, the West is at war with Muslims. The solution posed is that Muslims must fight back individually against all Westerners or, in relation to ISIS, Muslims must make *hijra* to the Islamic state and be in a perpetual state of war with non-believers.

As can be seen, the misinterpretation of these three concepts can be the basis for violence against Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Furthermore, these three concepts are not the only ones that are misinterpreted. There

are many others, including the concepts of caliphate, Islamic state, slavery and *naskh* (abrogation). Therefore, the need to explain these concepts and importance of theologically refuting the radical narrative cannot be underestimated, particularly when Muslims are exposed to the radical narrative more than ever before through social media. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss every misused Islamic concept. The final section of this chapter looks at three contemporary scholars and their responses to radicalism and violent extremism. In a way, the following section is a response to the radical narrative as a whole.

Contemporary Scholars' Stance Against Radicalism

Many influential contemporary scholars have spoken out against the use of religion to justify violent extremism. Hamza Yusuf, who lives in the US, is one of those prominent scholars who has not held back his views when terror attacks have taken place. In 2016, he wrote a blog titled *The Plague Within* where the sole purpose of the article was to criticise radicalism. In the article, Yusuf states: "a faith-eating plague has been spreading across the global Muslim community. This insidious disease has a source, and that source must be identified, so we can begin to inoculate our communities against it" (Yusuf 2016). Yusuf proceeds to explain that terroristic Islamists are a hybrid of an exclusivist *takfiri* version of Wahhabi ideology. He acknowledges the interventions and misadventures of the West cannot be denied but then emphasises that Muslims have never reacted as these "fanatics" have in the history of the Muslim world. This is an important point since most who refute the radical narrative are criticised for not criticising the West for its wrongdoings. Yusuf acknowledges that such wrongdoings exist, but that is not his focus. The two wrongdoings can and should be separated and evaluated separately. Basically, he is making the point that two wrongs do not make a right.

Furthermore, according to Yusuf, one cannot say the militancy seen in groups like ISIS has nothing to do with religion, as "it has everything to do with religion: misguided, fanatical, ideological, and politicized religion," and "mosques and schools have been breeding grounds for an ideological Islamism rather than Islam" (Yusuf 2016). The fact Yusuf refers to radicalism as a plague is noteworthy. That is, this ideology is spreading like a disease where mosques and schools have become breeding grounds, destroying anything good and healthy that comes in its path. The response needed, according to Yusuf, is scholars' voices to counteract these views. The mainstream

teaching of Islam, where this radical narrative is tackled, is essential to address the problem.

Fethullah Gülen, a prominent Muslim scholar and leader, also speaks openly and critically about terrorism and violent extremism. In an article titled *Muslims Must Combat the Extremist Cancer*, Gülen states "Having suffered oppression is no excuse for causing it or for failing to condemn terrorism" (Gülen 2015). Like Yusuf, Gülen separates the wrongs imposed on the Muslim world and the necessary reaction of Muslims to those wrongs. Once again, this is a Muslim scholar responding to a typical reaction by certain Muslims who will justify actions of violence by stating "look what they have done to us." The focus is not the injustices towards Muslims—that needs analysis in its own right. As a Muslim scholar, Gülen emphasises the responsibility of a Muslim when they experience or witness injustices. The use of the cancer analogy is also striking. As with the plague analogy used by Yusuf, it suggests a mutation has taken place in the "Muslim body," distorting Islam from its real essence. If such illnesses go untreated, these diseased cells can cause the mutation of other "healthy cells" which leads to the spread of the cancer.

Gülen also emphasises the acts we see today are not in line with the historical approach to such events, which disproves and dispels any religious justifications made by violent extremists (Gülen 2015). Once again, a serious disruption is highlighted between what is done now by radicals and what has been the long traditional practice. As part of the counter-narrative approach, Gülen sees religious education as critical to combatting terrorism. "When religious freedom is denied, as it has been for decades in parts of the Muslim world, faith grows in the shadows, leaving it to be interpreted by unqualified and radical figures" (Gülen 2015). This is exactly what is seen in groups like al-Qaeda, ISIS and Boko Haram, where violent actions are justified with religious text in a way that cannot be justified according to contemporary mainstream scholars and long-standing traditional understanding of Islam.

Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, a Pakistani-born Muslim who resides in Canada, published a 600-page *fatwa* (legal ruling) in 2010 that declared terrorism and suicide attacks were un-Islamic (Tahir-ul-Qadri 2011). Not only did Tahir-ul-Qadri argue that terrorism was un-Islamic, but the very act denotes rejection of faith, that is, the act of terrorism takes a person outside the folds of Islam. The *fatwa* is "arguably the most comprehensive theological refutation of Islamist terrorism to date," according to the Quilliam Foundation (2010). The book is immersed in Qur'anic verses

and *hadith* which dismantles the radical theology to go as far as claiming that people undertaking acts of terror cannot be Muslim.

Tahir-ul-Qadri continues to be vocal against terrorism since writing his book in 2010, as he sees it as dangerous for youth. "Terrorist organizations are brainwashing the Muslim youth and leading them astray by misinterpreting the teachings of Islam" (Minhaj-ul-Quran 2015). He continues with a stronger stance:

> The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that a time would come when the youth and immature people with imperfect knowledge will spread chaos by using his 'Sunna' and Islam. They would spill blood of innocent people and talk about establishing the dominance of truth but they would have nothing to do with Islam or his 'Sunna'. He (PBUH) ordained to the faithful to crush such elements with full might. (Minhaj-ul-Quran 2015)

Tahir-ul-Qadri's zero tolerance for terrorism leaves its mark on Muslims, since he is an Islamic authority with a significant following. Like Yusuf and Gülen, Tahir-ul-Qadri has extensive qualifications in Islamic jurisprudence and classical Islam, making their arguments compelling for Muslims, particularly in the prevention of violent extremism.

The three scholars referenced in this article are not the only ones to have spoken out against radicalism and violent extremism, nor are they the only scholars who have publicly challenged such ideologies. The significance of these three scholars is their influence and the following they have in the Muslim world, particularly in the West. However, as presented in the three examples, sound Islamic knowledge aligned with traditional Islamic understanding that considers the contemporary world's condition are essential to refute the radical narrative. Without addressing the misinterpretations and developing a theological counter-narrative, this plague or cancer will continue to spread.

Conclusion

There is no simple explanation as to what causes acts of violent extremism. On the contrary, in a world of complexity, it would be naïve to think there was a simple answer. However, among the complexity of violent extremism, a common thread can be found in the narrative of radicals, which is the use of religion to justify acts of violence. That is, when the narrative of radical leaders such as Maqdisi and Baghdadi or those who they have

influenced are analysed, it becomes apparent very quickly that there is a strong presence of well-known Islamic concepts within their narrative. The concepts are extracted in a masterful manner from the Qur'an and hadith to justify the acts of violence make them appear Islamic. The power of this narrative should not be underestimated, and it should not be forgotten that, ultimately, radicals engage in violence because they feel they are fulfilling their religious obligation, or because they believe their religion permits such actions.

This makes a counter-narrative essential, to reclaim the religion from violent extremists and hand it back to the mainstream Muslims who make up a significant majority of the Muslim world. This requires refuting the theological claims of radicals by authorised scholars like Hamza Yusuf, Fethullah Gülen and Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, who have the following to make their voices heard. If mainstream scholars' voices are not out there, including in the academic discourse, they will be drowned out by the radical voices that continue to have an impact on the Muslim youth.

It became apparent in the comments of the three scholars who were studied in this chapter that one of the most important aspects of refuting theological claims of violent extremists is the establishment of Islamic educational institutions and Islamic councils that are representative of and accepted as authentic spaces for learning by the community. Formal education, such as that provided through Islamic studies in universities, can be important hubs of learning and theological debate. Furthermore, academic discussions need to be more accessible to grassroots and wider communities if they are to have meaningful impact. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to propose practical solutions to countering violent extremism; that was not its purpose. What was the purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate the radical narrative, which is immersed in religious terms, cannot be ignored and must be responded to if violent extremism is to be combatted.

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CHAPTER 3

Refuting the Extremist Interpretations of the Text and the Prophetic Traditions: The Case of Qur'an 2:256

Hakan Coruh

Introduction

The world has recently witnessed violence and terror attacks by radical religious groups. Discussions continue on the nature and driver of violent extremism, radicalisation, and organisations such as al-Qaida and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). According to some, "homegrown" European violent extremists are violent nihilists who adopt Islam rather than religious fundamentalists who turn to violence. As highlighted in Chap. 2, the ideologies of groups Al-Qaeda and ISIS are not new in the history of the Muslim world, but at the same time, the rise of fundamentalism cannot be oversimplified.

Various factors are emphasised as the causes and drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism, including personal and individual factors such as lack of belonging; socio-cultural factors like marginalisation, racism, and social

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_3

exclusion; and political factors like frustration and injustices (Tahiri and Grossman 2013). Roy (2017) states that it is essential to understand contemporary Muslim radicals' violence alongside other similar forms of violence and radicalism, which includes "generational revolt, self-destruction, a radical break with society, an aesthetic of violence, doomsday cults." In his view, the reasons for the emergence of ISIS are related to the politics of the Middle East, and terrorism was not invented by it. ISIS offers young volunteers a narrative framework within which they can achieve their aspirations.

However, with all the various causes in mind, it is important to note that the violent extremist acts of radical groups such as ISIS is often linked with their affiliation to Jihadi-Salafism as they are following specific religious and theological orientations. They claim to rely on literature and religious texts from the earliest periods of Islam to justify their actions. Jihadi-Salafis believe military jihad should not just be "classical jihad" waged between Muslims and non-Muslims to defend or expand[1] the *dar al-*Islam (land of Islam) but also fight against what they see to be apostate rulers in the Muslim world[2] (Wagemakers 2016; see for classical jihad, al-Sarakhsī 1997; Ibn ʿAbidīn 2003). While mainstream Sunni *ulama* (scholars of Islam) reject Jihadi-Salafism altogether, even many Jihadi-Salafi scholars such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi explicitly reject the use of violence by ISIS and their claim for the establishment of a caliphate as premature, unwise, and illegitimate (Wagemakers 2016). On the other hand, many other experts describe radical groups such as ISIS as a hybrid of Salafism and other Islamist currents. For example, Hassan Hassan (2016, 1), an expert of radicalisation, emphasises "the Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period. Its extremism is the product of a hybridization of doctrinaire Salafism and other Islamist currents such as Sayyid Qutb's (d. 1966) concepts of *hakimiyya* (sovereignty of God)." It can be concluded from the above that radical groups such as ISIS are modern movements with added elements that describe themselves as representatives of authentic Islam, as practised by the earliest three Muslim generations.

Based on the information above, radical groups such as ISIS push specific theological ideas, relying on specific Islamic notions such as jihad and often presenting textual references to justify their brutal actions. Roy (2017) indicates the scriptural exegeses that fill the pages of *Dabiq* and *Dar al-Islam*, two recent ISIS magazines written in English and French which help provide a theological rationalisation for the radicals' violence. As Roy (2017) argues, religious radicalisation is considered to be the first stage of

political radicalisation since it rejects values based on individual choice and personal freedom. A number of Qur'anic verses (2:190–3; 8:59–70; 9:5; 9:12; 9: 30; 9:38–9; 61:4) are regularly cited by radicals to justify attacking non-Muslims (Bonney 2004, 28–9). They often support offensive jihad, aiming to remove *shirk* (polytheistic practices) and idolatry wherever it is found. In a 2007 speech, Abu ʿUmar al-Baghdadi, one of the first leaders of ISIS, remarked on the purpose of jihad: "The end to which fighting the unbelievers leads is no idolater (*mushrik*) remaining in the world" (Bunzel 2015, 10). A significant verse cited frequently by radicals is 9:5:

> When the [four] forbidden months are over, wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them, seize them, besiege them, wait for them at every lookout post; but if they turn [to God], maintain the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, let them go on their way, for God is most forgiving and merciful.[3]

The supporters of offensive jihad unconditionally argue this verse obligates fighting all disbelievers and claims it abrogated all previous verses that call for tolerance, patience, and good relations with others (Al-Qaradawi 2009), and that Qur'an 2:256 was also abrogated by the sword verse. While Chap. 2 analyses verse 9:5, this chapter analyses verse 2:256 as a detailed case study and then verse 9:5 is further discussed from an exegetical and juristic sources perspective. It discusses religious justification of wars by offensive jihad supporters. The chapter asserts that verse 2:256 declares a final universal principle about the freedom of religion and "unconditionally fighting due to faith" or "to fight non-believers until they embrace Islam or submit to its authority" is not a mainstream Islamic approach. In addition, it maintains various classical jurists were influenced by continuing war-based relationships in the medieval period, so they interpreted peace–war-related verses accordingly. In other words, this chapter further looks at certain Qur'anic verses which were touched upon in Chap. 2 with the intent of providing further insight to verses which have been misunderstood by violent extremists.

The Notions of Jihad and Fighting in Islamic Scriptures

In Islamic tradition, the term jihad refers to any struggle in the way of God to follow his commands and prohibitions. It is a broad term and connotations of jihad change depending on the context, from spiritual struggle

or spiritual techniques used to purify the soul to become closer to God, to material jihad and fighting an external threat. Therefore, it is important to analyse how it evolved from the Meccan to Medinan periods. During the Meccan period, Muslims were not allowed to fight against any persecution or suppression. However, they were ordered by the Qur'an to strive (jihad) by peaceful ways, such as using the Qur'an's arguments (Dagli 2015).

After migration to Medina, Muslims were allowed to fight against enemies who attacked them because they had been wronged. Verse 22:39–40 stresses "Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms because they have been wronged…" Early exegetes of Islam such as Ibn 'Abbas (d. 68/687-88) indicate "this is the first verse revealed about jihad" (Ibn Kathir 2000, x, 73–4). It is interesting to note the verse describes Muslims' armed struggle as a defensive response (Dagli 2015, 1807). Based on the verse, the majority of the classical Sunni and Shi 'i jurists have highlighted the justification for Muslims' fight against non-Muslims is self-defence against aggression (Kamali 2013, xiii).

While the concept of defensive war (*jihad al-daf'*) is emphasised in mainstream traditional sources (al-Jawziyyah 1983, 1, 17; Kamali 2013, xiii–xiv; Kalin 2013, 233–8), this is not the only approach in exegetical and juristic literature. The classical exegetical and juristic narrative includes the concept of offensive jihad (*jihad al-talab*[4]) (e.g., al-Sarakhsī 1997) which is what radical groups heavily rely on for their narratives (Bonney 2004, 25–6). According to this approach, some verses from the last stage of the Qur'anic revelation such as 9:5 (the sword verse) order Muslims to fight against the unbelievers unconditionally and abrogate previous verses that call for tolerance, patience, and good relations with others.

The Case of Qur'an 2:256

Qur'an 2:256 declares "there is no compulsion in religion" and serves as sine qua non of Islamic teaching regarding freedom of religion. Various other similar verses about freedom of religion are found in the Qur'an as well. For example, "And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed – all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad], would you compel the people in order that they become believers? And it is not for a soul to believe except by permission of God, and He will place defilement upon those who will not use reason" (Qur'an 10:99–100) and say, "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve…" (Qur'an 18:29). In his commentary, Ibn Kathir (d. 1373)

presents occasions of revelation of this verse about a Medinan Muslim community and emphasises the universality of its rule. However, as Ibn Kathir (2000, ii, 445–6) notes, there is also an alternative view (*qīla*):

> Others believe that this verse was abrogated by the sword verse (*ayat al-qitāl*, Q. 9:5). Therefore, it is a necessity to invite all the nations to Islam. If one of them refuse to enter Islam and does not pay a ransom or the *jizyah*, then Muslims fight with that nation until they are killed. This is the meaning of compulsion. (*ikrāh*[5])

Reports of occasions of revelation provide an explanation of the implications of the verse and provide guidance for the process of interpretation and application of the verse in question (von Denffer 1994). Therefore, it is essential to analyse the occasions of revelation for this verse.

Occasions of Revelations for Qur'an 2:256

Some reports show this verse was revealed in relation to some Muslims who had children among the *Banu Nadir*, a Jewish tribe that was exiled by the Muslim community from Medina after they were found plotting against the Prophet. Before the coming of Islam, some women of Medina whose children died in infancy made a vow—if they had children who survived, they would have them raised Jewish, which is how these children came to be among the *Banu Nadir*. These Muslim parents questioned whether they should force their children to join the Muslim community (Al-Tabari 2018; Nasr 2015). It seems that the people of Medina prior to Islam used to consider being a Jew as high status, and thus the vow by women whose children died in infancy to raise their surviving children as Jewish.

Another account describes a Muslim man whose two sons became Christians and left for Syria with the traders who had converted them. A third account refers to some Muslims who were wet-nursed by Jews, and when the Jewish clans to which they belonged were exiled, they wanted to leave with them and become Jews, but their families forced them to remain Muslims (Al-Tabari 2018; Nasr 2015).

Ibn Kathir's Qur'an commentary contains much traditional material as well, but it is not simply an uncritical compilation. As a prominent *hadith* scholar, he examines and evaluates exegetical reports (McAuliffe 2007). Like Tabari, Ibn Kathir refers to the first two incidents for the occasions of the revelation and directly cites from Tabari (Ibn Kathir 2000). Ibn Kathir

also points out that Abu Dawud (d. 889), Al-Nasa'i (d. 915), Ibn Abi Hatim (d. 938), and Ibn Hibban (d. 965) narrated the first report that dealt with the Muslim parents who wanted to force their children among the *Banu Nadir* to join the Muslim community. For example, Abu Dawud (n.d.) notes:

> Narrated ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbas (d. 68/687-88) that when the children of a woman (in pre-Islamic days) did not survive, she took a vow on herself that if her child survives, she would convert it a Jew. When *Banu an-Nadir* were expelled (from Arabia), there were some children of the *Ansar* (Helpers) among them. They said: We shall not leave our children. So, Allah the Exalted revealed; 'Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error.' Abū Dâvûd said: *Muqlat* means a woman whose children do not survive.

Moreover, Ibn Kathir (2000) underlines that Mujahid (d. 721), Said Ibn Jubayr (d. 713), Al-Sha'bi (d. 722), Hasan al-Basri (d. 728), and others mentioned that verse 2:256 was revealed about the earlier incident.

Furthermore, Ibn Kathir (2000) cites from Tabari about the second incident for the revelation of the verse. According to Muhammad bin Ishaq's (d. 925) narration from Ibn ʿ(d. 9, Ibn ʿAbbas states the verse was revealed about a man called Husayni from the *Ansar* (Helpers), son of Salim bin ʿAwf. He had two Christian sons and was a Muslim. He asked the Prophet whether he should force both to become a Muslim because they were insisting on being Christians. God revealed the verse about this event. Ibn Kathir reports from Suddi (d. 745) a similar narrative with some additional information. In addition, Zamakhshari (d. 1144) in his commentary also includes this incident for the revelation of the verse (2018).

It should be reasonably concluded that the three possible occasions of revelation for this verse, narrated by Tabari, were caused by conflict with the Jews, who were excluded by force. Therefore, it is time to examine the exegetical and juristic interpretations of the verse.

Various Interpretations of Qur'an 2:256: Not to Force Conversions to Islam

Some sources say this verse refers specifically to the People of the Book, or to anyone from whom one can take *jizya* (Ibn Kathir 2000; al-Rāzī 2018). Some reports say that the idolatrous Arabs who attacked Muslims during

the Prophet's time were forced to abandon idol worshipping, and that there is no coercion in religion among the group of religions recognised by Islam (Nasr 2015).

Zayd bin Aslam (d. 754) argues that this verse was abrogated by those verses that command Muslims to fight (e.g. 9:5) (Al-Tabari 2018). As Nasr (2015) highlights, however, this interpretation is not chronologically compatible with the three possible occasions of revelation for this verse. All the reports include conditions caused by conflict with Jews, who were excluded by force. This suggests Muslims' fighting and violence perpetrated by Muslims have been motivated by political circumstances rather than a desire to convert people. It must also be kept in mind that the Prophet was also the head of the state and the ruler. Therefore, as an ethical or moral pronouncement, this verse is not subject to abrogation. As Kamali (2003) emphasises, sharia in all its parts aims at the realisation of certain essential values. The main objectives and essential values of sharia (*maqasid al-sharia*) are protection of religion, life, progeny, the mind, and wealth. These must not only be promoted but also protected against any threat that undermines their safety. Therefore, it should be reasonably concluded that verse 2:256 indicates religious freedom as a universal value. Ibn Kathir (2000, ii, 445–6) underlines the universality of its rule and interprets it as: "Do not force anyone to enter the religion of Islam, for Islam is plain and clear, and its proofs and evidence are plain and clear … Therefore, there is no need to force anyone to enter Islam. While its ruling is general in meaning, it was revealed about some from the *Ansar*."

In addition, to force conversions to Islam negates the idea of responsibility before God (*taklif*) (Nasr 2015). From the early history of Islam, conversion through persuasion and "calling" (*da'wa*) was promoted, and various methods were applied for the conversion of individuals and masses via peaceful means. Conversion by force was not encouraged as a policy by either the *ulama* or rulers. Furthermore, non-Muslims did not need to convert to become a part of the Muslim community and obtain religious freedom and protection under Islamic law (Kalin 2013).

Analysis of Qur'an 9:5 and the Issue of Abrogation

Moreover, based on the notion of abrogation (*naskh*) in *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis) and *usul fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), some jurists and scholars, such as Hibatullah ibn Salamah (d. 1125) and Ibn Al-'Arabi (d. 1148), hold the view that Qur'an 9:5, called the sword verse, abrogates

140 Qur'anic verses (or 114 or 200) related to tolerance, good relations with others, and freedom of religion (Al-Qaradawi 2009; Kamali 2003; Saeed 2006). However, most Islamic authorities, such as al-Rāzī (d. 1210) and Suyuti (d. 1505), highlight that the most warlike verses in the Qur'an, even those verses revealed very late, do not nullify the overwhelming number of verses that praise tolerance, reconciliation, inclusiveness, and peace (see Afsaruddin 2013, 71–76). The contextual information revealed within the Qur'an points out that the verse of the sword is related only to a particular time, place, and set of circumstances, and the claim it abrogates the established policy of tolerance is not supported by history (Hayward 2013).

It is important to note the doctrine of abrogation (*naskh*) has been the subject of the most scholarly discussion within the sciences of the Qur'an (*ulum al-Qur'an*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Technically, it means abrogation of one ruling by a subsequent ruling (in the Qur'an or *sunnah*) (Saeed 2006). As Ahmad Hasan (1965) indicates, the term abrogation is used broadly in the times of the Companions and Successors, and concepts of abrogation (*naskh*) and specification (*takhṣiṣ*) were often conflated. This broader understanding of abrogation in the early period of Islam influenced the number of abrogated verses (*mansukh*). However, later scholars analysed those so-called abrogated verses and reduced the number by harmonising them. While al-Suyuṭi reduced the number of abrogated verses to 21 cases, Shah Wali'ullah (d. 1762) reduced al-Suyuṭi's number to just five cases (von Denffer 1994). Therefore, it is crucial to understand completely what the early exegetes and jurists meant by the doctrine of abrogation and how authoritative commentaries and jurists such as Ṭabari and Qurṭubi (d. 1273) interpret it.

As M. Hashim Kamali (2013) notes, the Muslim jurists of the second century AH (after *hijra*, migration) considered war as the norm in relations with non-Muslims. Under such political circumstances and the context of the medieval imperial world order, classical jurists thought the permanent pattern of relationship with non-Muslims was war. Also, there was a need for being in a state of continuous readiness for war in order to defend. Thus, their approach is not binding on anyone, and the balance of evidence in the Qur'an and *sunnah* does not support this. In addition, it seems Muslim scholars such as Imam Shafiʿi argued the reason for the armed struggle was non-Muslims' faith and proponents of offensive jihad were influenced by the international relations of that time and non-Muslim states' regular attacks towards Muslim lands (Özel 1993). This context

provides the reason for the emergence and development of the abrogationist and expansionist paradigm (Khalil 2017). However, in the modern period, the state of affairs in relations between Muslims and others is arguably peace and cooperation. At the very least, it cannot be simplified to indicate an ongoing war scenario.

Abdul Hamid Abū Sulaymān (1987) also thinks abrogation was primarily a historical phenomenon rather than juridical; therefore, it should be understood in that context. Some arguments of abrogation with regard to the sword verse, 9:5, are historical and largely influenced by the widespread form of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims at the time. Abu Sulayman holds the view that the classical understanding of abrogation is unnecessarily restrictive, tends to limit the "rich Islamic and Qur'anic experience," and sometimes includes exaggeration and excess (Kamali 2013).

With regard to Qur'an 9:5, Abdel Haleem (2018), a professor of Qur'anic exegesis, says the sword verse is one of the most famous Qur'anic verses, and one of the most often misunderstood and (mis)quoted by propagandists, extremists, and some modern academics. The verse refers to just one group of polytheists rather than being a general indictment. In his view, Qur'an 9:5 cannot be correctly understood when removed from its original context. The verse should be read together with the first section of Chap. 9 (verses 1–28), which are interconnected and deal with the same theme. Verse 9:5 clearly and very explicitly deals only with those idolaters who did not honour their treaty and supported others against the Muslims. Abdel Haleem also points out that Chap. 9 is, chronologically speaking, the last chapter to mention fighting. The permission it gives to fight and arrest those polytheists who had broken their treaty and were thus in a state of war with the Muslims did not bring anything new (Abdel Haleem 2018). Consequently, it should be reasonably concluded that Qur'an 9:5 cannot be a basis for fighting people unconditionally for conversion. Unconditional fighting due to faith is not a mainstream Islamic approach, and Qur'an 2:256 emphasises freedom of religion as a universal rule.

Defensive War (*Jihad Al-Dafᶜ*) and Offensive Jihad (*Jihad Al-Talab*)

The Qur'anic justifications for war and the opinions of the majority of classical and modern Muslim jurists and scholars[6] confirm that jihad is defensive war (Kamali 2013; Kalin 2013). There are two justifications for a defensive war: aggression against the Muslim nation, and *fitna*, that is,

the persecution of Muslims. Both reasons indicate jihad is a just war aimed at stopping aggression or protecting Muslims' religious freedom. This kind of defensive war is called *jihad al-daf*ʿ, which is *fard* ʿ*ayn* (personal duty of every capable person). According to Ahmed Al-Dawoody (2011), the main reason for the confusion and controversies about the nature of jihad is that the same word is used for another kind of jihad called *jihad al-talab* (military campaigns to convey the message of Islam in non-Muslim territories). He emphasises that *jihad al-talab* does not necessarily involve armed confrontations. This kind of jihad refers to the campaigns initiated by Islamic states after the Prophet's death in the first century of the Islamic era. Muslim jurists agree that the aim of this kind of militarised missionary campaign was to convey the message of Islam to non-Muslims. In Al-Dawoody's view, Islamic states in the classical period used this kind of preaching because the freedom to preach Islam in non-Muslim territories was not secured at that time. Yusuf al-Qaradawi argues that the Islamic state resorted to this kind of jihad "in order to break down the barriers," that is, because the non-Muslim regimes are preventing people from listening to the message of Islam (Al-Dawoody 2011).

With all this discussion in relation to preaching of Islam, it must be accepted that the dynamics of the world are very different today. While *jihad al-talab* existed at a time when preaching one's religion was the norm, all nations preached their religion as we see in the very example of the Crusades. Therefore, it is essential to understand the earlier discussion in the context in which it took place and seeking to apply "as is" in today's world simply would not work.

Therefore, at present, jihad in the sense of armed conflict refers to a defensive war justified in cases of aggression and persecution of Muslims. The idea of bringing the world under the reign of *dar al-Islam* by military means and territorial expansion is not related to the concept of jihad, but is related to the political conditions of the classical period. Thus, certain verses that may have different implications regarding war need to be deeply analysed by taking their contexts into account (Özel 1993).

Extremist Interpretations of Prophetic Traditions

Marked by extreme traditionalism, radical groups such as ISIS rely heavily on the Prophetic traditions (*hadith* literature). The conversations of new ISIS members suggest the group's clerics often search Islamic history for obscure stories or *hadith* to impress new members, thereby implying that

true Islam has been absent from their society (Hassan 2016). Early Islamic traditions play an important role in martyr biographies included in ISIS' magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, including many implicit references to stories about Prophet Muḥammad and his companions (Nanninga 2018). In addition, they heavily cite the jihadi literature in classical *hadith* sources, such as Bukhari's *Ṣaḥiḥ*.

Proponents of fighting all people unconditionally often cite the following *hadith*, arguing that fighting is justified in the absence of the proclamation "there is no god but God" (Al-Bukhhārī 1998, 2.17 (no. 25)):

> I have been commanded to fight the people until they bear witness that there is no god but God and Muhammad is God's Messenger, perform the prayer, and pay the alms. When they have done this, their blood and property are safe from me, except by the right of Islam and their reckoning with God.

The vast majority of Qur'anic exegetes and jurists highlight the fact that the command to preach peacefully and never force anyone in their choice of religion is a permanent ruling from the Prophet's life to the present (Dagli 2015; Al-Qaradawi 2009). For the majority of traditional scholars, "the people" in the *hadith* are those with whom the Prophet was engaged in conflict at the time. Therefore, "the people" does not refer to all people in the world but is limited strictly to the pagan Arabs who were extremely determined to give Muslims ongoing hardship and never admitted defeat. Also, the verb "to fight" (*qatala*) in the *hadith* implies a mutual disagreement and conflict in terms of Arabic grammar (Dagli 2015). It is clear from the above statement that a single *hadith* cannot be applied to all people unconditionally, and the context of the *hadith* along with the overall Qur'anic message and *hadith* literature need to be considered. While this *hadith* is authentic, no Muslim jurist, Qur'anic commentator, or hadith scholar has supported the idea of fighting all people until they become Muslims on the basis of this *hadith*. The majority understanding of this *hadith* is that it is particularly related to the Arab polytheists in a point in time who showed enmity to Islam from its beginning (Al-Qaradawi 2009, i, 348–50).

In addition, ISIS uses eschatological themes in the *hadith* collections extensively for its ideology. In his book, William McCants shows how Doomsday prophecy shaped ISIS and its mindset (McCants 2015). David J. Wasserstein (2017) also analyses the 1000-year-old form of Islamic apocalyptic messianism ISIS draws upon today. This clearly shows how

apocalyptic events at the end of the time indicated in the *hadith* collections form an important part of ISIS narratives in their magazines. Using such narratives attracts more people to ISIS.

Forcing Muslims in Their Religious Practices

Whether the verse includes forcing Muslims in their religious practices is also discussed in the interpretation of Qur'an 2: 256. Some punishments with regard to forbidden actions aim to protect social order rather than interfering in an individual's private religious life or between an individual and God. Many other forbidden actions or religious obligations have no worldly punishments. Muslims are advised to uphold common good (*ma'ruf*) and discourage evil (*munkar*) among each other to protect social ethics and order. Force by the state can be carried out for only protection of Islamic great signs, common ethics, and social order (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı 2007). This is no different to upholding the law in a Western country for the benefit of society as a whole. Having laws around human actions which impact all of society such as theft, murder, defamation, illegal drug dealing, child abuse, illegal running of a business, and so on are all examples of legal rulings which are implemented to keep a society safe and just. Similarly, societies built on Islamic principles have similar legal rulings but personal practice of Islam is not routinely policed.

Forced Conversions and Leaving Islam: The Case of Apostasy

The Qur'an emphasises free choice, as the following verses indicates: "And say, 'The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve.'…" (Qur'an 18:29); "Whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul. And whoever errs only errs against it…" (Qur'an 17:15).

Belief is an individual choice—or, rather, it is a choice involving the individual and God. Therefore, forced conversions are unacceptable, and anyone who would use force rather than persuasion to promote religion must ignore the view of the person central to the Qur'an. Not even Prophet Muhammad could impose his will or force people to profess a belief in Islam (Saeed 2013). When people were unreceptive to the message of Islam, the Qur'an explicitly reminded him that he was never to resort to coercion: "So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller" (Qur'an 88:21–22).

Evidence from Islamic history suggests this view is also applied by Muslim rulers. For example, an elderly Christian woman came to see Caliph ʿUmar and then refused his invitation to embrace Islam. He became anxious that she might have perceived his invitation as compulsion. "'O my Lord,' he said, expressing his remorse, 'I have not intended to compel her, as I know that there must be no compulsion in religion …'" (Saeed 2013).

Moreover, the Qur'an does not prescribe any worldly penalty—let alone death—to those who leave Islam. Prophet Muhammad never imposed the death penalty for the mere act of conversion from Islam. According to Bukhari's collection, a man came to Medina and converted to Islam. Shortly after his arrival, however, he informed Prophet Muhammad that he wanted to return to his former religion. Far from punishing him with death, the Prophet let him go free without imposing any penalty at all (Bukhari, cited in Saeed 2013). Furthermore, a simple conversion does not cause any problem, according to some Prophetic traditions.

According to one report, the Prophet says, "A man who leaves Islam and engages in fighting against God and His Prophet shall be executed, crucified, or exiled" (Nasai n.d.). This *hadith* points out the crime requiring punishment is not simply changing one's faith, but the definite choice to engage in war against the Muslim community. Another Prophetic tradition provides a similar reason for the punishment: "…one who has abandoned his religion, while splitting himself off from the community" (Muslim n.d.). The reference here to "splitting himself off from the community" is interpreted to mean one who actively "boycotts and challenges the community and its legitimate leadership" (Saeed 2013) and waging war against his polity. Because of the ongoing hostility between Muslims and their opponents, conversion from Islam generally referred to a person leaving the Muslim community and joining its opponent communities. Apostasy in this context was equal to treason (Saeed 2013).

Simple unbelief (*kufr*) is not used in the Islamic legal tradition as a justification for war or for any form of capital punishment. The Qur'an asserts it is an individual's responsibility to follow or not follow the straight path (Qur'an 27:92; Qur'an 10:108).

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the extremist interpretations of religious texts by radicalised groups. It has focused on Qur'an 2:256 as a case study to show how radicalised groups understand it and has refuted this narrative by relying on mainstream understandings of such war and peace-related scriptural texts.

The chapter underlines that Qur'an 2:256 declares a final universal principle about the freedom of religion, and fighting can be carried out to establish freedom of religion, human rights and law, and remove oppression from communities. However, even this must be evaluated and decided upon by a nation, not individuals. Similar declarations can be found in Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has been embraced by many countries in today's world.

The majority of classical and modern Muslim jurists and scholars confirm jihad is a defensive war, and it can be carried out for two reasons: aggression against the Muslim nation and *fitna*, that is, the persecution of Muslims. The contextual information within the Qur'an indicates Qur'an 9:5 (the verse of the sword) is related only to a particular time, place, and set of circumstances, and does not abrogate any previous verses about peace, tolerance, and cooperation. Each verse is valid within its own circumstances and contexts. The natural state of affairs in relations between Muslims and others is peace and cooperation, as many mainstream Islamic authorities emphasise.

Notes

1. Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) states "what was spread by the sword was the political domain of Islam, not the religion of Islam." Through political domain, Islam could work to produce the order on the earth that the Qur'an seeks. Rahman also believes that "armed jihad was often used by later Muslims whose primary aim was territorial expansion and not the worldview they were asked to establish by God" (Rahman 2009, 63). Moreover, bringing the territories under the reign of *dar al-Islam* by military means and territorial expansion should be seen within the context of the geopolitical conditions of the classical Islamic world (Kalin 2013, 235).
2. See Adang et al. (2015), which focuses on accusations of unbelief (*takfīr*) in Islam throughout the Islamic history from the earliest period such as *the Khārijīs* (secessionists) to the modern period such as radical groups (1–24, 327–353).
3. Muhammad Abdel Haleem's translation of the Qur'an is used throughout this chapter.
4. Imam Shafi'i (d. 204/820) and Sarakhsi (d. 483/1090) understand jihad as the duty of the Muslim ruler to fight against the lands described as the "territory of war." Shafi'i formulated his expansionist theory of jihad as a religious duty. These jurists justified fighting against non-Muslims on account of their disbelief (*kufr*), while they also indicate war ethics of Islam such as

accepting truce or saving the lives of non-combatants (Kalin 2013, 234). See Khalil (2017) for the expansionary warfare and expansionist paradigm.

5. *Ikrāh* is a situation in which one is forced to do something against one's wishes. Since this state does not affect life or reason and discretion, it has no effect on the capacity for acquisition or execution. However, *ikrāh* (coercion and duress) negates free consent and willingness (Nyazee 2006, 135–8).
6. Such as Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767), Malik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), Abu Yusuf (d. 182/798), Shaybani (d. 189/805), Awzai (d. 157/774), Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350) (Kalin 2013, 234).

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CHAPTER 4

Social Construction of Jihad and Human Dignity in the Language of ISIS

Jan A. Ali

Introduction

In the post-9/11 world, violence in various Islamic revolutionary groups or movements has become an instrument of social reparation affecting transformation in politics and society. Today, Islam and almost all Muslim-majority countries are in crisis.[1] This crisis situation has been building since the colonial era culminating in the Iranian Revolution of 1978–79. Since then, certain Muslim activists, revivalists, and revolutionaries have agitated against incumbent Muslim governments, Muslim elites, and Western intervention in domestic affairs of Muslim-majority countries. These "architects" have founded powerful groups or movements that have sought to directly wrestle with Western "infidels" and "crusaders," expose so-called secular tyrants who cloak themselves in the garb of Islam, overthrow many Muslim governments they consider to be incompetent, self-serving, and corrupt, and replace them with a caliphate (Islamic state with *sharia*—Islamic law—as its constitution) with the *khalif* (the civil and religious leader of an Islamic state) as the

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_4

head of state who shall establish *sharia* as a framework for political and legislative decisions and as socio-cultural life.

For these revolutionary groups or movements, the caliphate is the solution to the crisis of Islam and Muslim societies. In fact, the caliphate is seen as a panacea not only to Islam and Muslim societies but to the modern world order that these revolutionary groups or movements describe as steeped in *jahiliyya*[2] (ignorance of divine power, design, and respect). According to these revolutionary groups or movements, the modern world suffers from two fundamental ailments—secularism and Westernism—which threaten the norms and values of a religious or traditional way of life, and these have detrimentally affected Muslim societies. First, they claim these ailments have to be removed through the cleansing process of Islamisation of Muslim societies, and then the modern world order needs to be subjected to systematic reconfiguration by replacing its key institutions, such as the government, judiciary, and education with Islamically based institutions such as *shura*[3]-based government, *sharia* judicial practice, and Islamic educational system. Their attempt is to reclaim the efficacy of religious life by stopping the influence of secularising and Westernising agents within the Muslim religious tradition and re-creating a comprehensive social and political order with a reach to all aspects of life by returning all things in submission to one single deity—God.

To achieve all these aims, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) emerged. Founded in 2004 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, ISIS promises to deliver the modern world from its malaise and build a utopia on Islamic principles, precepts, doctrines, and laws. Drawing on a variety of sources, including Islamic scripture and Muslim historiography, ISIS has developed its own ontological and epistemological cosmology in which it is the supreme worldly saviour. ISIS sees the modern world in a state of *jahiliyya* and Muslims facing a multitude of perceived and real challenges and threats, and Muslim human dignity under attack. ISIS thus feels compelled to react. It therefore reacts or fights back with what it believes is the greatest of all weapons, the weapon of jihad of the sword.

Before it undertakes this global project of rebuilding the world or creating a pure whole new order, however, ISIS has opted to first concentrate on what is commonly described as the Muslim world, whose current crisis epicentre is the Iraqi and Syrian states. Its plan is to amass popular support for its cause from below within Muslim-majority countries, as well as in diaspora communities to secure its political grip in Iraq and Syria, and gradually move on to capturing other Muslim and non-Muslim states.

With this, ISIS hopes to consolidate all disparate polities of the world into a single global polity—the caliphate—to establish what it sees as justice and eliminate exploitation and oppression. It seeks to bring about social change and a transformation of society and its institutions with a new approach to governance and social interaction.

However, what ISIS has set out to achieve resonates with myriad other Muslim revolutionary groups and movements. So, how is ISIS different from these groups? In this chapter, I endeavour to address this by examining ISIS not as a doctrinal or theological group, but what Fazlur Rahman (2002) calls a "community solidarity" group. I argue that ISIS has gone to great lengths to reconceptualise and reconfigure human dignity and jihad, and it has done so through language. I want to further argue that ISIS has turned jihad into a political weapon with literal application to wage a violent war on its enemies. In this way, this chapter builds on Chaps. 1 and 2 where jihad was discussed from the theological and historical perspective. It now discusses from a socio-political angle. The premises of the arguments made in this chapter are that ISIS in its approach reflects the disposition of the seventh-century Kharijites.[4] Infused with puritanical and fanatical zeal, ISIS takes a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and an unorthodox conceptualisation of human dignity and jihad separating itself from the Muslim community and condemning all sinners and their families to death.

The Theory: Social Construction

It is fair to state, in the context of ISIS as a social group, and any other revolutionary or social group for that matter, legitimisation of violence is inevitably embodied in language. The language of how ISIS constructs violence vis-à-vis terror as a legitimate and effective tool to redress socio-economic and political crises in many Muslim-majority countries, and counter Western exploitation and dominance of the Muslim world, can be explained by locating the language in the social constructionist framework. Examining the conceptualisation and legitimisation of violence in ISIS' language within social constructionism provides us with an understanding that knowledge is a social construct that configures human behaviour and confers legitimacy to it.

Language is the central focus for social constructionism because subscribers to this framework opine the processes through which individuals construct themselves and the world that can be comprehended and made

meaningful originate from interaction and communication. Also, social constructionism suggests that language which is shared among individuals makes it possible to create meaningful social realities. As Bradshaw-Camball (1989, 32) elucidates, "Reality is socially constructed. Through developing and using common language and interactions, we create and sustain a social world of intersubjectively shared meaning."

Social constructionism can be traced back to eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) (2004), a connection that has been acknowledged by Hacking (1999). In this sense, Kant strove to address the question "What can we know?" He posited the world per se is unknowable because human knowledge is confined to mathematics and the science of the natural and empirical world. In other words, the mind actively creates different aspects of experience and restricts the mind's access spatio-temporally only to the natural domain. Thus, in Kant's view, it is not possible to extend knowledge beyond the range of what is perceptible by the senses and related to the fundamental nature of reality and being.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) expand on Kant's idea of "unknowability" in their work entitled *The Social Construction of Reality*. In it, they argue that a society in which individuals live is both an "objective and subjective reality" (1966, 149). For them, if a comprehensive understanding of society is to be achieved, these aspects need to be recognised, and society must be "understood in terms of an ongoing dialectical process composed of the three moments of externalisation, objectivation[5] and internalisation" (ibid.). According to Berger and Luckmann, when it comes to social phenomenon, these moments do not occur in a chronological order. Rather, society and its constituent elements "are simultaneously characterized by these moments" (ibid.). Similarly, a person as a member of society "simultaneously externalizes his own being into the social world and internalizes it as an objective reality" (ibid.). To put it differently, to live in the society means the individual has to take part in its dialectic. The individual is not a member of society at birth, or a mere product of society, but is naturally predisposed to sociality and becomes "a creator of society through the emergence and the aggregation of individual actions" (Cojocaru et al. 2012, 398).

Given that everyday interactions between individuals are granted a central role, and these interactions actively generate the forms of knowledge that are taken for granted, language is more than just a way of expressing oneself or a vehicle for self-expression. People's communications and

interactions with one another are ways through which the world is created. Language has a "performative" role, and an individual's use of language can therefore be inferred as a form of action. As soon as an individual engages in social exchange—talking, writing, or making gestures—"one is participating in the active process of constructing and reconstructing the ongoing reality" (Hosking and Bass 2001, 359). This shows that language is performative and is in itself a form of social action.

In this sense, language becomes a form of social action. Language, communication, and discourse operate as means of interaction or socialisation between individuals who engage in the construction of multiple realities. From a social constructionist perspective, realities are created by individuals who engage in communication, interaction, and socio-cultural exchange through language, and they influence and restrict the responses of the other.

Thus, language does not provide a picture of the world, but is world constituting. What we as individuals see as the world is not instructive of how we understand the world; instead, consensus is reached over certain words and concepts that describe and present our observations. Social convention instructs us to use certain words and concepts to describe our observations, and therefore the relationship between concepts/words (signifier) and the thing that is referred to (signified) is subjective (Saussure 1974). To put it differently, social constructionists posit "that there is no privileged relationship between word and world" (McNamee and Gergen 1999, x).

The phrase "social construction of reality" does not mean that reality does not exist outside human perception. What it denotes is that the process through which humans perceive and interpret reality is inexorably influenced by the beliefs of members of a social group or culture and are encoded in language. It is not possible to communicate complex ideas without the use of a language, and this compels humans to conform to the assumptions of the language in which humans speak.

However, this emphasis on language and discourse as fabricators of reality and knowledge is not free from criticism. Space and time restrict a detailed discussion of the various criticisms here, but suffice to say, despite different streams of criticisms, general consensus prevails that reality is constructed through language. I later attempt to show how ISIS uses language—the language of jihadism and human dignity—to construct a particular socio-religious and political reality.

ISIS and the Proclamation of the Caliphate

As a "community solidarity" group and revolutionary movement, ISIS is an offshoot of al-Qaeda established in 2004 in Iraq after the US-led invasion of Iraq, which lasted from 20 March to 1 May 2003. ISIS stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also often referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIL, and in recent times simply called IS or Islamic State. ISIS was founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was the head of the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda for numerous years. In the harsh political conditions of Iraq and Syria, ethnic divisions and religious and sectarian conflicts in the Middle East, and the impact of socio-economic and political failures of the USA and its Western allies in the Muslim world catalysed the birth of ISIS and its subsequent striking success (Michael and Dekel 2014). ISIS found further energy and greater resolve in Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's vicious military response to the challenges of the Arab Spring and its purported democratisation surge.

ISIS seeks to invade territories and establish a long-term hold on them, and this differentiates ISIS from terrorist groups and networks that are usually made up of relatively small armed forces that attack and then move on with the "near enemy" as their primary target. It invades, occupies, and governs areas as proto-states in its larger vision of a transnational caliphate. As such, ISIS has devoted membership to those who share similar if not the same socio-political ambitions and goals, who interpret Islamic structure literally, focus on practical and political issues facing the Muslim world, have claim over territory that extends over a single nation state, conduct its operations openly, and present itself as an archetypal hybrid threat, combining methods of conventionally armed struggle, terror acts, guerrilla warfare, and unlawful activity (Michael and Dekel 2014). ISIS membership and active fighting force is around 200,000 (Cockburn 2014).

In its attempt to establish a transnational caliphate, ISIS gradually consolidated its power, proceeded to govern and administer its captured territories, and imposed its version of *sharia* and Islamic order. Under its new order and law, inhabitants are required to adhere to these closely. At the same time, ISIS also functions as an efficient and effect government, creating employment, providing goods and services, establishing urban infrastructure, servicing public works projects, building and improving transportation networks, maintaining medical and educational facilities

and services, and sustaining a supply of food, resources, and utilities (Zelin 2014).

As discussed extensively in Chap. 2, ISIS is a neo-Kharajite group with Khawarij ideology and religious justification to recruit, appropriate, and motivate its members in its endeavours to achieve its aims and objectives. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, born Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai in Samarra in 1971, a cleric with a doctorate in Islamic culture and *sharia* from the Islamic University of Baghdad, became ISIS' leader in May 2010 and has produced his personal brand of Islam and uses it to recruit and mobilise his members in the battlefield. His brand of Islam is typical of Islamist Islam, blending religion and politics into a comprehensive religious system (Tasgin and Cam 2016).

On 5 June 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi stepped into the pulpit of the Great al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul, Iraq, and declared himself the *khalif* of the newly created caliphate known as Islamic State. The caliphate symbolises Muslim unity, governance, and social justice reminiscent of the Islamic Golden Age. With the caliphate now established, ISIS extended its claim to religious, political, and military authority over all Muslims around the world. ISIS claims the establishment of the caliphate practically replaces what it considers to be the illegitimacy of the emergence of modern Arab states after World War I under European colonialism and gives Islamic State the legitimacy to pursue its expansionist programme (Tasgin and Cam 2016).

In ISIS, under Baghdadi, Islam is religiously and organisationally monolithic, exclusivist, and with single interpretation of *sharia*. Islam is what Baghdadi says it is. Those who subscribe to this Islam form one community with one leader to which Islamic State members swear allegiance, that is, to Baghdadi. Those who resist or defy Baghdadi and his Islam in true Kharajite fashion are declared untrue Muslims and labelled "outsiders" or "enemies." The consequences for disloyalty and defiance are severe and violent (Unal 2008; Akyol 2014). Later, I discuss how outsiders or the enemies of ISIS are impaired through the acts of jihad and their dignity ignored, but for now, let us turn our attention to the concept of human dignity in Islam. In Islam, the Qur'an is the principal source of human dignity, and I refer to some chapters and verses to develop a general understanding of human dignity from which ISIS has tried to steer away through the processes of reconceptualisation and reconfiguration of jihad and human dignity.

Human Dignity in Islam

Human dignity in Islam is an important concept. Its origin is in the Qur'an and its practical demonstration in the *sunnah* (deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad). In Islam, human dignity existed from the very beginning not as a mere slogan, but as part and parcel of the faith, legal system, and ethics (Hamdy 2012). Thus, the Qur'an states the children of Adam are honoured, with God conferring on them all dignity regardless of their creed and ethnicity. The Qur'an says: "And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Qur'an 17:70).

This conceptualisation of human dignity many centuries later entered the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, appearing in its introduction: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (United Nations 1997). Furthermore, Article 1 was the first codification of human dignity and its connection with human rights, stating, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (ibid.).

The Qur'anic statement "children of Adam" naturally excludes any discrimination or prejudice based on race, colour, sex, or belief and since all human beings, according to Islamic belief, are descendants of Adam, rendering human dignity universal. Clearly established by God in the Qur'an, Muslims believe it is not only critical that this principle is always upheld according to Islam, but that penalties are prescribed for its violation. Thus, the Qur'an warns: "…And do not kill the soul which God has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right…" (Qur'an 6:151).

Muslims believe human dignity is an irrevocable right established on clear and firm foundations. They believe God has endowed human beings with a very high status among His creations, as human beings are described in the Qur'an as the noblest and most favoured of creatures. In this connection, the Qur'an says: "Surely We created the human being of the best of forms" (Qur'an 95:4).

Muslims believe God's conferral of human dignity is not just an honorary appellation, but an integral part of Islamic everyday living. They claim this is supported and confirmed in various passages of the Qur'an and *sunnah*.

They accept that preserving and upholding human dignity continues throughout human life from birth to death, and even after death. For them, Islam prohibits violation of the sanctity of the human body and its mutilation (Kamali 1993). However, as we see later, ISIS has reconceptualised and reconfigured human dignity to such an extent that it has taken a distinct meaning. Jihad also has been subjected to reconceptualisation and reconfiguration by ISIS. I discuss these words in the final section, but for now, let us develop a general overview of the concept of jihad based on what scholars and the Qur'an say about it.

Jihad in Islam

Jihad is surrounded by much controversy because Westerners generally and many Muslims understand jihad exclusively as an armed struggle or what is often called "holy war," thus associating jihad with violence and fanaticism. Of course, this is a very narrow understanding of jihad and even misleading as the term has a much broader meaning.

Since the meaning of jihad has been discussed extensively in Chaps. 2 and 3, in this chapter, the two forms of jihad are the focus, the two forms of jihad which scholars of Islam often talk about: *al-jihad al-asghar*—a lesser outer jihad, such as a military struggle or warfare; as a physical struggle against the enemies of Islam; and *al-jihad al-akbar*—a greater inner jihad, such as a spiritual struggle, the struggle of personal moral self-development against wicked desires, which takes a non-violent form. *Al-jihad al-asghar*—a military struggle or a physical struggle against the enemies of Islam—according to Fatoohi (2004), is treated as only a temporary measure or momentary reaction against armed hostility from an enemy and, when the hostility is over, jihad ceases too. However, David Cook, in his book entitled *Understanding Jihad*, takes an opposite view, stating "'Warfare with spiritual significance' is the primary and root meaning of the term [jihad]" (2015, 2).

This shows that jihad is a contested concept. A variety of interpretations and constructs around the term jihad exist, and this is the case because interpretations and constructions of jihad are shaped by prevailing social, economic, and political conditions in different contexts. Jihad is not the main term with respect to warfare in the Qur'an. The term *qital* (kill), or the root *q-t-l*, is used in the Qur'an, but the warlike meaning of jihad has become predominant in modern discourse as *qital* has been overtaken by jihad, giving jihad, in a sense, a legal definition. Shahrour (2008) and

Donner (1991) have constructed different arguments relating to war in Islam and differ in their thoughts on whether war is permissible in Islam; however, they both are in concordance in the sense that the Qur'an treats jihad and *qital* differently, where *qital* is exclusively connected with *harb* (war). Also, the use of the Qur'anic phrase *jihad fi sabili llah* alongside another Qur'anic phrase *qital fi sabili llah* (armed struggle in the cause of God) seems to have contributed to equating *j-h-d* with holy war or warfare. The terms jihad and *qital* apparently cannot be used interchangeably because, while *qital* specifically means killing, and is used in the Qur'an in specific reference to armed struggle or war, jihad has a much broader meaning than simply killing (Munir 2012).

Muslim social groups and ideological movements insist the term jihad refers to participation in warfare. Such is the case with ISIS. With ISIS, the definition of jihad is centred on waging war on the West and anyone siding with it, including Muslim Western sympathisers (Cook 2015). The support for ISIS is born of social, economic, and political conditions that many Muslims find unacceptable. ISIS offers its Muslim supporters an opportunity to fight back through "legitimate" jihad and carve out their own future and the future of generations to come.

Jihad and Human Dignity in the Language of ISIS and the Social Construction of Reality

ISIS constructs suicide attacks as "acts of martyrdom" or "martyrdom missions," and has constructed violent attacks on the West, their Muslim sympathisers, Muslim secularists and modernists, and nominal Muslims generally as "strategic manoeuvres" to meet its governance objectives. At the same time, however, for ISIS, suicide attacks or violent onslaughts are acts of jihad—acts considered to be virtuous and rewarding.

How ISIS justifies and then legitimises violence, or what it calls the "martyrdom missions" is through language, which is a means of communication and channel through which ISIS members establish rapport with each other and develop social bonds. Language has the power to contribute greatly to the understanding of social thought, action, and the construction of reality and therefore is a tool for implementing social cognition (Semin 2000), and much social cognition is gained through the use of language, which ultimately helps bring about important social change in society.

ISIS' overall aim is to return Islam to its former glory—the era of the Islamic Golden Age. In an attempt to achieve this, ISIS has resolved to pursue a policy of restoration of "true" human dignity through offensive jihad. Human dignity, especially of Muslims, according to ISIS, has been grossly violated for too long, particularly by the West through processes such as colonisation, Westernisation, and secularisation, and Muslim suffering has reached crisis point. Hamdi Khalfaoui summarises the situation aptly with the statement: "Nowadays, Muslim countries remain among the least developed countries on all levels, although they are rich in natural resources … Muslim countries have high rates of illiteracy and unemployment" (2015, 62). ISIS argues that colonisation, Westernisation, and secularisation have destroyed many traditional social, cultural, economic, and political institutions in the Muslim world and instigated the abandonment of Islam by many Muslims. It believes it cannot remain silent and idle on the matter and needs to take the war to the "enemy"—the West and Western-oriented elites in Muslim countries—in an attempt to free Muslim societies from the clutches of Western hegemony and dependence. Thus, it says:

> We hate you because your secular, liberal societies permit the very things that Allah has prohibited while banning many of the things He has permitted, a matter that doesn't concern you because you separate between religion and state, thereby granting supreme authority to your whims and desires via the legislators you vote into power.
>
> We hate you for your crimes against the Muslims; your drones and fighter jets bomb, kill, and maim our people around the world, and your puppets in the usurped lands of the Muslims oppress, torture, and wage war against anyone who calls to the truth. As such, we fight you to stop you from killing our men, women, and children, to liberate those of them whom you imprison and torture, and to take revenge for the countless Muslims who've suffered as a result of your deeds. (*Dabiq*[6] 2015, 31–2)

ISIS sees Islam as de-territorialised, supranational, and a universal order for all humanity. It believes physical borders should be replaced with the caliphate system, hence its call for one state, one military, one flag, and one leader: "Regardless of where you are, know that pledging allegiance is an obligation upon you, as is listening to your leader, the Caliph, and obeying his command" (*Dabiq* 2015, 27). In its pursuit to extend its boundaries until the entire world is under its tutelage, ISIS declared a perpetual jihad—a waging of war first to bring what it considers as recalcitrant

Muslim states under its control and then to capture Western territories. As ISIS gains new territories, it sees its right is to protect them, and in this way jihad is viewed as the method adopted by Islam to protect its lands. ISIS thus states, "We hate you for invading our lands and fight you to repel you and drive you out. As long as there is an inch of territory left for us to reclaim, jihad will continue to be a personal obligation on every single Muslim" (*Dabiq* 2015, 32).

For ISIS, the greatest problem facing Muslims in their own countries and in diaspora communities is their alleged Muslim suppression by the West. Thus, ISIS calls for jihad against the West and anyone associated with the West. Jihad is seen by ISIS as a religious obligation, expressed as the act of unmatched sacrifice to defend human rights conferred by God and distinguishable from forms of war fought for purely worldly and material reasons. It is described as a battle to assist the oppressed against the brutalities and torments committed by tyrants. Furthermore, it claims:

> Your secular liberalism has led you to tolerate and even support 'gay rights,' to allow alcohol, drugs, fornication, gambling, and usury to become widespread, and to encourage the people to mock those who denounce these filthy sins and vices. As such, we wage war against you to stop you from spreading your disbelief and debauchery – your secularism and nationalism, your perverted liberal values, … and all the depravity and corruption they entail. You've made it your mission to 'liberate' Muslim societies; we've made it our mission to fight off your influence and protect mankind from your misguided concepts and your deviant way of life. (*Dabiq* 2015, 32)

Jihad for ISIS is a secret weapon and source of power. In the past, much of the known world was under Muslim domination and, for ISIS, this was so because Muslims had jihad as their secret weapon and used it extensively to achieve great success, which it now wants to emulate. Of course, argues ISIS, Muslims of the past failed to hold onto power all the way into the modern era because they abandoned jihad and other Islamic injunctions, and Muslims in the contemporary period are continuing to suffer as a consequence. ISIS, therefore, is calling for the return of jihad, as they understand it, and restoration of Muslim human dignity. In its language, ISIS describes jihad as "an obligation for all Muslims at all times" (Gerges 2016, 252). Contrary to an orthodox comprehension of jihad, ISIS has reconceptualised jihad in its language and discourse as an offensive jihad, and in this regard the ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has been quoted as saying

"O, Muslims, Islam was never for a day the religion of peace. Islam is the religion of war. Your prophet (peace be upon him) was dispatched by the sword" (Gerges 2016, 252). For ISIS, the current global world is in a state of *jahiliyya*, and is characterised by a perpetual abuse of human dignity. To extract it out of such a state and return to people their due human dignity, those who consider themselves to be Muslims have to engage in jihad against what ISIS describes as the "evil doers" in whatever way possible. ISIS is exhorting all Muslims— men and women, young and old—to contribute, in any possible way, to what it considers a noble cause of society building. Thus, ISIS mobilises Muslims in jihad against the unfaithful, and those Muslims who neglect the call are seen to be on the opposite side of Islam and are therefore the enemies of Islam (*Dabiq* 2015).

Thus, in its attempt to return Islam to its former glory, ISIS has reconceptualised human dignity and jihad in its appropriation and reconfiguration of Islam in its language and overall discourse. Human dignity from ISIS' viewpoint is due to humans, and humans are those who follow true Islam in total completeness. ISIS claims it is the holder of true Islam and is its manifestation. According to ISIS, those who follow this true Islam are real Muslims and genuine humans, and their dignity and rights should be protected and defended. ISIS' conceptualisation of genuine humans vis-à-vis true Muslims renders untrue Muslims and non-Muslims as subhumans who deserve to be exterminated.

In the disciplines of sociology and social cognition, language is conceptualised as a semiotic tool. In other words, language is a tool that is used for meaning-making and meaning exchange in social interaction and functions as a mechanism for the creation and exchange of meaning (Chiu et al. 1998). The point of meaning-making and meaning exchange, or how individuals engage in meaningful thought and action in social contexts, is a pivotal concern of sociology of knowledge. Language is a vehicle through which meanings are constructed and exchanged.

Hence, ISIS justifies its actions through the language of jihadism and Muslim human dignity and gives jihad and human dignity self-nominated meanings, unprecedented in the history of mainstream Islam. It interprets the Islamic scripture in what many orthodox Muslim scholars might say an unorthodox practice. Language in its abstract sense is a socially shared tool enabling individuals to use language to create and exchange meaning. In so doing, individuals using a particular language are able to interact and engage with each other through this shared symbolic system. In this way, language becomes a conduit for connecting individuals.

We can see from the above statement that ISIS' language of jihadism has a performative function that prioritises action, that is, it serves as a call for defensive jihad. It tries to persuade its members and potential recruits that those Muslims who prefer to confine themselves to the domestic sphere, those who choose home for battleground, and those who steer away from defending Islam in jihad are not true to their faith. In its language of jihadism, ISIS renders unfaithful Muslims *tawaghit* (dissenters) and therefore non-Muslims and non-genuine humans who will enter hell and abide there forever. ISIS sees this as a dire Muslim situation. It sees the current conditions in which many Muslims find themselves warranting the enactment of jihad by invoking Qur'anic injunctions, such as "So let those fight in the cause of God who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of God and is killed or achieves victory – We will bestow upon him a great reward" (Qur'an 2:74). ISIS, therefore, encourages the pursuit of jihad as a noble cause, for which great reward awaits the faithful in the Hereafter. This cognition of jihad is, of course, a social construct, as all cognition is essentially social cognition or social construct. Not all Muslims or Muslim scholars see jihad from the same prism, but for ISIS members, implementation of jihad holds certain meaning and a reality. Language is the symbolic system that makes this possible.

ISIS assigns jihad and human dignity meaning that potentially stands in contrast to orthodox Muslim conceptualisation and social constructivism. These distinct meanings are in essence only shared and accepted by the "insiders" or the "in-group"—ISIS members, their supports, and jihadists in general. Jihad and human dignity with distinctively assigned meanings, which form a critical feature in ISIS language of jihadism, when used frequently and extensively as a semiotic tool, constitute a "linguistic practice" (Kashima et al. 2006, 388–396). Like any tool that can help its users achieve their goals, features of language such as jihad and human dignity aid ISIS to achieve its goals. When a certain linguistic practice, such as the words jihad and human dignity, is adopted repeatedly by ISIS members as a community solidarity group as well as a linguistic community across a wide range of social contexts, this linguistic practice has lasting and extensive social cognitive consequences. This particular linguistic practice has the potential to influence the nature of the linguistic representations of jihad and human dignity among ISIS members and, when this linguistic practice is used, frequently and extensively within ISIS grouping for a long period of time, eventually jihad and human dignity become part of the language itself (a type rather than a symbol). Language as a semiotic tool

when used over time as a particular type of construction or in a particular manner as ISIS uses the language of jihadism and the words jihad and human dignity in particular and when this use becomes prevalent in a particular context, then it may be said it is now part of the language—lingua franca—as an abstract symbolic system.

For ISIS, jihad and human dignity are malleable, unfixed in time and space, and it convinces its members and potential recruits of their distinct meanings.[7] Offensive jihad in particular is presented as "… perpetual, unstoppable, and eternal …" (Gerges 2016, 252) and ISIS members and potential recruits accept these distinct meanings. Such "rhetoric seems to be effective as a mobilization tool, particularly for zealous religious activists and young recruits" (ibid.). These distinct meanings are internalised and objectified as reality, and consequently activists and young recruits act upon it by becoming "killing machines," "martyrs," "weapons as in suicide bombers," and the whole situation descends into violence—suicide bombing, terrorism, and killing.

Berger and Luckmann articulate the way human beings express themselves has the potential for objectivation, that is, expressivity that "manifests itself in products of human activity that are available both to their producers and to other men as elements of a common world" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 49). Such objectivation, that is, the transfiguration of abstractions into objects, act as lasting "indices of the subjective processes of their producers" (ibid.), permitting their accessibility to those in face-to-face situations as well as those outside this context in which they can be easily understood. ISIS' (or its members') subjective attitudes, particularly towards jihad, are clearly expressed in the face-to-face situation by an assortment of bodily indices—"martyrdom," "suicide bombing," "terrorism," "violence," or plain "killing." These indices are unceasingly present in face-to-face situations, which is what provides one with the ideal situation for entering another's subjectivity. Jihad, in the context of ISIS, can be objectivated by means of a weapon, such as suicide bombing, where the body itself becomes a weapon—a weapon of jihad for the greater good, which in this case is for the purpose of restoring Muslim human dignity. For example, if a member of ISIS blows himself up in the courtyard of a foreign embassy, his disintegrated body, those of others, and the surrounding debris from the blast are objects of jihad; they are understood to have been produced by the suicide bomber as an act of jihad that for ISIS and its members is not without meaning or purpose, but full of it; the meaning and purpose are connected to returning Muslims to their human

dignity. This enables others, particularly ISIS members and other jihadists witnessing the event, to gain access to the bomber's subjectivity, which in this case is waging war against the enemies of Islam in an attempt to return Muslims their rightful human dignity. Not only does this express an act of jihad to ISIS members but also to ISIS sympathisers and other jihadists who come to learn of this from other areas arrive at the same conclusion, that is, an ISIS member who has blown himself has engaged in an act of jihad. For them, this act of jihad represents a selfless, praiseworthy, and rewarding act of restoring Muslim human dignity for the sake of God. In other words, suicide bombing as an act of jihad has become an objectively present constituent of reality shared among ISIS members and with other jihadists. As for the presumably innocent bystanders, they were not the targets, only the officials. However, this act is an expression of subjective intention of jihad, whether motivated by anger produced by crisis in Muslim society or by the reconceptualisation of jihad. Jihad as an object in the real world persists to express an overall intention to commit violence that is identifiable by anyone who has a certain comprehension of jihad. Jihad as an object in the real world for ISIS is not violence as such; although "outsiders" might perceive or construe it as such, it is an altruistic act as well as an act of worship because it is undertaken for the sake of God. In this way, ISIS reconfigures jihad, literally, from violence to an act of piety, which then becomes accepted within the close circle or circle of "insiders" as an act of worship. In this reconfiguration, jihad is transformed from violence that is evil and hateful to an object of blissfulness, virtuousness, and purity. Jihad, then, is both a social construct or human product and an objectivation of personal subjectivity. As is the case in general, the reality of everyday life in the context of ISIS is not only saturated with objectivations; objectivations, in fact, constitute the reality of everyday life.

When jihad and human dignity enter ISIS' discourse, they then form part of ISIS' knowledge. ISIS members construct knowledge between themselves through what Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe as secondary socialisation.[8] Through daily interactions between themselves in the course of their social life, ISIS members engage in the construction of their own version of knowledge, particularly knowledge of jihad and human dignity. The interaction and socio-cultural exchanges that occur between them in everyday life are viewed as practices that produce their shared version of knowledge. Therefore, what ISIS members regard as "truth," that is, their present accepted modes of comprehending the world, is a product not of objective observation of the world, but rather of secondary socialisation in which they are engaged in an ongoing basis with

one another. ISIS' self-serving reconfiguration and reconceptualisation of jihad and human dignity are the techniques used "to intensify the affective charge of the [secondary] socialization process" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 164). The process involves institutionalisation of a finely worked-out initiation process requiring ISIS members to abandon any prior knowledge or understanding of jihad and human dignity and embrace the "supposedly" new meanings assigned to them. This knowledge, in which jihad and human dignity are understood in a particular way, is real for ISIS members, and they come to commit themselves fully to the reality that is being internalised. ISIS members then commit themselves in a comprehensive manner to the new reality. They surrender themselves to ISIS ideology, ISIS indoctrination, ISIS Islam, the revolution, jihadisation (a particular, approach to salvaging Islam) not reluctantly and partially, but in a subjective an all-encompassing way. ISIS represents for them a complete world, a total reality, and they avail themselves in complete readiness to sacrifice—the ultimate consequence of socialisation into ISIS reality.

Conclusion

ISIS is a fairly new community solidarity group and a "player" in international politics and Islamic social and political transformative projects. Rapidly emerging in 2004 as a revolutionary movement with transnational networks and a growing social base, especially among disenfranchised, marginalised, and disillusioned youth, ISIS has managed to effectively take full advantage of the crisis of Islam and crisis situations in Iraq, Syria, and beyond. Muslims from all walks of life seem to be drawn to ISIS as it preaches the message of salvation, military triumph, socio-economic prosperity, new world order, and Islamic global dominance. Also appealing to the younger cohort of Muslims is ISIS' reconceptualisation and reconfiguration of human dignity and jihad. ISIS' assignment of distinct meanings for these terms gives Muslims a new outlook on them and an innovative way to operationalise them in real-life situations. In particular, ISIS' concepts of human dignity and jihad, and its own version of Islam, have gained momentum among jihadists in the Middle East and beyond.

ISIS fights for its conceptions of what should form Muslim everyday life, for Muslim human dignity, for Muslim territory, and for an Islamically friendly world. It is prepared to achieve this by employing the instruments of war through prioritising action (offensive jihad) over theory (theology). Their members, especially youth, are socialised into a political culture of

sacrifice and martyrdom, which suits ISIS' apocalyptic imagery of war against the abusers and oppressors of Muslims and the enemies of Islam. Violence remains a main pillar in ISIS' paradigm and language.

Notes

1. By crisis, I mean Islam's (represented by the ulemic community) failure to resolve various socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political issues facing Muslims in their everyday living; Muslim countries' comparatively poor performance in social, economic, and political spheres, and general moral and ethical deficiencies in Muslim societies.
2. In his work, Maududi refers to secular modernity as *jahiliyyah*, viewing modernity as the "new *jahiliyyah*" (see Maududi 1960). Drawing on Maududi's conception of *jahiliyyah*, Sayyid Qutb articulates *jahiliyyah* as a situation in which humans dominate humans as opposed to their submission to God (see Qutb 1964).
3. A consultative committee.
4. The term Kharijite is linked to the Arabic word Khawarij or al-Khawarij, which means "the Outsiders." The Khawarij are members of a group or an early Islamic sect that emerged during the reign of Islam's fourth caliph—Ali—in the first century of Islam. The Khawarij were a breakaway group from the Shi'i collectivity who revolted against the authority of the Rashidun Caliph Ali after he was forced to agree to arbitration by umpires. Khawarij believed the arbitration repudiated the Qur'anic dictum regarding the matter, withdrew their support for Ali, and started a separate campaign under the leadership of Ibn Wahb. A Khariji later assassinated Ali, and for many hundreds of years, the Khawarij were a source of insurrection against the Umayyad and Abbasid empires. Members of Islamic State have often been described as neo-Kharijites or modern-age Kharijites because of their ideological semblance with that of original Kharijites in the first century of Islam (Nance 2016).
5. Objectivation is the transformation or transfiguration of a concept or abstraction into an object.
6. Dabiq, particularly in the West, is seen as an ISIS propaganda magazine.
7. When I say ISIS gives jihad and human dignity distinct meanings, I am not saying these meanings are unique to ISIS. In fact, meanings given by ISIS overlap with meanings given by other Muslim movements, but ISIS seems to believe these meanings are unique to it and thus claim ownership.
8. Secondary socialisation is the internalisation of institutional or institution-based "sub-worlds'." Secondary socialisation requires the acquisition of role-specific vocabularies, which means, for one thing, the internalisation of semantic fields structuring routine interpretations and conduct within an institutional area (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 158).

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PART II

The Social and Political Perspectives to Violent Extremism

CHAPTER 5

Orientalism and Anti-Orientalism: Epistemological Approaches to Islam and Violence

Mohammed Sulaiman

Introduction

The question of the relationship between Islam and violence is far from settled. Yet, for some time now, it seems to have been largely dominated by two epistemological approaches. The first is the essentialist, and predominantly Orientalist, approach, which seeks to explain acts of violence by Muslims by reference to an underlying and immutable set of features, beliefs and practices which embody the real essence of the Islamic tradition. This cluster of qualities is discovered in, or extracted from, philological analyses of classic Islamic texts (the Qur'an and *hadith*) and history. According to this view, there is a direct and internal relationship between Islam and contemporary Muslim practices of violence. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 have sought to argue against such claims. Contrary to this, the second anti-essentialist approach is critical of the Orientalists' reductionist epistemology and its inability to account for the complex heterogeneity of Islamic

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_5

interpretations and lived experience. That is, anti-essentialists emphasise the dynamic, empirically complex and changing nature of Muslim cultures and societies. Hence, they question, if not entirely reject, the use of the term 'Islam' as a useful analytical concept, that is, Islam, for anti-essentialists, is an irrelevant category in the explanation of Muslim violence. Therefore, anti-essentialists seek an explanation for this phenomenon not in the classic texts and medieval history of Muslims, but by reference to external factors, such as material contexts and socio-economic conditions. Nonetheless, this, as I shall illustrate, leaves entirely unaddressed the Muslim identity of the actors, and whether it is plausible to disregard the relevance of Islam to the explanation of the phenomenon and the identity of the actors under discussion (i.e. violence by *Muslims*).

In this chapter, I aim to examine both perspectives in further depth with any eye to assess the validity of their theoretical underpinnings and assumptions. Nonetheless, before I begin to do this, I shall make two points which clarify my own approach to the question as well as serve to provide some theoretical context to the discussion. First, throughout this chapter, I employ the term 'West' as an analytical category which, in my view, is crucial to the explanation of our object of analysis. This, however, is not to say that I understand this term in reference to a reified, fixed and monolithic entity. This term should not be understood in a geographic, civilisational or, more broadly, empirical sense. The 'West' and 'Islam' do not simply designate entities that are out there in the world, hermetically sealed from each other, void of internal dynamism and complex heterogeneity and destined to clash with one another. To the contrary, I employ these categories in the discursive sense. In other words, they function as signifiers of particular conceptual entities which refer to specific historical trajectories; constellations of ideas, norms and values; as well as particular ways of understanding and mediating the world.

For example, I understand the 'West' in a sense that is similar to how Stuart Hall (1992) identifies it, that is, as a historical, not geographic formation, which emerges at a particular historical juncture (namely, after the break-up of feudalism in the sixteenth century), and refers to certain ideas, norms and characteristics (e.g. secular, modern, industrial and capitalist) that arise out of specific historical processes (such as the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment). Therefore, the West is a 'concept,' 'a system of representation' and a 'language' (ibid.). Furthermore, Hall illustrates how the idea of the West has been historically produced through a series of contrasts with and differences

from a series of 'external' and 'internal' others (e.g. Islam, China, 'the New World,' Eastern Europeans and Jews). For example, Hall (ibid.) draws on Edward Said's definition of Orientalism as a discursive formation which produces the Orient and the West as two ontologically distinct entities. This last point was also made by Bryan Turner (1989), who describes the West as a conceptual entity or a discursive construct whose identity is formed and reinforced through a cluster of binary oppositions with Islam. All three critics agree that the West exists because it refers, first and foremost, to a specific and hegemonic range of ideas, which reflect a distinct historical experience and a particular way of understanding the world (see also Sayyid 2003).

This brings me to the second point that is essential to the argument of this chapter. Following Talal Asad (1993), it is argued that the hegemonic, modern conception of religion as an autonomous, distinct sphere of the social system separate from power is 'a modern, Western norm,' In other words, the modern understanding of religion as a unique domain that is strictly separate from other domains of power (politics, law and economics) is a norm that arises out of and is intimately bounded up with the historical experience (namely, the Reformation and post-Reformation), which we have called the 'West.' Asad writes, 'there can be no universal definition of religion not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific but because it is the historical product of discursive processes' (ibid., 29). In other words, religion is not a universally valid (trans-historical and transcultural) concept. This is not only because religion is a dynamic, socio-historical phenomenon whose scope, function and roles have changed between medieval and modern Christianity, but because it is *itself* the outcome of a set of power struggles specific to Reformation and post-Reformation Europe. Simply put, the modern definition of religion is not only historically specific, but, more importantly, it is *culturally* specific, that is, it is unique to a certain cultural formation and a history with a distinctively Christian genealogy. According to this norm, religion must be kept quite separate from the domain of power.[1]

The implications of Asad's genealogical investigation of religion on the study of Islam and Muslims cannot be overstated. As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, the problem with any universal definition of religion is that it allows us to speak of some religions as natural and others as abnormal or deviant for not conforming to what is regarded as the 'universal' essence, function and extension of religion. Therefore, I aim to demonstrate how this 'Western norm' permeates explanations of the

relationship between Islam and violence and is common to both approaches identified earlier. In their conceptualisation of Islam and its significance to Muslim violence, these arguments can be said to be epistemically Eurocentric to the extent that they employ the concept of religion as a self-evident, transparent and universally valid category impervious to discursive contestation and historical inquiry.

Generally, I show that the problem of Islam and violence is commonly considered to be an outcome of the violation of the religious–secular divide. That is, in all these accounts, Islam becomes a pernicious and divisive force always as a result of a recognised failure to keep it strictly confined to the private sphere and sharply separate from the domains of power. Whether the disruption of the boundary between the sacred and the profane reflects 'real' Islam and its authentic essence as found in Islamic texts and history, or is merely a consequence of a specific, skewed and instrumentalist interpretation of Islam is the question that sets apart the essentialists from the anti-essentialists. Both, however, take for granted that, whichever the culprit (Islam as a religion or Islamism as an ideology), they are precisely that because their practices deviate from the dominant Western norm. I shall now interrogate this scholarship in more detail.

Traditional Orientalism: Islamic Texts and History

Categories such as Islamic 'culture,' 'history' and 'civilisation' lie at the core of the Orientalist approach to Islam. Proponents of this view believe that Islam has a direct, internal relationship with what they deem to be Muslim hatred of Western civilisation, its economic and technological superiority, cultural values and way of living. For Orientalists, Islam is a fixed and empirically identifiable entity (i.e. a civilisation), whose essence is found in classic texts and history, which can be extracted through 'objective,' unmediated philological approaches. Through this, Orientalists seek to discover the intrinsic qualities that determine the shape and character of Islamic societies and practices. In short, Orientalists search in the culture and history of Muslim societies for what they deem to be the root causes of contemporary Muslim 'rage' against the West. As Mamdani (2004, 17) puts it, culturalists 'assume that each culture has a tangible essence which defines it, and then explain politics as a consequence of that essence.'

This view was given its most durable version by the preeminent Orientalist Bernard Lewis (1976, 1990, 2002, 2003). According to Lewis (1976), the growth of Islamism and violent extremism is the inevitable

corollary of Islam's failed encounter with European, secular modernity due to the innate nature of Islam, whose primary loyalty is 'religion.' In this view, Islam, unlike Christianity, is incapable of separating the religious/private sphere from the political/public one. Elsewhere, Lewis (1990) asserts that Muslim extremism is deeply rooted in their religious culture, which defines their loyalty, passions and allegiances. Historical experiences of Western imperialism and current material conditions hardly have any relevance to understanding Muslims' resentment and violence. They may be important, Lewis says, but 'something deeper is involved … something deeper that turns every disagreement into a problem and makes every problem insoluble' (1990, para. 28).

Like Lewis, Daniel Pipes (2003) opines that the revival of anti-Western extremism and violence lays bare Islam's ingrained hostility to Western civilisation and its core values. According to Pipes, the origins of Muslims' animosity and violence are a result of Islam's marriage with political power since its advent in the seventh century. For Pipes, the decline of the Islamic civilisation (namely, the Ottoman empire), starting in the late eighteenth century, brought home the reality of Muslim inferiority in the face of Western military, economic and technological dominance (2003). Therefore, Muslim violence is the cynical reaction of those Muslims stranded in the modern world, capable of neither adjusting to it nor instituting the supremacy of Islamic law through the establishment of the caliphate (2003).

Furthermore, in *Islamic Imperialism* (2007a), Efraim Karsh provides a specifically dense, exhaustive, albeit idiosyncratic, reading of Islamic history, to demonstrate that the September 11 attacks constitute yet another stage in the history of what he calls 'Islamic imperialism.' From Karsh's perspective, all forms of Muslim violence are resurrections of, and have their origins in, the history of Islam, which he presents as the story of a sword-wielding prophet, and his warlike companions and successors, acting like soldiers of God, and embarking on a global conquest, fighting innumerable battles to spread their faith and instal a worldwide Islamic society. Like Lewis and Pipes, Karsh states that, contrary to Christianity, which has established a distinction between God and Caesar, 'the birth of Islam was inextricably linked with the creation of a world empire and its universalism was inherently imperialist' (2007b, 798).

Consequently, it is the fascinating story of the rise and fall of fully contained civilisations promoted by Samuel Huntington (1996) that Orientalists find most relevant to analysing contemporary Islamic phenomena.[2]

However, there are, to my mind, two crucial problems with this approach. First, as pointed out earlier, in the wake of Said's eviscerating critique in *Orientalism*, Orientalist scholarship on Islam has been largely discredited due to its essentialising and homogenising tendencies, as well as its failure to make sense of the infinite empirical diversity and contingency of Islamic experience and phenomena. The Orientalist position attributes to Islam a fixed and timeless essence and proceeds to explain Muslim phenomena and practices as a consequence of this essence. This is problematic purely because it entirely disregards the fact that Islam has historically been interpreted and practised in diverse ways by Muslim societies in their various socio-historical contexts. Simply put, it is impossible to identify one form of Islam as the true, authentic Islam and discount others as less true and authentic.

Nonetheless, Orientalists acknowledge that it is difficult—but not impossible—to make generalisations about Islam (e.g. Lewis 2003). For this reason, Lewis-style culturalism is careful to make a distinction, albeit all too superficially, between Islam, which is a 'faith,' a set of rituals and 'a pious way of life,' and Islamic fundamentalism, which is a 'totalitarian' and 'belligerent' ideology (Pipes 2003; Scruton 2002). That is, the concept of 'ideology,' as is clear in the following part, is equally central to Orientalist arguments, as it serves to establish a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims and hence functions as a safeguard against the homogenising of all Muslims as backward, extremist and violent.

However, even though Orientalists claim their argument is about Islamic history and civilisation and is not about Muslims *per se*, upon careful examination, this appears to be a superfluous distinction that cannot be coherently maintained. As they interpret Muslim acts of violence to be a consequence of an objective, unmediated and scientific interpretation of classical Islamic texts and as representing a seamless continuity with classic Islamic history, Orientalists provide their readers with what they perceive to be the real, authentic Islam. In turn, this unadulterated form of Islam produces the essential (bad) Muslim. Consequently, 'good' Muslims are only good to the extent that their Islam is reinvented and remodelled to fit within the 'universal' template of Western, liberal modernity. In other words, according to this view, a good Muslim is only one who, by accepting the superiority of Western cultural formations, has managed to depart from the archetype of the bad 'real' Muslim.

This leads to the second, and, in my view, more important problem with the Orientalist approach, which has not been as carefully underlined;

namely, Orientalist scholarship on Islam is epistemically Eurocentric in that it treats its conceptual and historical formations to be of universal validity, and in Richard Rorty's (1978) terms, its vocabulary as 'the final vocabulary' through which the world should be described and mediated (see also Grosfoguel 2010). That is, it imposes its epistemic framework on the analysis of other cultures, and, as a consequence, it fails to account for its own embeddedness within a particular language-game and treats Western cultural formations as universal and transcultural. Therefore, Orientalism is a characteristically foundationalist approach to the extent that Orientalist observers view themselves to be standing on some 'mythic universal ground' (Sayyid 2003, 15), which enables them to 'objectively' and 'transparently' study an external entity called Islam and capture its core and kernel.

Lewis, Pipes and Karsh are able to produce essentialising accounts of Islam, while, in their minds, allowing for a degree of diversity among Muslims whose Islam becomes an updated and diluted version of what might be called the 'original' Islam. This original Islam is an aberrant religion, for it does not completely conform to the definition of religion as essentially distinct and separate from other spheres of human life, and which such authors employ as an *a priori* and universal category and are unable to contextualise or historicise in any way. As a result of the absence of such a separation, the original Islam, on these accounts, unlike Christianity, is an anti-modern and regressive religion. However, as I remarked in my introduction, 'religion' is neither self-evident nor pre-given but is 'the historical product of certain discursive processes' (Asad 1993, 29). Treating this category as timeless and universal will inevitably produce theoretical problems for the conceptualisation of Islam as a religion. On the one hand, Islam is deemed to be an abnormal religion for resisting secularist, modernising attempts, which try to fit it within this 'objective' and 'universal' template of what religion is, or, on the other hand, Islam can, to some extent, be 're-formed,' refashioned and made fit neatly into this template. In the latter case, this will still produce 'perverse' subjects and practices that digress from the modern, Western norm in their continuous endeavours to 'politicise the religious.' In the following section, I further examine this position by reviewing a closely related group of arguments about Muslim violence, which, in the wake of the anti-Orientalist critique, have become fashionable and are predominant in scholarly and popular discourses on Islam and violence.

More Orientalism: Ideology and Political Islam

Whereas the earlier view is centred on the role of Islam in the civilisational or cultural sense, the arguments considered later shift from Islam as a faith, form of piety or set of rituals to Islamism or political Islam as an 'ideological,' 'politicised' and instrumentalist expression of Islam. Islamism is broadly defined as a certain interpretation of Islam which places Islamic religious vocabulary at the core of its political practice. Arguments falling under this category can be roughly classified into two main camps: the neo-Orientalists and the 'modernists.'

The first draws on Orientalist approaches to Islamic texts and history. Although they place central emphasis on the concept of 'ideology' to understand the phenomenon of Muslim violence, for neo-Orientalists such as Emmanuel Sivan (1990), Martin Kramer (2003) and Paul Berman (2004), Islamist and jihadist ideologies reflect the real content of Islamic theological and historical interpretation. In this sense, this position is neither theoretically nor methodologically different from the earlier group of arguments, except in that they formulate their arguments in less generalising terms and situate them in a narrower frame of analysis at whose core lies in the concept of 'ideology' as opposed to 'culture.' In other words, neo-Orientalists take what they believe to be 'radical Islam' or 'Islamic extremism' rather than Islamic culture in its entirety as their analytical referent and focus on a specific set of Islamist figures, precepts, notions and practices. In the same way, modernists, such as Bassam Tibi (2005, 2008, 2012), regard political Islam to be the source of strife and division in Muslim societies, but, in contrast to the neo-Orientalists, they consider this 'ideological' Islam to be a perversion of the essentially benign nature of Islam and Muslims, and a 'distortion' that has no origins in Islamic tradition. Whereas traditional Islam is a 'faith' and religion of peace, Islamism, from this perspective, is a modern, totalitarian ideology, which turns an apolitical Islam into a dangerous political force (Tibi 2012). That said, both views employ the category of 'ideology' not merely as an explanatory factor but, more importantly, as a direct cause of Muslim violence.[3]

Emmanuel Sivan's work (1990) is emblematic of the neo-Orientalist view, which explains the practices of 'radical Muslims' solely by reference to the texts and thought of medieval scholars, such as the well-known Muslim jurist Ibn Taymiyyah and modern thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb. Sivan argues that the contemporary acts and views of extremist Muslims constitute a cultural and political revolution against the encroachment of

secular, liberal modernity into Muslim lives transforming their social mores, education, economics and so on, enabled and encouraged by the practices of the 'secular' state (ibid.). Therefore, for Islamists, a militant revolution against the state and its ruling elite is necessary to curb the decadence of Islamic culture and protect it from the subversive impacts of Westernisation. Thus, borrowing from Ibn Taymiyyah, Sayyid Qutb put forward the case for the legitimacy of the use of force in the fight against Muslim rulers who relinquished the supremacy of Islam and its law (ibid.).

Similarly, Paul Berman (2004) is a devotedly liberal writer whose analysis of Islam and violence is predicated on a clear-cut bifurcation between liberalism and non-liberal ideologies and modes of thought. Berman locates Islamism in a longer succession of recent totalitarian ideologies. Like the anti-liberal, but secular, European ideologies such as communism and Nazism, Islamism is another form of movement and parochial strand of thought based on a hostile opposition to the universalism of liberal values and its individual rights and freedoms. Merely by reading the texts of Sayyid Qutb, Berman (2004) arrives at the conclusion that this is no less than a 'mental war' or a 'war of ideas' between liberalism and Islamism as its primary enemy. Hence, he calls for a war for the 'hearts and minds' of Muslims against the dangers of modes of thought and practice that wish to dispense with some of the core tenets of liberalism, namely the religious-secular divide. The same argument is made by avowedly atheist intellectuals such as Christopher Hitchens (2007) and Sam Harris (2004), for both of whom religion *tout court*, and Islam in particular, is a source of menace due to its innate irrationality and divisiveness, which is incompatible with the rationality, reason and scientific inquiry of liberalism (see Cavanaugh 2009).

Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, it is, in fact, difficult to draw a sharp line between the views of Sivan, Berman and the new atheists on Islam and violence from those of the culturalists discussed earlier. In fact, both camps draw precisely the same conclusions concerning the origins of Muslim extremism, which they identify to be Islam's ingrained incompatibility with liberal and secular modernity as a discursive configuration and the values and norms arising out of it. Hence, Pipes and Lewis are able to pinpoint 'Islamic fundamentalism' as the problem, while at the same time they explicitly mean the real, authentic Islam. Similarly, while Berman declares the enemy of liberalism to be primarily 'Islamism,' he regards it as a natural expression of Islamic civilisation, and hence, according to this view, every Muslim remains a potential threat until—and probably even after—their 'hearts and minds' have been won over by the West in its 'war

of ideas' against Islamists. This is to say, every Muslim is deemed to be intrinsically at risk of being 'radicalised' (thus, becoming a real threat) due to the innate appeal of radical Islam to Muslims. Therefore, radical Islam should be actively fought by working to institute the hegemony of Western values and institutions in Muslim societies, that is, to 'save Muslims from themselves' by ensuring their Westernisation (which subsequently becomes synonymous with their de-Islamisation) even if that requires the exercise of military capability (see Cavanaugh 2009; Kundnani 2013).

From the modernist perspective, Tibi (2005, 2008, 2012) has provided what is probably the clearest account for what has become a trite distinction between the 'faith' of Islam and the 'ideology' of Islamism, treating the latter as a direct cause of Muslim violence with very little consideration of other potential factors. Tibi blames the prevailing anti-Western sentiment among Muslims on the 'ideology of Islamism,' which, like (neo-) Orientalists, he defines as a totalitarian political ideology, which, *contra* the authors cited earlier, derives from a malignant and instrumentalist political interpretation of Islam (2012). Tibi adds that Islamism is a form of 'religious fundamentalism' which aims at the establishment of a political order based solely on the will of God rather than on popular sovereignty (2012). Therefore, according to Tibi, Islam, but not Islamism, is not incompatible with the West and its secular, liberal norms. Islamism is a dangerous falsification of Islam that endeavours to generate 'civilisational rifts' and perceives non-Muslims as well as secular, liberal Muslims as their enemies, and thus as legitimate targets in their revolution (2012).

There are several methodological and conceptual lacunae which emerge in these explanations of Muslim extremism and violence, which are centred on the role of Islam and Islamism as 'religion' and 'ideology,' respectively. First, proponents of this view establish a direct, causal relationship between ideology and its content, on the one hand, and the practices of actors who espouse this ideology, on the other, thus creating a direct relationship between ideology and violence. That is, ideology is provided less as one explanatory factor than 'a cause *sui generis*' of Muslim violence. Ideology is understood as a 'radicalising' force; it 'radicalises' people and turns them from 'peaceful' to 'violent' (Volpi 2010). What this fails to explain is why, of all those who subscribe to this set of beliefs and ideas (be it regarded as Islam proper or radical Islam), only a very small number ultimately resort to violence (ibid.). Moreover, this view, as Arun Kundnani (2013, 39) notes, has its origins in the Cold War conception of ideology and totalitarianism, 'in which theorists assume a direct causal connection

between holding a certain ideology and committing acts of political violence.' Like communism and fascism, Islamism is conceived as a uniform, monolithic and inherently violent ideology. The complexity of the nature of 'ideology' itself, its internal divisions, its relations with and differences from the Salafism of Saudi Arabia (otherwise known as Wahhabism) and, far more important, the complexity of the socio-economic, political and historical circumstances as well as behavioural factors that act as a catalyst for people to enact their ideologies, are completely overlooked.

No less important, by substituting the category of 'religion' with that of 'ideology' as explanatory of these acts of violence (so Muslim acts of violence are reductively explained as a consequence of the content of a warped ideology), proponents of this view obviously seek to bypass the charge of essentialism, ethnocentrism and Orientalism insofar as they are careful not to explicitly link these acts with Islam *per se* or with the entirety of Muslims. However, as I mentioned earlier, for many, this extremist ideology has its origins in Islam and represents an authentic articulation of the 'real' Islam in that they consider it a consequence of a more faithful reading of Islamic texts and history. However, from the perspective of those who consider it as merely a perverse, cherry-picked and self-serving interpretation of the real Islam, it appears any political interpretation of Islam that is not strictly modelled on the example of post-Reformation European Christianity (i.e. Islam as *only* a private faith that has nothing to say about how to organise public morality and government) is regarded as extremist and inherently threatening, regardless of whether it actually practises or endorses violence (e.g. Wiktorowicz 2006; Tibi 2012). Thus, all non-liberal, non-secular interpretations of Islam are considered 'warped' and anti-modern (i.e. ideological, fundamentalist, extremist), and their followers become deviant subjects and potential threats. This view also converges with the standard epistemically Eurocentric accounts of Orientalism in treating Western cultural formations and historiography as superior and universal models to be replicated and closely followed.

Enter Anti-Orientalism: Violence and the Primacy of Material Factors

In response to (neo-)Orientalists, anti-essentialist scholarship attempts to repudiate the essentialising and generalising gestures of Orientalism and provide an alternative account for the phenomenon under discussion.

While 'unity' and 'homogeneity' of Islam and Islamists characterise the (neo-)Orientalist views, anti-Orientalists emphasise the diversity and heterogeneity of Islam and Islamists. For them, Islamic texts, history and culture cannot offer a plausible, objective interpretation of contemporary Islamic phenomena, especially Muslim extremism and violence. The anti-essentialist reading of Islamic history ultimately relinquishes 'Islam' as an analytical category entirely. According to them, there is no single Islam but only multiple 'little' Islams (El-Zein 1977; Al-Azmah 1993). Anti-essentialists put a great deal of emphasis on the empirically polysemic nature of Muslims in their historical traditions, ethnic cultures, legal and theological interpretations and forms of religiosity. Therefore, because there is no Islam, but only multiple Islams, there can, *ipso facto*, be no argument about Islamic texts, history or even ideology.

Instead, anti-Orientalists are more interested in investigating the material and socio-economic contexts of Muslim societies in order to account for the popular appeal of Islamist movements generally and the rise of Islamic extremism and violence in particular. That said, they accept the view that certain 'ideological' interpretations of Islam contribute to fomenting anti-Western violence and attitudes. However, for them, instead of searching for the origins of these interpretations within the Islamic tradition, they turn their eyes to something external to it, such as the role of political economy as well as the history of European colonialism and contemporary Euro-American domestic and foreign policies vis-à-vis Muslims (i.e. Islamophobia, systematic surveillance, jailing and torture of Muslims, support for Israel as well as Western-backed autocratic regimes, the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, etc.), which all played a crucial part in fomenting Muslims' feelings of alienation and oppression. Rather than focus on Islam or Islamism, anti-essentialists contend that the West should carefully examine its own record vis-à-vis Muslims for an explanation of Islamism (Demant 2006). In short, whereas the above two views explain Muslim acts of violence in the West as a product of Islam(ism), anti-essentialist accounts explain this as being primarily caused by material conditions, while the role of Islam is merely nominal.

Edward Said's *Covering Islam* is emblematic of this view. Said carefully scrutinises the US media coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 and shows the ways in which Western media and public commentary analysed this issue through an essentialist and grossly generalising lens, thereby distorting the complex reality of Islam and reducing it to a set of negative stereotypes and Orientalist tropes (1997). Islam is spoken of

assertively as though it was a monolithic entity, closely associated with terrorism and religious fanaticism. However, for Said, Islam, far from being an explanatory factor, is a problematic category and an 'unreliable index' (ibid.). No 'real' Islam exists but only multiple Islams which exist as 'acts of wills and interpretation that take place in history of will by Muslims and non-Muslims alike' (ibid., 45; see also Sayyid 2003, 36).

Like Said, Fred Halliday argues that to demand an answer to current Islamic political phenomena through Islamic texts is 'spurious' and a 'clear simplification' because, like any religion, Islamic resources—texts, traditions, precepts, learned writings—include a range of possible interpretations. Islam is not 'a set menu of moral, political, and social behaviour; it offers, within varying limits, an *a la carte* selection, varying with sect, time and context, if not from individual to individual' (2003, 114). Although Halliday concedes a role for Islamists in creating 'a myth of confrontation' between Islam and the West (ibid., 112–115), unlike Orientalists, he avers that Islamism does not represent a trans-historical, unchanging influence of a monolithic Islam. Instead, he emphasises the primacy of external material conditions and socio-economic factors in accounting for the rise of Islamism and anti-Western attitudes and rhetoric. Islamists represent particular forces operating within certain societies and arise in response to specific issues of political and social nature (ibid.).

John Esposito (1999) identifies the failure of secular, modernising Muslim regimes as the primary context and external factor that led to the popular growth of Islamist forces in Muslim societies. Esposito's analysis consistently and lucidly examines the array of Islamist practices and discourses, violent and otherwise, as rooted in the complex socio-political dynamics and changes and in the West's domineering attitude and position vis-à-vis Muslim countries. Esposito, like Halliday, does not disregard the role of Islamists, but he is primarily interested in laying bare the West's prime role in creating and maintaining its 'mythical' perception of the Islamic world with all its cultural biases and gross stereotypes (1999). Along similar lines, Nazih Ayubi writes that Islamism is 'not an old doctrine that is currently being resurrected, but a new doctrine that is in the process now of being invented' (1992, 119). The Islamic revival, he says, far from being a return to the past, is a set of 'new improvised reformulations,' which are selectively reconstructed in relation to specific socio-political contexts and in response to the actions and policies of the modern, secular state. Islamism 'emerged as a moralist/culturalist response to a severe developmental crisis that engulfs many Arab societies' (ibid., 230).

Likewise, for Sami Zubaida, Islamists are a modern product of the political and socio-economic problems of their contexts rather than of their past tradition (1993, ix).

Consequently, for anti-essentialists, not only is there no direct relationship between Islam and violence, but also Islam is irrelevant to understanding the emergence of Islamism and, much less, Islamist violence. Nonetheless, as Reza Pankhurst noted, the snag with the post-Orientalist accounts is that the hegemony of the secular, liberal model is never contested and its universality is taken as a given. Because of the non-essential and polysemic nature of Islam, its compatibility with the Western liberal model, unlike Orientalists' claim, should not pose a problem. Therefore, Orientalists and their opponents, despite adopting contradictory approaches to understanding Islamic phenomena, do not sufficiently historicise the liberal model and take for granted its universality. While one school of thought completely disregards context and asserts continuity of Islamic classical texts and history, the other overemphasises the primacy of political contexts and entirely disregards the significance of Islamic textual and historical sources to Muslims. 'Neither school,' Pankhurst concludes, 'strikes the right balance between interpreting discourses while evaluating the influence of context in order to understand the extent to which the ideas produced are merely reactive or derived systematically from alternative worldviews, as well as how symbols are constructed, perceived and used' (2013, 13).

The Negation of Islam: Anti-Orientalism's Orientalism

The anti-Orientalist scholarship emphatically problematises the presumed objectivity of Orientalism and serves to contest its hegemony over the study of Islamic societies and phenomena. However, it is not without its shortcomings. Mainly, the dismantling of the category of Islam and negating its relevance to Muslims and their socio-historical conditions have been a major point of contention and raised many questions regarding the plausibility of anti-essentialist scholarship. As Dale Eickelman (1982, 1) points out, the anti-essentialist approach 'can thus be seen as a reaction to the orientalist search for an ahistorical Islamic essence and the somewhat parallel venture of Muslim fundamentalists who declare their own beliefs and practices to be "Islamic" in opposition to the *jahili* practices of other Muslims.' Said, as mentioned earlier, states 'Islam' is an 'overused' word

and an 'unreliable index' of phenomena generically called Islamic (1997, 45). Likewise, Turner (1989, 636) writes that in order to 'avoid the unwarranted essentialist of the old scholarly orthodoxy,' one must 'abandon all reified notions of "Islam" in order to allow for the study of "Islams" in all their complexity and difference.' Therefore, the dissolution of a unitary conception of Islam is the promise of anti-Orientalism. In order to safeguard Islam against the essentialism underlying Orientalist scholarship, anti-Orientalists tend to repudiate the significance of Islam treating it as 'simple nominalism' (Sayyid 2003, 37).

The first, and most sophisticated, argument for this approach was put forward by Hamid El-Zein in 1977, where he raises the question of whether 'one single, true Islam exists at all' (1977, 240–41; Ahmed 2015, 131–8). El-Zein argues that defining Islam as an identifiable object by reference to a kernel or essence that constitutes the truth of Islam fails to account for the continuous and historical process of the production of meaning by Muslims, which challenges the stability and fixity of the truth that constitutes what Islam is. There is no true, single Islam that refers 'to a positive content which can be reduced to universal and unchanging characteristics' (El-Zein 1977, 254). Rather, Islam is articulated by different ensembles of practices and experiences in a multiplicity of local contexts.

However, as Ahmed (2015, 135) argues, it is possible to agree with El-Zein that the quest for the 'real,' 'authentic' Islam is analytically futile without necessarily dissolving Islam as a singular category. Recognition of the multiplicity of Islam does not logically lead to the dismantling of Islam as a category unless 'we cannot conceptualise or locate Islam in such a way as to meet the challenge of the diversity of meaning, which is a task that … does not require the resort to "essence," or to "religion" (something which el-Zein makes no attempt to do).' In other words, to replace a universal, true Islam with multiple, local Islams is to operate in a 'zero-sum game' in which one has to make a choice: either to conceive of Islam in terms of an underlying, universal essence which constitutes the truth of Islam, or to reject this and recognise the multiple, local truths and meanings articulated by Muslims in various local contexts but which cannot be made to correspond to a universal Islam (ibid.).

Furthermore, while it has been largely influential in challenging the standard, homogenising accounts of Orientalism, as Sayyid explains, the anti-Orientalist rejection of Islam's unity in favour of its 'local articulations'

constitutes less a break from Orientalism than its mere reversal (Sayyid 2003). 'Whereas Islam occupies the core of the orientalist explanations of Muslim societies, in anti-orientalist narratives Islam is de-centered and dispersed' (ibid., 38). Thus, the phenomena at stake is explained primarily as a product of deep structural effects (material, socio-economic factors), and the Muslimness of the actors is seen as merely coincidental (the actor *happened to be* Muslim); that is, it is purely nominal, its role being an ideological medium (in the Marxian sense) through which the 'real' interests of the actors are represented.

Nonetheless, what this approach fails to consider is if Islam is merely epiphenomenal, why are these subjects primarily defined by reference to Islam? That is, to disregard Islam does not explain why and how the object of analysis has been constructed as such (i.e. violence by *Muslims*). In other words, how can one explain that it is the vocabulary of Islam that mediates the 'representation' of this phenomenon, its subject ('Muslim terrorists') and object ('Islamist violence') and the underlying structural causes and 'secular' demands? To be sure, the authenticity of extremist interpretations is highly questionable from the perspective of Islamic juridical tradition on jihad and violence and is embraced by only a minority of Muslims, but it remains the case it is the name of Islam, rather than any other, that is invoked (by the individual subjects themselves and the discursive regimes of power) to mediate the construction of this phenomenon and actors involved (most often acting in that capacity, i.e. as Muslims). Even if Islam is just a nominal entity, this entails recognising that these actors are Muslims, and this fact (i.e. that they are Muslim) needs to be investigated and accounted for unless one is insisting, in a rather circular fashion, that because Islam is irrelevant, the Muslim identity of the actors should also be completely disregarded.

The response that Islam is irrelevant because these actors are, in most cases, not observant, practising Muslims, and therefore they are not Muslims *proper*, is also unsatisfactory. First, this position resorts to an inverse form of essentialism of the Orientalist discourse (Islam is only a faith or religion; Islam is just sharia, hence real Muslims are only practising, observant Muslims). This, as Ahmed (2015) explains, effectively reduces Islam to a positive essence, and homogenises Muslims as objects determined by this essence (the law), thereby excluding (perhaps, strategically) from Islam all other Muslims who do not conform to the normative, legal interpretation of Islam. However, while it is true that Islamic juristic discourse unequivocally condemns this arbitrary practice of violence, this

should not lead to a negation of the Muslim identity of these actors, nor should it eliminate the need for an inquiry into this identity. Hence, it seems entirely plausible to hold that these acts cannot be reduced to a single entity called Islam, which is subsequently reduced to an underlying essence without necessarily denying that these actors are Muslims acting as Muslims, so Islam is also central to the meaning of this phenomenon. In short, how can Islam be secondary—if not entirely irrelevant—to the phenomenon of which it is also constitutive and to the acts of people constituted by Islam (i.e. Muslims)?

Therefore, if the multiplicity of Islam does not negate its unity, and if the category of Islam is significant and constitutive of the phenomenon at stake, it becomes imperative that the analyst first addresses the challenge of conceptualising Islam as a coherent category without: (1) reducing it to a cluster of universal essences that ignores the variety of Islamic meaning and experience and (2) reducing it to its local articulations so that it ceases to exist as a unitary category. Furthermore, this novel re-conceptualisation of Islam must have the potential to demonstrate the relevance of Islam to thinking about our object of analysis and bringing us closer to understanding the conditions that have paved the way for the emergence of the phenomenon under discussion.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I revisited some of the scholarship on Islam and violence with specific focus on the conceptual frameworks underpinning their various approaches. I sought to demonstrate the centrality and implications of the concept of religion as a specific discursive product of Western historical formations on the study of Islam and Muslims. The Orientalist approach was shown to be deeply problematic for its sheer failure to take into account the dynamism and heterogeneity of Islamic thought and lived experience. Anti-essentialists painstakingly elucidate this diversity and hence conclude that there is no one correct Islam that is universally applicable to all Muslims in their multiple socio-historical contexts. Furthermore, I argued that the categories of 'culture,' 'religion' and 'ideology' are not transparent, self-explanatory, objective concepts that can unproblematically be applied across all cultural and historical contexts without producing a number of conceptual ambiguities.

Moreover, I underlined the anti-essentialist endeavour to dismiss the relevance of Islam to the object of analysis is unconvincing. These attempts

fail to engage with the many questions I raised earlier and, most importantly, that Islam cannot be irrelevant to the identity and acts of subjects constituted by the vocabulary of Islam. It may well be the case that, as many argue, these acts are not 'Islamic' from a normative, legal perspective, but this should not constitute a negation that they are Muslim subjects. Yet, to affirm the Muslim identity of the subjects requires an explanation of this identity and its relevance to their acts. That is, what is required is to move beyond the simple observation of the facticity of Muslimness to an explanation of its emergence and the reason for why and how this object of analysis has becomes constructed in such a manner.

By way of conclusion, it can be suggested that one way to address this monumental challenge is to employ Talal Asad's (1986) concept of discursive tradition. In his important essay, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, Asad seeks to move beyond the limitations of both essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches. For Asad, Islam is irreducible to an ahistorical essence or fixed template for a social order but, at the same time, more is needed for the emphasis on the multiplicity of Islamic interpretations and experience. Therefore, Asad proposes the concept of discursive tradition to underline the continuity as well as the diversity of all Islamic discourses and interpretations. Asad defines Islam as 'a set of historically changing and materially embodied discourses,' that is, Islam designates a broad range of interpretations and experiences which are Islamic not because they replicate or imitate an Islamic past, but because, in their interpretation of the present, they arise out of particular discursive engagement with an Islamic past (the Divine Revelation to Prophet Muhammad). Asad's concept can also be challenged and complemented by the theoretical contributions of scholars such as John Obert Voll (1994), Sayyid (2003), Ovamir Anjum (2007), Ahmed (2015) and others. Such a way of approaching Islam can prove to be a fruitful starting point to thinking about contemporary Muslim identity and practice without falling into the traps of essentialism or reproducing the pitfalls of anti-essentialism.

Notes

1. In addition to Talal Asad, similar arguments have been made by others such as Timothy Fitzgerald (1997), Daniel Dubuisson (2003) and Tomoku Masuzawa (2005). For instance, Fitzgerald has argued, as an analytical category, religion is 'a clumsy concept,' 'fraught with confusions' and does not pick out any distinctive cross-cultural, trans-historical aspect. Following his

examination of the construction of 'world religions' in the contexts of India and Japan, Fitzgerald concludes that the category of religion should be abandoned because it is 'meaningless' and 'analytically redundant' (Fitzgerald 1997, 93; 2000, 153).

2. Huntington (1996) argues that after the Cold War, the dominant form of conflict at the global stage will be neither ideological nor economic, but cultural. Nation states will be replaced by broader civilisational blocks. Thus, there are two central ideas to Huntington's thesis. First, ideology has been replaced by civilisation as the dominant force of politics and mobilisation; and second, Islam is a major force in this new civilisational conflict (Huntington 1996, 258; Mamdani 2004, 21).
3. Generally speaking, such arguments contain recurring reference to what are known as the 'ideologues of radical or political political' Islam, such as Hassan al-Banna, Abul Ala Maududi and Sayyid Qutb (as well as Muhammad Abd as-Salam Farag) (Sivan 1990; Berman 2004; Wiktorowicz 2006). Some also point out that Islamist extremism and violence is associated with a particular branch in Sunni Islam arising in Saudi Arabia, first promoted by the Najdi reformer Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792). For good or ill, ibn Abd al-Wahhab, like Qutb, was inspired by the thought of ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) of the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence (Wiktorowicz 2006; see also Abou El Fadl 2005). The militant political thought of Qutb in particular as well as the strictly literalist reformism of ibn Abd al-Wahhab are regarded as the wellsprings of modern-day jihadist movements and violence in much of this literature.

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CHAPTER 6

Political and Social Changes in the Muslim World with Special Reference to Development, Knowledge and Freedom Deficits

Riaz Hassan

Introduction

According to the eminent Pakistani Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman, a persistent theme in the Qur'an commands Muslims to "establish a political order on earth for the sake of creating an egalitarian and just moral-social order" (Rahman 1989, 62). He goes on to assert this is one of the key intellectual messages of the Qur'an. Ernest Gellner, in his seminal book *Muslim Society*, boldly asserts: "By various obvious criteria – universalism, scripturalism, spiritual egalitarianism, the extension of full participation in the sacred community, not to one, or some, but to all, and the rational systemization of social life – Islam is, of the three great Western monotheisms, the one closest

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_6

to modernity" (Gellner 1983, 7). He further argues that, had the Arabs won at Poitiers and gone on to conquer and Islamise Europe, we should all be admiring Ibn Weber's *The Kharejite Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which would conclusively demonstrate how the modern rational spirit and its expression in business and bureaucracy could only have arisen in consequence to neo-Kharijite puritanism in Northern Europe but not if Europe had stayed Christian, "given the inveterate proclivity of that faith to a baroque, manipulative, patron-ridden, quasi-animistic and disorderly vision of the world" (Gellner 1983, 7).

The modern Muslim world is a pale shadow of Gellner's and Rahman's characterisation of Muslim society. Islam's spiritual and moral egalitarianism has not bolstered some of the key benefits of modernity—health and well-being, economic prosperity, democratic freedoms and the advancement of knowledge—in the Muslim world. On the contrary, an astute observer would have little difficulty in assembling volumes of data to demonstrate the acute deficits of development, freedom and knowledge in the Muslim world. This has given rise to contentious debate about the causes of these deficits. The culprits identified by social scientists include Islamic theology and culture (Huntington 1996; Lewis 2002; Lakoff 2004), oil (Ross 2001), Arab-specific culture/institutions (Sharabi 1988; Noland 2008), the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (El Badawi and Makdisi 2007; Diamond 2010), "desert terrain and institutions" (Haber and Manaldo 2010), weak civil society (Pamuk 2004; Kuran 2011) and the subservient status of women (Fish 2002). In this chapter, I attempt to examine these deficits and their political and sociological ramifications in some detail and discuss explanatory frameworks that may account for them. While Chaps. 2, 3 and 4 have focused on the theological narrative of violent extremists and their interpretation of certain Islamic terms, as highlighted in Chap. 5, there is more to the picture than religious interpretations. Such religious interpretations do not happen in a vacuum. This chapter explores the other causes which have had a real impact on the Muslim world today, providing a bigger and more real understanding to the realities of today.

Development Deficit

In 2010, there were over 1.6 billion Muslims constituting 23 per cent of the world population. Over one billion of them lived in 48 Muslim-majority countries. Asia is home to 66 per cent of the world's Muslims, of which almost half (536 millions) live in South Asia. Economically, Muslim

Table 6.1 Distribution of countries and population by income level of economy in the world and Muslim world[a] 2008

Type of economy GNI per capita	*World population*		*Muslim economy groups as % of total Muslim population*		*Muslim economy groups as % of different world economy groups*	*Muslim economy group population in relation to total world population*
	Number (m)	*%*	*Number (m)*	*%*	*%*	*%*
Low income per capita	976	15	352	25	36	5.0
Less than US$ 975	43 countries		18 countries			
Middle income per capita	4652	69	993	72	21	15.0
US$ 976–11,905	101 countries		23 countries			
High income per capita	1069	16	35.8	3	3	0.5
Greater than US$ 11,905	66 countries		7 countries			
	6697	100	1381	100		20.5
	210 countries		48 countries			

Source: The World Bank Development Indicators, http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do

[a]Excludes Iraq and Somalia

countries are very diverse. Table 6.1 depicts the distribution of Muslims in different types of economies in 2008.

Muslim countries tend to be poorer than non-Muslim countries. They are over-represented in low and high income countries. In 2008, one-quarter of Muslims lived in poor countries compared with 15 per cent of the world's population. Even more striking is the change in the distribution of different types of economies. Between 1988 and 2008, the number of Muslim countries in low income economies increased. In middle income countries, the number increased from 16 to 23, but the number of non-Muslim countries in the same category increased from 38 to 78, and a similar pattern occurred in the case of countries in the high income categories (see Fig. 6.1).

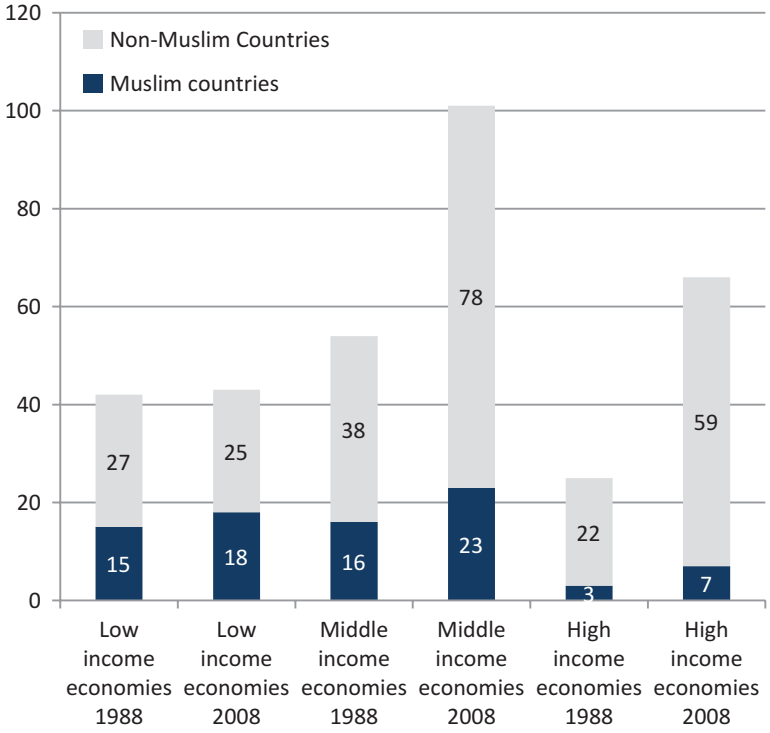

Fig. 6.1 Comparison of the numbers of Muslim and non-Muslim countries in different economy groups. (Source: The World Bank Development Indicators, http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do)

The economic "backwardness" of Muslim countries is further illustrated by more recent economic indicators. Muslims constitute 23 per cent of the world population, but the combined gross domestic product (GDP) of Muslim countries in 2015 was only 5 per cent of the world GDP. The average GDP per capita for Muslim-majority countries was US$5101, three times less than the global average of US$12,820 (NationMaster 2018).

These economic inequalities contribute to a range of health and demographic inequalities, which are listed in Table 6.2. One of the most sensitive development variables is the mortality rate of children below the age of five. As the data in Table 6.2 show, this rate is 63 per cent higher in Muslim

Table 6.2 Demographic and health indicators in Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries

Variable	*Muslim majority* (n = *48*)	*Non-Muslim majority* (n = *142*)
Life expectancy	64.2	66.7
<5-year old mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	84.5	51.9
Adult mortality rate (per 1000 population)	237.9	217.7
Total fertility rate (per woman)	3.8	2.7
Annual population growth	2.4	1.2
Urbanisation (%)	53.1	55.8
Low birth weight (% of births)	13.4	9.8
Improved water access (% of population)	77.5	85.7
Improved sanitation	77.1	68.9
Gender equity	50.3	64.0

Source: Razzak et al. (2011)

countries compared with non-Muslim countries. The adult mortality rates in Muslim countries are also significantly higher than non-Muslim countries, and the same pattern is reflected in low birth weight, which is significantly associated with cognitive and physical development later in life. One significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslim countries is that Muslim countries have a higher rate of improved sanitation facilities. Muslim countries also significantly lag behind in gender equity, which probably accounts for their prevailing higher total fertility rate.

What accounts for this development deficit? According to Adam Smith, economic growth is "the natural course of things" because of people acting in their own best interests and the pressure of competition from the "invisible hand." From this behavioural perspective, economists see development as a long-run sequence of decisions by economic agents acting in their self-interests that culminates in rising investment and higher labour productivity (Timmer and McClelland 2004). An important question that arises is whether there are Islamic theological injunctions that act as behavioural impediments to these elements. In other words, is Islam inimical to economic growth? In general, this theory is not borne out by empirical studies. According to one of the most detailed empirical analyses of this question, "Islam does not appear to be a drag on growth or an anchor on development as alleged. If anything, the opposite appears to be true" (Noland 2003).

Changing Economic Fortunes

With regard to economic backwardness, the evidence shows, before the balance of power shifted after the European expansion of the seventeenth century, the Middle East was economically just as dynamic as Europe. Muslim merchants were just as successful in carrying their commerce and faith to the far corners of the world as their European counterparts, if not more so. According to economic historian Angus Maddison (2003), in 1000 AD, the Middle East's share of the world's gross domestic product was larger than Europe's—10 per cent compared with 9 per cent. By 1700, however, the Middle East's share had fallen to just 2 per cent and Europe's had risen to 22 per cent. The standard explanations among Western scholars for this decline are the assertions that Islam is hostile to commerce as well as the Islamic ban on usury. However, these deterrents are routinely circumvented: Islamic scripture is more pro-business than Christian texts, and as for usury, the Torah and Bible take the same line. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad and his first wife Khadija were both successful merchants. Many Muslims blame their economic backwardness on Western imperialism. But then why did a once mighty civilisation decline and succumb to the West?

A recent book by American economist Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (2011), offers an answer to the puzzle that if Islam is not the cause, then what may account for the development deficit in the Muslim world? He marshals impressive empirical and historical evidence to show what slowed economic development in the Middle East was not colonialism, geography or incompatibility between Islam and capitalism but laws covering business partnerships and inheritance practices. The institution of these laws benefitted the Middle Eastern economy in the early centuries of Islam, but from around the tenth century, they began to act as a drag on economic development by slowing or blocking the emergence of central features of modern economic life, such as private capital accumulation, corporations, large-scale production and impersonal exchange.

Historically, Islamic partnership, the main organisational vehicle for businesses of the Muslim merchant classes, could be ended by one party at will, and even successful ventures were terminated on the death of a partner. As a result, most businesses remained small and short-lived. Most durable and successful business partnerships in the Muslim world were operated by local non-Muslims. Islamic inheritance customs hindered

business consolidation within the Muslim community because, when a Muslim merchant died, their estate was split between surviving family members, a tradition that prevented capital accumulation and stymied long-lasting, capital-intensive companies. The resulting organisational stagnation then prevented the Muslim mercantile community from remaining competitive with its Western counterparts (Kuran 2011).

Kuran (2011) also shows how the tradition of the *waqf* system impeded any application of capital to productive and innovative developments. The wealthy used the *waqf* system to circumvent Islamic inheritance laws, which stipulate that two-thirds of an estate must be divided between relatives, thereby preventing any concentration or accumulation of wealth. A *waqf* was a type of trust established by the wealthy, turning private property and wealth into an endowment to support any social service permissible under Islamic law. The individual and their family became the proprietor or manager of the *waqf* and derived monetary benefits from it. In return for this material security, the *waqf* supplied social services for the public, thereby unburdening the state from the obligation of supplying them. A *waqf* partly overcame the problems of fragmentation of wealth, but it was not a corporation that could change its founding purpose. It had no legal status as an organisation and its functions were fixed for perpetuity. The end result was the *waqf* system locked resources into uses that became obsolete over time, while individual *waqfs* could not merge to pool resources for productive investments (Kuran 2003, 2011). In short, the *waqf* system was inimical not only to capital accumulation but also its productive use.

Freedom Deficit

According to a major study by Freedom House (2001), there is an "expanding gap in the levels of freedom and democracy between Islamic countries and the rest of the world." The study found a non-Islamic country is more than three times more likely to be democratic than a Muslim country. Of the world's 192 countries, 121 are electoral democracies. But only 11 of the 47 Muslim-majority countries, or 23 per cent, have democratically elected governments. In comparison, among 145 non-Muslim countries, 110 or 75 per cent are elected democracies. In other words, a non-Muslim state is three times more likely to be democratic (Freedom House 2014).

At the time of the study, democracy deficit was especially pronounced in the Arab world, where in fact none of the countries was democratic. However, the study also found a large proportion of Muslims lived in electoral democracies, including Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Moreover, the study found a positive relationship between economic development and democracy. Another empirical study of democracy (political liberalism) and poverty found "the greater the percentage of Muslims in the population, the lower the political rights in the country" (Pryor 2007). Does this mean Islam and Islamic culture are incompatible with political freedom and democracy?

Harvard University economist Eric Chaney (2012) has examined this question in a historically and empirically grounded study. Chaney's study debunks the theories that the root cause of democratic deficit is Islam or Arab cultural patterns, oil, the Arab–Israeli conflict or desert ecology. Chaney shows democratic deficit as reflected in the prevalence of autocracies in the Muslim–Arab world is real but is a product of the long-running influence of control structures developed in the centuries following the Arab conquests. In the ninth century, rulers across this region began to use slaves as opposed to the native population to staff their armies. These slave armies allowed rulers to achieve independence from local military and civilian groups and helped remove constraints on the sovereign in premodern Islamic societies. In this autocratic environment, religious leaders emerged as the only check on the power of the rulers. This historical institutional configuration, which divided power between the sovereign—backed by his slave army—and religious elites, was not conducive to producing democratic institutions. Instead, religious and military elites worked together to develop and perpetuate what Chaney calls "classical" institutional equilibrium—which is often referred to as Islamic law—designed to promote and protect their interests (2012).

Ostensibly, religious leaders devised "equilibrium institutions" to protect the interests of the general public, but in effect this institutional configuration cast an autocratic shadow across centuries. Rulers came to rely on slave armies, freeing themselves from dependence on civil institutions. Religious leaders cooperated with the army to design a system that proved hostile to alternative centres of power. Modern-day concentrations of power and weak civil societies are the enduring legacies of this historical institutional framework in regions that were conquered by Arab armies and remained under Islamic rule from 1100 AD onwards.

However, regions incorporated into the Islamic world after they were conquered by non-Arab Muslim armies, such as India and the Balkans, and where Islam spread by conversion (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia and Sub-Saharan Africa), did not adopt this classical framework. Their institutions continued to be shaped by local elites, which preserved their political and cultural continuity. Consequently, while democratic deficit has remained an enduring legacy in the Arab world as well as in lands that were conquered by the Arab armies and remained under Islamic rule from 1100 AD onwards, in countries incorporated into the Islamic world by non-Arab Muslim armies or by conversions, the democratic developments have followed a more progressive trajectory (Chaney 2012).

Knowledge Deficit

In the 2018 *Times Higher Education* world rankings of universities, not a single university from 48 Muslim-majority countries with a total population of over one billion, constituting 18 per cent of the world's population, found a place in the top 200 universities in the world. This has been a recurrent pattern over many years and signifies a serious academic and intellectual crisis. By comparison, the United States, with less than 5 per cent of the world's population, had 75 universities in the top 200. According to the late Pakistani physicist and Nobel Laureate Abdus Salam, "of all civilizations on this planet, science is weakest in the land of Islam" (cited in Hoodbhoy 1992).

The problem of knowledge deficit is not confined to the absence of world class universities; its roots go much deeper. As the data in Table 6.3 show, Muslim countries lag behind non-Muslim countries on a whole

Table 6.3 Education and military expenditure indicators in Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries

	Muslim majority (48)	*Non-muslim majority (142)*
Total adult literacy (%)	68.6	85.0
Male adult literacy rate (%)	78.6	89.5
Female literacy rate (%)	65.2	84.5
Public expenditure on education (% of GDP)	4.1	4.9
Military expenditure (% GDP)	3.1	2.0

Source: Razzak et al. (2011)

range of literacy indicators, which are the building blocks of a "knowledge society." Several factors can account for this crisis, the most important being the meagre resources allocated by Muslim countries to research and development (R&D). The science budgets of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) are near the bottom of the world league. According to a recent estimate based on The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Bank data from OIC countries, the average annual R&D spending in those countries between 1996 and 2003 was 0.34 per cent of the GDP, much lower than the global average over the same period of 2.36 per cent. Indeed, many OIC countries, particularly the richest, spend more on armaments than on science or health. Six of the world's top ten military spenders as a share of public spending are OIC countries: Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria and Oman spent over 7 per cent of their GDP on arms. While science spending in OIC countries is among the lowest in the world, spending on education is more variable: Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia and Iran were among the top 25 spenders on education in 2002 (Butler 2006).

According to the World Bank's "education index" of the poorest performers in 2002, 15 are OIC countries including several African countries, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The low investment in science and technology is also reflected in poor scientific outputs, including low levels of scientific articles and numbers of researchers. In 2003, the world average for production of research papers per million of population was 137. The OIC average, however, was only 13. Not a single OIC country reached the world average. Moreover, with the exception of Turkey and Iran, the numbers of papers produced by the 24 OIC countries for which data is available have either remained flat or declined. Turkey's publication rate has grown from around 500 in 1988 to 6000 in 2003, while in the case of Iran numbers have increased from a low base of fewer than 100 papers per year ten years ago to nearly 2000 (Butler 2006).

Part of the obvious explanation for these conditions is related to inadequate public investment in education and R&D. However, an important cause of the present predicament of these countries pertains to prevailing cultural and political practices. Countries like Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, China and India have taken notable strides in the fields of science and technology and are now among the major emerging economies. Institutions of higher learning thrive in societies with a robust civil society based on institutional and ideological pluralism strong enough to counter-

balance and resist the power of the central institutions of the state over power and truth. This is unfortunately lacking in Muslim societies, most of which have a weak and underdeveloped civil society.

In many Muslim societies, there is another growing obstacle. They are coming under increasing pressure from religious fundamentalist movements to impose epistemologies compatible with the fundamentalists' versions of Islamic doctrines that are generally hostile to critical, rational thought. The tension between fundamentalist and moderate/progressive strands of Islam invariably spills over into the political arena. We are witnessing this phenomenon unfolding in a number of Muslim countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Malaysia and Nigeria. But in countries where this challenge is being mounted, there are few mechanisms for open political expression; so the political challenge is posed as a religious challenge. And when secular governments try to suppress radical religious challenges through violent means, the non-state actors resort also to violent means, including terrorism, making the problem worse. These conditions then lead to political instability, which becomes a major impediment to the good governance vital for strong economic performance.

Religious fundamentalism is a growing and important part of social change in Muslim countries. Religious fundamentalism is not merely a body of beliefs and opinions but a practice that stipulates a relationship of power to knowledge, crystallising in attempts to regulate, uphold, require or adjust correct practices and to condemn, exclude, undermine or replace incorrect ones (Asad 2009). Fundamentalists seek hegemonic cultural and ideological power to establish *shariah* (Islamic law) as the explicit, comprehensive and exclusive legal base of society.

The genesis of fundamentalist movements is not found in religiosity but in the struggle between "hybridity" and "authenticity," an outcome of globalisation and modernisation. For much of Islamic history there has been a common Muslim belief that Islam is not only a religion but also a complete way of life, which in Islamic discourse is known as the "one religion one culture" paradigm. Globalisation and modernisation have shattered this belief by revealing the Muslim world is in fact socially, culturally and even religiously a "hybrid" world. This realisation has provoked an unfavourable reaction among some groups of Islamic intellectuals towards this hybridity, which has given rise to fundamentalist movements that seek to replace hybridity with the "authentic" Islamic way of life. These intellectuals feel Islamic identity is at risk and being eroded by cultural and

religious hybridity. They try to fortify their interpretations of religious ways of being through a selected retrieval of Islamic doctrines and practices from an Islamic past. Religious fundamentalism, in short, is a problem produced by the encounters between modernity and globalisation and the Islamic *ummah* in all its diversity and cultural hybridity.

Islamic fundamentalist movements have important implications for the nature of civil society. The core idea of civil society is institutional and ideological pluralism, which prevents central institutions of the state from establishing a monopoly over power and truth in society. Religious fundamentalism makes societies more susceptible to falling in the sway of hegemonic religious cosmologies, which privilege conviction and truth over reason and doubt, which has a significant impact on the development and functioning of institutions of higher learning. As mentioned earlier, universities in Muslim countries do not rank highly in global rankings. Part of the obvious reason for this situation is inadequate public investment in education and R&D, but this is compounded by prevailing cultural and political practices in Muslim-majority countries. The knowledge deficit arising from these conditions has far-reaching implications for growth and economic development.

In short, a robust civil society is a prerequisite for the development of countries based not on cosmologies of strongly held convictions and beliefs but on a social order based on doubt, reason and compromise. Science and technology prosper only under conditions that privilege the rule of reason. The influence of orthodoxy and its accompanying cosmologies has a deleterious effect on academic conditions. The persistence of such conditions has far-reaching consequences for the well-being of Muslims, making this one of the greatest challenges facing the Muslim world.

Another implication of the prevalence of fundamentalist movements is that they may not be conducive to creating conditions amenable to the reform of religious practices and thought. On this issue, Fazlur Rahman's observations are worth mentioning. Rahman (1989) argues that a central aim of the Qur'an was to establish a viable just and ethical social order on earth. This aim was declared against the background of an Arabian society characterised by polytheism, exploitation of the poor, general neglect of social responsibility, moral degradation, injustice towards women and the less powerful, and tribalism. The Qur'an and the genesis of Muslim community occurred at a particular point in history and against a social-historical background. The Qur'anic response is the product of a "coherent philosophy" and "attitude towards life" that Rahman calls the "intellec-

tual tradition" of Islam. This intellectual tradition was and still is subverted and undermined by emphasis on "literalist" interpretations of the Qur'an by the *ulama* (Islamic scholars). By literalist tradition he means emphasis on "minimalist Islam," focusing on the "five pillars," and a negative and punitive interpretation of Islam.

Rahman argues that the intellectual tradition of the Qur'an requires Islamic thought to be dependent on a factual and proper study of social conditions in order to develop appropriate Islamic social norms for reforming society. For Rahman, intellectual and social reforms are an important part of the development of contemporary Muslim societies. These reforms require objective social scientific studies of modern Muslim societies and deeper understanding of what he calls "social thought in the Qur'an," which deals with the rise and fall of societies and civilisations, moral decrepitude of nations, function of leadership, conditions conducive to creating peace and prosperity, and "the inheritance of the earth" (Rahman 1989, 161–62). This body of knowledge should be placed next to the pure moral thought of the Qur'an. He argues, unless the material of the Qur'an is well-systemised, it can be dangerously misleading to apply individual and isolated verses to situations, as Muslim preachers and many intellectuals tend to do.

Social movements, including religious fundamentalists movements, emerge as a response to collective grievances and to mobilise the public to seek support to redress them. Some of the Islamic fundamentalist movements resort to extremist violence in order to achieve their objectives. An example of such movements is the Taliban movement in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In the knowledge economy of the third industrial revolution, the creation of wealth will rely primarily on "brain industries." Members of the OIC produce hardly any patents and are among the lowest exporters of high-tech exports as a percentage of total exports (Butler 2006). These scientific, technological and intellectual conditions are going to have far-reaching socio-economic repercussions. The intellectual stagnation of Muslim countries threatens to imprison a significant proportion of humanity in permanent servitude. There is a great urgency to create and nurture conditions promoting academic excellence and to develop strategies to arrest the decline of higher learning in these countries. Only this will ensure the honourable survival of future generations of Muslims. This is probably the greatest challenge facing the governments of Muslim countries today.

Concluding Remarks

What are the implications of this for the Muslim world? Is its history its destiny? There are some optimistic developments that suggest it may be possible for the Muslim world to escape its autocratic past. Many Muslim countries have undergone structural changes, such as increasing levels of education, urbanisation and industrialisation over the past 60 years, which have made them more receptive and conducive to democratic change than at any time in the past. The widespread uprisings of the Arab Spring, which have swept through the Arab world since 2011, are unprecedented in the region's history, and this does not preclude the emergence of political equilibrium in countries like Egypt, Iraq and Yemen, similar to the past historical equilibrium.

The structural changes in the Islamic world have heightened tensions between the two main traditions of Islam, popular/Sufi and scripturalistic traditions. Historically, popular Islam has been the dominant tradition permeating the social and cultural life of Muslim masses. However, increasing urbanisation and literacy have galvanised the appeal of the scripturalistic tradition, especially in urban areas. This tension is manifesting in the development and growth of Islamisation movements, which at their core represent an existential struggle between the two traditions of Islam for political and spiritual domination.

Muslim societies are struggling to develop a "compact" between the two traditions to coexist in mutual harmony. Only Indonesian Islam appears to have succeeded in evolving such a compact between the two traditions, represented by *Nahdlatul Ulama* (popular/Sufi) and *Muhammadiyah* (scripturalistic), which has contributed to Indonesia's political stability and spurred on its economic development. Other Muslim countries may have to develop their own appropriate versions of such compacts. These compacts can only be sustained in pluralistic cultures that nurture and value religious and ethnic diversity. Unfortunately, many Muslim countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt and Syria, are struggling to evolve such cultures, and in the interim, are experiencing political and social instability that is accentuating their economic and political woes.

There is another aspect related to the nexus between religion and identity in the Muslim world. Almost all Muslim countries are religiously and ethnically diverse, but they publicly and legally privilege only the Muslim identity that is grounded in the observance of hegemonic religious tradi-

tions, and do not provide adequate opportunities for the expression and growth of Muslim identity/identities grounded in minority sects. For example, in Pakistan, only particular Sunni religious identities are officially privileged, while members of the Ahmadi sect are discriminated against, persecuted and denied public recognition as members of the Muslim community. The same applies in Saudi Arabia, which privileges Wahhabism, and Iran, where Shiaism is privileged. Empirical evidence also suggests, for a significant proportion of Muslims, ethnicity and heritage play a defining role in their being Muslim. By heritage, I mean family as well as national and ethnic affiliations. For example, the identity of Kazak Muslims is primarily derived from their ethnicity. As a consequence, Muslim countries contribute to the institutionalisation of hypocrisy through a range of laws and oppressive norms and practices. Such practices are not conducive to the emergence of vibrant, open and fair civil societies (Hassan et al. 2008).

There is one clear sign that Muslim countries will follow a range of different trajectories. Countries like Turkey, Albania, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia are more likely to defy history than the Arab countries, but poverty and weak civil institutions will nevertheless remain obstacles to democratic change for them. In economics, the process of economic growth is conceptualised around three variables: trade and specialisation, investment and technology, and increasing returns to research and development or knowledge creation. These variables are interconnected, but each has been found to have a significant effect on the rate of economic growth. The evidence reviewed and examined in this chapter suggests that Islamic beliefs and values may not be inimical to economic growth, but the prevalence of poverty in the Muslim world accentuates the scale of freedom and knowledge deficits, which in turn have a deleterious impact on economic development. The road to overcoming the deficits of development, freedom and knowledge in the Muslim world ultimately lies in the establishment of politically accountable governments capable of delivering effective and efficient public services, including universal quality education and the rule of law, and in the development of pluralistic civic cultures that nurture and value good governance.

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CHAPTER 7

Islamism, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Perspectives of Young Muslim Australians

Halim Rane and Melissa Bull

Introduction

For the past few decades, Islam and Muslims have been the focus of intense media, political and public debate, most often in the context of social relations and national security. This chapter focuses on the perspectives of young Muslim Australians concerning radicalisation and violent extremism and what it is like to be a young Muslim in the contemporary climate. It contends that the radicalisation and extremism observed among some Muslim Australians in recent years do not arise from within the religion of Islam *per se* but in association with the post-colonial, political ideology of Islamism. However widespread the problem of Islamism (or its overtly violent variant jihadism) may appear in media and political discourses, this ideology does not necessarily inform how young Muslim Australians self-identify or envision their place, or that of Islam, in contemporary Australian society. Therefore, this chapter does not concern itself so much on the

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_7

disciplinary causes of radicalisation like the previous chapters did, although it is discussed to some extent to provide a context, but rather, it focuses on what Muslim youth living in Australia think about such discourse and how it affects them directly. Based on the findings of focus groups conducted with young Muslim Australians, and using time-period effects as a theoretical framework, this chapter examines young Muslim Australians' perspectives on identity as well as factors that may contribute to and protect against radicalisation and violent extremism.

A recent study on preventing radicalisation in Australia highlights that over 100 Muslim Australians have been involved in fighting for groups such as ISIS, and many more in Australia actively support the group (Jennings 2015). It contends that "Islamist ideology is used by spiritual mentors, recruiters and terrorist social networks as a vehicle for radicalization" and "the Syrian conflict, the spread of ISIL into Iraq, the international response involving air strikes, and a constant stream of online propaganda videos primarily from ISIL are combining to spur an increase in the number of Australians willing to fight in Syria or Iraq and potentially to commit terrorist acts in Australia" (Jennings 2015, 6, 8). In addition, and related to the support for Islamism within sectors of Muslim communities in Australia, has been a more widespread influence of Salafism. Documents recently released by WikiLeaks have highlighted the role of Saudi Arabia in funding "mosques and supporting Islamic community activities" in Australia (Dorling 2015). Laurence describes the scales and influence of Saudi Arabia in the process of spreading its ideology as follows:

> The boom in Saudi proselytism around the world—through the construction of grand mosques, the circulation of millions of free Wahhabi prayer books, and the dispatching of missionaries and imams—was funded by petrodollars at an estimated expense of more than $85 billion between 1975 and 2005, reflecting a determined effort to establish spiritual and political hegemony over Muslim practice. King Fahd (1982–2005) personally financed the building of 210 Islamic centres and supported more than 1,500 mosques and 202 colleges and almost 2,000 schools for educating Muslim children in non-Islamic countries. (2012, 54)

The phenomena of radicalisation and violent extremism among a relatively small number of Muslims are recent developments in the story of Islam in Australia. Research on early Muslim Australians suggests, in spite of living in Australia during the era of the White Australia Policy[1]

(1901–1966) expressed through the *Immigration Restriction Act* that effectively prevented non-Europeans from migrating to Australia, they felt integrated and accepted as Australians (Rane et al. 2015) and lived harmoniously without the stigma or suspicion that has resulted from the association of Islam with terrorism since the latter half of the twentieth century and especially since September 11, 2001 (Dunn et al. 2016). Time-period seems to be an important factor in the emergence of radicalisation and violent extremism among Muslim communities in the West. While Muslim communities have been present in Australia (and other Western countries) for many decades, the threat of violence and extremism from within these communities has only emerged in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 and particularly since the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Consideration of such time-period effects necessitates acknowledging the influence of a politicised interpretation of Islam, referred to in this chapter as Islamism, that has grown since the 1970s. This involved the spread within Muslim societies and communities of more conservative, literalist and rigid interpretations of Islam, namely Salafism and its Saudi variant Wahhabism (Shavit 2014; Laurence 2012; Prokop 2003). At the same time, many Western countries relaxed or repealed immigration restrictions, allowing large numbers of Muslims to migrate to the West. Australia's Muslim population experienced an almost tenfold increase between the early 1970s and mid-1990s, when it first exceeded 200,000. Between 1986 and 1991, Australia's Muslim community experienced a growth rate of 35% due largely to immigration. During this period, nearly 100,000 Muslims arrived in Australia, mostly from the Middle East and South Asia. This was followed by a further doubling of the Muslim population by 2011. According to the 2016 census, Australia's Muslim population is now just over 604,000 (2.6% of the total population).

Consistent with patterns of Muslim migration to most European countries, the bulk of Muslim migrants to Australia came from developing countries with relatively higher religiosity, mainly from rural areas having lower socio-economic backgrounds and limited education (Voas and Fleischmann 2012). Many Muslims who arrived towards the end of the last century had been raised in social and political contexts in which ideas associated with political Islam had become influential (Esposito 2017). They brought with them new and different interpretations of Islam that reflected or resonated within their own political, social and cultural contexts, which often emphasised outward manifestations of "Islamic" identity, and in some cases promoted anti-Western attitudes (Rane et al. 2015;

Howell 2014). Moreover, since the latter decades of the twentieth century, interpretations of Islam such as Salafism and Wahhabism have gained influence among Muslims globally through the funding of mosques, Islamist organisations, imams and teachers, as well as the provision of publications and online content by countries such as Saudi Arabia (Laurence 2012; Prokop 2003). Groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, who are responsible (or have claimed responsibility) for most terrorist attacks committed in the name of Islam since the turn of the century, adhere to the Salafist and Wahhabist interpretations of Islam and are adherents of Islamist ideology. Like other Islamist groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, al-Qaeda and ISIS believe the establishment of an Islamic state or caliphate, characterised by the implementation of a *sharia* law code, to be an Islamic religious obligation and regard democracy as antithetical to Islam. The policies and practices of such groups have given Islam and Muslims a bad name.

In response to terrorist attacks committed around the world by individuals or groups with an alleged or claimed Islamic motivation, government policies and programmes intended to promote social cohesion and harmony, and counter violent extremism, have had "an overriding emphasis upon Muslim vulnerability to extremism" (Dunn et al. 2016, 282). Dunn, Atie and Mapedzahama propose that "the unfortunate effect of this mission is that a militant threat is officially confirmed, and, moreover, this reinforces many of the core stereotypes of Islam in the West: militancy, fanaticism, intolerance, fundamentalism, misogyny and alienness" (2016, 282). Political responses to, and media framing of terrorist attacks, as well as ongoing conflict between Islamist groups and Western military forces, have contributed to the rise of groups such as Reclaim Australia and political parties like One Nation, with an overt anti-Muslim, anti-Islam agenda. Muslim Australians experience high rates of racism leading to "everyday anxiety about relations between Muslims and non-Muslims" (Dunn et al. 2016, 291). Various studies of Muslims in the West have also documented such detrimental effects of the post–9/11 period, including reactive religiosity (Peek 2005) and strained relations between Muslim communities and the Western societies that host them (Voas and Fleischmann 2012). Radicalisation, however, is confined to a small minority of Muslim Australians (Dryzek and Kanra 2014). While religion is not the cause of violent extremism, ideological, cultural and religious acceptability of violence may be drivers under such certain conditions (Davis and Cragin 2009).

It is within the time-period of these three factors—the spread of Islamism and Salafist interpretations of Islam among Muslim-majority societies, subsequent Muslim migration to the West, followed by the rise of anti-Islam groups and parties in the West—that the views expressed by the young Muslim Australians who participated in this study emerge. Given the centrality of Islamist ideology to groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda—would-be recruiters of young, potentially alienated Muslims—it is pertinent to examine the extent to which Islamist ideas resonate with young Muslims in a broader discussion of their identity and perspectives on radicalisation and violent extremism. Following a brief discussion of Islamism, which this chapter contrasts with the religion of Islam, we present the findings of the focus group sessions, which are discussed in relation to time-period effects.

Islamism

Islam and Islamism are not the same. The former is a faith, while the latter is an ideology that borrows from the religion of Islam for its legitimacy:

> … there is a distinction between the faith of Islam and the religionized politics of Islamism, which employs religious symbols for political ends. Many will deny this distinction, including most prominent Islamists themselves. There is no doubt that many Islamists hold the sincere conviction that their Islamism is the true Islam. In fact, however, Islamism emanates from a political interpretation of Islam: it is based not on the religious faith of Islam but on an ideological use of religion within the political realm. (Tibi 2012, vii)

In one of the seminal works on Islamist movements, first written in 1988, Zakariyya (2005) identifies and explains the profound events that took place in different parts of the Muslim world in the late 1960s and 1970s that influenced the rise of a politicised version of Islam (Islamism) in Muslim societies. In the 1970s, Western scholars of Islam began to use a multitude of terms to capture the religiously inspired political movements and developments gaining prominence across the Muslim world, most notably Iran's Islamic revolution, Muslim Brotherhood-inspired organisations and parties, and Wahhabi-inspired conservatism and intolerance. These terms, including Islamic fundamentalism, radical Islam, Islamic revival and political Islam, attempted to reflect the political, sometimes violent, anti-Western, anti-establishment characteristics of the movements.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Islamist became an increasingly used term in reference to groups that support the dominance of a totalitarian interpretation of Islam that sees the West as antithetical to Islam and justifies the use of violence to achieve either national or global political goals (Mozaffari 2007).

Mozaffari explains "Islamism is more than merely a 'religion' in the narrow sense of theological belief, private prayer and ritual worship, but also serves as a total way of life with guidance for political, economic and social behaviour" (2007, 22). Islamism selectively uses the teachings of Islam to form the sets of ideas that comprise the ideology, which it reproduces as legitimate religious obligations (Mozaffari 2007). Two other characteristics of Islamism are that it is not a monolithic movement with a central leadership nor is the use of violence among its constituent groups consistent or systematic, a point which was discussed in detail in Chap. 5. Tibi (2012) makes a distinction between two broad groups of Islamists: the *institutional*, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who are willing to work within existing institutions and political systems, and the *jihadists*, including ISIS and al-Qaeda, who use violence and terrorism in pursuit of national or global political goals with the objective of establishing a new political institution referred to as a caliphate or Islamic state.

However, the goal of establishing an Islamic state or caliphate, characterised by the implementation of a legal code termed *sharia*, is not expressed in the Qur'an or *hadith* (Tibi 2012; Kamali 2012) but finds expression in the Islamist ideology of its various proponent groups. Islamists' characterisation of *sharia* as a legal code is inconsistent with the concept of a moral path used in the Quran (45:18) and by Prophet Muhammad and his companions in Islam's formative years (Kamali 2012). The Islamist conception of *sharia* as a legal code also differs from its use in Islamic civilisation's classical era (eighth to thirteenth centuries) when it operated as a jurists' law that reflected individual judgements concerning *ibadat*/matters of worship (prayer, charity, fasting, pilgrimage, etc.), *mu'amallat*/civil matters (marriage, divorce, inheritance, trade, commerce, etc.) and *hudud*/specific crimes and punishments (theft, adultery, defamation, etc.), among other matters. During this period, matters of state, such as administration, taxation, warfare and foreign relations, were in a separate category called *siyasa* (policy and administration) and were the prerogative of the caliph. *Siyasa* was not commonly associated with *sharia* until the fourteenth century when Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) linked the two in response to the destruction of the caliphate by the Mongols in 1258 (Kamali 2012).

Tibi (2012) uses the term "shari'atization of Islam" in reference to not only the Islamist agenda of institutionalising what he regards as a "reinvented" conception of *sharia* but also contends the claim that this "shariah" is derived "not from human deliberation but from the will of God [and] is central to Islamist ideology" (Tibi 2012, 25). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to elaborate, but the key point here is that the political institution called *caliphate* is not found in the Qur'an or *hadith* and thus its implementation cannot be considered a religious obligation as has been detailed and argued by Ali Abdel Razek in his book *Islam wa Usul al-Hukm: Bahth fil khilafa wal hukuma fil Islam* written in 1925 (Razek 2013). It is in the context of these post-colonial developments in Muslim thought, large-scale migration and settlement of Muslims in the West, and the West's backlash against an "Islam" that has been widely associated with intolerance and violence since the turn of the century that this chapter now turns to consider the perspectives and views of young Muslim Australians.

Perspectives of Young Muslim Australians

The perspectives of young Muslim Australians presented in this chapter are based on five focus group sessions conducted with a total of 38 participants in Southeast Queensland in October and November 2015. The participants were all Muslims, males and females, ranging in age from 18 to 33 years. They were of various backgrounds including African, European, Middle Eastern, South Asian and Southeast Asian. All participants had completed secondary school and many had completed or were engaged in a tertiary degree at the time. Participants were recruited by research assistants who advertised the study through various social networks within different Muslim ethnic and cultural groups. Focus group sessions ran for between 90 minutes and two hours, were audio recorded and then transcribed. Multiple readings were undertaken independently by this chapter's authors in order to identify key themes. Qualitative analysis software, Leximancer (version 4), was used to verify these themes and key concepts as well as the relationships between them. In accordance with the research ethics conditions approved in relation to this study, participants remain anonymous and are identified in this chapter by a code indicating their focus group and the specific number they were assigned. The next section of this chapter presents the perspectives of the focus group participants in relation to identity, radicalisation and violent extremism. It focuses on their responses to questions about being a young person in Australia today and views on the extent, causes and consequences of Muslim radicalisation.

Identity

Asked about being a young person in Australia today, participants expressed a range of responses from feelings of privilege and acceptance to marginalisation and discrimination, with many placing themselves at the latter end of the spectrum. Those who expressed feelings of privilege emphasised opportunities, such as education, afforded to them by Australian society. Across each of the five focus groups were participants who felt their experience of being a young person in Australia today closely resembles that of other Australians in their age group who face similar challenges associated with study, interpersonal relationships and employment. Among these participants were a number who felt Muslims face additional challenges in finding a job due to what some researchers have identified as labour market discrimination (Booth et al. 2012).

While most participants had not directly experienced physical or verbal abuse, or even overt discrimination or prejudice, the prevailing sentiments among them were dominated by fears of discrimination, feelings of being under scrutiny and a general sense of being viewed with suspicion. Such sentiments have intensified over time, according to participants who attributed them to political and media discourses that position Muslims as outsiders, a threatening "other" from which non-Muslims need protection. Participants expressed the view that the extent to which they identified as a Muslim impacted how they are viewed by the wider society:

> … *since* [Tony] *Abbott* [became PM] *I feel like there is something that we need to prove. There's an extra barrier that all young Muslims face. I suppose it depends on how much you identify as a Muslim, how much you have to answer for that and sometimes atone for it, apologise for things.* (G2P6)

To the extent that one can be identified as Muslim, some participants felt they were not accepted as Australian:

> *I know that I'm Australian and I was born and raised here and I see myself as an Australian, but I just don't think other people see me as an Australian because I'm Muslim.* (G2P2)

The prevailing political discourse was described overwhelmingly by participants in terms of an "us versus them" mentality (G2P8), which was commonly seen as having detrimental impacts on intercommunity relations. Consistent with the findings of Dunn, Atie and Mapedzahama

(2016), participants felt segments of the wider society have been turned against Muslims by the media and political discourses that have sanctioned, and even encouraged, anti-Muslim sentiments and attacks against Muslims. Some participants provided personal anecdotes about their increasing reluctance to express and even acknowledge their Muslim identity and avoidance of observing Islamic rituals such as prayer when in the company of non-Muslims in order to maintain positive relations:

> *We try to hide more and more and more these days. Whereas previously I would, if I was going to pray at uni, I would be happy to tell my friends I'm just going to pray, I'll be five minutes. Whereas now, I would openly lie about it and say I'm going to the bathroom or something because I just feel like now we're seen as a threat because people don't understand Islam properly these days … Probably following the Sydney siege, I think that was a big turning point … it was seen as though that was something done by Muslims on our home turf and now being a Muslim and being Australian are two different things. You can't be a proper Australian if you're Muslim. If you pray and you go to a mosque, you're not really Australian.* (G2P2)

Similarly, other participants expressed that experiences of discrimination often depend on the extent to which they identify or could be identified as Muslim. Distinctive forms of dress, namely the *hijab* (head scarf), were cited by some participants as a barrier to acceptance and cause of discrimination and prejudice. There is a sense among Muslims that the *hijab* is a religious obligation for Muslim women. However, there are some contemporary scholars, such as Khaled Abou El-Fadl, who are challenging this perspective in the Western context. The propagation of the *hijab* as a mark of Muslim identity is explained by Khaled Abou El-Fadl (2016) as follows:

> It is rather ironic that modern Muslims, at least since the late 1970s, have chosen to make the head-covering an integral component of identity politics when their own scriptural injunctions are far less dispositive than their Jewish and Christian counterparts. There is nothing uniquely Islamic about the hijab except for the fact that Muslim social movements, at least since the late 1970s, have chosen to make it a part of Islamic catechism.

This particular *fatwa* was written in response to the hostility and animosity experienced by Western Muslim women who wear the *hijab*. Participants in our study remarked that the *hijab* put Muslims in the spotlight and placed females who wear the covering in a burdensome position of bearing the brunt of negativity associated with Islam:

> *… I find it really exhausting. Every day I go out there I can't just be in a bad mood today because I don't want to smile on the bus today. No, you can't do that as a Muslim wearing a hijab – I can tell you that. If you're not smiling at every person that you make eye-contact with you have problems. They won't sit next to you on the bus – it's happened to me. There are days where I just won't smile. There's been a packed bus, there's only one chair and no-one will sit there.* (G1P6)

Another participant provided a contrasting perspective based on not being as easily identifiable as Muslim:

> *I think most of my life I've gone under the radar. I don't wear a headscarf and that sort of thing so I haven't had that experience of racism towards me or anything but I think sometimes there are things that make you feel uncomfortable, things that people say not knowing that you're actually a Muslim … but I think it definitely, as Number 6 was saying, depends upon how much you identify as a Muslim these days.* (G2P2)

Feelings of marginalisation, intimidation, anxiety and fear were shared by many participants. Echoing the findings in Dunn, Atie and Mapedzahama's (2016) research, most felt stigmatised and unfairly judged by political leaders and especially the mass media. Political rhetoric and media coverage concerning acts of violence committed by Muslims, anti-terror laws and police raids of Muslim homes were cited by numerous participants as major contributors to a diminished sense of belonging and acceptance as Australians. The prevailing media coverage of Islam and Muslims was identified by our participants as the most significant problem concerning Muslim relations within the wider society. Many participants remarked they have come to de-identify as Muslim in the public sphere in order to avoid the pressures associated with the negativity towards Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments:

> *Since certain things have happened in the world, I have started to de-identify myself as a Muslim a bit, not completely, but sometimes I think it's easier just to not – people not to know that you're a Muslim. I just think it's a lot easier.* (G2P6)

While not making explicit references to it, a number of participants openly refuted Islamist and other right-wing notions that emphasise distinctions between Muslim and Australian identity:

With the "us and them" mentality, it's odd that we refer to ourselves as Muslims only and not Australian as well, and whenever we talk about non-Muslims, it's always assumed to be Australian. I think that feeds into it quite negatively. Part of our future identity is to embrace that we are Australian and we are Muslim and you can be both. They're not mutually exclusive concepts. (G2P8)

In this respect, numerous participants advocated more meaningful interaction with wider society where religious labels and identity are de-emphasised. Many participants expressed their desire for Muslims to "get out there" and engage with non-Muslims. Here, participants expressly rejected the Salafist doctrine of *al-wala wal bara* (loyalty and disavowal), which proscribes friendship and social engagement between Muslims and non-Muslims (Shavit 2014). On the contrary, participants were in agreement about the need for Muslims to form closer social connections and friendships with non-Muslims in wider society.

There was a strong call from participants for Muslims to be treated without exceptionalism and to be accepted like other Australians. This, some participants highlighted, is required in order for Muslim youth to feel secure and included. Muslim Australians such as Waleed Aly, Ed Husic and Usman Khawaja, among others, were identified by multiple participants in different focus groups as important role models for Muslim youth, as they demonstrate how Muslims can also be successful Australians who constructively contribute to Australian society and culture:

I think having those role models is really important, having those sorts of mentors – I think that's incredibly important. I suppose proud Muslim people, people that don't shy away from identifying as Muslim, but that's not the only thing that's important about them. That they do contribute and they add value to this country. (G3P2)

Other participants expressed frustration towards outward manifestations of Islamist identity, which they considered counter-productive in respect to the place of Islam and Muslims in Australia:

Just in aspect of dress, why do you have to look like that Islamic extremist? There's nothing that says you can't wear a suit or something, or you have to wear the full black abaya [cloak]. *It makes people – you have to be more relatable – I think that's the thing.* (G3P7)

In each of the focus groups, participants suggested reforms ranging from better language and communication skills for Muslim community leaders to a reformation of Islam. Participants agreed that Muslim community leaders need to speak English to be better engaged with Australian society. Across the focus groups was a consistent call for Muslims to get to know Australians and Australian society better in order to address misconceptions, promote mutual understanding, and enable Muslims to be successful, contributing members of Australian society. A number of participants used the word "integration" in this respect. Responses were mixed concerning suggestions by participants that integration should go so far as to de-emphasise distinctive forms of dress, including the *hijab* (head scarf) and *niqab* (face veil). However, far more critical views were expressed with respect to the latter than the former. Participants tended to position this discussion within the context of multiculturalism and emphasised the importance of cultural diversity being respected by everyone, including media, political leaders, Muslims and wider society. In the words of one participant:

> *… because Australia is a very multicultural society, you automatically feel very Australian. You don't necessarily have to be a certain colour or certain religion to feel like you're Australian.* (G5P4)

Participants in each of the focus groups suggested a need for internal reforms of the community and even Islam. A few participants suggested Islamic law was in need of revision in relation to the contemporary world. Such views sought to harmonise religious teachings with the contemporary realities of Muslim Australians. There was also encouragement from some participants to embark on their own socio-religious navigation of Islamic boundaries with the Australian social and cultural context in order to overcome the "othering" and potential isolation of Muslims:

> *I think the othering thing is very important. The Muslim leaders thrive on their Muslim identity and it's one of their defining factors. That's fine, that's perfectly understandable, but that might not be the case for their congregation. That congregation has to interact with the broader society and so we need to have Muslim leaders who understand that, who appreciate that and who give us guidance on how to navigate particular situations, like drinks after work … You have all these different social interactions that you have to learn to navigate. So long as they stay quiet or they don't choose to address it because it's not Islamic or not this or not that, we're going to remain ignorant and isolated.* (G2P8)

This participant further explained that social interactions such as after-work drinks with colleagues promoted mutual acceptance and understanding without necessarily leading to a violation of the religious prohibition on drinking alcohol. Such responses suggest a desire among Muslims to discard many of the more restrictive aspects of certain interpretations, such as those proscribing socialisation with non-Muslims and gender mixing (Meijer 2010). A nuanced perspective would acknowledge that, in their everyday lives, most Muslims are able to successfully navigate such social contexts. The main challenge, however, is that religious teachings are generally not reconciled with social realities. Interacting with the opposite sex may be rigidly prohibited at "Islamic" events but is normative in the everyday lives of Muslims (ibid., 20). Such contradictions expose the irrelevance of such restrictions and inhibit the development of a legitimate approach to Islam that is conducive to the Australian context. Some participants expressed the view that imams could be more helpful in guiding Muslims if they were more culturally informed, better educated, socialised and appropriately qualified in social, family and youth work. Moreover, participants suggested imams and other Muslims community leaders need training in dealing with youth issues, and that there needs to be more open debate and discussion about politics, religion and social realities.

Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

The question of why Muslim youth become radicalised was met in each of the focus groups with a mixture of concern and frustration that the issue had been "exaggerated," "overhyped," or otherwise not reflective of the reality. Most participants commented they did not personally know of any Muslims who could be considered radicalised and much of the concern is generated by political and media discourses. There was consensus in each of the focus groups that actual numbers of radicalised Muslims are small. Each of the groups provided thoughtful insights that show remarkable consistency with the scholarly literature (Davis and Cragin 2009; Dryzek and Kanra 2014). A number of participants stressed that radicalisation is not a Muslim community problem, but an individual one, and that people are radicalised because of the political environment, not the religion. Religion, they contended, is the façade used to justify acts of violence, and has been tainted by politics:

I think radicalisation is set more in political rhetoric than Islamic tradition, because I feel people get radicalised based on the political environment that they're in and not religion. Religion's more of a façade that they use to justify acts of violence. (G1P9)

Yeah, it's more of a political drive that leads people to radicalisation and less some sort of Islamic conviction. (G1P8)

What I find is that a lot of people these days are using Islam as a sort of an excuse for their messed up ideologies. (G1P1)

While some participants, such as the above-quoted, made a distinction between Islam and politics, others seemed to express a view of the two being inseparable, and could not distinguish between Islam and Islamism:

I don't think anyone here believes Islam and politics [are separate]*; it's not oil and water. We are supposed to believe that they do mesh together and that it is a way of life in every facet. But the thing is, when you get crazy groups like ISIS and stuff like that saying, this is political Islam, this is what we want to impose.* (G1P8)

Because I can understand Islam is a religion, but I also believe in political Islam and sharia law. But not in – for example – an Australian context because to apply or to have a legitimate caliphate – or whatever they call it – there's a lot that has to go into it. A lot of stuff that I'm not qualified to speak about, but – so I don't know how to make that distinction between Islamism. (G1P7)

The responses of these participants, however, suggest they see the ISIS brand of Islamism to be inconsistent with their faith, and also certain approaches to political Islam are inconsistent with the Australian social and political context. The latter view was reiterated by another participant in the following words:

… so I think the whole idea of Islamism in a Western country is not understood by non-Muslims or ignorant people, the way we understand it. Because we know that … Islamic politics does not work with democracy and stuff, and therefore it cannot be implemented here. (G1P2)

A few participants opined that many Muslims lack adequate knowledge of authentic and legitimate sources of Islam's teachings and struggle to refute Islamist propaganda when exposed to it, leaving them vulnerable to

this rhetoric. One participant suggested those who have been radicalised due to political violence or conflict are disenfranchised youth who also lack an adequate education about Islam:

> *I think a lot of it is due to ignorance and lack connection to authentic sources of knowledge about the religion … So, if the scholars themselves are radicalised, their followers are, by association, you're going to assume they're going to be radicalised too. So, what makes those scholars radicalised, and I think it's probably geopolitics and socioeconomic factors in their own home countries that have caused the resentment and anger and they see no way out.* (G4P4)

In each of the focus groups, participants highlighted the need for education about Islam (for Muslims) and about Muslims (for non-Muslims). These discussions tended to focus on the former, in which a need for critical thinking skills was advocated, particularly with respect to Islamic teachings. In one focus group, concern was expressed in relation to the kind of higher education many Muslims acquire, particularly engineering, information technology, science and medicine, in which critical thinking skills and debate tend to be less emphasised than in the humanities and social sciences (Rane 2016). The knowledge and skills associated with the latter were seen as necessary for Islam to moderate certain aggressive and intolerant tendencies that have come to be associated with the faith in the past and in the present:

> *I definitely think the type of education that you get at uni makes a difference. I know in terms of radicalisation, and it's usually guys, right, and I find some of these guys really arrogant, like it's just all about the identity politics, about Islam being something that makes them so powerful and so important. I mean that bothers me, but I find when they've got degrees in medicine or engineering they're a lot harder to deal with. Whereas if they've – like an arts degree or law degree, they seem to be a bit more open, even within the religion, their understanding of the religion seems to be a bit more flexible. But when they've got a pure science type background or when they're from part of the Asian subcontinent they, it's, I don't know, it's just – I find that the type of education also makes a difference.* (G3P2)

Such insights are consistent with an emerging body of literature that has identified a link between right-wing extremism (including Islamism and jihadism) and particular fields of study, namely engineering, science, technology and medicine (STEM) (Gambetta and Hertog 2017; Rose 2015).

Of those with post-secondary school qualifications, engineers comprise 45% of the membership of jihadist groups recruited from among Muslim-majority countries, and 59% among Muslims from Western countries (Gambetta and Hertog 2017, 11). While those with degrees in STEM fields are overrepresented among jihadist-group members, humanities and social sciences (HSS), graduates are not prominent among such groups (Rane 2016). In contrast to the critical examination and debate encouraged by HSS fields, the STEM fields tend to foster binary thinking based on right and wrong, black and white, and neglect the shades of grey, contexts and perspectives examined by HSS (Rose 2015). These findings are important to consider both in the context of understanding who may be most susceptible to Islamist propaganda and the protective factors that may assist in its rejection. Furthermore, a large plurality (38%) of jihadists with post-secondary school qualifications have a degree in Islamic studies (Gambetta and Hertog 2017). Saudi school curriculum, for instance, reinforces the Wahhabi ideology, and uses teaching methods that:

> … place heavy emphasis on rote learning; lessons are very repetitive and often use complex language not always appropriate to the age of the students. This philosophy of teaching inculcates passivity, dependence, an a priori respect for authority and an unquestioning attitude. Many Saudi students and professors complain that there is too little emphasis on analytical and creative thinking. (Prokop 2003, 80)

These methods and content reinforce the kind of thinking found to be conducive to right-wing extremism and have been exported to both the Muslim world and the West via mosques, imams and Islamic studies teachers and the publication of books and other material (Prokop 2003, 78). The above highlights the challenges that many young Muslims face in dealing with their peers in matters of religion, which seems to be exacerbated in the absence of critical thinking skills.

Discussion

At the time of writing, Australia was engaged in a heated debate about Muslim immigration in response to the then Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton, who stated it was a mistake for Australia to allow Lebanese-Muslim refugees to settle in the 1970s as their children and grandchildren pose a threat to Australia's national security. Lebanese comprise the

largest ethnic group among Muslim Australians, and according to the Immigration Minister, 22 of the most recent 33 people to be charged with terrorist-related offences in Australia are from second- and third-generation Lebanese-Muslim background (Anderson 2016). This view shares a commonly expressed perspective among studies of Muslims in the West that changes in Muslim thinking and behaviour can be explained in terms of generational factors. For instance, Fleischmann, Phalet and Klein (2011) discuss religious identification and politicisation in relation to discrimination and support for political Islam and political action among the Turkish and Moroccan second-generation Muslims in Europe. Maliepaard and Lubbers (2013) explore parental religious transmission across generations of Muslim migrants from Morocco and Turkey to the Netherlands. Voas and Fleischmann's (2012) study examines religious change among first- and second-generation Muslims in the West, including Europe, North America and Australia. Their examination of research on the relationship between education and religiosity among Muslim migrant communities in Europe shows that the "somewhat conflicting results might be explained by generational differences or period effects or both" (Voas and Fleischmann 2012, 536) and the changing association between education and religiosity "could also be the result of period effects" (ibid.). This raises a critical question of whether intergenerational changes in religious thought and observance reflect generational, life phase or time-period effects.

Proponents of the generational theory contend that adolescence is a pivotal period for the development of social and political awareness, and that pre-adult socialisation exerts enduring effects on attitudes (Nikolayenko 2008). Pilgaard (2013) explains that values are formed by different forces that characterise the socio-historical context of each generation, including economic conditions, social events, media and social trends. Along with cultural norms, values produce generational effects where people from a certain generation adhere to an established set of values that influence opinions and behaviours. Alternatively, life phase or life-cycle theories assert that each life stage is associated with a distinct set of biological needs, cognitive functions and psychosocial characteristics (Nikolayenko 2008). According to this perspective, the development of sport and exercise as an integral part of one's lifestyle, for instance, can be explained based on "habits or values and behaviours that are linked to situational determinants in different stages of everyday life," such as

enjoyment and esteem experienced in childhood and adolescence and health, and well-being benefits in adulthood (Pilgaard 2013, 36).

By contrast, time-period effects, also known as period or periodical effects, emphasise the role of historic events in influencing thinking and behaviour on an individual basis, regardless of one's association with a particular generation or life-cycle phase (Nikolayenko 2008). Relating this theory to engagement in sport and exercise, Pilgaard (2013) identifies a time-period effect to have occurred in Denmark when engagements in such activities were found across all generations or life phases at the same time. Though not explicitly stated in terms of a time-period effect, Peek (2005) explores the social and historical contexts of the emergence of particular formulations of religious identity among second-generation Muslim Americans in relation to the impact of 9/11. Other studies have found, in the aftermath of 9/11, many young Muslim Americans formed closer associations among each other and asserted "the primacy of their religious identity over other forms of social identity" (Peek 2005, 215). The findings of our study suggest religious identification had also been strengthened among Muslim Australians. However, within the last few years, many participants seem to be not only questioning the function of an overt religious identity but have already reached a decision that it is unnecessary and even detrimental to their place in Australia and relations with non-Muslims. These findings contrast with those of Peek's (2005) study, which found, while some young Muslim Americans de-identified as Muslim following 9/11, many of these participants re-embraced their Muslim identity in subsequent years as a mark of solidarity and defiance.

In contrast to Peek's (2005) participants, who generally rejected the advice of their parents to de-identify as Muslim in respect to attire, many of our study's participants have seemingly made a conscious decision to do so in response to the prevailing social and political context. Anti-Muslim sentiments have provided fertile ground for the relatively recent rise of anti-Muslim groups and political parties, which have subsequently contributed to such events as Brexit, the election of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party to the Australian senate, and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. Another factor seems to be the disdain with which many of our participants regard militant groups like ISIS. Arguably, ISIS represents the extreme end of the Islamist spectrum, and its crimes against humanity have driven many young Muslims to not only reject the group's brand of Islamism but some to also question the legitimacy of the Islamist ideology vis-à-vis Islam.

Conclusion

Over the latter decades of the twentieth century, Islamism gained influence across the Muslim world and through its association with violence and terrorism, Islam and Muslims more generally have been stigmatised. This has been an exceptionally challenging time for Muslims in the West, particularly those whose formative years have occurred post–9/11. While most participants in this study were generally unaware of the distinction between Islam and Islamism, recent phenomena and events, including sustained, pejorative media and political discourses concerning Islam and Muslims, as well as the rise of Islamist extremists like ISIS and anti-Islam groups like Reclaim Australia, have seemingly caused many participants in this study to question whether Islamist ideology is consistent with Islam and conducive to social harmony and national security. Motivated by their sense of Australianness, appreciation for multiculturalism and respect for cultural diversity, they are at a crossroads in their understanding of Islam and its part in their own identities. The young Muslim Australian participants in this study are in many ways remarkably unremarkable. They face similar challenges to and identify with their non-Muslim Australian peers. They also identify as Muslims and some have, perhaps unwittingly, accepted Islamist ideas into their understanding of Islam. However, they do not regard radicalisation as a widespread problem among their Muslim peers, consider violent extremism to be antithetical to their understanding of Islam and support a response to such security concerns based on education, including critical thinking in relation to matters of religion. They are a product of the time-period in which they live.

Note

1. Between the federation of Australia in 1901 and 1966, the state enforced the *Immigration Restriction Act* commonly known as the White Australia Policy, which effectively prevented non-Europeans from migrating to Australia. The policy was dismantled in stages after the Second World War and replaced with a policy of multiculturalism in the early 1970s.

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PART III

Religious Leadership and Violent Extremism

CHAPTER 8

Understanding Key Themes in the ISIS Narrative: An Examination of *Dabiq* Magazine

Greg Barton

Introduction

The Islamic State group (IS), or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria/Levant (ISIS/ISIL), as it is still widely known, was, at the height of its powers, the most potent terrorist group the world has ever known. Boko Haram was previously more lethal, but it did not draw foreign terrorist fighters and resources on the global scale that ISIS did, focussing primarily on northern Nigeria and contiguous regions in central Africa (by 2015, ISIS was responsible for greater loss of life than Boko Haram and both well exceeded the Taliban and al-Qaeda: Institute for Economics and Peace 2017, 74). ISIS had a global vision matched only by al-Qaeda, but by most measures, it exceeded the reach and scope, and certainly the ambition, of al-Qaeda (Barton 2015c, 2017; Burke 2015; Cockburn 2016; Hamming and van Ostaeyen 2018; Khosrokhavar 2016; Neumann 2016; Soufan 2017;

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_8

Wright 2016). As it was pushed out of holding territory in Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa in Syria, it was finally denied the claim of a physical caliphate, and as a result, the brand and network were greatly diminished. Nevertheless, it remains a formidable force, not least because it was never wholly reliant on a strategy of holding territory (Fishman 2016).

Even with the loss of its so-called caliphate, ISIS remains much more powerful and resilient than is commonly acknowledged (Winter 2017; Zelin 2017). The group, in one form or another, is likely to be around for many years yet (Atran et al. 2018; Wright and Berger 2017). Regardless of whether ISIS (the older name is used here for the sake of clarity) continues to evolve under its current name, or whether its succession is marked by a sharp rupture, it is almost certain that the key narrative elements of its messaging will figure prominently in the next generation of jihadi terrorist propaganda (McCants 2015; Roy 2013; Wood 2016).

Dabiq Magazine

This chapter focuses on understanding the appeal of ISIS by examining the central lines of narrative in the seminal ISIS magazine *Dabiq*. This digital magazine, produced to exceptionally high production standards not previously seen in jihadi publications, was published between July 2014, immediately after the declaration of the caliphate, and July 2016 (Ingram 2016). During these two years, 15 editions of around 60 pages each were published in English and several other European languages. In September 2016, *Dabiq* was quietly replaced with a new periodical, *Rumiyah*, of which 13 issues of around 44 pages each were published over the following 12 months (Wignell et al. 2018). Through the analysis of the *Dabiq* magazine, a better picture will be drawn of how the radical narrative is further coloured through the images and feelings it portrays in its publications. This will provide further insight into another layer of the ISIS narrative which has been discussed thus far in various chapters of this book.

Each issue of *Dabiq* had a cover story reflecting current developments. This, together with the interval between publication and length of each issue, reflected the triumphs and trials of the organisation, fluctuating between boasting of achievements, declaring God's judgement and railing against enemies near and far:

Issue 1 *The Return of Khilafah*, 5 July 2014, 26 pages
Issue 2 *The Flood*, 27 July 2014 (22 days since previous issue), 44 pages
Issue 3 *A Call to Hijrah*, 10 September 2014 (45 days), 42 pages

Issue 4 *The Failed Crusade*, 11 October 2014 (31 days), 56 pages
Issue 5 *Remaining and Expanding*, 21 November 2014 (41 days), 40 pages
Issue 6 *Al Qai'dah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within*, 29 December 2014 (38 days), 63 pages
Issue 7 *From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grey Zone*, 12 February 2015 (45 days), 83 pages
Issue 8 *Shariah Alone Will Rule Africa*, 30 March 2015 (46 days), 68 pages
Issue 9 *They Plot and Allah Plots*, 21 May 2015 (52 days), 79 pages
Issue 10 *The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men*, 13 July (53 days), 79 pages
Issue 11 *From the Battles of Al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions*, 9 September 2015 (27 days), 66 pages
Issue 12 *Just Terror*, 18 November 2015 (101 days), 66 pages
Issue 13 *The Rafidah from Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal*, 19 January 2016 (62 days), 56 pages
Issue 14 *The Murtadd Brotherhood*, 13 April 2016 (85 days), 68 pages
Issue 15 *Break the Cross*, 31 July 2016 (109 days), 82 pages

The name *Dabiq* is taken from an otherwise obscure Syrian town, north of Aleppo near the Turkish border. The importance of the name is that it occurs in disputed *hadith* prophesying an "end of time battle" occurring on the plains surrounding Dabiq. ISIS, even more so than al-Qaeda, is in part a fundamentalist apocalyptic cult. Although the town of Dabiq was of no great strategic value, ISIS expended significant effort and resources in capturing it. The first inside page in every issue of *Dabiq* carried, above the table of contents, Musab al-Zarqawi's call to battle: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify … until it burns the Crusader armies in Dabiq" (Comerford 2016).

For the ISIS leadership, or at least for that genuinely religious element publicly visible, the claim of establishing the one true caliphate and of leading the great fight at the end of time go hand-in-hand. Certainly, in terms of recruitment propaganda and messaging, the declaration of the caliphate and the apocalyptical clash that ensued was absolutely central to the ISIS pitch (Wood 2015, 2016). Their appeal to the youth was an invitation to join them in a utopian project building the true, perfect society at the end of history on the side of true believers (Bergen 2017; Dawson 2018; Kepel 2017; Manne 2016; Schuurman and Taylor 2018). The apocalyptic framework provided a justification for the focus on martyrdom,

something previously not seen so strongly in Sunni Islamic thought before the advent of al-Qaeda. It was the very nature of their apocalyptic struggle that meant followers would be called upon to offer up their lives as martyrs in the sure knowledge of two things: one, that to die in the struggle was a glorious thing, and two, that whatever their loss, God was on their side and the tide would, in God's time, turn in their favour (Manne 2016).

The successor magazine to *Dabiq,* first published in September 2016, was called *Rumiyah* (Rome), because in early Islamic texts Rome (Rum) referred to the historical Roman Christian Empire, and by extension, the Christian West. In the same apocalyptic texts, it was prophesied that the people of God, the true Muslim soldiers of the caliphate, would prevail over not just the Levant but also in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and through to Europe as far as Rome. The change in title did not signify a clear shift in direction so much as an adaption to changing circumstances. However, given that, after weeks of fighting, the township of Dabiq was wrested from ISIS' control in mid-October 2016, it made good sense in terms of branding to shift the focus outwards and foreshadow the incoming cycle of conflict in which the forces of the caliphate would once again be on the ascendant.

In the period between the last issue of *Dabiq* on 31 July 2016 and the first issue of *Rumiyah* on 5 September 2016, ISIS lost control of virtually all urban centres in Iraq except for the very significant city of Mosul (Issue 1 of *Rumiyah* came 36 days after Issue 15 of *Dabiq*, which came 82 days after Issue 14). Much of the magazine's content was focused on inspiring would-be foreign fighters to join the struggle.

Dabiq and al-Adnani's September 2014 Call for "Lone Wolf" Attacks

On 21 September 2014, ISIS spokesman and second most senior leader Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani issued a call to "true believers" (*muwahhidun*—literally those who believe in the unity of God), via an audio recording uploaded to Twitter, to join a global insurgency and attack in the name of ISIS anywhere in the world (al-Adnani 2014):

> So, O *muwahhid*, do not let this battle pass you by wherever you may be … If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that

> entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling. Both of them are disbelievers.
>
> …
>
> If you are not able to find an IED or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of their allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him. Do not lack. Do not be contemptible. Let your slogan be, 'May I not be saved if the cross worshipper and taghūt (ruler ruling by manmade laws) patron survives.'

From this point on, ISIS, from the beginning an inherently complex hybrid organisation, began to pursue a multipronged strategy of calling for workers and fighters to join with it in the glorious struggle of establishing the caliphate, while also urging those who could not travel to "attack where they were with what they had." This second line of appeal was addressed to individuals who already had an organic connection with a global network and to strangers who had no prior relationship with ISIS. Unlike al-Qaeda before it, ISIS was happy to take all volunteers, whatever the state of their mental health, or personality disorders, or criminal background (Stern and Berger 2015a, b; Speckhard and Yayla 2016).

The September 2014 call to attack was repeated throughout the pages of *Dabiq* and later *Rumiyah*, as well as through multiple social media posts, videos, and audio recordings. It effectively established a social contract that whoever attacked in its name would be acknowledged. Their sins would be expunged and they would be lionised as heroes by the ISIS media. Even a failed attack, such as the attempt by Numan Haider to kill two police officers in southeastern Melbourne two days after the initial call for such attacks on 21 September 2014, was praised as the work of a heroic young martyr. In Issue 6 of *Dabiq*, released on 29 December 2016, after quoting again from al-Adnani's call to arms, ISIS praised Numan Haider and Man Haron Monis, the gunman behind the Lindt Café siege in Sydney a fortnight earlier on 15–16 December. Monis was praised for turning from "false religion," as an Iranian Shia, to true faith. The February Issue 7 of *Dabiq* devoted six pages to lionising "Abu Basir Al-Ifriqi"—Ahmedi Coulibaly—a close friend of the Charlie Hebdo assassins, Cherif and Said Kouachi. Four pages were given over to a hagiographical account of Coulibaly's piety and zeal and a further two to an interview with his widow who he had dispatched to Syria to join ISIS (Barton 2015a).

Where *Rumiyah* principally differed from *Dabiq* was in its focus on the global insurgency alongside fighting for the caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Even before the battle of Mosul began on 16 October 2016, it had become increasingly more difficult for foreign fighters to move across Turkey's southern borders into Syria and Iraq. At the same time, heightened security in many of the source countries had greatly reduced the outflow. In Australia, for example, as many as 300–400 young people were stopped from travelling to Syria and Iraq in 2015 and 2016 (Barrett 2017; Barton 2015b).

As will be seen below, a major theme in *Dabiq* is that of *hijrah*, or migration—of leaving behind family and familiar surroundings to start a new life with God's people in their struggle to build an Islamic state. Of necessity, the call to *hijrah* is restyled in the pages of *Rumiyah* to focus on the global insurgency, with repeated references to al-Adnani's September 2014 speech calling on believers to fight where they are with what they have.

Sayyid Qutb and the Roots of ISIS' Apocalyptic Narrative

Even more important than this apocalyptic dimension is the fundamentalist character of al-Qaeda and its spin-offs like ISIS. This fundamentalist character was first formed by Sayyid Qutb during his dark prison days in Cairo in the late 1950s and early to mid-1960s. Qutb's writing from this period remains deeply influential within al-Qaeda and ISIS (Byman 2015, 73–9). In his new biography of Qutb, Fawaz Gerges argues that Sayyid Qutb was a late arrival in the world of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, somewhat contrary to his common portrayal as a natural partner with, and successor to, Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna. Sayyid Qutb had only been with the Brotherhood in a formal capacity for a few short years before his arrest and imprisonment. While in prison, not only did his meditations turn darker in the face of callous violence but his contact with a revolutionary underground group more radical than the Muslim Brotherhood helped compound his increasingly bleak view of the world (Gerges 2018).

Sayyid Qutb came to see the whole of Egyptian Muslim society and Egyptian Islam as being lost in the darkness—*jahiliyya*—of pre-Islamic ignorance: "This Jahiliyyah is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty on earth" (Qutb 2015, 6). For Qutb, the entire Muslim world was lost in

a "… vast ocean of Jahilyyah which has encompassed the entire world" (Qutb 2015, 7; Kepel and Milelli 2008, 150). For Qutb, the failures and shortcomings of Muslim teachers and ordinary Muslims were multiple, but in simple terms they could be summed up as departing from the core doctrinal principle of Islam of *tawhid*—the unity of God (Gerges 2018). Anything that sought to add to the pure doctrine of the unique unity of God, be it human tradition or superstitious belief, amounted effectively to blasphemy: a lie against the very nature of God and therefore an insult to true religion. According to Qutb, opposition to God needed to be met, by the vanguard of true believers, with offensive, physical jihad "to establish God's authority on earth, to arrange human affairs according to the true guidance provided by God" (Qutb 2015, 7). This idea, of course, had earlier origins. Many contemporary scholars see it reflected in the first-century movement of the Kharijites (Wood 2016). More recently, the so-called Salafi reformist movement, which began in the interior of Arabia by Abdul Wahhab at the end of the seventeenth century, can be seen as being founded on this principle (Wright 2011; Wright and Berger 2017).

The result was an extreme form of "Protestant" iconoclastic anger. Because this form of fundamentalism has for decades been acknowledged as the official state religion of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the historical sites beloved to Muslims around the world, particularly in Mecca and Medina, have been bulldozed away or otherwise covered up lest pilgrims fall into superstitious practices. Within the context of the Saudi kingdom, however, modern Salafis tend to be quiescent and turn their fundamentalist gaze inward so it is reflected not in a revolutionary political movement, but in an obsession with narrow legalism and the stripping out of any sense of mystical reality and religious life. Needless to say, it also results in an unpleasant judgementalism, but not one that is necessarily inclined to violence or other extreme activity.

Beginning with Sayyid Qutb's dark prison writings, this notion of a world divided into a small community of true believers living in a vast sea of darkness—the extreme "us and them mentality" common to all forms of fundamentalism—was married with revolutionary ideals taken ultimately from Marxism that called for radical action and the rising up against an existing order that it might be torn down, with a new order put in its place. After Sayyid Qutb was executed in 1966, his brother Muhammed Qutb, along with many other members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, fled into self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia. There, in conversation with more extreme elements of the Salafi community, and drawing upon Sayyid

Qutb's prison writings, the central ideas that were to inform al-Qaeda took concrete form (Wright 2011; Wright and Berger 2017).

These ideas were the foundation and justification for Musab al-Zarqawi's extreme sectarian violence. In theory, the core al-Qaeda leadership was not opposed to this analysis, but they certainly disagreed with al-Zarqawi's tactics and strategy. For them it was more important to win over the support of local communities and to slowly turn them towards the revolutionary cause. Zarqawi, however, was a revolutionary in a hurry, and he correctly judged that an occupied Iraq provided the perfect opportunity to mount a revolution. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi arrived at the same conclusion about the civil war context in Syria. Although his personality was very different from that of al-Zarqawi, he took a strongly sectarian position and believed that opposing the Shi'a majority was necessary to build support for the Sunni resistance. From the beginning, al-Qaeda and ISIS leaders have judged that violence has its own attraction and is bound to attract idealistic young men and women when married with a strong narrative of a righteous cause in a black-and-white view of the world (Wood 2015, 2016; Wright and Berger 2017).

Radicalisation, Recruitment, and the Appeal of Positive Messaging

There are good reasons for describing ISIS' message as being dark, violent, and judgemental. This is the approach the West and enemies of ISIS tend to take, and it is, in fact, the approach ISIS encourages them to take. This, however, should give us pause for thought about what we understand to be the appeal of ISIS and what can be done to counter it (Crenshaw and LaFree 2017).

When trying to understand why an otherwise normal young man or woman would be drawn to a brutal group such as ISIS, it is often assumed, in being seduced by this very powerful group, these men or women have lost some capacity for rationality, or at least perspective. ISIS, after all, like other groups that are successful in recruiting to a radical cause, works first through social networks and the offer of friendship, belonging, meaning and purpose, and generally only later does the group's narrative message become an important component in the process of radicalisation (Callimachi 2015). Radicalisation then is better understood as a process of recruitment, and as with recruitment to non-radical religious and other movements, the first stage involves finding new friends and a new sense of

belonging in a new community. Only then, for most people, does engaging with the narrative begin to really shape their thinking. First comes the sense of identifying with a new group and then comes internalising that group's ideas to shape one's own identity (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009; Borum 2011; Coolsaet 2016).

While all of the above is true, and to a considerable degree important, to stop at this level of analysis is to miss a large part of the narrative elements of the ISIS message and what makes it so appealing to those who join it (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009; Crenshaw and LaFree 2017). For while ISIS, like other such violent fundamentalist movements, is harshly judgemental to everyone outside its fold, its message is by no means wholly negative or dependent on violence. On the contrary, as might be expected with any effective media and recruitment campaign, ISIS' message is to a large extent positive and its appeal lies not just in providing a sense of meaning, purpose, and belonging.

The final section of this chapter focuses on an analysis of the major themes that run through the messaging in the 15 issues of *Dabiq* magazine. As has been noted above, *Rumiyah* magazine picks up on most of the same themes, even though its focus is more oriented towards encouraging attacks in the West. Consequently, the major themes discussed below also apply broadly to *Rumiyah* magazine and the centrally produced digital media beyond these magazines, including professionally crafted video and audio material (Ingram 2016). The same cannot necessarily be said for the product of the large community of "jihadi fan" boys or "keyboard warriors" whom ISIS employs for viral distribution through cyberspace. These fellow travellers play a vital role in disseminating the professionally curated material produced by ISIS and frequently also add crude elements of their own. This gritty material can be effective in its own way, but because it is not controlled by ISIS' central production houses, it cannot be said to necessarily reflect the group's careful media strategy.

Nine Major Themes in *Dabiq*

From a careful reading of the text and examination of the imagery of the 15 issues of *Dabiq*, nine major themes stand out clearly: (1) Justice; (2) Goodness; (3) A sense of belonging; (4) The caliphate (*khalifa*); (5) *Hijra*, or migration in the path of God; (6) Redemption; (7) Sin; (8) Judgement; and finally, (9) Jihad. Clearly, there are dark elements inherent in these themes, but what is somewhat surprising is the extent to which even some of the darker themes are presented with such a focus on positive messaging.

Justice

The theme of justice and a utopian state that can alone truly deliver justice is absolutely central to ISIS' messaging. The images that run through the pages of the magazine regularly depict medical personnel attending the ill and wounded. They show images of construction equipment cleaning up damaged streets and men hard at work repairing the ruin of war and making cities clean and habitable. The first issue of the magazine, coming just days after the announcement of the caliphate, was full of positive stories about what the establishment of the Islamic state meant. "A NEW ERA HAS ARRIVED OF MIGHT AND DIGNITY FOR THE MUSLIMS" proclaimed the all-caps title of the lead story (*Dabiq*, Issue 1, 5): "So, let the world know that we are living today in a new era … The sun of Jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of victory have appeared."

The arrival of the caliphate, the fabled Islamic state, was portrayed as a process of glorious liberation in which the borders of the tyrants—referring particularly to the infamous Sykes–Picot border dividing Syria and Iraq—have been smashed. The Sunni tribal leaders of Iraq in Syria were portrayed as rejoicing in liberation. In bold dot points it was explained (*Dabiq*, Issue 1, 13) the benefits and services provided by the Islamic State, including: "- Returning rights and property to the rightful owners; - Pumping millions of dollars into services that are important to the Muslims; - The state of security and stability enjoyed by the areas under the Islamic states authority; - Ensuring the availability of food products and commodities in the market, particularly bread; - The reduced crime rate; - The flourishing relationship between the Islamic State and its citizens."

The practical outworking of justice is presented in traditional religious terms, such as the giving of *zakat* (the obligatory tithe) in sharing personal wealth for the common good. In contrast, the international order, and particularly Western nations, is depicted as constituting "THE ANGER FACTORY," to use the title of one of the articles penned in the name of British journalist John Cantlie (*Dabiq*, Issue 7, 76): "It's Western governments heavy-handed tactics that generate the growing anger that will reduce Western nations to ashes…."

In many of the earlier issues of the magazine, the carefully curated personal story of John Cantlie, backed up with a series of slickly produced videos in which he narrates the piece to the camera, seeks to portray a man whose eyes have been opened to the true justice of the caliphate (*Dabiq*, Issue 7, 81):

> It's a strange thing, to harbour real anger towards your government. For me it's a new sensation, politics never touched me before because I lived blissfully under the radar. I'd never voted in my life because I figured that all politicians were, by nature, public-school liars who would just say whatever needed to be said to get into power and then do exactly the same thing as the leader before them except wearing a different coloured tie.
>
> Now, having been exposed first-hand to the cold indifference of politicians and how utterly ruthless they are when the chips are really down I realise how right I was in the first instance.
>
> Despite being a prisoner, I've been shown respect and kindness, which I haven't seen from my own government. Even if I had a choice, could I honestly return to and live in a country that disowned the other Britons, all their families, and myself so contemptuously?
>
> I don't think so.

The message is clear, in "the words of John Cantlie," that it is the West that lacks justice and is full of hypocrisy and callous cynical calculations, and it is the Islamic State, despite the necessary violence behind its achievements, that is most truly concerned with justice.

Goodness

The second theme that runs through the 15 issues of *Dabiq* is that of goodness. For a movement described as a "death cult," and one that certainly employs gratuitous violence in a pornographic fashion to appeal to young men looking for something edgy and shocking, it might seem strange that ISIS would focus so much on goodness. On reflection, of course, this is not really surprising. It's always easier to sell a positive message than a negative message. Notwithstanding the limited appeal and shock factor of pornographic violence, such material is primarily limited to either provoking angry responses from near and far enemies or engaging those cruising the web or social media and hooking them into conversations.

Not only is goodness an important focus for effective marketing in general, it is particularly important in military recruiting. Much of the content of *Dabiq*, in fact, resembles military recruiting literature, as do large portions of its video content. Effective military recruiting campaigns not only sell the idea of excitement and self-development but also of belonging and being part of a team. Most of all, they pitch the warrior as a heroic figure working selflessly for the good of society, who, if not recognised by everyone for the good that he does, is instantly recognised by his band of brothers.

This is exactly the pitch that ISIS uses in *Dabiq*. It is amplified by the fact that the digital magazine is extremely well produced. The pages are laid out in an attractive fashion, and the quality of the imaging is second to none. The pictures are often beautiful, and all of them are aesthetically of high quality and often contain content that is attractive and positive. So, for example, there are images of bearded warriors gently cradling kittens. The juxtaposition is not accidental; rather, it speaks to the inner quality of the prized noble warrior. There are many stories about these foreign terrorist fighters, and almost all of them emphasise selfless service and a willingness to give up the comforts of home for the hardships of the battlefield for the cause of goodness. Some are directly pitched at Western converts to Islam, and emphasise the Islamic ideals of equality, justice, and working for the greater good, in contrast to the shallow materialism, hedonism, and narcissism that is generally associated with Western culture (Macdonald 2017).

Along with quite striking pictures of warriors in combat gear tenderly nursing kittens, *Dabiq* is also filled with many images of smiling children and grateful villagers. The message of the caliphate is one of liberation, a breaking of shackles and the restoration of justice. The images that accompany such messages glow with an optimistic sense of basic goodness.

Much of the non-violent religious content in *Dabiq* draws upon general Islamic devotional writing and includes mainstream Islamic teachings about prayer and fasting, the qualities of heaven, and those to whom admission to paradise is granted. ISIS does not shy from the fact that the "noble warrior" will likely become a martyr, but even this is presented as good news. If nothing in this world is certain, then the promise of paradise to come and the strong sense of personal redemption that comes with it resonate with many who experienced frustration and disappointment in this world, not least with themselves.

ISIS recognises its target audience of potential recruits are not only looking for adventure and purpose but also hungering to overcome personal failings in relationships, substance abuse, criminality, and generally staying on the straight and narrow path. And so, in a remarkably mainstream fashion, there are articles about what Islam teaches about character development and the noble and good. Alongside this, every issue contains at least one interview with a foreign fighter, invariably highlighting not just their noble self-sacrifice but also the satisfaction and joy they have found coming to serve the caliphate.

As noted above, the co-attacker in the Charlie Hebdo attacks, Coulibaly, is praised not just for his deeds but also for his discipline, piety, and character. His *nom de guerre* is literally Abu Basir al-Fariqi—literally "The African." In the minds of any Muslim with basic religious knowledge, it evokes memories of Prophet Muhammad's companion Bilal Ibn Rabah, the dark-skinned former slave, son of an Arab slave and a captured Ethiopian princess, who found not just freedom but honour and dignity in the Prophet's community.

Belonging

The third theme that runs very clearly through all 15 issues of *Dabiq*, and much of ISIS' messaging, is that of belonging. In the regular discussions about foreign fighters, a recurrent theme is the joy of finding belonging with a band of brothers. This is very resonant in effective military recruiting material. So, for example, the five "martyrs" (the Shuhada), the Bangladeshi students who laid siege to an upmarket restaurant in the diplomatic quarter of Dhaka, the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan, are portrayed smiling to the camera as they stand shoulder to shoulder cradling their assault rifles and dressed in fetching black combat gear with contrasting red and white head scarves (*Rumiyah*, Issue 2, 8). The message of the image is not simply that each individual is happy—they appear to be bubbling over with joy—but that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. They have found purpose and belonging together as brothers in arms. The fact they came from middle-class homes and gave up a comfortable university education abroad with the promise of lucrative careers underscores their noble character.

Khilafah

The caliphate, or *khilafah*, is of course one of the major themes not just of *Dabiq*, but of all ISIS messaging. It is the theme of the lead story on the cover of Issue 1 of *Dabiq*, and its presence throughout the magazine is ubiquitous. It is listed as the fourth theme here as a reminder that the caliphate is spoken about as being the fulfilment of the first three themes: justice, goodness, and belonging. The pages of Issue 1 proclaim the declaration of the caliphate as glad tidings for the entire global Muslim community, beginning with gathering believers from every corner of the planet (*Dabiq*, Issue 1, 6):

> Raise your head high, for today – by Allah's grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might rights, and leadership.
>
> It is a state where the Arab and the non-Arab, the white man and the black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers.

Closely tied with the idea of the caliphate, the utopian religious state, is the idea of *imama* or leadership. In a world prone to injustice from self-serving and self-appointed leaders, a hallmark not just of the Middle East and North Africa but of the vast majority of the 50 Muslim-majority nations around the world, the caliphate is held up as a state led by noble leaders walking on the path set by their Creator. The caliphate is the ultimate achievement not just because it represents victory but also because it is a panacea for everything that ails modern society.

Hijra

The next theme that runs in tandem with the theme of the caliphate is that of *hijra* or migration in the path of God. The fabled caliphate was only made possible by the sacrificial dedication of those who left the comforts of home to come and fight for its creation. The prospect of *hijra* represents a tantalising combination of self-sacrifice and liberation. On the one hand, *hijra* historically, for example, joining with the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan in the 1980s, involved arduous and difficult travel and the threshold requirements proved too great for many. However, ISIS makes it as easy as accepting a plane ticket and placing yourself in the caring hands of your brothers. The logistics and even the financial means can be readily arranged by others so long as one is willing.

Not only is *hijra* presented as an exciting and liberating prospect, free of the guilt of self-indulgence because it is in the path of service to others and following true religion, it is also portrayed as a means of salvation. As the title of the lead story proclaims (*Dabiq*, Issue 3, 32), "BAD COMPANY DESTROYS THE HEART":

> Living amongst the sinful kills the heart, never mind living amongst the kuffar! Their Kufr initially leaves dashes and traces upon the heart which over time become engravings and carvings that are nearly impossible to remove. They can destroy the person's *fitrah* (character) to the point of no return, so his heart's doubts and desires entrap him fully.

ISIS understands very well its target audience of young people struggling not just with boredom and frustration at the level of daily life but also with a deeper frustration of the failure to live a good life and maintain pious ideals. Their appeal is pitched not just at young men but also young women who are the subject of regular dedicated columns with titles like "THE TWIN HALVES OF THE MUHAJIRIN" (*Dabiq*, Issue 8, 32).

It is a foundational element of jihadi thought that violent jihad is not only necessary, but obligatory for all Muslims to support. Al-Qaeda promoted the idea that, for individuals who could not directly participate in jihad, it was their obligation to support others that could. ISIS took this formula and filled out the details in a convincing fashion in the context of establishing a caliphate. Issue 3 of *Dabiq* is entitled "A CALL TO HIJRAH" and, true to the title, is filled with arguments suggesting that true adherence to Islam demands the believer migrate to join the caliphate in Syria–Iraq. The formula of obligation for *hijra* was spelled out as a stark formula in the very first issue of *Dabiq*: (1) The individual migrates in the path of God (*hijra*); (2) they join with the community of true believers (*jama'a*); (3) they come together to topple the tyrants (*taghut*); and in doing so, (4) they join together in enabling (*tamkin*) the believers in their struggle to (5) support the caliphate (*khilafah*) (*Dabiq*, Issue 1, 38). To migrate to the Levant (*hijra* to Sham) is to follow in the path (*milla*) of Prophet Abraham. In Issue 8 of *Dabiq*, a young man pulls his trolley bag towards the boarding gate of an airport. In the next frame, he strides confidently towards an enormous flagpole from which proudly flies the very distinctive black banner of ISIS. Splashed across the first panel are the words: "Abandon the lands of superstition and false belief (*shirk*)," and across the second panel: "And come to the land of Islam" (*Dabiq*, Issue 8, 28–29).

Redemption

Hijra is described in very personal terms as an act of liberation and even salvation. This fits closely with the sixth major theme found in *Dabiq*: redemption. A striking photograph of a modern jet airliner climbing against a beautiful backlit cloudscape sits above the headline: "*HIJRAH* AND FORGIVENESS" (*Dabiq*, Issue 3, 23). Alongside this is the text from a *hadith* collection (Salih Muslim), using a translation preferred by ISIS, with words attributed to Prophet Muhammad:

> Are you not aware that Islam wipes out all previous sins? And that hijra wipes out all previous sins? And that Hajj wipes out all previous sins?

This choice of hadith is rather peculiar, but, as is the manner of *Dabiq*, it is artfully and confidently presented in a manner that many readers would find wholly convincing. To a reader with limited religious knowledge, *Dabiq* appears to be based on deep and authentic Islamic scholarship, even as it plays fast and loose with its juxtaposition of quotations.

The concept of redemption is closely tied to a believer taking action by making *hijra* and turning their back on the comforts of home to travel to join the community of believers and work with them to build the caliphate. But not everyone is able to travel. As noted above, as early as September 2014, when the caliphate had only just been established and was meeting with only weak resistance, Sheikh al-Adnani, in his infamous *fatwa*, spelled out an alternative path to make physical *hijra*. For those who are unable to travel to join the fight for the caliphate in Iraq and Syria, the option, and obligation, remains to fight where they are. Issue 6 of *Dabiq* leads with the examples from Australia referred to above. Man Haron Monis, the Lindt Café siege gunman from Sydney, and Numan Haider, who died in Melbourne trying to fatally knife two police officers, are presented as sinners who found redemption through martyrdom. Quoting from his community media posts, framed against a flattering photo, Monis, formerly a Shi'a Muslim (Rafidi—a 'rejecter'—in Salafi parlance) is held up as a model of repentance (*Dabiq*, Issue 6, 5):

> In the past, I had raised a flag other than the flag of Islam. I ask forgiveness from Allah and repent to Him. I swear by Allah the Almighty that I will never raise a flag other than the flag of Rasullah. (sallahu alayhi wa sallam)
>
> I used to be a Rafidi, but not anymore. Now I am a Muslim, alhamdulilah.

He is lionised as one who answered the call of Shaykh al-Adnani (*Dabiq*, Issue 6, 4):

> Thus, he added his name to the list of Muslims who answered the Khilafah's call to strike those waging war against the Islamic State wherever they may be …

The march of ISIS across northern Syria and Iraq is presented as the work of God in which the hand of God is seen not just in military victories but in thousands of Sunni leaders repenting their opposition to ISIS and finding forgiveness and redemption in joining with it.

Sin

Redemption, of course, is the hope of sinners. The seventh major theme running throughout *Dabiq* is that of sin. Sexual deviance, which for ISIS includes homosexuality, is presented as evidence of a world gone astray. In Issue 7, the West is condemned for a sexual revolution that has led to a "downward spiral of sexual deviance and immorality … Disease became rampant, the rate of children born outside marriage skyrocketed, and the nuclear family was on its way to becoming a relic of the past" (*Dabiq*, Issue 7, 42). Western Christianity is portrayed as being lost in idolatrous superstition. Stories of Western converts are presented as tales of salvation from an empty life of sin and false religion and finding the truth and happiness in Islam. Christianity and its doctrines of incarnation are presented in the pages of *Dabiq* as a sinful deviation from true belief. Shia Muslims and Sunni Sufi mystics alike are presented as being lost in sinful delusion and false religion.

Issue 7 of *Dabiq* came out in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attack, and the cover shows French imams holding up *Je Suis Charlie* signs in solidarity with fellow Parisians protesting the attacks, but the headline beneath reads: "FROM HYPOCRISY TO APOSTASY: THE EXTINCTION OF THE GREY ZONE." For ISIS, spiritual reality is starkly black and white. Only by joining with the caliphate, or supporting it from afar, can a believer find redemption from sin. To do anything else is to be lost in the darkness of sin: there is no option of sitting on the fence; there is either light or darkness.

Judgement

As an angry fundamentalist movement, ISIS is, of course, extremely judgemental towards fellow Muslims who do not support it and everyone else lost in the darkness outside the narrow cone of light that bathes the true believers. This us-and-them, black-and-white world view is restated again and again throughout the 15 issues of *Dabiq*. In Issue 1, following the "Breaking News" page with a photo of ISIS fighters standing on a commandeered Iraqi military truck driving in a triumphal convoy, under the title "KHILAFAH DECLARED" comes the second story of the issue. "THE WORLD IS DIVIDED INTO TWO CAMPS," reads the all-caps headline, with DIVIDED written against the sky in mustard yellow. Beneath the headline comes the explanation (*Dabiq*, Issue 1, 10):

> Amirul-Mu'minin said: "O Ummah of Islam, indeed the world today has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present:
>
> The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy – The camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the jews, the crusaders their allies, and within the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and mobilised by the jews."

After Issue 1's cover story announcing the arrival of the caliphate, the next issue led with a cover story about judgement: "IT'S EITHER THE ISLAMIC STATE OR THE FLOOD." The text appears against a dramatic painting of Noah's Ark ploughing through stormy waters. Even among the Muslims there is darkness, it is explained under a story bearing the title: "The widespread ignorance of the people." The accompanying text explains "if we were to unconditionally affirm the Islam of many people today, without understanding the reality of the different shades of shirk that they've fallen into …."

This state of widespread sin and error has called forth the judgement of God, *Dabiq* explains, just as has been prophesied. This is explained under the title: "Sham is the Land of Malahim – The Levant is the land of the Great Battle at the end of time."

ISIS is particularly judgemental towards Shi'a Muslims, who are referred to derogatorily as the Rafidah, or rejectionists. Issue 12 is entitled "THE RAFIDAH FROM IBN SABA TO THE DAJJAL" (Antichrist). Many of the images of violence in *Dabiq* portray the destruction of Shi'a mosques and Christian churches (Issue 15 is entitled "BREAK THE CROSS") which, as with the destruction of pre-Islamic antiquities, is justified as being part of the necessary cleansing of idolatrous affronts to *tawhid* (oneness of God).

Jihad

The ninth and final theme of *Dabiq* is that of jihad. Quoting from a *hadith* popular with jihadi extremists, it is explained (*Dabiq*, Issue 2, 44):

> You will invade the Arabian Peninsula and Allah will enable you to conquer it. You will then invade Persia, Allah will enable you to conquer it. You will then invade Rome, and Allah will enable you to conquer it. Then you will fight the Dajjal and Allah will enable you to conquer him. (Salih Muslim)

Here, as is typical in *Dabiq* and its other media material, ISIS takes a peculiar approach to translation to serve its purposes: this *hadith* is more accurately translated: "you will then confront the Romans." Most of its readers would, nevertheless, be none the wiser and would assume, as ISIS intends, that they are being presented with substantive Islamic scholarship rather than manipulative propaganda.

The theme of jihad runs as a swirling subcurrent through every issue of *Dabiq* and frequently breaks out on cover stories. Issue 4 of *Dabiq* has a photoshopped ISIS flag flying atop St. Peter's Square in the Vatican under the title "THE FAILED CRUSADE." Issue 8 shows a distinctively African minaret of classical cuboid beauty accompanied by the title "Shari'ah alone will rule Africa."

In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attack, in Issue 7 (released 12 February 2015) *Dabiq* stepped out assertively to proclaim: "ISLAM IS THE RELIGION OF THE SWORD NOT PACIFISM." Quoting in Ibn Taymiyyah, the classical scholar most popular with extremists: "THE BASIS OF THE RELIGION IS A GUIDING BOOK AND SUPPORTING SWORD" (*Dabiq*, Issue 7, 22).

Issue 12 was uploaded on 18 November 2015, just five days after the military assault-style massed attack on the streets of Paris on Friday, 13 November. Entitled "JUST TERROR" and featuring a movie poster-like montage of the Paris attacks superimposed over the streets of the city, it reminds readers that attacks like those in Paris are a necessary part of the global project of jihad that ISIS is committed to prosecuting as part of the divinely ordained apocalyptic confrontation between the forces of God and those who oppose Him. Jihad is portrayed as lying at the centre of God's plan to set right the wrongs of the world, to punish evil, and to bring history to its predestined conclusion.

In the final issue of *Dabiq*, Issue 15, Under the title: "WHY WE HATE YOU AND WHY WE FIGHT YOU," it is explained that jihad is inevitable when the West and so much of the Muslim world are lost in sin and opposed to true religion (*Dabiq*, Issue 15, 30). The true believers have no choice but to engage in jihad. Even in discussing this rather dark theme, however, *Dabiq* frames it as a glorious and good struggle, and the *mujahidin* are depicted as "facing affliction with faith." The struggle is portrayed as intergenerational, and so alongside images of stern-faced child executioners standing stoically, pistol in hand above those who they have just shot dead, comes the caption: "THE LION CUBS OF THE KHILAFAH" (*Dabiq*, Issue 8, 21).

Conclusion

There is no escaping the darkness that runs through much of ISIS' messaging, but it is not possible to understand the appeal of that messaging if only the violence and judgementalism are observed and if the power of attraction for the recruit is lost in the images of brutality in the war against sin (Macdonald 2017).

Recent studies have pointed out that ISIS cannot really be understood without understanding its religious message, however distorted it might be. However superficial the religious understanding of those attracted to it, it is nevertheless powerful precisely because it makes spiritual claims (Dawson 2018). For those that are drawn to it, this is a message of "good men joining the good fight." In a world in which bad things happen to good people, there is no choice but to fight back.

Most of those who become terrorists do so in the belief they are joining the side of the good (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009; Borum 2011; Coolsaet 2016). ISIS understands the power of positive messaging, and while it may seek to provoke and catch attention through ultraviolence, it understands its message is strongest when it is framed in terms of "good men fighting for the greater good." If we are to dissuade those who are being drawn towards this message, and work towards restoring those who have gone astray, it is essential that we understand this message in the way its intended audience receives it and that our counter-messaging is equally effective (Crenshaw and LaFree 2017; Dawson 2018).

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CHAPTER 9

Potential Impact of the AKP's Unofficial Political Islamic Law on the Radicalisation of the Turkish Muslim Youth in the West

Ihsan Yilmaz

Introduction

Step by step eliminating its centre-right, centre-left, and liberal stakeholders, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) "evolved from a broad coalition into one-man rule, ensuring that no one except Tayyip Erdoğan could exercise any real power in the party. Working with key figures in the media, in politics and trade, he consolidated a personal power base of technocrats whose loyalties were not to the party, but to Erdoğan directly and personally" (Yilmaz et al. 2017, 57). This new Islamist[1] autocracy in Turkey "can be best described as Erdoğanism. Erdoğanism refers to the emerging political regime in Turkey that has four main dimensions: electoral authoritarianism as the electoral system, neopatrimonialism as the economic system, populism as the political strategy and Islamism as the political ideology" (Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018, 2). Erdoğanism also has Sunni nationalist, neo-Ottomanist, and anti-Westernist dimensions.

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_9

Similar to Kemalism before it, Erdoğanism has an "authoritarian logic of a top-down imposition of power, using the Althusserian ideological apparatuses of the state to manufacture consent and socially engineer compliant citizens" (Yilmaz et al. 2017, 60; see in detail Yilmaz 2013, 2015a).

Erdoğanism's core feature is populism, and Erdoğanists have an understanding of society that is based on binary oppositions and diametrically opposed socio-political identities. This identitarian approach has insiders and outsiders, where the outsiders, even if they are citizens, are regarded as foreigners and even internal enemies. In other words, similar to other populist ideologies, Erdoğanism divides society into the opposite poles of "us" and "them" and "friends" and "enemies" (Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018). As a result, the AKP has been trying to construct "the New Turkey" identity through elements such as conservatism and Sunni sectarianism. Those who share these characteristics and are loyal to the AKP government are considered to be "us," and those who do not are "others" (Gençoğlu Onbaşi 2016).

Erdoğan and his Islamist circle seem to think it is politically and religiously correct to commit anything if it brings gain for the survival of the *umma* (the global Muslim community), which they have likened to the international structure to the fight between the truth (Muslims and their *dar al-Islam*, lands of Islam) and falsehood (non-Muslims and their *dar al-harb*, lands of infidels). The data shows that the Turkish people are suspicious of Turkey's Western allies. Thus, AKP politicians have an incentive to play on this mentality (Stein 2018). They have also been "using foreign policy as a tool for populist political gain" (ibid., 1) and "focused on perpetuating a nationalist, inward-looking narrative of a Turkey under siege from hostile external powers" (ibid., 5). As a result, anti-Westernism and anti-Western conspiracy theories have gradually becoming cornerstones of Erdoğanism.

In this imagined struggle, the Turkish diaspora in Western European countries has a significant role, since the West is constructed in the Islamist mind as the source of all evil things and pitted against Islam, the will of God. For example, some Islamists think the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, who is identified with Erdoğan, helped some Irish people to establish the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to fight for Ireland's independence so that the English would be preoccupied with the IRA and leave the Ottomans alone. Islamists see this as a great achievement against the infidel West (Akit 2015). This animosity and hatred have also been aggrandised by the circulation of anti-Western conspiracies and post-truth theories.

Erdoğan has developed a tough nationalist and anti-Western conspiratorial discourse to demonise and criminalise his critics. During the Gezi Park protests, Erdoğan vociferously fabricated conspiracy theories claiming the Western powers were behind the scene (Lancaster 2014). In December 2013, revelations of serial wiretaps revealing massive systemic corruption related to the involvement of AKP elite were countered again by Islamist conspiracy theories, arguing that a "mastermind" and "foreign hubs" (apparently, Islamist euphemism for the US and world Jewry) were trying to destroy the AKP, which was destined to lead the Muslim world against the imperialist oppressors.

Since then, the Erdoğanist "regime has been engaging in creating domestic and international controversies which usually involve conspiracy theories of sort" (Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018, 10). He "brought back religio-civilizational animosity against the West in his rhetoric. Today, Erdoğan and his media constantly propagate the existence of a holy warfare between the Muslims and the Christian West and claim that the latter is bent on the former's destruction" (ibid., 12). Whoever is critical of Erdoğan's government is suddenly framed and demonised as an internal enemy and traitor and identified as an infidel, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent, crypto-Jew, member of the dark forces, puppet, spy, internal pawn, and so on. Any time Erdoğan wants to attack his opponents, he uses connotations such as "crusaders," "Israeli offspring," "Byzantine leftover," or "Vatican" to accuse them of being extensions of external powers. By doing so, Erdoğan creates imagined enemies who prowl and attack the Turkish state.

The AKP wants to "Islamise" youth through education (Lüküslü 2016; Yilmaz 2018), interventionist politics, and the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) (Yilmaz 2015a; Yilmaz and Barry 2019) and build a new national identity. Islamist unofficial law has been used for this purpose as well. Thus, on the basis of some preliminary observations, this study briefly looks at the Turkish transnational socio-legal realm to see the extent of any impact Erdoğanist radicalisation, on the basis of anti-Western conspiracy theories, may have on the minds of the Turkish Muslim youth through unofficial Islamist law, which is an emerging phenomenon this study refers to as "Islamist legal pluralism." Islamist legal pluralism is different from Muslim legal pluralism, which is based on the apolitical daily life experiences of Muslims whose understanding of Islamic law differs from the law of the nation-state in which they are residing (Yilmaz 2016). Muslim legal pluralism is generally related to family law, financial issues

such as *halal* mortgages, or culinary matters such as *halal* meat. In contrast, Islamist legal pluralism is about political issues and reflects the ideology of Islamism.

Rather than focusing on the radicalisation of the Muslim youth in Turkey, which deserves several separate studies, this chapter looks at the transnational dimension as the AKP elites have increasingly employed a rhetoric that simultaneously targets the global *umma* and Turkish diaspora communities that predominantly live in the West. Sporadic incidents like the AKP-tied Osmanen Germania or Erdoğan's open threats, which signal to organise terror attacks through proxy jihadi organisations, suggest that there is a radicalisation process taking place in the Western countries in which Turkish citizens live.

Erdoğan's Long Arm[2] in the West: Transnational Mobilisation of the Turkish Diaspora

The Erdoğanist regime has been monopolising the socio-religious public sphere, and its radicalised interpretation of Islam is becoming more influential among Turkish youth with every passing day. By employing different conspiracy theories, the AKP has shifted its focus from Western to more non-democratic Eastern countries. The USA is currently considered the external enemy within the triangular relation between the pro-Kurdish terrorist organisation Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the PKK's northern Syrian branch Democratic Union Party (PYD), and the sympathisers of Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen and his Hizmet Movement (Gülenists)[3] as their collaborators and agents. Yet, the Turkish society feels mistrust towards the US as well as the European Union (EU) countries. According to research conducted by Istanbul Bilgi University, 87.6% of respondents believed that attempts by European countries to divide the Ottoman Empire into parts were continuing to the present day (Karakaş 2018; Özkırımlı 2018). All these developments have transnational dimensions as well, since the regime has been trying to mobilise Muslim youth in Western nations.

Turkey is one of the top ten emigration countries in the world. The website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs states: the population of Turks living abroad exceeds 6 million people, of whom about 5.5 million live in Western European countries (MFA n.d.). The Turkish diaspora is the largest group of Muslim immigrants in Europe. Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Austria are some of the countries in

Western Europe, home to the largest population of the Turkish diaspora in the world. Despite the emergence of large-scale Turkish emigration to Europe in the 1960s, Turkey's active engagement with its newly emerging diasporic community did not take place until the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002. European leaders have been concerned that Turkey's volatile internal tensions and conflicts might have become a Western domestic security problem as they perceive the authoritarian regime of Turkey is trying to transplant Turkey's domestic fight to Turkish diasporas (Arkilic 2018).

Turkey has the capacity to influence its transnational expatriates and emigrants who are manipulated in Europe to promote their domestic and foreign political interests. Populations in the diaspora with stronger grievances against host countries are more likely to be courted by outreach efforts from their countries of origin (Arkilic 2016). The approach of Turkish officials to their expats is welcomed by the Turkish diaspora because many Turks remain unintegrated to the wider communities and feel isolated in their host country and excluded (Arkilic 2016, 2018; DW 2009). In this context, it is remarkable that the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlights and frames these problems:

> Meeting the needs and bringing solutions to the problems of this community which constitutes one of the most important dimensions of our relations with Western European countries are regarded as one of our foreign policy priorities… Following 9/11, xenophobia, discrimination, racism and Islamophobia against Muslims have increased and gained a new dimension. Turkish community in West Europe constitutes the majority of Muslim population thus is directly affected by these adverse trends. (MFA n.d.)

Turkey's intensive efforts have gradually paved the way for the state of the Turkish diaspora as a group to be increasingly torn between Turkey and their host countries. Among Turkey's objectives is to strengthen the political presence of the historical AKP by the convocation of emigrants, extending its soft power beyond its borders. This is in accordance with the neo-Ottomanist foreign policy of Ankara and the mobilisation of measures of the diaspora against the policy of the interests of Turkey, such as the recognition of the genocide of the Armenians by the European countries in 1915 (Arkilic 2018).

A comprehensive analysis of Turkey's relations with expatriate umbrella organisations operating in France and Germany also shows that Turkey

influences the political participation of immigrants through the "diaspora empowerment" mechanism, which transforms the identification and capabilities of immigrants. It expresses a sense of self-efficacy, collective identity, Islamism mixed with Ottomanism, and group consciousness among the leaders of Turkish diaspora organisations, providing them with technical, financial, and legal support. Leaders of Turkish diaspora organisations are more willing to be receptive to the diaspora policy of their country of origin if they have strong objections to their host country (Arkilic 2016). Larger grievances are more readily absorbed and encourage immigrant leaders to identify with the state of origin rather than the host state. It is clear that the AKP's anti-Western conspiracy theories reinforce these feelings of disapproval of Western nations, who are portrayed as crusaders who continue to conspire against the Muslim world.

Islamist Unofficial Law and the Radicalisation of the Fatwas in the Erdoğanist Era

In Erdoğanist Turkey, there has been a growing trend: "the rising status of regime-connected religious scholars such as the previous head of Diyanet, Mehmet Görmez, and columnist/scholar Hayrettin Karaman, who have become instrumental in legitimising the regime's policies through various Islamic injunctions, i.e. *fatwas* and declarations" (Yilmaz and Bashirov 2018, 12). In this study, I only focus on Professor Hayrettin Karaman (1934–), as he has been very close to Erdoğan, writing for an Islamist newspaper that has been supportive of Erdoğan since the 1990s and is deeply respected by the AKP circles. Karaman is rarely objected to by the Turkish Islamists and the AKP elite. Thus, it is safe to say that Karaman represents, to a great extent, the Islamist legal mind of the AKP. Karaman is also the most famous of pro-AKP Islamist *fatwa* producers. He is internationally "known for issuing 'fatwas'," and he once even "argued that the government has no obligation to protect harmful, ugly, and illegitimate acts, practices, that the majority disapproves and the minority must voluntarily refrain from exercising certain freedoms" (Kubicek 2016, 136–137).

Karaman is a professor of Islamic law and columnist in the pro-AKP Islamist daily, *Yeni Şafak*. He has long been supporting the AKP government and Erdoğan against the opposition parties and groups. He finds legitimising *fatwas* and interpretations of Islamic rules in accordance with the benefit of the AKP/Erdoğan since AKP/Erdoğan is believed to be the

ultimate guarantor and representative of Islam. Karaman is the Islamist *fatwa* giver who produces favourable *fatwas* for the AKP (Kentel 2016; see in detail Kuru 2016, 170–172).

It is not known who is influencing who. Even if Karaman is influencing Erdoğan, it is still not known if he is acting on Karaman's advice. But it is clear that the Erdoğanist regime's actions have been legitimated from the perspective of unofficial *sharia* to satisfy the AKP's religious electorate. As mentioned above, almost no one in the AKP circles has objected to Karaman's *fatwas*, despite the hot debates on these *fatwas* in the Turkish political arena.

Islamists like Karaman seem to be thinking, since what the AKP is doing is jihad, they can bend Islamic rules out of necessity (*darura*) and also break the official law, which they believe are the codes of the infidel West. For those religious authorities, there is only one political party in Turkey that truly represents Islam, and it is a religious duty for each Muslim to vote for the AKP, otherwise this will lead to division (*fitna*, *tafriqa*) of the *umma*, which is considered worse than killing one's Muslim brother. For such preachers, winning elections is equal to winning jihad. Thus, the winners are entitled to booty (*ghanimet*) from the infidel opposition. It is most likely for this reason that Karaman vociferously sided with the AKP in the scandalous corruption probe of December 17–25, 2013, producing religious *fatwas* supporting AKP politicians in his corner (Karaman 2014a). The elected Islamist politicians can receive bribes in the form of 10% or 20% commission on billions of US dollar public tenders from building contractors, which is legally likened to the share of alms collectors in the early years of Islam (Karaman n.d.).

In some of his other articles after the December 17, 2013, investigation, Karaman also started writing openly about these bribery and corruption issues in an attempt to convince religious voters that Erdoğan's corruption is Islamic. Simply put, Karaman has been indirectly implying that Erdoğan and his circle may have engaged in corrupt actions, such as receiving unofficial commission from businessmen who are given public tenders and procurements. Nevertheless, this corruption is an Islamic necessity (*darura*) as the money is needed for *da'wa* (the Islamic cause) and jihad for the Islamist cause, not for Erdoğan's personal wealth. Karaman (2013) has also asserted that individuals and religious communities can be sacrificed for the sake of the state, providing the example of opposition party leader Muhsin Yazicioglu, who was killed in a very dubious helicopter accident. Karaman (2013) has also written about the Gülen

Movement and indirectly implied that the movement was working against the state interests and creating *fitna* (corruption); as a result, it can legitimately be destroyed by the state (Yilmaz 2015b). While Karaman gives these *fatwas*, he also gets benefits from defunct *Majalla* (the Ottoman Code of Civil Law), which is deemed as it constitutes the *urfi* (traditional) façade of *shari'a* (Karaman 2013).

I was personally targeted by one of Karaman's anti-Westernist *fatwa*s. Karaman wrote two separate complete columns against me after I delivered an anti-AKP speech at a think tank in Washington DC, which was completely distorted by pro-AKP television. For one week, several TV stations and newspapers ferociously lynched me and I could no longer walk freely in the streets. On the basis of these false accusations, Karaman implied that I had become an apostate (*murtad*). He wrote that:

> If the AKP is Islamist and if it is Islamizing Turkey, a Muslim should not be disturbed by it. If the USA, EU and others are disturbed, then this shows that Turkey is on the right path. If a Muslim says these things to stumble Turkey or get favor from the others, then, his faith (*iman*) is doubted. (Karaman 2014b)

He did not publish my denial and correction in his column. Thus, I had to publish a full one-page answer in another newspaper. My explanation did not satisfy him and, in a second piece, he wrote that my answer was actually a confession (Karaman 2014c). Since the proclamation of this latent *fatwa* and Erdoğan's declaration at a rally that this academic who went to the USA and betrayed his nation is a traitor (see Cemal 2014), I have been receiving death threats.

Before the referendum on the amendment of Turkey's Constitution held on April 16, 2017, which led to the opening of gates for a presidential system, Karaman, not surprisingly, discriminated voters based on his *fatwas* for their political preferences. He stated, "A 'yes vote' has also become an Islamic issue." Synchronously, Erdoğan issued media releases stating emphatically that a devout Muslim should vote Yes, and "No voters will go to hell." Karaman then issued a *fatwa* just before the referendum claiming, "a yes vote is an Islamic obligation" (Yayla 2017). According to Karaman, since Erdoğan's actions enable him to complete this religious obligation (to become an Islamic state), "every action which approach us to this target is a religious obligation (*fardh*), including a 'yes' vote in referendum" (Karaman 2017b). In another article, Karaman openly states that naysayers are those who are standing against Islam (Karaman 2017c).

Without labelling them as such, Karaman is excommunicating opponents of Erdoğan as though Erdoğan is the embodiment of Islam or even God, claiming whoever opposes him is at war with Islam and God. It is clear that this is almost a veiled *takfirism*, an excommunication practice employed by the Jihadist Salafists to declare their opponents as apostates. They believe this offence is punishable by death.

After the fall of the Islamist Erbakan government due to the soft coup on February 28, 1997, many Islamists, including Hayrettin Karaman, thought that against the Kemalist military tutelage, the EU membership process was the only way for practising Muslims to proceed. Thus, they published books and newspaper articles in a pro-Western fashion. However, increasingly after the Gezi events, their anti-Western rhetoric has become stronger with every passing day.

As a typical Islamist, Karaman sees the socio-political sphere through binary oppositions and frequently talks about an Islam versus the West dichotomy. Below is an example of this stance:

> Europe … on the one hand rebelling against natural disposition for the sake of freedom and legitimizing deviant relationships, making the religion, whose original no longer exists, conform to its own thoughts and desires – and if that doesn't work, it abandons it entirely and chooses atheism. On the other hand, it doesn't want Islam, which will fill the religion void there, and Muslims who live their lives in accordance with Islam … Back in the day, they had gathered workers from Muslim countries to sweep the streets, to work in mines and do the heavy, risky and difficult jobs. Now business has begun to go downhill; the fortunes they stole from colonies, the money they accumulated through exploitation started to run out and has become insufficient in meeting their needs. So *they have set their sights on the assets of Muslims in Europe*. (Karaman 2017f, emphasis added)

For the last few years, Karaman and many other Islamist columnists[4] like him have frequently employed anti-American and anti-European rhetoric. Observers have noted, "Hayrettin Karaman, the Turkish AK Party's go-to religious leader, attacked 'the West' in a letter which insisted Erdoğan should immediately invest in weapons of mass destruction. [Karaman] accused Christian countries in the West of egotism and racism – stating the bad attitude towards Turkey has been accelerated" (O'Brien 2017). Karaman's newspaper piece appeared just after Erdoğan was "in the midst of a deep fall out with European nations including Germany and the Netherlands after both countries banned rallies and kicked out his ministers who had sworn to campaign for his referendum" (O'Brien 2017).

Karaman frequently pens similar anti-Westernist pieces. For instance, after some Gulf countries—led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—blockaded the AKP's ally Qatar, he rhetorically asked what the West wants from Qatar and answered:

> Because this country [Qatar] is angering the administrators of the so-called Muslim country by establishing good relations with Turkey, one of the main countries that do not bow down to the US; nor does it bow down to terrorists. Turkey supports legitimate Islamic movements that want to save the Ummah from overt and covert enslavement, exploitation. (Karaman 2017e)

His critique of the USA is very strong. In the same article, he puts that:

> [The USA] wanted all of the Middle East, as a matter of fact, the whole world, for its impermissible interests. Whoever wanted to overshadow or stop its greed, if there was a likelihood of such, the U.S. would bring it to its knees through various games, making it subject to itself. You can find everything among these games as being against the conscience, religion, and law. It uses its collaborators in countries to cause sedition, disorder, clashes, terrorism and misperception.

Karaman imagines unification of all Muslims (under *umma*) to deter the enemies (the West) (Karaman 2017a). Karaman stresses that Turkey must balance out the West and the non-Muslim world by acquiring similar or equal weapons of those of the enemy. He argues that:

> [The US and the West] are driving Pakistan, who is in possession of nuclear weapons, into a tight corner. They are terrified that Iran will have these weapons too– against which they take one measure after the other. But things have changed in Turkey, now there is the leader Erdoğan who is determined to stop the oppressors and side with the oppressed. For this, we need to be powerful in every aspect, including first-class military force. (Karaman 2017d)

Foreign observers note that, since Karaman is not an ordinary person and his *fatwas* (and policy suggestions) are taken as the source of Islamic authority by the AKP government and Erdoğan, he should be taken seriously (O'Brien 2017). Analysts assert, "Whatever Karaman says cannot be brushed aside without considering how much weight it carries in the eyes of Turkey's Islamist rulers. His narrative has often resulted in policy actions

by the Erdoğan government" (Bozkurt 2017). It is probably not a coincidence that Erdoğan stated in March 2018 that: "They [Western countries] might be possessing missiles, nuclear missiles, armored vehicles, this and that. They have not been giving them to us but we started to produce them as well" (Erdoğan 2018).

The Impact of Populist Rhetoric and Radical Fatwas

Erdoğanist demonising rhetoric, Islamist populism, conspiracy theories, and unofficial radical *fatwa*s of scholars such as Karaman will most probably have an impact on some pro-AKP Turks, even if it has not been already doing so. It is a common observation that some supporters of the AKP in Turkey, from the everyday person in the street to columnists and TV pundits, have been unprecedentedly radicalised. Hate speech and intimidation against the others of the AKP have become the new normalcy.

From time to time, even though they are currently rare (but did not exist five years ago), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-minded self-made *fatwas* are uttered by pro-AKP figures and do not face harsh reaction from the AKP elite. For example, a worker at the Istanbul Municipality, Ömer Akbayrak, said if the constitutional amendments are approved, naysayers' wives and daughters will be *halal* as concubines or permitted as plunder and sex slaves for "yes" voters:

> Dear friends. The CHP [Republican People's Party] clearly declared war and has been fighting at full force. They have spread the aggression they launched in Parliament on 'yes' voters with their words and deeds. When we win the war on April 17, the wives and daughters of those who vote 'no' will be halal to 'yes' voters as plunder… In fact, it is necessary to check the laws of war in Islam. When I said 'halal,' it means they can be your concubine. In any case, let us win the war first; then we can think about it. (Evrensel 2017)

Akbayrak also likened naysayers to Nimrod and Pharaoh, saying: "They declare war and we wage jihad, and we will have booty until Judgment Day" (TurkeyPurge 2017a). After this was shared on social media, many people, including Havva Olcayto, the CHP's Head of the Women Branches in Trabzon, strongly condemned the sharing. She claimed this kind of hate speech was the result of the embodiment of the AKP's mentality, which was ISIS' attitude (Vira Trabzon 2017).

The AKP's radicalised narrative led to official statements by civil servants. The Directorate of National Education in Gaziemir sub-province of İzmir issued an official statement requesting all civil servants of the directorate not to practise any Christian ritual during the New Year celebrations. The official statement orders "Within the scope of all the activities related to the celebration of new year in our schools and institutions, you shall not use any ritual belongs to Christianity such as Christmas, Santa Clause, decorating a Christmas Tree etc. You shall stay away any social and cultural activity that are not associated with our national and religious values" (Diken 2017).

In the same fashion, after the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, hate speeches against the Gülen Movement have become widespread in Turkey. An executive of the Trabzonspor soccer club, one of the biggest clubs in the Premier League, tweeted: "The properties and the wives of the infidel coup-plotting bastards are spoils of war" (Tele Sur 2016).

Hate speeches on the basis of Islamist legal pluralism and unofficial *fatwas* have also spread to the AKP's supporters in the West. Hasan Güray Özüyer, the representative of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK) in Austria, advises ruling party supporters to have polygamous "marriages" with wives of jailed Gülenists. DEİK works under Turkey's Economy Ministry. Thus, Özüyer committed this hate crime as an official. Responding to a Twitter message that interpreted the Rabia sign, a four-finger hand gesture frequently used by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as meaning the Turkish lira hitting rock bottom at 1 euro was equivalent to 4 Turkish Liras, Özüyer wrote from his Twitter account: "That [sign] is not for the euro. It is for the wives of jailed FETÖ supporters. It means you could marry as many as four of them." Özüyer's remarks were reminiscent of the practices of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants, who take women in the territories they occupy as their second, third, and fourth wives (TurkeyPurge 2017b).

What is alarming is that the AKP leadership and its supporters in the media, academia, and other members of the Islamist elite have so far not objected to this rhetoric.

Radicalisation of Turkish Muslim Youth in the West

Due to racism and Islamophobia, many young Western Muslims experience a sense of disorientation, discrimination, victimhood, and alienation that negatively affects their attitudes. These experiences encourage some

to solve their problems at home and abroad. The nonviolent, but radical Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir's (HT) message in Western Europe appeals to the minds of such Muslim youth, as it "conveys a message of 'justice' to Muslims alienated from mainstream society, which it views as imperialistic and anti-Islamic" (Yilmaz 2010, 502). HT, which has condemned democracy and Muslim political participation in the West, argues "the only way to re-establish the kind of Islamic society promulgated by the Prophet Muhammad is to liberate Muslims from the thoughts, systems and laws of *kuffar* (infidels), by replacing the Judeo-Christian dominated nation-state system with a borderless ummah" (Yilmaz 2010, 502).

Thus, "in the West, HT's recruitment efforts benefit from discrimination against Muslims and from the unfulfilled expectations of Muslim migrants, who often see the functioning of their host societies as unjust. HT is known to target frustrated youth who have lost faith in their home country's system … One reason why other groups with similar goals seem unable to amass the same degree of international support is that HT adapts its message to appeal to the desires of the populations it is trying to impress" (Yilmaz 2010, 509).

Similar to the Muslim youth who have found HT's message attractive, the majority of the Turkish diaspora in Western European countries has been experiencing the same process. In addition to the aforementioned facts and disadvantages, most of the expatriates feel they belong to a lower class simply due to their Muslim identity. Unlike HT, this inferiority complex is usually tackled via Ottomanism and Ottomanist discourse, as well as Ottoman motifs on car stickers, T-shirts, and Tughra (Ottoman seal) impressed goods. This psychologically helps to keep Turkish expatriates' motivations high, reminding them that they are members of a greater civilisation that once used to rule in Europe. Seeing this inferiority complex and a deep sense of grievance, at this point, the AKP comes into play as the "voice of the desolated ones," as a challenge to the host nation-states. The success of the AKP's takeover of the pro-Western "infidel" centre in Turkey has become an identity matter and role model for these expatriates.

At the international level, the Erdoğan personality cult has encouraged and helped to consolidate this latent grandiosity paradigm. For example, people rushed into the streets celebrating Erdoğan's "one-minute" incident in Davos where he berated the President of Israel in front of live TV cameras. Those expatriates who feel insecure against majority Western societies have aligned themselves with Erdoğan for such reasons.

As in Turkey, the AKP knows how to take advantage of the deep sense of grievance of expatriates in the Western countries. To reiterate once more, governmental institutions, kin organisations, Islamist communities, and networks financed by the AKP have played a significant role in this manipulation. With the destruction of the Gülen Movement, which is known for its interfaith dialogue events and tolerant and all-embracing pro-democratic Islamic interpretation (Barton et al. 2013; Yilmaz 2007), radical Salafi communities have taken the lead. Given the AKP's *fatwa* providers' radical decrees, like Karaman and other AKP-supported radicalised religious communities in the Western Europe, the AKP is doing the same thing HT has done in the UK.

It must be noted that "Muslim law is still superior and dominant over English law in the Muslim mind and in the eyes of the Muslim community" (Yilmaz 2002, 343), and my earlier research found some Muslim individuals in England "follow Muslim law by employing several strategies" (Yilmaz 1999). Thus, preliminary observations suggest that the unofficial *fatwa* production of Islamist scholars such as Karaman in an anti-Western fashion would most probably make an impact on the minds of Turkish Muslims in the West. Nevertheless, field research is needed to substantiate this preliminary observation.

At this stage, it is not possible to offer a casual explanation, as field research is needed, but it is undeniable that some AKP supporting young Turkish Muslims in the West have been radicalised. Some countries directly blame the Turkish government's direct interference for this radicalisation. Several European countries have expressed concern that Turkey is exerting a growing influence on the Turkish diaspora due to the excessive Islamist politicisation of the AKP, launched personally by Erdoğan through the Turkish National Intelligence (MIT) and the Turkish Religious Presidency (Diyanet).

For instance, the German government warned of the Turkish government trying "to influence some 3 million people of Turkish origin in Germany through propaganda, media and other institutions, such as DITIB and the pro-Erdoğan Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD)" (DW 2017). Germany's government has credible reasons to be concerned. In the country, anti-Erdoğanist German-Turkish politicians have been placed under police protection after receiving anonymous death threats, and they have received "hundreds of emails with messages of hate or death threats" (Brady 2016). German businesses thought to be in support of Erdoğan's critics "have been harassed by

Erdoğan supporters" (Conradis 2016). It seems the Erdoğanist regime has been using some German-Turkish youth groups in its transnational activities that target its critics.

A violent gang called "Germania Ottomans" is a telling example. Founded in April 2015, Ottoman Germania is estimated to have 3500 members in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Sweden (Winter 2016). The group mostly consists of unemployed German-Turkish Sunni Muslims (Winter 2017). After it became known the group has links with the MIT, UETD, and Erdoğan MP Metin Külünk, the German authorities and politicians called an inquiry (Winter 2017). These groups are used by the Turkish government to intimidate and spy against his opponents like some of the Kurds, Alevis, and Fethullah Gülen's supporters (King 2017). German media reported an investigative study that tied a Turkish MP close to President Erdoğan to violent criminal activity. The report claimed that a Turkish parliamentarian (Metin Kulunk) provided money to Osmanen Germania to buy weapons, organise protests, and go after critics of Erdoğan. The investigative study was based on the German police phone taps and surveillance of the group (Winter 2017). The report suggests a relationship between Osmanen Germania and Kulunk, as well as the Turkish intelligence agency MIT, the AKP's European lobby, and Erdoğan. Phone taps indicate that Kulunk instructed Turks in Germany to "hit Kurds over the head with sticks," film the act, and provide videos to the Turkish state to be used as a "deterrent" against Erdoğan's critics (Winter 2017). An Osmanen Germania member "pledged to one of Erdoğan's chief advisors that he would fight on Turkey's behalf against 'terrorists' in Germany" (Winter 2017). In one tapped phone conversation, Kulunk urged the former head of the UETD in Mannheim, Yilmaz Ilkay Arin, to get Osmanen Germania to punish German comedian Jan Böhmermann for his controversial poem criticising Erdoğan. In other phone conversations with German-Turks, Arin encouraged them to arm themselves and promised that he could provide them with "clean" weapons (Winter 2017).

Conclusion

In the 2010s, the AKP slid from democratic and EU norms to authoritarianism in order to strengthen its diminishing power. In this authoritarianism and radicalisation, the AKP primarily derived its power from Islamism and unofficial Islamist law to legitimate its actions in the eyes of

its religious voters. As Islamism's greatest imagined enemy is "the infidel West," this Islamist politicisation seems to be radicalising Turkey's diaspora in Western European countries as well, especially the Turkish Sunni religious youth, who are slowly turning into the AKP's long arm in the West. Until very recently, the Turkish communities in the West were thought to be immune to Islamist radicalism, and Diyanet's existence in the West with its modernity and Western-friendly Islamic interpretation played a role in this perception. Now, with the AKP's radicalisation and influence on Diyanet, its impact will be negative. This needs to be monitored by new research. The Turkish diaspora under the spell of Erdoğanism has more serious potential in the West than the HT does in the UK. Unofficial radical *fatwas* and populist rhetoric, financial aids (carrots, bribes), a sense of deep grievance, anti-Western conspiracy theories, Erdoğan's tough persona, and authoritarian leadership vis-à-vis Western politicians all help build this newly emerging paradigm.

This chapter has endeavoured to underline the potential impact of Erdoğanism on the Muslim youth's radicalisation in the West. The AKP's authoritarianism—coupled with state-sponsored anti-democratic and anti-Western hegemonic Islamism—has been trying to monopolise diverse Islamic discourses with stick and carrot tactics and by employing repressive and ideological apparatuses of the state. Understanding changes in Turkish Islam is relevant to understanding changes in the Muslim world, in general. Moreover, Turkish political Islam has utmost relevance to political (in)stability in the Middle East where the West has its particular political and security concerns. For decades, Turkish Islam was hailed as the source of moderation and pro-Western attitudes in the West. Newly emerging state-led radicalisation and Islamism in Turkey have serious implications in the Muslim world. Furthermore, Islamist radicalisation promoted by the AKP and Erdoğan in Turkey has the potential to influence Turkish diasporas in the West, especially the Turkish Sunni youth. Erdoğanism has many followers in Western countries. This ideology and discourse have already penetrated to Turkish Sunni community members in the West, which is dangerous, given its anti-Western, discriminatory, and even violent tone. On the basis of some preliminary observations, this chapter has attempted to provide a cursory sketch of the nascent Islamist legal pluralism, unofficial Islamist *fatwas,* and their potential impact on the radicalisation of the Turkish Sunni Muslim youth who embrace Islam as a socio-political identity. In order to attain more tangible evidence, field research is needed.

Notes

1. Islamism is not a monolithic ideology or movement; it has many forms. Generally speaking, Islamism presupposes a pure and monolithic Islam, and Islamists believe this Islam has answers for all social, political, and personal problems. They, of course, see themselves as the genuine interpreters of this Islam. Islamism argues for a pan-Islamic political unity of the *ummah* and the elimination of non-Muslim, especially Western, socio-cultural, and political influences in the Muslim world, as they think these influences are against Islam. Islamism seeks to solve modern political problems by reference to Muslim texts (Halliday 2011). It is also defined as "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives" (Ayoob 2009, 2). Drawing from Shayegan (1997), I argue that Islamists are bound by an unquestioned adherence to their own imagined glorious history, but at the same time, they face an external reality that derives from the West. The meeting of these two incompatible worlds leads to a profound distortion not only in how they see the West but, more importantly, in how they see the so-called Muslim world or *ummah*.
2. "Erdoğan's long arm" metaphor, depicting the AKP's excessively politicization of Turkish immigrants in Germany, was first used by Christoph Sydow (2016) in *Der Spiegel*. However, the term has been widely used by the Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF), which has so far published three separate reports on Erdoğan's long arm (SCF 2017a, b, c).
3. For Gülenists, see Barton et al. (2013).
4. In almost all pro-AKP newspapers, there are such columnists. But a few of them from Karaman's newspaper *Yeni Safak* have been published by the Albayrak family, whose companies have been getting public tenders from Erdoğan since he was mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s. Columnists of *Yeni Safak*, such as Yasin Aktay, Yusuf Kaplan, and its editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Karagul, frequently pen pieces full of anti-Western conspiracy theories.

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CHAPTER 10

Said Nursi's Non-violent Social Activism as a Refutation and Response to the Re-emergent Neo-Kharijite Sect in Islam

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The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a rapid depletion of Islamic society, government, theology, and culture. This caused a great disconnect with the long theological and historical traditions of the Islamic faith. Many Muslim scholars and theologians were highly influenced by the decline of the Muslim world and deeply troubled by it (Kuru 2007, 568–78). Moreover, in a context of oppression, many adopted novel responses and reformulated their theologies with emphasis on rejection, reformation, and revolution of Islam from its established traditions and institutions (Kerr 1966). The result of such thought was Islamic movements were mostly Islamist in their outlook and approach with a political agenda. This chapter argues the modernist influence and its shift away from the Islamic tradition paved the path for the re-emergence of the neo-Kharijite sect in Islam. A good exception to this was the Kurdish scholar Said Nursi's (1877–1960) revivalist work, the *Risale-i Nur*, which retained

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_10

the rich theological, historical, and cultural traditions of Islam and called for a social activism rooted in non-violence as well as an apolitical attitude. This chapter critically examines the *Risale-i Nur* and discusses the historical context within which Said Nursi worked. It describes the theological arguments and methodology that refuted the prevailing discourses of his contemporaries, particularly the emerging Salafism and neo-Kharijite. It does so to distinguish Nursi's theology-based apolitical non-violent activism from theological arguments that endorse activism rooted in political Islam. A comparative analysis of these theological arguments in light of their historical contexts provides a good framework to analyse contemporary Islamic movements and their political and civic responses to the world, ranging from non-violence to social and political activism and finally to violent extremism.

Historical Foundations of Modernism, Salafism, and Wahhabism and the Rise of Islamic Movements

The implication of Said Nursi's theological response to the neo-Kharijite requires a contextual assessment of the historical foundations of modernism, Salafism, and Wahhabism. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the development of various alternative methods and reforms that emerged in the Muslim world in response to the reality of Western socio-economic, intellectual, and political domination and colonisation of the Muslim world. This defeat necessitated a scholarly engagement and response to 'redress' or 'restore' Islam (Kerr 1966). The scholarly fervour in this era was focused on reform and change. There was an attempt by many to resolve and revive the Islamic world from the brink of a gradual political and economic defeat (Kuru 2007, 579–87).

The Enlightenment period left an indelible mark on Muslim thinking, questioning Islam as a tradition and seeking to restructure aspects of it that were 'out of touch' with modernity. There was general consensus among many modernist scholars that Islamic thought had stagnated and therefore become problematic in light of advancing developments in European and Christian communities. Many also saw the rise and success of Protestantism in the Christian world (Weber 2002) as a possible guide for Islam and the Muslim world (Ansari 2015, 188). Although scholarly responses varied across the Muslim world, many were encouraged by the Protestant trend to question the historical and cultural inheritance of

Islamic scholarship and re-examine its foundations (Makdisi 2002, 605–7). Nursi also sought to fill in the gaps in Islamic thought and culture like his contemporaries, but he differed in his style and method, which is detailed in the second section of this chapter.

Moreover, colonial rule in the Muslim world encouraged a new method of understanding Islam and the textual tradition of modernism. Modernist Muslims emerged from as far as the subcontinent, Asia, Middle East, and, in particular, Egypt (Kurzman 2002, 72). In addition to novel changes to the political and social system across the Muslim world, Muslim intellectuals, particularly those mesmerised by their passion for reform, made dramatic and drastic changes that cut off Islamic traditional scholarship, including thinkers like Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (1838–1897), Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905), and Rashid Riḍā (1865–1935). Others such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) sought to reconstruct Islam from within (Parray 2011, 81–2). The essential call to change was a methodological one that was centred on a deliberate move away from the established scholarship and inherited tradition and sought to go back to the primary sources for reinterpretation. Although this motivated change and continuity in their respective communities, this abrupt change created a vacuum in the scholastic tradition of Islam, paving the way for literalist interpretations. Nursi, like the modernist thinkers, adopted '*aqiliyyat* (rational reasoning) in his works, but he based his reform on the *ihya* tradition of Islam. This is a critical distinction that demonstrates the divergence of his works from modernist thinkers, particularly in relation to methodology and outlook.

An alternative ideological challenge that dominated the Islamic dialects of the last three centuries was the notion of *salafiya*. Salafism (i.e., a return to the early community that emerged shortly after Prophet Muhammad) entered the discourse of Muslim thinkers and brought about related issues such as the problem of *taqlīd* (imitation or adherence to the tradition schools of law in Sunni Islam) and the need for *tajdid* (reform). Almost all of the Muslim intelligentsia, including Said Nursi, seriously discussed the dangers of *taqlīd* and parameters of *tajdid*. It was the latter two concepts that were fiercely debated by Muslim thinkers like 'Abduh and Riḍā, which had a radical effect on Muslim thought and practice, particularly in the post-colonial era. Although *tajdid* became an attractive topic that made sense in a modernist context, it also brought about nuanced discussions that led to a radical divergence in Islamic scholarship.

As an emerging phenomenon of the modern world, Salafism, or the idea of returning to the roots of Islam, became the central focus of various Islamic movements. Roel Meijer (2009) outlines three elements that identify Salafism as a broader concept or outlook but with varying and distinct strands. The first encompasses a jihadi Salafism, a Wahhabi paradigm centred on the judgement of Muslims and non-Muslims as either being outside the fold of Islam (*kufur*) or apostates (*takfir*) due to their incorrect practice of Islam in the post-colonial context. The second is political Salafism, also categorised as *al-salafiyya al-tanzimiyya* (organised Salafism), and the third is quietist Salafism, a scholarly Salafism called *al-salafiyya al-'ilmiyya,* which rejects political participation as long as rulers enable scholars to make injunctions based on sharia (Meijer 2009, 1–32). Hammond contends there is another category of Salafism called the Salafism of the modernist intellectuals like Al-Afghani, 'Abduh, and Riḍā who projected a fundamentalist revivalism 'that would enable the Islamic culture to meet the challenge of the West' (Hammond 2017, 419).

Furthermore, modernism brought about the intellectual framework within which the ideology of Salafism was rooted in the Muslim world. The methodology of modernism encouraged and paved the way for a major innovation in thought that was almost ready and willing to reject and uproot the rich intellectual tradition of Islam. This fight against *taqlīd* (imitation) of the preceding centuries encouraged a total disregard for the rich historical intellectual legacy of Islam. *Taqlīd* was perceived as one of the core reasons for the socio-political downfall of Islam. Many movements and thinkers discussed *taqlīd* and tried to dissuade their followers from the imitative practice of religion (Khan 2014, 3). This resulted in various formulas put forward as a solution to combat *taqlīd*, one of which even included total rejection of tradition or hadith. Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) were critical of blind imitation of the Sufis, while others' rejection of *taqlīd* also led to a rejection of the jurisprudential schools. Others like Said Nursi confirmed *taqlīd* was no longer plausible for a sound *aqeda* (faith and world view) in an age where reason prevailed. In short, *taqlīd* became a key concept that characterised many emerging contemporary Islamic movements, each providing their own prescription for addressing it (Khan 2014, 1–4).

A common agreement among many reformist thinkers was that Sufism was responsible for much of the *jahiliyya* or bigotry that led to the gradual demise of rational thought. Thus, in addition to *taqlīd*, Sufism became a central target of their rejection with initially an ideological discontent and

then gradual total dismissal of Sufism and Sufis (Ansari 2015, 281–3). This manifested in various forms; Sufi lodges and *tekkes* were shut down and outlawed in secular nation states amid the secular apparatus of the Muslim world. Some, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, were softer in their tone, particularly in their early stages under the leadership of Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949), who was influenced by Sufism in Egypt (Hammond 2017, 418–21). However, many groups influenced by Muhammad 'Abduh, such as the Muhammadiyya Movement from Indonesia and Hizb ut-Tahrir, oriented towards an anti-Sufi position that fit well into their wider rejection of *taqlīd* (van Bruinessen 1999, 711–15). The more extreme and aggressive opposition to Sufis came from the staunchly Salafi-oriented camp. These developments, alongside the birth of a puritanical adaptation of Islam by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), were the two necessary elements in the gradual production of the neo-Kharijite sect.

In addition to addressing *taqlīd*, scholars also fervently discussed the notion of *tajdid*. Moreover, in an atmosphere of political strife and domination, many social reforms in the spirit of *tajdid* focused their energies on creating change in the government and public domain to reclaim Islam's ascendancy over Western colonial powers and 'protect its pristine form' (Esposito 1983; Haj 2008). The concept of *tajdid* was very delicate, and the modernist and Salafist rendition of the term presented a set of radical reforms, renewals, and reconstructions across the spectrum of Islamic tradition. These were particularly noticeable in legal, socio-political, and economic models (Esposito 1983, 39–47). While this fostered an environment of rapid change and opportunity for growth in all aspects of society that positioned the Islamic world amid other rising powers (Haddad et al. 1991, 3–22), it also presented Muslims with a bleak perspective of their tradition and historical past. In opposition to this trend, there were staunch traditionalists who were adamant in their scholastic ways and not open to any reform (Riexinger 2008, 146–55). A more popular trend in this period saw many Muslims disenfranchised by the 'backward' or cultural aspects that intermingled with Islam in various Islamic societies (Haddad et al. 1991, 4–11). Moreover, in some cases, *tajdid* went too far and rejected the gradual development of Islamic scholarship, juristic schools, and their sophisticated *usul* (methodologies), as well as the theology of *kalam* (Haddad et al. 1991, 4–13). The floodgates of change meant everything was under scrutiny, and this made Islam vulnerable to extremist interpretations. A larger pool of Salafi-inclined factions resorted to their own

interpretations. In this context, the inclination towards literalist interpretation of the sacred texts in Islam Qur'an and Sunnah was more credible.

It was also within this context that the Wahhabi movement propagated a type of extreme literalist Islam that was soon classified as neo-Kharijite. The uprooting of the long intellectual tradition of Islam was a significant problem, as it destroyed the sophisticated development of the sciences within the Islamic tradition and created a vacuum for scholarly authority in Islam, paving the way for individual interpretations regardless of their lack of scholarship (Abdelhalim 2017, 51–6). This void created a form of Islam that was vulnerable and could easily be filled with progressive or regressive thoughts. This became one of the key methodological problems that opened various avenues for ad hoc interpretations. It is within such an atmosphere of rejection, reconstruction, and reform that the Wahhabi discourse of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab developed, calling for the ultra-puritanical return to early *salaf e saliheen*, and opened the doors to approaching the Qur'an and Sunnah directly. This type of Salafism is very distinctive, which developed independently in the context of the Arabian Peninsula. Abdul Hakim Murad (n.d.) and other Sunni scholars have classified Wahhabi Salafism to be neo-Kharijite in nature:

> The neo-Kharijite nature of Wahhabism makes it intolerant of all other forms of Islamic expression. However, because it has no coherent *fiqh* of its own–it rejects the orthodox *madhhabs*–and has only the most basic and primitively anthropomorphic *aqida*, it has a fluid, amoeba like tendency to produce divisions and subdivisions among those who profess it. No longer are the Islamic groups essentially united by a consistent *madhhab* and the Ash'ari [or Maturidi] *aqida*. Instead, they are all trying to derive the shari'a and the *aqida* from the Quran and the Sunna by themselves. The result is the appalling state of division and conflict, which disfigures the modern Salafi condition.

Murad is one of many voices that opposed the rise of Wahhabism in the Muslim world. Leading Sunni scholars across the Muslim world have also classified the Wahhabi rendition of Islam as neo-Kharijite in nature, including Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi. Al-Yaqoubi (2015) discusses the scholarly grounds for the divergence of Islamic State (IS or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—ISIS) from Islamic orthodoxy. The Pakistani scholar Tahir ul-Qadiri and the president of Zaytuna College in America, Hamza Yusuf Hanson, also characterise militant violent, radical groups as 'modern *khawarij*'— those who are outside the normative Sunni tradition (ul-Qadiri 2010; Hassan 2017, 9).

The emergence of Salafism as a new Islamic revivalist ideology dominated the discourse, rhetoric, and ideology of major Islamic movements globally. From North Africa and across the Middle East, Asia, and Southeast Asia, various forms of Salafism have manifested in the emerging and growing Islamic movements (Meijer 2009, 1–32). Salafi-based movements incorporated *tajdid* renewal to 'save' Islam and Muslim worlds from the 'foreign elements' that had crept into tradition, such as local customs and culture. Under this category, many movements such as the Muhammadiyya from Indonesia were quietist Salafis following the rationally inclined Mutazilite world view propagated by modernist scholars Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897) and his disciple Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905). It is important to distinguish this strand of Salafism as significantly distinct from the jihadi Salafism that paved the way for radical groups such as ISIS (Meijer 2009, 7). The Salafism of modernist scholars and those movements inspired by them were ultra-rationalists and less reliant on tradition (Hammond 2017, 417). Even though some, like the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir, were politicised, the former were politicised more gradually than the latter. These movements do not possess the dangerous world views that have incubated the extremist thinking of radical groups; nevertheless, many contain one of the three elements of Salafism as mentioned above (Hammond 2017, 419).

Islamic movements, which were characterised by their founders' intellectual response to modernity, developed their own method of being active in social and public domain (Esposito and Voll 2001). For those in the political field, this was an important means to ensure the longevity of Islam and its ideals within majority Muslim-populated states. However, this was not sufficient to address the global issues, the bigger modern dilemmas that not only challenged the Muslim world but also the international community who faced the inevitable 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington 1993, 22–49). With the rise of nationalism and the nation state, the decades following World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 saw a rapid schism and tribalism based on ethnicity and race as opposed to religion (Esposito and Voll 2001). This paved the way for race-based partisanship where the borders of the newly established nation state became the reason for a constant clash between the dominant races and the ethnic-religious minority communities across the Muslim world.

The arms race era, marked by a growing need for mutual coexistence and dialogue between all traditions and cultures, instigated the need for a new understanding of relating to others. Most of the Islamic movements,

though, concentrated their efforts towards 'saving Islam' and the 'Muslim world', or reviving Islam from within. The much-needed tolerance and compassion that was conventionally taught and learnt in various institutions, mosques, *zawiyas*, or Sufi lodges were a lot less accessible due to the closure of many of these centres either by secular national states or by increasingly popular Salafi-oriented Islamic movements. This vacuity in spiritual ethics created a more rigid and insular outlook, rapidly giving way to increased levels of social tension in nation states with diverse ethnic and religious demographics.

In the midst of these events and socio-political context, Said Nursi started to write his *Epistles of Light*, which became the basis of a non-Salafi and mystically inclined scriptural community called the Community of Nur. Nursi and the Nur Movement provided an alternative to the ultra-rationalist (Mutazilite form of Salafism) or mostly Salafi-inclined Islamic movements. Arguably, Nursi, like Muhammad Iqbal and other aesthetically inclined scholars, was successful in retaining much of the spirit of tolerance and compassion that had become the hallmark of Muslim nations traditionally. The Sufi *tariqas* (orders) were quite successfully in permeating these ethics in the Muslim world. Nursi, like Iqbal and others, continues to embody the world view of acceptance, tolerance, and coexistence with other races, cultures, and traditions (Vahide 2012, 32). Thus, the rich mystical and compassion-based ethics and magnanimity that existed in the Islamic world was retained and continued through principles highlighted in the *Risale-i Nur* and adopted by the Nur Movement (Turner and Horkuc 2009). Consequently, the spiritual ethics of Islam combined with a continuation of scholarship present in his works further developed the spiritual tradition to address modern dilemmas in the post-Enlightenment era.

Said Nursi's *Ihyaism* (Revivalism), Non-violence, and Apolitical Activism

The theological, cultural, and socio-political vacuum of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries encouraged a gradual development of 'jihadists' ideology, based on theological modern interpretation of Islamic theologies in the neo-Kharijite renditions of *takfir*, jihad, in a new radical 'Islamic' reconstruction. Against such an extreme response, the emergence of a non-political, non-traditional, non-violent resistance model of social movement

by a Kurdish scholar from Anatolia becomes significant. The case study of Nursi's theology and methodology provides an alternative response and solution to the development of neo-Kharijite violent ideologies. Nursi's ethical framework provides a peaceful solution to the void and vacuum in the Islamic world in relation to social activism *dawah* and service.

Due to the increasing popularity of modernism, Salafism, and Wahhabism, the Muslim world entered a new era of 'radical reform' and change. Many Islamic movements adopted the slogan 'Islam is the answer', while in a similar way, all scholars thought their approach and methodologies differed, and there were important nuances, even, for example, within Salafis as well as Wahhabis. Many of the civic-based movements were gradually politicised (like the Muslim Brotherhood), while others remained completely aloof from social and political life, such as the Tablighi Jamaat as well as many of the Sufi orders. An extreme form of secularist nationalism also dominated the newly formed Muslim nation states, which rejected most forms of religious expression and frowned upon most public displays of religiosity. Within this context, Said Nursi framed his revivalist activism in the form of a text-based community (Abu-Rabi 2003). He carefully balanced the questions demanded of Islam at that time and corresponded to address the popular demands for *tajdid*, without displaying any aversions towards it. Similarly, he did not dismiss Sufism nor portray complete immersion in it. Thus, his community was neither highly politicised nor completely disassociated from civic and socio-political duties. Nursi's revivalist work sought to find balance between these concerns as he mapped out his world view for a text-based spiritual movement through his key works written in the remote town of Barla in Western Anatolia.

Nursi lived during an era of great change (Vahide 2012, 17). He embraced the Enlightenment era's development in his philosophical thought; he also incorporated positivist science into his exegetical works in his reformulations of the Islamic tradition (Vahide 2012, 97). Despite being aware of the need for change and modernisation, Nursi perceived gaps in ethical and moral decline across the globe. Like his contemporary Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), Nursi suffered from political exiles (Vahide 2003, 97). Contrasting Nursi, Qutb (1990, 5–6) projected the socio-political crisis of the post-colonial Muslim world as *jahiliya* (ignorance) being 'the dominant state of post-colonial Muslim world and much of the world'. Nursi did not classify Europeans or non-Muslims as one monolithic and misguided group. In his discourse, the positive aspects of science, technology, and justice that were beneficial developments to society

were classified as 'inspirations received from true Christianity' (Nursi 2004, 157–60). He afforded the 'perverted and oppressive side of Europe' that he believed was impacted by the 'darkness of the philosophy of naturalism' as a reflection of 'corrupted Europe' (Nursi 2004, 160).

Two aspects of Europe are elaborated in Nursi's book *The Flashes*, where he carefully states only 'attributes of the second type of Europe may be disliked' (Nursi 2006, 160). Nursi discusses at length the differences between the European experience of religion and that of the Islamic world. He does this to prevent a new form of imitation *taqlid* of Europe. He argues, due to their different experiences in history and outlook, the same result cannot and will not be achieved if all European policies are adopted blindly (Nursi 2006, 169–78). Nursi sees this as a foreign disease infiltration that would destroy Islamic unity. Thus, despite his cautioning against blind imitation, Nursi acknowledges and appreciates Europe's positive aspects. This provides a nuanced outlook that clearly delineates the parameters of his criticisms to his appreciation, leaving no opportunity for misreading his teachings in a neo-Salafist and Islamist era.

Notwithstanding the many commonalities Nursi shared with his contemporaries, the nuanced differences in his approach highlight the significance of his response to modernity. Despite the extreme oppressions he faced at the *markaz* (centre) of the Muslim world in the demise of the Ottoman Empire, he did not succumb to violent struggle against regimes (Abu-Rabi 2003, 65). The subtle distinctions in Nursi's work emerges in the context of his contemporaries in Egypt, India, and Persia, who were either totally immersed by the philosophical outlook of modernity, welcoming *tajdid* and rejecting all forms of tradition in the name of dogma, or those who completely retracted from modernity and rejected *tajdid* in their conservative outlook (Kurzman 2002). On the one hand, were the ultra-traditionalists who were susceptible to a classical mindset and, on the other hand, were extremist secularists who oppressed any expression of faith. Then, there were moderate Salafis who called for the practice of real Islam and the extreme Wahhabis who were displeased with the ruling irreligious secular elite and could easily excommunicate their fellow citizens with *takfiri* or *jahiliya* classifications (Rafiabadi 2007). The latter eventually resulted in civil unrest and a perpetual cycle of violence. Nursi is hard to situate amidst this web of response and extremities, as he was born in the *tanzimat* era of the Ottoman Empire and therefore welcomed *tajdid*. He was also optimistic at the start of the constitutional era and perceived no ideological clashes with republicanism and democracy (Mardin 1989;

Vahide 2012). He was able to apply the broad governing principles of Islam and could see potential in the proposed new system. However, he was not for blind acceptance and complete cultural revolution. He actively participated in social and public life and even had a reception by the Ottoman Sultan to address what he saw as the errors of the Ottoman Empire in blindly adopting Western ideals, proposing the development of a university that would teach positive sciences and religious disciplines side by side (Vahide 2012, 19–39). Even in the beginning, Nursi firmly envisioned a gradual revival based on educational reform to rid his nation of bigotry and spiritual poverty. However, he differed to other Muslim scholars who adopted modernism and reform as their only ideal, by suggesting change that engaged with existing tradition (Vahide 2012, 45–67).

Apart from his involvement in the militia regiment against the Russians during World War I where he fought alongside the Ottoman Army, Nursi was not involved in any armed conflict (Saritoprak 2010). He spent most of his early life pursuing knowledge and education across greater Anatolia and became the shining leader and 'wonder of his age' according to his native region (Abu-Rabi 2003, 65). He was a revered intellectual and scholar whose passion for knowledge and education never stopped even when on horseback, as he dictated his book on Qur'anic commentary in the midst of the 'Great War' (Vahide 2003). In his later years, he was subjected to exile and imprisonment and led a mostly solitary life with little contact with the outside world. His main communication was through his major works the *Risale-i Nur*. Education was a key solution in Nursi's revivalist paradigm; one of the key problems he recognised in many of his works and sermons was 'bigotry and ignorance' were the basis for the 'diseased' state of the Muslim world. He sought to address the gap in education, which he perceived to be 'one-eyed' due to its ignorance of the sciences or its neglect of religion (Vahide 2012, 29–34). His educational reform envisioned harmony of all the sciences taught at one institute, and despite his project of *Madrasat ul-Zahra* not advancing due to the Great War, Nursi realised this vision with the *Risale-i Nur*. The 'academy' he built in his revivalist works sought to meet this gap and form a basis of addressing the 'spiritual disease of the time'.

For Nursi, since the problem of the Muslim world was *manawi* (spiritual/immaterial), the solution had to be immaterial. Thus, the 'club' of politics and use of force were no longer applicable or appropriate responses. He stated 'victory is not through the use of force but through convincing others about one's own ideas' (Nursi 2006, 189). Accordingly, he encouraged non-violent activism in the era of his life that he titled the 'New Said'

era (Vahide 2003). His conscious self-classification permeates throughout his major work, demonstrating a shift from being an activist to semi-pacifist, and from a physical to an intellectual struggle for Islam as a living tradition. Nursi's life becomes a good example of the merging of the classical period with the modern period (Abu-Rabi 2003, 65). His evolution of self marks a change not only in his inner self, or socio-political outlook, but also represents the struggles of the Muslim world and a solution for its survival in the modern period.

Nursi's recommendation for Muslims in similar conditions of oppression is to pursue a method of activism called '*muthbat haraket*' or positive action in the *darl al-khidmah* or the abode of service (Yildiz 2017, 381–9). Nursi was against political activism in the New Said era despite being very involved and passionate about pursuing a cause for Muslims and Islam in the First Said period. As outlined by many of his biographers, Nursi refrained from social and political life and endured the oppression of the hostile Kemalist regime and one-party rule to avoid civil war that would result in the killing of many innocent civilians (Vahide 2012, 25). His complete disillusionment from politics and social life is not purely a result of never-ending exiles and prison sentences that he withstood but also due to the fact he really believed the jihad of modern times was a 'spiritual jihad' or *manawi jihad* that required an inner struggle to sustain faith (*iman*) and realise the truths of the Qur'an (Nursi 2004, 179; Saritoprak 2005, 427). His objective was to instil faith by conviction, confirmed through investigation and rational proofs; this meant disengagement from politics, which he thought would intersect his mission. This can be understood using the 'swamp' analogy, where Nursi addresses his indifference to politics in the *Thirteenth Letter*, where he states that 'service of the All-Wise Qur'an severely prohibited me from the world of politics' (Nursi 2004, 68). He also explains his lack of fear or interest in it by giving the swamp analogy. 'The way has entered the swamp. The caravan of mankind is stumbling forward in stinking and filthy mud. Part of it is travelling a safe way. Part of it has found certain means to save itself as far as is possible from the muddy swamp. The great majority are travelling in darkness in the stinking, filthy, muddy swamp' (Nursi 2004, 69).

The swamp is an analogy for the demise of the socio-political life of humanity. Surprisingly, Nursi does not restrict this to the demise of Muslim socio-political life but includes all of humanity. According to Nursi, there are only two solutions in this scenario, to either 'beat the drunken with a club and bring them to their senses or point out the safe way to the bewil-

dered by showing them the light' (Nursi 2004, 69). The drunkard represents the misguided people, the club represents the political currents, and the light represents the Qur'an. The analogy may be understood with reference to political movements, which find themselves in a 'swamp' and are trying to guide people back to the 'light'. Even though these political movements present the solution to be in Islam', according to Nursi, this becomes problematic when the light is shown together with the club:

> Light cannot be disputed, nor can enmity be held towards it. In order to hold in my hand the light of the Qur'an, I said, 'I seek refuge with God from Satan and from politics,' and throwing away the club of politics, embraced the light with both hands. I saw that in the political currents, there are lovers of those lights in both the opposition and the supporters. It is necessary that no side and no group casts aspersions on or holds back from the lights of the Qur'an which are shown, which are far superior to all political currents and partisanship. (Nursi 2004, 70)

He also avoided oppositional politics, which he believed did not address the real issue facing the Muslims of his time and context, which was a struggle with faith internally (Turner and Horkuc 2009, 29). Nursi emphasised the dangers of partisanship and decided to leave politics as he observed 'politics affected even the pious, who sought after personal gain and interest and sided with the unjust due to partisanship' (Vahide 2012, 119). Due to these 'grave dangers', Nursi made the famous statement 'I took refuge in God from Satan and politics' to avoid detracting anyone who would be concerned with truth (Vahide 2012, 119). He also made the infamous statement: 'I only have two hands and I will cling on to the light with both. If we had one hundred hands we will hold the light again' (Nursi 2004, 70 and 104) in response to questions of him returning to the socio-political world. These show that not only did Nursi stay away from politics because it was wise to do so under the harsh circumstances of the newly secularised Turkey, he did so because he genuinely thought it would be a disservice to the revival of faith.

Nursi's Revival Project and Non-violent Social Activism

Since Nursi believed the problems or 'sicknesses' of his world were immaterial or spiritual, his revivalism addressed the spiritual problems of his time and context in which he lived (Michel 2013, 17). He also exerted his

efforts towards the development of an alternative strategy and models of activism. In his famous *Damascus Sermon* delivered in 1911, Nursi addressed hundreds of scholars from the Muslim world in 'Sham' among thousands of other Muslims calling for brotherhood, unity, and solidarity (Vahide 2003, 7). Nursi outlined his famous six reasons why Europeans were successful and the Muslim world had fallen behind. The underlying six sicknesses affecting Muslims were being in a state of despair and hopelessness due to social life; the death of truthfulness in social and political life; love of hatred and enmity; not knowing the bonds that bind the believers to one another; widespread tyrannical rule; and pursuing personal interests (Nursi 2006, 25).

The solution to this state of affairs came 'from the lessons I have learnt from the pharmacy of the Qur'an, which is like a faculty of medicine. This lesson constitutes the medicine to cure our social life of those six dire sicknesses' (Nursi 2006, 25–56). The six 'words' or remedies include: being hopeful in God and not falling into despair; being truthful in an age of lies; loving love and hating hatred to combat enmity; holding on to the unity and brotherhood prescribed by Islam; and lastly, applying the principle of consultation in all aspects of life (Nursi 2006, 25–56). In the Twenty-ninth Letter called 'The Six Attacks', Nursi discusses six stratagems used by evil men and *satans*: the desire for fame, acclaim, and high position; fear; greed; racialist nationalism; egotism; and laziness (Nursi 2004, 483; Michel 2013, 9). By highlighting the inner failures and spiritual problems of the Muslim world and the 'attacks of Satan', Nursi highlights the parameters of a new battlefield—one with the self, which is also known as *jihad ul-nafs*—and gives it more prominence.

To assist with this internal endeavour and renewal, Nursi first resorts to the rich literary and theosophical tradition of Islam, as well as science, with the aim to re-form and project Islamic beliefs in the modern era. He appeals to the 'critical mind' and even the atheist mind through the use of logic and rational arguments. He intends to install not a *taqlidi* imitative culture faith, but a '*tahqiqi*' investigatory faith with reason. Unlike the theologies of neo-Kharijites, he not only resorts to the Qur'an and hadith but also to the exegesis, jurists, and philosophies of the classical and modern era. He had unique expositions and approaches to various aspects of belief that were challenged by the modern era, such as the notion of *hashr* (resurrection) (Nursi 2004, 117). It was this revivalist methodology that paved the way to a contemporary understanding of Islam. In methodology as well as theology, Nursi may be distinguished from neo-Kharijites; his was one of construction and not destruction of Islamic scholarship.

The neo-Kharijite ideology opposes Said Nursi's work, which reflects the pre-modern, Sunni kalam (theology) and ethics. Increasingly, Salafis and radical extremist groups, such as ISIS, are opposed to this tradition (Al-Yaqoubi 2015; ul-Qadiri 2010). The extremists do not have a method to interpret the primary principles of *tafsir*, and the hadith disciplines, which were established throughout Islamic tradition. The irony is that radical extremists believe geo-political factors and decades of economic and social oppression are valid reasons to 'defend Islam' violently through terrorist attacks (Hassan 2017, 2–5). It is clear that a lack of ability to approach the textual traditions has led the neo-Kharijite to haphazardly interpret various verses of the Qur'an as literalist justifications to defend Islam via a militant and radical type of jihadism (Hassan 2017, 3–8). Nursi's works therefore remain vital to refute the gradual development of the neo-Kharijite from the Wahhabi world view, and this requires the explication of a rich ethical framework of socio-political activism as the only viable practice of jihad today.

Sayilgan and Sayilgan (2011) outlines the context within which Nursi carefully redefined the concept of jihad. Nursi not only addresses the polemical debates around the problematic notion of jihad in Eastern Europe, including its contact with Ottomans and Muslim world, but also addresses the violent and growing Salafi world view that saw the world in the classical textual definitions of *darl al-harb* (abode of war) and *darl al-Islam* (abode of peace). Despite not directly addressing the Salafi/Wahhabi mindset, Nursi effectively addressed the core of their ideology. Aware of changes in the globalised world, Nursi argues the world can no longer be seen in binary terms and people were not living in homogenous communities. He understood a globalised world calls for a universal mindset of nations focused more on mutual economic, social, and political benefit and cooperation, and not so much on religious lines. To his new inclusive mindset, it was no longer possible to retain a rigid application of abodes of war and peace. Nursi coined a new concept *darl al-khidmah*, the abode of service, and was successful in developing the tradition in this respect (Nursi 2006, 47).

Responses to the modern world manifested differently in diverse contexts across the Muslim world. For scholars who welcomed *tajdid* despite developing an almost exclusionist approach to the development and scholarship of Islam across 1400 years, this opened the gates to various approaches to the complex and systematic theology that developed and evolved across the centuries. Despite opportunities for reinterpretation in light of *tajdid*, and the opportunity to re-read Islam in the modern context, this trend eventually created a gap in approach to text and tradition

that was inclined towards a literalist and rejectionist approach. The gradual development of a Wahhabi/Salafi mindset flourished in this environment, despite being rejected outright by many of the Sunni authorities across the Muslim world (Hammond 2017). This idealised and puritanical approach to Islam appealed to the coming generations, who faced outright rejection of their tradition and an almost overnight closure of their institutions in extreme secular applications of 'modernity' introduced in Turkey, Egypt, and across the Muslim world. The upcoming generations were also cynical of the modernist interpretations they felt compromised their ideals. In this climate, the Salafi/Wahhabi strand was more appealing as it went back to the roots of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

At the core of the extremist dilemma was and is the misinterpretation of jihad as offensive warfare and the idea that Islam is a religion of the sword. The extremist's rendition of jihad encourages military warfare and even ruthless terrorism as a means to 'serve the interests of Islam'. This eventuated historically as a form of dissatisfaction with Western colonial powers; the immediate remedy according to jihadi Wahhabis was to serve the socio-political interests of Muslims in a 'global world order of Muslim subjugation' against all others. This geo-political outlook has become the ultimate 'service' or jihad to Islam today, according to the neo-Kharijite. To dispel this absolutist mindset, Nursi proposes a new form of jihad and prescribes a new ethical framework within which it should be exercised. In many sections of the *Risale-i Nur*, he refers to the analogy of 'the metal sword has been put back in its sheath, and now we will be fighting with the sword of the Quran' (Nursi 2006, 49). This statement formulates the backbone of Nursi's theology and refutation of the neo-Kharijites. He argues for the 'power of the word' over 'power politics' and states, 'this is the age of reason, Muslims should endeavour and struggle through the bright proofs of the Qur'an and not though the use of force', and this is the 'Century that people will be won over through persuasion not force' (Nursi 2006, 57). Nursi stresses that faith cannot be forced upon people, and people will not enter religion through force. He elaborates that intellect, persuasion, and evidences from the Qur'an are the way of the *Risale-i Nur*, which according to him is the method that should be applied today.

Nursi thus carefully reconstructs his revivalist *Epistles of Light* to address changes in the modern context. In the second point of the *Seventh Flash*, Nursi (2006, 119) intentionally uses the imagery of the sword to reconstruct a fresh understanding of jihad in the context of his time. He agrees with his contemporaries that *taqlidi iman* or imitative faith is no longer

possible in a rationalist age of science and reason. Neither can faith be enforced upon Muslims and non-Muslims by jihad war nor strict imposition by the state apparatus. Throughout the *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi infuses the word 'sword' with the Qur'anic concept of '*qalam*' or 'pen' serving 'justice and the truth', in order to remove its violent associations and reconfigure the minds of Muslims. The Qur'an mentions the pen several times and even swears by it (68:1). To highlight the worth of the 'jihad of the pen', Nursi states in the *Treatise of Sincerity* that 'the ink of the scholars will have the same value of the blood of martyrs on judgement day' (Nursi 2006, 219). Moreover, the repetitive use of the word sword in various contexts in relation to the *manawi jihad* is employed in a similar way that 'the immaterial sword of Risale-i Nur, has solved hundreds of the mysteries of religion' to emphasise the substantial role it plays. Furthermore, Nursi emphasises the 'deaf, blind and heedless materialist philosophy being smitten by the diamond sword of the Qur'an', highlighting the rational proofs of the Qur'an being like a 'weapon' or 'tool' to eradicate inequity, with injustice stemming from wrong philosophies and outlook. Thus, he uses this Qur'anic term to juxtapose the image of the pen with that of the sword to reaffirm its significance as a way of serving faith in the twentieth century.

For Nursi, the days of jihad or the sword are over, so there is no question of any obligation to engage in warfare against the People of the Book. However, the question regarding the proper way for Muslims is through reasoning and appeal to people's rational faculties. He states in the *Munazarat*:

> The ruler of the old times was strength; the one with the sharp sword and a stony heart would rise. But the motor, the soul, the strength, the ruler, and the boss of the times of freedom is righteousness, mind, knowledge, law, and public opinion. Only those with a sharp mind and a bright heart will rise to the top. (Nursi 2002, 68)

Nursi is defiant against any type of military warfare, violent resistance, or extremism propagated by the neo-Kharijites; he promotes an understanding of jihad that is redefined in the context of serving the Qur'an and *iman* (faith). This is a subtle address of the socio-politically inclined renditions of jihad that went so far as to suggest waging war was not only a way to defend the country but also extend jihad against secular Muslims who were classified as in a state of *jahiliyya* or in *kufr* (disbelief). One Qur'anic

verse (25:52) supports Nursi's redefinition: 'so obey not the disbelievers, but strive against them (by preaching) with the utmost endeavour, with it (the Quran)' (*wa jahid hum bihi jihadan kabeera*).

Nursi bases his ethical framework to fight or 'persuade' upon this Qur'anic appeal to reason. Since it is a Meccan verse where fighting was not permitted, it is interesting the word *jahid bihi* or fight with the Qur'an was prescribed to the early Muslims, encouraging them to reason or argue using evidence from the Qur'an. This was poignant in a context when fighting, even in self-defence, was not permitted for Muslims. In another sense, this verse serves as further evidence that one of the earliest prescriptions and Qur'anic usages of the word jihad is in the verse '*jahid bihi*'. The word '*jahid bihi*' means to strive or struggle in a non-violent fashion; it refers to a type of jihad or response through the Qur'an. This also challenges the notion that jihad is a prescription for war in Islam.

Thus, despite coming from a socio-economically backward region in Eastern Anatolia, and experiencing injustices and unfair accusations by the state, Nursi never raised arms or encouraged a revolt. He preferred to resort to educate through his writings; 'he took up the pen' and 'put the sword back in its sheath'. For Nursi, this was not only poetic imagery but represented a reality and change in his philosophical outlook. He was not ready or willing to take up arms against his own people to prevent civil war; instead, he appealed to the minds of his people and community and tried to address their concerns for reform through arguments from the Qur'an.

Conclusion

Said Nursi emerged at a critical period in modern Muslim history, when the Muslim world and Islam were challenged by rapid global changes. Various responses to modernity—from modernism *tajdid*, which was open to new interpretations of Islam, to Wahhabism/puritanical literalist interpretations, which arose from Salafist tendencies and opposed 'Western values', to quietist Salafist responses that accepted the status quo of their community and did not resort to political violence, so long as they deemed it sharia compliant (Hammond 2017).

This era demanded a careful and considerate response that addressed all aspects of life and retained the value and inherent dignity of Islam for Muslims. In this sense, the rise of Salafism, coupled with a secular modern state set-up that made major legal and political as well as economic reforms

arguably changed the shape of the social fabric in almost all Muslim lands. There were also other types of stratification, one of which was to close spiritual Sufi centres. It was this radical reform and break from tradition that caused the gap to grow into a vacuum and increasingly led to puritanical interpretations of Islam, which dominated some areas of the Muslim world and evolved into a neo-Kharijite mindset like that of Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, and ISIS. Another way of interpreting these responses is with reference to individuals and scholars who became central to key Islamic movements that each responded within the above framework. Their texts and prescriptions either mobilised or de-mobilised masses of Muslims. The most prominent movements were characterised not only by subtle forms of Salafism (a rejection of tradition) but also those who could not understand certain concepts within the Islamic tradition in the context of their changed worlds, such as *jahiliya*, *darl harb*, jihad, *takfir*, and *tajdid*.

One of the unique mobilisers of this respective community was Said Nursi. He was able to respond to the challenges posed by the modern world and socio-political developments in the West and adopted a passive resistance or non-violent attitude in relation to politics. Nursi's key difference compared to his contemporaries was his active disengagement from politics, which was reflected in his writings, letters, and court defence speeches. He reinterpreted (without radical redefinition) certain aspects of Islamic tradition as he carefully reconstructed his theology and put forward a framework to practise Islam and continue to apply all traditional aspects in a harmonious manner that was compatible with the realities of secular modern state to which most of the Muslim world was subjected. His grassroots appeal to educate and liberate hearts and minds was diametrically opposed to most of the other Islamic movements, which sought to effect change by engaging with politics. Many social movements like the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan*) in Egypt and the Middle East, Jamat Islamiya in India and Pakistan, and their likes started out as civil movements but gradually and inevitably became involved in politics.

Nursi's approach also stands out due to the context in which he worked—the oppressive authoritarian Kemalist Turkey that made drastic changes to the outward expression of religion and closed down many religious and spiritual centres that thrived in the Ottoman Empire. Nursi carefully reformulated a theoretical framework for his social activism that he termed '*khidmah*' and redefined jihad to a spiritual jihad and *manawi jihad* because the changed circumstances required that.

This chapter has examined many examples involving Nursi, who developed a complex set of theological and ethical principles of social activism in Islam to dispel extremist, egoistic, vengeful, political, revolutionary, and violent movements. He also encouraged education to sustain the rich, intellectual legacy of Islam in his treatise. Nursi and the movement he inspired through his revivalist works has created a unique alternative model of social service and activism in Islam that addresses the pious Muslim's need to 'serve' faith within an ethical framework. His response has shown how, despite a historical context that has encouraged political resistance, non-violence and apolitical social activism can be a successful alternative to the historical and methodological dilemmas facing the Muslim world. Nursi's contributions in Turkey filled an otherwise wide vacuum created by Islam's encounter with modernity and Salafism in the Muslim world. It has served as an intellectual civic movement, which has contributed positively to civil society, social justice, and democratic values and sustained its non-violent stance.

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CHAPTER 11

Pro-active Religious Rehabilitation for the Prevention of Radicalism and Violent Extremism

Cemil Alkan

Introduction

Due to the extensive diversity in education, lifestyle, religiosity and characteristics of convicted Islamist extremists, it is hard to draw a single profile of radicals and radicalisation. Nevertheless, as discussed extensively through this book thus far, theologians and social scientists agree that social ruptures, socio-political injustices, discrepancies in dealing with Muslim countries' political affairs and the heartfelt grievances of the global Muslim community lay the foundation for alienation and draw a handful of Muslims to radicalism. Radical preachers tap into that handful of dissatisfied Muslims by further fuelling their political frustrations with religious discourse.

The radicalisation ratio of Muslims is significantly small (Harris-Hogan 2017) when compared to the population of Muslims in the West and around the world. Indeed, radicalism is denounced by Muslims all over the world (Poushter 2015). Yet, this does not change the fact that a handful of vulnerable Muslims engage in radicalism and violent extremism.

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3_11

The emergence of terrorist groups such as Al Qaida and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) does not happen in a vacuum. Socio-political unrest (Gause 2014) and a hegemonic religious discourse (Cesari 2015) legitimising the aggression (Droogan and Peattie 2016, 2017; Ingram 2017) are the key factors behind the emergence of such terrorist groups. For instance, ISIS found ground to grow in the instability and anarchy of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

The Arab Spring was sparked in 2010 by the self-immolation of a Tunisian street vendor, who was frustrated with unemployment and police officers' humiliation. This was a protest against the corrupt government, which stimulated revolts by unhappy crowds in Tunisia. The President's downfall in Tunisia inspired similar uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa. In this new era of revolutions, mobile phones and social media were instrumental in spreading and organising the masses for revolts against the corrupt governments and dictatorial regimes (Howard et al. 2011; Khondker 2011).

The uprisings and civil wars caused bloodshed, especially in Iraq, due to the absence of a stable government and in Syria due to the Assad regime's brutal suppression measures of the revolts. The instability, anarchy and violence in the civil war bore violent ISIS in the region, since it practically blended its forces with the local armed rebellions in Syria and Iraq (Gerges 2014). Similarly, the turbulence in Middle East has also been a main driver of ISIS recruits from the West. For instance, content analysis of two of the most popular English-speaking radical preachers clearly provides evidence of this: 74.1% of tweets by Ahmed Musa Cibril and more than 11,000 posts by Musa Cerantonio were about Syria (Carter et al. 2014).

The source of the problems stimulating the revolts was legitimate—lack of human rights, respect for human dignity and democracy as well as corruption in economic, judicial and governmental systems. Yet, the revolts fed the instability and anarchy set the ground for the growth of ISIS. Contrary to Al Qaida, ISIS promised a utopian caliphate, where Muslims were promised rest, peace and shelter (Droogan and Peattie, forthcoming) from the "chilling Arab winter" (Byman 2011).

Under this socio-political turbulence, religious hegemony was a tool for the oppressing and the frustrated parties. Hegemonic religion favours a certain religious group, while denying or oppressing the other religions and religious groups (Cesari 2015). The religious hegemony backs up the authority's ideology, agenda and corruption with its authority-funded religious scholars (Abou El Fadl 2015). ISIS countered the secular and

corrupt leaders' religious hegemony by using another type of religious hegemony, which accuses everyone except their followers of being either infidels or hypocrites (Droogan and Peattie 2016, 2017; Ingram 2017).

Considering the socio-political factors and hegemonic religion as the two main elements leading to radicalisation, this chapter explores an alternative religious discourse that could prevent individuals from emotional eruptions like that of the Tunisian vendor and its outcomes. This countering religious discourse also could prevent masses from rebelling against dictators and corrupt governments. Thwarting individual frustrations and group revolts, this alternative religious discourse could prevent civil wars, anomaly and anarchy, all of which provide fertile ground for radicalisation and violent extremism.

To analyse the role of religion in coping with socio-political aggressions, this chapter focuses on the case of the Hizmet movement (also known as the Service and/or Gülen movement), which has been subject to socio-political and economic ordeals as well as defaming religious hegemony of Turkish authorities since 2014. This chapter does not delve into the political discussions and tensions between the Hizmet movement and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's regime, but: (1) Sets the scene to the Hizmet's ordeal with the Erdogan regime; (2) analyses Muhammed Fethullah Gülen's religious discourse and how it is shaped under certain circumstances and (3) highlights the religious dynamics that have curbed individuals' emotional eruption and the masses' reactions. In doing so, this chapter provides an empirical example of countering religious discourse that avoids the personal frustrations, group revolts, instability and anarchy that would turn Turkey into one of those Arab Spring countries and fertilise radicalism and terrorism in the region.

Setting the Scene

Turkey was not part of the regional unrest during the Arab Spring in the Middle East. Portraying a Muslim Democrat image, the ruling AKP (Justice of Development Party) was the voice of wide-ranging religious and centre-right party electorates (Yardimci-Geyikçi 2014) and appeared to be an empowering image for the rebels in the Middle East.

Yet, the trend in Turkey has changed with the exclusive discourse of the government (Yilmaz et al. 2017) and increasing opposition from the excluded left-wing parties, especially the Kemalist and Kurdish electorates (Yardimci-Geyikçi 2014). The unrest among the secular Turkish youth

broke out with the Gezi Parkı protests that faced Prime Minister Erdogan's rigid backlash in 2013 and, according to Cagaptay, evoked the illiberal legacy that AKP inherited from the Islamists (Cagaptay 2017). Like the Arab Spring revolts, the Gezi Parkı protests were quickly and smoothly organised through mobile phones and social media posts (Tufekci 2014). The diminishing democracy has been criticised by Turkey's Western allies (Corke et al. 2014).

In addition, the bribery operation to the four AKP ministers and Erdogan's son in the same year was another threat to Erdogan's political power. Instead of leaving the bribery case to the judiciaries, Erdogan opted for concealing the corruption and accusing Gülen (Hizmet) followers in the police force of confronting the government. These two incidents set the cornerstone of Erdogan's authoritarian politics, turning his back on the European Union and facing the Islamic world by using hegemonic religious discourse (Cagaptay 2017). The presidential election in 2014 secured Erdogan's political position with 51% supporters, but this also implied that almost half the population was uneasy about Erdogan's presidential role (Cagaptay 2017). The unrest deliberately increased as President Erdogan chose to be the voice of his electorates rather than all citizens in the country.

The increasing tension was handled by force after an unsuccessful coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016 (Barkey 2017; Kingsley 2017; Zeynalov 2017). Erdogan called the coup attempt "a gift from God" (Gunter 2016), since he could rigidly suppress all his critiques under martial law. Alleging Gülen to be the mastermind behind the coup and calling the movement a terrorist organisation, Erdogan massively targeted followers of the Hizmet movement. Associating his other opponents with the movement or using martial law against them, Erdogan silenced most of his critics. The post-coup politics deepened the divide between the 51% Erdogan supporters and the rest. While Erdogan critics were jailed, purged and had their businesses confiscated, Erdogan supporters were generously granted the purged positions and confiscated businesses.

The coup allegations still remain shadowy, since Gülen publicly called for Erdogan to be trialled in an impartial international court to find the real actors behind the coup, but Erdogan avoided an international investigation. The lack of evidence attributing blame to Gülen is raised by British MPs, Germany's Chief of Intelligence and Washington, all of whom declined to extradite Gülen (Srivastava 2017). Why Hizmet was Erdogan's biggest target is beyond the scope and aim of this chapter. Yet, the literature

points out, as an organised, highly educated and influential religious group, the Hizmet movement was seen as a threat to Erdogan's religious and political hegemony (Taspinar 2014).

Under such an extremely polarised atmosphere, one possibility could have been opposing the dictatorial religious hegemony, with an alternative religious discourse legitimising the self-defence. Yet, religion was used to tame the socio-politically most disadvantaged and discriminated Gülen followers in Turkey. Religious rehabilitation in the face of ordeal can be traced to Gülen's sermons, who, with his followers, has been subjected to a post-coup purge and crackdown in Turkey by Erdogan.

Heightening Hatred and Oppression

The Hizmet movement has been publicly targeted by Erdogan since 2014 by naming his operation "witch hunting," at a party congress in Ayfon in 2014 (Stockholm Center for Freedom 2017a), and extrajudicial punishment increased since 15 July 2016. The Stockholm Center for Freedom's report on Erdogan's hate speeches from 2013 to 2017 recorded 240 speeches against Gülen and his followers. Speaking at a rally in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak on 4 April 2017, Erdogan said:

> And we will continue cleansing them because we will eradicate this cancer from the body of this country and the state. They will not enjoy the right to life. … Our fight against them will continue until the end. We will not leave them wounded. (Stockholm Center for Freedom 2017a, 24)

Erdogan's severe hatred for Hizmet followers is publicly replicated by his ministers. The Minister of Finance Nihat Zeybekci explained in detail at a mass meeting how they will capture and torture Hizmet followers:

> Not only the death sentence. We are going to punish them so that they will beg to be killed to escape suffering. (Claps and whistles from the floor) … We will stuff them into holes. They will suffer in those holes … They will not hear a human voice again. 'Kill us.' They will beg. As I said earlier, we will make them beg in those holes to be killed in order to escape suffering. You can be sure of that. (Turkish Realities 2016)

Zeybekci's hate speech, which is still available on YouTube, raises concerns as it approves the level of hatred of the Erdogan regime towards the Hizmet people. The partisan blunt approval of such genocidal sentiments

and executions is reflected in the cheerful applause to Zeybekci's speech. Similar sentiments have been echoed among pro-Erdogan popular and public figures. One journalist, Fazil Duygun, suggested the prison administration force the jailed Hizmet people to commit suicide. He thought death was the most effective way to exterminate them (TurkeyPurge 2018). None of those genocidal statements, including Erdogan's 240 hate speeches, have been taken to court.

Eventually, the level of hatred and torture experienced by the Hizmet people reached a level where they preferred death over imprisonment. Numerous Hizmet people took the risk of dying by crossing over the border in boats. In November 2017, a released teacher, Huseyin Maden, attempted to cross to the Greek island of Lesvos, but drowned along with his wife and three children (Keep Talking Greece 2017). In mid-February 2018, another drowning incident involved a couple and their 3- and 9-year-old sons. The pictures of the dead children alluded to the memory of a Syrian child whose body washed to the shore off the Turkish coast in 2016 (Keep Talking Greece 2018). Silence surrounding these incidents continued in Turkey and the Muslim world. In addition, since 15 July 2016, almost 152,000 were sacked from their jobs; 133,500 were detained; 65,000 were arrested; 6000 academics lost their jobs; 4500 judges and prosecutors were dismissed; 3000 schools, dormitories and universities were shut down; 319 journalists were arrested and 189 media outlets were shut down. Over 500 children are reportedly still in jail with their mothers under inhumane circumstances (TurkeyPurge 2018).

This wave of hatred extended overseas, with advocates of Hizmet abducted in many Third World countries. Erdogan threatened the movement's followers and chased them down even overseas, declaring: "No country or region around the world will ever be a safe haven [for them]" (Stockholm Center for Freedom 2017b).

Regardless of the intense and massive hate crimes and severe persecutions, some of which concluded with deaths and suicides while in custody, not a single significant incident, misbehaviour or even emotional eruption and reaction has been recorded among followers of the movement. Despite the Erdogan regime's massive and expensive campaign to declare and label Hizmet people as terrorists, it is still an inconvincible argument, since the Erdogan regime cannot provide any example of a single act of violence to support their "terrorism" claim.

So, what is the secret behind Hizmet followers' determinedly nonviolent stance in Turkey and abroad? What restrains the people of the

movement from aggressive behaviours and reactions can be traced to Gülen's weekly sermons over the past three years. Nevertheless, this chapter discusses the first 1.5 months right after the coup attempt, when major arrests, seizures and vandalisms took place.

Perspective: The Hizmet Case

The secret behind Hizmet's non-violent response is not a case of overnight training, but a mindset that has been established and deeply rooted in the psyche of the movement for decades. Hizmet has a half-century history dating back to the 1960s. Since its establishment, the movement is known for its education, dialogue and philanthropic institutions and activities in Turkey and around the world. Their more than 20 years of transnational "service" experience in non-Turkish societies has also been positively received and supported by locals (Ebaugh 2009; Pandya and Gallagher 2012).

The messages for peace, harmony and positive action were conveyed to the public, including conflict-ridden countries like Bosnia, Iraq and many African countries, as well as war-torn countries such as Afghanistan and Turkic states in Central Asia (Saritoprak 2016; Özdalga 2000). This constructive approach was in force while they were not the target of massive and systematic oppressions (Özdalga 2000; Esposito and Yilmaz 2010; Yavuz and Esposito 2003; Barton 2007; Tittensor 2014).

While Hizmet followers presently go through widespread and blatant persecutions, as shown in the above-mentioned expulsions and tragic stories, it is important to re-examine the movement's discourse to understand if its mindset has changed, and if so, to what extent and how it manoeuvred the outward hostile climate and inward disappointments while going through a severe ordeal. An analysis of these changing circumstances is important for the scope of this chapter, in order to investigate how religion can be used to counter radical and violent extremist tendencies.

Analysis of Gülen's weekly sermons broadcast right after the coup shows Islamic discourse can be effectively used to curb people's natural instincts in response to persecutions and grievances. Furthermore, religious discourse can be used as the only soothing and curing resort for afflicted and abandoned individuals during an ordeal. Using the blueprint of Gülen's discourse, a generic countering discourse can also be drafted by focusing on what kind of religious perspective, arguments and topics tame people's reactions, frustrations and eruptions before they evolve into further steps like radicalism and violent extremism.

Online Sermons

Living life in exile in the United States since 1999, Gülen's spiritual messages to Hizmet followers in Turkey and abroad have been maintained through his online sermons that are placed as video recordings on the herkul.org webpage and YouTube channel. These sermons can be categorised under three titles: "Heartstrings" (*Bamteli*)—weekly sermons that last about 45 minutes; "Hekultunes" (*Herkul Nağme*)—Gülen's short and improvisational talks that last about 30 minutes; and "Broken Jug" (*Kirik Testi*)—Gülen's transcribed sermons. They are all broadcast weekly (recently with English subtitles), while some of the transcribed ones are also translated and broadcast in English. Although Gülen gave some interviews to different international media outlets right after the coup attempt, which would also be important to analyse for the purpose of this chapter, they are a response to Erdogan's political allegations, addressing a global audience and therefore is not considered in this chapter.

Gülen's sermons were mainly for his followers, providing a spiritual source and roadmap to his local followers, while also aligning worldwide Hizmet followers with the main quarter. To obstruct this connection, Erdogan banned access to those sermons in Turkey in February 2016, prohibited all of Gülen's books and shut down Gülen-inspired media outlets, radios, magazines and publication houses (Silencing Turkey's Media 2016). Erdogan's tireless efforts to silence Gülen by every means makes his sermons more noteworthy today, since they stand as the most significant and up-to-date religious source and rehabilitation for the movement's oppressed members.

After the coup, Gülen's sermons continued to be broadcast in three categories as usual (i.e. weekly sermons, short talks and transcribed sermons). One transcription and 13 video recordings were released within the six weeks after the coup attempt. Six of them were regular weekly sermons, while the remaining were his improvisational short talks. Contrary to the abundance of video recordings, there was a noticeable halt in the written sermons, which restarted five months after the coup attempt. Another noticeably unusual practice during this time was a sermon transcribed directly in English, called "The Meaning of Events Related to Our Deeds." This was Gülen's first piece right after the coup, which was released three days after the coup attempt and four days before Gülen's first video recorded short talk.

When the title, content, timing and the language of the releases are considered altogether, one can assume this broadcast was an initial response by the Hizmet movement to Erdogan's allegations, smear campaigns and purges. The content was unpacking "the connection between world events and our deeds; recognising the connection between the troubles we face and our faults and sins; and acting in accordance with the criteria of the Qur'an and Sunnah regarding these issues" (sermon 1).

After two years, "The Meaning of Events" remains among the last of the translated transcripts. The transcribed sermons along with the six long and seven short video recordings produced within the six weeks after the coup are shown in the following table:

Number	*Date*	*Title*	*Category*
1	18/07/2016	The Meaning of Events Related to Our Deeds	Written sermon
2	22/07/2016	Oh, the Patient Travellers of the Tight Path! Be Patient!	Short talk
3	24/07/2016	Oath to the Time ("*Asr*")!	Weekly sermon
4	27/07/2016	Brotherhood/Sisterhood as a Graceful Call	Short talk
5	31/07/2016	You are (Alive) as Much as Your Patience!	Weekly sermon
6	04/08/2016	Faith, Hope and Patience	Short talk
7	07/08/2016	Self-accounting, God Inspired Guidance (*Hidayet*)[a] and Oppression	Weekly sermon
8	09/08/2016	Foreignness within Foreignness (While Away from Homeland)	Short talk
9	12/08/2016	Submitting to the Divine Will and the Heartfelt Payer	Short talk
10	14/08/2016	Those Concerned with the World Burdens Oneself with the World's Amount of Concerns	Weekly sermon
11	17/08/2016	A Societal Hypnosis	Short talk
12	18/08/2016	The *Nafs* (Spiritual Station) that Interrogates and Blames Oneself	Short talk
13	21/08/2016	We will Show Patience in *Tawakkul* (in Submission to God after fulfilling One's all duties)!	Weekly sermon
14	28/08/2016	Persecutions, Sadness and the Divine orders	Weekly sermon

These sermons will be addressed using above-provided numbers within the text

[a]Original words are spelt according to Turkish rather than Arabic since the sermons were delivered in Turkish

When the written piece and 13 video recordings are analysed, three main themes stand out in Gülen's addresses to his followers during these most difficult days for the movement:

(a) Self-accounting (*muhasebe*) at individual and communal level
(b) Acknowledging the hardship of the [Prophetic] path and showing patience
(c) Positive response and mannerism

While unpacking these concepts, Gülen addresses the main sources of Islam, the Qur'an and *hadith*, using examples from the life of Prophet Muhammad (in every sermon) and other prophets afflicted by his people (like Prophet Yunus—sermons 9, 13 and 14), his brothers (like Prophet Yusuf—sermons 6, 9, 12, 13 and 14) and sickness (like Prophet Ayyub—sermons 8, 9 and 13). Then, giving examples from the Mecca and Medina periods of Islam and the companions of Prophet Muhammad, especially the four rightly guided caliphs (Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali—sermons 3, 5, 9, 10, 13 and 14), Gülen spiritually motivates his followers by telling them that they are not alone on the path. Gülen frequently and deliberately gives examples from the most righteous Islamic rulers while portraying them as spiritual giants. In doing so, Gülen implicitly and explicitly addresses the discrepancy between the authentic Islamic rulers of the past and the so-called political Muslim leaders of the present.

Further, Gülen seamlessly combines spiritual, inner and intrinsic religiosity with social, political, outer and extrinsic religiosity. Travelling back and forth in history and connecting the past to the present, Gülen similarly combines tradition with modernity. Selecting examples from the Mecca and Medina periods, Gülen portrays an ideal Muslim attitude in difficult times and during the heydays of Islam. Relating socio-political issues to individual and communal responsibilities and shortfalls, Gülen also interprets current affairs in relation to the individual (person) and society (community, group, movement) and their relationship to the One (i.e. God). In his first sermon released after the failed coup, Gülen summarises this relationship:

> We [personal to the societal we] miss the connection between the events and our deeds. As beings immersed in a world of causality, we mostly think in accordance with the cause and effect principle and say; "The punishment for that event must have been so and so." However, things happen in accordance with the mystery of Divine testing. In this regard, if one does not view events with the keen eye of wisdom, one fails to discern their connection with people's deeds. (sermon 1)

Such comprehensive and multilayered interpretations of the events, which explains the three overarching themes, are distinctive in terms of establishing an alternative discourse to a compartmentalised religion. Dissecting the religion and focusing only on one side or perspective has always been restraining and limiting the religion and its capability to provide complex, comprehensive and compatible perspectives to contemporary realities and challenges. Compartmentalising religion as Sufi or political Islam, traditional or modern Islam, or Mecca or Medina period, Islam has produced diverse versions of Islam that take people to certain predetermined and often differing destinations. For instance, Sufis promise inner peace, Islamists promise outer peace, radicals call for resistance by referring to the Medina period, while pacifists call for submission referring to the Mecca period of Islam to lead people in different directions.

One of these directions is prescribed by radical preachers. Contrary to the complexity and comprehensiveness of the religion, radical preachers opt for absolutism, literalism and puritanism (Abou El Fadl 2005). Limiting their perspective to the literal meaning makes them close-minded and ignorant to all other facets in Islam. Eventually, within their iteration of compartmentalised religion, radical preachers opt for a highly politicised and linear Islam that is void of internal, spiritual and self-interrogative aspects, which contradicts the complex and sophisticated creation, the comprehensive religion (Qur'an 6:59) and the All-Encompassing God (al-Muhit; Qur'an 3:120, 4:108, 4:126). The radical preachers' partial understanding and selectivism eventually cause a dismissal of the entirety of the religion rooted in the Qur'an, prophetic experiences and historical religious role models.

Incomplete understanding of Islam with a pre-agenda causes diametrically oppositional interpretations of Islam by radical preachers. As a mainstream Islamic scholar, Gülen's three overarching themes in this regard should be read as antonyms to the radical preachers' main arguments. While Gülen aims to spiritually feed and thereby curb the emotional eruptions and reactions of his socio-politically afflicted and oppressed followers, radical preachers aim to fuel a sense of affliction and grievance to further alienate and mobilise Muslims for revolt. For instance, "Islam at war" is a central theme in the e-magazines of al-Qaeda and ISIS (*Inspire* and *Dabiq*, respectively). A textual analysis of these two e-magazines discloses the sub-themes and concepts listed under those sub-themes which then eventually feed the central theme: "Islam at war" (Droogan and Peattie, forthcoming). This deliberate radical discourse creates an overwhelming urge to defend Islam using warfare.

Accordingly, although the external realities are equally severe, and the personal and communal grievances are equally intense, the alchemy of religious discourse bears completely different results. Gülen acknowledges the instrumentality of religious leaders in interpreting external events and guiding people in certain directions and actions:

> [It is] impossible for all believers to show an equal insight and comprehensive understanding in relation to an issue. Therefore, it is essential to have spiritual guides, who can view and interpret the unfolding events from a comprehensive point of view and in relation to the causes and effects. Those guides must analyse the reasons behind the afflictions … and minutely calculate the negative consequences of the committed mistakes, [in order to] rightly guide people. (sermon 1)

In the same sermon, Gülen also acknowledges the power of preachers' discourse in evoking, moderating and channelling people's excitement:

> … On the one hand, it is necessary to evoke in people excitement like roaring floods, but on the other hand, it is also necessary to set boundaries to balance this excitement and turn it into a beneficial force; [likewise] it is necessary to build proper canals and dams.

The preachers' discourse becomes a litmus test for those afflicted with discrimination, oppression and surviving in grievance. Cognisant of the preachers' power of guiding people, Gülen uses his sermons to spiritually rehabilitate his followers. His three overarching concepts in this regard stand as antidotes to radical and violent extremist mentality and discourse.

Self-Interrogation

Although "retrospection, self-interrogation" is a topic of Gülen's Sufism book in which he elaborates on the states and stations of the spiritual traveller (Gülen 2007), he makes it the headline of his first address to his followers three days after the attempted coup. The tight connection between social and spiritual is a characteristic of Gülen's religious discourse (Michel 2005). Eventually, Gülen does the same thing by connecting an intensely spiritual concept to a heavily socio-political matter.

> When a believer experiences some fiascos on the path he walks, he faces some allegations and slanders that taint his honour and reputation, or he experiences some failures in certain activities that were seemingly likely to

> succeed, he should view each of these events as a *Divine warning* and use *self-interrogation to revise his relationship* and *servanthood to God*. (Sermon 1, emphasis added)

Gülen suggests self-interrogation for individuals and his community, both of whom were afflicted by the Erdogan regime. He later extends this offer to Turkish society and the Muslim world in order for them to identify their failures in the historical scene of the last few centuries (sermon 13).

In the nexus of external trials and internal faults, Gülen sees the main fault of the individual as one that involves a lessening of the relationship (i.e. prayer, pleading, supplication, spirituality) with God. According to Gülen, the communal fault is being deceived by apparently Muslim politicians' discourses. Such politicians, according to Gülen, "assassinated Islam by uttering 'Islam'" (sermon 13).

Gülen instils resilience and warns his followers from rebelling against the oppressor by pinpointing part of problems as oneself and seeing the misfortunes as a blessing in disguise, describing afflictions as compensation for personal and collective sins. Providing a comprehensive reading of the external world far beyond causality and in relation to Divine Wisdom and one's positioning to it, Gülen instils a sense of responsibility and action not to delve into criticising external ills, but improving one's spirituality to repair one's relationship with God (sermon 7). Gülen makes his point by explaining the verse 5:105 of the Qur'an.

According to Gülen, seeking fault in oneself first directs one to supplication, repentance and renewing one's relationship with God. Gülen suggests sincerely prolonged prayers and supplications not only repair the relationship with God but also break the chain of causality through the surprising favours of God as a gift to His sincerely imploring servants. Gülen supports his argument with the stories and supplications of the prophets who were miraculously rescued and released from calamities and the rightly guided caliphs like Omar, who pleaded to God not to punish his people for his personal sins.

Gülen wants to raise these sentiments among his followers and accordingly asks them to spend at least three hours in supplication (sermon 9) and perform night prayers asking God to forgive the people of Muhammad (*allümme verham ümmeti Muhammed*). Gülen continues to emphasise the close relationship between the internal and external world, stating "those lacking *tehecciid* (the night prayer) lack *tecehhüd* (effort and activity for external matters)." He further explains: "If one does not get up for night

prayer to spend a few hours by pleading to God, one would have nothing to give to the ummah of the Prophet" (Gülen 2016). Gülen correlates activism with spiritual life and in so doing differs from many other preachers who solely focus on the external world and political affairs, but give no advice about one's spiritual life and worshipping practice.

Through self-interrogation and its outcomes, Gülen thinks "the vicious circle of negativities can be turned into the productive cycle of positivity." Self-interrogation provides a comprehensive interpretation of the incidents and provides the oppressed with a perspective transformed from *basar* to *basiret* (i.e. a simple seeing to seeing with Divine Wisdom) (sermon 10).

Self-interrogation in Gülen's discourse appears to mobilise people. When interpreting events beyond causality, but in relation to individuals' and communities' connection to God, one avoids delving into complaining, scapegoating and the victimisation psyche. Asking what personal action caused the affliction stimulates every person to take a share in it and accordingly take responsibility and action to repair it. Gülen extensively explains one's position in response to understanding and responding to Divine Will (sermons 1, 7, 12 and 13).

Gülen's discourse significantly differs from that of radical preachers, who prefer scapegoating and blaming others and, in so doing, reinforce the victim psyche among Muslims. Scapegoating also draws a bold line between "us" and "them" (Welch 2006), which corresponds to other disparities in the radical discourse, such as "Muslims" versus "infidels," "good" versus "evil," "oppressed" versus "oppressor" and "innocent" versus "wrongdoer." This black-and-white dichotomy provides a temporary relief mechanism to ignore one's individual failures and communal fallbacks, and keep instilling dislike, hatred and disgust to the so-called guilty, inhumane and merciless other. While the intrinsic journey entails fixing oneself and one's relationship with God, and thereby sharpening one's divinely vision, the politically overloaded radical discourse dismisses spirituality and excellence in worship. Instead, it entails revenging the merciless one and bringing back justice by force and brutality.

Acknowledgement of the Path and Showing Patience

Gülen rehabilitates his audience by constantly emphasising that persecutions and ordeals are the by-products and prerequisites of being on the path of prophets and their companions: "If this is the path of prophets, then wait for hardship and trials. That's what the Prophet of Allah

promised you" (sermon 3). In his first video recording after the coup, Gülen draws parallels between the oppressions, migrations and socio-economic pressures faced by Hizmet followers and Prophet Muhammad with his companions (sermons 2 and 6). This type of acknowledgement is also used as part of mindfulness therapy in dealing with anxiety and depression. Acknowledging negative feelings and experiences helps one move forward. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapist Zindel Segal (2016) explains acceptance of hurting feelings and experiences as "registering their presence before making a choice about how to respond to them." Contrarily, unwillingness to experience and accommodate negative thoughts, feelings or experiences causes anxiety (ibid.). This type of unwillingness is also a tool for radical preachers to fuel vulnerable Muslims' frustration with their negative circumstances.

To curb this sort of frustration, Gülen uses religious arguments for accepting hard conditions in contentment and not panicking. First, Gülen points out that God's consent and being with God are the biggest reward even if one is in prison, misery and poverty (sermon 2). Second, God has never abandoned them. He states "If your path is the path of the Prophet, He certainly does not leave you (alone and helpless) on that path. Nor does He let you feel the grief of pathlessness … If the path is his path, every single trial along his path is a blessing" (sermon 6).

Gülen states that being with God and striving on His path is a rewarding but costly task, which requires waiting in endurance. The Qur'an also calls people to endure in patience. Drawing on some verses from the Qur'an that advise patience and praise patient believers, Gülen similarly calls Hizmet followers to be patient. Gülen uses the word patience and its synonyms more than 80 times within the first 6 weeks of his sermons analysed here and calls his followers: "Oh! Patient travellers of the right path, be patient!" (sermon 2).

Gülen motivates his followers by highlighting the benefits of patience. He explains that the word *sabır* (patience) refers to a poisonous desert plant (sermon 13) and therefore describes patience as being as bitter as a poison in the beginning, yet having a sweet taste at the end (with its outcomes) (sermon 6). He calls patience a key to victory (*miftah'ul ferec*) (sermon 2), a requisite of showing respect to the Divine Will (*tevekkü*l) (sermon 13), a resilient victory by breaking the enemy's force and endurance (explanation of the *hadith* "*Men sabera zafira*" [One showing patience reaches victory]; sermon 14) and a state for the people of the zenith as well as a source of power for the travellers in reaching the zenith (sermon 5).

Patience is explained as a prerequisite to fulfil heavy and long-term duties. Gülen explains in sermons 9 and 14 that, although Prophet Muhammad was extremely considerate of his people and had the power to change his oppressed companions' misfortune just by raising his hands and asking God's help, he did not do this. Instead, he advised his companions to be patient, reminding them of the earlier believers' trials and how they were heavily tortured, but stayed steadfast (sermon 9). Gülen interprets the Prophet's advice for patience in the early days of Islam as a prerequisite for shouldering Islam properly, and he connects this requisite to the movement's long-term vision and project, which is to make Islam acknowledged worldwide as a respectable religion (sermon 9).

Gülen elaborates the different types of patience and calls his followers to perform them as well. One type of patience is to resist worldly temptations. This is a reminder in this particular context to some Hizmet followers who were offered worldly gains by state officials in return for publicly condemning the movement and reporting on Hizmet advocates to the authorities (sermon 5).

Another type of patience is submission to destiny (*tevekkül*) and perseverance in supplication until the sorrowful destiny of Hizmet changes. When destiny is about to be executed (termed as *kaza*), the sincere prayers of people can interfere in and change the direction of the execution (termed as *ata*). Yet, for an executed undesirable destiny to turn into a desired direction with supplications (*kaza* turning into *ata*), waiting in patience and persevering in supplication are essential. Prophets Yusuf, Yunus and Ayyub's stories are given to exemplify the state of prayer and waiting in patience for the execution of an altering destiny in favour of the afflicted ones (sermon 9).

Submission to destiny is coined with respect to God and His comprehensive attributes (sermon 10), acknowledging that God is everyone's God, including that of the oppressors, tyrants and persecutors. He does not punish the wrongdoers right away but shows patience and gentleness, thereby giving time for His wrongdoing servants to repent and return back to God. This is how God manifests His names, which include the Most Patient, Most Gentle, Most Forgiving and Most Merciful. Hence, although God gives time (*imhal*), He does not neglect (*ihmal*) the oppressor's wrongdoing. Therefore, Gülen calls his followers to patience as a way of displaying respect to God in full acknowledgement of the fact He is the God of everyone and His Divine treatments and attributes require the opposed ones to "leave it to Him … [and] show patience" (sermon 9).

Being content with the Divine Will is also promoted as a higher spiritual station (sermon 9), which is an indicator of God's contentment with His servant (*raziyye* and *marziyye*). These two types of people are joyfully invited to heaven by God (Qur'an 89:29). Instead of gaining this virtue in a Sufi lodge, Gülen calls his followers to reach this spiritual zenith in the midst of socio-political hardship. Furthermore, Gülen calls his audience to show active and firm consent declaring "We consent with God as the deity, consent with Muhammad as the prophet and consent with Islam as the religion" (sermon 12). This declaration is confirmation of God's choice (Quran 5:3) and a replica of *hadith* with similar meaning (Ilm Bukhari 29, Siyam 197 in Muslim) (sermon 13).

The declaration of showing content and patience becomes stronger to the level of challenging the oppressor. Gülen quotes the fourth caliph Ali "We will show patience until the patience itself realises that we can endure against much severer ones" (sermon #13), refers to chapter Ibrahim verse 12 and repeats "undoubtedly" they will show patience to all kinds of oppressions, no matter whatever the oppressor does (sermon 13). Gülen's determined declaration of patience aims to dishearten the oppressor and reconciles with the interpretation of the *hadith* "*man sabera zafira*," that is, whoever shows patience and endurance breaks the resistance (of the oppressor) and eventually reaches the awaited victory.

In contrast to Gülen's highlight of acknowledging the hardship of the path and bearing patience accordingly, radical preachers deliberately make their audience overwhelmed by discrepancies, injustices and grievances. Rejecting the spiritually and psychologically empowering notion of acknowledging and accommodating hardship, and rejecting to work towards hardship by showing patience, perseverance and endurance, leaves Muslims helpless. Anxiety and victimhood psychology mobilise vulnerable Muslims react in violence. For instance, Al Qaida and ISIS first overwhelm their recruits with victimisation psychology by highlighting injustices and then calling them to reject all by fighting back via so-called defensive jihad (Fink and Sugg 2015).

Positive Action and Mannerisms

While rejection increases frustration and leads people to uncalculated reactions, patience enables people to take time to discern the best way to cope. Gülen's coping strategy is gentleness, while providing his followers with countless reasons why they should show patience. In his first video sermon

after the coup, Gülen reminds his followers of Said Nursi's (d. 1960) formula of abstaining from "the cruel principle of giving a similar response" (sermon 2). He explains a similar response only doubles the distance, whereas inaction or silence keeps the distance at a level determined by the perpetrator. According to Gülen, such a distance is easily compensable once the wrongdoer repents and turns back to ask forgiveness. A person with heart is expected to be overwhelmed with the maturity and kindness of the target to the oppressor (sermon 2).

Gülen theologically backs up his point on "the cruel principle of giving a similar response" with Qur'an 16:126, which gives the right to *qisas* (punishing the wrongdoer in the same way), while encouraging to show patience. Gülen also quotes a *hadith* that bans responding harm with harm (sermon 9).

In his first sermon after the coup, Gülen asks his followers to supress negative feelings and exert effort for unity and harmony (sermon 1), while the president of the country, Erdogan, was calling people to fight and even lynch Hizmet people under the high tension of the coup attempt. Gülen religiously motivates his followers by reminding about Prophet Muhammad's famous *hadith* that gives glad tidings to strangers (*tooba lil ghuraba*). Although the term stranger (*ghuraba*) is widely discussed and featured by classical scholars, Gülen brings a new dimension to it within that particular point in time. According to Gülen, strangers are those showing utmost effort for constructivism and restoration in the era of massive destruction and demolition. Regardless of the "surrounding fires" about the Hizmet people, Gülen describes the strangers of the time as those who never give up the spirit of constructiveness, mediation (and moderation) and humane attitude (sermon 2). Gülen gives practical tips to implement these attributes in the face of unending smear campaigns, purges, improvements, poverty and deaths. Not halting even a second, but constantly being involved in positive action and production is given as an antidote to a momentary halt, which would pull people into deep concerns about the surrounding disastrous conditions (sermon 11).

Gülen rehabilitates his followers for positive action not only on behalf of oneself but also on behalf of the Hizmet movement, which has a long-lasting positive reputation around the world. Gülen calls his followers not to ruin it, but to maintain the legacy of the movement in the face of hardship (sermon 2). The method as well as the goal should be licit. In another sermon, Gülen makes the goal and method clear and states it is a long-term and expensive project requiring tireless effort, that is,

unconditionally representing Islam as a religion of peace and Muslims as the guardians of peace (sermon 9).

On the anniversary of the coup, Gülen declared in his sermon dated 2 July 2017 that "the power is embedded in the truth (*haqq*) and the truthful one is merciful." Gülen rehabilitates his followers to be forgiving like the prophets; for instance, Prophet Muhammad said "no blame on you" as the conqueror of Mecca and Prophet Yusuf said the same to his wrongdoing brothers as the ruler of Egypt. These two occasions in prophetic history were reminded to Hizmet followers in the sermons delivered in 2014–2018, when they had been afflicted by the wrath of the Erdogan regime.

Quoting verses advising to repel evil by gentleness (Qur'an 70:10, 41:34), Gülen warns his followers not to be diverted by people of less faith and underlines the need for firmness in keeping their method and manner in force regardless (sermon 3). He similarly believes endurance on the right path will prevail the false means and the righteous will not be harmed by wrongdoers (sermon 7, Qur'an 5:105). The tranquillity and power of being on the right path (sermons 3 and 7) are coupled with not wanting to risk the movement's vision, reputation and longer-term goals. In this regard, Gülen's call to patience originates not from passivism or despair, but a determined strategy to prevail to the end with endurance (i.e. *men sabera zafira hadith*).

Opting for a diametrically opposite path, radical preachers impatiently lead their audience to fix deep-seated socio-political problems by destruction. They envision a frightening religion that will scare oppressor and bring justice by bloodshed. Therefore, radical preachers deliberately dismiss the above-mentioned Islamic sources and points, which provide spiritual insights and depth to the oppressed. Instead, they urge for justice by using religion as the sword of Damocles, a fearful image to keep people upright and legitimise revenge from the oppressor by exerting violence.

Conclusion

People respond to unfortunate conditions in different ways. There are many internal and external factors that diversify the result under seemingly similar circumstances. Religion can function as a transcendental force that can directly control internal factors if not external ones. Some conditions, such as the oppression of Muslims in conflict-ridden areas, may be beyond the control of religion. However, religion can help address the situation. This chapter focused on the role of preachers in shaping disadvantaged Muslims'

perception of reality and how they cope with it and develop methods in relation to the visions, missions and goals envisioned by those preachers.

Compartmentalisation and cherry-picking pieces from the religion cause preachers to introduce different versions of Islam that are seemingly inconsistent with each other. For instance, radical preachers envision an Islamic dominion and accordingly adopt a political Islam that dismisses the Makkah period, spiritual teachings and numerous examples of prophets and how they dealt with calamities. Their patchwork (i.e. so-called Islam) moves far from portraying a holistic Islam that is spiritual and peaceful like other religions.

This chapter also argued that the envisioned end product affects the perception of the elements of Islam and how they should be implemented in people's puzzling times, especially in times of ordeal. Those feeling desperate, but dreaming of the heydays of Islam, hastily attempt to fix the problem by taking revenge on oppressors and removing the system in place. This approach is instilled by making people feel wronged, drawing them into a victim mentality of helplessness, frustration and despair. Radical preachers evoke these sentiments by scapegoating, fuelling hatred against the outgroup, constantly bringing political rhetoric into their discourse and distancing religion from spirituality. Religion is instrumentalised to stimulate a need and responsibility for people to bring back missing justice.

Gülen's discourse in this regard stands out as countering the radical preachers. Gülen does this incidentally while rehabilitating his followers who are undergoing severe oppression under the current Erdogan regime. Since the advocates of Hizmet did not show any radical response (not even an emotional eruption) to the persecutions, social and economic embargos and smear campaigns, Gülen's rehabilitation stands as an empirically proven and effective countering discourse. Envisioning Islam to be acknowledged as a peaceful religion, and its followers as peace builders, Gülen mobilises his followers to behave accordingly while going through ordeals. Gülen uses three arguments to rehabilitate his followers. He first emphasises reading the external events in relation to one's personal and communal shortfalls and renewing one's relationship with God through prayers and pleading. Constant self-interrogation and self-accounting and the deepening spiritual relationship with God ensure the authenticity of one's path. Second, Gülen calls his followers to accept the fact that prophets' paths are always accompanied by severe trials, but the prophetic response is showing patience with deep spirituality. Third, Gülen instils his people with hope by associating faith with hope and proving a Qur'anic method that advises

followers to repel evil by responding with good. Referring to the pillars, mission and vision of the movement, Gülen asks his followers to be steadfast with showing positive action and thereby represent the peaceful face of Islam. Gülen's holistic approach to the religion teaches Muslims how to navigate their lives successfully in times of hardship.

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F. Mansouri, Z. Keskin (eds.), *Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism*, Middle East Today,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02719-3