Re-Thinking Conceptual Approaches to Modern Islamic Terrorism:

A Genealogy of ISIS and the Dynamism of Salafi-Jihadism

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Abstract

Acts of political violence under the broad categorisation of 'Islamic terrorism' are a pervasive socio-political problem in the modern geo-political environment. Furthermore, in the nearly two decades since September 11th 2001, Salafi-Jihadist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS have emerged to symbolise potent counterpoints to models of legitimacy and sovereignty championed by Western powers, and rely on narratives of justified violence to achieve their ultimate ambitions which defy parameters of conventional Western morality in an increasingly globalised world. This thesis attempts to broaden academic and policy discussions regarding the endurance of the threat posed by violent Salafi-Jihadism by re-examining actors according to their own socio-cultural reference points, and in relation to those classified as 'other'. It intends to provide a holistic examination in a manner which has yet to be undertaken in the fields of terrorism, international relations, or religious studies.

This thesis employs a Foucauldian genealogy of ISIS to deconstruct the problematisation of Islamic terrorism in the context of the Global War on Terror by scrutinising fundamental aspects of social group dynamics, the potency of religious ideology, and the symbiotic relationship between violence and ideology. It further reconstructs the emergence of ISIS by drawing on reference points unique to its own self-perception of cosmological and temporal history. Finally, this thesis analyses and reconsiders the utility of current frameworks in use for the study of terrorism. By genealogically scrutinising ISIS, and de-constructing the very understanding of the term 'terrorism' as employed by Western actors as a fluid concept in a power-knowledge nexus, this thesis argues for the necessity of alternate categorisations for the conceptualisation of actors in a contested geo-political social space.

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Acknowledgements

A PhD can inherently be a solitary endeavour, as I discovered one winter morning in Glasgow when I realised it had been over two weeks since I had said a single word to another living soul, while I tried desperately to begin writing chapters in what seemed like an insurmountable task. Despite the long stretches of silence ensconced in my flat in the West End, the University of Glasgow library, and my basement office at home in Virginia, I never would have been able to produce a work that is the fruit of years' worth of academic and intellectual aspirations without the support and encouragement of a truly wonderful network of compassionate, brilliant, and steadfast individuals.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Introduction

On the US Presidential campaign trail in 2012 and following the death of Osama Bin Laden, former president Barak Obama confidently asserted that "Al-Qaeda is on the run" and "Al-Qaeda's core leadership has been decimated".[1] This declaration represented a symbolic victory over the perpetrators responsible for the atrocities of September 11 2001, and the group that had become synonymous with Islamic terrorism. Four years later in 2016, however, Al-Qaeda affiliates had seized control of 370 miles of Yemeni coastline, and provided infrastructural and welfare services in the areas they autonomously governed.[2] Despite the fact that Al-Qaeda's territorial ambitions in Yemen were short-lived, this resurgence of a group thought to be in its death throes came as an eerie reminder to powers and observers in the West that the radical organisation could not so easily be dismissed with a high-profile decapitation of leadership.

Following the tumultuous events of the U.S. led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the momentous shifts embodied by the Arab Spring, in June 2014 ISIS declared a Caliphate, and thus claimed victory over both foreign powers in the Middle East as well as the hegemonic geopolitical systems they upheld, and it also assumed self-proclaimed vanguard status in the Salafi-Jihadist movement while simultaneously declaring Al-Qaeda itself to be apostate and defunct.[3] Almost two years to the day later, a coordinated military operation was executed by Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces with U.S. support. This effort succeeded in retaking Fallujah from ISIS, and commanders declared that the operation was "done, and the city is fully liberated".[4] These comments and battlefield successes were accompanied by predictions that within a short period of time ISIS would not only be physically decimated in the region, but also that the group would cease to have any operational capacity anywhere in

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[1] Obama, Barak, In Lucas, Fred, "Obama Has Touted Al Qaeda's Demise 32 Times since Benghazi Attack", *CNNNews.com,* November 1, 2012. http://cnsnews.com/news/article/obama-touts-al-qaeda-s-demise-32-times-benghazi-attack-0 (Accessed 8 January 2018)

[2] Riyadh, Mohammad, "Al-Qaeda Is Taking Control of a Pivotal Middle-East Country", *The Fiscal Times,* February 24, 2016. http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2016/02/24/Al-Qaeda-Taking-Control-Pivotal-Middle-East-Country (Accessed 8 January 2018)

[3] Vick, Karl, "ISIS militants declare Islamic 'caliphate', *TIME,* June 29 2014. https://time.com/2938317/isis-militants-declare-islamist-caliphate/ (Accessed 21 May 2020)

[4] Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi, in "Iraqi Commander: Fallujah 'fully liberated' from ISIS", *FoxNews,* June 26 2016. https://www.foxnews.com/world/iraqi-commander-fallujah-fully-liberated-from-isis (Accessed 29 June 2020).

the world due to international cooperation in the spheres of migratory regulations, financial monitoring, and economic development packages. [5]

In February 2019 U.S. President Trump declared that ISIS had been "100 percent defeated"[6], and later that year caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a U.S. special forces led raid.[7] Despite these military victories, ISIS structural evolution had enabled an international diaspora of ideological adherents, and it also continued to engage in violence in conflict zones where the group conducted multiple attacks in Iraq in April 2020.[8]

This chilling narrative raises a number of poignant questions. Most pressing perhaps is a three-part question. What makes these violent organisations so consistently resilient in the face of overwhelming military, tactical, and financial odds, and why do governments, the media, NGOs and intellectuals in the West fail to see and understand this phenomenon in order to adequately address it? Furthermore, what drives and enables the longevity of ideological platforms espoused by certain groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda that exist in evolutionary contention with one another but that fall under the broad categorisation of 'Islamic terrorism'? These bold questions do not suggest that by simply understanding a phenomenon one can presume to put an immediate halt to worldwide terrorism and sources of radicalisation. They do however suggest that assertions of victory over terrorism have been grossly overstated, and that perhaps the methods used to combat terrorism have stemmed from inadequate conceptualisations of the phenomenon and therefore have failed to yield desired or expected results because they were misjudged in their inception and initial formulation.

Persistent violent extremism carried out worldwide in the name of Islam is one of the most critical and dangerous threats of our time, and developments over the past decades, and more internationally visibly since September 11th 2001, affirm the fact that conventional international relations paradigms and military responses fail as effective and definitive

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[5] U.S. Department of State, "Bureau of Counterterrorism's FY 2017 Request", *Statement Before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee: Terrorism, Nonproliferation & Trade,* Washington DC, May 17 2016. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/rm/257307.htm (Accessed 23 June 2020)

[6] Faulders, Katherine, "Trump claims '100 percent' of ISIS caliphate defeated in Syria", *ABCNews,* February 28 2019. https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-claims-100-percent-isis-caliphate-defeated-syria/story?id=61388529 (Accessed 21 May 2020).

[7] Hennigan, W.J., "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is Dead. Where Does That Leave ISIS?", *TIME,* October 27 2019. https://time.com/5711828/al-baghdadi-dead-isis-future/ (Accessed 21 May 2020).

[8] Mills, Cory, "Don't Ignore Increased ISIS Attacks in Iraq", *NewsMax,* May 4 2020. https://www.newsmax.com/corymills/independence-zubair-erbil-haliburton/2020/05/04/id/965879/ Accessed 21 May 2020).

responses. To address this critical issue, we must be able to not simply respond to an evolving threat, we must be able to understand its aspirations, justifications, and resonance in specific cultural and historical contexts. In so doing it becomes possible to deconstruct and scrutinise the violent narratives that are relied on, in order to posit alternative and more soundly based paradigms on which to build platforms for counter terrorism and hopefully stem the flow of radicalisation. This thesis, therefore, aims to demonstrate that a scholarly exploration of the intellectual, social, cultural, and religious history that informs and is manifest in dangerous and violent ideologies should be developed as a cornerstone in the framing of successful paradigms and policies to confront violent Islamic extremism, and understand the ongoing and future evolution of political violence.

For this to take place, the study of violent extremism carried out in the name of Islam must be removed from the exclusive academic realms of security and terrorism studies, and international relations. While these disciplines are both valid and necessary, the academic and policy discussions regarding Salafi-Jihadist groups must be broadened by locating them in socio-cultural context. By broadening the scope of inquiry, it may be possible to re-orient the direction of the discussions pertaining to understanding and countering violent Islamic extremism. Subsequently, Western paradigms in academia and policy, which assume the supremacy of the Westphalian state as a baseline of analytic normalcy in geopolitics may be effectively challenged. This mentality is one of the consequences of numerous developments in the Western intellectual tradition which seeks to deconstruct objects of inquiry to yield their smallest component parts in order that they may be scrutinised independently to ascertain how they may best perform their specific functions as part of a whole. This method of investigation was partially applied to polity building and informed revolutionary conceptualisations of society during the era which birthed the modern nation state, and largely relegated religious and numerous civil entities to a newly conceived private sphere. This trajectory was not emulated in the Islamic world, yet assumptions regarding the appropriate interactive roles between violence and global actors permeate discussions regarding Islam and the Middle East today. This orientation frames geopolitics as a zero-sum game in which actors can only participate if they adhere to specific models of state building and governance.

To mention a piece of both tactical and intellectual advice that has been cited so often as to almost be cliché; if to achieve victory in whichever form that manifests itself we must know both ourselves and our enemy, then comprehension of not only the immediate reasoning

of Islamist violence is necessary, but so are the mechanisms by which it is informed, presented, and understood in context. To complement this, we must also evaluate the process by which we seek to comprehend acts of Islamist terrorism, and by doing so we may come to the conclusion that seemingly random acts of violence are not random at all; they are simply being interpreted through a cultural lens other than the one through which they are being carried out. In an attempt to bridge this gap as a stepping stone between comprehension and response formulation, and to address the three-part question mentioned above, this thesis asks the following question: Is it accurate and useful to label violent Islamic groups like ISIS as terrorist organisations, and study as well as counter them accordingly within existing frameworks for understanding and defeating terrorism which rely on the conceptual ordering of global politics that assumes the intellectual, moral and legitimate supremacy of the Western nation state? To answer this question, a comprehensive ideological case study of ISIS will be used which will place the group in the context of Islamic history, modern jihadism, and current regional as well as global political events. This case study will explore the narratives and ambitions embodied by ISIS and the mechanisms relied on for their attainment in order to explain both its ideological longevity and potential to alter the future of violent political contestation.

Asking this is critical because in the years since 9/11, there has been a striking lack of historical and contextual studies which seek to comprehend terrorism and violence itself within a wider scope of cultural analysis.[9] This must be remedied, because those who commit acts of violence in the name of Islam do so with a deep sense of attachment to their collective history, cultural context, and place within a divine mandate. We must be able to understand them and their actions against their own historical and socio-cultural reference points instead of grafting them onto our own. Despite the fact that imagined Sharia utopias and expressions of communal grievances put forth by extremist organisations may be misguided or inflammatory, they are nonetheless valid to those willing to kill on their behalf and hold great mobilising power. For that reason they must be paid diligent attention. As was noted by an American general, "We're not just fighting a force, you know, we're fighting an idea."[10]

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[9] Gordon, Avishag, "Can Terrorism Become a Scientific Discipline? A Diagnostic Study", *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3:3 (2010), 437-458.
Sageman, Marc, "The Stagnation in Terrorism Research", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26:4 (2014), 565-580.

[10] General John Allen, in Alexander Yonah and Dean Alexander, *The Islamic State; Combatting the Caliphate without Borders* (New York: Lexington Books, 2015), 36.

Although ideology alone is insufficient to drive people to action because opportunity is needed as well, military solutions or economic incentives aimed at defeating the physical contextual opportunities that give rise to violent extremism are doomed to short-lived success and are bound to be trapped in an ongoing cycle of escalating violence if root ideologies are not also addressed. While this is certainly an ambitious undertaking, it is of critical importance to begin to take creative and proactive measures in this direction to better understand global threats and the environments in which they exist.

Methodology

This thesis seeks to address the question of whether it is accurate and useful to label groups like ISIS as terrorist organisations, and study as well as counter them based on this categorisation and the resultant analytical frameworks. As was stated in the introduction, to answer this question an in depth case study of ISIS will be utilised which will attempt to understand the group as it views itself, and explore its aspirations and justifications against its own reference points and in the context in which it exists both culturally and geopolitically. To adequately conduct this investigation, the methodology chosen must reflect both the complexity and depth of the subject under scrutiny, as well as the underlying ambitions inherent in the research question, and therefore this thesis will employ genealogy as its primary research tool.

Genealogy as it is currently used traces its origins to Michel Foucault, who used it to produce 'political histories of truth' and demonstrate the inseparability of power and knowledge based on previous arguments by Friedrich Nietzche that reality had no singular ontological status and that genealogical inquiry should be used to produce historical-philosophical accounts of how specific realities came into existence.[11] Foucault described genealogy as a history of the present that intended to demonstrate the contingency of said present against a backdrop of various historical narratives and socio-political trajectories that embodied distinct understandings of the use, formulation, and function of power.[12] To produce these political histories of truth, genealogy as a research tool focuses on uncovering

[11] Vucetic, Srdjan, "Genealogy as a research tool in International Relations", *Review of International Studies* 37 (2010), 1295-1312, 1295.
[12] Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* Alan Sheridan (trans) (New York: Vintage, 1979), 27.

accurate problematisations of socio-political phenomena as a preparatory mechanism for normative intervention. Foucault argued that the purpose of genealogical inquiry was not to scrutinise behaviour, but to make problems themselves active and expose their complexity in order to connect them to the experiences of individuals. He further argued that by examining social phenomena in such a way, through "difficult cases, movements of rebellion, reflections, and testimonies, the legitimacy of a common creative action can also appear."[13] In this sense, a genealogical study is one which employs an in depth cultural critique to produce a historical account, justified by relevant social and political evidence, and seeks to uncover how a certain social phenomenon became a problem, and simultaneously questions the manner in which that phenomenon should be studied.[14]

To accomplish this, Foucault argued for the necessity of reversing certain analytical progressions in that he believed that deducing concrete phenomena and their intelligibility from a consensus regarding universal statements was inferior to beginning with a scrutiny of collective practices in context, and then analysing the validity of universals against the meaning of the aforementioned practices.[15] As it relates to the objectives of the above stated research question, this thesis will strive to analyse ISIS collective practices and cultural contexts that inform them, to then retroactively pass universals in the form of prominent Western definitions and frameworks for terrorism through the intellectual grid formed by these practices and their significance. This juxtaposition is necessary insofar as genealogy is a political-ethical critique of values in that it holds that there is no universal truth, but a scientific one that recognises cultural domains in which specific regimes of truth are made and validated.[16] In the context of the ongoing global war on terror, a genealogical study of ISIS may prove valuable in that religious terrorism is a term charged with political and ethical connotations stemming from diametrically opposed cultural contexts.

As a research tool, genealogy uses episodes, examples and effectiveness to deconstruct the origins of social problems to better comprehend their origins and significance. While no

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[13] Foucault, Michel, "An Interview with Michel Foucault", in Faubion, James D. (ed) and Robert Hurley (trans), *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (New York: New Press, 2001), 288.
[14] For the uses of genealogy and its applicability to the social sciences, see Koopman, Colin, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013).
[15] Senellart, Michel, Francois Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Arnold I. Davidson (eds), and Graham Burchell (trans), *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979* (New York: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[16] Vucetic, 1298.

concrete rules exist for the selection of episodes and examples, they form the basis for case studies, and should be concrete and relevant to the overall analysis and utilise a comparative method due to the fact that the objective of genealogy itself is to "demonstrate the diversity and specificity of battles between different interpretations of social items".[17] In this regard, effective genealogies will be those that try to discover how a specific social problem, which came to be understood as relatively normal and definable, came into existence in light of specific contingencies and dynamics of power, and how it was constructed as a social reality. Put succinctly, effective genealogies rely on relevant episodes and examples to intervene in the past in order to diagnose the present.[18]

Foucault envisioned his genealogical methodology and collection of works as comprising a toolbox, from which researchers could draw in order to apply to specific areas of interest.[19] He perceived the concept of discourse as unifying this toolbox, and discourse in this regard is any practice through which individuals give meaning to their immediate reality and existence through the form of a collective consciousness embedded in and created by human language.[20] Thus understood, discourse should be evaluated as a practice of power and knowledge rather than simply language in use, thereby focusing on the agency and interactive roles of individuals who produce and experience the discourse in question. The importance of discourse within the goals of an effective genealogy lies in its ability to constitute subjects of study, insofar as it is a powerful mechanism for rewarding or punishing "ideas, institutions, and practices that are congruent/deviant with the pre-set political boundaries of inclusion/exclusion."[21] Furthermore, discourse creates meaning in that it is by nature cumulative, given that new narratives that result from specific socio-political environments may build on pre-existing discourse in order to impose upon and transform old meanings. In this regard, and due to the fact that discourse is a social construction of meaning and reality that implies specific expectations for future courses of action, it is open to multiple

[17] Vucetic, 1301.
[18] Kendall, Gavin and Gary Wickham, *Using Foucault's Methods* (New York: Sage Publications, 2015), 4.
[19] Gutting, Gary, *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 112-113.
[20] This position is also the foundation for discourse analysis from the vantage point of the sociology of knowledge. See Ruiz Ruiz, Jorge, "Sociological Discourse Analysis: Methods and Logic", *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 10:2 (2009), doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-10.2.1298 (Accessed 23 June 2020)
[21] Vucetic, 1300.

contestations and critiques from the vantage points of disparate actors who will be affected by any future course of action.[22]

This thesis will strive to produce a genealogical study of ISIS in order to provide a deeper understanding of the construction of ISIS and the global, regional, as well as intellectual context in which it emerged and exists. It will do so to reconcile the Weberian institutionalism prevalent in the current discourses of counterterrorism with the political construction of different subjective realities, as well as their repercussions and significance.[23] This approach is relatively new in the study of critical subjects such as terrorism, but perhaps first gained mainstream attention in 1987 with the work of James Der Derian.[24] Der Derian used a genealogical approach to test the hypothesis that many tactics of Western diplomacy originated to mediate alienation, and he did so by utilising paradigms attributed to Marx and Hegel to deconstruct historical narratives and demonstrate that practices which were initiated towards non-diplomatic problems gradually became co-opted for diplomatic purposes when relationships with a socially constructed 'other' became problematic.[25] In 1995, Jens Bartelson used genealogy to explore the social construction of sovereignty in order to raise questions related to assumptions of universality of the status of normalcy in global politics and international relations. He concluded that sovereignty should be conceived of as contingent upon the complex history of political science; not fundamentally universal to it.[26] In 2018, Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson produced a genealogical study of terrorism itself, and through historical analysis which explored the symbiotic relationship between the birth of the modern nation state and terrorism, deconstructed the term to articulate the position that it is a mode of

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[22] For the construction of reality through discourse and its ontological contestation, see Joseph, Jonathan and John Michael Roberts, "Introduction", Roberts, John Michael and Jonathan Joseph (eds), *Realism, Discourse and Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-19.

[23] Institutionalism in this sense can be described as the study of "who gets what", and was largely rejected by Foucault for its narrow understanding of the dimensions of power. See Flyvberg, Brent, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it can Succeed Again* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 117.
For the methodological reconciliation, see Hay, Colin, "Constructivist Institutionalism", Rhodes, Sarah Binder and Bert Rockman (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 56-75.

[24] See Der Derian, James, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987).

[25] Warren, Mark, "*On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement.* By James Der Derian*", The Journal of Politics* 51:1 (February 1989), 208-211.

[26] Bartelson, Jens, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

social defence that can be appropriated and wielded subjectively on behalf of factions within a contested power dynamic.[27]

The goal of this thesis is not necessarily the exploration of causal mechanisms that lead to manifestations of terrorism, rather it is the discovery of the ways in which individual and collective subjects and worldviews are constituted via the dynamics of the power/knowledge continuum. While substantial academic investigation has been devoted to explaining the root causes of terrorism, this thesis will attempt to account for distinct manifestations of violence in historically specific structures and processes, and the meanings behind them, in order to answer the research question regarding whether ISIS should be considered a terrorist organisation.[28] Furthermore, this thesis will utilise the same vantage points to reconsider the universality of what constitutes terrorism both in its current political usage and as a fluid concept that exists in the nexus of the power/knowledge relationship.

ISIS is simultaneously a religious and revolutionary political entity, and this blended existence intellectually challenges platforms for mediation and prevention which are founded on the separation of religious belief and political action that underlies hegemonic international structures. As a methodology, genealogy accounts for historical disjuncture and transformations that can be religious, social, political, and ethical, and the ways in which these experiences shape individual and group experiences and worldviews. This type of holistic genealogical approach that seeks to both explain and understand has yet to be applied to a case study of ISIS, and will be beneficial in that the political and ethical analysis that must necessarily follow can be grounded in novel conceptualisation of how actors invest their world with meaning in such a way that dictates complicated world relationships.[29] Although genealogy has not been widely used for this type of study, its ability to analyse multiple overlapping narratives simultaneously; religious, historical, ontological, epistemological, and ethical; makes it a powerful tool to attempt to answer the research question posed in the introduction to this thesis.

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[27] Erlenbusch-Anderson, Verena, *Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Violence, Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).
[28] For a collection of essays on this subject, see Bjørgo, Tore (ed), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, reality and ways forward* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[29] Vucetic, 312.

Structure

The research question this thesis will attempt to answer is complex. It grapples both with the applicability of frameworks for conceptualising and countering terrorism in a state-centric geopolitical environment, and a subject of inquiry, ISIS, that defies categorisations which are inherent in that same environment. It is religious, it is political, and it is violent in manners commensurate with tactical and transcendent aspirations simultaneously. It is also unique in that it embodies diverse socio-political trajectories which inform its worldview, narrative, and potential for endurance. Understanding ISIS, and subsequently using this understanding to reach a conclusion regarding the applicability of current frameworks for studying terrorism, requires employing the genealogical method outlined previously, and therefore this thesis will be structured to achieve the aims set out. The structure will reflect a holistic approach, beginning with fundamental human social constructs and dynamics, in order to incorporate these into an analysis of ISIS in a manner that reflects the genealogical method of problematisation. Each chapter of this thesis will therefore build on previous ones to reach a culminating argument.

Chapter 1 will outline current definitions of terrorism in use in academia and policy to demonstrate the lack of consensus regarding precisely what terrorism is, and it will further elaborate specific frameworks for approaching terrorism studies that were developed after 9/11. In this regard, this chapter will concurrently serve as a literature review of the field of terrorism studies. Chapter 2 will discuss social groups, the ways they form and behave, and the reasons individuals join social groups. This chapter will explore the competitive dynamic between groups for survival, the relationship between groups and individuals, and will present sociological paradigms which will be crucial in prosecuting the ISIS case study. Chapter 3 will introduce religion, and will explore it as a deliberately created concept linked to political development which fulfilled tangible social requirements, and individual needs for significance. It will also present the birth of monotheism as a radical departure from existing religious practices, in a manner that reflected competitive social group dynamics. This discussion of religion as a human construct linked to social aspirations and political structures is necessary in order to later comprehend the power of religious framing employed by ISIS. Chapter 4 will analyse violence, its philosophical justifications, and the fact that in a social context, violence is not meaningless. It will approach violence as a powerful tool to convey significance, aspirations, and frustrations, and will analyse the ways in which both religion and

violence fulfil many of the same functions in a socio-political context. Chapter 5 will constitute the climax of the previous three, and will discuss the ways that religion and violence interact, rely on each other, and have been wielded in tandem in the context of social group dynamics.

Chapter 6 will narrate the birth of Islam from the vantage point of competitive social dynamics that was previously elaborated. It will discuss the socio-political and cultural conditions that were experienced by members of Muhammad's community, and how these led to specific theological doctrines regarding violence and relationships with the 'other'. These formulations remain central in ISIS worldview construction, so understanding their genesis as the result of contemporary circumstance which was framed as transcendentally applicable is crucial to the genealogical study of ISIS. Chapter 7 will commence with a discussion of the emergence of Salafism in the modern period, and will progress to briefly analyse defensive modernisation in the Middle East, and the inception of political Islam. It will then recount the radical transformations that took place within Salafi-jihadism in the 1960s and during the Afghan Soviet war. In this context, it will also discuss the creation of al-Qaeda, and its role in the jihadist community prior to 9/11.

Chapter 8 will build on the groundwork created in the discussion of Chapters 6 and 7 to recount the U.S. led war in Iraq. It will deliberate on the justifications for violence used by Western actors and jihadists to demarcate both differences and similarities. It will also identify emerging cleavages within jihadism that U.S. strategic policy failed to recognise during the course of the war, and will scrutinise the competing aspirations within jihadism that were intellectually pursued in Iraq. Chapter 9 will focus on ISIS re-emergence following the Iraq war, and will analyse the sociological significance of events triggered by the Arab Spring. It will explore the nuances in intellectual thought within jihadism and the factors which ISIS capitalised on during the Syrian civil war. Chapter 10 will begin with the declaration of the ISIS caliphate, and will devote significant attention to the group's self-portrayal, aspirations, and justifications. By engaging in discourse analysis from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, which seeks to understand the very production of thought in its socio-historical setting to grasp its dissemination and impact on individual thought and action, this section will

explore ISIS according to its own reference points.[30] It will also juxtapose this with references to counterpoints offered from within Islam that dismissed ISIS justifications, and also with the way ISIS was perceived and countered by a Western coalition in order to demonstrate the disconnect between the somatic reality created by ISIS and the manner in which it was confronted.

Chapter 11 will revisit Chapter 1 in that it will insert the ISIS case study into the definitions and frameworks provided in the latter to argue that ISIS does not fit any of prominent models currently in use for understanding terrorism. It will also argue that these frameworks inform policy decisions, and that successful policy in the future therefore depends on successfully understanding ISIS, its legacy, and its potential, outside of the frameworks. The conclusion chapter will constitute the culmination of the thesis. It will offer new ways to conceive of terrorism which require viewing it as a fluid tool for social construction, and not a definable pattern of political violence which exists in opposition to the crystallisation of the Western Nation State. It will discuss the symbiotic emergence of terrorism as both a tactic and rhetorical tool in the French Revolution that accompanied the birth of the Nation State, and will argue for understanding terrorism and socio-political construction as fluid components of a constantly evolving cultural landscape. With this foundation, the conclusion will answer the research question posed in the introduction, and offer propositions as to why the answer may prove useful in the future study of terrorism and political violence.

[30] For more on this perspective and its utility, see Schutz, Alfred, "Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World", in Broderson, A. (ed), *Collected Papers. Vol II: Studies in Social Theory* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 226-273.

Chapter 1

Terrorism in Contemporary Geopolitics

Since before September 11 2001, international terrorism has been described as an existential threat to national sovereignty, global security, and human rights.[31] Despite the danger it poses and the staunch positions advocated by governments to combat it, terrorism continues to defy definitional parameters, and in the absence of a singular definition, policies intended to counteract it lack ideational fortitude. This chapter will present the dominant ways of conceptualising terrorism in the field of study, and identify the problems and questions inherent in dealing with the subject matter. It will progress to summarise the generalised theory that attempts to group terrorist organisations categorically, temporally, and ideologically, as well as scholarly contributions that have been made to build on and also question this theory. This chapter will culminate with an appraisal of the current methods and efforts to place ISIS within these dominant models, and evaluate their effectiveness. It will conclude with a paradigmatic alternative to the study of ISIS as a violent religious social group to enable a deeper understanding of it as an enduring actor in contemporary geopolitics.

1.1 Terrorism (un) Defined

Before 9/11 the field of terrorism studies was comprised of a small but committed, resilient, and diverse group of scholars. In their seminal 1988 work, Schmid and Jongman identified only 32 researchers devoted to the active production of knowledge related to terrorism. Furthermore, in this same study, the authors compiled 100 definitions of terrorism yet found none of them independently adequate.[32] 9/11 brought terrorism to the forefront of Western agendas, and transformed it from a distant threat that happens "over there" to a critical danger that can happen "over here".[33] Academics from diverse backgrounds began

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[31] Crelinsten, Ronald D., "Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in a Multi-Centric World: Challenges and Opportunities", In Taylor, Max and John Horgan (Eds) *The Future of Terrorism,* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 170-196.

[32] Schmid, Alex Peter, A.J. Jongman, and Michael Stohl, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories & Literature* (New York: Transaction Books, 1998), Chapters 1-2.

[33] United States Congress, *The 9/11 Commission Report,* 362. https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf (Accessed 2 October 2019)

applying their distinct methodologies to the scrutiny of terrorism in efforts to define, understand, and confront the phenomenon. Despite, or perhaps fueled by this convergence, there is no consensus regarding a precise definition of terrorism. The distinguished historian and scholar of political violence Walter Laqueur proposed that a definition of terrorism may not be necessary for policy-makers to adequately address it,[34] and Gilbert Ramsay argued that a unified concept of terrorism would ultimately prove un-useful insofar as the phenomenon itself is a social construct.[35] Definitional quandaries are compounded by the fact that different interested actors define terrorism in accordance with their biased objectives.[36] Demonstrative of this fact is the following: "After the attacks of 9/11, the United Nations Security Council approved motions condemning terrorism and delimiting the fight against it, and also created a list of organizations and individuals related to terrorism without establishing any definition. (…) made it possible for a state to legitimize their list of organizations to be targeted."[37] Terrorist organisations in a geopolitical context dominated by Westphalian states, therefore, are understood primarily by contemplating their aims relative to interests of the state.[38]

The above notwithstanding, certain distinguishing elements of terrorism have been generally agreed upon to facilitate academic study and counterterrorism policy. Terrorism, according to Louise Richardson, "simply means deliberately and violently targeting civilians for political purposes"[39], and she established that it has seven crucial characteristics that distinguish it from other types of political violence.[40] Paul Wilkinson built on this by arguing that "It is used to create and exploit a climate of fear amongst a wider target group than the immediate victims of the violence, and to publicise a cause as well as to coerce a target to

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[34] Hoffman, Bruce, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 33.
[35] Ramsay, Gilbert, "Why terrorism can, but should not be defined", *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8:2 (2015), 211-228.
[36] Legal experts for instance will define terrorism with the objective of enabling the prosecution of acts of terrorism, whereas social scientists will tend to define it with the objective of understanding it as a complex phenomenon. See Petta, De Leon, "Why there is no real difference between a Terrorist Organization and an Organized Crime faction, just a matter of interaction towards the state", *Contemporary Voices: St. Andrews Journal of International Relations* 1:1 (2008), 26-35.
[37] Petta, 27.
[38] Khan, Ali, "A Theory of International Terrorism", *Connecticut Law Review* 19 (1987), 945.
[39] Richardson, Louise, *What Terrorists Want; Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat,* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2006), 4.
[40] According to Richardson, terrorism must be politically inspired and involve the use or threat of violence. Its point is not to defeat but send a message to the enemy through an act that has symbolic significance. It is solely the act of non-state actors, the victims are not the same as the target audience, and as a tactic it deliberately targets civilians.

acceding to the terrorists' aims".[41] In the context of understanding terrorism in contrast to the state, as well as its emotional appeal, Charles Townshend defined it as "a distinctive form of modern political agency, intended to threaten the ability of the state to ensure the security of its members-and thus its claim to legitimacy" and that it "resolves the discrepancy between actual destructive power and desired political effect by an almost mystical belief in the transformative power of violence".[42] For political purposes, in 2006 the US State Department applied the label of 'terrorist organisation' to any group that engages in "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets".[43]

These definitions can be useful in that they provide ways of conceptualising terrorism as a unique strain of political violence. They present terrorism as a method used by aggrieved actors to contest the legitimacy and relative roles of governing institutions in society, but this framing assumes a socio-political status quo in which legitimate governance is the domain of secular entities. They reflect a heritage in which violence performed by groups that do not belong to the apparatus of the state developed as a way to assert individual and community agency in the quest for representation, and the recognition of deeply held values. The assumptions inherent in Western definitions of terrorism do not render them useless, but they are important to consider when applying them to groups or organisations that may not share the same cultural and political heritage.

Terrorism is fundamentally a group phenomenon that evolves because groups within society and power dynamics are constantly in flux, so it is necessary to complement the above definitions with that of Roger Griffin, who argued that terrorism is "the deliberate use by a movement, group, or individual of extreme violence against either human or symbolically significant material targets associated by the perpetrators with a demonised 'Other'".[44] This definition suggests that terrorism is both a vehicle for radical change carried out against dominant political power structures, and the meaningful performance of violence linked to the maintenance of a culturally constructed communal identity. In this regard, "we should resist an approach which isolates terrorism from the rest of the political and social world: 'terrorism studies', properly conceived, should involve a rooting of explanation within the wider,

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[41] Wilkinson, Paul, *Terrorism Versus Democracy; The Liberal State Response* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 17.
[42] Townshend, Charles, *Terrorism; A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3 & 15.
[43] Abrahms, Max, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work", *International Security* 31:2 (2006), 42-78, 55.
[44] Griffin, Roger, *Terrorist's Creed; Fanatical Violence and the Human Need for Meaning* (New York: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11.

interconnected realities of political and social life."[45] Closely related to this, it is worth observing that terrorism in Islam can be defined as any violent act which contravenes the shari'a.[46] Islamism conceives of the shari'a as the means by which to implement and regulate divine prescriptions for worldly governance, and thus both the Western and Islamic definitions of terrorism conceive of it as violence which challenges legitimate political authority. The differences are entirely due to the different cultural heritages that produced them, and concern the sources of said political legitimacy; civilians as a body politic in the Western tradition and Allah in the Islamic tradition, as well as the form that ideal governance should take. These similarities and differences are important because it is crucial to recognize that different engaged actors will rationalise their actions and aims differently. While these may seem potentially contradictory, they must be understood as equally valid to those articulating them.

Due to the lack of definitional consensus, as well as the necessary overlap between academics and policy makers in the realm of terrorism studies,[47] while since 9/11 an increased effort has been placed on uncovering the motivations of terrorism, the conditions which facilitate its emergence, its relative effectiveness, and the factors contributing to its cessation, a similar lack of agreement has been reached in these ventures.[48] Nevertheless, the persistence of terrorism has resulted in the formation of distinct frameworks for understanding and generalising the phenomenon. One of the most prominent of these, as well as its alternatives, will be surveyed.

1.2 Rapoport's Four Waves

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it has been used as a deliberate tactic to alter political realities since antiquity.[49] Notwithstanding, the events of 9/11 altered the scope,

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[45] English, Richard, *Terrorism; How to Respond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53.
[46] Venkatraman, Amritha, "Religious Basis for Islamic Terrorism: The Quran and its Interpretations", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30:3 (2007), 229-248, 235.
[47] Sageman.
[48] For a holistic evaluation of psychology, politics, economics, religion, and culture as independent motivators of terrorism, see *Addressing the Causes of Terrorism 1*, International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, Club de Madrid, 8-11 March 2005. Articles were provided by preeminent scholars of terrorism Jorrold M. Post, Martha Crenshaw, Ted Robert Gurr, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jessica Stein. http://www.clubmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Volume-I.pdf (Accessed 23 June 2020)
[49] For two examples see: Horsley, R. A., "The Sicarii: Ancient Jewish 'Terrorists', *The Journal of Religion* 59:4 (October 1979), 435-458.
Lewis, Bernard, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Basic Books, 1967).

visibility, and potential for terrorism in novel ways, and in light of this efforts were undertaken to attempt to explicate and hopefully predict terrorism patterns. One of the most notable of these is the theory postulated by political scientist David C. Rapoport, who argued that modern terrorism has occurred in four waves, and the world is currently experiencing the fourth wave which is characterised by religious terrorism.[50] The intricacies and extended commentaries concerning this theory are beyond the scope of this thesis, but for the present purposes, the theory will be summarised.

Rapoport argued that terrorism in the modern era can be divided into four waves, each lasting approximately 40 years and corresponding with the human life cycle, suggesting that aspirations of one generation do not translate to the next due to changing political and cultural circumstances. He did not attempt to uncover root causes of terrorism, but instead posited that each individual wave was precipitated by very specific and monumental events which altered social perceptions and enabled terrorism to develop internationally beyond specific cultural confines. He further identified four common components that defined each wave: time (the abovementioned 40 year generational span, which is comprised of a beginning, high point, and end), space (while the geographic epicentre of each wave is unique, the geographies of various waves overlap), participating units (multiple small groups who's individual lifecycles are shorter than the wave as a whole), and purpose or hope (the idea that a wave is generated by hope which is encapsulated in a specific event). Finally, Rapoport asserted that revolution was the overriding aim in every wave, but that it was understood differently in each.

The first wave according to Rapoport was the anarchist wave, which began in Russia in the 1880s. It was characterised by targeted assassinations, and its hallmark was the use of newly invented dynamite. Anarchist doctrine was comprised of 4 major points: That modern society is full of ambivalence and hostility, it devises artificial moral conventions to generate social guilt and humiliation, tactics utilised in the present that may be viewed as immoral will be perceived as noble and liberating in retrospect by future generations, and that terror is the quickest and most effective way to destroy restrictive social conventions. The use of dynamite and assassinations was perceived as the only way to effectively communicate a message of social revolution, and the first wave can be described as embodying the notion of 'propaganda

[50] Rapoport, David C., "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11", *Anthropoetics VIII* 1 (Spring / Summer 2002). http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0801/terror/ (Accessed 20 September 2019).

by the deed'.[51] This idea was first articulated in 1877, in an article by the same name written by Paul Brousse with the support of Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin, and argued that conventional forms of propaganda were unable to adequately reach and rally the masses to effect necessary radical social change, and should thus be supplemented by violent action.[52] This violent propaganda, in turn, was facilitated by the advent of mass international communication which was able to rapidly and effectively disseminate news of both anarchist ideology and actions. The first group to embody propaganda by the deed was the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), and it "created a doctrine of strategy for terror, and inheritance for successors to use, improve, and transmit."[53] Crucial to cementing this doctrine was Nechaev's *Revolutionary Catechism*, which outlined not only the purpose of violence conducted outside of the scope of moral conventions regulating its use, but also framed the actions of revolutionaries as duties carried out in accordance with relations to the self, fellow revolutionaries, and society at large; both the corrupt society which was the object of struggle and the ideal one which would be realised in revolution.[54] A final important note on the first wave is the fact that those who were empowered by propaganda by the deed considered themselves proud to be terrorists. In one famous instance, Russian anarchist Vera Zasulich wounded a police officer who had abused political prisoners. She threw her weapon to the ground and declared that she was not a killer; she was a terrorist.[55] Her trial quickly became an indictment of the Czarist regime and its abuses, and when she was freed, Zasulich was heralded as a popular hero.

The second wave was precipitated by the treaty of Versailles, which ignited the hope for self-determination in the form of anti-colonial terrorism.[56] Mandate status was applied to territories in which independence was not seen as being immediately feasible, and this was perceived as an abuse of colonial power and incongruent with principles of self-determination. The legitimacy of empire was questioned, and according to Rapoport terrorist groups emerged in all imperial domains to contest subjugation. Tactically, the second wave differed from the

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[51] Fleming, Marie, "Propaganda by the deed: Terrorism and anarchist theory in late nineteenth-century Europe", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 4 (1980), 1-23.
[52] Fleming, 4.
[53] See Rapoport.
[54] See Nechayev, Sergey Genadievich. *The Revolutionary Catechism.* https://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/nechayev/catechism.htm (Accessed 23 June 2020).
[55] Ulam, Adam B., *In The Name of the People* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 269.
[56] See Rapoport.

first and it reoriented away from high profile assassinations towards the systematic targeting of police and enforcement personnel who were the eyes and ears of imperial entities abroad, as well as their institutions. Through the debilitation of colonial infrastructure, this was intended to simultaneously weaken the morale of imperial populations while fortifying the resolve of subject peoples by forcing imperial forces to commit atrocities in response to acts of terrorism.[57] Guerrilla tactics became a mainstay of second wave terrorism, and two important changes took place. First, the causes of terrorists became more legitimate in the eyes of international observers in that they were framed as struggles for the same rights of self-determination as those afforded to other peoples in former imperial territories.[58] Second, terrorists began referring to themselves as freedom fighters as opposed to first wave terrorists, and as such, "governments (…) began to describe all violent rebels as terrorists."[59] This terminological reconfiguration symbolically attempted to legitimise the state's defence of its interests, inside or beyond its sovereign borders, and established the ability to classify any organisation that pursued aims in conflict with those of the state as illegitimate and criminal, regardless of their individual motivations or aspirations.

The third wave, terrorism of the new-left, began after the catalyst of the Vietnam War. The idea that a Western superpower could be defeated by guerrilla insurgencies resonated worldwide, and this was combined with the fact that the legitimacy of national Western political agendas were being increasingly questioned by domestic, especially younger, populations.[60] In the third wave, radicalism was combined with nationalism that was the natural evolution of the drive for self-determination that had characterised the previous wave, and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation became emblematic of the new left. In its terrorist assaults on Israeli interests, which were framed as proxies of American hegemony, the PLO succeeded in public perception where Arab armies had failed in the 1960s and 1970s, and thus "its very existence was a statement that terror offered more hope than conventional military forces."[61] This point is important because it conceptually built on the framing that had occurred in the second wave that pitted states against any opposing actor branded a terrorist.

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[57] See Rapoport.
[58] For a discussion on the debate regarding framing between terrorists and freedom fighters, see Ganor, Boaz, "Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?", *Police Practice and Research* 3:4 (2002), 287-304.
[59] See Rapoport.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

The third wave provided the ability for terrorist organisations to intellectually claim to pursue notions of self-perceived legitimate statehood and self-determination without adhering to conventional Westphalian models that dictated what a state should look like and how it should behave. In this wave, international terrorism as a term was revived and terrorist organisations increasingly relied on international diasporas of supporters. Hijacking became the weapon of choice, demonstrating a penchant for spectacular acts which, due to increased broadcasting of international news, could be replayed on screens around the globe.[62] Finally, the third wave saw an increase in international counterterror cooperation as states began to recognise the transnational capabilities and aspirations of terrorist organisations.

The fourth wave, characterised by religious violence, was catapulted and enabled by two key events, both of which took place in 1979. These were the Iranian Revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Importantly, 1979 was the beginning of a new Islamic century, a time at which in Islamic tradition a redeemer would arrive to revitalise the faith and restore Islamic prosperity.[63] According to Rapoport, the Iranian Revolution "provided proof that religion now had more political appeal than the prevailing revolutionary ethos", and despite the fact that the battlefield impact of Islamic *Mujahidin* was negligible in the ultimate defeat of the USSR, the totality of the Afghan war experience conveyed the idea that "religion now manifested the ability to eliminate a secular superpower."[64] For Rapoport, the fourth wave, defined by the hope of uniting the global Muslim umma in a Caliphate, is based on its drive to "strengthen Islamic rebel groups in various states of the Sunni world, an effort Americans help frustrate by supporting existing states organised on national lines, which many see as residues of collapsed colonial empires."[65] Fourth wave groups incorporated systematic use of suicide terrorism into their modus operandi, and ongoing technological improvements in social media and global broadcasting have enabled groups to reach a vast audience of both potential recruits and third party viewers.[66] Rapoport stated that the fourth wave, while being

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[62] Biernatzki, W.E., "Mass Media: Collaborators with Terrorists", *Communication Research Trends* 21:2 (2002), 3-42.

[63] This belief is attributed to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "The Messenger of God said, "At the beginning of every century God will send to this community one who will renew its religion." (Abu Da'ud)" See Eaton, Charles Le Gai, *The Book of Hadith; Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, from the Mishkat al-Masibah* (California: The Book Foundation, 2008), 12.

[64] See Rapoport.

[65] See Rapoport.

[66] For more on the relationship between terrorist groups, its audiences, and the media, see Conway, M. and McInerney, L. (eds), "Terrorism in 'old' and 'new' media", *Media, War & Conflict* 5:3 (Special Edition 2012), 3-5.

the most dangerous of the waves, will terminate in 2025.[67] Commensurate with his assessment that individual groups exhibit lifespans shorter than those of the waves, Rapoport wrote in 2002 that "at this writing, Al-Qaeda seems destroyed."[68]

1.3 Alternatives to the Waves

Rapoport's four wave theory remains seminal in terrorism studies, and is emblematic of the sociological method which attempts to generalise and categorise social phenomena based on similarities which transcend time and space.[69] Notwithstanding, Rapoport acknowledged that he did not intend for his work to be conclusive in the field; rather he envisioned it as a blueprint for future research.[70] One of the criticisms of the wave theory is that it does not account for the importance of local dynamics in catalysing terrorism.[71] Jeffrey Kaplan argued that when taken into consideration, local dynamics can produce terrorist groups which do not respond to unifying catalysts that would enable grouping them together, but rather these groups themselves become triggers for ongoing political violence. He posited considering these groups as unique and constituting a fifth wave of terrorism, and he enumerated 17 characteristics that they would share.[72] For the present discussion, the two most pertinent points of Kaplan's fifth wave theory are that they possess intrinsic self-awareness and knowledge of their own cultural history, and that their "guiding dream is to create a new world – a utopian society to be realised in this lifetime."[73] Kaplan's theory utilized the case studies of Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army and the Sudanese Janjaweed and predates the advent of ISIS, but his argument that a combination of localism and nationalism couched in culturally specific rhetoric can add dynamism to the wave theory and enable further paradigmatic studies of terrorism is valuable moving forward.

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[67] See Rapoport.
[68] See Rapoport.
[69] For a brief critique of generalisation, see Sanchez de Rojas Diaz, Emilio, *Are we Facing the Fifth International Terrorist Wave?*, Instituto Espanol de Estudios Estrategicos, 2016, http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2016/DIEEEA02-2016_Oleada_Terrorismo_Internacional_ESRD_ENGLISH.pdf (Accessed 23 June 2020)
[70] See Rosenfeld, Jean E. (ed), *Terrorism, Identity and Legitimacy: The Four Waves Theory and Political Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
[71] Kaplan, Jeffrey, *Terrorist Groups and the New Tribalism; Terrorism's Fifth Wave* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 45.
[72] Kaplan, 48-49.
[73] Kaplan, 1.

Similarly, in 2019 Honing and Yahel argued that the advent of Terrorist Semi-States (TSSs) in MENA and Pakistan could potentially constitute a distinct fifth wave of terrorism.[74] These authors stipulated that as opposed to regular terrorist organisations, TSSs displayed both conventional military and terrorist capabilities, provided state functions in areas of territorial administration, and while they governed in power vacuums created by weak or failed states, they continued to launch terrorist attacks against 3rd party countries.[75] The enabling condition for this wave was "the sense of Islamists especially in the Arab world that the political avenue for gaining power was effectively blocked."[76] While the authors stated that there can be no definite answer as to whether the behaviour of TSSs such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Jabhat al-Nusra, among others, are due to religious doctrine, they posited that they are primarily guided by the real-politik goal of expanding political power. Furthermore, they argued that it was unclear whether TSSs should be considered a distinct wave, or part of Rapoport's fourth, and that the territorial defeats of ISIS could be considered indicative of TSSs self-defeating proclivity to maintain commitment to a revisionist ideology despite changing circumstances.[77] Perhaps the most important detail of this speculative theory is that the authors predicted that TSSs would play a dominant role in the future of terrorism by "changing the nature of interactions between different terrorist groups."[78] This point is crucial, and as of this writing remains an understudied aspect in the field of terrorism studies.

The final alternative to Rapoport's wave theory, and the most comprehensive, is that provided by Parker and Sitter in 2016 which argued that terrorism should not be conceived of as occurring in temporal waves, rather that it should be viewed as a phenomenon which can occur within distinct strains, all of which exist conterminously.[79] The authors proposed four distinct strains: nationalism, socialism, religious extremism, and social exclusion. They argued that terms such as freedom fighter had been used well before the second and third waves, as evidenced by an 1853 pamphlet in which German revolutionary Karl Heinzen coined the term and became the first in the modern period to publicly "articulate the use of

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[74] Honing, Or and Ido Yahel, "A Fifth Wave of Terrorism? The Emergence of Terrorist Semi-States", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31:6 (2019), 1210-1228.
[75] Honing and Yahel, 1210-1214.
[76] Ibid, 1219.
[77] Ibid, 1215.
[78] Ibid, 1213.
[79] Parker, Tom and Nick Sitter, "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's not Waves, it's Strains", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28:2 (2016), 197-216.

violence, even mass murder, by individuals to effect political change."[80] Furthermore, they offered the idea that when terrorism is viewed as strains it becomes apparent that Al-Qaeda's ideological writings have more in common with core texts of communist insurgencies than with Islam itself.[81] The most important observation of this theory is that it rejected generalisations as dangerous, and instead relied on the perspective adopted by Jessica Stern, who used the term 'protean enemy' to refer to terrorism due to its constantly changing nature.[82]

1.4 Locating The Islamic State (ISIS)

ISIS proclaimed the formation of its Caliphate in June 2014,[83] and in the years since, the group has conducted and inspired atrocities worldwide that have captured global attention to the extent that enumerating them here is not necessary. The violent actions of the group towards fellow Muslims, and its rhetoric encouraging the slaughter of those who stand in the way of the Caliphate would tend to conform to the above definitions of terrorism in regards to both their political objectives and symbolic intention to harm a 'demonised other'. In the nearly two decades since 9/11, numerous studies have undertaken examinations of religious terrorism, Islamic terrorism in particular, and ISIS in detail; yet questions about the group, its underlying motives, and resilience endure.[84] Part of this may arise from the fact that ISIS does not seem to fit neatly into either Rapoport's fourth wave, or any of the delineated alternatives. The debates surrounding ISIS revolve around its status in comparison to Al-Qaeda, and attempt to discern what the group ultimately wants, and the degree to which it is, or isn't, 'Islamic'.[85] These debates build on each other and more often than not result in more

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[80] Ibid, 203.
[81] Ibid, 207.
[82] Stern, Jessica, "The Protean Enemy", *Foreign Affairs,* July/August 2003. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2003-07-01/protean-enemy (Accessed 7 October 2019).
[83] Vick.
[84] Works on these subjects are abundant, but for in depth analysis and bibliographies, see the following for religious terrorism: Gunning, Jeroen and Richard Jackson, "Whats so 'Religious" about 'Religious Terrorism'?", *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4:3 (December 2011), 369-388.
For Islamic terrorism see Wictorowicz, Quinton, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28:2 (February 2005), 75-97.
For ISIS see Alexander and Alexander.
[85] Wood, Graeme, "What ISIS Really Wants", *The Atlantic,* March 2015. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/ (Accessed 23 June

questions than answers, and this is compounded by the shifting nature of the subject of inquiry as encapsulated above in the idea of a protean enemy. Fundamental questions endure which reflect the sociological method of inquiry which seeks to discern the relationship between human agency and structure insofar as there exists friction between those who stipulate that political violence leads to violent readings of the Qurʹan in ISIS ideology, and those who assert that fundamental belief drives violent action.[86] Furthermore, creating a unified framework for understanding ISIS which must underlie any informed program for countering it is hindered in that "religion as a topic makes most Western scholars extremely uncomfortable: not only do they not understand the Islamic faith well, but also dwelling too much on religious ideology surely risks accusations of bigotry. So they negate religious ideology as a causal mechanism."[87]

ISIS is not a state in the Westphalian sense, and since its territorial demise at the hands of a military coalition can no longer claim to be a Caliphate in the strictest Islamic terms. It is not, however, a terrorist organisation as far as the term itself has been described and applied to categorical studies of organisations. Stating this is not a denial of its brutality, nor is it to say that the group has not conducted terrorist activities; it is, however, an assertion that ISIS is ideologically and physically unique in ways that have not been fully examined and evaluated. As was mentioned above, Honing and Yahel argued that the legacy of TSSs will be that they will shape the future of terrorism in their interactions with other organisations, and while ISIS has been studied in its relationship to Al-Qaeda, sufficient attention has not been devoted to uncovering the true meaning and implications behind the friction between the two groups in their struggle to claim vanguard status in a resurgent victorious umma.

In order to conceptualise ISIS, it is necessary to cautiously remove the label of terrorist organisation, and this has not yet fully taken place. The group must be removed from any categorisation which seeks to apply generalisations, and must be examined from its own cultural reference points. ISIS shares characteristics with groups from all four of the waves yet it seems to exist outside of them. It is the product of the convergence of numerous

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2020). This article received huge attention, and became the most read digital article of 2015. In a single day following the Charlie Hedbo attacks, it received over a million hits. It was appraised and re-evaluated two years later in the following: Cottee, Simon, ""What ISIS Really Wants" Revisited: Religion Matters in Jihadist Violence, But How?", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40:6 (2017), 439-454.

[86] Cottee, 442.

[87] Ross, Daveed Gartenstein. In Cottee, 448.

historical and intellectual trajectories and an analysis of its rhetoric, methodology, aspirations, and subsequent appeal against a backdrop of all of these has never been undertaken. While numerous works have explored the details of certain aspects of ISIS ideology, and juxtaposed them with similar instances in Islamic history, it is necessary to combine these with a consideration of the manner in which ISIS very fundamentally has acted and been shaped by intellectual mechanisms which informed the birth and endurance of the secular nation state. ISIS is a product of its environment insofar as it responded to local cultural dynamics, internal quarrels within Islamism, but also to the political reality dominated by Westphalian states. Upon evaluation, it will be seen that ISIS can potentially be better understood by removing the constrictive label of 'terrorist organisation' and by rationalising its aspirations and intellectual mechanisms against metrics in both Islamic history and, paradoxically, the very relationship between authority, sovereignty and violence which was crystallised in the modern state by the use of deliberate and systematic terror. As was noted above, definitions of terrorism and Rapoport's theory, as well as its alternatives, presuppose the sole legitimacy of violence as purview of the nation state. Locating ISIS as an actor both in the international geopolitical realm as well as within the jihadisphere of contemporary Islamic terrorism requires a scrutiny of it as an actor which does not simply seek to alter political realities through the application of violence, but as an entity which seeks to replace global hegemonic systems by both challenging and recreating the very means by which they came into existence. Beyond understanding it in this way, it will be useful to consider the salience of ISIS ideology and the implications it has for the future of terrorism and Islamic state building by viewing it from the perspective of social group dynamics, and the ways in which ideas like power, violence and transcendence evolve to shape group perceptions. By adopting this novel approach, perhaps a deeper understanding can contribute to more unified approaches to confronting such a dangerous phenomenon. This does not intend to dismiss the validity of Rapoport's theory, or any of its alternatives, or deny the tremendous contributions of scholars who have produced works on ISIS, Al-Qaeda, religious terrorism, and Islamism. It does, however, intend to broaden the discussion by considering aspects of the human social condition and accumulated intellectual and political heritage, and how these are capitalised on by ISIS, in ways that have not yet been explored, and which will hopefully contribute to existing frameworks.

Chapter 2

The Human Quest for Transcendence: Social Groups Dynamics

The term 'social group' does not necessarily invoke images of power, righteousness, or transcendence. However, if one were to ask randomly chosen individuals across different social, linguistic, and cultural settings what their highest aspirations were; or what they felt would constitute the noblest of purposes in life, chances are that a significant number of answers would include elements such as the desire to be a part of something larger than themselves. Answers like "doing something significant" or "contributing to a worthy cause" lack specific details as to what precise actions or causes the respondent considers 'significant' or 'worthy'. Precisely because they do, they demonstrate the underlying issue that conceptions of the highest ideals to which humans aspire revolve around concertedly linking the individual self to an entity or idea which has the ability to carry out actions subjectively considered to be of the highest moral standard, and which transcend the physical limitations of the individual.

To illuminate this subject, this section will first describe the processes by which social groups form, and continue to discuss their traits and characteristics. Next this section will explore the mechanisms social groups rely on for survival, and will conclude with an analysis of the relationship between the individual, the group, and subjective identity. The ISIS case study which is the subject of future chapters, and the effective answering of the research question based on Foucault's genealogical method relies on successfully problematising social phenomena. For this reason, the underlying fundamental dynamics of the human social condition must be explored, to then overlay them onto a scrutiny of the abovementioned case study, and contemporary frameworks for approaching terrorism.

2.1 Social Group Formation

A social group is a collective of people that are joined around a sense of sameness for a shared purpose.[88] Humans are by nature social beings, and social group dynamics have been

[88] Volkan, Vamik, "Large Group Identity: 'Us and Them' Polarizations in the International Arena", *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* 14:1 (2009), 4-15.

driving forces behind some of the most momentous transformations in world history. While the role of agency is important, it is the mutually reinforcing dynamic between individuals and their constructed groups which is critical to understand in the study of socio-political evolution.

Social groups form around the common acceptance of certain beliefs which inform patterns of behaviour and this occurs because as competitive social animals, human beings require both allies and enemies. In any arena there will never exist a homogeneity of beliefs, and so choosing to affiliate with one specific set of beliefs in contrast to another helps to alleviate the anxiety of social isolation, and establishes a degree of certainty within an otherwise uncertain social landscape. Cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker described social groups as marketplaces of cooperation between actors of varying degrees of trustworthiness, which form as the result of the fact that a natural preference for one's own kind develops early in life and is something which must be unlearned, rather than learned.[89] Jeffrey Murer posited that the practices that result from shared beliefs act as magnets to unaffiliated individuals that come within their range.[90] In this regard, if individuals are prone to gravitate towards others they perceive as being similar to themselves, then they will also gravitate towards the participation in practices that are representative of the characteristics that demarcate said similarities.

Social groups also form as the result of the intrinsic awareness of death. The realization that life is finite and existence therefore potentially insignificant leads to the need of individuals to associate their lives and actions with transcendent purpose. By doing so, humans are able to avoid what Roger Griffin called the "terror of an absurd death".[91] By voluntarily participating in acts of association with a set of shared beliefs, individuals can feel that they have contributed to the endurance of a set of principles which will outlive them and have thus assisted in maintaining a significant reality. Furthermore, by doing this, individuals reap both the tangible physical benefits of group protection in a competitive social space as well as the aforementioned spiritual ones. The power of a commonly held set of beliefs to

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[89] Pinker, Steven, *The Better Angels of Our Nature; A History of Violence and Humanity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 630.
[90] Murer, Jeffrey Stevenson, "Understanding Collective Violence: The Communicative and Performative Qualities of Violence in Acts of Belonging", in Bantekas, Ilias and Emmanuele Mylonaki (eds), *Criminological Approaches to International Criminal Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 297.
[91] Griffin, 26-27.

provide both this worldly and spiritual set of benefits was identified by Peter Berger in what he called the "Sacred Canopy".[92] Different groups in different cultural contexts may stress the importance of certain aspects of the sacred canopy over others. For some groups the promise of an eternal afterlife in paradise is central, while others may stress the physical benefits of membership. This dualistic benefit and the power of framing to encourage affiliation in ways that satisfy both fundamental human needs and contextually specific cultural problems is the primary reason that social groups form in response to specific social conditions or problems. The physical sheltering from social injustice offered by group membership and the transcendent promise that group beliefs will ultimately triumph over injustice makes a sacred canopy alluring.

2.2 Traits and Characteristics of Social Groups

Perhaps the most important characteristic of social groups is their ability to imbue reality with meaning. Meaning is not inferred by professing to hold certain beliefs, but is cultivated over time and woven into the very ways in which individuals view the world through socially produced and shared patterns of behaviour. Meaning is derivative of the function of an action in relation to the contemporary needs of the group in question, the relevance of that action to the historical trajectory of that group, and the degree to which it is reflective of methods portrayed as being legitimate tools for achieving certain goals deemed to be of critical importance to the group. One of the primary ways in which this is achieved is that groups deliberately create distinctions of 'us vs them'.[93] This can be understood as a necessary evolutionary paradigm in a competitive social space, so in this regard social groups are not only fundamentally interest groups in competition for resources, but ones which are highly self-aware of both their existence and their difference from others.[94] By default, these self-aware groups emerge out of contact with groups deemed 'other' and therefore constitute a mobilized collective identity.

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[92] Berger, Peter, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990). (First Published 1967).
[93] Bowman, G, "The Violence in Identity", in Schmidt, Bettina and Ingo Schroeder (eds), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 293.
[94] Eller, Jack David, *Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence; Religious Violence across Culture and History* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2010), 288.

Once the distinction between 'us and them' has been made, social groups have the ability and proclivity to not only dissociate from those deemed 'other' but also dehumanize them. This can be understood as a necessary step in affirming the superiority of the belief system around which the group had formed in the first place. Individuals will not willingly engage in acts of association that represent values systems that are at the core of a social group if they consider these to be questionable. Therefore, they must be framed as not only affirmative and relevant, but also as absolute. The belief and values system around which a group forms then becomes the foundation for a Manichean paradigm within which the values held by group members come to represent absolute truths and standards for belief and behaviour that transcend human barriers to observance. In this framing, individuals within the group are deemed to be enlightened and righteous while those outside of it are equated with the opposite of absolute truth: absolute evil and decadence. The reasoning behind this is that individuals within a society in which information is readily accessible, must have been aware of the presence of a group choosing to engage in communal activities that represent the observance of beliefs, which in turn are informed by absolute truths and values. Willingly choosing to not affiliate with these absolute truths and values, therefore, must be taken as an indication that the individual in question does not possess either the intellectual faculties or moral awareness to recognize universal values and choose to embrace them. In a mutually reinforcing cycle, the dehumanization of those deemed 'other' also serves to continuously elevate the perceived righteousness of the group itself. By consistently affirming the evil of 'the other' and conscientiously engaging in activity of differentiation, this activity is increasingly strengthened as morally superior due to both its representation of universal values and its ability to demonstrate the endurance of said values despite obstacles presented by the presence of evil.

Closely associated with the distinction that is created between 'us and them' is the characteristic of social groups to incorporate into their belief systems the memories of past victories and traumas. Social groups as upholders of a dualistic sacred canopy must necessarily straddle the divide between the tangible world and a transcendent reality, as evident in the need to associate worldly actions with a set of values portrayed as being universal and not bounded by time and space. The pioneer in psychoanalysis Carl Jung distinguished between "reality thinking" and "fantasy thinking";[95] and while he considered

[95] Jung, Carl, in Eller, 48.

this distinction to be evolutionarily non-productive and primitive, the need to reconcile that gap between the two lies at the foundation of the attempts of social groups to establish meaning and a desired social order. By incorporating memories of past victories and traumas, social groups link individuals with a series of values, and the lived experiences of past members. This creates a framework and timeline for causation, justification, and response which spans generations, and allows for individual group members in the present to carry out actions against members of the dehumanized 'other' as they may consider them to be representatives of their predecessors in a similar paradigm, even if those individual 'others' do not. Ultimately, the intellectual construction of an action as having direct bearing on events of the distant past, and therefore also occupying a place in a series of events to be called on by future generations, is what imbues that action with subjective transcendent meaning. By thus giving meaning to individual actions, the social reality in which those actions are carried out is transformed into a representative plane of existence in which larger battles are fought over the relative supremacy of a universal set of values at that given moment in time.

While these traits and characteristics will be observed and manifest differently by different groups, in different socio-cultural contexts, they become ingrained frames of reference for the conduct of everyday activities and subsequent political relationships. For instance, many Western democracies routinely conduct election monitoring in developing nations, make the distribution of economic aid conditional upon the observance of certain patterns of political conduct, or make public declarations imploring other states to adopt their own formulas for success. While Steven Pinker noted that the observance of democratic government itself did correlate with declines in cultural violence and the suffering of a population[96], it is important to note that in the scope of analysing the behaviour and interaction of social groups, one group's values are stipulated as being absolutely true. Despite the fact that models for social governance must develop organically, certain values of democratic governance and their accompanying social actions in this discussion are considered universally righteous and applicable across socio-cultural divides, and stand in stark contrast to those deemed 'other', therefore inferior. This example is intended to illustrate that even models of behaviour which are considered normal, mundane, and even benevolent or humanitarian in our nation-centric model of international geopolitics, demonstrate the

[96] Pinker, 68.

applicability of basic social group characteristics that elevate one set of beliefs and practices over another.

2.3 How Social Groups Survive and are Maintained

Social spaces are dynamic, fluid environments in which actors compete for relative influence. At any given time, certain actors may be more successful at asserting relative dominance, so social groups must recognize the need for malleability to face uncertain social realities. One of the core characteristics of groups is the need to distinguish between 'us' and 'them', and in this regard then a group is more readily defined by its boundary than by what that boundary encloses.[97] Groups must constantly be remade and reimagined to adjust to an evolving social space, and to do this it is the boundary that fluctuates in both its measure of inclusivity and rigidity of enforcement. This is not due to drastic changes in group values, but because the boundary demarcates those eligible to receive the benefits of membership and upholds pillars of differentiation. These two markers of group identity must be observed according to contemporary social needs to ensure the persistence of universal values into a cosmological future of perpetual applicability.

In order to achieve this, social groups must incorporate survival mechanisms both internally within the group, and vis-à-vis 'the other'. According to Sigmund Freud, there exist different types of social groups; those that are homogeneous or diverse, those that are primitive or structured, and those which are natural or artificial.[98] All social groups are artificial in the way Freud defined them, in that they require an external force to keep them together, and in Freud's paradigm, libidinal ties with both the external force and fellow members are the two cognitive mechanisms which ensure group survival.[99] He argued that the external force is an illusion of the presence of some higher power that cares about its community of followers, to which individuals must pledge absolute devotion. The recognition of the same pledge of obedience and adherence being upheld by others is what generates

[97] Bowman, 293.
[98] Freud, Sigmund, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego", 1922, in Laurence, Bruce B. and Aisha Karim (eds), *On Violence; A Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 228.
[99] Freud in Laurence, 230.

libidinal ties with fellow group members. In this regard, libidinal ties between members of social groups as framed by Freud are self-reinforcing group regulatory mechanisms.

Freud called them libidinal ties, but what is crucial is that the mutual understandings of both the relationships with sources of ultimate authority, framed as the fulfillment of values deemed true and universal, as well as those between individuals that recognize said authority, lie at the intellectual foundation of the survival of social groups. Finally, because the illusory external force is benevolent equally and only towards those who recognize its authority, social group members perceive themselves as instrumental in the performance of a plan which is understood as the fulfillment of universal and transcendent values, by upholding socio-political structures that govern norms of behaviour.

Social groups ensure their longevity by establishing institutions that have the ability to represent the transcendent values of their sacred canopies and guarantee tangible benefits to their members. In the approach adopted in this thesis, an institution is more than simply a governing body or identifiable organisation. It is instead a "Long lasting or permanent standardized set of beliefs, behaviors, and values, usually expressed in sets of roles and the relationships between these roles."[100] This can be thought of as a multi-tiered developmental process in which ideas are first theorized, then linked to values in a historical trajectory, and then used as the foundations for rules. This process can be repeated in the presence of changing external circumstances. As the first step in this process, social groups create ideologies. An ideology is best described as a "formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a "world-view"".[101] This definition, given by Raymond Williams in 1976 is emblematic of his attack on the structuralist approach to studying cultural interactions. He offered the idea instead of a "structure of feeling", and framed it as the foundation of social structure that is manifest in the lived experiences and interactions of members of a community.[102] An ideology, therefore, provides the intellectual groundwork for the establishment of rules that reflect an understanding of a group's perceived place in history, and the appropriate methods of expressing this through actions. This expression, in turn, is carried out in a symbolic system of communications which, according to

[100] Eller, 31.
[101] Williams, Raymond, "Keywords", 1976, in Lawrence and Karim, 183.
[102] Lawrence and Karim, 180.

Rene Girard, enables societal differentiation.[103] Furthermore, the expression of culture in its inception is itself a mechanism for differentiation from 'the other' which lies at the heart of social groups. It is valuable to understand here the role that creation myths have in informing this culture, as according to Girard, they reinterpret ongoing crises in light of the social order that has resulted from them.[104] This in turn is reflective of the social group characteristic that internalises past experiences in a cosmological narrative, and links them to the present and future in a series of communications unique to the social groups that produced the myths in question.

This process yields a cultural hegemony which constitutes a particular set of practices and expectations, regarding the appropriate roles and interactions both within and without the group. These practices and expectations are then articulated in a creed, and this is framed as the codification of the beliefs that inform, and justify, patterns of behaviour as the expressions of universally applicable values that result from access to undisputed truth. Creeds demonstrate the belief that the group articulating a set of values in text are doing so in recognition of, and to claim the observance of, universal truths. Following this, they express the solidarity that is to be achieved in perpetuity through the common recognition of, and respect for, an external force which generates universal values and bestows physical as well as transcendent benefits on its adherents. Finally, they outline patterns of behaviour to express this recognition in ways that can then be governed by overseeing organisations. They do this with the understanding that while the individuals that comprise the organisations may be transient, the organisations themselves will endure by virtue of the fact that they represent universally applicable truths and are therefore immune to the ravages of humanity.[105]

These creeds can be upheld in the structures of a nation state, a religious organization, a charity foundation, or a non-governmental organization. Furthermore, additional texts can

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[103] Stirling, Max C., "Violent Religion: Rene Girard's Theory of Culture", in Ellens, Harold J. (ed), *The Destructive Power of Religion; Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Volume 2; Religion, Psychology, and Violence* (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 23.

[104] Stirling, in Ellens, 33-39.

[105] For examples of ideological creeds encapsulated in discourse, see below. While ideologically these creeds are unique, they embody the parameters of the relationship between ideology, creed, and social groups that were outlined above:
King James Bible Online. https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/ (Accessed 12 December 2017).
Declaration of Independence: A Transcription. https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript *(*Accessed 12 December 2017).
Al-Qaeda's Creed and Path, in Meijer, Roel (ed), *Global Salafism; Islam's New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 51-56.

be produced by members of a social group to further establish rules of governance and interaction. By doing this over time, social groups may fracture over issues regarding disputes as to how the original group creed should be understood and implemented in behavioral practices. The poignant issue is the accusation that certain factions within the group failed to correctly observe the practices prescribed as the manifestation of a wholly righteous ideology. The crucial consideration here is the fact that social groups use ideology to establish a creed and follow on texts that both govern behaviour, and serve as the basis for future rules governing interactions within and without the group. Because this occurs due to understanding the original source of the ideology as access to universal truths, principles, and values, the institutions created in this progression are considered legitimate beyond worldly reproach. This progression is precisely how individuals and social groups put their actions into an active dialogue with the past, present, and future. By thinking of this multi-directional interaction of cause and effect as the way in which humans imbue any practice, or interpretation of reality with meaning, a comprehensive picture is formed of the discourse produced by any social group.

One final critical issue is that as it relates to a group's survival, a creed will be all encompassing and provide for an array of contingencies. If a group's survival depends on the recognition of its system of values and practices as supreme, then by default all other belief systems constitute an existential threat. When a group's worldview is presented as being under threat, specific aspects and mechanisms of a creed will be favoured and turned to in order to justify eliminating opposing worldviews. Ideological focus will shift from credal aspects that emphasize group benefits in a passive environment to those that serve to define and reinforce the group boundary to survive in a dangerous one. For groups to be able to survive in a dynamic and fluid social space in the present, the ideology, creed and institutions they create must incorporate mechanisms both of passivity and assertiveness.

2.4 The Relationship between Individuals, Groups, and Identity

The relationship between the group and individual identity is not a causal one, rather it is a mutually reinforcing cycle that shapes individual and collective identities to result in individual empowerment and group resilience. The theory of personal identity, exemplified by the works of Sheldon Stryker, focuses on what it is that makes each person unique as

defined by their personal experiences. The collective of these individuals in a demographic then produces a consensus of socio-cultural factors which affects social interaction and group dynamics. Role identity theory as elaborated by George J. McCall defines an individual's identity as the role played when holding certain social positions. Therefore, identity is relational because people in a group will interact based on their relative hierarchical positions both within and without the group. The theory of social identity, given primarily by Henri Tajfel, argues that a person's concept of self will be formed through the knowledge of his or her membership in a meaningful collective; and that through this identity individuals will simplify and understand the world by differentiating the meaningful group from 'the other'. Finally, the collective identity theory as pioneered by Alberto Melucci focuses on individuals in action. This is to say, that this theory holds that collective group consciousness and identity will be created through individual actions in the pursuit of a common agenda or goal.[106]

Given the above, theories of identity creation in a social sphere can be grouped into those focusing primarily on the individual as the prime mover in identity creation and social action, and those which give primacy to the group. These two schools of thought are now linked to the social scientists who first elaborated on them definitively. Sociologist Max Weber studied society through the modes of action of individuals and their accompanying behaviour. He believed that individuals were rational and that over time, they would devise means to accomplish certain ends and join together to do so in a logical course of action. Emile Durkheim, by contrast, studied social groups by emphasizing structure. He argued that humans draw their actions from the surroundings of their social groups and those of others, and that these groups are entities separate from the individual, which compel individuals to act in certain ways within their given parameters.[107] For Weber, therefore, society as the institutionalisation of social group beliefs exists solely as a function of human behaviour, whereas for Durkeim the opposite holds true. This discussion demonstrates that in the field of sociology there is no consensus as to the appropriate method with which to attempt to determine causality in the creation of identity and the social action subsequently produced. It also indicates that each of these theories exists because they have proven to have validity in

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[106] Androit, Angie and Timothy J. Owens, "Identity", *Oxford Bibliographies,* September 5 2014. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0025.xml (Accessed 4 January 2018).

[107] Durkheim, Emile, (Cladis, Mark S. (ed), Cosman, Carol (trans)), *The Elementary forms of Religious Life (1912)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

certain cases. This in turn means that each of these theories is useful insofar as they can be used not exclusively, but in conjunction with one another as appropriate in any case study to explore the roots of individual and group identity, and their relationship in creating social action in specific historical and cultural contexts.

Given this background it is possible to consider how it relates to the creation of meaning that lies at the core of human yearning. Peter Berger argued that individuals will make concerted efforts to create a sense of self that aligns with the core tenets of the group. Therefore, "The subjectively chosen identity becomes a fantasy identity, objectified within the individual's consciousness as his "real self"".[108] This results in a group absorbing subjectively created identities, and evolving over time as a whole constituted by the parts. While Roy Bhaskar countered this by arguing that humans and society are not related dialectically by constituting two moments of the same process,[109] it is precisely the symbiotic relationship between members and their social groups that provides both individual empowerment and group resilience. While social structures may have the power to *shape* human actions, free will dictates that these structures of group ideology may do so without *dictating* them. This in turn confirms the notion that both the theories of Weber and Durkheim must be considered in relation to one another. Finally, the link between individuals, the group, and their cosmological narrative was perhaps best summarized by Karl Mannheim when he stated that on a theoretical level, man never purely exists outside of the social context and his or her individual imagination. Furthermore, they can only exist by their actions and how these are perceived by others in the social group.[110] In this assertion we can see a fusion of all four of the theories of identity outlined above, while combining them with the power of human imagination in creating meaning through self-construction and interpretation.

When these actions are both carried out and interpreted through the lens of the ideology and creed of a social group; and mediated by both the textual narratives and institutions these produce, individuals will naturally gravitate towards those they feel a sense of 'sameness' with. The word *identity* itself is derived from Latin and refers to the recognition

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[108] Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality; A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 171.
[109] Bhaskar, Roy, *The Possibility of Naturalism* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).
[110] Mannheim, Karl (Louis Wirth, trans), *Ideology and Utopia; an Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (Connecticut: Martino Fine Books, 2015).

of 'same and same'.[111] In this regard, to possess an identity is in fact the discovery of one's intellectual, physical, emotional, or spiritual counterpart in some other individual or entity. Identity, therefore, is the result of a creed, ideology, and its structures being recognized by an individual as 'same and same' with the personal self. To defend or uphold an ideology, then, becomes in a very real sense, indistinguishable from defending or upholding the self and all that entails.

This process illustrates how the creation and mingling of identities yields both personal empowerment and group resilience. To expand on this point, the concepts of emergence and entativity are crucial to consider. Emergence is the "possibility that, when certain elements or parts stand in particular relation to one another, the whole that is formed has properties (…) that are not possessed by its constituent elements taken in isolation."[112] Similarly, entativity can be framed as an expansion of this, in that it is the consideration of something as original entity; abstracted from its attendant individuals. In the sense of social identity theory, it refers to the perception that a set of people form a meaningful entity.[113] When taken in conjunction, there exists then the paradigm that, when social groups form, they will possess traits and abilities that no single individual member is able to claim. Furthermore, this group can then be perceived by its members as a pure entity. When coupled with the recognition of 'same and same', a powerful bond emerges between the identity of the self and the collective. As was discussed previously in this chapter, social groups are by necessity dynamic which means that they cannot demand absolute compliance and rigidity of their individual members in perpetuity. Instead, groups must rely on contributions from individuals and by doing so, recognise the importance of the individual actor in question. When an individual feels that his or her actions contribute to a group's cause, said individual will increasingly associate with both the cause and the identity of the group.[114] When this is carried out on a large level, it empowers individuals and provides protection for the group. Individuals will be attracted to a creed, ideology, and its institutions, and be encouraged to demonstrate their commitment and act with agency in support of a cause greater than themselves. This simultaneously promotes the group interests and protects the sacred canopy because not only does it expand its

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[111] Murer, 290.
[112] Lewis, 210.
[113] Jans, Lise, Tom Postmes, and Karen I. Van Der Zee, "The Induction of Shared Identity: The Positive Role of Individual Distinctiveness for Groups", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37:2 (2011), 1130-1141.
[114] Jans et al., 1131.

membership base, but it also has had action taken on its behalf, demonstrating the legitimacy of its message in contrast to others insofar as it is able to mobilise active support. Whether the group stands or falls then depends on the resonance of the creed, and the relationship between the collective and individual identities.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has illustrated the processes through which social groups form, their traits and characteristics, and their strengths and vulnerabilities. It has also drawn on different aspects of social theory to shed light on the dynamic between individuals and the groups they choose to associate with to better grasp the allure group identity has, and the way this affects both notions of human empowerment and group resilience. Perhaps the most salient point is that paradoxically by associating with a group ideology and creed, individuals believe that they are able to choose their own fate and forge their own identity through action. This can be especially alluring in cultural contexts in which identity may be socially prescribed, binding, or even culturally humiliating. This newly forged identity may represent strength and certainty in an otherwise confusing social space, and will become a source of meaning to provide an explanatory framework for viewing the past, present, and idealised future. Furthermore, by aligning with a group and engaging in the meshing of purpose with other members and the group cause itself, individuals may be granting themselves immortality. By conceptually rationalising the premise that if the self were to perish in the defense or promotion of a creed or ideology, then the values promoted by that creed and ideology would be allowed to survive in perpetuity, an individual may feel a sense of transcendence otherwise unachievable in daily life. Ultimately groups depend on the actions of individuals to uphold a worldview against all others, and this depends in great measure on their ability to present a worldview as absolutely true and in contrast to any threat deemed ‘other’.

By conceptually operating in a cosmological timeframe, social groups are able to engage actively with the past and present to envision a future in which their institutionalised belief system stands unopposed as recognised truth. By utilising these types of narratives and linking them to an unfolding reality, groups may operate on a utopian premise. Mannheim famously described a utopia as a state of mind which is incongruous with immediate reality,

which when manifest as action has the tendency to shatter the existing cultural order.[115] Furthermore, utopias usually make reference to times bygone so are by nature unfulfillable. By creating institutions based on a utopian premise and grounding these in rules called justified law; which prominent American jurist Robert M. Cover defined as the projection of a desired future on the immediate reality;[116] groups presume to operate in a fashion which transcends temporal reality and norms governing traditional social interaction, and thus attempt to claim transcendent legitimacy. In an interesting twist, therefore, if Mannheim's assertion about utopias are correct, then perhaps the characteristic that provides most resilience to groups is their ability to effectively project utopias as within reach, but never fully achieve them. By framing the narrative and applicability of a creed and ideology in this fashion, groups may ensure the resonance of their values system and continue to engage in the process of empowering individuals to actively uphold it. Finally, this chapter has provided an explanatory framework that argues there this is no single applicable paradigm to social groups across a socio-cultural spectrum, but that there are an array of tools available which, when combined with an in depth knowledge of a particular historical context, may be drawn on to understand the meaning which individuals ascribe to themselves, their surroundings, and their actions.

[115] Mannheim, 154.
[116] Cover, Robert M. "Violence and the Word", in Lawrence et al., 295.

Chapter 3

Fundamentals of Religion

Religion is arguably one of the most fundamental yet controversial topics in the history of the evolution of mankind as a species. As an idea, religion inherently embodies a plethora of paradoxes which can simultaneously be the cornerstones of collective inclusive identities and also serve as the basis on which to subjectively exclude selected individuals or demographics, or deny them rights and benefits belonging to a self-ascribed elect. Even individuals in modern societies that disavow religion and claim the sole validity of atheism recognise the fact that religion in all its manifestations, and due to its utterly unique capacities as a mobilising force that drives and galvanises human thought and action, has been partially responsible, as cause or secondary effect, for many of the socio-political and cultural transformations that have defined the modern world as it exists today in both its physical structural manifestations and intellectual paradigmatic formulations.

The relationship between religion as a humanly created construct, the individual intellect, and the immediate social reality is a dynamic and ever evolving force which has the ability to shape the present and the future; both in tangible ways and in the minds of vested individuals. It is even more powerful when understood as the foundation of a social group. This section will first define religion and its role in human society in its ability to shape morality, behaviour, and identity. Second, it will discuss the early evolution of monotheism and the associated changes this brought to existing social dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Finally this section will progress to the conceptual ordering exhibited by Judeo-Christian worldviews in order to demonstrate the fundamental paradigms associated with these types of belief structures.

3.1 What is Religion?

The Oxford Dictionary defines religion as "The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods".[117] While this definition fits the way in

[117] "Religion", Oxford Dictionaries, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/religion. (Accessed 12 November 2017)

which the vast majority of individuals conceive of religion in the 21st century, it does not do justice to the complexity and power of religion as a driving force in shaping world events. Roger Griffin defined it as "A totalizing cosmology, generally formulated within an extended, and constantly evolving, scriptural and ritual tradition and admitting many variant sectarian interpretations, postulating a suprahuman, metahistorical order which is manifest in atemporal laws or metaphysical patterns, and which endows human life with a narrative shape, ethical values, and ultimate meaning conceived as independent of human agency or will."[118] A crucial starting point in understanding the potency of religion is in recognising it as the product of human intellectual creativity beyond rational logic that seeks to ascribe meaning and purpose to everything it confronts, and establish connections to make sense of otherwise confusing or frustrating realities. As a human construct, religions across time and space have displayed certain common features. They posit the existence of supernatural beings, distinguish between the sacred and profane (or holy and worldly), contain ritual acts and a code of appropriate behaviour, provide a worldview to include the place of individuals within it, and establish a means of accessing this worldview.[119] This last point is critical, as the ability to access this worldview in often framed as the means by which the divide between the ethereal and worldly can be bridged, thus linking the two in symbiotic purpose and harmony.

According to Rene Girard, religion and human civilisational culture, consisting of symbols enabling cooperation and interaction, developed simultaneously and symbiotically.[120] In the earliest human settlements following the advent of agriculture, places of communal worship existed in the same structures as those which housed public and political officials and offices.[121] To maintain the levels of cooperation necessary to ensure the functionality and endurance of novel systems of production and governance, mechanisms were needed to rationalise both the utility of said systems and the place of the individual within them. Religion, therefore, developed as the creation and propagation of myths which served three crucial functions in the blossoming of early human society in order to preserve the tenuous

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[118] Griffin, 160.

[119] See Eller, Chapter 1.

[120] This construct underlies and serves as the foundational assumption for the following work: Girard, Rene, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, 1979).

[121] The intricacies of the symbiotic development of early systems of religion, economics and politics are beyond the scope of this thesis, but is important to consider as a foundation for later developments that would seek to separate these elements that inform worldviews of a community of followers. See Bentley, Jerry and Herbert Ziegler, *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 30-45.

progress that had evolutionarily been accomplished: explanation, control, and legitimation.[122] The legitimation factor was twofold in that it needed to legitimise both novel systems of social organisation by framing them as 'preferential' and thus subjectively enlightened due to the access to and applicability of a power exceeding that of mere humanity; and it also needed to legitimise the human individuals and structures necessary to administer new social systems. In order to do this, a common set of foundational beliefs regarding issues such as origin, nature, language, and death, would be adopted as the paradigmatic basis for interpreting and experiencing reality, and these would be framed as beyond reproach due to their super-human source. Subsequently, from these would flow norms for social interaction that would be viewed as the sole manifestation of appropriate behaviour insofar as they reflected a set of beliefs regarding de facto reality that existed *sui generis.* Jack David Eller succinctly described the mechanisms relied on by early religion to achieve this, and it did so via models, mandates, and metaphysics.[123] Religion provided models of behaviour to which humans should aspire, produced discourse and formulated knowledge which proscribed this behaviour to all individuals under its domain, and linked this behaviour to a reality unseen by the naked eye.

In this framing, society is presented as a model that reflects standards beyond human nature to be discovered and upheld through sanctioned practices, reflective of explanatory beliefs which can only be maintained and enforced by legitimate representatives of otherworldly knowledge. In this regard, Durkheim described religion as a symbolic representation of social relations which provides integration to establish a moral community based on shared values. This in turn binds individuals and transforms them into a collective, making religion simultaneously representational, transformative, and constitutive.[124] This is accomplished by the cognitive mechanism discussed in the previous chapter in which humans recognise "same and same" both in the beliefs and behaviour of others and therefore construct a sense of individual and collective identity. Furthermore, this type of social religious activity is one which existed as part and parcel of communal survival and therefore was very much something that was lived, practiced, and 'done' rather than something which existed solely on a speculative level as theoretical belief.

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[122] Eller, 70.
[123] Eller, 74.
[124] See Durkheim.

If religion developed as a structural mechanism by which to dictate the place and conduct of individuals within a social domain, then its objective will ultimately be the same as that of a social group within that same domain, namely self-sufficiency and survival. To ensure this survival, awareness of a super-natural plane of existence and its reflection in social reality must be guided by a created framework of morality. Beyond the framework popularised in Western religious traditions which postulates absolute morality as originating in a Divine aura, morality in a developmental social context should instead be conceived of as the natural outcome of premiums placed on specific behaviour to uphold particular modes of social interaction. Morality, therefore, is subjectively defined by the beliefs underpinning social structural organisations, the behaviour that enables them, and the hierarchical authority which enforces them to ensure the survival of the collectively formed identity. This dynamic balance is maintained via the concerted adoption of what Armando Salvatore called patterns of civility. These, as behavioral norms, mediate the relationship between structures of power vested with the maintenance of a shared identity based on commonly held beliefs about the nature of worldly and ethereal existence, and the self-aware knowledge of that reality as the lived experience of those who share that belief.[125]

Religion should be seen not as an eternal crystalised ideal, but rather as an ongoing psycho-sociological process that informs a worldview[126] which can change as do the circumstances which either inhibit or enable the observance of that worldview. Linking this idea of religion's flexibility to the distinction between seen and unseen planes of existence, the idea of a god should not be viewed as an external reality as much as a fluid symbol of an ethical idea governing the interaction between those who share common beliefs, as well as with those who do not. This type of distinguishing externalisation to dictate individual and societal ethics falls into the category of Jung's fantasy thinking[127], nevertheless it is crucial to understand that to those who employ patterns of civility reflective of culturally constructed idioms of shared beliefs, this fantasy thinking is intellectually understood as reality.

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[125] This is the premise for the work which seeks to reconfigure the way we study Islam as both a society and religion, while critiquing the traditional Western methodology for social analysis and questioning its applicability to Islamic civilisation. Salvatore, Armando, *The Sociology of Islam. Knowledge, Power and Civility* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).

[126] Ellens, 3.

[127] Jung in Eller, 48.

A common assumption is that faith and knowledge are diametrically opposed. If knowledge itself is understood as everything which is assumed to exist, however, and in this capacity can structure beliefs, actions and identities, then religion does create and sustain its own kind of knowledge. Perhaps not knowledge as empirical data; but knowledge nonetheless. Crucially, it can be framed as knowledge which is absolutely certain, valid, and true, precisely because it is not empirically demonstrable. In providing this certainty, this type of knowledge serves the psychological function of allaying anxiety experienced at the individual and social levels when confronted with the prospect of a tenuous and uncertain future.

At its most basic, religion as a paradigm that is both socially constructed and individually felt may be summarised as a sense of awe, or an emotional overwhelming when faced with unexplainable realities or the prospect of insignificance.[128] As an explanatory framework for the world, it seeks to do the same thing as modern science; but it does not do so from a rationally grounded perspective. Instead, because it may originate from the prospect of insignificance, it may be born from a condition of utter despair whereas science often portrays itself as stemming from a position of rational optimism. Fundamentally, religion is an all-encompassing feeling, and a motivating driving force with the potential to structure power relations, forge collective identities, and inform the place of an individual in a reality which transcends the visible present. Its purpose to the human condition was perhaps best captured by Friedrich Schleiermacher when he stated that as a feeling, manifest in the actions of those who feel it, it seeks to intuit the universe; to discern its nature and visible manifestation in human life.[129] It is, therefore the attempt to attribute meaning to experiences and relationships, as well as find and solidify a cognitive relationship between the self, the social collective, and the universal whole to ensure synchronicity and the resultant harmonious existence while occupying a temporary seen plane of existence.

3.2 Early Evolution of Monotheism

[128] Tylor, Edward Burnett, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom,* 1871, in Eller, 47.
[129] "Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schleiermacher/ (Accessed 10 February 2018).

Early religious beliefs developed symbiotically within distinct and unique cultures, and were characterised by monolatry; a system wherein a god, gods, spirits, or forces, could be worshipped by a group of people without denying the validity of other supernatural beings. Furthermore, these gods and forces were often viewed as co-inhabiting the physical location occupied by their worshippers, so norms of social interaction deemed moral were applicable only to the people and location in observance of given supernatural forces.[130] The advent of writing and gradual growth of state-like entities and trade networks, led to geographic displacement of individuals who could take knowledge of their beliefs with them, against a backdrop of trade relations which formed the basis of competitive relations for resources against other previously unknown collective identities. In this context of displacement and exchange of goods, personnel, and more importantly, knowledge, an individual's belief system could become the means of maintaining an identity when confronted with alternative power structures and displays of normalised ethical behaviour which may have undermined his or her notion of morality. One of the results of this type of clash is that religious belief was transformed from something which was locally grounded in a place and people to something which was portable, and that could be clung to as a badge of identity. Another key development is that if an individual or group of individuals were displaced into the larger collective of a competing civilisation, they may have found themselves as a numerical minority; and faced critical treatment by local power structures due to the fact that their sense of moral behaviour clashed with codes of normalcy adopted by the host collective.

Another result of this type of exchange was twofold. As it became portable in that it represented a place, people, and normative idioms reflected in moral behaviour, religious belief began to form the basis for stark distinction with foreign power and social structures insofar as they represented the institionalisation of alternative belief systems. As early states and peoples vied for influence and resources, situations resulted wherein competition between the relative validity and supremacy of belief systems themselves became a front in struggles to claim cultural relevance and ensure group prosperity despite adversity. Another mechanism that evolved as a result of religion's new found portability was an evangelical turn, which transformed it from something one was born into in a given place to something an individual could choose to affiliate with. Morality and belief became more subjectively determined by the shifting desires and needs of a translocal and mobile community in relation to "the other",

[130] Eller, P. 66.

as opposed to idioms which normalised existing intra-group relationships. In order for this evangelism to achieve its purpose of bolstering the relative strength in numbers of a community of those self-ascribed 'same and same', belief systems themselves had to be transformed. They had to evolve from being simply explanatory frameworks into revelations of absolute truth; universal precisely because they needed to appeal to an unforeseen and limitless demographic to ensure their own continuity and the wellbeing of their adherents.

If belief systems were revamped to claim universal validity and truth in their systems of explanation, control, and legitimation via narratives of models, mandates, and metaphysics, then all other paradigms for interpreting the world by default became completely defined by error and untruth. The gradual perceptual construction of this Manichean worldview further provided the basis for aligning individual adherents of competing, and therefore untrue, worldviews, with representations of perverted morality because they were based on faulty knowledge of the unseen plane of existence and its applicability in the here and now. A singular deity, which assumed the roles and responsibilities of a plethora of previously venerated spiritual forces, could be conceived of as a projection of human ambition and ideal; a god which does all that humans do, but in benevolent, paternalistic perfection. Furthermore, a singular deity became the ordering force in the universe; linking the seen and unseen and creating a cosmology of time which transcended human notions of temporal continuity. This reformulation laid the foundations for notions of fate and predestination as ultimate divine objectives, and sui generis social conditions to be achieved by man as the physical link between the corporeal and ethereal realms of existence. This reflects the change in religious conceptualisation which saw it transformed from primarily explanatory to visionary and ambitious. Furthermore, by positing a singular notion of fate and unitary existence, monotheism eliminated the possibility of ascribing negative effects in the world to lesser supernatural forces. This meant that any act or consequence in the world which contravened unitary ambitions framed as fate and divine purpose in the world became necessarily an act of absolute evil. Additionally, because they could be framed as inhibiting the revealed and desired purpose for humanity as a whole, those individuals who aligned with this inhibition could easily be regarded as less than human because they did not share, understand, or desire the unitary purpose for humanity, benevolently provided by a singular deity. One of the crucial ways that monotheism reconfigured the human social space and intellect, therefore, is that individuals, collectives, and structures deemed 'other', assumed the perceived burden and

role of evil in the world, more different in their clashing morality than similar in their shared humanity. This illustrates an interesting paradox in monotheism in that the existence of an omnipotent benevolent deity creates multiple simultaneously existing hierarchies between divine and human. This distinction promotes an egalitarian ideal in that all those who believe in a god will be human and thus equal in relation to the divinity. Simultaneously, however, that equality is predicated on the intellectual acknowledgement of that deity, so egalitarianism only extends so far as the boundaries of the group united in common belief. Monotheism as a construct created the intellectual conditions for Freud's social libidinal ties to be established simultaneously as mechanisms for unity and markers of differentiation.

Monotheism enabled the cementing of existing power structures and hierarchical relations within a collective, and also proscribed modes of conduct through which the achievement of the divine purpose for social harmony could be realised. These in turn could be encapsulated in a creed which simultaneously presented an idealised future, established correct belief, and dictated appropriate divinely ordained behaviour. This creed therefore could be presented as the holistic device by which humanity and the chosen elect could be brought out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of divine grace; which in turn would be reflected in worldly harmonious existence and prosperity. Thus, monotheism became a potent vehicle for effecting change in the world rather than solely a series of beliefs-grounded practices which explained and legitimated the conduct of a particular group of people; it became a civilisational promise in an institutional space.[131] It obliterated the primacy of the present in favour of a distant utopia to be achieved both in the world and the hereafter in a unitary cosmology.

3.3 Judeo-Christian Conceptual Ordering

Perhaps the most accurate way to conceptualise the birth of the Judeo-Christian tradition is to recognise that, as religious scholar and Egyptologist Jan Assmann has pointedly observed, it was thoroughly anti-religious in that it defined itself primarily by its vehement opposition to all other religions and cultures.[132]/[133] By revolutionising ideological and

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[131] Salvatore, 283.

[132] Assmann, Jan, (Robert Savage trans), *The Price of Monotheism*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press. Stanford, 2010).

[133] Prior to this, monotheism was not a foreign concept. Zoroastrianism had flourished, and Yahweh began his conceptual "existence" as one of many gods, perhaps as 'El' of the Canaanites. His transition from "one of the more powerful gods" to "the only god" occurred over numerous centuries, and even the first commandment

physical mechanisms to ensure its own survival, early Judaism created the foundations for many of the intellectual formulations relied on by proponents of Islamist violence today.

In Judeo-Christian narratives, God promised Abraham that He would elevate the Hebrews to supremacy: He would take their side in cursing their enemies, and would make them a great nation. In the context of existing religious traditions, the supremacy of the Hebrew tribe would represent the physical manifestation of the Hebrew God's supremacy amongst the host of existing gods.[134] This utopian promise embodies many of the characteristics described in the previous chapter in that it identifies a certain 'chosen' people that will rise to supremacy not by virtue necessarily of endeavors undertaken but because an omnipotent deity favours them over others. It also identifies a key foundation of monotheism in that the rise to supremacy is contingent upon the recognition of God as a singular omnipotent deity, and this recognition must be continuously demonstrated. When applied to a potentially expanding demographic in a dynamic social space governed by humans capable of rational independent thought, this becomes a potentially toxic and dangerous prescription. The utopian promise of supremacy also underlies the paradoxical understanding inherent in Judeo-Christianity insofar as it illustrates the reciprocal and mutually reliant relationship between a deity and community of believers. The Hebrew rise to supremacy is promised by a deity that is framed as all powerful, and would represent the physical unity and omnipotence of that deity; yet for the ascendance to great nationhood to occur, consistent affirmation of God's singularity and omnipotence must take place. It is in this regard that Judaism in its inception altered yet maintained one of the three critical functions of religion, that of control.

This mechanism for control, with the altered paradigm that posits belief as the vehicle through which to transform 'what is' into 'what should be' required structure insofar as religion itself requires legal formalisation in order to survive.[135] This formalisation is encapsulated in the Ten Commandments, which forms part of a broader socio-legal framework

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revealed to Moses reflects the contemporary belief that other gods did indeed exist, so followers of Yahweh had to compete by pronouncing their god supreme. This section does not attempt to chronologically discuss the evolution of Yahweh, but identify key ways in which the early Jewish tradition reformulated key sociological concepts that still have an important impact on today's jihadist rhetoric.

[134] Genesis 12:1-3.

[135] Milbank, John, *Theology and Social Theory; Beyond Secular Reason* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), 87.

comprised of 613 commandments in revelation that codifies social behaviour.[136] The nature of these commandments reveals two crucial facts: first, this unique strain of monotheism sought to reflect the unity of God in transforming all aspects of human life into manifestations of worship. Second, they set a precedent for prophets to evaluate contemporary standards and laws, and maintain those that fit the activist needs of a community deemed 'chosen'. They could then appropriate them in the name of religious authenticity, formalise them in discourse, and discard all else as unholy thus potentially subhuman.

The Jewish declaration of faith anchors the 613 rules for holistic social interaction and governance: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord"[137]. It reveals in its brevity a number of telling transformations in the conception of religion, primarily the underlying desire identified by Schleiermacher to establish a link between the seen and unseen.[138] It transforms the role of god in that it is not a force or animistic idea, rather it is a 'lord', and this entails a revolutionary form of rulership, dominion, subjugation, and hierarchy which had the potential to drastically alter models of socio-political governance, and their perception in the eyes of the faithful. In this declaration, unity is paramount. The authentic god belongs only to those self-ascribed Israelites, and these, both in person and collective, must exist as microcosms of divine unity by bonding inner faith with outer praxis. When each individual follows these commandments united in common belief, social harmony will theoretically follow and thus productive and cooperative society can be framed as a *fait accompli* presented to mankind by god which is based on true consensus rather than an artificially binding social contract. In this regard, the activist nature of the Judeo-Christian tradition is highlighted insofar as a bond is forged between private virtue, authentic unitary religious practice, and social justice. The importance of social unity is evident in the fact that the covenants made between God and His followers were not forged with individual Hebrews, but with a community of faithful believers as a whole. Virtue, therefore, became possible only through collective unity in observance of the faith, and any behaviour that deviated from mandated directives reflected not only a legal transgression but also a conscious impediment to the observance of divine social justice.[139]

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[136] These 613 are contained in the Torah, the first five books of the Christian Bible. An accessible list can be found here: http://www.gods-word-first.org/bible-study/613commandments.html (Accessed 15 February 2018).

[137] Deuteronomy 6:4.

[138] Schleiermacher.

[139] This concept has been elaborated on by theologians of various traditions for hundreds of years. For a discussion on its theological relevance to monotheism and Christianity, see Wetzel, James, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Morality as previously defined therefore became linked to specific social agendas and could be measured against the expectations and standards encapsulated in a governing creed.

This type of holistic unity was predicated on unique reformulations of the concept of sovereignty. Insofar as God became lord, He became sovereign of both the universe and human affairs. If His commandments were to govern all aspects of human life meant to ensure social justice and harmony as His plan for mankind, then political leadership of a community could only be legitimate insofar as it upheld those regulations. While regimes that strove towards divine social justice could be legitimate yet only representative of the ultimate source of law and sovereignty, any regime that did not rule by divine directives for social interaction could no longer be deemed legitimate, regardless of its popular support. The ultimate responsibility for humanity, therefore, became both the recognition of a singular deity as lord of all affairs both worldly and ethereal, and the perpetual striving towards achieving a utopian ideal of divine justice in this existence. This conceptualisation of sovereignty further reveals the political activist nature of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The ability to legitimate a political regime by aligning it with the lord of all existence seen and unseen is extraordinarily powerful; yet this same framework of legitimation can be utilised as a potent challenger to authority in that alternative political agendas can be advanced by arguing that existing power structures do not reflect the correct implementation of divine will. This duality is perhaps monotheism's deepest reservoir of latent potential political energy.

The fact that God was framed as sovereign of both worldly and spiritual realms meant that rules for social governance became litmus tests for membership in a community of the chosen. While social harmony could be postulated as the ultimate objective, individual humans and regimes could favour certain demonstrations over others at given times, thus making the boundary enclosing the community of the faithful a subjective and fluid one. Crucially, this established certain forms of loyalty. By declaring God as lord, believers created what James McDougall called an "entre-soi"; or "who we are".[140] They established libidinal ties with each other and a form of rulership which transcended the boundaries between the seen and unseen planes of existence and thereby simultaneously drew a stark distinction with those who denied God. Failure to uphold the standards of morality

[140] McDougall, J.R., "Culture as War by Other Means: Community, Conflict, and Cultural Revolution, 1967-1981", in Aissaoui, R. and Eldridge, C (eds), *Algeria Revisited: History, Culture and Identity, 1830 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

encapsulated in a creed became automatic grounds for expulsion in order to preserve the integrity of the social whole. One of the particularities of this development is that love and veneration of Yahweh became necessary but insufficient as demonstrable proof of loyalty. Vehement intolerance and potentially hatred of groups and individuals deemed 'other' is inherent in religion, according to Eller, and castigating those that are different is an effective way to protect the image of the self.

This idea is encapsulated in the origins of the term 'demon' in the Christian tradition in how it appropriated existing ideological formulations to drastically differentiate the faithful from the 'other'. The word demon today conjures ideas of absolute evil, yet in its etymological and social origin it actually referred to a guiding spirit, comparable to what could be considered a guardian angel, and was frequently commented on in philosophical treatises of Greek and Roman antiquity. Insofar as this type of spirit contravened the idea of a unitary Christian God, it must by default have been absolutely evil; something which had to be vociferously rejected in order to be a demonstrably true Christian. Thus, the benevolent and protective 'daimon' of the Greeks and Romans; and the collective social groups and intellectual schools of thought regarding human and existential reality that were associated with this type of belief, became the embodiment of absolute evil in the Christian tradition.[141] This further demonstrates the political and social activist agenda inherent in Judeo-Christianity in that theological doctrines of unity and loyalty to the faith were developed by rejecting and recasting terms and practices associated with contemporary socio-political structures that did not abide by the prescriptions of morality and social justice collectively held by the followers of a subjectively created unitary god. While this mechanism was theoretically meant to proclaim a fundamental hatred of evil that denies the love, grace, and unity of the one god, the reality is that it is subjective to human social desires and agendas and thus potentially a tool to be weaponised.

A final element to be considered is the way that Judeo-Christian monotheism reoriented paradigms of human agency. Ideas regarding the role of human agency originate in the understanding that the seen plane of existence must be transformed to approximate as closely as possible the divine model for achieving social justice. This is only possible via the thorough and meticulous physical performance of the directives encapsulated in a religious

[141] This is another example cited to support the notion of the Judeo-Christian tradition developing as an 'anti-religion'. See Assmann.

creed, and thus the underlying role of humanity is not one of individuality but, responsibility. If the unitary God is also sovereign lord in this existence, only He can endow humans with intrinsic freedoms and liberties, and with these He expects His subjects to affirm His legitimacy and protect His rule. This in turn is reflective of the strength yet fragility of social groups in that they are strong as ideological unifying forces but vulnerable insofar as they rely on the continuous actions of their members to ensure their perpetuity. Another underlying paradigmatic cornerstone on which ideas of agency are built in the Judeo-Christian tradition is the understanding that existence, and every aspect of reality, is a manifestation of what Mark Juergensmeyer called a cosmic struggle between good and evil.[142] This struggle is the result of the cosmological Manichean ordering of the world that monotheism relies on, and dictates that actions in this world can have a direct impact on the ongoing struggle between a community of the faithful and all that exists in opposition to it. Social groups perceive conflicting worldviews as existential threats, and therefore individual action in defense of the faith becomes an urgent imperative for believers. This framing was captured succinctly by Juergensmeyer when he stated that "The idea of cosmic war is compelling to religious activists because it ennobles and exalts those who consider themselves a part of it (…) It provides escape from humiliation and impossible predicaments".[143] Participating in a cosmological struggle means that immediate results may not always be visible, or even achieved in this lifetime. Precisely because they are not, individuals may be led to believe that their actions have served a higher purpose.

Another way in which religion endows its followers with agency is that it transforms them into active carriers of universal knowledge of the cosmic struggle in which they play a role. By affirming their belief through word and action, which can be understood as a type of oath, they can form a bond of *schwurgemeinschaftliche,* brotherhood, which forms the basis of collective agency which in turn can be institutionalised as a mechanism for social action.[144] These, as embodiments of universal knowledge with the potential to widely disseminate it, have the ability to further encourage and determine the direction and type of social action required by the agenda encapsulated in the pursuit of a religious utopia. In this regard, institutionalised knowledge becomes both a facilitator of individual agency and a mechanism

[142] Juergensmeyer, Mark, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global rise of Religious Violence* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003).
[143] Juergensmeyer, 187.
[144] Discussion on Weber, in Salvatore, 98.

for social control insofar as it prescribes and authorises certain types of actions to serve specific ends.

Finally, Divine utopia requires another form of agency in which particular humans are given the ability and duty to interpret divine directives. These underpin the blueprint for achieving social justice and are considered eternal, but must be made accessible to diverse social scenarios, so certain individuals must thoroughly comprehend their very nature in order to then graft them onto particular cultural landscapes and guide a people into their observance. For this purpose God endows individuals with critical judgement, so that some among them may utilize intellectual agency for the purpose of making divine social justice and its institutions of governance applicable to any time and place. Actions undertaken in this respect are not always, but may be, framed as operating outside conventional socio-political norms governing legal conduct if the parameters of legality have been established by institutions which do not share the religious beliefs of the actors. This reflects the ability of religion to legitimate the actions of its members in stark contrast to oppositional worldviews, and interpret actions undertaken as simultaneous manifestations of personal agency, god's will, and the individual representation of the collective identity which transcends human temporality.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has attempted to engage in a discussion of religion with a focus on its utility and functionality as a social group. It has attempted to highlight the fact that the evolution of specific religious beliefs and paradigms that inform modes of action is intricately linked to parallel developments in human cultures, societies and their interactions. As such, religion itself is a deliberate individual and social creation. Religion critically performs the functions of explanation, control and legitimation, and it does so by crafting and presenting narratives of models, modes, and metaphysics. These in turn can form the basis on which knowledge encapsulated in a creed can be institutionalised, and create notions of morality which are understood as beyond worldly reproach in their transcendent origin. Monotheism and Judeo-Christianity in particular appropriated many of the mechanisms and paradigms inherent in pre-existing belief structures, but its most important and radical departure was its activist agenda which focused on transforming 'what is' into 'what should be'. This notion of

'should be' is the worldly implementation of God's will for social justice and harmony in an experienced utopia.

Religion is transformative and constitutive; it can be integrative yet serve to differentiate. Any notion of God is something which is alive and dynamic, and can be moulded to fit the contemporary needs of a community. Human agency and divine predestination interact symbiotically to pursue the socio-political objectives of a self-described elect, which alone possesses absolute morality. Social justice, framed as an eternal ideal and the link between the seen and unseen planes of existence is central, and this in turn empowers individuals by leading them to believe they are acting on behalf of a righteous higher cause. Empowerment is further provided in that for its own survival religion requires that individuals with a deep understanding of its directives interpret governing creeds and apply them to diverse environments. This concept in itself encapsulates religion, its form, function, and future as an exclusivist human social construction tool.

Chapter 4

Philosophies of Violence

Violence is physical damage willfully inflicted by a self-aware actor with agency upon another self-aware entity, without the latter's approval, which results in immediate and often enduring negative repercussions for the recipient, while benefits may or may not be gained by the perpetrator as the result of his or her actions. Violence, however, cannot be reduced to a formula of predictability, cause, and effect. Violence is conceptually problematic in that its use is predicated on the ability of an individual or group to act deliberately after having rationally formulated ideas which frame the use of violence as being beneficial. These concepts, in turn, such as what any individual entity may consider beneficial, the use of rationality in constructing plausible situational outcomes, or justified targets of physical harm are also highly subjective and thus escape definitional compartmentalisation. As was mentioned in the previous chapter regarding religion, the mere mention of the word 'violence' can also trigger a cascade of powerful, conflicting, and complex emotions in different recipients. To some it may mean global war, and to others it may mean personal murder. On a very different level, some may conceive of entrenched structural racism as violence, and others may understand violence as psychological abuse or torment which does not necessarily leave any physical marks but still scars its victims. Despite having opened this chapter with a seemingly simple definition of violence, perhaps the only thing which as a starting point can be confirmed is that violence in its essence is constructed, displayed, enacted, received, and perceived subjectively according to individual worldviews and cultural dynamics which orient things such as violence relative to other devices in a matrix of ongoing and fluid social interaction.[145]

To explore the above nuances, this chapter will first explore violence as a powerful social action with the ability to convey cultural meaning and shape constructs of identity, as well as its intrinsic relationship to human freedom and notions of morality. Second it will discuss how and when violence is wielded in a social group context, and the philosophical as well as pragmatic justifications for its use. Finally, this chapter will scrutinise the extent to

[145] For a collection of essays on the philosophical exploration of violence and its justifications, see Bufacchi, Vittorio (ed), *Violence; A Philosophical Anthology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

which violence can be effective in achieving social goals, shaping human behaviour, and altering a meaningful reality. ISIS employs extreme and deliberate violence in the pursuit of its ambitions, so successfully promlematising the group's case study according to Foucault's genealogy requires a deconstruction of violence itself in relation to the human condition.

4.1 What is Violence?

Etymologically, the word violence stems from the Latin '*violentia'* meaning vehemence, which is recognised as passionate and uncontrollable force; as opposed to force used in a calculated manner. Furthermore, this construction of violence frames it as force which is used to pervert something from its natural expression of itself and exceed established norms or limits. It also can be deconstructed as '*vis'* and *'ferro'* which in turn means to phsycially carry force, and it is grammatically linked to the concept of *'violare',* so ingrained in the term violence itself is the notion of violation.[146] Necessarily, force must also be defined as the two are inextricably linked, and it can be described as the singular ability to effect a significant change by the expenditure of energy, or physical effort.[147] The critical distinguishing feature, however, is that force alone is morally neutral whereas violence is the deliberate shattering and violation of certain moral rules and parameters to affect change which favors others.

Due to its complexity, "violence must be understood as a form of practice mediating between the historical boundness of action in response to specific structural conditions and human creativity and the cultural quest for meaning".[148] Sociologist Georg Simmel revolutionised the study of violence as a deliberate social action relative to the interests of actors as opposed so simply an instrument of evolutionary selection[149] and in this regard, it is a symbolic action that conveys cultural meaning, desire, and frustration. Most importantly, the cultural ideas it conveys are most often linked to notions of legitimacy; either in support or contention. Weber famously defined legitimacy as entailing that "a social order is accepted as valid either due to its historicity, to its emotional value, or to instrumental reasoning."[150] In

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[146] Wolin, Sheldon S., "Violence and the Western Tradition", in Bufacchi, 42.
[147] Wolff, Robert Paul, "On Violence", in Bufacchi, 53.
[148] Schroder, Ingo W. and Bettina E. Schmidt, "Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices", *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1-24, 18.
[149] Simmel, Georg, "The Sociology of Conflict", *American Journal of Sociology* 9:4 (January 1904), 490-525.
[150] Weber, in Shroder, 8.

this regard, violence as a social action can be understood as an important mechanism by which the ideals of a social group can be advanced to lay claim to definitions and implementations of desirable forms of legitimate social structuring. Understanding it in this way, violence is no longer a senseless or rash action, rather it is a realm of social interaction which is carried out for concrete reasons, and which both shapes and is shaped by inter and intra group relations in a dynamic social space.[151]

Given the relationship between violence and legitimacy, which is the ordering of a social landscape, violence can be manifest in three different ways. It can be structural, insofar as institutions of power can be devised and implemented to benefit certain social demographics while oppressing others, it can by physical, represented by issues ranging from police brutality to sectarian conflict, and finally it can be symbolic wherein one social group expresses its dominance and superiority over another by means which can be overt or subtle, and often entail the unknowing or unwilling compliance of the subjugated.[152] Steven Pinker identified distinct stages of human social evolution, and asserted that civilisational progress positively correlated with a decline in all types of violence.[153] In fact, one of the key suppositions which underpins the postulated need for strong centralized government, framed as political and civilisational progress, in the birth of the modern Western tradition is the fact that humans are inherently violent by nature; an impulse which can only be tempered by strong governing social contracts.[154] The deliberately articulated use of violence as a preferred means by which to cleanse society of impurities, and enforce the observance of sanctioned codes of moral behaviour dates to the earliest Greek civilisations, and is representative of man's unique ability to rationalise the use of force with the purpose of controlling the behaviour of others.[155]

Given the above understanding, violence is a potent tool for social construction by groups and individuals in power or those contesting said power. It is inextricably linked to perceptions of morality and legitimacy, which in turn are subjectively created by groups with specific vested interests. One of the most crucial intellectual foundations on which violence as

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[151] Murer, 287-290.
[152] For more on the three social manifestations of violence, see Murer.
[153] Pinker, XXII.
[154] This is the foundational assumption for the Western social contract. See Hobbes, Thomas, introduction by MacPherson, C.B., *Leviathan* (London: Penguin Classics, 1982).
[155]Wolin, in Bufacchi, 33.

a tool for social creation can be built is the ability that it has to create a common and united conscience.[156] In this regard violence can be understood as the final link in the chain of emergence which produces social entativity as described in the previous chapter on social groups. Violence therefore is theoretically capable of spawning new dimensions of culture as elaborated by Girard in that it can result in new ways of communicating and receiving ideas and interests in a social dimension. When practically applied to a modern Western nation centric political model, this emergence of culture through a united conscience can result in the formulation of specific national identities, based on the recognition of same and same as mediated through violence as the normative mode of communication, representative of the pursuit of commonly accepted ideas of legitimacy and parameters of morality. One of the most influential figures to elaborate on this notion was Frantz Fanon, who argued in the context of the struggle for independence from colonialism that violence itself is capable of providing unity insofar as it gives individuals both a common cause and a means by which to physically strive for it. It is the social language of dominance used by oppressive political entities, and therefore is the only realm of interaction which can be understood by said entities and defeat them. Furthermore, the transcendent nature of violence is highlighted in that through this act of striving, individuals are given a sense of both history and destiny thus linking past, present, and future in a singular manifestation of the common will through force. This force, furthermore, is linked to moral righteousness in that it is intended for the specific function of achieving freedom. Freedom, as a right inherent to the human condition, is considered morally beyond reproach. This formulation requires understanding rights themselves not as existing sui generis, but instead as the moral language of modern Western politics. As Alexis de Tocqueville commented, the notion of an inherent right is nothing more than constructions of virtue and morality inserted into the modern political world.[157] Even if acts of violence do not immediately result in freedom from the structural violence in the colonial context which informed Fanon's writings, by simply performing an act of violence, representative of a group identity, history, and destiny, individuals may find personal freedom

[156] For more on the relationship between social groups and violence, see Volkan.

[157] Tocqueville wrote this as part of an observation and study of democracy in action in the United States in 1831. For a full work see Mansfield, Harvey C. and Delba Winthrop (trans & ed), *Alexis de Tocqueville "Democracy in America"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

from the boundedness of cultural subjugation by symbolically claiming the right to enact their social will through violence which had previously been the purview of colonial oppressors.[158]

Some of the most radically influential thinkers, such as Marx, Engels, Hegel, and Fanon, have held that violence as structure is a fundamental framework in the ordinary processes of daily life in the world. This being said, "there is no general theory of violence apart from its practices (…) Theories of violence must be as varied as the practices within which they occur."[159] Foucault held that violence begins in the human consciousness and as such, it is important to consider whether violence itself is a product, or a process.[160] As a process it is cumulative in that it "creates and recreates new norms of collective self-understanding"[161] and therefore as a product it becomes ingrained in expectations and identities of social groups. Violence is just as fluid as the dynamic environment in which it exists. As a subjective perception, it is a cultural construct, and it constructs culture.

4.2 How and When is Violence Justified and Used?

In Western thought, violence is the domain of the secular state. Weber's definition, which frames the state as any human community which successfully monopolizes the use of force in a given territory has become so developed and ingrained in geopolitics, as well as individual orientation to it, that it may seem difficult to consider that this has not always been the case nor the default approach to conceiving of violence.

As it pertains to dynamic interaction between competing social groups, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci defined the state as the representation of attempts to symbolically and physically permanently crystallise a particular state of development into a status quo.[162] By combining these two conceptualisations, links begin to emerge which forge connections between violence, power, authority, and legitimacy which are more profound than labelling given to a particular regime. The Western canonisation of the state and its monopoly on violence is simply the recognition of the need to harness the socially destructive capacity of

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[158] For more on violence related to the anti-colonial struggle, see Fanon, Frantz, Philcox, Richard (trans), and Sartre, Jean-Paul and Homi K. Bhaba (comm), *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2005).
[159] Lawrence, 5-7.
[160] Foucault, in Lawrence, 5.
[161] Lawrence, 11.
[162] Gramsci, Antonio, *Prison Notebooks,* 1929-1935, in Lawrence, 168.

violence by tying its approved use to subjectively constructed notions of legitimate authority. Authority, in turn, can be thought of in this context not as a de-facto ability to wield violence, but as a recognised right to utilise tools for constructing and reshaping the social world to enforce the collective will, granted by the self-defined collective itself. In this paradigm, in the absence of recognised authority; in whatever form is subjectively conceived of as legitimate and moral, no violence can theoretically, philosophically, or tangibly be justified.

Perhaps one of the most oft-cited rationales for the use of violence is that the ends justify the means, yet this is overly simplistic. According to John Dewey who theorised on methodologies of social reform, this justification is a way in which immediate social desires can be masked and pursued in violent practice.[163] Fundamentally, violence relies on human reasoning for its justification; that is to say that to justify it is to demonstrate that it is rational.[164] Problems in attempting to find a universal paradigm for justification arise, however, when accepted constructs of human morality and rationality; as well as the necessity or ability to apply said rationality in particular instances, clash with those which have been socially constructed in different fashions. For this reason, the theoretical legitimacy of any act of violence lies somewhere in the triangle of relationships between the perpetrator of said act, the victim, and an observer.[165] Thinking of it this way is useful because in a social context, violence without an audience is meaningless insofar as the reception of the intended meaning behind the act will be limited.[166] This paradigm of seeking social significance through violence as deliberate performative action is an important foundation in the ongoing study of terrorism itself, yet one that is often neglected in the attempts to scrutinise acts of terror in favour of resorting to forceful retaliatory measures or degrees of securitisation.[167] Interestingly, these responses may also be understood as performative acts requiring an audience for their social agenda to have impact.

One of the most enduring philosophical justifications for violence stipulates that it can be used when all other avenues of addressing areas of conflict have been exhausted or are unavailable, in order to reduce the presence of evil in society and alleviate general suffering. To reach this conclusion, the public will and reason must balance the expected ultimate

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[163] Dewey, John, "Force and Coercion", *International Journal of Ethics* 26:3 (April 1916), 359-367.
[164] Gert, Bernard., "Justifying Violence", in Bufacchi, 67.
[165] Murer, 301.
[166] Shroder, 6.
[167] See Murer, 295-300.

outcome of violence with both existing circumstances and the effects that violence will have on areas which are not immediately affected by the act itself.[168] The counterpoint to this argument, however, holds that violence may in fact be morally justified despite not having exhausted or attempted all other avenues if the violence rectifies egregious wrongs and is used to advance an agenda of social reform which benefits the social group in question.[169]

Given that violence is socially linked to legitimacy, morality, freedom and authority in a social context, regimes of authority may use it physically, structurally, or symbolically to maintain dominance, and this perspective relies on recognising all spheres of human socio-political interactions as relationships of subjugation and domination.[170] Violence can also be used to protest dominance, and so it can reasonably be expected to be used and justified if "human beings are influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential".[171] The crux of this paradigm is that in this aspect, violence is socially equivalent to religion. Just as religion, violence can be used and justified to establish and maintain authoritative dominion while also being employed as a means by which to challenge that authority. In a social context, both religion and violence can be framed and used as potential tools for changing 'what is' into 'what should be'. Furthermore, this 'what should be' is based on a fantastical ideology as a way to view and exist in the world, subjectively created by a social group which deliberately distinguishes itself from others in beliefs and practices as reflectors of absolute morality. As the distance between 'what is' and 'what should be' increases, so too does the likelihood of violence being used to narrow the gap. Insofar as this gap must be bridged by specific actions, individuals can justify violence as the way to demonstrate allegiance to an ideology and thus reap the social benefits which membership affords. This in turn is most likely to occur in a social landscape in which multiple social group identities hold narratives of violence as central, placing a much greater sense of urgency on the individual. This also demonstrates a parallel with religion insofar as both it and violence are something which individuals fundamentally can feel a need to resort to in order to assuage social anxiety in favor of certainty and security.

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[168] Gert, in Bufacchi, 71.
[169] Auldi, Robert, "On the Meaning and Justification of Violence", in Buffachi, 152.
[170] Bourdieu, Pierre, "Outline of a Theory of Practice", in Lawrence, 188.
[171] Galtung, John, "Violence, Peace and Peace Reform", in Bufacchi, 80.

While violence is not predictable, concluding that it is rash or meaningless would be to negate its function as a powerful tool for social transformation. In doing so, the underlying psychological, philosophical, and social platforms on which narratives of violence are built are dismissed for fear of giving the appearance of 'justifying the unjustifiable', and thus the ability to truly understand the sources and rationales of deliberate violence in order to curtail it is squandered.

4.3 Effectiveness of Violence

The purpose of violence as a tool for social manipulation is the achievement of a particular goal held by some group, so it will be used if it is believed that it will be successful in achieving said goal. The efficiency of violence therefore is relative insofar as it is determined by the subjective goals of the group and those with the power to dictate the necessary social benchmarks that the group must reach. This issue has been crucial to terrorism studies in that much effort has been devoted to the study of whether violence actually is effective at achieving the goals of terrorist organisations.[172] For instance, a singular act of violence may be successful in helping a group achieve short term and immediate goals such as notoriety or causing fear in others, while falling short of effecting the totality of the social change the group ultimately aspires to. This makes quantifying violence's effectiveness as a social tool immeasurably difficult, yet it is an issue which must be considered to in problematising violent social groups within the context of their aspirations.

One of violence's most effective uses has been in its monopolisation by the modern state, and true power of domination lies in the harnessing of total violence by some entity to the extent that it does not have to exercise that violence for its authority to be recognised. This demonstrates one of the most significant effective uses of latent and symbolic violence in that it has the ability to control the behaviour of others. Again, in this dimension a parallel with religion emerges in that religion and violence are both highly effective at controlling the social conduct of individuals and groups. They do this by establishing parameters for moral conduct and ensuring their observance by holding a monopoly on the infliction of consequences for their breach. The modern state, for instance, is legitimated in conducting actions of violent

[172]English, Richard, *Does Terrorism Work; A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

self-defense that would be considered morally reprehensible were they to be carried out by private groups not vested with legitimate governing authority.[173] Additionally, from a philosophical perspective, this type of violence is so thoroughly entrenched that in order to challenge it, even greater violence is theoretically necessary. This dynamic of entrenched legitimate authority grounded in justified latent violence is a reflection of a paradigm that stipulates that the quelling of all forms of competing violence by a hegemon is not necessarily always in the defense of the common good. Rather, it is a deliberate inhibition of social exchange, and a denial of the mechanisms used in human evolution to mold an ever-changing social landscape.[174] In this regard, the modern state exists both as defined by Weber, and by Gramsci insofar as it promotes its own interests through effective use of violence to dictate and control behaviour and perceptions.

Another way in which violence is highly effective is that it possesses an inherent lawmaking character in that when it is used to promote the social agenda of a specific group, the group's parameters of morality take the form of desired new laws, and violence is framed as the way to enforce their observance from a position of power. In this context, law is the projection of an imagined, idealised future upon reality, and of power as the union between violence and the establishment of law.[175] Here again the potency of violence as a tool to unite 'what is' and 'what should be' is evident, and renowned jurist and legal scholar Robert M. Cover argued that institutions that lose their grasp on foundational violence as essential to the maintenance of law and order in society will ultimately decay.

To return briefly to the paradigm developed by Fanon, violence is a highly effective weapon of cultural emasculation insofar as those who control violence control historical narratives for posterity. In Fanon's view, violence carried out by a hegemon is able to render colonised populations passive and inorganic, whereas violence carried out by the colonised is able to raise a population out of historical oblivion and immobility its rightful place of equality.[176] Perhaps the most significant way in which violence is effective is its ability to shape a meaningful reality.[177] Most human relationships are to some extent relationships of relative power; and in a sociopolitical context, power is linked to the successful harnessing of

[173] Wolin, in Bufacchi, 36.
[174] Lawrence, 11.
[175] Cover, in Lawrence, 295.
[176] Fanon, Frantz, "Concerning Violence", in Lawrence, 81-83.
[177] Murer, 299.

physical, structural, or symbolic violence. Individuals and social groups on both sides of the power equation therefore live in a reality which is effectively shaped by the real or potential violence enacted upon them, and the degree of violence at their disposal to use in pursuit of common goals. It is effective in establishing, maintaining, and simultaneously challenging authority and thereby is also effective at shaping perceptions regarding parameters of normalcy in social interaction.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated that violence is a powerful social tool which should not be dismissed as rash or senseless. As a human social construct, it is intimately intertwined with notions of legitimacy, authority, the establishment of law and order, and the demarcation of moral parameters. Because these in turn are also human social constructs shaped by cultural and historical narratives, the relationship between them and violence will never be universal. Fundamentally, however, despite the fact that the relationships cannot be predictable, it can be argued that the prime nexus uniting them is one of social control. Regardless of the particular manifestations in a given social context between legitimacy and degrees of multi-directional violence, the underlying struggle will not be for the sole possession of tangible resources necessarily; but it will be for those as a representation and mechanism of the possessing group's control over the behaviours of groups which do not share similar visions of constructs of legitimacy, morality, law and authority.

Philosophically violence can be justified in numerous ways, but these in turn are subjective, so the justification most likely to be chosen is one which will most effectively forge social bonds and enable the creation of identity through action. Furthermore, this chapter has attempted to illustrate the fact that violence endows these actions and identities with meaning. Insofar as violence is about control, it can be used both to maintain control and also challenge it. Through the deliberate shattering of imposed control, violence possesses a unique empowering potential capable of endowing its practitioners with ultimate freedom. In this duality also lies violence's most sinister nature in that when observed continuously by social groups clinging to distinct constructs of 'what should be', a reinforcing cycle emerges and with every iteration violence itself becomes increasingly integral to groups' core. As this occurs, violence becomes not a mechanism for attaining goals, but the sole reason for the

group's existence, without which it would lose its identity, reputation, recruitment potential and ability to pursue its agenda.

Whether it pertains to social control, the ability to dictate the realm of the appropriate by reflecting moral standards, or its place as integral to personal and group identity, violence's effectiveness and utility as a social tool mirrors that of religion. As religion, violence is effective in being both transformative and constitutive concerning the physical and ideological orientation of groups and individuals. The parallels between the two means that there is an inherent dangerous potential for religions to utilise and justify violence, or for groups with vested interests to coopt religion to promote violence.

Chapter 5

The Interplay Between Religion and Violence as Social Group Function

Religion is not unique in enabling violence but it is uniquely effective at it. This assessment runs slightly counter to the assertion that "religion is the most prolific source of violence in our history".[178] This statement offered by Sam Harris, and reflective of views shared by other prominent political scientists and authors such as Christopher Hitchens, is not an outlier in the field of religious critique, rather it is emblematic of the 'Secularisation Thesis' which dominated the rationale of Western intellectuals until only recently.[179] Broadly speaking, this framework stipulates that as societies progress through mechanisms of modernisation and rationalisation, religion will lose its authority both in personal and social life as well as governance. It is predicated on the claims that religion is absolutist, divisive, and insufficiently rational; therefore incompatible with ever emerging new social dynamics which accompany modernisation in a state-centric global environment. While this chapter will demonstrate that these claims may hold a certain degree of validity, the secularisation thesis as such has not materialised in that as opposed to fading away in the face of encroaching modernisation, individuals have clung even more vehemently to religious beliefs in attempts to maintain a sense of identity in an environment of uncertainty and uprootedness. In the context of the aims of this thesis, when coupled with the fact that the sheer quantity of acts of religious terrorism has far surpassed equivalent actions with secular motivations since 2001,[180] yet simultaneously religious programs have sponsored global outreach, poverty alleviation and democratisation, the inquiry from a political science perspective has become reoriented towards discovering under what conditions religion will become violent.

The rise and global prominence of Islamic terrorism in recent decades has led to intellectual attempts to uncover underlying co-enabling links between religion and violence.[181]

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[178] Harris, Sam, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: WW Norton, 2005), 27.
[179] Philpott, Daniel, "Religion and Violence from a Political Science Perspective", in Juergensmeyer, Mark, Margo Kitts and Michael Jerryson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 397.
[180] "Global Terrorism Index 2015; Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism", Institute for Economics and Peace, Report 36, November 2015. http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf (Accessed 13 March 2018).
[181] For a broad introduction to frameworks for understanding religious violence, see Kimball, Charles, *When Religion Becomes Evil; Five Warning Signs* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

To further this inquiry and complete the theoretical introduction to this thesis according to the genealogical method for problematisation, first this chapter will present the relationships between Judeo-Christian paradigms and violence in a social context. Second it will introduce useful analytic frameworks for understanding the contexts in which religious narratives may most likely be used to justify violence.

5.1 Violence and Judeo-Christian World Ordering

Previous chapters discussed the fact that in the earliest human societies, seats of religious and political power were often collocated in the same physical structures, and this was not accidental. As humans established agrarian societies and later empires, warfare evolved as a means to acquire necessary revenue, and coercive force was required to ensure individuals played their roles in supporting the necessary functions of these emerging polities. Political establishments therefore relied on their social control of structural violence for survival. Simultaneously, systems of religious belief evolved in which the past was presented as chaos, and the existing order as the pinnacle of human existence. In this evolutionary context, the favour of the gods was essential for the survival of civilisation, so myths and rituals developed in which rightful rule, established socio-political order, religious legitimacy and notions of past and present intermingled without clear boundaries in the visible manifestation of social reality which was underpinned by entrenched structural violence.

The structural violence underpinning early agrarian societies and legitimating religious beliefs as well as supporting rituals was predicated on the notion that enduring violence and ritual was a continuation of the first violence used in myth to conquer chaos; and its enduring practice was thus essential to ensure society did not slip back into that same chaos. Furthermore, by associating practice with foundational origins, legitimacy, violence, and transcendence, these actions were endowed with meaning and cemented with every repetition, transforming a world into a unique lifeworld of a people.[182] Perhaps it is to this conceptual starting point that the sociologically oriented argument could be traced that religious violence is simply a unique manifestation of the inherent dynamic between violence and order as one of the intellectual bedrocks of human society.

[182] Srubar, Ilja, "Religion and Violence, Paradoxes of Religious Communication", *Human Studies* 40:4 (2017), 501-518.

It is against this type of socio-political backdrop that early Judaism developed. The first Israelite settlements were established as social alternatives to the stratified city state which was upheld by institutionalised and structural violence[183] and in their inception departed from the social norm in which deities were reflections of social order and relations, and their prophetic polemic against idolatry necessitated the unprecedented physical militaristic victory of the Israelite God over all others.[184] This type of supreme victory of a god, people, and worldview over all others draped in language of violent moral righteousness was new to human social evolution, and is potentially a foundational link which conceives of Judeo-Christian reality as reliant on violent resolution for its fulfillment. It also demonstrates a swing in the pendulum as systems of religious belief evolved to not sanctify the status quo of a social order, but to challenge it.

In the Book of Exodus, God was portrayed as a man of war; not a distant god prayed to, but a very real god who physically took violent action in defense of His chosen people. Congruent with contemporary paradigmatic orientations, this god was responsible for imposing order, but order on behalf of a distinctly defined people. Furthermore, this defined people, that would become the Israelites, was not responsible for maintaining a status quo achieved in a mythical victory of order over chaos. Rather in his novel role as a very national deity, God took up arms to bridge the gap between 'what is' and 'what should be' according to the nationalistic ambitions of the early Israelites. Later, this nationalistic identity was solidified in that in the context of sieging foreign cities, "when the Lord thy God hath delivered it unto thine hands, though shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword (…) thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not the cities of these nations".[185] The ideological orientation to violence was novel in that contextually it was framed as serving to prevent Israelites from associating with or engaging in idolatry. The violent destruction of 'the other', therefore, became in a very real sense a necessary profession of faith and the belief in the one true god. In the context of the relationship between Israelites and the Egyptian apparatus, violence further evolved in that diplomatic tactics would have had minimal effect when confronted with the overwhelming power of the latter, and so God necessarily gravitated towards ruthlessness. In the Book of

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[183] Armstrong, Karen, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 105.
[184] Meltzer, Edmund S., "Violence, Prejudice, and Religion: A Reflection on the Ancient Near East", in Ellens, 102.
[185] Deuteronomy 20:10-18, in Munson, Henry, "Religion and Violence", *Religion* 35:4 (2005), 223-246, 229.

Psalms, "When he grows angry he shatters kings, he gives the nations their deserts; smashing their skulls, he heaps the world with corpses."[186]

What is important to note in the development of divine violence in this case is that God was framed as violently engaging in the world not to conquer cosmic chaos, but to institute the rightful rule of a distinctly defined people. Acts of violence equated to the eradication of perverse moral belief systems, and would afford the Israelites the opportunity to create socio-political structures which would enable the observance of the one true god. These social structures therefore were not framed as simply divinely sanctioned, but their attainment and observance was portrayed as an act of worship in and of itself. Against the backdrop of entrenched structural violence therefore, violence carried out on behalf of a god promoted as being supreme among all gods in existence, and later as the only god in existence, became a necessary tool to advance the political agenda of a uniquely defined 'people' who perceived a discrepancy between their potential and somatic reality. Furthermore, while this novel conceptualisation of violence evolved, it was neither solely religiously of politically inspired as such distinctions were foreign concepts in contemporary societies.

5.2 Analytic Paradigms

Two critical variables in a dynamic socio-political context which can be observed to understand the processes by, and conditions under, which religions may espouse violence are institutional independence, which measures the degree of autonomy and tolerability in relation to governing institutions; and political theology, which puts forth ideas that religious communities hold regarding the legitimacy of those governing institutions.[187] Political theology, reflective of the characteristics of social groups broadly speaking, evolves as the result of external circumstances dictated in part by degrees of institutional independence, and through intellectual discourse suited to the needs of its constituency. The scholar of religion and global politics, Daniel Philpott argued that religious communities will be more inclined to utilise violence in a socio-political context in specific situations dictated by the interplay between these variables. For instance, a religious community may be more likely to embrace

[186] Psalms 110:5-6.
[187] Philpott, in Juergensmeyer et al, 398.

violence in a situation in which its political theology advocates the creation of an integrated state, giving it both political and religious authority over a broader citizenry.

A religious community may also be more likely to engage in violent resistance in an environment which it feels strips it of its ability to fully observe the demands placed on it by its faith.[188] In this regard, religious violence in a modern political context can serve the role of maintaining its authority and for this reason religious scholar Bruce Lincoln has described integrationist ruling groups as "religions of the status quo".[189] Perhaps paradoxically this places them in the same company as the secular modern state as defined by Gramsci insofar as they both attempt to leverage their ideological capital to maintain a state of affairs in which their legitimacy and hegemony is uncontestable. Alternatively, religion's potential in a 21st century political science paradigm also serves to inspire violence to challenge that same status quo to enable the observance of its political theology. Given this paradigmatic approach to analysing religious violence in a political context, the claim made here is in line with that which predicts violence on a sociological level, insofar as social groups can most likely be expected to engage in violence when there is a perceived discrepancy between their rightful potential and actual experienced reality.

One innovative tool for comprehending religion's unique effectiveness at inspiring violence in a political context is the use of social theories as vectors of analysis. Thomas Malthus's work in political economy led to the development of the scarce resource theory, which stipulates that as populations grow, resources such as food and land will become increasingly scarce, and the inability to satisfy demand could serve as a catalyst for conflict.[190] According to secular biblical scholar Hector Avalos, "The creation of a scarce resource by religion occurs when belief in supernatural forces and/or beings generates the belief that a resource is scarce in some manner. These are really perceived scarcities rather than ones we can verify exist when we do not share the religious presuppositions of believers".[191] Understood in this way, when members of a religious group feel they are unable to dutifully observe the full complement of their belief system due to perceived oppression, the reward for

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[188] Philpott, in Juergensmeyer et al, 399.
[189] Lincoln, Bruce, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11th* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 18.
[190] Malthus, Thomas, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: J.M. Dent, 1803), 1-24.
[191] Avalos, Hector, "Religion and Scarcity: A New Theory for the Role of Religion in Violence", in Juergensmeyer et al, 557.

this full observance, such as eternal salvation, becomes in effect a scarce resource. The gravity and enormity of the reward in question precipitates a heightened sense of urgency which, when coupled with textual discourse that provides justification for actions taken to reclaim this precious resource, creates a situation which is conducive to the emergence of conflict as outlined in the scarce resource theory. While salvation, spiritual liberation, or the preservation of a particular sacred site might not readily appear to be scarce resources in the traditional sense, they are to those who act on their behalf and towards their attainment. Additionally, their ethereal nature makes their attainment all that more crucial in the worldview of the faithful, one which is mandated not only by a need for survival but also by a moral imperative.[192]

5.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the symbiotic relationship between religion and violence as a function of social groups engaged in cultural world ordering that can be understood as foundational and transformative in the ongoing evolution of humanity. This relationship and the degree to which it must be emphasised in practice is in large measure commensurate with the immediate needs of a particular demographic, and flexible enough to accommodate the needs of both the social group as a whole and its individual members. Both religion and violence are terms and theoretical concepts which are subjective to human interpretation and applicability, and for the reasons discussed, the unification between the two provides for a powerful reservoir of powerful latent socio-political energy.

The relationship between religion and violence is extraordinarily complex, and so a singular approach can and will not suffice. Utilising a combination of the abovementioned paradigms may prove useful in the attempts of scholars or historians to place themselves in closer proximity to their subjects of inquiry. Adopting paradigms in this innovative way may be a valuable avenue towards utilizing familiar conceptual language to comprehend frames of reference which might be foreign to our own.

[192]For a case study in this regard, which analyses the Zionist insurgency in Palestine in the 1930s and 40s from the perspective of the scarce resource of statehood, see Charters, David A., "Jewish Terrorism and the Modern Middle East", *The Journal of Conflict Studies* 27:2 (2007), 80-89.

Chapter 6

The Inception of the Umma and its Social Defence Mechanisms

When ISIS declared a caliphate, it claimed the authority to define and preside over a religious group comprised of nearly two billion followers. By doing so, it dismissed the validity of alternative positions regarding what the umma is and how its members should behave, and therefore it is imperative to understand ISIS's reliance on fundamental intellectual mechanisms for defining and defending a constituency that is not solely a religious group. Examining the roots of these mechanisms and their implications is critical in understanding them as more than simply tools in the terrorists' arsenal. This chapter will present the birth of Islam as a social group whose boundaries and sense of self were determined by internal and external factors. It will then present the conditions and rationale which laid the foundations for the development of key ideological tools in Islam that are central in the ISIS worldview: *takfir*, *al-wala' wa-l-bara',* and *jihad.* This chapter will then illustrate how these mechanisms evolved to achieve and maintain statehood. The focus throughout this chapter will be on understanding the early umma, its perceptions, and communal and individual behaviour against frameworks of social group dynamics.

6.1 Birth of the Umma as a Social Group

In 610 CE while on a retreat outside of Mecca, the prophet Muhammad was commanded by the angel Gabriel to "Recite in the name of thy Lord who created, created man from a clot of blood, that thy Lord is the most munificent, who teaches by the word, teaches man what he knew not (…) Recite! Thy Lord is most noble".[193] Upon his return to Mecca, he began preaching a unified system of worship that was simultaneously revivalist and revolutionary, and would come to clash with entrenched socio-economic and religious power structures, and most notably the Quraysh tribe that was vested with authority in their maintenance.[194] Muhammad advocated a return to the unadulterated monotheism of Abraham,

[193] Quran, 96:1-3.

[194] For more on the socio-economic and religious landscape of Arabia at the time of the advent of Islam to include tribal dynamics, and the presence of ideas of monotheism, see Peters, F.E., *Mecca: A Literary History of the Muslim Holy Land* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

to be achieved first by the belief in Allah's ultimate unity, singularity, and uniqueness. *Tawhid* as divine unity represented in inception the belief that Allah was the ultimate singularity, and provided the basis for unity between humanity and the divine through the acknowledgement of said singularity and specific directives for human action meant to respect it. By bridging the worldly and ethereal, *tawhid* also dictated that Allah was sovereign in all matters both worldly and spiritual, and thus the greatest sin was *shirk*, the denial of God's oneness by placing any being equal to Him, in any position to receive human veneration of any sort.[195]

Early Qur'anic revelations centred on belief in *tawhid*[196], and this became the foundation for the delimitation of a distinct community.[197] As a nascent social group, Muhammad's community required the means by which to identify itself, and in 613 CE what would become the foundational creed and first pillar of Islam was introduced in the form of the *shahada*, or proclamation of faith. Although not encapsulated in direct revelation, it declares "I bear witness that there is no other god than (except) Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."[198] By uttering these words, an individual accepted Muhammad's revelations as undisputed, universal and divine truth and submitted to the sovereignty of Allah. The proclamation of faith provided the initial mechanism by which the demarcation of a distinct community bound by belief could be demonstrated, and because social groups are partly defined by their relationships with 'the other', it also laid the foundations for the rejection of contemporary polytheistic religious beliefs and the hierarchical social structures which depended on and supported them. Similarly, by joining others in this belief, it provided the means by which an individual could elect to associate with a distinct group, and this ability was a radical departure from traditional tribal affiliation in pre-Islamic

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[195] Donner, Fred McGraw, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 52.
[196] Quranic chapters and verses on Tawhid, which include themes such as the renouncement of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the central nature of the belief in Muhammad's preaching: 17:42-44, 21:21-24, 27:60-64. Also, Surah 112 in its entirety. In hadith literature, Muhammad is said to have referred to this chapter as being equivalent to one third of the Quran in its importance. See Sahih al-Bukhari 7374, Book 97, Hadith 4. Volume 9, Book 93, Hadith 471. In Muhsin Khan, Muhammad (trans) *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari; Arabic-English, Volume 9* (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997).
[197] See Donner, Fred M., "Talking about Islam's Origins", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 81:1 (February 2018), 1-18.
[198] El-Najjar, Hassan Ali, *Islamic Proclamation of Faith,* January 13, 2019. http://aljazeerah.info/Islamic%20Editorials/2014/November/Islamic%20Proclamation%20of%20Faith%20By%20Hassan%20Ali%20El-Najjar.htm (Accessed 20 August 2019)

Arabia.[199] The *shahada* also encapsulated the ability of religious creeds to demonise those deemed 'other' insofar as those who chose not to embrace *tawhid* and declare shahada could be perceived as personifications of the antithesis of Allah's ultimate goodness; namely, absolute evil. The Manichean tendencies of religious belief systems in this regard that enjoin the physical and metaphysical are evident in that Muhammad preached there were only two paths for humanity: that of righteousness in this life and reward in the hereafter, and absolute evil in the world followed by eternal damnation.[200]

The ideological demarcation provided by the declaration of belief in *tawhid* and Muhammad as divine messenger was manifest socially in that revelations included prescriptions for social conduct for those who had professed the *shahada*.[201] By anchoring conduct in belief in *tawhid*, Muhammad transformed quotidian behaviour into overt acts of worship and infused them with notions of absolute applicability and morality. The objective of this holistic approach was to create a social order defined by harmony and justice, portrayed as only being achievable by predicating all actions on belief in *tawhid*. The social implications of this morality extended insofar as Muhammad recited that those who had refused to acknowledge *tawhid* could not claim to judge the actions of any who had.[202]

As opposed to the messages of previous prophets, Muhammad's revelations appealed to all humanity, as the unity of mankind would represent divine *tawhid*.[203] Notwithstanding, his message met with resistance from the dominant Quraysh who viewed it as an affront to ancestral beliefs, and the socio-political status quo which rested on longstanding systems of belief which informed economic and political practices in Arabian power structures.[204] Given that Muhammad's community was defined both internally and externally by its belief, it was contrasted by those in Mecca who refused to acknowledge *tawhid* and Muhammad's role as Allah's messenger. These disbelieving Meccans were described as *kafir*, a term conjured to

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[199] For more on pre-Islamic tribal systems of social affiliation in contrast to the freedom of unilateral association offered by declaring the shahada, see Crone, Patricia, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 190.
[200] See Quran Surahs 90 and 92.
[201] Surah 70 outlines 8 fundamental social responsibilities of believers, including prayer and almsgiving.
[202] See Surah 84.
[203] Guillaume, A., *The Life of Muhammad; A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 212-213.
[204] For more on the dynamic of the symbiotic nature of trade, politics, and religion in pre-Islamic Arabia see Crone.

describe one who covered over the truth.[205] By covering over truth and obfuscating *tawhid*, disbelievers had plunged Arabia into an age of ignorance, *jahiliyyah,* and continued unabated to live this way. Further, they actively continued to cover over truth by persecuting believers and attempting to seduce them away from their newfound convictions. As persecution increased, the nature of Muhammad's revelations adapted to reflect the needs of a social group under threat.[206] A cycle of escalating tensions ensued, and ultimately Muhammad was divinely instructed to "proclaim what you have been ordered and turn away from the polytheists. (…) In the end they will know."[207] This development is highly significant in that it set the precedent for the disassociation from those deemed "other" on grounds of correct internal belief and public proclamation of it, gave believers the ability to quantify what actions constituted disbelief, and encouraged further solidarity between those who believed themselves to possess the correct worldview when contrasted with opposing and threatening worldviews. While revelations did not provide firm doctrinal mechanisms for pronouncing fellow humans disbelievers, the nature of escalating social tension between believers and disbelievers culminated in ideological ideations that laid the foundations for *takfir* and *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (WB) in Islam.[208]

While social and ideological lines of demarcation had been drawn in revelation, Muhammad's community continued to exist in Mecca as a persecuted minority. Just as the ideological tools to defend group integrity had emerged parallel to evolving social circumstances, shifting political realities gradually afforded Muhammad the opportunity to provide his community with the physical means to defend itself.[209] After receiving pledges of military alliance from tribal representatives from Yathrib, divine revelations changed, and Allah granted Muhammad permission to engage in violence, but equally provided justifications for said violence and the conditions which allowed it. "The first verse which

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[205] Quran, 74:43-46.

[206] For details on specific instances of Quraysh harassment of the early community and the way in which revelations addressed this issue, see Ishaq in Guillaume, 161.

[207] Ishaq in Guillaum, 184-187.

[208] Doctrinal developments pertaining to both declarations of apostasy and the concept of loyalty and disavowal as relevant to ISIS and Islamic terrorism will be covered in future sections, this section demonstrates only the sociological development of the foundation for the concepts.

[209] In 621 and 622CE, Muhammad met with representatives from Yathrib and concluded the first and second treaties of al-Aqabah. The details of the meetings are beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note that at the second treaty, it was agreed that the tribes of Yathrib would grant Muhammad and his community protection, and would ally with him in matters of war. For an account of these treaties, see Ishaq in Guillaume, 204.

was sent down on this subject (…) was: 'Permission is given to those who fight because they have been wronged. God is well able to help them,- those who have been driven out of their houses without right only because they said God is our Lord. (…) Fight them so that there be no more seduction, i.e. until no believer is seduced from his religion. 'And the religion is God's."[210] Encapsulated in this revelation is the foundational notion that violence engaged in by a believer is justified in the case that he or she has been wronged on the grounds of belief in God. It is more profound for practical and philosophical purposes when considering the way that Muhammad's revelations had framed morality by equating quotidian social practices to acts of worship in recognition of *tawhid*. While the initial command granting permission to fight can be seen in purely theological terms that allows violence to permit freedom of worship, the way Muhammad had drawn lines of demarcation between believers and non-believers set the precedent for this command to be expansively applied because it provided the platform which could be used to equate any action not predicated on belief in *tawhid* as an act of persecution.

The earliest foundations for *takfir*, WB, and jihad as legitimate violence conducted in the name of God can thus be seen as thoroughly intertwined, and as the progression of psychological and physical mechanisms by which a community could define itself relative to 'the other'. Furthermore, these foundations were not laid independently due to underlying theological positions, rather they evolved under the guise of divine infallibility in direct response to concrete social realities. The framing of 'the other' as both an identifiable entity, and later one which directly threatened the physical integrity of Muhammad's community, necessitated the ability of the group to defend itself. Commensurate with the behaviour of social groups which will see opposing worldviews as incompatible with their own when under perceived threat of annihilation, in the face of increased persecution, revelations described *jahiliyyah* and its adherents as irreconcilable with *tawhid*. Once that fear was alleviated by promises of military protection, physical mechanisms of force were introduced into the framework of identity and disassociation which had already been revealed.

6.2 Early Consolidation of Defence Mechanisms in Statehood

[210] Ishaq in Guillaume, 212-213.

In 622 CE Muhammad and his community emigrated to Yathrib, (hereafter Medina) and this momentous event, the *hijrah*, marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. [211] At Medina, the umma settled among Arab Jewish tribes which became known as the *ansar*, helpers. In this exile, which can be interpreted as a physical act of WB insofar as the community physically disassociated structural disbelief, the umma gained the opportunity to implement it vision for social governance which relied on revelation.[212] Muhammad combined all positions of pre-Islamic authority into his person, serving as tribal adjudicator, military commander, and religious leader, and his revelations increasingly emphasised the creation of a distinct group identity which departed from norms of previous Judeo-Christian prophets.[213] Indicative of this development is the Constitution of Medina which was likely produced shortly after the arrival of the believers at Medina. This document identified the inhabitants of Medina as a distinct and independent political unit, but also delineated the appropriate relationship in social, religious, economic, and political interactions between believers and those who did not believe, but with whom believers coexisted. This document, and further rules for governance which followed, incorporated previous institutions such as that of lex talionis, but did so by inserting notions of morality in that they were intended not to maintain the status of one group relative to another, but to establish God's justice through the promotion of umma integrity.[214] The distinct identity that began to form at Medina was based on the belief in an absolute divine authority, and the centralisation of worldly authority to mediate it. Furthermore, religious ties among co-believers were reinforced by uncompromising rejection of all paganism and denial of *tawhid*. Due to the intertwined religious and political nature of revelations and Muhammad's position, the act of disassociating from *jahiliyyah* became simultaneously social and moral; thus any future

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[211] For fuller historical narratives of the early umma, see Cook, David B., *Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
Rubin, Uri, "Muhammad and the Islamic Self-Image", in Motzki, Harald (ed), *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Source* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 3-17.
Watt, William Montgomery, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956).

[212] See Ramadan, Tariq, *The Messenger; The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[213] For more on the evolution of Muhammad's revelations to the creation of a distinct identity, see Rodinson, Maxime, *Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon, 1971).

[214] The most comprehensive study of the Constitution of Medina is Lecker, Michael, *The 'Constitution of Medina': Muhammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004).

severing of ties with the umma through belief or action could be considered both crime and sin.[215]

After the *hijrah*, the umma as a distinct social group and political unit that had been persecuted required the means to ensure its survival in a competitive social space, and the permission Allah had given it to engage in violence was expanded on in revelations, and the idea of jihad which was developed to convey a necessary defensive posture.[216] Although Muhammad and his community engaged in proactive raiding that was vital to the group's survival, this was construed as defensive in that was conducted against individuals and groups that threatened the umma's survival.[217] "They did not wait for the enemy to attack them in their own country. This is in accordance with a natural sociological law: "only contemptible people are fought in their own house"."[218] While raiding had been customary in pre-Islamic Arabia, what was socially revolutionary was that revelations not only condoned these raids, but that in their conduct as the means of ensuring group survival, notions of morality gave violence a higher meaning and purpose. Revelations forbade the killing of innocents, while they also described violence as a way to disgrace and humiliate those who perpetuated evil and denial of *tawhid*.[219] Most importantly, all violence was linked to the defence of God, territory, freedom, and human rights. "Jihad in the sense of fighting, however, is restricted by the phrase *fi sabil Allah*, in the way of God. This implies that jihad is not just plain, ordinary war, but must somehow be connected with religion and the interest of believers."[220]

Muhammad's community also engaged in three major battles with Meccan forces, and these were portrayed in revelation as having been necessary to the survival of the community, and virtuous endeavours in the eyes of God in that they provided the opportunity for believers

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[215] Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests,* 56.

[216] Jihad in Islam means to strive, and involves both inner striving for spiritual purity and external striving for the observance of God's will. For the present purposes, however, the use of the term jihad will be confined to describe acts and mechanisms of violence and warfare. For a comprehensive study of the evolution of jihad related to specific socio-cultural contexts in early Islamic history, see Heck, Paul L, "Jihad Revisited", *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 32:1 (Spring 2004), 95-128.

[217] For issues related to early raids of the umma, and the difficulties defining violent jihad relative to the community, see Faizer, Rizwi, "Expeditions and Battles", in McAuliffe, Jane (ed), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an Vol 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 143-152.

[218] Shaltut, Mahmud, "The Koran and Fighting", in Peters, Rudolph, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 100.

[219] Peters, 12-13.

[220] Rida, Rashid, in Peters, 118.

to physically strive to fight those who would deny *tawhid*.[221] Due to the way violence had been revealed and justified, it's conduct as a communal expression of belief in *tawhid* and rejection of paganism could further enhance bonds of loyalty and cohesion between believers through the shared cathartic experience of righteous violence.[222]

While violence in the form of raids and battles took place against external enemies in the years immediately following the hijrah, structural and physical violence also manifest itself internally which reinforced underlying premises of nascent *takfir* and WB. Following the battle of Badr, a Jewish tribe of Medina was accused of treachery by Muhammad and subsequently expelled from the town. This occurred again after the battle of Uhud with another tribe. After the Battle of the Trench this again occurred, yet this time Muhammad ordered the massacre of all the tribe's men.[223] These instances have been explored extensively in research, but for the present purposes what is important to note is that they are indicative of a period in which the authority and longevity of the umma as a social group was not a certainty.[224] They demonstrate the fact that any act contrary to the political interests of the group could be simultaneously construed as an act of disbelief in that questioning Muhammad's political role as leader also undermined the fundamental premise that he acted on behalf of divine interest. These acts, therefore, removed their perpetrators from the fold of group inclusion and cast them outside community protection and divine favour. In a dangerous social space in which umma survival was not guaranteed, violent mechanisms were necessary to ensure umma unity, the most important social quality observed in the constitution of Medina in that human unity meant to represent divine *tawhid*. This type of enforcement and violently casting out those deemed 'other' could strengthen bonds of solidarity in correct belief and practice in that individuals would be hesitant to place themselves in a position of

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[221] For a contextual placing of the battles of Badr, Uhud, and the Trench, see Bonner, Michael, *Jihad in Islamic History; Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 40.

[222] This is commensurate with the formativist sociological approach which understands nationalist sentiments in the creation of identity as an inevitable result of warfare. See Malesevic, Sinisa, "Nationalism, War and Social Cohesion", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34:1 (2011), 142-161.

[223] For details see Reynolds, Gabriel Said, *The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsberg Fortress Publishers, 2012), 44-47.

[224] For more on the specifics of each expulsion and the massacre, as well as an analysis of how these events were chronicled by contemporaries, see Faizer, Rizwi, "Muhammad and the Medinan Jews: A Comparison of the Texts of Ibn Ishaq's Kitab Sirat Rasul Allah with al-Waqidi's Kitab al-Maghazi", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28:4 (November 2006), 463-489.

precarity and risk facing a similar fate. In these instances, the power of one of religion's three primary social functions, that of control, is evident.

In 630 CE, Muhammad marched from Medina to Mecca with an army of 10,000 men, and Meccan forces under Abu Sufyan surrendered the city without bloodshed. Muhammad in turn granted amnesty to those who had persecuted believers, and many of these went on to become influential leaders and warriors under the prophet and his successors.[225] The fact that Muhammad and his followers achieved victory over Mecca is highly significant, as one of the hallmark features of religion is its ability to provide a narrative that future generations can incorporate as their own in a shared transcendent experience. The victory over Mecca provided the foundation for the narrative that correct belief in *tawhid*, practices reflective of it, identity formation and demarcation resultant from it, and calculated violence in enforcement of it, could produce a self-sufficient socio-political group which could not only survive but which could also be victorious over contemporary relative hegemons.

6.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the deliberate creation of a unique identity based on fundamental belief, and intellectual mechanisms that were introduced into a transcendent framework to safeguard the integrity of that identity. Because the foundational developments of ideas that would inform *takfir*, WB, and jihad were the result of contemporary contexts, and because the call to *tawhid* was meant to appeal to all of humanity, these ideas were flexible to enable their application relative to future and unforeseen needs of the community. Muhammad's messages revealed a vision for a sacred canopy that encompassed spiritual, social, economic, and political spheres of life and whose inner cohesion would reflect divine unity. Another crucial point for restatement is the fact that all violence conducted to safeguard group identity and integrity was framed as both justified and necessary to achieve God's will. God's will as described in revelation, however, did not limit itself to abstract principles, rather it was the construction and maintenance of a revolutionary sovereign entity. Due to the cultural context in which these ideas developed, violence in the way of God manifest itself as one of the mechanisms through which one social group could pursue independence and a

[225] For details on the events leading to Muhammad's victory over Mecca, see Watt, Montgomery, *Muhammad; Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 203-206.

model for governance which contradicted contemporary institutions of power as well as existing rules for achieving and exercising statehood.

Chapter 7

ISIS Antecedents

ISIS is one of the world's best-known entities, yet the nuances and characteristics that make it unique and potentially able to provide an enduring ideological framework despite territorial demise remain underappreciated in Western frameworks.[226] The Wilson Center, an internationally respected think tank based in Washington DC summarised the early years of ISIS by stating the following: "The Islamic State – also known as ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh – emerged from the remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a local offshoot of al Qaeda founded by Abu Musab al Zarqawi in 2004. It faded into obscurity for several years after the surge of U.S. troops to Iraq in 2007. But it began to re-emerge in 2011. Over the next few years, it took advantage of growing instability in Iraq and Syria to carry out attacks and bolster its ranks."[227] This description, while not entirely inaccurate, is misleading in that it portrays ISIS as having grown organically as an Al-Qaeda splinter organisation, and as part of a single jihadist movement whose members share violent anti-American ambitions. Furthermore, this assessment frames ISIS and its relative level of prevalence and success as being inversely related to the presence and influence of the US military, and can thus facilitate blanket labelling of "Islamic terrorism" and encourage support for countermeasures which rely heavily on military intervention at the exclusion of all others.[228]

ISIS is the product of the juncture between longstanding ambitions of Islamic self-rule in the jihadist program and the contextual circumstance provided by the US led war in Iraq. In the case of social groups pursuing ambitions, and especially in the case of those which would

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[226] The group has undergone numerous name changes since its appearance, and has been known as The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), The Islamic State (IS), and Daesh (the transliteration of the Arabic acronym formed of the same words that comprise ISIS in English). All of these names have different meanings to both proponents and opponents of the organisation, but for sake of ease, this thesis will utilise ISIS to refer to the group at all stages of its existence until later noted.

[227] *Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State,* Wilson Center, October 28 2019. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state (Accessed 5 December 2019).

[228] For more widely circulated brief assessments of the origins of ISIS, see *ISIS,* History.com, June 7 2019. https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/isis (Accessed 5 December 2019).
Kirdar, M.J., *Al Qaeda in Iraq,* Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 15 2011. https://www.csis.org/analysis/al-qaeda-iraq (Accessed 5 December 2019).

do so violently, ideology alone is insufficient to trigger action.[229] For this to occur, opportunity is needed as well, and the Iraqi conflict was not the catalyst for ISIS emergence; rather it was an opportunity required for competing visions within the jihadisphere to take root, and which exacerbated them. The extreme and seemingly indiscriminate violence conducted in the name of jihad, which characterised the early conflict in Iraq, was widely noticed by international audiences. The underpinning meaning of the longstanding program that said violence supported, and the ways in which it had evolved leading up to its manifestation in Iraq, was not.

This chapter will first explore Salafism and its emergence as a distinct identity within the umma, designed to reinvigorate Islam's prosperity by emulating the standards provided by Muhammad and his community. Second it will discuss the development of Salafi-Jihadism as a unique substructure to achieve Salafi objectives through purity and governance by means of violent ideological reconfigurations. Third this chapter will discuss the impacts of the Soviet-Afghan war on Salafi-jihadism and the birth of al-Qaeda. Fourth this chapter will introduce one of the most influential Salafi-jihadist ideologues of this period, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, in order to survey his intellectual reconstructions of key concepts that remain points of contention within the jihadisphere. Finally, it will chronicle the state of Salafi-jihadism in the period between the Soviet-Afghan war and 9/11.

7.1 Exploring Salafism

ISIS is, at its core, a Salafi-takfiri organisation, and thus no examination of the group's framing and wielding of the concepts would be useful without understanding the origins and significance of the same. "Salafism derives from the term the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-salih)*, the first three generations of Muslims who had first-hand experience of the rise of Islam and are regarded as exemplary for the correct way to live for future Muslims."[230] In order to follow the example set by the first generations of Muslims and emulate their behaviour despite centuries of separation, Salafis adhere to a strict methodology which relies on the principles of

[229] Baldet, William, *Preventing radical right extremism requires honesty, empathy and a whole society approach. Are we doomed to fail?* OpenDemocracy, June 5 2019. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/preventing-radical-right-extremism-requires-honesty-empathy-and-whole-society-approach-are-we-doomed-fail/ (Accessed 5 December 2019).

[230] Meijer, Roel, "Introduction", in Meijer, Roel (ed), *Global Salafism; Islam's New Religious Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-32, 3.

the Qurʼan and hadith to correctly observe *tawhid* in the world.[231] Salafis are therefore distinguished from other Muslims by their self-asserted proximity to the pious predecessors, gained through the correct emulation of emotivity and behaviour, and the refusal to adopt non-scriptural sources of *shariʿa.*[232] Salafism traces its roots to the scholar Ibn Hanbal (780-855 CE) and the movement *ahl al-hadith* which rejected contemporary sources of Islamic law such as analogical reasoning (*qiyas)* and personal scholarly legal opinion (*ra'y).*[233] Later proponents of this methodology included the 14th century scholar Ibn Taymiyya who argued that the Mongol rulers that had displaced the Abbasid Caliphate had converted to Islam by proclaiming the *shahada*, but that they governed by manmade laws that contradicted the *shariʿa*. This, he asserted, had rendered their conversions null and void, making them apostates and thus legitimate targets of jihad in which every Muslim was legally required to participate.[234] Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya declared that sin and communal deviance from the path outlined in the Quran constituted disbelief so grave that in return the Muslim community had been thrust into chaos and subservience.[235] The only way to rectify the situation, he argued, was to return to the basic fundamentals of worship and governance embodied by the first three generations of Muslims. In the 18th century, 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) built on this framework and argued that those who did not adhere to his vision of tawhid could be declared *kuffar*, apostate, and thus excommunicated by *takfir*, making them legitimate targets of lawful jihad.[236] The desire to emulate the standards of Muhammad's community proved to be a powerful intellectual mechanism for mobilisation, and as it was presented by Ibn Taymiyya and 'Abd al-Wahhab centuries apart, proved to later generations that it could be applicable across time, space, and serve specific cultural needs.

Despite the fact that Salafism appeals to the desire to purify Islam and return to the most unadulterated sources of law, governance, and social conduct, the way that this is

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[231] Hadith is the "group of reports"; accounts of what Muhammad or a member of his early community said or did. They are second in authority only to the Qur'an, and were collected in written form in the 9th century CE. In collecting an authoritative collection, hadiths were evaluated on their constituent parts: *isnad* (chain of transmission, to verify authenticity), and *matn* (the text of the report containing guiding principles, measured for utility and applicability). The hadith, therefore, are viewed as "the practices and patterns of behaviour that brought such phenomenal success to Muhammad and the Medinese community". See Shah, Mustafa, *The Hadith: Articulating the Beliefs and Constructs of Classical Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[232] Meijer, 5.

[233] Schacht, Joseph, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 63.

[234] Peters, 162.

[235] Ibn Taymiyya, in Aaron, David, *In Their Own Words: Voices of Jihad – Compilation and Commentary,* RAND Corporation, 2008, 47.

[236] Meijer, 5.

achieved differentiates Salafis both from the broader umma and amongst themselves, and there is no single definition of what it means to be 'Salafi'.[237] Quietist Salafis "focus on the propagation of their message (*da'wa*) through lessons, sermons, and other missionary activities and stay away from politics and violence, which they leave to the ruler."[238] These individuals emphasise purification and education, and do not recognise modern political systems as legitimate due to lack of foundation in scriptural principles. Furthermore, they consider political activity as a dangerous diversion which detracts from an individual's ability to achieve spiritual purity, and foments unlawful divisions within the umma.[239] Salafi-jihadism, a term used to describe those who seek a return to the models exemplified by the first three generations of Muslims by means of violence has gained notoriety in the West after 9/11, but can best be described as a theological doctrine of millenarian change which focuses on issues of rightful authority, legitimacy, obedience and justified rebellion.[240] In linking its theology to violence, Salafi-jihadists emphasise the Quranic injunctions for warfare which dictate that it must be conducted *fi sabil Allah* (in the path of God) as was outlined in the previous section, and maintain that the path of God entails the premises for *tawhid* in governance which were embodied by Muhammad and his companions. This undermines visions of jihad which describe it as a holistic struggle for purity, and thus Salafi-jihadists view physical struggle as the pinnacle of Islam, and themselves as an elite group within the umma responsible for its salvation.[241]

The rigidity of the worldview embraced by Salafis, and the self-appointed role of Salafi-jihadists in ensuring Islam's survival and enforcement of *tawhid*, necessitates the practical application of *takfir* to delineate what the Muslim community should be. For Salafi-jihadists, *takfir* is the means by which to embody one of religion's core social functions, that of control. Just as Muhammad linked worldly conduct to the living demonstration of *tawhid*, so Salafi-jihadists consider what they interpret as unlawful or un-Islamic behaviour as

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[237] Primary points of divergence among Salafis revolve around the concepts of *'aqida* and *manhaj;* creed and method. Defining the creed is particularly important to Salafis as it entails correct belief and the elimination of religious innovations as well as un-Islamic influences. See Meijer, 5.

[238] Wagemakers, Joas, "A Terrorist Organisation that Never Was: The Jordanian 'Ba'yat al-Imam' Group", *Middle East Journal* 68:1 (Winter 2014), 59-75, 64.

[239] For more on purist Salafis, and how they are distinguished from Salafis who attempt to maintain purity while engaging in political activity for a greater good, the 'politicos', see Wiktorowicz, Quinton, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006), 207-239.

[240] Maher, Shiraz, *Salafi-Jihadism; The History of an Idea* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), 14.

[241] Maher, 32.

comprising a sin grave enough to remove its adherent from the fold of Islam.[242] When coupled with a militant ideology which stipulates to those outside the fold of Islam as legitimate targets of violence, *takfir* becomes a mechanism to ensure homogeneity through fear and coercion. While *takfir* as a construct is meant to protect the purity of the umma by casting out those who engage in major acts of disbelief, it becomes problematic when attempting to discern the inner motivations and intentions of those individuals who may outwardly engage in questionable behaviour.[243] Salafi-jihadists, however, circumvent this difficulty by citing examples of the Prophet Muhammad's life in which he judged individuals based on their apparent actions.[244] Given human subjectivity and the social ambitions of a group, however, it is evident how the application of *takfir* can be moulded and modified to serve a desired outcome.

Salafism advocates the realisation of *tawhid* through credal purity, and its adherents believe themselves to be of the saved sect which will lead the umma to prosperity. Further, they believe that socio-political developments which occurred after the time of the Prophet are corrupted and deviant, and must be avoided to maintain purity. While quietists do not overtly engage in political structures, Salafi-jihadists maintain that justified jihad conducted to eliminate these structures is a necessary step in progress through idealised regression in order to emulate the standards of Muhammad's community and the mechanisms by which it achieved sovereignty. In terms of social group analysis, Salafism provides a worldview which offers revival and communal dignity, and Salafi-jihadism offers a specific type of agency, justified through sacred historical narrative, through which this may be achieved.[245] As a construct, it is abstract and subject to the needs and desires of a constituency which when combined with the abovementioned irreproachable religious justification, makes it a powerful paradigm for forging specific visions of an ideal community.

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[242] Maher, 72.

[243] For more on the subjective use of takfir, and the six types of sin that comprise *kufr akbar* (great sin), see Lav, Daniel, *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 69.

[244] In one example, Muhammad told his paternal uncle who was captured during the Battle of Badr that although he was Muslim, it was only 'apparent' that he had been against the Muslim army. This was used by Anwar al-Awlaki in 2009. See Maher, 74.

[245] For more on contextual development of Salafism, and its uses as a vehicle for change, see Lauziere, Henri, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

7.2 The Dream of the Utopian Islamic State

The Islamist and jihadist programs in the modern era can trace their roots to the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 by school teacher Hasan al-Banna.[246] The Brotherhood, according to article (2) of its bylaws, "is an international Muslim Body, which seeks to establish Allah's law in the land by achieving the spiritual goals of Islam and the true religion".[247] It sought to Islamize society by creating and maintaining grassroots organizations as well as the provision of essential social services in accordance with the principles of *tawhid*.[248] This would in turn ultimately result in the restoration of a worldwide Caliphate following the inevitable collapse of secular regimes. Al-Banna wrote extensively on the topic of jihad, and described it as a tool incumbent upon all believers in establishing the Islamic state and this was reflected in the organizational motto: "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our exemplar. The Quran is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."[249] The Muslim Brotherhood in its inception therefore began the process of intellectually reorienting the grounds on which a state could and should be formed in the modern era. The Western construct of a modern state took root in Europe following the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The Treaty, which outlined rudimentary notions of citizenship based on locality and loyalty, sought to guarantee enduring peace through the recognition of the validity of new laws and agreements which were the result of distinct communal identities.[250] Al-Banna, however, argued that these fundamental ideas of identity and citizenship were artificial, and therefore any state that arose from them would be similarly

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[246] Islamism is "the ideological proposition that the legitimacy of the political order be derived from Islam." Alexander and Alexander, 33. While Salafis stipulate that sources of legitimacy can be found solely in the emulation of the standards of the Prophet's community, Islamism emerged following defensive modernisation in the Middle East. See FN 23 below.

[247] *Bylaws of the International Muslim Brotherhood*. http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/673.pdf (Accessed 9 December 2019)

[248] The desire to return to Islam to achieve social justice and national dignity did not originate with the Muslim Brotherhood, it had been theorised previously as part of the intellectual debates which characterised defensive modernisation. During this period, especially in Egypt, Muslim governments and populations grappled with the difficulties of maintaining cultural identity despite encroaching systems of Western bureaucracies and values. These debates gave genesis to the idea that original precepts of Islamic governance exemplified by the Prophet's community at Medina were eternal, and could be adapted and implemented in the modern world. See Tignor, Robert L., *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

[249] Ali, Ayaan Hirsi, "The Quran is our Law; Jihad is our Way", *The Wall Street Journal,* February 28 2011. In American Enterprise Institute. http://www.aei.org/publication/the-quran-is-our-law-jihad-is-our-way/ (Accessed 9 December 2019)

[250] "Treaty of Westphalia (October 24, 1648): Peace Treaty between the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France and their Respective Allies", *Islamic Studies* 50:1 (Spring 2011), 73-102.

flawed. This would especially be the case when states derived from this artificial construct were superimposed onto a culture which already possessed organic models for identity-based governance; in this case, that which was provided by the example of Muhammad's experience at Medina.[251]

The Brotherhood outlined a policy of gradualism that was reflected by the organization's seven stated goals: (1) inform the world about Islam and spread its teachings, (2) unify the world under the banner of Islam, (3) raise the standard of living and achieve social justice, (4) fight disease, poverty and hunger, (5) liberate the umma from foreign rule, (6) establish a worldwide Caliphate, and (7) build a new world order based on the Sharia. These goals, in turn, were to be met through the gradual conduct of four separate phases: (1) *da'wa* I, (2) *da'wa* II, (3) jihad, and (4) *khalifa*.[252] It is important to note that despite the overall ambitions made explicitly clear in the Brotherhood's charter, the organisation was committed to working within established frameworks and institutions of democracy to achieve them, did not believe itself to be in the jihadist stage of progression, and thus did not apply *takfir* to rulers or regimes.

After playing a vital role in the Egyptian free officer's coup of 1952, the group was politically persecuted and radical offshoots began to advocate the progression towards the jihadist stage of operations, embodied by thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb who revolutionised the construct of *takfir* by applying it to secular rulers.[253] He justified this by citing Ibn Taymiyya, whose theology had been reinvigorated in the modern era by 'Abd al-Wahhab, who argued that any activity; social, moral, or political, that encroached on the sole authority of Allah was by default an act of apostasy and therefore necessitated a two-fold process: jihad waged to cleanse the umma of impurities and jihad waged to wrest political control from the grasp of infidel authorities and establish *tawhid* in governance.[254] Furthermore, according to the Quran and the models of governance embodied by the earliest generations of Muslims, it would be

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[251] For more on Al-Banna, see Wendell, Charles (trans), *Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna: A Selection from the Majmu at Rasail al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978).

[252] *da'wa* refers to spreading the messages and teachings of Muhammad. For the outline of the stages of achieving the Caliphate, see Friedland, Elliot, "The Muslim Brotherhood; Special Report", *The Clarion Project,* August 23 2016, 14 http://www.clarionproject.org/sites/default/files/Muslim-Brotherhood-Special-Report.pdf (Accessed 9 December 2019)

[253] Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones.* In Bergensen, Albert J., *The Sayyid Qutb Reader; Selected Writings of Politics, Religion, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18.

[254] Napoleoni, Loretta, *The Islamist Phoenix; The Islamic State and the Redrawing of the Middle East* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2014), 90.

the obligation of the legitimate Islamic ruler to maintain *tawhid* and enforce correct forms of pious behavior in all aspects of life by defining and implementing strict guidelines for members of the umma to follow. By drawing inspiration from Ibn Taymiyya and 'Abd al-Wahhab and moulding their precepts for contemporary applicability, Qutb set an important precedent in Islamic reformism and statecraft. He embodied the necessity of recovering the 'true pristine Islam of the Quran' by resorting to militant methods and imposing correct reformist ideology by force,[255] and he did so by carefully crafting an ideological platform which built on ideas which had been a part of Islamic history for centuries, demonstrating the power of religious narratives to create a continuum between past, present, and idealised future.

Qutb also began to build on the ideas developed by al-Banna in that he continued to redefine conventional notions of legitimacy and sovereignty in ways that reflected a melding of traditional Islamic constructs of divine rule and Western frameworks which relied on the existence of a power relationship between rulers and a constituency.[256] By framing a return to original Islamic models for governance as the means of reviving human fulfilment, dignity, and social harmony, Qutb demonstrated the ability of religious beliefs to provide links between contemporary circumstances and an idealised past. By elaborating on the necessity of violence by reinvigorating the role of *ijtihad*, he also appealed to underlying sentiments of modern national subjugation and offered individual and collective agency as a vehicle for effecting change in the world.[257] Qutb did not utilise the term Salafi-jihadism as we understand it today when conceptualising terrorist models, but his reformulations of justified violence as a necessary means of defining the umma and restoring Islamic purity demonstrate the salience and endurance of the frameworks he built on.

In 1971, Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Hudaybi rejected both violence and *takfir* on behalf of the organization, stating that while the need to maintain the struggle against oppression in the pursuit of the eventual Caliphate remained paramount, any individual to

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[255] Rahman, Fazlur, "Islam: An Overview", in Eliade, Mircea (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Religion, Volume 7* (New York: Simon & Schuster MacMillan, 1995), 303-322.

[256] Khatab, Sayed, "Hakimiyyah and Jahiliyyah in the Thought of Sayyid Qutb", *Middle Eastern Studies* 38:3 (July 2002), 145-170.

[257] Ijtihad refers to the ability of a learned scholar to interpret sacred texts to apply them in governance and quotidian affairs. This role had largely been abandoned after the 10th century, and by claiming the right to exercise it Qutb set the precedent for revolutionaries to interpret scriptural mandates in justification of political and religious objectives. For the dynamics that led to the abandonment of the practice in ijtihad and the systems which followed it, see Hallaq, Wael B, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16:1 (March 1984), 3-41.

pronounce the *shahada* in earnest was to be deemed a believer against all accusations.[258] This stance is commensurate with the belief in Islam that one cannot judge what is in a person's heart; this role is reserved for Allah alone.[259] While this position remained institutionally firm within the Brotherhood, Qutb's ideology also found resonance, and in 1981 members of the militant Jamaat al-Jihad assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The group's theoretician, Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, argued that extreme violent jihad was an individual duty necessary to cleanse the umma. Further, he elaborated on Qutb's position in that he believed the social bonds of ideological solidarity in pursuit of ideal governance exemplified by Muhammad's community were stronger and more valid than any notion of modern citizenship. By thus crafting his argument, 'Abd al-Salam Faraj developed and made more salient the notion that concepts of statehood and nationality were invalid when contrasted with superior models of social harmony that would result from the observance of divine prescriptions for governance.[260]

7.3 Salafi-Jihadism in the Soviet-Afghan War

The details of the events leading to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the nuances of tacit and overt governmental support for the mujahidin that confronted it are beyond the scope of this thesis, but no discussion of ISIS ideology would be complete without a brief narration of the jihadist experience there.[261] Early in the Afghan conflict, Dr. Abdullah Azzam, with the financial support of Osama Bin Laden, established the *Maktab al-Khidamat* (Office of Services), whose function was to release recruitment propaganda, facilitate the inflow of foreign fighters into the country, and train them.[262] Azzam capitalized on subjective individual socio-political grievances experienced by the lower classes of Muslim nations, and

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[258] Sullivan, Denis Joseph and Sana Abed-Kotob, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt; Civil Society vs. The State* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 63.
[259] Quran 6:114.
[260] Abd al-Salam Faraj, *The Neglected Duty,* in Euben, Roxanne L. and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (eds), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought; Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 321.
[261] For more on the invasion of Afghanistan, the international response, and the mujahidin, see Rubin, Barnett R., *Afghanistan From the Cold War Through the War on Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[262] The Office of Services also built on the precedent set by the Muslim Brotherhood in establishing 'shadow state' structures in that it created a university for theological training, finance offices for the disbursement of payment and benefits to fighters, and an internal council responsible for voting on military and quotidian initiatives. See Rana, Muhammad Amir, *Arabs in Afghan Jihad* (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2007).

linked them to an expanded perception of nationhood. He urged allegiance to an Islamic identity over a national one by stating that "This Afghan Affair has emerged from a regional affair to an Islamic one."[263] Azzam argued that jihad as prescribed in scripture did not necessarily need to be conducted exclusively defensively, but that it could be waged offensively in order to establish a territorial foothold from which to expand the eventual caliphate. In this regard he differed from Qutb slightly in that in his framing he shifted the primary focus of jihad away from apostate rulers to the Soviets; foreigners that had physically invaded Muslim lands. He also echoed Faraj's conceptualization in positing that jihad should not be a collective duty declared by a recognized ruler but an individual obligation incumbent upon every single believer, thus further undercutting the authority of apostate states to declare jihad, and establishing the transnational umma as an independent stakeholder engaged in just warfare within a global conflict. By doing so, Azzam gave his vision of the umma the ideological ability to wield state like power in a modern context.[264]

In the early 1980s Bin Laden established Al-Qaeda's immediate forerunner in Afghanistan, *Ma'sadat al-Ansar* (The Lion's Den of Supporters) as an Arab-only fighting unit that did not integrate with local mujahidin counterparts, and increasingly "treated Afghans living in government controlled areas as unbelievers to whom Muslims should apply the laws of *futuhat* (conquest), including execution of adult males who resisted and enslavement of women and children."[265] Whereas in 1979 the conflict had been framed as a pan-Islamic solidarity movement, by the mid-1980s members of the Office had begun to focus substantial energy on redefining the parameters of umma membership and these, to a large degree, were determined by the conceptual developments regarding the role of jihad in shaping not only a state but the Muslim community itself. In Bin Laden's view, his fighters constituted an elite cadre that was necessary if the jihadist program was to succeed, and this jihadist vanguard would be responsible for achieving what previous Islamists and revolutionaries had not.[266] This conceptual orientation gave the vanguard the imperative of establishing an Islamic state modeled on Medina, and established the basis on which a self-determined group of individuals

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[263] Azzam, Abdullah, *The Signs of Allah the Most Merciful in the Jihad of Afghanistan,* (London: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, no date)

[264] For a discussion on Azzam's fusing of historical and contemporary rhetoric to create something unique of unprecedented power within the popular discourse of Islamic resistance see Burke, Jason, *Al-Qaeda; Casting a Shadow of Terror* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 68-69.

[265] Rubin, 87.

[266] De Waart, Cornelis and Abu Dawud al-Amriki, "Jihadist Authority: Understanding the Structure and Narrative", *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 6:4 (May 2014), 4-8, 5.

could claim elite status within a larger constituency and thus dictate the composition and identity of that same constituency. This intellectual positioning, therefore, created an environment in which *takfir* and WB could be extensively interpreted and applied within the umma itself as well as beyond it to create and enforce specific parameters for membership. While the Office of Services and the members of the Lion's Den were materially focused on defeating the Soviets as part of the larger progression towards Islamic statehood, the ideological creation of an elite vanguard and its theoretical self-ascribed ability to define the identity, composition, and goals of the larger Islamic social group was an important development in the doctrine of jihad.[267]

7.4 The Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

One of the most important individuals to have great impact on the intellectual repositioning of jihad, its role in identifying the umma, and achieving statehood during this period was Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.[268] He is, to this day, one of the most important spiritual fathers to develop the militant ideology of Salafi-jihadism which first gained worldwide renown through its incarnation in Al-Qaeda.[269] Furthermore, the Jordanian Salafi continues to be a figure of great authority within the jihadisphere, and his outspoken role in the ongoing debates surrounding the application of *takfir* and WB, as well as his contributions to revolutionising the very concepts, and Salafi-jihadism itself, require devoting significant attention to his ideology.

Since the 1970s al-Maqdisi has made numerous contributions to the ideology of Salafi-jihadism, but for the present purposes, this section will focus on his treatment of WB and its implications. Notions of community and loyalty which form the foundations of WB predate the advent of Islam, and were used to denote the process by which members of a tribe could expel an individual from the safety guaranteed by group membership, and simultaneously claim to be innocent of any fate to befall the former member.[270] This concept was

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[267] For more on the early history of the Office of Services, the Lion's Den and Al-Qaeda, see Cragin, Kim R, "Early History of Al-Qai'da", *The Historical Journal* 51:4 (December 2008), 1047-1067.
[268] For an authoritative biography, see Wagemakers, Joas, *A Quietist Jihadi; The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[269] Al-Saud, Abdullah bin Khaled, "The Spiritual Teacher and His Truants: The Influence and Relevance of Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41:9 (2018), 736-754.
[270] Izutsu, Toshihiko, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), 56.

incorporated as the early Muslim community absorbed ingrained tribal social mechanisms, and was repurposed to distinguish group membership between those who did and did not acknowledge *tawhid*. The Qurʾanic passage that informs al-Maqdisi's treatment of WB is the following: "Indeed there has been an excellent example for you in Abraham and those with him when they said to their people: "Verily we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allah. We have rejected you, and there has started between us and you enmity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone."[271] This verse, according to the Salafi interpretation, encompasses the obligation of the believer to disavow any form of worship that denies *tawhid*, as well as those who uphold it. Crucially, it dictates that relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims must remain on the basis of hatred until *tawhid* is realised, and parties can find common ground in the acknowledgement of *tawhid*.[272]

Al-Maqdisi expanded on this conceptualisation in "Millat Ibrahim" (1984) by aiming the necessary hatred and enmity at man-made laws.[273] Furthermore, al-Maqdisi argued that in the modern world, those who uphold man-made laws should also be treated with enmity, making individuals at all levels of government and secular institutions targets of hatred. He did so by elaborating on the Islamic deficiencies manifest by Saudi governance, arguing that while Wahhabi theology was well intentioned, it relied in contemporary usage on innovations which were heretical due to their having originated after the time of the *salaf*.[274] In his work, al-Maqdisi cited extensively from the Quran, hadith, and Wahhabi scholars to support the proposition that the ideal form of expressing disavowal was violent jihad. "By thus connecting *wala*' towards 'un-Islamic' laws with worship, and its alternative -*bara'* – with jihad, while all the time stressing the necessity of disavowal for all Muslims, al-Maqdisi has turned *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* from a quietist tool to purify the religion into an instrument for revolution."[275] Not only did al-Maqdisi revolutionise WB by arguing that it entailed mandatory hatred and justified violence against those deemed 'other' by their adherence to man-made laws, by doing so he also made the outward conduct of jihad, as demonstrative *bara*, a necessary litmus test for inclusion in a narrowly interpreted Muslim community.[276]

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[271] Quran 60:4
[272] Bin Ali, Mohamad, *The Roots of Religious Extremism; Understanding the Salafi Doctrine of Al-Wala' wal Bara'* (London: Imperial College Press, 2016), 108.
[273] Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi; The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,* 170.
[274] This premise was first encapsulated theologically in *Millat Ibrahim,* 1984. See Wagemakers.
[275] Ibid, 173
[276] Ibid, 184.

Al-Maqdisi used his framework, which built on the ideas developed by Qutb and ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, to determine that applying or upholding any system of laws or governance other than those mandated in scripture constituted disbelief so grave as to warrant unequivocal pronouncement of *takfir*. He did so in a meticulously Salafi fashion, by likening modern political structures to the *jahiliyyah* which predated Islam, and he turned an intellectual construct designed to strengthen bonds of Islamic solidarity into a means by which to declare apostate those who did not share his vision of *tawhid*. Fundamentally, he created a framework which equated justified violence to the natural consequence of the basic beliefs of the Islamic faith.[277]

7.5 Salafi-Jihadism between the Soviet-Afghan War and 9/11

A great deal has been written about the evolution of Al-Qaeda between the Soviet war and 9/11, but for the present purposes a few points are worth noting.[278] Despite the cessation of hostilities, and the international displacement of veterans of the Soviet war, Al-Qaeda maintained its self-image as a transnational entity and absorbed regional affiliates by providing tactical and theological training to groups of local fighters, and granted them eventual autonomy in return for a pledge of loyalty, *bayat*, sworn to Bin Laden himself.[279][280] Although Saudi Arabia had acknowledged the legitimacy of Azzam’s jihad against the Soviets, following the return of foreign fighters and the perceived threat they posed by embodying reformulated ideas of what constituted legitimate governance, the Saudi State launched a wave of repression against the moderate Islamist group Sahwa in an effort to contain any affront to its Islamic legitimacy. Despite these efforts, in 1995 Saudi Arabia experienced its first terrorist attack which killed five Americans, two Indians, and injured dozens more. Of the four perpetrators, three were veterans of the Soviet war, and at trial all of

[277] Wagemakers, Joas, “The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* in the Ideology of Muhammad al-Maqdisi”, in Meijer, 81-106, 102.
[278] For more on Al-Qaeda, see Burke.
[279] For the minutes of the first Al-Qaeda meetings outlining this strategy, see Cragin.
[280] For more on the diaspora of foreign fighters that returned to the Middle East following the Soviet war, see Hegghammer, Thomas, “Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia”, *Middle East Policy* 3:4 (2006), 39-60.

the accused stated that they had been heavily influenced by the teachings and ideology of al-Maqdisi.[281]

One of the most important developments during this period was the fact that when Saddam Hussein's military invaded Kuwait, the Saudi state invited American troops and personnel to the region, despite Bin Laden's offers to supply the regime with jihadist troops and personal finances.[282] This had a major impact on reshaping the realpolitik and theological objectives of the jihadist movement. In his initial appeals to the Saudi state, Bin Laden displayed hesitance in applying the theologically dangerous accusation of *takfir* as "at the time, he saw the Saudi regime as Islamic, and believed any religious irregularities in the country did not extend to driving the regime out of the fold of Islam."[283] Following the refusal of his offer, Bin Laden left Saudi Arabia, and Al-Qaeda's core leadership relocated numerous times before finding safe haven in Afghanistan.[284] While Bin Laden's ultimate objectives of Islamic statehood, achieved through justified violence, remained constant, reorienting organisational benchmarks and priorities meant that *takfir* and WB as they had developed during the Soviet war could be potentially further reconfigured intellectually to correlate with those entities or individuals which now became enemies.

Bin Laden's ideology gradually developed to embrace the recognition that visions of an Islamic state grounded on Salafi ideals could never be realised without first driving powerful foreign influence from the Middle East, and thus WB and its application extended predominantly towards foreign hegemons. This sentiment was manifest in Bin Laden's 1998 *Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries,* in which he abstained from applying *takfir* to regimes or individuals, but reiterated the sentiments previously embodied by al-Banna and Qutb which presented Islamic dignity as oppressed, and offered jihad against the 'Judeo-Christian' coalition as the means by which to

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[281] In 1985, Saudi Arabia's Chief Mufti published a Fatwa in *al-Jihad* which declared the legitimacy of Azzam's jihad against the Soviets. See Cragin, 1052. For the repression launched against the Sahwa, see Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi; The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,* 121.

[282] Khatab, Sayed, *Understanding Islamic Fundamentalism; The Theological and ideological Basis of Al-Qa'ida's Political Tactics* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 100.

[283] Khatab, 101.

[284] For more on the movement of Al-Qaeda in the 1990s, and its tactical shift towards small scale operations, see Mendelsohn, Barak, *The Al-Qaeda Franchise; The Expansion of Al-Qaeda and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

reclaim them.[285] In his declaration, Bin Laden also critically described jihad as both a collective and individual duty, and urged Muslims to unite despite their differences in order to avoid falling into the capital sin of neglecting Islamic prerogatives.

Al-Qaeda attempted to institutionalise its vision of global jihad against America, and cement its narrative of a unified and transnational umma in 1998, when Bin Laden, along with Ayman al-Zawahiri, announced the creation of the *al-Jabha al-Islamiya al-'Alamiya li-Jihad al-Yahud wa-l-Salibiyyin* (World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders).[286] This organisation attempted to unite various jihadist factions and did not focus on theological *takfir* or WB, but what is most remarkable about it was its lack of success in that only three out of the roughly twenty jihadist organisations operating in Afghanistan at the time endorsed it.[287] The lack of unanimity, and refusal to abide by Al-Qaeda's program which did not endorse declarations of *takfir* and focused instead on waging jihad against foreign powers was manifest by the presence in Afghanistan of Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Zarqawi had spent little time in Afghanistan immediately following the Soviet war, and had later returned to Jordan where he had been imprisoned and come under the mentorship of al-Maqdisi. Following his release from prison in 1999, he returned to Afghanistan and established independent training camps in Herat Province, where he repeatedly refused overtures from Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda leadership to give *bayat*.[288] Central to this refusal was the fact that Zarqawi advocated directing jihad at who he perceived as the true enemies of Islamic integrity: apostate regimes of the Islamic world, and the Shi'a. While Bin Laden and Zawahiri attempted to promote Islamic unity and a fundamental unifying Muslim identity, Zarqawi founded his visions on the stringent application of *takfir* and WB to first create a cleansed Muslim community which could then form the bedrock of

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[285] For the full declaration, see Lewis, Bernard, "License to Kill: Usama Bin Ladin's Declaration of Jihad", *Foreign Affairs,* December 1998. http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/54594/bernard-lewis/license-to-kill-usama-bin-ladins-declaration-of-jihad (Accessed 7 January 2020).

[286] Following the end of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, al-Zawahiri, who had been a member of Bin Laden's Lion's Den, returned to Egypt and engaged in Jihadist activity with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ). In 1995 he distributed a memo to EIJ members which called for a cessation of activities due to lack of resources and increased dangers of operations. He indicated that EIJ struggles would be in vain without targeting the powers that backed the Egyptian regime. See Gerges, Fawaz, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 129.

[287] Brown, Vahid, "Classical and Global Jihad; Al-Qa'ida's Franchising Frustrations", in Moghadam, Assaf and Brian Fishman (eds), *Fault Lines in Global Jihad; Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 88-116. 2011.

[288] Napoleoni, Loretta, *Insurgent Iraq: Al Zarqawi and the New Generation* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 95.

Salafi Caliphate.[289] Zarqawi's justification for targeting the Shi'a rested on the fact that he believed them to be heretics, and outside the fold of Islam due to their rejection of the first three Caliphs of Islam; the embodiment and institutionalisation of the *salaf*.[290] Furthermore, Zarqawi's position, unlike that of Bin Laden, had the support of renowned Salafi shaykhs, mobilisation infrastructure in Europe, and many individuals who relocated to training camps in Afghanistan from the Middle East found his strategic and theological vision appealing. While Al-Qaeda's leadership maintained its position and abstained from pronouncing *takfir* on fellow Muslims, and focused on the global enemy of America, Zarqawi's training camps swelled with new recruits.[291] Despite numerous attempts on behalf of Al-Qaeda to achieve cooperation, Zarqawi's organisation maintained its autonomy and uncompromising ideology regarding the necessary application of *takfir* and WB through jihad as the only way to pursue independence and sovereignty in the Middle East and Levant.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

The above narration is not an all-inclusive account of the evolution of jihadist thought in the 20th century leading up to 9/11. It is, however, important to note the major thinkers associated with the era that reformulated key constructs in ways that continue to affect jihadist thinkers and narratives to this day, because this trajectory created discourse which is central to genealogical problematisation. The overview demonstrates that *takfir*, WB and jihad, while being theologically grounded in Islamic history, are fluid concepts which have been moulded and elaborated on at specific junctures and in response to specific events to fit the needs of a self-defined, and often times idealised community, which is meant to be deliberately distinct from those identities and communities deemed 'other'. They have been refashioned to suit the purposes and aspirations of groups contending with the difficulty of applying divine prescriptions for maintaining and ensuring community prosperity to the realities of modern geopolitics. Furthermore, commensurate with philosophical justifications for violence, and the proclivity for religious narratives to endorse violence, these concepts have been utilitarian

[289] Brown, in Moghadam and Fishman, 103.
[290] This is the fundamental starting point for the theological casting out of the Shi'a according to modern Salafi-jihadists, although justifications continue to be elaborated on in terms of historical precedent and modern geo-political relations. For an introduction on this subject, see Hafez, Mohammed M., "Takfir and violence against Muslims", in Moghadam and Fishman, 33.
[291] Brown, in Moghadam and Fishman, 104.

in that they have tended towards violence in instances in which the ideologues dealing with them did so in a context which presented a community facing an existential threat.

This chapter has also demonstrated that the concepts dealt with are not only fluid, but that their meaning and utility as part of informing identity and strategy are seldom agreed upon. This variance in opinion transcends the decision to use violence; it indicates deep divides in how individuals perceive what it means to be Muslim, and what the representation of that collective identity should be in governance. While this may be a difficult issue to explore given the more immediate nature of contending with the violent consequences associated with this subject, it is worthwhile to note that great violence and turmoil accompanied the same process of communal identity and resultant governance which led to the eventual formation of the secular nation state in the Western context. For this reason, except for the mention of the terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia in 1995, this section has refrained from using the term terrorism, and has instead focused on the intellectual links between the constructs of *takfir*, WB, jihad and violence, and how these have been used as cognitive mechanisms to advocate individual and collective agency in pursuit of alternate models of statehood.

Chapter 8

ISIS Origins

The timing of the birth and rapid ascension of ISIS, as well as the role it continues to play in the aftermath of the US led war in Iraq may be sufficient to speculate a causal relationship between the two phenomena.[292] It may further be true that had the US not invaded Iraq, ISIS would not have emerged and developed into its present form. This chapter will demonstrate, however, that the war in Iraq and its aftermath simply provided a theatre of operations and a highly altered conducive environment in which competing aspirations towards the attainment of an Islamic state within jihadism could take root and be manifest. Furthermore, this chapter will argue that the failure to understand these longstanding and at times conflicting aspirations, the framing of the war in Iraq, and the blanket labelling of Islamic and Al-Qaeda terrorism by Western actors contributed to the pursuit of well-intentioned yet at times misguided policies. Instead of focusing on the war in Iraq as an open front in the Global War on Terrorism, this chapter will emphasise the role, framing, and utility of violence as it was advocated and used by jihadist actors with vested interests towards the attainment of specific goals. This utility and purpose, aided by and framed in relation to specific constructs of *takfir*, *tawhid*, and WB, superimposed on events as they unfolded in real time, distinguished those actors and the ambitions they pursued. Additionally, this chapter will consider the vastly different ways that similar events and progressions relating to the war in Iraq were framed and understood by US policy makers, who considered them within the context of a conventional war on terrorism but who failed to recognise the ways in which they were understood and used by those they sought to defeat. By understanding these nuances,

[292] Media entities and national leaders alike have at times attributed the emergence of ISIS to the US invasion of Iraq and its subsequent regional policies. See Milne, Seumas, "Now the truth emerges: how the US fuelled the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq", *The Guardian,* June 3 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/us-isis-syria-iraq (Accessed 18 February 2020). O'Connor, Tom, "U.S. Created ISIS to Distract World from Israel, Iran says", *Newsweek,* March 22 2018. https://www.newsweek.com/us-created-isis-distract-world-israel-iran-defeated-it-khamenei-says-857359 (Accessed 18 February 2020)

light can be shed on "what terrorists want"[293] and better understand them as they perceive themselves, and as enduring players in the geopolitical environment.

First this chapter introduce the ways in which the U.S. and its allies justified an invasion of Iraq in the escalating war on terror, and contrast these with the mechanisms introduced by Bin Laden to reframe the conflict in politicised jihadist rhetoric. Second it will discuss the role of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in forging a distinct violent theology that distinguished him and his followers from al-Qaeda and which sought to establish the foundations of an Islamic polity in Iraq. Third this section will analyse the roles of the U.S. troop surge and Anbar awakening of 2007 in subduing sectarian violence in Iraq, which ultimately led to the decision to withdraw U.S. combat forces. Finally this section will introduce the repercussions of this decision both within Iraq and the jihadisphere.

8.1 Iraq: A Necessary War for the West

After the attacks of 9/11 and the targeting of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the United States military invaded Iraq in March 2003.[294] In a message to the US Congress, then President George W. Bush wrote that force had become the only way to ensure the protection of American national security, and that the invasion would constitute a vital part of the broadening global war on terror.[295] The military actions undertaken by the president had been approved by the US Congress months before, in October 2002, and it had passed a resolution which stated:

*"*Whereas members of al Qaida, an organization bearing responsibility for attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, are known to be in Iraq;

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[293] This refers to the title of Louise Richardson's seminal work which tries to explain the methodology of terrorist organisations, and the rationale behind their actions in pursuit of goals which are counter to both the goals and hegemonic positions of democratic nation states.

[294] For an opinion piece on the rationale behind the decision to militarily invade Iraq, see Albert, Michael and Noam Chomsky, "Noam Chomsky on Iraq War", *Peace Research* 35:1 (May 2003), 51-60.

[295] Sanger, David E, "Threats and Responses: The White House; Bush Orders Start of War on Iraq; Missiles Apparently Miss Hussein", *The New York Times,* March 20 2003. https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/20/world/threats-responses-white-house-bush-orders-start-war-iraq-missiles-apparently.html (Accessed 20 February 2020)

Whereas Iraq continues to aid and harbor other international terrorist organizations, including organizations that threaten the lives and safety of United States citizens;

Whereas the attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, underscored the gravity of the threat posed by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by international terrorist organizations;

Whereas Iraq's demonstrated capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction, the risk that the current Iraqi regime will either employ those weapons to launch a surprise attack against the United States or its Armed Forces or provide them to international terrorists who would do so, and the extreme magnitude of harm that would result to the United States and its citizens from such an attack, combine to justify action by the United States to defend itself;"[296]

While and in-depth analysis of the US government's rationale for invading Iraq is beyond the scope of this thesis, the above extract is poignant for a number of reasons.[297] First, it displays the power a nation state has at its disposal to harness the use of violence to protect what it considers its very foundation: its citizens. Furthermore, it demonstrates the fact that in current practice, the state has both the mandate and the ability to use violence in order to wage war on organisations deemed as existing outside the realm of political normalcy and the status quo. Beyond the political implications, the above extract exemplifies behavioural traits of social groups that were explored in previous chapters, in that a group will be more inclined to use and justify violence when faced with an imminent threat. Whether or not the threat is tangible or defined is inconsequential; rather it is the framing of it as existential that underpins the ability to justify violence.[298] This sense of existential urgency is visible in the fact that only 14 days passed between the time the resolution was presented to the US House of Representatives and the time that it became public law.[299]

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[296] United States Congress, *H.J.RES.114-Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002*. October 16 2002 became Public Law No. 107-243. https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-joint-resolution/114/text (Accessed 20 February 2020)

[297] For an analysis of the international and domestic legal justifications for the Iraq war, see Murphy, Sean D., "Assessing the Legality of Invading Iraq", *92 Georgetown Law Journal* 4 (2004), 173-257.

[298] Volkan.

[299] The resolution was presented to the US House of Representatives on October 2 2002. It was approved in the House and Senate by overwhelming majorities. President Bush signed it into law October 16 2002.

President Bush and the US did not act unilaterally in Iraq, and it is interesting to note one of the primary justifications for war used by its staunchest ally, the UK, which sheds additional light on the way in which the violence was rationalised from a modern state perspective. In response to an anti-war protest on the eve of the invasion, then Prime Minister Tony Blair cited the ultimate morality of war in Iraq. He publicly stated that the number of casualties to come, and the overall suffering endured in war would be relatively minor compared to the long-term human toll that would inevitably result from Saddam Hussein remaining in power and the secondary opportunities this would provide to those who sought to harm Western interests.[300] This construct of sacrifice in order to attain a greater good is not specific to nation states, and in this usage is reflective of the quasi proselytising nature inherent in the modern democratic nation state that considers its socio-political model for governance superior and universally applicable.

This information is not presented to deny the atrocities that the Hussein regime undisputedly committed in Iraq[301] nor to dispute the laws of self-defence available to nation states under the United Nations charter[302]; rather it is intended to demonstrate the existential framing of the decision to wage war in Iraq as a moral imperative in a struggle against a multi-dimensional and incompatible 'other', presented collectively as the war on terror.

Months after the invasion, President Bush famously declared "mission accomplished" in the toppling of the Hussein regime[303] and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld summarily dismissed ongoing fighting as minor skirmishing, conducted by "dead-enders".[304] Salafi-jihadists, however, perceived the events early in the Iraq war in a different manner. Prior to invading Iraq, as was noted earlier, the United States and coalition forces had targeted both Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The most pertinent point worth noting is the duality

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[300] Gordon, David, "Iraq, War and Morality", *Economic and Political Weekly* 38:12/13 (March 22 – April 3 2003), 1117-1120, 1117.

[301] For a complete account of the atrocities committed under Saddam Hussein, based on the Ba'ath Party Archives at the Hoover Institution, a collection of more than 10 million digitised pages chronicling the party's workings and motivations, see Sassoon, Joseph, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[302] Article 51, Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter states: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of collective or individual self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations." https://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml (Accessed 20 February 2020)

[303] For the "Mission Accomplished" speech see https://www.history.com/speeches/george-w-bush-declares-mission-accomplished (Accessed 20 February 2020)

[304] "The Iraq War", *Council on Foreign Relations.* https://www.cfr.org/timeline/iraq-war (Accessed 20 February 2020)

inherent in this strategy in that this effort did initially succeed in denying safe haven to the Al-Qaeda command structure, and can thus be considered a strategic victory in the war on terror as framed by Western actors.[305] A secondary effect to this course of action however was that the success in eliminating centralised command structures of Al-Qaeda resulted in the weakening of its organisational and ideological unity, and the dispersal of mid-level leadership and combatants contributed to the birth of what has since become known as the "global jihadist movement".[306]

8.2 Osama Bin Laden's Framing of the Invasion of Iraq

Just as President Bush, the US Congress, and Prime Minister Blair had addressed their constituents and the world at large regarding the need to wage war in Iraq and the objectives they hoped to accomplish by doing so, Bin Laden articulated his perception of the war and its significance in an ongoing history which exists independent of a finite war on terror. In an October 2003 broadcast, Bin Laden addressed the Iraqi people, and he referred to the war as simply the most recent chapter in a continuous struggle which pitted Christian crusaders against a global Muslim community and identity.[307] In his address, Bin Laden invoked the morally righteous cause of Muslims in following scriptural justifications for defensive violence, and echoed Hassan al-Banna by arguing against artificial national identities imposed on Muslims in the Middle East and Levant. Bin Laden reiterated the ideology upon which he had founded Al-Qaeda in that he urged Muslims globally to unite in solidarity to confront the evil embodied by the United States whose demise was necessary for Islamic virtue to triumph. It is interesting to note that Bin Laden focused primarily on pan-Islamic unity in his rhetoric, only mentioning an Islamic state twice in this particular address. Furthermore, he abstained from proclaiming *takfir* on rulers or individuals, but he linked the construct of theological disbelief to alliance with enemy interests. "I am speaking to Muslims in general, and Iraqis in particular, when I say: beware of supporting America's crusaders and those who have taken

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[305] For more on the perception of the invasion of Afghanistan related to targeting responsible parties and Al-Qaeda in the war on terror, and the portrayed success of the demise of the Taliban, see *The 9/11 Commission Report,* 337-338.

[306] For early transformations that spawned the global jihadist movement, see Gunaratna, Rohan and Aviv Oreg, *The Global Jihad Movement* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2015).

[307] Bin Laden, Osama, "Second Letter to the Muslims of Iraq", October 18th 2003. Transcribed in full in Kepel, Giles and Jean-Pierre Milelli (eds), *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2008), 66-70.

their side, because all those who collaborate with them or belong to them, whatever their names or titles, are unbelievers and apostates."[308] Bin Laden also drew on the ideological developments of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi in that he equated participation in democratic electoral processes and institutions to the sin of supplanting God with men, and offered that justified jihad was the only avenue to casting off corrupt regimes that had denied human dignity and social fulfilment to Muslim masses.[309]

Bin Laden not only addressed the global Muslim community, but he also addressed the American people. In the days immediately following 9/11, President Bush spoke to the US Congress and delivered perhaps one of the most remembered speeches that defined his outlook on the war on terror, and his rationale regarding terrorist organisations and the parameters under which to designate them 'other'. He said: "Americans are asking: "Why do they hate us?" They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."[310] While Bin Laden had indeed argued in his address to the Iraqi people that participation in democratic institutions constituted sinful behaviour and disbelief, he pragmatically rebutted President Bush's assertions: "By way of introduction, let me say that security is an indispensable pillar of human life and that free men do not forfeit their security, contrary to Bush's assertion that we hate freedom. If that were true, then let him explain to us why we did not attack Sweden, for example. (…) No, we fight because we are free men who do not slumber under oppression. We want to restore freedom to our nation, and just as you lay waste to our nation, so shall we lay waste to yours."[311] Bin Laden also emphatically stated that despite President Bush's claims, all men love freedom, and neither he nor the jihadists on whose behalf he spoke detested Americans for the freedoms they enjoyed. Instead, Bin Laden presented a concise timeline of violent grievances suffered by Muslims either at the hand of the United

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[308] Bin Laden, in Kepel, 68.

[309] Bin Laden lists specifically princes and ulema who have been co-opted by foreign and sinful rulers. He also lists legislative councils and parliaments as sinful institutions, and those who participate in them as sinful transgressors. Kepel, 68.

[310] This is an extract from George W. Bush's speech to a joint session of congress, September 20 2001. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html (Accessed 20 February 2020)

[311] Bin Laden, Osama, "Message to the American People". This address was delivered to Al-Jazeera October 30 2004, two days before the U.S. Presidential elections. For the unedited transcript, see https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/11/200849163336457223.html (Accessed 23 February 2020)

States, or supported by it, and by doing so effectively took the same posture as President Bush in presenting his violence as a justified campaign of retribution which possessed the inherent moral high ground due to its defensive nature.[312]

In presenting his justified retribution, Bin Laden utilised the metaphor of the United States as a crocodile that had seized a helpless child, and argued that violence was the only possible way to confront the threat it posed: "Tell me: Does the crocodile understand any language other than that of force?"[313] This conceptualisation demonstrates the salience of different strains of anti-colonial violence that had been merged with Bin Laden's ideology in that the idea of colonial powers which sought to subjugate native populations by violence only understood the language of violence, and therefore must be confronted by that very same violence. This framework had been popularised by Franz Fanon as was recounted in the chapter of this thesis on violence, and further went on to state that by confronting the colonial aggressor, subjugated peoples could appropriate mechanisms of domination, and through this appropriation, bond together to attain cultural, political, and spiritual freedom. By reinvigorating this narrative, and then recounting his calculus to engage in violence, Bin Laden built on this framework insofar as the anti-colonial violence he cited was imbued with Fanon's interpretation that colonial and imperial aggression denied the agency of those it targeted.[314] By thus justifying his violence, Bin Laden conveyed the desire for his actions to reclaim agency on behalf of a subjugated community.

Bin Laden went on to challenge the very foundation of nation state legitimacy, and its claim to a monopoly on violence: "State terrorism is called freedom and democracy, while resistance is termed terrorism and intolerance."[315] In Bin Laden's view, the United States had committed terrorism during its embargo of Iraq following the first Gulf War, which resulted in mass casualties among civilians and children.[316] Just as President Bush and Prime Minister Blair had claimed the moral high ground in their decisions to invade Iraq and eradicate

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[312] Bin Laden specifically cited the American-supported Israeli incursion into Lebanon in 1982, and the resultant bloodshed of civilians and innocents.
[313] Bin Laden.
[314] For more on the social group dynamics of anti-colonial violence and enactment of identity and agency, see Loadenthal, Michael, "Othering Terrorism: A Rhetorical Strategy of Strategic Labeling", *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 13:2 (2017), 74-105.
[315] Bin Laden.
[316] For an analysis of how sanctions increased childhood mortality rates, see Ronsmans, Carine, Oona Campbell, Mary C. Smith Fawzi, Sarah Zaidi, David H. Spodik, Omar A. Obeid, et al., "Sanctions against Iraq", *The Lancet* 347:8995 (January 20 1996), 198-200.

terrorism, so Bin Laden argued that his actions were in fact morally justifiable in that they were carried out in order to confront what he perceived as terrorism carried out against his people.[317]/[318] In this address, Bin Laden made no mention of *takfir, tawhid,* or the mandatory hatred that al-Maqdisi had codified in WB. Rather, he positioned himself politically and questioned the morality and authority of nation states, and intellectually claimed for himself the ability to speak and conduct violence on behalf of an organisation and a people not joined by national identity, but by religious faith.

8.3 Iraq: A 'Golden Opportunity' for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

Due to his role in the attacks of 9/11, Bin Laden was a focal point for the war on terror, but his visions for a united global umma, forged through the violent toppling of American hegemony via systematic attacks reminiscent of anti-colonial guerrilla warfare were not uncontested within the jihadisphere. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi embodied the birth of the global jihadist movement in that he was among those who fled Afghanistan following the U.S. led invasion in 2001, and eventually arrived in Iraq. In the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell had named al-Zarqawi as an associate leader of Al-Qaeda to Bin Laden during an address to the United Nations.[319] Here Bin Laden as a focal point for terrorism, and the blanket labelling of Al-Qaeda to justify an incursion into Iraq in the name of the global war on terror is evident. Furthermore, this justification showed no signs of understanding, or expressing the need to understand, the various factions within jihadism that would prove more difficult to combat than a conventional military enemy, united in purpose, ideology and location.

Once in Iraq, al-Zarqawi merged various jihadist factions that had taken up arms against American forces following the collapse of the Hussein regime, and those who saw in

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[317] In terrorism research, it has been argued that "Historically the use of terror by regimes has been infinitely more lethal than that of non-state groups, because, by definition, regimes / governments are likely to have control of far greater supplies of weapons and manpower to implement their policies of terror in the course of internal repression or foreign conquest." See Wilkinson, 6.

[318] For a rethinking of terrorism labelling in relation to the state, see Jarvis, Lee and Michael Lister, "State Terrorism Research and Critical Terrorism Studies: An Assessment", *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7:1 (2013), 43-61.

[319] Colin Powell's address to the U.N. on February 6 2003 concluded its justification for war in Iraq with the premise that Iraq had substantive ties, and provided safe haven to Al-Qaeda members and infrastructure. The full address is accessible in the CNN archives. "Transcript of Powell's U.N. Presentation", February 6 2003. https://www.cnn.com/2003/US/02/05/sprj.irq.powell.transcript.09/index.html (Accessed 22 February 2020)

Iraq an opportunity for jihad, and in June 2003 Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad was formed.[320] Despite President Bush's proclamation of "mission accomplished', an insurgency emerged in Iraq out of disbanded Ba'athist forces and jihadi diaspora foreign fighters which U.S. war planning had failed to anticipate. In fact, much of this insurgency was fuelled not by pre-existing Iraqi ties to Al-Qaeda as U.S. politicians had claimed, but by the very invasion of Afghanistan itself and the successful messaging carried out by Al-Qaeda leadership which stressed an existential threat to Muslim security and prosperity, as outlined above in Bin Laden's broadcasts. This messaging was reinforced by messages such as this from al-Zawahiri in October 2002, which were delivered with the purpose of ideologically preparing Muslim masses for the pending invasion and framing it as the next step in the American quest to subdue Islam: "The campaign against Iraq has aims that go beyond Iraq into the Arab Islamic world (…) Its first aim is to destroy any effective military force in the proximity of Israel. Its second aim is to consolidate the supremacy of Israel. (…) America and its deputies should know that their crimes will not go unpunished."[321] The Iraqi insurgency intensified following the initial conventional stages of the conflict, and violence escalated to unforeseen levels.[322]

Amidst this violence in February 2004, Zarqawi composed a letter to Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri in which he outlined his interpretation of the conflict in Iraq, and more importantly, the opportunities he saw in it, which differed drastically in presentation, methodology, and objectives, from those advocated by Bin Laden.[323] Al-Zarqawi described the war in Iraq as a golden opportunity, and as the manifestation of a divine blessing to conduct jihad in its truest purpose to finally culminate in the ultimate battle between Islam and disbelief.[324] Central to this culmination was not only driving the U.S. and its allies out of the Middle East, but defining who the true enemies of Islam were, and establishing the correct methodology of confronting them. Al-Zarqawi believed that the first essential step was the establishment of a territorial foothold within Iraq, and he blended Bin Laden's realpolitik of

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[320] Milelli, Jean-Pierre, "Introduction: Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, Jihad in Mesopotamia", in Kepel, 245.
[321] Al-Zawahiri, Ayman, October 2002, in Hegghammer, Thomas, "Global Jihadism after the Iraq War", *Middle East Journal* 60:1 (Winter 2006), 11-32, 18.
[322] For a concise study understanding the factors that fuelled the Iraqi insurgency that included but were not limited to jihadist radicalisation such as internal dislocation and personal grief over loss, see Moaddel, Mansoor, Mark Tessler and Ronald Inglehart, "Saddam Hussein and the Sunni Insurgency: Findings from Values Surveys", *Political Science Quarterly* 123:4 (Winter 2008-9), 623-644.
[323] For the full text see U.S. Department of State, "Zarqawi Letter", https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm (Accessed 22 February 2020)
[324] Al-Zarqawi, in Kepel, 251.

interstate relations with narratives of Islamic history and statecraft which pitted factions of Islamic belief against one another in their drives for dominion. These factions had been defined by either their righteous belief in Sunni Islam, or their adherence to heretical beliefs. For al-Zarqawi, Iraq represented "a political mosaic, an ethnic mixture made up of confessional and sectarian differences that only a strong central authority and a despotic ruler have been able to lead."[325] While here al-Zarqawi echoed the premise offered by Hassan al-Banna that Western constructs of statehood had no applicability when transposed onto an Islamic landscape, he criticised the modern manifestation of the Brotherhood along similar lines as his mentor, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, by arguing that the organisation had left the fold of the religion by its duplicitous engagement with political processes and institutions.[326]

Against this backdrop of the critical importance of using the opportunity provided by the U.S. invasion of an artificial state to create a foothold from which to utilise jihad to restore Islamic purity manifest in political sovereignty, al-Zarqawi presented the true enemy to the jihadist project: the Shiites.[327] To introduce his audience to the topic, al-Zarqawi quoted the Qurʹan by stating "They are the enemies; so beware of them. The curse of God be on them! How are they deluded (away from the truth)".[328] He went on to say "(They are) an insurmountable obstacle, a lurking snake, a crafty and malicious scorpion, a spying enemy, and a mortal venom."[329] Al-Zarqawi began his justification for critique against the Shiites by citing Islamic history, arguing that the demise of righteous Muslim conquest had been caused by the Shiite Safavid dynasty's incursion into Baghdad in 1624 which had also resulted in a massacre of the Sunni population.[330/331] Further citation of history included references to Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Hanbal. In citing Ibn Hanbal, al-Zarqawi embodied the Salafi justification to pronounce *takfir* on any who denied the supreme position held within Islamic tradition to the companions of the prophet Muhammad. "Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was asked about those

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[325] Al-Zarqawi, in Kepel, 252.
[326] Al-Zarqawi, in Kepel, 259.
[327] The historical dispute between Shia and Sunni Islam and its manifestations worldwide are beyond the scope of this thesis, but for a fundamental analysis, see McHugo, John, *A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018).
[328] Al-Zarqawi, in Kepel, 253. The Qur'anic verse cited, 63:4, refers to the hypocrites; those who have nominally accepted Islam but who have either perverted its beliefs or failed to adhere to the standards and guidance of revelation.
[329] Al-Zarkawi, in Kepel, 253.
[330] Kepel, 345.
[331] For more on the dynamic between the Ottomans and Safavids, and the conquest of Baghdad of Shah Abbas I, see Blow, David, *Shah Abbas: The Ruthless King who became an Iranian Legend* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2009), Specifically, the Chapter "Final Triumphs: the capture of Qandahar and Baghdad".

who insulted Abu Bakr, Omar, and Aisha. He replied: "I do not see them as Muslims.""[332] For al-Zarqawi, the historical grievances suffered by Sunni Muslim populations, the role of Shiite dynasties in thwarting legitimate Caliphates, and the denial of the true teachings of Islam was sufficient to proclaim *takfir* on Shiites.

Al-Zarqawi did not conclude his condemnation of the Shiites with historical grievances, rather he utilised it to explain how and why the Shia were the true enemy in the fight raging in Iraq in 2004, inserting an ongoing cosmological struggle into an unfolding event in real time. Al-Zarqawi reflected on the sectarian dimensions of the aftermath of the U.S. led invasion, and the affiliation that had begun to grow between U.S. reconstruction efforts and Shiite interests.[333] He argued that while the United States was indeed an archenemy, the most pressing threat was the Shiite population because, true to its historical proclivities, had chosen to affiliate with foreign crusaders. Al-Zarqawi displayed foresight in stating that eventually, American forces would leave Iraq. Were this to happen without resistance, the Shiite led institutions they would help create would remain in place and the Sunni population of Iraq would yet again be left subjugated in an artificial state.

The only recourse, and first step towards establishing a territorial foothold, therefore, was targeting the Shia. "In our opinion, they are the key to change, because attacking their religious, political, and military aspects will reveal their rage against the Sunnis. They will bare their fangs and show the secret hatred simmering in their hearts. If we manage to drag them into a religious war, we will be able to awaken the slumbering Sunnis, who will sense the imminent danger and the cruel death that these Sabeans have in store for them."[334] Here al-Zarqawi conjured the imminent existential threat necessary to rally a religious social group to violence. He went on to say that in this type of righteous cosmological struggle, Sunnis would inevitably emerge victorious. Al-Zarqawi argued for specific targeting of Shiite and American leaders, because "When one of their leaders dies, the community will die with him. The situation is not the same among the Sunnis, because, if a leader dies or is killed, another arises, and the death of the first is a challenge that gives weak Sunnis heart."[335] This final

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[332] Al-Zarqawi, in Kepel, 257.
[333] After the dismantling of the Hussein regime, state building in Iraq was primarily Shia-centric which resulted gradually in Sunni rejection. Many Sunni communities with no pre-existing hostilities were targeted by Shia militias and were ostracised from initial and ongoing reconstruction efforts. See Haddad, Fanar, *Shia-Centric State Building and Sunni Rejection in Post 2003 Iraq*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016.
[334] Al-Zarqawi, in Kepel, 263.
[335] Al-Zarqawi, in Kepel, 265.

point is worth noting insofar as it was used to self-describe both the tactics and perceived resilience of the Sunni insurgency, and demonstrates the premise that Al-Zarqawi had already alluded to by predicting the eventual departure of the United States from Iraq, in that the jihadist movement considered itself engaged in a struggle which transcended the armed conflict in Iraq.[336] Al-Zarqawi concluded his letter by stating that if his recipients, namely Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri were amenable to his proposals, he and his organisation would be ready and willing to be the vanguard in Iraq.

While the above broadcasts and letter are only a snapshot of the conflicting aspirations present within the jihadist movement in the early phases of the Iraq war, they are important to consider for a number of reasons. Bin Laden presented himself much more as a statesman attempting to articulate grievances and justify retribution on behalf of a global Muslim community that was engaged in a conflict driven by state actors.[337] While he certainly advocated the revival of the Caliphate by mandatory violence, he urged Muslims to lay aside their differences to fight the ultimate foe. For this reason, he abstained from proclaiming *takfir* on regimes or groups of people, believing that the struggle to defeat the United States was paramount. Al-Zarqawi, by contrast, revived the legacy of Sayyid Qutb by arguing for jihad as a two-fold process; first to cleanse the umma of impurities, and second achieve sovereignty. He viewed the war in Iraq as an opportunity to act on the declaration of *takfir* against the Shia, and utilise the opportunity to ignite a sectarian war which would result in the creation of a physical foothold from which to then export the jihadist program. Both men stressed the imminent and existential nature of the struggle, and they both claimed morality and justification for their proposed courses of action. President Bush, the U.S. Congress, and Prime Minister Blair had also argued for the morality of their cause as well as its imminent and existential nature; yet Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi did so in a fashion which portrayed the Iraq war as an event within a cosmological timeframe not bound by the constrictions of the state-centric geopolitical process.

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[336] Numerous mechanisms have been identified by which terrorist organisations are most likely to cease in their existence. One specific mechanism is decapitation, which is the targeted killing of the group's leader. This mechanism, it has been argued, is the least likely to be successful in the long term, yet it has remained a cornerstone of United States counter terrorism policy. For more on these mechanisms and the paradoxical use of counterterrorism by leadership decapitation, see Cronin, Audrey Kurth, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Demise and Decline of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[337] Gunaratna, Rohan, *Al-Qaeda's Ideology*, Hudson Institute, May 19 2005. https://www.hudson.org/research/9777-al-qaeda-s-ideology (Accessed 1 March 2020)

8.4 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's War of *Takfir*

In October 2004, the U.S. State Department designated Al-Zarqawi's group, Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad a terrorist organisation,[338] and this coincidentally occurred within days of Al-Zarqawi's pledge of allegiance to Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, which he had refused to do in the past.[339] Al-Zarqawi likely realised that his aspirations of igniting a sectarian war required the superior resources of Al-Qaeda, and that by pledging allegiance he could utilise the increasingly popular brand name of that organisation to attract more recruits. More importantly, by pledging allegiance al-Zarqawi became the face of Islamic violence in Iraq, given that Al-Qaeda's leadership remained in hiding following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Furthermore, this physical removal from the battlefield and the claim that Al-Qaeda had accepted his battlefield proposals meant that al-Zarqawi's *takfir* driven agenda would not have to be compromised despite his organisation's transition to an official subsidiary affiliate.[340]

Weeks after the pledge of allegiance, Iraq experienced a sharp increase in sectarian and anti-democratic violence, as Sunni militants used car bombs to kill and injure over 180 people in two separate attacks in the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. The same day, gunmen executed three election officials in Baghdad.[341] Responsibility for these attacks was claimed by minor Sunni militant groups, and it may therefore be surmised that smaller organisations and individuals were emboldened by both the physical presence of al-Zarqawi, and as his agenda which strove vehemently against both the Shia and forcibly imposed democratic institutions. Furthermore, the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005 saw some of the bloodiest battles that U.S. and coalition forces had been engaged in since the beginning of the war on terror.[342] American strategic planners acknowledged the emergence of sectarian

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[338] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Terrorist Organization: Designation of Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad and Aliases*, October 15 2004. https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/37130.htm (Accessed 1 March 2020)
[339] Mendelsohn, 118.
[340] Mendelsohn, 118.
[341] Hussein Al-Obeidi, Abdul, "Car bombs hit Najaf and Karbala, killing at least 60", *The Seattle Times,* December 19 2004. https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/car-bombs-hit-najaf-and-karbala-killing-at-least-60/ (Accessed 5 March 2020)
[342] 140 U.S. Servicemen were killed in November 2004 alone. Casualty rates reached the highest point they had been in Iraq as the U.S. Military began Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah which initiated the months long campaign to rid the country of the insurgency. See https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties_nov04.htm (Accessed 6 March 2020)

violence, and targeted key cities in efforts to render them peaceful in order to begin state-building. Fallujah and Ramadi became magnets for aspiring jihadists and foreign fighters, and although command of them fell to a Mujahidin Shura Council which represented nearly 40 different organisations, al-Zarqawi was the face of the resistance.[343] It is poignant to note in this regard that U.S. politicians saw the capture of these cities as essential steps in the process of building a democratic Iraq and ridding the country of vaguely described 'terrorism'.[344] Furthermore, the large-scale operations that took place in these cities were studied and understood by the U.S. military in a fashion which sought to locate them in the context of homegrown insurgencies.[345] Tactical analysis placed premiums on understanding conceptual model-driven growth and fluctuation of insurgent movements which understood them relative to U.S. military presence, and based the success of an insurgency on the ongoing tacit or overt support of the domestic population. While al-Zarqawi had referenced a similar need in his call to awaken the slumbering Sunni masses, U.S. military strategists viewed the insurgency as something finite in its immediate expression, which could be defeated through simultaneous military and psychological operations, designed to inflict casualties on the enemy and sway the loyalties of the populace respectively. It is evident from the previous analysis of al-Zarqawi's letter, however, that these battles represented to jihadists something much more complex than simply confronting crusader forces, and certainly not something that was finite or restricted to Iraq.

While these military clashes that, according to U.S. forces, would end the insurgency and help shape the future of a democratic Iraq were taking place, another struggle was simultaneously occurring which would have a greater long-term impact on the shaping of the intellectual battle space. In July 2005, a letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi was intercepted by U.S. forces, in which the former outlined the place of the Iraq war within the greater

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[343] For more on the U.S. strategic planning against the Sunni insurgency, and the role of Al-Zarqawi, see Rayburn, Joel D., et. al. (eds), "Fighting to the Elections, August – December 2004", *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War: Volume 1,* Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. War College, 2019, 335-364.

[344] For an American political assessment of this stage of the war in Iraq, see the interview with then U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice on "The Big Story with John Gibson", which aired September 22 2004. Partial transcript included here: "Condoleeza Rice on the War in Iraq", *FoxNews,* September 23 2004. https://www.foxnews.com/story/condoleezza-rice-on-the-war-in-iraq (Accessed 5 March 2020)

[345] This thesis was presented for the fulfilment of the Master of Military Studies at the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, where military leadership incorporates lessons of previous campaigns in order to return officers to operational forces who are capable of shaping future strategy. Harrill, J.D., *Phased Insurgency Theory: Ramadi,* Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico VA, 2008. https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a491315.pdf (Accessed 6 March 2020)

jihadist project.[346] Using reference points rooted in the Qur'an and hadith, al-Zawahiri portrayed Iraq as the epicentre of Islamic history, and expressed the serendipitous nature of the future of Islam resting on the outcome of ongoing battles there. Against the backdrop of this cosmological narrative, he outlined the stages of the jihadist project, and the role of the violence in Iraq within it. Al-Zawahiri argued that the expulsion of American troops and establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Iraq represented the short-term goals of Al-Qaeda, and that the eventual long-term toppling of Middle Eastern regimes and the unification of Islam in a worldwide Caliphate was the ultimate objective. He stressed that the homogenisation of Islam was paramount in achieving the ultimate objective, but that this duty did not fall to the mujahidin in Iraq and that credal spiritual purity, while necessary for the establishment of the Caliphate, was not sufficient in its own right.[347]

Al-Zawahiri did not disagree with al-Zarqawi's pronouncement of *takfir* on the Shia, and he stressed that they existed outside the fold of Islam due to heretical beliefs. He also noted that it was undeniable that they had historically conspired against true Islamic governance, and that they had collaborated with American interests. In this regard, the superimposition of historical grievances against a particular social group onto contemporaneous events is evident, and served the purpose of further framing the war in Iraq as an episode within a grand narrative that existed independently of U.S intervention. "It is a religious school based on excess and falsehood whose function it is to accuse the companions of Muhammad of heresy in a campaign against Islam (…) Their prior history in cooperating with the enemies of Islam is consistent with their current reality of connivance with the Crusaders."[348] Perhaps the most critical point in al-Zawahiri's letter that would prove to be an enduring point of increasing separation within the evolving jihadist movement is that he argued that common Shia individuals were innocent of accusations of heresy and thus immune from targeted violence, because they had been misguided ideologically. For this reason, they could and should be forgiven and absorbed back into the fold of Islam through gradual *da'wa* while their leaders could not.[349] While al-Zawahiri did not theologically disagree with al-

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[346] A full translation of the Al-Zawahiri letter can be accessed here: *Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi*, Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2013/10/Zawahiris-Letter-to-Zarqawi-Translation.pdf (Accessed 6 March 2020)

[347] Al-Zawahiri, 4-5.

[348] Al-Zawahiri, 8.

[349] Bar, Shmuel and Yair Minzili, "The Zawahiri Letter and the Strategy of al-Qaeda", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology,* Hudson Institute, February 16 2006. https://www.hudson.org/research/9901-the-zawahiri-letter-and-the-strategy-of-al-qaeda (Accessed 6 March 2020)

Zarqawi, he disapproved of the indiscriminate violence the latter exhibited towards the Shia because he argued it detracted from the immediate goals of the jihadist project previously outlined. On this point, al-Zawahiri posited that indiscriminate violence towards the Shia could provoke Iranian reactions, and would alienate Sunni populations who's support he saw as essential to the creation of an Islamic Emirate in Iraq. He further found problematic the fact that many of those engaged in anti-Shia violence were non-Iraqis and that this undermined the potential for a homegrown Islamist constituency.

This was the first instance in which issues of violence linked to the indiscriminate application of *takfir* as a strategic component within the jihadist program with real-time application in a combat zone were discussed in such detail. It is important to locate al-Zawahiri's letter in the context of the subject matter that was presented in the previous section insofar as he advocated for the need to garner the support of the Iraqi masses and the ulema, and discussed these issues within the context of regional and global state entities. The need for popular consensus as the pillar of a future Caliphate, and the manoeuvring within a state driven world represented the Al-Qaeda worldview which channelled the legacy of the Muslim Brotherhood and operated within existing institutional frameworks, and thus incorporated undertones of modern nationalism.[350] As was noted in the previous chapter, violent offshoots emerged in the 1960s out of frustration with this modus operandi, and thus it is important to read this letter as part of the continuum of the evolution of the Islamist agenda, not solely as a strategic battlefield intercept.

Al-Zawahiri was not the only jihadist ideologue to criticise al-Zarqawi. In July 2005, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi was released from a Jordanian prison and gave an interview to Al-Jazeera in which he reiterated statements he had conveyed in a letter to al-Zarqawi in 2004.[351] Al-Maqdisi had been al-Zarqawi's mentor while in prison in Jordan in the 1990s, and his personal relationship with his pupil as well as his prominent role within the ideological structure of Al-Qaeda gave many in the West hope that he could temper the sectarian violence

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[350] For more on the rationale within the Al-Qaeda worldview in this regard, see Munson, Henry, "Islam, Nationalism and Resentment of Foreign Domination", *Middle East Policy* 10:2 (Summer 2003), 40-53.

[351] Kazimi, Nibras, "A virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology.* Hudson Institute, September 12 2005. https://www.hudson.org/research/9771-a-virulent-ideology-in-mutation-zarqawi-upstages-maqdisi (Accessed 6 March 2020)

in Iraq.[352] Unlike al-Zawahiri, al-Maqdisi criticised al-Zarqawi both theologically and tactically. Just as al-Zarqawi had justified his indiscriminate targeting of the Shia by citing Ibn Taymiyya, al-Maqdisi argued that the latter had not deemed Shia laypeople unbelievers, and "as (Ibn Taymiyya) says in his fatwa under the section of fighting the rebels that one should not equate (the Shia) with the Jews and the Christians as to how they are fought."[353] He further agreed with al-Zawahiri and stated that common Shia individuals were innocent of heresy due to having been misled ideologically, and therefore wholesale application of *takfir* was unwarranted according to guidelines established in the Qurʹan and hadith. Al-Maqdisi went on to argue that the extreme violence conducted by al-Zarqawi was detrimental to the overall jihadist aspiration of the establishment of the Caliphate, which was only attainable through the gradual education of the global Muslim population.[354] While the education that al-Maqdisi envisioned surely rested heavily on his interpretations of mandatory jihad and WB, he viewed the indiscriminate application of *takfir* and subsequent violence as a dangerous precedent which would lead to extremism and cause the umma to fall into *fitna*, upheaval, that would be catastrophic for Islam.

Within days, al-Zarqawi responded to his former mentor, and began by stating that the positions taken by al-Maqdisi represented more than a simple of judgement, and that he had become merely a puppet of Al-Qaeda leadership. He argued that historically, those individuals present on the battlefield had the clearest understanding of the situation and its requirements, and thus his actions should be considered beyond reproach.[355] He also attempted to usurp the legitimacy of al-Maqdisi by citing extensively from the Qurʹan and hadith to justify his actions, and uncompromisingly repeated his stance toward the Shia. In these arguments, al-Zarqawi was not alone, and vehement support for him and his campaigns appeared online on jihadist websites and forums. One example is an eight-page document which adamantly stated that the conflict in Iraq, and atrocities committed by the Shia had created an 'exceptional situation' which required jihadists to conduct 'necessary deterrence' based on 'treatment in kind'. Further, after referencing numerous instances in the Qurʹan and

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[352] For more on the relationship and subsequent fall out between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi, see Brooke, Steven, "The Preacher and the Jihadi" in Fradkin, Hillel, Husain Haqqani and Eric Brown (eds), *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3 (2006), 52-66.

[353] Al-Maqdisi, in Kazimi.

[354] Kazimi.

[355] Haykel, Bernard, "Jihadis and the Shi'a", in Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (eds), *Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions within Al-Qa'ida and its Periphery,* Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 2010, 202-223, 220.

hadith, the author of this document concluded that although individuals like al-Maqdisi focused on the impermissibility of targeting the Shia, it was in fact warranted because it served the purpose of achieving one of God's ultimate aims; that of deterring attacks on Muslims, and ensuring Muslim communal safety.[356]

This final point is worth noting insofar as both al-Zarqawi's critics and his supporters placed his violence in the context of its utility in serving ultimate ambitions. While the above is only a portion of the discourse circulated in jihadist circles, his critics argued against violence and blanket excommunication in *takfir* due to its perceived detrimental effect on the goals of establishing popular consensus, expelling American forces, and establishing an Emirate. While these goals may have been present for al-Zarqawi and his supporters, they argued that blanket *takfir* and subsequent violence were necessary because they served God's ultimate aims, and these superseded any temporal or political ambitions. Furthermore, the argument of mandatory violence, justified by scriptural prescriptions for *takfir* emerged not in the intellectual realm of jihadism, but from within the chaos of the Iraq war. This hybrid creation of theology and violence is representative of social entativity that was outlined in Chapter 2, and is underpinned by the assertions later made that violence, when performed as an act of communal association, can lead to the creation of distinct and novel notions of group identity that despite religious, philosophical or pragmatic justifications, holds the very conduct of violence as central to its existence.[357]

U.S. observers to the war in Iraq were not necessarily unaware of the points of friction within the jihadist movement, but the general policy preference for resolution through leadership decapitation, and the expectation that this would cause insurgent terrorist organisations to crumble, remained intact.[358] U.S. forces succeeded in capturing Fallujah and Ramadi, long touted as essential steps in creating a foundation from which to build a democratic Iraq, but al-Zarqawi vowed to kill any individual involved in drafting Iraq's new constitution. His fighters also continued their violence against the Shia in suicide attacks in Shiite cities such as Karbala, and also attempted to undercut state building by carrying out

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[356] This document was published anonymously, likely from within Iraq, Haykel, 221.
[357] See Hardie-Bick, James, "Escaping the Self: Identity, Group Identification and Violence", *Onati Socio-Legal Series* 6:4 (December 2016), 1032-1052.
[358] For a contemporary policy opinion piece on intra-jihadist friction, see Hunt, Emily, *Zarqawi's 'Total War' on Iraqi Shiites Exposes a Divide among Sunni Jihadists*, The Washington Institute, Policy No 1049, November 15 2005. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/zarqawis-total-war-on-iraqi-shiites-exposes-a-divide-among-sunni-jihadists (Accessed 7 March 2020)

attacks such as one on a police station in Baghdad which killed over 130 people in January 2006.[359] That same month, and perhaps due to increasing separation between those actively involved in the fighting in Iraq and the noticeably absent Al-Qaeda leadership, al-Zarqawi announced that his organisation would join the Iraqi Mujahidin Shura Council.[360] This decision may have been influenced by the gradual tactical progress of U.S. forces and the need to consolidate jihadist resources, as well as the recognition that popular Iraqi support was needed for al-Zarqawi to continue his *takfir* driven agenda. Perhaps in a similar effort to garner support, in April 2006 al-Zarqawi appeared in a video in which his face was exposed for the first time. In it, the entrenchment of hatred through WB as violent disavowal of democracy and the continued necessity of purging the umma of the Shia in order for Islam to be victorious was evident. "The charade of the rotten democracy, which you brought to the Land of the Two Rivers, after bestowing upon the people material and spiritual freedom, happiness, and stability - all this has been dispersed, never to return, by Allah's grace. (…) Continue your jihad, intensify your operations, and multiply your blows. By Allah, these are the victories of Islam. By Allah, these are the final moments before the servants of the cross declare their defeat in the Land of the Two Rivers. The collapse of the motivation to fight has become the most prominent characteristic of the armies of the Crusaders. (…) To conclude, we bring good tidings to the nation: The establishment of the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Iraq, which, Allah willing, will be the nucleus for the establishment of an Islamic state in which the word of Allah will reign supreme."[361]

These statements portray an unabashed righteousness, and also are interesting insofar as they utilise glamorous imagery and a transcendent symbolic narrative to reframe contemporary events in Iraq. Whereas U.S. forces perceived the outcomes of battles such as Fallujah and Ramadi as key victories in their favour, al-Zarqawi restated the position he had taken with Bin Laden in his 2004 letter in which he argued that the Sunni jihadist movement

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[359] For a brief timeline of the major violent events associated with al-Zarqawi, see Smith, Laura, "Timeline: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi", *The Guardian,* June 8 2006. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/08/iraq.alqaida1 (Accessed 7 March 2020)

[360] For a brief overview of the Council and its role, see *Mujahidin Shura Council (Islamic State of Iraq)*, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium. https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/mujahideen-shura-council-islamic-state-iraq (Accessed 7 March 2020)

[361] On April 25th 2006 al-Zarqawi's video was uploaded to the Jihadist website www.alsaha.com. The translation can be accessed here: *New Video by Al-Qaeda Commander in Iraq Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, Middle East Media Research Institute,* Iraq; Special Dispatch No 1149, April 26 2006. https://www.memri.org/reports/new-video-al-qaeda-commander-iraq-abu-musab-al-zarqawi (Accessed 7 March 2020)

would be immune to losing a leader. Here, he similarly argued that seeming military victories by the coalition were only steps in the progression towards the ultimate and ever nearing Islamic triumph. The statements made in this audio release may be indicative of an insurgent leader becoming desperate to retain influence, but when analysed in reference to the ideas outlined above in which communal violence carried out both tangibly and symbolically against a perceived aggressor has the ability to form new and enduring social group perceptions of self, purpose, and identity relative to the 'other', they offer insight into that crystallising worldview, and its potential longevity despite adversity.

Al-Zarqawi was killed in an airstrike in Baquba, north of Baghdad, on June 7th 2006 as the result of a prolonged intelligence cooperation between U.S. and Jordanian entities to locate and kill him.[362] This represents the culmination of the policy of organisation decapitation, the rationale for which was explained by a Jordanian intelligence officer: "There is no such thing as 'Zarqawism'. What Zarqawi is will die with him".[363] While it is true that perhaps al-Zarqawi did not inspire a cult of personality that would survive his demise, the relationships between *takfir* and violence that he gave applicability in the ongoing tumultuous events of the Iraq war created a tangible shared experience that would inform the worldview of those fighters and individuals that did survive him. This does not imply that every fighter would adopt al-Zarqawi's worldview, but is commensurate with the social psychology of groups outlined by Pinker in Chapter 2 which stipulates that shared experiences become internalisations of normative behaviour, and thus form the foundation for future institutions and social structures. This progressive paradigm is then reinforced by forging these shared experiences through violence meant to physically reshape an ideological community against a contemporary and transcendent narrative, and thus despite the leadership decapitation of al-Zarqawi, the influence he had on shaping the worldview of factions within jihadism that would survive him would prove to present an ever increasing challenge to the war on terror.

8.5 An Islamic State Built on *Takfir*

[362] Teslik, Lee Hudson, *Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi*, Council on Foreign Relations, June 8 2006. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/profile-abu-musab-al-zarqawi (Accessed 7 March 2020)

[363] Jordanian intelligence official, in Weaver, Mary Anne, "The Short, Violent Life of abu Musab al-Zarqawi", *The Atlantic.* July/August 2006. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/ (Accessed 7 March 2020).

Following the death of al-Zarqawi, Al-Qaeda in Iraq appointed his successor. More importantly on October 12th 2006, the Mujahidin Shura Council announced the unification of several unaffiliated Sunni jihadist groups, and three days later proclaimed the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq which was to be the legitimate governing body of Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala as well as other provinces, and declared Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi (d. 2010) its leader under the title 'Commander of the Faithful'.[364][365] In this original inception, the use of the word 'of' in the Islamic State of Iraq portrayed the entity as a state for Iraqi Sunnis to counterbalance the establishment of federal Shia governance during U.S. led reconstruction. Shortly after its formation, the entity began referring to itself as the Islamic State *in* Iraq, later simply the Islamic State, meant to represent the notion that it was in fact a burgeoning polity for the global Muslim community which happened to have taken root in Iraq.[366] These depictions represented a claim to institutional and political legitimacy within administrative territories inside Iraq's national boundaries, but the latter is particularly important because not only did it present the Islamic State in Iraq as a lawful stakeholder, it also signified the institutionalisation through narrative and self-portrayal of a worldview which refused to acknowledge the legacy of Westernisation that had been grappled with by scholars, jurists, activists, and Islamists since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798.[367] In November 2006 a spokesman succinctly proclaimed "We are not the sons of Sykes-Picot, we are the sons of (the Prophet Muhammad)".[368]/[369] By framing its organisation as the cultural and political heir of

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[364] This is a direct link to the second Caliph of Islam, Umar Ibn al-Khattab, who became the first to assume the title "Commander of the Faithful". For more on the significance of this title and its role in early Islamic state building, see Crone, Patricia and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2003), 114.

[365] Bunzel, Cole, "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State"*, The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World,* Center for Middle East Policy, 19 (March 2015), 18.

[366] Bunzel, 18.

[367] Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt was a world altering event in that it ushered in closer contact between the West and Islam than had previously been experienced. It was in part motivated by power dynamics on the European continent, and Napoleon brought with him a large cadre of scientists and bureaucrats which rapidly led to the introduction in Egypt of Western systems of law and education. Most disruptive was the fact that within weeks of French arrival, Napoleon's armies summarily defeated the Mamluks, which had been Egypt's elite fighting class. European incursion into the Middle East followed, and subsequent defensive modernisation efforts were undertaken by host communities as was discussed in the previous section. For more on the Napoleonic invasion and the original commentary by an Egyptian intellectual respectively, see Brier, Bob, "Napoleon in Egypt". *Archaeology* 52:3 (May / June 1999), 44-53. Moreh, Shmuel (trans), *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001).

[368] Islamic State In Iraq spokesman Abu Hamza, in Bunzel, 18

[369] The Sykes-Picot agreement was a part of wartime diplomacy conducted between England and France. It was signed in 1916 and determined that following the conclusion of WWI the Ottoman Empire would be partitioned into British and French spheres of influence. Four Arab states were directly created as the result of this

Muhammad's original community at Medina, which had also dismissed existing tribal affiliations in favour of a unifying identity in the acknowledgement of *tawhid* and socio-political behaviour meant to recognise the same, the leaders of the Islamic State in Iraq claimed salafi legitimacy, confronted the same structural problems that defensive modernisation had attempted to, and rejected the approach of perceived moderates which advocated striving within existing democratic frameworks to achieve statehood. Furthermore, because the organisation was also deliberately a Sunni jihadist organisation which built on the foundations of violence which had occurred in Iraq up to that point, it existed not only in the context of Muhammad's legacy but in the realpolitik world in which historical Shia subversion was manifest in Iraqi political power which relied on the maintenance of artificial borders imposed by Sykes-Picot and upheld by foreign powers. For both historical and contemporary reasons therefore, and the applicability it had been given by al-Zarqawi, *takfir* as a mechanism that would identify group parameters and form the basis of a state-like participant on the world stage while rejecting the very legitimacy of states themselves provided a historically powerful and presently relevant socio-political tool.

While Al-Qaeda had striven for Islamic unity and incorporated many of the paradigms of the Muslim Brotherhood in framing the legitimate nation state of Iraq as a front in the jihadist project, The Islamic State summarily rejected both the approach of its jihadist predecessor and the very existence of states and the identities derived from membership therein. In February 2007, Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi gave a public address in which he stated that "We are fighting not for any patriotism but rather for God's word to be the most high."[370] This conceptualisation echoed Muhammad's appeal in that his community strove for social harmony and political prosperity through the conduct of *tawhid*, and by linking itself with this pursuit, the Islamic State also undercut the legitimacy of other competing jihadist organisation that could now be portrayed as operating on the basis of theological and political innovations

agreement, one of which was the Kingdom of Iraq. This partitioning led to further creation of states which did not represent the ethnicities or pre-existing community identities which were affected and moulded into different nations. Retrospectively the Sykes-Picot agreement may be considered the height of modern colonialism. For more on the history of the agreement and its continued relevance in Middle Eastern politics, see Rabinovich, Itamar and Robbie Sabel, *A Century Since the Sykes-Picot Agreement: Current Challenges*, Institute for National Security Studies, 2016.

[370] Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, in Bunzel, 18.

that were illegitimate and void due to having occurred after the time of the Prophet and salaf.[371]

It is in this regard that the application of *takfir* became increasingly relevant. While Al-Qaeda leadership initially supported the establishment of the Islamic State and viewed it as the beginning of the potential Emirate in Iraq, the latter was unable to garner the unanimous support of jihadist groups operating there at the time. After releasing the theological justifications for the Caliphate, in April 2007 Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi declared that all individuals and organisations who refused to swear fealty by giving *ba'ya* were sinners, and applied blanket *takfir*.[372] Consistent with this position, the Islamic state enforced strict compliance within its territories and continued its attacks on coalition and Iraqi government forces as well as other Sunni militants who refused to acknowledge its legitimacy. This contestation led to a drastic increase in violence in Iraq, where in early 2007 there were over a thousand violent attacks per week on coalition and Iraqi forces, as well as civilians, and thousands of individuals and families were displaced.[373]

8.6 The U.S. Troop Surge and Anbar Awakening

Faced with this situation, President Bush announced that he would surge 30,000 additional troops to the region in an effort to stem sectarian violence.[374] The justification in international law for this type of surge can be found in part in the norm of non-combatant immunity, which has its roots in the ethical tradition of "just war", and has been enshrined in the Law of War which was most notably codified in the Hague Conventions of 1907 and the

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[371] The concept of *bid'ah* as heretical innovation has an important place in Islamic and Salafi theology. It has been interpreted in many ways according to the tradition attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that Islam is applicable to any time and place. Salafis argue that any innovation in socio-political norms or conduct that occurred after the time of the salaf constitutes heresy due to its not having originated in scripture or Muhammad's life, and not being therefore ensconced in the Qur'an and Hadith. For more, see Ibn Mohar Ali, Abu Muntasir, *Bid'ah: Understanding the Evil of Innovation* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2006).

[372] In its classical connotation, this oath of fealty is a contract to render obedience. For more on its significance and utility, see Khel, Muhammad Nazeer Ka Ka and Mohammed Nazeer Ka Ka Khel, "Ba'ya and its Political Role in the Early Islamic State", *Islamic Studies* 20:3 (1981), 227-238.

[373] "Iraq violence hit new high in early 2007: Pentagon", *Reuters,* World News, March 14 2007. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-usa-pentagon-idUSN1426801120070314 (Accessed 8 March 2020)

[374] For a logistical analysis of the troop surge, see Shnaubelt, Christopher M., *What NATO Can Learn from "The Surge" in Iraq,* NATO Defense College, 2008.

Geneva Conventions of 1949.[375] As a signatory to these conventions, the U.S. was obligated to observe the norms therein as a participant in a conflict, and therefore in order to reduce the violence inflicted on innocent civilians, it reinforced existing combat troops in Iraq with additional army brigades and Marine battalions. Beyond the justifications which stemmed from codified norms of interstate relations during hostilities, members of President Bush's advisory team believed that the presence of additional troops would be effective in curtailing sectarian violence in order to allow political reconciliation and state building in Iraq.[376] While sectarian violence was perceived as an obstacle to U.S. led democratisation in Iraq, by framing the troop surge in relation to norms of inter-state conduct and as a solution to conflicts being waged by factions adhering to religious ideology, U.S. strategists fell into the trap of believing that the underlying theological debates raging regarding the Islamic legitimacy and worldview of jihadists organisations were minimally important compared to the need to fortify Iraq's new government.[377]

This paradigm was reinforced in that in 2007, a movement known as the Anbar Awakening began to gain traction. Following the initial U.S. invasion, L. Paul Bremer, a career U.S. diplomat and expert on terrorism had been appointed chief administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), responsible for transitioning Iraq from a post-Hussein vacuum to a democratic state. Bremer's key policies revolved around the 'de-Ba'athification' of Iraq, and the dismantling of the Iraqi security and intelligence services. This led to the marginalisation of Iraq's Sunni elite, which commanded large popular support. [378] This in turn fuelled the resonance of jihadist rhetoric which framed U.S. backed Shia dominance as an existential danger to Sunnis. While the evolution of the Anbar Awakening is beyond the scope of this thesis, by late 2006 and early 2007, a large number of Sunni Shaykhs capitalised on growing popular discontent with rampant violence, and began cooperating with U.S.

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[375] Kahl, Colin H., "In the Crossfire or the Crosshairs? Norms, Civilian Casualties, and the U.S. Conduct in Iraq", *International Security* 32:1 (Summer 2007), 7-46.

[376] Sky, Emma, "Iraq, From Surge to Sovereignty: Winding Down the War in Iraq", *Foreign Affairs* 90:2 (March / April 2011), 117-127, 118.

[377] This view is consistent with policy pursued by the U.S. leading to the troop surge in 2007, and much debate in hindsight has focused on the idea that modernisation assumed the decreasing relevance of ideology and religion in public life and governance. Following the Iraq war, much attention has been paid to the fact that this assumption has in not materialised uniformly in the world, and religious ideology has been more important in driving collective action than was recognised at the time. See Cladis, Mark, "Religion, Secularism, and the Democratic Culture", *The Good Society* 19:2 (2010), 22-29.

[378] See Stover, Eric, Hanny Megally, and Hania Mufti, "Bremer's "Gordian Knot": Transitional Justice and the US Occupation of Iraq", *Human Rights Quarterly* 27:3 (August 2005), 830-857.

forces.[379]/[380] While this was a sanctioned government program which was financially subsidised by the U.S. and supported by its troop surge, it was portrayed as a grassroots movement which had resulted from discontent with insurgent violence. This portrayal allowed U.S. strategists to reconcile their paradigms regarding the superior validity and applicability of liberal democratic governance, congruent with one of the sociological pillars of the process of modernisation, which can be described as: "a process by which major clusters of old social economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken down and the people become available for new patterns of socialisation or behaviour."[381] By pursuing this strategy, therefore, U.S. interests could be served in that the troop surge was designed to eliminate violence and create sufficient space to engage in negotiation and reconciliation; namely, erode the psychological commitments to ideological constructs which had fuelled violence such as *takfir*, and begin the process of introducing new patterns of socialisation in the form of popular democratic participation. This motivation is consistent with the overall framework of modernisation, one of the foundations of the Western nation state. It states that when mobilised and given social agency, individuals and social groups will naturally gravitate towards the pinnacle of rational organisation, and this will organically result in democratic governance, its resultant institutions, and social harmony.[382] By framing the Anbar Awakening as a native Iraqi grassroots movement which supported fledgling state institutions such as the police force and military, and supported government initiatives, the sociological trajectory and supposed applicability of democratic modernisation could be validated. What this paradigm failed to account for, however, was that a construct such as *takfir* allows for no reconciliation. The only possible reconciliation according to the Qurʼanic passages used by jihadists to justify *takfir* is in the eventual mutual recognition of *tawhid* and all that it entails. The fact that the Awakening was portrayed as an organic Iraqi movement also gave it undertones of nationalism, something that jihadist rhetoric had evolved to dismiss as heretical through the reconfiguration of WB. Perhaps mobilisation towards democratic

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[379] For the trajectory of the Anbar Awakening, see Kagan, Kimberly, *The Anbar Awakening: Displacing Al-Qaeda from its Stronghold in Western Iraq,* Institute for the Study of War, 2006.

[380] For Iraqi discontent with rampant violence and motivations for fighting against insurgents, see Montgomery, Gary W. and Timothy S. McWilliams (eds), *Al-Anbar Awakening: Iraqi Perspectives (Volume II)* (Military Bookshop, 2009).

[381] Deutsch, Karl W., "Social Mobilization and Political Development", *The American Political Science Review* 55:3 (September 1961), 493-514, 494.

[382] Abid, Mohammad, "Political Modernisation: The Concept, Contours and Dynamics", *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 65:4 (October – December 2004), 590-602.

modernisation and the formation of a state could be feasible, but it is precisely this state entity and its accompanying social structures that jihadists such as al-Zarqawi had vehemently dismissed.

The Islamic state and other Sunni insurgent organisations fought to maintain control in areas such as Ramadi, Diyala and Baghdad, but were gradually pushed out of their strongholds by U.S. forces as well as Iraqi brigades and police troops bolstered by the surge and Anbar Awakening movement. This was aided by the fact that the Mujahidin Shura Council announced in late 2007 that it would cease all attacks against civilians, and would no longer support foreign jihadists; again inserting sentiments of Iraqi nationalism perhaps in an effort to retain Sunni influence in what it perceived as a turning tide. Furthermore, while the Islamic State had emphasised strict enforcement of Islamic law in its territories, it had neglected the provision of security and essential services, and thus the Council may have been willing to distance itself from what it perceived as an organisation incapable of sustaining popular support.[383] Although fighting persisted, by late 2007 violence levels had significantly decreased in Iraq.[384] Additionally, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) officially dissolved in favour of the Islamic State, and al-Zawahiri acknowledged that "there is nothing in Iraq today called al-Qaeda. Rather the group al-Qaeda in Iraq has merged with other jihadi groups into the Islamic State of Iraq, may God protect it, which is a legitimate emirate".[385]

The reduction in violence in Iraq as the result of the Anbar Awakening, troop surge, repositioning of jihadist organisations such as the Mujahidin Shura Council, and formal dissolution of AQI gave U.S. commanders and strategists cause to believe that the tactics used had been successful. Most importantly, as Al-Qaeda had been the focal point of the war on terror, its organisational demise in Iraq symbolised a significant victory both on the battlefield and in the political realm.[386] The gradual return to urban areas of formerly displaced Iraqis, the improvement of the economic landscape, and the tactical improvement of Iraqi forces further bolstered the perception that the war against Al-Qaeda, and by association Islamic

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[383] For the indigenous Iraqi role in the surge and Anbar Awakening, see Al-Jabouri, Najim Abed and Sterling Jensen, "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening", *PRISM* 2:1 (December 2010), 3-18.
[384] For an evaluation of the confluence of factors that led to overall violence reduction, see Biddle, Stephen, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?", *International Security* 37:1 (Summer 2012), 7-40.
[385] Al-Zawahiri, in Bunzel, 21.
[386] For the perceived success of the campaign to drive AQI from Iraq, see Smith, Neil and Sean McFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point", *Military Review* 88:2 (March – April 2008), 41-52.

terrorism, was nearing its conclusion. The troop surge ended in late 2007, and throughout 2008 and 2009 U.S. forces reoriented their approaches to focus on counterinsurgency operations (COIN), key leader engagement (KLE) and relied increasingly on Iraqi security forces for combat manpower.[387] Despite these advances, much of the decrease in violence can be attributed to the fact that due to the 2007 military operations, Iraq had been further divided geographically along sectarian lines in that Sunni and Shia populations no longer coexisted, and each retained their limited spheres of influence. The Islamic State, it appeared, had been reduced to an entity in name only. Given these realities, the important point to note is that the war in Iraq to this point had drastically altered the landscape in which jihadist organisations were operating. Many smaller Sunni jihadist organisations continued to exist, as did the Islamic State, and all were adamantly opposed to the presence of the U.S. as well as ongoing state building measures. At this point, however, due to the strengthening of Iraq federal authority under U.S. auspices, these organisations did not have the physical or financial ability to conduct violent campaigns.[388] While U.S. strategists lauded the success of organic movements such as the Anbar Awakening as proof positive of the applicability of democratic modernisation, the narrative which framed the U.S. invasion as part of an ongoing continuum in Islamic and jihadist history had been given relevance through the campaigns of violence and application of *takfir*, and had thus become a new chapter in that ideological continuum.

8.7 U.S. Troop Withdrawal and Immediate Repercussions

In January 2009, Barak Obama became the U.S. President. Amid plummeting American support for the Iraq war, he had campaigned in part on the promise that he would extricate the U.S. from that conflict.[389] On August 30th 2010, President Obama announced the end of U.S. combat operations in Iraq, and that troop levels would drop to 50,000. These troops would be restricted to advisory roles, and they would also be scheduled to leave Iraq by

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[387] Hull, Jeanne F., *Iraq: Strategic Reconciliation, Targeting, and Key Leader Engagement*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2009.

[388] Gompert, David C., Terrence K. Kelly, and Jessica Watkins, "Political and Security Conditions of U.S. Withdrawal", *Security in Iraq: A Framework for Analysing Emerging Threats as U.S. Forces Leave,* 5-48. (Virginia: RAND, 2010).

[389] Rosentiel, Tom, "Public Attitudes Toward the War in Iraq: 2003-2008", *Pew Research Center,* March 19 2008. https://www.pewresearch.org/2008/03/19/public-attitudes-toward-the-war-in-iraq-20032008/ (Accessed 9 March 2020)

the end of 2011.[390] The popular and political consensus in the U.S. was that there had been no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, al-Qaeda had been defeated, and that ongoing American casualties were unacceptable. The Obama administration hoped to engage with the Iraqi government to pursue long-term security arrangements, but even as the troop withdrawal was announced, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki began expelling U.S. companies, and arresting hundreds of Sunni citizens, accusing them of either having been jihadists or former Hussein regime collaborators.[391] Al-Maliki, a Shiite, had been one of the leading Iraqi's responsible for aiding the CPA in its de-Ba'athification campaign, and his consolidation of sectarian power following the inevitable eventual withdrawal of the U.S. was precisely what al-Zarqawi had foretold in his 2004 letter to Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.

Despite the fact that sectarian violence did not escalate to the levels previously seen in Iraq, the important point to consider is that the experience in Iraq between the U.S. invasion of 2003 and the decision to end operations and withdraw all troops in 2010 was a formative one for jihadism in the realm of real world combat as well as that of ideology. Just as Egyptian state repression had led individuals like Sayyid Qutb to refashion parameters regarding the necessity of violent jihad in the pursuit of sovereignty and *tawhid;* and just as the Soviet war in Afghanistan had led to the reorientation of Islamic identity through combat against an aggressor deemed 'other', so the Iraq war had a deep impact on shaping the continuum of jihadist thought when placed against a transcendent narrative of salafi history and contemporary socio-political grievances. Notions of a morally righteous and divinely justified violent campaign built around *takfir* were given tangible applicability when leveraged against an existential threat whose roots were deeply culturally embedded both within Islam itself and the legacy of colonialism. This is not to say that all jihadist organisations adhered to specifically agreed upon definitions or uses of *takfir*, but that its utility in justifying a violent campaign to ensure homogeneity of correct belief and practice which would form the foundation of a state which existed outside of the norms of Western statehood, was used, expounded upon, and debated within jihadism itself to the point that it became ingrained in the narratives used to develop jihadist ideology. This reflects the approach outlined Chapter 1

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[390] MacAskill, Ewen, "Barak Obama ends the war in Iraq. 'Now its time to turn the page'", *The Guardian,* August 31 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/01/obama-formally-ends-iraq-war (Accessed 9 March 2020)

[391] Fly, Jamie M. and Robert Zarate, *FPI Bulletin: Bringing the Iraq War to an Irresponsible End?* Foreign Policy Initiative, 2011.

which states that terrorist groups are learning organisations, and they incorporate lessons learned from other groups and formative experiences to shape an ever-changing ideological platform which is best suited to the achievement of its goals. This is compounded by the proposition made throughout this chapter and previous ones that groups are able to form revolutionary ideas of communal identity when engaged in situations in which the conduct of violence is perceived as central and necessary. Given this, despite the relatively low levels of violence in Iraq in 2010, it is crucial to consider the potential longevity of the ideological permutations that took place during the war there, specifically as they related to the interpretation and use of *takfir* wielded to shape an idealised community and revive the political legacy of the salaf in the modern period in a fashion which would result in the establishment of a polity that does not adhere to current Western interpretations of what a state should be. The longevity, potential resonance, and danger of this ideology is what can be overlooked when policies and strategies that view the enemy as a physical force that can be defeated on the battlefield through the use of both conventional and unconventional military and political tactics are relied on. While the danger of extremist ideology manifest in Al-Qaeda had been acknowledged by U.S. forces, the progression of events leading to the troop withdrawal emphasised strategic victories leading to a reduction in violence, and did not take into full account the significance and latent extremism, or the fracturing along theological lines regarding *takfir* and the deep significance of the same, that had developed up to that point.

8.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter began with a discussion regarding the different ways the war in Iraq was justified by the West as a moral imperative, as well as the counterpoints offered by Bin Laden which located it in a transcendent history of oppression in the jihadist struggle for sovereignty. It then discussed the role of al-Zarqawi in the early stages of the Iraq war, and how his near-term objectives conflicted with those of al-Qaeda and led to the creation of a distinctively defined violent ideology grounded in both Islamic narrative and contemporary reality. This chapter then chronicled the impact of the U.S. troop surge and Anbar awakening, and how the results of these ultimately led to a U.S. troop withdrawal. Finally, it discussed that while violent organisations in Iraq were constrained in their abilities to carry out attacks, the

decrease in violence did not necessarily correspond with an eradication of the ideologies and objectives that had been given applicability and potential endurance through collective action. While this chapter stated that the relationship between ISIS and the war in Iraq is not unilaterally causal, it presented the pertinent socio-political and cultural perceptions of the war in furtherance of the thesis objective of successfully problematising ISIS by means of a thorough genealogical inquiry.

Chapter 9

ISIS Re-emergence

The U.S. decision to remove all combat troops from Iraq in 2010 represented the end of the war in terms related to direct state involvement, but by leaving behind thousands of troops as advisors, the U.S. transitioned from an active combat role to operations other than war (OOTW) and thus maintained a high level of intervention consistent with the ambition of establishing a democratic Iraq.[392] By contrast, this decision did not signify the end of the war for jihadists, as Iraq had been portrayed as a front in an existential struggle; it simply meant that the ultimate battle to achieve *tawhid* had transitioned to a new and different phase. The Manichean worldview of salafi-jihadism which pre-dated the war in Iraq, and developed there to incorporate new realities through the deliberate application of *takfir*, allowed for no political reconciliation and demonstrated its malleability in the context of evolving socio-political realities. After 2010 therefore the physical and intellectual innovations which had taken root through their application in Iraq became part of the jihadist transcendent narrative, able to be utilised and expounded on again in the future.

This chapter will analyse the events and conditions which shaped the socio-political operating space of jihadism following the war in Iraq, specifically as they related to the rise of ISIS, and will emphasise the importance of the marginalisation of al-Qaeda and self-ascribed role of ISIS in both Islamic tradition and future world order. First this chapter will reflect on the position taken by global Islamic scholars regarding *takfir*. Second, it will analyse the written jihadist manifesto which offers insight into the strategy and self-perception of ISIS which also may have contributed to the group's ability to maintain its ideology despite physical losses in Iraq. Third, this chapter will examine the Arab Spring in the context of popular mobilisation and the effects that this had on reshaping the realm of the possible in regional geopolitics. Finally, this chapter will provide an overview of the civil war in Syria,

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[392] Military intervention can be comprised of either combat operations or OOTW, but intervention underpins a longstanding belief which had been a cornerstone of U.S. military and political strategy since before 9/11, that articulates the position that justice and peace can be established relatively quickly by the U.S. military, in any global context. Although this did not occur in Iraq, this belief endured in institutional behaviour, leading to a situation in which the U.S. could not extricate itself entirely from Iraq. For more see Odom, William E., "Intervention for the Long Run: Rethinking the Definition of War", *Harvard International Review* 22:4 (Winter 2001), 48-52.

the rise of ISIS as a stakeholder entity, and the fracturing within jihadism that this engendered. Throughout this chapter, uses of *takfir* will be noted but the emphasis will be on the drastically altered geopolitical landscape between 2010 and the summer of 2014, and the ways in which jihadism evolved to capitalise on contextual realities.

9.1 International Conference on *Takfir* 2010

The dangers posed by the revolutionary ways in which *takfir* and WB had been wielded to fuel violence shrouded in justificatory language that evoked prominent individuals in Islamic history did not go unnoticed within the broader umma. In March 2010, a Peace Summit Conference was convened in Mardin, Turkey, and included religious scholars and authorities from different specialisations and geographic locations which intended to represent the global Muslim community and its diversity as well as unity. The conference deliberated on issues related to the umma's relationships with the rest of mankind by revisiting the classical and juridical division of the world into abodes of war, peace, and covenant, as well as the constructs of jihad, WB, and citizenship.[393] The scholars focused on the fatwa passed by Ibn Taymiyya regarding the classification of the city of Mardin, due to the fact that it had been appropriated by jihadists in order to justify *takfir*. The underlying motivation for the re-exploration of Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa was the fact that in the 21st century, Muslims were living in a much altered global context, interacting with societies and political structures not accounted for during the time of Ibn Taymiyya, and were bound by international laws and treaties as well as novel formulations of citizenship and identity. The conference sought to ensure the compatibility of principles of the Sharia with an evolving modern world. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to enumerate all of the findings of the conference, but it is important to note its first conclusion, which stated:

"Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa concerning Mardin can under no circumstances be appropriated and used as evidence for leveling the charge of kufr against fellow Muslims, rebelling against rulers, deeming game their lives and property, terrorizing those who enjoy safety and security, acting treacherously towards those who live (in harmony) with fellow Muslims or with whom

[393] For an introduction to the purpose and methodology, and findings of the conference, see "The Mardin Declaration", *Al Habib Ali Al-Jifri,* March 30 2010. http://www.alhabibali.com/en/news/the-mardin-declaration/ (Accessed 24 March 2020)

fellow Muslims live (in harmony) via the bond of citizenship and peace."[394] It furthermore concluded that jihad was not in fact the pinnacle of Islam as individuals like Bin Laden had argued, but it was one of many ways in which to defend the faith. The legitimacy of jihad rested on its conduct solely as a mechanism by which to repel foreign aggression, and could only be valid when declared by a rightful Islamic ruler. Finally, the conference concluded that WB could never be used as the basis on which to declare *takfir*, unless an authoritative governing body found there to be an actual article of disbelief.[395]

This conference and its findings attempted to prevent any ideological misuse of Ibn Taymiyya's legacy by violent jihadists while arguing that doing so would lead to *fitna* within the umma, causing it to fracture. It focused on the unity of the umma as paramount, and sought to maintain the cultural identity of Islam within a modern world bound by hegemonic systems of international laws, boundaries, and structures which had no organic precedent within classical Islam or the Sharia. It is poignant to note that while the scholars at this conference strove to find a middle ground between Muslim identity rooted in historical narrative and the modern structures governing global relations, they did so in a fashion which stressed the importance of abiding by those same structures and therefore could be accused of *takfir* by the very jihadists whose validity they sought to undercut. The purpose of this brief examination is to demonstrate that *takfir* has deep relevance to the construct of Muslim communal identity, and that elements within Islam had become aware of its resultant potential gravitational pull, and ability to resonate with contemporary circumstances and grievances in order to justify violence. It also demonstrates the increasing competition for the rightful appropriation of Ibn Taymiyya's legacy in the aftermath of a conflict which had witnessed such revolutionary applications of it to fuel violence.

9.2 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the "Management of Savagery"

In April 2010, Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi and other top Islamic State officials were killed in a joint raid between U.S. and Iraqi forces in Tikrit, and the leadership decapitation appeared to signal the end of the jihadist organisation, as it had already lost the ability to conduct a

[394] "The Mardin Declaration".

[395] For more on the specific articles which constitute disbelief, and the argument that WB cannot be used to justify takfir, see Hassan, Muhammad Haniff, "The Danger of Takfir (Excommunication): Exposing IS' Takfiri Ideology", *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9:2 (2017), 3-12.

sustained violent campaign.[396] Within a month, the Shura Council of the Islamic State appointed a successor, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, naming him Commander of the Faithful, and emphasised his descent from Muhammad's tribe as well as his Islamic scholarly credentials.[397] The choice of al-Baghdadi, while never overtly recognised, may have been influenced by the desire of the Islamic State to portray Islamic legitimacy to the masses it sought to influence by claiming equal juridical status to acknowledged entities such as those represented at the Mardin Conference. Furthermore, while the Islamic State may have been incapacitated due to the U.S. troop surge, Anbar Awakening, and entrenchment of Iraqi federal authority under Nouri al-Maliki supported by remaining U.S. forces, al-Baghdadi demonstrated great foresight in that his first act as Commander of the Faithful was the appointment of former Ba'athist officials to prominent posts within the Islamic State.[398] In this simple act we are able to glean a great deal about the ambitions of the Islamic State and its methodology. More importantly, we can surmise the group's visions of itself and its desired role in the world as an entity with stakeholder power without adhering to structural or intellectual parameters that govern state stakeholders. To explore this, it is necessary to understand the work that perhaps inspired and justified the Islamic State's methodology, aspirations, justifications, and longevity despite temporary incapacitation.

In 2004, an online manifesto was published anonymously in Iraq under the pseudonym Abu Bakr Naji, that blended an understanding of states' behaviour with Islamic rhetoric to justify violence in the pursuit of sovereignty.[399] In "The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass"[400], Naji opened his work by outlining the

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[396] Bunzel, 22.

[397] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was reported to have a doctorate in Islamic Jurisprudence, while others claim it was in Islamic Education. He joined the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006 as a judge on its Sharia Council, and was known in jihadist circles as '*al failusuf al jihadi*' (philosophical jihadi) due to his extensive knowledge of Islamic history and ancestral studies. He was a skilled orator, and enjoyed popular support in Sunni-dominant governorates north of Baghdad. For more on al-Baghdadi, see Alkaff, Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman, "Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, The Imposter", *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 6:10 (2014), 4-7.

[398] Jasko, Kataryzna, Arie W. Kruglanski, Ahmad Saiful Rijar Bin Hassan, and Rohan Gunaratna, "ISIS: Its History, Ideology and Psychology" in Woodward, M., Lukens-Bull R. (ed), *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives* (New York: Springer, 2018), 1-25.

[399] William McCants translated the work in its entirety, and was crucial in highlighting the importance of the manifesto in understanding ISIS strategy from the time of the group's inception to its rule as a self-proclaimed caliphate. See Jenkins, Jack, "The Book That Really Explains ISIS (Hint: It's Not the Qur'an)", *ThinkProgress,* September 10 2014. https://archive.thinkprogress.org/the-book-that-really-explains-isis-hint-its-not-the-qur-an-f76a42e9a9a7/ (Accessed 1 April 2020)

[400] For a full translation of the manifesto, see Naji, Abu Bakr in McCants, William (trans), *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass* (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, May 23 2006).

state of affairs in the Muslim world following the agreement of Sykes-Picot, and concluded that under such conditions, the lives of the masses were governed by "no goodness, no justice, no world."[401] Naji articulated the belief that this unnatural state of subjugation and humiliation could not be remedied institutionally, but only through the direct application of extreme violence and the exploitation of fear. Still in the introduction, he blended realpolitik and sociological theory to argue that nation states had imposed values and structures on an independent society which contravened rationality, and this had caused cultural depravity and inequity to proliferate.[402] By creating, harnessing, and wielding the savagery and chaos caused by this artificial imposition, of which the war on terror was only the latest iteration, the true Muslim community could violently define itself by true belief in praxis, and the strategic implementation of lessons learned in both Islamic and global history, could also achieve sovereignty. "If we succeed in the management of this savagery, that stage (by the permission of God) will be a bridge to the Islamic State which has been awaited since the fall of the Caliphate. If we fail (…) it does not mean the end of the mater; rather, this failure will lead to an increase in savagery!!"[403]

Throughout his manifesto, Naji conjured figures of the Islamist movement, such as Hassan al-Banna, and cited their utter failures and lack of both strategic vision and theological conviction.[404] While he reiterated the position taken by Islamists that the umma could only regain dignity and sovereignty by returning to fundamental premises of Islam, he rejected their assertion that this could occur by engaging with structures of democracy. He also criticised them for only preparing future generations for an abstract jihad and failing to take violent action.[405] Naji also condemned previous jihadist movements, arguing that they had become weak, and had engaged in wanton terroristic violence without using it to strategically forge a community identity which would result in sovereignty.[406] Naji wove his narrative by promoting the creation of a state built on Qurʼanic prescriptions as a Muslim communal imperative, and linked the events of the war on terror to the tribulations that were experienced by early generations of Muslims. Simultaneously, he exhibited knowledge of authoritarian

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[401] Naji, 16
[402] Naji, 14.
[403] Naji, 11.
[404] Naji, 61.
[405] Naji, 129.
[406] For a brief analytic piece on Naji, see Sole, Jeff. "" Management of Savagery" – A Model for Establishing the Islamic State", *The Mackenzie Institute,* June 2 2016. https://mackenzieinstitute.com/2016/06/management-of-savagery-a-model-for-establishing-the-islamic-state/ (Accessed 27 March 2020)

regimes and practices in the Middle East as well as U.S. foreign policy to craft a strategic state-building platform heavily influenced by Marxism and guerilla warfare tactics.[407] In keeping with salafi-Jihadist inspirations, he also drew heavily from both Sayyid Qutb and Ibn Taymiyya to justify violence and jihad. Citing the former, he wrote "Verily, this Qur'an does not reveal its secrets save to those who rush into battles with it (on their side) and who live in an atmosphere like the one in which it was sent down the first time."[408] Although the manifesto was published anonymously under a pseudonym, it is possible to see its influence in the actions of al-Zarqawi that were covered in the previous chapter in that Naji argued for the necessity of the violent polarisation of the masses in order to both ensure a homogenous eventual population and the support required for governance in a modern world. He recognised the need to use theological weapons such as *takfir* to achieve goals of statehood, but also emphasised the need to learn from centuries of socio-political developments. He advocated harnessing technical and tactical expertise in politics and warfare while discarding those that contravened prescriptions of the Sharia, in order to capitalise on creating a sovereign entity in the modern world which adhered solely to Islamic governance.

It is important to note this framework because it invoked the importance of sovereignty as linked to the masses, and thus echoed the revolutionary beliefs posited by Marat or Robespierre during the French Revolution which gave birth to the modern state. By articulating the need for violence, however, he emphasised the later legacy of the French Revolution which arguably dictated that inter-communal violence was the primary vehicle for the achievement of the revolutionary politics of democracy because it ensured the homogeneity of beliefs required to support a popular base.[409] By directing necessary violence towards an oppressive power, Naji also revived the ideas proposed by Fanon and demonstrated an understanding of the effects that violent conduct had on the behaviour of state actors protecting national interests. Finally, by viewing the world in the context of natural and unnatural states of existence which naturally tended towards socio-political group formation in order to self-govern as a sacred canopy, Naji appropriated the same premises that Western

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[407] Naji discussed the social and cultural factors which led to the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, and concluded that superpowers could not withstand domestic attrition of cultural unity in purpose. He posited that only strong authoritarian rulers had been able to govern the Middle East because a unifying natural identity had been destroyed by Sykes-Picot. Naji, 16-23.

[408] Naji, 132.

[409] For the use of violence as an aspect of the creation of the state in the French Revolution, see Blaufarb, Rafe, "The French Revolution: The Birth of European Popular Democracy?", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37:3 (July 1995), 608-618.

enlightenment intellectuals such as John Locke had used in his work on social contracts.[410] Naji's manifesto was clearly born from the chaos which ensued from the onset of the war on terror, but just as religious ideology sought to supplant chaos with order, as was narrated in Chapter 3, so Naji's work sought to use Islamic narratives blended with socio-political thought from diverse backgrounds in global history to propose a system of violence by which a divinely righteous social group could conquer chaos and usher in order under the mantle of a caliphate. Ultimately, by blending social and tactical philosophies under the banner of salafi-jihadism in a specific geopolitical context, Naji's work provided a blueprint by which the umma could and should reclaim its communal dignity represented in sovereign governance.

While Naji's work did not appear to be referenced by Islamic State leadership, by scrutinising its directives and comparing them to tangible actions taken, it is possible to surmise in hindsight that it had a degree of influence. By appointing former Ba'athist officials to prominent posts within the Islamic State, al-Baghdadi capitalised on the institutional and administrative expertise of individuals who had also been marginalised in the building of a future democratic Iraq. By pursuing this strategy, Islamic State leadership distanced itself from the policy objectives of al-Qaeda, and increased the theological and tactical divergence that had begun during the war in Iraq. By engaging former Ba'athist administrators and strategists, al-Baghdadi made it clear that his organisation intended to govern, as Naji had argued was necessary for legitimacy and survival, which al-Qaeda had been criticised for failing to do in Iraq.[411] While this governance was not immediately feasible due to the restricted capabilities of the Islamic State, events would soon create conditions that the group could capitalise on, and these events similarly revolved around notions of the mobilisation of the masses and constructs of sovereignty in geopolitical context.

9.3 Arab Spring, Reshaping the Realm of the Possible, and Jihadist Responses

[410] See Waldron, Jeremy, "John Locke: Social Contracts versus Political Anthropology", *The Review of Politics* 51:1 (Winter 1989), 3-28.

[411] This was a primary distinguishing point between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda as proffered by the former in its first public founding declaration, "Informing the People about the Islamic State of Iraq" which was released January 7 2007 on Al-Furqan Media. In Fishman, Brian and Assaf Moghadam, "Conclusion; Jihadi Fault Lines and Counterterrorism Policy", in Fishman, Brian and Assaf Moghadam (eds), *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 233-255, 246. New York. 2011.

On December 16 2010, a young street vendor in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, had his cart and electric scales confiscated by the police, and he was allegedly slapped and publicly humiliated by a female officer. The following day, the vendor, named Mohamed Bouazizi, went to the governor's office to complain. When the governor refused to see him, he covered himself in gasoline and set himself ablaze in protest.[412] Although Bouazizi died 18 days later from his injuries, his self-immolation sparked protests in Tunisia which built on an entrenched cultural post-colonial tradition of engaging in collective action of dissent. Protestors originally called for social equality and dignity, but rapidly began vehemently demanding the ouster of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali who had, since 1987, manipulated the constitution to allow himself to remain in power indefinitely.[413] Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia on January 14th 2011, but the protests were captured on social media and represented the culmination of popular dissent with entrenched corruption, violent repression, rampant unemployment, and social inequity experienced by a population under an autocratic regime surviving under the guise of Western modernity and its institutions.[414]

On January 25th 2011, millions of citizens flooded Cairo's Tahrir Square in Egypt, called for fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime, and demanded "bread, freedom, and social justice".[415] While mostly peaceful, many protests manifest themselves by violently targeting what were perceived as structures and symbols of regime repression and brutality such as police stations.[416] Mubarak did step down 18 days after the protests began, and opposition forces to include labour unions and the Muslim Brotherhood tentatively joined together to call for the establishment of a 'civil state'. While the breadth and complexity of what has become known as the Arab Spring is beyond the scope of this thesis, the international audience was captivated by these protests because they represented something new and unheralded. They demonstrated that young individuals in Muslim countries were not bound by cultural stereotypes inimical to democratic and civic participation, and that primarily nonviolent grassroots movements could erode divisions along sectarian, economic, and social lines to

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[412] Gana, Nouri, "Tunisia", in Amar, Paul and Vijay Prashad (eds), *Dispatches from the Arab Spring: Understanding the New Middle East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1-23, 8.
[413] Gana, 4.
[414] For more on popular dissent and conditions leading to the Arab Spring, its geographic spread, and conduct, see Dabashi, Hamid, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* (London: Zed Books), 2012.
[415] Amar, Paul, "Egypt" in Amar and Prashad (eds), 24-62, 26.
[416] Amar, 30.

mobilise actors in the pursuit of fundamental rights within democratically endorsed structures.[417]

The Arab Spring spread rapidly to Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria, but as a revolutionary movement it was misconstrued due to the fact that it did not adhere to the patterns and aspirations associated with the monumental revolutions in Western heritage that ultimately hoped to unify the masses and revolutionise political structures to represent popular sovereignty.[418] The first Western reactions to the uprisings portrayed them as being carried out by westernised and educated youths who had progressed to the secular standards embodied by modern political structures and thus were determined to overthrow regimes that failed to uphold them correctly. In fact the Obama administration quickly distanced itself from the Mubarak regime, which had been a regional ally to the U.S. in terms of relationships with Israel, and due to this relationship took a central role in mediating future Egyptian elections where it saw the potential for a stronger democratic ally; all the more crucial given the perceived danger from Islamist organisations should they capitalise on growing discontent with practices associated with democratic regimes under Mubarak.[419]

While a great deal of contemporaneous study was devoted to understanding the root causes and future potential of the Arab Spring in a traditional state centric model which views world relations as contests for power between rational actors, notions of affect which would have more profoundly enduring ramifications on the socio-political landscape, and on individuals as actors, were taking root through the revolutions. These paradigms forged through notions of affect that empower agents to take collective action in pursuit of self-determination were embodied in the revolutions in that they were "transparent movements that both exceed individual subjects and bind together collectives in ways that create conditions of possibility for both the crystallisation of social structures and for their contestation".[420] This type of social entativity is not dependent upon modernisation theory or democratic aspirations. It can be better understood as a dualistic cultural outburst, which on the one hand physically

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[417] Amar, 28.

[418] Revolutions such as the American, French, and Bolshevik are noted for their commonalities. The Arab Spring, and the narratives that emanated from it, however, did not adhere to the discursive parameters that had come to be associated with popular democratic revolution in the Western tradition. See Spanos, William V., "Arab Spring, 2011: A Symptomatic Reading of the Revolution (To the Memory of Edward W. Said)", *Symploke* 20:1-2 (2012), 83-119.

[419] Spanos, 85-88.

[420] Solomon, Ty, "Ontological Security, Circulations of Affect, and the Arab Spring", *Journal of International Relations and Development* 21:4 (September 2018), 934-958, 939.

revolted against corrupt regimes and their associated practices, and on the other which transcendentally grappled with the legacy of Sykes-Picot and its aftermath and sought to regain a sacred canopy in the sense of ontological security which, beyond physical security, imbues actors with a sense of self that forms the foundation for collective agency.[421] The Arab Spring developed differently in different nation states that experienced it, but it is perhaps this cultural and deeply rooted human sociological yearning that was manifest through protest which was its most significant legacy in reshaping the realm of the possible through collective action in the Middle East.[422]

The reshaping of the geopolitical landscape as a result of the Arab Spring would prove to have an enduring effect on the jihadisphere. As protests spread to Yemen in January 2011, al-Qaeda's affiliate on the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP, seized large portions of territory to include major towns in Abyan Province.[423] The most important aspect of this development is the fact that AQAP was instructed by al-Qaeda General Command to not declare the establishment of an emirate or nascent state, due to the fact that it could not hope to provide the foundation of a state in terms of basic services, and therefore would fail to gain necessary popular support. In a letter to AQAP leadership, Osama Bin Laden wrote that Arab populations had become entirely dependent upon their governments for goods and services, and subsequently any Islamic State which failed to deliver these same public services quickly and efficiently would lose any hope for support.[424] This position is reflective of al-Qaeda's incorporation of Muslim Brotherhood precepts concerning governance and the masses, and also may have been a response to the fact that it had been criticised for failing to hold territory in Iraq. This move by al-Qaeda may have been carried out due to knowledge of the prescriptions given by Naji for state building, yet with underlying recognition of the power of the masses demonstrated in the Arab Spring. Instead of declaring an emirate, AQAP engaged with tribal leaders and began a concerted strategy designed to win the 'hearts and minds' of the local population, and unify disparate elements of society.[425] This further underpins al-Qaeda's long term vision for the establishment of the Caliphate in that the group abstained

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[421] Solomon, 935.
[422] For more on the Arab Spring, see Grand, Stephen R., *Understanding Tahrir Square: What Transitions Elsewhere can Teach us about the Prospects for Arab Democracy* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2014).
[423] McCants, William, *The ISIS Apocalypse; The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 55.
[424] McCants, 54.
[425] McCants, 56.

from any proclamation of *takfir* and instead emphasised gradual education of the population to ensure an ease of transition to eventual Islamic governance. Despite holding territory and engaging in grassroots civil state building, AQAP remained focused on using strongholds from which to attack U.S. interests in the Middle East, and conducting terrorist training in order to carry out attacks abroad in pursuit of its primary ambition of forcing U.S. removal from the region.[426]

On May 1st 2011, a U.S. special operations team killed Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, in what was heralded as a success of intelligence gathering and operational planning.[427] While this leadership decapitation certainly eliminated one of the focal points in the war on terror and the mastermind behind 9/11, al-Qaeda's leadership passed to Ayman al-Zawahiri and the organisation continued unabated in its global mission via regional affiliates.[428]

9.4 The Arab Spring Triggers Civil War in Syria and Creation of Jabhat al-Nusra

While AQAP was capitalising on the opportunities created by the Arab Spring in Yemen, protests spread to Syria, where in January 2011 protestors had begun demanding "freedom for the people" in public arenas across the nation.[429] While the regime of President Bashar al-Assad initially made concessions to the protestors, it increasingly responded with brutal repression. In this regard it is interesting to note the relationship between the Alawite Syrian state and opposition movements, in that the Muslim Brotherhood had enjoyed great popular support in opposition to the regime in Syria beginning in the 1960s. This relationship culminated in a Syrian government assault on the city of Hama in 1982, which resulted in massive Sunni civilian casualties.[430] Following this catastrophe, political Islam declined in Syria as a mobilising force, but interestingly religious education aimed at the moral transformation of society through grassroots initiatives became the focal point for advocating

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[426] Terrill, Andrew W, *The Struggle for Yemen and the Challenge of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2013), 6.
[427] Annamalai, Ganesan, "The Impact of Osama Bin Laden's death on the Landscape of Global Jihad", *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 8:3 (August 2011), 10-13, 13
[428] Following the disruption of al-Qaeda's safe haven in Afghanistan and the disbandment of al-Qaeda in Iraq, the organisation pursued a franchising strategy in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and incorporated local jihadist groups into the al-Qaeda network by combining local grievances with its anti-American geopolitical narrative. For more on the structural evolution of al-Qaeda, see Hellmich, Christina, *Al-Qaeda: From Global Network to Local Franchise* (London: Zed Books, 2011).
[429] Hilu Pinto, Paulo Gabriel, "Syria", in Amar and Prashad, 204-242, 205.
[430] Hilu Pinto, 210.

social reform. For this reason, the 2011 protests used religious language and reference points to criticise the regime not due to political party affiliation but because Islamic social values had become the primary framework for reform following the 1982 massacre.[431]

In April 2011, the U.S. imposed sanctions on Assad and top Syrian officials due to the regime's brutal repression of protests.[432] Unlike Ben Ali and Mubarak, Assad refused to step down and various factions of resistance emerged to his increasing crackdowns as government loyalists and rebel groups framed the conflict in ways to maximise their respective narrative appeal.[433] Amidst this tumult, al-Baghdadi commissioned Syrian Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani to spearhead an Islamic State cell in Syria, and he formed Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) as one of many factions combatting the Assad regime.[434] Al-Zawahiri voiced his organisation's support for jihad in Syria, and emphasised the prominent role that territory enclosed in Syria in the 21st century played in Islamic history.[435] JN quickly grew in capabilities, but portrayed itself as a nationalist movement without ties to terrorist organisations and by doing so was able to capitalise on the Islamic frames of resistance that had been ingrained in Syrian political narratives.[436] JN adopted an approach similar to that of AQAP in Yemen which had incorporated Muslim Brotherhood precepts, and engaged in grassroots initiatives to gain popular support for an eventual Sharia government following the collapse of the Assad regime. During the second half of 2011, JN engaged in attacks to achieve its immediate objective, the defeat of the Assad regime, and crafted a military strategy that deliberately targeted Syrian government security and intelligence branches, divisions of the army, and

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[431] Hilu Pinto, 211.

[432] "Timeline: US Intervention in Syria's war since 2011", *Al-Jazeera,* October 7 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/timeline-intervention-syria-war-2011-191007190255685.html (Accessed 30 March 2020)

[433] For a study on the power of framing in the Syrian conflict, and the power of narratives along sectarian lines to fuel violence, see Corstange, Daniel E. and Erin A. York, "Sectarian Framing in the Syrian Civil War", *American Journal of Political Science* 62:2 (April 2018), 441-455.

[434] Cafarella, Jennifer, *Middle East Security Report 25; Jabhat Al-Nusra in Syria: An Islamic Emirate for Al-Qaeda* (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of War, December 2014), 12.

[435] Al-Zawahiri noted that the Umayyad Caliphate that was established after the rule of the Rightly Guided Caliphs was centred in Damascus, and that Islam's holiest sites were in the levant. See Jones, Seth G., Charles Vallee, and Maxwell B. Markusen, *Al-Qaeda's Struggling Campaign in Syria: Past, Present, and Future* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018), 4.

[436] While JN adopted Islamic frames of reference, it primarily embraced a nationalistic worldview in that the military overthrow of the Assad regime for the benefit of the Syrian nation was its ultimate objective. For more on this strategic distinction, see Adraouli, Mohamed-Ali, "Jabhat Al-Nusra in the Syrian Conflict", Oxford Research Group, December 20 2017. https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/Blog/jabhat-al-nusra-in-the-syrian-conflict (Accessed 21 April 2020)

prominent figureheads.[437] Al-Jawlani also framed the Syrian conflict as a stepping stone to expelling American interests and oppressive rulers from the heartland of Islam, and by doing so echoed the narrative popularised by al-Qaeda during the war in Iraq. JN dealt rapid successive blows to Syrian government forces, characterised by brazen suicide attacks which resulted in high death tolls, which forced them to retreat to urban defensive positions. In this situation, JN capitalised on the chaos Naji had proposed creating and successfully recruited from among rural populations, and organised them into effective military style brigades.[438] By leading these efforts and mobilising the Syrian rural population, JN played a crucial role in transforming the conflict in Syria from one characterised by sporadic clashes between factions to one of civil war.

9.5 Al-Maliki's Authoritarianism and Re-emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq

While JN expanded operations in Syria, aided in part by the political manoeuvrings of the Assad regime which freed insurgents from prisons in order to justify increasing brutality under the guise of counterterrorism, al-Baghdadi and Islamic State leadership responded to the results of the U.S. troop departure from Iraq and the secondary effects from the Arab Spring.[439] As was noted above, al-Maliki intensified his consolidation of power following the removal of U.S. forces. In December 2011, he dispatched troops and tanks with arrest warrants to the residences of Minister of Finance Rafi al-Issawi, Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, and Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq. Al-Hashemi fled from Baghdad to Iraq's Kurdish region, but later confessions from his protection detail claimed the Vice President had been behind a string of terrorist bombings.[440] These confessions were revealed to have been coerced under extensive torture, and the fact that the politicians in question in this instance were Sunni represented the increasing trend of the al-Maliki administration to implement tactics akin to those used by Saddam Hussein to quell sectarian opposition to his

[437] Cafarella, 13.
[438] Cafarella, 14.
[439] For details on Assad regime tactics, see Sands, Phil, Justin Vela and Suha Maayeh, "Assad Regime Abetted Extremists to Subvert Peaceful Uprising, Says Former Intelligence Official", *The National*, January 21 2014. https://www.thenational.ae/world/assad-regime-abetted-extremists-to-subvert-peaceful-uprising-says-former-intelligence-official-1.319620 (Accessed 30 March 2020)
[440] Cochrane Sullivan, Melisa, "Iraq's Post-Withdrawal Crisis; Update 2," Institute for the Study of War, December 23 2011.

rule.[441] Furthermore, a week after deploying tanks and troops to confront opposition, al-Maliki announced that he intended to abandon national coalition governance in favour of a political majority. By doing so, he would effectively side-line the Iraqiyya party which was widely supported by Sunnis, and this was perceived as an effort to marginalise the Sunni population in favour of a Shiite majority.[442] These developments were eerily predicted by al-Zarqawi in the letter that he wrote to Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri in 2004 that was covered in the previous chapter, in which the former argued that the failure to wield *takfir* successfully to create conditions in which the Sunni population would mobilise to defeat the Shia and establish a state, would result in the Americans' Shiite allies retaining the structures of power following U.S. withdrawal and the use of them to subjugate the Sunni masses.[443]

The withdrawal of U.S. combat troops removed effective barriers to re-emerging violence, and in December 2011 car bombs detonated in both Sunni and Shia neighbourhoods in Baghdad which killed 60 and injured over 200 individuals, in the deadliest attacks in Iraq in over a year.[444] Beginning in January 2012, the Islamic State began releasing speeches declaring an imminent return, claiming that the group was rapidly gaining new supporters. In February, it proclaimed that "The (Islamic) State will soon return, God willing, to all the areas that have been taken from it."[445] In July 2012, al-Baghdadi announced that the Islamic State "is returning anew, advancing to take control of the ground that it had and more…The Islamic State does not recognise synthetic borders, nor any citizenship besides Islam".[446] Subsequent speeches by the Islamic State argued that al-Maliki's tactics were indicative of a Shiite expansionist plot at the expense of Sunnis, and emphasised the tangible grievances of Iraq's Sunni population under increasing authoritarian democratic rule. This final instance is poignant in both its content and timing in that it channelled developments of the Arab Spring to fuel discontent with corrupt and authoritarian regimes, but did so in a method which deliberately framed the outlet of said discontent as a violent entity which dissolved the very

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[441] Abdul Ahad, Ghaith, "Corruption in Iraq: Your son is being tortured. He will die if you don't pay", *The Guardian,* January 15 2012. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/16/corruption-iraq-son-tortured-pay (Accessed 1 April 2020)

[442] Cochrane Sullivan.

[443] For more on the development of Iraqi politics during the U.S. led war towards its conclusion, and the details of manoeuvrings by the al-Maliki administration to consolidate authoritarian power, see Dodge, Toby, "State and society in Iraq ten years after regime change: the rise of a new authoritarianism", *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 89:2 (March 2013), 241-257.

[444] Cochrane Sullivan.

[445] Islamic State spokesperson al-Adnani, in Bunzel. P. 24.

[446] Al-Baghdadi, in Bunzel, 24.

foundation of the modern state in which authoritarianism was taking root. While other regional protests demanded freedom, equality and social justice for the citizens of a state, the Islamic State summarily rejected this proposition and instead posited that the remedy for contemporary Sunni grievances lay in the transcendent image of citizenship according to Islamic prescripts. Throughout 2012 the Islamic State released memos and speeches which reiterated this position, and violence in Iraq along sectarian lines and against centres of government power increased to levels not experienced since before the U.S. troop withdrawal.[447]

9.6 Islamic State Expansion into Syria and the Fracturing of Jihadism

On December 11th 2012, the United States State Department designated JN a terrorist group, and accused it of operating under the umbrella of the Islamic State. To this, JN responded that it was a separate organisation; the Nusra Front.[448] Although JN had claimed credit for over 600 violent attacks in Syria, the group continued its self-portrayal as a Syrian movement devoted to the overthrow of the Assad regime and had become a popular insurgent movement. Whereas the manifesto by Naji, born out of the chaos of Iraq, had perhaps inspired al-Baghdadi's strategic choices and rhetoric to this point, JN seemed guided primarily by another work published contemporaneously with "Management of Savagery". This work, a 1,600-page tome entitled "The Call of the Global Islamic Resistance"[449] had been written by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, a Syrian who had participated in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's uprising against President Hafez al-Assad that was recounted earlier. Al-Suri had also participated in the struggles in Algeria and Afghanistan, and viewed the current jihadist movement as a failure due to insufficient religious knowledge which led to rash decisions and excessive violence, and he sought to heal jihadism through his manifesto.[450] Whereas Naji stressed the importance of conquering and brutally defending territory, al-Suri promoted popular revolt under the mantle of jihadism as the only way to establish a Muslim society, and

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[447] "Still Bloody", *The Economist,* January 5 2013. https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2013/01/05/still-bloody (Accessed 1 April 2020)

[448] Lister, Charles, *Profiling the Islamic State,* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, November 13th 2014), 13. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/en_web_lister.pdf (Accessed 1 April 2020)

[449] The most comprehensive analysis of this work is Masoud, Zackie M.W., "An Analysis of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's "Call to Global Islamic Resistance", *Journal of Strategic Security* 6:1 (Spring 2013), 1-18.

[450] McCants, 86.

this position was championed by leaders of JN.[451] Any use of *takfir*, he argued, could be arbitrarily wielded to serve motives that would ultimately result in the destruction of any popular support or communal unity required to overthrow corrupt regimes. This position stood in stark contrast to that taken by Naji which framed *takfir* as a useful and necessary multi-dimensional weapon which could be used to create the chaos necessary for the victory of violent jihadism, and subsequently harnessed to ensure the unity, homogeneity, and compliance of a population.

The differences regarding ultimate ambitions and the use of *takfir* between JN and the Islamic State became increasingly evident as the latter expanded its operations into Syria. Whereas JN followed the al-Qaeda model and the prescripts given by al-Suri and sought to engage with Sharia committees and other rebel groups to provide services and settle disputes in the regions it captured, the Islamic State did not perceive itself as engaged in a war against the Assad regime and sought instead to dominate rather than collaborate with other rebel factions. It instituted harsh Sharia governance, including severe penalties for those accused of non-compliance which extended to the pronouncement of *takfir* on individuals suspected of collaborating with either the regime or other rebel organisations.[452] While the group did engage with local Sunni tribes, it did so to secure resources to be used to gain the necessary finances and infrastructure to operate a future state. As part of this tactic, the Islamic State engaged in independent campaigns of warfare against local tribes that controlled areas vital to the extraction of oil and whose support could not be swayed. By doing so, it simultaneously portrayed itself to the local populations as a dangerous yet more viable and sustainable alternative to the existing regime in its ability to secure resources required of a political stakeholder.[453]

Differing methodologies and conflicting aspirations led to the demands of the Islamic State that JN announce loyalty to it in March 2013. Al-Jawlani refused, stating that publicly claiming any allegiance would erode the group's popular Syrian support, and al-Baghdadi unsuccessfully attempted to recruit the former's top officials.[454] A month later, in April 2013, al-Baghdadi released a public statement: "It's now time to declare in front of the people of the

[451] McCants, 87.
[452] McCants, 88.
[453] Napoleoni, 31.
[454] McCants, 91.

Levant and the world that Jabhat al-Nusrah is but an extension of the Islamic State of Iraq and part of it. (…) So we declare while relying on Allah: The cancellation of the name 'Islamic State of Iraq', and the cancellation of the name 'Jabhat al-Nusrah', and gathering them under one name, 'The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham'."[455] Al-Jawlani responded immediately by publicly claiming allegiance to al-Zawahiri, which he had never done publicly and which al-Baghdadi refused to do, and yet amidst this confusion many JN fighters defected to join al-Baghdadi's new organisation, ISIS.[456] Al-Baghdadi meanwhile appealed to al-Zawahiri, urging him to recognise the merger in order to avoid *fitna* and the dangerous fracturing of jihadism and the umma. In May 2013, however, al-Zawahiri voided the merger, called on both groups to cease infighting, and ordered the Islamic State to return to Iraq while JN should continue in Syria as al-Qaeda's official affiliate.[457] He further appointed a deputy, Abu Khalid al-Suri, to mediate compliance with his orders.

In June 2013, al-Baghdadi responded: "I have chosen the command of my Lord over the command in the message that contradicts it."[458] Furthermore, ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani claimed that ISIS had never been contractually obligated to al-Qaeda, and crucially that al-Zawahiri had erred due to the fact that he had tried to partition jihadism and ISIS according to the artificial boundaries of Sykes-Picot and that therefore his ruling held no legitimacy.[459] This conflict reverberated within the jihadist community. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi chastised ISIS in January 2014 for behaving like a state when in fact it had no legitimacy to do so, and harshly condemned the group's excessive use of *takfir* and argued that this threatened the future potential of any eventual legitimate Islamic government.[460]

ISIS fighters did not abandon Syria and in fact escalated violence against opposing rebel groups that did not declare fealty, arguing that this constituted allegiance with an enemy and therefore fundamental disbelief. When called to submit to shura consultation to mediate

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[455] Al-Baghdadi, *And Give Glad Tidings to the Believers* (Al-Furqan Media Foundation, April 2013), in Jones et. al., 15.
[456] Alexander and Alexander, 6.
[457] Atassi, Basma, "Qaeda chief annuls Syrian-Iraqi jihad merger", *Al Jazeera,* June 9 2013. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/06/2013699425657882.html (Accessed 1 April 2020)
[458] Al-Baghdadi, in McCants, 92.
[459] Joscelyn, Thomas, "Islamic State of Iraq leader defies Zawahiri in alleged audio message", *Long War Journal,* June 15 2013. https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/islamic_state_of_ira_3.php (Accessed 1 April 2020)
[460] Bunzel, Cole, "The Islamic State of Disunity: Jihadism Divided", *Jihadica,* January 30 2014. http://www.jihadica.com/the-islamic-state-of-disunity-jihadism-divided/ (Accessed 1 April 2020)

disputes, ISIS repeatedly refused because this would "infringe on the rights of the Muslim sovereign and his state".[461] ISIS leadership increasingly portrayed itself as a sovereign entity and many JN members as well as unaffiliated individuals both from within Syria and internationally joined its ranks as the group refused to abandon its methodology and claims to statehood.[462] Unlike other Jihadist organisations, ISIS employed apocalyptic narratives to legitimise its existence. Just as al-Qaeda had portrayed the war in Iraq as part of a continuum in the struggle between Islam and the Crusaders, so ISIS represented its emerging statehood as the indication that the end times were nearing and that the final confrontation between Islam and the West was approaching. In order to be victorious this endeavour, the spiritual purity of the community was paramount and therefore ISIS leaders reiterated the urgency of utilising *takfir* and its violent repercussions to ensure the cleanliness and uniformity of the umma.[463] ISIS continued conquering territory, and in January 2014 it seized Raqqa which became the group's de-facto capital.[464] In conquered territories, ISIS leadership emphasised the abovementioned need to purify as well as prescriptions advocated by Naji by implementing social services such as police and educational as well as public services, but doing so in a manner that strictly adhered to the group's stringent parameters in that punishments for nonconformity included death and mutilation, schools taught only authorised material, smoking was outlawed, and deviance was met with declarations of *takfir*.[465]

On February 2nd 2014, al-Qaeda issued a statement formally disavowing ISIS, and bracketed the organisation's name which clearly intended to delegitimise its claims to statehood.[466] Two weeks later, ISIS leadership dispatched fighters to assassinate al-Zawahiri's deputy, Abu Khalid al-Suri, and in the following months the group consolidated its power in Syria as the Assad regime redirected military efforts away from it due to the fact that it did not deliberately target the government itself.[467] In April 2014, an ISIS spokesman hinted publicly that a major announcement was forthcoming from the group, and weeks later, its primary

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[461] Bunzel, 29.
[462] The recruitment strategies employed by ISIS are beyond the scope of this thesis, but for more on the different motives that drew recruits to ISIS, see Wiess, Michael and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Regan Arts, 2016), 146-159.
[463] For more on the apocalyptic narratives employed by ISIS in Syria in 2013-2014 see McCants. Pp. 100-106.
[464] "Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State", Wilson Center, October 28 2019.
[465] Napoleoni, 48.
[466] Bunzel, 29.
[467] "Syria: Countrywide Conflict Report 4", Syria Conflict Mapping Project, Carter Center, September 11 2014. https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/NationwideUpdate-Sept-18-2014.pdf (Accessed 1 April 2020)

apologist, Turki ibn Mubarak al-Bin'ali released a treatise which argued in meticulous theological detail that the prophesied caliphate would return, ISIS merited the title of caliphate, and that al-Baghdadi was qualified to lead it as caliph.[468] The major announcement would be delivered months later in Mosul, Iraq, and will be the starting point for the next chapter.

9.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated the potential for survival exhibited by ISIS in that the organisation endured despite suffering near catastrophic losses during the war in Iraq. It had successfully reinterpreted a worldview that predated it which perceived history and contemporary events within a cosmic timeframe, and which did not frame military or territorial losses as ultimate defeats. The Arab Spring had enduring effects on power dynamics in the Middle East that continue to resound into the present, but for the purposes of this thesis, it had two primary repercussions. First, it physically led to power vacuums and the creation of space within which power and sovereignty could be contested. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it represented the possibility that change in entrenched authoritarian regimes in the Middle East was possible through collective mobilisation that did not necessarily have to possess ambitions of democratisation or secularisation. The power of individual agency and collective action in dictating the outcomes of inter-group dynamics in a competitive political context is tremendously powerful, and has been one of the pillars of revolutionary movements of varying orientations regardless of specific moments in history. This chapter has therefore explored the way in which pre-existing ideologies and plans that informed the ISIS worldview were able to be galvanised in the socio-political arena which resulted from the Arab Spring. This section has also demonstrated the increasing methodological differences between al-Qaeda and ISIS regarding what a state resultant from jihad should be, and how it should be attained. In this regard, this chapter has scrutinised how jihadist organisations reacted to external global and regional events, as well as to each-other, and how they incorporated lessons of previous failures and successes while maintaining a transcendent worldview as it related to sovereignty and methodology.

[468] McCants, 116.

Chapter 10

ISIS Caliphate

This chapter will cover the time period from the announcement of the ISIS caliphate in the summer 2014 to the territorial loss of the same by the summer of 2019. Throughout this account, previous chapters will be emulated in that critical benchmarks in the group's evolution will be chronicled as reflected in the use and understanding of *takfir* as a socio-political weapon. Furthermore, this evolution will be synchronised with a discussion of U.S. and international perceptions of and reactions to ISIS and the war on terror in order to demonstrate relative successes and failures.

First this chapter will discuss the declaration of the caliphate and the reasons that it was so appealing in a socio-political context. It will analyse the ideological purging that took place within ISIS regarding *takfir* and the way that the group portrayed itself to the world. Second it will explore international and jihadist responses to the ISIS caliphate and the repercussions that this had on the group's physical capabilities, its ideological orientation, and the jihadisphere at large. Third this chapter will scrutinise the 2017 internal schism that took place within ISIS which resulted from territorial losses and revolved around the utility and application of *takfir*. This will be juxtaposed with contemporaneous external events in order to understand the salience and endurance of the evolving jihadist worldview as well as the entrenchment of *takfir* driven violence as a tool for achieving sovereignty within a social group context. Finally, this chapter will recount disputes between al-Qaeda and ISIS from 2019 in order to demonstrate the fracturing of jihadism, longevity of ideological platforms forged through the conduct of violence, and implications for the future of terrorism.

10.1 Declaration of the Caliphate

In early summer 2014, ISIS forces that had consolidated in Syria and capitalised in rhetoric on the grievances suffered by Sunnis under the al-Maliki regime swept through northern Iraq largely unopposed by government troops and seized Mosul relatively quickly.[469]

[469] Prior to seizing Mosul, IS forces captured Fallujah in January 2014, the site of extensive battles fought between insurgents and U.S. forces in 2004. Gaining the city had become a key point for the U.S. in the turning

This occurred in part because Iraqi government troops had abandoned the city after learning about the ISIS advance, and because "ISI(S) had already won the support of the local Sunnis who joined the fight, this time on the side of ISI(S)."[470] Upon entering Mosul, ISIS militant seized $US 429 million from the city's bank, commensurate with the group's strategic calculus to gain control of resources necessary to sustain state-like operations.[471] On June 29th 2014, ISIS spokesman al-Adnani released an audio message in which he announced that the group had decided to declare an Islamic caliphate, and that Abu Bakr-al Baghdadi had been chosen to be its caliph.[472] He further emphasised that this decision had been deliberated on by a shura council of experts, and that all legal sharia requirements had been met to ensure legitimacy of rule and the validity of the declaration.[473] By declaring a caliphate, ISIS proclaimed that it embodied the resurgence of the institution which had been absent in the Middle East since Turkish President Kemal Ataturk abolished it in 1924, and which in popular jihadist memory had served as the idyllic lost sacred canopy of Islam.[474]/[475] In addition to the declaration of a caliphate, al-Adnani stated that the name ISIS would be abolished in favour of the designation "Islamic State" (IS), indicating that the group did not perceive itself as being constrained to the territory of Iraq and Syria and that it remained committed to its objective of

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tide of the Iraq War leading to the Anbar Awakening, and its recapture in 2014 provided significant symbolic momentum for IS as it rapidly regained lost territory. In the reference below, note the use of al-Qaeda in the article title as opposed to Islamic State, indicative of the fact that due to the rapid spread of ISIS and lack of understanding regarding the divisions between jihadist organisations al-Qaeda was credited with regaining a foothold in Iraq. Roggio, Bill, "Al-Qaeda seizes partial control of 2 cities in western Iraq", *Long War Journal,* January 2 2014. https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/01/al_qaeda_seizes_cont.php (Accessed 20 April 2020)

[470] Jasko et al., 11.

[471] Kranz, Michael, "This map shows how ISIS has been almost completely wiped out", *Business Insider,* December 22 2017. https://www.businessinsider.com/map-of-isis-territory-2017-12 (Accessed 20 April 2020)

[472] Ali, Abdallah Suleiman, "ISIS announces Islamic caliphate, changes name", *Al-Monitor,* June 30 2014. https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/06/iraq-syria-isis-announcement-islamic-caliphate-name-change.html (Accessed 20 April 2020)

[473] These conditions include stipulations such as the control of territory and the means by which to govern it, and proven descent of the caliph from the prophet Muhammad. For an analysis of the declaration of the IS caliphate in this context, see Haykel, Bernard and Cole Bunzel, "A New Caliphate?", Project Syndicate, July 10 2014. https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/bernard-haykel-and-cole-bunzel-consider-the-implications-of-the-islamic-state-s-declaration-of-a-caliphate?barrier=accesspaylog (Accessed 20 April 2020)

[474] For jihadist perceptions on the symbolic importance of the caliphate as a sacred canopy, see Naji, 16-18. For the importance of the caliphate as a utopian regression in political Islam, see Rosefsky Wickham, Carrie, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[475] For the abolition of the caliphate, transition to Western style governance, and cultural cleavages this process exposed in the 1920s, see Hassan, Mona, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

sovereignty beyond the confines of nation state borders dictated by the agreement of Sykes-Picot.[476]

In his message, al-Adnani utilised compelling and vivid imagery to rally the global Muslim community around shared grievances which revolved around the longstanding Islamist and jihadist platforms of a return to dignity, but he emphasised IS methodology and violence. He began his message by stating "The time has come for those generations that were drowning in oceans of disgrace, being nursed on the milk of humiliation, and being ruled by the vilest of all people, after their long slumber in the darkness of neglect – the time has come for them to rise. The time has come for the ummah of Muhammad...to wake up from its sleep, remove the garments of dishonour, and shake off the dust of humiliation and disgrace, for the era of lamenting and moaning has gone, and the dawn of honour has emerged anew. The sun of jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of victory have appeared."[477] While this message was certainly couched in jihadist language, and appropriated the contextual opportunities afforded by the wars in Iraq and Syria, the grievances that al-Adnani referred to evoked the ambitions articulated by previous generations of Islamists and jihadists. In this appropriation and by declaring a caliphate as the pinnacle achievement of jihad, IS also summarily nullified the legitimacy and validity of all jihadist organisations such as al-Qaeda, as well as its regional affiliates such as JN engaged in nationalistic struggles.[478] This message further undercut the authority of competing jihadist organisations in that al-Adnani stressed the fact that due to the rightful office of the caliph, all Muslims must swear fealty to al-Baghdadi or be in violation of one of the communal and individual obligations of the religion.[479] Just as previous Islamists had argued that only a return to Islamic belief reflected in practice could salvage the umma from living in a state of subjugation, so al-Adnani stipulated that fealty to the caliphate had become a forgotten

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[476] Chapter 7 of this thesis indicated that for ease of use, the term ISIS would be used to describe the group at all stages of its existence, unless otherwise noted. From this point forward, the acronym IS will be used exclusively to describe the organisation as it is most suited to comprehend the way in which the group perceived itself in relation to other actors, and its objectives.

[477] Al-Adnani in a Twitter audio message, June 29 2014, in "ISIS Declares Islamic Caliphate, Appoints Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi As "Caliph", Declares All Muslims Must Pledge Allegiance to Him", Middle East Media Research Institute, Iraq Special Dispatch No. 5782, July 1 2014. https://www.memri.org/reports/isis-declares-islamic-caliphate-appoints-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-caliph-declares-all-muslims (Accessed 21 April 2020)

[478] Al-Adnani.

[479] Al-Adnani.

obligation, and the only way for the umma to return to dignity was the recognition of IS caliphal authority.

Al-Adnani's framing is poignant in that it reflected the language and worldview offered by Naji, but it also capitalised on classical Islamic guidance for the swearing of fealty which simultaneously would serve as a communal act of association meant to strengthen intra-group bonds of demonstrative loyalty as was explored in Chapter 2.[480]

Al-Adnani's message continued to outline what IS considered markers of apostasy, which included democracy, secularism, and nationalism. By enumerating these acts of apostasy, IS leadership made clear where the boundaries of group membership lay, and remained true to its ideological premise which stated that democratic institutions constituted modern polytheism and thus abiding by them represented fundamental disbelief.[481] By linking the prevalence of democratic institutions to sinful behaviour which had caused the umma to suffer at the hands of foreign and corrupt powers, IS capitalised further on the rampant disaffection with both the al-Maliki regime in Iraq and corrupt democratic regimes in the Middle East that had birthed the Arab Spring. The answer to this apostasy and corruption lay not in peaceful demonstration and theoretical demands for social justice, but through the violent establishment of legitimate Islamic governance in the form of a caliphate. Throughout his message, al-Adnani utilised violent imagery, demonstrating the premise articulated in Chapter 3 that ideological worldviews forged through the conduct of violence will increasingly regard it as central to their foundation, existence, and longevity. He stated: "'We spilled rivers of our blood to water the seeds of the caliphate, laid its foundation with our skulls, and built its tower over our corpses. We were patient for years in the face of being killed, imprisoned, having our bones broken and our limbs severed. We drank all sorts of bitterness, dreaming of this day. Would we delay it for even a moment after having reached it?' And say to them, we took it forcibly at the point of a blade. We brought it back conquered and compelled. We established it in defiance of many. And the people's necks were violently struck, with bombings, explosions, and destruction...Our caliphate has indeed returned with certainty...".[482] Further, regarding any individual who did not accept the caliphate, or its

[480] For more on bay'a, swearing of fealty, and the differing views regarding its application among jihadists organisations, see Wagemakers, Joas, "The Concept of Bay'a in the Islamic State's Ideology", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9:4 (2015), 98-106.
[481] Al-Adnani.
[482] Al-Adnani.

legitimacy to rule, al-Adnani declared "The Mujahideen Must Rally Around The Caliphate, And If Anyone Refuses, "Split His Head With Bullets And Empty Its Insides, Whoever He May Be...".[483]

Days after the release of al-Adnani's message declaring a caliphate, al-Baghdadi delivered a sermon to assembled Sunnis at a Mosul mosque. In his speech, he reiterated sentiments articulated by al-Adnani by stating that the establishment of justice through sharia was a communal imperative, and that God favoured IS in allowing it to establish the caliphate in order for religion to be properly in place.[484] Furthermore, al-Baghdadi also tapped into Arab Spring disaffections by declaring that he would not treat his subjects as previous rulers had done, and that the umma should only follow him so long as he followed God's commands.

Perhaps the most enlightening information about the IS caliphate in its declaration can be gleaned from its Creed and Path, a compilation of statements released by the group which outlined its fundamental ideological orientation. These did not focus on dismantling Western power structures, but rather on reinstating Islamic purity as the means to realise an immediate social utopia. In nineteen distinct enumerations, IS articulated the grounds on which individuals should be considered believers or apostates, and reiterated its position that according to prophetic methodology, unbelievers were legitimate targets for violence and death.[485] Furthermore, the Creed and Path portrayed IS as a unifier, predicated on the common acknowledgement of *tawhid* in that the group stated it embodied the middle ground between extremism and laxity, and proposed that in common embrace of *tawhid* the group could enjoin individuals from different races, nationalities and backgrounds, much as Muhammad had done when he favoured umma affiliation over pre-existing tribal loyalties.[486]

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[483] Al-Adnani.

[484] "Islamic State's 'caliph' lauds Iraq rebellion", *Al-Jazeera,* July 6 2014. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/islamic-state-caliph-lauds-iraq-rebellion-20147512574517772.html (Accessed 22 April 2020)

[485] The Creed and Path outlines people of the book as a people of war not enjoying a status of protection due to historical and contemporary violations of treaties, states that any individual to give assistance to enemies of IS is a disbeliever, and any individual to render obedience to laws of nations states is a disbeliever. Individuals who pray in the direction of Mecca and engage in sinful behaviour but do not consider it licit are to be considered Muslims unless they engage in a specific nullifier of the faith. The Creed and Path in its entirety can be accessed in Bunzel, 38-42.

[486] Bunzel, 41-42.

10.2 Purge of *Takfir* Extremists

Just as social groups, and emerging polities as revolutionary social groups must enforce ideological uniformity in order to survive in a competitive social space, so IS conducted an internal campaign designed to ensure the proper conceptualisation and utility of *takfir* within its ranks in the months preceding and immediately following the declaration of the caliphate. This campaign had its roots in the teachings of Ahmad ibn 'Umar al-Hazimi, a Saudi scholar who travelled to Tunisia during the Arab Spring and preached there in the wake of the revolts regarding a doctrine he called *takfir al-'adhir;* excommunication of the excuser.[487] In this doctrine, al-Hazimi sought to cleanse the Islamic community by eliminating not only those who engaged in acts of disbelief, but also those who failed to excommunicate those who did.[488] According to this doctrine, otherwise devout Muslims who did not declare *takfir* on individuals who sinned by engaging in behaviour such as participating in elections, were themselves apostate and could be excommunicated and targeted with violence. While al-Hazimi was not affiliated with IS, it is important to note that he preached a doctrine of *takfir* in Tunisia that equated democratic institutional participation, among other things, with disbelief and therefore capitalised on the grievances in that country, the hotbed of the Arab Spring, which were explored in the previous chapter.[489]

This viewpoint gained endorsement within segments of IS leadership, most notably by Tunisian Abu Ja'far al-Hattab, an early Sharia Committee member who enjoyed popular support among the ranks.[490] Another member of the committee, however, Bahraini Turki al-Bin'ali, argued that *takfir al-'adhir* was a sinful innovation, and that its application would lead to the majority of the world's Muslim population being classified as disbelievers. Further he argued, its use would result in *takfir* in infinite regress, or an endless chain of *takfir*, and that

[487] Bunzel, Cole, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13:1 (2019), 13-22, 14.
[488] This viewpoint is an elaboration on the Islamic premise that individuals can be excused of sinful behaviour on account of ignorance. For more on the development of this premise in salafi-jihadist thought, as well as how it evolved within the war on terror, see Alshech, Eli, "The Doctrinal Crisis within the Salafi-Jihadi Ranks and the Emergence of Neo-Takfirism: A Historical and Doctrinal Analysis", *Islamic Law and Society* 21:4 (2014), 419-452.
[489] It is interesting to note the effect of al-Hazimi's preaching in the numbers of Tunisian jihadists who travelled to Iraq and Syria after 2011 and were responsible for gruesome acts of *takfir* driven violence. See Zelin, Aaron, *Your Sons are at Your Service: Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020). Specifically, Chapter 8, "It Was Mostly the Tunisians Who Were Involved in Takfir", 188-203.
[490] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 15.

this would detract from the ability of IS to portray itself as a middle ground caliphate and attract recruits.[491]

An IS document dated November 14 2015 described the efforts undertaken by the group in 2014, and revealed that those who embraced the teachings of al-Hazimi and al-Hattab were perceived as dangerous extremists by IS leadership.[492] These extremists had gone so far as to declare *takfir* on IS leaders due to their failure to excommunicate al-Zawahiri.[493] IS leadership arrested and interrogated over 100 suspected extremists, and executed approximately 70 of them, including al-Hattab, while the remainder managed to flee to Turkey.[494] While IS did not publicly make reference to the *takfir* purge while it announced the caliphate, in late summer 2014 its General Committee released a statement which outlawed the discussion of issues related to *takfir al-'adhir*, and continued to monitor, arrest, and execute extremists who had formed cells in the wake of the large scale purge and were perceived as an imminent internal threat to caliphal authority, stability, and legitimacy.[495]

The purge of extremists should not be interpreted as an effort on behalf of IS to temper violence within its ranks, rather it should be viewed in the context of social group dynamics in which a group's worldview was crystallising into a self-identifying sovereign entity. In order to maximise its potential and ensure its success, violence was directed inward on the group to cleanse itself of those who did not adhere to specific parameters pertaining to *takfir*, the primary ideological tool leveraged by the group in defining its identity and therefore by default its relationship with 'the other'.

10.3 Jihadist and International Responses to the Caliphate

The announcement of the IS caliphate resounded around the world and within the jihadisphere. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a Doha-based cleric who had endorsed physical and financial support of terrorism as well as suicide bombings, and who had gained renown for

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[491] Ibid.
[492] For more on this document, its nuances, and the fact that most supporters of al-Hazimi were non-Arab foreign fighters, see Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad, "An Internal Report on Extremism in the Islamic State", *Aymennjawad.org.* November 1 2018. http://www.aymennjawad.org/21757/an-internal-report-on-extremism-in-the-islamic (Accessed 23 April 2020)
[493] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 15.
[494] Ibid.
[495] Ibid.

holding various prominent positions within Islamic organisations such as the European Council for Fatwa Research, denounced the IS caliphate and stated that it's announcement violated Islamic law, and endangered the future of Iraq's Sunni population.[496] On July 1st, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi posted a lengthy statement on his website in which he called the IS caliphate illegitimate and deviant.[497] While he acknowledged that the return of the caliphate and elimination of artificial borders remained paramount in jihadist aspirations, he argued that IS had rushed to do so and that the decision had not been adequately based on popular consensus. He also articulated the opinion that extremism in *takfir* and the brutality exhibited by the group would have disastrous consequences for young aspiring jihadists and that it would detract from the mujahidin's ability to maintain the unity necessary for a successful caliphate.[498] Finally, al-Maqdisi argued that IS insistence on the pledge of fealty to al-Baghdadi would result in a population more driven by fear than the desire to achieve Islamic prosperity.[499]

Al-Qaeda leadership also reacted to the declaration of the IS caliphate, but instead of simply writing refutations, al-Zawahiri released a 2001 video of Bin Laden in which the latter recognised Taliban leader Mullah Omar as commander of the faithful.[500] By naming Omar as a pre-existing counter caliph to al-Baghdadi, al-Qaeda sought to undermine the ideological validity of IS and promote itself as the true adherent to the correct methodology for establishing an Islamic emirate. In retaliation, numerous IS supporters dismissed these claims, stating that Omar was ineligible for the role of caliph due to the fact he was not of Quraysh descent, had participated in the United Nations, and did not espouse correct salafi ideology. Furthermore, these assertions held central the fact that the Taliban did not enjoy territorial sovereignty as did IS, a key component of caliphal authority.[501]

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[496] For more on al-Qaradawi, see "Yusuf al-Qaradawi", Counter Extremism Project. https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/yusuf-al-qaradawi (Accessed 22 April 2020)
[497] Oddone, Elisa, "Jordanian jihadist leader condemns ISIS caliphate", *Al-Monitor,* July 7 2014. https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/jordan-maqdisi-jihad-iraq-isis-caliphate-qaeda.html (Accessed 22 April 2020)
[498] Oddone.
[499] Al-Khalidi, Suleiman, "Jihadist thinker says Islamic caliphate will cause Islamist infighting", *Reuters,* July 2 2014. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-jihadists-idUSKBN0F727720140702 (Accessed 22 April 2020)
[500] Bunzel, "From Paper State to Caliphate", 33.
[501] Ibid, 34.

In September 2014, an open letter was addressed to al-Baghdadi from internationally renowned Muslim scholars. This letter focused on the core claims of IS, and refuted their legitimacy according to scriptural law.[502] The letter claimed that allegiance to one's nation of origin was in fact permissible in Islam, that in considering legal rulings contemporary circumstances must be acknowledged, the reintroduction of slavery was illegal, there was no requirement to emigrate to the caliphate following the death of the prophet, and the violent atrocities engaged in by IS were all strictly forbidden under Islamic law. Finally, the letter devoted significant attention to refuting IS conceptualisations of *takfir*, stating that individual belief must be accepted at face value without testing that faith. It clarified that only intent and deeds combined could nullify faith according to prophetic teachings, and that killing individuals due to perceived disbelief was forbidden under Islamic law, and a heinous crime.[503] Furthermore, the letter demonstrated cognisant knowledge of the methodology used by IS to declare *takfir*, as well as the different viewpoints within IS regarding the matter, and stated unequivocally that "it is forbidden to declare people who do not doubt the disbelief of others, or refuse to declare them non-Muslim, as non-Muslim."[504]

Roughly a month after the declaration of the IS caliphate, on August 9th 2014, a U.S. led coalition began conducting airstrikes against IS targets in Iraq. In September, the U.S. House of Representatives voted in favour of giving the American military authority to train and fund Syrian Rebels to combat IS, and the U.S. led coalition began airstrikes on IS targets in Syria.[505] During remarks in September 2014, U.S. President Obama vowed that the U.S. would take all steps necessary to dismantle the IS "network of death".[506] Kurdish forces were also among the first to join U.S. efforts in the military struggle against IS, and joined the fight in August 2014.

10.4 IS Governance, Brutality, and Sophistication

[502] The entire letter can be accessed here: "Open Letter to Dr. Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri, Alias 'Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi'; And to the Fighters and Followers of the Self-Declared 'Islamic State'", 24 Dhul-Qi'da 1435 AH / 19 September 2014. http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/ (Accessed 1 May 2020)
[503] "Letter to al-Baghdadi", 10.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Glen, Cameron, "Timeline: US Policy on ISIS", Wilson Center, April 27 2016. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-us-policy-isis (Accessed 23 April 2020)
[506] "Islamic State crisis: US hits IS oil targets in Syria", *BBC News,* September 25 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29357934 (Accessed 23 April 2020)

Following the announcement of the caliphate, IS embarked on a mission to remain in power and expand in influence. In July 2014 the group seized control of Syria's largest oil field, al-Omar, as well as others, and set up refineries to produce raw oil and sell it illegally well below market price.[507] This was not an isolated venture, as IS demonstrated its state like intentions alongside its brutal and extortionist tactics insofar as it gained control of up to 40 percent of Iraq's annual production of wheat, as well as major flour mills and grain silos in that country.[508] IS was subsequently able to utilise these resources as commodities; delivering them beneficently to Sunni populations that supported it while withholding them from those it considered enemies.

In areas that IS gained control of, the organisation demonstrated its penchant for violence against those deemed 'other'. Shortly after the declaration of the caliphate, 53 individuals were brutally executed in the mostly Shiite village of Khamissiya, Iraq.[509] In August 2014, IS fighters demanded that the Yazidi population of Kocho in northern Iraq convert to Islam or be put to death, and in eastern Syria 700 tribesmen were executed in retaliation for plotting an uprising against IS.[510] That same month, IS seized Sinjar in Iraq near the Syrian border, and in the course of capturing the town killed 5,000 people and sold thousands of women into slavery.[511] The decision to sell women into slavery certainly corresponded with the preference for brutality exhibited by the group and also served to further enhance the group's economic position. Notwithstanding, IS leaders justified their decisions with literalist interpretations of Sharia law which allowed for the selling of women seized in the abode of war who were sinners due to original disbelief. In this case, disbelief was defined as opposition to the IS worldview, yet it was framed in such a way that equated the actions of the organisation with the methodology used in the times of Muhammad, and

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[507] "Islamic State crisis: US hits IS oil targets in Syria".

[508] Fick, Maggie, "Special Report – Wheat Warfare: Islamic State uses grain to tighten grip in Iraq", *Reuters,* September 30 2014. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-wheat-idUSKCN0HP12J20140930 (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[509] The location of this village, in southern Iraq, also demonstrates the expanse of IS influence in the summer of 2014. See Salman, Raheem and Isra' Al-Rubei'I, "Fifty-three blindfolded bodies found in Iraq as political leaders bicker", *Reuters,* July 9 2014. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-idUSKBN0FE1UE20140709 (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[510] Sly, Liz, "Islamic State fighters kill dozens of Yazidi villagers", *Washington Post,* August 16 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/yazidis-killed-in-kocho-near-sinjar-after-obama-calls-off-rescue-mission/2014/08/15/31478a3c-e46e-4c4c-8406-d0f27073a308_story.html (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[511] Kranz.

thus due to Islam's universal applicability could and should be considered beyond reproach.[512] Furthermore, in justifying their actions pertaining to slavery and mass murder, IS leaders demonstrated familiarity with current and historical scholarly debates regarding the permissibility of their actions, and thus presented their calculus in a rational and theological manner.[513]

In these same areas, IS also demonstrated its adherence to the outlines set by Naji in that the group continued to lay the foundational groundwork for a state like entity in the provision of food, electrical services, and medical care, among others. It also overhauled educational institutions in the abolition of subjects such as science and history, and emphasised the strict worldview of IS.[514] These services, in turn, came with the acknowledgement of the IS Creed and Path, and behaviour that the group considered sinful. Public execution and torture were commonplace punishments for those deemed noncompliant, and many of these sentences were carried out on live streaming media and broadcast globally.[515]

IS organisation was instrumental in coalescing its brutality and worldview into a state like entity, and distinguished it from groups like al-Qaeda and JN, as well as previous Islamist and jihadist organisations. In a condensed hierarchical organisational structure, the caliph had two deputies; one for territories in Iraq and the other for territories in Syria.[516] Under these deputies, were 24 provincial governors; 12 each for Iraq and Syria. Al-Baghdadi also had a cabinet of advisors, each responsible for overseeing and reporting directly to the caliph on specific sectors of the organisation, as one would expect in a typical government bureaucracy.[517] The organisation also had numerous oversight committees charged with managing affairs, and it is in these committees that the state-like nature of IS in its inception is

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[512] This conceptual orientation is commensurate with the power of religious framing in social groups that was discussed in previous sections.

[513] For an excerpt and analysis of an IS twitter account discussing the permissibility of selling women into slavery, see Roth, Kenneth, "Slavery: The ISIS Rules", Human Rights Watch, September 5 2015. https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/05/slavery-isis-rules# (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[514] The focus on children and education is a prominent theme in next generation terrorism studies. See summary of Kaplan in Chapter 1.

[515] Kuruvilla, Carol, "Syrian extremists reportedly live-tweeted the amputation of a thief's hand", *NY Daily News,* February 28 2014. https://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/syrian-extremists-reportedly-live-tweeted-amputation-thief-hand-article-1.1706824 (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[516] Alexander and Alexander, 110.

[517] Thompson, Nick and Atika Shubert.,"The anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' is run, from oil to beheadings", *CNN,* January 15 2015. https://www.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/index.html (Accessed 15 April 2020)

best demonstrated. Among the committees were the financial council charged with selling and procuring weapons and resources, the military council charged with establishing IS strategic plans, the leadership council charged with drafting law and policy, the security council charged with law enforcement, the intelligence council charged with gathering information on IS enemies, and the media council responsible for social and traditional media.[518] Finally, the shura council existed independently and reported directly to al-Baghdadi. This council was responsible for ensuring that all other councils, governors and deputies were properly adhering to the group's vision of Islamic law, and it had the ability to remove the caliph.[519] In many instances, local IS officials who were found to be in violation of the Creed and Path or the group's vision of Islamic law were simply 'disappeared', demonstrating that those within the organisation were just as vulnerable to the group's brutality as those outside it.[520]

IS also employed elite troop units alongside its rank and file members. New recruits were thoroughly indoctrinated, and existing troops engaged in continuing religious education where they were provided the manifesto by Naji, along with extracts from religious texts which emphasised violent proselytization of Islam.[521] Alongside these, IS apologists such as al-Bin'ali wrote handbooks for recruits to study which emphasised the achievement of narrowly defined *tawhid* through the deliberate application of IS methodology. These handbooks included reiterations of the Creed and Path, and explored in detail nullifiers of the faith, grounds on which individuals and communities should be declared apostate, and the theological justifications for using violence to protect the umma from these apostates.[522] The intensity of indoctrination depended on the perceived level of faith and commitment of a potential recruit. By instructing recruits in this type of *takfiri* ideology, IS was able to clearly delimit the social boundaries of its redefined umma and simultaneously affirm the commitment of those who sought to join its ranks.

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[518] Alexander and Alexander. P. 110.

[519] Reuter, Christoph, "The terror strategist: Secret files reveal the structure of the Islamic State", *Der Spiegel,* April 18 2015. https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[520] Alexander and Alexander, 110.

[521] Hassan, Hassan, "The secret world of Isis training camps – ruled by sacred texts and the sword", *The Guardian,* January 24 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/25/inside-isis-training-camps (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[522] The most prominent of these handbooks was authored by al-Bin'ali, and the translation of his work can be accessed here: Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad, "Islamic State Training Camp Textbook: "Course in Monotheism"- Complete Text, Translation and Analysis", *Aymennjawad.org,* July 26 2015. http://www.aymennjawad.org/17633/islamic-state-training-camp-textbook-course-in (Accessed 25April 2020)

The complexity of the violence and statecraft employed by IS and its rapid expanse leading to and following the declaration of the caliphate represented a monumental shift in the Western led global war on terror, as the group seemed more determined to purify communities through violence to achieve sovereignty than on causing the immediate downfall of corrupt regimes or the United States. In August 2014, U.S. Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel stated that "They're beyond just a terrorist group. They marry ideology, a sophistication of strategic and tactical military prowess."[523] General John Allen, the U.S. special envoy for countering the Islamic State observed that "We're not just fighting a force, you know, we're fighting an idea".[524] These were not understatements, as by the end of 2014 IS controlled roughly one third of Iraq's territory and one third of Syria's territory, an area roughly the size of Britain, and approximately nine million people lived under IS rule.[525]

10.5 IS Self-Portrayal

One of the primary ways IS distinguished itself from other jihadist organisations was its proficient use of multi-language media. While Bin Laden had founded a media organisation in London in the 1990s which was dedicated to mobilising financial support for jihadist campaigns of liberation[526], and al-Qaeda continued to publish its *Inspire* magazine[527], IS began releasing issues of its magazine *Dabiq* immediately following the declaration of the caliphate. In this magazine we are able to glean a great deal about how the group viewed itself, what it aspired to, and how it reacted to external events. The name itself reflected the group's eschatological worldview in that Dabiq was a town in Syria that featured prominently in Islamic end-times prophecies as the location where the Mahdi would return to bring victory

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[523] Meek, James Gordon, "ISIS an 'incredible' fighting force, US special ops sources say", *ABC News,* August 25 2014. https://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/isis-incredible-fighting-force-us-special-ops-sources/story?id=25116463 (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[524] Rago, Joseph, "Inside the war against the Islamic State", *Wall Street Journal,* December 26 2014. https://www.wsj.com/articles/joe-rago-inside-the-war-against-islamic-state-1419636790 (Accessed 24 April 2020)

[525] "ISIS controls an area the size of Britain: Syria expert", *Al Arabiya News,* November 28 2014. https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/11/28/ISIS-controls-an-area-the-size-of-Britain-Syria-expert (Accessed 25 April 2020)

[526] This organisation, Guidance and Reform, was led by Khalid al-Fawwaz. See Khattab, *Understanding Islamic Fundamentalism; The Theological and ideological Basis of Al-Qa'ida's Political Tactics,* 91.

[527] Issues of Inspire magazine have been posted to the primary source clearinghouse Jihadology by Aaron Y. Zelin. https://jihadology.net/category/inspire-magazine/ (Accessed 25 April 2020)

to the righteous over those who oppose Sharia.[528] In November 2014, IS militants executed former U.S. Army Ranger and aid worker Peter Kassig, and chose to do so in Dabiq and broadcast a video message to the American government: "Here we are, burying the first American crusader in Dabiq, eagerly awaiting for the remainder of your armies to arrive".[529]/[530] This millenarian parallel that IS viewed itself as enacting reflected portions of hadith literature in which the last hour would come once the Romans were assembled at Dabiq. In the hadith of Sahih Muslim, Muhammad was reported to have said: "The Last Hour would not come until the Romans would land at al-A'maq or in Dabiq. An army consisting of the best (soldiers) of the people of the earth at that time will come from Medina (to counteract them). (…) When the enemy of Allah would see him, it would (disappear) just as the salt dissolves itself in water and if he (Jesus) were not to confront them at all, even then it would dissolve completely, but Allah would kill them by his hand and he would show them their blood on his lance (the lance of Jesus Christ)."[531] In IS interpretation, it was fulfilling this prophecy by using the execution of Kassig to lure the armies of the West, the modern day Romans, to the location at which the umma would prevail over its enemies.

As a periodical publication, *Dabiq* focused on issues of *tawhid*, *manhaj* (the seeking of truth), *hijrah* (the mandatory migration of Muslims to the caliphate), jihad, and *jama'ah* (community). It utilised romantic prose to illustrate a glorious Islamic past and link IS actions to it, in order to portray the group as part of the inevitable continuum of Islamic prosperity and superiority.[532] In the first edition of the magazine, an extensive article was devoted to the fact that with the declaration of the caliphate, the world had been divided into two camps; that of faith and that of disbelief. Due to the legitimacy of the caliphate, Muslims from around the

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[528] Mauro, Ryan, "The Islamic State Seeks the Battle of the Apocalypse", Clarion Project, November 18 2014. https://clarionproject.org/dabiq-islamic-state-wants-battle-end-days/ (Accessed 25 April 2020)

[529] "Peter Kassig killed by ISIS, Obama confirms", *CBS News,* November 16 2014. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-video-claims-us-aid-worker-peter-kassig-beheaded-in-syria/ (Accessed 25 April 2020)

[530] The video also features a mass execution of Syrian soldiers, and the voice in the video is speculated to have been that of Mohammed Emwazi, better known as 'Jihadi John', a British citizen and early voice of IS in its brutal media broadcasts. Emwazi was killed in a drone strike in 2015. For see Casciani, Dominic, "Islamic State: Profile of Mohammed Emwazi aka 'Jihadi John'", *BBC News,* November 13 2016. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31641569 (Accessed 25 April 2020)

[531] Sahih Muslim, *Book of Tribulations and Portents of the Last Hour,* Hadith 6924. https://sunnah.com/muslim/54/44 (Accessed 25 April 2020)

[532] A total of 15 editions of *Dabiq* were published. For a brief synopsis of all editions, see "Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Horrific Magazine", Clarion Project, September 10 2014. https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq-50/ (Accessed 25 April 2020)

world were required to emigrate to the caliphate to demonstrate their loyalty to the righteous camp and participate in its victory.[533] This seemingly simple division underlay the Manichean potency of religious worldviews, and also served to potentially identify friends and enemies in a social group context insofar as emigration could be considered a test of loyalty and group affiliation. In this regard, IS continued its rhetoric which sought to de-legitimise the construct of states, proclaiming that Muslims should emigrate to caliphate territory because it represented Islam and its future; and that "Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis".[534] Furthermore, IS emphasised Islam's universality by stating that the caliphate had attracted soldiers from nations as diverse as France, Australia, China and India who had all chosen to abandon their polytheistic societies to recognise the truth inherent in the message and legitimacy of IS.[535] Naji's legacy was also strong in the debut edition in that its editors stressed the services provided by IS in areas it had conquered, and emphasised the group's superiority in providing them over nation states. Brutality was also highlighted in that graphic images of deceased enemies were prominently displayed in the edition's pages, as were photos of innocent Muslims that had been killed by Syrian or coalition air strikes.[536] A final poignant point about the first edition of *Dabiq* is that its editors devoted two pages to prominent Western thinkers, who had acknowledged that IS had carved a de-facto state amidst the chaos of the Syrian civil war. Among these was Brian Fishman, former Director of Research for the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, whose editorial work has been referenced numerous times throughout this thesis.[537] By including this section entitled "In the Words of the Enemy", IS sought to further validate its position as a sovereign entity and demonstrated the ability to comprehend the paradigms being articulated by its opposition that would form the foundations of strategic and diplomatic policies designed to weaken and eliminate it.

The second edition of *Dabiq* included a lengthy reappraisal of the story of Noah's Ark. In recitations, Muhammad had recast the story of the ark by focusing not on the historical account, but on the role of Noah as a warner. The prophet had stressed the mercy of Allah, and stated that He had only sent the flood as a last resort once people had finally rejected Him and ignored Noah's warnings.[538] In *Dabiq*, IS portrayed its caliphate as the ark, and warned of

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[533] *Dabiq Issue 1 The Return of the Khilafah,* Ramadan 1435 (July 2014), 10-11.
[534] *Dabiq Issue 1,* 11
[535] Ibid, 7
[536] Ibid, 18, 37, 42, 43.
[537] Ibid, 32-33.
[538] *Quran,* Surah 71.

the horrific violence in the 'flood' that would follow for those who did not submit to its rule and worldview.[539] Paradoxically, this article also spoke about the elimination of freedom of choice, by equating it with sinful democratic and Western paradigms. While individuals were free to, and must, choose the Islamic State or the flood, there could be no half measures. Either outcome would be carried out in its absolute entirety; be it IS worldview in governance or absolute destruction. This reflected not only the Manichean structuring of religious worldviews, but the power of religion to articulate itself in ways that enable social control over individual manoeuvrability.

The seventh issue of *Dabiq* devoted significant attention to a subject that had not been featured prominently in previous editions. In the section "Among the Believers are Men", IS gave eulogies of fighters killed in battle, and included their biographies which highlighted their individual piety, dedication to jihad, and above all, their humanity.[540] This section is poignant because it gave individual faces to IS members killed, and showed them to be brave and emotional warriors who had devoted their lives willingly to service and death in the way of Allah. This type of media campaign was important to IS because it attempted to break down the Western dehumanisation of those affiliated with terrorist organisations. In the war on terror, the U.S. and its allies eulogised their fallen heroes while they described the enemy as a faceless entity, and described casualty counts in bulk numbers by referencing things generically such as 'drone strike kills 150 jihadists'. This "othering" in a social group context served to dehumanise those who nations sought to rally public support against. By including this section in *Dabiq*, IS both emulated the behaviour of nation stakeholders engaged in conflict by honouring its dead, and also showed the human face of those who embraced the IS worldview and who fought to ensure it would survive their individual deaths, thereby lending a sense of immortality to the IS cause and potentially attracting new recruits.[541]

Later in this edition, IS featured a lengthy article entitled "The Extinction of the Grayzone", and it is important for a number of reasons.[542] This article reiterated sentiments

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[539] *Dabiq Issue 2 The Flood,* Ramadan 1435 (July 2014), 5-11.
[540] *Dabiq Issue 7 From Hypocrisy to Apostasy; The Extinction of the Grayzone,* Rabi' al-Akhir 1436 (February 2015), 46-49.
[541] This concept of fighting for a cause that will survive the individual is crucial to the psychological construct of a sacred canopy that was covered in Chapter 2. For a study on the dehumanisation of terrorist organisations and individuals, and the effect this has on population perceptions, see Feltz, Adam and Edward T. Cokley, "The terror of 'terrorists': an investigation in experimental applied ethics", *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 6:3 (2014), 195-211.
[542] *Dabiq Issue 7,* 54-66.

from the magazine's first edition which had argued the world had divided into two camps, and credited former U.S. President George W. Bush with being correct in his 2001 assertion regarding the war on terror that "You're either with us or against us".[543] In this article IS stated that the wars in Iraq and Syria had succeeded in dividing the world into two camps plunged into violence, much as Naji had argued was necessary, but that events such as the Arab Spring that proposed a peaceful and institutional way to find accommodation between Islamic culture and Western style governance had threatened this necessary division.[544] The wavering of the Islamic community manifest in regional nationalist aspirations displayed by groups such as JN, as well as the military setbacks suffered by IS in early 2015 at the hands of the U.S. coalition required that the group both repeat its message and expand it to meet current challenges.[545] In this article, IS repeated its message insofar as it continued to focus on the mandatory emigration to the caliphate as a legitimate stakeholder, but stressed that the extinction of the grayzone must be violently pursued to both de-moralise opponents and convince Muslims of the righteousness of the IS cause. To illustrate this, the article discussed the necessity of killing disbelievers wherever they may be. To do so, it cited the attack on Charlie Hedbo in Paris in January 2015, and argued that attacks such as these were necessary to enforce the extinction of neutrality and force the calamitous ultimate confrontation between the righteous and the disbelievers.[546]

10.6 IS Allure

From mid-2013 to 2015, IS eclipsed al-Qaeda in attracting foreign fighters, suggesting that its self-portrayal through the caliphate held a deeper attraction to potential recruits.[547] While IS responded to geopolitical specifics, its declaration of the caliphate represented a

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[543] "You are either with us or against us", *CNN,* November 6 2001. http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/ (Accessed 26 April 2020)

[544] *Dabiq Issue 7,* 55.

[545] In January 2015, around 6,000 IS fighters had been killed by the coalition, and Kurdish forces succeeded in pushing IS out of its stronghold in the Syrian border town of Kobani after a four-month battle. See Glen.

[546] The article featured photos from the aftermath of attacks in London, Madrid, and a portrait photo of Theo Van Gogh, who was killed for mocking the prophet, all which occurred before the time of the caliphate. It continued to identify Muslim 'hypocrites' and Western individuals who condemned the Charlie Hedbo attacks, and marked them for death.

[547] For a graphic representation of the flow of foreign fighters joining al-Qaeda, JN and IS from 2011-2015 see Perliger, Arie and Daniel Milton, *From Cradle to Grave: The Lifecycle of Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria*, Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 2016, 36.

continuation of the al-Qaeda, jihadist and Islamist platforms and also transcended them in a unique way. The messages ensconced in *Dabiq* and the IS worldview appealed to individual needs for personal and collective significance, they relied on a narrative that portrayed violence as the road to that significance, and in broad distribution they enabled a networking process that made that narrative a shared reality.[548]

After the declaration of the caliphate, IS strength was estimated at 30,000 troops.[549] Half of all IS foreign fighters arrived in 2015, suggesting that social and traditional media such as *Dabiq* was facilitating, but not primary, insofar as more recruits came from specific areas suggesting that pre-existing social networks also had a great impact on potential recruits.[550] Many foreigners that answered the caliphate's emigration call were from Western nations who felt marginalised or at a loss for a sense of identity, and "building a utopian caliphate satisfied the need for a valued social identity or personal significance which one has been unable to find in his or her current communities."[551] In differentiating motivations among those who joined the caliphate, Westerners sought to escape their pasts and find personal validation, whereas individuals from Muslim states were more motivated by humiliation and the suffering of fellow Muslims under corrupt Middle Eastern regimes and Western states.[552] The caliphate through is self-portrayal offered the means by which both of these disparate existential needs could be satisfied, and the fact that it offered violence as the means to do so gave individuals the physical agency they felt had been denied them.

IS guaranteed individuals eternal group membership and the according benefits, which when framed in a transcendent narrative has sociologically proven to be attractive to individuals and demographics prone to existential anxiety and feelings of dislocation, powerlessness and subjugation.[553] Beyond the transcendent appeal, IS successfully exploited the socio-political cleavages revealed in the Arab Spring and the crisis of the Middle Eastern

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[548] Jasko et. al., 4.

[549] Dalton, Melissa G., *Strengthening the Counter-ISIS Strategy*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017, 2.

[550] The idea of pre-existing social networks of the global Muslim community having a great impact on radicalisation was first made prominent following the attacks on 9/11 and the onset of the war on terror. While this work focused primarily on al-Qaeda, the patterns of radicalisation it identified have been selectively applied to study the foreign fighter phenomenon to the present. Sageman, Marc, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[551] Jasko et. al., 19.

[552] Jasko et. al., 19.

[553] Gerges, Fawaz A., *ISIS: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 25.

nation state, and marketed itself as capable of creating a holistic socio-economic system whose prosperity could rival that of the Western liberal democratic state. In this regard, IS harnessed the power of social entativity that was unleashed following the Arab Spring in that it offered a means by which a collective could bind together to contest power structures in a turbulent vacuum to crystallise a vision of utopian governance. The agency that IS offered gave individuals the ability to collectively pursue self-determination in a manner that was subjectively defined by an organisation that eschewed Western parameters for state building, and the group further gave individuals recognition for participating in an endeavour that was simultaneously worldly and transcendent. Fundamentally, IS appealed to individuals by uncompromisingly declaring that it operated according to a different value system than that which had been institutionalised in nation states, and because this was rooted in Islam's universal truth, was superior. This appeal was strengthened sociologically due to the turmoil of war and political instability that created conditions in which violent religious identity politics could capitalise on insecurities by offering clear, tangible, safe, and transcendent solutions.[554]

The attraction of the IS worldview did not limit itself to recruits that flocked to the Middle East, in what became the largest mobilisation of foreign fighters in decades.[555]/[556] The allure of IS spread internationally to Africa and Asia where local insurgent and terrorist organisations pledged fealty to the group instead of al-Qaeda. This level of attraction can be attributed in part to the fact that IS had demonstrated that it had succeeded where al-Qaeda had failed, and that its combination of realpolitik governance and uncompromising transcendent ideological narrative, combined with its message of universal applicability, could be easily inserted into regional conflicts as a vehicle for success.[557]

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[554] Gerges, 24-25.

[555] Basit, Abdul, "Foreign Fighter in Iraq and Syria – Why So Many?", *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 6:9 (October 2014), 4-8.

[556] Part of what made the foreign fighter movement unique in this context was that, in contrast to the phenomenon as it occurred during the Afghan Soviet war, many foreign fighters were of European and Western origin. See Hegghammer, Thomas, "Number of foreign fighters from Europe in Syria is historically unprecedented. Who should be worried?", *Washington Post,* November 27 2013. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/27/number-of-foreign-fighters-from-europe-in-syria-is-historically-unprecedented-who-should-be-worried/ (Accessed 1 May 2020)

[557] The franchising operations of IS are not the focus of this thesis, but as an *important aspect of the group's expansion it is important to note. See* Oosterveld, Willem Theo and Willem Bloem*, The Rise and Fall of ISIS: From Evitability to Inevitability*, Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2017, 11.

10.7 IS Setbacks and Re-Orientation

As IS attracted recruits on an unprecedented scale, the U.S. led coalition escalated efforts to counter the group under the banner of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), which had been established in October 2014.[558] By March 2015 an estimated 8,500 IS members had been killed, and the following month the Iraqi army, with the support of the international coalition, recaptured the city of Tikrit from IS.[559] Following over a year of silence since recognising Mullah Omar as a counter caliph, in September 2015 al-Zawahiri released an audio tape in which he accused al-Baghdadi of sedition, and stated that the violent methodology of the caliphate and its illegal claims threatened to divide the unity of the mujahidin in a such a way that would enable the U.S. to exploit and defeat jihadism.[560] In December 2015, the U.S. sent 200 troops to Iraq to serve as tactical advisors, and that same month assisted the Iraqi army in the recapture of Ramadi.[561]

The increasing fervour of OIR was manifest in the fact that by February 2016, coalition airstrikes had killed 26,000 IS members, and in April U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declared that the U.S. was "definitely at war with ISIS".[562] This framing is poignant insofar as it built on the legacy of the Bush administration which had cited the necessity of pre-emptive self-defence as the means by which to bypass the conditions required to wage war ensconced in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.[563] In June 2016, the Iraqi Popular Mobilisation Forces recaptured Fallujah, and the city was declared "fully liberated".[564] This assessment was critical in that Fallujah had been the first city to fall to IS in 2014, and the Sunni stronghold was viewed as essential in disrupting IS organisational capacity.[565] Only

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[558] For up to date events, and the social media platforms used, see "Operation Inherent Resolve". https://www.inherentresolve.mil/ (Accessed 1 May 2020)
[559] Glen.
[560] Meek, James Gordon, "Al Qaeda Leader Al-Zawahiri Declares War on ISIS 'Caliph' Al-Baghdadi", *ABC News,* September 10 2015. https://abcnews.go.com/International/al-qaeda-leader-al-zawahiri-declares-war-isis/story?id=33656684 (Accessed 1 May 2020)
[561] Glen.
[562] Glen.
[563] Hathaway, Oona A., *Fighting the Last War: The United Nations Charter in the Age of the War on Terror* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2014), 213.
[564] Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahhab al-Saadi, in "Iraqi commander: Fallujah 'fully liberated' from ISIS", June 26 2016. https://www.foxnews.com/world/iraqi-commander-fallujah-fully-liberated-from-isis (Accessed 2 May 2020)
[565] Al Shamary, Ammar and Gilgamesh Nabeel, "Iraqi forces enter Fallujah, take on Islamic State", *USA Today,* May 30 2016. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/05/30/iraqi-forces-enter-isil-held-city-fallujah/85150894/ (Accessed 2 May 2020)

weeks later, in August 2016, IS spokesman al-Adnani, who had released the audio message declaring the caliphate and proclaiming its legitimacy and sovereignty, was killed in an airstrike in Aleppo, Syria.[566] In December 2016, President Obama authorised deploying an additional 4,200 U.S. service members to Iraq, and it was estimated that 50,000 IS fighters had been killed by the coalition that had conducted airstrikes against 31,900 IS targets.[567]

Coalition military victories were lauded in the U.S. political realm. In May 2016, Justin Siberell, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism testified before the US Congressional Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, and he stated that significant progress had been made in reducing the territorial footprint of the caliphate, and that the coalition had succeeded in severely limiting IS access to and finances. He further argued that empowering multi-national cooperation as well as community leaders, and the increased tightening of border and travel monitoring had reduced the ability of IS to gain new recruits in the conflict zone. Mr. Siberell stated that although these measures were in their developmental stages, they should form the foundation of future policies aimed at defeating IS, and that in conjunction with successful military ventures like those carried out under OIR, had great potential for ultimately defeating IS.[568]

Faced with these territorial, financial, and human losses, IS was forced to re-evaluate its narrative as well as its existence. *Dabiq* ceased being published in 2016, and in its place IS began releasing periodic editions of *Rumiyah.* This shift occurred in part because the town itself of Dabiq was lost to coalition forces in the summer of 2016, and in *Rumiyah* IS began preparing its followers for a post-caliphal future that seemed imminent.[569] In *Rumiyah*, IS re-orientation was demonstrated insofar as the title itself referenced the new Rome, or the West, as the emphasis of the group looking to the future. In its editions, IS promoted engaging in battles in Africa, Asia, and attacks in the West, and it included instruction manuals for aspiring terrorists regarding methodology for carrying out devastating attacks in metropolitan centres in the West.[570] Furthermore, those who carried out attacks were immortalised within the pages

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[566] "Islamic State: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani 'killed in Aleppo'", *BBC News,* August 31 2016. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-37224570 (Accessed 3 May 2020)
[567] Dalton, 2.
[568] U.S. Department of State, "Bureau of Counterterrorism's FY 2017 Request".
[569] Bunker, Robert J. and Pamela Ligouri Bunker, *The Islamic State English – Language Online Magazine Rumiyah (Rome); Research Guide, Narrative & Threat Analysis and U.S. Policy Response*, Terrorism Research Center, 2019, 1.
[570] Bunker and Bunker, 2.

of the periodical in that their names and eulogies were highlighted, demonstrating again the group's devotion to the fulfilment of human validation in the search for meaning through violent jihadism that had begun in *Dabiq*.

In the editions of *Rumiyah*, IS sought to reiterate its legitimacy despite the withering losses suffered at the hands of the coalition, and enforce loyalty to the group. In the seventh edition, the group declared that any who strayed from IS affiliation to include family members and breakaway jihadist organisations were to be declared apostate and marked for death. Furthermore, the group re-affirmed the fact that this loyalty was owed because IS had succeeded in establishing a caliphate where all others had failed, and that steadfastly abiding by a true cause was more important than possessing a large army.[571]

IS portrayed the coalition as intent on destroying Muslim identity, but remained staunch in its commitment to the ideals promulgated with the declaration of the caliphate. In the ninth edition of *Rumiyah*, IS affirmed that a generation had been raised on the doctrine of *takfir*, and that by nurturing this generation and the jihadist family nucleus, memory of the caliphate would take its place in the transcendent Islamic narrative that future mujahidin would rally to revive.[572]

Perhaps the most interesting re-orientation revealed in *Rumiyah* was expressed in the twelfth edition. Here, IS apologists explained that perhaps the end state that was once centred on the caliphate in the Levant was unsustainable. Instead, they posited that the caliphate in spirit was more ephemeral in time and place, and may actually be destined to take root elsewhere in the world where circumstances allow. The argument continued to state that one of the primary objectives of the coalition was to demonstrate to the world that military victories could successfully eradicate IS, but countered by stating that the group had demonstrated its malleability and ability to endure catastrophic losses. Additionally, IS affirmed its commitment to continue to engage in both conventional and guerrilla military tactics to ensure ultimate success, and because the world had heard the legitimate call of the caliphate, all who refused its message should be considered either apostates or enemies, and killed wherever they may be.[573]

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[571] Bunker and Bunker, 24.
[572] Ibid, 28.
[573] Ibid, 35-37.

10.8 Internal Schism on *Takfir*

While IS was reorienting its narrative and self-portrayal to the public, it was grappling internall with ideological cohesion and attempting to explain the reasons that the group had failed to hold the territory it felt it had claimed by Divine grace. In February 2016, al-Bin'ali, as head of IS Office of Research and Studies composed a letter to the group's Delegated Committee in which he stated that the problem of extremism he had helped eradicate in 2014 had arisen anew. He outlined the new emergence by identifying new extremist leaders as primarily Saudis, and explained that the issue they proposed was that *takfir* should be considered part of the 'foundation of the religion', as opposed to simply one of its requirements.[574] This conceptualisation meant that if *takfir* were considered foundational, then individuals could not abstain from proclaiming it or they would themselves fall into disbelief. Furthermore, individuals who did not agree with this assertion of *takfir* as foundational would similarly be declared apostate and marked for death. This framing, al-Bin'ali argued, was simply *takfir al-'adhir* stated another way.[575]

Instead of agreeing with al-Bin'ali, many senior figures within IS held the view that excessive restraint and moderation in *takfir* were to blame for the group's shortcomings. A special committee was formed in February 2016 to investigate doctrinal uniformity and its effects on group unity, and found that extremism in *takfir* within IS existed, but only in response to what was perceived as excessive laxity within the organisation's senior ranks. The committee was led by Abu Muhammad al-Furqan and staffed by his close personal associates, including Abu Sulayman al-Shami and Abu Khabbab al-Masri.[576] Al-Bin'ali was interrogated by the committee, and his views on *takfir* were assessed as being 'inadequate'.[577] Furthermore, in May 2016 the committee released its findings in which it condemned all those who hesitated to excommunicate polytheists, but strove to embody the caliphate's stance as a middle ground. The committee was equivocal on whether *takfir* was part of the foundation of

[574] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 15.
[575] Ibid.
[576] Ibid, 16.
[577] Al-Bin'ali's inadequate views revolved around the fact that he did not necessarily consider large groups of Muslims living in secular nations apostate.

the religion, as advocated by extremists, or was simply a requirement of the religion, as moderates such as al-Bin'ali had argued.

Still in May 2016, al-Adnani circulated a message to IS leadership before he was killed later that year as recounted above. In it, he posited that territorial defeats were the means by which God had chosen to test the faith and resolve of IS, and argued that more physical hardships were sure to come. This conclusion was reached logically by al-Adnani in that in 2014 he had made a statement upon the declaration of the caliphate in which he had said: "if this state be a state of Kharijites, then break its back, kill its leaders, bring down its flag, and guide its soldiers to the truth. O God, and if it be a state of Islam, ruling by Your book and the practice of Your prophet and waging jihad against your enemies, then fortify it, empower it, make it victorious, establish it in the land, and make it a caliphate on the prophetic methodology".[578] Under this pretence there could be only two explanations for the loss of the caliphate; either the group as a whole had erred in its quest for statehood through violent jihad, or IS leaders had acted in a way not befitting God's will and the group was being punished as a result.

After al-Adnani's death, his successor, Abu al-Hasan al-Muhajir released a statement in April 2017 which echoed the former's sentiments by stating that "If we are dispossessed of a city or an area or a village, this is only the testing and trying of the Muslim community, in order that the ranks may be purified and the filth expunged."[579] In this framing, al-Muhajir argued that through trials and tribulations, IS was being punished for failing to properly uphold God's will and that to regain favour it needed to rid itself of elements which had caused it to stray. This behaviour is commensurate with social group tendencies to tighten ranks and re-affirm delineating borders when faced with an existential threat as was narrated in Chapter 2. It is also in keeping with the inward turn and professed need to purify the group to compensate for communal suffering at the hands of foreign aggressors that gained prominence during defensive modernisation and the rise of political Islam. Although this proposition gained substantial traction within IS, many individuals asserted that it was not God who was punishing the group, but that the group had failed to maintain territorial integrity due to theological and methodological errors on behalf of senior leadership, most of which

[578]Al-Adnani, in Bunzel, Cole, "Divine Test or Divine Punishment? Explaining Islamic State Losses", *Jihadica,* March 11 2019. http://www.jihadica.com/divine-test-or-divine-punishment/ (Accessed 4 May 2020)
[579] Al-Muhajir, in Bunzel, "Divine Test or Divine Punishment? Explaining Islamic State Losses".

revolved exclusively around issues of who to include within the chosen sect of the new umma by means of *takfir*.[580] The extremist position on this issue incorporated the legacy of *takfir al-'adhir* and maintained that the misfortunes befalling IS had occurred due to excessive laxity on behalf of group leaders, and some went so far as to apply *takfir* to IS leaders and prominent figures such as al-Bin'ali due to their perceived moderation.[581]

Although the special committee had attempted to find a middle ground to preserve group cohesion when confronted with conflicting factions in the wake of territorial defeats, these efforts were short-lived in that al-Furqan, al-Shami and al-Masri were all killed in coalition drone strikes in late 2016 and early 2017.[582] In response to these deaths, al-Bin'ali wrote a letter to al-Baghdadi in January 2017 in which he warned the caliph against empowering extremists by appointing them to newly vacant positions in order to placate unrest.[583] Despite these warnings, in early 2017 a young Saudi named Abu Hafs al-Wad'ani was appointed to head the Delegated Committee to commence a reinvestigation of ideological uniformity among IS leadership to ensure group longevity despite tribulations. Al-Wad'ani made it clear in his appointment that he considered *takfir* to be part of the foundation of the religion and thus sided with the extremist faction within IS and sought to ensure that this would become the organisation's official position.[584]

In the course of the investigation to determine official ideological posture, the Delegated Committee was charged with answering the pivotal question of whether a Muslim who was not individually guilty of heresy, but who did not denounce those who were, in fact a heretic. The attention given to this question demonstrates for posterity the emphasis the group placed on being a middle ground, accessible to all under conditions of ideological conformity, which sought to identify the most theologically and tactically sound way to exist between excessive extremity in *takfir* and its dangerous postponement. Solving this question revolved partially around conceptualisations of WB and whether these were being correctly applied to groups and individuals tentatively deemed 'other'.[585] On this issue, IS was divided. The

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[580] Bunzel, "Divine Test or Divine Punishment? Explaining Islamic State Losses".
[581] Green, R., "Dispute over Takfir Rocks Islamic State", Middle East Media Research Institute, August 4 2017. https://www.memri.org/reports/dispute-over-takfir-rocks-islamic-state (Accessed 4 May 2020)
[582] "IS confirms death of propaganda chief Abu Mohammed al-Furqan", *BBC News,* October 11 2016. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-37619225 (Accessed 3 May 2020)
[583] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 16.
[584] Ibid, 17.
[585] For more on the evolution of violent WB in salafi jihadism and the scriptural justifications relied on for its use, see Bin Ali, 102-113.

mainstream camp argued that those who refrained from proclaiming *takfir* on other heretics were not to be considered apostate if not found to be in violation of a nullifier of the faith, while the extremist faction disagreed.[586]

In April 2017 al-Baghdadi gave the Delegated Committee caliphal authority to establish ideological uniformity within IS, and in May 2017 the latter released a seven-page memo. In the memo, the Delegated Committee stated that *tawhid* that encompassed governance and social justice had been defined during the period of the rightly guided caliphs, but had fallen into obscurity, only to have its hope reinvigorated by jihadist Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia.[587] It went on to argue that IS had been created to establish rightly guided rule on the prophetic methodology, and that discord between postponers (moderates) and extremists threatened the unity required of the umma. It also clarified that extremists had strayed from the religion insofar as they accused IS members of apostasy, and that this betrayed the fundamental obligation of the Sunnah to demonstrate unquestioning obedience to the group and its appointed rulers.[588] Finally, on the issue of *takfir*, the Delegated Committee memo reversed the stance previously taken by the Special Committee, and stated that it "regards the issue to be one of the clear principles of the religion, which must be known (to a Muslim) even before he knows (the rules) of prayer and other religious obligations".[589] By taking this position and declaring *takfir* to be foundational in Islam, not one of its requirements, the Delegated Committee demonstrated its propensity to act in accordance with social group dynamics insofar as by siding with extremist factions it sought to make even more stringent the parameters of group inclusion, and make more deliberately obvious the required acts of performative association that would ensure safety within the group.[590]

On May 19th, al-Bin'ali wrote a scathing critique to the Delegated Committee in which he accused the latter of relying on weak hadith references to formulate conclusions, noted that the memo was unprofessional in that it contained numerous grammatical errors, and finally that it had erred insofar as it sided with extremists and therefore threatened to plunge IS into an endless spiral of *takfir*. On this final matter, al-Bin'ali lamented that the Delegated

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[586] This is a simplification of theological arguments, for more see Green.
[587] Despite IS claims of non-recognition of state citizenship, this point paradoxically underlies the primarily Saudi based demographic of the extremist faction within IS. See Green.
[588] This stance is commensurate with the ability of religious ideologies to frame issues to ensure social control.
[589] Green.
[590] For clarification on the Delegated Committee siding with extremist factions, see Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 17.

Committee's memo had implied that all Muslims who lived outside the caliphate, in *dar al-kufr,* were to be considered apostates and thus marked for death, and he included numerous previous speeches by IS leaders which contradicted this position.[591] On May 31st, al-Bin'ali was killed in a coalition airstrike along with others who supported his critical stance.[592] Due to the fact that many of these supporters were imprisoned for their criticisms at the time of their deaths, rumours circulated that their locations had been leaked to the coalition in order to eliminate opposition.[593] A final subtle point of observation is that al-Bin'ali, who had been one of the most vocal and recognised IS apologists, was not eulogised by the group that had devoted such attention to immortalising its heroes. Furthermore, his portrayal as an evil individual who condoned massacres and the slavery of women was highlighted in Western accounts of his death, and as such it was considered a great victory for the coalition in the war on terror.[594] The foregoing is not intended to condone his brutality, rather it is meant to highlight the fact that his opposition to theological trends within IS that had the capacity to fuel increasing socio-political violence were not understood at the time of his death, nor was the potential for the strategic use in countering violent extremism of the increasing internal methodological and ideological cleavages he represented.

Al-Bin'ali had not been alone in criticising the Delegated Committee. Notably, in July 2017, Abu Muhammad al-Husseini al-Hashimi, who had sworn allegiance to IS in 2006 when the Islamic State of Iraq was formed, wrote a letter to al-Baghdadi in which he referred to the latter as the 'emir of the Islamic State', underlying the fact that he no longer believed al-Baghdadi to be the rightful ruler over Muslims or a caliphate.[595] He criticised IS leaders for not eulogising al-Bin'ali, and argued that the elimination of opposition within the group resembled the Mu'tazilite inquisition of the 9th century.[596] In August 2017, another man, Abu

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[591] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 17.
[592] Windrem, Robert and Kenzi Abou-Sabe, "ISIS Leader Who Approved Sex Slaves Killed by U.S. Airstrike", *NBC News,* June 2 2017. (Accessed 5 May 2020)
[593] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 17.
[594] For instance, see the title of this report: McLoughlin, Paul, "IS 'butcher scholar' killed in airstrike", *The New Arab,* June 1 2017. https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/6/1/is-butcher-scholar-killed-in-airstrike (Accessed 5 May 2020)
[595] The author always used the term caliphate in quotation marks, and although the letter was conciliatory it was highly critical of IS and its strategic calculus. See Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad, "Dissent in the Islamic State: 'Hashimi Advice' to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi", *Aymennjawad.org.* January 4 2019. http://www.aymennjawad.org/22199/dissent-in-the-islamic-state-hashimi-advice-to (Accessed 5 May 2020)
[596] This comparison is important. It demonstrates the salience of the transcendent narrative embodied by IS and the fact that the group and its members incorporated a shared history of Islam's trajectory as relevant and determinant in ongoing schisms and unfolding events. For more on Mu'tazilite theology and the schisms it

Abd al-Malek al-Shami wrote a refutation of the Delegated Committee's memo in which he stated that its conceptualisation of *takfir* meant extremists had come to dominate IS, and scholars of Islam and the utility of *takfir* in forging a prosperous umma had been marginalised, persecuted, and killed.[597] In this letter, al-Shami portrayed al-Baghdadi as a distant figure who relied excessively on individuals without sufficient knowledge of Islam, and urged him to oppose extremist tendencies within IS. Furthermore, he criticised the organisation for mismanagement of funds, accused it of engaging in deceptive media campaigns which did not rely on scriptural mandates of applicability, and asserted that foreigners were gaining too much influence within the critical mass of the group.[598]

Dissent within IS led al-Baghdadi to dissolve the Delegated Committee and reconstitute it with new members, and on September 15 2017 it released a statement which withdrew the seven-page memo on *takfir* and urged IS members to 'return to the truth'.[599] The members of the committee that had released the memo in May 2017 were imprisoned, and later fled IS, and al-Wad'ani urged al-Baghdadi to reconsider his position due to the rapidly deteriorating circumstances facing IS. He urged the caliph to repent and rectify his September decisions in order to rally fighter support anew, but he was eventually captured and executed on charges of being a 'Kharijite'.[600] Following the withdrawal of the *takfir* memo, Jordanian Abu Ya'qub al-Maqdisi was appointed as al-Adnani's successor as director of the Office of Research and Studies, and this entity released numerous audio tapes which further clarified institutional stances on *takfir* and described it as an obligation of the religion, not one of its foundations. Despite this progress, al-Baghdadi himself withheld numerous instalments of the audio tapes which forbade excessive *takfir*, although these were eventually leaked by the Scholarly Heritage Establishment.[601]

The perceived oppression of scholastic consensus created further dissent within IS ranks, and in March 2018, al-Maqdisi stated that IS leaders had usurped *tawhid*, spread oppression, and violated the core tenets of the inviolability of Muslim blood and property. He

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engendered, see Demichelis, Marco, "Between Mu'tazilism and Syncretism: A Reappraisal of the Behavior of the Caliphate of al-Ma'mūn", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 71:2 (October 2012), 257-274.

[597] Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad, "Dissent in the Islamic State: The Testimony of Abu Abd al-Malek al-Shami".

[598] See above reference for a full transcript of the critique.

[599] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 18.

[600] Ibid.

[601] This Establishment was a branch of the Office of Research and Studies, presided over by al-Maqdisi, and described itself as an unbiased scholarly media institution with close ties scholars in search of the truth. See Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State", 18.

also argued that they had come to "equate themselves with God in commanding right and forbidding wrong."[602] He revived the sentiments posited earlier by al-Adnani that the group was suffering catastrophic losses due to sinful behaviour of its leaders, and that God was exacting vengeance on the group and causing it to suffer against foreign aggressors as a consequence. For his statements, al-Maqdisi was executed in late 2018 on charges of apostasy.[603]

In late 2018, the media group that had been launched earlier that year to give advice to al-Baghdadi and present a unified ideological front, al-Naisha, turned to outright opposition in the onslaught of the suppression of voices of moderation and ensuing executions. The media releases by al-Naisha offered the view that extremism within the religion, and the lack of cohesion that ensued, was more detrimental to the jihadist project and aspirations of global sovereignty than foreign aggression. In turn, al-Baghdadi's leadership responded by stating that any and all who criticised the caliphate, its decision-making calculus, or rationale, were disbelievers because they presumed to know the will of God. Al-Naisha outlets responded simply by stating that "oppression does not please God, that unwarranted killing does not please god, that extremism in religion does not please God".[604] This final point is interesting insofar as internal opposition to IS to leadership in 2018 began to resemble the popular voices against oppression that were raised during the Arab Spring against tyrannical rulers; the very symbols of democratic rule that IS had sworn to obliterate.

What is crucial to observe regarding the IS schism over *takfir* is that it coincided perfectly with increasing losses suffered by the group, leading it to question itself, its methodology, and future. The emphasis on *takfir* was emblematic of social group proclivities to desperately attempt to define the group and the mechanisms by which it could measure inclusivity and loyalty. During the dispute between al-Naisha and IS leadership, online media outlets representing al-Qaeda welcomed this rift, and encouraged individuals who displayed more moderate tendencies to renounce the deviance of IS and join al-Qaeda.[605]

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[602] Al-Maqdisi, in Bunzel, "Divine Test or Divine Punishment? Explaining Islamic State Losses", 19.

[603] For more on al-Maqdisi and the media campaign that he oversaw to challenge the suppression of moderate academic voices within IS, and his eventual execution, see Bunzel, Cole, "Death of a Mufti: The Execution of the Islamic State's Abu Yaqub al-Maqdisi", *Jihadica,* January 4 2019. http://www.jihadica.com/death-of-a-mufti/ (Accessed 5 May 2020)

[604] Bunzel, "Divine Test or Divine Punishment? Explaining Islamic State Losses", 19

[605] Bunzel, Cole, "A House Divided: Origins and Persistence of the Islamic State's Ideological Divide", *Jihadica,* June 5 2019. http://www.jihadica.com/a-house-divided/ (Accessed 5 May 2020)

10.9 The End of the Caliphate

The territorial and human losses suffered by IS encouraged the coalition, and in December 2018 U.S. President Trump announced that he would withdraw the 2,000 combat troops that had been deployed there to fight IS while leaving smaller specialised contingents in place.[606] In March 2019, IS lost its final territorial stronghold in Syria, and coalition partners as well as the Syrian Democratic Forces triumphantly declared that the caliphate had at last been eliminated.[607] This assertion rested, in part, on the U.S. strategic policy position in the war on terror which sought, first and foremost, to deny territorial save havens to terrorist organisations and equated the loss of these to the inability to conduct actions detrimental to U.S. national interests. In a more abstract rendition, this proposition assumed that lacking a physical safe space in which to proliferate, violent ideologies would dissipate and lose cohesion as well as the ability to concertedly carry out violent attacks.[608] Despite the deterioration of IS institutional control in the Levant, thousands of IS affiliated individuals remained in Iraq and Syria either in hiding or incarcerated. Furthermore, many of these individuals had been part of the foreign fighter movement and thus presented a challenge to their home nations.[609]

To keen international observers, IS was plagued by not only the loss of its territory, but also by how the group had handled it. While the loss of territory certainly coincided with an increasing lack of ideological cohesion as was recounted above, the friction focused on reasserting the organisation's identity and the theological means by which it could both justify its existence and survive catastrophic losses. Following the territorial loss of the caliphate and

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[606] Yildiz, Guney, "US withdrawal from Syria leaves Kurds backed into a corner", *BBC News*, December 20 2018. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-46639073 (Accessed 6 May 2020)

[607] Wedeman, Ben and Lauren Said-Moorhouse, "ISIS has lost its final stronghold in Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces says", *CNN*, March 23 2019. https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/23/middleeast/isis-caliphate-end-intl/index.html (Accessed 6 May 2020)

[608] This is a simplification of the policy designed to eliminate terrorist safe havens which was an intellectual precursor to the U.S. invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq. See Brooks, Risa, "Territorial Havens and the Risk of Complex Terrorist Attacks in the United States", in Al-Istrabadi, Feisal and Sumit Ganguly (eds), *The Future of ISIS: Regional and International Implications.* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 201-222.

[609] Many of these foreign fighters remain incarcerated in Iraq and Syria, which has provoked international policy discussions regarding the necessity and legality of repatriation. It has also spurred discussions related to the cost – benefit analysis of repatriation in terms of national security for home nations. See Dworkin, Anthony, "Beyond Good and Evil: Why Europe Should Bring ISIS Foreign Fighters Home", European Council on Foreign Relations, October 2019.

the ensuing schism over *takfir*, at least two factions existed within IS that believed al-Baghdadi was ill suited to be caliph as the group deteriorated into a fragmented entity.[610] To compensate for this development, the group focused increasingly on its global affiliates and online propaganda designed to spread the group's message and confidence in it.[611] IS media propaganda increasingly reflected the group at large in that it became more diffused and decentralised, and lacked an overarching command structure.[612] Paradoxically, while the internal schisms in IS revolved around correct methodology for establishing group parameters, broadened virtual platforms designed to ensure the survival of a stringent ideology necessarily widened the scope of potential access and inclusion. In a virtual world, a performative act of association could become as simple as accessing digital content.

Virtual IS ideological proliferation and the survival of its worldview and the fractures within jihadism were exhibited in the summer of 2019 following the death of Egyptian Leader Mohamed Morsi, who had become that nation's president following the ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood following the Arab Spring.[613] On June 27th 2019, al-Qaeda eulogised Morsi in an official communique and online support abounded. The Taliban, and al-Qaeda's affiliate in the Maghreb (AQIM) also issued official eulogies. Al-Qaeda supporters argued that this demonstrated the universal and accessible appeal of the group, which was a part of the global umma, not distinct from it, and that it showed the jihadist community it had the ability to unify and identify with disparate elements of Islam and their struggles around the globe in moments of need.[614] In online retorts, IS supporters stated that this memorialisation of an individual who supported and participated in democratic institutions demonstrated al-

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[610] Hamming, Tore, "Kill the Caliph! The Islamic State's Evolution from an Integrated to a Fragmented Group", *Jihadica,* May 20 2019. http://www.jihadica.com/kill-the-caliph-the-islamic-states-evolution-from-an-integrated-to-a-fragmented-group/ (Accessed 7 May 2020)

[611] IS franchising is not the focus of this thesis, but it is pertinent to note IS Khorasan, which was formed as an affiliate in Afghanistan in 2014 and engages mostly locally while continuing to clash with the Taliban, giving a violent outlet to the ideological confrontation that ensued when al-Zawahiri declared Mullah Omar a counter caliph to al-Baghdadi. See "Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K)", Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018. https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/terrorism-backgrounders/islamic-state-khorasan-k (Accessed 7 May 2020)

[612] For more on the various platforms used, see Shehabat, Ahmad and Teodor Mitew, "Black-Boxing the Black Flag: Anonymous Sharing Platforms and ISIS Content Distribution Tactics", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12:1 (February 2018), 81-99.

[613] "Mohamed Morsi's death: World reaction", *Al Jazeera,* June 18 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/mohamed-morsi-death-world-reaction-190617162635604.html (Accessed 7 May 2020)

[614] Bunzel, Cole, "Mourning Morsi: The Death of an Islamist and Jihadi Divisions", *Jihadica,* September 27 2019. https://www.jihadica.com/mourning-morsi/ (Accessed 7 May 2020)

Qaeda's weakness, and abandonment of jihadist principles. Interestingly, the long-time al-Qaeda ideologue, Jordanian Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi wrote a letter in June 2019 in which he departed from that organisation's position, and did not memorialise Morsi. Instead, he called for a revision of jihadist methodology and appropriate usage of WB because he argued currents within jihadism caused not only division, but adulation for symbols and representations of institutions he perceived jihad as necessary in eliminating. This stance taken by al-Maqdisi is critical because, while he did not endorse the IS position and had in fact condemned the group repeatedly as deviants, in a post-caliphal environment that had seen IS camps divided into extremists and moderates which then spilled into online forums, al-Maqdisi appeared to side with the more extreme position. The divisions regarding how to treat and identify disbelievers and those deemed 'other', as well as the contests over broader support bases for positions on this issue did not end with the theological disputes within IS, rather they transcended them in that they became part of the lexicon in discussions shaping the evolution of jihadism.

In July 2019, the UN released a report in which it stated that despite territorial loses, groups such as IS and al-Qaeda still represented viable and enduring threats in terms of human capital, strength of ideology, and financial resources, and that the global community should not expect a decrease in terrorist violence as the result of the loss of the caliphate.[615] On October 26th of that year, al-Baghdadi was killed in Barisha, Syria, in a raid by U.S. special operations forces. One of his top officials, al-Muhajir, was also killed.[616] While this was certainly a symbolic victory in the war on terror, its strategic implications were more complex. Previous assassinations of key al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and IS leaders such as Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi did not signify the end of their respective organisations, rather they forced them to adapt. Given the ideological turmoil that IS had experienced, and the deepening rift between extremists and moderates in the broader jihadisphere championed by supporters of IS and al-Qaeda respectively, al-Baghdadi's death created an opening in which these divisions could be deepened or healed. Al-Baghdadi had been the first individual within

[615] "Letter dated 15 July 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council". United Nations Security Council, July 15 2019. https://undocs.org/S/2019/570 (Accessed 8 May 2020)

[616] Montoya-Galvez, Camilo and Caroline Linton, "ISIS leader dead after U.S. commandos stage dramatic raid in Syria", *CBS News,* October 27 2019. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-isis-leader-dead-killed-in-us-raid-in-syria-2019-10-27/ (Accessed 8 May 2020)

the jihadisphere to publicly condemn al-Zawahiri, and thus the elimination of a figure to whom individuals and groups had sworn personal fealty could possibly provide leverage to al-Qaeda in attracting disaffected remnants from the caliphate.[617]

Shortly following the death of al-Baghdadi, his successor was announced although there was initially confusion as to his identity. Amir Mohammed Abdul Rahman al-Mawli al-Salbi, who was reportedly responsible for engineering the enslavement of ethnic Yazidis, and had met al-Baghdadi and joined the Islamic State of Iraq following incarceration at Camp Bucca during the Iraq War, was described as a loyal follower of the group's worldview although little else was known about him.[618] In December 2019, an IS affiliate released a video of a brutal execution of 11 Christian men in Nigeria, and stated that it was in direct retribution for the assassination of al-Baghdadi.[619] Furthermore, the group remained active in its former conquered territories, where despite the continued presence of U.S. personnel and infrastructure, it carried out seven violent attacks in Iraq in the first half of April 2020 alone.[620]

10.10 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has chronicled the IS caliphate from its announcement in 2014 to its territorial demise in the summer of 2019. It has attempted to portray the ways in which IS capitalised on both contemporary evolving circumstances and longstanding aspirations of jihadism and political Islam in geo-politically specific ways. By positioning itself as the rightful inheritor of prophetic methodology for establishing a sovereign entity in a socio-political environment prone to existential anxiety that was experiencing the possibilities of effecting profound change through collective mobilisation, IS tangibly achieved what previous jihadist and Islamist organisations had failed to. The declaration of the caliphate held deep resonance both in a transcendent narrative and on a temporal landscape, and the group set a crucial precedent in demonstrating that points of cultural resentment such as the agreement of

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[617] Schweitzer, Yoram, "The Elimination of al-Baghdadi from the Arena: A Limited Shockwave", Institute for National Security Studies, October 31 2019, 2.
[618] Chulov, Martin and Mohammed Rasool, "Isis founding member confirmed by spies as group's new leader", *The Guardian,* January 20 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/20/isis-leader-confirmed-amir-mohammed-abdul-rahman-al-mawli-al-salbi (Accessed 8 May 2020)
[619] Chakraborty, Barnini, "ISIS beheads 10 christian captives in Nigeria as retaliation for Baghdadi death", *Fox News,* December 27 2019. https://www.foxnews.com/world/isis-beheads-christians-nigeria-baghdadi (Accessed 8 May 2020)
[620] Mills.

Sykes-Picot, in both actuality and symbolic representation, could be obliterated in favour of alternative models of sovereignty.

This chapter discussed the absolutism demonstrated by IS in its self-portrayal and governance, and the reasons that this worldview was unprecedented in its appeal and success. This chapter crucially explored the dissonance between strategic blows dealt by the coalition, and the way that these losses were internalised by IS in such a fashion that combined theological precepts, realpolitik and social group behaviour in efforts to ideologically survive otherwise fatal attacks. This section continued to briefly recount the repercussions within the jihadisphere following the territorial collapse of the caliphate, and the way that the group's trajectory and ideological frameworks had transcended the physical operating space previously afforded by the same. Furthermore, because these frameworks had been built on a legacy of violent social group formation mechanisms ensconced in theological constructs such as the reconfigurations of *takfir*, IS reoriented the lateral limits governing discussions regarding both the composition of the umma as a social group and the potential future of the jihadist project aimed at attaining sovereignty.

The overarching aim of this chapter has been to explicate the rise and territorial fall of the IS caliphate within the context of the evolution of violent jihadism that was covered in previous chapters in order to understand its progression both as an institutional arc and a unique manifestation in the continuum in the quest for an idealised socio-political utopia that takes the form of an alternate sovereign governance. Furthermore, this chapter emphasised that due to IS's unique characteristics and achievements, its legacy has the potential to realign future social and ideological formation within jihadism, and profoundly alter models of violent political contestation. Understanding the institutional arc in relation to itself, the narrative continuum in which it exists, and the global environment at large through a scrutiny of diverse actors and associated discourse and practice is a critical component of the deconstructive problematisation of the genealogical method.

Chapter 11

Locating the Islamic State in Terrorism Frameworks

This thesis has explored the development of IS, and demonstrated the evolution of the group's ideology both within its own cosmological narrative and against a backdrop of evolving socio-political regional dynamism. This evolution took place within the context of competition within the jihadisphere to attain a specific model of sovereignty, and IS emerged to embody this utopian model against one which is upheld by secular Middle Eastern regimes, U.S. hegemony, and the global nation state system. While chapter 1 of this thesis indicated that terrorism should be understood relative to the interests of the state, and despite the fact that IS championed a sovereign model that undermines both state structures and the regional interests of those states, the case study of IS has demonstrated that the group's trajectory, existence, and future potential cannot be reduced to concise definitional parameters to either understand or combat it. A deeper understanding, therefore, is required of how IS does and does not adhere to contemporary models for the conceptualisation of terrorism.

First this chapter will discuss the trajectory and existence of IS against Rapoport's wave theory, as well as its alternatives, to demonstrate that the group does not necessarily adhere to a single conceptual framework. Second it will survey selected publications that have argued that IS should not be conceived of strictly as a terrorist group and discuss the rationale for this position.

11.1 Locating IS in Rapoport's Four Waves of Terrorism Theory

Rapoport's theory attempted to find identifiable patterns in terrorism to understand how this fluctuating vehicle for violent agency mutated. It was not intended to be a crystallisation of objective truth, rather it provided a framework that must consistently incorporate new knowledge.[621] The enduring popularity of the wave theory as a reference point in terrorism studies makes it valuable in providing points of comparison against which to

[621] Kaplan, Jeffrey, "Waves of Political Terrorism", *Oxford Research Encyclopedias,* 2016. https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-24 (Accessed 31 May 2020)

scrutinise the IS case study. Rapoport identified four common components to each wave: time, in that waves last approximately 40 years and represent the span of a generation; space, in that each wave originates in a specific geographic region; participating units, which possess lifecycles shorter than the wave itself; and purpose, which dictates that waves originate with hope generated by a catalytic event.[622] Regarding time, IS certainly came into existence during the 40 year period that Rapoport identified as having begun in 1979, but the growing momentum of political Islam as resistance, radical ideological reconfigurations, and Salafi-jihadism which IS both capitalised on and was a result of, had begun well before that year. Furthermore, time cannot adequately be a metric of constraint to analyse or predict IS behavioural patterns in that the group views itself as engaged in a struggle which simultaneously manifests itself temporally and cosmologically, as reflected in the statements of IS leadership as well as its publications of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* that were discussed in chapter 10.

Concerning space, the jihadisphere undoubtedly has its roots in the levant, as demonstrated by the commitment to initially include the region in the organisational name "Islamic State Iraq and Syria". The decision to eliminate Iraq and Syria from the group's name in 2014 upon the declaration of the caliphate, however, indicated that IS did not view itself as being engaged in nationalistic regional struggles, but that its governing identity transcended a specific geographic region.[623] This transcendent appeal fostered a collective mobilisation that yielded the most significant foreign fighter movement in recent history. These foreign fighters, in turn, have dispersed globally since the rise and territorial fall of the caliphate, and IS sympathisers have conducted violent attacks worldwide, and thus a delimited geographic area of operations cannot be applied to the group.[624] Furthermore, following the territorial collapse of the caliphate in 2019, IS leaders stated in *Rumiyah* that perhaps the future of the caliphate lay in some yet-to-be-discovered conflict zone or area of operations.

Regarding participating units, previous chapters of this thesis juxtaposed IS narratives, ambitions, and methods with those of al-Qaeda, and briefly JN, to explore the deep cleavages between the organisations. Despite the facts that al-Qaeda and IS share aspirations of Islamic

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[622] Rapoport.
[623] Byman, Daniel, "ISIS Goes Global", *Foreign Affairs* 95:2 (March / April 2016), 75-85.
[624] See Speckhard, Anne and Molly D. Ellenburg, "ISIS in Their Own Words: Recruitment History, Motivations for Joining, Travel, Experiences in ISIS, and Disillusionment over Time – Analysis of 220 In-Depth Interviews if ISIS Returnees, Defectors and Prisoners", *Journal of Strategic Security* 13:1 (2020), 82-127.

sovereignty, and that due to their temporal and geographic co-location in the levant during and following the U.S. led war in Iraq were subjectively combined in Western strategic and policy decisions to form the image of a tangible enemy in the war on terror, IS and al-Qaeda are and have been two distinct organisations with more ideological and methodological differences than similarities.[625] The drastic differences and increasing hostility between the two organisations that endure to the present, as well as the polarising nature of the conflict that reflects the religious absolutism espoused by both groups, should make it impossible to conceive of IS and al-Qaeda as equivalent organisations in a wave characterised by religious violence simply because they both profess to be Islamic. Doing so neglects the importance of potential future violence inherent in intra-jihadist competition that was witnessed in IS assassinations of al-Qaeda emissaries that was recounted in Chapter 9, as well as the ability to comprehend the underlying meaning of these actions in the pursuit of a group's ambitions.

Finally, concerning purpose, chapter 7 recounted the war in Iraq, and how this was viewed by al-Zawahiri as a 'golden opportunity' to plant the seeds of an Islamic emirate in the Levant. Furthermore, chapter 8 described the role of the Arab Spring in the reimagination of the realm of the possible through collective action. Just as the movements within Islam which IS capitalised on predated the beginning of the fourth wave, IS was not spawned organically as the result of either the Iraq war or the Arab Spring.[626] In fact, and more importantly for posterity, the declaration of the caliphate in 2014 represents its own hope enshrined in a tangible event. Although the territorial composition of the caliphate failed, its declaration and tentative attainment now forms part of the legacy of the jihadist project, which can be framed in memory and emulated in the future as a lost hope to be reinvigorated.

Despite the fact that Rapoport's theory seems to be useful in providing parameters for contemplating IS, yet insufficient for fully comprehending the group's nuances and potential,

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[625] For more on the importance of underlying divisions within the jihadisphere and how these inform ongoing debates, see Lia, Brynjar, "Jihadis divided between strategists and doctrinarians", in Moghadam and Fishman, *Fault Lines in Global Jihad,* 69-87.

[626] Entities as diverse as the Iranian regime and the Centre for Research on Globalisation have argued that the U.S. created IS. While these are opinions, it is worthwhile to note them in the context of the availability of that narrative to a broad audience. See Chengu, Garikai, "America Created Al-Qaeda and the ISIS Terror Group", *Global Research,* September 19 2019. https://www.globalresearch.ca/america-created-al-qaeda-and-the-isis-terror-group/5402881 (Accessed 31 May 2020)
Moore, Jack, "America 'Created ISIS' and Its War on the Group is 'A Lie', Says Iran's Supreme Leader", *Newsweek,* June 13 2017. https://www.newsweek.com/america-created-isis-its-war-group-lie-says-irans-supreme-leader-khamenei-624824 (Accessed 31 May 2020)

the waves that he delineated are valuable in that their analytic use can be harnessed to demonstrate how IS narratives and methodology have drawn on both Islamic ideology and the evolution of modern terrorism. Chapter 1 of this thesis recounted that Rapoport's first wave terrorists argued that modern society was full of artificial conventions, and immoral tactics in the present would be perceived as righteous in the future due to their use in righting egregious wrongs. IS adopted this framework insofar as its premise, regarding the illegality of artificial constructs such as national borders and their relationship with Western hegemony enshrined in the agreement of Sykes-Picot, was and remains foundational to the group's worldview. Furthermore, IS brutality was framed as immoral and an assault on fundamental human rights by Western observers, but also simultaneously justified in IS speeches and periodical publications that conceived of it as necessary to bring about the end of institutional immorality ensconced in Western statehood manifest in the Islamic world. This justification of violence is commensurate with the socio-philosophical argument which stipulates that violence may be morally justified despite not having exhausted other avenues, if the violence rectifies egregious wrongs and is used to advance the agenda of social reform which benefits the social group wielding said violence.[627] Additionally, IS framed its violence as a duty both to the self and the collective, in a manner which drew on Islamic concepts of loyalty such as *ba'ya*, but in doing so it also emulated the first wave proclivity to do the same which was based on Nechayev's "Revolutionary Catechism" that was discussed in Chapter 1.[628] Just as first wave groups relied on the advent of mass communication to broadcast this collective obligation, IS relied on its multi-language publications, as well as social media and live streaming capabilities to both disseminate fear and attract supporters.[629]

Rapoport's second wave began due to the perceived abuses of colonial power manifest in regional mandates and their incongruence with Western ideals of self-determination. The adamant rejection of Sykes-Picot and its legacy, which was first articulated in 2006 in Iraq by IS's precursor as was discussed in Chapter 8, should be understood as a contemporary

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[627] Auldi, in Bufacchi, 152

[628] For a discussion of the collective and individual duty of violence, see Naji, 255.

[629] For more on the fundamental relationship between terrorism and the media that predates the widespread use of social media, see Biernatzki, W.E., "Mass Media: Collaborators with Terrorists", *Communication Research Trends* 21:1 (2002), 3-42.
For IS use of social media that endures to the present, see Ward, Antonia, "ISIS's use of Social Media Still Poses a Threat to Stability in the Middle East and Africa", RAND, December 11 2018. https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/12/isiss-use-of-social-media-still-poses-a-threat-to-stability.html (Accessed 1 June 2020)

rejection of institutional remnants of colonialism as well as in the context of the increasing use of Islamic frames of resistance relied on since the beginning of defensive modernisation that was narrated in Chapter 7. IS also emulated second wave tactics in its deliberate targeting of police, military, and security services associated with hegemonic Western actors and their regional proxies. This tactic can be considered all the more holistic given the fact that it drew on both the tactical legacy of the second wave, and the ideological reconfigurations within jihadism which argued that all those who associated with structures and institutions of a modern state were disbelievers and thus marked for death.[630] IS also emulated second wave ideological orientation insofar as it argued that it utilised violence in order to achieve freedom from oppression. In the first edition of *Dabiq*, IS leadership framed the wielding of violence in the pursuit of statehood as the mechanism by which to reclaim Muslim freedom, abolish dishonour, and self-extricate from the bonds of cultural humiliation and disgrace.[631] By thus framing violence, IS also adopted the paradigm offered by Frantz Fanon, which was summarised in Chapter 3, that argued violence was both useful and necessary in that by appropriating its use from colonial monopoly, its performative conduct could serve to inculcate personal and collective freedom even in the absence of the achievement of tangible objectives.

The third wave began after the catalyst of the Vietnam war, which represented the idea that a superpower could be defeated by a smaller, technologically inferior force. Al-Zarqawi clearly understood this in his selection of tactics and prediction of an ultimate U.S. withdrawal from Iraq that was discussed in Chapter 8. While Rapoport argued that the third wave was defined by nationalist terrorism, and IS violently rejects ideas and structures of nationalism as artificial and heretical, it is worthwhile to note that IS did and does advocate its own brand of nationalism. If a nation is defined as "a large group of people with strong bonds of identity – an "imagined community," a tribe on a grand scale"[632], then IS certainly fits the definition, and the group engaged in consistent efforts to define that identity and forge bonds within an imagined community that drew on transcendent narratives and contemporary geopolitics simultaneously. Furthermore, IS pursued its own version of nationalism insofar as it sought,

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[630] See "The Law of Allah of the Laws of Men", *Dabiq Issue 10 The Laws of Allah or the Laws of Men,* Ramadan 1436 (July 2015), 50-65.
[631] *Dabiq Issue 1,* 9.
[632] "What is a "Nation"?", Global Policy Forum. https://www.globalpolicy.org/nations-a-states/what-is-a-nation.html (Accessed 1 June 2020)

and tentatively achieved, governance in the form of a caliphate. The pertinent point to observe here is that while IS rejected and continues to reject the structures of the modern nation state, and utilises *takfir* to excommunicate Muslims who engage in practices associated with democracy, it strives for nationalism in the sense that it pursues a vision of governance to ideally encompass a self-defined communal identity in sovereign self-sufficiency.

The fourth wave began in 1979, and while IS does espouse one of its defining characteristics in that it hopes to unite the umma in a global caliphate, its ideas regarding how to achieve, define, and govern this caliphate and its relationships with 'the other' are unique unto itself. Reducing IS aspirations to the achievement of the caliphate is to dilute both the symbolic significance of the caliphate in Islamic historical memory and as a representation of cultural resistance against the gradual encroachment of modernity inherent in political Islam. This reduction, while valuable when attempting to discover similarities which lead to generalisations, risks further 'othering' the image of Islamic governance manifest in a caliphate to a Western audience prone to receiving divisive narratives in the course of the global war on terror which locates Western democracies in an existential struggle against irreconcilable ideologies which are inimical to values such as freedom and liberty.[633]

The above discussion is not intended to dismiss the significance of Rapoport's contribution to the study of terrorism, rather it is intended to utilise a prominent model to assist in answering the research question which asked whether it is useful to label IS a terrorist organisation, and study it within established frameworks. It therefore suggests that IS, as a flexible and mutating organisation, cannot neatly be placed in a temporal wave defined by its similarities with coterminous organisations. It utilises mechanisms and tactics that were central to all of the waves and continues to evolve, indicating that the group is able to effectively learn from both historical precedent and contemporary dynamics.[634]

11.2 Locating IS in Alternate Frameworks

[633] This reference is taken from Chapter 8 which included a speech by then U.S. President Bush delivered to Congress in which he stated al-Qaeda hates the West and the U.S. for their inherent freedoms.
[634] For more on the learning curve of terrorist organisations, see Clarke, Colin P, "How Terrorist Groups Learn: Implications for al Qaeda", RAND, March 14 2019. https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/03/how-terrorist-groups-learn-implications-for-al-qaeda.html (Accessed 1 June 2020)

Jeffrey Kaplan wrote in 2010 that contemporary terrorism was fundamentally different than previous movements of political violence. He argued that terrorism cannot be reduced to an amalgamation of tactics, rather it represents a fundamental war of ideas, and is in essence a value-neutral term.[635] He offered the idea of the existence of a unique fifth wave of terrorism, stressed the importance of local and cultural dynamics in spawning terrorist violence, and stated that groups themselves could become catalysts for ongoing violence. Although the fifth wave theory predated the formal establishment of IS and the caliphate, certain points of comparison are worth noting.

If morality itself is a construct that is defined as a consensus regarding acceptable social behaviour within the delimited bounds of a self-identified social group, then terrorism is indeed a value-neutral term in that its morality cannot be absolutely determined according to the moral constructs of one society's norms relative to those of another.[636] IS devoted significant time and energy to reshaping the limits of morality and accepted behaviour both as it related to performative violence and ideals of governance. By engaging in this social architecture and tentatively institutionalising it in a caliphate, IS became a catalyst for future violence and introduced expanded parameters for what should be considered moral behaviour according to its worldview in the pursuit and justification of Islamic sovereignty based on selected theological readings and lessons from previous terrorist movements.

Kaplan argued that fifth wave groups were acutely aware of their own history, and in this regard IS proved itself to be consistent. Although international scholars and Western opponents of IS dismissed the theological reasoning of IS violent justifications, especially regarding the killing of innocents as was narrated in Chapter 9, in its publications and narratives IS demonstrated intrinsic awareness of Islamic, jihadist, and Western history, as well as its own perceived place within these intersecting trajectories. Finally, Kaplan argued that fifth wave groups were defined by their aspirations of attaining a social utopia within this lifetime, and IS adheres to this standard in its desire to see the caliphate reinstated in the present.

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[635] Kaplan, 17-18.

[636] This is commensurate with both the construction of morality that was discussed in Chapter 2 and the paradigm which states that the legitimacy of any act of violence lies somewhere in the triangle of relationships and perceptions between the aggressor, audience, and victim of violence that was narrated in Chapter 3.

Parker and Sitter argued in 2016 that terrorism did not occur in waves, rather that it manifest itself in distinct strains of nationalism, socialism, religious extremism, and social exclusion, all of which existed simultaneously. Regarding this theory, IS embodied all of these strains insofar as it advocated its own brand of nationalism, provided social services in a manner which reflected socialist agendas related to the state control of resources, religious extremism in its reconfigurations of *takfir* and violence, and social exclusion in that the group consistently engaged in efforts to define itself relative to 'the other', identified as both heretical Muslims and Western democratic structures.

In 2019 Honing and Yahel proposed that the evolution of terrorism had led to the emergence of terrorist semi-states (TSS), and in its governance and structuring IS resembled the model offered by the authors. Honing and Yahel argued that the driving motivation for TSSs was the fact that the political avenue for gaining power was effectively blocked. While this may have been true in informing IS approaches especially in its recruitment of former Ba'athist officers who were precluded from Iraqi reconstruction, IS distanced itself from the TSS paradigm in that it placed emphasis not on the inaccessibility of political avenues, but on the fact that those very avenues were heretical and could not lead to the visions of sovereignty and governance it aspired to. Honing and Yahel concluded that TSSs were self-defeating by nature in that they would cling to stringent revisionist ideology despite changing circumstances, and in this regard IS did not behave like a TSS. IS demonstrated through its reimagination of the caliphate as fulfilling itself in a yet-unknown location, as well through its meticulous deliberation regarding the utility of *takfir* in defining the group and achieving tangible objectives, that it could change according to immediate and shifting realities. Similarly, Honing and Yahel surmised that the greatest legacy of TSSs would be their ability change the nature of interactions between terrorist organisations, and in this regard IS embodied the premise insofar as it continues to engage in hostile rhetoric with other organisations that share its long term aspirations and ideologies of violence such as al-Qaeda, and this socio-political outbidding has already changed the dynamic between the two groups and numerous junctures and will therefore likely continue to do so.[637]

[637] For more on the debate surrounding outbidding and the proposition that competition between terrorist organisations leads to increased levels of violence, see Nemeth, Stephen, "The Effect of Competition on Terrorist Group Operations", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58:2 (March 2014), 336-362.

By scrutinising the trajectory of IS against the frameworks provided by the alternatives to the wave theory, it is clear that while the group may share similar characteristics with each of their defining features, it cannot be placed exclusively in any of them at the risk of ignoring cogent aspects of the group's identity and aspirations.

11.3 Locating IS Outside the Frameworks

In 2015, Cronin proposed that IS should not be considered a terrorist group, due to the fact that the U.S. had built a counterterrorist platform tailored to the fight against al-Qaeda and its application to IS would be ineffectual.[638] She argued that mechanisms designed to contain the caliphate such as border monitoring and collective international bargaining should be adapted and put into the service of a strategy designed to counter state-like actors. While this assessment was given immediately following the declaration of the caliphate, it is worth remembering in that although the caliphate no longer exists in territorial form, its aspirations of sovereignty have not changed.

On a more abstract level, in 2015 Sullivan posited that IS should be regarded as a millenarian mass movement.[639] He stated that it was not a terrorist movement in that it "attracts and holds a following not by its doctrine and promises, but by the refuge it offers from the anxieties, barrenness and meaninglessness of individual existence".[640] Furthermore, Sullivan argued that IS should be considered a revolutionary movement within the complex arena of jihadism which remains the leading platform for anti-Western hegemony. He concluded his assessment by drawing parallels between the experiences of Muhammad and those of IS, which are all the more relevant given IS reliance on scriptural justifications and the desire to emulate the standards of the Prophet and *salaf.* He stated that Muhammad had succeeded in establishing a new model for sovereignty at a time when the Persian and Byzantine empires were exhausted from over-extended warfare and could no longer promulgate their hegemony or governing structures by proxy. Linking the legacy of the Byzantine and Persian empires to the experience of prolonged U.S. and Western military

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[638] Cronin, Audrey Kurth, "ISIS is not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadi Threat", *Foreign Affairs* 94:2 (March / April 2015), 87-98. P.87.
[639] Sullivan, Edward R., "The Islamic State: Terrorists or Millenarian Mass Movement?", in Miller, Larry D. (ed), *The Army War College Review,* Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2015, 13-25.
[640] Hoffer, Eric, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (London: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2010). First Published 1951.

intervention in the Middle East provides a powerful continuum in the transcendent narrative of jihadism, according to Sullivan, and IS therefore should be understood as a revolutionary movement able to galvanise history to rally continued support.

In 2018, Krause also framed IS as a revolutionary movement, because "revolutions do not simply seek to replace presidents and generals; they aim to overturn the existing social order and replace it with a vision for how life should be for individuals, their community, and their polity. (…) The loss of territory may help cripple ISIS's state, but not necessarily its revolution."[641] He also focused on the importance of the IS caliphate and how those involved in its construction and provision of public goods and services considered it to be a legitimate, sovereign state. Finally, Krause concluded that the complex nature of IS requires a combination of a war of bombs, a war of governance, and a war of ideas to defeat it.[642]

11.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated the difficulties inherent in attempting to intellectually locate IS in the major frameworks for generalising and understanding terrorism in attempts to understand both its complex nature and potential for the future. While the caliphate no longer exists in territorial form, IS demonstrated its resilience and reorientation capabilities in its increased emphasis on small scale attacks against the West within the West itself in its publications of *Rumiyah*, its network of regional affiliates, and transition to an online presence, that were recounted in Chapter 10. By drawing points of similarity and difference between IS and the conceptual frameworks for terrorism, it is clear that the group is a manifestation of a long trajectory of jihadism, political Islam, and global political violence as well as the representation of a unique phenomenon which responded to local and transcendent grievances. This assessment and the nature in which it was reached correlates with the genealogical method for inquiry in that it attempted to emulate Foucault's analytics by first examining a series of practices infused with cultural meaning, and then passing an understanding of these through a grid of assumed universals; in this case, existing prominent frameworks for conceptualising terrorist groups and patterns.

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[641] Krause, Peter, "A State, and Insurgency, and a revolution: Understanding and Defeating the Three Faces of ISIS", in al-Istrabadi and Ganguly, 223-246, 233.
[642] Krause, 236.

While military campaigns and fostering productive local governance to counter the legitimacy of IS remain paramount in a multi-pronged approach as advocated by Krause, the research question this thesis presented in its introduction intends to address the war of ideas he argued was necessary because an exploration of the complexity of IS and how it should be understood should inform the subsequent wars of bombs and governance. This chapter addressed an aspect of the research question by revisiting a multiplicity of prominent frameworks and arguing that IS cannot be understood in its entirety according to the theoretical limitations of any of the frameworks provided. It also discussed alternate ways that IS has been conceived of as a revolutionary, state-like actor, and these assessments will form the foundation of the final concluding chapter.

Conclusion

Re-thinking Terrorism for the 21st Century

This thesis has engaged in an in-depth case study of IS and demonstrated the intrinsic problems in attempting to place the group in any of the prominent frameworks in current usage for studying terrorism. The discussion of the complexity of the war on terror, rise of IS, and significant academic attention devoted to understanding and countering terrorism illustrate the fact that terrorism is assumed to be a normal fact in the global state of affairs, and significant social problem. Furthermore, this problem was and is framed in the war on terror as 'us vs. them', and an existential struggle between liberal democratic values and a fanatic religious ideology inimical to the same. Terrorism itself, however, along with its framing, is a social construct and should therefore be understood as such. In order to finalise the genealogical problematisation of IS and address the research question posed in the introduction, this chapter will question the very foundations of how terrorism is and should be understood.

First this chapter will discuss the emergence of terrorism as a social construct intimately linked to the birth of the nation state, social identities and political views regarding legitimacy and power during the French Revolution. Second it will explore the manner in which this social construct was adapted and used by the United States preceding and during the war on terror in a social manner both commensurate with precedents set during the French Revolution and in novel ways. Third this chapter will propose an alternate system of labelling to describe actors in a contested geopolitical environment which is consistent with the genealogical method of problematising social dynamics in order to then adequately confront them with thorough understanding. This proposal will constitute the genealogical conclusion regarding the research question. Finally, this chapter will discuss why this alternate labelling may be useful in guiding discussions related to political violence in the future, as groups currently labelled as terrorist organisations show no signs of disappearing despite decades of protracted military engagement and counterterrorism operations.

Terrorism as a Concept in the Rise of the Nation State

Terrorism as it is articulated today traces its roots to the French Revolution and is therefore intricately connected to the notions of power and contestation that took form there.[643] In the context of the relationship between power and knowledge, it was a world changing event in that it drastically altered models of political legitimacy and the means by which to achieve and justify them, proved that those models could be moulded according to social consensus, and provided the environment in which terrorism could be theorised in relation to those models and fluid social conditions. In its original inception, terrorism referred to terror from above, in that during the period 1793-1794, the regime of terror under Maximilien Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety violently targeted French citizens who were perceived as enemies of the state, and who had no right to live in the newly imagined sacred canopy of the French body politic due to their rejection of revolutionary values. While this body politic attempted to make Enlightenment ideas of popular sovereignty a reality, the terror under Robespierre was wielded to both advance popular sovereignty embodied by the revolution and also eliminate opposing political factions who vied for power and control of the budding revolutionary government. In this regard, "The French Terror served as both the founding act of modern state terror and as the model defining and delineating the strategic use of violence by a state apparatus."[644]

Terror as the psychological mechanism by which to instil a deep fear was subsequently practiced violently in executions and incarcerations to ensure compliance with revolutionary values that aligned with the Jacobin faction.[645] The justification for this was the idea that to achieve popular sovereignty 'the people' had to be reborn in a certain way, and for this to take place any who opposed this process had to be eliminated.[646] This became problematic insofar as definitions of 'the people' in practice became increasingly narrowed to only reflect core members of the Committee for Public Safety and their political allies, and increasing violence was directed at perceived enemies. This perception is reflected in Robespierre's justification for the execution of King Louis XVI, where he argued that the replacement of the old order with a civic society based on Enlightenment ideals was only possible through the elimination

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[643] For more on the revolution, its enabling conditions as well as its repercussions in the modern global hegemonic order, see Bukovansky, Mlada, *Legitimacy and Power Politics: The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
[644] Chaliand, Gerard and Arnaud Blin, "The Invention of Modern Terror", in Chaliand, Gerard and Arnaud Blin (eds), *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to ISIS* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2016), 95-112, 101.
[645] Chaliand and Blin, 102.
[646] Richardson, 29.

of all those who upheld and represented said old order. In Robespierre's estimation, the Republic could only live if the King; and thereby all that he represented, did not.[647]

In the way that it first originated as part of the public political lexicon of modernity, and insofar as violent terrorism was portrayed as the mechanism by which to achieve the revolution's aspiration of popular sovereignty, "terrorism constituted a social identity that could be assumed and cultivated by way of an active commitment to certain beliefs, values and principles."[648] Furthermore, revolutionary terror relied on the same practices of violence as the old order such as public executions, but it harnessed their use for new purposes. In this regard, the use of violence through revolutionary terror aligns with Foucault's analysis that individual acts may appear identical in practice, but in their ability to embody divergent meanings and aspirations should be understood as social functions according to the physical and intellectual contexts in which they occur.[649] In the context of the nascent French Republic, Robespierre upheld the notion that systematic terrorism wielded for political purposes was the only way in which new codes of civic morality and virtue could be institutionalised in popular sovereign structures designed to guarantee the pinnacle of human socio-political development and freedom. This was therefore a moral and political imperative in that it was intended to support the salvation of a people.[650] The use of terror was further justified in that the constitutional structures the Jacobins advocated were framed as being unattainable without first achieving a homogeneous population that shared beliefs of popular sovereignty. Lack of homogeneity and proliferation of faction were understood as constituting a crisis, and due to the yet-unfulfilled nature of desired political structures, this crisis was existential in nature. This crisis regarding the future direction of a polity, in turn, followed the crisis of sovereignty of the preceding century, which Foucault argued was the result of new Enlightenment ideals and the discovery of immutable laws of nature which undermined the indisputable right of a monarch to rule unilaterally.[651] To ensure the survival of revolutionary

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[647] McPhee, Peter, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012), 142.
[648] Erlenbusch-Anderson, 23.
[649] Erlenbusch-Anderson, 26-27.
[650] For the necessity of violence in the attainment of moral and political imperatives, especially during foundational and tumultuous periods, see Benjamin, Walter, "Critique of Violence", in Bullock, Marcus and Michael W. Jennings (eds), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1, 1913-1926* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 236-252.
[651] See Foucault, Michel, *The Order of things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), xxiii-xxiv.
See also Parker, Geoffrey and Lesley M. Smith (eds), *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,* (London: Routledge, 1997).

models of governance, therefore, violence and terrorism were necessary, according to Robespierre: "Revolutionary government owes good citizens full national protection; to enemies of the people it owes nothing but death. (…) Virtue, without which terror is disastrous; terror, without which virtue is powerless."[652]

Robespierre was executed in the summer of 1794, and leading Thermidorian Jean-Lambert Tallien coined the term 'terrorism' to describe the systematic use of terror employed under the former. This development was significant in that the social revolutionary movement that succeeded Robespierre's regime of terror did so after growing organically out of it as a moderate faction that viewed itself as susceptible to falling prey to the expansive reprisals and killings of declared enemies of the revolution.[653] Tallien broke with the model embodied by Robespierre in that he argued that terrorism was an "extreme affection" and its institutional practice by the state only served to weaken the ultimate survival of that state.[654] He further proposed that only by the enforcement of egalitarian law could revolutionary government succeed, and that mechanisms of terrorism should only be used selectively to target hidden dissentious factions within the body politic, rather than to categorically define and punish individuals that existed outside of the revolutionary social group despite their status as French citizens. This paradigm shift was significant in that it reshaped the boundaries of inclusivity regarding the body politic, and framed terrorism as essential in targeting an internal 'other' that threatened the integrity of the social whole rather than identifying the 'other' as an external enemy in its rejection of revolutionary ideals.[655] These legal and philosophical transformations shaped the discussion regarding the appropriate mechanisms by which popular sovereignty should be defined, achieved and exercised, and therefore created the intellectual conditions under which terrorists could be portrayed as threats to the integrity of the nation which required their violent removal from society.

Despite these intellectual transformations, terrorism itself remained a contested term in relation to power and legitimacy and Thermidorian revolutionaries engaged in many of the same practices that Robespierre had. In 1795, the National Convention, which by that point

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[652] Robespierre, Maximilien, "On the Principles of Political Morality", in Slavoj Žižek (ed), *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror* (London: Verso, 2007), 115

[653] For more on this transition in context, see Baczko, Bronislaw, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[654] Erlenbusch-Anderson, 39.

[655] Erlenbusch-Anderson, 41.

was dominated by anti-Thermidorian sentiments and pro-Girondins, promulgated a new constitution and established the Directory, which was charged with reconciling revolutionary principles with democratic order.[656] The Directory argued that egalitarian laws must protect the body politic, that violence should only be used by the government to punish legal violations, and finally that laws should target both royalists and populist terrorists in order to safeguard nascent revolutionary statehood. This stance represented another important shift in that "the term terrorism now designated a political stance one could choose."[657] Furthermore, this choice indicated self-ascribed opposition to egalitarian laws designed to protect the integrity of the body politic, and therefore by framing populist revolutionaries and otherwise patriots as terrorists, the new constitution portrayed their actions as illegal violations of human rights enshrined in and protected by law. In this way, the portrayal of terrorism as a direct political assault on the freedoms guaranteed protection by the state was born.

Many prominent individuals who had participated in the fluid framing of the meaning and utility of terrorism in relation to both the body politic and a set of values were imprisoned as a result of their intellectual stances, and one of the most notable was François-Noël Babeuf, a journalist who wrote under the pen name Gracchus.[658] After his imprisonment, Babeuf wrote that terrorism had come to be a somewhat magical word, in that it functioned to justify the persecution of political opponents under the guise of legality in order to save the nation, and that in this regard it was the means by which to justify pre-existing institutional interests and practices of power.[659]

The above discussion is intended to demonstrate the fluidity of the term terrorism, and how it evolved parallel to nascent Republicanism in the French Revolution which sought to establish the correct manner in which to define and protect a socio-political body. Terrorism began as the way to violently establish the body politic and castigate those determined to be 'other' by their non-adherence to revolutionary values. The problem of defining what constituted those values and a lack of consensus among revolutionary factions led to terrorism being expansively used against perceived enemies of the state. As the revolutionary state

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[656] For more on this transition, see Brown, Howard G., *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2007).
[657] Erlenbusch-Anderson, 48.
[658] For more on Babeuf and his legacy which influenced egalitarian Marxism, see Rose, Robert Barrie, *Gracchus Babeuf: The First Revolutionary Communist* (California: Stanford University Press, 1978).
[659] Erlenbusch-Anderson, 51.

evolved, terrorism gradually became a term of derision used to describe those who presented a threat to the integrity of the state and therefore needed to be violently removed from it. In this regard, terrorism became a term of differentiation and exclusion, used to discriminate between good individuals who abided by the egalitarian laws of the state and bad individuals who held contradictory views and had to be eliminated to ensure the longevity of the state.[660]

The legacy of the French Revolution for posterity is twofold, in that it proved that radical socio-political change through agency was possible in the immediate term, and that for this change to occur, obsolete and corrupt institutions as well as their participating members that embodied worldviews incompatible with revolutionary values had to be destroyed in order for society to flourish in a manner commensurate with man's innate rights.[661] Comprehending the dynamic nature of the origins of terrorism as an intellectual concept rather than a concrete practice within this ideological context of possibilities, and the way in which it was appropriated by various actors during the French Revolution requires understanding its symbiotic relationship with individuals as well as nascent laws and institutions that shaped the modern state in relation to popular sovereignty and the protection of the body politic. Viewing it thus, terrorism ceases to be a defined category of political violence, and instead should be understood in light of these relationships as a deliberate mechanism of social construction and defence.

U.S. Social Defence and Framing in the War on Terror

The origin of terrorism as it is presently understood in the context of the global war on terror lies in a combination of the continuation of its dynamic utilitarian framing in the birth of the modern state and American neoconservatism. Neoconservatism in the U.S. emerged as a political rationality that held that American democracy could not survive in a global environment hostile to its values, because in an increasingly interconnected world, economic and political relations abroad had the ability to profoundly impact domestic American prosperity and therefore the longevity of its political system.[662] This ideological posture gained traction after Francis Fukuyama's 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man*

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[660] Baczko, 29.
[661] Richardson,30
[662] Kristol, Irving, *The Neoconservative Persuasion. Selected Essays, 1942-2009* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 150.

which built on his previous works.[663] In his book, Fukuyama argued that the end of the Cold War represented the end of grand struggles between ideological worldviews, and that liberal democracy had become universally accepted as the pinnacle of human socio-political development. Furthermore, the ultimate success of American style liberal democracy rested on its international recognition and emulation insofar as reciprocal relationships between states predicated on universal understanding of economic freedom and human equality before liberal democratic laws was fundamental to the peaceful longevity of the liberal democratic order.[664] Under this perception, the role of the U.S. would need to transcend its borders and protection of its national body politic. Instead, the international recognition of human freedom and equality ensconced in democratic institutions became intertwined with the government's domestic role in that its sovereignty rested on its ability to ensure the universal safety of innate human rights and their legal guarantee. It is poignant to note the postural similarities between French Revolutionaries and Neoconservatism in that they both perceived their systems of sovereignty as the pinnacle of human socio-political development that reflected the flourishing of individual rights, and assumed a vanguard role in the protection of the same. The key difference is that Neoconservatism perceived America's national fate as inextricably linked to the global proliferation of the same universal values under which it operated.

The institutionalisation of Neoconservatism is perhaps best reflected in the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS), which was first issued in 1987 during the Reagan presidency. Since its inception, the NSS has adopted a Neoconservative worldview in that it embodies a teleological view of historical and political development, an eschatological view of history as a struggle between liberalism and totalitarianism, and stipulates that the U.S. is ultimately on the righteous side of this struggle due to its embrace of liberal democracy, framed as the only viable political option to ensure freedom, peace and prosperity.[665] By the late 1990s, the annual issue of the NSS reflected the fact that following the Cold War, U.S. policy makers perceived the nation as being embroiled in a fight against global terrorism.[666] Whereas previously terrorism had been used in U.S. policy narratives to describe state-sanctioned Soviet efforts to undermine liberalism, it now described the actions of various state

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[663]Fukuyama, Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
[664] Fukuyama, xx.
[665] Erlenbusch-Anderson, 140.
[666] U.S Department of Homeland Security, *National Security Strategy for a New Century [December 1999]* https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&.=487539 (Accessed 8 June 2020)

and non-state actors who sought to use violence to threaten the global stability which was vital to U.S. survival. NSS 1995 stated that the lines between domestic and foreign policies were disappearing.[667] Furthermore, this document was entitled *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, and this title bears a striking resemblance to the IS self-declared posture of 'remaining and expanding' that was adopted by the group following its declaration of the caliphate that was discussed in Chapter 10. Also in 1995, the U.S. Counterterrorism Act was introduced to congress. It did not succinctly define terrorism, rather it described it as deadly problem comprised of violent crimes that threatened global and regional stability. While the act did not pass a congressional vote, altered portions of it were included in the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.[668] This inclusion is all the more pertinent due to the fact that it gave the U.S. federal power to prosecute international acts of terrorism in a fashion similar to domestic crimes that threatened the state, and in this stance the perception of the necessity of international enforcement of universal values to protect the sovereignty of a state and its body politic is evident.

NSS 1998 built on this foundation, and described terrorism as being intricately linked to Osama Bin Laden in that while different groups existed, they were united by a shared "hatred for democracy, a fanatical glorification of violence and a horrible distortion of their religion to justify the murder of innocents. They have made the United States their adversary precisely because of what we stand for and what we stand against."[669] This framing is critical to recognise because it effectively created a distinct political 'other', defined by its violent opposition to intangible values championed by the U.S. It left no room for discussion of the intricacies, aspirations, motivations or contexts of groups or individuals, rather it presented terrorism as a singular enemy that could manifest itself in various locations and that was engaged in an ideological struggle aimed at destroying the intellectual foundations for governance on which the U.S. was built.

NSS 2002 was the first instance in which platforms of Neoconservatism that had gained momentum in the previous decades were used to justify a war on terror following 9/11.

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[667] The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlarging*, February 1995. http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1995.pdf (Accessed June 8th 2020)
[668] United States Congress, *Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996.* https://www.congress.gov/104/plaws/publ132/PLAW-104publ132.pdf (Accessed 8 June 2020)
[669] The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, October 1998, 16. http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1998.pdf (Accessed 8 June 2020)

While this document equated terrorism with the institution of slavery and the practice of genocide to demonstrate its disastrous potential effects on a global population, it specifically portrayed terrorists as enemies of civilisation.[670] It also framed 9/11 as an opportunity for the U.S. to confront the enemy of terrorism. This point is highly relevant in that it reflects the fact that U.S. strategists viewed the coming war as an opportunity to implement visions of governance and national security that relied on an increasingly homogenised global community and acceptance of universal values, and later al-Zarqawi would similarly frame the invasion of Iraq as a golden opportunity to establish an Islamic emirate in the Levant and pursue alternate models of statehood, as was recounted in Chapter 8. Just as al-Zarqawi would later frame his cause as a righteous quest to eliminate evil from Islam and the Middle East, NSS 2002 proffered the view that following 9/11 America had a responsibility to history to both "rid the world of evil" and defend "our democratic values and way of life."[671]

As of late 2020, U.S. policy for counterterrorism relies on a combination of restricting freedom of movement of suspected terrorists, repatriating former foreign fighters, and combatting online radicalisation. It also utilises the increased designation of individuals and groups as terrorist actors to enable financial sanctions, and has increased the operational pace of special operations forces internationally to foster local security and governance conditions.[672] Due to the prolonged nature of the conflict, numerous international entities have been established such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum which is comprised of 29 member states and the European Union, and these embody the very mutual recognition of international structures and shared human rights and freedoms that Neoconservatism holds is essential to the survival of liberal democracy.[673] While the above discussion does not intend to enumerate the developments of U.S. counterterrorism policy in the nearly two decades since 9/11, it seeks to explain the ideological roots that informed its institutional onset.

The Secular War on Terror Paradox

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[670] The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, 31 https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf (Accessed 8 June 2020)

[671] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* 7.

[672] The White House, *The U.S. Policy in Countering Terrorism*, September 25 2019. https://www.state.gov/the-u-s-policy-in-countering-terrorism/ (Accessed 9 June 2020)

[673] For an organisational overview see Global Counterterrorism Forum. https://www.thegctf.org/ (Accessed 9 June 2020)

The framing of the war on terror in a Western and Neoconservative context as explored above presents an interesting paradox. The values championed by strategists in documents such as NSS 2002 were based on specific paradigms regarding innate human rights and their relationships with state structures that emerged at a time during which religion was relegated to the private sphere following the 17th century crisis of sovereignty and the French Revolution. In this regard, those identified as terrorists were living in a time that modernity had eclipsed insofar as they advocated a worldview in which God-given law played a central role. Thus understood, terrorists were living in a world in which history still existed, to use the terminology of Fukuyama, and in which intellectual battles regarding the relative supremacy of ideological governance could still be waged.[674] According to the consistency displayed in annual releases of the NSS as recounted above, this worldview amounted to a fanatical ideology incompatible with the values that had developed and superseded it in the course of socio-political evolution. The paradox emerges in the fact that although U.S. strategy was informed by a historical trajectory that had outgrown religious governing worldviews, and distanced itself from religious rhetoric in statecraft, it was framed in a manner which in many ways mirrored the worldview of its adversary.[675]

The war on terror was portrayed as an existential struggle between good and evil, and one in which the U.S. would be responsible to history for leading. This initial framing lends a similar narrative of transcendence to that employed by IS that was recounted in detail in previous chapters. Once framed in a manner which posits good against evil in an existential struggle, the only outcome can be undisputed victory or undeniable defeat and annihilation. Just as IS leadership declared in its periodical *Dabiq* "its either me or the flood", referencing the story of Noah's ark to illuminate the Manichean struggle it was engaged in, U.S. framing of the war on terror posited its structures and universal values as the ark, and thus created an intellectual framework that was predicated on the same stark divisions of irreconcilability as those it sought to defeat.

The above paradox can perhaps assist in explaining one of the questions raised in the introduction, regarding why policy fails to understand the complexity and longevity of current

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[674] Erlenbush-Anderson, 158.

[675] For more on the separation of religion and statecraft in U.S. policy and the paradoxical ways in which American foundational religious beliefs permeated key policy initiatives, see Sands, Kathleen, *America's Religious Wars; The Embattled Heart of our Public Life* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2019).

terrorist organisations in order to adequately confront them. The answer may lie partially in a sociological and subsequent political understanding of the overlapping narratives of both IS and foundational U.S. policy. Chapter 2 explained that social groups require both allies and enemies in order to survive; it is precisely the presence of an identifiable 'other' which creates boundaries of inclusivity which in turn serve to strengthen intra-group bonds of solidarity by the recognition of sameness. Furthermore, within these boundaries, social groups will construct a sacred canopy which is dependent on both a concertedly created universal worldview based on a value system framed as absolute, and individual action to uphold it against those deemed to be other. In this social construction, any opposing worldview will be perceived as a danger because by definition there can only be a single universal absolute, and until it exists uncontested, opposing worldviews must be treated as existential threats. According to Fukuyama, this dynamic was manifest in the relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Following the end of the Cold War, terrorism became the social 'other', the existential threat in an absolutist social worldview in which forces of good and evil would compete until one reigned supreme, and this language was clearly reflected in both NSS 2002 and IS leadership statements that were recounted in previous chapters. Understood in this way, a deep comprehension and scrutiny of the aspirations of groups like IS may soften the perception of it as an irreconcilable 'other' so vital to group survival.[676] Engaging in this type of exploration may threaten the potential endurance of the Western sacred canopy in the mind of a social being, and furthermore risks being perceived as condoning the brutality exhibited by groups like IS.[677] While this proposition cannot account for the complexity of the problems confronted when dealing with political violence, its consideration may prove useful in understanding why individuals in positions of authority behave in a manner commensurate with the dynamics of social groups.

Locating IS Relative to the Fluidity of Terrorism in a Western Narrative

The above discussions illustrate the inherent intellectual complexity of terrorism when it is theorised in relation to power structures as the result of specific socio-political agendas. Although U.S. National Security Strategies were discussed above, the issue is further

[676] See Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Social Space and Genesis of Groups", *Theory and Society* 14:6 (1985), 723-744.
[677] Miller, A., A. Gordon and A. Buddle, "Accounting for Evil and Cruelty: Is to Explain to Condone?", *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (1999), 254-268.

complicated when recognising that as of 2014, different U.S. organisations with different mandates and jurisdictions to counter terrorism such as the National Counterterrorism Centre, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Defence, all operate under different variations of a terminological definition of the phenomenon. For instance, the FBI use the definition "The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives", while the U.S. State Department defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents".[678] These definitions are commensurate with the manner in which terrorism evolved to be thought of following the legal and philosophical transformations of the French Revolution which pitted it and its use against the safety of the state and those it was charged with protecting. It is useful, therefore, to recall the definition provided by Griffin that was noted in Chapter 1 which states that terrorism is "the deliberate use by a movement, group, or individual of extreme violence against either human or symbolically significant material targets associated by the perpetrators with a demonised 'Other'".[679]

Although these definitions are different, and intended for different purposes regarding law enforcement, diplomatic policy creation, and academic inquiry, it is evident that IS can be labelled a terrorist organisation relative to these operative definitions. While this may be the case, definitions such as those offered above have formed the foundation of both intellectual vantage points and policy proposals which have been used to counter IS and worldwide terrorism. While there have certainly been great victories on that front as evidenced in greater international cooperation and the territorial elimination of the caliphate, it may be useful to scrutinise IS and its methodology as well as aspirations against the refence points provided by the discussion of the emergence of modern terrorism and its intellectual contestation relative to radical models of governance that took shape during the French Revolution.

As was recounted above, Robespierre believed that the conduct of violence was essential, as was the proliferation of fear and terror, in the establishment of the revolutionary state. According to Griffin's definition of terrorism, Robespierre's violence was directed at a

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[678] "Organisational Definitions of Terrorism", Secbrief. https://www.secbrief.org/2014/04/definition-of-terrorism/ (Accessed 10 June 2020)
[679] Griffin, 11.

demonised 'other', and was deliberate in the sense that it sought to establish particular viewpoints regarding what the state should be and represent. Furthermore, Robespierre stipulated that terrorism was essential in moulding the ideological homogeneity of a body politic as a necessary precursor to the institutionalisation of that same ideology. Naji understood and emulated this position in his manifesto that was discussed in Chapter 9, when he argued for the necessity of the creation of savagery in order to shape it into an eventual state: "The word "state" is a universal expression and of all the states, even those that are democratic, are established after oceans of blood – proves that we need the solution which we have set forth."[680] Al-Zarqawi also argued for the necessity of targeting the Shia in order to rally the Sunni masses, and through violent action, establish bonds of political and religious unity. IS also stated repeatedly in its publications of *Dabiq* that homogenous unity of correct belief and practice in *tawhid* was necessary in order for it to form the basis of a state capable of surviving. While Robespierre and the Committee for Public Safety framed their mechanism for accomplishing their objectives as terror, and IS framed its as justified jihad following the application of *takfir* to distinguish between those within and without the self-defined body politic, both Robespierre and IS sought to wield fear and violence to result in a cohesive social body capable of sustaining a novel sovereign structure. While Robespierre's sovereign entity would be grounded in enlightenment ideals and that of IS would be founded on Islamic precedent, it is crucial to note that while the ideals and values pursued were the result of different historical trajectories, the framing of necessary violence in relation to a homogenous social body and eventual governance was identical.

In the pursuit of its new state, French revolutionaries relied on similar methods and tactics as those employed under the old order, but utilised them to achieve different social objectives, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Similarly, IS mirrored Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes in its caliphal governing structure, as well as in its use of detentions and interrogations that was explored in Chapter 10. In this regard, both French revolutionaries and IS demonstrated their abilities to harness pre-existing techniques of violence and change their underlying meaning by using them in relation to novel values systems. This in turn reflects the philosophical capability violence has to forge social identities in its communal

[680] Naji, 171.

appropriation from pre-existing oppressive powers, and underlies the position that similar acts of violence can convey vastly different meanings in different contexts.

In many ways the French Revolution was the result of a crisis of sovereignty that undermined the legitimacy of existing regimes of power. Similarly, the agreement of Sykes-Picot and coexisting narratives of the lost grandeur of Islamic prominence manifest in the caliphate can be understood as constituting a crisis of sovereignty in its ability to raise poignant questions regarding the reconciliation of cultural trajectories that led to diametrically opposed models of government, one which had been superimposed onto the other.[681] The erosion of traditional government and the Sharia in the Middle East as the result of the gradual encroachment of Western bureaucracies and legal institutions in the 19th century led to the cultural redundancy of a holistic system predicated on its ability to be flexible and accommodate diverse social settings. The Sharia as a comprehensive series of institutions was meant to ensure the applicability of core Islamic social values to a wide range of cultural and localised contexts, and in this regard functioned according to the patterns of social groups in that they will be flexible to ensure survival. Over the course of Western intervention in the 19th century, the Sharia was replaced with Western structures which were founded precisely on the universal applicability of a series of laws and practices that should be consistent with innate human rights as elaborated during the Enlightenment and enshrined in the nation state, and which should be applied equally across social boundaries regardless of cultural context.[682] This conflict did not solely represent political oppression, it also embodied the institutionalisation of a system of values that had not evolved organically, and as was discussed in Chapter 7, led to the development of defensive modernisation and political Islam. Despite its different manifestations, this series of events should be understood socially as a similar crisis of sovereignty to that which was experienced in Europe in the 17th century, and which therefore resulted in the foundations for a lack of credibility in the legitimacy of political regimes which followed it.

In the early stages of the French Revolution, terrorism shifted from being a state prerogative to being understood as a dangerous political 'other' that threatened the integrity of

[681] For more on the image of the caliphate in historical memory, see Hassan.

[682] The vast history of Western encroachment and the cultural emasculation of the Sharia as a holistic system governing laws, social relations, and economic patterns is beyond the scope of this thesis, but for an in-depth examination, see Hallaq, Wael B., *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

the body politic. This transformation occurred due to the growing moderate faction within the revolution that feared it would be targeted with the same violence it had participated in. As was recounted above, Tallien argued that violence only begot violence and therefore could never be an efficient way to sustain a social body or its representative state. Similarly, Chapter 10 narrated in detail the schisms within IS regarding *takfir* which pitted moderates against extremists. As a specific point of comparison, al-Bin'ali warned of the danger of *takfir al-'adhir, takfir* in infinite regress, and argued that its expansive application would result in the majority of the world's Muslim population being declared apostate, and thus marked for death. Just as original members of the Revolution were executed due to their beliefs regarding who should be considered part of the social body to be represented in a state, and the manner in which to violently target those who should not, Chapter 10 explored the ways in which IS leadership responded to the *takfir* schism of 2017 and ultimately executed those who had been responsible for the Delegated Committee Memorandum on *takfir*. Additionally, just as intellectuals such as Babeuf were imprisoned following levelling accusations of terrorism and illegitimacy towards the budding French government, so individuals like Abu Ya'qub al-Maqdisi were marginalised after accusing IS leadership of violating core tenets of Islam, engaging in self-serving excessive violence, and usurping the role of Allah.

While the states advocated by French revolutionaries and IS represented political structures and social values that were the results of different cultural contexts and historical trajectories, it is pertinent to note the underlying similarities of the intellectual orientation of their proponents. In their meticulous deliberations regarding the mechanisms by which to define a social group, and the grounds on which to calculate the necessity of violence in relation to both that social group and the governing structures meant to represent it, both French revolutionaries and IS leadership demonstrated devotion to the establishment of a government designed to embody values which were framed as universal and indisputable.

The legacy of the French Revolution was twofold, first in that it demonstrated that radical change was possible in the immediate term. In this regard IS most closely aligns with Kaplan's fifth wave terror groups, which are defined partly by a belief in the achievability of a utopia in this lifetime, as was discussed in Chapters 1 and 11. Beyond this framework, however, Chapter 9 discussed the role of the Arab Spring in reshaping the realm of the possible, and in this sense IS capitalised on both the legacy of the French Revolution and contemporary realisations within the Middle East that radical change was indeed possible.

Despite its territorial demise, the declaration of the caliphate in 2014 represented this legacy insofar as it combined contemporary realities with a philosophy which stated that through violence, a new form of sovereign government could emerge.

The second aspect of the French Revolution's legacy is the idea that for the abovementioned radical change to occur, institutions and individuals incompatible with values meant to be the foundations of new structures must be violently eliminated. For Robespierre this was widespread, but symbolised by the execution of King Louis XVI, who represented not only the old political order but also values portrayed as inimical to popular sovereignty. For IS, this paradigm has been demonstrated in previous chapters which outlined the evolution of the doctrine of WB. The codifications of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi have led to a worldview in which WB can be used to portray all structures of democracy, as well as individuals who participate in or support them, as embodiments of absolute depravity and irreconcilable with Islamic values and governance. Additionally, this revisionist interpretation of WB has created an environment in which hatred of those structures and individuals is a necessary condition of being Muslim, and their violent destruction is necessary for the ultimate establishment of Islamic sovereignty.[683]

The above discussion is not meant to question or alternatively confirm the validity of positions taken by IS regarding *takfir,* or those framings of WB as elaborated by al-Maqdisi and his supporters. These issues have been confronted from both within and without the umma.[684] It instead intended to illustrate the underlying socio-political objectives shared by French revolutionaries and IS. While Robespierre and his successors adamantly pursued a state to represent a body politic defined by Enlightenment values popular sovereignty, and IS championed the revival of Islamic grandeur in the form of a caliphate, both of these models were presented by their advocates as the pinnacle of human socio-political achievement. Furthermore, both groups demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the utility of violence in both shaping and governing their ideal polities. In this context, a single definition of terrorism becomes increasingly irrelevant. At its most fundamental, both groups devoted significant attention and resources to the institutionalisation of a particular set of beliefs; the

[683] Al-Maqdisi's ideology has been referenced previously in this thesis, but for more see Wagemakers, Joas, "Defining the Enemy: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Radical Reading of Sūrat al-Mumtaḥana", *Die Welt Des Islams* 48:3/4 (2008), 348-371.

[684] For a poignant theological critique of IS ideology and methodology, see Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi, *Refuting ISIS,* (Herndon: Sacred Knowledge, 2016).

unification between knowledge and power in a socio-political context. The violence displayed by both groups was perceived as necessary, and due to the fact that it was enacted to realise a worldview predicated on absolute values, was able to be framed by opponents as abhorrent and detrimental. What is crucial to note in the above discussion is that in many ways, IS replicated the methodological aspirations of French revolutionaries and engaged in the same sort of ideological manoeuvrings regarding the utility of violence in defining a people and creating a state based on a certain set of shared values and its resultant identity.

Alternate Categorisation for the Future of International Relations

The research question posed in the introduction asked whether it is accurate and useful to label groups like IS as terrorist organisations in order to study and counter them accordingly within frameworks derivative of this labelling. This chapter has argued that terrorism is more profound than a set of behaviours or motivations, and is even more difficult to quantify in an environment in which those behaviours and motivations are judged against hegemonic frameworks that define what a state is and what its responsibilities are. It is further complicated in the present operating environment insofar as an increasingly global community, U.S. National Security Strategies, and Neoconservatism have effectively redefined the role of liberal democratic states in the proliferation of values systems. Terrorism should not be understood as something that is employed by non-state actors and deliberately targets civilians for political purposes.[685] While this describes terrorism, its contemporary manifestations, and the global intellectual and political realm it currently exists in, it does not define it. Terrorism instead should be understood as a powerful physical and intellectual tool in the arsenal of socio-political architects which can be wielded in power struggles across time and space. Its latent potential in this regard is further increased in that its rhetorical use as a pejorative accusation to vilify those deemed 'other' can serve to enhance the morality and legitimacy of the accuser in specific contexts. This fluidity and dynamic utility is what makes it such an enduring and powerful force in socio-political construction and contestation.

States, regimes, and empires have never been pinnacles of socio-political progress, although most revolutionary and radically new ones have claimed to be. One has only to

[685] Richardson, 4.

study the narratives surrounding the Roman or British Empires, the early Islamic Caliphates, the abovementioned French revolutionary and American states, or European Union, to recognise that these entities perceived themselves as the highest manifestation of political organisation.[686] Upon observation of the past and present, however, what emerges is not a single trajectory towards a political pinnacle, rather a cascading temporal multi-dimensional mountain range punctuated by peaks which represent the highest levels of attainment within a certain context, and which were built on the foundations of a unique culture replete with its own social perceptions, realities, and worldviews. What makes these peaks similar is their proposition that they embody the ideal manner in which to implement a sacred canopy in governance that is universal in time and space, and due to this similarity of proposed universal superiority, they are paradoxical in that they often do not recognise other peaks as equivalent or universally valid due to their lack of grounding in reciprocal values.

Viewed in this manner, the assertion of this thesis is that it is neither accurate nor useful to label groups like IS as terrorist organisations, and study as well as counter them within existing frameworks. Instead, this thesis proposes that IS should be regarded as an ambitious emerging sovereign entity, and that this descriptor may be useful to categorise future movements that advocate models of sovereignty and nominally possess the resources, relevant ideological structures, and cultural capital to achieve them. While this categorisation may clash with internationally recognised classifications of sovereignty, it is important to note in this conclusion that Western constructs of popular sovereignty are relatively young compared to the span of human political evolution, and the values underlying the international proliferation of liberalism embodied by Neoconservatism is even younger. Furthermore, the primary power of this young framework is the ability of the state to "produce and impose (especially through the school system) categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things of the social world – including the state itself."[687] The ability to transcend the purported normalcy and eternality of the present hegemonic system and recognise the meaning

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[686] These narratives are numerous, but the narrative surrounding the ideal governance encapsulated in early Islam was discussed in Chapter 6. For an opinion piece on the EU, see Professor Anton van der Merwe's letter here: "EU is the pinnacle of human achievement", *The Guardian,* June 22 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/22/eu-is-the-pinnacle-of-human-achievement (Accessed 11 June 2020). For a more expansive work on the Roman Empire as the embodiment of ideal governance and command structure, see Drogula, Fred K., *Commanders and Command in the Roman Republic and Early Empire* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

[687] Bourdieu, Pierre, Loic J.D. Wacquant, and Samar Farage, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field", *Sociological Theory* 12:1 (March 1994), 1-18, 1.

and potential of alternate models of sovereignty in order to incorporate this knowledge in a manner that effectively contextually comprehends political violence is the underlying premise in the above assertion to the research question.

This assertion can further be justified in the fact that modern trends of globalisation, when juxtaposed with local contexts and conflicts, have led to both a questioning of the endurance of a crystallised role of the nation state, and a resurgence of identity politics. "Contemporary identity politics is driven by the quest for equal recognition by groups that have been marginalised by their societies."[688] Identity politics, its role and appeal when intertwined with transcendent human social yearning for dignity, which in turn is socially constructed and temporally dependent, has become a contributing factor in understanding and studying movements that exist, or seek to exist outside of state's realms of influence.[689] Furthermore, it is poignant to consider the way in which states themselves develop in this context of resurgent identity politics, and the proposition of this thesis as stated above intends to contribute to the discussion regarding the way in which states can and should incorporate new knowledge and frameworks, and understand them within their own socially constructed frames of reference.[690] An understanding of the power of identity politics, and in the case of this thesis, the recognition of the subjectively valid socio-political model of sovereignty advocated by IS, leads to the conclusion of this thesis that IS should be considered an ambitious emerging sovereign entity. Creating this categorisation allows for a deeper cognition of human social motivations, and may help create an environment in which the very values championed by the West that decry violence and herald freedom may be more widely and effectively embraced in manners commensurate with pre-existing ideological structures and socio-political norms.

Foucault himself argued for this paradigmatic approach in his study of prisons relative to the power of the state to mould behaviours and perceptions as was briefly noted in the chapter of this thesis on Methodology. By deconstructing the problematisation of crime and punishment in light of the relationship between presumptively existing power and knowledge

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[688] Fukuyama, Francis, *Identity; The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 22.
[689] For a case study, see Maddy-Weitzman, Bruce, "Challenging the State, Redefining the Nation: The Contemporary Amazigh Movement in Turbulent Times", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 23:4 (2017), 413-430.
[690] For a discussion on the evolution of state formation in this regard, see Steinmetz, George, *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999).

in socio-political formation, Foucault illuminated aspects of cultural and behavioural relevance that would otherwise have been lost. This thesis has attempted to approach the study of IS and its problematic framing within extant paradigms regarding the supremacy of the nation state and its relationship with terrorism in order to demonstrate the validity of relative, although not reciprocal, visions of a utopian socio-political pinnacle manifest in Islamic sovereignty. It has used a genealogical case study of IS to demonstrate the depth and cultural resonance of an alternate model of statehood, and its viability in the minds its proponents as well as its symbolic significance for posterity in the declaration of the Caliphate. Further, by exploring the trajectory and objectives of IS relative to socio-political developments which occurred independent of it in the French Revolution, the ideological platforms that inform the U.S. National Security Strategy, and the contested complexity of an overarching jihadist ideology that advocates the eventual attainment of Islamic sovereignty, this thesis has concluded that IS should not be considered a terrorist organisation according to existing intellectual parameters that dictate what terrorism is, what it seeks to accomplish, and how it behaves.

According to Paul Wilkinson, terrorist groups engage in symbolic acts of violence in order to publicise their cause, and coerce a specific government to accede to their aims.[691] James Woolsey argued in 2001, however, that "terrorists don't want a seat at the table, they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it."[692] This claim may categorise the appearance of IS violence to a table represented by state stakeholders, but does not serve to thoroughly understand the intricacies within IS. The above discussion has explored the fact that states are not universal crystallisations of values, although one of their defining features is that they purport to be. Additionally, it has discussed the dynamic process of forming a sovereign state according to socio-political practices meant to represent universal values, and the utilitarian framing of terrorism in this process. Thus understood, IS can and should be understood as an ambitious emerging sovereign entity in that it has engaged, and continues to engage in a socio-political process of institutional construction that aspires to the enshrinement of universal values in governance. "The prophetic method in its essence is the universal method in establishing states (…) "State", which is given to a single existing thing and the

[691] Wilkinson, 17.
[692] Woolsey, James, in Lemann, Nicholas, "What Terrorists Want", *The New Yorker,* October 29 2001. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/10/29/what-terrorists-want (Accessed 12 June 2020)

existing thing is the "predestined law" (*al-sunna al-qadariyya),* something that all people have regardless of their religion and their values".[693]

Thesis Limitations

This thesis has been, by design, a multi-disciplinary project which included historical, sociological, and political approaches to craft an intellectual history of IS in context, and problematise its 'terrorism' within the context of the global war on terror. This design also began by examining the relevant material needed to successfully understand IS and the dynamic environment in which it exists, reflected in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5. While this approach is new in the field, and necessary, it is also limiting. This thesis did not account for IS specifics as related to recruitment strategies or battle-field tactics which evolved alongside the group's trajectory. While this thesis commented on the ongoing relationship between al-Qaeda and IS, it did so to amplify the case study of the latter and thus did not attempt to explore the relationship in its entirety. The same is true of the relationship between IS and its global affiliates, in that the focus of the thesis has been on worldview and the utility of justified violence to attain sovereignty. A critical component in the future of political violence; global affiliate proliferation and consequences of the same, therefore, was not explored in detail.

The same can be said of U.S. and Western counterterrorism policy. While this chapter outlined the NSS and Neoconservatism, this thesis did not examine specific mechanisms in the construction of counterterrorism policies, or the details of strategic policies designed for either al-Qaeda or IS. Instead, this thesis focused on the macro-level problematisation of IS and terrorism, and competing visions of sovereignty through the lens of competitive social dynamics. The focus, therefore, has been on the thorough examination of relevant material in a multi-disciplinary approach.

Thesis Proposition Utility for the Future

[693] Naji, 228.

Chapter 10 stated that IS fighters still pose a danger in their conduct of violent attacks in Iraq and Syria, former foreign fighters pose a security concern to their host nations, the online presence of IS in its virtual caliphate has global reach, and international IS affiliates remain engaged in disparate local struggles. Despite the territorial collapse of the caliphate, Western powers should be cautious in claiming this as a decisive victory over IS and terrorism.[694] The ongoing battle against IS and Islamist violence has led to calls for new ways of approaching terrorism, and this thesis has attempted to do precisely that.[695] By approaching IS according to methodological prescriptions and objectives as articulated by Foucault, this thesis has attempted to answer the above calls. Numerous academic studies have scrutinised the work of Edward Said, and this thesis further attempted to reshape the future of discussions regarding Islamist political violence by building on his proposition that "orientalism stakes its existence (…) on its internal repetitious consistency about its constitutive will-to-power over the orient."[696] By overlapping Said's notions of orientalism onto current manifestations of Neoconservatism and strategies of national security, this thesis attempted to deconstruct the object of scrutiny to comprehend IS the way Said proposed was necessary. This thesis, therefore, scrutinised IS according to its own articulated reference points, and by doing so presented its discourse as a "self regulating system for the production of ideas about a designated object or field of objects".[697] Understanding IS discourse and the intellectual environment in which it exists in relation to its own perceptions of rightful sovereignty may help detangle images of terrorism from Islamic causation, and assist in perceiving its violence as acts of collective rationality, engaged in as a logical means to achieve desired ends.[698]

Renowned scholar of terrorism and political violence Walter Laqueur stated in 2018 that IS had defined the nature of terrorism for the foreseeable future, primarily because it forced nation states to reconsider the universality of popular sovereignty.[699] He argued that the accomplishments of the caliphate and its symbolic feasibility as well as failures would

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[694] Van der Heide, Liesbeth, Charlie Winter and Shiraz Maher, "The Cost of Crying Victory: Policy Implications of the Islamic State's Territorial Collapse", International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2018.
[695] Bakker, Edwin, "Forecasting Terrorism: The Need for a more Systematic Approach", *Journal of Strategic Security* 5:4 (Winter 2012), 69-84.
[696] Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (California: Vintage, 1979), 222.
[697] Williams, Patrick, "Edward Said (1935-2003)", in Simons Jon (ed), *Contemporary Critical Theorists: From Lacan to Said* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 269-285, 272.
[698] For a landmark study in conceptualising terrorist rationality, see Crenshaw, Martha, "The Causes of Terrorism", *Comparative Politics* 13:4 (1981), 379-399.
[699] Laqueur, Walter and Christopher Wall, *The Future of Terrorism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018), 208.

serve as reference points for future organisations, and that IS affiliates as well as al-Qaeda were actively incorporating them in creating governing institutions within power vacuums in areas such as Libya and Yemen. Laqueur proposed that IS had failed but that its legacy would inform terrorist evolution in the future. He concluded this argument by linking IS to patterns of modern terrorism by stating that "the history of terrorist groups shows that those with realistic, limited aims had a chance of some success. Those who intended to change the world profoundly did, as a rule, fail."[700] While this may be true regarding modern terrorist movements of the past, and Chapter 10 argued that IS had indeed reshaped jihadism through its declaration of the caliphate and ongoing ideological struggles with al-Qaeda, this thesis has attempted to repudiate the above notion by deconstructing the very institutional premises of Laqueur's argument. French revolutionaries employed terrorism in various dimensions both physical and rhetorical to achieve a specific vision of sovereignty, and ultimately did change the world profoundly. Rather than viewing IS within the context of terrorist movements of the modern era that began with Rapoport's first wave, future studies of political violence and trends in governance should rather broaden the scope of what constitutes sovereignty in different cultural contexts, and how their resultant discourses manifest themselves in an increasingly interconnected and dependent world.

In the introduction to her seminal work *What Terrorists Want*, Louise Richardson described the relationship between U.S. counterterrorism policy makers and the research community dedicated to the study of political violence before 9/11 as one based on distance, distrust, and discord.[701] She argued that distance was necessary in that she believed government involvement in academia would be detrimental to research integrity. Following the events of 9/11, however, Richardson stated that "Had the American government's policy in the past few years been informed by the views of the terrorism studies community, it would have been a very difference policy indeed. Lives have been lost because of our government's failure to understand the nature of the enemy we face and its unwillingness to learn from the experiences of others in countering terrorism".[702] While in the decades since 9/11 academics have played a much more active role in informing counterterrorism policy, this thesis seeks to further contribute to this effort by offering an alternate conceptualisation of groups like IS

[700] Laqueur and Wall, 232.
[701] Richardson, xix.
[702] Richardson, xix.

which recognises their intellectual and cultural trajectories as well as relative aspirations, to ultimately bridge the gap between policy and research; power and knowledge; to assist in averting future catastrophic loss of life.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has attempted to discuss the fact that terrorism is not a set of concrete behaviours and practices relative to the state, nor is the state an eternal crystallisation of universal ideals. It discussed the French Revolution and the ways in which violence was framed as necessary, and harnessed in the pursuit of popular sovereignty to abruptly break with the old established socio-political order. Further, it elaborated the notion that in this context, terrorism emerged as a concept whose power lay in its physical and rhetorical ability to categorically define and target a socially constructed 'other' which did not share a set of institutionalised values. This chapter then discussed the emergence of American Neoconservatism and how this ideology transformed the role of the state from one charged with domestic protection of a body politic to one responsible for the international proliferation of universal freedom. It additionally discussed the way this intellectual platform informed U.S. national security strategy and policies of counterterrorism that took form before 9/11. This chapter then discussed the similarities between IS and the French revolutionaries in their shared aspirations of sovereignty which were both predicated on a set of absolute ideals.

This chapter then progressed to address the research question, and offered the view that it may be useful to conceive of IS not as a terrorist organisation, but as an ambitious emerging sovereign entity that draws on overlapping narratives of socio-political contestation, and strives towards a unique model of sovereignty. Finally, it explained that while the multi-disciplinary approach and objective of this thesis inherently produced necessary limitations, the conclusions which led to the above-mentioned alternate framing may assist future research regarding Islamic political violence. This was further justified by asserting that no existing framework of sovereignty represents the pinnacle of socio-political achievement by embodying universal values and innate human rights. Although they purport to, this chapter demonstrated that universal values and innate human rights are and should be considered cultural constructs which are relative to both the environments which produced them and the cultural 'other' with which they interact.

A key objective of this thesis has been to deconstruct and explore fundamentals in the most objective way possible to articulate the idea that a recognition of the relative validity of models of sovereignty which do not align with our own does not constitute an entire dismissal of the latter. This thesis evaluated social dynamics which inform group behaviour and the individual desire to contribute to a meaningful existence, and explored the power of religious framing and how it intertwines with violence in a simultaneously transcendent and worldly purpose to create meaning. It then scrutinised IS within the parameters of its own socio-cultural reference points and in juxtaposition to a hegemonic state-centric order. By doing this, and drawing comparisons between IS and fundamental precepts of social dynamics and the power of religiously inspired violence, this thesis deconstructed the problematisation of modern terrorism to re-orient the lens of inquiry into the same. This thesis has argued for an enhanced understanding of cultures, perceptions, and motivations in order to hopefully and humbly contribute to the study of political violence within the ever-fluctuating mountain range of competing aspirations towards the institutional enshrinement in government of culturally absolute values in a utopian sacred canopy.

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