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Grand Narrative and the Islamic State: Investigating Propaganda, Education and Narrative in *Dabiq*

Gareth Michael Davis

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education
College of Social Sciences
University of Glasgow

September 2022

Abstract

The emergence of the Islamic State (IS) Caliphate in 2014 in Iraq and Syria brought with it a profound challenge to Western visions of the political order of the Middle East. The group's system of belief and understanding of religious knowledge confronted long-held and Western -backed grand narratives emphasising the primacy of secularism and liberalism to social and political reality. This thesis is concerned with interrogating the dominant themes of the grand narrative of the Islamic State militant group, focussing on their online magazine propaganda series *Dabiq*. It analyses these texts using thematic coding analysis. Using the work of philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, specifically his text *The Postmodern Condition*, this thesis applies the theory of grand narrative to understand the reasons why once-dominant Western grand narratives have collapsed. This has led to an incredulity toward universal or liberal grand narratives, resulting in a retreat that has allowed powerful anti-modern forces such as IS to take advantage and institute their own narrative and systems of knowledge. The thesis begins with an introduction that maps out its motivation, structure and goals. Chapter One conveys the substance of Lyotard's work and the nature of the areas of enquiry. Chapter Two presents the issues of ideology and imaginaries (Western and Islamic) and the importance of education to grand narrative. Chapter Three illustrates the history and influence of Western and non-Western colonialism in shaping the state of grand narrative in the 19th and 20th centuries. Chapter Four outlines the West's relationship to the Enlightenment and how this shaped Western attitudes to grand narratives of knowledge and education, while also examining the challenge offered to this by Islamic educational forces. Chapter Five explicates this comparison further between Western and Islamic forms of learning, while Chapter Six discusses methodology and thematic coding, and Chapter Seven discusses the analysis of the themes of *Dabiq*. This thesis concludes that the three dominant themes of the grand narratives found in *Dabiq* are: 1) the importance of the Caliphate to unleashing individual and collective transformation; 2) jihadist activism and 3) the prophetic methodology as the system of knowledge within the Caliphate. By analysing these themes we can understand how the grand narratives of IS are not truly educational but propagandistic in nature. This thesis argues that a genuinely liberal grand narrative offers the truest challenge to that of IS, but that this requires a deep and authentic commitment to the values of liberalism that Western political forces have often failed to realise.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of countless people. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns made much of my PhD a deeply challenging and stressful time. In navigating these myriad challenges on top of the rigours of intense academic study, I am indebted to the following people.

Chief thanks first and foremost must go to my supervisors Professor James Conroy and Professor Margery McMahon. Their deep wealth of knowledge on the topics of the thesis played a major role in shaping vague and often contradictory ideas into a cohesive piece of interdisciplinary academic work. Their teaching, counsel and criticisms have been absolutely invaluable throughout the last four years. The learning they have imparted has been essential not only to the completion of this thesis but also to the growth of my knowledge and critical understanding of a range of disciplines, issues and methodologies I was previously unfamiliar with. I cannot thank them enough for the time they devoted to my supervision and the patience they displayed as we collectively navigated a complex and demanding journey of discovery. Their passion for this project helped fire my intellectual and creative pursuits and I hope this thesis lives up to their high standards. Any shortcomings are my responsibility and mine alone.

Undertaking this work has often been a solitary experience, compounded by the fallout of the pandemic. Because of this I express my sincere gratitude to numerous friends and family who played a crucial part in providing much-needed advice and respite, some in-person and others remotely across the world. I would like to thank my brothers Mark and Christopher Davis and sister-in-law Melissa Deans for the endless encouragement and distractions they offered while I was engaged in study. Their humour, advice and kindness were vital to keeping my spirits high and sanity intact throughout the ups and downs of this process, especially during the final writing-up period! Thanks must also be given to my aunt Maureen Connolly for her relentless support and motivation since undertaking this project.

I am also extremely grateful to Kieran Taylor, Jasmeena Minhas, Conor Ferns, Colin Reilly, Craig Reilly, Victoria Pinion, Bryan and Rachael McShane, Jennifer Rowlinson, Christopher McKnight, Tilman Schwarze, Mary Dodd, Matthew and Lauren Petherbridge, Jovana Perovska, Carolina Rocha Santa Maria, Alex Conway, Beth Wakefield, Andrea Bonfanti, Rina Guran, Shreeman Patel, Helen and Scott Malone, Kathleen Docherty, Becca Mackelprang,

Tom Giles and Jordan Evans among many others. All of them in their own way contributed immeasurably to making the last few years enjoyable despite the many challenges and in the process aided hugely in the completion of this PhD. I am exceptionally lucky to count them all as friends.

Finally, the most important people I must thank from the bottom of my heart are my parents, Ann and Robert Davis. Were it not for their infinite and tireless support – materially and morally – as well as their generosity, inspiration and love, I would not have been able to finish this thesis. My debt to them both is beyond words. I hope to have made them proud.

Author's Declaration

"I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation 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."

Printed Name: GARETH MICHAEL DAVIS

Signature:

Introduction

This thesis is a study of the grand narratives found within the propaganda outputs of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group. It specifically analyses the texts of the fifteen-issue English-language online magazine series *Dabiq*, produced between 2014 and 2016. It employs qualitative research methodology in thematic coding analysis and documentary analysis to study the issues of *Dabiq* cohesively and coherently.

This endeavour uses the substance and framing of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard's concept of grand narrative, articulated in his 1979 book *The Postmodern Condition*. The principle aim of this study is concerned with understanding what the dominant themes and features of the Islamic State's grand narratives are as expressed within *Dabiq* and how they relate to the subject of education. Yet conceptually, it also links this analysis and Lyotard's work to a broader initiative aimed at exploring the bonds *and* differences between propaganda and education and what role various grand narratives have played in the emergence of modern-day Islamic militancy, as embodied by IS.

Grand narratives (or metanarratives), in Lyotard's view, function as important signifiers and definers of knowledge, values and the social bond – the key social relations that enable societies to operate and cohere. They are 'broad and general religious, philosophical or scientific accounts of our world' (Gearon, 2007:99) that portend to a form of universality and transcendence in their application. Yet Lyotard also contends that we are now living in an age of deep scepticism towards grand narratives that has resulted in a crisis of knowledge and the dissolution of the social bond, meaning the fragmentation of societies at large (Lyotard, 1979:XXIV). This is the post-modern condition of his argument. In this fashion, this thesis adapts Lyotard's view of the collapse of metanarratives to argue that the failure of Western grand narratives – that predicated themselves on being universal but which have been rejected by many of the societies in which they manifested – is another expression of this condition. Knowledge and values are seen as contingent and dependent upon specific historical and cultural contexts (Gearon, 2007:99). They thus cannot be said to be universal (ibid). The thesis contends that the failure and retreat of these grand narratives has seen part of this ideological space come to be occupied by forces that are deeply antagonistic to Western ideas and values. The Islamic State and its brand of Salafi-Jihadism is one such expression of this, a key example

of the broader trend of Sunni Islamic militancy. This movement is modern yet it has deep historical, political and theological roots that will be addressed throughout this thesis.

Identifying the dominant themes and features of this *new* grand narrative constructed by IS and how it views itself as a form education in *Dabiq* is of major importance. The initial motives behind this thesis were borne out of my interest in both narrative as a political tool and the question of how political ideologies and narratives are formed and constituted. I sought to understand how narratives are constructed as a reaction – or a response – to the failure of other ideologies, narratives and belief systems. I was also interested in conceptualising narratives on a collective level and how they can become engrained into societies and political cultures. Lyotard's vision of grand narrative offered such a theoretical and philosophical lens. As part of this framework, both education and propaganda function as modes of learning and information dissemination. They are some of the key means through which grand narratives are constituted, distributed and addressed to various audiences, designed to foster social bonds and imbue wider social and political structures with meaning, understanding and a conception of laws, principles and values. These narratives offer a vision of how society should be ordered. Understanding what the grand narratives of *Dabiq* are also emerges out of a concern to comprehend the forces and impulses at play that drive the propaganda of IS and the desire to distinguish between propaganda and education proper. Propaganda is often couched in a way that suggests it offers the world a set of propositions but which are in fact a set of ideological presuppositions, melded as to appear open, free and exploratory when they are fact self-confirming and indoctrinatory, calculated towards pre-determined aims and limited possibilities. Genuine education meanwhile – as conceived in a liberal grand narrative – holds that learning should be an ongoing process based on rationality, reason and evidence that is open to revision and new ideas and the cultivation of critical thinking and choice. This is one the essential differences between education and propaganda that will be explored in this thesis and through the texts of *Dabiq*.

By elucidating these nuances and distinctions, it enables another wider point of the thesis: that grand narratives in the service of propagandistic ends can serve as a tool of totalitarian actors. In distinguishing between such aims and claims this study also offers a defence of a genuinely liberal educational grand narrative and postulates that this vision of education can offer a real rebuttal to the challenges and threats posed by the grand narratives of extremist and violent

Salafi-Jihadist discourses, as found in *Dabiq*. Moreover it also argues that this liberal grand narrative can only succeed if it is authentic and true to the principles it professes in action.

There are a few reasons why the magazine *Dabiq* was chosen as the object of primary source study that forms the core of this analysis. Firstly, given the wealth and multifaceted nature of Islamic State propaganda material that has accumulated since 2014, this thesis needed to be discriminate in terms of what forms of propaganda it focused on. *Dabiq* was selected as it is one of the primary pieces of Islamic State propaganda that addresses potential recruits in English-speaking and Western nations. Over fifteen issues, the magazine offers the most substantive articulation of the Islamic State's worldview and ideology in the two years that it controlled parts of Iraq and Syria. It explicitly outlines numerous aspects of the group's goals and its religious understanding of reality. It also contains the leadership statements of Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. These statements are expansive and address issues relating to the Islamic State, the contemporary state of the Caliphate, global politics and issues of theology. Within them, there are examples of al-Baghdadi articulating key narratives and directing ideas of education, identity, and community towards the audience under examination and the new roles these individuals can play by joining the Islamic State. Importantly, the magazine explicates the theological justifications of the Caliphate's system of governance, why it is contingent upon Muslims everywhere to join the new state, the duties and identities they can fulfil there as its citizens and how Muslims are to conduct themselves in accordance with the laws and will of God. It also details reports of military successes as the Caliphate spread throughout Iraq and Syria and features testimonies from its fighters and martyrs on the glory of fighting for the State, such as those who conducted the 2015 Paris attacks and the following year's attacks in Brussels. The magazine actively responded to contemporary political developments as they were happening and reinterpreted them to conform to the group's narrative and its ideological precepts. For example, as the Islamic State suffered serious territorial loses in 2016, the final three issues of the magazine reflected on these events and portrayed them as further evidence of God's will and his ultimate plan for victory. *Dabiq* forms one of the group's key measures of outreach and recruitment, intent on giving an all-encompassing message of Islamic life to its readers. As such, the magazine provides an interesting and important piece of the jigsaw that helps us to understand one of the potential implications of the postmodern breakdown of grand narrative; that is, the way in which the Islamic State has moved into the literal and figurative space vacated by the failure of other,

once-dominant grand narratives and how the group's conception of knowledge, education and action offers a direct challenge to a rational liberal grand narrative that was once considered universal.

This study focuses strictly on the texts of *Dabiq*. Every issue features numerous photos and visual elements showing various aspects of the Caliphate. The visual component of the magazine was outside the scope of this thesis. By focusing solely on the written word, it was felt that the substance of the group's discourses could be studied in-depth and the most important core elements of the narratives present could be drawn-out. It presents the opportunity for specific yet extensive and broad analysis of long-form pieces of literature spanning a two-year timeframe. Thematic coding analysis enabled the breakdown of this vast amount of data into cohesive themes and in doing so the critical features of *Dabiq* as documents were established.

Structure of Thesis

In Chapter One, I set out the context of the 21st century Islamic State and elucidate the core concept of grand narrative as primarily conceptualised by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*. I also articulate the interplay between propaganda and education that is a major consideration in the thesis. Chapter Two develops these ideas further by illustrating the connections between grand narrative and political imaginaries and how each influences the other. To do this I draw upon a number of contemporary and historical examples to convey the importance of grand narrative in unifying elements and stories of history, politics and religion to aid the goals of political concerns in the present day. Chapter Three builds on this by focussing on the issue of colonialism and how relations between Western forces and the Muslim world have often been shaped by antagonism, violence and war. It contends that these historical episodes – marked by crisis, domination and conflict over material resources – have had a profound impact on the development of grand narratives and their relationship to ideas of power and ideology. This helps to illustrate the point that the failure and withdrawal of Western-backed grand narratives has seen the vacated spaces assumed by distinctly anti-Western forces of various kinds such as IS and Salafi-Jihadism.

Chapter Four introduces the subject of education. It firstly traces the roots and history of the European Enlightenment, some of its key figures and its deep influence on liberal grand narratives and its conceptualisation of education and its possibilities. It also discusses the

changing role of religion within the public sphere in nations such as France and Britain and the impact this has had on modern grand narratives and visions of education. It also importantly introduces how the Islamic world has historically understood the relationship between religion and education by discussing the institution of the madrasa and illustrating the differences between these approaches to faith, education and grand narrative. Chapter Five explicates the thesis' definitions of propaganda and compares these with notions of education discussed in the previous chapter. It outlines how a genuinely liberal educational grand narrative built on a form of instruction that is evolutionary and subject to provisionality – as opposed to indoctrination – cultivates judgement and justified conviction and treats the subject of education as an end in themselves, not a means to other purposes. This is contrasted with the indoctrinatory impulses of propaganda which has been a feature of numerous political movements throughout history, and of which IS is another example. This argument situates IS as belonging to a totalitarian tradition and compares its ideology, radical vision of purity politics and system of rule with that of the Nazis, as considered by Hannah Arendt in her work on totalitarianism.

Chapter Six outlines the methodology employed for this research and explains why thematic coding analysis as a form of documentary analysis was the primary method of enquiry. It also explains the ethical considerations that were involved in gaining access to this primary source material and how the research was conducted while adhering to stringent ethical guidelines. In Chapter Seven the three dominant themes that emerge from the narratives found within *Dabiq* are analysed and discussed with reference to the thesis' overall concerns on education and propaganda. Ultimately the three themes that develop from this analysis are:

1) The centrality of community and the Caliphate to realising individual and collective Muslim identity.
2) The role of jihad as one of the organising principles of the Islamic State.
3) The notion of a prophetic methodology that unifies all aspects of Islamic life.

Positionality

Throughout this research process, I have attempted to always be aware of my positionality towards the various subject matter in question and the primary source material. As an outsider to the Islamic faith who is studying specific strands of belief and various political actors

associated with this, I am aware that this research area – grounded partially around terrorism studies as a field – is one in which negative, extreme and violent images and interpretations of the faith are widely seen and may predominate. It is a research milieu that has grown exponentially since the attacks of 9/11 and has attracted a huge amount of focus on Islamic militancy and jihadism, meaning other Islamic voices that can fruitfully contribute to these debates may not get the attention they deserve. It is an environment in which biases and stereotypes regarding Islam must be acknowledged and navigated carefully. Understanding a faith as historic, rich and diverse as Islam in all its multiplicity and complexity is beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet throughout I have repeatedly attempted to acknowledge that complexity and diversity to demonstrate that there are multiple voices at play within the arenas of political and religious conflict. While the key area of discussion within this thesis is that of IS grand narratives, alongside this I have also engaged with and discussed other narratives, strands and ideologies within Islam to ensure that I gave space to this multiplicity, especially those which are not defined by violence, intolerance or conflict. For example, in Chapter Two I articulate the differences between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism, two ideologies that are linked yet very different in practice, while in Chapter Four the history of the modern madrasa movement in India is acknowledged and how it initially sought to learn and borrow from the curriculum of Western educational authorities. This section also acknowledges the diversity of the madrasa institution in Islamic thought and practice and how it is not only linked to expressions of extremism or violence. In Chapter 5 I also discuss 21st century attempts by Muslim scholars and educators both in Europe and elsewhere to harmonise Western and Islamic learning as a means of integrating complex multicultural societies and countering political and religious extremism.

These distinctions are important. In addressing them I have been careful to avoid conflating complex and differing strands of ideology and have sought to keep generalisations to a minimum. This has enabled me to illustrate that while the grand narratives of Islamic State hold real power, they are not the definitive or only stories of relations between the West and Islam and that other tools exist to refute such narratives. This has worked as a means of both reflecting on the potential biases that come with being involved in this field and moving beyond stereotypes that are not just harmful but also limiting to serious academic enquiry. I have therefore done my utmost to ensure that this research has been conducted with this context in mind. This has also helped me to acknowledge my positionality as an individual born and raised in Britain who is approaching this subject matter from a Western-influenced point-of-view. By

engaging with and being exposed to critiques of such a milieu and its ways of thinking – both in Lyotard's work and others – this has allowed me to reflect on and critique Western narratives of power and values and their sometimes pernicious impact in various places and historical episodes across the world.

Chapter One: 21st Century Jihadism and *The Postmodern Condition*

'The narrative function is losing its functors, its great heroes, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal'- Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1979

Since the Islamic extremist attacks of September 11th, 2001 and the subsequent declaration of the Global War on Terror, there has been a major increase in efforts on the part of governments, international institutions, security establishments and wider Islamic communities to explain the origins and designs of this specific form of violence. This has resulted in widespread and often febrile debates surrounding a host of socio-cultural, political and religious issues within Western nations and beyond where the threat of Sunni Islamic extremist violence has grown (Sieckelinck, Kaulingfreks & De Winter, 2015). Other recent developments such as the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group in Iraq and Syria, as well as rising concerns over the security risks posed by radicalised Western jihadist Muslims, have accentuated this already fraught and deeply polarised realm of public policy. One area that has drawn considerable attention from both policymakers and scholars alike is the role narrative plays in the ideological configuration of these Sunni Islamic terror movements. Enquiries surrounding how these narratives are constructed, their capacity to promote or instigate violence, and how they are to be countered, have become essential to counter-terrorist and anti-radicalisation discourses. As Glazzard writes: 'Narrative is now at the forefront of concerns about terrorism, or violent extremism, and 'counter-narrative' is frequently advanced as a principal means of preventing terrorism/violent extremism' (Glazzard, 2017:3).

This enquiry into the potentially radicalising power of narrative has therefore found currency with both political elites and Western security agencies. Former Prime Minister David Cameron stated in 2015 that 'a narrative of extremism and grievance' had been promoted by a 'poisonous Islamic extremist ideology' in order to target sections of Britain's Muslim population, and that counter-narrative resources would be mobilised by the government to neutralise its reach and impact (Counter Extremism Project, 2018). Similarly, the UK Government's anti-extremism taskforce defined Islamic extremism as:

> '… an ideology…based on a distorted interpretation of Islam, which betrays Islam's peaceful principles, and draws on the teachings of the likes of Sayyid Qutb. Islamist extremists deem Western intervention in Muslim-majority countries as a 'war on

Islam', creating a narrative of 'them' and 'us'.' (UK Government, 2013:2).

In the United States, former President Barack Obama echoed this sentiment in 2015:

> 'We must acknowledge that groups like al Qaeda and ISIL are deliberately targeting their propaganda to Muslim communities, particularly Muslim youth. And Muslim communities, including scholars and clerics, therefore have a responsibility to push back, not just on twisted interpretations of Islam, but also on the lie that we are somehow engaged in a clash of civilizations; that America and the West are somehow at war with Islam…That narrative sometimes extends far beyond terrorist organizations. That narrative becomes the foundation upon which terrorists build their ideology and by which they try to justify their violence' (Obama, 2015).

These statements illustrate how Western leaders and intelligence agencies have come to identify narrative as one of the major battlegrounds in the ideological conflict against Islamic extremism. Part of the long-term strategy of winning the so-called war of ideas involves eliminating the fertile ideological ground that may produce extremist beliefs or future violence, to prevent such ideas from ever taking root. The notion of countering violent extremism (CVE) through counter-narrative initiatives, in tune with intelligence-led operations, is viewed by the UK Government as an all-encompassing, multi-level enterprise that will drain extremist ideology of legitimacy and promote British values such as 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and toleration of different faiths and beliefs' (UK Government, 2013:1). This fixation however has come in for a great deal of criticism. Specifically, as Glazzard writes: 'The assumptions upon which it [counter-narrative theory] rests are sweeping and, on the whole, not grounded by research' (Glazzard, 2017:5). In her 2016 study of the UK's various CVE programs, Ferguson also found that 'there is little hard evidence that proves interaction with VE [violent extremism] content leads to participation in VE activities' (Ferguson, 2016:10). Furthermore, she argues: 'The theory that the messages, myths, promises objectives, glamour and other enticements propagated via VE narratives can be replaced with, or dismantled by, an alternative set of communications is an assumption that remains unproven' (ibid:11).

These findings evidently raise concerns over the effectiveness of government-led anti-radicalisation and counter-narrative programs. Further issues surrounding the credibility of these initiatives within Britain's Islamic communities have seen them attacked as

Islamophobic, perpetuating dangerous stereotypes and divisive narratives that profile Islamic communities and foster an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion (Gearon, 2017).

The dominant focus on a narrative/counter-narrative dichotomy within both policy circles and academia has obscured other ways in which analysis of political narratives may be of use in understanding the origins and nature of contemporary Islamic militancy. With these critiques in mind, this thesis seeks to look at the complex relationships between narrative, ideology, propaganda, education and political violence from a different standpoint.

The Postmodern Condition

In applying Lyotard's analysis expressed within *The Postmodern Condition* to the subject of jihadism and Islamic militancy, this study will examine impact of the dissolution of grand narratives in shaping Western and Islamic interactions from the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire to the emergence of the modern Islamic militancy we see today. To reiterate, having situated this historical and political analysis in its context, the substance of this thesis will then address the Islamic State and question what role grand narrative plays in the configuration of the group's propaganda strategies regarding the topic of education. In doing so I will distinguish between propaganda, indoctrination and education wherein education is an activity open to revision and reimagination, indoctrination is one closed to possibility and propaganda is an instrument for shaping and reinforcing pre-ordained beliefs and attitudes. As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, I will examine a particular genre of propaganda outputs; that is the IS group's online magazine series *Dabiq* which ran for fifteen issues from July 2014 to July 2016. *Dabiq* charts the growth of the Islamic State as it began to gain control of Iraqi and Syrian territory at the beginning of summer 2014. The series, published in multiple languages but principally aimed at English-speaking Western audiences, elucidates the group's ideology and its theological worldview, outlining its beliefs on a wide range of historical, political and theological issues. It comprises a major expression of the grand narratives that the group constructed and vociferously disseminated while it expanded the reaches of its domain.

Narratives do not exist in a vacuum. Hence, this thesis will question how hegemonic narratives have emerged as a product of material historical forces (economic, political, religious and military), and why certain narratives developed at specific points in history. In particular, it will elucidate the ways in which Western-centric grand narratives — formed during eras of

heightened Western dominance – assisted in the oppression of Middle Eastern nations and Islamic cultures during the colonial period. This, in turn is instructive in developing our understanding of the surfacing of subsequent (consequent?) anti-Western discourses that arose to counteract and resist such narratives. These counter-narratives, which were both a response to political events and an attempt to shape how these events were told, would later go on to be reinvented and repackaged for different audiences over time, imbued with renewed purpose and tailored to the needs and values of the audience in question. Over time, these counter-narratives may in turn start to constitute their own grand narratives and assume many of the same power dynamics present in the original narratives they sought to oppose.

The extent to which these grand narratives succeed or fail is also crucial to our understanding of the success or failure of political power structures. In particular, the late 19th and early 20th centuries were periods fraught with global epistemic change due to the growth and later decline of colonial empires, as well as substantial increases in technological advances and innovation. The growth of Western empires and the political, economic and military dominance this heralded – alongside the exploitation and subjugation that followed for much of the non-Western world – were instrumental in creating narratives that not only reflected the hegemony of empire but also increased and preserved their reach as systems of knowledge. As we shall see, knowledge is a central feature of the grand narrative's composition, and a key source from which it makes claims to power and legitimacy.

In a similar vein, the collapse of these empires and political power structures informs the corresponding narratives that emerge as opposition to empire. This thesis will seek to understand the events that led to the breakdown of dominant power structures and how these altered both grand narratives and the state of knowledge that such narratives sought to legitimate. What were the factors, both internal and external, that drove their erosion and eventual collapse? And by analysing these factors, how might we be able to better understand the origins of militant Islamic narratives that are defined by opposition to the West and which have found renewed currency in the late 20th and early 21st centuries? Addressing these questions is, I hope to show, of some importance. The link between the failure of grand narratives and the emergence of counter-narratives that were foundational to political movements antagonistic to the West, is one that has been neglected in the recent preoccupation with narrative as a counter-extremism measure. Such an approach adopts a short-sighted, near

ahistorical outlook that undermines the importance of much earlier interactions between the West and Islam in shaping popular attitudes in the here and now. Indeed, there can be no adequate attempt at counter-narrative in the 21st century unless the reasons for the failure of earlier grand narratives are addressed. Equally, we cannot understand the origins of this specific form of contemporary Sunni militancy without comprehending the historical, political and religious contexts that gave anti-Western Islamic extremist narratives a cover of legitimacy and support.

Narrative

Prior to defining and analysing the nature of grand narratives, we must first have a coherent understanding of the word 'narrative' and how central it is to human lives. Narratives are the architecture by which individual and collective experiences are framed, articulated and situated within broader social realities and liminal boundaries. Narrative can be viewed as distinct from mere stories. Stories typically tell of specific events or sequences of events entailing forms of action (Abbot, 2008:19). Beyond this, narrative conveys a particular sequence of events through action and can refer to the ways in which those stories are represented in various forms; in other words, how the story itself is conveyed (ibid:15). The medium through which stories are represented influences both how they are told and how they may be received and understood by respective audiences. The narrative of the self is crucial to how we process and comprehend ourselves in all our multiplicity and complexity, on both internal and external levels. A history of the self is 'the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human action' (Macintyre, 1984:208). As Schechtman states, this view of the self is composed of two elements: 'One is that our sense of self must be narrative, the other that the lives of selves are narrative in structure' (Schechtman, 2011:395). She elaborates, observing that:

> 'Selves, on this view, are beings who lead their lives rather than merely having a history, and leading the life of a self is taken inherently to involve understanding one's life as a narrative and enacting the narrative one sees as one's life…Selves are fundamentally agents on this view, and agency requires narrative. To be agents we must be intelligible to ourselves and to others; our actions must be meaningful and significant in a way that cannot be captured in purely naturalistic terms but requires that we interpret our behaviours in the context of a narrative' (ibid:395-396).

Furthermore, in the view of the philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, when taken together,

narratives (whether personal or collective) are imbued with a profound sense of meaning that ultimately constitutes a form of knowledge – 'a particular way of understanding the world' (Prickett, 2002:14). Lyotard classifies 'narrative knowledge' as one of the fundamental mechanisms through which human beings process and comprehend their experiences and place within an often confusing and alien world. As Prickett writes: 'We have within us all a personal 'story' which we tell ourselves, and which we constantly modify and alter in the light of experience' (ibid). The role of narrative as a psychological tool that enables individuals to navigate these complexities and acquire this knowledge is key to Lyotard's understanding of its appeal and power. It is also for this reason that narrative is of particular relevance when it comes to the growth of social communities and political movements. This is where the notion of the grand narrative is introduced.

Grand Narrative

Lyotard is not particularly interested in individual narratives. He is intrigued instead by larger ideas surrounding these metanarratives. Grand narratives are more than just the personal narratives of individual lives. Rather, they are closely associated with the bonds between knowledge, legitimacy and power. In Lyotard's view, grand narratives constitute 'unifying and controlling narratives of the past' (Lyotard, 1979:XIV). Such narratives can take many forms but have a common thread in so far as the 'dominant narratives pos[es] as guiding and transcendent stories of history' (Marciniak, 2005:1). These narratives stand not only as a form of narrative knowledge but also function as an articulation of values that are considered sacred or fundamentally sacrosanct to the societies or community in question. This capacity gives the grand narrative its legitimacy. Furthermore, this nexus of narrative, knowledge and legitimacy operates as a key facet within what Lyotard calls the 'social bond' (Lyotard, 1979:XXIV) – the relations required for societies to exist coherently. As he states: 'A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before' (ibid:15). Thus, grand narratives claim to illustrate an objective truth within the confines of historical stories and forces, functioning as a guarantor of knowledge and value that encompasses the entirety of the social bond. The transcendent nature of grand narratives mean that they are able to remain significant and "true" to audiences and societies, even as these change over time; able to explain the past, present and future, making them ancient, modern and timeless simultaneously.

However, in Lyotard's view, writing in a post-World War Two, post-industrial Europe that had undergone great change, people no longer believe in the grand narrative. This in turn has a major impact on the state of knowledge in Western societies. As he states: 'the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post-industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age' (Lyotard, 1979:3). Lyotard in fact defines 'postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives' (ibid:XXIV). And this incredulity raises serious questions regarding where else legitimacy is to be found: 'Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? The operativity criterion is technological; it has no relevance for judging what is true or just' (ibid:XXV). The overall result of this rejection of grand narratives 'is one of temporal disjunction' (ibid), which has critical implications for society as a whole. Traditional systems of authority and institutions of legitimacy no longer exercise the power or sovereignty they once did. They are therefore unable to function. Lyotard declares:

> 'the old poles of attraction represented by nation-states, parties, professions, institutions and historical traditions are losing their attraction… "Identifying" with the great names, the heroes of contemporary history is becoming more and more difficult' (ibid:14).

Faith in these traditional bodies has been shaken. Times of 'general transformation' and crisis (ibid:4), whether political, economic or military, are a threat to grand narratives as they attack the assumptions and underlying rationales of metanarratives and the conception of knowledge they profess to promote and enact. If seismic enough, this in turn generates a transformation in the state of knowledge itself which results in 'repercussions on the existing public bodies, forcing them to reconsider their relations… with civil society' (ibid:6). Upheaval and instability contribute to an 'internal erosion' of traditional power structures and the legitimacy that underpins them (ibid:38). Lyotard uses the example of the backlash against Stalin from left-wing and revolutionary circles following the exposure of the repressive state that existed under his leadership, and the 'the image of the president in the United States since the Watergate affair' (ibid:90), to illustrate instances where trust and conviction in traditional authorities has eroded. Such events result in new oppositional narratives that attempt to fill the vacuum vacated by the original grand narrative.

The manner in which this instability affects both the structures of society and relations between individuals and those public institutions can reshape the fundamental ties that keep society

together; in other words, the social bond. Lyotard acknowledges that no society is really homogenous and thus none truly form 'an integrated whole' (ibid:13). Nevertheless, society remains haunted 'by a principle of opposition' (ibid). Ultimately, when grand narratives break down and this opposition reaches a heightened state, it results in what Lyotard terms: 'the dissolution of the social bond and the disintegration of social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion' (ibid:15).

Taking Lyotard's conception of grand narratives into account, we must apply it to the area in question. How is Lyotard's analysis of grand narratives conducive to understanding the emergence of Sunni Islamic extremist narratives and their preponderance at this stage in the 21st century? Utilising a historical lens, we are able to look at specific interactions between the West and Islam where grand narratives were used, often violently, to buttress and renew existing power dynamics, and the aggressive reactions such narratives generated as opposition. Lyotard's work on grand narrative finds a useful forebearer in the work of German philosopher Hannah Arendt. In Arendt's 1959 speech upon accepting the Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg, entitled 'On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing', she speaks of the state of the world, knowledge and truth following World War Two, and the great uncertainties that have emerged following the collapse of the social and political order. She states:

> 'The "pillars of the best-known truths" (to say with his metaphor), which at the time were shaken, today lie shattered; we need neither criticism or wise men to shake them any more. We need only look around to see that we are standing in the midst of a veritable rubble heap of such pillars.' (Arendt, 1959:3).

The 'pillars of truth' Arendt ruminates on shares a number of similarities with Lyotard's later vision of grand narrative and the systems of knowledge and legitimacy they traditionally sanctioned. In times of great crisis - or 'dark times' as Arendt labels them, focusing specifically on the context of the Holocaust – these moral pillars that were supposed to guarantee social and political stability failed. Such events precipitated a profound loss of faith in the institutions and values that were intended to prevent such civilizational atrocities from ever occurring. She states:

> 'For long ago it became apparent that the pillars of the truths have also been the pillars of the political order, and that the world (in contrast to the people who inhabit it and move freely about in it) needs such pillars in order to

> guarantee continuity and permanence, without which it cannot offer mortal men the relatively secure, relatively imperishable home that they need.' (ibid).

What replaces these pillars once they have collapsed? Like Lyotard, Arendt sees their failure resulting in deep uncertainty and social fragmentation, the notion of objective truth fatally undermined. Arendt laments this development, as it results in 'the most frightful errors' replacing 'the "best-known truths"' as she calls them, while 'the error of these doctrines constitutes no proof, no new pillar for the old truths' (ibid). Civilisational conflict, and the industrialisation of killing that emerged during the Second World War, shattered these pillars. In an effort to counter these frightful errors, Arendt believed that the pillars have to be reconstructed and re-erected. Yet she even admits:

> 'the fragility of these repeatedly restored props of public order is bound to become more apparent after every collapse, so that ultimately the public order is based on people's holding as self-evident precisely those "best-known truths" which secretly scarcely anyone still believes in' (ibid:12).

Grand narratives, or pillars of truth as Arendt labels them, may still exist in some fashion even after transformations and times of destabilisation. But they lack any sense of credibility and therefore have little power if faith in their authority has been irrevocably lost. The impact of this collapse of grand narratives through repeated crises, and in turn the complex systems of knowledge and value they seek to articulate, is profound. It does not mean that the concept of narrative itself is fundamentally flawed. Lyotard's view of the collapse of grand narratives underlines the role scepticism plays in questioning the alleged self-evident truths of grand narratives and the long-held assumptions and beliefs that underpin them. In doing so, Lyotard opens up the possibility of multiple narratives and multiple selves emerging to contest the vacuum created by the grand narrative's breakdown. Lyotard and Arendt both saw World War Two as one of the primary catalysts for the failure of grand narratives, and the collapse of the pillars of truth. Crises and other epoch defining events are by their nature destabilising and chaotic. In refuting and challenging these dominant ideas, the conditions are created that allow for alternative voices and oppositional forces to not only emerge but also gain traction with powerful social actors and groups. These new narratives then seek to articulate their own conceptions of legitimacy and authority in order to speak to a new political reality in a way the former grand narratives did not. Thus these competing narratives are in constant

dialogue with one another, becoming enmeshed in a host of wider social, political and military conflicts.

Imaginaries

At this point, it is worth introducing another concept that is essential to our enquiry: social imaginaries. This notion, and its links to narrative, is of major philosophical importance to this thesis. Much like narrative, the imaginary itself is often intimately associated with a host of other concepts and ideas such as knowledge, ideology, kinship, culture and values that are considered sacred or sacrosanct. On a basic level, a social imaginary refers to the 'ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' (Taylor, 2004:23). Imaginaries are also intrinsic to the 'dimension of the imagination that spurs action and makes it meaningful (Kitts, 2013:418). They enable the explication of an ordered social reality that aids human beings in imbuing their lives with meaning and coherence. Similar to Lyotard's vision of the grand narrative, imaginaries operate on the collective level. They are, as Gaonkar writes, 'ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life' (Gaonkar, 2002:4). They are also 'embedded in the habitus of a population or are carried in modes of address, stories, symbols, and the like' (ibid). This process of entrenchment is concerned with how people '"imagine" their social surroundings' (Taylor, 2004:23) through the accumulative power of narratives, performances, symbols and myths. From a cultural perspective, these acts become a 'multifaceted range of social inquiries and intentional performative acts addressing people's conversations about themselves and their world' (Kitts, 2013:418). Consequently, these help to generate common social practises and, crucially, foster shared senses of legitimacy and kinship (Taylor, 2004:23) between individuals who would otherwise be socially atomised, echoing the Lyotardian view of the importance of the social bond. This 'stranger sociability is made possible through mass mediation', as imaginaries build-up 'relations among strangers' in order to bind often disparate collective and individual entities within a cohesive social order or community (Gaonkar, 2002:5). An imaginary may even constitute 'a shared worldview for all the members of the group' (Murer, 2014:204) once it attains a strong level of adherence within the realm of a collective.

In order for imaginaries to become entrenched, these cultural practises and beliefs must ultimately become a dominant feature of the social and political order. Atran writes that imaginaries are intrinsic to the construction of a coherent ideology, particularly in relation to the devotion that is inspired among adherents: ‘Nearly all major ideologies, political or religious, require the subordination or assimilation of the real family (genetic kin) to the larger imagined family of brothers or sisters’ (Atran, 2011:34). This loyalty and zeal is what gives the imaginary much of its power, as it is the ‘willingness of at least some to give their last full measure of devotion to the imaginary that makes the imaginary real, a waking dream’ (ibid:54). Atran repeats that this devotion cuts across secular and religious ideological lines, referring to religious imaginaries with their commitment to theological practises, transcendent or supernatural narratives and preponderance of specific iconography, as well as the imaginaries found within secular ideologies such as nationalism, communism and fascism (ibid). For example, Gaonkar examines the political-social imaginary of what he terms ‘the national people’ within modern nation-states, noting that:

> ‘Its distinctive features include its representation as a “we”; its transparency between individual and collectivity; its agential subjectivity, in which a people acts in time; its unfolding in progressive history; and its posited environment of mutuality with other national peoples’ (Gaonkar, 2002:5).

This and other social imaginaries are all concerned with what Gunning and Jack term ‘ultimate values or one’s sense of self’ (Gunning & Jackson, 2011:374). The imaginaries present in all of these ideologies frame how people situate themselves within a broader social reality (particularly in relation to others), how they imagine their existence within those parameters, and the beliefs and values that provide sources of meaning and moral order to that reality.

Grand narratives, in the Lyotardian sense, can be viewed as one of the primary mechanisms through which imaginaries can sustain their power. Moreover, the relationship between grand narratives and imaginaries may be said to be symbiotic: each frame’s, influences and shapes the other. Commenting upon this intimate relationship, Bernstein argues: ‘Grand narratives are one of the central ways in which the social imaginary of a people is instituted and becomes manifest; and grand narratives are ‘grand’ because what they narrate is the work of the social imaginary itself’ (Bernstein, 1991:115). Grand narratives, with their goal of being a guarantor of knowledge, can usefully articulate the nature of the social reality professed by

the imaginary, underlining the position and situation of individuals within the confines of the social bond. Moreover, grand narratives profess to elucidate the 'unifying' stories of the past (Lyotard, 1979:XIV). Such narratives 'present a way of seeing the broad sweep of history, enhance soft power credentials, and present to others a justification or understanding of the behaviour' of social groups, states, organizations or civilizations (Ferguson, 2013:36). The historicity of these narratives is what partially enables them to present themselves as the key source of social and political legitimacy. Grand narratives may be told and retold through various representations. The cultural behaviours and practises that become key features of social imaginaries are buttressed by the historical dominance of these grand narratives that typically narrate the origins, justifications and rationales underpinning such behaviour. This is also true of the way that grand narratives attempt to articulate shared values and kinship between both individuals and different social groups. Repeated narrative retellings involve constant invocations of historical stories, with social realities in the present refracted through the prism of specific historical lenses. Thus, the cultural hegemony of this narrative reinforces the dominance of the social imaginary. Furthermore, this emphasis on historical precedent is often 'used as the essential background for suggesting current policies and future goals' for states and political elites, meaning political power remains tied to the same historical ethos(ibid:37).

This understanding of the link between grand narratives and imaginaries is important. By illustrating how they inform one another, and the ways in which they derive authority owing to their mutually complementary nature, we are able to see how the imaginary is impacted when grand narratives are challenged in times of crisis. In the event of their breakdown and ultimate collapse, the wide-ranging implications this holds for society at-large on both social and political levels must be properly comprehended. This is especially relevant in regards to situations where competing narratives are constantly clashing with one another as part of a larger political or military conflict. As we shall see, the 'war of ideas' is not a new concept within political circles, but it has become a critical battleground in the ongoing War on Terror and is a useful example of narratives becoming weaponised by political and military forces to achieve their strategic objectives.

War on Terror

Having established these philosophical parameters, it is worth thinking how they might apply to the inquiries of this thesis. Specifically, it is worth examining the dominant Western narratives that have emerged during the course of the War on Terror and how this has, in turn, shaped Western imaginaries surrounding this conflict. As outlined previously, Western counter-terrorism polices are largely predicated on the notion of winning the 'war of ideas'. Therefore, efforts at interrogating the relationship between narratives and contemporary Islamic extremism have arguably become the defining feature of broad-based counter-extremism and anti-radicalisation strategies. These endeavours are typically framed as a war between competing narratives within a larger battle over ideologies and values. Antulio Echevarria, Director of Research at the United States Army War College, states that the war of ideas is to be thought of in the same terms as armed conflict:

> 'a war of ideas is a clash of visions, concepts, and images, and— especially—the interpretation of them. They are, indeed, genuine wars, even though the physical violence might be minimal, because they serve a political, socio-cultural, or economic purpose, and they involve hostile intentions or hostile acts.' (Echevarria, 2008:V).

The forms these wars can take include: '(a) intellectual debates, (b) ideological wars, (c) wars over religious dogma' (ibid). Echevarria illustrates how this rhetoric and discourse surrounding the clash of ideas has become an essential element in the overriding Western narrative of the War on Terror. From its earliest stages, this conflict was framed as being not simply a military endeavour. The Bush Administration's 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS) - published while the US and other Western nations were suffering heavy setbacks in both Afghanistan and Iraq - outlined this in clear terms:

> 'From the beginning, the War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas – a fight against terrorists and their murderous ideology... In the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas, for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims. While the War on Terror is a battle of ideas, it is not a battle of religions. The transnational terrorists confronting us today exploit the proud religion of Islam to serve a violent political vision: the establishment, by terrorism, of a totalitarian empire that denials all political and religious freedoms' (US National Security Strategy, 2006:4).

This statement offers a useful explication of how the War on Terror was conceptualised by the

Bush Administration following the attacks of 9/11. Already, the notion of an ideological battle is placed at the forefront of its strategic objectives, with this war of ideas situated within a grand historical narrative of resisting totalitarian enemies who are tyrannical in nature. This is made even more explicit later in the same document:

> 'The United States is in the early years of a long struggle, similar to what our country faced in the early years of the Cold War. The 20st century witnessed the triumph of freedom over the threats of fascism and communism. Yet a new totalitarian ideology now threatens, an ideology grounded not in secular philosophy but in the perversion of a proud religion. Its content may be different from the ideologies of the last century, but its means are similar: intolerance, murder, terror, enslavement, and repression' (ibid:1).

Here the grounding of the historical grand narrative in terms of fighting and triumphing against tyranny and fascism is obvious. The War on Terror is viewed as following in the same historical footsteps as the battles against Nazism and Communism. The victories against those ideologies is framed as representing a triumph of values: freedom and democracy overcoming tyranny, hate and repression. As Burke notes, this political framework positioned 'the various contemporary conflicts as the successors to those fought by the West throughout the 20th century against Nazism and Fascism and then Communism' (Burke, 2011:260). This was done in order to justify 'the continued commitment to very significant resources to what was perceived as a fight for the survival of the American nation and of American values - 'freedom' - and provided a rationale for the continuation of extraordinary legal measures and presidential powers for the foreseeable future' (ibid).

The invocation of a grand narrative here – a narrative of American justice and triumphalism against an existential enemy whose values were anathema to the nation – serves a clear political purpose both in terms of overall strategy and in reinforcing a social imaginary of American political power, one that is concerned with justice and defending noble values. In this narrative, 'the enemy was aggregate. If it was not 'Islam' itself... it was 'Islamism' or 'Islamofascism' or jihadism' (ibid:261). The problem with this approach however was that the grand narrative decontextualised a whole host of events, histories, political orders and cultures in order to narrativise the contemporary conflict within the confines of a larger story surrounding the battle against an enemy allegedly dangerous enough to threaten both the physical safety of the West and its ideological values. As we shall see, this problem

of decontextualisation makes the grand narrative open to challenge and rebuke. A failure to understand these complex historical forces has been at the heart of the failures of the War on Terror and also accounts for the failure to appreciate the origins of this Islamic extremist threat in the first place. However it is worth stating at this point that while comparisons to the Nazis have to made carefully, this thesis does situate the Islamic State as a totalitarian entity that shares similarities with other 20th century political forces.

The above instance is only one example of the way in which narrative has been operationalised in the context of the War on Terror. A key element within this notion of winning the 'War of ideas' is the need to imagine the conflict as long-running, generational, and unconfined to the physical and temporal limitations of a battlefield or warzone. Both the Western-led War on Terror narrative and the extremist counter-narratives promoted by groups such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State position their visions of the conflict as defining battles for supremacy against an enemy that represents an existential threat to the other's way of life. The features of these narratives differ hugely in terms of ideology and purpose but both are framed by an opposition and mutual antagonism to the values and political cultures of the other. As we shall see, the narratives that have emerged from both Western and Islamic political groups during the War on Terror have relied on retelling and reinterpreting earlier historical events in order to legitimise political action in the present, in much the same way the grand narratives of the past have done. In order to understand the strength and enduring nature of these narratives and their imaginaries, we will have to look at the cultural and political elements that help to sustain them. The long-term survival and viability of a political ideology relies on a nexus of cultural, symbolic and historical factors. Chiefly among these is the role education plays in affirming and promoting the values of the social and political order.

Understanding the educational dimension to the sustenance of narrative is of vital importance, particularly in the context of the post-9/11 political landscape. In the two decades since those events, the role of Islamic educational institutions and systems in promoting beliefs and ideologies deemed extremist by Western societies has undergone renewed scrutiny. But again, it is important to note that the nature of these institutions is incredibly varied, with histories and traditions that existed centuries before the events of 9/11. One such educational institution that has received much attention is the madrasa. These religious schools originated in their modern incarnation in India in the mid-19th century (Burke, 2007:92). They were formed by a revivalist Sunni Islam movement known as the Deobandis 'in reaction to the challenge posed

by British power and Hindu demographic superiority to Indian Muslims' (ibid). In this fashion, 'they follow the pattern of revivalist and reformist movements within Islam reacting to external threats' (ibid). While I will later consider in detail the nature and import of madrasas and their distinctiveness from occidental educational structures and imperatives, it is worth making some preliminary remarks here. In their origins, we can already see a reaction to Western colonial rule and a defensive posture with respect to non-Islamic cultures. These religious schools were designed to maintain a coherent Islamic space, distinct and removed from the presence of outsiders (ibid:93). Over the centuries, the growth of madrasas saw their number increase by 30,000' (Burke, 2011:347). The term madrasas can refer to two things: 'the everyday meaning of school' and a 'nonformal educational institution that offers instruction on the Qu'ran, the sayings (hadith) of the Prophet Muhammed, jurisprudence (fiqh) and law' (Rust & Allaf, 2018:396). These schools and networks experienced an explosion in growth during the 1970s and 1980s, when money and funds from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states flooded into Pakistan and elsewhere as a means of promoting pan-Islamic solidarity (Burke, 2007:93). The role and nature of these institutions in nurturing anti-Western ideologies and violence has been a subject of fierce controversy (ibid), particularly after 9/11. The impact of this has fed into the wider conversation surrounding an alleged clash of civilisations between the West and Islam, with the global madrasas perceived as centres of indoctrination for anti-Western ideals and sources of recruitment for extremist groups. The nature of these institutions, how they relate to the ideas and grand narratives promoted by the Islamic State, as well and other forms of Islamic education more generally, will be discussed in detail in chapters four and five of this thesis.

Correspondingly, within many Western societies, the field of education has similarly become another battleground within the War on Terror paradigm. The post-9/11 security environment has seen multiple levels of civil society - including areas of education, health, social work and political engagement - become subsumed in an extremist/anti-extremist dichotomy, with the language of counter-terrorism and security embedding itself within the discourse of each of these fields. It is worth noting, as O'Donnell does, that in the twenty years after 9/11 this language of counter-terrorism has gradually evolved within the United Kingdom. This in turn has implications for the narratives that are, intentionally or unintentionally, promoted by such language:

> 'Counter-terrorism language moved from the "them vs us" Manichean discourse post-9/11, to the "battle of ideas", and then finally to a softer, quasi-therapeutic approach that images the potential homegrown terrorist as a vulnerable person who needs support. This model privileges the notion that the explanatory paradigm for terrorism requires identifying emotional and existential vulnerability, and the solution to terrorism involves addressing said vulnerabilities in the population (O'Donnell, 983:2016).

This linguistic underpinning has become a defining feature of the UK government's statutory Prevent duty which came into law in 2015 under the Counterterrorism and Security Act (CTSA). This states that: 'A specified authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (CTSA, Section 26 (I)). The Act also lists the public bodies obligated to exercise such a function, including 'schools, most further and higher education bodies, NHS trusts and foundation trusts, local authorities, prisons, probation service providers, and the police' (Open Society Foundation, 2016:27). The effect of this securitisation of civil society at large within the UK has been felt strongly within education. Prevent directly 'affects the lives of students and teachers, and the nature and experience of education, by making it a statutory obligation for educators and institutions to prevent terrorism and to report students "at risk of radicalisation" (O'Donnell, 2016:982). While the duty itself applies to the institutions rather than the individuals, individuals are likely to find themselves required by the institutions for whom they work or are otherwise associated to address the Prevent duty in the course of their work' (Open Society Foundation, 2016:27). It is has thus become an essential element of UK counter-terrorism and anti-radicalisation policy.

Central to the anti-radicalisation remit of this duty is the promotion of what has been termed fundamental British Values (FBV). The UK government has defined extremism as: 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British Values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (UK government, 2011). FBV are therefore situated as being the bedrock upon which any charges of extremism are to be based. This in and of itself can be read as an attempt to facilitate the creation of a singular, dominant narrative that endeavours to unite the concept of binding principles with specific historical and cultural characteristics that are unique to Britain. However, FBV itself is a deeply contested term. Struthers notes the difficulty successive governments have had in defining the term:

> '…it is clear that the concept remained amorphous. Its meaning was vague and elusive, and the broad and varied rhetoric around what it actually meant to be British provided scope for any value to be included in the definition without question. Indeed, a number of 'values' included under the British values label are arguably not values at all based upon an understanding of the concept as individual characteristics to which society as a whole attaches importance. Because nobody really understood what British values were, to be critical of attempts to define them was to engage in a somewhat pointless exercise.' (Struthers, 2016:95).

This uncertainty, in turn, affects the most serious provisions of the Prevent strategy. The implication at the centre of Prevent is that there is 'universal agreement in respect of the meaning of values and concepts such as democracy, rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs and individual liberty' (O'Donnell, 2016:983). The difficulty with which this has been put into practice illustrates the practical, ethical and political pitfalls of re-orientating the field of education into a securitised domain. The use of education as a means to nurture and promote narratives and ideologies that are concerned with defining an enemy 'other' - and which see the world in terms of existential threat – has been a historical feature of both Western and Islamic discourses. It has also attained a new relevance in the post-9/11 world, where the propagation and control of competing narratives has become a major weapon in the War on Terror conflict and the battle for ideas. The role of education in fostering violent ideologies within this War on Terror context, and understanding how narrative emboldens and is in turn embedded within historical-cultural discourses, is central to understanding why certain grand narratives of the past have failed, and why this latest wave of Islamic extremist narrative has gained a new ascendency in the 21st century. As O'Donnell again states:

> '…genuine education, as opposed to indoctrination, is by its nature anti-extremist, requiring and demanding careful, rigorous and reasoned discussion of difficult topics in such a way that avoids the pitfalls of either relativism or forms of authoritarian "liberalism" that rely upon a single narrative' (O'Donnell, 2016:982).

This 'genuine education' forms a critical element of what may be termed a genuinely liberal grand narrative. It stands in contrast to the propagandistic purposes of indoctrination that finds currency within illiberal and anti-modern political forces. These dual facets – propaganda and indoctrination – constitute some of the key epistemic and dissemination tools of the Islamic State. If propaganda outputs may be viewed as part of the Islamic State's overall media strategy, then indoctrination constitutes its ideological superstructure and this informs the ways

in which it attempts to educate and promote its narrative within the pages of *Dabiq*. In utilising Lyotard's vision of grand narrative this thesis will argue that ultimately, grand narratives can only succeed when underpinned by a genuinely liberal ethos, one that is founded on a universalism that encompasses enlightenment principles such as reason, tolerance and an authentic sense of freedom. In this context, the truth is the result of a collective process that can be reached through the embedding of these principles and being open to new information, ideas and developments. It is a process of constant revising. Education is a key outlet for how liberalism is imagined and (however imperfectly) put into practice. In defending grand narratives in this way, this thesis will correspondingly illustrate how grand narratives can be used by illiberal, authoritarian and anti-modern forces such as the Islamic State to attack the principles of liberalism. Such narratives are powerful tools that are used to propagate and justify oppression and violence, in the service of political actors that are concerned only with their own ability to control and gain political power. This is particularly evident in the case of Islamic State and its propaganda series *Dabiq*.

Chapter Two: Historical Context- Narratives and Imaginaries

In order to coherently answer the questions outlined in the opening chapter, the complex historical context of the relations between the West and Islam must be understood. The attacks of 9/11 and the War on Terror were the product of a series of transformational events throughout the centuries that shook both the Western and Islamic world. These events are of critical importance when thinking about the construction of narrative, and how old narratives can gain new significance when retold in modern contexts. How these events are put together in narrative form can in turn shape the dominant cultural imaginaries that emerge from this process. O'Donnell's understanding of the power and uses of imaginaries is instructive for this purpose: 'If collective and social imaginaries orient our political, and effective lives, and shape our concepts, then understanding collective imaginaries means thinking about images as constitutive, generative and productive rather than descriptive' (O'Donnell, 2016:984). Imaginaries perform a social function in that they help to sustain forms of practise as well as collective understandings of values that are considered sacred, often the bedrock upon which political legitimacy is based. Imaginaries in this sense are constantly in motion, as are the narratives which are a key constituent element. Code states that the images and symbolisms woven into dominant socio-political imaginaries shape and govern 'possibilities of being, thinking, acting', while legitimating certain epistemic and human relations and influencing how philosophical systems in turn 'reflect and reinforce' these imaginaries' (Code, 2006:11).

Lovat suggests that the failure of Western policies in the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim world (both before and after 9/11) results from a poor understanding of the power of these often religiously-driven narratives, as well as a misinformed and limited view of religion more generally: 'Many of the mistakes that Western security and intelligence have made in the Middle East are owing to a lack of theologically-informed intelligence, especially about Islam.' He goes on to state:

> 'The inference is that we missed the Arab Spring, the birth of ISIS and the Gulf crisis… and then engaged in uninformed and miscalculated strategies in dealing with them, partly because we did not understand the theological matrices and fractures of Islam and how these play out in relations between different sects of Islam and between Islam and the rest of the world' (Lovat, 2018:4).

This is especially relevant when thinking of the historical emergence of deeply religious Islamic movements that were also defiantly political in character. The failure to anticipate the long-term ramifications of Western policies in the Middle East and elsewhere – partly due to this limited understanding of the motivating power of religious belief and narrative – has played a key role in creating the conditions for the extremist religious movements we see today. How these events are articulated imbues such beliefs with a narrative coherence and rationale that unifies various symbols, myths and cultural histories. The speech that IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi gave from the Grand Mosque in Mosul, Iraq in 2014 announcing the formal declaration of the Caliphate was laced with religious iconography and symbolism, presenting himself as the true leader of Islam's lost empire that could be traced to the days of the Prophet himself. In this instance it 'became clear that Baghdadi was drawing on a deep historical theological tradition in Islam, inspired especially by the Abbasid Caliphate that had sparked an 8th century revolution in Islam, directed heavily against Shi'iism and other allegedly "infidel" forms of Islam' (Lovat, 2018:5). Baghdadi stated in his proclamation:

> 'This is the pillar of religion: a book that guides and a sword that brings victory. Your Mujahideen brothers have been rewarded by Allah victory and He has enabled them to assume power after long years of jihad and patience and fighting the enemies of Allah. He has granted them success and enabled them to achieve their goal, where they have rushed to declare the Caliphate and the inauguration of Imam. This is the duty of Muslims, which has been lost for centuries and, absent from the reality on the ground, thus it has been neglected by many Muslims. Muslims who have neglected this duty are sinners, and they should seek its establishment. They have already established this goal praise be to Allah' (al-Baghdadi, 2014).

This narrative of reclaiming a lost Islamic empire that had been thwarted by enemies external and within is a recurring and powerful one within certain strands of Islamic thought. Lovat notes that in the narrative's propagated by Baghdadi, 'the imaginary Ummah they create is a malevolent one bent on destruction of anything that stands in the way of establishing "the Islamic State". This so-called promised Caliphate is an imaginary construct built around a theologically interpreted "history"' (Lovat, 2018:8). He argues that 'without understanding the theology sitting behind it, one is blinded in attempting to deal with these issues, including in being able to identify the misconceptions and alleged dupe of imagination that underpins much of the Jihadi strategy' (ibid).

As Lovat suggests, the roots of this narrative reach deep into the vestiges of history. Rust and Allaf state that despite the heterogenous nature of fundamentalist groups within Islam, and

their often divergent and contradictory goals, one thing that they nonetheless have in common is 'their belief that there once existed a perfect moment (an Islamic state) and they must fight the threats (leaders in their own countries and outside influences) in order to regain the idealized state (even if the ideal never actually existed)' (Rust & Allaf, 2018:391).

Yet it must be emphasised that this narrative is built on specific interpretations of history. Within these interpretations, certain historical events and episodes are selected, partialized and politicised. This is indeed true of all political narratives, including those that have sought to promote opposing political-religious historical narratives designed to counteract the ideas of jihadist ideology. The role of history in crafting narratives and reorienting them to contemporary political ends is a highly contested area, in which history, politics and ideology clash. These re-imaginings often rely on appropriations of certain traditions, events and sources in order to define current 'social practices and their concomitant attachments' (Conroy, 2013:8). Developments such as this are thus not confined to jihadist narratives or violent extremist politics. Lepore for instance notes the battle for control of history in the political dynamics of the United States, and how this manifests in the narratives propagated by various political movements. In her examination of the emergence and growth of the Tea Party movement following the election of Barack Obama, Lepore cites the obsession with America's origin story – the revolution – as a defining characteristic of the group's political ideology, image and rhetoric. Part of this involves repurposing a particular, ideologically-driven vision of American history through appropriation and requisition that is in keeping with the 21st century movement's right-wing precepts and doctrine. While she is focussing on a distinctly American version of this phenomenon, certain aspects of her analysis are applicable when addressing the ways in which narrative has been utilised by various groups in the post-9/11 political landscape. The Tea Party saw itself as the inheritor of the American Revolution. It sought to utilise the iconography and mythology of the Founding Fathers to construct a conservative narrative of American history that was predicated on refuting and combating the perceived threat of liberalism in the present. Lepore terms this a form of 'historical fundamentalism', an approach marked by:

> 'the belief that a particular and quite narrowly defined past – "the founding" – is ageless and sacred and to be worshipped; that certain historical texts – "the founding documents" – are to be read in the same spirit with which religious fundamentalists read, for instance, the Ten Commandments; that the academic study of history (whose standards of evidence and methods of analysis are based on scepticism) is

> a conspiracy and, furthermore, blasphemy; and that political arguments grounded in appeals to the founding documents, as sacred texts, and to the founding fathers as prophets, are therefore incontrovertible' (Lepore, 2010:16).

With this view in mind, the Tea Party ideology can be summarised as 'nothing trumps the Revolution'. Lepore explains:

> 'From the start, the Tea Party's chief political asset was its name: the echo of the revolution conferred upon a scattered, diffuse and confused movement a degree of legitimacy and the appearance, almost, of coherence. Aside from the name and the costume, the Tea Party offered an analogy: rejecting the bailouts is like dumping the tea; healthcare reform is like the Tea Act; our struggle is like this' (ibid: 14-15).

A key feature of this fundamentalist approach to history is the collapse in distance between past and present. This is because it rests on a 'shared set of assumptions about the relationship between the past and present' that is not only anti-intellectual but antihistorical, 'not least because it defies chronology, the logic of time' (ibid). The Tea Party foregrounded their critique of modern liberalism in the mantra that the nation had '"forgotten the founding fathers"' (ibid) and the principles of the revolution. This saw the group co-opt and appropriate the iconography of this era to situate themselves not only as the founding fathers' natural successors, but also the architects of the next chapter of the same revolutionary tradition. In doing so they were thus claiming wholesale ownership over the complex and long-disputed historical episode of America's origin. As Lepore states, the Tea Party's relationship with the founding fathers 'was more literal than an analogy. It wasn't "our struggle is like theirs." It was "we are there" or "they are here"' (ibid). This sense of chronological continuity created a distorted, simplified and fundamentalist version of history that was defined by the narrow strictures of conservative doctrine, smoothing over the inherent contradictions and paradoxes, as well as the issue of applicability. Historical fundamentalism has 'no patience for ambiguity, self-doubt and introspection' (ibid). It thus has serious ramifications for the generation of knowledge and the dictation of social relations and practices in the present. The Tea Party purposefully positioned itself in this way in order to present a narrative of contemporary conservative intimidation at the hands of an overbearing, oppressive liberal government. This was key to the Tea Party's mission of attacking several political issues following the election of Barack Obama, specifically Democratic healthcare reform initiatives and efforts to maintain the separation of Church and state – the latter of which they viewed as an assault on

conservative religious values and the distinctly Christian vision of American culture and history they adhered to.

Another crucial feature of the Tea Party's partialized and politicised account of history was their desire to imprint their narrative through education. They supported reform measures in various school bodies throughout America designed to promote conservative values and an interpretation of history that was couched in Christian discourse. For instance, the Texas School Board proposed rejecting a longstanding approach to history teaching that focused on 'women's history, labor history, and the history of slavery and emancipation' (ibid:12). It favoured instead 'replacing "ordinary people" with "patriots and good citizens"; dispensing with "capitalism" in favour of "free enterprise" and the calling the "slave trade" the "Atlantic triangular trade"' (ibid:13). Furthermore, the teaching of the founding era was to undergo a dramatic shift:

> 'Thomas Aquinas was added to a list of thinkers who inspired the American Revolution; Thomas Jefferson (who once wrote about the "wall of separation of church and state") was removed… Biblical law was to be studied in an intellectual influence on the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution' (ibid).

The example of the Tea Party is instructive in our understanding of how political narratives are often constructed with fragmented and prejudiced readings of history. The key aspect of this shift was that it represented an effort to ensure that a particular political narrative, built on a warped interpretation of American history, became the dominant discourse within the body politic. In doing so, the Tea Party hoped it would emerge as an arbiter of authority, able to confer legitimacy on political action in the present. This reconfiguring and repositioning of the past to suit contemporary ends is a feature of numerous political groupings and ideologies. It is a major feature of different groups within the so-called battle for hearts and minds of the War on Terror.

Liberal, conservative and jihadist narratives have all sought to reconfigure the past, and utilise specific interpretations of history, to encourage and support political ideologies and initiatives in the present. The example of the 21st century Tea Party is used here to illustrate that these desires are not necessarily limited solely to Islamic State but are part of a broader political

phenomenon. The recession of grand narratives and the rise of this postmodern condition creates a range of propagandistic impulses in different polities. It is a similar route which finds different expressions, with drivers in place that produce similar effects – of propagandistically using and reorienting history to dictate the political vision of the present and close off alternatives – but with different ideological framings. When addressing other examples related to conceptualisations of historical relations between the West and Islam, we see this process play out again. For example, in her book *The Ornament of The World*, Menocal presents a particular historical vision of European-Islamic relations that she believes can offer a counter-narrative to 21st century jihadist discourses, as well as Western ideologies that situate conflict between the West and Islam as an inevitable clash of civilisations. While she is of course not trying to undermine the reading of history in the same way as the Tea Party, Menocal's aims nonetheless suffer from a similar problem of viewing history through the lens of a contemporary 21st century political narrative, designed with current political concerns at the forefront. Menocal focuses on a particular period of Islamic rule over areas of Europe, specifically the Al-Andulus region of medieval Spain. She posits that this era offers not only a historical blueprint for anti-jihadist narratives in the present, but also an example of intercultural tolerance and diversity and a counterpoint to contemporary polarisation between the West and Islam. Menocal views the Islamic takeover of sections of the Western Mediterranean as the natural successor to the Roman Empire, given that it occupied much of the same territory: 'the new empire filled almost exactly the bed left by the old Roman Empire': the 'map of Mediterranean territories of the nascent Islamic Empire – the Umayyad Caliphate – in the 7th and 8th centuries corresponds remarkably to the Mediterranean center of a map of the Roman world in the 2nd century' (Menocal, 2002:21). Indeed, Menocal portrays the post-Roman, pre-Islamic Iberian Peninsula as a land ravaged by decline, ignorance and barbarism. The collapse of Roman civilisation and its institutions had unleashed chaos and factionalism, led by the Visigoths. The fall of Rome's 'northern and eastern frontiers and the assumption of power by various Germanic tribes ruptured Europe's connection with its own cultural past, an event that would shape the West's consciousness of itself' (ibid). The Visigoths were notorious for their battles against other tribes and amongst themselves. Menocal labels their control over the former province of Hispania a cultural and material wasteland, which the later Muslim conquests rectified. This was the salvation of a territory that was 'politically unstable, religiously and ethnically fragmented and culturally debilitated' (ibid).

Menocal situates the southern Caliphate as the successor civilisation to Rome, that brought enlightenment and knowledge and kickstarted a cultural explosion: 'Over the course of the subsequent three hundred years… the sort of political order and cultural flourishing that had once graced Roman Hispania returned to the peninsula' (ibid:27). This meant the 'political history of the Cordobyn state is amazingly even… one emir ruling for decades, after the next, one addition to the Great Mosque of Cordoba after the next' (ibid:27). She also claims: 'In the end, it would be al-Andulus' vast intellectual wealth, inseparable from its prosperity in the material realm, that made it the "Ornament of the world"' (ibid).

Menocal conceives of the Umayyads as a tolerant, forward-thinking branch of Islam that was distinctly progressive, both for its time and in retrospect. This contrasts with other large areas of Europe that she paints as marked by backwardness and ignorance. She is explicit about how this era offers vital lessons to the 21st century in countering the violent narratives that pre-figure in the discourse surrounding Islam. This is history in service of a modern liberal imaginary. Nowhere is this evidenced more clearly than in her interpretation of how the Caliphate treated its non-Muslim inhabitants.

> 'The new Islamic polity not only allowed Jews and Christians to survive but, following Quranic mandate, by and large, protected them, and both the Jewish and Christian communities in al-Andulus became thoroughly Arabized within a relatively few years of Abd al-Rahman's arrival in Cordoba' (ibid:29).

Menocal sees this cosmopolitanism as being key to the cultural revitalisation that occurred in al-Andulus, with intermarriage and intermixed ethnicities common. Jews and Christians were dhimmi – the protected "peoples of the Book". But in Menocal's view al-Andulus was from its outset 'the site of memorable and distinctive interfaith relations', where the 'Jewish community rose from the ashes of an abysmal existence under the Visigoths to the point that the Emir who proclaimed himself Caliph in the 10th century had a Jew as his foreign minister' (ibid:30). Crucially, Menocal also states that the ultimate decline of this golden age, as a result of the re-Christianisation of the territory, resulted in a catastrophic loss of knowledge and a rise in religious intolerance and brutality, particularly towards Jews and Muslims.

Yet it can be argued that Menocal's thesis valorises this era, to the extent that it ignores historical intricacies and other issues that undermine the idea of al-Andulus being a beacon of toleration and multiculturalism. It is a partial reading of a deeply complex history. While it is

undoubtedly true that certain members of religious minorities achieved roles of prominence within the government and society of the time, as Conroy notes 'the singling out of individuals as examples of a state of politics is… likely to mislead' because it ignores 'the often marked distinction between parvenu and pariah, where the former are encouraged to see themselves as disassociated from the latter' (Conroy, 2013:5). This focus on certain figures ignores the fact that ordinary non-Muslim citizens within the region would likely not have been treated as equals. This was reflected in the punitive tax levied upon non-Muslim peoples and that practising their faith openly was not without repercussions. Furthermore, the rise in intolerance, sectarianism and nationalism that accompanied the end of the al-Andulus era occurred alongside widespread economic and agricultural stress as well as devastating disasters such as the plague (ibid). Menocal neglects to highlight the importance of material conditions in driving social and political change. As a result, her account of this period is rich yet also partialised and incomplete, driven by a narrative concerned with promoting ideas that are applicable to the situation of the 21st century. As Conroy states:

> 'Rather than seeing the fall of an Islamic ornament as a consequence of the rise of Rome it may be better to consider the disappearance of this order, such as it was, as a consequence of changing economic pressures which expose, in the end the fragility of our endeavours to create cultures of tolerance' (ibid).

The narratives promoted by IS and other violent groups are following a key lineage within Islam that is similarly built on appropriated and distorted historical interpretations. They exist as an interpretation of political events, intended to apportion credit for success and locate the reasons for failure in the event of defeat. To understand contemporary events and the role they play in shaping the nature and goals of current Islamic extremist movements, the earliest years of Islam must also be examined. The narrative of Islam's original ascent as a global, world-altering force under the leadership of Mohammed has been the example aped by numerous Islamic factions throughout history in their pursuit of political power. Burke notes that the spread of Islam attained an element of myth from its earliest stages, such was the speed of its advance across the Arabian Peninsula and beyond:

> '…Islam spread rapidly…The expansion gathered momentum and, decade after decade, the advance of the faith never really slowed, with every military victory reinforcing their sense that Islam was indeed the project of God. Many crucial military encounters were won when opposing forces defected. Many cities just decided against resistance… Huge swathes of territory were joined, nominally to

> the new empire as local rulers simply sent messages pledging acceptance of their new sovereigns and often the new faith too' (Burke, 2015:83-84).

Burke points out that the geopolitical reality had more to do with the rapid success of Islam's expansion than either military superiority or the strength of the faith. These successes came at a time when both the Byzantine and Persian empires, the two dominant political powers, had 'exhausted themselves in centuries of conflict: Riven with internal dissent, structural weaknesses, and existential doubt, neither was able to defend marginal territories. This was a historic opportunity that the newly mobilised Muslim community readily seized' (ibid). The impact of these rampant military successes has had a profound effect on the cultural and mythological memory of the origins of Islam. From the faith's earliest days, Islam's collective memory was markedly different from the other Abrahamic religions: 'Mohammed did not merely outline a vision of a utopian community to be realised at an unspecified date but actually built one during his own lifetime… While for Jews the collective memory of the earliest experiences of believers is repeated exile, and for Christians it is persecution, for Sunni Muslims it is one of the most successful military and political campaigns in history' (ibid:84).

This long-standing history of militant activism – the spread of the faith through the sword – has been routinely invoked by violent Islamic extremist groups, particularly Salafist-Jihadis, throughout the centuries since Mohammed's conquests. In this worldview, the example of the Prophet entails the instrumentalising use of violence to spread the faith. In this militant narrative, it is one of the primary means of Islamizing physical space – its purity reflecting the need for inner transformation. This will be a recurring feature of jihadist activism throughout this thesis. The narrative of Islam's massive military victories is recited and reiterated in forms of discourse and iconography. Both groups purposefully frame their violence and their activism as belonging to this historical lineage of jihadist doctrine, and position themselves as the rightful heir to Mohammed's legacy. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's nome de guerre reflects this desire to situate himself as a true inheritor to Mohammed. Hoksen writes 'Abu Bakr was the name of the first Sunni caliph to succeed the Prophet Mohammed back in 632… Baghdadi also claimed to be 'al-Qurayshi', claiming descent from the Prophet's tribe… Many Islamic scholars consider this an essential requirement to become caliph and it is clear that Baghdadi and ISI [sic] believed the qualification to be equally important at the time' (Hosken, 2015:122).

Baghdadi's speech from the Grand Mosque in Mosul was a dramatic performance of that claim

in action. Burke illustrates that the notion of reclaiming a lost history is something that has not been lost on successive militant leaders throughout the centuries. His analysis is instructive in relation to the power of specific narratives in militant Islam's understanding and interpretation of history:

> 'What today's commentators in London and Washington often forget – and militants repeatedly remind themselves and anyone else prepared to listen – is that the supremacy of the West is a relatively new phenomenon in historical terms. Across much of the world, for two-thirds of the last 1300 years, the power, the glory and the wealth was, broadly speaking, Islamic. The militants seek to return the world's Muslim community to what they see as its rightful status: a global superpower. The story of the Caliphate can only be understood within the context of this overarching narrative. And understanding this story – and its different versions – is essential if we are to understand the degree to which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his Islamic State followers have not simply revived this 140-year-old institution but also imagined and reinvented it' (Burke, 2016:85).

These narratives situate the defeats and traumas of the past – the sense of Islam's divine destiny being denied - within the framework of the present. It also places a predominant emphasis on violence as the primary means of activism. Narratives that stress the centrality of violence can in turn foster violent imaginaries that are designed to encourage and motivate future acts of bloodshed. Kitts outlines: 'a violent imaginary, by definition, takes shape in violent acts. It would be remarkable if religious literatures, conveying a mesh of icons, legends, symbols, theological notions, and ritual practises involving violence, did not shape outright expressions of violence as well as the significance attributed to them' (Kitts, 2013:419). Such violent imaginaries seek to differentiate between the "us" and "them" groups (Jassen, 2015:178). They are also 'rarely intended to remain purely imagined' (ibid), as collective violence, as a concept, 'needs to be imagined before it can be carried out' (Schmidt & Schroder, 2001:9). For violence to be imagined, the historicity of conflict has to be both simultaneously emphasized and de-contextualised. Stories of war and existential threats to culture or ethnic group identity maintain the awareness of violence and persecution within collective memory. Past violence becomes the source of legitimacy for future violence as Schmidt and Schroder observe:

> 'The most important code of the legitimation of war is its historicity. The symbolic meaning of prior wars is re-enacted and reinterpreted in the present, and present violence generates symbolic value to be employed in future confrontations. Wars are fought from memory, and they are often fought over memory, over the power to establish one group's view of the past as a legitimate one' (ibid).

Violent imaginaries, and the narratives they produce, are vitally important in our efforts to understand the historical context in which grand narratives rise and fall. The violent imaginaries of Salafi-Jihadism are commonly expressed in narratives defined by absolutism, divinely-sanctioned conquest, intolerance and Islamic supremacy.

At this point it is worth briefly outlining some of the key tenets of Salafi-Jihadist doctrine that are essential to the ideology of terrorist groups such as Islamic State. Grasping these ideological beliefs is critical to addressing the underlying imaginaries and narratives that give such beliefs authority and integrity. Salafi-Jihadism is considered an offshoot of the wider, and older, Islamic philosophy known as Salafism. Salafism emerged in the late 19h century as a revivalist form of Islam in reaction to European colonial expansion and its dominance over large stretches of the Muslim world. Broadly speaking, it is a 'philosophical outlook which seeks to revive the practices of the first three generations of Islam, who are collectively known as the al-salaf al-salihin, or "pious predecessors"' (Maher, 2016:7). This is the essential thesis of the Salafi creed, 'that Islamic belief and practise should replicate the model of Muslim life as lived in the times of the holy Prophet himself and his companions for three generations' (Ahmad, 2016:21). These original generations 'are held to constitute a golden age of authenticated and orthodox Islam, based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad in which he was asked about the characteristics of the best Muslims' (Maher, 2016:7). Maher notes that:

> 'Salafism is a philosophy that believes in progression through regression. The perfect life is realised only by reviving the Islam of its first three generations. Taken as markers of both authenticity and purity, the legacy of the al-salaf al-salihin provides the praxis for contemporary Salafism. The message is consequently a revivalist one, seeking to bring Muslims back to what is regarded as the "authentic" and "pure" Islam of its early generations.' (ibid).

Given its revivalist nature, Salafism explicitly rejects cultural innovation, man-made laws and secular ideologies. These directly contravene the divine revelations and laws revealed to Mohammed by Allah and codified in the sacred texts of the Qur'an and Sunna. Salafists 'believe that by strictly following the rules and guidance in the Qur'an and Sunna (path or example of the Prophet Muhammad) they eliminate the biases of human subjectivity and self-

interest, thereby allowing them to identify the singular truth of God's commands. From this perspective, there is only one legitimate religious interpretation; Islamic pluralism does not exist' (Wiktorowicz, 2006:207).

In the Salafi worldview the reasons for the decline of the Muslim world - relative to European and Western ascendency - are to be found in Muslim nations embracing modernity as well as human-made secular ideologies - systems of unbelief - thereby rejecting the divine path that was the original cause of their pre-eminence. The West's technological and political domination of Muslim nations is viewed as being the result of Muslims failure to live authentically in accordance with their religious heritage. Therefore, the answer to arresting the decline of Muslim civilization is to be found in the restructuring of its political regimes into authentic systems of Islamic governance and practice, in tune with the divine laws and sovereignty of God. Haykel notes the importance of God's sovereignty, or unity (tawhid) in Salafi doctrine. This indisputable oneness makes 'certain that unbelief is fought, especially all forms of associating other beings or things with God (shirk)' (Haykel, 2009:39). Such unity of belief is drawn from the 'only valid sources of authority', the Qur'an and Sunnah' (ibid). These in turn grant the authority to rid 'Muslims of the reprehensible innovations (bida) in belief and practise that they have wittingly and unwittingly adopted' (ibid). A stringent, literalist interpretation of the holy texts is viewed as 'sufficient to guide Muslims for all time and through all contingencies' (ibid).

It is worth pointing out that Salafi movements have taken on numerous forms throughout history, the majority of which have been nonviolent in character. Often they have embarked upon campaigns of apolitical activism, with Salafi adherents removing themselves from society as a whole in order to live wholly within a literalist interpretation of the faith. This involved separating themselves from what was viewed as corrupt (jahiliyyah) and ignorant societies of unbelief. It involved disassociating with any political or social institutions that were outwith God's divine sanction (Olidort, 2015).

Salafi jihadism however is a more recent mutation of this line of belief, which has been embraced by certain groups since the 1980s as a means of achieving this distinct reordering through a violent conceptualization of jihad as 'fard 'ayn (a personal religious duty)' (Jones, 2014:2). All ideologies outwith the sovereignty of God's word are not to be simply rejected, but violently purged from society at large. The concept of jihad takes on a special significance

within this incarnation of Salafism. It becomes predicated on the direction of violence against political regimes that have been declared kaffir (infidels) or takfir (apostates). Aping the example of the Prophet, Salafi-Jihadism seeks to deliberately invoke the military successes of Islam's ancient conquests. In this way, the narrative of Islam's violent expansion is repeatedly recited, as Salafi-Jihadist groups such as Islamic State situate their violence as a continuation of the righteous violence of Mohammed's victories.

The narratives propagated by Salafi-Jihadist groups are built on a historical dichotomy that foregrounds Islam's divine supremacy while denying the realisation of its destiny. The defeats and failures of Islamic entities in the past are expressed within stories of existential betrayal and Manichaean conflict, of malevolent forces - both external and within – who are set upon Islam's destruction. These grievances shape the ideologies and messaging of militant Islamic movements, and often inform the nature of the violence directed at their enemies.

A major historical moment for the configuration of modern Sunni Islamic militancy lies in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This is a key episode with major socio-political and religious ramifications across the world, and its impact is deeply felt in the narratives that emerged to inform the ideologies of modern violent movements. The Ottoman Empire existed in various forms for over 600 years, from around 1299 to 1922/23. At its peak, it encompassed vast swathes of territory stretching from the Middle East, across Central and Southern Europe, up to the Caucasus region, as well as areas of North Africa and the Horn of Africa. It was a major centre of economic, cultural and military power, regularly clashing with its rival European and Christian states. Before interrogating this historical episode however, it is worth firstly illustrating the origins of this great power within the context of Islam's territorial growth post-Mohammed. The Ottoman Empire emerged out of the expansionist campaigns of early Islamic rulers. Forming vast networks of trade and deep cultural links across multiple regions, this 'new Islamic empire developed into a hugely rich and powerful civilisation', as we have already seen:

> 'The Umayyads, who ruled from 661 to 750 from Damascus, continued to acquire new territory, extending their rule as far as the Atlantic coast of the Iberian peninsula to the west and the Indus Valley in the east. They gave the new imperial entity a permanence in other ways too. Some of the most famous examples of Islamic architecture – the great mosques of Cordoba and Damascus, the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem – date from this period. The Umayyads also consolidated the Arabic language throughout their domains and launched naval expeditions for the

> first time. The Abbasids, who overthrew the Umayyads in a revolt in 750, ruled from a series of cities including Baghdad, Raqqa and Samara, and are credited with ushering in a golden age of Islamic civilisation' (Burke, 2015:84).

The strength of this collective memory is a deeply powerful one. As the 9/11 Commission Report stresses: 'Many Muslims look back at the century after the revelations to the Prophet Mohammed as a golden age. Its memory is strongest among the Arabs', (9/11 Commission Report, 2004:50) and the Caliphate as an institution exerts a real nostalgic pull over many Muslims today, particularly Sunnis (ibid).

Yet as we can see, the history of Islam itself is replete with disunity and factionalism. The narratives propagated by IS and other jihadists often portray the various Caliphates as a single continuous entity throughout Islamic history, neglecting the internecine warfare between the competing Caliphates throughout the centuries. The overthrow of the Umayyads led to the declaration of the rival Caliphate in al-Andulus under Abd al-Rahman years later, as we have already discussed. Subsequent chaos in the Abbasid capital of Baghdad led directly to the 'declaration of independence and superiority by the Andulusians' (Menocal, 2002:31). It has never been a truly unified global entity. Later, in Tunis (close to Andulusia) a breakaway group of Shiites who claimed descent from the Prophet's daughter Fatima declared their own insurrectionist Islamic state and proclaimed it to be the legitimate Caliphate (ibid). This led to another series of hostile reactions and bloodshed. But these histories are often minimised or outright ignored in Sunni jihadist narratives that portray the Caliphate as a source of continuity and stability, its foundation paving the way for an uninhibited golden age.

Despite these bloody rivalries between competing Islamic dynasties for control of the domains that constituted this fledgling empire, 'brilliant cultural activity continued' (Burke, 2015:84). This also occurred alongside persistent attacks from external enemies such as the Mongols and Crusaders. As Burke notes, the brutal sack of Baghdad by Mongol invaders in 1258 by no means brought an end to Islam's ascendancy: 'Those who had destroyed the great city converted to Islam themselves. Within two hundred years, Constantinople would have fallen to the Ottoman Turks, who went on to conquer much of the Balkans and threaten central Europe' (ibid).

The Ottoman's emerged out of the power struggles between these various Islamic dynasties, as well as clashes with the European and Mongol powers of the time. The territory initially claimed by the Ottoman's had long belonged to the Christian Roman Empire and its successor state, the Byzantine Empire, which was ruled from Constantinople. This area is situated in the 'northwestern corner of the Anatolian peninsula, also called Asia Minor' (Quataert, 2005:13). The territory of the Byzantine Empire once stretched across nearly all of the modern-day Middle East, including states such as Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Turkey and parts of Iraq (ibid:15). Over time however, Byzantium ceded much of this territory owing to a convergence of threats posed by new states with their own expansionist agendas based in the cities of Mecca, Damascus and Baghdad (ibid). This was compounded by other enemy states on multiple fronts vying for control of lucrative trade routes and the economic wealth of the Aegean, Black Sea, and eastern Mediterranean (ibid). Alongside growing European states such as Bulgaria, Serbia and Venice, there was also a major threat on the eastern Mediterranean from Turkish nomads known as Turcoman. This polity formed out of a series of massive migrations that saw the Turcoman move from Asia Minor into Iran and the Middle East. Here they converted to Islam while also retaining many of the practices and rituals associated with their native shamanistic religion (ibid). One of their leaders was the Seljuk family. This group directed their followers into the nearby region of Byzantine Anatolia in order to minimise the disruption caused by large-scale migration into Iran.

Anatolia was also a target for two reasons: its provinces were full of 'productive, heavily populated agrarian settlements and thus for the nomads appeared as very attractive targets for plunder. In a word, the Anatolian provinces were rich. They were also Christian. Therefore they offered doubly justified targets of warfare for these Turkish nomads recently converted to Islam and under the influence of popular preachers who fused shamanist beliefs with Islam' (ibid:16). Quataert illustrates that the motives behind the decision to invade Anatolia were a 'mixture of economic, political and religious factors' (ibid): '…not long after their entry into Iran, the Turcoman nomads began plundering and raiding the eastern provinces of Byzantium, pulled there by economics, politics, and faith, and pushed there by the centralising Seljuk rulers of Iran' (ibid).

Over the course of several centuries, Anatolia was beset by both Byzantine and Turcoman factions seizing and then ceding control of territory. Turcoman 'principalities rose and fell and Byzantine control ebbed and flowed' (ibid). Ultimately, however, 'Byzantine Christian,

predominantly Greek-speaking, Anatolia underwent a profound transformation and over time became Turkish-speaking and Muslim' (ibid). This change sent shockwaves that reverberated across both Asia and Europe. The eventual triumph of a faction of Turcoman led by the Osman dynasty over the Byzantine Empire, and its establishment of the empire that would rule for over 600 years, is intrinsic to the essentialised narrative of divinely-ordained Islamic supremacy that dominates modern Salafi-Jihadist thinking. Similarly, the Ottoman Empire's ultimate collapse in the early 20th century compounds the duality of this narrative and gives jihadist movements in the 21st century the foundational loss from which all subsequent paroxysms in the Islamic world can be traced, defined and foregrounded.

Osman's success in state building was 'due to an exceptional flexibility, a readiness and ability to pragmatically adapt to changing conditions' (ibid:18). As well as fighting the remnants of the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman's also fought other Turcoman dynasties, meaning its expansion was 'multi-directional – aimed not only west and northwest against Christian Byzantine and Balkan lands and rulers but always east and south as well, against rival Turcoman political systems'. In this sense, it is important to note that the Ottoman enterprise, at least initially, was not solely a religious state 'in the making but a rather a pragmatic, dynastic one' (ibid:189). These two elements combined were crucial to the state's ultimate growth in becoming a world empire that challenged various Western forces throughout the centuries.

The Ottomans expansion into the Balkans was again marked by these twin motives of faith and material considerations: 'These lands were rich and at the time were empty of Turcomans. Appeals to action also could be made in the name of ideology – of war for the faith' (ibid:19). This marked the beginning of their incursions that ultimately brought them 'vast territories at the junction of the European, Asian and African continent' (ibid:20). A series of stunning victories occurred at places such as Nicopolis in 1396 and Varna in 1444 where they defeated 'wide-ranging coalitions of west and central European states that were becoming painfully aware of the expanding Ottoman state' (ibid:20). I453, under the leadership of Sultan Mehmet II, the Ottoman's finally seized control of Constantinople, the 'city of the Caesars', signifying the decisive fall of the Byzantine Empire. This achievement subsequently became a major part of the mythos of modern-day Islam. Specifically, the notion of jihad that emerges from this era becomes central to modern militant thinking regarding the methods by which Islam is to regain its Ottoman-era ascendancy. This is despite the fact that, as we have already seen, the real motives behind the early Ottoman conquests were a combination of religious reasoning and

more pragmatic considerations concerning space and material wealth. The Islamization of Constantinople saw it renamed to Istanbul, and they filled the city 'with great mosques and palaces that overwhelmed visitors from Western Europe' (Polk, 2018:93) Polk notes that while the architectural, literary and artistic achievements of the Ottoman Empire at its peak were extraordinary, it was fundamentally its 'enormous extent and vast power' that gave it its influence and authority and ability to project its will across huge distances and territories:

> 'Europeans were particularly impressed by its governmental and military system…Ottoman armies came close to taking Vienna on two occasions and occupied most of the Balkan Peninsula for centuries. The standing army, particularly its artillery, and its navy were thought to be among the most potent military forces in the world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. To man their army, the Ottoman rulers drafted or kidnapped suitable young men from among the non-Muslim, mainly Greek Christian, Balkan communities, converted them to Islam, trained them in the martial arts, and employed them either as soldiers or as what we could call civil servants' (ibid).

Given the incredible reach of its power, Burke argues that 'Even as late as the seventeenth century, no European state, with the arguable exception of Spain, came even close to rivalling the Ottoman Empire's territorial extent, military capability, scientific knowledge and artistic achievement.' (Burke, 2015:84). From this height, the slow subsequent collapse of the Ottoman Empire over the course of the next 200 years took place in accordance with the growth of numerous European powers that ultimately outstripped the reach and power of the Ottomans. The causes of this, in parallel to huge transformations in Europe, resulted in a series of tumultuous paroxysms that would define relations between the West and the Muslim and Arab world for centuries to come. The era of empires, with their promotion of dominant narratives married to profound economic and military strength (both Western and Islamic alike) in turn set the stage for the antagonisms and violence found in many nations in the following 20th and 21st centuries. This era, and its role in shaping the narratives that would embolden the Islamic State, will form the topic of discussion in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: The Religization of Arab and Middle East Politics

As we have seen, the roots of a militant vision of Sunni Islam originate from the faith's earliest days. A series of major crises and upheavals spanning the late 19th and 20th centuries powered the growth of Sunni militant Salafism in the modern era. These events would take on renewed significance in the post-9/11 jihadi movement. Specifically, we will see how the role of the modern Caliph and the Caliphate emerged during an era of intense colonial and imperial expansion (both Western and non-Western) beginning in the 18th century, and what impact these eras of crisis and conflict had on grand narrative. Lyotard's theory is useful again this instance. It cannot be described as postcolonial – political and cultural movements concerned with critiquing the impact and legacy of imperialist and colonial enterprises, predominantly from Western nations – in its analysis of the failure of longstanding Western narratives in many places. Yet his theory of grand narrative nonetheless holds a mirror up to grand Western political projects and questions the internal dynamics that drove their erosion and why their ideas were rejected so fiercely in many places. In this sense it is self-reflective and helps to understand how the distance between what these narratives professed and their actual reality saw their ultimate collapse. This of particular relevance when examining colonial and post-colonial contexts such as the end of World War One which helped to fuel the jihadist militant forces embodied by the Islamic State.

The Ottoman Turks

As we shall see, taken together, these crises can be viewed as an elongated historical 'moment' which had major ramifications for the role of narrative in shaping post-colonial and anti-imperial discourses. The specific forms these various narratives took on helps to inform how narratives are often in dialogue, and indeed direct competition, with each other, underlying their multiple, reactive and complex nature. It is within this 19th and 20th century period that we see the rise and fall of multiple ideologies and their accompanying narratives within the Arab and Muslim world. The failure of each narrative in turn shapes the form and character of its successor, with the replacement narrative often driven by its predecessor's inability to explain and define a workable and cohesive social order, and to protect it from both external and internal attack. The conclusive defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War One by the Western powers brought an end to nearly 800 years of nominal Muslim rule throughout the

Middle East. Its impact across the world was tumultuous, ushering in a new order in the region defined largely by the European powers such as Britain, France and Russia. Following the Ottoman surrender in 1918:

> 'the British and French divided between themselves the Ottoman lands that lay between present-day Turkey and Egypt. The British exercised mandates over Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq, while the French held as their mandates what became Lebanon and Syria. The borders set for these domains reflected British and French convenience, not ethnic or political lines as they existed in reality' (Lynn II, 2019:270).

The carving up of former Ottoman land and the creation of artificial borders by the colonial powers came at enormous cost. But before examining the impact of World War One itself, it is worth considering the context of the years leading up to the conflict that help explain both the Ottoman's subsequent breakup and the Entente's decision to divide up its territory amongst themselves. The Ottomans had gradually ceded territory throughout the 1800s owing to the growth of emerging European powers. This had been partially fuelled by major technological changes in the previous century during the industrial revolution that had been recognised and utilised by northern European entities such as Italy, France, the Low Countries and Great Britain (Polk, 2011:99). The 17th and 18th centuries had seen the onset of new machinery and mass-produced goods, as well as the growth in mechanisation of agricultural and key military capabilities. The growth of organised and effective administrative and bureaucratic systems within European governments also complemented their evolution into empires as the goal of expansionism became institutionalised (ibid:100). Here we see again the importance of the material economic conditions of the age shaping great social and cultural change. Polk contrasts examples of European innovation with Ottoman indifference and stagnancy:

> 'Printers found that if they replaced workmen with machines powered by energy instead of muscle, they could produce far more and do it more cheaply. The waterwheel thus came into widespread use to heat metal and produce paper, and, as it did so, the impulse arose to make it more efficient…The failure to grasp the importance or the means of mobilising equipment was one of the main reasons the nations of the south eventually came under colonial rule' (ibid).

The Ottoman Turks throughout this period however maintained stringent control over their most powerful institutions. These included the army known as the janissary, which was initially established as the sultan's personal bodyguard in 1370 but was ultimately broadened to become

for a time one of the most formidable armies in the world (Agoston & Masters, 2009:296), as well as their vast bureaucracy. Beyond these, the Turks showed little interest in European influences. Ottoman policy at this time was to 'turn European slaves (kapi kular) into quasi-Turkish janissaries (yeniceris) rather than having Turks copy the ways of the Europeans… There was little room or scope for technological innovation or organizational reordering except in military affairs. The aim of the system was preservation, not change' (ibid:1000).

This stagnancy would come to a head in the 1800s. Selim III ascended to the Sultanate in 1789 and by the early 1800s his 'authority over the Empire's peripheral territories had declined so dramatically… that soldiers, governors and landowners had scrambled to fill local power vacuums as they appeared' (Glenny, 2012:3). Glenny situates this decline as arising directly from the Ottoman's refusal to recognise both the dramatically shifting geopolitical landscape and the technological superiority of its rivals. This in turn revealed the weaknesses of maintaining control over such a geographically, culturally and ethnically diverse space. The number and reach of these new European rivals exacerbated the Ottomans overstretched capabilities. The technological and military advances in other empires of the period had left the Ottomans lagging behind. But these changes had also left the Ottomans ill-prepared for real reforms. Powerful blocs such as the military, the janissaries and Islamic religious authorities, wielded enormous influence and prohibited measures that would limit their power. It is worth noting that the need for modernisation was recognised by some factions within the Ottoman central authority but that these efforts were continuously resisted by the janissaries and the pashas, powerful regional governors who controlled expanses of territory across regions as diverse as the Balkans, Palestine and the Maghreb (ibid). Glenny argues:

> 'Cocooned in privilege, the conservative majority – the 'wise men' of the Islamic hierarchy, the ulema; and the bloated officer classes in the army – resisted the encroachment of European ideas and administrative systems, seeing them as a threat to Ottoman tradition. Although the Empire was a well-established prop on the international stage, its sultans and viziers declined to play an active role in the drama. Watching from the wings as Spain, Britain, Holland and France developed their great commercial empires, they ignored the influx of large amounts of gold and silver into the European markets…In the two centuries since the colonization of the New World, the impact of European mercantilism promoted inflation, famine and political instability in the Ottoman Empire' (ibid:3).

Attempts at reforming the janissaries by reducing their number in order to contain corruption and nepotism met with only mild success: 'None of the targets were achieved for the janissary

corps because of well-organised reactions. The size of the janissaries rose against all attempts at reduction from 54,458 in 1794 to 98,539 in 1806' (Uyar & Erickson, 2009:121). Uyar and Erickson note that this modest attempt at reforming such a powerful institution left Selim appearing weak and in fact had the opposite effect of galvanising the janissary as it 'merely encouraged the ring-leaders of hard-core criminal elements within the janissaries to such a degree that their insolent behaviour alarmed Ottoman society' (ibid). Selim's rule also saw the pashas exert greater regional autonomy, undermining the central authority in Istanbul (ibid:4). Intensifying this growing territorial fragmentation and economic stress were a series of conflicts in the late 1700s and early 1800s that saw rebellions, losses of domains and the reassertion of distinctly nationalist narratives and identities that further challenged Ottoman hegemony. While there had been revolts in different regions throughout the empire at various points in its history, these had rarely sought decisive independence from Ottoman rule. They were usually geared towards remedying social and political problems within the system (Quataert, 2005:55). But the beginning of the 19th century brought with it a new form of rebellion:

> 'in the Balkan, Anatolian, and Arab provinces alike – movements emerged that actively sought to separate particular areas from Ottoman rule and establish independent sovereign states subordinate to no higher political authority. Further, in almost every instance, one or another of the Great Powers supported these revolts, and their assistance indeed was crucial to the success of the rebels' effort' (ibid).

A major onset of this change was the French invasion of Egypt in 1798, then an Ottoman vassal state. Napoleon sought to cut off British access to the lucrative trade routes of the Far-East and India. Cairo was captured by French troops in July, the Ottoman provincial forces easily routed. This further damaged the image of the Ottomans, portraying them as unable to defend their own subjects from foreign attack. They had been caught unaware and unprepared for an assault by a modern European army and it took the British Royal Navy and the governor of Syria's army of mercenaries to halt the French army's advance (Uyar & Erickson, 2009:123). British observers concluded that 'due to the lack of an efficient officer corps, basic military training and discipline, they [the grand army] were more or less useless against a European army' (ibid:124). The ordeal exposed the military fragility at the heart of the empire and hastened the loss of control in provinces such as Egypt, Baghdad and Syria (ibid:). Egypt in 1805 came under the rule of an Albanian Ottoman officer named Muhammed Ali who crafted his own military force and accrued greater autonomy. While Egypt was nominally still Ottoman

territory until 1914, from this point onwards 'Egypt embarked on a separate course for the remainder of Ottoman history' (Quataert 2005:55). It officially recognised the sovereignty of the Sultan but essentially became a self-governing province (Hyde, 2017:239). This event was echoed in the Balkan territories. Serbs had rebelled against the local administration in the northwest corner of the empire owing to abuses committed by janissaries known as the Dahije who had seized power in a coup. After their pleas for help to the Ottomans fell on deaf ears, the Serbs appealed instead to Russia. Over the course of the following decade, a number of uprisings took place between Serbian revolutionaries supported by the Russian Empire and the Ottomans that ultimately resulted in the installing of hereditary rule by a Serbian prince. This led to the establishment of the autonomous principality of Serbia. While not legally defined as an independent state until 1878, by 1817, Serbia was essentially a 'state separate from the Ottoman' (Quataert, 2005:55). Russia also made increasing territorial gains throughout this century of what had formerly been Ottoman land, asserting itself as the protector of Slavic minorities within the Ottoman Empire (Hyde, 2017:241). This culminated later in the century with Russia invading Herzegovina and Bulgaria following brutal Turkish crackdowns on rebellions in these regions:

> 'Keen as ever to be seen as the guardian of the Slavs, Russia moved into the Balkans and inflicted a bloody nose on the Turks. The subsequent peace resulted in the Ottomans ceding further large tracts of the Caucasus to Russia and having to pay an indemnity they could ill afford' (ibid).

The growth in nationalist movements - and pan-ethnic solidarity across steadily weaker borders - throughout the Ottoman Empire accelerated during this era. Following the 1821-1830 Greek war of independence (supported by Britain, France and Russia) and the failure of Sultan Mahmut II to supress the rebellion, the 1830 Treaty of London formally acknowledged the birth of a new independent state in what is now the southern region of modern Greece (Quataert, 2005:56). Greece would eventually expand its own borders 'until all the territory from Thessaly up to Macedonia had been liberated' (Hyde, 2017:241). The toll of these wars and rebellions was heavy. The cost of maintaining military bases and supporting armies across vast domains intensified the empire's already precipitous financial situation as well, when local levies and tributes for the Sultan were repeatedly ignored (ibid:243). As the Ottomans sought to weather these numerous crises, Arab movements began to exert their influence and push for similar levels of autonomy and independence. The role of Arab nationalism within this context

is instructive, as it is also deeply linked to religious notions surrounding the role of the Caliphate. Specifically, the idea of a pan-Arab identity which was centred on earlier, more ancient notions of cultural and religious unity gained greater credence, emboldened further by expressions of nationalist sentiment from other ethnic groups. Here, powerful narratives and mythologies were promoted that sought to define Arab history and identity in opposition to the growing power of Turkish nationalism.

Before moving onto the issue of Arab nationalism, it is worth pointing out that while the Ottoman Empire underwent significant change throughout this century, it still retained a claim on being the legitimate incarnation of the Islamic Caliphate. Religious officials and senior civil servants were still required to swear an oath of fealty (known as a bay'a) to the Caliph. Following the ascent of Sultan Abdulhamid II to the position of Caliph in 1876, he sought to bolster his religious credentials as a means of preventing further territorial fragmentation. The reformed Ottoman constitution of 1876 contained provisions that simultaneously attempted to reform Ottoman structures of governance – modernising the army and civil service at the behest of young Turkish intellectuals and military officials - while still emphasising the essential Islamic character of both the office of Caliph and the Empire itself. The Constitution stated:

> 'The Ottoman sovereignty, which includes in the person of the Sovereign the Supreme Caliphate of Islam, belongs to the eldest Prince of the House of Osman, in accordance with the rules established an antique… His Majesty the Sultan, under the title of "Supreme Caliph," is the protector of the Muslim religion. He is the sovereign and padişah (emperor) of all the Ottomans' (Ottoman Constitution, 1876).

Identifying himself as a descendent of Osman, the founder of the original Ottoman empire, Abdulhamid sought to emphasize this sense of continuity and his link with the Empire's earliest victories and Islam's golden age. Alongside the articles conferring divine and hereditary rights was the principle of the Caliph's military power and his right to make war. The constitution stated that the Caliph 'declares war and makes peace; he commands both land and sea forces; he directs military movements; he carries out the provisions of the Şeriat (the sacred law), and of the other laws' (Ottoman Constitution, 1876). This had also been a well-established provision within Islamic thought: a Muslim ruler who had had the power to protect fellow Muslims was viewed as having a justifiable qualification to the office of Caliph, traced back to at least the 10th century and gained renewed legitimacy through the work of the eminent scholar

and philosopher Ibn Khaldun in the 15th century. Khaldun argued that the state of man necessitated the forming of political communities to protect them from violence, and that the best community was the Caliphate as it was the only state governed by the laws of God, the Sharia:

> ‘it is necessary, as required by the religious law, to cause the mass to act in accordance with the religious laws in all their affairs touching both this world and the other world. The authority to do so was possessed by the representatives of the religious law, the prophets. (Later on, it was possessed) by those who took their place, the caliphs. This makes it clear what the caliphate means’ (Khaldun, quoted in Royer, 2022:8-9).

These provisions regarding the divine sovereignty of the caliph and their right to oversee the protection of their fellow Muslims remain cornerstones of Islamic tradition. It was an influential piece of philosophy that shaped the thinking of the Ottomans in both political and religious terms (ibid).

Decline of Ottomans

Returning to the Ottomans: despite these constitutional changes, Abdulhamid nonetheless oversaw an Ottoman Empire that was in major decline. The legitimacy of their religious claim was also deeply dependent upon contemporary political realities and the Ottoman’s ability to maintain power, control and security within their territories. Within this fractious environment, another source of critique gained new relevance. In Islamic thought regarding the Caliph, there has been a long-running debate surrounding the identity of who is permitted to assume the office and how exactly they are to be appointed. Abdulhamid claimed descent from the House of Osman. But his family line was not part of what is termed the ‘prophetic tradition’- the notion that all Caliphs should be members of the Prophet Muhammed’s own tribe, the Quraysh (Buzpinar, 1996:63). The basis for this argument is contested. Buzpinar notes that the hadith on which some Islamic jurists in favour of the prophetic tradition grounded their reasoning was widely viewed as being superseded by a later hadith. This second hadith stated that "the Caliphate after me [the Prophet] will endure for thirty years; then will come the rule of kings’ (ibid). The Ottomans broadly interpreted this to mean that ‘the requirement that the Caliph must be a Qurayshi was valid only for the first four "Rightly Guided" Caliphs, who had reigned

between 632 and 661, and that later Muslim rulers who were sultans could, by virtue of fulfilling the functions of Caliph, rightly assume its titles' (ibid).

Nonetheless, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was weak, with factionalism and nationalism splintering whole regions, the prophetic tradition critique took on a new life, particularly among Arabs who sought to return the Caliph and the Caliphate to what they viewed as its ancestral home. Complicating this further was the emergence of distinctly anti-Turkish sentiment in Arab areas of the Empire. Prior to Abdulhamid, there had been minor talk among both Arab and foreign groups about supporting the creation of an Arab state under the rule of a Sharif in one form or another to undermine the Ottoman claim of legitimacy and exploit anti-Turkish attitudes. In 1858, British Consul-General I.H. Skene reported from Syria of the 'hatred felt by the Arab population of this part of Syria for Turkish troops and officers in general':

> 'it would appear that the Mussulman population of Northern Syria harbours hopes of a separation from the Ottoman Empire and the formation of a new Arabian State under the sovereignty of the Shereefs of Mecca' (Zeine, 1970:583)

There is clear evidence in this period of growing Arab anger that would accelerate towards the end of the century. Zeine notes that 'Despotism, corruption, injustice, and an army of spies intensified the disaffection of the Turks and the Arabs alike towards Turkish mismanagement' (ibid:583). Despite promulgating the reformed constitution in 1876, Abdulhamid suspended it two years later, which enraged both reform-minded Turks and Arabs. Repeated military defeats compounded this escalating sense of crisis. Strohmeier writes that these events provided the backdrop to a nascent Arab nationalism that 'sought to throw off the Turkish yoke', as well as endeavours by the British to undermine the Ottomans by destabilising their claim to the Caliphate (Strohmeier, 2013:207). The idea of the prophetic tradition was revived, out of a combination of both British opportunism and Arab desire to carve a viable state shorn of Turkish influence. To briefly refer to the 21st century context, this tradition was a key aspect of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's claim on the office of Caliph as he also claimed to be a member of the Qurayshi tribe and therefore a descendent of the prophet (Al-Baghdadi, 2014), illustrating that the tradition remains potent in the 21st century. At the end of the 19th century, the prophetic tradition became entwined with political Arabism, which ultimately obtained a distinctly revolutionary character. Zeine states that 'in the vilayets of Damascus and Beirut, the anti-

Turkish struggle emphasized Arabism and Arab unity rather than local patriotism. Hence Arab nationalism became a secret and revolutionary movement' (Zeine, 1970:587). The unique features of Arab culture and the Arabic language, and in turn their intrinsic relationship with Islam, would become cornerstones of the movement, central to the articulation of an identity wholly independent from Ottoman rule.

Emergence of Arab Nationalism

Although Islam does not make distinction between race, nationality or ethnicity, or place limits on who can become a Muslim, it nonetheless has a fundamental link to the culture and peoples of Arabia. Muhammed himself was an Arab, and the holy texts of the faith were originally codified in the Arab language. The core narratives and mythology of Islam's origins and expansion are fundamentally Arabian stories. These elements made Islam a foundational identity for millions within the region, which was sharply contrasted with the increasingly beleaguered, corrupt, and decaying institutions of the Turks. As Zeine writes, as far as many Arab Muslims were concerned, 'they were to be united in one great community, which was the umma of Islam… Islam gave the Arabs a special consciousness of their identity and a sense of pride and superiority'. In the case of Arabs who became Muslims, 'Islam and the Arabic language became the two prime movers of their national unity and political sovereignty' (ibid:585-586). However, a crucial point must be made here. The Arab nationalism that was re-emerging during this time had both religious and secular strains within it. Many Arabs in the region were Christian, which further complicated how a future Arab state would accommodate Arabs of different faiths and what exact system of governance it would employ. As we have seen, the British had been aware of rising anti-Turkish sentiment in Syria since at least the late 1850s and had speculated about the prospect of aiding in the creation of a new Caliphate. These ideas started to spread more widely towards the end of the century. The establishment of the American University in 1866 in Beirut, many of whose students were Christian Arabs, saw Syria and Lebanon become centres of an Arab literary revival that became known as the Nahḍa. This era saw the publication of an Arab dictionary in 1867 and Arab Encyclopaedia and a rise in the number of published Arab newspapers (Krimsti & Ghobrial, 2021:267) Alongside this, there was the beginnings of political resistance against Ottoman rule which was seen by groups within the Ottoman Empire as imperialistic, foreign and dogmatic. From the 1880s to the early 1900s, the idea of a new independent Arab state headed by a Caliph or Sharif was prevalent within sections of both Ottoman territory and the British government.

A major influential thinker on the subject was the Syrian writer Ab al-Rahman Kawakibi. In a series of works, he articulated the Arab and Islamic world's decline in relation to the mismanagement and corruption of the Ottoman Turks. The Turks were attacked as tyrants who economically exploited their subjects and corrupted Islam into a despotic political tool (Kedourie, 1972:243). Crucially, Kawikibi wrote that the political system adopted by this prospective Arab state should encompass Muslim and non-Muslim alike, taking into consideration its Christian Arab population. To this end, he advocated what has been termed a 'non-religious national unity' (Tauber, 1994:192). He also wrote in other works about the importance of Mecca as the location for the seat of the Caliph, which was to exist alongside a non-religious political government. This posited a broad division between secular and religious authorities. The Hijaz region, containing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, would be the area where the Caliph – who was to be of Quraysh descent – had sole jurisdiction and authority. By dividing power in this way, Kawikibi professed that Islam itself would be restored as it would be protected from earthly political corruption (Kedourie, 1972:243).

As Tauber writes:

> 'He [the Caliph] would work for the establishment of an advisory council with 100 members from all the Islamic countries, which would concentrate only on religious matters. The oath of loyalty to the caliph should be renewed every three years and would become void if he transgressed certain conditions. The election of the caliph would be in the hands of the advisory council. The caliph would not intervene in the political or administrative matters of other Islamic countries' (Tauber, 1994:192).

Kawakibi's writings would inspire other Arab thinkers, such as Rashid Rida in the early years of the 20th century. Rida is an important figure as he was linked through personal connections to Hussein bin Ali, the man who would become the Sharif of Mecca in 1908 and later be a central figure in the Arab Revolt during World War One. Rida was born in Syria and travelled throughout the Empire, becoming politically involved in a number of Arab groups that attacked the rule of Abdulhamid. Evidence of the influence of European thought is clear in his revolutionary writings, which advocated the overthrow of the Ottomans:

> 'Was not it the secret political societies which cleansed Europe of the tyranny of kings and popes, eliminated the governments of the nobility, and replaced them with republican and monarchic governments limited by laws and the supremacy of the members of the nation council?' (Rida, quoted by Islam & Islam, 2020:85).

To this end he founded a secret society in 1911, the Society of the Arab Association (Jamʿiyyat al-Jamiʿa al-ʿArabiyya), which was devoted to the goal of promoting the unification of the Emirs of the Arabian Peninsula which would then join the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire to create a genuine Arab state. Hussein bin Ali's son Abdullah was inducted into this organisation and Rida proposed his father as the religious leader of this potential state. Rida echoed Kawakibi's reasoning of having a division between government and religious authorities, with the former having the power to remove the Caliph if he transgressed, stating explicitly:

> 'the rule over the nation is in its own hands ... and its government is a sort of a republic. The caliph has no superiority in law over the lowest of the congregation; he only executes the religious law and the will of the nation… For the Muslims, the caliph is not infallible (ma'sum) and not the source of revelation' (Tauber, 1994:197).

Tauber also writes that Rida emphasised the narrative of Islam's decline only being arrested by its realisation within an Arab state:

> 'Only through the Arab nation could the strength of early Islam be restored, since it was in the days of Arab power that Islam had achieved its most glorious victories; it was the Arabs who developed the Islamic religion; and they were the most superior nation with the most solid foundations' (ibid:196-197).

World War One and Jihad

Within this febrile environment, and the growing onset of war throughout the 1910s, the Ottoman Empire continued to suffer a number of reversals. The Empire had already lost a sizable chunk of their European territory before the outbreak of World War One in a series of conflicts throughout the Balkans between 1912-13. These wars had created a series of back-and-forth territorial changes that had greatly reduced what remained of the Ottomans influence in Europe. The Balkan wars had cost them 80% of their European territory, containing over 4 million people which amounted to 16% of the Ottomans total population' (Aksakal 2008:22). War between the European powers broke out in 1914. The reasoning behind the Ottoman decision to enter the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary later that year is hotly debated. Given the series of defensive wars the Ottomans had fought over the preceding

decades, and the ongoing tensions between the European powers, fears regarding the Ottomans precarious position meant it sought out alliances to prevent further attacks by foreign states. The press within the Empire repeatedly spoke of the need for its leaders to be more assertive against foreign aggression. The Anatolian daily newspaper Ahenk (Harmony) for instance stated: 'We must now fully realize that our honor and our people's integrity cannot be preserved by those old books of international law, but only war' (Wigen, 2015:121), while other papers lashed out at the treatment of fellow Muslims in places such as Macedonia and Greece (ibid). This narrative of Muslim humiliation and denied superiority, Aksakal writes, reflected a public thirst for revenge against the European powers, particularly the Entente Powers (Britain, France and Russia) that had attacked or undermined Ottoman territories such as Egypt, Syria and Anatolia (Aksakal, 2008:34.) Politicians and military figures within the dominant Turkish political parties of the Empire also articulated this sentiment (ibid).

Military cooperation between the European powers and Ottomans accelerated during this time, with the Ottomans purchasing German naval ships and German military personnel helping to reform the Ottoman army. From Germany's perspective, an alliance provided it access to key trade routes in the Near East and ultimately, it hoped, the rich lands of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean (Aksakal, 2008:65). Such an arrangement therefore became key to enabling its expansionist goals. In August 1914, just before the outbreak of war, a formal Treaty of Alliance between the two powers was signed. It stated that 'In case Russia should intervene with active military measures, and should thus bring about a casus foederis [case for alliance] for Germany with relation to Austria-Hungary, this casus foederis would also come into existence for Turkey' (Treaty of Alliance Between Germany and Turkey, 1914). The Ottomans entered the war in October 1914 by attacking Russian forces in the Black Sea. A formal declaration of war followed in November. Buttressing this aforementioned strategic thinking was a rhetorical push that repeatedly emphasised the centrality of Islam in the defence of the Empire. This was reflected in the declaration of war. The language of the declaration was explicitly religious, invoking a 'holy war' or jihad against the infidel powers of Russia, France and the United Kingdom, with the blessing of the Caliphate's highest religious authority, Sultan Mehmet V. It stated:

> 'Of those who go to the Jihad for the sake of happiness and salvation of the believers in God's victory, the lot of those who remain alive is felicity, while the rank of those who depart to the next world is martyrdom. In accordance with God's beautiful promise, those who sacrifice their lives to give life to the truth will have honor in this world, and their latter end is paradise' (Ottoman Declaration of War, 1914).

This was an explicit attempt to invoke the pervasive narrative of defensive jihad that had been threaded throughout Islamic thought from its earliest days. This had both practical and propagandistic applications. Britain recognised the potentially seismic power of the call to jihad for the global Muslim population. Around 100 million Muslims lived in the British Empire alone, while the Russian and French Empires both contained around 20 million (Rogan, 2014:2). The German writer and orientalist Hugo Grothe asked in 1915 not long after the declaration if 'the Mohammedan nations under European rule' were to be 'so charmed by the call to arms issued in the name of Sultan Mehmed Reshâd' that they were compelled to rebel against their Entente rulers? (ibid). A later fatwa issued by Mehmet aimed to sow discord and rebellion in precisely these terms:

> 'Russia, England, and France never for a moment ceased harbouring ill-will against our Caliphate, to which millions of Mussulmans, suffering under the tyranny of foreign dominations, are religiously and whole-heartedly devoted, and it was always these powers that started every misfortune that came upon us. Therefore, in this mighty struggle which now we are undertaking, we once for all will put an end to the attacks made from one side against the Caliphate, and from the other against the existence of our country… In this sacred war and struggle, which we began against the enemies who have undermined our religion and our holy fatherland, never for a single moment cease from strenuous effort and from self-abnegation… Throw yourselves against the enemy as lions, bearing in mind that the very existence of our empire, and of 300,000,000 Moslems whom I have summoned by sacred Fetva [Fatwa] to a supreme struggle, depend on your victory… No army in the history of the world was ever honoured with a duty as sacred and as great as is yours. By fulfilling it, show that you are the worthy descendants of the Ottoman Armies that in the past made the world tremble, and make it impossible for any foe of our faith and country to tread on our ground' (Mehmet V, 1914).

Here we see clear evidence of Mehmet invoking the narrative of the unified, globalised and militaristic Islamic community in action. It is a fatwa that utilised the convention of divinely decreed defensive jihad; deliberately reminded its people of the great history to which they were the supposed inheritors and centralised the Caliphate as the fundamental state of being that all Muslims were duty-bound to fight for and preserve. Only through this act of rebellion would the pre-eminence of Islam and the global ummah be restored. It expressed this narrative while focusing on the present threat posed by the Entete powers, characterised as godless infidels intent on destroying Islam itself, making it both modern and ancient, articulating the timeless applicability of this strand of Islamic ideology and how it offered a direct line of

continuity from Islam's golden age to the present. This is given even more relevance in times of major upheaval, uncertainty and crisis. Importantly, the fatwa towards its end also mentions the concept of martyrdom: 'Let those of you who are to die a martyr's death be messengers of victory… and let the victory be sacred and the sword be sharp of those of you who are to remain in life' (Mehmet V, 1914). This statement emphasised the significance of dying for the Caliphate and again situated the impending conflict within the long history of Islam's past struggles, as well as the lineage of revered martyrs within the faith. Djemal Pasha, minister of the Ottoman navy, summarised the unifying nature of this religious narrative when he wrote of visiting the Ottoman troop lines: 'It gave me enormous pleasure to see and feel that the Arabs would not hesitate to make any sacrifice in this great war for the liberation of the Mussulman Khalifate'(Djemal,2018:43).

The fear of Mehmet's statements sparking rebellion across the world was indeed a real concern among the British elites at least. Herbert Kitchener, who was the British Secretary of State for War in 1914, had previous experience fighting militant Islamic forces in Sudan and took the threat seriously. His experiences as Consul General in both India and Egypt in the years before 1914 also sharpened his awareness of potential unrest among Britain's Muslim population (Rogan, 2014:15). The issue of India, with its vast Muslim population, was a pressing concern. McMeekin writes that these British anxieties surrounding the Ottoman rallying call were not without merit:

> 'In the Raj, there were signs the Turks and Germans were winning the propaganda war, with evidence mounting that the sultan's clam to be caliph of global Islam was taken more seriously in the far-off Indian subcontinent than it was closer to home. By summer 1915, Persia had turned into a hotbed of jihadist intrigue, with fiery holy war sermons against Britain and Russia read out in mosques across the country…Kitchener and his Cairo advisers did understand – or thought they understood – what was at stake following the sultan's declaration of holy war against the British Empire in November 1914: the loyalties of Britain's hundred-million-odd Muslim subjects, spread across the Indian subcontinent, the Persian Gulf States, Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan' (McMeekin:2015: 296).

To counter this and maintain the loyalty of their Muslim subjects, British authorities in India employed the press and local Islamic authorities in a major propaganda drive that portrayed the British Empire as a benevolent guardian of Islam. The British promised to protect Islamic holy sites and shrines in the country while strengthening the power of religious officials and authorities (Rogan, 2014:6). The leader of the Ismaili Muslim community and a powerful

figure within India at large, Sultan Aga Khan, echoed the British line that the declaration of jihad was not genuine but in fact done at the behest of Germany:

> ‘With deep sorrow, I find that the Turkish government having joined hands with Germany acting under German orders, is madly attempting to wage a most unprovoked war against such mighty sovereigns as the King-Emperor and the Tsar of Russia…Turkey was the trustee of Islam, and the whole world was content to let her hold our holy cities in her keeping. Now that Turkey has so disastrously shown herself a tool in the German hands she has not only ruined herself but has lost her position as the trustee of Islam and evil will overtake her’ (Aga Khan, quoted in Rogan, 2014).

The counter-narratives promoted here illustrate the importance of the battle of ideas at the beginning of the war, and the link between narrative and the mobilisation of mass support. It also illuminates the deep-rooted colonial priorities that were a central enterprise to both British and Ottoman empires. It was an essential matter of policy for both that they weren’t threatened by revolutions or mutinies from their subjects and this informed the propaganda campaigns and narratives that were to be consolidated. Such policies were still predicated on colonial visions of control. Britain as a benevolent empire, which was intrinsically bound to the fate of Islam, was contrasted with the opportunistic and weak Ottoman Empire, depicted as a lackey of a European power which had no interest in preserving or defending Islam. British and Indian authorities successfully depicted the Ottomans as deceitful and blasphemous, guilty of using the language and discourse of the faith to further the irreligious political objectives of a non-Muslim nation. A manifesto signed by the Muslims of Delhi for instance declared ‘war is political and not religious and that the duty of and interest of the Indian Mohammedans lies in supporting law and order in India’ (Pati, 1991:20-21). Other groups such as the Mohammedans of Balasore expressed similar sentiment: ‘this meeting of the Mohammedans of Balasore expresses its deep sense of gratitude for the assurance given to the Mohammedan public that in the war between the Allies and Turkey our sacred places will not be molested’ (ibid). Pati notes that this drive saw an upsurge in military recruitment across India. The London Times reported in 1914: ‘Scores of offers of every description continue to reach the Government and several Maharajahs [Princes] have volunteered for the front. The Native States are taking special measures to inform their subjects by pamphlets regarding the war and the brutality of the Germans’ (ibid:21. The significance of the counter- narratives propagated by the British at this moment against the Ottoman declaration of holy war was therefore essential to obtaining mass support and staving off the prospect of religious rebellion in their territory. Indeed,

McMeekin posits that this revival of the Ottoman's religious credentials in fact originated from a position of weakness which the British were able to exploit: it formed 'an unwitting recognition of declining Ottoman prestige in the modern era, a last-ditch effort to rally Muslims to the cause before the empire split apart along national or confessional lines' (McMeekin, 2015: 296). The declaration itself also revealed a hypocrisy to Ottoman reasoning behind joining the war as, in McMeekin's words, it reflected the 'shaky nature of Turkey's casus belli as an ally of "infidel" powers like Germany in a war against her European rivals' (ibid).

Nonetheless, as a unifying rallying cry within the Ottoman military, historians have speculated that the religious rhetoric of their leaders had some psychological impact. Efforts to foment a holy war in North Africa had also greatly concerned the British and had the effect of keeping the 'Ottoman army together as a fighting force in spite of periodic disasters on the battlefield' (ibid). Moorehead also comments that during the ill-fated campaign in Gallipoli 'Those who watched the Turkish gunners at Kilid Bahr [an area of significance during the Gallipoli campaign] say that they fought with a wild fanaticism, an Imam chanting prayers to them as they ran to their work on the gun emplacements. This was something more than the usual excitement of battle; the men were possessed, apparently, with religious fervour, a kind of frenzy against the attacking infidel' (Moorehead, 2015:100). McMeekin summarises this line of thinking as 'Whether or not the German-produced jihad pamphlets inspired Muslim civilisation to take up arms against "the infidels who rule over Islamic lands" (i.e., French, British and Russian Christians), the idea that they were fighting for their faith surely put heart into Ottoman Muslim soldiers facing the formidable armies of the Entente' McMeekin, 2015:297).

To further counter this militant religious revival, Britain began to assume a more assertive role in Arab territories. The distinctly religious holy war narratives propagated by the Ottomans – and the fear they inspired of uprisings in other regions - was a factor in shifting Britain's attention towards supporting nationalist Arab movements. Simultaneously however, this policy shift was still driven by materialistic strategic concerns, as the need to deliver a major blow against the Ottomans in the east became imperative following a number of British losses (Hyde, 2017:58). It is for these combined reasons that the British once again returned to Hussein bin Ali. British involvement in the region had a long history as we have seen. Ali had been appointed Sharif and Emir of Mecca in 1908. The 1916 Arab Revolt against the Ottomans

followed long-running back-and-forth exchanges between the British and various Arab movements. There was uncertainty in British military and political circles regarding what form any future Arab state would take. Foreign Secretary Edward Grey wrote a telegram to Henry McMahon in 1915, then High Commissioner of Egypt, that authorised publication of a statement 'that His Majesty's Government will make it an essential condition in any terms of peace that the Arabian Peninsula and its Moslem Holy Places should remain in the hands of an independent Sovereign Moslem State' (Grey, 1915, quoted in Lieshout, 2016:41). Sir Reginald Wingate, Governor-General of the Sudan, was another senior figure who supported the idea of Arab independence (Wilson, 1989:187). Kitchener had also met with Abdullah, Hussein's son, in Egypt where the topic of Arab unrest towards the Ottomans was broached, following the appointment of a Turkish governor in the Hejaz who was 'not in sympathy with the people' and did not act harmoniously with the Sherif (ibid). Kitchener addressed this meeting in a letter to Grey: 'He [Abdullah] stated very decidedly that in case the Turkish government dismissed his father the Arab tribes of the Hedjaz would fight for the Sherif and a state of war against the Turkish troops would ensue' (ibid).

Following Ottoman entry into the war, Kitchener wrote to Abdullah stating: 'It may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Khalifate at Mecca or Medina and some good may come by the help of God out of all the evil that is now occurring' (Kitchener, 1914).

This spurred on further correspondence between McMahon and Hussein that would define the role of the Arabs for the remainder of the war. Hussein had been initially reluctant, fearing that the conditions were not right for open rebellion and only when Britain would offer territorial guarantees. Hussein's son Faisal had also been in contact with two Arab secret societies, al-Fatat and Al-Ahd, groups which sought to unify the Arab populations of the Ottoman Empire. The Damascus Protocol, as it came to be known, was the document given to Faisal by these societies which promised that they would support Hussein's revolt against the Ottomans if the British unequivocally committed to guaranteeing the territorial boundaries demanded by the Arabs (Rogan, 2015:280-281). The territorial demands within this document became the basis for Hussein's eventual communications with McMahon. The McMahon-Hussein correspondence consisted of ten letters sent between June 1915 and March 1916. Hussein's letters asked that:

> 'England will acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries… England to approve the proclamation of an Arab Khalifate of Islam…The Arab Government of the Sherif will acknowledge that England shall have the preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries whenever conditions of enterprises are otherwise equal…Peace not to be decided without agreement of both parties' (Hussein, July 1915).

McMahon's reply stated that Britain sought 'the independence of Arabia and its inhabitants, together with our approval of the Arab Khalifate when it should be proclaimed' and also declared: 'His Majesty's Government would welcome the resumption of the Khalifate by an Arab of true race' (McMahon, August 1915). Formally, his October letter stated explicitly that:

> '…Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca… Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression and will recognise their inviolability' (ibid).

These guarantees were followed up with further promises that 'Great Britain has no intention of concluding any peace in terms of which the freedom of the Arab peoples from German and Turkish domination does not form an essential condition' (McMahon, December 1915). The impact of these promises set the Arabs on a path to open rebellion. Hussein and his forces within the Hijaz agreed to rebel against the Ottomans with British aid, training and support. This policy also saw the promotion of a counter-narrative to the Ottoman's vision of cross-border, pan-Islamic, jihadist unity. This focussed on a nationalist conception of Arab unity, shorn of the Turco-dominated systems and structures of the Ottoman Empire. Hussein bin Ali's claim was still a profoundly religious one – the Hashemite family line claiming descent from the Prophet Mohammed's great-grandfather (McMeekin, 2015:299).

Yet Hussein's claim was also rooted in a political desire for Arab independence from what were considered alien and didactic Ottoman overlords that had little in common with the tribes and dynasties that populated areas throughout the Middle East. Hussein stated explicitly in his letters to McMahon that Christian Arabs would have their rights respected in the new Arab state: 'there is no difference between a Moslem and a Christian Arab: they are both descendants of one forefather' (Hussein, November 1915). His reasoning invoked a tradition established by past Caliphs from Islam's earliest days:

> 'We Moslems will follow the footsteps of the Commander of the Faithful Omar ibn Khattab, and other Khalifs succeeding him, who ordained in the laws of the Moslem Faith that Moslems should treat the Christians as they treat themselves. He, Omar, declared with reference to Christians: "They will have the same privileges and submit to the same duties as ourselves." They will thus enjoy their civic rights in as much as it accords with the general interests of the whole nation' (ibid).

This illustrates the union of Islamic and nationalist sensibilities that Hussein was seeking to inculcate. While Islam would be the central feature of the state, underpinning it would be the unifying power of Arab social, cultural and historical imaginaries. In doing so he also referenced the Caliphs to whom he claimed heritage - again attempting to maintain the narrative of historic continuity between the present and the past, of lost glories being realised and divine destiny reclaimed. The partially successful revolt of 1916-18 created a powerful new narrative built around Arab liberation and conquest, of emancipation from tyrannical political overlords.

Simultaneously, around this time British propaganda portrayed the emancipation of the Arabs as a critical goal of the war. This also corresponded with a narrative that characterised the Ottoman Empire as tyrannical, bloodthirsty and fundamentally incompatible with Western civilisation. Evidence for this narrative can be found in various outputs disseminated between 1916-17. A pamphlet issued by the British government in 1917 titled *The Ottoman Domination* outlined the rationale for the destruction of the Empire and the liberation of its people: 'Those states which on the map are indistinguishable from Turkey are national states. Their claim to integrity rests on the common desire of the inhabitants of their territory' (British Government, 1917:4). Destroying the Ottomans is framed in clear moral terms: 'The breaking up of Turkey is not the destruction of a living commonwealth but a liberation of enslaved peoples from prison, a clearing of the ground for the commonwealths which these people at long to build' (ibid). Buttressing this moral reasoning is an appeal to history. The Ottoman state is depicted as an artificial creation, a historical aberration built by an inherently war-like people, therefore making it intrinsically unstable: 'the instinct for soldiering is the Osmanli's one and inalienable characteristic' (ibid:5). Violence, fanaticism and oppression are seen as the defining features of Ottoman history: 'The Empire spread with disastrous momentum, engulfing free peoples and destroying well-grown states – the Byzantine Empire… the vigorous kingdoms of Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia, Hungary' (ibid:7). This narrative portrays Britain as the facilitators of civilisation and the harbingers of freedom and liberation, in contrast to the authoritarian barbarity of the Ottomans. The genocidal violence carried out by the Turks against the

Empire's Armenian population is cited as an impending threat to the Arabs, who are represented as a noble, ancient people fighting for national self-determination against alien rulers:

> 'After eliminating the Armenians, the Young Turks prepared the same fate for the Arabs, and they have been engaged on this since 1916. The Arabs in the southern provinces have been able to defend themselves. The province of Yemen, in the hinterland of the Aden, has been in chronic revolt for years and the Young Turks have abandoned the attempt to subdue its national rulers. The province of Hedjaz which contains the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, reasserted its independence a few months ago under the leadership of the Sherif of Mecca, who is the hereditary custodian of the holy city… Which will be destroyed first? The subject peoples or the Ottoman domination?' (ibid:17-18).

This echoes the rhetoric of the Allies war aims in a statement to President Woodrow Wilson at the onset of American entry into the war. These included 'the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from Europe and the liberation of the people subjected to its rule' (ibid:3). It also characterised the Ottoman state as 'radically alien to Western civilisation', and its methods of government a 'murderous tyranny' (ibid).

Other British propaganda outputs in 1916-17 solidified this narrative. One such piece was *The Murderous Tyranny of The Turks,* written by the historian and scholar Arnold J. Tonynbee. It was produced as part of an effort by propagandists and intelligence experts to change perceptions about potential war allies. To this end, Toynbee portrayed the Arabs as the progenitors of one of the world's great civilisations, an advanced people whose technological, scientific and cultural achievements throughout history stood in stark conflict with the backward and domineering Turks:

> 'The Arabs created a wonderful civilisation at the time when medieval Europe was in its darkest ages. Their discoveries in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and medicine are the foundations of modern science. This Arabic civilisation was swamped by the Turkish migrations from Central Asia in the 11th century and blotted out by the Mongols, who followed in the wake of the Turks and sacked Baghdad in the 13th century. The Arabs are still the most progressive race in the Islamic world; they are almost as numerous as the Turks in the population of the Ottoman Empire… Yet the Turkish government excludes them from the share of control, and has thwarted their revival as persistently as that of the Armenians and Greeks. They too have been massacred and exiled during the present war' (Toynbee, 1917:19-20).

Here we say the British adopt a new narrative for their political purposes one which, like Menocal years later, would depict an Islamic culture as being the harbingers of a golden age, responsible for vast learning and cultural accomplishments. This is part of an overcompensation narrative that tries to minimise the complexity of geopolitical reality, to downplay the negative aspects of such an alliance. Toynbee expressed the British propagandist view that the war in the east must be fought to save this ancient civilisation from extinction and liberate the subjects of Ottoman domination from its rule: 'In 1916, the Sherif of Mecca, at the opposite extremity of the Ottoman conqueror's domain, liberated an Arab province and the Holy Arab city of which is the legitimate head. It is for the Entente to liberate the Arabs of Syria and the Armenians, who cannot save themselves' (ibid:21).

In actuality, British support for the Arab Revolt, and the promises of an independent Arab state, were not solely motivated by benevolent concern. The humanitarian language adopted in relation to the Arabs, both in public declarations and in private correspondences, belied a complex balancing act involving a series of promises made between the Entete powers regarding the post-war political order, especially Britain and France. Complicating matters further, Britain was also engaged in negotiations with Jewish officials regarding a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. This meant that in the immediate post-war environment, there were competing claims for territory alongside much confusion regarding the primacy of different agreements. A crucial caveat within Hussein's rebellion remained. While his call to arms had galvanised some to support his cause, it was not the general uprising either he or the British had originally hoped for. Throughout Syria's Arab-speaking provinces, the response was in fact muted (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:321). This was compounded by Arab public figures who accused Hussein 'of being a traitor and condemned his actions as dividing the Ottoman-Islamic Empire at a time when unity was crucial' (ibid). Cleveland and Burton contend that the Arab Revolt therefore cannot be considered a popular uprising against the Ottomans and must be seen as a 'more narrowly based enterprise relying on tribal levies from Arabia and dominated by the Hashimite family' (ibid:322) – making it a project driven by a specific group of elites. This undermined Hussein's claim in his correspondences to McMahon that he was speaking and acting on behalf of all Arabs. Nonetheless, Arab forces reached Damascus in October of 1918, a month before the conclusion of the war in Europe. Throughout the conflict, France had been open to the British about its wishes for territory in Syria. In his correspondences with Hussein, McMahon had sought to remove areas of Syria from Hussein's prospective state as he claimed they were not solely Arab: 'The two districts of Mersina and

Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded.' (McMahon, October 1915). In fact, Cleveland and Bruton argue, the real reason for this refusal was because France had already claimed control of the Syrian coast post-war and Britain did not want to undermine a key ally (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:317). Hussein contested this boundary change and both he and McMahon agreed to postpone the final arrangement until after the war was over.

This tension was emblematic of wider problems. The already-imprecise nature of the territories under discussion, and the competing claims and counter-claims of legitimacy, fed into corresponding narratives of grievance. Hussein felt that he had been given assurances by the British that an independent Arab state would emerge post-war, albeit one in which Britain and France would play a major oversight role. However, other agreements conducted between the allies ultimately came to supersede the promises to the Arabs. France had a long history of involvement in the Middle East since the 1870s as the waters of the Mediterranean that flowed into the regions of Syria and Lebanon were seen as their sphere of influence. France had also been a major investor in the Ottoman Empire and had 'obtained rights in its massive debt and the revenues appropriated to pay it' Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:324). As France grew into a great power, it saw Syria and Lebanon as a major sphere of influence and viewed with alarm Britain's colonial incursions into the region (ibid). To maintain their alliance and coordinate their spheres of influence post-war, Britain and France conducted their own secret agreement that was to the detriment of Britain's agreement with the Arabs. Sykes-Picot as it came to be known (named after diplomats Sir Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot) was the defining agreement of these negotiations. This was drawn up in May 1916, a month before the start of the Arab Revolt. While the agreement stated France and Britain were 'prepared to recognize and protect an independent Arab state or a confederation of Arab states (a) and (b) marked on the annexed map, under the suzerainty of an Arab chief' (Sykes-Picot, 1916), in practicality it divided vast portions of prospective Arab territory between themselves. It stated:

> 'That in the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab state or confederation of Arab states. That in the brown area there shall be established an international administration, the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in

> consultation with the other allies, and the representatives of the Shereef of Mecca' (ibid).

This meant that in reality Britain and France exercised direct control over huge swathes of territory that had nominally been promised to the Arabs by McMahon. It gave the French the majority of the territory they claimed in Lebanon and Syria, stretching from southern Syria all the way to Anatolia. Britain meanwhile gained control over most of southern Mesopotamia, including the key Iraqi provinces of Basra and Baghdad. It also established spheres of so-called 'indirect' influence (ibid) for both powers that saw much of the Syrian interior fall under French administration and areas such as the Sinai, Gaza and Kirkuk under that of the British (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:325). No such spheres of influence were mentioned in McMahon's proposals to Hussein (ibid). A much-reduced Arab state fell in between these two zones. The designated 'brown area' was Palestine which was to be overseen by an international authority (ibid). The partitioning was kept secret from Hussein and the Arabs. Sykes-Picot was fundamentally an agreement designed by the great powers to maintain and expand their hegemony in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's forthcoming demise. It was driven by materialistic concerns at a time when the political order was in a state of flux, and represented an attempt by the Allies to define that new political order on their own terms at its inception. Evidence for this can be found in how the agreement designates zones of economic, commercial and trade activity between Britain and France, granting each access to major trade routes and water supplies that were key to each Empire's expansion into the Middle East. For example, it held:

> 'That Great Britain be accorded (1) the ports of Haifa and Acre, (2) guarantee of a given supply of water from the Tigres and Euphrates in area…That Alexandretta shall be a free port as regards the trade of the British empire, and that there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards British shipping and British goods…That Haifa shall be a free port as regards the trade of France, her dominions and protectorates, and there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards French shipping and French goods. (Sykes-Picot, 1916).

These arrangements - alongside provisions allowing for Britain to build a railway connecting Haifa to the British zone, giving it 'a perpetual right to transport troops along such a line at all times' (Sykes-Picot, 1916) – enabled Britain and France to project massive economic and military power over huge swathes of new territory. Britain had also found that the 'financing of oil exploration would be easier if it imposed direct rule in Iraq' (Barr, 2016). This new economic and political order undercut Britain's wartime propaganda narrative that the war in

the east was set on freeing the Arabs from Ottoman oppression and that Britain was to be the guarantors of a new Arab state. The existence of Sykes-Picot was not widely known until 1917 when the new Bolshevik regime in Russia published it to discredit the previous Tsarist regime. As Rogan writes:

> 'Sykes had led Sharif Husayn to believe that the British planned a short occupation of Iraq and would pay him rent for the time they remained there. He encouraged the sharif to see France's presence in Syria as another such short-term lease in a small patch of the Syrian coastal region' (Rogan, 2015:358).

The reality of the agreement fell well short of the terms agreed to by Hussein and McMahon. Arab anger grew at the end of the war with the Ottoman's defeat coming in October 1918. This culminated in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 where Hussein's son Faisal presented his case which attempted to reconcile the terms of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and Sykes-Picot.

Faisal sought:

> 'immediate and full independence for Arab kingdoms in Greater Syria (corresponding to the territory of the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority) and the Hijaz, then ruled by his father King Husayn. And he acknowledged British claims to Mesopotamia, (ibid:399).

Faisal's terms were overruled by the British and French. Britain again chose to honour French claims on Syria, as without doing so France would not give its consent to British claims on Mesopotamia and Palestine (ibid:400). Rejecting this agreement, Faisal declared the independent Syrian kingdom in March 1920, only for it to be overrun by colonial authorities soon after as the French asserted control. For this betrayal, Hussein refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or the agreement formally ending the war with the Turks, stating that he could not 'affix his name to a document assigning… Syria to foreigners' (Jeddah Report, 1921:16). In Hussein's eyes, his decision was a 'legitimate reaction to the nonfulfillment of undertakings - undertakings that had caused him to give to the Arabs promises he was honour bound to fulfil' (Mousa, 1978:185). Britain's ultimate reneging on the original promise to the Arab leaders of a viable, independent and unified Arab state following the defeat of the Ottomans played into a legitimate and real sense of grievance and betrayal at being exploited by the great powers for their own ends.

The significance of Sykes-Picot in shaping the destabilisation and violence of future conflicts in the region, as well as the rise of Islamic extremist violence later in the 20th and 21st centuries, is contested. The British and French arrangement created artificial borders that had previously not existed. The impact of Sykes-Picot has been repeatedly cited by scholars and journalists as the root from which the modern Middle East's problems emerged. Robin Wright in the New Yorker summarises this thinking: 'The colonial carve-up was always vulnerable. Its map ignored local identities and political preferences. Borders were determined with a ruler—arbitrarily. At a briefing for Britain's Prime Minister H. H. Asquith, in 1915, Sykes famously explained, "I should like to draw a line from the 'E' in Acre to the last 'K' in Kirkuk"' (Wright, 2016). The borders that were created by Sykes-Picot have been re-drawn and reshaped numerous times in the last hundred years, yet Syke-Picot is still cited as the original sin that led to even more chaos and bloodshed. Cook and Leheta point out that the conventional wisdom throughout the 2010s is that 'If there is a historic shift in the region, the logic goes, then clearly the diplomatic settlements that produced the boundaries of the Levant must be crumbling' (Cook & Leheta, 2016). In 2014, IS released a video entitled 'The End of Sykes-Picot' which showed its members demolishing the fences and gates demarcating the borders between Iraq and Syria. The propaganda significance of the video was obvious, a visual demonstration of the destruction of the old Western-orchestrated order – indeed a western narrative of how the Middle East and Muslim peoples are to be governed and controlled – and the reclamation of a pure, unified Islamic state. IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi attacked Sykes-Picot in one of his earliest addresses as IS seized territory across Iraq: 'This blessed advance will not stop until we hit the last nail in the coffin of the Sykes–Picot conspiracy' (al-Baghdadi, July 2014). Clearly the symbolic power of the agreement exerts a great hold over the imagination and narratives of Sunni militant groups in the 21st century. But nonetheless, as Cook and Leheta illustrate, the spheres of influence were not as arbitrary as others have claimed. They were in fact based on pre-existing borders that were often the result of earlier Ottoman administrative, political and religious divisions (Cook & Leheta, 2016). They can therefore be said to have been built off of arrangements that had a much longer history. The conflicts, they argue, that have erupted over the years throughout the region are less to do with the contested legitimacy of national boundaries and are more to do with the question of 'who has the right to rule them' (ibid). This is undoubtedly a question that defines IS's worldview and forms a key part of their overall goal of gaining territory. Nonetheless, the issue of borders and the perceived injustices inflicted upon the Muslim world by malevolent outsiders figures prominently in the rhetoric,

narratives and propaganda of Sunni militant extremism. The 9/11 Commission Report comments that episodes such as Sykes-Picot symbolised to Muslims such as Osama bin Laden that the West and other outside forces were ‘encroaching foreign powers eager to steal their [Muslim] land, wealth, and even their souls’ (9/11 Commission Report, 2004:51).

Dabiq explicitly mentions Sykes-Picot on a number of occasions, illustrating the depth of symbolic feeling on the agreement as an act of Western betrayal. Instead of a unified Muslim state, the agreement divided Muslims into competing nationalist states , an ideology that IS hold to be ungodly and man-made:

> ‘Sykes, together with his peers and leaders, devised a plan to further divide the broken Muslims’ lands into nationalist states. The Muslims’ lands had been polluted by pagan domes (for grave worship) and plagued by manmade laws at the hands of Ottoman rulers, especially in the last two centuries before the eventual collapse’ (*Dabiq* Issue 9, 2015:20-21).

As we shall see going forward, the impact of this agreement fuelled the Sunni militant sense of their destiny being denied, which was to constitute a major source of anger and political activism over the ensuing decades.

Chapter Four: The Enlightenment, Education, Narrative and Extremism

As we have seen, the 19th and 20th centuries were an era of seismic political change that produced several competing ideological movements and concomitant political narratives. It is with this in mind that we turn to the issue of education, and its relationship with narrative in generating and sustaining ideas – social, political and religious. The links between these ideas, education and violent political action will be the principal area of discussion in this chapter. The differences between what may be termed a Western liberal grand narrative – with its roots in Enlightenment thought and the way it has been expressed in educational initiatives and reforms – and the various forms of Islamic education that have emerged throughout the centuries are key to answering the questions of this thesis. The role of the Enlightenment in shaping the values of many modern Western societies, including their educational and pedagogical systems, is a highly important development in understanding how grand narratives seek to articulate, transmit and embed those values over time, and will form a major area of enquiry in this chapter. It will extensively discuss the impact of the Enlightenment in France especially because the example of this movement in influencing the French Revolution and the complex strands of secularism that followed is of essential importance to the configuration of radical notions of liberty, the erosion of religious power and notions of equality that feature heavily in liberal grand narratives. While other successful revolutionary movements emerged in this era such as those in America, the study of France is deeply instructive to understanding these human desires and impulses for political change and recrafting society anew, which is also of relevance when understanding entities like the Islamic State, despite their massive ideological and historical differences. Furthermore, the Islamic educational institution that will be examined in this chapter is a specific form of madrasa schooling that has functioned as an outlet for anti-Western extremist activism and violence since the late 19th century onwards, experiencing a period of dominance in the latter half of the 20th century. Its promotion of distinctly anti-modern narratives in turn presents a major confrontation with the values and ideas of the Western liberal grand narrative.

Education and the Madrasa

Following the attacks of September 11th, 2001, the issue of anti-Western extremism being fostered within Islamic educational institutions across the world underwent renewed scrutiny. Political leaders, security agencies, think-tanks and other groups called on new measures to investigate the educational content of Islamic schools in both Western nations and elsewhere. Specifically, the issue of madrasas, their functions and the role they played in nurturing extremist views came under greater focus. The Bush Administration's Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld pondered in a private memo circulated (and subsequently leaked) to other high-level administration officials in 2003 during the War on Terror:

> 'Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas [sic] and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?... Does the US need to fashion a broad, integrated plan to stop the next generation of terrorists? The US is putting relatively little effort into a long-range plan, but we are putting a great deal of effort into trying to stop terrorists. The cost-benefit ratio is against us!' (Rumsfeld, 2003).

This statement, while crude, nonetheless offered a useful indication of what some senior officials within the American government were saying in private if not in public, and presented a recognition that military means alone could not win the wider ideological struggle against violent Sunni extremism. However, Rumsfeld's characterisation of madrasas as terrorist training schools reflects a common misconception in Western discourse surrounding these institutions and the nature of their educational set-up. The history of modern madrasas in the Islamic world is deeply complex, varying significantly within individual countries as well as globally. Understanding these nuances is key to grasping the crucial role education in general plays in promoting certain ideas, narratives and values.

The very first madrasas emerged in Iran in the tenth century, under the auspices of Nizam al-Mulk, the effective leader of the Seljuk Empire. Nizam was a scholar and vizier who played a major role in crafting and institutionalising the 'judicial, fiscal and administrative structures that remained operative in Persia down to the nineteenth century' (Black, 2011:91). One of these structures was the madrasa. He formulated an initiative that saw the 'provision of funds for the foundation and running costs of madrasas in every major city, including the 'Nizamiyya at Baghdad (built 1065-67); in which education was free' (ibid). These institutions provided administrative training and sought to educate the future ulema (scholars of the faith) in Islam's holy texts. This amounted to, in the words of scholar George Makdisi, 'a Sunni political,

cultural and intellectual revival' (Makdisi, 1981: 71a–2a). This was also partly motivated as a response to the propaganda efforts of the rival Shia faction known as the Isma'ili who vied with the Seljuk's for political dominance throughout Persia (Black, 2011:91). From their earliest days therefore, madrasas were as much political enterprises as religious ones. The word madrasa itself is derived from the Arabic root 'drasa, which means 'to study', and is related to the term for lessons, dars' (Noor et al, 2008:9). As Noor et al note, in the Arabic-speaking world today, madrasa is used to refer to many different kinds of schools, from those that teach only traditional Islamic subjects to those that are wholly secularised and make no real provision for religious education (ibid). In non-Arabic speaking areas of Asia however, 'the word is generally more understood in a more restricted sense – as a school geared essentially to providing students with what is understood as Islamic education'(ibid). Broadly speaking, as stated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, they function as 'nonformal educational institutions that offer instruction on the Qu'ran, the sayings (hadith) of the Prophet Muhammed, jurisprudence (fiqh) and law' (Rust & Allaf, 2018:396). But as Noor et al state, 'the ways in which this is conceived and its scope are widely divergent' (Noor et al, 2008:9). This diversity makes understanding the intricacies of Islamic education in different regions – and its relationship with political extremism – a complex yet vital operation.

The Beginnings of the European Enlightenment

At this juncture, it is also worth stating that the institution of the madrasa – and the ways it has been viewed or depicted in Western discourse – highlights a particular problem within certain strands of Western political thought towards the issue of religion as an instrumental social and political force in and of itself. As such, it also has implications for how the topic of religious terrorism is discussed and analysed in relation to other forms of political violence. Scholars and writers such as Talal Asad have written that a key long-term development of the Enlightenment was the constitutional subordination of religion to the state and ultimately its relegation to – predominantly – the private sphere (Asad, 1993:206-8). Throughout Europe, the dominant position occupied by Christian institutions such as the Church was eroded over the course of several decades and centuries. This shift was profound and dramatic and had tumultuous implications for European and indeed world history. Before analysing how this development is relevant to understanding Sunni extremism in the 20th and 21st centuries, it is worth outlining in general terms the role of religion in the pre-Enlightenment age, and how this shift changed Western Europe's identity in massive ways. Christianity in Europe had been both

the bedrock of intellectual, cultural, social and political life in the early modern period (Spencer, 2014:3) *and* a tool of elite power maintenance and control. Religion, 'in the form of Christianity' provided a fundamental structure and cohesion in both public and private life, a cosmology that organised and situated individual experience within a governed reality. It likewise enabled social and political happenings to be positioned in the context of a wider ordered universe. It also (and indeed still does) offered the symbols, rituals and ceremonies that mediated some of the most essential experiences of human life. Spencer writes:

> 'It [Christianity] regulated their days, weeks and years, their births, marriages and deaths. It told them what to hope for and what to fear. It legitimized communities, kingdoms and empires. It explained the past, present and future, earth, heaven and the heavens, human origins, purpose and destiny. It was the key in which all life, human and natural, was composed, if not necessarily played' (Spencer, 2014:3-4).

Both Spencer and the secular writer Kenan Malik use the 1676 blasphemy case of John Taylor in England to illustrate how the precepts of Christianity were essential to the contemporary social and political order, enmeshed in the laws and constitutional authorities of the time, to the extent that church and state often appeared indistinguishable. John Taylor had allegedly said loudly in public among other things that 'Christ is a whore-master and religion is a cheat, and profession of [Christianity] is a cloak, and they are both cheats… I fear neither God, devil nor man… and no man fears God but an hypocrite, Christ is a bastard' (Levy, 1995:220). He was tried before the King's Bench in front of the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Matthew Hale, one of England's most distinguished jurists (ibid). Upon finding Taylor guilty of blasphemy, Hale proclaimed:

> 'Such kind of wicked and blasphemous words were not only an offence against God and religion, but a crime against the laws, States and Government; and therefore punishable in this court; that to say religion is a cheat, is to dissolve all those obligations whereby civil societies are preserved; and Christianity being parcel of the laws of England, therefore to reproach the Christian religion is to speak in subversion of the law' (ibid:221).

The Taylor case had wide-ranging effects in England. It 'reverberated down the centuries in many cases in which freedom of religious opinion or separation of church and state was an issue' (Levy, 1995:221). This is because it explicitly outlined that Christianity was an essential characteristic, indeed perhaps the ultimate characteristic, of both English law and wider civil society of the time. It was such an important, unimpeachable feature that it was beyond

reproach. Hale's judgement ultimately assumed that 'civil society could not exist without religion, in particular the Christian religion' (ibid:222). As Malik writes, any challenge to Christian doctrine was in effect an attack on the social order: 'To preserve the social order, one must necessarily also protect the authority of faith and Church' (Malik, 2014). The case reinforced the all-encompassing influence of Christianity at this time within England and many other European nations. To the vast majority of Europe's people, 'to unstitch faith was to unstitch society, indeed life, itself' (ibid).

The unravelling of this order and this mindset over the centuries in Europe therefore heralded momentous change in the relationship between civil society, the nation state and religion. The age of Enlightenment, a product of numerous preceding conflicts between different Christian sects and institutions and various European monarchies, as well as changes in material and economic forces throughout Europe, was fundamentally an attack on a social order that advanced the power of religious doctrine and the institutions that drew social and political authority from it. The growth of rationalism, reason and scientific enquiry, spearheaded by a number of prominent European philosopher and scientists, bolstered the movement's challenge against the assumptions and age-old conventions of Europe's traditional elites and authorities. In his analysis of the age of Enlightenment, Jonathan Israel sees the Enlightenment era commencing gradually around 1650. This time represents a major demarcation point in history:

> 'During the later Middle Ages and the early modern age down to around 1650,western civilization was based on a largely shared core of faith, tradition, and authority. By contrast, after 1650, everything, no matter how fundamental or deeply rooted, was questioned in the light of philosophical reason and frequently challenged or replaced by startlingly different concepts generated by the New Philosophy and what may still usefully be termed the Scientific Revolution' (Israel, 2002:2).

Framing pre-1650 European culture as overwhelmingly defined by debates between competing Christian sects, Israel contrasts this world with the transformative, revolutionary power of enlightenment thought:

> 'Mid-seventeenth- century Europe was still… a culture in which all debates about man, God, and the World which penetrated into the public sphere revolved around 'confessional' – that is Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), or Anglican issues, and scholars fought above all to establish which confessional bloc possessed a monopoly of truth and a God-given title to authority. It was a civilization in which

> almost no none challenged the essentials of Christianity or the basic premises of what was taken to be a divinely ordained system of aristocracy, monarchy, land-ownership, and ecclesiastical authority' (ibid:3).

The post-1650 environment meanwhile brought forward a new radicalism and determination to challenge these deep-seated norms, thanks to a 'general process of rationalization and secularization' which not only ultimately overthrew the 'theology's age-old hegemony in the world of study' but also 'slowly but surely eradicated magic and belief in the supernatural from Europe's intellectual culture, and led a few openly to challenge everything inherited from the past' (ibid:4). Thus, these kinds of challenges weren't solely against elements of Christian doctrine or even the faith itself, but over the question of how civil society and political order as a whole should be constructed.

Locke and Spinoza

A number of figures throughout this era in Europe publicly questioned the institutions of church, monarchy and systems of government. In many cases, these debates centred on where political power, authority and legitimacy ought to reside, and what position the rights of man occupied in such a system and the state of nature at large. The views of such figures on these issues were diverse and there was much disagreement and varying degrees of radicalism. It may also be argued at the outset here that despite attacking powerful elements within the establishment, Locke and Spinoza were *still* part of the grand narrative of the elites, in that they articulated the views of another elite that sought to command power over the state and its institutions. This illustrates another way in which grand narratives are often employed by competing factions as a means of ultimately obtaining power and installing a new group of self-ordained and privileged groups as the new elite, even as the old regime is abolished.

John Locke argued in his 1690 work Two Treatises of Government that man possessed the right to a 'state of liberty' without a 'state of licence', within a broader state of nature that had a 'law of nature to govern it' (Locke, 1690:5). In Locke's view, this law was based on reason and taught that 'all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions' (ibid). Importantly, Locke centred this conviction on man fundamentally being a product of God, 'for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker; all the servants of one sovereign

master, sent into the world by his order' (ibid). This social contract between state and man was drawn, in Locke's view, from the will of the divine. Locke's beliefs on the church were predicated on it being a 'a free and voluntary society', in keeping with his individualist principles. He saw religious matters as being outside the civil jurisdiction of magistrates. This is evident in the content of his 1689 letter entitled 'A Letter Concerning Toleration':

> 'the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil concernments [the violations of laws pertaining to public justice and equity]… it neither can nor ought in any matter be extended to the salvation of souls… All the life and power of true religion consist in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing… In the second place, the care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his powers consist only in outward force; but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God' (Locke, 1689:7).

Locke saw the separation of Church and state as a fundamental aspect of a healthy and functioning civil society:

> '…whencesoever their authority [religious authorities] be sprung, since it is ecclesiastical, it ought to be confined within the bounds of the Church, nor can it in any manner be extended to civil affairs, because the Church itself is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the commonwealth' (ibid:15).

Nonetheless, Locke denied this religious toleration to Papists and atheists. This was partly a product of the geopolitical environment of the time. Locke saw Roman Catholics as a threat to public safety and peace owing to their supposed allegiance to a foreign power, while 'the atheist was excluded because, on Locke's view, the existence of the state depends upon a contract, and the obligation of the contract, as of all moral law, depends upon the Divine will' (Sorley, 2018:27). Yet Locke's treatises on these matters are still important as they outline major intellectual and political challenges to the role of religious authority in public life, and the desire to disentangle religious institutions from formal political and judicial structures. They are a direct challenge to the integralist view of church and state that formed the substance of the judgement in the John Taylor case some twenty years before. The influence of these ideas is critical to understanding how the power of religion in Western European political life was gradually eroded and replaced by secularism. This relegation of religion to the private sphere is in turn key to grasping the secular West's attempts to understand and engage with powerful religious forces in the 20th and 21st centuries, and how such efforts have often been hampered by a religious illiteracy that fails to comprehend the radical, deep-rooted power of religion on

its own terms. Other figures of this era proposed more radical alternatives than Locke that embodied a profound secularism. God still occupied a central place in Locke's worldview, given that natural rights were ultimately derived from the sacrosanct will of the divine. But across Europe:

> 'The quest to undermine religious dogmatism took decades and crossed national and linguistic borders; it brought men into contact because they shared a similar goal. They wanted a way out from under the doctrinal quarrels that had left large parts of German territory in ruins, forced French Protestants to flee north and seek refuge in the Dutch Republic as well as Prussia, and made an entire century from the 1620s to the 1720s perilous for anyone out of step with the prevailing orthodoxy of a state or region' (Jacob, 2019:166).

This atmosphere in Western Europe fed into what Jacob terms a 'search for secular freedom', spurring fiercer attacks on the hypocrisies, superstitions and authoritarian reach of religious institutions throughout the continent. The notorious Treatise of the Three Imposters, a text of complex origins, exemplified this burgeoning pan-European solidarity. Written by German students based at the university in Halle sometime before 1700, the work denied the power of the three Abrahamic religions and mocked Jesus, Moses and Mohammed, the eponymous imposters. It was shared by the students among close friends in German and Denmark and 'From there, the text gradually spread'. While, as Jacob points out, 'it may have been written as an elaborate and naughty joke', the humour of it vanished as its provocative content spread among atheists and freethinkers across Western Europe (ibid:163). The text opens with an excoriating attack on religion and faith itself as a concept:

> 'Although it matters to all men to know the truth, there are nevertheless very few who enjoy this advantage; Some are incapable of searching it out by themselves, & others do not want to give themselves the trouble…nothing is better able to give them currency than ignorance: it is the only source of all the false ideas which men have of the Divinity, the Soul, Spirits, & of almost all the other objects which compose Religion. Custom has prevailed, men content themselves with the prejudices of birth, & rely in the most essential things on interested persons who make it a law to themselves stubbornly to uphold received opinions, & who dare not destroy them for fear of destroying themselves' (Anderson & Nissen, 1997:3).

This attack on the superstitious nature of faith is expanded later in the text where the author states:

> 'Those who are ignorant of physical causes have a natural fear which proceeds from uneasiness & from the doubt they are in, if there exists a Being or a power which has the capacity to harm them or preserve them… They make themselves Gods out of these in the end, & this chimerical fear is the source of the Religions which each forms after his own fashion. Those to whom it mattered that the people be contained & arrested by such dreamings have fostered this seed of religion, have made laws of it, & have finally reduced the peoples by the terrors of the future, to obeying blindly' (ibid:7).

Such incendiary words - and their distribution across borders - offer a useful indication of the growing radicalism prevalent within elements of the Enlightenment (particularly among its younger adherents), as well as the increasing sophistication of the movement's methods of dissemination. The text proved popular among young student groups, reaching France, the Netherlands and parts of Scandinavia in the years following its publication (Jacob, 2019:165). Upon its publication in the Netherlands, the impact was immediate and Dutch authorities were quick to confiscate every copy of the Treatise they could find. Yet 'Slowly but surely, nonetheless, the manuscript spread throughout Europe, and anyone who was someone in enlightened circles had by 1750 seen or read it' (ibid). It cemented a growing counter-narrative across Europe that was in defiance of the dominant religious discourse of the era. Many of the students within this grouping were devotees of Baruch Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher who had embodied the Enlightenment's more radical wing during the mid to late 1600s. Spinoza went much further than his contemporary Locke in his views on religion, the state and individual freedom. Israel views Spinoza as one of the most important figures for 'challenging revealed religion, traditional morality and political authority' (Israel, 2002:43). Individual liberty and its relationship with political and religious authority was critical to Spinoza's writings. He sought to disentangle the notion of earthly liberty originating from divine sanction. This stood in contrast to Locke's vision of man's state of liberty and its intrinsic relationship to a divine will. This made Spinoza an immensely controversial figure in his own time, labelled one of the most dangerous thinkers of the era by other intellectual figures all over Western Europe. In 1717, Spinoza had been characterised as the 'chief atheist of our age' by Johann Franz Buddeus, an eminent German Lutheran theologian (ibid:44), while also being attacked in a near-universal sense as, among other things, 'the prince of atheists, Christendom's chief foe, 'the new Mahomet' for almost half a century' (ibid). His views had also seen him excommunicated from his synagogue (Malik, 2014), although it should be noted that Spinoza never explicitly argued against the existence of God in his work. These attacks emerged from

his promotion of the centrality of man's personal freedom to the state of nature, which many saw as an attempt to undermine the reach of the political and religious authorities of the time. In his work Treatise on Theology and Politics, Spinoza contended that: 'Therefore the most tyrannical government will be one where the individual is denied the freedom to express and to communicate to others what he thinks, and a moderate government is one where this freedom is granted to every man.' (Spinoza, 2002:567).

This evidently represented a real challenge to the dominance of ecclesiastical power, which he felt had the authority and influence to greatly repress this essential human freedom. His critique also extended to non-ecclesiastical political institutions. Spinoza's vision of the state was one that guaranteed man's state of liberty to enable him to flourish:

> 'the basis of the state that its ultimate purpose is not to exercise dominion nor to restrain men by fear and deprive them of independence, but on the contrary to free every man from fear so that he may live in security as far as is possible… so that he may best preserve his own natural right to exist and to act, without harm to himself and to others' (ibid).

This was closed linked to his vision of restricted religious authority. God was to have 'no special kingdom over men except through the medium of temporal rulers', while the 'practice of religion and the exercise of piety must accord with the peace and welfare of the commonwealth, and consequently must be determined only by sovereigns' (ibid:558). Ultimately, in Spinoza's philosophy, 'The right of the sovereign, both in the religious and secular spheres should be restricted to men's actions, with everyone being allowed to think what he wishes and say what he thinks' (ibid). This profound understanding of toleration and explicit limits on the powers of religious institutions made Spinoza one of the most radical figures of the Enlightenment and influenced the later incendiary attacks on religion found in the Treatise of the Three Imposters in the following decades. What made Spinoza's ideas even more dangerous was that this was an era 'in which state and church were fused, and ecclesiastic power was immense, and often an obstacle to individual liberty' (Malik, 2014). In this sense, Spinoza's view of how church and state were to be divided has been genuinely long-lasting in Western European and American understandings of the concept of freedom.

Revolution and Republicanism

The narratives that Spinoza helped construct involving toleration and limitations on religion's social and political power are instructive for understanding the ultimate relegation of religion to the private sphere in Western Europe. Later events in the 18th and 19th centuries led to a major reconfiguring of the social contract between citizen and state. The radical figures of the Enlightenment saw religion as an impediment to the birth of a new social order that put man and human reason at the centre of the universe. Jonathan Israel quotes the radical 18th century French philosopher Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger in summarising the nature of this outlook: 'reason, and law founded on reason, should be the only sovereigns over mortals' (Israel, 2010:19). The late 1700s – long after Spinoza's death – saw the growth in what is termed Spinozism, a philosophical movement that 'sought to base theories about society on the principle of equality, and separated philosophy, science, and morality entirely from theology, grounding morality . . . on secular criteria alone and especially the principle of equality' (Israel, 2010:35). This influenced French philosophers such as Denis Diderot and Baron d'Holbach who embraced Spinoza's ideas and forcefully attacked the monarchical regimes that dominated French political life in the 1700s. Over time, these movements came to embody a secularist radicalism that accompanied a profound decline in religious-ordained order throughout Europe. This sentiment gradually took on the form of a revolutionary fervour – particularly in France where the aristocratic class and the Catholic Church enjoyed enormous privileges that were denied to much of the populace. This movement demanded the end of regimes viewed as tyrannical, their systems of rule predicated on preserving power for a hierarchical elite through repression and state violence. The dominant political powers of monarchy, church and aristocracy were not interested in reform or concession to the demands of Enlightenment values. They were 'not informed by any principle' beyond survival and control (Rosenblum, 1982:249). Therefore, for the radical republican forces emerging in places such as France, this ancient regime had to be violently confronted and purged of all power.

This radical republicanism would ultimately help ignite the French Revolution that would see the end of King Louis XVI's regime. In the words of Isiah Berlin, the revolution was an event 'which exploded, or at the very least profoundly altered, some of the most deeply rooted presuppositions and concepts by which men lived. It made men acutely conscious of change and excited interest in the laws that governed it' (Berlin, 1972). It radically shifted the idea of what was possible in systems long ruled by monarchies and religious institutions. Louis XVI's execution in 1793 encapsulated the revolution's bloody zeal. Maximilien Robespierre – chief of the Committee for Public Safety during the French Revolution and a figure that symbolised

the violent radicalism of the revolution's purification politics – articulated the reasoning behind the decision to execute the King: 'To punish the oppressors of humanity is clemency; to forgive them is barbarity' (Catani, 2013:22). The radical republican view was that the destruction of the ancient regime – a system that embodied superstition, violent repression and profound injustices that trampled on reason and man's natural yearning for liberty – necessitated the purging of society at large as a means of unlocking genuine transformation. Robespierre would go on to become the chief architect of the Reign of Terror, a period of widespread violence and social disorder in which numerous people were killed or imprisoned due to their alleged disloyalty to the revolution, illustrating the bloody and indiscriminate fervour the revolution took on in its immediate aftermath. The expiating revolutionary zeal embodied by Robespierre and the radical republicans offers a useful example of how violence has been wielded as the catalyst not just for political change, but as an intrinsically regenerative element of building a wholly new order and a new state. Further, the system advocated by the radicals predicated on the notion that its realisation would unleash an inner or metaphysical transformation of humanity's being by placing it in a new state of genuine liberty where reason and rationality were unconstrained by repressive religious and political authority. It aimed to reorder man's position within the universe and reclaim his centrality to his own social reality. While there are other examples throughout history of violence being seen as an essential tool of transformation, the manner in which it was used by the likes of Robespierre to purge the prior system is notable for its vehemence and fundamentalism. Despite their obvious and vast differences in ideology and context, echoes of the radical revolutionary power of violence can be found in the political-religious policies, narratives and imagination of the twenty-first century Islamic State. Both used violence in similar ways but for reverse purposes. As we shall see in forthcoming chapters, the stories the group tells are of Islam's religious ascendency being unleashed through aggression and militancy. This is married to the widespread use of real violence as policy to abolish man-made and ungodly systems of authority in order to realise God's Caliphate here on Earth. In doing so, God's status as the only true law-giver and authority will be fulfilled. While Robespierre's republicanism wielded violence to place man at the centre of his own destiny in his pursuit of liberty, the Islamic State seek to reorder this once more by positioning God at the pinnacle of all hierarchies as the single legitimate authority within the universe. This is not to suggest they shared the same goals or ideas, but merely to remark on the similar understanding both groups showed regarding the symbolism of violence, particularly public violence. The guillotine became the enduring symbol of the French Revolution's bloodier dimension, claiming even Robespierre's head in the end, while IS announced themselves on

the world stage with several graphic execution videos showing the beheadings of Western hostages. These were distributed online for maximum impact and viewed by millions. Central to both forces was the primacy of violence to achieving their goals and the utter destruction of what came before as an essential perquisite for genuine transformation. Everything of the ancient regime is to be eradicated in its totality.

Events in France sped up a process of Dechristianisation and quickly reverberated all over Europe and beyond. For radicals, the revolution provided a vindication that enlightened republicanism could achieve profound social change when married to social action. It represented 'the practical embodiment of reason and of equality, and a concrete expression of social progress' (Malik, 2014). For those involved in the revolutionary era towards the end of the 1700s, some form of violence was essential to the realization of democratic and republican values. For this generation, in the words of Rosenblum, 'war was inseparable from the causes of liberty… who identified a just war with the national uprising of an inspired people' (Rosenblum, 1982: 250-251). For conservatives of the era, the revolution represented the dark side of human reason and intellect being prized above all else, used to justify horrendous acts of violence and lawbreaking. The conservative thinker Edmund Burke graphically described the capture of King Louis, his wife and children in his pamphlet Reflections on the Revolution in France, in which he attacked the violence and chaos unleashed by the revolution and its avowed destruction of traditional authorities such as the Church. Burke saw these institutions as essential to social order, stimulating human progress through continuity instead of an exalted vision of reason or rationality, and lamented their loss:

> 'This king…and this queen, and their infant children (who once would have been the pride and hope of a great and generous people) were then forced to abandon the sanctuary of the most splendid palace in the world, which they left swimming in blood, polluted by massacre and strewed with scattered limbs and mutilated carcasses… they were, under a guard composed of those very soldiers who had thus conducted them through this famous triumph, lodged in one of the old palaces of Paris, now converted into a bastille for kings. Is this a triumph to be consecrated at altars? To be commemorated with grateful thanksgiving? To be offered to the divine humanity with fervent prayer and enthusiastic ejaculation?' (Burke, 1790:60-61).

Far from being regenerative and liberating for its perpetrators, Burke saw this moment as one of terror and horror for its victims. Here we see Burke employ the narrative and imagery of blood, desecration and imprisonment, invoking what he saw as the gross inversion of man's

relationship to the sacred as it removed him from the very sources that gave him his virtue and which enabled him to partially overcome his essentially fallen state of being. By having reason and rationality supplant God at the top of this hierarchy, bereft of the ennobling powers of the divine, this left humanity at the mercy of man's capricious, selfish and defective desires. Burke decried what he saw as the dangerous passions of the revolutionaries, obsessed with the notion of man's rights to the extent that they were blind to their own weaknesses and misunderstood man's essentially imperfect nature:

> 'It is with them a war or a revolution, or it is nothing... They have some change in the church or state, or both, constantly in their view. ... This sort of people are so taken up with their theories about the rights of man that they have totally forgotten his nature' (ibid:94-95).

The flawed nature of man's existence (rooted in Christian doctrine) meant that, in Burke's view, it had to be constrained and mediated through robust and long-lasting customary institutions. The notion of the sacred was key to this vision of human life. The power of 'ancient traditions, of a common faith, and a universe that spoke to them through myths and symbols' (Malik, 2014) exerted real power on counter-Enlightenment thinking, couched as it was in enduring narratives of humanity's existence and nature that had, in their view, enabled it to partially nullify its baser instincts and work towards a common good. Burke's conservatism was influenced by other conservative figures such as the British diplomat and man of letters Lord Chesterfield who opined that 'The bulk of mankind have neither leisure nor knowledge sufficient to reason right; why should they be taught to reason at all? Will not honest instinct prompt and wholesome prejudices guide them much better than half reasoning?' (Kirk, 2001:42). Burke echoed this line of thinking, writing that 'in this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree'. In contrast to the arguments of the Enlightenment, such prejudices should not be subordinate to rationality, or reasoned out of, as 'the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them' (ibid).

This represented one of the fundamental differences between Enlightenment ideals and conservative-minded figures who came to embody the Counter-Enlightenment. The philosophical, social, religious and political debates ignited during this era would go on to dominate the political landscape of Europe and others parts of the world for much of the 18th

and 19th centuries. This era also marks the solidification of competing narratives between the Enlightenment and the Counter-Enlightenment and more conservative views regarding man's nature and his relationship to the divine. The Enlightenment had a profound impact on the modern liberal grand narrative, particularly in the way it conceived of the pursuit of knowledge and learning as something that was universal, beyond the strictures of religious sanction. Liberty was essential to the exercise of reason. Many Western European nation states reformed their constitutional makeup to remove the once inherent link between religion and state. The long-term impact of Western Europe's embrace of secularism marked a major decline in the social and political capital of religious institutions and faith in general. As the democratic franchise grew throughout the later 1800s and early 1900s, politicians and parties saw the need to expand their voting constituencies. In Great Britain, this also coincided with major educational reform that opened up access to the masses. Religious denominations had played a key role in running and administering the educational system prior to 1870, meaning that they exercised important social and political power within their communities. The Education Act of 1870 committed the government to the 'systematic provision of universal education for the first time, and this was made free in 1891. The school-leaving age was set at eleven in 1893; then in 1899 it increased to twelve' while 'special provisions for the children of needy families were introduced' (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012:317). Religious groups still provided education in many areas across the UK and still wielded authority, but in expanding access, they were no longer the predominant provider on a mass level. The reform act of 1902 expanded these provisions further by increasing the resources available to schools and importantly 'introduced the grammar schools which subsequently became the foundation of secondary education in Britain' (ibid). Christian institutions became less central to provisions that were being increasingly provided by the state.

The British system of government is an interesting example, given that there is no formal separation between the Church of England and the state, unlike in nations such as the United States. The UK's non-codified constitution makes the nature of the relationship between the Church and state complex. The King remains the UK's Head of State and is also, as the reigning monarch, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The UK's second legislative chamber, the House of Lords, also seats the Church of England's most senior bishops as it is the established church. Nonetheless, the UK has still been subjected to this process of secularisation and the decline in both religious observance and the political importance of religion has been evident for some time. Spencer and Clements write that 'The Church of

England was long known, partly playfully but also with good reason, as the Tory Party at prayer, an association that pre-dates the modern Conservative Party and can be traced into the 18th century' (Spencer & Clements, 2015:38). Meanwhile the Liberal Party in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was favoured heavily by Nonconformists, 'holding William Gladstone in saintly esteem and helping to take the party to unprecedented electoral success in 1906, the association finally weakening with the decline of Nonconformity and then the near-death of the Liberal Party in the second quarter of the century' (ibid). The Labour Party's growth in the early to mid-20th century was also forged partially out of strong support among immigrant and Catholic communities throughout the UK, founded as they were as the party of trade unions and workers (ibid). But as religious attendance among the British populace declined over the course of the 20th century, so too did the power of Christian identity in determining political mobilisation. UK church membership (as opposed to attendance) declined from '10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 Million in 2010, or as a percentage of the population; from about 30% to 11.2%.' By 2013, this had declined further to 5.4 million (10.3%). 'If current trends continue, membership will fall to 8.4% of the population by 2025' (Faith Survey, 2016). Regular church attendance meanwhile has also declined in the 1980-2015 period from '6,484,300 to 3,081,500 (equivalent to a decline from 11.8% to 5.0% of the population' (ibid). These trends indicate a clear decline in the Christian religiosity of the UK population over the course of the 20th century, a decline that is likely to continue into the second half of the twenty-first century.

A key question that links these disparate themes is: what roles do religion and education, and indeed religious education at that, play in the arrangement of the state and civil society? What is the purpose of the two as concepts and processes, and what should their relationships with political power look like? Many ideologies have sought to answer these questions. As we have seen, the relationship between the state and organised religion was once inextricably aligned in many Western European nations. The Enlightenment sought to counter this set-up using a new discourse that reconceptualised man's position within the broader social and political universe, beyond the strictures of the state and institutional religion. Over the centuries, formal education has become one of the principal battlegrounds for these contested ideas. Within Western nations, the liberalising of education - and the reduction of religion's overt role in its provision - revealed a number of socio-political conflicts that accompanied the differing ideological views of the purposes and objectives shared between the state, religion and various education systems. These tensions would in turn expose the fault-lines and contradictions at

the heart of liberal and conservative notions of what constituted religion's role, both within education specifically and in civil society more generally.

Rousseau

Another critical Enlightenment figure who had a major influence on liberal grand narratives, issues such as religious toleration and how the secular state should engage with religion, was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For Rousseau (1712-1778), established religion represented a divisive aspect to citizenship, most obviously seen in his depiction of the Catholic Church. Rousseau's treatise The Social Contract outlined his vision of three different kinds of religion within the context of man's relationship to freedom. His treatise opens with the famous words 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains' (Rousseau, 1762:1). Understanding the legitimacy of the social order and how it could be achieved was the key question underpinning Rousseau's text. He argued: 'But the social order isn't to be understood in terms of force; it· is a sacred right on which all other rights are based. But it doesn't come from nature, so it must be based on agreements' (ibid:1). The influence of Locke on Rousseau's thinking is clear, given that Rousseau echoes the former's vision of man's natural state being one of freedom, his natural rights unassailable by kings, despots or religious institutions. In Rousseau's vision, societies must be organised towards the goal of the common good, which must be achieved by what he terms the 'general will' (ibid:13). The 'general will' is the culmination of the social compact which enables man to overcome the barbarism of the state of nature:

> 'Let us take it that men have reached the point at which the obstacles to their survival in the state of nature overpower each individual's resources for maintaining himself in that state. So this primitive condition can't go on; the human race will perish unless it changes its manner of existence' (ibid:6).

But man cannot create new forces for this endeavour from scratch; instead he must:

> '…bring together ones that already exist, and steer them. So their only way to preserve themselves is to unite a number of forces so that they are jointly powerful enough to deal with the obstacles. They have to bring these forces into play in such a way that they act together in a single thrust' (ibid).

It is important to stress at this point that Rousseau's conception of the 'general will' was not a form of democratic majority. It in fact only represents a privileged and vaunted elite who are

tasked with acting in the best interests of the nation. Man therefore 'voluntarily hands over his individual will to the General Will, which knows best what man's priorities are' (Piedra, 2017).

Rousseau acknowledged the tension between the necessity of working towards the common good and maintaining man's individual liberty and own self-interest: 'For forces to add up in this way, many people have to work together. But each man's force and liberty are what he chiefly needs for his own survival'. The question therefore was '…how can he put them into this collective effort without harming his own interests and neglecting the care he owes to himself?' (Rousseau, 1762:6). This contradiction can be seen as an antecedent of the 'Tragedy of the Commons' scenario, a term popularised by the 20th century ecologist Garret Hardin in a 1968 article on the dangers of individuals acting solely within their own self-interest to the detriment of their shared resources and capacity for collective action (Hardin, 1968). Although it is worth noting that Hardin based his scenario on the writings of the economist William Foster Lloyd who had outlined a similar situation in 1833. To overcome this inherent contradiction, Rousseau outlined the need for a social contract that would:

> '…bring the whole common force to bear on defending and protecting each associate's person and goods, doing this in such a way that each of them, while uniting himself with all, still obeys only himself and remains as free as before… Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole' (Rousseau, 1762:6-7).

Within this framework for social and collective formation and action, Rousseau situated his three views of religion, and delineated how each of them interacted with the social contract. He wrote: 'At first men had no kings except the gods, and no government except theocracy… Men's thoughts and feelings have to go through a long period of change before they can bring themselves to take their equals as masters and to expect to profit by doing so' (Rousseau, 1762:67). Rousseau viewed the history of religion as one of conflict, violence and intolerance owing to man's use of God as a political tool:

> 'Simply from the fact that God was put in charge of every political society, it followed that there were as many gods as peoples. Two peoples that were strangers to one another, and nearly always enemies, couldn't go on recognising the same master for long; two armies giving battle couldn't obey the same leader. So national divisions led to polytheism, which in turn led to theological and civil intolerance… Thus, because every religion was attached solely to the laws of the state that

> prescribed it, the only way to convert a people was to enslave it, and the only missionaries there could be were conquerors. So far from men fighting for the gods, the gods (as in Homer) fought for men; each man asked his god for victory, and… paid for it with new altars' (ibid:67-68).

Rousseau noted that in the earliest societies, gods were viewed synonymously with the heads of state. These gods or kings were responsible for guarding and protecting a state's people. In other words, a religion or God was closely allied – and confined – to each particular state in question. The alignment between gods and states made conflict between states simultaneously wars of religion as well. Christianity however – in Rousseau's view – represented a profound challenge to this ancient arrangement. Jesus, in preaching of a kingdom of God that was distinct from the earthly realm, put forward a division between state and faith. If faith were to cut across national and ethnic boundaries – as did it most clearly with Christianity - where people from different states could worship the same god, an inevitable tension could be created within a populace between allegiances to state and faith. State unity would be undermined and instability would emerge. Rousseau stated: 'Jesus came to set up on earth a spiritual kingdom, which, by separating the theological from the political system, destroyed the unity of the state, and caused the internal divisions that have never ceased to trouble Christian peoples' (Rousseau, 1762:68). Rousseau roots Christian sectarianism and its conflicts with the state as emerging from this division between an earthly and metaphysical kingdom. The impact of this was Christianity's eventual rise to dominance in claiming state power, instituting what Rousseau felt were oppressive social norms and laws on man that violated his natural state of liberty, often violently: 'Then everything was re-arranged: the humble Christians changed their way of talking, and soon this so-called kingdom of the other world turned, under a visible leader, into the most violent despotism in this world' (ibid:69). The inherent confusion within this muddled distinction between state and church created further conflict, because there 'was always a prince and civil laws as well as a church, this double power created a conflict of jurisdiction that made it impossible for Christian states to be governed well'. Such a conflict meant that 'men never managed to discover whether they were obliged to obey the master or the priest' (ibid), because the secular and the religious would inevitably clash. These dysfunctional systems, where the power and legitimacy of the state is undermined by the greater supremacy of Christianity, equate to what Rousseau terms an arrangement of 'two sovereigns', meaning the social contract for the citizen cannot be fulfilled and the natural rights of man are infringed upon. The merging of the political and the religious was a dangerous set-

up built on deeply unstable foundations. Rousseau condemned this system:

> ‘Among us Europeans, the kings of England have been made heads of the Church, and the Czars have done much the same thing; but: this title has made them ministers of the Church rather than its masters; they have acquired the power to maintain the church rather than to change it; they aren’t its legislators, but only its princes. Wherever the clergy is a corporate body, it is master and legislator in its own country’ (ibid:69).

This understanding of religion’s fraught relationship with man underpinned Rousseau’s placement of religion within his ideal social and political set-up. He further distinguished between three different types of religion. The first of these he saw as the individual’s own personal sense of faith, called the ‘religion of man’. This version ‘doesn’t have temples, or altars or rites, and is confined to the purely internal worship of the supreme God and the eternal obligations of morality’ (ibid:70). It is the faith of the Gospel, the ‘true theism’, a kind of ‘natural divine law’ (ibid). While in favour of this incarnation of faith on a personal level, Rousseau found that it was not enough when it came to buttressing the unity and capacities of the state:

> ‘this religion, having no special relation to the body politic, leaves the laws with only the force they draw from themselves without adding anything to it; which means that one of the great bonds for uniting the society of the given country is left idle….so far from binding the citizens’ hearts to the state, it detaches them from that and from all earthly things. (ibid:71).

The second type of religion was the ‘religion of the citizen of this or that nation’. This is ‘is codified in a single country, to which it gives its gods and its own patron saints; it has its dogmas, its rites, and its external forms of worship prescribed by law;’ (ibid). This seeks to unite divine worship with a fidelity to state law. It makes the ‘country the object of the citizens’ adoration, it teaches… that service done to the state is service done to its guardian god’ (ibid). In Rousseau’s eyes it constitutes ‘a form of theocracy, in which there should be no pope but the prince, and no priests but the magistrates’ (ibid). It instils a form of state patriotism in its citizens and seeks to ensure the interests of state and church are unified. Yet it also risks corrupting ‘true worship of the Divine’ by replacing it with the empty ceremonies of the state (ibid). It is additionally vulnerable to tyranny and exclusivity, which may in turn lead to violence and brutality aimed at other nations and peoples who do not believe in the same gods:

'it makes a people bloodthirsty and intolerant, breathing murder and massacre, and regarding as a sacred act the killing of anyone who doesn't believe in its gods.'

The third and worst form of religion in Rousseau's view is one that is endemic to Christianity and especially the Catholic Church at the time of his writing. It exemplifies his severest criticisms of the divisive role religion plays when interfering with power that should be the reserve of the state. This religion 'gives men two codes of law, two rulers and two countries' (ibid), echoing his previous criticism of the 'two sovereigns'. It also 'imposes contradictory rules on them makes it impossible for them to be believers and citizens' (ibid). This system is intent on 'destroying social unity' through institutions that set man in contradiction to himself' and therefore violate the social contract and the general will (ibid). It would also demand that not only all a state's citizens be Christian, but that they all be similarly pious: 'If there happened to be a single self-seeker or hypocrite… he would certainly get the better of his pious compatriots' (ibid:71). Such a system lends itself easily to corruption and the possible usurping by a figure who comes to dominate its levers of authority and institute unjust rule.

How then should religion be incorporated into the sovereign, in tune with the general will and the social contract? Rousseau proposes a simultaneous compromise between and a synthesis of the first and second types to create a truly powerful civic religion. This will entail respecting the rights that the social contract grants the sovereign over state citizens, which does not, Rousseau notes, include 'anything that isn't good for the public' (Rousseau, 1762:72). The sovereign must respect man's individual beliefs, including his religious convictions as neither the state nor the sovereign plays a role in any afterlife, permitted they do not interfere in his behaviour as a citizen and violate the laws of the land and the contract between the two:

> 'The subjects then owe the sovereign an account of their opinions only insofar as the opinions matter to the community. Now, it matters very much to the community that each citizen should have a religion that makes him love his duty; but that religion's dogmas are no concern of the state's or of its members' except insofar as they involve morality and the believer's duties towards others' (ibid).

In return for this respect and freedom, the citizen should therefore pledge an allegiance to a civil religion of the state, fixed by the sovereign. The content of this need not be 'religious dogmas, but… social sentiments that are needed for to be a good citizen and a faithful subject' (ibid). The sovereign, as the legitimate ruler, has the power to banish anyone from the realm

for not abiding by or believing these sentiments, 'not for impiety but for being anti-social, incapable of truly loving the laws and justice, and if necessary sacrificing his life to his duty' (ibid). Rousseau simplifies these essential dogmas to mean: acknowledging the 'existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent Divinity'; the belief in a life after death; the need for justice against the wicked; the exclusion of intolerance; pursuing the 'happiness of the just' and respecting the 'the sanctity of the social contract and the laws' (ibid:73). His calls for religious toleration can be read as an early demand for a kind of religious pluralism, which was especially noteworthy given the religious conflicts that had ravaged Europe over the centuries:

> 'You can't possibly live at peace with people you regard as damned… Wherever theological intolerance is admitted, it must inevitably have some civil effect; and as soon as it does the sovereign is no longer sovereign even in the temporal sphere; from then on, priests are the real masters, and kings only their ministers' (ibid:73).

Tolerance as a matter of principle should thus be granted to 'all religions that tolerate others, so long as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship' (ibid). The divorcing of the state from the established church would be the only way for such a society to thrive. This social contract holds these multiple and diverse beliefs together by ensuring they all simultaneously subscribe to certain core values and are geared towards fostering the common good.

It is important to note therefore that Rousseau clearly still sees a role for religious belief in this prospective state. Yet beyond a general belief in the divine and certain common religious principles, the state is to be disentangled from religious matters and religious authorities are to exert no serious influence over political matters of the state. This informed his view that, much like Locke, the Catholic Church represented a grave threat to the stability of the state and the authority of the sovereign. Rousseau saw the precepts and institutional dominance of the faith as a danger to the sanctity of the social contract. For these reasons he did not extend the notion of citizenship to Catholics, viewing their potential dual loyalties to a power other than the state or sovereign as a destabilising influence on the social contract as a whole. The proto-liberalism of Rousseau's treatise was thus still limited by his own prejudices and the political and religious biases of his era.

The Role of Religion in Western Education Systems and Narratives

But the imperfect nature of Rousseau's work illustrates the tensions between state and religious authority, secularism and faith. Extricating political power from the realm of religion, while respecting the rights and views of citizens, has become a defining feature of liberal understandings of how political power should be organised, as a means of guaranteeing liberty and enabling citizens to exercise their political, social and religious freedoms. This also underpins the modern view of liberal democracy: citizens have the right to free choices – including political choices – without state infringement (within reason) while subject to equal treatment under the law and the political authorities, authorities which derive their legitimacy from those same citizens. In an idealised sense, this liberal grand narrative centring on the values of liberation, reason and equality is seen as a universal endeavour that is applicable to everyone, because everyone is theoretically free to pursue their own vision of the good life, according to their morals, precepts and desires. Built into this concept is the notion that a liberal political imaginary is capable of reinventing and revising itself, adapting to new circumstances and ideas because it is predicated on the rejection of pure dogma and a recognition of the certainty of new challenges and events, coupled with the tensions of citizens being free to live the lives they choose which might result in conflict. It aims to consider the issues of difference and diversity of belief and values, and in doing so paradoxically underscores its universality and applicability. In this manner, it attempts to futureproof itself. This recalls Lyotard's vision of grand narrative that seeks to establish a genuine and cohesive social bond, a fabric of complex social relations that recognises difference while still articulating a 'unifying' story (Lyotard, 1979:XIV) that allows issues of conflict to be navigated and society to continue to credibly function (ibid:XXIV). As we shall see, this idealistic paradigm is not without flaws. Rousseau's vision of how the state and religious institutions were to operate in civil society proved deeply influential. His ideas shaped the thinking of elements of both the French and American revolutions. Alberto Piedra notes that Rousseau was not only a major figure of the Enlightenment, but also 'probably the most popular and widely read intellectual revolutionary in France' (Piedra, 2017). His theory of the 'general will' found expression in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, composed by France's National Constituent Assembly in 1789 during the early stage of the French Revolution. Article Six reads:

> 'The law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to contribute personally, or through their representatives, to its formation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally admissible to all public dignities, positions, and employments,

> according to their capacities, and without any other distinction than that of their virtues and their talents.' (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, Article Six).

This image of equality and freedom remains foundational to many Western societies in the modern world today. The power and legacy of Rousseau's division between religion and state can also be seen in modern secular visions of how the relationship between the two institutions should function and which should be subordinate to the other. This is particularly relevant when it comes to evaluating the role of religious education and schooling in secular societies, and the question of the state's reach in regulating religious institutions. There are diverse strands within this line of thought. As previously outlined, Christian religious schools were once the dominant form of educational institution in many European nations. As religious membership, observance and attendance has declined, so too has the monopoly on educational instruction from religious institutions. Despite its relative decline in the 19th century, religion in many of these European states had still formed an essential part of the social compact well into the 20th century. In Scotland, the 1918 Education Act had formally integrated Catholic schools into the educational system by establishing 'in law the principle of state funding for Catholic schools' (UK Parliament, 2017). This meant that Catholic schools were transferred into the control of local authorities and beyond that of Catholic parishes or institutions while also maintaining their clear religious nature (Harvie, 1998:78-80). Martin Conway echoes this noting that religion remained a durable social bond in the post-World War Two environment throughout the continent (Conway, 2004:79). In England and Wales this sentiment was codified into law in 1944 towards the end of the War. To reiterate an earlier point, at this historical juncture, educational provision here was no longer the sole realm of religious authorities. The number of children educated by the Church of England had declined from 40% in early 1900 to 20% in the 1940s owing to educational reforms enacted in 1902, while schools run by the Catholic Church were responsible for educating around 8% of children at the time of World War Two (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012:317). Despite these declines however, the 1944 Education Act nonetheless extended the rights of the Christian churches, most notably the Church of England, and strengthened their reach into the social and political realms of the nation and consequently the nation's social compact. The Act enshrined the need for 'state-aided primary and secondary school to begin the day with collective worship on the part of all pupils, and with religious instruction in every such school' (BBC, 2001). Religious practices and rituals remained as fundamental processes that mediated the lives of Britain's citizens, particularly the nation's

children. The Act's increase in ecclesiastical power advanced the notion that Britain as a whole was at its core a devout Christian nation. As S.J.D. Green writes:

> '…the 1944 Education Act was a measure of avowedly Christian stewardship: advanced by a Christian minister [Rab Butler], passed by a Christian parliament, directed towards the goal of creating a truly Christian population. Put less politely, it enacted compulsory Christian education for the first time in all maintained schools' (Green, 2000:149).

The Act was not without its critics or controversies. Green also quotes the then headmaster of Westminster City School H.C. Dent who observed at the time that the real outcome of the new law was its denial of state aid to 'those groups of educationalists who might wish, with the approval of parents, to provide a purely secular education' (Green, 2011:214). Writer and journalist Adrian Wooldridge criticised the Act for being the work of a 'quintessentially Tory politician who reformed in order to preserve, pandering to a litany of cherished conservative beliefs – of traditional religion, the virtue of variety and decentralisation, the value of hierarchy and privilege' (Woodridge, 1994:258-59). Religion, and specifically the Church of England's brand of Christianity, was therefore to be central to the social, political and spiritual life of the nation. It was widely viewed as a triumph of Anglicanism: 'a reassertion not simply of the Christian principle in English and Welsh education, nor merely of the priority of Protestantism in official thinking but of the peculiar privileges, both assume and specified, of the Church of England in these vital aspects of national life' (Green, 2000:150).

The social compact was almost by default a religious one. In Rousseauian terms, the arrangement of the British state and the social contract in this era would be seen as privileging the rights of certain citizens to the detriment of others. It would also inherently lend itself to division and corruption owing to the close alignment between the Church and certain state institutions. Nonetheless, the primacy of religion to the social bond and social compact was clear. It was not solely a designation of personal belief but an articulator of identity, values, practices, social ties, community and collective organisation and action. Such sentiment was again illustrated in the 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales, the most comprehensive piece of educational reform since Butler's 1944 Act. Regarding the issue of worship in schools, this legislation held that it 'shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', with 'broadly Christian character' meaning that 'it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination' (Education

Reform Act, 1988:5). However, as we shall see, despite emphasising the primacy of Christian worship, this Act also recognised the growing changes that were occurring in parts of Britain concerning faith and identity. It ensured that religious education was required in the basic curriculum – with Christianity evidently the assuming priority (ibid:6) – while at the same time requiring the study of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (ibid).

Further evidence of this religiosity throughout Europe was reflected in the way that religious practice 'remained a much more reliable determinant of electoral behaviour than social class until circa the 1980s in much of western Europe (Conway, 2004:79). The dominance of centre-right politics in western Europe took on various forms in different European states: 'In Britain Conservatism was again the implausible survivor, while in France the inclusive and less doctrinaire Gaullism of the 1960s ultimately emerged as its particular expression' (ibid). The most successful incarnation of this, according to Conway, was the Christian Democrat political parties in western and northern European nations. The makeup and priorities of Catholic politics and social organisation were often reflected in these parties. In such instances, 'religion was indeed an important factor, but less in terms of its ideological content than in terms of the way in which it provided the collective identity and organisational basis' (ibid:81). This is an example of the way in which religion fed into the social compact through tributaries that linked it to identity, community and social organisation. As a grand narrative, it articulated and centralised a unified social bond that integrated all these dimensions. As Conway writes: 'Issues of religion mattered to many post-war Europeans, partly no doubt because of the prominence that religious faith and the Catholic Church had acquired in local and personal life during the war years' (ibid). He also states:

> 'The moral leadership offered by some clergy, the physical sanctuary provided by churches and religious communities and the structures of welfare and solidarity that clustered around, the churches brought religion back towards the centre of local life in all but the most dechristianised areas of wartime Europe.' (ibid:81-82).

For many Roman Catholic voters in western Europe, political expression was found in various Christian Democrat parties that formed part of what has been termed a process of 'reconfessionalisation' (ibid). The electoral success of these parties illustrated how a politically engaged Catholicism was able to, in Conway's words, 'capture the political initiative and to generate a seemingly inexhaustible supply of new elites' who were 'possessed of the sense of

purpose that came from membership of the ‘imagined community’ of Catholicism’ (ibid). The Christian Democrats also functioned as a bulwark during eras of widespread social change, and were able in their most successful incarnations to address the material aspirations of their constituents while articulating their spiritual identities and bonds of community. In nations such as the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium and Italy, these parties ‘gave voice to an unambiguously Catholic worldview, based on fundamental (and largely unattenuated) antipathy towards liberal and socialist values’ (ibid). Alongside this, the material wants of the populace were a major driver of their electoral success. After all, ‘the social and political visions fostered in the interwar youth movements or wartime resistance were less important than taxation rates for small businesses, child allowances and the price of sugar beet’ (ibid). Material needs, married to these religiously defined concepts of identity and social relations, therefore played a crucial role in explaining the longevity of this religious-infused social compact through the mid and latter stages of the 20th century. The material element illustrated by Conway also underscores how economic forces again are able to buttress or damage narratives and also function as a driver of social and political movements. As noted in the introduction and chapter two of this thesis, the legitimacy or essential credibility of grand narratives are subject to the capriciousness of material conditions and factors, and as Lyotard posited, it is during periods of intense material crisis and ‘general transformation’ that grand narratives have collapsed or failed to answer the challenges of the moment (Lyotard, 1979:4).

The dissolution of these religious-infused social compacts marked an epochal moment in European history. Talal Asad views this secularisation movement across the UK and Western Europe - this constitutional subordination of religion to the state and its shift to the private sphere - as representing a new construction of religion as a ‘historical object’, one that is ‘anchored in personal experience, expressible as belief-statements, dependent on private institutions, and practiced in one’s spare time.’ This ‘construction of religion ensures that it is part of what is inessential to our common politics, economy, science, and morality’ (Asad, 1993:206-8). In other words, it no longer exerted the foundational or dominant influence within the social and political fabric of the Western European nation state. This development is also found in theories of modernisation. As previously stated, the power of organised religion in the constitutional makeup of the European state has been dramatically reduced or removed entirely. Modern day Western notions of religious belief tend to view it through this lens, seeing faith as a personal matter that exerts negligible influence in the public square. The influence of the Enlightenment, the gradual untying of religious institutions from formal political power in

many European nations, and seismic economic developments proposed in modernisation theory, argued that religious belief was ‘supposed to be doomed by the irresistible two-hundred-year advance of reason, secularization and privatization’ (Conroy & Davis, 2008:191). Massive economic and social change fostered through industrialisation and urbanisation was believed to be key to triggering crises’ within and the eventual decline of religious traditions and authorities. As J.C.D. Clark remarks, 20th century sociologists such as Peter Berger, S. S. Acquaviva and Harvey Cox presented this as a chronological development. He quotes the sociologist Acquaviva in 1979 contending that:

> 'Everything concurs in indicating (whether directly or indirectly and inductively) that religion undergoes a profound crisis in industrial society . . . Incipient secularity began in the urban area . . . Within industrial society social changes 'bring about a decay in religiosity from a certain moment history onwards’ (Acquaviva, 1979:84, 109, 159).

Cox meanwhile stated: 'The rise of urban civilization and the collapse of tradition religion are the two main hallmarks of our era and are closely related movement’ (Cox, 1965:1). Berger was also a proponent of this view of historical and social forces: ‘The… "locale" of secularization . . . was in the economic arena, specifically, in those sectors of the economy being formed by the capitalist and industrial processes (Berger, 1969:113). Clarks also quotes Berger’s argument that this entailed firstly ‘a capitalist, then an industrial socio-order’ (ibid:128). This would in turn generate a process of modernization that Berger held was a ‘worldwide phenomenon’ at that point in the late 1960s. This was true across different nations, regions and cultures: ‘the structures of modern industrial society, despite great modifications in different areas and national cultures, produce remarkably similar situations for the religious traditions and institutions that embody these’ (ibid:170). Within this line of thinking, the chronological, seemingly inexorable pattern of these developments – then dominant across the Western world – would ultimately hold true everywhere, ensuring the long-term decline of religion as a major social and political entity. The seemingly antiquated notion of religion would ultimately not be able to compete with the materialistic concerns of the masses and other forms of social identity. In the words of historian J.C.D. Clark, the narrative went along the lines of: the emergence and dominance of industrial capitalism would lead to economic growth; ‘‘Monotheism’ in historical time produced ‘Rationality’ which begat ‘Science’ which begat ‘Technology’, which begat ‘Technological consciousness’ (Clark, 2012:165). Ultimately, this grand narrative of secularisation was self-serving, in that it allowed its

proponents to project its apparent success in the Western world as an example of its universalising and universal character everywhere. Enlightenment ideals, secularism and theories of modernisation failed to anticipate that religion would remain ‘a popular world-transforming force’ and a continuing vehicle ‘to shape human behaviour in accordance with non-material teleologies’ throughout the world (Conroy & Davis, 2008:191). It was assumed that religious institutions too would undergo a ‘parallel process of internal secularization, rapidly adapting to the requirements of modern social structures while maintaining a merely residual religious symbolism that would steadily mutate into alternative and wholly material forms of cultural meaning such as art and recreation’ (ibid:192). As the re-emergence of Islamic extremist groups such as the Islamic State – with its distinct and serious challenge to Western-constructed political entities throughout the Middle East and a system of governance predicated on realising a divine will through violence – have illustrated, religion retains a deeply powerful influence on various communities globally . Indeed, as we shall see, the narratives articulated by Islamic State offer a strong repudiation of Western liberal grand narratives and promote stories that are manifestly anti-modern. These narrative move in to occupy the space vacated by the failure of various Western grand narratives, and in turn capitalise on the post-modern incredulity and scepticism towards grand narratives in general, which is itself a product of those same original failures.

With the destabilising of the religious social compact, numerous questions remained: what would come to take its place? What should a profoundly secular social contract look like? Would it embody the values of Rousseauian virtue, or Enlightenment reason? And what would the consequences be for religious institutions, as well as individuals who held onto deep personal faith? As outlined earlier, France strove to embody a form of constitutional secularism that came to be known as ‘laïcité’. A formal separation of church and state was established in law in 1905, denoting a policy of state secularism in the public sphere. Furthermore, the nation’s Constitution of 1958 states: ‘France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic, guaranteeing that all citizens regardless of their origin, race or religion are treated as equals before the law and respecting all religious beliefs’ (French Constitution, 1958:4). Debates surrounding these matters are particularly relevant when it comes to the role of faith schools in the twenty-first century. Firstly, understanding the decline of religion involves recognising its nuances. As the earlier cited work of Conway has stated, political identification entwined with religious identification in certain European countries formed strong, durable electoral coalitions that lasted for many decades throughout the 20th century. This centred on

their ability to communicate values, a sense of community and a common social bond, alongside economic policies. These coalitions were maintained even as actual church attendances declined (Conway, 2004:81). But in places such as Britain that are now fundamentally more multicultural and more secular than before, and with the prominence of Christianity declining according to most metrics, what is the purpose of such compulsory religious instruction? Traditional Christian societies were legitimized not just by their belief in the supernatural. Processes, rituals and activism were designed to be in accordance with God's will while also functioning as a means of influencing or directing political and social policy. In this way, the church could exercise great influence as a major political actor in matters not immediately related to religion. This was reflected, in the British case, by Christianity's key role in education in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In Britain as a whole, the rise of secularism has eroded Christianity's ability to influence or govern social activity. This is symbolised by the fact that in the cases of the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts, the compulsory act of daily worship is not respected by around three quarters of secondary schools in England and Wales (Sharpe, 2019). This erosion was also seen, as Skinner comments, in developments in the 1970s and 1980s where approaches to the study of religion within schools changed, indicative of the recognition of the increasing ascendancy of multiculturalism and multifaith identities. These developments saw a shift away from 'confessional or denominational' approaches to religion and instead a greater focus on the 'academic study of religion in schools, drawing widely on the phenomenology of religion' (Skinner, 2002:172). For example, the Swann Report (again relating to England and Wales) explicitly advocated a phenomenological approach that views the aim of religious education as the 'promotion of understanding' (Swann Report, 1985:470). Such an approach doesn't seek to promote a single religious viewpoint, but instead 'draws a clear distinction between what can strictly speaking be termed 'religious instruction' i.e. instruction in a religion, and 'religious education' i.e. education in the concept of religion and in the range of belief systems which exist' (ibid:471). As stated earlier in this chapter, the eventual 1988 Education Act sought to maintain the pre-eminence of Christianity in education in England and Wales but contained the crucial caveat that schools were required to teach a range of faiths, in turn introducing students to the non-Christian 'lifestyles and beliefs of minority communities in Britain' (Skinner, 2002:172), (Education Reform Act, 1988). This marked a compromise between the phenomenological approach advocated by the Swann Report and the traditional institutional power of Christian authorities and their ideals and structures of educational provision. The

success of this approach is seen in the fact that state-funded schools are now required to teach about the six main faiths in Britain as part of the curriculum (Skinner, 2002:172). This is a reflection not only of the multicultural and multifaith makeup of modern Britain but also of the secular liberal idea that no faith should be privileged or elevated beyond others, treated as equals to allow students to judge each on their own merits according to their values, illustrating the choice and freedom that is intrinsic to liberal narratives of learning. The liberal secular narrative in this sense is designed to foster a genuine political, religious and non-religious pluralism. This is particularly evident in a society which is increasingly defined by its atheistic or humanist belief systems. Areas of contention still exist of course, given the multifaceted nature of such societies. Social issues such as gay marriage and abortion have seen clashes between secular and religious authorities in defining the morality of the law and the freedoms that are afforded through them. The law introducing gay marriage in Britain had explicit religious freedom protections built-in to ensure the state could not dictate to religious authorities the extent of their ministries or force them to accept or conduct services they didn't agree with (Marriage Act, 2013). But despite these conflicts and codified religious protections, and despite the durable maintenance of the system that unifies political and religious power in Britain through the Church of England, the Crown and institutions such as the House of Lords, the decline of these traditional Christian forces and their ability to influence the realm of education, social policy and politics remains apparent. The widespread public support in favour of gay marriage, something that was once deeply contentious and enjoyed only minority support, may in fact be said to offer more evidence of the waning power of religious authority and Christianity specifically in Britain. Secularisation has come to be a definitive cornerstone of the post-religious social compact, although what form this takes given the fragmentary nature of twenty-first century British society is often imprecise and confused. The growth in the multiplicity of social identities and new communities – accompanying the receding influence of religion – has been a major development and discussion point over the last few decades. This has led to calls for the reform of religious schools in the UK. Organisations such as the UK's Humanist Society and the National Secular Society have continually sought to challenge what they see as the religious privilege still prevalent throughout British society. Education has been a particular focus of much of their campaigns. These groups have called for an end to state-funded faith schools of all kinds, seeing it as a divisive, unfair and out-of-date system that discriminates on the basis of faith (National Secular Society, 2017). Keith Sharpe of the National Secular Society argues that given sections of the 1944 Education Act

are no longer abided by despite being law, the rationale underpinning its provisions on daily worship are out-of-date:

> ‘The daily act of collective worship should be ended… There should be a national entitlement for all pupils to high quality, non-partisan education about the diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews. Any form of confessionalism or religious instruction should be separated from the subject and only ever take place in a voluntary non-state environment’ (Sharpe, 2019).

This line of thinking is indicative of many secular and atheist arguments against the elevation of religious belief – in particular Christian belief – in the public sphere. Given the increasing multiculturalism of Britain, the argument is that the primacy of Christianity in certain public institutions such as schools represents an archaic and unrepresentative advancement of one ideology and belief system over all others. As previously noted, church membership and attendance has steadily declined. This has corresponded with an increase in the number of people in the UK identifying as having no religion, from 15% in 2001 to 25% a decade later and now estimated to be as high as 33% at the beginning of the 2020s (Woodhead, 2022). But a critical development alongside this decline in Christianity and the growth in non-belief has been the rise in Islamic belief throughout the UK. Muslims are the second biggest religious group in the UK despite constituting just 4.4% of the overall population, according to the 2011 census (Ipsos MORIS, 2018:6). The number of people identifying as Muslim is estimated to increase to 8% in the 2021 census, making it the fastest growing religious group in the UK (Woodhead, 2022). Attitudes towards certain issues such as education among British Muslims also differ from their Christian and non-believing peers:

> ‘Education is important to Muslims, and they are much more likely to feel that their level of education is part of their self-identity than are most Britons: 55% of Muslims say their education is important to their sense of who they are, compared to 35% of Christians’ (Ipsos MORI, 2018:6).

This strong attachment to education has been accompanied by a rise in Islamic faith schools throughout the UK since the 1990s owing to various government reforms. The then Labour government’s commitment to diversity in educational provision and delivery, ‘based on the belief that variety would improve quality and supported by the above-average achievements of pupils attending church schools, led to a proposal to extend state support for faith-based

schools' (Skinner, 2002:177). It aimed to have the dual-impact of fostering greater inclusivity and tolerance, while most importantly refining and improving the quality of provision across society at large. In a sense, it may be argued that this policy is reflective of a liberal grand narrative, in that it emphasises tolerance, mutual respect and the right of communities and groups to organise within a multicultural society according to their own beliefs and value systems. This is imperfect of course, given that state schooling is still subject to monitoring and oversight, but the intentions and their centring on a form of common good is indicative of the tolerance and universality that a liberal narrative is grounded on. The first Muslim state school was established in 1997 and opened in 1998 (although private Muslim schools had already operated within the UK for at least ten years before this), while Sikh and Hindu schools followed shortly after (Long & Danechi, 2019:17). Between 2007 and 2017, the number of Muslim schools in the UK increased by 24, more than any other non-Christian faith. The number of Christian schools fell slightly over the same period (ibid). These schools must still teach the national curriculum but are allowed to choose what they teach in religious studies (Long & Bolton, 2018:4). Despite still being minority status (accounting for less than 1% 'of all state-funded mainstream schools'), the increase in Muslim schools as a form of educational provision suggests a growing demand for religious-backed education among certain strands of the British population, one that is at odds with the long-term decline in Christian belief and educational provision throughout the UK. Schools with a faith designation are 'able to use faith criteria in their oversubscription criteria, but they must (with the exception of grammar schools) offer a place to any child, where a place is available' (Long & Danechi, 2019:4). This illustrates an apparent contradiction at the heart of Britain in the twenty-first century, where 'despite declining participation in the historic churches, the presence of significant religious minorities has resulted in a modern society which is widely perceived as increasingly secular but is paradoxically increasingly multi-faith' (Skinner, 2002:172). This is especially apparent when a faith such as Islam has increased its adherents and its social capital while the influence of traditional Christian faiths and their institutions have receded. If the march of secularism was supposed to be inevitable and result in a whole-hearted embrace of secular ideals, then why has Islam remained such a major source of political and social identity?

This is applicable both in contexts such as Britain and globally, where the 20th and 21st centuries saw a revival of extremist Islamic activism that offered a direct challenge to the ideas of Western liberalism and the supposed immutability of Enlightenment ideas. In chapter three of this thesis, we saw the failure of Western grand narratives to take root in Middle Eastern,

Asian and Arab world contexts owing to the oppressive, violent and divisive systems instituted through colonialism and imperialism, which in turn planted the seeds of further conflict and discord that would come to fruition years later. Many of these movements were defiantly religious in character and there is no clearer example of this than the Islamic State. This thesis does not seek to conflate all of Islam with its extremist incarnations. The durability of Islamic identity takes on many forms and outlets. For the purposes of this argument, these extremist incarnations, particularly Sunni Salafi-Jihadist activism and those varieties that may be considered its offshoots and antecedents, are the chief subject under discussion. It is for this reason that we turn to a critical outlet for this anti-Western jihadist sentiment: a specific kind of madrasa that emerged in the late 19th century and would go on to become a highly influential vector of religious violence in the century that followed. This institution shaped the thinking of groups as such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The role of this institution in promoting a distinctly anti-liberal, anti-modern narrative illustrates the nature of the challenge that is posed to liberal forces ideas in times of Lyotardian narrative crisis or collapse.

The Madrasa

The Western-backed narrative of secularisation and its view of itself as a universal and inexorable process finds some difficulty in explaining the political and religious troubles within the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim world. The relationship and history between institutional religion and the state in the Middle East and parts of South-East Asia is markedly different from that in European nations. Distinctions between secular and religious institutions have often been blurred or non-existent. As Asad writes, ‘The formation of strong state power in the contemporary Middle East has a very different genealogy’ from the process underwent in the West. In ‘most cases, strong states have inherited colonial forms; a few owe their formation to Islamic movements’ (Asad, 1993:207). Saudi Arabia is the most obvious example in the Middle East and Muslim world of a state that is defined by its religiosity. It is an absolute monarchy in which Islam is the state religion and the law is based on the Sharia: Islamic law originating from the Quran and Sunnah. Saudi Arabia has played a key role in the financing and promotion of a specific kind of madrasa throughout the 20th century that has been linked to the backing of jihadist violence and anti-Western sentiment, especially within Pakistan. But it is firstly in the colonial context that the modern madrasa becomes of central importance and this is what we turn to next.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the madrasa is an ancient institution within Islam, originating in tenth century Iran. The specific type of madrasa of concern for this thesis was inaugurated in its modern incarnation in India in the mid-19th century following Britain's often bloody colonial incursions into the region (Burke, 2007:92). Chapter three of this thesis described how Islam functioned as a means and ideology of resistance against colonial and imperial rule and this was very much the case in India during the eras of British rule. The madrasas were instituted by a revivalist Sunni Islam movement known as the Deobandis (named after the town in Northern India in which it was founded) in 1867, formed 'in reaction to the challenge posed by British power and Hindu demographic superiority to Indian Muslims' (ibid). Amid the febrile environment produced by colonialism and conquest, the Deobandis 'were one of several groups that sought to reform or conserve religious education which aimed at providing the Muslim community with a (Islamically) legal basis for action', an initiative that was 'informed by the loss of the so-called "Islamic Empire" to the British once and for all' (Malik, 2008:7). The madrasas aimed to foster a refuge for orthodoxy during the upheavals and seismic heterodoxy brought in by the colonial authorities (Rahman, 1998:202). They constituted a narrative of resistance through preservation. In this fashion, 'they follow the pattern of revivalist and reformist movements within Islam reacting to external threats' (Burke, 2007:92). The Deobandis share a similarity here with the way revivalist Salafi movements of the era sought to reclaim their Islamic identity when faced with outside influences and threats (Wiktorowicz, 2006:208). Unlike Salafism though, the kinds of activism and educational initiatives initially practiced by the early Deobandis advocated for some form of limited engagement and exchange with Western forces. At their outset, like many institutions of the colonial era, these Deobandi schools were modelled on the blueprints provided by Western authorities, 'reorganised in imitation of European educational institutions' (Burke, 2007:93). The madrasas were staffed by a paid faculty known as the ulema (scholars of the faith) who 'ran classes offering a sequential curriculum', and who were tasked with 'interpreting the external world by the texts, thus becoming the central focus of the Deobandi movement' (ibid). In this form, far from representing an antiquated or medieval throwback, this type of madrasa was in fact an embodiment of Islam's attempt at embracing certain aspects of modernity. It engaged with Western subject matter and borrowed heavily from the organisational structure of Western educational systems. In the town of Deoband, the founders of this movement 'saw themselves as being engaged in an educational struggle, having now realised the futility of armed struggle against the country's new masters' (Noor at al, 2008:15). The viability of education as a long-term outlet for anti-colonial change was recognised early on by the

Deobandis, who saw it as an opportunity to maintain and promote their own social and religious identities, beliefs and values, while operating cooperatively under the framework provided by the colonial authorities.

This madrasa advocated a pragmatic approach to engaging with both colonial institutions and specific Western ideas. The leading Islamic scholar Shibli Nu'mani exhorted his fellow Muslims not to reject those aspects of modernity that didn't conflict with Islam, pointing out that Islam itself had adsorbed the ideas and knowledge of other faiths and civilisations such as the Romans, Greeks, Hindus and Persians (ibid:15). He recommended that madrasas should include subjects such as English and Mathematics, while maintaining their core goals of religious instruction and maintaining the primacy of Islamic learning (ibid). This 'middle path' became a common pedagogical procedure throughout North India in the mid to late 19th century (ibid). Conservative ulema of this era however, including other Deobandis, nonetheless dismissed any notion of accommodating modernity or Western ideas, and envisioned the madrasa as a strictly Muslim space. The clearest way to mobilise Islamic sentiment against colonial and outside powers was through embracing the power of purely Islamic symbolism, which required the removal of all things outwith a deeply austere and puritanical interpretation of the faith (Malik, 2007:8).

This growing strand of Deobandi adherents were more reactionary than their pragmatic counterparts and sought to maintain a coherent Islamic environment, distinct and removed from the presence of outsiders (Burke, 2007:93). They advocated a 'retreat from, rather than an adaptation of, the innovations of their colonial rulers', constructing an 'isolated Islamicized space' that allowed their followers and students to create 'an idealized Islamic society', islands in a sea of kufr and barbarism' (ibid). One of the key beliefs of the conservative Deobandis was and still is the opposition to Sufi Islam, owing to the latter's emphasis on intercession with saintly figures and engagement with mysticism. This is seen as violating the tawhid of God and fundamental indivisibility of his word and laws (Afzal, 2019:3). Sectarianism towards other sects is common. As Zaman writes, the conservative Deobandis self-conceptualisation invited Muslims to 'conform to the "true" Islam' that was embedded within the 'authoritative religious texts of the faith' (Zaman, 1999:304). It was this that eventually grew to become the dominant strain of Deobandi madrasa throughout large sections of India and especially Pakistan, including the area close to the border with Afghanistan containing the city of Peshawar. The young members of these schools became known as Taliban, from the Arabic root talib meaning

student, and some of them would go on to join the militant organisation of the same name in Pakistan and Afghanistan during the 1990s (Burke, 2007:94-95). Throughout the middle and later part of the 20th century, these students would be increasingly drawn from the poorest echelons of Pakistani society which are typically found in poverty stricken rural areas (ibid). Rahman notes in his study of these madrasas during the late 1990s that 'Languages are not taught for their intrinsic worth but because they aid religious learning or may be necessary' for those seeking to join the ulema (Rahman, 1998:198). His study states that many of the students were learning and reciting from texts that were centuries old, particularly when it came to learning Arabic and its grammar. For example, he describes lessons where:

> 'Arabic books are often those which were used in the medieval age and were prescribed later… in the middle of the 18th century… In the madrassas Arabic is not taught as a living language. The student is made to memorise the rhymed couplets from the ancient texts as well as their explanations. As the explanations of a number of texts are in Persian, which is also memorised, the student generally fails to apply his knowledge to the living language' (ibid:200).

The implications for genuine learning here and the ability of the student in question to gain knowledge stand in stark contrast to attitudes to knowledge and learning in the liberal grand narrative. This rigid form of instruction and rote learning entails a devotion to a strict form of textual or scriptural recitation that profoundly limits further enquiry and the applicability of language beyond not just the religious but the confines of an extremely archaic form of divine expression, foregrounded by an ideology that demands conformity to the only correct and legitimate interpretation of the faith. The Deobandi madrasas see this not as a theoretical or academic pursuit but as an existential question that necessitates the preservation of a deep, unyielding orthodoxy. For those reasons, external sources of learning or influence are not permitted. Such a conception of language and faith is static and inflexible despite the huge changes in language and indeed Islam that have taken place since those texts were first written. It may be termed a form of indoctrination, not authentic learning. This example illustrates the profound difference between this form of supposed education and that which is promoted by a liberal grand narrative, informed by the ideas of the Enlightenment. The content of learning in the latter is designed to be applied not simply to the immediate tasks in the classroom, but also to help enable the student's ability to discriminate and question, to impart knowledge and to inculcate critical thinking and the ability to form their own independent views. The nurturing of rational intellects defined by reason requires an openness and critical engagement with a range of political and religious ideas, unencumbered by doctrinaire methods of teaching or

fanatical devotion to a single unassailable authority. It is these values that underpin much of the liberal grand narrative's claim to universality. The applicability and reach of this learning, in an ideal sense, is supposed to go beyond the environment of the classroom or school and move into new contexts where that critical thinking and knowledge can be put into practice. In the case of the Deobandi madrasas learning is instead devoted to the service of maintaining a rigid deference to the ideology of the faith, borne out of recitation that does not even cohere with the 'living language' of the present (ibid). It is a confessional vision of instruction that brings with it an intrinsic form of dogma and submissiveness that is designed to be unquestionable by its very nature, owing to its allegedly unimpeachable self-conception as the true incarnation of Islam. This is also demonstrated in the way that, within the madrasa context, the knowledge that is imparted is unrevisable. It has been communicated and passed down through the decades via the same method of memorisation as its default mode of learning, emphasising the unbending continuity of Islamic lineage to which the students now belong. Further evidence of the indoctrinatory nature of the pedagogical setup is seen in the way that language teaching was part of a process of, in Burke's words:

> 'supporting, reproducing and reinforcing the philosophical import of other doctrinaire subjects. The worldview it created is entirely religious. The true believer is defined against the 'other', the non-Muslim, the heretic, the blasphemer or even the follower of another sect or a Westernized non-practising Muslim. The emir must be obeyed' (Burke, 2007:94).

Indoctrination is therefore one of the critical tools of this form of madrasa schooling, stressing the importance of hierarchy and the adoption of a singular worldview. The narrative it promotes is one of austere and uncompromising religious control, in which Islam assumes the dominant place in all facets of social and political life. The differences between this kind of instruction and the genuine learning articulated by a liberal conception of education and Enlightenment thought – and how this in turn is key to powering a potentially transformational grand narrative – will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

Over the decades, the growth of these more conservative madrasas saw their number increase massively in Pakistan. Between 1967 and 2007, the number of madrasas in Pakistan increased from around 1,000 to 'somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000' (Burke, 2011:347). The self-preservation element of the madrasas that arose out of defiance against British colonial rule remained even after Pakistan gained independence and became an Islamic republic. This was

owing to the fact that many of the educational outlets and authorities from the colonial era remained entrenched even in the decades after independence, while the cost of formal education was expensive and out of reach for vast swathes of the country. For poor, rural Pakistanis, the madrasas offered ‘free education, board and lodging’, making it an extremely attractive proposition to millions of people (Burke, 2007:95). The often perilous economic situation in Pakistan meant that the government repeatedly lacked the resources to fund schools, teachers and even build the physical buildings. Formal government-funded education was also heavily biased in favour of the middle-class population found in urban centres (ibid). This allowed the madrasas to come in and fill the gap. By 2019, it was estimated that around 80% of all madrasas in Pakistan were Deobandi (Afzal, 2019:4). One of the key reasons for the explosion in this type of madrasa is related to Saudi Arabia. These schools and networks experienced a dramatic surge in growth during the 1970s and 1980s, when money and funds from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states flooded into Pakistan and elsewhere as a means of promoting pan-Islamic solidarity (Burke, 2007:93). In other words, economic factors once again played a key role in ushering in ideological change and emboldening extreme political actors. This in turn had an impact on the political narratives that gained ascendancy at this time, namely the austere, fundamentalist Islam practised by a significant strand of the madrasas in Pakistan, which then became entwined with violent jihadist activism. The reasons for the Saudis’ massive economic input into Pakistan religious schooling are linked closely to the political environment of the Saudi regime during the 1970s and the context of the growing power of revolutionary Shia political forces in Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

Saudi Arabia and Iran

The Western-backed secular monarch of Iran, Shah Mohammed Pahlavi, was overthrown in a revolution in 1979. The Shah’s regime operated essentially as an autocracy or a ‘royal dictatorship’ for close to thirty years, in conjunction with a limited parliamentary democracy to give it a veneer of popular legitimacy (Keddie & Richard, 2003:132. It utilised various security and secret police networks to crush political opposition through torture, imprisonment and beatings (ibid), alongside a significant arrangement of patronage and co-optation by giving potential opposition groups jobs within a large network of government employment (ibid). But by 1979 the regime was suffering from widespread corruption and faced a growing mass opposition movement made up of a coalition of a young leftist student movement and the

increasingly powerful Shia religious figures led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. This latter movement sought to reclaim what they saw as Shia Islam's pre-eminent position as a great civilisation and empire, the renewal of the link to the great Safavid dynasty that converted Sunni polities into Shia Muslims and transformed the country into a centuries-spanning empire around the 16th century (Graham, 2016). Khomeini attacked what he saw as the fundamentally anti-Islamic project of the Shah, backed as it was by ungodly Western states such as the United States. He declared that the Shah's mission was the very 'destruction of Islam in Iran' for good (Marquardt & Heffelfinger, 2008:90). The successful revolution ultimately saw Iran transformed into a theocratic Islamic republic. Shia religious authorities assumed essential roles known as the Guardian Council within the new regime and the nation was to be governed in accordance with Shia Islamic law alongside a nominal parliament and presidential office, all under the supreme leadership of Khomeini. Iran is one of four nations where Shia Muslims are the majority despite being a minority worldwide compared to the Sunni. In Iran the Shia constitute around 90% of the population (Pew Research, 2009). The impact of the revolution was seismic in reorienting the power of global political Islam partially away from the traditional centres of authority such as the Saudi Kingdom (styled as it is as the Sunni custodian of Islam and the birthplace of the faith) and moving it instead into the hands of Shia revolutionary forces that had managed to seize control of a state that had been a strong Western ally for decades. The iconography of Khomeini offered a powerful symbol of the world-altering possibilities of Islam when married to determined and sustainable political activism. It reclaimed a renewed sense of Muslim victory and dignity against enemies that had appeared hegemonic and economically and militarily overwhelming. As Wright states: 'For Muslims everywhere, Khomeini reframed the debate with the West. Instead of conceding the future of Islam to a secular, democratic model, he imposed a stunning reversal' (Wright, 2006:47).

The event again emphasised that secular notions of the inexorable march of reason and rationality coming to upend the superstitions and dogma that had defined human relationships to political power for centuries had proved to be mistaken. The underestimation of religion as a galvanising, world-altering force that could engender profound social and political change well into the 20th century meant that the emergence (or re-emergence) of religious grand narratives were able to provide a clear definitive alternative to the dominance of Western or Western-backed metanarratives. The Shah of Iran had undertaken reforms to modernise Iran economically and socially throughout his reign, making it appear more Western in character. These included measures such as liberalising the economy, which involved breaking the power

of the semi-feudal landowning Shia clergy, extending limited suffrage rights to women and giving them equal rights in the law in divorce and child custody cases, as well as ending the segregation of education (Osanloo, 2020: 503). But this narrative of incremental equality and freedom was fatally undermined by the brutality and corruption that rested at the heart of his system of power. The mirage of freedom was tarnished by the oppression that accompanied it. In order words, it can be argued that it wasn't genuinely liberal beyond some moderate attempts at liberal reform, given that those reforms were still wedded to a political system built on oppression and targeted violence against its opponent. Some of these reforms, such as the land reforms and allowing religious minorities to hold political office and women's rights, were also deeply unpopular with the country's religious conservatives who saw it as further evidence of Western infiltration into their culture and society. The system ultimately ushered in by Khomeini was avowedly anti-liberal in nature, yet it was one that the Ayatollah saw as entwined with Islamic justice (Vakil, 2011:75). Many of the Shah's initiatives on women's rights were reversed. This saw the closure of childcare centres and restrictions on what subjects women could study at university (Camara, 2012:50), with women's primary roles to be that of carers, wives and mothers, positions that Khomeini argued 'were the most important contributors to a successful Islamic society' (Vakil, 2011:75). A clear symbol of this new direction was the introduction of the mandatory dress code in public spaces that required all women to wear a headscarf. In 1983, the Iranian parliament 'passed the Islamic Punishment Law where the lax observance of the veil would render a punishment of 74 lashes', a punishment that was designed to enforce the essential Islamic values of piety and modesty despite protests and anger on the part of many of the nation's women (ibid:74). Liberty, one of the critical ideas of the Enlightenment, was portrayed as a form of subjugation and a source of vice. This was reflected in Khomeini's fiery rhetoric that spoke of a reinvigorated Islamic mode of living - spiritually, politically and socially – and attacked the false promise of secular freedom:

> 'Yes, we are reactionaries, and you are enlightened intellectuals: You intellectuals do not want us to go back 1400 years. You, who want freedom, freedom for everything, the freedom of parties, you who want all the freedoms, you intellectuals: freedom that will corrupt our youth, freedom that will pave the way for the oppressor, freedom that will drag our nation to the bottom' (Wright, 2006:47).

If the Western secular grand narrative is seen to rest on an inherent illegitimacy, as in Shah-era Iran or Western colonial and imperial endeavours – or its precepts are found to be wanting in

moments of intense crisis as Lyotard writes – then it follows that the modern liberal grand narrative will inescapably suffer from a popular 'incredulity toward metanarratives' (Lyotard, 1979:XXIV), presaging a post-modern condition where belief in such a concept collapses, and along with it the idea of the supposed universality of liberalism and the key tenets of the Enlightenment. In its place may well arise another kind of grand narrative, one that is anti-modern or strikingly anti-liberal in character and which is founded on values that are opposed to the foregrounding of man's alleged capacity for reason, rationality or wisdom, free to pursue these because of his natural and inalienable state of liberty. The political systems of Saudi Arabia and the Iran are the antithesis of Spinoza or Rousseau's Enlightenment ideals. They remove man from the centre of the universe and place him at the service of a divine power, living under the rules and laws of supposed deific sanction. This divine being is the source of his virtue and his ability to live a good life. The social bond of these narratives is based on the unifying reach of Islam that subsumes all other forms of identity – social, political or personal – and constitutes the truest and holiest form of community. The oneness of God, or unity of the faith, is what is essential. In the case of Iran, Khomeini sought to build a new society that enacted and lived by divinely-ordained Shia Islamic knowledge. As well as expressing this deep social bond of Islamic unity, Khomeini's grand narrative, much like Lyotard's theory, functioned as a guarantor of that Islamic knowledge and its value system, giving it a profound sense of transcendence that fuses the earthly human realm with the word and authority of the divine and the realm of the cosmic. It is imbued with a salvific dimension, in that it communicates how life is to be lived in communion with the commands of the divine and the knowledge he has imparted. Living in accordance with this knowledge is the means of attaining that salvation after death. Building a new religious regime that promotes this narrative is therefore key to the realisation of individual and collective transcendence.

The response from the House of Saud to the revolution was complicated. The Kingdom had seen itself as not simply the bastion of Islam but also the bulwark against Shia activism that, in their view, sought to undermine the unity of the faith and sow discord between the two sects over issues such as their alleged practices of idolatry and polytheism (Entessar & Afrasiabi, 2018:129). Around 10-15% of Saudi citizens identify as Shia (Pew Research, 2009). The religious uelma in the country have consistently targeted the Shia through accusations of deviant beliefs and antagonism to the Sunni authority, rhetoric that continues to this day. Perazzo notes the words of the prominent cleric Mohammed al-Arifi, who sits on the Kingdom's government funded NGO the Muslim World League, who stated in a sermon on

Shia Saudis: 'Today the evil Shias continue to set traps, for Monotheism and for the Sunnis', while their loyalty would ultimately be to Iran (Perazzo, 2012:1). Shia Saudis have also experienced discrimination from the state in areas beyond the rhetorical. The Saudi government 'does not allow any public places of worship for non-Sunni communities, most significantly Shia mosques; authorities regularly shut down even private Shia halls for communal prayer' (Lantos, 2018). Historically, the regime has excluded Shia from 'serving in certain public-sector jobs and high political office. There are currently no senior Shia diplomats or high-ranking military officers' (ibid). Further to this state discrimination, there is the issue of a supposed political threat. One of the products of the massive oil wealth that transformed Saudi Arabia was the rapid growth of the middle class who worked in the oil and energy sectors. Among this group were many Shia citizens. Restless political activism in the 1970s was seen in the way that these middle-class Saudi Shia's were represented in radical Marxist or leftist groups. Organisations such as the National Reform Front were dominated by Shias, owing to their work with the state oil company ARAMCO. Louër notes that many of these Saudis were exposed to Arab nationalist and leftist ideas owing to their interactions with ARAMCO foreign workers from places such as Egypt, Syria and other Arab countries (Louër, 2012s:226). The National Reform Front demanded greater political participation for all Saudis, including a new 'constitution establishing a parliament and guaranteeing political pluralism', while the Saudi Communist Party demanded that the state's huge oil resources be nationalised (ibid). It was in this febrile environment that the Iranian Revolution occurred. In the aftermath of the revolution, the Saudi regime responded cautiously, promising to commit to a new era of engagement. This included early diplomatic talks and a statement from King Khalid that the establishment of the new Islamic government in Tehran would act 'as a precursor for further proximity and understanding between the two nations (Entessar & Afrasiabi, 2018:129).

Nevertheless, the dangers of the revolution to the Saudi regime were apparent, particularly in a nation that had a Shia population agitating for reform. If revolutionary Shia Islamic activism could topple a long-standing Western ally such as the Shah, the argument went that it was possible in Saudi Arabia and other nominally Sunni Islamic nations too. This shaped the reasoning behind the critical decision by the Saudis and other Gulf states to launch a global campaign of Islamic solidarity involving the promotion of the Saudis' brand of Islamic Salafist Wahhabism. It was emblematic of the mission to wrench control of the dominant global narrative of Islamic power away from Tehran and Shia Islam and return it to the world of the pre-eminent Sunni authority. Part of this outreach involved pouring huge sums of money into

madrasa education and mosque construction in many Muslim countries across the Middle East, Asia and Africa. And in areas such as Pakistan, Deobandi madrasas were some of the biggest recipients of those funds. Afzal contends that the economic links between Deobandis thought and Saudi Salafism owes to their similarities in ideology: both are austere interpretations of the faith and share much in common on maintaining the unanimity of monotheism, rejecting the alleged polytheism and division of Shia Muslims, and ensuring a rigid focus on strict, often literalist forms of practice and the removal of non-Islamic ideas or practices (Afzal, 2019:2). The Saudi fear of political Shiism spreading its revolutionary sentiment across borders and becoming the dominant strain of Islam in world politics —in nations such as Pakistan (the second-most populous Muslim nation in the world) that shared a border with Iran and suffered from profound economic inequality and political instability since independence — meant the threat had to be countered. The madrasa was a critical tool in this mission, part of the Saudi and Pakistani Sunni establishment's plan to promote their own 'vision of Sunnism through patronage of Islamic education in the Muslim world' (Nasr, 2000:144), which also aligned with the Saudis wider agenda of 'controlling Islamic intellectual and cultural spaces across the Muslim world' (ibid). The Saudis saw Pakistan as critical to its regional isolating of Iran through erecting a 'Sunni Wall' around the nation geographically and in doing so preserving the Sunni nature of Pakistan's Islamisation (ibid). While motivated principally by contemporary geopolitical concerns, this clash also opened up another avenue in the historical antagonism between the Sunni and Shia sects. Thus the narrative of Sunni and Shia hostility took on a new level of intensity and saw contemporary conflict reframed through the prism of millennia-spanning sectarian rivalry, indicating the multiplicity of narratives at play and how grand narrative works to collapse the past and present so that contemporary events are situated as the mere continuation of a long-running historical struggle.

It has been estimated that since the late 1960s, the Saudi regime has funnelled around $100 billion across the world with the goal of funding religious institutions that promote fundamentalist Wahhabi Salafism. Pakistan was one of the foremost recipients of this aid (Economic Times, 2016). The narrative of pan-Islamic Sunni solidarity across national borders was a direct challenge to its Shia opposite propagated by Khomeini. Yet both underscored the intense power of Islam as a state-level power and its ability to stimulate seismic political change as well as the collapse of secular alternatives in the region.

Pakistan's importance was also underscored by the Soviet-Afghan War. The Soviet Union's

decision to invade Afghanistan in late 1979 and prop up a failing and corrupt Communist regime had resulted in a huge outcry across the Muslim world and condemnation from the United States and other Western nations (DeYoung, 1980). Muslim leaders sought to aid the resistance through economic and military measures. It was the invasion of Afghanistan that saw these already puritanical madrasas become vectors of recruitment for the jihad across the border in Afghanistan as a means of resisting the Soviets, a secular atheistic regime that appeared intent on pacifying an Islamic people. The war resulted in the puritanical Islam preached in the madrasas becoming imbued with a Salafi-Jihadist narrative of conquest and violent purity. The invasion functioned as a global Islamic rallying cry that saw thousands of volunteers travel to the border with Pakistan and the city of Peshawar to train, be propagandized into the ideology of violent activism and prepare to fight. The Islamic thought they preached was marked by bellicose rhetoric and the promise of salvific violence. Given the set-up of these madrasas emphasised a single purely Islamic view of reality, this made them perfect centres for indoctrination. The ideological nature of this kind of jihadism and its influence on groups such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State will be discussed in the next chapter. It is crucial to the emergence of Osama bin Laden, and the culture of jihad that became an intrinsic element of the Islamic State's grand narrative, as we shall see in the analysis of its propaganda outputs.

The emergence of the madrasa as not simply a religious school but an incubator of a certain kind of fundamentalist strain of Islam illustrates one of the key challenges to the applicability of Enlightenment values. In plotting an abridged history of the Enlightenment and contrasting it with anti-Enlightenment forces in the 20th century, this chapter has aimed to show the weaknesses of Western-endorsed secular narratives in underestimating the durable power of religion to motivate profound change. While through the Enlightenment there came about a gradual disestablishing of religion and state power throughout the West, as well as an acute decline in religious and Christian belief, the 20th century saw a reclaiming of this from an Islamic perspective, with the state entwined in religious power and faith doctrines comprising the defining moral guide for law and conduct. These forces have brought with them new grand narratives that situate faith not only as the essential element of the political community, but also fundamental to individual and collective salvation. It reforms the grand narrative's social bond and its role as the guarantor of knowledge along clear religious lines and applies it to realms such as education and learning, seeing these as outlets for promoting the allegiance to the faith and maintaining the Islamizing of society at large. This challenges the Enlightenment's conception of itself as universal in nature because it foregrounds humanity's

natural desires for liberty and the importance of his rationality and reason. The Islamic grand narratives discussed here refute these ideas on the basis of man's indivisibility from God and the essential unity and loyalty he demands. The next chapter will further interrogate these differing visions of education and narrative from religious and secular forces. The juxtaposition between this and the significance secular education places on the value of choice is deep and will be seen again when analysing the grand narratives of the Islamic State in chapter six.

Chapter Five: Illiberal and Jihadist Narratives: Propaganda, Education and Narrative

This chapter will document the various salvific grand narratives that have gained ascendency throughout parts of the modern Arab and Muslim world such as Iraq. By doing this, it will also outline how powerful historical forces laid the groundwork for the ideological struggle that would ultimately help birth the Islamic State and provided fertile ground for the group's narrative to flourish. In particular, this chapter will examine how authoritarian and extremist political actors such as the regime of Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda (an important forerunner and later rival of the Islamic State) constructed grand narratives that were decidedly anti-liberal in character as a means of securing political power.

As well as this, this chapter will also define what the term propaganda means and how it may be separated from genuine education. This is of vital importance when considering the complex relationship between propaganda and education and how narratives emerge as a signature feature of both. Crucial to this paradigm are the IS narratives linked to education: Islamic systems of learning are of deep significance to the ideological makeup of Islamic State as well as the practical structure of the group's attempts at governing. How these ideas are expressed, and the manner in which they are geared towards specific audiences, reveals a great deal about the nature of the stories that are promoted by IS and how they have sought to position themselves as the only truly legitimate Islamic entity within the international order. This formulation is based on a combination of selective readings of Islamic theology (specifically Salafi-Jihadism), long-standing histories of political grievance against the West and cross-national Islamic solidarity, emphasising a kinship that is both real – such as the family and friendship ties that often link members of IS, especially foreign volunteers – and imagined, signifying the individual's connection to the global ummah or worldwide community of Muslims whom IS proclaims to fight on behalf of. The clash between the truly educational potential of a liberal grand narrative – with its emphasis on universalism, reason and the possibility of revision – and the propagandistic forms of extremism is decisive to understanding the themes of Islamic State's narratives in *Dabiq*.

<u>The Contradictory Nature of Islamic State</u>

Before addressing these questions, at this early juncture it is worth stressing the contradictory nature of how the Islamic State functioned during its time as a proto-state in Iraq and Syria, as well as how this was reflected in its media outputs. The group fashioned itself as the authentic inheritor of Mohammed's legacy and the early Islamic societies that followed him. The laws instituted in territory the group controlled were based on a strict literalist interpretation of the Sharia that was grounded in the holy texts of the faith. Through violence, coercion and religious zeal, IS attempted to constitute a new Islamic polity that dissolved the artificial borders imposed by Western states and centred its claim to legitimacy on a divinely ordained theological mandate. The reconstruction of Iraqi and Syrian society through a profoundly Islamic vision was enacted on the basis of this divine command. In this sense the group presented itself as a radical challenge to the dominant nation-state model – a symbol of Western hegemony – by explicitly rejecting modernity and seeking to ape the alleged example of the earliest Islamic societies and the Caliphates that defined an era of global Islamic pre-eminence. But within this, there were serious inconsistencies and ambiguities. In reality, the proto-state formed by IS arguably had more in common with its enemy states, particularly those regimes that had already existed in the Middle East for decades, than the societies of Islam's golden age. Far from being a throwback to those earlier eras, the Islamic State was a distinctly modern phenomenon. It does not 'present as radical an alternative to modern nation states in terms of governance or administration as may seem the case at first sight' (Burke, 2015:103), because its structures of governance and sources of income were as much a product of their twenty-first century environment as its ability to wage war on the Iraqi and Syrian states. Charles Tripp has written that IS - both as a governing and military entity - had 'more in common with the region's territorial, patrimonial and authoritarian rentier states' (Tripp, 2015) such as the oil rich Gulf states. Tripp posits that IS closely resembled the Iraqi government of Nouri al-Maliki that ruled in the years after the American-led invasion (2006-2014) in terms of how it used a combination of economic wealth and targeted violence to crush its opposition and patronise powerful pre-existing tribal and sectarian networks. Maliki's government:

> '…practised a familiar regional style of government: fuelled by huge oil revenues that he and his cohorts believed were theirs by right, he presided over an authoritarian government that played on his sectarian identity. He favoured those who identified with him and used various sanctions, including violence, against those outside his circle' (ibid).

IS similarly ensured its territorial hegemony through force and financial incentive. In Tripp's view, the group displayed a strong ability at not simply acquiring but also distributing the money that flowed into its coffers (ibid). IS was therefore able to bring together a disparate cohort of 'disgruntled Iraqis – kin groupings, tribal clans, ideologues, both Islamist and Baathist – from the Sunni Arab northwest of the country' through its economic resources, meaning these groups were given the opportunity to 'win resources, gain protection and to avoid retribution' (ibid). A key resource was oil, which it sold to other factions and political groups throughout the region in nations such as Turkey and Syria. The revenue generated by these activities was essential to firstly breaching key segments of the Iraqi population and then ensuring their loyalty. Mazur notes that the need for political groups to penetrate diverse tribal networks and alliances in order to assume power has a long-standing history in both Iraq and Syria. In Syria for example, the Baath Party government was able to wield power in the north-eastern Sunni tribal areas of the country 'through a policy divide-and-rule, empowering particular tribes at the expense of others and building linkages to lower-level figures outside of the formal structure of tribe' (Mazur, 2015). This included providing representation within the political establishment and certain constitutional bodies.

> 'By apportioning seats in the Parliament for tribal leaders and providing access to lucrative jobs in the military and security services, the regime purchased the loyalty and assistance of many tribal communities that it used to put down challenges to its rule… The work of the Baath to encourage competition among elements within a single tribe is part of a longer historical process by which tribal populations have come under the influence of the central Syrian state' (ibid).

While IS did not offer formal representation in institutions such as a parliament, it was nonetheless still able to exploit these tribal networks to its own advantage through a mix of patronage and protection as a means of maintaining control over its territory. This was typically expressed in an economic system based on 'tribute and distribution' that saw the looting of public and private assets such as banks and military installations, with so-called ''protection levies" imposed on businesses and on transport firms' (Tripp, 2015). It is 'clear from this trajectory that for all its denunciation of the territorial nation state, IS has followed its pattern faithfully' (ibid). In doing so, it was thus following in a long line of actors who had behaved similarly in the region. With controlling territory and attempting to function as a state also came numerous other familiar issues concerning the question of governance. These included 'Rampant inflation, dilemmas over fiscal policy, budget deficits, supply shortages, export

difficulties, internal policing and external defence…and fracturing social cohesion' (ibid). As Burke states, these issues are not unfamiliar to the region and 'could even be said to characterise many nations within it' (Burke, 2015:103). Despite its efforts to reject modernity and present an anti-modern narrative, the actual structural entity of Islamic State as it existed in Iraq and Syria was in fact still largely defined by it.

These developments on the part of IS also reflect a recurring pattern of state formation that sees the grand ideological ambitions of political movements simultaneously defined stringently by economic factors. The ability to leverage key economic interests (backed by military power) as a means of securing support among crucial actors – particularly in societies in the Middle East that are partially divided along tribal, ethnic and religious lines– has been a hallmark of various power grabs in the region for centuries. This is especially true when examining the colonial era and the age defined by empire. In the case of modern Iraq for example, it can be argued that IS were in fact exploiting many of the divisions originally instituted by the British Empire that sought to maintain economic hegemony over the new territory and its resources. These divisions were in turn exacerbated over the decades by subsequent Iraqi administrations in their pursuit of power, leaving many of the initial wounds of empire to fester. To better understand this situation – and the repeated patterns of how different group's assumed power over the nation – we must go back to the state's genesis.

The territory was formed out of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. This newly-created state that initially belonged to the British Empire was shaped out of the three former Ottoman provinces (known as vilayets): Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. This formed part of the carve-up agreed between the French and the British following the conclusion of the First World War. Under the Ottomans, the vilayets were administrative regions with their own governor that had some level of basic autonomy. The regions of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul were ethnically and religiously diverse and before unification had little in common with each other (Walker, 2003:30). Basra was formed along the coast and was tied to the Persian Gulf, while the majority of its population were Shia Muslim Arab. The region of Baghdad meanwhile was the traditional centre of power and housed the capital of the same name, which at one time had been the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate centuries before. Crucially, most of the population in this region were Sunni. Mosul was a mountainous area that had enjoyed strong autonomy under the Ottomans and was predominantly Kurdish (ibid). These vilayets, with their own distinct identities, cultures and histories, were thus brought together under the banner of a unified Iraqi state.

From its birth, this new state had to reckon with the issue of crafting an integrated, cohesive sense of national identity from disparate and often conflicting elements. It also had to find a way to foster a political grand narrative that overcame these now embedded religious and ethnic tensions and which expressed a shared history and common social bond, beyond the individual identities that defined the former provinces. Many of the tensions that would come to dominate Iraq's history can be traced at least partially to the structure of the state that was crafted out of the incongruent constituent elements of the former Ottoman Empire.

A monarch, Faisal bin Hussein (son of the Sheriff of Mecca), was installed in place of direct British rule in 1921 owing to revolts and unrest aimed at the colonial regime in the aftermath of the War. The economic costs of policing Iraq on Britain's part were also substantive, while the costs of its military action throughout the Middle East amounted to around £37 million by the early 1920s (Howell, 2006:888). But Britain still exerted serious control over the nascent state's fortunes. Two issues were critical to British interest in the nation: access to and eventual ownership of Iraq's oil fields which helped fuel the Empire's activities regionally, and protecting 'imperial communications with India' (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016:402). Part of the creation of the state involved simplifying the complex relations between various groups – specifically those between the Sunni minority and Shia majority, as well as the Kurds – throughout the provinces and utilising Britain's economic power to buy off powerful and influential tribal networks that controlled areas of the nation. Britain's economic and political interests were also reflected in the fact that the new Iraqi state, and its favourable disposition towards Britain, functioned as a buffer zone in the region against rival states Turkey and Russia (Buchan, 2003). Economic interests were therefore central to both the goals and operational formation of the modern Iraqi state. Such factors were also critical to Britain's desire to withdraw from the nation owing to the economic costs of its administration and policing, while still allowing it to maintain its sphere of influence as a great power.

Yet a major element of this system of rule and its simplification of the nation's religious and tribal diversity was the way power was divided. The revolt that was crushed in 1920 had been seen as a general protest against British rule across all levels of Iraqi society (Tripp, 2007:44). But it also marked the emergence of an organised Shia movement that sought to gain political power on its own terms for the first time. Their defeat saw them excluded from many areas of political and economic power in the fledging state. When Iraq was handed over to King Faisal, the British had left a state with severe power imbalances across sectarian lines. Iraq had a

population of around 3 million at this time; Sunni Iraqis constituted less than 20% of this yet had been patronised and supported by the British and now wielded huge political control over the country. Government ministries, high-ranking state offices, and the officer corps of the Iraqi Army were all nearly exclusively controlled by Sunnis (Tripp, 2007:31), under a Sunni Arab king in what was eventually defined as a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament as part of a bicameral legislature. Because of the way Iraq had been constructed from the former Ottoman provinces, the Sunni had major advantages as power was centralised around Baghdad. They had also controlled the bureaucracies of the Ottoman administration, were more urban-oriented and had higher levels of education. Despite their majority status, the Shia on the other hand tended to be poorer, more rural, and less educated, making them suspicious of and aggrieved at the growing power of Baghdad's central government (Walker, 2003:34). Meanwhile, ethnic Kurds in the north who had their own distinct language and culture resisted the ongoing centralising of power and demanded greater political autonomy, decrying the artificial boundaries that had been imposed which separated them from their ethnic counterparts in what was now Syria, Turkey and Iran (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:400). Such matters were complicated further by the presence of Christian, Jewish and Yazidi minorities who also disliked the political composition of the emergent nation and who amounted to around 8% of its total population when Faisal assumed the throne in 1921.

The impact of this ethnic and religious arrangement meant that efforts at fostering national unity or a common social bond, a unified Iraqi identity that could be expressed through grand narrative, were handicapped from its inception. The clear economic and political discrepancies between Sunni and Shia – inaugurated by British colonial authorities and then exploited further by their Iraqi successors – set the stage for serious tensions that would come to define the state of Iraq for much of its history. These tensions have often turned violent in times of crisis and conflict. They are therefore partially a legacy of empire and the economic and political interests that drove the decision-making of colonial authorities. The ethnic power arrangement instituted in Iraq remained in place even as the nation underwent profound changes. This was compounded by the enormous amount of power wielded by the Iraqi military which operated as an autonomous group independent of state control. Iraq gained full independence in 1932 and experienced serious instability in the run-up to World War Two. A series of Shia uprisings in 1935-36, aimed at challenging the exclusion of Shia sheiks from the Iraqi parliament, were brutally supressed by the military. A further series of military coups also aggravated the inbuilt weaknesses of the state and underlined its inability to curb the power of the Sunni-dominated

armed forces (Tripp, 2007:83-84. The divided composition and the imbalances of power distribution in the state continued into the Ba'athist era, when the monarchy was overthrown by the Baath Party. After another series of power struggles, Ba'athist Saddam Hussein became leader and dictator of Iraq in 1979.

His rule was marked by the brutal use of force against perceived threats through both the Iraqi military and a vast internal security apparatus that violently crushed dissent. Shia and Kurdish Iraqis suffered greatly at the hands of Saddam's regime. Saddam felt that the fragmentary and diverse nature of Iraq meant that it could only be controlled rigorously through a powerful centralised state. This was to be the only source of governing authority in the nation. Karsh and Rautsi quote Saddam stating:

> 'The ideal revolutionary command should effectively direct all planning and implementation. It must not allow the growth of any other rival center [sic] of power. There must be one command pooling and directing the subsequent governmental departments, including the armed forces' (Karsh & Rautsi, 2002:87).

To preserve this centre of power, Saddam also stringently maintained the system of Sunni privilege over the majority Shia and their minority counterparts owing in part to the Shia revolution in Iran in 1979. During the early 1970s, the price of oil skyrocketed due to an oil embargo declared by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) against Western nations such as the US and UK. Iraq was a key beneficiary of this as revenues from its oil exports exploded. Crucially, Saddam and the Ba'athists used this immense new wealth generated by oil reserves to buy the support of key constituents through generous welfare state provisions and by modernising agriculture and farming in rural areas (Tripp, 2007:207). As Tripp writes, these efforts had the effect of 'creating a wide circle of dependents, deeply implicated in the regime's use of state funds to favour those whom it trusted and to create a client network of countryside proportions' (ibid). In other words, Saddam's reign followed a similar pattern that had defined modern Iraq's destiny since its birth. His rule intensified the deeply polarised socio-political relations between Sunni and Shia that had been embedded long ago by the colonial architects of the state. When his regime was removed during the US-led coalition invasion in 2003, the fragmentary, sectarian nature of the Iraqi state was laid bare. The system of governance that ultimately emerged post-invasion, while nominally democratic and designed on the basis of power-sharing, in fact still had many of the same mechanics of Saddam's regime. These included the continued long-term consolidation of

power in the centre, a top-down system of governance, and extremely powerful institutions such as the oil ministry, the army and the security services (Fairweather, 2011). From this set-up emerged the Shia-led regime of Nouri al-Maliki. As illustrated earlier in this chapter, al-Maliki's regime ultimately came to dominate Iraqi politics after the invasion in a way that again exacerbated the profound ethnic and religious divisions that rested at the heart of the Iraqi state. The security services, army and government ministries, which had been controlled by Sunnis for decades, were ultimately purged of Sunnis in a process that became known as De-Ba'athification (Burke, 2011:113). This policy was enacted owing to their heavy involvement in Saddam's regime. This served to inflame resentment just as the state moved into its post-Saddam era and spearheaded a massive reorientation of the religious and ethnic power set-up in Iraq while leaving the underlying mechanics and levers of power in place (ibid). While not as brutally authoritarian as Saddam's, al-Maliki's regime likewise followed a comparable model of sustaining power through economic patronage and targeted violence, only this time along Shia-led lines instead of Sunni in a massive reversal of the power arrangement that had defined Iraq's state model since its founding.

And as illustrated above, IS in turn themselves followed a similar blueprint in their seizure of power. In this sense, they were echoing the footsteps of firstly those who created the Iraqi state at the end of World War One, and then those who had attempted to utilise the underlying religious and ethnic tensions to parlay themselves into power. It can therefore be argued that IS, despite portraying themselves as the rejectors of modernity through explicitly destroying the artificial borders imposed by Sykes-Picot and overthrowing the modern state system of Iraq, nonetheless wielded the very facets of modernity – economics, networks of oil exports and wealth, modern military hardware – in both their attempts to seize power and ultimately govern.

Iraq, Grand Narrative and Jihadism

The impact of this complex recent history on political narrative is stark. As noted, there was no unified Iraqi identity to accompany the newly unified Iraqi state when the British handed over power to Faisal in 1921, to the extent that at Faisal's coronation there was no Iraqi national anthem. "God Save The Queen" was played instead as the British departed (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:403). The state was territorially unified but the power dynamics that had been embedded at its birth meant that a coherent unified body politic that linked these often disparate religious and ethnic identities was never formed. From the outset therefore, Iraq was defined

by one particular group dominating the others, backed by the economic and military power of the state. Because of this, as well as the lack of representation and deep economic inequalities, attempts at crafting grand narratives that expressed a legitimate political unity and all-encompassing sense of Iraqi identity that was linked to statehood were built on acutely unstable foundations. Yet despite this, Iraq's leaders over the years have still endeavoured to craft and promote various grand narratives that enabled the articulation of a social bond that encouraged a unified, metaphysical Iraqi identity that was inextricably linked to the body politic.

When Faisal assumed the throne he attempted to inculcate a sense of patriotic duty in the populace of the new state. Importantly, one of the chief ways he did this was through educational initiatives and cultural pursuits. The development of an educational curriculum was an early imperative of Faisal's as the Ottoman's had neglected the territory's educational system compared to neighbouring areas such as Syria (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:404). The education system eventually created in Iraq was broadly secular, as it was seen as a way of bypassing the sectarian divides that undergirded its political framework (Walker, 2003:31). Given that King Faisal was the son of the Sheriff of Mecca, who had attempted to create a unified pan-Arab state out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War One, the ideology of pan-Arab nationalism became heavily promoted within this system. The educational curriculum sought to develop patriotism and a distinct Arab nationalist culture (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:404). The formation of cultural institutions also strived to highlight Iraqi and Arab history as a means of fostering a collective awareness of cultural heritage and ancestry. These measures marked a serious effort at building a genuine national Iraqi identity that unified the nation's ingrained religious and ethnic characteristics – in other words, a common social bond with a shared history and sense of self. This was reflected in the establishment of what eventually became the National Museum of Iraq and the National Library, founded in 1920 and 1926 respectively. The Museum housed the archaeological treasures of the Babylonian era (Walker, 32:2003) while the Library was eventually taken over by the Ministry of Education and contained vast collections documenting the nation's history before it was formally created by the British and French colonial powers. Faisal's educational reforms were successful at doubling the enrolment of primary school students, while the number of students studying into secondary level had increased from fewer than 200 in 1920 to 2,000 by 1930 (Cleveland & Bruton, 2016:410). But despite these efforts, the unstable foundations of the Iraqi state meant that the conditions for creating a truly legitimate grand narrative – that would in turn foster a national identity – were deeply insecure. Another important factor in the failure of these

initiatives was the issue of top-down governance. Those attempting to craft these narratives and identities were elites who had a vested interest in doing so to maintain their own power. In this sense, the narratives and identities that were promoted lacked authenticity on the ground. They felt artificial and imposed upon, meaning they were to be superseded by the people's own ethnic and religious identities that existed long before the creation of the Iraqi state. The regime's attempts at creating a national Iraqi identity merely reflected their own preoccupations with power and control and how they were to be maintained. As Tripp notes, the unbalanced nature of the Iraqi state and the underlying ethnic and religious tensions it sought to bypass meant that efforts at constructing an Iraqi identity were:

> '…ambiguous, since it was obvious that any such identity would be determined by individuals who had an overdeveloped sense of Iraq as an apparatus of power and an underdeveloped sense of Iraq as a community. The emergence of army officers during the 1930s as the supreme arbiters merely made these features crudely apparent' (Tripp, 2007:104).

In this sense, such efforts were doomed in the long-term as they foundered on a lack of legitimacy and failed to give all of the nation's diverse communities a vested stake in the Iraqi state's success. Driving this lack of legitimacy were the imbalances in political power and economic opportunity between these communities. The link between narrative, identity and material conditions is therefore central to understanding the failures of the Iraqi state in its earliest stages.

Evidence of attempts at grand narrative also exist during Saddam's reign. Despite the intense inequalities between Sunni and Shia, Saddam promoted various social and political narratives over the course of his rule to bolster his own popular legitimacy. This entailed framing his personal image – and by turn the image of the nation-state – around different symbols and representations in order to appeal to various elements of Iraqi society. In the early years of his rule Saddam deliberately cultivated the image of an Arab nationalist, in tune with the nominally secular ideology of Ba'athism. This ideology sought to foster Arab political unity and was greatly influenced by the pan-Arab nationalist movements that had helped achieve Arab independence in the years following the end of World War Two. Ba'athism was also popular among political elites in other nations such as Syria during the 1960s and 1970s. By emphasising the nationalist character of the state, the ideology strived to overcome the factionalism, sectarianism and religious divisions that had repeatedly beset Arab nations and

their diverse communities. In Iraq, efforts at promoting a nationalist grand narrative were reflected in the imagery that was endorsed and disseminated by Saddam and his regime. Coupled with the sharp increases in Iraqi oil wealth during this time, such imagery depicted the nation as a modern state with advanced technological and economic prowess that represented the apex of Arab culture and heritage. Examples of this include the popular image of Saddam dressed in traditional Arab or sometimes Kurdish clothing (though Saddam himself was not Kurdish) while wielding an AK-47 machine gun which was widely seen in photographs, murals and posters throughout Iraq (The White House, 2003). This fed into a wider cultural narrative of Arab unity that sought to erase cultural or ethnic differences in favour of a resolute national identity and depicted Saddam as the custodian of the Arab world in the face of Western and Soviet imperialism. The ubiquity of these cultural depictions also magnified the strongman image that was essential to the highly centralised, autocratic security state built by Saddam and his party, and enhanced the prevalent cult of personality that would become a defining feature of his reign.

Another element of this Arab nationalist narrative in Iraq saw the promotion of historical stories linking the Iraqi state and Saddam himself to the ancient civilisation of Mesopotamia, suggesting that Iraq under Saddam was the modern reincarnation or continuation of a long-gone golden era. Arnold writes that Saddam was 'fond of constructing historical endorsements for his policies, exemplified by the construction of an ersatz Babylon beginning in the early 1970s' (Arnold, 2004:204). Saddam appropriated archaeological sites as symbols and evidence of this nationalist grand narrative (ibid). Bulloch and Morris note that during Saddam's birthday celebrations in his birthplace of Tikrit in 1990, 'he allowed himself to be identified with Sargon the Great, the ruler of the empire of Agade, the first great state to arise in the land of the two rivers' (Bulloch & Morris, 1991:44). The historical importance of this comparison – as Arnold comments – rests on the fact that Sargon was the first ruler of Mesopotamia to establish a dynastic empire and was noted for his immensely successful military conquests throughout the Middle East (Arnold, 2004:204). Sargon was not the only historical figure Saddam publicly emulated as part of this campaign. The Kurdish icon Saladin, who successfully fought against Christian crusaders in the Holy Land, was another figure born in Tikrit whom Saddam appropriated in the name of promoting his regime's ideology and bolstering his vision of a distinctly nationalist Arab-Iraqi grand narrative. Saladin was both Iraqi and Kurdish, symbolising unity and the belief that Arabs could unite and defeat the modern crusaders if they had a powerful military figure at their head (Bengio, 1998:82). In this

sense, the Arab-Iraqi grand narrative fostered by the Saddam regime deliberately portrayed the nation's conflicts against its various enemies as re-enactments of earlier struggles. The social bond that was built into this vision of unity was predicated on existential threats posed by nations such as Shia-controlled Iran and the United States and the notion that only Saddam could unify and protect the Iraqi and indeed wider Arab community. Critically, Bengio notes that education was one of the primary targets and disseminators of this propaganda. Articles, children's books and other literature was produced that explicitly represented Saddam as a modern incarnation of Saladin:

> 'Primary targets of Ba'th propaganda were children. From a tender age, they were exposed to official indoctrination and taught to admire Iraq's leader. In this particular context, comparing Husayn [sic] with the great figures of Arab history was a useful device. In 1987, a Baghdad publisher of children's books printed a booklet entitled, The Hero Saladin. Its cover picture showed a portrait of Husayn, with sword-wielding horsemen in the background' (ibid).

The book compared the lives of Saladin and Saddam and gave the latter the title of '"the noble and heroic Arab fighter Saladin II Saddam Husayn"' (ibid). Just as Saladin had united Muslims and liberated Muslim land from crusader control, so too would Saddam lead the Iraqi and wider Arab nation to victory in the 20th century. Other cultural initiatives where this sentiment was expressed included state-sponsored colloquiums titled '"The Battle of Liberation—from Saladin to Saddam Husayn' (ibid:83) and articles in state media that spoke of a new Saladin who would liberate Egypt, Syria and Palestine (ibid). The creation of this mythology was to generate cultural and political narratives that linked the survival of the Iraqi people to the survival of Saddam's regime. It became of strong propaganda importance during the Iran-Iraq war during the 1980s, where the Iraqi state's propaganda framed it as a battle against an insidious Persian (non-Arab) foe. Indeed, the merging of Iraqi and Arab identity functioned as a rallying cry to the wider Arab world that signified Saddam's projection of Arab strength and harmony and his own self-image as a global leader on the world stage. It is worth emphasising in this early era of Saddam's rule that these initiatives, while embracing the imagery of Muslim icons such as Saladin, were also careful about engaging explicitly with the figure's religious dimensions. Saddam's Iraq had long seen Islamic militancy – specifically Shia groups supported by rival Iran – as a potential threat and he had foregrounded his regime on the pre-existing imbalances that saw the minority Sunni dominate the Shia majority. The imagery surrounding Saladin was in the service of a distinct Arab nationalist ideology that sought to

craft a grand narrative in which senses of community and political identity were subsumed by the concept of an aggressive Arab-Iraqi nationhood, that would contain the country's deeply rooted and long-running sectarian tensions. But the contradiction at the heart of this initiative was that in attempting to go beyond the traditional identities of Sunni and Shia and craft a unified Iraqi polity, these sectarian fault lines were deliberately never reconciled. They were in fact further embedded, meaning a grand narrative that sought to define Iraq in terms of its national identity could not overcome the central competing demands of the Sunni and Shia political-religious identities. A truly unified Iraqi state was therefore not possible, because the Iraqi people were fundamentally divided by powerful structural, top-down economic and political forces that sharpened the conflict between deep-rooted religious and ethnic identities. The process of constructing such a narrative involved selecting various pieces of Arab and Islamic history to build stories of conquest and liberation that could serve political ends in the present. This is a repeating pattern of grand narrative construction, with fragments of history – which may be incongruous, inconsistent or even wholly contradictory to one another – forming constituent elements that are melded together to build overarching stories that are to be attuned and reframed in order to address contemporary social and political concerns. As outlined in previous chapters, the social bond is an essential component of the grand narrative. In Lyotard's view it seeks to provide an element of social and political transcendence, enabling the long-term durability of the social relations that allow society to function cohesively. The strong centralised power in Iraq under Saddam used the promotion of Arab nationalist ideology and the cultivation of nationalist myths and narratives to secure the durability of these social relations in the name of fortifying and strengthening the regime's grip on power. As such, the construction and promotion of such narratives in this fashion may be opportunistic when driven by political elites, designed to consolidate power structures in response to external events or pressures as in the case of Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The use of grand narratives in this fashion by certain actors – presented as an effort to overcome the various divisions and tensions within the nation state and the population at large – may take on repressive or authoritarian characteristics when they are devised to aid the policies and aims of autocratic and despotic regimes. This issue also raises the question as to whether grand narratives themselves are inherently predisposed to dictatorial purposes given that they promote dominant stories and seek to bind social relations within specific socio-political paradigms. Are they in fact mostly a tool of the powerful, used merely to reflect and reinforce the views and policies of the strongest social and political forces as a means of control? This is of particular relevance when assessing Islamic State's use of grand narratives which will be explored later in this chapter.

Evidence of the repeated, opportunistic nature of grand narratives can again be found in the later years of Saddam's rule. Having once promoted and extolled the ideology of Arab nationalism, projecting himself as the unifier and liberator of the Arab world, the events of the Gulf War (1990-1991) saw a shift in emphasis regarding the regime's iconography and the socio-political narratives that it sought to endorse. The broad secularist rhetoric of the Ba'ath Party subsequently gave way to more avowedly religious language that was heavily promoted by the regime in the build-up to war. Iraq invaded the sovereign gulf state of Kuwait in August 1990. A large international coalition led by the United States was organised to expel Saddam's military forces and force them to retreat. Members of this military coalition included other Middle Eastern states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Crucially, US military forces were stationed in Saudi Arabia with the Saudi Royal Family's consent, meaning they were situated close to the two holiest sites in Islam, Mecca and Medina. This development was deeply controversial throughout the Middle East and among Muslim's worldwide. The entrance into the war by Western nations saw Saddam employ the language of jihad for the first time and present himself as an Islamic holy warrior defending Muslim land from infidel invaders. This move away from pan-Arabist sentiment reflected a change in circumstance whereby Saddam deliberately sought to rally support for his regime both within Iraq and in the broader region by explicitly appealing to the Islamic beliefs of its people, seeking to harness their deep-rooted religiosity despite his own history of association with Arab nationalism. This new rhetoric was also marked by pro-Palestinian statements and threats to attack Israel using chemical and biological weapons, including a promise to 'burn half of Israel' should they join the anti-Iraq coalition (New York Times, 1990). In the lead-up to war following the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saddam explicitly endorsed Islamic symbolism by adding the words 'God is Greater' to the Iraqi national flag (Helfont, 2014:359). The religious language of the regime can be viewed as an opportunistic attempt at co-opting longstanding Islamic narratives and contemporary political grievances in the furtherance of its own agenda. In this instance, such efforts illustrated how far the regime would go to instrumentalise Islam in the name of its foreign policy objectives as it responded to major challenges and external pressures (ibid:352). The co-option of religion as a foreign policy tool when it had previously been absent conveys not just the ad-hoc nature of foreign relations but also how grand narratives themselves may be calculated inventions, recast, adapted and utilised as a means of social and political control, particularly in times of crisis or major change.

Further evidence of Saddam's embrace of this new Islamic grand narrative can be seen in how he positioned himself vis-a-vi Saudi Arabia following the arrival of American troops there. The rhetoric espoused by Saddam and his regime took on a distinctly apocalyptic religious fervour that closely resembled the fiery oratory employed by jihadist and militant Islamic groups. As American forces entered Saudi Arabia, Saddam condemned the Royal Family as hypocrites and liars who were in thrall to the anti-Islamic West. He declared:

> 'Your brothers in Iraq are determined on jihad (holy war), without hesitation and without any slowing down. The American forces came and Saudi Arabia opened its doors to it under the false pretext that the Iraqi army will move toward them. So they are not only defying the Arab and Islamic nations ... but are challenging God the day they put Mecca and the tomb of Mohammed under the grip of the foreigner' (Megalli, 1990).

He also openly called for Muslims throughout the region to attack Saudi Arabia and its Western allies on the grounds that they had forfeited their right to be custodians of Islam: 'Burn the soil under their feet. Burn the soil under the feet of the aggressors and invaders who want harm for your families in Iraq. Hit their interests wherever they are and rescue holy Mecca and rescue the grave of the prophet (Mohammed, at Medina)' (ibid). This rhetoric also expanded the supposed goals of the invasion of Kuwait to include the liberation of Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations, but along radical jihadist lines as opposed to nationalist politics. Saddam concluded his statement with the following:

> 'We shall be victorious, God willing, and evil and corruption will be trampled wherever it is and the sun will rise on the Arabs and the Moslems and God will happy after we purify our souls and land from the foreigners' (ibid).

The marked change in rhetoric from Arab nationalist sentiment to the language of jihadist fervour also helps to illustrate the wider shift that had taken place in the Middle East and the Arab world. Arab nationalist ideology, along with its concomitant narratives, had failed to bring about the political change that it had once promised post-World War Two. Political events throughout the 1970s and 1980s such as the Iranian Revolution (as seen in Chapter Four) and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had seen various strands of revolutionary and militant Islamic ideology attain new levels of political dominance. To appeal to the wider community of Islam, as opposed to the distinctly political nationalist ideology of pan-Arabism, meant that Saddam had recognised the latter's failure to gain serious traction within the Arab world and

calculated that a narratological and rhetorical pivot was required as part of his response to the new conflict with Western forces. It is important to stress however that the invoking of this militant Islamic imagery and narrative did not reflect a genuine ideological transformation within the Iraqi regime. As Helfont has written: 'Islam did not guide the regime's policies; it was a tool for achieving them' (Helfont, 2014:359). Regime ministries and military officials such as the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs were told to ' "raise the emotions of hatred and hostility of all Muslims. Emphasize that the Islamic holy sites are being violated by foreign forces that entered the holy land and the desecration of the Ka'ba and the Prophet's grave"' (ibid). The policy of rallying wider support among the Middle East's Muslim population as a means of forcing other Arab and Middle Eastern governments into withdrawing from the anti-Iraq coalition and oppose Saudi Arabia was spearheaded by this radical jihadist narrative that had found renewed currency at the end of the Cold War.

Harnessing the popular anger against American entry into the war and their close proximity to Islam's holiest sites, the populations of the Western-supporting Persian Gulf states were specifically targeted by the Iraqi regime , illustrating the cross-border appeal of the jihadist narrative. In August 1990 Saddam released a statement denouncing these oil-rich states for being traitors to Islam alongside the Saudis, and calling on their people to rebel and retake the holy sites of Mecca and Medina from American control:

> 'Make it clear to your rulers, the emirs of oil, as they serve the foreigner; tell the traitors there is no place for them on Arab soil after they humiliated Arab honor and dignity… Arabs, Moslems [sic], believers in God…this is your day to jump up and defend Mecca, hostage of the Americans' (Associated Press, 1990).

The ideologies of Arab nationalism and radical jihadist pan-Islamism are extremely different, but in narrative terms both were used by Saddam to achieve similar goals. Both were utilised to overcome the divisions that were inherent to Iraqi and wider Middle Eastern societies at the time by binding their social, political and religious forces within a common story and social bond, all in the name of maintaining his regime's grip on power. Pan-Arabism sought to eliminate the sectarian and religious divides by focussing on a common nationalist political struggle. The new pan-Islamism espoused by Saddam here emphasised the divine nature of Muslim identity and sought to remove other markers of political, social or ethnic identity entirely by disparaging them as man-made, and therefore false, constructs. Authentic unity lay in embracing tawhid, the true oneness of God. The language employed by Saddam emphasises

the role of faith and struggle against godless antagonists, invoking narratives of good versus evil and the ultimate triumph of God's chosen people. It merges the political and the religious whereas Arab nationalism attempts to foreground its political goals – and its search for unity – along broadly secular lines. Again, this shift did not represent a genuine conversion to Islamist or jihadist belief on Saddam's part. It in fact signified the growing ideological change in the wider Middle East and Muslim world as the prior dominance of Arab nationalism receded and the region's political struggles began to be framed in starkly religious terms. This in turn had a major impact on the narratives that grew to be prevalent during this time. The re-emergence of the jihadist narrative as a legitimate outlet for popular anger and grievance illustrates the power and longevity of narratives that link conflict and struggle with spiritual transcendence. While Arab nationalist narratives evoked the conflict of political liberation, the jihadist narrative instrumentalises violence as the key to not simply defeating oppressors and enemies but attaining the realisation of the faith's divine mandate. By being placed beyond the realm of mere politics, this narrative frames itself as a distinctly cosmic battle entailing salvation through violence, outside the spatial borders of history and the sequential ordering of time. Juergensmeyer notes that secular political ideologies may express narratives involving generational conflict and emancipation but that these 'take place only on a social plane and within the temporal limitations of history' (Juergensmeyer, 2000:217). Violent religious narratives erase these limitations, while the concept of cosmic warfare is 'beyond historical control' (ibid). This is one of the principle differences between the old pan-Arabism championed by the Saddam regime in Iraq and its newfound embrace of a jihadist pan-Islamist narrative at the beginning of the 1990s.

Further to this, following the defeat of Iraqi military forces at the end of the Gulf War and their expulsion from the state of Kuwait at the hands of the international coalition, Saddam's regime underwent severe internal turmoil. His self-styled image as a strongman, alongside the regime's stringent control over all aspects of Iraqi society, had been seriously undermined. The cult of personality that had been fostered by Saddam and his status as Iraq's sole leader remained, yet he now faced internal revolts from constituencies who had suffered under his rule, chief among these being the Kurds. While the Saddam-endorsed narratives had projected an image of Iraqi unity, in reality these narratives had promoted a vision of power that was consolidated among Sunni elites; the security state had worked to maintain this arrangement through violently crushing dissent and Iraq's Kurdish population had been repressed throughout much of Saddam's rule. After the Gulf War defeat and with the regime in a moment of crisis, Kurdish

nationalists alongside Shia Arab groups launched a series of uprisings in an effort to overthrow Saddam and the Ba'ath Party regime. After some initial successes, the revolt was brutally supressed. To urgently boost his regime's credibility in the aftermath of what at that point was its biggest crisis and prevent more revolts, Saddam reinforced this new religious messaging as a means of controlling what was a febrile and unstable internal political environment. He doubled down on his projected image as an Islamic warrior, a man of God who had fought Islam's enemies and stood against the forces of kuffar. Images and murals of Saddam praying towards Mecca, dressed in his military clothes, and embracing aspects of the traditional five pillars of Islam were widely distributed throughout the state during the 1990s and replaced the typical Arab nationalist iconography that had been previously dominant. A state effort to refurbish Iraq's mosques was also launched. This became known as al-Hamla al-Imaniya, or the 'Faith Campaign'. It involved large displays of public religiosity that were designed to 'enlist support for the regime both in Iraq and in the Muslim world' (Sassoon, 2012:267). A 1990 US Defence Department document, quoted by the George W. Bush White House in 2002 noted: 'In recent years, the Baathists have not hesitated to exploit religion as a mobilizing agent'. This saw images such as 'Saddam Hussein depicted in prayer on posters displayed across the country', while 'the Baath Party has provided large sums of money to refurbish important mosques' to maintain its religious credibility with the population (The White House, 2003).

Other measures brought in that reflected the power of this grand narrative included the introduction of zakat, the Islamic tax intended to help the poor, for the first time (Orton, 2015). This shift from Ba'athist secularism to pan-Islamism was a recognition of new post-Cold War political realities. It was also the driving force behind a propaganda campaign designed to maintain the support of religious conservatives who were afraid of the prospect of other groups within the Iraqi population overthrowing Saddam's regime. In the wake of the failed rebellions, the regime made a point of broadcasting images of Saddam visiting and apparently rebuilding mosques, pilgrimage and madrassa sites that had been destroyed as a means of bolstering his popular image with this key constituency (ibid). These measures also sought to galvanise wider Iraqi society as the pressure of international sanctions hit the country, mobilising support for Saddam as the only leader capable of leading the nation through this crisis. The campaign centred on religious measures as it sought to exploit increasing religiosity among the populace. The Gulf War defeat, coupled with economic crisis and then an international embargo and sanctions, had seen many Iraqis turn to their faith in the face of severe hardships (Baram,

2011:7). These included soaring inflation and 'close to 50% unemployment' which 'devastated the Iraqi middle and lower middle class' (ibid). Because of this profound economic cost, Baram writes that many Iraqis 'sought solace in visits to the mosque' (ibid). He quotes a young Iraqi worshipper who stated: '"We feel we need support, we need peace, so we pray ... Everybody seeks a refuge somewhere... I turned to God"'. (ibid). The nature of this emerging social bond, upon which the regime re-foregrounded its legitimacy, was therefore imprinted with this new pan-Islamist identity. The example of Iraq at the turn of the 1990s also provides another indication of the role material conditions play in driving ideological and political change, which in turn shapes the narratives that emerge in response to these events. The military defeat of the Gulf War and the numerous economic crises that afflicted the nation saw the earlier ideology of Arab nationalism repudiated and discredited. It had failed to provide the political, social or economic liberation it had once promised and had failed to assert itself in the face of overwhelming Western-backed hegemony. Within Iraqi society at large, the multiple crises that had been unleashed saw a turn inward toward their faith. In this sense, it may be said that the regime was in fact not shaping events in its pivot to Islamism but seeking to capitalise on an already growing trend, one that was largely outwith their control, as a means of securing its own long-term future. The material conditions – military, economic – are therefore essential to how ideologies and narratives react to external circumstances, adapt and tailor their core messages to prospective audiences as a means of retaining their legitimacy.

It is also worth mentioning that another key measure introduced as part of this religious propaganda campaign utilised education as a means of mobilisation and distributing the Islamist narrative among the populace. This was in fact partially similar to the regime's earlier efforts at fostering secular pan-Arabism through educational initiatives. Saddam established the Saddam Centre for the Reciting of the Qur'an in 1990. It made the Qur'an an essential part of its educational reforms. Graduates of the Centre were to supervise recital classes in mosques all over the country (Baram, 2011:11). As well as this, further recital courses were given to both male and female high school students during the summer months which meant that the holy book now occupied a central part of the nation's formal schooling. By 1992, an estimated 60,000 students were taking part in these courses in mosques, taught by the Centre's graduates (ibid). It amounted to something that Baram sees as hitherto 'unheard of in Iraqi history - it not only gave Qur'an reciting an unprecedented place in the educational system, it also placed students at the mosques for months at the expense of their holiday' (ibid). The increasing emphasis on building-up the power of Iraqi mosques and religious authorities, and their

growing role in the nation's educational system, was another example of the regime's use of patronage networks to buy-off influential religious groups and clerics, both Sunni and Shia, who were also plugged into the nation's complex tribal system. The regime felt that by channelling popular anger and discontent through the mosques, the masses would be easier to control as a result (ibid:17). Mosques that were loyal to the regime received huge sums of funding and support to rebuild and expand, thereby incentivising their allegiance to Saddam, and the regime granted a limited amount of autonomy to these institutions provided they did not criticise the president or his administration. New mosques that were built were imprinted with his image, depicting the recent Gulf War as a religious battle in which Iraq was in fact victorious. The Umm al-Ma'arik mosque ('Mother of All Battles', Saddam's own moniker for the Gulf War) in Baghdad opened in 1998 to the cost of $7.5 million and featured minarets in the style of Iraqi Scud missiles and Kalashnikov rifles, while the outer minarets were 43 metres high as a commemoration of the 43-day long battle against what the regime stated was 'American aggression' (The Guardian, 2002).

Such grand iconography helps to illustrate how the regime firstly co-opted the nation's religious character and then sought to merge it with the cult-of-personality that surrounded Saddam. The grand narrative promoted here was not solely Islamist or jihadist in character, it also fundamentally centred on the personality and characteristics of Saddam himself, meaning the measures by which the regime pursued control, and the future of the Iraqi state and its people, were inextricably linked to the wishes, caprices and fortunes of the president. In this way local power brokers had a stake in the success and long-term viability of the national regime and in Saddam's own longevity despite the ongoing economic and military crises. The grand narrative here was therefore promoted by multiple actors working to achieve both their own interests and towards a reciprocal goal of nurturing the regime's power base. Saddam continued to accelerate the role Islam had in Iraqi public life through educational enterprises throughout the rest of the decade. New measures were brought in by the Ministry of Education that required every teacher to undergo a religious exam that tested their knowledge of Islam, and Saddam would ultimately instruct that that the teaching of the Qur'an begin from the first grade of primary school (ibid).

The nature of this religious instruction was a conservative one that emphasised the fundamental role Islam had to play in day-to-day Iraqi life and directed its ire at external enemies such as the United States and other Western governments, away from the Iraqi regime. Among certain

Islamic conservative groups, this represented a major change as they had once stridently condemned the Ba'athist regime's secular pan-Arabism when Saddam had first assumed power. This combination of material and spiritual factors, alongside the prospect of wider legitimacy and its link to serious political power, made the convergence of interest between groups that had once been far apart more urgent and necessary. The features of grand narrative were therefore endemic to the Saddam regime in its various guises over its nearly thirty-year reign. It did not matter that the regime itself was not ideologically Islamist or greatly motivated by religious sentiment. A European diplomat during the 1990s summarised this newfound Islamist approach as a move that was solely concerned with survival:

> 'A huge mosque-building scheme may help the formerly secular – almost atheist – and socialist regime to get more fully reincorporated into the family of the Arab nations, whereas the plight of a majority of the ordinary people can be used as its propaganda shield' (Loiko, 2003).

The various guises Saddam adopted in tune with these narratives were all geared towards specific political purposes. As previously stated, these shifts in identity, national character and grand narrative were opportunistic, illustrating Saddam's efforts at appealing to different strands of Iraqi society at various points in time and his attempts at crafting a social bond that was invested in the long-term durability of his regime. But nonetheless, the ultimate objective of all the actions remained the same: the pursuit of power and the maintenance of control. The Iraqi state from its earliest days was built on fundamental power imbalances between its complex ethnic and religious groupings owing to its colonial carve-up at the end of World War One. The various powers that have ruled Iraq since have all sought to craft and imprint grand narratives on the nation as a means of achieving popular legitimacy, in the name of realising power. But just as in the case of King Faisal and the Iraqi monarchy, it can be argued that it is precisely because of the failure to address these underlying power imbalances – with both the political elites and the grand narratives they promoted paying mere lip service to the concept of unity – that the grand narratives themselves did not actually have the genuine popular legitimacy to achieve their aims and thus devolved into simply tools of the powerful. Despite partially placating certain Shia religious authorities through embracing Islamism towards the end of his reign, Saddam's regime was ultimately concerned only with its own survival and did nothing to resolve the widespread economic and political inequalities that existed between

Sunni and Shia. The reality beneath the narrative saw the organs of the state target Shia Iraqis throughout the 1990s regardless of the change in rhetoric. Shia Muslims were forbidden from airing programmes on state-controlled radio and television, while the regime also banned certain Shia prayer books and guides as well as funeral processions and observances outside of those organised by the state (The White House, 2003). Public meetings and celebrations on Shia holy days were also severely restricted (ibid). Following the 1991 Shia uprisings and their defeat, a campaign of violent repression was launched by state security forces that saw thousands arrested and killed. By centring power around one individual, the state's political power and its concordant narratives continuously presented themselves as the expression of popular will when in fact they were inorganic and did not derive from the sort of legitimacy that originated from the Iraqi populace itself.

The means by which Saddam wielded power created unstable vacuums that meant once he was removed, instability and collapse followed. In the years following the American-led invasion and the establishment of a new ostensibly democratic regime, Nouri al-Maliki's government in fact operated using many of the same building blocks of the Saddam regime because it too did not want to address the power imbalances within the Iraqi state – it instead decided to reverse them, putting the Shia in power at the expense of the Sunni. As we shall see, the vacuum that rested at the heart of this power set-up eventually allowed groups such as IS to play on the grievances of their perspective constituencies and craft their own grand narratives. These narratives also situate themselves in a broader metaphysical universe and seek to craft a social bond that binds its people in union, deriving legitimacy not just from popular will but on the basis of enacting the will of God. But as we shall see, these narratives also centre on notions of power and control and the ability to articulate a shared identity or common social bond that provides social, political and religious answers to the people in question.

Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda

The events of the early 1990s had a profound impact on the growth of narrative more generally in the Muslim world. It wasn't just in Iraq where new narratives of Islamism and jihadism had started to gain renewed currency, narratives that elites were quick to cultivate for their own ends. In fact, to understand the narratives that IS have nurtured through their propaganda, analysing the narratives that emerged in response to the events of this era and which influenced other jihadist groups are instructive. Evidence of the resurgence of this jihadist Islamist

narrative stemming from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the American military's entrance into Saudi Arabia can also be seen a few years later in the form of other important political actors. Their emergence also helps to illustrate how long-established narratives adapt to incorporate new events as a means of reinforcing their core message and legitimacy. The impact of these events galvanised radical Islamic militant forces across the region, none more so than Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Bin Laden himself was Saudi and greatly angered at the Kingdom's decision to invite American forces to be stationed there. Having fought in the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s (albeit in a small role) as part of the ensemble of foreign fighters who travelled there, bin Laden formed Al-Qaeda at the end of the war and hoped to lead these fighters in defending the holy sites of the Kingdom from any Iraqi aggression (9/11 Commission Report, 2004:55-56). He argued the holy texts forbid non-Muslims from inhabiting territory near Mecca and Medina and that it was an insult to the faith and to the Kingdom to rely on foreign military forces to defend itself from attack. His offer of providing a force to protect Saudi Arabia was allegedly turned down by Saudi authorities. This enraged him further and saw him issue several proclamations that excoriated America and the Saudi regime in terms very similar to Saddam's. Importantly, these calls represented bin Laden's first public edicts where he explicitly called for attacks against American targets, justified squarely on religious grounds. Again invoking the language of jihad, bin Laden issued his first fatwa in 1996. Saddam's armies had been defeated and expelled from Kuwait in 1991 yet American military forces were remained stationed in Saudi Arabia. The fatwa was entitled: 'Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holiest Sites'. It stated:

> 'It is not concealed from you that the people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them by the Jewish-Christian alliance and their collaborators to the extent that the Muslims' blood became the cheapest and their wealth and assets looted by the hands of the enemies. Their blood was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The false propaganda regarding human rights have vanished under the tribulations and massacres that were committed against Muslims everywhere. This last aggression was the worst catastrophe that was inflicted upon the Moslems since the death of the Prophet. That is, the occupation of the land of the two holiest sites, Islam's own grounds, the cradle of Islam, source of the Prophet's mission, site of the Ka'bah was launched by the Christian army of the Americans and their allies' (Bin Laden, 1996:1-2).

It also stated: ‘No other duty after Belief is more important than the duty of Jihad. Utmost efforts should be made to prepare and instigate the nation against the enemy, the American-Israeli alliance occupying the country of the two holiest sites’ (ibid:7).

The linking of individual historical episodes such as Palestine, Iraq, Kashmir and the casting of American forces as synonymous with the original Christian crusaders (in league with the Jews) illustrates how the jihadist grand narrative works to decontextualise historical episodes as a means of presenting an unbroken chain of oppression, violence and persecution aimed at Muslims across the world. When imbued with the radical language of violent, divinely ordained resistance to this oppression, the parameters of the conflict are widened, history is refracted as a single ongoing battle between Islam and the forces of evil that will end with Muslim victory over the unbelievers. This single narrative thread, endorsed and promoted relentlessly by figures such as bin Laden, also works to shape future conflicts to the confines of the same paradigm, meaning it is equipped to explain not simply the past, but the present and the future as well, binding the global Muslim ummah for all time in the same religious struggle. Bin Laden portrays jihad as a sacred Islamic duty incumbent upon all Muslims who are able, the highest purpose to which one can be devoted. The social bond in this grand narrative is therefore one that is predicated on the common, shared story and identity of collective oppression and eventual triumph of God’s chosen people primarily through war and spiritual conflict. The cosmic dimension of the narrative entails that the violence that is enacted in the present may only bear fruit in the distant future, meaning the conflict is left open-ended and without a determinate endpoint given that the ultimate objective is to bring about God’s decisive victory. While Saddam Hussein pivoted to this jihadist rhetoric as a means of maintaining his regime’s power when it was under severe threat, bin Laden was a genuine believer who embraced the jihadist struggle in its totality. He sought to enact jihadist violence to bring about massive contemporary political change that would in turn create the conditions for Islam’s cosmic and spiritual ascendancy and the realisation of Allah’s word. His early successes toward this endeavour had the effect of giving him and his group Al-Qaeda a sizable amount of power, influence and legitimacy at its height within the Muslim world, illustrating again how grand narratives are used by political actors to gain and strengthen their socio-political (and in this case religious) capital.

The other significant proclamation from bin Laden prior to the 9/11 attacks was another fatwa released in 1998. This repeats many of the same charges as his 1996 declaration but centres on

the justifications for violence against Americans. Crucially, this statement expands the provisions of jihad considerably. It explicitly calls for the killing of all Americans wherever they are to be found, with the distinction between civilian and military targets erased:

> '… for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors [sic]… All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger, and Muslims. And ulema have throughout Islamic history unanimously agreed that the jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries…
>
> 'The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty Allah, "and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together," and "fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah' (bin Laden, 1998)

This message elides the border between politics and religion, framing the justification of anti-American violence on the grounds of being in accordance with the word of Allah. The significance of the 1998 fatwa lies in its shift from what can be termed defensive jihad to offensive jihad. This in turn has ramifications for the grand narrative itself. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (1979-89) was conceptualised and justified on Islamic grounds by various authorities as a defensive jihad against an invading atheistic aggressor. Although never a member of Al-Qaeda, an influential figure in both bin Laden's life and the wider Afghan jihad movement was the Palestinian cleric Abdullah Azzam. In his seminal text, Defence of Muslim Land, he articulated the principle of defensive jihad in explicitly religious terms that defined how the jihad against the Soviets should be fought and substantiated it in the language of divine reasoning. As Cragin stated Azzam argued that it was:

> '…both fard kifaya (the responsibility of the entire Muslim community) and fard ayn (an individual duty) for Muslims to help the Afghans fight against Soviet occupation, because the situation that Afghans found themselves in was not of their own doing and they were powerless. This revolutionary argument implied that it was a religious duty for all Muslims, regardless of whether or not they lived in Afghanistan, to support the Afghan jihad.' (Cragin, 2008:1051).

The war was to be defensive in character and sought to liberate Islamic territory from outside aggressors, defining it as a sacred religious duty. This argument extended not just to Afghanistan but to any part of the Islamic world that had been attacked or was under threat from hostile kuffar forces. The vision of jihad espoused by Azzam was borderless and articulated a struggle where the oppression of one group of Muslims was a concern to Muslims everywhere. By conceptualising this struggle as a religious obligation, Azzam gave voice to a narrative that once again erased national, ethnic, social and political differences between Muslims worldwide (9/11 Commission Report, 2004:55).. The ummah in this narrative was a truly global force that was to be united solely under the banner of Islam. The impact of this narrative was reflected in the huge numbers of foreign Muslim volunteers who travelled to Afghanistan to support the indigenous Afghan mujahideen forces in their jihad against the Soviets. An estimated 35,000 travelled with the intention to fight, 'while untold thousands more attended frontier schools teeming with former and future fighters' in which the message of jihad was promulgated in fiery sermons telling of war, death and salvation (Commins, 2006:174). The numerous madrasas that were built along the Afghan-Pakistan frontier region thanks to Saudi funds became the ideal breeding ground for foreign recruits who were indoctrinated into this jihadist imaginary, trained to fight and spread the substance of the jihadi doctrine and the authentic form of Islam to which it belonged (Wright, 2006:104-105). This made it the centre of a global transnational Salafist movement (Commins, 2006:175). Azzam saw this jihad as a form of liberation. Other territories formely ruled by Islamic entities were also to be liberated and transformed, such as Palestine, Lebanon, the Philippines, Somalia and even Andalusia (ibid), The reference to Andalusia, the same place that Menocal saw as a model the modern world could look to regarding inter-religious tolerance, is a reminder of the mythic golden age which the jihadists were attempting to reclaim. The jihadist grand narrative made all of these disparate locations and eras seem part of the same struggle, of religious destiny being denied. Bin Laden's 1996 statement articulates this principle of jihad as well, referencing the Israel-Palestine conflict while also directing his ire against Saudi Arabia and the United States. It similarly conceives of jihad as an individual duty for all Muslims to adhere to and to realise its liberating potential.

By the time of the 1998 fatwa, bin Laden had embraced a new form of offensive jihad. This shift came about because of an internal debate within Al-Qaeda itself. Azzam was killed in a

suicide bombing in 1989. Following this, and in tune with the events of the early 1990s, the influence of Ayman al-Zawahiri, a close member of bin Laden's inner circle who would eventually become his second-in-command in Al-Qaeda, grew. Zawahiri was an Egyptian doctor who had been heavily involved in radical militant Islamic activity against the Egyptian government throughout the 1970s and 1980s. His vision of jihad was more radical than Azzam's. Zawahiri was a member of a terrorist group called Egyptian Islamic Jihad that successfully assassinated the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981 due to Sadat's signing of a peace agreement with Israel, a move which was backed by the United States. The Egyptian state symbolised what Zawahiri felt was the most pressing problem within the Muslim world. Despite pretences to the contrary, many of the regimes that ruled throughout the Middle East and elsewhere were not Islamic. In his worldview, they were in fact hypocritical, heretical syte that oppressed their people using man-made laws that violated the unity of Islam by failings to govern in accordance with the laws of God, as outlined in the holy texts. By operating under these human institutions and political laws, the regimes were inherently corrupt and were set on selling their people out to ungodly hostile kuffar forces such as the United States. There was no better example of this betrayal than Sadat's peace agreement with Israel, the occupiers and oppressors of holy Islamic territory. He stated in his memoirs: '… we had to fight the government, which was against God's Sharia and supported God's enemies' (Wright, 2002). To resist this, Zawahiri articulated an expansive form of jihad that called for designating such regimes as being guilty of apostasy, meaning they could be the subject of takfir, or excommunicated from the Islamic faith. This in turn meant that they were legitimate targets for attack and were to be deposed in the name of jihad and a new, genuine Islamic regime created in their place, a Caliphate. Jihad was no longer a defensive response to invasion or hostility. It was a duty incumbent upon righteous Muslims to take the fight to Islam's enemies wherever they were, even if that meant killing other Muslims. This was a hugely controversial development within militant Islam in general. Azzam had opposed the deliberate killing of other Muslims in operations during the Soviet-Afghan War, fearing it would see jihadist movements lose popular appeal (Wright, 2002). Zawahiri and bin Laden adopted the view that such actions were necessary given that they deemed these regimes as inauthentic and ungodly, meaning they were hurdles to Islam realising its divine mandate.

The language of bin Laden's 1998 fatwa applies this understanding of jihad to the people of the United States, who came to be known as the 'far-enemy'. The 'near enemy' were the apostate regimes in the Muslim world who individuals such as Zawahiri had fought for decades

before the events of the Soviet-Afghan War or the emergence of Al-Qaeda. These regimes were viewed as repressive and secular and represented a more immediate threat in terms of oppression and violence towards Muslims (Byman, 2003:146). The 'far enemy' was the kuffar state that supported and bankrolled these regimes – the United States. Without this support, bin Laden felt that the apostate regimes would crumble and allow Al-Qaeda to lead a revolution that would see the creation of genuine Islamic regimes that realised God's will on earth and would fulfil Islam's cosmic and spiritual mission, as foretold in the holy texts. In light of the events of the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia became the symbol of the 'near enemy'. Only by ending US hegemony could pro-Western regimes such as Saudi Arabia be overthrown, bin Laden argued (ibid). Like the example of the Afghan-Soviet War, this understanding of jihad links the local with the global but adjusts the narrative by designating both all kuffar and those who are excommunicated as legitimate targets for violence. The scope of who is both an unbeliever and who is a guilty of apostasy is therefore greatly expanded and permits the fight to be taken to the supposed aggressor even if there is no invasion or hostility in traditional terms. By viewing America as the ultimate enemy and the source of all the political and religious problems besetting the Muslim world, Al-Qaeda reversed the traditional strategy of Islamic militant groups and thus shifted their own grand narrative.

It did not matter that this new jihad was not traditionally defensive in character. The difference between defence and offence was erased when the US was framed as the primary instigator of antagonism who had been covertly attacking the Muslim world through economic, political and military means for decades. It buttressed the ability of regimes in Muslim nations to oppress their people as part of a grand overarching anti-Islamic conspiracy. In this way, the grand narrative bin Laden and the group promoted set-up a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil that deliberately attempted to divide the world into two camps: believer and non-believer with no middle ground in-between. By framing violence as the primary form of legitimate resistance and defining the conflict in this fashion, previous forms of jihad encouraged by the likes of Azzam were viewed as being too reactive, meaning Muslims were constantly on the backfoot and could only resort to violence after they had been attacked. Arguments over the origins of these acts of aggression, and over the terms in which violent resistance becomes lawful, are irrelevant because war is the ever -present default condition, in both physical and cosmic terms. The forces of history are narrativized, explained away in language that legitimises the grand narrative. The narrative utilises these forces to simultaneously explain the past and use that past as proof of the grand narrative's continuous

legitimacy and authenticity in the present. In this sense it is self-referential, forming a kind of feedback loop that is in a constant process of self-legitimation. Histories of the collective and personal kind are designed towards this purpose. Bin Laden called for the removal of the ultimate source of this aggression. In this narrative, the social bond that unites Muslims is this state of perpetual and omnipresent oppression, with an enemy that cannot be negotiated with. There can be no assimilation or peaceful coexistence and no Muslim can be discounted from this struggle, as it is a divine duty incumbent upon all. At the same time, the non-Muslim identity of the oppressors means their claims, views and wishes are inherently illegitimate. Sacred prophecy and the commands of the holy texts are directly linked to the events of the here and now, with distinctions between the religious and political expunged. The grand narrative crafted by bin Laden and Al-Qaeda is important because it is one of the key forerunners of that promoted by Islamic State. It too presents the world in a binary fashion and instrumentalises violence as the primary means of achieving serious and long-lasting change. As we shall see, Islamic State modify the bin Laden narrative and take it to further extremes, incorporating the events of 9/11, the War on Terror and indeed the failure of groups such as Al-Qaeda to explain its vision of the world and articulate how Muslims are to learn from the mistakes of earlier attempts in their efforts to ultimately achieve these religious objectives. Understanding the lineage of the narratives of the Islamic State is key to seeing how they are constituted and modified or born anew as a result of history, a history that the group then attempts to reshape to their own advantage.

Propaganda and Education

Having touched on the issues of propaganda when examining the various narratives of Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda, it is important at this stage to define the term propaganda and how it differs from genuine education. This conversation has been highly contested over recent decades. Cunningham notes that since the early 20th century, the debate about what constituted propaganda and how it was to be approached saw the 1900s described by scholars as 'the century of propaganda' and the 'age of propaganda' (Cunningham, 2002:2), particularly following World War One when the term came into popular usage. It is 'simultaneously a philosophical, psychological, rhetorical and sociological concept' (Hobbs & McGee, 2014:57), with clear political and cultural characteristics. But on a fundamental level it is an epistemic phenomenon (Cunningham, 2002:4) concerned with knowledge, its validity, purpose and the control and flow of information. Education is also deeply concerned with these concepts.

Hobbs & McGee note that in the 20th century, public relations guru Edward Bernays was one of the first public figures in America to attempt to coherently define propaganda (Hobbs & McGee, 2014:57). In his work Propaganda, Bernays wrote that it entailed: 'a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of a public to an enterprise, idea, or group' (Bernays, 1928:52). Bernays did not differentiate between public relations and propaganda in his definition of the term and focussed on the impact of propaganda on a mass level (Hobbs & McGee, 2014:.58). Hobbs and McGee also comment upon an earlier work of Bernays' where he directly comments on the similarities between propaganda and education:

> 'the only difference between propaganda and education, really, is the point of view. The advocacy of what we believe in is education. The advocacy of what we don't believe is propaganda. Each of these nouns carries with it social and moral implications. Education is valuable, commendable, enlightening, instructive. Propaganda is insidious, underhand, misleading.' (Bernays, 1923:212).

Bernays wrote that a similar distinction also expressed itself in the field of public opinion: 'When this uniformity accords with our own beliefs we call it an expression of the public conscience. When… it runs contrary to our beliefs we call it the regimentation of the public mind and are inclined to ascribe to it to insidious propaganda' (ibid:69).

Bernays' distinction between propaganda and education is clearly limited owing to its pithy simplicity although he was broadly correct that – much like the word 'terrorism' – each term is loaded with political and moral dimensions. The negative connotations of propaganda are clear and obvious. Henderson's definition meanwhile summarises propaganda as a deeply unethical process and enterprise that consists of 'pressure-techniques deliberately used to induce the propagandee to commit himself, before he can think the matter over freely, to such attitudes, opinions, or acts as the propagandist desires of him' (Henderson, 1943:83). He similarly states that it is 'a process which deliberately attempts through persuasion-techniques to secure from the propagandee, before he can deliberate freely, the responses desired by the propagandist' (ibid). In political and social circles, the term has become a shorthand for deriding and dismissing viewpoints that may conflict with pre-existing ideas or beliefs, regardless of their validity (Cunningham, 2002:12). But a deeper understanding of the nature of propaganda helps to uncover not just a coherent definition of the term but also the ways in which it is distinct from education as an epistemic tool. Of equal importance to this is the underlying conditions that imbue propaganda and its techniques with power and the ability to persuade its subjects. As we shall see, these conditions form a major part of propaganda's

fundamental challenge to the epistemic interpretations of reality that undergird an individual's worldview and belief system.

Cunningham has written that when viewed epistemically, propaganda goes beyond the standard definition of merely manipulating belief and modifying perceptions. He also refutes the simplistic notion that propaganda is 'largely a skein of lies' when in his words: 'it is more accurate to describe propaganda by its deliberate alliance with factual information and the use of truth, albeit selectively' (ibid:97). This is especially relevant when assessing the narratives propagated by Islamic State. Cunningham states that the complexity of modern propaganda comprises a number of 'deep-structured epistemic twists-and-turns':

> 'Characteristically propaganda uses facts and poses as truthful information; it instrumentalizes truth; it does falsify, but in ways that involve the use of truth and facts as much as possible; it exploits expectations and confusion; it overloads audiences with information; it relies upon epistemic moves such as suggestion, inuendo, implication, and truncated modes of reasoning; it discourages higher epistemic values such as reflection, understanding and reasoning, and the accumulation of evidence and its procedural safeguards… In many texts and contexts, the propagandist will pose as an objective discussant and reasonable respondent who encourages dialogue, but in such a way as to deflect audiences from harsher and more substantial truths… the propagandist's message sublimates itself into altered belief-states and perceptions within the unwitting listener or viewer' (ibid:98).

This characterisation of propaganda is highly instructive as it acknowledges that in its most sophisticated form, the concept goes beyond simply promoting falsehoods. It therefore represents a much more malignant threat to the truth than mere lies. It embraces the appearance of knowledge by positioning these falsehoods side-by-side with legitimate facts, enabling it to soften rational critical thinking and the ability to differentiate between truth and untruth. In this way, the term propaganda itself can be thought of principally as a 'litany of epistemic deficits' (ibid), meaning it goes further than duplicitous techniques designed for nefarious ends. Instead, it seeks to break down the apparatus of perception within its audiences, potentially seeing their identity itself subsumed to the cause of the propagandist. The breakdown alluded to here recalls Hannah Arendt's assertion that in the long term:

> 'The result of a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lies will now be accepted as truth, and the truth defamed as lies, but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world – and the category of truth vs. falsehood is among the mental means to this end – is destroyed… consistent

> lying, metaphorically speaking, pulls the ground from under our feet and provides no other ground on which to stand (Arendt, 1951:308-309).

In this way, propaganda works to corrupt knowledge itself and in turn warp reality. Arendt wrote that 'facts and events – the invariable outcome of men living together – constitute the very texture of the political realm' (ibid:296). When they are attacked, reality can be upended, This notion of truth and legitimacy can also be linked to grand narrative. If grand narratives are built on illegitimate, false or propagandistic foundations, the political structures and social bonds that the narratives seek to unify may be inherently unstable. This can be applied to the issues surrounding the state of Iraq as it was constructed by the British at the end of the First World War. When Faisal assumed the throne, his efforts at promoting a pan-Arab grand narrative that grafted a distinct Iraqi national identity onto the newly-unified territory came up against the reality of the massive political, sectarian and social inequalities that beset Iraqi society. The often violently authoritarian and exclusionary nature of power within the state meant that the system remained fragmented and the grand narrative promoted by the regime failed to take root among the Iraqi people. Arendt's concept of the corruption of truth and the destruction of the barriers between that and falsehood find equal resonance when examining the authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein. Under his rule, mass media was strictly controlled by the state. Censorship and violence were two key tools wielded by the regime to impose this direct control over the dissemination and exchange of information. In this sense all media functioned as propaganda for the Hussein regime – leaving it as the sole determiner of much of Iraq's political reality. Radio, television and newspapers became, in Hana Noor Al-Deen's words, 'privileged' instruments 'in the hands of a ruling clique who utilized them to suppress freedom of expression' (Al-Deen, 2005). The media therefore came to espouse only what the regime disseminated, meaning that facts or notions of truth that were independent of the administration were stringently suppressed. The desire to block all outside sources of information extended to the banning of satellite dishes in Iraqi homes in 1993. This authoritarian arrangement was often enforced at the point of violence. In the 1980s it became illegal to insult Saddam, his family, the regime or the Ba'ath Party (Reporters Without Borders, 2003). Those found guilty could face the death penalty. Further evidence of the warped political reality in Iraq under Saddam can be found in the often absurd use of elections to give the regime a veneer of democratic legitimacy. In 2002, in the build-up to the Coalition invasion, a sham election was held in which Hussein was said to have received 100% of the vote on a 100% turnout. All 11 million votes were supposedly cast for the incumbent leader, electing him to

another seven year-term (BBC, 2002). Within such a context, the reality of life in Iraq was inherently confused and contradictory, echoing Arendt's words of the texture of the political realm becoming degraded beyond measure.

Arendt scholar Roger Berkowitz notes that the depletion of legitimate facts and unsullied truths 'deprives the shared world of the pillars on which it stands', meaning that their loss or adulteration constitutes 'the loss of our shared political reality' (Berkowitz, 2020). In other words, the impact of propaganda is not limited to those who propagate it or consume it – its reach is such that it diminishes the world at large and destabilises wider political systems and cultures. Propaganda also substitutes credibility for the truth. Doing this can also convince the recipient of propaganda that they have been granted access to illicit knowledge, hardening perceptions and conditioning individuals or groups for certain desired ideologies or behaviours. Propaganda effects to exploit information and skew perception, owing to its indifference to superior epistemic values and their safeguards (Cunningham, 2001:139). In this sense, it is commonly agreed that by distorting truth and rationality, propaganda instead partially asserts an appeal to emotion and the non-rational. It is a process that utilises 'non-rational factors, forces and conditions' (Henderson, 1943:73) as one way of achieving influence and control over individuals or groups. Henderson suggests that attacks on critical thinking are not simply non-rational but in fact amount to a kind of anti-rationality. This forms part of propaganda's corruption of reason:

> 'One of the propagandist's most useful techniques is the appeal to emotions and to non-rational drives… these when fully aroused, pre-empt the whole field of consciousness to such a degree that rational considerations are rendered impotent. Again, emotions are not only more easily aroused to action but also far more easily communicated than ideas are' (ibid:81)

Human beings are emotional animals and not all personal or political appeals to emotion constitute propaganda. Similarly, the appeal to emotion is not the sole defining trait of propaganda. But in certain contexts such as times of war, conflict, distress or crisis, the appeal to emotion can nonetheless constitute a highly important condition of propaganda. When it is deployed sufficiently, it is deliberately intended to supersede rationality and critical thinking and present an all-encompassing sense of threat. The group or actor promoting such propaganda often presents themselves as the only force capable of defending the individual and defeating the enemy. This is a notion that allies with Cunningham's assertion that propaganda is able to provide 'ersatz certainties' (Cunningham, 2001:140) that may become

totalising in their rigidity and severity. In times of conflict or war, such as in the context of the Islamic State's campaign in Iraq and Syria, propaganda becomes an important psychological tool. This is especially relevant to the promotion of hate propaganda, that which denigrates and dehumanises groups viewed as enemies of the Islamic State and thus emboldens violent or persecutory action against them. For example, an IS English-language online magazine titled *Rumiyah* (a successor to *Dabiq*) repeatedly made the point of situating the appeal to emotion by characterising the threat posed by Westerners and non-Muslims as urgent and existential, necessitating a violent response wherever they were to be found in the name of jihad. Its first issue proclaims:

> 'The Khilafah has called for you to mobilize from your dens to alleviate the pain afflicting the hearts of the Muslims by striking the kuffar in their homelands... So here before you are the doors of jihad – unhinged, and in their lands! Kill them on the streets of Brunswick, Broadmeadows, Bankstown, and Bondi. Kill them at the MCG, the SCG, the Opera House, and even in their backyards. Stab them, shoot them, poison them…. Kill them wherever you find them' (Ingram, 2018:23)

Here we see that the appeal to emotion is deeply entwined with Islamic concepts of belief and unbelief and the call to jihad. The status of IS' enemies as kuffar justifies a profound campaign of violence against them, while the threat from the kuffar is depicted as omniscient, urgent and existential. By namechecking places that potential recruits will recognise, the prospect of violence is situated in the lived reality of these overseas believers, while at the same time the parameters of jihad are flattened. The war is not confined to Iraq and Syria but is truly global in scale, meaning one need not risk travelling to the Caliphate. If Muslims are facing a serious existential threat in the lands of the West, then the requisite response requires Muslims in those nations to take up arms against a crusader enemy that is intent on destroying Islam itself. The appeal to emotion and victimhood, expressed in the language of war and cosmic conflict, as a motivator for violent action, coupled with the dehumanising portrayal of others, is central to this entire formulation. This also corresponds to one of the Islamic State's key propaganda strategies towards its followers and potential recruits: to motivate members of its audience to commit acts of violence on its behalf. Not all Islamic State propaganda is hate propaganda and neither is the group as a whole defined by one strategy. These are of course both multifarious in nature yet the appeal to emotion to the detriment of other elements of human psychology remains a key element of the group's strategy and its ability to sell its messages.

However at the same time, underlining the often contradictory nature of propaganda is the fact that a focus on emotion risks simultaneously overlooking appeals to reason that are also a feature of it. Contrasting the appeal to emotion, this technique of propaganda conveys its complexity as a political force by invoking reason while actually corrupting it. This is what Henderson views as the '"specious appeal to reason" or, more simply, the "pseudo-rational appeal"' (Henderson, 1943:82). This may be done in combination with appeals to reason to further the goals of the propagandist and similarly undermine the rationality of those who are targeted. This echoes Cunningham's understanding of propaganda in that it exploits and manipulates facts, 'which it of course pretends to be anxious to discover and present' (ibid). By feigning to satisfy reason, it actually works to obfuscate, impede and ultimately corrupt it (ibid):

> '…the propagandist may distort, magnify, minimize, or deny some or all of the relevant facts. In following this technique he may not appeal at all to non-rational mechanisms… It can be an effective deception of reason because the "facts" offered are false and the victim is thereby necessarily led to a false conclusion before having opportunity to secure correct data, or even suspecting that these are incorrect. Akin to this doctoring technique of the propagandist for the thwarting of reason is another which offers false reasonings in the hope that, because of the victim's lack of logical acumen, the fallacy in the seemingly logical argument will not be detected' (ibid).

This combination of techniques functions as a multi-pronged attack on truth and reason, eroding the individual or group level ability to discern real fact from falsehood. The spurious appeal to reason buttresses and enlarges already powerful core emotions that are seeking to be expressed, giving a rational sheen to feelings that are already seen as authentic. These simultaneous appeals to emotion and reason may be best articulated through the form of individual and collective narratives. Such stories, though invidious products of propaganda, also contain elements of fact and fiction. They function as legitimisers and validators of experience, enabling those emotions to be processed and situated as part of something larger that explains the individual or group's role within a grander construction of reality in which they are at the centre. Crucially, propaganda offers answers to why things are the way they are. In IS narratives, the idea of an ancient unsullied form of Islam offering answers to issues of the past, present and future is of immense importance. These narratives are designed to provide a unified explanation of reality couched in specific forms of Islamic theology and militant Islamic politics, in spite of the obvious contradictions outlined earlier in this chapter. Such stories relate to the physical and the metaphysical world and outline how each is

intrinsically linked. The power of narrative lies in its capacity to offer a vehicle for the expression of answers that resonate both on an emotional and rational level. Yet propaganda narratives are dependent upon skewed perceptions, incomplete information, inauthentic calls to emotion and reason, and the calculated fudging of truth and falsehood. They represent a fundamentally deceptive exercise that attempts to cultivate specific beliefs and perceptions regarding the world, recalling the 'ersatz certainties' labelled by Cunningham. The nature of the information, ideas and narratives promoted and disseminated by the Islamic State constitute propaganda. Their media products and the manner in which they are harnessed and targeted conform to the definitions of the term set out by Cunningham as well as the features and techniques of propaganda as outlined by Henderson and others. The primary source analysis in chapter six will outline how the group sought to cultivate narratives relating to specific audiences and what this reveals about the Islamic State's understanding of education and propaganda.

Indoctrination, Instruction and the Liberal Grand narrative

In the context of Islamic State, grand narratives constitute a major source of indoctrination aimed at its various target audiences. But this points to a larger debate surrounding the differences between genuine education and propagandistic indoctrination. Indoctrination is widely considered a key propaganda tool that holds deeply negative connotations, seen in extremes such as brainwashing and the development of cult-like thinking or behaviour. In its typical contexts and scenarios, indoctrination also tends to involve an authority figure (or figures) who controls what is imparted and to what end. It is also usually seen as an issue of ethics, one in which learning is didactic, involving a lack of choice and interrogation, leading to impressionable and potentially vulnerable young people being indoctrinated with respect to dangerous ends. In educational contexts the authority figure is seen most obviously in the character of the teacher. RF Atkinson distinguishes between indoctrination and instruction; the former not being education at all even as the two may be characterised by certain superficially similar sets of entailments, despite the fact that both relate to knowledge and forms of pedagogy. The important distinctions revolve around the conceit of the engagement as a 'rational process'. Hence, while superficially they may be considered as sharing similar (teacher centred) didactic approaches educational instruction entails providing adequate support for particular ways of thinking and practices, by way of proofs, reasons, evidence, as may be appropriate to the field in question. 'In this no higher degree of conviction is sought

for any particular claim than is warranted by the nature of the support available' (Atkinson, 1972:44). The goal of this kind of instruction is 'justified conviction' and 'rational assent' (ibid). In teaching, instruction seeks to convey to the student knowledge, awareness and understanding based on the parameters of the subject in question. This is contrasted with indoctrination's dependence on conviction alone as an outcome: 'Understanding, awareness of the grounds upon which opinions ought to rest, is not required' (ibid): 'If knowledge consists in justified conviction…the object and result of instruction may be knowledge; whereas of the man who is indoctrinated merely, although what he believes may be true and capable of justification, it will not be possible to say that he knows it' (ibid).

Atkinson's view is useful in that it offers an articulation of what can be termed a post-World War Two modern liberal imaginary that situates education as a key part of its overall grand narrative. This narrative rests on a salvific vision of the purposes of education and how it is to be utilised as both a form of knowledge generation and as an expression of a wider search for truth. If the Second World War was to be considered the apotheosis of the flight of reason and its replacement with indoctrination fed by a strong propagandistic strategy, post-War liberal education might be deemed as the redemption of reason. In this sense it is a major manifestation of Enlightenment thought, emphasising the primacy of reason and rationality. The kind of instruction outlined by Atkinson belongs to this educational tradition. Genuine educational instruction treats a person 'as an end in himself; it is not putting him to use, exploiting him, treating him as a mere means, as indoctrination so clearly is' (ibid:45). The best education is that which can be justified on the principle of common reason. It proffers a universal ethic which can therefore be justified anywhere, in many different contexts, because it is founded on the notion of evidence, rational argument and moral justification. It therefore initiates a process of repeated and ongoing revision, highlighting, importantly, how the underlying principle of freedom attempts to operate as a guarantor of rational, intellectual openness and avoids absolutism. The power of this form of liberalism lies in its ability to use reason to gain answers, meaning it is revisable and can change over time as the facts develop and new ideas emerge. It is a constant state of learning that, in its ideal form, produces rational, truthful outcomes and negates dogmatism. This form of liberalism and its constituents elements is of course open to critique. Atkinson accepts that the criteria according to which instruction and indoctrination are differentiated may often be ill-defined in various educational contexts, and that certain non-rational methods of teaching also have their place in the classroom:

> 'Even where the ultimate aims are knowledge and intelligent practice, it seems inevitable that some recourse will have to be had to non-rational teaching methods, that it will sometimes be necessary to try to impart information and techniques beyond the recipients' understanding, that there will be some learning by rote or drill' (ibid:44).

The vision offered by Atkinson is therefore also accommodating to elements outside the rational, seeing them as complementary components that enhance the wider process of learning within the liberal imaginary. This also helps to underline how such a vision would maintain its flexibility and openness and circumvent ideological or political rigidity. Nonetheless, the defining principles of rationality, reason and evidence-based learning are at the core of this modern liberal narrative and its educational precepts. The utopian element regarding its supposed universality give it a salvific dimension. This is also what imbues the liberal grand narrative with much of its power, its dual capacity for applicability and adaptability, but along rational lines based on reason and devoted towards a common good. Salvation and truth could be found ultimately in the deployment of reason, with reason and freedom being the unifying principles that would enable other liberal values such as equality, democracy and the rule of law to flourish. In Atkinson's view, the fundamental difference between indoctrination and instruction is a difference of intention as well as evidence. In order to strengthen Atkinson's claims it is worth adding a further condition (often neglected in such epistemic discussions) – judgment. An account of post-War liberal education needs to account for the importance of the cultivation of judgment as an independent faculty. It isn't an accident that Kant in his seminal text The Critique of Judgment argues that that which distinguishes the beautiful from the not beautiful is not superior knowledge of the observer but the capacity to move beyond a particular instance of 'taste' to a judgment as to its (potential) universality (Kant, 2007:115). In the case of indoctrination there is no place for the kind of synthetic judgement for which Kant advocates. So it was that the Nazi and other totalitarian regimes, keen on indoctrination, pre-determined the aesthetic of 'the people'; that is, what they might and might not see, listen to and approve of; cultural objects they may or not be allowed to access.

And so it is that it may well be possible to indoctrinate people towards specific good ends and purposes, but this requires the removal of personal autonomy in practical, moral and epistemic senses. Instruction, on the other hand, prioritises these elements in its goal of reaching truth that can be justified and evidence-based – because of this it constitutes as legitimate education. Indoctrination therefore cannot qualify as legitimate education because it fails to adhere to

these principles and cannot be classified as an exercise in justifiable true beliefs. Indoctrination is thus a key tool of propaganda, as it involves this devaluation of epistemic, practical and moral autonomy, with the propaganda directed towards specific ends that have their source and end outside the individual subject.

Atkinson's view is important in returning us to the opening reflections on the rise of the postmodern discourse, which in subtle but important ways has opened up opportunities for the Islamic State proposition of a salvific education as an alternative narrative to the self-indulgence of a liberal Western Weltanschauung, which has no greater claim to dominance in a world without a unifying grand narrative. Indeed, and somewhat ironically, the postmodern dismantling of the 'progressive' grand narrative leaves a space for a different genre of grand narrative, one that would ultimately come to embody a religiously-inspired anti-progressive hermeneutic that views the liberal project as fundamentally incompatible with its vision of existence and how it is to be governed.

In parallel to its liberal antagonist, the grand narrative propagated by IS likewise seeks to articulate a collective story of existence that provides universal answers to humanity's most pressing political, existential and spiritual questions. But unlike the liberal grand narrative, which is an expression of modern Enlightenment values, the IS narrative may instead be viewed as a product of an anti-enlightenment form of postmodernism. The space that allows this opposing alternative narrative to take root has been created by the failure and indeed collapse of that original liberal grand narrative. The hollowing out of once dominant narratives, and their concomitant values, political ideas and cultural visions, sees the emergence of new ideologies and narratives that are a direct reaction to these hegemonic narratives. The nature of such reactions are often virulently opposed to the character and makeup of the original grand narrative. This is what Lyotard outlined in *The Postmodern Condition*. The challenge to and resulting breakdown of longstanding grand narratives sees these newly emerging competing narratives move in to fill the void, many of which are anti-modern. In certain cases, such as in the example of IS and other Islamic extremist groups, these narratives are not new as such but represent a resurgence and a refurbishment of older ideologies that are attempting to repackage and reorient themselves towards modern contexts and concerns. Atkinson's distinction between education and indoctrination is characterised by a post-War liberal and universal narrative of rational freedom under a set of legal frames that vouchsafe democratic entitlements. While the modern liberal grand narrative seeks to foster reason and freedom, and

promote an evidence-led approach to learning, the anti-modern grand narrative of IS embraces its antithesis, viewing only that which is divinely-ordained as truth. It is anti-modern and anti-Enlightenment in its conceptualisation of knowledge, how it is to be gained and how that is to be used to shape and govern the nature of human behaviour. The liberal grand narrative, on the other hand, sees its underlying principles as being, in principle, applicable everywhere, working in tandem with specific contexts. The Islamic State's grand narrative, and its accompanying notions of what constitutes truth, knowledge, learning and education, are based on inherited belief. It conforms far more to Atkinson's definition of indoctrination than instruction. It presents itself as universal but in fact cannot be justified outside of a specific theocratic culture. It is therefore contingent upon, and seeks to achieve, the conversion of both populations and the political system to that theocratic culture. Like the liberal grand narrative it too is salvific. But it sees salvation in strictly religious terms and rejects the ideas of reason and freedom as corrupt man-made constructs. True salvation can only lie in embracing not just Islamic State's understanding of God, but its iteration of the Caliphate too. In this anti-modern vision, the Caliphate is essential to the identity of the global Islamic Ummah. Individual and collective identity is view synonymously with the Islamic State project and cannot be separated from the trials and status of the Caliphate. Only through the success of the Caliphate can true salvation be achieved. This in turn informs the group's narrative regarding its systems of learning and knowledge, and why it can be argued that the manner of education propagated by IS – as well as the content of that system – conforms to propaganda as opposed to legitimate education. The liberal grand narrative sees education as something that is open to continuous revision and seeks to engage the world on its own terms and understand its independent dynamics fully. By contrast, the extremist 'education' disseminated by IS is set on fitting the world around itself. Its thinking is circular and self-referential. In this sense it is absolutist and dogmatic, enforced at the point of coercion and violence. This postmodern take on education opens education itself up to subversion, in the service of powerful forces that seek to dominate. The liberal grand narrative is ideally subject to its own provisionality; it is evolutionary, constantly in search for better answers that are in tune with its core liberal principles, and is not predetermined. The Islamic State's grand narrative by contrast is totalising, driven by the same stories and is internal to itself. The group's grand narrative is therefore placed in service of an authoritarian worldview and belief system that seeks to not simply reject the liberal political order of rationality and freedom, but to destroy it. The Caliphate is the ultimate manifestation of this idea, providing proof of the grand narrative in action and its apparent

success, and representing the pronounced physical - and metaphysical - challenge to the Western-dominated international order and its values.

Islamic State as a form of Totalitarianism

In this sense, the system created by the Islamic State and the way in which it constitutes its vision of knowledge can be said to conform to the examples of other totalitarian regimes throughout history. As I have already argued this type of regime mirrors the examples of those in Nazi German. Comparing these two groups is imperfect of course given the differences in ideology, context and the distance between their political eras. But nonetheless as we see through the work of Arendt, we can identify the emergence of specific patterns relating to wider totalitarian impulses and action. Both reflect and illustrate a desire for purity and control and the need to use the apparatus of the state to erase the complex differences that make up society and the wider human experience. Both also sought this purity partially through the aid of narratives. Each system is prosecuting in its indoctrinatory nature, while not being subject to the same indoctrinatory processes as those they are prosecuting. If the propaganda produced by this regime type is the message, comprising the primary means of communication and dissemination strategy, then its indoctrinatory nature constitutes its ideological superstructure. Everything within the totalitarian state owes its fealty to the indoctrinatory ideology. The systems of order, information and dissemination cultivated to imprint these propagandistic tenets on their subjects at large are aware of their intended purpose and work to reinforce the all-encompassing reach of the group in power. The political intention of these efforts is to attack the notion of truth itself, to erode the mechanisms by which collective truth may be revealed or discovered, and to destroy the liberal principles of reason, freedom, rationality and evidence-based learning that would oppose and ultimately threaten it. In doing so it presents itself – the system, its ideas and indeed the totality of its whole existence – as the singular truth, the unadulterated arbiter of all that is right, just and moral. The fate of its subjects is therefore presented as being inextricably bound with the fate of the regime. This takes on a heighted importance when such a dependency is married to cosmic concerns surrounding divinity, salvation and life after death as in the case of Islamic State. The state was conceived by its architects and supporters as both the literal manifestation of God's will and the necessary precursor to achieving the faith's destiny and the fulfilment of prophecy. Such a powerful perception works to galvanise support and maintain those social bonds that keep the existing power structures in place, even in the face of crisis and eventual collapse. This was also true in the case of other totalitarian states that were non-religious. Towards the end of Hitler's Nazi

regime during World War Two, his Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels gave a speech in which he exhorted the German people to embrace total war as the Allies closed in, stating that the military defeat of the regime would mean the destruction of the German people as whole. What was required was the total mobilisation of all of society for the war effort. Goebbels declared:

> 'Total war is the demand of the hour… The danger facing us is enormous. Everyone knows that if we lose, all will be destroyed. The people and leadership are determined to take the most radical measures… Do you believe with the Führer and us in the final total victory of the German people?... Do you want total war? If necessary, do you want a war more total and radical than anything that we can even imagine today?... Now people, rise up, and storm, break loose! (Goebbels, 1943).

Goebbels' speech sought to portray the Nazi regime and the German people as one and the same. The latter could not survive without the former. It mirrored the reasoning that the social bond of the Nazi grand narrative had to be maintained at all costs even in the face of calamity. The boundaries between civil society, the German people and the German war effort had been erased, as the totalitarian nature of Nazi social reality and its grand narrative meant that these various aspects became synonymous. Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry worked to increase the fervour of this narrative as the onset of Nazi defeat loomed, ensuring that the social ties which bound Nazi society together rallied the populace to the cause and attempted to prolong the war for as long as possible. The speech's substance was a lie. The German people did indeed survive the fall of Nazism; such a notion was promoted in order to aid the regime in its own survival. Other parts of Goebbels speech espoused the long-standing Nazi belief in a Jewish-Bolshevist conspiracy that sought to destroy the Reich and Europe as a whole. He claimed:

> 'Bolshevism has always proclaimed its goal openly: to bring revolution not only to Europe, but to the entire world…The goal of Bolshevism is Jewish world revolution. They want to bring chaos to the Reich and Europe, using the resulting hopelessness and desperation to establish their international, Bolshevist-concealed capitalist tyranny' (ibid).

The language employed here marries two of the most demonised groups within Nazi ideology – Jews and Communists – and reconstitutes them as part of a unified anti-German plot to take over the world. This formed a major aspect of the Nazis' propaganda messaging throughout the course of their rule and reached a fever pitch as their defeat approach. The speech's heightened rhetoric and fervour reflected plainly the displacement of argument and reason.

While this had been endemic to the Nazi system of order and its ideological superstructure from the very beginning given its totalitarian nature, the instability engendered by repeated military defeats and impending regime collapse exposed the indoctrinatory bedrock of the Nazi enterprise and how its lies had failed to accurately describe and account for reality beyond itself. The deeply emotive and almost pleading tone of Goebbels speech indicated the desperation that had seeped into elite Nazi thinking as well as the recognition that the tide of the war had turned decisively against the regime. This tension between the regime's totalitarian grand narrative and its failure to truly reflect the nature of a fluid and ever-changing reality as events took their course illustrates the flaws inherent to the rigidity of the Nazi ideology and how its claims to authenticity and legitimacy foundered as external reality worked against it. Its narrative was internal only to itself, not subject to outside forces or measurements and driven by the same unbending vision of how reality was to be organised. It was inherently regressive in much the same way that the liberal grand narrative attempts to be inherently evolutionary. In the same speech Goebbels also went on to state:

> 'I do not need to say what that would mean for the German people. A Bolshevization of the Reich would mean the liquidation of our entire intelligentsia and leadership, and the descent of our workers into Bolshevist-Jewish slavery… That is a direct threat to the existence of every European power… The goal of… its wars is the Bolshevization of every land and people in the world.' (ibid).

This part of the speech again highlights the acceleration of rhetoric against those defined as enemies of the regime and the alleged existential threat they posed to the Third Reich. It depicts an apocalyptic struggle for Europe itself at the hands of Jewry and Bolshevism. The Manichean imagery of a battle between good and evil feeds into long-held Nazi tenets surrounding the purity of the Aryan race and Germanic peoples and their strict hierarchies of superior and inferior forms of life that would be reversed under Jewish-Bolshevik rule. Goebbels framed this point of the Second World War as not simply a war between Germany and its foes but a fight for European civilisation itself. It offers a reflection of how the Nazi regime saw itself vis a vi its role as the elite vanguard of the European continental order, how it deigned that everything outside that order had to be crushed, as well as to what ends the regime's indoctrinatory enterprises were devoted. This conception of European civilisation was of course marked by profoundly racist and xenophobic policies that were the result of the Nazis' ideological superstructure and its vision of a racially and politically pure world order. Its totalitarian grand narrative, in tune with the regime propaganda machine, succeeded in making

these ideas regular features of daily life within the regime. Notions of civilisational struggle, and what must be done to ensure survival and eventual victory, are common traits of both totalitarian rhetoric and policy. The struggle establishes the parameters of what is permissible and presents the regime with an ongoing narrative goal that is foregrounded on addressing the problems of the present while simultaneously moving beyond the temporal limits of present reality. It is elevated to a higher plane, one that is concerned with concepts of transcendence and permanence. This was true of the regimes of both Nazi Germany and the Islamic State.

While German Nazism lacked the clear religious dimension embodied by the Islamic State, there are nonetheless similarities in terms of how both regimes sought to dictate every aspect of social, political and civil life within their spaces; define what constituted the correct individual and corresponding 'others',and centralise a form of violence that was to be purifying and exterminationist in nature. The conditions for these policies were partially enabled by the power of their grand narratives and their concomitant propaganda outputs. Each regimes' propaganda outputs exacerbated these tensions to make them essential doctrinal tenets. This also had the effect of linking daily life within each totalitarian state with their wider efforts at mythmaking. As has been noted in earlier chapters, fostering continuity with a mythic past is a key feature of the post-modern grand narrative. It presents itself as the harbinger of a sacred, irrefutable truth, order or system, its claim to legitimacy bolstered by its continuity with this alleged golden age, when in fact it is entirely revisionary. By revolting against the liberal grand narrative pursuit of an ongoing, long-term commitment to an evidence-led concept of truth that is in tune with liberal values, the totalitarian grand narrative movies into occupy the febrile and fertile political spaces that have been vacated by the liberal narrative. It establishes a condition in which these earlier and often long-existing forms of belief or political organisation can be cast aside as they are guilty of transgressing the sacred or fundamental underpinnings of the reincarnated order. They are derided as failures because they preached or espoused ideas that were seen as inadequately addressing the most pressing needs of the societies in question, or were in fact the source of their oppression and hardship. Such a paradigm entails the rejection of once long-standing and dominant beliefs, systems and ideologies and the embrace of new systems of political order that seek to remove the ancient regime in its entirety.

It may be argued that the Nazi regime, while not seeking to fulfil ancient scriptural prophecies like the Islamic State, was nonetheless still dealing in the language of the sacred regarding Germany's national, political and racial transcendence. The mythic past in this instance

referred to the Nazis' belief that they were the rightful successors to the earlier Holy Roman Empire and then Imperial German Empire that had been brought to an end by the First World War – the Third Reich that Hitler proclaimed would usher in a new Nazi millennium (New York Times, 1934). An important feature of this vision encompassed the belief in an ancient chosen people – the Aryan race – who formed part of a strict racial hierarchy that was itself linked to mythic and pseudoscientific categorisations of a superior master race or Ubermenschen and corresponding Untermenschen, subhuman or inferior peoples. Within the Nazi paradigm, the Aryan race belonged to atavistic and powerful civilisations that had been the most advanced in terms of technology, culture and intellect throughout history, with Nazi German their latest manifestation. An essential element of this political creed was a strong emphasis on pan-Germanism, as Germanic peoples were said to be the purest of Aryan stock remaining (Longerich, 2010:30). The regime sought to create a 'racially homogenous 'national community' consisting of biologically superior 'Aryan' or 'Germanic' Ubermenschen' (ibid). This entailed the creation of lebensraum or living space throughout Europe for the new political and racial community to flourish, which necessitated the invasion and destruction of other states. Further to this was the programme of persecution and extermination launched against so-called inferior peoples as a means of ensuring the racial purity of the master race, most principally the Jews. The narrative emphasis on the link between the spheres of space and people worked to justify and operationalise the campaigns of violence directed at those deemed by the Nazis to be impure or a threat to the totalitarian system of rule. Violence to these ends was not simply a matter of policy but the fundamental, structural means of shaping a radical, transformational racial order and the reclamation of lost Germanic power, power that had been seen as its destiny and which had been denied it by enemies external and within. This was the transcendent idea at the heart of Nazi rule, that the 'most pressing problems besetting Germany could be solved with the introduction of a fully comprehensive 'new racial order'' (ibid). As Longerich writes:

> 'The only practical way to implement racial policy was therefore to use negative criteria. National Socialist racial policy consisted above all in the exclusion of so-called 'alien races' and in the 'racially hygienic filtration' of the weaker members of the native 'Germanic' race. Nazi racial policy thus always consisted of the exclusion of 'eradication' of minorities' (ibid).

The mythic past that formed part of the Nazis' ideological superstructure – that depicted Germany regaining a lost imperial ascendency which would in turn transform into a civilisation

and world-defining empire lasting a new millennia – was therefore used to justify profound violence in the present in the name of the creation of a radically, racially pure Germanic society. The long-term success of the Reich was seen by the Nazi elites as dependent upon the success of these racial policies as the staging ground for the initial process of revolutionary transformation. Violence was instrumentalised to the extent that it became an essential tool of regime policymaking, reflecting both the practical and the metaphysical desires of the political order and its ideology. This in some senses mirrors the policies and totalitarian nature of the Islamic State. As we have seen, violence forms a critical part of Salafi-Jihadist ideology and theological outlook. It is a belief system that is intent on reclaiming a lost Islamic golden age and foregrounds violence as a divine duty in the name of a distinctly religious goal. It is intent on purging society of elements and peoples it considers fundamentally non-Islamic, while also seeking to dominate every aspect of individual, social and political life in the spheres that the group control. Much like the Nazis, the Islamic State's vision of violence sees its use as an essential creed to creating the necessary conditions for later transformation –both religious (in the case of the Islamic State) and national-racial transcendence (in the example of Nazism) is viewed as achievable owing to the expiating, cathartic power of regenerative violence. It is both a precursory tool and a permanent characteristic of the regime superstructure, a link between the mythic past and the promised future. The Islamic state regime similarly utilised a negative criteria when deciding who constituted a threat or was un-Islamic and was therefore a legitimate target. This concept of violence therefore cannot be removed from the overall ideological superstructure of either regime. Both regimes espoused an argument that centred on their destiny being denied by malevolent outside forces intent on their destruction. The Islamic State's claim to legitimacy rests on their conception of divine sanction and the aping of the example of the earliest Islamic societies as a show of authenticity. The Nazi claim to authenticity meanwhile similarly rested on regaining a fallen order, restoring their rightful place as the elite vanguard of European civilisation that will in turn be the answer to the Germanic peoples most pressing problems and usher in new epoch of German dominance. Both were also motivated by a profound antagonism to Enlightenment values. Goebbels himself is alleged to have said that Nazism 'can only be compared to other great events in human history' and one of its chief aims was to 'erase 1789 from history' (Thomas Laqueur, 2020) although others have made the comparison between the violent excesses of the French Revolution's radical turn under Robespierre with the revolutionary eliminationism of Nazism (Lewis-Stempel, 2020). Yet this argument misses the fact that the Nazis saw the principles of 1789 as something to be expunged (Barber, 2019), underpinned by a vision that constituted a 'a radical

rejection of 'history' and a flight into deep continuity with a remote past and a remote future' (Clark, 2019:208). It was the values of the French Revolution, the products of this modern history, that needed to be purged as they existed beyond this ancient past and did not belong in the Nazis envisaged future.

While each form of totalitarian organisation and their rule are distinct, and it would be a mistake to overstate the direct similarities between Nazism and IS as they are both products of specific circumstances, ideas and dependent upon differing historical contexts, this comparative analysis is nevertheless highly useful to understanding the wider nature of the indoctrinatory process of totalitarian systems. It enables us to see the commonalities and patterns that emerge when they are identified as belonging to the same type of political system – totalitarianism – which is defined by an indoctrinatory superstructure and propagandistic communication strategies. It also illustrates the continuities that exist despite the divergent and unique historical contexts of each regimes' origins. Furthermore, this approach also helps to illustrate the transferability of this type of political regime and shows that totalitarianism can materialise in multiple circumstances involving a diverse range of political, cultural and religious contexts. In this sense, we are able to move beyond looking simply at the political-religious nature of the Islamic state and gain a deeper appreciation of the mechanics of totalitarianism more generally and the complex nexus that exists between narrative, propaganda and indoctrination.

By attacking the very foundational principles of the liberal Enlightenment, these profoundly totalitarian forces move to occupy the space afforded by the departure of the liberal grand narrative. Notions of truth, the key concern of the past liberal grand narrative, are then subjected to relativistic and postmodern forces that seek to craft their own story in the hope of gaining power. In place of an ideal of something approaching an evidence-based, measurable or objective truth, the forces of totalitarianism – in their pursuit of total control – instead place themselves as the only unimpeachable source of truth. They do this by virtue of their desire and ability (once they have seized the primary apparatuses of power) to organise reality solely around themselves. Such power is dependent upon the totalitarian group having a profoundly rigid grip on all elements of the political sphere. Anything beyond their control or sanction is seen as a deviance and potential threat that is to be removed. In this way, the fact that the regime is fundamentally self-referential and limited in its ideological outlook is minimised as only they are permitted to define what constitutes truth and legitimate discourse. In the example given above, Goebbels' speech - in which the distinction between the people of Germany and

the Nazi regime was erased - was the product of a long-running process that had begun long before the Nazis assumed power and was expressed towards the end of their time in power as the regime grand narrative was under unprecedented pressure. Both the Nazis and the Islamic State attempted to project the belief that nothing could exist outwith the regime, because the regime itself was not just a political entity but the arbiter and organiser of reality itself. The regimes classed themselves as the ultimate authority that determined what was true and untrue, and this power meant that the borders between fact and fiction were blurred to the point of collapse. As noted, this was an intentional act because it became a mechanism by which the regimes in question flattened the contradictions and hypocrisies inherent to their rule, as well as the ability of the opposition to attack their legitimacy. As Arendt writes in The Origins of Totalitarianism:

> ' …ideological thinking ruins all relationships with reality. The preparation has succeeded when people have lost contact with their fellow men as well as the reality around them; for together with these contacts, men lose the capacity of both experience and thought. The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi… but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist' (Arendt, 1951:15).

This ability to establish, coordinate and order reality means the regime narrative is able to elide and attack liberal ideas of freedom that seek to normalise a conception of truth based on these aforementioned traditional Enlightenment principles. It is one of the hallmarks of the impact of propagandistic dissemination and control. In the erosion of the very borders between fact and fiction, what is left is a debased version of 'truth' that is subject entirely to the whims of the regime. In this reality, the only real, ongoing and consistent truth is the regime. This is exacerbated, in Arendt's words by the role of regime leaders, a totalitarian elite that 'never stops to think about the world as it really is and never compares the lies with reality' (ibid:20). Arendt was writing during the 1950s after the end of World War Two. The collapse of the Nazi regime in Germany and the nature of the Communist regimes throughout the USSR had illustrated the intricacies of totalitarian rule and the ways in which power had been consolidated by the parties in question along such rigid and violently deterministic lines. The conditions of postmodernism that had been seized by such totalitarian forces enable the debasing of the concept of universality. There can be no genuinely universal truth or definable guiding, comprehensive principle as the prosecuting nature of the system that is in place is oriented around the fundamental ideological desires enacted by the elites in power. What this amounts

to instead is a parody of universalism, in that it projects itself as the rightful arbitrator of the natural order and moral civilisation, the answer to human need and humanity's search for meaning – but only according to its own needs and its essential demand for overriding consistency. This recalls Arendt's assertion that one of the crucial drivers behind totalitarian entities is not merely an overwhelming lust for power but the need to fulfil a key ideological impulse:

> '…to make the world consistent, to prove that its respective supersense has been right: It is chiefly for the sake of this supersense, for the sake of complete consistency, that it is necessary for totalitarianism to destroy every trace of what we commonly call human dignity.' (Arendt, 1951:458).

In order to prove that it is 'right', totalitarianism cannot open itself up to external examination or any assessment linked to a measurement it has no control over. It is 'universal' only because it coerces the world to conform to its own vision of consistency. This is also applicable in the case of the Islamic state. Indeed, the grand narrative proffered by the Islamic State speaks repeatedly of its universalising mission to bring the entire world under the word of God. As we shall see, it emphasises the erasures of all other forms of human division as a means of achieving what it sees as fundamental religious unity. In the group's conception of human existence, Islam is the liberator from the vagaries of suffering, sin and damnation. But again, this vision is entirely inward looking. It functions as a demand on human life and rejects anything that challenges that vision of consistency on the basis of its allegedly divine legitimacy. The distortion of universality is again evident in the way that the Islamic State's vision can only be victorious at the point at which the whole world has converted to its interpretation of Islam – therefore aligning with its understanding of liberation and human freedom through God. It is 'universal' through essentially coercive means. It is not the ideology that must engage with reality, but the wider world that must bend to its will because the ideology constitutes the only 'truth', in a wholesale reversal of what the liberal grand narrative claims as the epistemic basis for how ideologies should approach the complex and multifaceted nature of existence. For this reason the form of totalitarianism embodied by the likes of the Islamic State is inherently expansionist and borderless, which links closely to its militant strategies and the manner in which it wages war across much of the world. The group sees Iraq and Syria as the earliest phases in an ongoing and limitless campaign to ultimately conquer the world and transform it into an Islamic empire. This expansionist characteristic of the group is a constant. It will not be satisfied with victory in local contexts or in political negotiation or

acquiescence. The fact that the goal of global dominance and control is unachievable serves to prolong and enhance the authenticity of the group's religious claims, as it means the contemporary military battle is beyond the confines of the present and is infused with cosmic and salvific outcomes. It suggests that victory will come at a specific moment as foretold in the holy texts of the faith and that the battles of the present are a necessary precursor to that moment. Here again Arentd's words are instructive, applicable to the twenty-first century totalitarian ideology personified by the Islamic State:

> 'The struggle for total domination of the total population of the earth, the elimination of every competing nontotalitarian reality, is inherent in the totalitarian regimes themselves; if they do not pursue global rule as their ultimate goal, they are only too likely to lose whatever power they have already seized' (ibid:391).

The elimination of other realities, and the fealty of the world to the totalitarian paradigm, is the overarching goal of the Islamic State and the engine behind its drive to convert the entire world to its laws and systems of belief. Only then can its ideology and narrative become truly 'universal', as nothing else would be able to exist. The eliminationist rhetoric used repeatedly by the Islamic State in its propaganda outputs reflects the need to destroy not just political or religious enemies but the potential for another point of view, another belief system developing that may exist beyond the reach of itself. It therefore demands new enemies to fight, new territories to conquer and other realities to dominate. The nature of human endeavour, with all its curiosity, creativity and fallibility, is to be tamed and recast in devotion to the Islamic State's conception of God and the protocols that constitute the laws of its empire. As has been noted, totalitarian ideology seeks to subvert the liberal notion of the discovery new truths through a process of collective endeavour by offering an explanation of all things past, present and future, This is typified in the examples of the Nazism and the Islamic State. The very nature of that endeavour involves the subjugation of human life to a rigid set of protocols that cannot be deviated from, in turn inflicting an exacting toll on the dignity of those who fall under its rule. Dignity, and creativity as its expression, 'implies the recognition of my fellow-men or our fellow-nations as subjects, as builders of worlds or cobuilders of a common world' (ibid:458). It suggests man has an internal agency untouched by the strictures of rapacious political control which can be nurtured. It is an Enlightenment notion of liberty.

> 'No ideology which aims at the explanation of all historical events of the past and at mapping out the course of all events of the future can bear the unpredictability

> which springs from the fact that men are creative, that they can bring forward something so new that nobody ever foresaw it' (ibid).

This identifies one of the key weaknesses of totalitarianism. As a political enterprise it is a victim of its own voracious appetite because it cannot comprehend the diversity and multiplicity of human experience. Arendt also expresses the charge that it is more than just anti-pluralist but also inherently anti-human. It cannot exist alongside something that is not itself, whether that be other people, political systems or alternative ways of life. Those conflict with the totalitarian's self-image as the sole, unifying harbinger of truth and hinder the search for complete consistency that marks one of the key thematic drivers of totalitarian ideology's reasoning. This becomes evident when examining IS propaganda.

Liberal Educational Narratives and Modern Islamic Education

It should be emphasised here that the education propagated by IS is distinct from other, legitimate forms of Islamic education. Atkinson's vision of the liberal narrative does not suggest that a religious education in general is incompatible with the ideas of rationality, reason or the ethics of Enlightenment values. Islamic education is of course diverse. There are many different traditions within the faith and thus multiple strands of educational strands, and there has been much debate regarding what constitutes its best form and how it relates to wider society and politics, both Islamic and non-Islamic. As outlined in Chapter Two , the ideological roots of the Islamic State's form of indoctrination are found in a combination of factors. These include the embracing of long-standing, violent myths and imaginaries of Islam's history of conquest, and the forms of activism and political action throughout the centuries that promoted this vision. Chapter Four has also described the growth of a certain type of radical madrasa schooling in Pakistan and other parts of the Muslim world during the 1970s and 1980s, spearheaded by a vast outreach campaign from the Saudi regime and other international actors and authorities, and how this played a role in shaping global Islamic responses to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Western hegemony and the embrace of a violent jihadist form of political engagement. It is this combination of the ancient and the contemporary – a sense of timelessness – that gives the group's narrative power and legitimacy in the eyes of its supporters.

By contrast, it does not follow that all forms of Islamic education and a Western liberal narrative must inevitably conflict. It is worth emphasising again the diverse nature and form

of Islamic education throughout the world. Within a religion that encompasses around 1.8 billion adherents and covers vast areas of the globe - while also containing a number of different denominations - there will be key areas of divergence in terms of practice, forms of worship and the nature of instruction. A contemporary twenty-first century example of what can be thought of as legitimate Islamic education that seeks to integrate values that are in common with a liberal narrative of rationality and freedom can be found in the case study of Belgium. This is the key endeavour in Lafrarchi's research on Islamic education in the Flanders region as it contains one of the fastest growing populations of Muslim students in public education in the country (Lafrarchi's, 2020:5). The number had increased by one-third between 2012-13 and 2017-18, while 'nearly 900 IRE [Islamic religious education] teachers taught IRE in public schools in 2017-18' (ibid). Much like the narrative promoted by Atkinson, Lafrarchi's research focuses on this IRE's goal of cultivating the self of individual Muslim students in Islamic terms and proposes that it need not fall into dogmatism or absolutism and is compatible with Western liberal socieites. In this way it would seek to respect the students' autonomy, avoid the issue of making them feel that they are being forced to choose between either Western or Islamic ways of life (ibid:6), and work in tune with a mode of learning that can be said to be instructive instead of indoctrinating.

A demographic study conducted by Pew Research in 2016 estimated that Muslims constitute around 7.6% of Belgium's overall population (Pew, 2016). Lafrarchi notes that the case of Belgium is useful given the debates that have taken place there throughout the post-9/11 years over issues such as integration, radicalisation and extremism. It is also unique in that it has one of the largest-scale provisions of Islamic religious education in public schools in the Western world (ibid). Belgium has also experienced its own problem with homegrown Islamic terrorism, the most notable being the 2016 Islamic State attack on the Brussels metro system which killed 32 people. Belgian citizens were also involved in the earlier November 2015 Islamic State attacks in Paris (Lafrarchi, 2020:3). For these reasons, Flemish government and educational authorities have reviewed the role public education could play in not simply aiding the de-radicalisation process but in fostering a positive Islamic identity that would prevent engagement with radicalising discourses or sources. Another reason why Lafrarchi's research focuses on the education system in Flanders specifically is that since 2015-16, the region's education authorities have brought in additional IRE teacher training programmes in response to the attacks committed by Belgian citizens (ibid:6).

Lafrarchi notes the three Islamic concepts that are key to this vision of education: tarbiyah, ta'leem and ta'deeb. She states:

> 'Tarbiyah—which is linked to the word 'raba'—means 'to grow, to increase, to nourish'. In this way, 'tarbiyah islamiyah', literally meaning 'growing up Islamically', is a term referring to Islamic upbringing or nurture. Ta'leem stems from the word 'alima'—which means to 'know, to learn'—and the word 'ilm'—which means 'knowledge'—and is thus related to instruction and teaching. Ta'deeb is rooted in the word 'adaba'—which refers to good manners, politeness, courtesy, etiquette and refinement—and therefore points to the moral and social dimension of personal development' (ibid: 7).

Already, these three concepts have certain echoes of Atkinson's vision of a liberal education grand narrative. Each is deeply concerned with issues of morality, epistemology and the self, and function as underlying principles that suggest the process of becoming a good, knowledgeable Muslim is a holistic one that entails an ongoing search for truth that may be subject to new discoveries. These principles are, in Lafrarchi's words, part of the Muslim experience that sees their 'religious identity as an integrated and inextricable part of their personal identity' (ibid:6). The overall goal of this form of Islamic education is a 'a holistic personality development that concerns the whole person of the Muslim (insan al-ka̅mil, the unified human being), encompassing the rational, spiritual, social and moral dimensions' (ibid. In common with other Islamic traditions, this visions still seeks to ape the example of the Prophet Mohammed and sees the Qur'an as the ultimate source of true principles. Yet it also sees the holy text as a source of critical engagement, allowing for the catalytic power of doubt to force the student 'to question their knowledge, and to integrate newly acquired knowledge and insights' into their own personal development as a Muslim (ibid). It does not see Islamic education as a static endeavour but one that should facilitate openness to difference as a means of ensuring human flourishing. Sahin echoes this view and is quoted extensively in Lafrarchi's research. He contends that tarbiyah should be understood in a way that 'does not depict education along dichotomic lines of religious or secular' (Sahin, 2018:2). He goes on to state:

> '…it cannot be limited to a form of religious education, instruction or nurture. It conveys a more comprehensive understanding of education as a holistic, embodied and reflective process that facilitates human flourishing and the transformation of the human condition in its diverse psychical, cognitive, spiritual, moral and emotional articulations' (ibid).

Both Sahin and Lafrarchi's see the outcome of this tarbiyah-connected human flourishing to be crucial to the formation of Muslim identities that are critical and reflexive (Lafrarchi,

2020:8). The role of Islamic education and its teacher practitioners in this vision or narrative is to help inculcate this and create positive personalities 'by taking into account their pupils' multiple and conflated identities' (ibid). In this sense, it may be a form of education and Islamic identity that embodies values that are very similar to those propagated by the liberal grand narrative by recognising the multiplicity of identity and how each identity marker shapes the other. It is not anti-modern and does not attempt to force the world to fit within the limitations of its own terms. Sahin goes further than this in order to promote a 'critical dialogue of convergence' (Sahin, 2018:13|), refuting what he calls the binary view of alleged mutual incompatibility between the values of Western secular education and Islamic education. He sees this mistrust and discord as based on an 'ahistorical, literalist and reified perception of both Islam and the West' (ibid). The central Islamic concept of Tawhid (God's oneness and unity), far from being a rigid and authoritarian measure of control as in the case of Islamic State and other Islamic regimes, should in Sahin's view in fact operate as a principle of Islam's historical tolerance and engagement with other cultures, ideas and systems of power:

> 'Seeing the world from a relational holistic educational vision, enshrined in the central Qur'anic theological concept of tawhid, stimulated early Muslims to engage with the indigenous thought and wisdom of the traditions of Persia, India and ancient Greece that, in turn, have contributed to the emergence of Islamic civilization… It is significant that, when Muslims first reached Southeast Asia, largely through trade, instead of dismissing the deeply-rooted values of Hinduism and Buddhism of the region, they integrated and creatively expressed Islam within this rich civilizational tapestry ' (ibid:14).

Islamic moral education and ethics was also influenced by other cultures and traditions: 'Most classical Islamic ethical thought and moral education…have parallels with, if are not actually modelled on, early Greek thinking. This was not a simple borrowing but a creative appropriation and integration into the core revelation-based Islamic values' (ibid:15). Here we can see the construction of an alternative grand narrative steeped in a tradition of Islam's history of cosmopolitanism, tolerance and willingness to engage in dialogue with other cultures, religions and civilisations. This in turn can inform contemporary efforts at forging a distinctly Islamic form of education. There are openings within this conceptualisation of education for common ground between the secular and the religious, and it offers a pronounced rebuke to the systems of knowledge, alleged education, divine moral codes and order of existence promoted by Islamic State. Sahin makes a fervent case for this, arguing: 'It cannot be stressed highly enough that contemporary Muslims need to have confidence in their tradition

and revive this early Muslim spirit of learning and critical education in order to engage creatively with the challenges facing them' (ibid:15). This 'earlier spirit' also recalls similar efforts by the likes of Menocal to revive alternative forms of Islamic heritage that combat the extremist-dominated discourse of the 21st century, such as the history of the Andalusian Caliphate. While Menocal's efforts were in their own way an expression of a liberal narrative of Islamic tolerance, based on deeply contested and inaccurate readings of the Andalusian Caliphate, what Sahin and Lafrarchi propose instead is to facilitate a critical engagement with Islamic history in religious school settings that cultivates that 'earlier spirit' of learning by also acknowledging the elements of the faith that are dogmatic and fundamentalist. By in turn interrogating them, they hope to illustrate why the version of the faith they promote is the most appropriate and will equip young Muslims to confidently engage with their faith and the wider world at this juncture of the twenty-first century. It hopes to give young people the ability to navigate contentious issues by nurturing an awareness of their faith's deep well of knowledge and diversity, reflecting its truly multifaced nature. By doing this they also hope to move beyond stereotypes and polarised narratives of extremism and counter-extremism and actually reflect Islam's genuinely complex features and their competing histories, while simultaneously promoting the faith – and its education – as a legitimate identity and worldview in secular Western nations. It is about positioning Islamic education within a modern heuristic that simultaneously maintains the fundamental characteristics that make it Islamic. It seeks to engage the secular world and Western ideologies in critical dialogue in order to embark upon its own search for truth. While the liberal grand narrative situates rationality and freedom as key human ideals, this Islamic educational narrative locates critical thought and judgement as emerging from Allah himself, a clear principle of all Islamic education regarding the status of the divine and the origins of man's critical capacities. Within this narrative, the Islamic educative principles of tarbiyah, ta'leem and ta'deeb are designed to nurture the desire to search for answers and cultivate an Islamic identity, and personal character, that is imbued with this moral and spiritual understanding of the Qur'an and its concept of God, as well as this notion of how the faith is to use its knowledge to orient itself towards the rest of the world and indeed wider existence in all its multiplicities and complexities.

Its educational potential rests on this issue of character and values. On this issue it also shares much in common with how the liberal grand narrative conceives of education. Sahin's vision of an open Islamic education sees it as inextricably linked to values – those which are 'culturally-embedded and culturally-mediated enduring beliefs and ideals that shape one's

sense of purpose, meaning, trust and worth in life' (ibid:8). Education is both a reflection and an expression of the values within the wider culture in question, embedded as they are within cultural, political and social milieus. In typically liberal Western societies, their demographic, cultural and political constituent elements are usually heterogenous, leading to questions regarding how education is to accommodate these diverse characteristics. These societies are necessarily pluralistic in their character. The liberal grand narrative makes provisions for this outcome and attempts to offer an answer, given that it places serious value on the concept of freedom and the importance of democratic ideals, norms and the provision of choice. This element of choice is ideally afforded to the people of those societies, allowing them to enjoy an education that is most in line with their own personal values. Greater knowledge and truth may indeed result from this process of socially embedding multiple different cultures and allowing them to express themselves within the same parameters of a system that promotes human freedom and rationality. This is of course not a simple linear process and encounters problems, particularly regarding the issue of maintaining values that are cohesive and stable in societies that are multicultural where there is likely to be disagreement and potential discord over what those values are, how are they legitimised, how they are to be expressed, and to what ends they are directed. Nonetheless, the nature of the ideals espoused by the liberal grand narrative foregrounds this possibility in its conception of how different value systems are accommodated. The overriding goal of attaining truth, knowledge and directing it towards good ends remains undiminished. Education within the liberal grand narrative therefore retains its value-laden character.

Sahin conceives of a similar role and purpose for Islamic education. It should be an 'Embodied and Embedded Transformational Cultural Practice' (ibid:8). As a 'defining feature of the human experience', this education operates as a 'fundamental organizing principle of human existence that articulates diverse 'life-worlds', value systems that are crystalized in specific historical/cultural settings as different interpretations of being human' (ibid). There may be serious differences between the liberal educational grand narrative and its Islamic counterpart, but both have the ability to partake in the convergence of dialogue outlined by Sahin, owing to their ability to recognise religious difference and therefore use it as a conduit to nurturing common values of 'mutual trust, respect, tolerance, justice and dignity through a reflective and open educational process' (ibid:12). In this sense, what Sahin and Lafrarchi promote is a civic-minded Islamic education that need not be in tension with the liberal Western grand narrative and approaches the external world with a strong degree of openness. This is not the same as

the liberal grand narrative's universal ideal but shares a common bond with it in its emphasis on tolerance. Sahin notes in his examples of Islam's encounters with ancient Greece traditions and Hindu, Buddhist and Persian civilisations that Islam only became a world-defining civilisation because of its ability to adapt and reinterpret forces that existed outside of itself: 'its core spiritual/ethical values shaped diverse cultures, and, in turn, Islam itself was creatively interpreted and articulated within different historical, cultural and geographical landscapes.' (ibid:7). Sahin's interpretation of the nature of the early Muslims societies is also squarely at odds with the distinctly militant vision of Islamic State, emphasising instead these societies capacity for learning and the revolutions that took place in knowledge generation as a result:

> 'The early Muslim community, inspired by the transformative divine educational vision of the Qur'an that can best be expressed with the concept of tarbiyah, imbued its spiritual devotion with a deeper reflective competence, thus becoming witness to the 'critical faithfulness' embedded at the ethical core of monotheism as voiced by the Abrahamic faith traditions' (ibid:16).

This approach to education led to new discoveries and 'triggered he emergence of a dynamic and holistic Islamic epistemology, facilitating the advent of the classical Muslim sciences and a creativity which generated new knowledge, insights and meanings' (ibid). According to Sahin, it was this intellectual and educational curiosity, more so than the military conquests throughout the Arabian Peninsula, that spearheaded Islam's rapid advancement across much of the ancient world. This stands in sharp contrast with the Islamic State's concept of the faith's history of expansion which rests on its relentlessl militancy and coercive use of violence. In an issue of the online propaganda magazine *Dabiq* this vision is expressed as: 'The true religion – embodied by the Jamā'ah [prayer in congregation] of the Muslims (the Khilāfah) and their Imām (the Khalīfah) – will be manifest over all false religions, with proof and evidence and by the sword and spear' (*Dabiq*, 2014:7). The Islamic State's vision of education forces its subjects to conform to its stringently literalist interpretation of the faith and its holy texts, all in the name of indoctrinating them towards authoritarian ends that maintain the group's rigid hold on power. It is the anti-modern, anti-Enlightenment grand narrative writ large. Its understanding of knowledge and education cannot be justified outside its own narrow terms and only on the basis of its own conception of a divine mandate. It is self-confirming, rejects other forms of evidence and leaves no room for knowledge or ideas that contest that fundamental principle of divine sanction. This vision is therefore set on forcing the wider world to exist within the confines of its own political, religious and cosmic order of existence – thereby constituting an illegitimate kind of universality. It sees new developments and events

as things to be shaped and permitted only according to its own internalised logic and its totalising vision of how human life is to be managed and governed. For these reasons it cannot constitute as legitimate education but propaganda instead, unlike the conception of Islamic education that is outlined by Sahin and Lafrarchi's that utilises distinctly Islamic traditions and concepts of learning to promote its religious principles, morals and epistemic modes of knowledge while also embarking on a dialogue with the secular world. In this sense it is a form of education that would be compatible within a broader liberal grand narrative, one that would be able to flourish within the confines of a multicultural liberal society that was based on the principles of rationality, freedom and choice. This is particularly relevant in the case of Western societies that contain large Muslim populations, where the issues of extremism and intolerance have dominated political discourse in the years following 9/11. This Islamic narrative strives to overcome these divisions and foster a dialogue of ideas through a form of education that may be seen as reasonable and rational on its own terms, while the Islamic State by contrast seeks to instigate an apocalyptic clash of civilisations. The educational vision proffered by Sahin and Lafrarchi is a means of navigating complex issues of brought about by religious faith and religious education in a predominantly secular environment. Much like Atkinson's view of educational instruction, it treats the student as a whole person and seeks to cultivate a kind of rational assent and form of conviction based on justification, rather than mere religious conviction alone. This is achieved through a 'critical faithfulness' approach to the idea of religious education that sets about rooting its religious ideas within a broader paradigm of moral openness that is no less Islamic because it is so. In fact, it is the Islamic precepts of tarbiyah, ta'leem and ta'deeb that embolden this search for learning. This will, it is hoped, result in the cultivation of critical thought and the resist the closing-off or withdrawal of Islamic engagement with other ways of learning, ideologies and beliefs.To quote the words of Atkinson again, it desires to unlock the 'awareness of the grounds upon which opinions ought to rest', a genuine, real kind of understanding that will provide the bedrock for learning to flourish a common goal across both the liberal grand narrative and this version of Islamic education.

Islamic Education and Western Education

Taking together these concepts of liberal education and an Islamic form of learning that attempts to place itself in dialogue with secular and liberal ideologies, including recognising its nuances and contradictions, we can see how both can be differentiated from the nature of propaganda. IS propaganda does not allow for this element of choice or engagement with

sources beyond the strictures of the faith and its own literalist interpretation of it. IS critiques of Western ideology has informed part of their engagement with Western recruits , an audience that is of major interest to this thesis when analysing primary source material. The appeal to this constituency is often predicated on illustrating the failures of their home nations and societies as well as the violence enacted by these nations against Islamic nations or Muslim-majority countries. On a broader level, it is worth interrogating other forms of Islamic education beyond IS, in order to properly grasp certain features of Islamic education and how it differs from the general features of liberal Western education outlined in this chapter. Early forms of Islamic education that followed Mohammed's were not usually led by institutions. As explained in Chapter Four, the formal schooling institution of the madrassa did not emerge in Islam until the tenth century in what is now modern Iran. As Islam expanded and gained new recruits, the chief source of conversion was the Qur'an and the hadiths, the sayings of the Prophet which served as the 'ideological catalyst' for the burgeoning Muslim community's search for knowledge (El-Rayess, 2020:1). Given that the population of the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere was mostly illiterate, the chief pedagogical method of instruction, knowledge transfer and conversion was oral learning and recitation. As El-Rayess illustrates, this granted the early Muslim community an element of 'narrative informality' in how it thought of education, 'providing flexibility and inclusion' to different local communities in terms of how Islam addressed their material and non-material needs, with the spread of knowledge and Islamic practice facilitated by local mentors and teachers (ibid). Oral narrative was thus a key tool to the dissemination of the faith from its earliest days. As Islam's influence grew, mosques were established. But these new institutions were still mostly informal and concerned more with acts of prayer and worship than proper learning (ibid). They eventually became places where a number of matters were discussed pertaining to the daily lives of Islam's adherents. Bulliet determined in his analysis of the hadiths that:

> 'the vast majority of the Prophet's sayings represented pragmatic knowledge for the converting Muslims on topics relevant to their daily lives, including food, clothing, fasting, health, agriculture and business. Very few dealt with the broader knowledge on societal issues, such as criminal behaviour or governance. This reasonably confirms that Muslims' learning about Islam centered on its flexible interpretation and localized adaptation to guide converts on all matters of their daily lives' (El-Rayess, 2020:2, citing Bulliet, 1994).

The power of narrative to adapt itself to local environments, thus being able to tailor its message to specific groups with different needs and priorities, helped to enable the faith's growth and

the transmission of its core tenets throughout the region. As a method of persuasion, it addressed how Islam could address the daily needs of its adherents lives while also linking itself to a broader social and metaphysical system. It was thus a grand narrative that bound communities together in a system of belief.

Only later, as Islam grew as a militaristic and imperial force, did formal religious schooling emerge as one of the chief sources of knowledge transmission. This also saw the concurrent growth in the power of religious authority figures such as Imams and scholars, who grew to wield considerable influence in how the faith was interpreted and applied to contemporary political and social issues. In chapters two and three, we saw how the various Islamic Caliphates emerged to become some of the dominant political forces of their time. These Caliphates, despite their multiple and diverse nature across the centuries, embodied a unifying grand narrative of Islamic pre-eminence that located the source of its hegemony in divine sanction. This allowed the authorities to smooth over the contradictions inherent to empire, politics and religion and present a cohesive story – and a system of knowledge – that was transmissible across borders, that bound its people into a single community and a unified history despite their ethnic, cultural and political differences. As we have seen, colonialism and the military and economic defeat of the Islamic powers, namely the Ottoman Empire in its final form, revealed the unstable foundations of this grand narrative and fatally weakened its claim to divine legitimacy. The forces of Western modernity decisively broke the power of an Islamic political construct that had existed in numerous and various forms for centuries, ultimately resulting in the end of the Caliphate as a political and religious entity.

The history of colonialism and imperialism that defined relations between the West and Islam for centuries undoubtedly complicates efforts to understand Islamic education today. Western imperialism left an indelible mark on the political and social structures of many Muslim-majority nations, with educational institutions often still utilising the framework and methods put in place by Western authorities. The systems established had little to do with Islam and were mostly related to 'technological and economic development for which the West had set the example' (Meijer, 1999:158). Cook notes that policy makers in many Islamic and Muslim-majority nations face a 'delicate balancing act' between 'meeting the needs of economic development' – especially given the demands of the modern technologically advanced, typically Western-dominated, capitalist order – and 'affirming their countries' Islamic cultural heritage' through promoting Islamic educational theory' (Cook, 1999:45). The products of

modernity were infused within the educational systems of these nations long before the departure of the colonial authorities, regardless of how compatible these products were with Islamic knowledge or thought. Since the end of the colonial period, there have been serious efforts undertaken by Muslim authorities to redress this imbalance.

In 1977, the First World Conference on Muslim Education took place in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It was attended by over 350 Muslim scholars representing different academic fields from both Islamic and Western nations (Saqeb, 2000:45). It sought to address long-standing problems in the field of education in Muslim countries that had grown in the years following their independence:

> 'at the dawn of their independence in the post-war years, in the 1950s and 1960s, the larger Muslim Ummah found their national education systems suffering from serious problems of backwardness, widespread ignorance and illiteracy in all Muslim countries. Most of the Muslim children were without basic primary education. Trained teachers, equipment and textbooks were by and large missing. Secondary schools were limited in their scope. Technical and vocational education was available only at the basic level. Tertiary and university education were inadequate and restricted to basic teaching without any research' (ibid:46).

The conference sought to address these and other issues. In particular, it set-out the goal of establishing 'an Islamic concept of education which overcame the duality of Islam on the one hand and western secular science and education on the other' (Meijer, 1999:158). As part of this undertaking, a central point of the conference focused on the issue of knowledge. Meijer states that in Islam:

> 'Acquired knowledge may not, or indeed, cannot possibly contradict the revealed knowledge of Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, there is no ground for the duality of the type of schools that separates the religious from the secular, a duality that appeared in Muslim countries in the modern age' (ibid:158-159).

Because the rise of secularism had reduced formal religious institutional power, and divided religion from the wider social and political considerations of society in Western nations, the conference sought to undo this separation from continuing to occur in Muslim nations. The view of the conference was that everything from educational philosophy to teacher-training, curricula and textbooks should 'harmonise with Islam' (ibid). Indeed this undertaking revealed a crucial tenet of Islamic thought regarding the unity of God – tawhid - in all things. Knowledge and educational endeavours must be in tune with this indivisible oneness and the revealed theism of the holy texts. It is important to note that the works by various Muslim

scholars inspired by this conference emphasised that not all human knowledge is incompatible with revelation (ibid). Meijer points to how the Islamic scholar and educationalist Syed Ali Ashraf, who was the director of the Islamic Academy in Cambridge, England, positioned modern secularist education and knowledge in distinct opposition to the revealed knowledge of Islam, while simultaneously acknowledging that man-made knowledge could still be consistent with revelation (ibid). The key divide was secularism in knowledge and education that rejected the principal role of the divine. Part of this formulation emerged out of a recognition that huge numbers of Muslims student were now receiving their education in Western countries and so were overwhelmingly exposed to secular incarnations of teaching, knowledge, politics and culture (ibid).

Faith was to have a central role in combating the tide of secularism. Ashraf framed this effort as relevant not just to Islam but to all faiths. Christianity, Islam and others all had a vested interest in resisting this dominant non-religious vision that influences all aspects of education and culture to the erosion of religious traditions. Ashraf and Hirst contrasted the secularist concepts of rationality and critical thinking with the ultimate manifestation of truth revealed by Islam (ibid:160). They wrote: ‘Islam is not a new religious tradition of the world. It is the final, most perfect and complete manifestation of the same truth that was revealed to earlier prophets’ (Ashraf & Hirst 1994: ix). True freedom lies not in the false promises of secularism with its man-made laws and ideologies, based as they are on flawed human reasoning, erratic self-interest and capricious rationality. Islam overcomes these problems by positioning man within a metaphysical order created by God that places him on a path to revealed truth. In this way, Islam situates its ability to provide answers on the basis of being truly universal, unburdened by the various trends of contemporary secular political movements. Education is fundamental to this endeavour, because religion gives education the ‘excellent starting point’ (Meijer, 1999:161) of ‘a concept of man as the representative of God on Earth’ (Ashraf & Hirst, 1994:61-62). The cultivation of informed minds firstly necessitates the recognition of God’s role in all things and of man’s responsibility and intrinsic relationship to him. The role of education should be to know this fundamental truth and enrich it. Ashraf illustrates this example in his discussion of the educational study of literature. Importantly he does not dismiss anything beyond scripture as irrelevant or ungodly as some Islamic strains of thought have done. This is evident in the theological and ideological underpinnings of Islamic State for instance. But Ashraf sees literature’s educational value as still closely linked to religious knowledge – specifically the ‘search for something eternal and permanent, something universal

and transcendent' (ibid:67-68). It cannot be separated from God because its very function should be to:

> 'present the good, to present God, in a form not only to be understood more clearly, nor only to be rendered more attractive by cunning adornment and literary technique… but in its most pure state - … men cannot but love' (ibid:92).

Here there is clear divergence in how Western and Islamic systems of knowledge conceptualise the pursuit of truth. In the latter, knowledge must be in harmony with the substance of Islam's teachings. In the former there is a general consensus that knowledge is an ongoing discursive and epistemological process founded on Enlightenment principles of critical thinking and rationality. The 'best of what has been thought and said' (to use a phrase from Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*) is that which has survived intense examination and analysis (Arnold, 1869:1). In this incarnation of Islamic education, there is of course debate on what constitutes God's word and how best that is to be realised. El-Rayess notes that knowledge and learning are at the root of Islam's origins 'as reflected in the very first interaction Prophet Muhammad is claimed to have had with angel Gabriel who instructed Muhammad to "Read!"' (El-Rayess, 2020:5). Yet because legitimate knowledge itself is predicated on being a product of God, the parameters of debate are confined to a specific paradigm.

This understanding of the differences between Western and Islamic education more generally is of particular relevance when understanding the propaganda of Islamic State. It illustrates how IS belong to a strain of Islam that cuts across and rejects other visions of the faith and its modes of learnings. As discussed in Chapter Two, the group's Salafi-Jihadist ideology is a product of the wider movement of Salafism, an ideology that emerged in the 19th century out of opposition to Western imperialism and colonialism. Salafism sees the failure of Muslim societies in the face of Western aggression as resulting from the embrace of modernity. It refutes the notion that the Ottoman Empire was truly Islamic owing to its alleged embrace of modernist and man-made ideas that corrupted the religious knowledge and practices of the faith. According to Salafism, in attempting to defeat the Western colonial empire powers, Muslim rulers adopted secularism and forgot the values upon which they based their legitimacy. In order for Islam to purge itself of these elements and regain its divinely ordained place in the world, it must return to the values and forms of practice of Islam's earliest days. It advocates the rediscovery and re-enactment of the purist Islamic societies of Mohammed and those that followed him, seeing it as vital to the realisation of the Muslim community's essential

identity. While traditional Salafism has advocated the physical withdrawal of Muslims from corrupt mainstream society in order to create their own independent society in line with God's word and the spirit of the holy texts, Salafi-Jihadist doctrine represents an extreme form of this vision and centralises violence – justified on the theological basis of jihad – as the instrumental force to bring about this transformation. The corrupt physical non-Islamic world isn't to be withdrawn from, but violently confronted, purged of all ungodly elements and Islamised. While the conceptions of education outlined by Ashraf designate the validity of knowledge on its relationship with God, it does not say that knowledge outwith this should not exist. Both in their actions and in their propaganda, IS advocate for not simply the corruption of knowledge (in line with propaganda's intention) but its outright destruction. This in turn forms part of its appeal to new recruits, its notion of what constitutes the Muslim community and how a pure Islamic state is to be achieved. The unity of God in all things necessitates the violent purging of all elements deemed non-Islamic. The tactics of persuasion posit this as essential to creating bonds of community, fostering Islamic identity and ultimately realising God's word in the here and now. In other words, it builds a grand narrative out of a Salafi-Jihadist understanding of what constitutes knowledge and how that knowledge is to be enacted. Indeed, it is the formulation of education as story that is at the heart of IS propaganda strategy. The next chapter will seek to understand what the dominant themes of this IS grand narrative are, how they reflect these radical differences in vision on issues such as education, knowledge and what role grand narrative plays as an articulator and driver of these competing epistemic and ideological claims.

Chapter Six: Methodology: Thematic Coding Analysis and Ethics

This chapter will explain the nature of the methodology used – thematic coding analysis as a form of documentary analysis – to analyse primary source material and present an overview of why such material was selected. It will also describe the ethics involved in this research process of access and collection of source material and how this was carried out appropriately and correctly according to stringent academic standards. Firstly however, the chapter will give an overview of the Islamic State's propaganda operations and outreach activities. This will help in understanding the central role different audiences play in determining the objectives and goals of these operations, and what specific purposes narrative plays in communicating to these various groups.

IS Media Outputs – Old messages, modern techniques

In terms of IS' media outputs, the contradiction between old and new is also evident. As previously noted, IS has produced media that was cutting-edge and sophisticated, made with the latest twenty-first century technologies and distributed on the internet to hundreds of millions of views. In this sense, the methods of production and distribution are themselves clear products of the modern digital and technological revolution. Yet the messages and narratives expressed in these outputs offer a profoundly conservative vision of physical reality and the metaphysical universe. They articulate an unambiguous rejection of modernity even while using modernity's most cutting-edge features to communicate the group's ideas. The sub-genre of IS propaganda that focusses on acts of graphic violence starkly illustrates this. For example, the notorious execution videos depicting the beheadings of various hostages display a brutal form of crude, bloody violence - directed in the name of a militant anti-modernist ideology – that has been married to a state-of-the-art technological capability and modernist aesthetic, the contradiction itself accentuating the external audience impact in terms of shock, revulsion and fear. As Tim Wilson writes: 'Unsophisticated violence piggy-backs on sophisticated communications technology' (Wilson, 2017). But this aspect, while notorious, is only one small part of the group's overall media output. As we shall see, there is an irony in that the group constantly refers to an ancient Islamic golden age through a distinctly twenty-first century sensibility. Indeed, many of the events and narratives retold in IS propaganda are themselves not new and have actually featured in the outputs and narratives propagated by

other Islamic extremist groups over the decades. What sets IS apart from its forebearers has been the sheer depth of its output and its ability to use new, often emerging technologies (such as drones and the very latest in sound and video recording equipment) to sell a clear anti-modernist message and distribute its products globally through social media and other online outlets. This contradiction must be kept in mind when examining the primary source material of IS propaganda and attempting to understand the narratives and depictions of its educational efforts found within. Navigating these paradoxes underlines the complicated and multifarious nature of modern Salafi-Jihadism, as well as how IS views its ability to control territory they seize and how it uses its outputs to communicate with different groups and audiences – both internally and externally, to Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Islamic State's Media Empire: Audience, Intention, Impact.

Islamic State's propaganda outputs are voluminous and diverse, targeted at specific audiences for various purposes. Similarly, the narratives promoted by IS are many and varied. Since 2014, stories of Islam's religious and political supremacy, its persecution and history of conquest have been echoed, retold and grafted by the group onto contemporary events taking place throughout the Middle East and elsewhere. This diversity has been an essential part of its propaganda strategy since it assumed control of large areas of Iraqi and Syrian territory between 2013 and 2014. While much media attention was paid to those outputs that depicted graphic acts of violence aimed at Western individuals, the majority of material produced and distributed features its efforts to portray themselves as a powerful, multifaceted political-religious movement capable of functioning as a fully-fledged state. Such efforts – depicting everything from pious religious sermons to acts of atrocity, to institutional administrative processes such as the provision of healthcare and social services – underline the multiple audiences IS were targeting, both within Iraq and Syria and externally. Efforts to categorise different audiences must recognise their artificial nature and the fact that the lines between them tend to blur. There will be cross-over and nuances between each category. But defining these borders is useful in understanding the various purposes of IS propaganda when attuned to different groups.

First and most obviously, there is the external enemy audience. Propaganda outputs aimed at this group were typically the dominant focus of Western media, given that they often featured Western individuals. Numerous videos were produced depicting the graphic execution of

hostages, which were subsequently disseminated over the internet to hundreds of millions of views. According to one poll, the execution video of the American journalist James Foley in August 2014 was viewed by an estimated 1.2 million people in Britain alone in the days following its release (Larson, 2015). An online YouGov poll in the same month also found that 83% of the British public had heard about the video; 40% had seen a photograph of it and 25% had seen or heard an extract from it (YouGov, 2014). The vast reach of just one IS video helps to illustrate the power and influence the group exerted at its height. Throughout 2014 and 2015, the dissemination of these execution videos became headline news all over the world as military operations against the group escalated. Political leaders such as Barack Obama and David Cameron condemned the violence, with Obama describing the death of Foley as 'an act of violence that shocks the conscience of the entire world' (Guardian, 2014). A series of other videos showing the beheadings of Western hostages were released throughout September 2014, which in turn prompted renewed efforts at establishing an international coalition to defeat the organisation in Iraq. Britain voted to bomb IS positions at the end of that month (Guardian, 2014). A week later, IS executed the British aid worker Alan Henning in retaliation and distributed the video online, provoking further outrage (BBC, 2014). The purpose of this propaganda was clear: to shock, terrify and demoralise Western audiences and to project IS' vision of itself as a serious God-ordained challenger to Western hegemony. This violence was also designed to increase polarisation in Western nations regarding what the response to IS aggression should be. It partially did this by attempting to expose the softness at the heart of this Western supremacy, contrasting the uncertainty and indecision of Western nations with their own faith and conviction in their status as the legitimate voice of the global Islamic community. Within the Middle East and areas under IS control, violence is tailored to more immediate local concerns and audiences. Burke notes:

> '… most of the media department's output is directed at local viewers and varies according to the degree of control IS has over a given area. The degree of violence shown is carefully calibrated. Productions promoted in, for example, Raqqa, where IS is firmly in control, have highlighted governance, aiming to mobilise support. In Kirkuk and Diyala provinces in Iraq… both of which are frontier zones where control is fiercely contested, the emphasis has been very different, with graphic images of the execution of alleged criminals and spies being used to terrify the local population into submission' (Burke, 2015:101).

The instrumental use of force, reflected as it is through propaganda, thus has multiple purposes in both a practical and wider ideological sense. Enforcing loyalty over local populations also

articulates the system of justice that IS implemented and links it decisively to the religious authority the group claimed on behalf of itself. Violence emphasises the exclusion of those who are deemed a threat or un-Islamic. It narrativises these acts and makes them constitutive of how the community, and a truly Islamic state, should be built. Regarding this local audience, education through propaganda was a key method of control and is in keeping with Salafi-Jihadist doctrine. It ruled territory and its people 'through a max of blackmail, bribes, paternalism and terror. It seeks to bind inhabitants together with an ideology based on a selective reading of specific texts, a hate-filled sectarian agenda, paranoia about the designs of external actors and deep-rooted anti-Western sentiment fused with anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism' (ibid:102). This organisation of society along such strict ideological and religiously rigid lines entailed that:

> 'Dissent of any form is savagely punished, religious minorities are systematically persecuted, while education and information are seen only as means to reinforce its leaders' own position through the eradication of any ways of thinking that might allow a cowed population to imagine alternatives to their continued rule' (ibid:103).

However, while these graphic videos and significant and occupied the attention of Western media owing to their shocking and brutal nature, they were not representative of IS propaganda as a whole. This is an important aspect to note because it illustrates the various dimensions of Islamic State that go beyond its status as a terrorist or militant group. IS visualises itself and its physical operations as an enactment of divine will, governed strictly by the laws and parameters set out in Islam's holy texts. During the era when it successfully seized large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria, of greater importance was the need for it to demonstrate its competence as a political entity in the service of its people. As Fahmy states: 'The group's communication strategy was actually committed to using soft power to focus on a positive image of an idealistic 'Caliphate' (or an Islamic realm)' (Fahmy, 2020:2). Much of the group's propaganda outputs were devoted to this goal, alongside the promotion of its political-religious narratives. Winter in his 2015 report observed that 'an average of three videos and more than fifteen photographic reports are circulated per day' by the group's social media and propaganda wings (Winter, 2015:12). As well as this, radio news bulletins were appearing daily, 'meticulously timed in their regularity and broadcast in multiple languages, including Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, English, French and Russian' (ibid). He notes that while other Islamic extremist and jihadist organisations were producing propaganda, the scale of Islamic State's operation at the time was unprecedented (ibid). The professionalism and high-quality of this

media campaign set it apart from its extremist contemporaries. In 2015, the group was producing up to 90,000 tweets and other social media responses per day – ‘a volume of activity unmatched by government counter-messaging’ (Schmid, 2015:1). These media outputs and engagements were diverse in character. They included not only the notorious videos of public executions seen by millions online but also the day-to-day operations of government and representations of everyday life for those living under its rule.

Fahmy estimated in 2015 that only ‘5% of imagery produced and distributed by IS is violent’ (Lewis, 2015). This finding is echoed by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC). The group’s organisational structure is strictly defined, with specific wings devoted to specific tasks and audiences (ITIC, 2014:203). The study also stresses the importance of controlling the flow of information in the areas IS controls (ibid:202). This forms a fundamental part of its ‘hearts and minds’ media strategy, designed to spread its political-religious ideology by demonstrating the powerlessness of its enemies and how IS has ‘successfully filled the government void’ (ibid:72). It aims to demonstrate that it is a viable governing authority, providing social services and security for those under its rule. The ITIC report comments that IS propaganda outlets operating in the Iraqi town of Kirkuk have ‘issued pictures showing IS operatives cleaning and renovating streets and doing maintenance work on electric lines and irrigation ditches’ (ibid). The Quilliam Foundation also notes how prodigious this particular wing of IS propaganda was. In a report analysing the breadth and depth of media outputs, Winter found that 135 of the events depicted in IS media focussed upon ‘Islamic State’s service provision and bureaucracy’:

> ‘The breadth of this particular stream of media is impressive; photo reports and videos emerge on a daily basis showing the group administering its civilian population, cleaning the streets, fitting electricity pylons, fixing sewage systems, purifying water, collecting blood donations, providing healthcare and education’ (Winter, 2015:35).

This is fundamental to IS seeking to position itself within Muslims’ consciousness, both in Iraq and Syria and worldwide as a genuine alternative political entity to the nation-states in which they currently live. Key to this was the demonstration that it had the state capacity necessary to meet the needs of its citizens. This articulates a long-standing Salafist narrative that embracing pure Islam is not solely a spiritual endeavour but a practical one too with the state functioning as a provider of spiritual and non-material need. This propaganda was therefore

communicating to both local and international audiences. In fact, this element highlights a major audience that will be the chief focus of the analysis of primary source material propaganda. This is an audience that may be termed a 'Western receptive audience' referring to Muslims or individuals living in Western nations who might be persuaded to join the group due to a variety of reasons. The propaganda aimed at this group contained both violent and non-violent elements. Discourse is shaped by particular audiences, and texts are meant to shape people's minds, an act that posits itself as educational. The educational value of the primary source material under discussion illustrates how IS engaged this audience by attempting to persuade it of the dissolute nature of Western politics and society. IS portrays itself as the answer to the secular follies of the West. In the case of individuals who are Muslim or of Islamic heritage, the Caliphate project is defined as the future, the interpreter of life and eternity, in stark contrast to the failed chaotic modern systems of the West. The persuasion element of narrative situates community and education as essential to this personal realisation. Education thus becomes key to the narrative, the narrative of who one is, how they see their identity in the wider world and what role they will be able to fulfil in the Caliphate. Only by living in a pure Islamic space can the corrupt influences of Western culture and politics be purged. This forms something of a call for these individuals to return to their spiritual, and now physical, home. This audience is the subject of numerous IS outputs, including leadership statements released by Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the online English-language Islamic State magazine *Dabiq*. While not the first online magazine to be produced by jihadists, *Dabiq* was nonetheless notable for its high-quality production values and glossy aesthetic. It features articles on a wide range of subjects related to IS and Islam more generally, such as military operations in Iraq and Syria, attacks in Europe and elsewhere, regular life in the Caliphate, Salalfi-Jihadist theology and discussions of Islamic history. It is a major source for the promotion of the political-religious narratives essential to the ideological creed of Islamic State. It is therefore a key piece of primary source evidence when seeking to understand what these narratives are and how they are constructed, particularly in relation to education.

Ethics

Throughout this PhD, care and attention has been given to issues regarding the ethics of research. As noted, this thesis was entirely desk-based and used primary source material that was available online. Special care was given to ensure that access to the source material was carried out through the appropriate and legitimate channels in accordance with ethical

principles surrounding transparency, with clarity provided on issues such as intention, origin and the goals of the thesis and the ways in which the primary source material would be utilised. This also enabled positive conversations with gatekeepers within the field to ensure that the appropriate steps and processes were adhered to.

Fifteen issues of *Dabiq* have been collected and analysed. These were accessed from the Jihadology website. This is an independent online project run by Aaron Y. Zelin (Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy) that functions as a clearinghouse for jihadi primary source material and contains all fifteen issues of the English-language magazine *Dabiq*. It is an outlet devoted to the academic study of such material and aims to provide an appropriate channel to ensure potentially extreme material is subjected to serious academic rigour and handled carefully and sensitively. It also provides this space while removing the need for researchers to go directly to jihadist group websites or other sites that may be compromising and are often very difficult to access (Zelin, 2021:226).

All issues of the magazine were solely accessed through the Jihadology network. This site is not open to the public and requires authorisation and authentication from those running the project. Potential users must sign up using a legitimate academic or business-related email address. Membership and access to Jihadology was obtained through a process whereby I emailed the organisation from my official university email account and presented my academic credentials (such as my CV, PhD proposal, University of Glasgow profile and LinkedIn page) and explained the nature of my research. I described what my questions were, why I was interested specifically in the primary source material of *Dabiq*, how such material would be used and analysed and what I hoped to gain from the research. I also explained how it would contribute to and enhance the field in various ways, such as in its originality and its interdisciplinary approach to analysis. Once this email was sent and my proposal was assessed, access was granted.

Care was taken to ensure that at no point was extremist material stored on or downloaded onto a university or personal device. Access was always obtained solely through the authorised links provided by Jihadology. The data was therefore always secure and protected and I worked to ensure that such material was never sent or disseminated to anyone else or another outlet and that I was always the sole user of the data at all times.

Methodology

This section will explain the rationale for utilising thematic coding analysis, as well as the limitations of this approach. It will also explain how this research operates as a form of documentary analysis in identifying and breaking down the dominant themes of *Dabiq*.

Documentary analysis refers to research where the document constitutes the data. It encompasses both physical and digital types of documents (Grant, 2022). It is a 'systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents' that requires data to be 'examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge' (Bowen, 2009:27). It can include text and images, although as previously stated this thesis will focus solely on the written words of the magazine series. It is the features of *Dabiq* as a document – relating to grand narrative and education – that are under discussion. Document analysis is particularly suited for case study and qualitative research like this where other methodologies such as 'direct observation or participant observation' or direct human research is not possible (Hassan, 2023). It is also extremely applicable to this qualitative study as it involves producing rich descriptions and explanations of various phenomena, events, organisations or programs (Bowen, 2009:29). The system process of document analysis allows it to work effectively with content analysis (here meaning thematic coding analysis) to identifying the clusters of patterns and ultimately themes that emerge from the documents and which are most relevant to the thesis' research questions (Hassan, 2023). Document analysis also allows the context of the document itself to be situated and explained. As outlined in the introduction of this work, the content of the series cannot be divorced from the environment in which it was produced. The fifteen issues were made during an era when the Islamic State was firstly ascendent and then as it experienced major defeats. The series charts their theological and political mission and thus offers a major example of grand narratives in action, adapting as it did to new circumstances and also responding to losses and crises. It reflects their belief in their own victory and the living proof of the legitimacy of their mandate. Documentary analysis also asks who the documents' intended audience is, something which is again addressed throughout this thesis. *Dabiq* refers to multiple audiences, both those considered potential recruits and those seen as enemies. These two strands – context and audience – form the connective tissue that help us to understand the grand narratives operating within *Dabiq's* pages and are explicated further in Chapter Seven's analysis. As a qualitative research tool,

documentary analysis fosters criticality in order to gain a strong understanding of the mechanics of the documents in question, to go beyond surface-level repetition of what the content merely says and produce deeper analysis of how this content tells us about the Islamic State's vision of grand narrative, education and propaganda. Although these questions and concerns are pre-established, the 'data dictates the themes and issues' (Armstrong, 2021:3) that emerge relating to the research questions. As such, it is a 'process of evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding developed' (Bowen, 2009:33-34). The findings of this research regarding IS grand narratives illustrate critical features of the goals and purposes of *Dabiq* and the magazine's formulation of a coherent worldview and ideology, a significant form of propagandistic engagement that it is able to project widely because of its status as an official, legitimate document created and disseminated by IS.

Other methods of analysis that were considered for this thesis were narrative analysis and textual analysis. It is worth defining these methods and describing briefly why they were not appropriate for this study. Narrative analysis is 'concerned with the structure, content, and function of stories in written and oral communication' (Demuth & Mey, 2015:672). It is typically, though not always, suited to other forms of qualitative analysis such as interviews involving human subjects and is usually concerned with verbal or written material related to 'stories and accounts of personal experience' (Smith, 2000:313). It is interested in how these personal stories are constructed and performed on a metalevel and how they are used to navigate social encounters and phenomena (Mihas, 2023:309), often closely linked to the individual's knowledge, self-conception and psychology. Given this thesis was interested in understanding collective grand narratives in *Dabiq*, it was not focused on stories of individual or lived experiences. For understanding this type of narrative, it was felt that narrative analysis would have been inapplicable. Textual analysis meanwhile refers to a form of analysis that analyses the content but 'also the structure or design of a text and how elements function' as part of a larger social context (Daubs, 2018). Therefore, the meaning of the text is 'interpreted not just from the text itself, but through how that text 'speaks with' other texts as well' (ibid) such as other historical and cultural forces. As the thesis sought to break down the grand narratives of *Dabiq* on a thematic level relating to the research questions, I wanted the meaning of these themes to emerge from the content of *Dabiq* itself. Textual analysis does not utilise this same thematic framing or coding aspect and is concerned with aspects beyond the primary

source literature. It was thus seen not specific and effective enough as a tool for analysing *Dabiq*.

As stated, in tune with documentary analysis the written content of *Dabiq* was analysed using thematic coding analysis as part of the qualitative approach to the study of the magazines as documents. This twin approach enabled a systemic and cohesive analysis of *Dabiq*. Thematic coding analysis entails ‘indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it’ (Gibbs, 2007:38). It is extremely useful ‘for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns’ (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:2). Generating codes through examining the text involves seeing the connections and linkages that emerge between often disparate data fragments and smaller pieces of information. This in turn allows us to see where patterns and clusters form regarding specific aspects of content which can then be categorised into wider analytic themes (Neuman, 2007:330). Thematic coding involves comparing ‘each new chunk of data with previous codes, so similar chunks will be compared with the same code’ (Robson, 2011:474). This clustering of codes constitutes the building blocks of the wider analytic themes, meaning the overall approach is focused on analysing the meaning of the words, images and sentence structures that are present in the data. It seeks to move ‘beyond counting explicit words or phrases’ and focuses on identifying and describing ‘both implicit and explicit ideas’ (Marks & Yardley, 2004:138). It also allows for the dominant or most frequent ideas or concepts to emerge from data. This is particularly useful when analysing *Dabiq* to see what constitutes the leading themes of IS’ grand narrative in the text of the magazines amid a great deal of content.

Thematic analysis can be used in both inductive and deductive approaches. In the case of the former, an ‘inductive approach, as used in grounded theory, derives themes from the researcher’s data’ (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:2), while a deductive approach uses a ‘a pre-existing theory, framework, or other researcher- driven focus to identify themes of interest’ (ibid), meaning it is useful for focusing and expanding upon a specific aspect of the data and is best understood in the ‘context of a pre-existing theory or frame’ (ibid).

In the case of this thesis, a deductive approach underpinned the thematic coding analysis methodology. This is because the thesis offers an attempt to understand specific aspects of the Islamic State’s propaganda outputs through the lens of Lyotard ’s theory of grand narrative. It is examining how these outputs conceptualise and express the Islamic State’s grand narrative

and how these features highlight the fundamentally propagandistic – as opposed to educational – nature of that narrative in question. By utilising thematic coding in tune with this pre-existing framework, we are better able to illustrate the connectivity between concepts such as narrative, education and propaganda, and how they can be applied to understanding contemporary political events and actors. When looking at Islamic State propaganda we can thus move beyond mere description of their beliefs and gain a deeper interpretation of the constituent parts of their story, their goals and what ideas they are promoting through their grand narrative. In this case, the codes that are located throughout the texts can then be formulated into themes regarding the content of the narrative IS has sought to promote in relation to its efforts aimed at a Western audience and how they attempt to build these stories into a coherent, all-encompassing political-religious ideology that articulates and justifies their actions in the present through reference to an unbroken lineage of Salafi-Jihadist activism throughout the centuries. This is a lineage they claim themselves as heir to; one which defines them as the true inheritors of Muhammed's legacy and Islam's original supremacy. Such grand narratives give IS the tools to explain the past, present and future, enabling them to illustrate how their actions are essential to Islam regaining its ascendency in the face of overwhelming opposition. They also function as an attempt at propagandistic education that utilises narratives designed to attract new recruits from these Western nations.

Thematic coding analysis was considered the most appropriate technique for undertaking this research not just for its deductive uses. It also helps in the summary of large bodies of text (Braun & Clarke, 2006:37). The themes are the ultimate outcome of the coding. It is useful in highlighting the most important features of content in order to allow for the most coherent and systematic level of analysis – in this case, the most prominent narrative features articulated by IS to target a Western audience and their vision of a distinct political-religious reality (ibid:4). The cluster of codes that emerged from the features of the text and how they were translated into cohesive themes as part of this thematic coding analysis process is illustrated in an example in the table below.

Theme One: Community and the centrality of Caliphate to the realisation of collective and individual Muslim destiny. Expression of tawhid	
Text	Codes

'It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers. It is a Khilafah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shami, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribi (North African), American, French, German, and Australian.'	- Caliphate - Travel (Hirjah) - Unity (Tawhid) - Diversity of the world's Muslim population - War
'Raise your head high, for today – by Allah's grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership.'	- Caliphate - Individual identity - Global Ummah - Global solidarity
'They have a statement to make that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, and boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy, and uncover its deviant nature.'	- Caliphate - War - Anti-Westernism - Un-Islamic ideologies,.
'We make a special call to the scholars, fuqaha' (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with military, administrative, and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields.'	- Caliphate - Hirjah - Spiritual and practical roles - Islamic knowledge - Creating a new society. - Role for everyone
'The first priority is to perform hijrah from wher- ever you are to the Islamic State, from dārul-ku- fr to dārul-Islām. Rush to perform it saying, {And I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased} [Tāhā: 84].'	- Hirjah - Caliphate - It is an obligation upon all Muslims - Theological justification - Invocation of Allah

For example, repeated uses of the term hirjah and statements imploring Muslims to travel to the Caliphate (with 'hirjah' and 'travel' or 'return' being their own individual codes) can then be grouped under an overarching theme of community. This then allows us to interrogate just what kind of community the Caliphate is and what form of expression it takes in the pages of *Dabiq*. Within larger blocks of text there may be multiple codes that can be related to separate themes. For the longer table featuring an explication on the codes analysed in this work, and how they translated to themes, see the appendices section of this thesis.

This form of analysis allows the themes to emerge directly from the text. The common patterns – codes – that emerge from the Islamic State's discourse and their accumulation through the texts of *Dabiq* generates evidence of certain themes that dominate the narrative they attempt to promote through their propaganda outputs. The multiplicity of codes can then be grouped under the umbrella categories of the themes. This in turn feeds into how their use of information highlights their epistemological and moral purposes, and how that constitutes their conception of propaganda as education.

Chapter Seven: Analysis and Discussion

The central questions of this analysis section are: What are the dominant themes of the grand narrative aimed at the English-speaking audience of *Dabiq*? How are these transmitted through an Islamic – specifically a Salafi-Jihadist – understanding of grand narrative, education and knowledge? And how do they interact with its liberal narrative opposite?

Ultimately, examination of the source material and the grouping of codes resulted in the organisation of thematic categories. Three key dominant themes have emerged from this analysis:

1) The centrality of community and the Caliphate to realising individual and collective Muslim identity.
2) The role of jihad as one of the organising principles of the Islamic State.
3) The notion of a prophetic methodology that unifies all aspects of Islamic life.

These themes emerge out of the cluster of codes that constitute the substance of *Dabiq*. The themes themselves are the defining features of the grand narrative that Islamic State has sought to imprint upon the world. Both themes illustrate the extent to which Lyotard's understanding of how grand narratives rise and fall – and their relationship to concepts such as the social bond – is applicable to the situation of the Islamic State's emergence and the group's subsequent success across parts of the Muslim world. The grand narrative's emphasis on jihad also centralises violence as the instructive force upon which personal and communal Islamic identity can be realised through the destruction of an enemy 'other', such as Western targets or religious minorities. The other emergent theme of the notion of community and the centrality of the Caliphate to realising both the individual and collective will of Islam also feeds into ideas of violence. Similarly, the prophetic methodology on which all learning, conduct and law is to be based constitutes a clear statement on the nature of knowledge and the social bond within the Caliphate and how IS link these to those beyond the Caliphate's borders. The intersectionality of these dynamics contributes to our understanding of how the Islamic State constructs and imparts knowledge to potential recruits and to what ends that knowledge is directed. Each theme crosses over with one another and incorporates multiple other issues relating to the Islamic State's ideology and collective worldview. Education, or what Islamic State believes to be true Islamic education, is central to this thematic focus, influencing key

aspects of life in the Caliphate and functioning as a primary measure of the group's process of self-justification. This method of self-justification is a tool of propaganda and stands in sharp contrast to its liberal grand narrative counterpart. The knowledge that is to be imparted within this narrative paradigm refers variously to a spiritual place of individual piety, the physical construct of the Caliphate itself - its spaces and borders elucidating the boundaries of a then burgeoning community – and the nature of the laws, systems and norms that are utilised to administrate the territory. It is a place where the physical spaces of government are inextricably linked to the metaphysical goals of its divine mission. It is the living embodiment of specific theocratic tradition. The totality of this effort at imparting a supposed system of Islamic knowledge within its adherents subscribes to definitions of propaganda as outlined above. It denies choice and the possibility of other systems of knowledge and works to foster loyalty only to the new state and its religious ideal. The means by which it attempted to impart and indoctrinate, as revealed in the texts of *Dabiq*, is principally through narrative and the stories relating to historical, political, religious – as well as individual and collective - victory through a distinct Islamic lens. Each themes articulate these stories within a broader grand narrative that will now be the subject of analysis.

Theme One: Community and the Caliphate – Individual and Collective Transformation

Throughout *Dabiq*, knowledge is depicted as being inextricably linked to the Caliphate. The notion of spiritual fulfilment, and the ability to be a good Muslim – in other words individual virtue – is also tied closely to the parameters of space within the territory itself. The physical therefore becomes the metaphysical. It is within this space that the group is able to wield control over its subjects. More than this however, it centralises a form of community that is salvific in nature and adheres to a tradition of salvation history, in which the importance of historic continuity with the mythic past is essential to creating the conditions for divine transcendence in the future. In issue one of *Dabiq*, released in July 2014 just as the Caliphate announced itself to the world, the theme of community and identity is explicated from its earliest pages. Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi writes: 'Raise your head high, for today – by Allah's grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership' (*Dabiq* Issue 1, 2014:2).

This appeal to the ummah and Islamic solidarity also has a more direct focus on potential recruits. The Caliphate is the place where individual and collective narratives merge, and the

true realisation of identity is attainable. It also establishes the notion of restoration and its link to a historically continuous entity that is re-emerging in the twenty-first century. It is a promise to 'return' rights, dignity and leadership that contemporary Islam has been denied. In other words, it posits that this political and religious endeavour is in service of creating a future based on a refracted vision of the past. The past and the future form a feedback loop in which the mythic and imaginary past is the guide to this new future being achieved. The Caliphate is the ultimate manifestation of tawhid, the oneness of God and the source of the faith's true unity. Other forms of individual identity are subsumed by the status of being a follower of Allah. This is explained further in the same section, where al-Baghdadi states:

> 'It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers. It is a Khilafah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shami, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribi (North African), American, French, German, and Australian. Allah brought their hearts together, and thus, they became brothers by His grace, loving each other for the sake of Allah, standing in a single trench, defending and guarding each other, and sacrificing themselves for one another' (*Dabiq* Issue 1, 2014:3).

This presents a utopian vision of an Islamic state, one which is directly contrasted to the Western and non-Western states potential readers will currently be living in. Such states are riven by artificial man-made identities that foster division and conflict and will lead to people embracing forces outwith God. Racial, political and ethnic fault-lines are a source of jahiliyyah, a term used to characterise ignorance of the divine and applied often to the modern non-Islamic world. It also has a history of being used to describe the ancient world as it existed before Islam was revealed to Mohammed by Allah, particularly the pagan societies and cultures that dominated the lands of the Arabian Peninsula. Here we see an explicit feature of grand narrative in action, as Baghdadi directly appeals to the social bond characteristic of the story he is trying to tell. The reference to the truly global nature of the ummah offers an indication of its diversity. Muslims come from all walks of life and are united in tawhid, their status as followers of the faith essentialising their identities along strictly Islamic lines. In this way, the Islamic State seeks to bind them in the common struggle by removing what they view as manufactured and unreal identity categories and insisting that only the truly Islamic state in Iraq and Syria can help them fulfil their individual spiritual journey by becoming part of this physical and divine whole. While the West and elsewhere is defined in this narrative by chaos, due to the status of competing identity groups vying for social and political power, the new state is to be defined by its order and uniformity. Man-made laws, rules and identities are

inherently flawed and ill-equipped to answer the questions of existence and man's purpose. Those commands decreed by God are legitimate precisely because they originate from a place beyond man's control. In this Islamic State narrative, true power can only lie in God's hands. The imagery of war is not just a reference to the then-contemporary battles taking place in Iraq and Syria as the Caliphate was emerging. It is also an allusion to the constant state of war that will exist between Islam and its enemies until the Caliphate is realised and the kingdom of God arrives on earth. For this to take place it requires Muslims to emigrate to the Caliphate en masse from all over the world. The emotional appeal concerning the plight of Muslims who are fighting and dying for the faith also centres the call to solidarity among images of violence and persecution, emphasising the pressing immediacy of the threat and the urgent need for Muslims to travel and aid in the battle to defeat the state's many enemies. All Muslims are therefore compelled to be part of this existential struggle.

Al-Baghadi also explicitly attacks heretical man-made ideologies in this issue: 'They have a statement to make that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, and boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy, and uncover its deviant nature' (*Dabiq* Issue 1, 2014: 5). These ideologies - which have dominated world politics for centuries -have sown war, prejudice, discord and are fundamentally deviant owing to their origins beyond the purview of Islam. Al-Baghadi's word choice in this instance – and the specific citing of democracy – is instructive. We have already seen the great disdain extremist Islam holds Enlightenment visions of the concept of choice. By its very nature, democracy is defined by some form or category of choice. As a political system and as an ideology, it is predicated on its subjects' capacity to determine and discriminate between political and other epistemic claims. This stands in contrast to the regime of the Islamic State which depends on an indoctrinatory superstructure and propagandistic forms of communication. Indoctrination places severe restraints on what forms, structures of information and engagement (both pedagogic and epistemic, about substantive claims and how they are framed) can be disseminated and circulated within society, as it is predicated on creating a consistent, unified system of history, belief, behaviour and action. By its nature, this regime seeks to remove the subject's capacity (this is pedagogic) to discriminate, reason and choose a form of government most in line with their values. It nullifies that ability to decide by casting the very notion of choice as illegitimate owing to man's intrinsic fallibility, a fallibility that is constant and inevitable without the embracing of the truth embodied by God. It is therefore a pronounced rejection of the democratic idea of man's capacity to reason. By

refusing to engage with this element of democratic choice, the group's ideological outlook repudiates the notion of opening itself up to external revision. In the Islamic State imaginary, the history of mankind is one of constant struggle between divine truth and deviancy. Most pedagogies involve a journey, a process; the discovery of learning new things and comparing them to what has come before or applying them in various contexts. In the pedagogy of IS there is no continuum. It is polar and oppositional. The expression 'idol of democracy' reflects the view that democracy is a false ideal that man has been used to supplant the position of God, by placing itself at the centre of the universe in a subversion of the natural order mandated by God. That this idol is to be 'destroyed' and trampled, not merely criticised or rejected, illustrates the centrality of coercion to the group's ideological makeup. This is not simply a case of demagogic rhetoric designed to rally the regime's subjects. It also reflects the central battle between the modern liberal grand narrative and the anti-modern incarnation of IS. Such condemnatory language is indicative of the violent imaginary that rests at the heart of the Salafi-Jihadist project and how it can only see opposing beliefs as illegitimate challenges to its own hegemony. Opposing ideas constitute their own vision of social reality which lie outside the totalitarian's reach and violate the indoctrinatory principle upon which the latter bases so much of its governance and social control. It can only engage with the wider world in terms that are antagonistic. Al-Baghdadi argues that secular ideologies such as democracy and nationalism do not offer a cohesive or compelling story of existence and have thus failed to answer the yearnings of both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Potential new recruits from abroad reading the text will likely have direct experience of these ideologies in the societies they hail from and know of their inability to provide the necessary answers on both individual and collective levels owing to their lack of divine mandate. In essentialising Muslim identity in this way, the strictures of what is and is not permissible are inherently narrowed. In turn, the limitations on freedom - and what can be thought or enacted beyond religious decree - have major implications for the generation of knowledge and to what ends it is being directed. Essentialisation is a tool of indoctrination as it seeks to guarantee that all issues, no matter how complex or diverse, become a matter of identity. The narrative is intent on subsuming all personality and human choice within the Islamic State's fundamentalist paradigm.

Given the self-confirming nature of the narrative the Islamic State espouse, these huge early success from 2014-15 are hailed as proof of the grand narrative's inevitable success and the conclusive refutation of those man-made constructs. From the earliest issues of *Dabiq*, the call to Hirjah was central to the group's conception of the Caliphate at this opening stage of its

existence. This explicitly calls for the mass movement of the ummah to the Caliphate to solidify the territory's burgeoning community. Only within the boundaries of this territory can the totalising effect of the Caliphate's epistemological and educational endeavours truly take root. The Islamic concepts of hirjah and tawhid form key constituents of the theme within the narrative. Only by travelling to Islamic State territory and becoming one with the State can personal destiny and true Islamic unity be fulfilled (although as IS' military fortunes waned this outlook would change). One cannot exist without the other. This is evidenced throughout Al-Baghdadi's words in *Dabiq*. The link between land and people is explicated repeatedly, as in the example below:

> 'Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The earth is Allah's. {Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous}. The State is a state for all Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslim' (*Dabiq* Issue 1, 2014:9).

Here we see the group's call for global solidarity – a worldwide social bond that is essential to the Islamic State self-image and quest for self-actualisation – voiced in terms that are buttressed by the invocation of religious verse. It recalls the global rallying cry of jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviets. It is also an explicit reference to the aforementioned universalising aspect of the Islamic State narrative and mission. The narrative theme of community welds the regime's indoctrinatory heuristic to its totalitarian vision of reality. It does so by essentialising the diverse and distinct Muslim communities that already exist worldwide and characterising them solely as the natural, loyal servants to the 'true' Islamic State; the only legitimate Islamic entity that endures. By implication, this also suggests that those other forms of Islamic organisation are illegitimate and must now swear allegiance to the regime led by al-Baghdadi. This is one of the ends to which the group's propaganda messaging strategy is devoted. By framing the Islamic population as the subjects of Allah, and nullifying all other traits beyond their status as Muslims, the Islamic State seeks to craft its own version of a universal 'truth', ensuring that all epistemic, educational and religious needs can be met according to their own laws and knowledge systems. On a surface level, within *Dabiq*, the Islamic State regime makes explicit mentioning of the services it requires from its new recruits in order to function as a proper state. This includes a variety of roles. The group states:

> 'We make a special call to the scholars, fuqaha' (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with military, administrative, and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields' (*Dabiq* Issue 1, 2014:20).

This is another example of the group prioritising the Islamic obligation of hirjah as a means of bolstering its spiritual credentials. Issue two also sees al-Baghdadi issue the command that hirjah is a matter of the 'first priority' (*Dabiq* Issue 2, 2014:3). But it is also evidence of its then- pressing need to acquire the manpower and expertise necessary to practically fulfil both its day-to-day and religious duties. As the above sentence illustrates, crafting a cohesive, pure Islamic society requires skills, knowledge and opportunity. Indeed, this reflects the regime's need to exhibit all the features of a modern, technologically savvy, twenty-first century nation state. This is an illustration of the contradictions of the Islamic State state-building process. It tells the story of the restoration of an ancient mythic past, one that is defiantly anti-modern, but is entirely reliant on the tools of modernity to achieve it. Within the above statement, the group elucidates a strategy of appearing to conform to the traditional nation-state model when it comes to educational matters. The specific need for scholars, judges and those versed in Islamic jurisprudence would suggest that expertise and educated professionals are prioritised as a means of enabling the state to develop, build its own institutions and expand the knowledge-base of the state and its educational initiatives. But this is in fact a form of appropriation. The culture of the Islamic State is inward looking and its vision of knowledge predicated on a number of sacrosanct religious rules that cannot be adjusted. There are deep, inherent limits on what is permissible, what is allowed to be taught and how external ideas are in constant opposition to their epistemology. The state is therefore borrowing the appearance of educational legitimacy in the service of strengthening its propaganda. The presence of experts and authority figures conforms to the common tropes of technocratic educational state initiatives. But the role of these experts is to lend the regime's laws and pronouncements a veneer of authenticity and objectivity, when they are actually promoting the messages of the regime.

Theme Two: Jihad

The second dominant theme that emerges from the discourse of *Dabiq* is that of jihad. This permeates all aspects of life within both the physical space of the Caliphate and the wider metaphysical vision of the Islamic State, as well as the group's conception of itself as the

legitimate authority of God's will on earth. It also plays a crucial role in their indoctrinatory processes, linked as they are to issues such as narrative, history, mythmaking and the instrumentalising of violence both as an essential matter of policy and as a propaganda tool. This is particularly relevant when it comes to understanding how the Islamic State views its enemies and how such violence is defined as an intrinsic instrument of necessary transformation. In this sense, the Islamic State's practice of jihad arguably represents an evolution from earlier extremist interpretations of divine violence, transforming it into an intrinsic element of a wider religious totalitarianism that bears some of the same hallmarks as Arednt's conception of totalitarianism.

It has been noted many times throughout this thesis that the iconography and narratives of war dominate the Islamic State's discourse. In *Dabiq*, these stories and images are embedded within the magazine's outreach efforts, functioning as one of the central pursuits that unifies different and often disparate aspects of life within the Caliphate and beyond. The promotion of jihad is an obvious purpose to which much of the group's propaganda and educational enterprises are devoted. But acts of jihad can also function as propaganda in and of themselves. This notion has a long lineage in the narratives of extremist Islam, as well as in the broader history of other politically violent groups. It can be seen as a manifestation of what has been termed the 'Propaganda of the deed'. This was a tactic first embraced by European anarchist groups in the late 1800s who sought to utilise shocking and spectacular acts of violence as a means of inspiring, mobilising and galvanising mass support for their cause or movement. The act of violence itself – by its nature designed to be an example to others and to catalyse political change - constitutes a form of propaganda by carrying the message of the group to the wider audience. The anarchist groups saw these acts as being the spark necessary to ignite revolutionary sentiment among the populace and strike fear into the heart of their enemies. The version of jihad espoused and practised by the Islamic State often conforms to this practice and expresses it once again in the language of the divine. Every issue of *Dabiq* is prefaced with a quote from the leader of the Islamic State predecessor group known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the ideological Godfather of Islamic State's Salafi-jihadism, led this organisation from 2003 until his death in 2006 and his influence greatly shaped the Islamic state's objectives, tactics and interpretation of jihad, particularly regarding the idea of holding territory to create an Islamic enclave and the use of brutal violence to achieve this end. He states: 'The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify — by Allah's permission — until it burns the crusader armies in *Dabiq'* (*Dabiq* Issue 11, 2014:2).

Dabiq is a small village in Northwest Syria and a site of critical importance mentioned in the Qu'ran. It is here that 'according to a hadith, an apocalyptic battle will take place… between Muslims and their enemies before the ultimate defeat of the Romans at Constantinople' (Carter Centre, 2015:3). The stark, purifying imagery of al-Zarqawi's statement and its repeated invocation by the Islamic State is an illustration of the eschatological preoccupations of the group's thought. This incarnation of jihad explicated by al-Zarqawi is predicated on inspiring further direct action to create the conditions for the fulfilment of divine prophecy, the violence itself being the medium for the wider message. It again fuses tangible political violence with the metaphysical properties of apocalyptic transcendence, which in turn seeks to generate more violence and more action, becoming a self-repeating cycle. *Dabiq* issue six makes explicit reference to this tactic, depicting the group's self-conceived jiahdist enterprise as a universal struggle dependent upon the need for direct action to inspire further waves of violence and bring its message to the masses. Listing a number of martyrs who died in terror attacks against the West, it states:

> 'If you can kill a disbelieving American or European or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way…. There will be others who follow the examples set by Man Haron Monis and Numan Haider in Australia, Martin Couture-Rouleau and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Canada, Zale Thompson in America, and Bertrand Nzohabonayo in France' (*Dabiq* issue 6, 2014:4).

Statements such as this reinforce the jihadist concept of open-ended warfare, beyond liminal spaces, clearly defined battlefields and strict military targets. The designation of eternal war against all those defined as 'disbelievers' (European, Canadian, American, Australian etc) stands in stark contrast with how the Islamic State sees those who conform to their belief, as those artificial markers of national identity are effectively erased. The state of belief is the fundamental basis for their community, their land and their state, functioning as the unifying social bond and the source of unadulterated truth. Everything outside this is a form of deviance and therefore a legitimate target, with divinely-ordained violence against a dehumanised and debased enemy operating as a regenerative force that creates the conditions for such unified purity. But the above statement also illustrates the point that elements of the Islamic State's terror tactics and propaganda strategies are built on the examples of other organisations. The actions of the martyrs are designed to be a form of propaganda in and of themselves, the deeds

generating both fear and inspiration based on the various audiences who are captive to the spectacle. Violence and propaganda often have a symbiotic relationship and are used to mutually reinforce each other, as in the case not just of Islamic State but other terrorist groups too including non-Islamic ones. In this sense, it can be said that this is more evidence of the Islamic State following in the footsteps of the long-standing practices and behaviours of other political actors, while still placing its own distinct slant on such activities. This is important in that it illustrates the common methods and tactics that proliferate between terrorist groups and other politically violent movements across different time periods and despite vastly different goals, constituencies and ideologies. The cross-pollination of such ideas and methods means that the Islamic State's projection of itself as a radical new challenge to the existing political order must be viewed with some scepticism.

The discourse of jihad within *Dabiq* encompasses Islamic history, theology as well as contemporary concerns as the global fight against the Islamic State intensifies. Throughout its issues, we see the group explicate its justifications for violence against its enemies. The example of al-Zarqawi, who during his tenure had stated he was aping the example set out by Mohammed, is invoked to provide continuity with this lineage of conquest and the goal of creating a genuinely pure Islamic territory. In order to craft such a community and unlock the kind of salvific transformation analysed in theme one, violence must be instrumentalised to a such a degree that it becomes the definitive tool of the burgeoning state's policy and the primary means of coercion. For example, a section in issue three outlines the justifications given for Islamic State fighters massacring members of a Sunni tribe in eastern Syria in 2014 known as the Shu'aytāt. It does so by citing the words of al-Zarqawi:

> 'Abū Mus'ab al-Zarqāwī (rahimahullāh) said, "So we warn the tribes, that any tribe or party or assembly whose involvement and collaboration with the crusaders and their apostate agents are confirmed, then by He who sent Muhammad with the truth, we will target them just as we target the crusaders, and we will eradicate and distinguish them, for there are only two camps: the camp of truth and its followers, and the camp of falsehood and its factions' (*Dabiq* issue 3, 2014:12).

Within this binary division of the world into the camps of truth and untruth, authentic belief and paganism, the licence to use force is broadened. The language quoted here is exterminationist in character and places a special emphasis on the ability to declare other Muslims apostates – the practice known as takfir advanced by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri when leading Al-Qaeda, categorising them as no longer Muslim and therefore

legitimate targets for attack. The Islamic State utilised this with wild abandon. It was used in the example of the killing of the Shu'aytāt tribe who rejected the authority of Islamic State rule. The article states, again quoting al-Zarqawi:

> 'From now on, everyone whose affiliation with the pagan guards, police, and army is confirmed, or his collaboration and espionage for the crusaders is verified, then his ruling is execution… This is in retribution for his treachery towards his religion and ummah, and so that he becomes a manifest lesson and a deterring example' (ibid).

The word choice here illustrates the jihadist conception of designating guilt and the imposition of collective punishment. In the case of the Shu'aytāt, following their conquest of parts of Syria, the Islamic State targeted the group after they refused yield to them and proceeded to massacre huge numbers of the tribe. This was done on the basis of alleged apostasy and siding with the 'crusaders', which defined them as 'pagans'. Crucially, this is portrayed as an act of divine justice. The article openly states that it seeks to 'tie events narrated in the Sunnah and Sīrah of the Prophet… with events today' (ibid) by directly comparing the murder of the Shu'aytāt with how Mohammed treated 'treated the Arab and Israelite tribes as collective wholes whenever tribe members broke their covenants with him' (ibid). The Shu'aytāt's 'opposition to the enforcement of the Sharī'ah' (ibid) meant they were treated the same way. This is done on the basis of what the group's calls the 'prophetic…methodology (ibid)', an unbending system of law and rule that unleashed Mohammed's rise to power and Islam's dominance across much of the Arab world. The concept of 'prophetic methodology' will be explicated further under theme three. The narrative of war and violence against those who would resist Islamic State rule is therefore re-enacted, as the Shu'aytāt are defined as 'murtadd' (meaning apostate) (ibid), categorising them as the same enemy vanquished by Islamic militant forces in ages past.

These terms – 'pagan', 'apostates', 'betrayal', 'treachery', 'murtadd' – are indicative of a jihadist narrative that centralises dehumanisation. It is a key part of a process that creates the conditions for violence. To again recall the words of Schmidt and Schröder, violence 'needs to be imagined before it can be carried out' (Schmidt & Schroder, 2001:9). Dehumanisation helps to make sense of this – and aids in this imagining – by locating the source of conflict within the respective target or out group and rendering it as a supreme, existential threat or form of corruption that needs to be eradicated. The above terms are designed to define which 'others'

are incompatible with the objectives of the mission and its urgency. This is a thread common to totalitarian systems and groups, often taking the form of political, racial or religious hierarchies in which certain groups are deemed subhuman or unworthy of the same rights and protections as those in power. Such policies are pursued in search of the radical purity desired by those in power. Narratives of war are also essential to the jihadist ideology because they maintain the canonicity and cultural memory of conflict, in turn providing rationales for future violence and aiding in the denigration of those deemed the obstacle to victory and transcendence. The jihadist narrative further represents a totalitarian version of justice in that it hijacks notions of religious transcendence by situating the key to its attainment through exclusion and humiliation. The purity of the collective state must match the purity of the individual soul and vice-versa – and violence is the essential jihadist tool for collective transformation. There can only be an irreversible return to the absolute Godhead (an absolute or collective geist) through a process of aggressive purging and elimination.

But it would be incorrect to think of the jihad espoused by the Islamic State solely as a militaristic endeavour. The group deliberately frames it as being part of a holistic whole. Jihad is a crucial pillar of their version of Islam but it is placed alongside a wider movement in which Islam is to act as the guide to all aspects of life. Jihad therefore constitutes a form of outreach alongside a campaign of Da'wah, the act of inviting or summoning people to embrace Islam in its totality. Issue three also argues:

> 'Islam cannot be compartmentalized and approached piecemeal. We cannot adopt the mindset that jihād is acceptable without da'wah, or that the hudūd [punishments] cannot be established during defensive jihād…Rather, Islam is a holistic religion that is to be approached from all sides, and defended from all sides. If any aspect of it is abandoned or ignored, the Shaytān [Satan] and his soldiers will quickly fill the vacuum' (ibid:16).

Da'wah in this instance refers to a social campaign designed to address both the material and spiritual needs of the citizens of the new Caliphate. It exists alongside jihad, forming a holistic two-pronged movement that builds the contours of the state through violent coercion and then projects and implants its ideas through relentless outreach, propaganda and mobilisation campaigns. The seizure and takeover of local institutions and positions of authority enable the group to establish its own systems of law and dictate how the new state will operate and the values it and its subjects must adhere to. Once the rule of law has been brought in and the terms

of punishment ('hudūd) outlined, the ability of the state to inject itself into the everyday lives of its people and exert substantial control over them becomes an essential hallmark of its totalising power. The presence of enemies external and within – the targets of jihadi violence – solidify the state's quest for moral purity, in tune with the social and political efforts designed to ensure the state's citizens are living the 'correct' lives in accordance with its laws and values. The 'holistic' approach of this incarnation of Islam is dependent upon an absolutist moral conformity that encompasses the sum of life within the Caliphate. In comparison, the liberal grand narrative tends to be a typical feature of democratic political systems and cultures, because as previously noted democracy is grounded on the subjects' right, and their capacity, to distinguish and choose between conflicting claims of various types, whether political or otherwise. Few political activities reflect the values of choice and liberty more than participating in democracy and voting. It is the deliberate exercise of power in which individuals are invited to present their judgements, their ability to discriminate and utilise their rationality and reason – but only if they so wish to do so. In the pre-modern narrative of the Islamic State however, its subjects are simply denied the ability to choose between competing claims or ideas, because to allow any such choice would be to undermine the very nature of the holistic religious system the Islamic State seeks to create. It has to dominate and expand to all aspects of individual and collective life because it is an inherently unstable system of rule that cannot tolerate any serious source of opposition or critique lest its entire claim to legitimacy be weakened. The subjects' desire to express opposition is met with the state's monopoly of violence and a system that acts to violently purge any challenge.

This coercive push for conformity represents a thickening up of the territory's social and moral framework, in that the Islamic State's totalitarian posture seeks to erase the distinctions between the public and the private sphere in order to ensure coherence between all of the constituent elements of the new community. The consequences of failing to do this are again sketched in infernal imagery – that of Satan ('Shaytā'n') and his armies corrupting human life – which spells out the apocalyptic imaginary that fuels so much of the state's cosmic eschatology . The overwhelming need for obedience reflects the constrained 'universality' that underpins the philosophy of the Islamic State. It is unable to engage with complexity of the world and the nuances that define the human experience because (as previously stated) it is 'universal' solely on its own terms and can only express the desire to change the world through the will to dominate. This stands in stark contrast to a liberal grand narrative that is predicated

on creating the conditions for a genuine if imperfect universality built on reason and the desire for humanity to flourish in a state of freedom.

There is also a distinct educational element to this social outreach effort. The Islamic State wages a campaign of jihad that 'fights to defend Muslims liberate their lands, and bring an end to the tawāghīt [idolatry]' and a Da'wah that addresses their social and spiritual needs (*Dabiq* issue 3, 2014:16-17):

> 'As such, the Islamic State actively works to educate its citizens, preach to and admonish them, enforce their strict adherence to Islamic obligations, judge their disputes, implement the shar'ī hudūd, eradicate all traces of shirk and heresy, incite the people to jihād and call them to unite behind the Khalīfah' (ibid:17).

This illustrates the unified sense of purpose that underpins the entire moral project of the Islamic State. The Sharia is total and irrevocable as it is the ultimate expression of God's will and, crucially, his unity. To 'unite behind the Khalīfah' is to unite behind God himself. Education is just as important as jihad in these efforts, because controlling the former initiates the inculcation of values, a worldview, and system of belief. It enables the authorities to gain further loyalty and control over its subjects, especially children. But this quoted statement also illustrates how, despite appearances to the contrary, the form of education promulgated here has more in common with propagandistic endeavours than a genuine effort at educational pedagogy. Indeed the group is open and explicit here regarding the ends to which such 'education' is devoted. The purposes to which this alleged education is directed amounts to enforcing the group's own conformity and eliminating anything outside of that which is granted by the absolute Godhead – 'shirk' denoting idolatry or polytheism, alternative sources of divinity and worship. It is a form of education in the service of the same violent politics of purity that helped drive the group to power in the first place. Everything within the life of the state is to be judged according to the Sharia, and by wielding a monopoly on the means of education the Islamic State manages to strengthen its indoctrinatory superstructure and increase the reach of its propaganda outputs. The pursuit of jihad is in turn reinforced by this propaganda as it ensures a steady supply of new recruits and maintains its primacy as both the method of conquest and defence and as a dominant theme within the Islamic State's narrative of itself and its self-conceptualisation.

Theme Three: The Prophetic Methodology

The final dominant theme within the narratives of *Dabiq* relates to the notion of what is termed the 'prophetic methodology' of Islamic State. We have already seen this terminology referenced in terms of the group's execution of jihad and its campaigns of violence against those it deemed inferior or deviant. The prophetic methodology can be seen as the unifying thread that links the earlier themes of jihad and the physical and metaphysical aspects of community. Yet it constitutes its own specific theme in and of itself, as it encapsulates the key epistemic substance of the group's theology and its politics. The idea of a 'prophetic methodology' also serves to contrast the group's vision of reality with its Western counterpart and facilitate further attack on some of the defining ideas of Western thought and its narratives surrounding knowledge, education and how reality is to be governed. This supposed methodology is not simply theoretical; it is to be implemented practically within the confines of the state and is to provide the overarching basis upon which any matter of human life, or any theological question, is to be navigated. In this sense it is the principal force behind the laws and philosophy of the Islamic State; the superstructure which in turn allows the ideas and actions of jihad and community-building to flourish. Crucially, it is the very nature of this methodology which also ensures the systems of learning employed by Islamic State conform to propaganda and cannot be considered genuinely educational in their pursuit of knowledge. It is a methodology deployed in the name of a totalitarian religious imaginary, the narratives of which are designed to strengthen its own grip on power, maintain the profoundly narrow parameters of its socio-political reality and to exclude that which exists outside of its own sanction.

A key feature of this so-called 'prophetic methodology' centres on the issue of choice. This has already been explicated somewhat under theme one, specifically regarding Baghdadi's condemnation of democracy as a false man-made idol. But the magazine goes into greater detail regarding the frailties and failures of the human preoccupation with choice and how it violates the unity and order of God's will. This is intimately connected to the question of what constitutes truth and how it is to be discovered or revealed. The implications of this again illustrates the tensions and deep ideological and epistemic clashes between a liberal, progressive grand narrative and that of Islamic State. From the latter's perspective, these clashes in turn reinforce the group's radical view of the contemporary conflict in Iraq and Syria being a metaphysical – and necessary - struggle for religious transformation and an apocalyptic

clash of civilisations. From its earliest issues, *Dabiq* contrasts the divinely-inspired prophetic methodology of Islamic State with the pernicious, ungodly incarnation of choice embodied by Western states:

> 'From amongst the polluted ideologies that have afflicted people the entire world over through -out the course of the tyranny carried out by the forces of kufr, is the notion that the people can choose whether to follow the truth or to embark upon falsehood' (*Dabiq* issue 2, 2014:8).

Choice, as generally formulated by Western secularism, is depicted by the Islamic State as an illusion. What use is choice if it leads to humanity being deceived and turning away from God? Choice in this sense is not liberatory – as seen in Western liberal discourses – but its opposite, in that it overwhelms human faculties and presents us with a corrupted form of reason that negates the true word of God. The word choice of kufr illustrates that in the Islamic State worldview, this entire enterprise is led by disbelieving adversaries who are fundamentally anti-God in their mission. The methodology attacks the 'polluted ideologies' that proffer choice and corrupt the purity of God's will. Choice would ultimately be a violation not just of God's will but also the social bond Islamic State's claim to legitimacy rests on. To upend this social bond by offering choice, and undermine the uniformity that is a precondition for the building of a truly Islamic State, would be to give in to humanity's worst vices, symbolised most prominently in the decay of the Western world. The staging of this dichotomy between Islam and the West over this specific issue of human choice reveals one of the starkest fundamental differences in how Islamic State conceives of knowledge and therefore learning. What is seen as freedom in liberal discourses – the ability to revise, to argue, to select from competing ideas within an epistemological framework foregrounded on the belief in the human ability to reason – casts the pursuit of truth as a constantly evolving process that can adapt to new circumstances and navigate new ideas. It is a process of continual discovery. In the Islamic State discourse, the truth already exists and has already been revealed to humanity. The prophetic methodology, referring to the revelations revealed to the Prophet Mohammed and codified in the holy texts, sets out not just codes of behaviour and belief, but also how such knowledge is to be transmitted and disseminated. As has been outlined previously, many of the Islamic State's teachings often pivot on the power of textual authority and the example of certain figures and scholars within the faith. There are rigid binaries in terms of what constitutes legitimate sources of authority. This is particularly evident in relation to military affairs and jihad. But, by its very nature, the

prophetic methodology as interpreted by Islamic State is dependent upon a system of knowledge that is closed off. As a grand narrative, it cannot offer the same universalising epistemology as the liberal grand narrative because it demands fealty to those authorities above all else. It has distinct hierarchies and sharp limitations on what kind of information is permissible for circulation within its boundaries, because the truth has already been revealed to humanity and has been instituted in the laws and directives that govern the social reality of the state. This is all clearly reflected in the group's critique of the Western understanding of human choice. *Dabiq* argues:

> 'This ideology [Western choice] teaches that no one has the right, regardless of whom he may be, to impose any creed or set of morals on anyone else even if that creed or set of morals is the truth revealed by Allah' (ibid).

This represents a major attack on one of the liberal grand narrative's key understandings of freedom: the idea that through the combination of freedom and reason, humanity has the space, and is equipped, to make the correct choices regarding a range of political, social and personal questions. Freedom – in the liberal vision – is supposed to consider the fact that societies are composed of differences. Multicultural societies are also typically made up of various groups and constituencies with specific needs and desires. The notion of individual liberty, and the ability to exercise this freedom to live within the cultural, political or religious milieu of one's choosing – again within reasoned limitations – is a definitive feature of the modern liberal imaginary. How these (sometimes competing) needs are to be met is ideally the product of reasoned debate that looks to find solutions that provide benefits to the constituencies in question. Within this paradigm, authority is invested in a number of different institutions and political arrangements but is seen chiefly in the exercise of free and fair democratic voting –a clear expression of the freedom principle that underpins liberal societies as a whole. This is again linked to the idea that the truth is best realised through a process of collective discovery that attunes itself to a universalist paradigm. This is not to suggest that such a system is perfect; in fact, implicit within it is the suggestion that human beings are free to make choices that are not in their best interests and which may harm themselves and others. There are of course powerful political and social actors that exist beyond the scope of choice, but human beings in the liberal grand narrative nonetheless exercise certain choices over which authorities have permission to wield power over their lives and which have gained their trust. The framework of the liberal imaginary still places limits on these options in systems of checks and balances

but emphasises freedom in its various guises as a critical, defining and universal value in and of itself. It is also the value repeatedly under attack in the passages of *Dabiq*.

The core of these ideas represents a challenge to the Islamic State paradigm in which God is the central figure in all of life, whose word and example (seen in his prophet Mohammed) is sacrosanct. Where does the authority lie regarding, or who gets to decide, what comprises the truth in the liberal grand narrative? Here, the supposedly true word of God – while tolerated – is simply another participant in the marketplace of ideas that must compete against other ideologies and movements and may not exercise power over those who choose not to follow it. It is an affront to the hierarchical and ordered system of control that much of Islamic State's legitimacy and authority draws from. Above all, the liberal grand narrative's emphasis on the primacy of reason and its refusal to acquiesce to the total authority of one singular group means that it is designed to resist the fundamentalism and purity that defines much of the Islamic State's mission. The violence wielded by the group to enforce its decrees is a further grave violation of the liberal imaginary which posits tolerance and restraint on aggression and punitive sanctions. It is unconscionable in the Islamic State worldview for man to be allowed to make choices that go beyond or contravene divine law or sanction without punishment. This is seen in the way that the purity espoused by Islamic State in the texts of *Dabiq* extends to attacking other Islamic groups and the territories they command, including similar Sunni extremist organisations. Issue six features a lengthy account of a fighter's jihadist journey through Taliban and Al-Qaeda-held territory in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He expresses his disillusionment with the systems of governance and power he found there because they did not adequately accord with the holy laws and prophetic methodology of Islam, corrupted by secular ideas and human frailty. Interestingly, the fighter explicitly states that the provision of Islamic education was lacking in Waziristan, which is in stark contrast to the education of the young by the Islamic State. He asks:

> 'Why would the sons and daughters of the region enter the secularist government schools to a large and notable extent without there being any direction to or preparation for the establishment of school houses by the mujāhidīn'' (*Dabiq* Issue 6, 2014:44-45)

This illustrates the primacy of education to IS as a tool of Islamizing physical space. Similar to the Deobandi madrasas of Pakistan, the physical territory must become one with the laws and sacred teachings of the sharia. Schools and educational establishments become the transmitter of the faith, central to the totalising mission of making the land a community ruled

by the appropriate methodologies. The superstructure of the prophetic methodology allows the environment of indoctrination and its own world of social reality to take full effect, where the limits on independent thought and the ability to contest the goals, laws or purpose of the state are flattened by the belief in devotion to the sacred. It is a system that stands in sharp contradiction with the liberal vision of Atkinson, where the epistemic notion of assent between individuals and the cultivation of a genuine understanding of the origins of ideas or a manner in which they might be tested are the truly transformational endeavours of educational pursuits. In the liberal grand narrative, these might indeed be said to hold an element of transcendence. The methods propagated by IS were demonstrated in the creation of an Office of Education in Nineveh, Iraq. Much like the earlier austere madrasas in Pakistan, non-Islamic subjects once taught in schools in the city of Mosul such as ‘history, geography, literature, art and music’ were withdrawn (Iraqi Institute for Development, 2016:1). They were replaced by a radical curriculum that focussed instead on teaching the Sharia and Islamic law (texts on Islamic jurisprudence featured prominently) while elements of jihad education, such as texts extolling martyrdom and military training, were also introduced (ibid). The use of schools in this manner reflects the demands of IS’ prophetic methodology that both the geography of the Caliphate and the interior life of its citizens be rendered one and the same. This was seen in the way that even non-religious subject matter that was taught was still inflected with the rhetoric of Islamic State ideology and narrative. For example:

> ‘The textbooks aimed at children aged 6-12 clearly promote the ideology of the Islamic Caliphate and religious extremism. For example, physical and jihad education books for six- year-olds are entitled ‘The Islamic Caliphate is Remaining and Expanding’. These two words – ‘remain’ and ‘expand’ – feature repeatedly and are significant: they form part of the slogan used by ISIS militants, which says that the ‘Islamic State’ will ‘remain’ (or continue) and ‘expand’. Illustrations used in these books show children carrying weapons such as pistols and machine guns and dressed in clothes worn by ISIS militants’ (ibid)

The intense levels of indoctrination within the Caliphate at its inception illustrates that from the youngest ages children within its territory were being taught on a deep psychological and emotional level to defend the Caliphate and were being instructed in a form of jihad (Al Maaloli, 2016). This degree of political-religious propaganda reflected the Salafi-Jihadist ideals that buttressed much of its enterprise and which was communicated through narrative to students. IS declared in its official policy document on education that it didn’t ‘intend to base itself on any model other than the ‘voice of the Salafs’ (the first Muslims) and that it intended

to make a blank slate of the past because… all existing educational systems were 'corrupted by Western influence'' (Arvisais & Guidère, 2020:504). The intensity of control exerted over the realm of education by IS recalls Arednt's words on the overwhelming reach of totalitarianism under the Nazis, that such measures are designed to destroy the 'capacity for both thought and experience', and in doing so render any understanding of factual reality or objective truth futile (Arendt, 1951:15). Higher education also saw the elimination of numerous subjects deemed un-Islamic, while later in 2014 it was announced that the remaining religious textbooks had been banned so that the IS regime could write and distribute their own, while parents would be required to send their children to newly reopened schools after it had 'established a specific process for writing new textbooks' (Arvisais & Guidère, 2020:505).

Given the history going back to the Deobandis in Pakistan and beyond of schools being used as pathways for violent political Islamic activism, as well as the lineage of violent jihadism they claimed to be the inheritors of, the heritage to which IS belongs is clear. While the narrative that is being promoted here is therefore not necessarily 'new', it represents a serious resurgence and acceleration of an even greater intensity of Salafi-Jihadist power. Groups such as Al-Qaeda were never able to hold or control territory for long periods of time, much less partially overthrow a state power and establish the long-lost Caliphate. The levels of political control exercised across the lives of its citizens was profound. Their activities in education according to the prophetic methodology was in one sense the IS grand narrative writ large. It offered one of the strongest avenues for the purest form of political control thanks to the propagandistic properties of indoctrination and the collapse of other alternatives following IS' victory in Iraq. The ability to nurture younger minds and in turn imbue the Caliphate with greater longevity almost represents a near-parody of the liberal idea of young people being the harbingers of new ideas that revise and challenge long-held assumptions of older generations. Control of and indoctrinating of youth is one of the key measures utilised by the IS epistemology of knowledge (divinely-ordained and originating from God). Yet it underscores the weaknesses of this ideology in that it can only function in a state where it exists solely with itself. It illustrates the fundamental submissiveness IS' vision of the prophetic methodology requires and its inability to engage with systems, ideas or methodologies beyond its own self-reference.

The sentiment expressing disillusionment with other violent jihadist groups, only for it to be reawakened when volunteers joined IS, is echoed in another issue in an article describing an

IS fighter who had joined IS from another militant group in Syria, Jahbat al-Nusra. He states that in his time with them: ‘As for when I was in Jabhat an-Nusrah, I did not see implementation of Allah’s Sharī’ah, nor did I see justice between an amīr and an ordinary member’ (*Dabiq* Issue 6, 2014:38). These stories, told in a pro-IS magazine aimed at a Western audience, are of course self-serving and designed to underscore why IS are the only legitimate Islamic actor on the world stage. But they constitute a narrativizing of authenticity and enable audiences to see the results of what their actions and activism – in tune with a supposed prophetic method of operation – have realised.

In the IS worldview, these failures on the part of other groups are emblematic on their failure to adhere truly to the prophetic methodology of Allah. Unlike other well-known groups who claim to be enacting God’s will, the Islamic State is the only one physically doing it in a way that challenges not just Western military forces, but the very underpinnings of their moral and philosophical way of life. This, as much as their violence, is what foregrounds the legitimacy of their narrative.

Embracing those man-made behaviours and ideas amounts not just to sinful conduct but to embarking on a fundamentally anti-Islamic mission led by forces that are intent on the faith’s destruction. *Dabiq* argues:

> ‘the da’wah [act of calling people to join Islam] of prophet nūh (‘alayhis-salām) followed a policy from the very beginning that was completely opposed to the methodology of choice. In fact, it was characterized in contrast to this by a frank, early warning of the consequence of deviation and opposition to the truth’ (*Dabiq* issue 2, 2014:9).

Nūh is the figure of Noah in Islamic history and theology. Much like in Christianity, his story follows the same trajectory as a prophet who warned the world against their vices and urged the people them to repent lest they face God’s wrath. The reproduction of stories such as Nūh's in Islamic State discourse reflects the power of narratives that reinforce notions of apocalypse, punishment and regeneration through cleansing in the search for purity. Prophecy is used not just as an example of things that were promised and came to be, but as a warning that they may occur again. In the Islamic State epistemology and eschatology, time is cyclical and history bears repeating if certain conditions are not met regarding humanity’s treatment of God’s will and the revealed truth is not recognised. Deviation is not just a product of ignorance but an active choice made by the corrupt man-made ideology of secular freedom. Later *Dabiq* issues

13, 14 and 15 all repeat this sentiment, attacking a wide variety of targets such as feminism pornography, transgenderism, atheism (*Dabiq* Issue 15, 2016:5-6), the Saudi Royal Family (*Dabiq* Issue 14, 2016:57), and the Iranian regime (*Dabiq* Issue 13, 2016) on the same basis of an active rejection of God. But the final issue also explicitly mentions the French Revolution. In an issue that directly challenges the West (just as the Caliphate began experiencing huge territorial loses), it states: 'Since the days of the so-called French Revolution in the West… the Christian lands of disbelief have been generally ruled by philosophies at all-out war with the fitrah (inborn human nature)' (*Dabiq* Issue 15, 2016:20). This event is portrayed as the moment when man in the West rid himself of God and tried to subordinate his creator. It represents the starkest clash of values between the two forces. Liberalism versus conservatism, belief versus unbelief, Enlightenment values versus religious fundamentalism. Statements such as this make clear the one of the ultimate division points between the two forces. While the liberal grand narrative allows for change and modification in the search for truth and the ability of human beings to make their own decisions regarding a range of political authorities, the Islamic State narrative demands that the people themselves must change in order to submit to the right authority. The growth and success of these narratives is again indicative of the retreat of the once dominant liberal grand narrative and its failure to account for the new powers that would come to assert themselves in its place. While some took the emergence of the post-modern condition to allow for the enhancement of liberation in ways that the liberal grand narrative had failed to achieve, this idea also failed to account for the prospect of regressive and totalitarian powers and their narratives, moving in and capturing the crucial political space that sought to allow humanity to flourish. The liberal grand narrative therefore struggles to counter a belief system that wants to resuscitate those totalitarian ideas and sees human flourishing in terms that are anathema to the very principles of liberalism. The prophetic methodology is premised on the fundamental source of man's knowledge being Allah. The IS grand narrative roots its legitimacy in being a living expression of this knowledge and divine will, which informs its efforts at governing and educating its people. As is stated in issue nine:

> 'Absolute power, knowledge, and ownership are attributes unique to Allah… This has always been the faith of Muslims since the father of mankind – Ādam – treaded the Earth and will continue to be so until the last believer passes away shortly before the Hour (*Dabiq* issue 9, 2015:15)

While liberalism suffers from its own uncertainties and lack of purpose in a post-modern environment, the anti-modern narrative of IS offers instead a salvific narrative that centres all

knowledge, virtue and power with Allah. The methodology, the correct way to live, lies with him. This encapsulates the definitive difference between the liberal grand narrative and its IS opposite. The competing grand narratives crest on a fundamentally incompatible understanding of knowledge and how that is to be realised or encountered in the wider world. The realm of education symbolises the vast chasm between these ideas, because it is a field concerned with the transmission of values and knowledge and the ability of narrative to communicate to the wider world. *Dabiq* functions as the ultimate statement on IS grand narrative and its concomitant vision of a profoundly propagandistic form of education.

Conclusion

I embarked on this thesis four years ago with the intention of trying to understand the role that narrative has played in shaping the origins and growth of Sunni Islamic militancy in the 20th and 21st centuries. I especially wanted to focus on the magazine output *Dabiq* because of the all-encompassing view it offered its audience into the ideological beliefs and activities of IS. 'Narrative' has become a ubiquitous term for analysing numerous forms of political discourse in the world today, and the field of Terrorism Studies is no different. Staking out an original claim in a crowded field has often been challenging. But over that time, I believe this thesis has evolved in its complexity to become a serious form of enquiry into the bonds, connections and spaces that connect violent Sunni jihadism to grand narratives of transcendence, the sacred, the pursuit of knowledge and the ability to communicate that knowledge to others. We cannot understand the purposes and indeed the nature of such violence unless we firstly comprehend the powerful contextual, sometimes seemingly overwhelming forces – historical, religious, political – that shape both human behaviour and the stories we tell about how we relate to the wider world around us and indeed to ourselves.

Therefore, applying the theory of Jean-Francois Lyotard has been the most useful heuristic through which to comprehend these often disparate and multi-layered questions. While this study has first and foremost sought to understand the dominant thematic features of the Islamic State narrative found in one magazine series, central to engaging with this topic has been the work of Lyotard in broadening the scope of the thesis. The text of *The Postmodern Condition* illustrates how grand narratives operate on both political and existential levels and function as an expression of that which gives meaning to human life. Through such an approach, this thesis has, I believe, shifted away from merely describing what is seen in IS propaganda or providing surface level analysis of what type of stories are being told to certain audiences. Building on Lyotard's theory, this work has attempted to underline how the violence, activism and narratives of IS are expressions of concerns relating to modernity, post-modernity and anti-modernity. The emergence of the group was a product of the collapse of grand narratives. This thesis has demonstrated that Western-backed grand narrative that once assumed dominance owing to their nation or culture's technological or economic might – such as those found in the eras of imperialism and colonial exploitation – often failed in their mission when confronted by radical forces because those very same

Western-backed narratives were built on unstable foundations. The gap between the rhetoric of liberal grand narratives in these instances, and the actual lived reality of those who were their subjects, meant that when challenged, the social bond, knowledge and systems of learning they sought to impart were no longer seen as legitimate. Such strong contradictions are partially what has resulted in a state of scepticism toward grand narrative, both in the era in which Lyotard was writing and the current moment of the twenty-first century. Lyotard's theory holds serious lessons for today's world where there is an abundant lack of liberal grand narrative articulators, and the dominance of cynicism has presaged the emergence or re-emergence of decidedly anti-liberal forces who feel that liberalism as an ideal has failed.

In analysing and understanding the relationship between the liberal grand narrative and the post-modern condition theorised by Lyotard and how this may be applied to the emergence of Islamic State in the twenty-first century, this thesis has encompassed a wide range of diverse themes and topics. By conceptualising the notion of a liberal grand narrative and comparing it with its opposite promoted by the Islamic State, we have seen how the forces of history, politics, theology, education and philosophy converge in moments of crisis and conflict. A major argument in this thesis is that the growth of new ideologies and political movements can only be understood by the failure of older ideas. Ideas form out of the collapse of other ideologies that failed to address a pressing need or moment. It is in the aforementioned scepticism toward liberal grand narratives that postmodern cynicism is able to become a dominant sentiment. Acknowledging the reasons for this involves a self-awareness of the liberal grand narrative's flaws of course, as stated. But the result of a postmodern condition is that forces such as IS are better equipped to impose themselves in the political sphere and achieve real power as a result. The dominant themes found in *Dabiq* as a document and unearthed using thematic coding analysis (Caliphate as community, jihadism and a so-called prophetic methodology) are clear representations of an anti-liberal and anti-modern way of life that was enacted on the people of Iraq and Syria. The brutal reality of their rule underlines the precarious state of knowledge and the social bond when the liberal grand narrative retreats.

Grand narrative was also the tool with which the thesis was able to bring in education as a major area where these confrontations play out. The importance of this is to so many aspects of social, political and religious life across different nations and cultures provided an excellent lens through which so many diverse topics could not simply be studied but also linked. The issue of education was central to the argument of this work. By recounting how education

forms one of the key ways in which a grand narrative is implanted within society, expressed and challenged, we are able to see how different narratives conceive of education, utilise it and crucially, what distinguishes legitimate education from propaganda.

The relationship between true knowledge, propaganda, education and indoctrination and the condition of modernity permits the distinctions between propaganda and genuine education to become clear. It illustrates how essential reason is and the importance of cultivating critical thinking and learned intellects. The Enlightenment appeal to a rationality in tune with a spirit of liberty is not without its problems of course, but when applied consistently, the liberal grand narrative on education offers both real learning and genuine liberation. The contrast to this, its most extreme form, is the brutal militaristic indoctrination of IS. A Salafi-Jihadist narrative is predicated on a pre-or anti-modern vision of reality being enacted on the basis of rejecting man's capacity to live and learn without God. The evidence of *Dabiq* points to the totalitarian nature of IS rule and narrative.

It is through these direct comparisons between education and propaganda, liberal narrative and anti-modern opposite that this thesis has tried to defend the concept of the liberal grand narrative and its applicability as a form of universalism. It is in fact the position of this thesis that a grand narrative shorn of its liberal underpinnings and imaginary is likely inherently predisposed to being used as an instrument of oppression or political control. The example of a liberal education narrative - borne out of forces such as the Enlightenments and a salvific idea of the potential of education in the aftermath of the Second World War and which formed the basis of manty Western states vision of rationality and reason – can be a powerful tool used to combat the totalitarian narratives of IS. This is because liberal narratives and education point towards a system that does not lie on subjugation or coercion or stringent limits on the conduct of individuals and communities.

Limitations

As with every major piece of academic work, this thesis has limitations. The decision to focus specifically on one series of Islamic State propaganda outputs – *Dabiq* – was motivated by the need to find clear examples of the Islamic State communicating directly with Western audiences, as well as material that was broadly reflective of much of the group's core

philosophy and beliefs. Moreover, it helped provide primary material in the absence of other opportunities that might normally be afforded where direct interrogation of a community might be an option. Here, perhaps understandably, there was substantial and uniform reluctance in Islamic community leadership in the UK to engage with the research. One major issue that emerged during the course of the thesis was the insurmountable difficulty of gaining access to human participants for interviews. It was felt that interviews of certain experts and religious representatives, conducted alongside the analysis of primary source material, would have enhanced the quality of the thesis and brought in original perspectives beyond my own. This would have helped broaden the topic as a whole or provided new avenues for exploration and also helped with triangulating the findings of the *Dabiq* analysis with other methods of enquiry. However, efforts to engage into these areas were met with little to no response which was disappointing and meant that the research would be based on online primary source material only. This limited the thesis in that it deprived it of other voices of expertise and knowledge that may have given the work new layers of depth. Further enquiries into this topic would be advised to try and gain access to other voices as a complement to primary source analysis. It is important to remember positionality when carrying out research into sensitive areas such as this. As an outsider to Islam, gaining the trust of those who may be able to help with thesis research is fundamental to future endeavours. This should be always kept in mind. Key to this research is to be respectful and mindful of biases given my position vis a vi the area of enquiry and Islamic communities response to it.

In terms of the use of *Dabiq* itself there are other limitations. As has been described, this thesis used thematic coding analysis and documentary analysis to engage with the source material and focus strictly on the written words of the magazine series. This meant excluding images, art, photographs and visuals that are also heavily featured in the magazine. The decision to focus on the written word came out of the need to discriminate and make the parameters of the thesis manageable given the vast amount of written data available and not confuse different methodologies of analysis. Yet nonetheless, it may be argued that by excluding this visual element, there are aspects of the documentary analysis of *Dabiq* that are incomplete. It does not tell the whole story of the content of the magazine and does not analyse representations of grand narrative and story that may be found in these visual symbols or illustrations. Grand narratives are multifaceted and their visual depictions are a key method of expression and dissemination. Thus, the thesis is limited in that it is missing any analysis of this visual account and therefore may also be lacking analysis of other important Islamic State stories and

narratives that are conveyed solely in this form. While I have emphasised throughout this research the multiplicity of narrative at play in the texts of *Dabiq*, the absence of visual analysis can be seen as a check on assessing and understanding the nature of *Dabiq* as an overall document.

Another limitation that may be found in this research is that in terms of grand narrative analysis, it is still only one specific magazine series amid an ocean of Islamic State propaganda. *Dabiq* is a single series that had its own aims and goals. It therefore makes it difficult to generalise about the broader purposes, objectives and intentions of the group's propaganda strategies and may not tell us much about other concerns the group has that are also of real importance. For example, comparing *Dabiq* with its subsequent replacement magazine *Rumiyah* or indeed the group's non-magazine propaganda outlets may help to unearth the common issues and narratives that emerge across different platforms, styles of propaganda and forms of media. Ultimately the thematic and document analyses conducted here and their findings can only tell us substantially about *Dabiq* itself.

Finally, it should be noted that broadly speaking, the content of *Dabiq* does not substantially address narratives relating to women or the female experience of the Islamic State. It is a project that mostly focuses on male authors, experiences and stories and does not centre female voices in any notable way. In terms of understanding grand narrative, this thesis may be missing out on important other grand narratives that pay attention to the female visions of the Caliphate and IS as a group. Other forms of IS propaganda may expound upon this and analysing them in terms of Lyotard's understanding of grand narrative would likely be illuminating and helpful to conceptualising the key features of the group's narratives and how they relate specifically to women and womanhood.

Implications for Future Research and Education

Going forward, there are a number of future avenues for research which this research could inform and influence. Future enquiries into this area may wish to accommodate other forms of source material such as other magazines, the prodigious number of video outputs produced by IS, or art and entertainment products that express the group's ideas and fulfil a number of different purposes. The complex, multidimensional features of these outputs illustrate how Islamic State responds to events and adjusts its language to different audiences. This is key to

understanding its longevity, its various functions and its appeal, beyond simply seeing it simplistically as merely a terrorist organisation. Applying Lyotard's theory to other forms of IS or extremist Islam philosophy, activism or propaganda would be an extremely fruitful line of research. Its flexibility makes it a strong theoretical and epistemic tool. As stated above, this could especially be applied to the visual work of the Islamic State and how such representations reveal new insights on grand narrative construction and impact.

In terms of education, this thesis suggests that liberal grand narratives – married to genuinely educational endeavours – has a major role to play in counteracting the narratives of extremism promoted by IS. It should be noted that this thesis does not hold that education in and of itself will prevent or defeat extremism. It is not a panacea and schools and classrooms 'should not have to be burdened' with all of society's problems or concerns (Ghosh et al, 2016:34). But nonetheless educators have the 'long-term opportunity to educate students to become resilient citizens' (ibid). Education should provide the space, opportunity and parameters to have conversations and serious dialogues and that cultivate and inform values. This process is not a simple one yet it involves openly navigating and describing the nature of extremist and violent discourses, understanding their potential appeal and illustrating their dangers, deficiencies and ultimate harm to their subjects. Illustrating the means of grand narrative construction and dissemination in extremist literature such as *Dabiq* and how it is perniciously propagandistic and indoctrinatory can be part of this effort. A truly liberal grand narrative that centres a vision of education based on instruction and learning that is open, revisable (as defined by the likes of Atkinson) and based on reason, evidence and justified conviction. This can form a major part of educational citizenship endeavours to expose the *means* by which extremist and violent groups work by contrasting education's openness with the closed-off and dictatorial methods of propaganda (ibid:35). Such a liberal vision for education should also work to ensure it operates by its own self-professed principles and values and does not become reliant on dictatorial or authoritarian singular liberal narrative that rejects critique or criticism (O'Donnell, 2016:982). Emphasising criticality is key. Criticality is essential to developing 'critical citizenship' (Ghosh et al, 2016:56) that moves beyond partisanship and remains open to dialogues where students are able to not just learn more but also learn *differently* about the nature of civic engagement and contentious political issues. This way allows for the cultivation of widespread ethical values 'that can help foster social and civic and economic well-being at the individual and societal level' (ibid). The findings of this thesis can play a role in helping to realise these outcomes, because by identifying the critical features of Islamic State's grand

narratives it helps to define and explain how the mechanics of propaganda and indoctrination are at play within the texts of *Dabiq*. It suggests they can be countered by a serious and cohesive effort to employ a liberal grand narrative education that is genuinely true to its values, which in turn can hel to refute the narratives of violence and totalitarianism that rest at the heart of Islamic State's propaganda and indoctrinatory goals.

Appendixes: Tables of Codes and Themes

Note: This list is not exhaustive but it is iterative and representative. It is here to demonstrate how text was broken down into codes and then patterns and clusters of codes were reassembled into analytic themes regarding grand narrative.

Table 1 Coding of theme one

Theme One: Community and the centrality of Caliphate to the realisation of collective and individual Muslim destiny.	
Text	Codes
'It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers. It is a Khilafah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shami, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribi (North African), American, French, German, and Australian.' (Issue 1: 5)	- Caliphate - Travel (Hirjah) - Unity (Tawhid) - Diversity of the world's Muslim population - War
'Raise your head high, for today – by Allah's grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership.' (ibid	- Caliphate - Individual identity - Global Ummah - Global solidarity
'They have a statement to make that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, and boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy, and uncover its deviant nature.' (ibid:9)	- Caliphate - War - Anti-Westernism - Un-Islamic ideologies,.
'We make a special call to the scholars, fuqaha' (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with military, administrative, and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different	- Caliphate - Hirjah - Spiritual and practical roles - Islamic knowledge - Creating a new society. - Role for everyone

specializations and fields.' (Issue 1:ibid)	
'The first priority is to perform hijrah from wher-ever you are to the Islamic State, from dārul-ku- fr to dārul-Islām. Rush to perform it saying, {And I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased} ' (Issue 2:24).	- Hirjah - Caliphate - It is an obligation upon all Muslims - Theological justification - Invocation of Allah
Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The earth is Allah's. {Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah} (Issue 1:2)	- Islam as a universal force

Table 2: Coding of theme two

Theme Two: Importance of jihadi violence to the Caliphate	
Text	Codes
'They [Shia) are apostate heretics whose repentance cannot be accepted. Rather they are to be killed wherever they are found and cursed as they were described' (Issue 10:).	- Jihad - Murder - Apostasy
'Our knight departed and the hearts of the enemy boil with envy and spite while our hearts happily say, "He was a man of pure creed. (Issue 10:40).	- Martyrdom - Sacrifice

‘The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify — by Allah's permission — until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq’ (Issue 12:2)	- Apocalyptic imagery - War - Crusader enemy - Dabiq: Prophecy
‘If you can kill a disbelieving American or European or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way (Issue 6:4)	- Holy War - Borderless conflict - Murder as divinely sanctioned - Coalition enemy
‘Abū Mus’ab al-Zarqāwī (rahimahullāh) said, “So we warn the tribes, that any tribe or party or assembly whose involvement and collaboration with the crusaders and their apostate agents are confirmed, then by He who sent Muhammad with the truth, we will target them just as we target the crusaders, and we will eradicate and distinguish them, for there are only two camps: the camp of truth and its followers, and the camp of falsehood and its factions’ (Issue 3:12)	- Al-Zarqawi – major jihadist figure - Lineage of jihad - Enemies sanctioned for violence - Violence as truth - Bloodthirsty/genocidal rhetoric - Unlimited reach of God’s retribution
‘Fights to defend Muslims liberate their lands, and bring an end to the tawāghīt [idolatry]’ and a Da’wah that addresses their social and spiritual needs’ (ibid:16)	- Jihad as liberation - Idolatry: guilty of apostasy - War as spiritually cleansing

Table 3 Coding of theme three

Theme Three: The Prophetic Methodology.	
Text	Codes
'From amongst the polluted ideologies that have afflicted people the entire world over throughout the course of the tyranny carried out by the forces of kufr, is the notion that the people can choose whether to follow the truth or to embark upon falsehood' (Issue 2:8)	- Tainted ideas - Kufr: unbeliever - Kufr as political oppressors - Illusion of human choice - No middle ground – merely truth or falsehood
'This ideology [Western choice] teaches that no one has the right, regardless of whom he may be, to impose any creed or set of morals on anyone else even if that creed or set of morals is the truth revealed by Allah' (ibid)	- Illusion of free will versus God-granted sanctity - Conflicts of morality between believers and unbelievers - Differing understandings of who gets to decide what morality or ideologies to follow - Differing ideas of the 'truth'
''Why would the sons and daughters of the region enter the secularist government schools to a large and notable extent without there being any direction to or preparation for the establishment of school houses by the mujahidin'' (Issue 6:44-45)	- Importance of Islamic schools to Islamic spaces - This group (Taliban) failed to do this adequately. - Praise for IS in prioritising education - Mujahideen – holy warriors - Methodology: militant society, entwining of education and militancy
'As for when I was in Jabhat an-Nusrah, I did not see implementation of Allah's Sharī'ah, nor did I see justice between an amīr and an ordinary member' (Issue 6:20)	- Disillusionment with other extremist groups - Lack of discipline - IS offer the discipline and legitimacy through their methods

'Absolute power, knowledge, and ownership are attributes unique to Allah… This has always been the faith of Muslims since the father of mankind – Ādam – treaded the Earth and will continue to be so until the last believer passes away shortly before the Hour (Issue 9:15)	- Allah as the source of all knowledge - The Hour: invoking of the end of days - Seismic differences in epistemology and understandings of knowledge between IS and liberal grand narrative
'Since the days of the so-called French Revolution in the West and thereafter the October Revolution in the East, the Christian lands of disbelief have been generally ruled by philosophies at all-out war with the fitrah (inborn human nature)'(Issue 15:20) The deviance carried on until the so-called "Brave New World" of America and Western Europe began legalizing marijuana, bestiality, transgenderism, sodomy, pornography, feminism, and other evils,	- Godless West - French Revolution – triumph of liberal values - Seen it as the inversion of howman is supposed to live - fitrah – rejection of God purposeful and deliberate. - The West as decadent and deviant - Only IS offers the solution to this deviancy and confusion . -

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