



Nationalt Center for
Forebyggelse af Ekstremisme

Contextualising **Salafism** and **Salafi Jihadism**

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Preface
by
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This report presents perspectives and discussions shared at an international conference on Salafism and Salafi Jihadism held in Copenhagen on the 27th of November 2019 by the Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism.

The conference and this report are the first part of a study of Salafism and Salafi Jihadism in Denmark, which is inspired by a Swedish study, carried out by Magnus Ranstorp et al. and published in 2018 in the report *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism* (Between Salafism and Salafi Jihadism). The aim of the conference was to gather renowned international scholars and representatives of European intelligence services/authorities to shed light on the ideological dimensions of the entire spectrum of Salafism, and to establish a common understanding and language of the topic in question, that can inform the second part of the study initiated in 2020.

What the conference showed was that there is a need for further knowledge about Salafism and Salafi Jihadism in a Danish context. The second part consists of several studies of experiences and perceived challenges with Salafism and Salafi Jihadism among local police, municipalities and Muslim communities as well as studies of Salafism and Salafi Jihadism in Denmark. Framed by chapters on historical developments and recommendations for future prevention, the results of these studies will be presented in a report in the beginning of 2021.

March 2020

Karin Ingemann
Head of Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism

Introduction

Understanding different orientations and ideological currents within Islam is a difficult and complex endeavour. Salafism is one such ideological current within Sunni Islam that have become increasingly important to understand for academics and the policymaking community, especially after the events of 9/11 and since the establishment of the Islamic State (IS) and its subsequent collapse in Syria and Iraq in 2017. Both al-Qaida as a global jihadist ideological movement and its associated regional and localized manifestations and the Islamic State (IS) have their ideological origins within Salafism. This literalist Salafi interpretation within Sunni Islam is crucial to understand in order to confront the current jihadist challenge. At the same time, it is crucial to avoid equating all salafism with radicalisation and violence. The vast majority of Salafis are actually non-violent, apolitical and purist in orientation. It is therefore essential to contextualising Salafism.

Salafism is, in the words of Joas Wagemakers, a "heterogeneous movement"¹ which takes different forms. Salafism comes from *al-salaf al-salih* (the pious predecessors) which denote the first three generations of Muslims after the Prophet. Salafists believe they are the most authentic form of practice as they refer to a hadith by Sahih al-Bukhari (8:76:437) where the Prophet characterize the first three generations as the best people. Salafists seeks to follow, imitate and emulate the practices of these first three pious generations as closely as possible. This means that salafists are dogmatic and literalist in relation to the Quran and sunnah (teachings, deeds and behaviour of the Prophet whom they view as the perfect Muslim) as they view it as complete and sufficient to guide the lives of all Muslims. As such, salafists reject any subsequent interpretation of the Quran (*bid'ah*) and modern Muslim views and practices.

Salafists focus on an indivisible God (*tawheed*) and total submission to God's rule and regulations through a return to a pure past. Salafists believe only God have sovereignty (*hakimiyya*) to legislate and that everyone is obliged to follow this to the letter. As all Muslims must submit to God's divine authority as the only source of proscribing laws and regulations, Salafists reject secular legislative authority and democracy. Salafism also serve as a defence against Western secular values.

Salafism is dogmatic and literalist. All forms of change, deviation or renewal are deemed sinful and a denial of truth that requires fighting polytheism (*shirk*) and *kuffar* (non-believers). Salafists make a binary distinction between believers and unbelievers and apply a strict moral framework that categorizes all behaviour as *haram* (forbidden) and *halal* (allowed) and which needs to be followed to the letter. Salafists strictly follow rules and monitor closely adherence to this moral code that regulate all behaviour and social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Any deviation requires corrective measures. As such, Salafists strive to imitate the Prophet in minute detail and "have a hadith for any occasion."²

Salafists are dogmatic and literalist when it comes to strict separation of women from men. It promotes wearing veil and niqab/burka to limit *fitna* (disorder) with regards to sexual temptation as well as limiting women's role and presence in public sphere.³ This gender segregation is central to Salafism. As argued by Susanne Olsson, "for Salafis living as minorities in Western

¹ Mashail Haydar Ali, "The Traditionalist *Salafis'* Perspective and Discourse on Militant *Jihad'*", *Humanities*, (2019): p.1.

² Joas Wagemakers, "Salafism or the Quest for Purity", *Oasis* (26/07/2018).
<https://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/what-is-salafism-quest-for-purity>

³ Uriya Shavit, "Raising Salafi Children in the West", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol.28, No.3 (2017): p.335.

countries, the question of gender equality seems to be an important aspect that leads to a clear differentiation between in-groups and out-groups, and as such an important strategy for identity formation and group consolidation."⁴ Salafists are also fearful that non-Islamic influences can adversely affect the faith of their children. As such, Salafis invest in Quranic schools on weekends and summer camps and send their children to Islamic kindergartens.

Salafists view themselves as embodying an enlightened, a kind of authenticity and exclusivity as the vanguard that propagates, protects and defends the straight path of the Prophet. Salafists portray themselves as *ghuraba* (strangers) as they are the only sect saved from hellfire out of seventy-three Muslim sects.⁵

Salafists are deeply connected with efforts to preserve purity and fight and cleanse Islam from religious innovations (*bid'ah*). Salafists focus on cleansing the religion from renewal or reinterpretation through education (*tarbiya*), cleansing (*tazkiyya*) and *da'wah* among other Muslims while they promote segregation vis-à-vis non-Muslims. Salafists are closely following the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and enmity) which means that Muslims must show loyalty to fellow believers and turn away from "unbelievers". Those that are not Salafists are regarded as non-religious and should be denounced or excommunicated (*takfir*). Those that do not live up to the standards and norms of Salafism are branded *kuffar*, *murtaddun*, *rafidi* or other dehumanising terms. The concept of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and enmity) shapes all aspects of Salafis' everyday life and social relations and allows Salafis "to frame political and religious threats to Islam and Muslims."⁶

For Salafis, the principle of separating 'good' from 'evil' through *hisbah* (commanding right and forbidding wrong) and *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and enmity) are crucial elements as to avoid non-Islamic corruptive influences. It is also considered a trial for Salafis "who must prove the purity of their *niat* (intentions) by avoiding corrupting forces – thus demonstrating their love and fear of Allah (*taqwa*)."⁷ Interaction with non-Salafis is allowed as long as it is necessary for *da'wah* (propagation) in order to convert them or correct their behaviour and as long as it does not corrupt the Salafi faith and principles.⁸

It is possible to differentiate between different Salafist orientations. Broadly speaking there are three main categories of Salafists according to Quintan Wiktorowicz's typology: purist Salafism, political/activist Salafism and militant Salafism.⁹ All these different orientations are part and parcel of the same Salafist ideological foundation. The belief system (*aqidah*) is the same across these different orientations but what differs is *manhaj* (the application of actions and methods).¹⁰

Purist Salafists are religiously inward-looking turning that focus on purification of the faith through cleansing and *daw'ah*. These purists strive for strict separation between Muslims and non-Muslims and separation of women and men in strict spheres. These purist Salafists are sometimes referred to as Madkhali-Salafis. Activist Salafists distance itself from democracy and actively seek out Muslims to divorce them from democratic processes and participate in demonstrations and activism. These Activist Salafists are also known as Harakis (activists).

⁴ Susanne Olsson, "True, Masculine Men Are Not Like Women!": Salafism between Extremism and Democracy, *Religions*, (11), (2020): p.1-16.

⁵ Joas Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁶ Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Mira Menzfeld and Yasmina Hedider, "Interpretations of al-wala' wa-l-bara' in Everyday Lives of Salafis in Germany", *Religions*, 10(2) (2019): p.124.

⁷ Chaplin, Chris. "Communal Salafi learning and Islamic selfhood: examining religious boundaries through ethnographic encounters in Indonesia." *Ethnography* (2018)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed.) *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Approach* (Indiana University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Mashail Haydar Ali, "The Traditionalist Salafis' Perspective and Discourse on Militant Jihad", *Humanities*, (2019): p.3.

The last category is militant Salafists or Salafi-Jihadists who are revolutionaries and who seeks an all-out war against non-Salafists, the West and other enemies of Islam. Salafi-Jihadists believe that there is an individual duty for every Muslim to fight unbeliever regimes and to expand *dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam). For them, Europe is considered to be *dar al-harb* (Abode of War). Salafi-Jihadists seek to wage perpetual armed jihad, which is considered individually obligatory, until Judgement Day. These Salafi-Jihadists have strong categorisation of enemies that are considered un-Islamic and must be fought alongside specific phraseology for these enemies that serve as dehumanising.

This categorization has been visualised by the EU Radicalisation Awareness Factbook on "Islamist Extremism – A Practical Introduction":¹¹



How do Salafists differ from other Sunni orientations?

Sunni Muslims are divided into four main *madhahib* (Islamic law schools): Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali and Shafi. These four legal schools have engaged in debates about interpretation for centuries and rely on religious scholars’ ability to study and interpret issues from the perspective of the methodology of that legal school. A fundamental aspect to traditional Sunni Islam in most legal schools is the importance of the chain of scholars that has been built upon over time that can be traced all the way back to the Prophet. In contrast, Salafists short circuit this process and go directly to the literal sources of the Prophet and the pious predecessors. Wagemakers have aptly described this difference in the following way using a metaphor from Michael Cook: “we can think

¹¹ Magnus Ranstorp on behalf of EU Radicalisation Awareness Network – Centre of Excellence, “Factbook on Islamist Extremism: A Practical Introduction” (2019) https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_factbook_islamist_extremism_december_2019_en.pdf

of religion as a river coming down from the mountain, taking with it all kind of dirt: traditionalist, that is Sunni scholars, accept everything the river is taking with it as building blocks; fundamentalists instead, go upstream, back to the sources of the river, towards clean water."¹²

Most academic scholars argue that the Salafists reject the four Sunni legal schools (*madhab*) but there are those that maintain that Salafists is an methodology and can emerge from within the Maliki, the Shafi, the Hanbali and the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.¹³ For example, some Salafists refer extensively to scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim.¹⁴ Others maintain that Salafists are only rooted in the close adherence to the Qur'an, Sunna and the Salaf. As explained by Mark Durie, "Salafism is not so much an organization, as a worldview and a way of deciding religious questions. Salafi Muslims may identify with one or another of the schools of Islamic law, but their preference is not to stray from the practices of the first generations."¹⁵ To follow a leader is considered *shirk* since the *madhahib* did not exist during the time of the predecessors to the Prophet.¹⁶

Identifying who is a Salafi is complex as the term could be claimed by "all Muslims, in that the universal Islamic ideal is to imitate the prophet and the early pious Muslim community (*al-salaf al-salih*)."¹⁷ According to Wagemakers, "it is the strictness and the methodology with which Salafis try to live up to the standard set by the *salaf* and their willingness to gear their teachings and beliefs towards that goal...that distinguishes them from other Sunni Muslims."¹⁸ Salafists closely adhere to rituals in everyday life and social relations that show others their level of piety.¹⁹ To perform rituals (*ibdadat*) exactly according to the text is central to Salafism.

Perhaps the most vivid illustration how Salafism differ from other forms of Sunni orientations is to compare it to *Ikhwan* (the Muslim Brotherhood) in the West. Whereas the *Ikhwan* seeks to face the challenges of modernity and exert public influence on society and politics to safeguard a Muslim identity and where women play an active and constructive role through studying and working, the Salafists isolate themselves from the rest of society motivated by a sense of external threat from secularism, especially exercising social control by regulating that women stay at home.²⁰ Salafists openly oppose secular democracy since God's authority is the only legitimate source of legislation.

For many Salafis, "Salafism represents 'simplicity, clarity, connectivity, and a chain of authenticity to early orthodoxy – that is to say, the Qur'an and Hadith."²¹ For many followers it provides a rigid moral framework which provides certainty and clear group identity and an orientation which is rigorous, evidence-based, pure and free of corruption.

¹² Ibid.: p.3.

¹³ Mohamed Ali, "Understanding Salafis, Salafism and Modern Salafism", *Islamiyyat* 41(1) (2019): pp.125-136.

¹⁴ Mohamed Bin Ali, "Modern Salafism: One Ideology, Many Movements", *Maydan* (March 9, 2018).

<https://themaydan.com/2018/03/modern-salafism-one-ideology-many-movements/>

¹⁵ Mark Durie, "Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood: What is the difference?", (June 6, 2013).

<https://www.meforum.org/3541/salafis-muslim-brotherhood/>

¹⁶ Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (Columbia University Press, 2016).

¹⁷ Mohamed Bin Ali, "Modern Salafism: One Ideology, Many Movements", *Maydan* (March 9, 2018).

<https://themaydan.com/2018/03/modern-salafism-one-ideology-many-movements/>

¹⁸ Ibid.: p.3.

¹⁹ Emin Poljarevic, "In Pursuit of Authenticity: Becoming a Salafi", *Comparative Islamic Studies*, Vol.8, No.1-2 (2012): p.152.

²⁰ Mark Durie, op.cit. (2013).

²¹ Hamid Sadek, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016): p.59

The Challenge of Salafism to Secular Democracies.

Efforts to understand Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism are increasing across several countries in the EU. There are some understandable and natural reasons for this elevated focus on Salafism. Firstly, according to the Global Terrorism Index 2019, the highest number, level and intensity of violent terrorist attacks worldwide is principally associated with a variety of Salafi-Jihadi groups.²² Secondly, most of the more than 5000 foreign terrorist fighters who left EU-states to join the Islamic State and al-Qaeda affiliated groups in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere adhere to Salafi-Jihadi ideology. Thirdly, Salafists are inherently hostile towards non-Salafists and non-Muslims who they consider to be *kuffar*. In particular, Salafists have a deep-seated hostility and even hatred towards Shia Muslims and Jews that have deep religious roots.²³

Several EU governments have focused on Salafism as a problem for the secular democratic order. The Dutch Counterterrorism Coordinator (NCTb – now NCTV) and the Dutch intelligence service AIVD have published extensive reports about salafism, radical da'wah and global jihad. For example, the report *Ideology and Strategy of Jihadism* provides an invaluable framework to understand Salafism and its constituent ideological components alongside what differentiates Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism.²⁴ Other reports confirm the difficulty in identifying exact boundaries between different forms of Salafism.²⁵ These reports also show that Salafi activities can contribute to rejecting democracy, actively promote intolerance, discrimination and hate messages against other minority groups (such as against Jews and Shia Muslims) and promote isolationistic tendencies including the creation of enclaves where non-Salafi behaviour are vigorously countered. A study on Salafism by the Dutch Ministry of Justice reveal that Salafists have a large presence on social media which contribute to an increase in recruitment of youth to the Salafi fold. They often speak in native language when other non-Salafi imams preach in Arabic which many youths do not fully comprehend.²⁶ Salafi organisations in the Netherlands focus particularly on youths, women and different ethnic groups.

German government agencies underscore that puritanical and political/activist Salafism may constitute a precursor state to Salafi-Jihadism. According to analysis of Salafi biographies of those radicalised into the ideology, most join puritan and political/activist forms of Salafism first rather than going directly to Salafi-Jihadism.²⁷ Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV) stress that there is a fluid scale between the different forms of Salafism and that it is possible to float between different orientations. BfV have also warned that Salafists have focused on refugees as a target for recruitment.²⁸

A report on Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism in Sweden, sponsored by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, highlighted the importance of understanding the Salafi milieu as an elaborate and dynamic ecosystem with different roles, leadership and functions locally. The strength of these ecosystems relies on charismatic leadership of specific imams, the surrounding levels of organisation and transnational linkages. The study also demonstrated that there exist transnational *daw'ah* organisations that more militant Salafi-Jihadi militants used to recruit individuals to more militant networks. For example, the now-banned German Salafi group *Die Wahre Religion*, which is a transnational Saudi-sponsored *daw'ah* organisation operated in Sweden by more extremist elements within Salafi community. It also revealed that Salafi groups

²² <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/11/GTI-2019web.pdf>

²³ Susanne Ohlsson, "Shia as Internal Others: A Salafi Rejection of the 'Rejecters', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol.28, No.4

²⁴ NCTb, *Ideology and Strategy of Jihadism* (December 2009).

²⁵ AIVD and NCTV, *Salafism in the Netherlands: Diversity and dynamics* (2015): p.6.

²⁶ C.S. van Nassau, "Salafistische moskeeorganisaties in Nederland: mark ten competitieve voordelen nader onderzocht" (Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, October 2017).

²⁷ Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Glaube oder Extremismus?* (2017).

²⁸ Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, "How can I identify extremists and members of foreign secret services within my environment? Important information for refugees in Germany (February 2018).

operate schools across different levels to influence youths, from kindergarten to gymnasium level alongside out-of-school activities such as Quran-schools on weekends and camp activities.²⁹

Contextualising Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism

This report seeks to provide greater insight and contextualization of Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism in terms of unpacking underlying ideological elements; understanding the Salafi mindset; and how Salafism manifests itself in Denmark. It concludes with a brief overview how Germany's Federal Office of the Constitution government view the development of Salafism/Salafi-Jihadism. The principle purpose is to provide this contextualisation of Salafism through nuanced, scholarly and evidence-based analysis which seeks to add and enrich the knowledge around a specific Sunni-orientation and the spectrum of different shades within the ideology. All too often Salafism becomes synonymous in the media and public discourse with violence, violent extremism and terrorism. There are many more manifestations of Salafism. This report seeks to provide the necessary context and nuance to better understand how we should view the entire spectrum of Salafism.

In the process of developing this report an international workshop was held in Copenhagen in November 2019 with the contributors to this report as well as presentations from the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) and the Danish Center for Terror Analysis (CTA). The international workshop was attended by practitioners, policymakers and leading academics from Denmark.

The report can be divided into several sections. Firstly, the report focuses on providing an overarching introduction to Salafism combined with reflections on the conceptualization and categorization of Salafism. What are the differences between purist Salafism, political/activist Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism? Is Quintan Wiktorowicz's differentiation between purist, political and jihadi Salafism sufficient or do we need new categories? And do emerging concepts such as "neo Salafism" and "alt Salafism" hold promise? Secondly, the report focuses on different perspectives on Salafi Mindset – how do they see the world, social and religious relations as well as violence. Specifically, what is going to happen with Salafi-Jihadism after the fall of ISIS and how does Salafism-Jihadism and ISIS manifest itself on social media? Thirdly, the report narrows the focus to Denmark, specifically focusing on Salafist environments and mosques in Denmark as well as the role of women in the Salafist-Jihadist milieu in Denmark. How has Salafism established itself in Denmark and what factors affect its growth and development? Finally, the report provides a *tour d'horizon* of the Salafist milieus in Germany and the different associated challenges.

Jakob Skovgaard Petersen examines Salafism through the prism of Egyptian mass media and as part and parcel of an intra-Muslim cultural war as it challenges the elite and their culture. The Salafi current was conflated with other Islamist orientations over time, but when this was not possible the Egyptian establishment began to demonize Salafism. Skovgaard Petersen traces the historical evolution of the Salafi phenomenon and the religious awakening within Egypt through their representation on TV, moving from ignoring Salafism in the 1980s to demonizing it in the 1990s and creating non-Salafi role-models as counterweights in the 2000s. This media culture war reverberates within the Arab world and by extension to Arabs in Europe.

Joas Wagemakers contextualizes Salafism by initially focusing on two divergent poles of generalization: Salafism as Sunnism and the equation of Salafism as radical Islamism. Instead he provides an in-depth exploration how Salafism has evolved in Islamic history and the development of Salafism as a trend, together with the basic building blocks of what constitutes Salafism. Wagemakers then dissects the various categorisations of Salafism, especially examining

²⁹ Magnus Ranstorp et.al. *Mellan salafism och salafistisk jihadism: Påverkan mot och utmaningar för det svenska samhället* (Försvarshögskolan, 2018).

Quintan Wiktorowicz's tripartite divisions into purists, politics and jihadists and specifically how other scholars relate to these categorisations.

Susanne Olsson presents current variations of Salafism and probes into various Salafi types as Salafism is a fragmented phenomenon. She addresses Salafi theological principles such as excommunication; to command right and forbid wrong; interpreting jihad; loyalty and disavowal. Olsson also focus the necessity for typologies, especially the way in which purists and politics interpret and reconcile ideological principles. She concludes with a discussion of the fragmentation of Salafism and how martyrdom is embraced and justified.

Nelly Lahoud argues that the label "Salafi-jihadism" is unhelpful, particularly when used as a marker that separates mainstream Sunnis from jihadis. Instead, the differences between Sunnis (jihadis and non-jihadis) are not over foundational religious beliefs (e.g., Qur'an, Hadith, law and theology), but are centered on the sources of legitimacy underpinning political processes and institutions, such as citizenship, elections, the global world order of nation-states and international law. Mainstream Sunnis accept the legitimacy of positive law as the source of the modern nation-state (or at least do not contest it), jihadis reject this legitimacy and seek to make God's Word Supreme on earth through jihad. Lahoud argues that the importance of religious beliefs should not drive policy discussions related to the religious differences between Sunnis and jihadis. Since they all believe in the same foundational religious beliefs, such a policy approach risks stipulating that every Sunni is, at least in potential, a jihadi. Every jihadi is a Sunni, but not vice versa. Accordingly, the mantra of "defeating the ideology" as a policy goal in response to terrorism is at best facile. Religion, however, is the sole source of legitimacy of the political platforms of all jihadi groups, thus understanding religious differences, such as those between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, is essential to assessing their respective worldviews, internal dynamics and their propensity to resort to more violence when they splinter.

Nico Prucha explores the dialectic or nexus between jihadist groups and Salafi actors through their propaganda and social media output. He shows the importance of the textual output and the 'ecosystem' of virtual propaganda that is continuously providing a massive library and ideological nourishment for an expanding jihadi archipelago. Understanding this textual and visual output in Arabic is crucial to understanding the underlying ideological currents within Salafi-Jihadism. Islamic State has developed a multiplatform online distribution system that is targeting specific audiences in a battle for their reality and religious identity.

Moving from the ideological dimensions of Salafism and how this is manifest in Denmark is the subject of the next section. Two important contributions are provided as a framework for understanding and contextualising the emergence of Salafism in a Danish context.

Lene Kühle examines the Salafist environments and mosques in Denmark. She surveys the existing scholarly literature available and the empirical studies about Salafism in Denmark and the various ideological orientation of mosques. Kühle argues that the mosque milieus have changed over time and that the more radical elements were purged or left for Syria in the 2013-15 period leaving a vacuum. It has also been affected by the influx of Syrian refugees and new generations of Muslims that have integrated into society. These processes have led to continuity and change for the Salafi mosques and milieus in Denmark.

Sara Jul Jacobsen provides a unique analytical picture how three Danish Salafi-Jihadi organisations call on women to take part in jihad, using sixteen official social media over a five-year period. It examines which positions are assigned to women, how they seek to motivate women to take part in jihad and, in particular, the female-specific jihad propaganda's potential to mobilise. Specifically, Jul Jacobsen examines three conceptual positions in jihad: mother, martyr wife and mujāhida (i.e. female fighter). The motivational narratives focus on authenticity as well as a strong self-identity and (em)power(ment). Emotions have a central role within the female-specific jihad propaganda. It more specifically argues that the Danish female-specific jihad

propaganda is not just a manifesto on jihad, but also handbook on emotions with guidelines for how to act when experiencing certain emotions.

Finally, the German *BfV – Verfassungsschutz* (German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) discuss different varieties of Salafism within Germany and outline the social problems caused by Salafism and the mobilisation efforts made by Salafi groups. From their perspective Salafism provides a challenge for the democratic order. The number of Salafist in Germany has doubled in five years, from 5,500 to more than 12,000 today. Over 1,000 German citizens and nationals have travelled to join ISIS or al-Qaeda-affiliated groups in Syria and Iraq. While Salafi-Jihadists represent a specific security threat it is important to recognise that there are broader challenges to democracies from different orientations within Salafism in relation to the democratic order and upholding individual civil liberties and human rights.

This report provides the necessary contextualisation of Salafism as an ideology which has become increasingly important for social cohesion and against polarisation within society. It is also essential to understand this ideology as it is practiced to safeguard democratic principles such as gender equality and minority rights. Ability to distinguish between Islam, Islamism and Jihadism and specifically different forms of Salafism will make intellectual debate about Islam's role within society clearer and more intelligent.

Salafism and Its Critics: A Note on the Role of Salafism in Arab Mass Media

By
Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen

The point of departure for this chapter is the observation that over the last decades Salafism has appeared and spread in Western Europe. It may therefore be useful to look at its appearance and development in other parts of the world, and not least the Arab World from where it stems. The aim of this chapter is not to trace its Arab roots, or developments. A number of studies have looked into these issues, in particular its role inside Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi promotion of Salafism in other countries and regions. Instead, it will look at the response to Salafism in a neighboring country and its media. Egypt is not only the biggest Arab country (in 2019 reaching 100 million inhabitants), it is also the historical center of Arab media – especially film and fiction - and an important breeding-ground for Salafism today. It is thus the site of media wars that reverberate all over the Arab World, and beyond, to Arabs in Europe.

The role of Salafism in the Egyptian media points to a dimension to it – perhaps transferable to a European setting – namely its character as a counter-culture, a cultural challenge to established elites and their culture. Rather than seeing Salafism as a social movement, a theology or an ideology (although it is also all of these things), this chapter thus considers it as an object of public concern and situates it in an intra-Muslim culture war. That may be relevant in the European case, as well, as European Muslims, too, have experienced Salafism as a cultural, and divisive, phenomenon.

As is often stated, in common Islamic terminology the *salaf* denotes the first generations of Muslims who consolidated the practice and faith of Islam in wake of the prophet Muhammad's death. Especially in the Sunni Muslim tradition, the *salaf* have always been considered ideal Muslims, and their opinions and practices were often referred to by Muslim scholars. However, in the late 19th and 20th century, they were suddenly referred to by advocates of comprehensive religious and social change. The *salaf* became the focal point of a modernist trend which sought to re-vitalize and reform Muslim faith and practice by breaking with established theological and juridical norms that had been enshrined in a number of stable schools, known as *madhahib* (singular *madhhab*). Each *madhhab* had taken great pride in the scrupulous transfer of its doctrine and methods from master (*shaykh*) to pupil (*talib*), thus ideally continuing the teachings of its founder who lived a few generations after the prophet. These teachings were now considered obsolete and an obstacle for modernization by the reformers who were faced with European expansion and superiority. In their eyes, Muslims had to act and to modernize, not just their society, but their education and culture, and, indeed, their religion.

To legitimize their endeavor the Muslim modernists had to demonstrate that their proposed reforms were not a break with Islam, but a return to its proper roots in the earliest Muslim community. In doing so, these modernist reformers drew on earlier reformers, some of whom could perhaps be characterized as puritans, who wanted to cleanse religious practices of later additions. These medieval Muslim puritans had belonged to a *madhhab*, but had also maintained that not all of its theology and jurisprudence stood up to scrutiny. They had thus argued that the practice of the *salaf*, as known mainly through the literature of *ahadith*, could be used as a corrective to the teachings of the *madhhab*.

This somewhat paradoxical confluence of the modernists' quest for advancement and a tradition of puritan fight against innovation was duly noted by early scholars in the field, for instance the

French Henri Laoust in a major 1939 work on the puritan 14th century theologian Ibn Taymiyya.³⁰ Still, it was not a cause for great concern, partly because for most of the 20th century the modernists seemed to have won the day, and partly perhaps because according to a dominant Weberian interpretation of history, the Protestant reformation had been instrumental in furthering the emergence of modernity even though it was characterized by a similar puritan tendency. In the 1980s, when I set out to study, in the books about contemporary Islam, the concept of *salafiyya* was solely used for this modernist trend. Salafis of the puritan type, whom we are addressing today, were known as Wahhabis or fundamentalists. As such, in a Sunni context they were rarely distinguished from Islamists who at the time were mainly known as the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood.

This has changed. Over the last 30 years, the Salafis have become very visible to Western scholarship as representatives of a current in its own right. Researchers have traced their modern history back to early modern figures in for instance Delhi and Yemen, as well as networks of scholars in late 19th century Arab cities such as Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus.³¹ There are several trends and interesting scholarly disagreements about points in this history, but that need not concern us here. More relevant might be the significance of the genealogies of major contemporary Salafi trends and protagonists. As noted by many scholars – see Waagemakers in this report – it is also clear that we need to make some further distinctions between types of Salafis, based on their stand on political engagement, on the acceptance of violence, and perhaps also differences over doctrine.

My point here will be that a similar discovery, engagement and perhaps bewilderment has characterized Arab efforts to come to grips with the phenomenal rise of contemporary puritan Salafism. Not least because this rise is very much indicative of a forceful counter-culture like, say, American Evangelicals. Like the Western scholars, Arab intellectuals and media tended to ignore the Salafis and conflate them with other religious trends. When at a certain point this was no longer possible, they proceeded to demonize them. Few members of the cultural elites made the effort to acquaint themselves with Salafi life and thought.

Arab television, religion and Salafism

This is clearly visible on TV – for some fifty years the most important medium in the Arab World. Since its beginnings in the 1950s, Arab television has been an important political and cultural tool of the state, and the regimes controlling it. In consequence, the TV production environment was the preserve of established cultural elites. In practically all Arab countries, for the first couple of decades, religious programming was marginal, limited to official Muslim scholars giving sermons on religious holidays.³² With the religious awakening of the 1970s, this began to change; programs were interrupted by the call to prayer, and new religious formats, e.g. programs on religion and science, were introduced. Still, this was merely the ministries of culture responding to a demand and trying to make the state appear more religiously involved. It was top-down, and official. Even through the 1980s, in the popular genre of drama serials (*musalsalat*) no one seemed to be wearing a headscarf, although most women in the streets had taken to wearing it. It was not only that the regime considered Islamists a major threat. As noted by Lila Abu Lughod, the producers of films and TV dramas were equally averse to religion, not only in its

³⁰ Laoust, Henri: *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-din Ahmad b. Taymiyya*. (Cairo, 1939): pp.557-575.

³¹ Weissmann, Yitzhak: "A Perverted Balance: Modern Salafism between Reform and Jihad". *Die Welt des Islams* 57 (2017), 33-66; El-Rouayheb, Khaled: "From Ibn Hajar al-Haythami (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Din al-Alusi (d.1899): Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya among non-Hanbali Sunni Scholars", in Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (eds.), *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*. (Oxford, 2010).

³² Hroub, Khaled: "Introduction". in *Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East*. Ed. Khaled Hroub. (London, Hurst, 2012): pp.1-12.

political and Islamist variety, but also to a general cultural conservatism, e.g. with regard to gender roles, that was often represented by al-Azhar and religious figures.³³

Islamists and Salafis were still ignored. But by the late 1990s, political varieties of Islam became the object of intense interest. The reason was the rise of satellite television, and the concomitant loss of state control of content. Now the viewers had a choice between a steadily rising number of TV-channels, and no state could monitor what its citizenry were watching. From stable and staid monopoly television, competition was growing fierce.³⁴ In this entirely disrupted mediascape, Islam appeared as a highly attractive subject, across the board from personal issues to public policy and international relations. Islamists and other oppositional figures who were banned from national channels could now appear in transnational networks. Moreover, Islam was relevant to Arabs from Morocco to Yemen – as well as to the European Arabs who could now re-connect to Arab media.³⁵ In 1998, the first channel solely dedicated to Islamic issues, *Iqraa*, appeared.³⁶

Now Islamists were no longer ignored, and they had their own outlets. Still, in the most important religious program, al-Jazeera's, *Sharia and Life*, Salafis were not part of the conversation, and when they phoned in, they were dismissed.³⁷ However, the Salafis were making inroads through the Saudi-based networks, partly in *Iqraa* which would host preachers of various tendencies, but even more in the quite conservative network *Al-Majd*.³⁸

The Muhammad caricature crisis in 2005-06 heralded a new phase in the history of Islamic television. Numerous initiatives were launched "in defense of the prophet", and many new religious TV-channels were established. Now the Salafis came to the fore with half a dozen channels of their own, such as the hugely popular Egyptian *al-Rahma* and *al-Nas*. This was television on the cheap: a shaykh talking, whilst a banner ran advertising underneath. Yet many viewers found it mesmerizing. They had seen the Salafis in the public domain, but according to the doctrine, the Salafis tended to keep to themselves. Finally, everybody could watch and hear the Salafi shaykhs. And true to form, the shaykhs were railing against many issues in contemporary Egypt. Soon, star preachers like Abu Ishaq al-Huwaini and Muhammad Hassan became famous, or perhaps notorious, all over the Arab World.

Salafis in TV fiction

By then, the Salafis had already entered the favored genre of fiction, the *musalsal*, a TV-drama of 30 episodes (produced for the month Ramadan). As mentioned, in the 1990s, the *musalsal* had taken up the theme of religion in various ways. The more religious persons were, however, still seen from afar and not the persons to identify with. By the 2000s, however, an famous actor who had turned very devout produced a few portraits of a modern religious personality, a well-known shaykh (played by himself). In these moderately successful dramas, there is always a friend or acquaintance of the hero who becomes a zealot; in the course of the drama he manages to condemn all sorts of normal behavior as *haram* and ends up in trouble because his principles and actions run counter to the needs and values of ordinary believers. As an example

³³ Abu Lughod, Lila: *Dramas of Nationhood*. (Cairo, AUC Press, 2005): pp.165-68.

³⁴ Sakr, Naomi: *Satellite Realms: Transnational Television, Globalization and the Middle East*. (London, 2001).

³⁵ Skovgaard-Petersen, Jakob: "Islamic Fundamentalism in Arab Television: Islamism and Salafism in Competition." In *Fundamentalism in the Modern World: Fundamentalism and Communication: Culture, Media and the Public Sphere*, ed. Ulrikka Martensson. London, vol.2 (I.B. Tauris, 2011): pp.270-72.

³⁶ Galal, Ehab: "Modern' Salafi Broadcasting: Iqraa Channel", in *Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East*. Ed. Khaled Hroub. (London, Hurst, 2012): pp.57-80.

³⁷ Skovgaard-Petersen, Jakob: "The Global Mufti." In Birgit Schaebler and Leif Stenberg (eds.), *Globalization and the Muslim World*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004): pp.153-65.

³⁸ Al-Najjar, Abir: "Pure Salafi Broadcasting: Al-Majd Channel." in *Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East*. Ed. Khaled Hroub. (London, Hurst, 2012): pp.35-56; Galal, Ehab: "Modern' Salafi Broadcasting: Iqraa Channel", in *Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East*. Ed. Khaled Hroub. (London, Hurst, 2012): pp.57-80.

of these dramas, *Imam al-Maraghi* (2006) about a well-known reformer and rector of the al-Azhar university in the interwar period, al-Maraghi has a fellow student friend, Abd al-Moneim, who becomes a Salafi. Abd al-Moneim is against the introduction in Egypt of electricity and cars. Further, he does not allow his father-in-law to see his wife unveiled, and when she suffers a disease during pregnancy, he insists on going to the doctor himself instead of her, so as not to expose her to the gaze of an unrelated man. When he realizes that she secretly went to a doctor herself, he divorces her. Equally abhorring to an Egyptian audience, Abd al-Moneim refuses to eat stuffed pigeons because he cannot be certain that the people who raised it lived among can be considered ritually pure. He fails in his jobs because he insults people, and he ends up as an unsuccessful missionary in India.

In the most famous of these dramas, *Imam al-du`a* ("First among Preachers", 2003) a portrait of Egypt's most famous religious figure of the 20th century, Shaykh al-Shaarawi, a similar figure, Shaykh Juda, is introduced. Here, the focus is on Shaykh Judas enmity towards Christians, in contrast to Shaykh al-Shaarawis much more tolerant attitude.

These *musalsalat*, then, identify with Islam as the true belief of Egyptians and Arabs. At the same time, they stress that Islam is moderate, considerate and ethical. And Salafism is the very opposite of these values. In particular, the puritans are depicted as out of tune with ordinary believers and pursuing their own goals of control and power under the guise of piety. They are a challenge that needs to be confronted. By the believers. The era of non-religious ethical ideals is gone.

One of the things repeatedly criticized by the Salafi shaykhs was music and the arts. The Salafi shaykhs didn't mince their words but spoke of art as sinful. The Salafi channels were thus not only challenging the existing channels and their producers; they were an attack and an affront to them. It is not surprising that the art and film industry in Egypt – the Hollywood of the Arab World – mobilized against them. They were no longer ignored. And demonization was no longer working. They – and their audiences – would have to be converted to more sensible versions of Islam.

This is what happens in the popular Ramadan series "The Preacher", released during the reign of Islamist president Muhammad Morsi in 2013.³⁹ A young and handsome Salafi-leaning TV-star, Yusuf, is railing against music, the mixing of genders and marriages based on romantic love. Only to end up falling in love with his neighbor, Nesma, a violinist in Cairo Symphony orchestra and a participant in the revolution on Tahrir Square. As the elder brother, Yusuf is also the breadwinner and family head (his father, we later learn, is a musician and an addict) but is hard pressed to understand the hearts and motives of his siblings, and his attempts at restoring discipline tend to fail. Salafism is rigid and impractical. When Nesma is molested by Salafi thugs, Yusuf realizes that the enemies of Muslims are often those who accrue to themselves the right to reprimand others in the name of Islam. Consequently, Yusuf launches a new Daawa program focused on self-reflection and humbleness. This softer version of Islam is, however, of little appeal to the owner of the TV station who replaces him, or to his erstwhile Salafi friends who kill him in the end.

This storyline is the storyline of Liberals criticizing Salafism, in particular during the revolutionary years when censorship was at its most lenient. The Salafis of "The Preacher" are not only rigid and bigoted, they are preparing for a violent take-over.

To sum up, television drama has moved from ignoring religion in the 1980s, and ignoring Salafis in the 1990s, to include them and denounce them as zealots in the 1990s, but in contrast to other versions of Islam which were now promoted. In the most important drama of the "opening years" of 2011-12, "The Preacher", a Salafi preacher moved from a rigid and puritan doctrine to a

³⁹ Armbrust, Walter: "The Preacher: A Backstage Islamic Media Drama." In *New Islamic Media*, Ed. Marc Lynch. POME studies 23, (2017): pp.42-47.

softer and more humanist version of Islam. Other Salafis are, however, not converted. And they are violent.

The return of the madhhab

The 2011 revolution in Egypt took the Salafis to the fore in Egypt. Having supported President Mubarak and been allowed to establish their TV-channels in return, they were now abandoning their political "quietism" – i.e. support of authoritarianism - and establishing their own political parties. In the new, open and uncensored political climate, they were attacked by most of the other political forces, but also continuing their attacks on everybody else. In the parliamentary elections of the winter 2011-12, several recently established Salafi parties made it to Parliament, and one of them, the Nour party, won almost one fourth of the votes. In the campaigns and in the Parliament, the Salafis introduced some highly controversial proposals, and received a lot of criticism and attention in return. But practically nothing came out of it, and after four months the lower house in Parliament was dissolved on court orders. When in April 2012 the electoral commission disqualified the popular Salafi candidate for the presidential elections that summer, Hazem Abu Ismail, the Salafi rise was abruptly coming to an end. In the ensuing year of the presidency of Muslim Brother Muhammad Morsi, the Salafis were often critical of their erstwhile allies, and the Nour party openly supported the military coup d'état of 2013, and election of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as president in Egypt in 2014.

In the era of al-Sisi, Egyptian media have focused their attacks on the Muslim Brotherhood. But criticism of religion, and religious leaders and representatives has emerged. Al-Sisi himself is careful to appear a devout Muslim (his wife also wears the headscarf), but in 2015 he confronted al-Azhar university and its scholars with a demand for "reforms" (*islah*) of Islam. Studiously avoiding a direct confrontation, al-Azhar has sought to reframe it as a quest for "renewal" (*tajdid*), more in conformity with classical Islamic teaching. Well-known critics of Salafism in Egyptian media, such as the partly European-trained Islam al-Buheiry, have redirected much of their criticism towards al-Azhar. But they remain critical of Salafism, as well.

Salafism in fiction in the Sisi era

How has Salafism been portrayed in the Sisi era? There are a couple of novel approaches, either in the form of presenting different Islamic ideals, or in a more daring approach to the Salafi threat.

In the 2017 feature film *Our Master*, a TV preacher, Hazem, does not change his own views or doctrine. Rather, he engages with a Salafi woman and converts her. Hazem is an Azhar trained scholar of Islam. He is also independent-minded. This, the film suggests, is due to his upbringing as the pupil of a very wise Sufi shaykh. For this capacity to think and act independently is exactly what you do not learn at al-Azhar. It is his common sense, Humanism and unorthodox reading of Islamic scripture that makes Hazem so beloved by television audiences. Although the film is not about Salafism, and state employed Azhari scholars are its main target, Salafis occasionally appear. They attack Sufis and Christians, and they are generally quite negative about any other interpretation of Islam but their own. Based on the book *Mawlana* by star journalist Ibrahim Eissa, *Our Master* goes to some length denouncing them not only for being violent and chauvinistic, but also for being against independent reasoning.⁴⁰ In a highly unusual feature for Arab fiction, Eissas lets his hero – a shaykh, to boot – have an extramarital affair (and even lets his wife have affairs, as well). Hazems affair is the the beautiful, but veiled Salafi Najwa, who has collected material about him on a Salafi website and openly attacks him for being a rationalist during one of his tv shows.⁴¹ She - and other Salafis – are no match for Hazem who is both

⁴⁰ Eissa, Ibrahim: *Mawlana*. (Doha, Dar Bloomsbury, 2012): p.376.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: pp.274-77.

eloquent and well-versed in Islamic scripture. The novelty of the treatment, then, is not in the understanding of Salafism, but in the counter-figure of Hazem, and in the “terms of engagement”.

Remarkably, *Our Master* has been countered by another work by almost the same title, “Our Lord”, *Sayyeduna*. This is a rare example of a novel written by a *shaykh*, a scholar of Islamic sciences, at the al-Azhar University. His stated aim is to defend al-Azhar and its scholars against prevailing accusations of being out of touch, such as those launched by *Our Master*, and indeed by President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi himself.

In the novel, *Our Lord*, seven new students at al-Azhar get assigned by the university administration to share a flat in the old district of Cairo. As it turns out, the seven students come from different towns in Egypt, and have seven different worldviews, or interpretations of Islam. One is a Sufi, one a Muslim Brother, one a Jihadist, one a Liberal, one a Secularist and one, Hudhayfa, is a Salafi from Alexandria. The seventh, Yunis, with the significant family name al-Azhary, is the hero. He comes from a family of scholars of Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh*, and thus has the knowledge, but especially the moral maturity, to discuss and settle issues. And discuss they do. The book is largely a summary of discussions between these seven young men. In each of these discussions, Yunis prevails. While no one is more self-conscious, censorious, or obnoxious than Hudhayfa, the Salafi.

While Yunus discusses the role of women with the Liberals, and politics with the jihadi, the subjects that seem to interest Hudhayfa are more specialized. He is particularly incensed that the others go to pray in al-Hussein, Cairo’s most famous mosque, because it contains the tomb of a human, the prophet Muhammad’s grandson, Hussein. And right at the outset, at the first common meal, he engages in a heated argument about whether it is acceptable to say “In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate”, or not. According to Hudhayfa, the right formula is simply “in the name of God”. The rest is superfluous and an “innovation” (*bid`a*) which must be avoided. Yunus patiently comments that this is one of the many mistakes of the well-known Salafi al-Albani. But this issue has been settled long ago by master scholars such as Imam al-Nawawi and Imam al-Ghazzali. In addition, it is important to stress that all acts are permissible, as long as they don’t contradict statements in the Quran, Hadith, or the consensus of the early scholars.

These scenes in the student flat are meant to sum up some of the characteristic arguments of these various ideological and theological trends and give the proper answer to them by the Azhari position. As we have seen, the Salafis, are known for their obsession with eradicating *bida`* (“innovations”), their wide definition of *shirk* (“polytheism”), their interest in *`aqida* (“dogma”) and their attention to ritual detail. As well as their delight in denouncing other Muslims’ practices to be wrong. In fact, Salafis are regularly in some sort of conflict with all these other groups, from Sufis, Muslim Brothers and Jihadists to Liberalists and Secularists. And to people like Yunis whom we may call a *madhhabi*, a “believer in the value of the *madhhab*”. Obviously, the sanctity of the Hussein mosque, and the full *bismillah* are good examples of what Egyptians hold dear; defending them is therefore a good example of the ways in which Salafis are depicted as deviant from Egyptian Islamic values and common sense.

Conclusions

Western scholarship has approached Salafism as an ideology, as a social movement, as a Saudi foreign policy tool, and as a broader political force, especially after 2011. In the Arab World, its impact has been growing since the 1970s, but often in the shadows of Brotherhood Islamism and Jihadism – and sometimes with the tacit support of regimes.

Next to the political elites, Arab states also have cultural elites, who sometimes look at the politicians with disdain. Devoted to art and culture, they often have an internationalist outlook,

and they have often been considered, especially in film and television production, as a kind of tool of national development. Islamists and Salafists, in turn, have generally looked askance at these cultural elites and the cultural products they produce, especially in Egypt.⁴²

When in the early 2000s Salafis came into the public eye, this was of course due to Arab media. First as an object, in debate programs, fiction and other formats. Then in their own channels, especially after 2006. The fact that everybody could tune in and watch the Salafi shaykhs had a huge impact. Many people were angry and afraid of the censorious and menacing tone, not least in the privileged and liberal production environment. They had grown used to Islamists, who were in these years trying to appear approachable and compromise-seeking. With their focus on *halal* and *haram*, purity and impurity, and correct and incorrect belief, the Salafis seemed to be an altogether different kettle of fish.

With the aim of countering the appeal of the Salafis, several strategies were adopted by producers of films and television drama. In the generally Secularist cultural production environment, there was a tendency to depict Salafis as being prone to violence, politically dangerous and overly religious. Their TV dramas had traditionally simply depicted Islamists and Salafis as representatives of religion, and zealots. Since the turn of the millennium, new strategies have been adopted, focusing on creating *religious* role models who can stand their ground against Salafi aggression and criticism. This is what the shaykhs of al-Azhar do in the portrait dramas from the early 2000s, and this is what Hazem excels in in *Our Lord*. Moreover, narratives have been introduced of conversion of Salafis to other more tolerant and overbearing forms of Islam.

By contrast, the criticism coming from inside al-Azhar and its (relatively few) supporters in the production environment considered them insufficiently learned in the religious sciences, zealous but vacuous, and in conflict with accepted ritual and belief in a devout Egypt, led by al-Azhar itself. The most basic thing that was wrong with even their leaders was the lack of a long period of *suhba*, that is, humble service to a shaykh who over the years build them up as conscientious, morally mature believers. To the Azhari establishment, the lack of a shaykh means the lack of a *madhhab*, a school of moral and juridical guidance which the shaykh represents and embodies. As you will recall, the Salafis and the modernist reformers shared a disdain for the *madhhab*, the traditional vehicle Islamic jurisprudence and theology. For many years al-Azhar was influenced by this, and Salafis form an important group inside the university. But over the last two decades al-Azhar and its leadership have embraced the *madhhab* again. To them, now, Salafism is no longer the ways of the *salaf*, it is *la-madhhabiyya*, ("no-*madhhab*"). This is the attitude in the novel *Our Lord*.

Salafism is a challenge, first of all to Muslims. They are responding to it. Often I see crude stereotypes – just like the Salafis themselves depict their enemies – but this is a new and moving front in the intra-muslim culture wars. And as such worth our attention. It is difficult to assess the impact of culture wars on peoples' outlook. In the case of Arab attitudes to Salafism these films and television dramas have not come in a void. The revolutions of 2011, sudden rise of Salafi political parties, the Nour party's support for al-Sisi's coup in 2013, and the emergence and fall of the Islamic State are probably much more decisive factors. But the revised strategy of countering Salafis by introducing a change of heart, or even conversion, in key characters, and the introduction of more well-defined counter models of Islamic belief seems to be a more sophisticated response than the traditional demonization. In this respect, perhaps Salafism has also been the catalyst of new Islamic types in the public *imaginaire*.

⁴² Skovgaard-Petersen, Jakob: "Media Controversies and the Cultural Policies of the Morsi Government." *Communication and the Public* 2, 2, 2017, 154-63.

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Salafism: Generalisation, Conceptualisation and Categorisation

by

Joas Wagemakers

Introduction

Over the past few decades, speakers of Western languages have adopted several Arabic words that many see as highly troubling. Examples of these include “fatwa” (often mistakenly interpreted as a death sentence after the Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989) called for British author Salman Rushdie’s death through one), “intifada” (after the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in 1987), “hijab” (often seen as a sign of the oppression of women) and, of course, “jihad”.⁴³ To this list of “problematic” terms, the relatively new word “Salafism” can be added. Like the others mentioned above, “Salafism” inspires awe among some, fear among many and confusion among most, including some academics.⁴⁴

This chapter seeks to shed light on the term “Salafism” by analysing how it is used, what it means and how it can be categorised. Based on secondary sources – including my own, reflecting well over a decade of research on Salafism – this chapter first deals with what I call the generalisation of the term “Salafism” in popular discourse, addressing some common misconceptions. It then goes on to deal with the conceptualisation of the word as a technical term by academics, who rely on the writings and practices of Salafis and those associated with the term throughout history. Finally, this chapter focusses on the categorisation of Salafis into different and fairly distinct ideological sub-trends.

The Generalisation of Salafism

As mentioned above, the word “Salafism” inspires awe, fear and confusion, suggesting that people have quite different views on what the term means. This is, indeed, the case among both Muslims and non-Muslims, in negative as well as positive ways. Although views among non-scholars vary wildly when it comes Salafism, two main trends can be distinguished. Both of these – seen from the point of view of Salafism as a technical, rather than a general, term (see below) – are based on a misconception that generalises about Salafism. The first of these is to view Salafism as nothing more or less than Sunnism, while the second is the tendency to associate or even equate Salafism with radical Islamism. Both trends will be discussed below.

Salafism as Sunnism

The term “Salafism” is derived from the word “*salaf*” (predecessors, forefathers), often also referred to as “*al-salaf al-salih*” (the pious predecessors). This means that “Salafi” is the Arabic word for “like the predecessors”. Sunnis in general greatly admire these predecessors as moral and religious examples, which is perhaps particularly true of the first four successors to the Prophet Muhammad (Abu Bakr, r. 632-634; ‘Umar b. al-Khattab, r. 634-644; ‘Uthman b. ‘Affan, r. 644-656; ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, r. 656-661), whom they often consider the “rightly guided caliphs”. This admiration may be rooted in the predecessors’ closeness to the Prophet or their work on

⁴³ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, citing Ari Goldman, notes that in the late 1990s, the Hebrew word best known among speakers of English was *shalom* (peace), while the best-known Arabic term was jihad. See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, “Islamists and the Peace Process,” in *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?*, ed. John L. Esposito (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 212.

⁴⁴ To illustrate: in 2009, some colleagues and I formed a panel on Salafism at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in Boston. The room was packed, indicating a clear interest in the topic, but afterwards several of the attendees – all scholars of Islamic and Middle East Studies – admitted that they still had a hard time grasping what Salafism was.

behalf of Islam, but it is also partly based on Muhammad's sayings that "the best of my community" (*khayr ummati*) or "the best people" (*khayr al-nas*) are "my generation (*qarni*), then the ones who follow them and then the ones who follow them".⁴⁵

This quotation suggests that the first three generations of Islam – the Prophet's and the two following that one – are the best. Although there is some debate on when a generation begins and ends⁴⁶, it seems clear that three generations are referred to here. Yet does that entail that being "like the predecessors" – literally: "*salaf*" – means that one is a Salafi? Some lay Sunnis clearly believe it does, defining Salafism in such a way that it applies to themselves. To them, "Salafi" is a label they are in awe of because it signifies piety, taking your faith seriously and loving the Prophet and his companions. Abdoe Khouliani, for example, a Dutch local politician for an Islamic political party from the Hague, refers to Salafism as "Islam as such".⁴⁷ He believes that "[Salafism] means nothing more or less than that a Muslim – a practicing Muslim – takes his religion entirely seriously and wants to live according to the example of [...] the generation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and those who came immediately after the Prophet (peace be upon him)".⁴⁸

Khouliani's choice of words ("live according to the example of") suggests a very *general* way of following the *salaf*. This can also be seen in the words of Ahmed Aboutaleb, a former Member of Parliament for the Dutch Labour Party and currently the mayor of Rotterdam, who stated in an interview that "*salaf* is 'predecessor' and a Salafi is someone who wants to resemble that predecessor. So a Muslim that we now call a Salafi is someone who would really like to resemble the Prophet Muhammad." When the interviewer asked Aboutaleb whether he would call himself a Salafi according to that definition, the mayor answered: "Yes. In fact, every Muslim is a bit of a Salafi."⁴⁹

This definition of Salafism given by lay Muslims such as Khouliani and Aboutaleb clearly generalises the term, thereby making it applicable to a far greater number of people than the ones academics call "Salafis". In fact, Muslims such as Khouliani and Aboutaleb essentially equate the term with Sunnism as a whole. This equation not only glosses over historical differences between the Sunni Muslims adhering to the *madhhab al-salaf* (the school of the predecessors) and those following a course that would become more mainstream, as we will see below, but it also leads to the conclusion among some that the term "Salafi" is more or less the equivalent of "pious" or "strictly religious". Following this line of thinking, one academic suggests that Egyptian President 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi – because of his devout upbringing, adherence to Islam and ties with Salafis – is a Salafi, too.⁵⁰

Salafism as Radical Islamism

Apart from the generalisation of Salafism as an awe-inspiring term equalling Sunnism, there is a second major trend of defining Salafism in a general way among the broader public, namely the

⁴⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, book 57 ("Kitab Fada'il Ashab al-Nabi"), chapter 1 ("Fada'il Ashab al-Nabi"), nos. 2-3; *Sahih Muslim*, book 44 ("Kitab Fada'il al-Sahaba"), chapter 52 ("Fadl al-Sahaba, thumma ladhina Yalunahum, thumma ladhina Yalunahum"), nos. 2533-6.

⁴⁶ Justyna Nedza, "'Salafismus' – Überlegungen zur Schärfung einer Analysekatgorie," in *Salafismus: Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam*, ed. Behnam T. Said and Hazim Fouad (Freiburg: Herder, 2014), 96-100.

⁴⁷ It should be mentioned that those labelled Salafis by academic scholars of Salafism sometimes also label themselves "true Muslims" or "followers of true Islam", but this is because they see Salafism as the true path, not because they equate Salafism with Sunni Islam as a whole.

⁴⁸ "Abdoe Khouliani en Badr Youyou @Dialogavond 'Eenheid overwint extremisme'," www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJeOj6gSA4Y (accessed 26 September 2019), January 27, 2016. The words quoted start at 0: 21.

⁴⁹ "Aboutaleb: Ik ben een salafist," www.nporadio1.nl/achtergrond/7347-aboutaleb-bij-didd (accessed 26 September 2019), December 25, 2017. The words quoted are in the first clip and start at 0: 08.

⁵⁰ Ramy Aziz, "Who is Sisi of Egypt? A Salafi," *Middle East Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2019).

one whose adherents seem to fear Salafism and claim that the term is more or less equal to "extremist" or "radical" forms of Islamism. This trend is widespread in the way I have heard people talk about Salafism over the years and sometimes leads to media publications that explicitly state that it leads to jihadism⁵¹ or that Salafism should be prohibited⁵². Although accounts by academics are usually much more nuanced, even some of them deal with the subject of Salafism in the context of "extremism".⁵³

Perhaps as a result of such publications, a number of politicians have argued along similar lines. Former Member of Parliament for the Dutch Labour Party and current mayor of the city of Arnhem, Ahmed Marcouch, for example, has referred to Salafism as "a breeding ground of jihadism and the ideological cradle of [the Islamic State (IS)]".⁵⁴ Similarly, former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls stated in 2016 that Salafism was "a danger to Muslims themselves and thus a danger to France as well" and that it had "destroyed and perverted part of the Muslim world".⁵⁵ Given that Valls was speaking after a terrorist attack that killed 80 people in the French city of Nice in 2016, the former prime minister was probably – though incorrectly, as most Salafis are peaceful – equating this violence with Salafism. Given such sentiments, it is not surprising to find that calls for banning Salafism were also heard in France⁵⁶, as they were in other countries.⁵⁷

Because of the confusion about Salafism among the broader public, with its sometimes generalised views of the term and its meaning, it is not unthinkable that this has also seeped into some academic research related to Salafism. This is perhaps particularly the case when "Salafism" – a religious term – is employed by scholars who do research on radicalisation or terrorism and who have not been trained in Islamic or Religious Studies. As such, it should not come as a surprise that several scholars, in a review of the literature on Salafism in the Netherlands over the past fifteen years, argue that the term confuses more than it clarifies.⁵⁸ Because of this, the authors – whose review is based on studies that were mostly not written by academics working in Islamic or Religious Studies – later even called for abandoning the term "Salafism" altogether and for using words like "puritan" or "conservative" instead.⁵⁹ A more

⁵¹ Afshin Ellian, "AIVD wil maar niet begrijpen dat salafisme leidt tot jihadisme," *Elsevier* (www.elsevierweekblad.nl/nederland/blog/2015/12/aivd-wil-maar-niet-begrijpen-dat-salafisme-leidt-tot-jihadisme-2727265W/), accessed 12 July 2016), December 2, 2015.

⁵² *Id.*, "Waarom we het salafisme juist wel moeten verbieden," *Elsevier* (www.elsevierweekblad.nl/nederland/blog/2015/12/waarom-we-het-salafisme-juist-wel-moeten-verbieden-2730667W/), 12 July 2015), December 9, 2015).

⁵³ See, for instance, Mohamed Bin Ali, *The Roots of Religious Extremism: Understanding the Salafi Doctrine of al-Wala' wa-l-Bara'* (London: Imperial College Press, 2016); Behnam Said, "Salafismus – ein deutscher Extremismus," *STAK Journal* 1 (2013): 19-32.

⁵⁴ Ahmed Marcouch and Fouad el Bouch, "Moet het salafisme verboden worden? Pro & contra," *De Volkskrant* (www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/moet-het-salafisme-verboden-worden~badd5e5c/), accessed 26 September 2019), December 18, 2015.

⁵⁵ AFP (Agence France-Presse), "Valls: aux musulmans français de mener 'partout' le combat contre le salafisme." *Le Point* (www.lepoint.fr/politique/valls-aux-musulmans-francais-de-mener-partout-le-combat-contre-le-salafisme-21-07-2016-2055835_20.php), accessed 26 September 2019), July 21, 2016.

⁵⁶ Ambre Lefevre, "Manuel Valls reçoit Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet pour débattre de l'interdiction du salafisme," *Non-Stop Politique* (www.non-stop-politique.fr/actu/deja-vu/manuel-valls-recoit-nathalie-kosciusko-morizet-pour-debattre-linterdiction-du-salafisme), accessed 26 September 2019), September 2, 2016.

⁵⁷ See, for example, "Kazakhstan Looks to Ban Salafi Branch of Islam," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-to-ban-salafi-islam/28053251.html), accessed 26 September 2019), October 14, 2016.

⁵⁸ Maurits Berger, Merel Kahmann, Siham El Baroudi and Ahmed Hamdi, *Salafisme in Nederland belicht: Vijftien jaar salafisme onderzoek in Nederland* (Utrecht: Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2018), 31-3. For a critical discussion of this report, see Martijn de Koning and Joas Wagemakers, "Salafisme in Nederland belicht: Een bespreking van een bespreking," *Closer* (<https://religionresearch.org/closer/2019/02/25/salafisme-in-nederland-belicht-een-bespreking/>), accessed 26 September 2019), February 25, 2019.

⁵⁹ Maurits Berger, Ahmed Hamdi and Merel Kahmann, "Stop met de exotische term 'salafisme'," *NRC/Handelsblad* (www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2019/02/12/stop-met-de-exotische-term-salafisme-a3653766), accessed 26 September 2019), February 12, 2019.

detailed look at the conceptualisation of the term "Salafism" will show that this is not necessary, however.

The Conceptualisation of Salafism

In contrast to the use of "Salafism" as a *general* term – whether of the "Salafism = Sunnism" kind or the equation of Salafism with radical Islamism – the usage of the word as a *technical* term by academics is more specific. Yet even academics sometimes have trouble defining Salafism. The introductions to three edited volumes on Salafism, for example, do not so much define the trend as they describe it. They point to Salafis' emphasis on *tawhid* (the unity of Islam), their rejection of *shirk* (polytheism) and *bida'* (religious innovations), their preference for *ijtihad* (independent interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunna) at the expense of *taqlid* (blind emulation of the schools of Islamic law (*madhahib*, sing. *madhhab*)) and their use of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal). While all of this is correct, it tells us more about what Salafism stands for than what Salafism is.⁶⁰

Several more recent books on Salafism in individual countries have a greater tendency towards actually defining the trend, although they, too, sometimes resort to mostly describing Salafism.⁶¹ Others, however, define Salafism more concretely, followed by a more detailed explanation of what this definition means.⁶² Two aspects – among others – that all of them have in common is that they are more precise than the generalised "Salafism = Sunnism" view and more nuanced than the equation of Salafism with radical Islamism. In this section, we will look at how (precursors to) Salafism developed into a trend we define with the technical term "Salafism" today and what that word means.

"Salafi" in Islamic History

The starting point of any attempt to define Salafism should be that it is an ideology. Although it takes various forms and, to a certain extent, adapts to the circumstances in which it exists, it cannot be equated with any particular practice, political viewpoint or ritual act because Salafism is too diverse for that, on the one hand, and, on the other, also too focussed on religious *ideas* to be pigeon-holed as such. As Thurston rightly points out, Salafism is, in essence, "a particular ideological construction of the *salaf*".⁶³ In order to find out what this ideological construction is, we need to look at how Muslims have traditionally used the word "*salaf*" and what being "like the predecessors" (i.e., "*salafi*") meant to them.⁶⁴

In a book published in 2016, Lauzière shows that the term "*salaf*" was sometimes referred to by mediaeval Muslim scholars in the aforementioned phrase *madhhab al-salaf*. References to this school or doctrine of the predecessors (or its derivative "*salafi*") did not occur, Lauzière states,

⁶⁰ Roel Meijer, "Introduction," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 1-32; Bernard Rougier, "Introduction," in *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?*, ed. Bernard Rougier (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), 1-21; Behnam T. Said and Hazim Fouad, "Einleitung," in *Salafismus: Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam*, ed. Behnam T. Said and Hazim Fouad (Freiburg: Herder, 2014), 23-51.

⁶¹ Richard Gauvain, *Salafi Ritual Purity: In the Presence of God* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 3-18.

⁶² See, for example, Laurent Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (London: Hurst & Co., 2011), 42-7; Zoltan Pall, *Salafism in Lebanon: Local and Transnational Movements* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1; Alexander Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 5-11; Joas Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 28-36.

⁶³ Thurston, *Salafism*, 6.

⁶⁴ In what follows, I will use "*salafi*" to refer to the mediaeval interpretation of the word, while "Salafi" refers to the modern trend of Salafism.

before the tenth century⁶⁵ and – until the twentieth century – always referred to a certain set of theological beliefs associated with Ibn Hanbal (780-855) and his followers.⁶⁶ While the details of this collection of ideas could differ somewhat from time to time, these followers of Hanbali theology had in common that they were fideists, rejecting rational explanations of scripture for fear of distorting them. This was particularly the case with regard to God's names and attributes (*al-asma' wa-l-sifat*), such as his eyes (Q. 54: 14) and his hand (Q. 38: 75), whose existence adherents to Hanbali (also referred to as *athari* (traditionist)) theology affirmed on account of the Qur'an's mention of them, but about whose exact features they refused to speculate.⁶⁷ It is this confirmation (*ithbat*) of God's attributes and the relegation to God (*tafwid*) of what exactly they represented – couched in a set of more generally fideist beliefs – that was the core of the *madhhab al-salaf*.⁶⁸

In mediaeval times, a *salafi* was thus someone who believed in the reality of God's attributes, but refrained from speculation as to what they looked like. This doctrine put *salafis* at odds with other Muslims, such as Mu'tazilis, who denied the literal existence of God's attributes as aspects separate from his essence and read them through metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wil*) instead⁶⁹, and Ash'aris, who agreed with Hanbali theology but did allow some speculation about the divine attributes.⁷⁰ Ash'arism (in combination with Maturidism) later became the dominant theological trend in the Sunni Muslim world and, as such, has clearly drifted in a different direction than *salafi* theology, indicating that *salafi* thought is not the same as "mainstream" Sunni thought.⁷¹

Salafis did have some fellow travellers, however. These included the Zahiris, a mostly scattered school of Islamic law that no longer exists, who advocated a strictly literal reading of the Qur'an and the Sunna. Although they formed a legal rather than a theological group, the Zahiris' literal reading of the sources led to a very textual approach that was sometimes similar to what *salafis* practised. With regard to God's attributes, however, the Zahiri approach often – though not always – led to anthropomorphism (*tashbih*).⁷² While this differed with *salafis'* more complicated approach to this subject, it was underpinned by a respect for and dedication to the texts that *salafis* did share. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the famous Zahiri scholar Ibn Hazm (994-1064) – who did not espouse anthropomorphic views⁷³ – is also cited by modern-day Salafis in their writings.

Another, more important trend that could be considered as abetting *salafis'* theological beliefs was the group of early-Islamic *ahl al-hadith* (people of tradition), whose cause was championed by Ibn Hanbal. Unlike their opponents – the *ahl al-ra'y* (the people of considered opinion) – the *ahl al-hadith* believed that the example of the Prophet should not be derived from the lived practices of the Muslim community in Medina, but from the textual traditions (*hadiths*) ascribed to Muhammad himself. Although a synthesis between the two approaches eventually led to the schools of Islamic law that form the legal underpinnings of what we now know as Sunnism, the presence of the *ahl al-hadith* showed that from early Islam onwards there was a tendency among

⁶⁵ Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 11, 29.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-9. These should not be confused with the legal views developed by the Hanbali school of law. The Hanbalis were unique among *madhahib* in the sense that they had both a set of theological views as well as their own legal school.

⁶⁷ Nader El-Bizri, "God: Essence and Attributes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 124-5.

⁶⁸ Lauzière, *Making*, 29-30.

⁶⁹ El Bizri, "God," 122-4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 128-31.

⁷¹ The term "Ash'arism" is derived from Abu I-Hasan al-Ash'ari (874-936), while the term "Maturidism" stems from Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (853-944).

⁷² Livnat Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam: The Challenge of Traditionalism (700-1350)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 267-9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 269.

some to rely on and directly resort to the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunna, which would later be labelled "ijtihad".⁷⁴

While the theological views of the *madhhab al-salaf* may have been held by only a minority of scholars, they did not die with Ibn Hanbal. Indeed, late-mediaeval scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292-1350) espoused similar theological views on *al-asma' wa-l-sifat*⁷⁵ and combined them with a willingness to base their interpretations directly on the Qur'an and the Sunna, rather than on the schools of Islamic law.⁷⁶ Moreover, these and other mediaeval adherents to the *madhhab al-salaf* – like Hanbali scholars before them – bolstered their theological views on God's attributes by fideism, which resulted in ideas that put them at odds with certain aspects of Sufism, although Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and others in their circle may well have been Sufis themselves. It is likely, however, that theirs was a form of Sufism that concurred with their theological views and was free of the more "extreme" beliefs and customs – such as that Sufi masters occupied a higher position in a spiritual hierarchy than others – associated with other adherents to this trend.⁷⁷

The Development of Salafism as a Trend

The views espoused by Ibn Taymiyya and some of his students thus encompassed not only the Hanbali (*salafi*) theological views on the names and attributes of God, but also included a positive view of *ijtihad* and a certain amount of scepticism towards some aspects of Sufism. From the eighteenth century onwards, several reformers or even reformist trends within Sunni Islam also espoused one, two or even all three of these elements. Although more research is needed on this subject, it appears that Salafism as we know it today is a continuation of the mediaeval, theological beliefs ascribed to the *salaf* (i.e., the "original" meaning of "*salafi*"), combined with a circumvention of the *madhhab* through *ijtihad* – which, as we saw above, also has a long yet somewhat separate pedigree – and scepticism of some forms of Sufism as well as some other elements. This development of Salafism into a trend happened with leaps and bounds, however, and took several centuries.

One reformist movement in the eighteenth century that made a strong effort to perpetuate Ibn Taymiyya's and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *salafi* beliefs was Wahhabism.⁷⁸ Named after Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), a religious scholar and reformer from al-'Uyayna in the Central-Arabian region of Najd⁷⁹, this movement started with Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's beliefs that Islam on the Arabian Peninsula had become corrupted and should be returned to strict monotheism. To Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, this implied not only the belief in the existence of one god (*tawhid al-rububiyya*; the unity of Lordship), but also that God must be the only deity that is worshipped and that other objects of veneration, such as saints and holy men, should be rejected entirely (*tawhid al-uluhiyya*; the unity of divinity).⁸⁰ More important for our purposes

⁷⁴ Wael B. Hallaq, *Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 55-9.

⁷⁵ Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 38.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 43-4.

⁷⁷ Ovamir Anjum, "Sufism without Mysticism? Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's Objectives in *Madarig al-Salikin*," *Oriente Moderno* 90, no. 1 (2010): 173-5; Arjan Post, "A Glimpse of Sufism from the Circle of Ibn Taymiyya," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5 (2016): 159-63.

⁷⁸ The term "Wahhabism" is controversial and is not used by adherents to this trend because they believe it suggests Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab came up with something new, rather than merely following the sources, and that they worship him, rather than God. Wahhabis therefore often refer to themselves as "Salafis". Given that Wahhabis sometimes differ slightly from Salafis in general, however, I believe the use of the term "Wahhabism" is justified in the meaning of the Najdi form of Salafism. See also Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

⁷⁹ For more on Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's early life, see Michael Crawford, *Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2014), 19-32.

⁸⁰ David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 12-18.

here, however, is that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab also clearly espoused the *salafi* ideas of his ideological predecessors, namely the fideist theological views on the unity of God's names and attributes (*tawhid al-asma' wa-l-sifat*), although this seems to have occupied a smaller place in his doctrine than *tawhid al-uluhiyya*.⁸¹ The belief in the affirmation of God's names and attributes as they are explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an and the refusal to speculate on them has nevertheless remained an important part of Wahhabism until today.⁸²

Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and his followers thus clearly perpetuated the theological position on God's names and attributes that defined *salafs* in the Middle Ages as such. Moreover, their views on popular forms of Islam, such as the veneration of saints, put them on a collision course with some aspects of Sufism. This means that two of the three elements distinguished above in Ibn Taymiyya's works could also be found among Wahhabis. The circumvention of the Islamic schools of law through *ijtihad*, however, was not one of them. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab paid relatively little attention to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in his work and he was, for all intents and purposes, a follower of the Hanbali *madhhab*, rather than a *mujtahid* who, through the use of *ijtihad*, interpreted the sources directly and independently of the schools of Islamic law.⁸³ In fact, this adherence to the Hanbali *madhhab* continued among Wahhabi scholars until well into the second half of the twentieth century and it was probably at least partly due to outside influence that this changed into a greater acceptance of *ijtihad*.⁸⁴

The fact that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab paid little attention to *ijtihad* does not mean that others neglected it as well. In Yemen, for example, scholars such as Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. al-Wazir (d. 1436), Muhammad b. Isma'il al-San'ani (1688-1768) and Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Shawkani (d. 1834) upheld the idea of rejecting *taqlid* and relying solely (or at least first and foremost) upon the Qur'an and the Sunna through *ijtihad*.⁸⁵ Similarly, on the Indian Subcontinent, Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762) believed that excessive adherence to the schools of Islamic law had caused Muslims to go astray, away from the Prophet Muhammad's original message. He was less adamantly against the *madhahib*, however, and also somewhat more tolerant with regard to doctrine and popular religious practices than Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab.⁸⁶ Shah Wali Allah and his followers' ideas nevertheless helped inspire the Ahl-e Hadith in the 1870s. This group shared the aforementioned *ahl al-hadith's* advocacy of relying directly on the Qur'an and the Sunna, but was doctrinally stricter and more closely related to Wahhabi scholars, some of whom even studied with like-minded scholars in India in the late nineteenth century⁸⁷, and continues to preach similar ideas in Pakistan today.⁸⁸

The theological ideas of the *madhhab al-salaf* were thus espoused by Wahhabis (combined with scepticism of Sufism, but generally not with a proclivity towards *ijtihad*, at least not at first) and sometimes by Yemeni and Indian advocates of the very anti-*madhhab* attitude that Wahhabis lacked. It was apparently rare, however, to find scholars who, like Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya before them, combined the three elements of *salafi* theology, a general rejection of the *madhahib* and scepticism towards aspects of Sufism in the eighteenth and nineteenth

⁸¹ Guido Steinberg, *Religion und Staat in Saudi-Arabien: Die wahhabitischen Gelehrten, 1902-1953* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2002), 92-7.

⁸² Mohammad Gharaibeh, "Zur Glaubenslehre des Salafismus," in *Salafismus: Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam*, ed. Behnam T. Said and Hazim Fouad (Freiburg, etc.: Herder, 2014), 106-31; Steinberg, *Religion*, 94.

⁸³ Haykel, "Nature," 42-3; Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his Impact on the Shaping of Contemporary Salafism," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 60-1.

⁸⁴ Lacroix, "Between," 66-7.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhari and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Hadith Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 314-15; Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkani* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89-10.

⁸⁶ Brown, *Canonization*, 318-21.

⁸⁷ Steinberg, *Religion*, 249.

⁸⁸ Mariam Abou Zahab, "Salafism in Pakistan: The Ahl-e Hadith Movement," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 126-42.

centuries. This changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, when a transnational group of modernist reformist scholars arose who did combine these different elements and whose views have also been referred to as "enlightened Salafism" (*al-salafiyya al-tanwiriyya*).⁸⁹

This group of modernist *salafis* has often been associated with the Iranian activist Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838/9-1897) and the Egyptian scholar Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905). As Lauzière has shown, however, these two men did not refer to themselves as "*salafis*", did not espouse the theological views associated with the term "*salafi*" in the Middle Ages and did not form an actual trend or movement called "Salafism".⁹⁰ This does not mean that these reformers had nothing in common – Griffel has shown, for example, that many of them shared a rejection of the *madhahib*⁹¹ – or that there were no modernist *salafis* at all. Men such as the Syrian scholar Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (1866-1914)⁹² and his Iraqi contemporary Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi (1856-1924)⁹³ did adhere to *salafi* theological views and combined this with a belief in *ijtihad* and scepticism towards certain aspects of Sufism (though not to Sufism as a whole).⁹⁴

Yet it is doubtful that even scholars like al-Qasimi and al-Alusi formed a *salafi* trend with clear doctrinal characteristics. Apart from this, however, there was also a major difference between these *salafis* and today's Salafis, namely that the former geared their *salafi* theology, *ijtihad* and criticism of Sufism towards the *modernisation* of Islam, which they believed had become backward and rigid, rather than the *purification* of the religion, which is what today's Salafis aim for. The "modernising" *salafis* are likely to have chosen *salafi* theology (as well as *ijtihad*) because they viewed it as an authoritative and authentic means to confront the challenges of their time, including elements of Sufism that they found backward.⁹⁵ Because of this important difference, "modernising" *salafis* do not seem to be a major source of reference for today's Salafis, although some of the latter continue to see them as inspirational, particularly because of their combination of *salafi* theological beliefs and political and social activism.⁹⁶

As such, through the influence of various sources, *salafi* theology was brought into the twentieth century and, importantly, seems to have been increasingly abetted by the tendency to advocate *ijtihad* and scepticism of some aspects of Sufism. Although different but overlapping trends of modernists, "modernising" *salafis* and "purifying" Salafis developed during the twentieth century, they had in common that they saw Western colonialism as the enemy and wanted to overthrow foreign rule. This shared interest, Lauzière shows, brought them together, blurring the differences between them. Once independence had been achieved, however, the fault lines

⁸⁹ Haykel, "Nature," 45.

⁹⁰ Henri Lauzière, "The Construction of *Salafiyya*: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 369-89; *ibid.*, *Making*, 4-44.

⁹¹ Frank Griffel, "What Do We Mean by 'Salafi'? Connecting Muhammad 'Abduh with Egypt's Nur Party in Islam's Contemporary Intellectual History," *Die Welt des Islams* 55, no. 2 (2015): 186-220. See also Lauzière's response and Griffel's response to that: Henri Lauzière, "What We Mean Versus What They Meant by 'Salafi': A Reply to Frank Griffel," *Die Welt des Islams*, 56, no. 1 (2016): 89-96; Frank Griffel, "Rejoinder: What is the Task of the Intellectual (Contemporary) Historian? A Response to Henri Lauzière's 'Reply,'" *Die Welt des Islams*, 56, no. 2 (2016): 249-55.

⁹² David Dean Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (Oxford, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1990), 66-82; Mun'im Sirry, "Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and the Salafi Approach to Sufism," *Die Welt des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011): 75-108; Itzhak Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the *Salafiyya* from the Damascene Angle," *Die Welt des Islams* 41, no. 2 (2001): 219-20.

⁹³ Hala Fattah, "'Wahhabi' Influences, Salafi Responses: Shaikh Mahmud Shukri and the Iraqi Salafi Movement, 1745-1930," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 138-46; Itzhak Weismann, "Genealogies of Fundamentalism: Salafi Discourse in Nineteenth-Century Baghdad," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 279.

⁹⁴ Lauzière, *Making*, 34-5, 48-9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44-9.

⁹⁶ Joas Wagemakers, "Salafism's Historical Continuity: The Reception of 'Modernist' Salafis by 'Purist' Salafis in Jordan," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 30, no. 2 (2019): 205-31.

between them became more apparent, causing them to drift apart and crystallise into distinct and fairly homogeneous trends of which the “purifying” Salafi one proved victorious and essentially remained as the only survivor.⁹⁷

The remaining trend of “purifying” Salafism not only grew in its number of adherents in the latter half of the twentieth century, partly because of Saudi Salafi missionary activities funded by oil money⁹⁸, but also became increasingly settled as a trend called “Salafism”. This trend encompassed not only the original core of *salafi* fideist theological views, but also a growing support for *ijtihad* and a rejection of at least some aspects of Sufism. These theological, legal and spiritual components were accompanied by a growing emphasis on the Salafi community and correct rituals. Such a focus on in-group communal solidarity (and staying away from outsiders) while focussing on the “purity” of one’s own actions through the concept of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’*, among others, has a long history among adherents to *salafi* theology that can be found in the work of Ibn Taymiyya⁹⁹ and has been strongly supported by Saudi Wahhabi (and other Salafi) scholars.¹⁰⁰ Yet this concentration on personal piety also reflected the diminished mandate that Wahhabi scholars in Saudi Arabia enjoyed, forcing them to stay away from politically sensitive topics and to focus on societal and personal issues.¹⁰¹ This has resulted in Salafi communities both in- and outside of Saudi Arabia for whom the strict adherence to religious rituals forms an important part of their daily lives as Salafis.¹⁰²

Together, these theological, legal, spiritual, communal and ritual dimensions form a trend for which we can use the *technical* – rather than the general – term “Salafism”, which can thus be defined as the trend within Sunnism whose adherents claim to emulate the first three generations of Islam as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible.¹⁰³ It is precisely the fact that Salafis see the *salaf* as a source of *emulation* (rather than merely *inspiration*) and their claim to adhere to their example so ubiquitously that sets them apart from mainstream Sunnis. At the same time, it is also this claim to complete emulation of the *salaf* – rather than merely in the field of theology, as was the case in the Middle Ages – that sets modern-day Salafis apart from mediaeval adherents to the *madhhab al-salaf*. One might therefore opt for the use of the term “neo-Salafism”, as some have done¹⁰⁴, to set modern-day Salafis apart from their more narrowly defined mediaeval forebears. While they are, indeed, different, it was not until our own time that one could actually speak of “Salafism” (i.e., as a trend), meaning that there never was a “Salafism” before, which – in turn – makes the word “neo” a bit superfluous in my view. This is less the case with other adjectives that can be added to the noun “Salafism” to indicate the divisions within the trend, which is what we will turn to now.

⁹⁷ Lauzière, *Making*, 163-230.

⁹⁸ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (translated by Anthony F. Roberts) (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2002), 69-80.

⁹⁹ Joas Wagemakers, “The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *Al-Wala’ wa-l-Bara’* in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,” in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 82-6.

¹⁰⁰ Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Mira Menzfeld and Yasmina Hedider, “Interpretations of *al-Wala’ wa-l-Bara’* in Everyday Lives of Salafis in Germany,” *Religions* 10 (2019); Uriya Shavit, “Can Muslims Befriend Non-Muslims? Debating *al-Wala’ wa-l-Bara’* (Loyalty and Disavowal) in Theory and Practice,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25, no. 1 (2014): 67-88; Joas Wagemakers, “The Enduring Legacy of the Second Saudi State: Quietist and Radical Wahhabi Contestation of *al-Wala’ wa-l-Bara’*,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 93-110; *id.*, “Framing the ‘Threat to Islam’: *Al-Wala’ wa-l-Bara’* in Salafi Discourse,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2008): 1-22;

¹⁰¹ Steinberg, *Religion*, 427-69.

¹⁰² Wagemakers, *Salafism*, 169-75.

¹⁰³ See, for example, *ibid.*, 28. See also Henry Lauzière, “L’histoire du salafisme: ses pièges et ses mythes,” *Moyen-Orient* 33 (2017): 21.

¹⁰⁴ See, for instance, Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 90.

The Categorisation of Salafism

Over the past decade, several scholars have attempted to categorise Salafis, who undoubtedly form a diverse and pluriform trend. What is striking about these different types of categorisation, four of which will be dealt with here, is that all of them – despite their different approaches – implicitly seem to discern what aspect of Salafism should be used to categorise the phenomenon as a whole, namely Salafis' attitude towards politics. In what follows, the categorisations used by Quintan Wiktorowicz, Thomas Hegghammer, Jarret Brachman and Zoltan Pall will be briefly summarised and analysed, followed by my own take on the matter.

Categorisation Based on What?

The first author discussed here is Quintan Wiktorowicz, an American political scientist whose 2006 article "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement"¹⁰⁵ has perhaps been the most influential publication in the debate on the categorisation of Salafism, both in academia and in policy circles. Wiktorowicz states that "Salafis are united by a common religious creed, which provides principles and a method for applying religious beliefs to contemporary issues and problems".¹⁰⁶ While Salafis supposedly share a common religious creed, they also differ on issues "as a result of the inherently subjective nature of applying religion to new issues and problems", Wiktorowicz writes, and, as such, "they often hold different interpretations about contemporary politics and conditions".¹⁰⁷

Wiktorowicz explains that Salafis' unity in creed but differences in "contextual readings" have resulted in three main branches within Salafism: purists, politicians and jihadis. All three "share a common creed but offer different explanations of the contemporary world and its concomitant problems and thus propose different solutions". If we take a closer look at what Wiktorowicz means by "contextual readings", it becomes clear that he mostly refers to politics and how Salafis should relate to that. "Purists" are defined by Wiktorowicz as the Salafis who "emphasize a focus on nonviolent methods of propagation, purification, and education. They view politics as a diversion that encourages deviancy."¹⁰⁸ The purification of Islam, as expressed through adhering to and teaching from the Qur'an and the Sunna as seen through the eyes of the early Muslims, should take precedence over politics. If this happens the other way round, "any political action will likely lead to corruption and injustice because society does not yet understand the tenets of faith". As such, purist Salafis focus on calling people to Islam (*da'wa*) and cleansing and teaching the religion to others.¹⁰⁹

Politicians, on the other hand, "emphasize application of a Salafi creed to the political arena, which they view as particularly important because it dramatically impacts social justice and the right of God alone to legislate."¹¹⁰ Influenced by scholars from the non-Salafi but strongly politically motivated Muslim Brotherhood such as the Egyptian Muhammad Qutb (1919-2014) and the Syrian Muhammad Surur (1938-2016)¹¹¹, this trend is closely linked by Wiktorowicz to a younger generation of activist scholars in Saudi Arabia. These emerged at Saudi universities in the 1980s and came to the fore after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, when the threat to Saudi Arabia caused that kingdom's regime to invite 500,000 American troops, to the dismay of many of the country's citizens. Convinced that they were much better equipped than purist Salafi scholars to

¹⁰⁵ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207-39.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

judge this development, politicians got involved in protesting the presence of the American soldiers and also developed a broader political discourse.¹¹²

Jihadis, finally, “take a more militant position and argue that the current context calls for violence and revolution”.¹¹³ Wiktorowicz also describes this faction as strongly linked to Saudi Arabia and as rooted in the politico faction of Salafism. It radicalised, however, through the events surrounding the Gulf War as well as its members’ experiences fighting the Soviets as foreign fighters during the war in Afghanistan (1979-1989). Armed with this military experience and strongly critical of regimes in the Muslim world and the religious (Salafi) scholars who support them, jihadis advocate the use of attacks against both rulers of Muslim regimes, which they want to overthrow, and Western targets.¹¹⁴

We could summarise Wiktorowicz’s approach to the categorisation of Salafis by stating that they share the same beliefs, but differ politically. As such, it is on the basis of their differences with regard to politics that Wiktorowicz categorises them: purists are a-political, politicians are political and jihadis are anti-political. An entirely different approach that nevertheless concurs with Wiktorowicz’s is taken by Thomas Hegghammer, a Norwegian scholar of jihadism. Given Hegghammer’s academic interest – violent Islamism rather than Salafism per se – he is less interested in how to categorise Salafism and focusses more on a policy-oriented approach of Islamist preferences with regard to types of violence such as “socio-revolutionary activism”, “global jihadism” and “vigilantism”).¹¹⁵ As such, he dismisses Salafism as a useful tool for his own categorisation, because he acknowledges – like Wiktorowicz – that Salafis vary wildly in their political ideas and, as such, in their view towards violence as a political tool.¹¹⁶ To use Hegghammer’s own words, Salafism is “a *theological*, not a political category. Used on its own, it says very little about the political preferences of the actors described as Salafis”.¹¹⁷

A third way of categorising Salafis is adopted by Jarret Brachman, an American scholar specialised in counterterrorism. Brachman is implicitly critical of Wiktorowicz’s approach by offering an alternative categorisation of Salafis that is “significantly more nuanced than the categories currently used by Western policy-makers, analysts, and law enforcement agencies to discuss Establishment Salafists, Global Jihadists and those in between”.¹¹⁸ The categories that Brachman himself mentions as being “in between” those two strands are “Madkhali (or Jami) Salafists”, “Albani Salafists”, “Scientific Salafists”, “Salafist Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)”, “Sururis” and “Qutubis”.¹¹⁹ As such, he mixes methods (“Establishment”, “Scientific”, “Global Jihadist”) with labels derived from specific people: the label “Madkhali (or Jami) Salafists” is named after the Saudi Salafi scholar Rabi’ b. Hadi al-Madkhali (b. 1931) and the Ethiopian Salafi scholar Muhammad b. Aman Jami (d. 1996), “Albani Salafists” is derived from Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914-1999), a Syrian Salafi scholar, while “Sururis” and “Qutubis” are based on the aforementioned Muhammad Surur and Muhammad Qutb’s more famous brother Sayyid (1906-1966).

Given this mix of different labels Brachman applies, it is not clear what aspect (or aspects) he has used to come to these categories. It is also not entirely clear from Brachman’s own description how some of the categories he distinguishes differ from each other. “Madkhali (or Jami) Salafists”

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 222-5.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 225-8.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism,” in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 257-64.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 249-51.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹¹⁸ Jarret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 26. Brachman adopts his own categorisation from Tariq ‘Abd al-Halim, a Canadian Muslim scholar.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

appear to be slightly more fanatical in their pro-regime views than “Establishment Salafists” and “Albani Salafists”. The latter two also seems more or less the same.¹²⁰ This also applies to “Scientific Salafists”¹²¹, “Salafist Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)”, “Sururis” and “Qutubis”, who all appear to favour involvement in *politics*, but differ slightly in *doctrine*, which is a different aspect on the basis of which one can categorise Salafis.¹²²

A final way of categorising Salafis dealt with here is the one proposed by Zoltan Pall, a Hungarian scholar of Salafism. Firstly, he divides Salafis into two groups based on their political attitude towards the ruler: subservient purists and politically engaged *harakis* (activists).¹²³ He then subdivides the former on the basis of their political preferences: “purist-rejectionists”, who stay away from politics entirely, and purists-politically oriented, who do engage in politics, but merely because they see it as a platform for missionary activities, not as oppositional activists; *harakis*, for their part, engage in peaceful political activism.¹²⁴ Whereas Pall used to describe jihadis as a sub-set of *harakis*¹²⁵, he later – rightly – labelled them a different, third branch within Salafism altogether, namely one whose adherents “believe that removing secular regimes and imposing Islamic legislation could happen only through armed jihad”.¹²⁶

Wiktorowicz with a Twist

The complexity of the categorisation of Salafis – although the above is actually somewhat of a simplification of this discussion¹²⁷ – probably partly explains why there is so much confusion about the term “Salafism”. Yet what do we make of these different protagonists in this ongoing debate? What does each of these authors contribute and/or where do they go wrong? Starting with Wiktorowicz, one can criticise him for rather sloppily using the word “method” (*manhaj*)¹²⁸ and applying it only to politics, for his rather Saudi-centred analysis and for his incorrect assertion that Salafis agree on a common creed, as I have done elsewhere.¹²⁹ One of the things that Wiktorowicz fundamentally gets right, however, is that Salafism as a whole is divided along political lines (or, to put it differently, the political aspect of their *manhaj*), to which we will return later.

Wiktorowicz’s division of Salafis on the basis of their view towards politics is implicitly supported by Hegghammer’s chapter on this issue, which dismisses using Salafism as a way to categorise Islamists’ political preferences precisely because Salafis are so divided politically. Pall essentially agrees with this, using Salafis’ political attitude towards the rulers and their subsequent political

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26-34.

¹²¹ The label “Scientific Salafists” is rather a misnomer. Not only do they have little to do with science in the way it is understood in English, but the Arabic phrase this is probably a translation of – *al-Salafiyya al-‘ilmiyya* – should be translated as “knowledge Salafism”, a name more appropriately applied to a-political Salafis because of their focus on the acquiring, cleansing and teaching of religious knowledge outside of the realm of politics.

¹²² Brachman, *Global*, 34-9.

¹²³ Pall originally referred to this division as “theological in nature” (Zoltan Pall, *Lebanese Salafis Between the Gulf and Europe: Development, Fractionalization and Transnational Networks of Salafism in Lebanon* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 25-6), but took this out in a later publication: *id.*, *Salafism in Lebanon: Local and Transnational Movements* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 20. For a discussion on why this is not a theological issue, why theology is still relevant here and why it should nevertheless be left out here, see Joas Wagemakers, “Revisiting Wiktorowicz: Categorising and Defining the Branches of Salafism,” in *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People’s Power*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (London: Hurst & Co., 2016), 13.

¹²⁴ Pall, *Lebanese*, 25-8; *id.*, *Salafism*, 19-22.

¹²⁵ *Id.*, *Lebanese*, 26-8.

¹²⁶ *Id.*, *Salafism*, 21.

¹²⁷ For a more detailed treatment of this discussion, Wagemakers, “Revisiting,” 7-24, 241-8.

¹²⁸ The word “*manhaj*” refers to how Salafis apply a whole range of beliefs, varying from the way they read scripture to how they deal with politics. The latter is certainly part of Salafis’ *manhaj*, but cannot be equated with it. See Salih b. Fawzan al-Fawzan, *Why Manhaj (Methodology)?* (<http://turntoislam.com/community/threads/why-manhaj-methodology-by-shaykh-saalih-bin-fawzaan-al-fawzaan.25431/>, accessed 28 October 2019), 2008.

¹²⁹ Wagemakers, “Revisiting,” 10-12.

preferences as a yardstick for his own categorisation. Even Brachman, whose long list of different types of Salafis seems completely detached from other categorisations, essentially concurs with Wiktorowicz and others on taking Salafis' views on politics as the basis of how they should be categorised, as we will see below.

As was dealt with in the second section of this paper, the word "*salaff*" denoted a certain fideist theological approach to Scripture, particularly with regard to the issue of God's names and attributes. Although Salafis differ from each other with regard to certain theological issues, the most important of which is perhaps the issue of faith (*iman*) and unbelief (*kufi*)¹³⁰, they all share this aspect of theology. They are less united on the use of *ijtihad* with regard to legal issues, but they do generally seem to share the attitude that following the *madhahib* is less than ideal, tainted as they are considered to be by non-scriptural influences. The same applies to spirituality, on whose exact details they may disagree but on which they broadly concur that "extreme" aspects of Sufism should be rejected. This also holds true for their sense of community and rituals. While disagreements on how communal solidarity should be interpreted and expressed certainly exist and differences in everyday practices vary from Salafi to Salafi, there is a general adherence to concepts such as *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*, which has both communal and ritual aspects.

Conspicuously absent from this list of defining Salafism is politics. This is not only because Salafis lack a unified religious vocabulary for political activism, but also because actual political participation as we know it today did not really start among Salafis until fairly recently. As a result, politics is not a source of unity among Salafis, but a source of division.¹³¹ This makes Salafis' views towards politics an excellent tool to categorise them, which brings us to another thing that Wiktorowicz got right: his division of Salafis into a-political, political and anti-political actors. If we take attitudes towards politics as our yardstick, there really are only three different positions we can distinguish, namely a-political (not getting involved in political activism), political (getting involved in political activism) and anti-political (deeming politics as usual useless and advocating an overthrow of the entire political system instead). All attitudes towards politics – including those distinguished by Brachman, as we will see below – are essentially varieties or more specific versions in the framework of these three positions. This means that, despite the flaws in Wiktorowicz's categorisation, his basic framework of dividing Salafis into three different groups on the basis of their attitude towards politics was a sound one.

If we take Salafis' positions on politics as the basis of our categorisation of them, we should also, however, have a matching vocabulary. While Wiktorowicz's terms "politico" and "jihadi" are clear indications of their political and anti-political attitudes, respectively, "purist" does not say anything about Salafis' views on politics. Not only are all Salafis likely to view themselves as "purists", but the fact that their "main concern [...] is purifying the minute details of belief and religious practice of Muslims", as Pall rightly notes¹³², does not in and of itself justify calling them "purists" if their distinguishing factor is their being a-political. As I have suggested elsewhere, the term "quietists" (as in "politically quietist") is a much better fit for this purpose.¹³³

This leaves us with a framework of quietists, politicos and jihadis. As Brachman points out, however, the diversity among Salafis is greater than these three sub-trends suggest. Given the fact that a) we have taken politics as the basis for our categorisation of Salafis and b) there are basically only three broad positions one can have towards politics, the smaller branches of Salafism that Brachman mentions should be divided over these three sub-branches. As I have pointed out in greater detail elsewhere¹³⁴, this results in a group of quietist Salafis that can be sub-divided into three smaller groups: loyalists, aloofists and propagandists.

¹³⁰ See, for example, Wagemakers, "Transformation," 97-101.

¹³¹ Roel Meijer, "Salafism and the Challenge of Modern Politics," *Orient* 57, no. 2 (2016): 16-23.

¹³² Pall, *Salafism*, 20.

¹³³ See, for example, Wagemakers, "Revisiting," 11.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-17.

The first sub-group of these quietists, loyalists, are those who refrain from political activism – hence my calling them “quietists” – but they are also loyal to the regimes under which they live and, in the case of Muslim countries, sometimes advise the rulers and can be called upon to support them. These are the people Brachman refers to as “Establishment Salafists” and are mostly associated with the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia, probably because their role as loyalists is most explicit there.¹³⁵ Such Salafis would be rather broadly labelled “purists” by Wiktorowicz and “purists-rejectionists” by Pall, but – unlike Brachman – they do not acknowledge the diversity among quietist Salafis.

A second sub-branch of quietist Salafism consists of aloofist quietists: Salafis who – like loyalists – do not engage in political activism, but – unlike loyalists – stay entirely aloof from politics and do not endorse or justify the policies of any ruler. These quietists are often associated with the aforementioned Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, whose distance from political rulers kept him and his followers independent while he was still alive.¹³⁶ It is likely for this reason that Brachman distinguishes “Albani Salafists” from others, even if only implicitly. For the same reason, Brachman seems to mention “Madkhali (or Jami) Salafists” as a separate category. These Salafis, which I label “propagandists” because of their staunch defence of the (especially Saudi) political authorities in a way that goes beyond loyalty, are the third category of quietists.¹³⁷

Wiktorowicz’s *politicos* (Pall’s “*harakis*”), like the former’s “purists”, can also be sub-divided into two groups.¹³⁸ The first are what one might term “the politicians”: those Salafis who actively engage in elections, political debates and parliamentary politics, representing their constituents on issues ranging from trade to taxes. Examples of these include various Salafi political parties in Kuwait¹³⁹ (where they have often been inspired by the Egyptian and (in Brachman’s words) “Scientific Salafist”¹⁴⁰ scholar Abu ‘Abdallah ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Abd al-Khaliq)¹⁴¹, Lebanon¹⁴² and Egypt¹⁴³, although it must be said that some of these are active in politics not to achieve political results, but to use parliament as a platform for *da’wa*. One could therefore argue that they are really quietists in a political guise or, as Pall calls them, “purist-politically oriented”.

The second group of political Salafis consists of activists: those *politicos* who do not engage in parliamentary politics – either because they cannot or will not do so – but who are active in demonstrations, engage in political discourse or are involved in societal activism. This group is often associated in the literature with the so-called *Sahwa* (*renaissance*) shaykhs from Saudi Arabia who got involved in political activism in that country in the 1990s, like Salman al-‘Awda and Safar al-Hawali¹⁴⁴, but similar activities can also be found in Jordan, for example.¹⁴⁵ This

¹³⁵ For more on the religious Salafi (or Wahhabi) establishment in Saudi Arabia, see Muhammad Al Atawneh, *Wahhabi Islam Facing the Challenges of Modernity: Dar al-Ifta in the Modern Saudi State* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Nabile Mouline, *Les clercs de l’islam: Autorité religieuse et pouvoir politique en Arabie Saoudite, XVIIIe – XXIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011).

¹³⁶ Wagemakers, *Salafism*, 82-91.

¹³⁷ For more on al-Madkhali and his views, see Roel Meijer, “Politicising *al-Jarh wa-l-Ta’dil*: Rabi’ b. Hadi al-Madkhali and the Transnational Battle for Religious Authority,” in *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam: Essays in Honour of Harald Motzki*, ed. Nicolet Boekhoef-van der Voort, Kees Versteegh and Joas Wagemakers (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 375-99.

¹³⁸ Wagemakers, “Revisiting,” 17-18.

¹³⁹ Carine Lahoud-Tatar, *Islam et politique au Koweït* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011), 200-12.

¹⁴⁰ Brachman, *Global*, 34.

¹⁴¹ Pall, *Lebanese*, 90-3.

¹⁴² *Id.*, *Salafism*, 97-112.

¹⁴³ Jacob Hoigilt and Frieda Nome, “Egyptian Salafism in Revolution,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (2014): 33-54; Stéphane Lacroix, *Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism* (Doha: Brookings Doha Center Policy Briefing, 2012).

¹⁴⁴ Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: Palgrave, 1999); Stéphane Lacroix, *Les islamistes Saoudien: Une insurrection manquée* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 2010); Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Opposition* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

latter sub-group encompasses the people Brachman labels "Salafist Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)", "Sururis" and "Qutubis".

The jihadis¹⁴⁶, finally, can be divided into revolutionaries, who advocate jihad to overthrow the "apostate" rulers of Muslim countries, such as the prominent Palestinian-Jordanian scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (b. 1959)¹⁴⁷; global jihadis (the term used by Brachman), who are exemplified by groups such as al-Qa'ida and who seek to attack Western targets for various reasons, including to cause Western countries to withdraw their support for Muslim regimes¹⁴⁸; and caliphate jihadis, who actively and concretely work to re-establish a caliphate instead of the states in the Muslim world. The latter are embodied by the Islamic State (IS). It is with regard to these sub-types of Jihadi-Salafis that several of Hegghammer's categories, such as "socio-revolutionary activism" and "global jihadism", become relevant.¹⁴⁹

It almost goes without saying that even in this "Wiktorowicz with a twist" categorisation of Salafis, the individual categories are ideal-types that do not always correspond exactly with reality and allow movement from one (sub-)category to another. It is also clear that this is a categorisation on a macro level of Salafism as an ideology, meaning that studies on a micro level – for example on Salafism in a specific country or even a city – may well be far more detailed and take small networks or individual sheikhs as the aspect on the basis of which to categorise Salafis.¹⁵⁰ All of this can be incorporated into the categorisation given above, however. Moreover, my analysis takes the criticism levelled at Wiktorowicz's categorisation into account, makes it more consistent on the basis of Salafi views on politics as a yardstick, adds more nuance and incorporates the sensible additions suggested by other scholars. As such, it provides a useful and realistic framework for the categorisation of Salafism as a whole for both academics and policy makers.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that "Salafism" remains a difficult and complicated term to many and that even academic scholars do not entirely agree on how to categorise its different branches. While non-academics and lay Muslims sometimes define the trend in a general way, equating it either with Sunnism as a whole or radical Islamism, academic research on "*salafi*" as a technical term has shown that it originally referred to a limited set of fideist theological beliefs, particularly with regard to God's names and attributes. Some adherents to these beliefs abetted their views on this issue with a rejection of the schools of Islamic law and scepticism of certain aspects of Islamic spirituality as expressed in Sufism. This combination of theological, legal and spiritual views was espoused by important *salafi* scholars such as the late mediaeval Ibn Taymiyya and was partly perpetuated by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century movements such as Wahhabism and the Ahl-e Hadith and early twentieth-century "modernising" *salafis* like Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi. Somewhere along the line, ideas on communal identity and rituals were also added to this mix.

This combination of theological, legal, spiritual, communal and ritual beliefs came to shape Salafism as we know it today, which can be defined as the trend among Sunnis whose adherents claim to emulate the first three generations of Muslims as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible. From the work of various scholars dealt with in this paper, it became clear that

¹⁴⁵ Joas Wagemakers, "The Dual Effect of the Arab Spring on Salafi Integration: Political Salafism in Jordan," in *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (London: Hurst & Co., 2016), 119-35, 274-8; *id.*, *Salafism*, 201-26.

¹⁴⁶ *Id.*, "Revisiting," 18-19.

¹⁴⁷ *Id.*, *Quietist*, 59-71.

¹⁴⁸ Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁹ Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis," 258-9.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Wagemakers, *Salafism*, 118-43.

Salafis are most divided on their views with regard to politics, which yields the following categorisation of Salafism as a whole:

- Quietists* (Wiktorowicz's and Pall's "purists")
- loyalists (Brachman's "Establishment Salafists");
 - aloofists (Brachman's "Albani Salafists");
 - propagandists (Brachman's "Madkhali (and Jami) Salafists"; Pall's "purists-rejectionists").
- Politicos* (Wiktorowicz's "politicos"; Brachman's "Salafist Ikhwan", "Scientific Salafists", "Sururis" and "Qutubis"; Pall's *harakís*)
- politicians;
 - in politics for political reasons;
 - in politics for missionary reasons (Pall's "purist-politically oriented");
 - activists.
- Jihadis* (Wiktorowicz's "jihadis"; Pall's "jihadis")
- revolutionary jihadis (Hegghammer's "socio-revolutionary activists");
 - global jihadis (Brachman's "Global Jihadists"; Hegghammer's "global jihadists");
 - caliphate jihadis.

This way, existing categorisations of Salafism are incorporated into one general framework that encompasses Salafi ideology as a whole and in which micro analyses of local forms of Salafism can easily be integrated.

Different Types of Salafism: On Creed and Deed

by
Susanne Olsson

This chapter will present current variations of Salafism and will probe into various Salafi types. An awareness of the fact that Salafism is an umbrella designation is necessary in order to avoid generalizations. A typology of Salafism it is also heuristically useful when attempting to analyze what kind of consequences the various types may have in society (locally and globally), including on an individual level for adherents to the various Salafi types. Even though Salafi-oriented interpretations and practices are on the interpretative fringe of Islam, they do have an impact on many levels in society and deserves the attention of closer scrutiny. It would be a mistake to consider Salafism a homogeneous phenomenon. Salafism is fragmented and adherents to the various types are not in agreement, which becomes apparent when analyzed somewhat closer. However, there are some common aspects that make scholars analytically define certain ideas and movements as Salafi. These common aspects are briefly introduced below and then the chapter proceed into scrutinizing some of the main differences, mainly related to views on violence.

Oftentimes, Salafi ideology is described as having a puritan and rather passive orientation and it is described as apolitical. Salafi groups in Europe are often described as mainly concerned with identity issues and strivings to create "moral communities" based on Salafi discourse on creed and action.¹⁵¹ Salafism is also sometimes mainly used to designate forms of Islam that promote and practice violent jihad and terrorism. Both descriptions are correct in some sense, but it would be an oversimplification to stress merely one of these as the main Salafi method. It is not difficult to prove that a one-sided description is wrong simply in presenting empirical examples. This is not least shown in the practice and ideology of various Jihadi movements that constitute empirical examples of explicit activism that would be difficult not to designate as political.¹⁵² Moreover, a passive stance that forbids political activism and violence can still be understood as political from an analytical point of view. For example, when a choice is made by some to withdraw from society and advocate that adherents should refrain from performing democratic rights, such as participation in popular votes. Therefore, we can, and should, address Salafism (of all types) in a political light.¹⁵³

A typology of the political character of Salafism, formulated by Roel Meijer, includes all types of Salafism that will be addressed more in detail below, and it stresses that all types have a political character. He differentiates between (1) quietist and discreet, which equals what is called puritan Salafism in this article; (2) covert, in the sense of calling for quietism but still acting politically, which equals what is here called Politicos; and (3) openly activist, for example the *Sahwah* movement or the Islamic State.¹⁵⁴ Bernard Haykel too stresses the political side of Salafism when he states that "Salafis are first and foremost religious and social reformers who are engaged in creating and reproducing particular forms of authority and identity, both personal and communal. Indeed, Salafis are determined to create a distinct Muslim subjectivity, one with profound social and political implications."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ See, for example, de Koning (2013); Dogan (2014).

¹⁵² See, for example the anthology *Global Salafism* edited by Meijer, (2009). This collection includes chapters on various types of Salafis that illustrate their local and national situatedness and also the effects of globalization on local Salafi identities.

¹⁵³ See also Meijer (2009): 1–32; Haykel (2009): 33–37.

¹⁵⁴ Meijer (2009): 17; see also Haykel (2009): 48. Following Lauzière (2010), the modernist reform movement of the twentieth century, including 'Abduh and al-Afghani, are left out in the discussion of this contemporary kind of Salafism.

¹⁵⁵ Haykel (2009): 34–35.

The concept Salafi is often used as a self-designation. Moreover, at times scholars place individuals and groups within the frames of that concept, disregarding insider terminology. This is due to the analytical concept of Salafism used.¹⁵⁶ Self-descriptions as Salafi are connected to the Arabic term *al-salaf al-sālih*, which designates the first generations of Muslims, the “pious forbearers”, considered to have been close to Muhammad and also to the origins of Islam. Later generations are regarded to have been influenced by an increasing amount of innovations (*bid'ah*), which contemporary Salafis vehemently reject.¹⁵⁷ Salafism can thus be presented as pure or authentic Islam, from an insider perspective.

Salafism is analytically defined as fundamentalist, and this is due to the striving for authenticity, which is expressed in the promotion of an immediate return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah (tradition, example) of Muhammad and that of the first generations. These are regarded as the only authentic sources to guide creed and practice. This stance to the sources lead Salafis to reject *taqlid*, i.e. the imitation of the established schools of law that by a majority of Muslims is seen as the normative form of Islam. These schools are by Salafis understood as innovations (*bid'ah*), since they argue that their establishment is not sanctioned in the authentic sources and they are thus considered a human innovation without authentic scriptural “proof” (*dalil*).¹⁵⁸ Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah are understood as immutable sources, parts of the divine revelation that guide and rule faith and practice of Muslims, disregarding historical situations. This means that, even though Salafism obviously is a reformist version of Islam, it does not open up for any kind of adjustment of Islamic creed or practice related to context. In this respect, Quintan Wiktorowicz argues as follows: “While circumstances and contexts may change, religious practice must not be altered to accommodate contemporary challenges. Muslims must instead address new challenges with unchanging religious principles.”¹⁵⁹

Emulation of Tradition

Salafis in general advocate a striving to emulate (*ittibā*) the Prophet and the first generations of Muslims, which is a characteristic foundational trait in the formulation of a specific Salafi Muslim subjectivity. Examples that often appear in descriptions of Salafism are emulation of detailed rulings, such as dressing and eating like the early Muslims or behaving like them in social relations. However, there is a lot more to Salafism than such detailed ritualized rulings of everyday life and practice. Salafism, even in its most puritan and “passive” versions – in the sense of non-participation in majority society – uphold strong opinions about how to live as a minority and also how to relate to people not belonging to the in-group, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This includes strong recommendations, not to say requirements, for how the people of the in-group ought to relate to the surrounding society and to “others”. This of course relates to aspects of integration, segregation and enclavism.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ See Olsson (2014a).

¹⁵⁷ These usually include the first three generations of Muslims. As such they are regarded as having a purer understanding of Islam compared to later generations that were more affected by innovation. The “impurity” of innovation is one important aspect of contemporary Salafism, since Salafis strive to remedy the situation and purify Islam and Muslims, regarding both faith and practice. The forbearers include the companions of Muhammad and their followers (*tābi'ūn*) and then the generation after them (*tābi'u al-tābi'in*). We find some vocal authorities among these, such as Ibn Hanbal (780–855), who is regarded as the last “follower”. Later reformists are also included as important authorities, and regarded as following the example of the early forbearers, such as the Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), the founder of the Wahhabi tradition that dominates in Saudi Arabia. Wiktorowicz (2001): 111–112.

¹⁵⁸ Wiktorowicz (2001): 119.

¹⁵⁹ Wiktorowicz (2001): 111.

¹⁶⁰ See for example Olsson (2014b).

Salafis sometimes use *ahl al-hadīth*, the people of the hadith, or *ahl al-sunnah*, the people of the Sunnah, as a self-designation to underline the importance of the Sunnah.¹⁶¹ The Sunnah is constantly discussed by Salafis, who disagree on the status of individual hadiths, which may explain why they promote different views on action (*manhaj*), which will be elaborated further below.¹⁶²

Daniel Brown describes the Sunnah as “the fulcrum on which the central debates over religious authority turn”.¹⁶³ Interpretative conflicts center around the Sunnah and “[t]he problem of sunna has become the most important dimension of a modern Muslim crisis of religious authority, occupying a central place in Muslim religious discourse.”¹⁶⁴ The Sunnah is seen as a sacred source and it is used to connect contemporary Muslims to the early era and the companions of the Prophet. “For most Muslims, sunna is a symbol of the link with the Prophetic era, the representation of the Prophet in the here and now, a concrete embodiment of the need that Muslims have felt in every generation for continuity with an ideal past.”¹⁶⁵ As such, the idea of continuity with tradition is often stressed as a marker of authenticity, or in the Salafi case it should rather be described as a return to the ideal past, not a historical continuity. Such views on authenticity strengthens group identity and may assist in the motivation of specific actions, built on a perceived past:

All religious traditions construct pictures of their own formative periods. The pictures are built up over time by the retrospective projection of religious ideals onto the history of the tradition. Such pictures must not be accepted as literal descriptions of the formation of a tradition. Their function is to stress the unity and continuity of tradition, whereas the critical history of any tradition in the formative period never fails to reveal breaks, conflicts, and a diversity of views and practices.¹⁶⁶

Salafis thus avoids imitation of any interpretation or practice of Islam that is not considered to be scripturally based. They promote a literalists view on sources in the sense of promoting emulation, especially of the Sunnah. As is well known in the history of religions, interpretations of a specific source varies in time and place, and even in the same time and place, even though an insider may argue that he or she represents the only universal truth. The normative Salafi view on the sources causes a rejection of any human attempt of interpretation to understand the will of God. Human understanding of the sources is not to change depending on historical circumstances. The sources are to be read decontextualized. They are understood to be valid in a universal sense, i.e. in each historical situation, and the sources are considered self-explanatory. In this ideal sense, truth is eternally valid and the program of action (*manhaj*) and the content of creed (*ʿaqīdah*) never changes. Quintan Wiktorowicz summarizes: “Approaches that are guided by human logic will necessarily fall foul of human desire, which will lead to the selective and biased extrapolation of religious evidence to support human interests rather than religious truth.”¹⁶⁷ Only one view can be correct – and Salafis of all types claim to know which view represents the truth.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Sunnah is an Arabic word meaning tradition. Here, it is the tradition of Muhammad that is intended that has been written down. Sunnah consists of several large collections of narratives about what he said and did. One single narrative is called a *hadīth*, pl. *ahādīth*, which in this article is written simply hadith, pl. hadiths.

¹⁶² Hadiths are for example divided into sound (*sahīh*), fair (*hasan*) and weak (*daʿīf*). Salafis strive to use what they regard as sound hadiths to establish their version of Islamic authenticity but there is disagreement among Salafis (and others) about the status of individual hadiths, which affects differences among the types. Wiktorowicz (2001): 118–119.

¹⁶³ Brown (1996): 3.

¹⁶⁴ Brown (1996): 1.

¹⁶⁵ Brown (1996): 2.

¹⁶⁶ Valliere (2005): 9274.

¹⁶⁷ Wiktorowicz (2006): 210.

¹⁶⁸ Haykel 2009: (38–42). See also Wiktorowicz (2006) for a more thorough presentation of the common creed among Salafis.

The authority given to texts has in one sense prevented the development of scholarly authorities. Bernard Haykel even argues that Salafis are “relatively open, even democratic” as an interpretative community.¹⁶⁹ Still, the scholars used as authorities are often Wahhabi scholars, or Hanbali oriented scholars throughout history, and the different types of Salafism make use of different authorities – or the same but they then emphasize their teaching differently.¹⁷⁰ Hence, the authority given to the written sources does not mean that no scholars are used as authorities. It is rather the case that the scholars used are experts on Sunnah and share the same view on returning to the sources for proofs and make constant reference to them.¹⁷¹ Moreover, once the truth is set and the chain of authorities established, adherents are told to follow suit and there is no room for democratic views neither on sources nor scholarly authorities. An individual should not interpret the sources by him- or herself but simply accept the reading of the established authorities who have more knowledge.¹⁷²

Salafi theology

As mentioned initially, some commonalities exist among Salafi types. In terms of theology, it is possible to generalize and say that Salafis share a common creed (*‘aqīdah*), while views on programs for action (*manhaj*) differ. This includes both the approach to the sources in terms of interpretation and the actual behavior, which includes rituals as well as everyday life conduct. Considering theology, as a result of the literalist stance, metaphorical readings are rejected and the texts must be accepted at face value.¹⁷³ In the context of this article, it may be enough to mention briefly that Salafis of all types stress the unity of God (*tawhīd*) and reject everything that could be considered an association of power with something or someone besides God. That would be the greatest sin a human being could commit and it is called *shirk*. The strict monotheistic view underlies the idea that everything invented by human beings, such as the schools of law, is not created or legislated by God and it thus pertains to an act of *shirk* to follow or use such an innovation. Since God is understood to be the only legislator, these theological views can in extension be used to reject political ideas and practices as innovations, such as democracy or popular vote, and participation in such practices can be defined as disobedience to God. It is equaled to deviant behavior, to innovation, and understood as submission to something other than God, and thus equal to acts of *shirk*.¹⁷⁴ *Shirk* is mentioned numerous times in the Qur’an where it is clearly stated that a person committing *shirk* will end up in Hell:

Lo! Allah forgiveth not that a partner should be ascribed unto Him. He forgiveth (all) save that to whom He will. Whoso ascribeth partners to Allah, he hath indeed invented a tremendous sin. (Q4:48)

Lo! whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers. (Q5:72)

Turning unto Him (only); and be careful of your duty unto Him and establish worship, and be not of those who ascribe partners (unto Him). (Q30:31).¹⁷⁵

This theological stance is common among all types of Salafism. If we would probe more into them, we would of course note differences. The main differences, however, are found in the definitions of sinners and infidels and the rulings about how to treat them.

¹⁶⁹ Haykel (2009): 36.

¹⁷⁰ On the difference between Salafism and Wahhabism, see Olsson (2016): 118–121.

¹⁷¹ Wiktorowicz (2011): 119.

¹⁷² Olsson (2019): 88–95.

¹⁷³ Wiktorowicz (2001): 114–115.

¹⁷⁴ Wiktorowicz (2006): 209.

¹⁷⁵ See the references to the Qur’an in Wiktorowicz (2006): 115–116. The translation of the Qur’an by Pickthall is used in this article.

Excommunication

Most religions stipulate that their beliefs and practices are objectively superior to all others. Members of religious out-groups usually suffer some penalty for their wrong beliefs, but the penalty is often intangible, whether it is exclusion from a paradise in the afterlife, reincarnation in an inferior position, or an expectation that the out-group members will fail to achieve enlightenment and peace. In contrast, religious extremists impose penalties on out-groups here in the temporal world. [...] these penalties can include shunning, discriminatory practices, and even extermination.¹⁷⁶

As should now be apparent, the main differences among various Salafi types appear in their views on action rather than creed. It is thus action that is the main dividing line between the various types. This can be exemplified with views and practices of excommunication, *takfir*. *Takfir* is a strategy used in order to accuse others of being sinners or infidels. The differences in opinions often lie in the view of actual *manhaj*, where various practical responses to those regarded as sinners or infidels are advocated. Heresy and apostasy are often designated as *kufir*.¹⁷⁷ *Kufir* refers to unbelief in God and the prophet Muhammad, and the person committing this sin, the *kāfir* (pl. *kuffār*), will be punished. The difference is that some Salafis (mainly Puritans) argue that God will perform the punishment (i.e. on the day of judgement and in the Hereafter), whilst other Salafis (Jihadis) argue that (true) Muslims are obliged to punish sinners here and now. The majority of Sunni theologians throughout history have argued that God will make the judgement of a person's status on the day of Judgement and also perform the punishment.¹⁷⁸

This kind of discussion regarding sinners appeared already during the first caliphate, related to the group called the Kharijis who argued that sinners had to be excluded from the *ummah* (the Muslim community) and that it was their right to perform *takfir* in this world.¹⁷⁹ Views on othering thus had direct and very concrete effects early in Islamic history, not least with the rise of the Kharijis, who accused everyone of a different opinion of being apostates who could legitimately be killed.¹⁸⁰ However, the opposing opinion, that the judgement and punishment belongs solely to God, has since been the prevalent opinion among the majority of Muslims. Among Salafis, as we shall soon see, there are different opinions in this matter as well.

To command right and forbid wrong

And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful. (Q7:104)

Let there arise from you a group calling to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. It is these who are successful. (Q3:104)

Let us now turn more explicitly into the typology question. Several discussions among Salafis concerns the perceived duty to "command right and forbid wrong" (*al-amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*). Historically, to command good could concern controlling prices in the market (*hisbah*), but among contemporary Salafis it often includes charges of infidelity or apostasy (*takfir*, *irtidād*).¹⁸¹ We can also note that the word *hisbah* is used today to denote an Islamic "morality police".¹⁸² The duty to command good and forbid wrong is commonly understood to give individuals the right, on behalf of

¹⁷⁶ Berger (2018): 33.

¹⁷⁷ See Olsson (2008).

¹⁷⁸ This concerns the theological doctrine regarding postponement of judgement (*irjā*). See for example Woltering for a discussion on contemporary views on moderation and postponement of punishment.

¹⁷⁹ See Griffel (2000): 13 for a discussion on *takfir*.

¹⁸⁰ On Kharijis (*khawārij*), see Levi Della Vida (2012).

¹⁸¹ For a more elaborate discussion on "commanding right and forbidding wrong", see Cook (2001). See also Olsson (2008) for a discussion of contemporary cases regarding *hisbah*.

¹⁸² Cook (2012).

society, to file complaints of unbelief or apostasy against others. Among Salafis, this duty of the individual takes various expressions in practice, i.e. concerning *manhaj*. Puritan Salafis argue that the correct *manhaj* to enjoin good and forbid wrong is to avoid everyone and everything not part of the in-group, in order to avoid pollution and innovations. Jihadi Salafis hold that the correct *manhaj* to enjoin good and forbid wrong is to actively oppose sinners and attack them with words and violence. This, I would argue, is the main dividing line between Salafi types.

An often used typology of Salafism has been formulated by Quintan Wiktorowicz and it explicitly focuses on the different views on *manhaj*. He divides Salafis into: (1) *Purists*, who are Salafis focusing on a *manhaj* of non-violence, purification and education, and often stress segregation and isolation as methods; (2) *Politicos*, who argue that political participation as a method to reach the aims is an allowed part of *manhaj*; and lastly (3) *Jihadis*, who are militant, calling for a change through violence and revolution. Wiktorowicz states: "All three factions share a common creed but offer different explanations of the contemporary world and its concomitant problems and thus propose different solutions. The splits are about contextual analysis, not belief."¹⁸³ He thus confirms the above-mentioned differentiation between Salafi types based on their views on action.

Using typologies may be problematic, but this typology is used intending to differentiate between different stances concerning Salafi practice. Obviously, as any typology it would be difficult to uphold rigid boundaries when applied on the empirical material, since empirical material has a tendency to transgress theoretical and typological boundaries.¹⁸⁴ Still, to use an analytical typology is strategic and necessary in order to understand and explore differences and similarities of a phenomenon and to avoid generalizations.

The political side of Salafism

Scholars argue that Salafism has an empowering effect on people. Using a "post-colonial" language, Roel Meijer concludes that the downtrodden and discriminated understand themselves as the saved or chosen group (*al-firqah al-nājiya*, *ta'ifāt al-mansūra*).¹⁸⁵ This self-understanding is empowering in facing external opponents, real or imagined, Muslim or non-Muslim. Moreover, such a self-understanding may contribute to a sense of superiority and underlies the construction of group boundaries that is constantly stressed in the construction of in-group and out-group. This can be expressed in dress codes and symbolic and ritual behavior that influence daily life. We can phrase this as "time management" since Salafis, ideally at least, frame daily life with ritual observance.¹⁸⁶

As different from many Islamist movements that have a national or regional orientation, Salafi ideology is globally oriented, at least rhetorically. Puritan Salafis are often quietists and stress segregation. This should not lead us to expect that such Salafis are not activists. We can note that even among Salafis who reject violence and promote segregation there is a stress on missionary activities (*da'wah*) and in calling for "loyalty and disavowal" (*al-walā' wa al-barā'*), *takfir* as well as jihad. What differs in the various types of Salafism is how these important concepts and phrases are put into practice (*manhaj*). Quintan Wiktorowicz argues that the divergence "lies in the inherently subjective nature of applying a creed to new issues and problems. This is a human enterprise and therefore subject to differing interpretations of context."¹⁸⁷ Even though Salafis would argue that they do not interpret the sources, it is easy for outsiders to demonstrate that there are various understandings of them. The internal logic is that other interpretations do not represent true Islam, since there can be only one truth. That the verses of the Qur'an is not always easy to understand is also demonstrated by the stress on the

¹⁸³ Wiktorowicz (2006): 208.

¹⁸⁴ This is in line with the reasoning by Smith (1978) that map is not equal to territory.

¹⁸⁵ The expression "the saved group" refers to a hadith reporting that the Muslims will divide into seventy-three groups. Only one group will be saved from the fire. Muhammad said that there will always be a small group of Muslims holding the truth until the Day of Judgment, i.e. "the chosen group". These two expressions are often used by Salafis.

¹⁸⁶ Meijer (2009): 16; see also Haykel (2009): 35. See Gauvain (2013) for a detailed ethnographic account of Egyptian Salafis, mainly related to purity and everyday ritualization.

¹⁸⁷ Wiktorowicz (2006): 214.

Sunnah to assist understanding and to detail the general rules found in the Qur'an. This is another explanation as to why Salafis at times use the phrase *ahl al-hadith*, the people of the hadith, as a self-designation.¹⁸⁸

Purists are concerned mainly with purification (*tazkiya*) of Islam. This entails purification of faith and of deed. An aspect of this is the call to spread their creed and to eliminate deviant practices through education (*tarbiya*). One frequent activity in such groups is therefore to arrange lectures. They regard political activities or rebellion with suspicion. An analogy to the Meccan period is often made and a call is made to emulate the mission of the early Muslims, who used advice and propagation and avoided rebellion. This is also a reason why proper jihad is understood by them as a peaceful, non-violent, effort (see further below). The Western world is often generalized and represented by Jews and Christian, capitalism and immorality, and often believed to be determined to destroy Islam. To "combat" this, the same methods as the pious forbearers must be applied. If other methods are used or evoked, that would equal innovation. This stance may cause isolationism, due to the idea that one may be polluted if one engages with others who are part of the out-group. It is therefore not possible to engage in inter- or intra-faith dialogue for example, since all "others" are regarded as corrupt. Purists regard the other types of Salafism with suspicion and as threats and they avoid them as well in order not to be polluted.¹⁸⁹

Purists can in one sense be described as a moderate type of Salafism due to their passive stance and enclavist attitude. Other Salafis who are more activist inclined seek a more rapid success, where violence may be one method advocated and used.¹⁹⁰ Considering the type Politicos, like Purists it too rejects revolution and rebellion, but accepts political participation as a means to gain more grounds and spread their version of Islam.

A background to Politicos is found among Saudi Salafis who were rather homogeneous until the 1960s when they were influenced by Islamist teachings. The Muslim Brotherhood gained a stronger presence in Saudi Arabia, not least in teaching institutions, which influenced many students and caused a strengthening of political engagement and consciousness. The so-called Saudi Politicos strived to preserve a Salafi oriented creed, which was basically identical to a Wahhabi creed, but they stressed that political engagement was a necessity and a requirement. This attitude differs from mainstream Wahhabi ideology, which has been rather passive and one major part of Wahhabism has been to avoid any criticism of or rebellion against the political leaders. As such, this new trend constituted a threat to the monarchy. This was expressed for example in the different attitudes toward the presence of American troops. Purist Salafis (and mainstream Wahhabis) legitimated their presence. The Politics on the other hand questioned the Purists' competence of political analysis and knowledge of Islam, and they were accused of being irrelevant and outdated.¹⁹¹ Today, the example of the Egyptian political party al-Nour is often presented as part of the Salafi Politico type. Adherents were previously puritan but their view on *manhaj* changed as the context changed following the revolution in Egypt.¹⁹²

The type Jihadi Salafis, such as al-Qai'da and the Islamic State, advocate the use of violence as a method to establish an Islamic state. The type developed during the Afghanistan war with the Soviet Union. Many were exposed to real combat and became politicized and developed a violent Islamic ideology. In the early 1990s it was not possible to clearly distinguish between Politicos and Jihadis, but toward the middle of the 1990s the Saudi regime, backed by Purists, cracked down on other types of Salafis and some were jailed. This caused the stance which we now call Jihadi Salafism to become more explicitly formulated and it resulted in an increase in violent activities. Purists were by Jihadis targeted as agents of the state (*al-'ulamā' al-sultah*) and the call for violent jihad was made explicit.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Wiktorowicz (2006): 214.

¹⁸⁹ Wiktorowicz (2006): 217–221. A case study of a puritan Salafi ideology in Sweden is found in Olsson (2019).

¹⁹⁰ Wiktorowicz (2005): 215.

¹⁹¹ Wiktorowicz (2005): 221–225.

¹⁹² See Poljarevic (2017) for al-Nour and the Egyptian context.

¹⁹³ Wiktorowicz (2005): 205–228.

Interpreting jihad

Some comments on the concept of jihad may be in place in order to explain the different apprehensions of it among the Salafi types. A wide variety of opinions about the true meaning of jihad exist and some have effects around the world in rather concrete manners. We often hear Muslims say that jihad is not necessarily violent. Or that Islam is a religion of peace, based on the Arabic root *s-l-m*, which is also found in the word for peace, *salām*.¹⁹⁴ Jihad is often described as “an effort directed towards a determined objective” or “an effort directed upon oneself for the attainment of moral and religious perfection.”¹⁹⁵ The notion of “effort” is connected to the Arabic root *j-h-d*. As an example, the term *ijtihād* is based on the same root, and indicates the striving to interpret or understand. The term *ijtihād* is called for in many other reform movements, such as among Islamists and Feminists.¹⁹⁶ Among types of Islamisms there are also different views on action. Some stress social welfare activism as a main means to reach their goals of Islamization, some consider participation in political elections legitimate, and others violent jihad, for example. In a sense, this can be seen as similar forms of action compared to the different Salafis types. However, one important thing that is different between Islamism and Salafism is the Islamist acceptance of *ijtihād*, which here means a striving to reinterpret the sources related to contextual needs. This means that their view on how to approach the sources is radically different from Salafis, and they open up for different interpretations of Islam in different contexts.¹⁹⁷

Muslims often stress that jihad consists of two aspects, “the greater” and “the lesser” jihad, and refers this to a narrative where the Prophet Muhammad said that he and the companions had returned from the lesser jihad (battle, armed struggle) to the greater jihad, and greater jihad was explained to be a war against the soul (*nafs*).¹⁹⁸ Greater jihad denotes moral and religious efforts mainly on an individual and everyday life level where a person strives to follow the moral and ritual standards required of a Muslim. Lesser jihad denotes efforts on behalf of the individual (*fard 'ayn*) or of the community (*fard kifāyah*) to defend Islam, or “the abode of Islam”, from attacks – hence there exist definitions where jihad is considered war of defense. When jihad is defined as a collective duty, it is the responsibility of the state, i.e. the army. This, generally speaking, is the view within the frames of the schools of law. Within the juristic perspective, lesser jihad is legitimate in order to defend the “abode of Islam” (see below). Several detailed rules are presented by jurists from the schools of law considering when jihad is legitimate and how it may be conducted.¹⁹⁹

It is an empirical fact that jihad is not a static concept and that several different definitions have existed since the earliest Islamic era. To generalize, the mainstream juristic understanding of jihad is connected to the definitions of the “abode of Islam” (*dār al-islām*) and the “abode of war” (*dār al-harb*).²⁰⁰ Jurists within the frames of the schools of law require the abode of Islam to be attacked before a legitimate jihad may be called for by a legitimate leader. If we probe into other contemporary examples, we will note that interpretations differ. One example that is almost always presented in textbooks is the stance of the Muslim Brother ideologue Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), who

¹⁹⁴ See further Olsson (2018b).

¹⁹⁵ Tyan (2012).

¹⁹⁶ See for example Wadud (2006) on “gender jihad”.

¹⁹⁷ See for example Brenner (2017): 9 on Islamist *ijtihād*.

¹⁹⁸ This narrative is regarded as weak by most Islamic scholars, but it is nevertheless probably one of the most well-known. It was mentioned in some sources, for example in al-Khatib al-Baghdadi’s (1002–1071) *History of Baghdad (Ta’rikh Baghdād* 1931: #493, #523). The narrative is not included in the canonical collections of hadiths.

¹⁹⁹ See Peters (2005) for an overview of interpretations of jihad.

²⁰⁰ In the early Islamic era, there was no unified ideology of jihad, and also no explicit theories on *fard kifāyah*, individual duty, which were elaborated later by al-Shafi’i (d. 820). Bonner (1996): 131; Bonner (1992): 28–29. Moreover, the notion of a distinction between the abode of Islam (*dār al-islām*) and the abode of war (*dār al-harb*) was also not present in the earliest writing on jihad when mentioning enemy territory. See Denaro (2017).

argued in his book *Ma'ālim fī tariq (Milestones)* that the traditional division of the world into the abodes of Islam and war had collapsed and turned what used to be the abode of Islam into an abode of ignorance (*dār al-jāhiliya*). In his view this not only legitimated jihad but made it an obligation of the Muslims as well. The rhetoric used in the book polarizes against “the Western system”: “The period of the Western system has come to an end primarily because it is deprived of those life-giving values which enabled it to be the leader of mankind [...] Islam is the only system that possesses these values and this way of life.”²⁰¹ The collapsed world order made all societies “ignorant”: “The *jahili* society is any society other than the Muslim society [...].

According to this definition, all the societies existing in the world today are *jahili*.²⁰² The definition of abodes is also very straightforward in the book:

There is only one place on earth which can be called the home of Islam (*Dar-ul-Islam*), and it is the place where the Islamic state is established and the *Shari'ah* is the authority and God's limits are observed, and where all the Muslims administer the affairs of the state with mutual consultation. The rest of the world is the home of hostility (*Dar-ul-Harb*). A Muslim can have only two possible relations with *Dar-ul-Harb*: peace with contractual agreement, or war. A country with which there is a treaty will not be considered the home of Islam. [...] A Muslim has no country except that part of the earth where the *Shari'ah* of God is established and human relationships are based on the foundation of relationship with God; a Muslim has no nationality except his belief, which makes him a member of the Muslim community in *Dar-ul-Islam*.²⁰³

Qutb argued that the main duty of Muslims is to depose *jāhiliya* and provide a rightly guided leadership.²⁰⁴ Due to his view on abodes, he could argue that it was the individual duty of each Muslim to defend Islam, and thus he rejected the perspective found within the frames of traditional jurisprudence. Even though it is not clear that Qutb's reinterpretations have had a direct effect on later Islamists or Salafis, his writings on jihad and individual and collective duties show several similarities to later Jihadi ideologies.²⁰⁵

Loyalty and disavowal

Salafis generally consider people not belonging to the in-group as non-Muslims or as deviant Muslims. As such they can be regarded as ignorant. Here, the phrase “allegiance/loyalty and disavowal” (*al-walā' wa al-barā'*) may be addressed since it is used to support the opinion that a Muslim should avoid ignorant people and societies. The most radical interpretations of the phrase allegiance/loyalty and disavowal result in a view that Muslims should be loyal only to God, or other Muslims, i.e. the in-group, and others should be met with open hatred.²⁰⁶ What open hatred entails differs among Salafis. One verse from the Qur'an that addresses the unbelievers in this respect is:

Let not the believers take disbelievers for their friends in preference to believers. Whoso doeth that hath no connection with Allah unless (it be) that ye but guard yourselves against them, taking (as it were) security. Allah biddeth you beware (only) of Himself. Unto Allah is the journeying. (Q3:28)

The phrase allegiance/loyalty and disavowal is used by Salafis to demarcate an in-group from those regarded as part of the out-group. In terms of the Purist type in minority situations it may be used “as a bulwark against successful integration into society”.²⁰⁷ The understanding of this phrase has changed significantly throughout history. It was connected to the group Khawarij in early Islam, and also Shī'ites who held different views on the succession after the death of the Prophet compared to the majority of

²⁰¹ Qutb (2001): 8.

²⁰² Qutb (2001): 80. Bold in original.

²⁰³ Qutb (2001): 118–119. Bold in original.

²⁰⁴ Qutb (2001): 130–131. Bold in original.

²⁰⁵ As an example, see Olsson (2016): 189–190 for a discussion on a *fatwa* on global jihad.

²⁰⁶ Devin *et al.* (2009): 50–51; Wagemakers 2009.

²⁰⁷ Wagemakers (2009): 82.

Muslims. If we consider the juridical tradition, many schools of law did not discuss it, but early Hanbali jurists condemned it, but this changed, not least due to Ibn Taymiyya's use of it. He stressed loyalty and disavowal in a positive sense and described it as a means to combat innovation (*bid'ah*). This definition was later adapted by 'Abd al-Wahhab. In the contemporary era, the stress on fighting against unbelief (*kufir*) as disavowal has been more explicit and the rhetoric in this respect has become more categorical.²⁰⁸

Loyalty and disavowal is important to address in order to probe into the various understanding of *takfir*, understood here in the sense of accusing others of not being rightly guided. *Takfir* is used to divide people into "us" and "them" and it also outlines how the "others" ought to be treated. David Cook holds that it "enables radical Muslims to assert control over the definitions of who is and who is not a Muslim and it forces those who would wish to challenge that control into silence or into being characterized as 'non-Muslims.'"²⁰⁹

Loyalty and disavowal can be analyzed from a Social Movement Theory (SMT) perspective where strategies of Salafis are understood as part of the method of "framing". Framing explains the world and it helps define people into "us" and "them". A "frame" is not equal to "ideology", as a detailed system. A frame broader, vague and simplified version of a belief system that assist mobilization and promotion of the cause. Loyalty and disavowal can be understood as a "pious instrument" used to reject innovation and separate true Muslims from the ignorant.

Salafis using the phrase loyalty and disavowal define either a religious or a political threat. Those referring to a religious threat are often Saudi- or Wahhabi influenced, which may be related to the limits imposed on scholars by the Saudi state. The room given only leaves space to focus on personal piety and purity. A result of the situation is a stress to avoid things that may distort loyalty (*al-walā'*) to God (and political leaders). Disavowal (*al-barā'*) of others is made into an obligation. While this may appear as intolerant, this stance does not necessarily entail aggression or violence, but rather segregation and avoidance, and Saudi scholars are mostly politically quietist. Those referring to a political threat focus on political leaders and their alignment with non-Muslim countries. Leaders are criticized and sometimes excommunication (*takfir*) is called for as well as violent jihad. We can note that the use the phrase loyalty and disavowal appear to be useful in developing Salafi ideologies, but it is hardly used outside of Salafi circles.²¹⁰

From an SMT perspective, social movements are regarded as rational, organized manifestations of collective action.²¹¹ "Movements are not seen as irrational outbursts intended to alleviate psychological distress, but rather as organized contention structured through mechanisms of mobilization that provide strategic resources for sustained collective action."²¹² Within SMT, "core framing tasks" are used to explain how social movements function to make people adherents and activists. From this perspective, a movement constructs frames that (1) diagnose a condition that needs to be remedied; (2) offer a solution to the problematic condition; and (3) "provide a rationale to motivate support and collective action".²¹³ The frames reflect "the cultural and ideational components of contentious politics" and they "translate grievances and perceived opportunities into the mobilization of resources and movement activism".²¹⁴ If we use this theoretical perspective, Salafis define the problem as Islam being under attack. One problem is defined to be that Muslim individuals and states have contacts with infidels. The solution of Purists is to avoid contacts with all others. Purists call for separation from wrongdoers, others call for political engagement, and yet others for violent jihad.²¹⁵ These strategies

²⁰⁸ Wagemakers (2009): 86–91. For an example of Salafi anti-Shiite rhetoric, see Olsson (2017).

²⁰⁹ Cook (2005): 141. See also Devin *et al.* (2009): 50.

²¹⁰ Wagemakers (2008).

²¹¹ Wagemakers (2008): 9–10.

²¹² Wagemakers (2008): 10.

²¹³ Wagemakers (2008): 15–16.

²¹⁴ Wagemakers (2008): 19.

²¹⁵ See also Wagemakers (2008).

can be related to a hadith that narrates the duty to correct wrongdoers in a three-fold manner, which Michel Cook calls the “three modes tradition” of deed, word and thought:

“Whoever sees a wrong (*munkar*)”, says the Prophet, “and is able to put it right with his hand (*an yughayyirahu bi-yadihi*), let him do so; if he can’t, then with his tongue (*bi-lisānihi*); if he can’t, then with his heart (*bi-qalbihi*), which is the bare minimum of faith.”²¹⁶

The mainstream Sunni view has mainly been correction with the heart but also with words. This is also apparent in the earliest tradition that we call Hanbalism today. As expressed by Michael Sizgorich:

Ibn Ḥanbal, uncompromising hardliner though he was, also seems to have sought to set in place a system whereby Muslims could exercise surveillance over the behaviors of other Muslims, intercede when their fellow Muslims seemed to threaten or transgress communal boundaries, and *nonviolently* call them to account through processes of Muslim-to-Muslim interpellation.²¹⁷

This behavior (*manhaj*) is reflected in the biographies of Ibn Hanbal as well.²¹⁸ One example is his views on Christians narrated in the biography by Ibn al-Jawzi (ca1116–1200):

[The companion] [Al-Harbi:] Ahmad [ibn Hanbal] was asked whether a Muslim should say “May God grace you!” to a Christian.

“Yes,” he said. “He should say it, and mean by it ‘May God grace you by making you Muslim!’”²¹⁹

However, there are also plenty of examples of Hanbalis who promoted and performed hostile othering in the early era, for example the notorious traditionalist al-Barbahari (867–941). He and his likeminded “broke into homes, poured out wine, smashed musical instruments, and even interrogated couples on the street to assure that they were conducting themselves properly.”²²⁰ Hence, there are examples of othering in early Islamic history that is reflected in the various Salafi types today.

Violence and Fragmentation

The fragmentation of Salafism makes it necessary to analytically distinguish between the types. The construction of Salafi identities and norms challenge other dominant views in society. Salafis of all types create an “imagined community” that bypasses loyalty to others than those in the in-group. The question of whether jihad is permitted or not divides Salafis into two broad strands accusing each other of ignorance and lack of true knowledge. Only Jihadis make explicit calls for violent jihad. Purists hold that others have deviated from the truth and call them delegitimizing words, for example, Qutubis insinuating that they imitate Sayyid Qutb who is rejected as deviant and innovative, or Kharijites, alluding to the early group who held the right to perform *takfir* and caused upheaval, similar to contemporary Jihadis. Jihadis in their turn accuse others of being “shaykhs of authority”, insinuating that they are passive and bought by the regimes.²²¹

Following the Soviet-Afghan War, a “nomadic jihad” spread, where fighters travelled from place to place in order to partake in jihad. Some of these fighters called for rebellion against political leaders. The political leaders were considered at least as nominally Muslim by most Muslims, and, according to traditional juridical understandings, they should then not be attacked or rebelled against. The situation

²¹⁶ Cook (2001): 33. Cook notes that the literal meaning of *ghayyara* is to change. Here it is used in the sense of “putting right”. Cook (2001): 34. For the hadith, see Sunan al-Nasa’i, Book 47, hadith 24. See also Sunan al-Nasa’i, Book 47, hadith 25. Retrieved from <https://sunnah.com/nasai/47> October 18, 2019.

²¹⁷ Sizgorich (2012): 20

²¹⁸ For an overview of Ibn Hanbal’s life and teaching, see Laoust (2012).

²¹⁹ Ibn al-Jawzi 9.9.

²²⁰ Kraemer (1986): 61. See also Olsson (2018a).

²²¹ Wiktorowicz (2005): 215–216.

following the war made it necessary for some more activist Salafis to develop a theological justification for criticizing leaders and for performing violent jihad.²²² We are often told that the Salafis who promote jihad lean on the writings of Ibn Taymiyya. He wrote critically against the Mongol invasion and penned three *fatwas* related to it. The Mongols converted to Islam, but Ibn Taymiyya held that they were Kharijis and apostates, which then made it lawful to fight against them. Some citations from the *fatwa* that explicitly targets the Mongols and their infidelity read as such:

The Muslim scholars have come to [an] agreement that it is obligatory to fight a resisting group if it refrains from some of the Islamic obligations that are manifest and widely accepted.

The Mongols and their likes are more rebelled from the Islamic law than the ones who resisted zakāt [religiously obligatory taxes] and the Khārijīs of [the city of] Ṭā'if that refused abstaining from usury [which is forbidden]. Whoever doubts about fighting them is the most ignorant of the Islamic religion. The Muslims have agreed that they [the Khārijīs] should be fought when fighting them is obligatory even if some of them were forced out.

The Mongols are ignorant; they blindly follow who they think is right. Because of their stray they follow in their stray what is against Allah and His Messenger, they change the religion of Allah, they do not forbid what Allah and His Messenger forbid, they do not practice the true religion. If I were to narrate what I know about their affairs the speech would be long.²²³

Contemporary Jihadis have used this particular *fatwa* by Ibn Taymiyya to reject the mainstream Sunni view of loyalty and obedience to a Muslim ruler. Salafis could use it to argue that political leaders who claim to be Muslim but who do not uphold the law are rightful targets for violent excommunication. This understanding then spread to include others than political leaders and it could legitimate violence directed at basically anyone of the out-group.²²⁴ As expressed by Quintan Wiktorowicz: "The jihad at home, initially a unified assault on the regime, was derailed by the decentralization of *takfir*, leading to violence against broader publics and within the Salafi jihadi community itself."²²⁵

We should also note that Purist Salafis do not claim that jihad in the sense of using violence is necessarily always wrong, but they restrain it due to their understanding of the situation where Muslims are portrayed as spiritually weak. This situation needs to be remedied first, through teaching and purification of creed and deed. The idea is that individuals will transform through this and that it in time will lead to changes in society. "Jihad is thus viewed as the final stage of development that can be reached only after the Muslim community is unified and strong, certainly not the conditions that prevail today."²²⁶ Moreover, the argument is that if jihad would be waged prematurely it would risk leading to a greater evil. For example, political regimes may establish regulations that will prevent missionary activities, closing mosques and imprison scholars. Hence, what one does should contribute to the greater good for the in-group. This idea is certainly not new. It is found for example among earlier Hanbalis, such as the well-known Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziya (1292–1350) who is often used as an authority by Salafis. In his discussions regarding actions and their consequences all actions were seen as having some kind of effect. They can replace evil with good, diminish evil or even cause a greater evil, where the last was not allowed in his opinion.²²⁷ This opinion is reflected in the Puritan Salafi type, even though Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziya is not necessarily cited directly.

Suicide or martyrdom

The article will end with a concrete example to illustrate how interpretations differ between the types. Jihadis advocate a practice of violent jihad against those considered to constitute threats to Islam and

²²² Wiktorowicz (2005): 218–221.

²²³ A translation of the *fatwa* is found in Maihula (2018). The citations here have been slightly corrected.

²²⁴ Wiktorowicz (2001): 126–127; Wiktorowicz (2005): 221–225.

²²⁵ Wiktorowicz (2005): 225.

²²⁶ Wiktorowicz (2005): 227.

²²⁷ Wiktorowicz (2005): 227–228.

Muslims. Even though we repeatedly hear that Jihadis are a minority among the Salafis, their practice of this particular *manhaj* has severe affects globally. Their actions are rejected as being non-Islamic by other types of Salafis. One concrete example of this is the various views on the death of activists, which also illustrates clear differences between the Salafi types. A Jihadi who dies when striving (fighting) on what he or she considers to be on the path of God (*jihād fī sabīl Allāh*) is understood as dying the death of a martyr, who will be immediately rewarded with Paradise. Others rather consider the same death as caused by suicide, which is regarded as forbidden and it will be punished with an eternity in Hell.²²⁸ In Islamic sources, texts regarding suicide are rather straightforward and stem from the Sunnah. There are several hadiths stressing the unlawfulness of suicide, for example in the collection of al-Bukhari (810–870):

Narrated [the Prophet's companion] Thabit bin Ad-Dahhak:

The Prophet (sas [=Peace be upon him]) said, "Whoever swears by a religion other than Islam (i.e. if he swears by saying that he is a non-Muslim in case he is telling a lie), then he is as he says if his oath is false and whoever commits suicide with something, will be punished with the same thing in the (Hell) fire, and cursing a believer is like murdering him, and whoever accuses a believer of disbelief, then it is as if he had killed him."²²⁹

The Qur'anic text does not explicitly deal with suicide but some verses in the Qur'an can be used to legitimate martyrdom. For example:

Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision. (Q3:169)

And their Lord hath heard them (and He saith): Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. Ye proceed one from another. So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and suffered damage for My cause, and fought and were slain, verily I shall remit their evil deeds from them and verily I shall bring them into Gardens underneath which rivers flow - A reward from Allah. And with Allah is the fairest of rewards. (Q3:195)

Another aspects of participation of jihad that is often stressed is the requirement of right intention (*niyya*) on behalf of the fighter to join in, i.e. in order to be rewarded with Paradise.²³⁰

The importance of intention is expressed in several hadiths, for example in the collection of al-Nasa'i (829–915):

[The Prophet's companion] Abu Hurairah said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah [SAW [=Peace be upon him]] say: "Allah has promised the one who goes out in His cause [*fī sabīlihi*] 'and does not go out except with faith in Me and for Jihad in My cause,'" that he is guaranteed to enter Paradise no matter how, either he is killed, or he dies, or he will be brought back to his home from which he departed having acquired whatever he acquired of reward or spoils of war."²³¹

Thus, a Jihadi Salafi, through their selective use and understanding of the sources, may consider a death of one of their own as resulting in martyrdom. Purists and Politicos would disagree and could claim that the dead person was not even a Muslim and will end up in Hell due to his or her acts. This argument could be used to argue that one should neither travel to join any Jihadi group, such as the Islamic State, nor commit any acts of violence in sympathy with Jihadi groups. This example on martyrdom/suicide illustrates that the various Salafi types do interpret the sources differently. It also shows that the differences between the types considering views on

²²⁸ See Kohlberg (2011); Rosenthal (2011).

²²⁹ Sahih al-Bukhari 6105. Retrieved from <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/78/132> January 24, 2020

²³⁰ This would for example exclude those joining a movement attracted by its "coolness". See for example Picart 2017 on the allure of jihadi cool/chic. The rejection of such intentions is also made among Salafis, see for example Olsson (2014b): 76.

²³¹ Sunan an-Nasa'i 5029. Retrieved from <https://sunnah.com/nasai/47/45> , January 24, 2020

praxis (*manhaj*) are large. Based on the above, I hope to have demonstrated that it would be a mistake to generalize Salafism and that it is necessary and fruitful to use typologies.

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Jihadism and Religious Ideology

Nelly Lahoud

Synopsis

The label "Salafi-jihadism" is often used both to describe the ideologies of jihadi groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State and to explain their propensity to engage in terrorism. The "Salafi-jihadism" designation is also meant to demarcate the religious beliefs espoused by jihadi groups from those that mainstream Muslims (Sunnis) profess. This chapter contends that the label "Salafi-jihadism" is unhelpful, particularly when used as a marker that separates mainstream Sunnis from jihadis. Instead, the differences between Sunnis (jihadis and non-jihadis) are not over foundational religious beliefs (e.g., Qur'an, Hadith, law and theology), but are centered on the sources of legitimacy underpinning political processes and institutions, such as citizenship, elections, the global world order of nation-states and international law. Mainstream Sunnis accept the legitimacy of positive law as the source of the modern nation-state (or at least do not contest it), jihadis reject this legitimacy and seek to make God's Word Supreme on earth through jihad.

This chapter argues that the importance of religious beliefs should not drive policy discussions related to the religious differences between Sunnis and jihadis. Since they all believe in the same foundational religious beliefs, such a policy approach risks stipulating that every Sunni is, at least *in potentia*, a jihadi. Every jihadi is a Sunni, but not vice versa. Accordingly, the mantra of "defeating the ideology" as a policy goal in response to terrorism is at best facile. Religion, however, is the sole source of legitimacy of the political platforms of all jihadi groups, thus understanding religious differences, such as those between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, is essential to assessing their respective worldviews, internal dynamics and their propensity to resort to more violence when they splinter.

Introduction

One of the Abbottabad letters addressed to Usama Bin Ladin, penned by the operative Sheikh Younis in March 2010, warned of "the pitfall of extremism (*mazlaq al-tashaddud*) and of [the disposition among jihadis to rush] to declare fellow Muslims to be unbelievers (*takfir*)." Sheikh Younis was alarmed that the "lack of Islamic legal knowledge [among jihadis] is a fertile ground [that could lead to our] detriment, especially now that the expression the 'Salafi-jihadi path' (*manhaj al-salafiyya al-jihadiyya*) has started to spread on the Internet." He went on to add in the same letter that "this matter is highly dangerous, particularly with the emergence of representatives of this Salafi-jihadi current that is attributed to us, adopting the most extreme and absolutist positions in matters that are probable (*zanniyya*) and open to interpretation (*ijtihadiyya*)." Bin Laden agreed, and instructed other al-Qaeda leaders to caution against extremism in religion (*ghuluw*) in their public statements.²³² Since al-Qaeda's leaders are uncomfortable with the label "Salafi-jihadism" and are alarmed by being associated with religious extremists who represent this religious current, it is necessary to question the utility of this label that is often used to describe al-Qaeda and other jihadi groups in some academic and policy literature.

²³² Cited in Nelly Lahoud's forthcoming book about the Abbottabad Papers, which examines the internal correspondence recovered by U.S. Special Forces from Usama Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad). Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Arabic are by this author.

This chapter contends that the label "Salafi-jihadism" is unhelpful: it misleadingly suggests that it represents the religious beliefs of groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, thereby explaining their propensity to engage in terrorism and also demarcating them from the religious beliefs that mainstream Sunnis profess. This chapter argues that the differences between Sunnis and jihadis²³³ are not over foundational religious beliefs (e.g., Qur'an, Hadith, law and theology), but are centered on the sources of legitimacy underpinning political processes and institutions, such as citizenship, elections, the global world order of nation-states and international law. Mainstream Sunnis accept the legitimacy of positive law as the source of the modern nation-state (or at least do not contest it), jihadis reject this legitimacy and argue that political injustice can only be remedied by making God's Word Supreme on earth through jihad. Since mainstream Sunnis and jihadis believe in the same foundational religious beliefs, the mantra of "defeating the ideology" as a policy goal in response to terrorism risks perceiving all Sunnis as potential jihadis. While the importance of religion should not be underestimated, it is relevant in the context of differences between and among jihadi groups. As such, understanding the religious beliefs that jihadi groups profess is key to assessing their internal dynamics and can signpost these groups' propensity to resort to more violence when/if they splinter. Religious differences should also be examined alongside a multitude of other components, such as those that allow groups to form and the factors that cause them to resort to violence.

This chapter consists of four sections: (1) the challenge of understanding jihadism as "Salafi-jihadism;" (2) the facile policy objective of "defeating the ideology" in response to terrorism; (3) the political lens that should be applied to the study of the ideologies of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State; (4) and the religious understanding needed to analyze their inter and intra-group dynamics. The concluding remarks consider the challenges facing the Islamic State in light of its territorial defeat and the death of its leader/caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in October 2019.

What is "Salafi-Jihadi" about Jihadism?!

Typologies are a useful classification tool designed to reduce complex phenomena into accessible concepts to the student and the expert alike. Yet the common typologies building on or qualifying "Salafism" (e.g., "Salafi-jihadism," "neo/ultra-Salafism") used to describe the religious ideologies of al-Qaeda and other jihadi groups serve to confuse rather than explain the role that religious beliefs play in these groups' militant worldview. Quintan Wiktorowicz's article "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement" has been influential in advancing such a typology; it has served as a reference for many who write about jihadi groups to the extent that "Salafi-jihadism" has come to assume a meaning that is self-explanatory.²³⁴ Wiktorowicz, it should be noted, is at pains to highlight the "diversity" within Salafism – namely the "purists, politicians, and jihadis," to account for the different and differing figures represented in the movement. Such figures, he explains, range from the one-time leader of al-Qaeda Osama Bin Laden to the authoritative religious scholar Nasir al-Din al-Albani.

Notwithstanding the "diversity" of Wiktorowicz's approach, even a superficial reading of Bin Laden's public statements, let alone his internal correspondence, is bound to challenge what is assumed to be "Salafi jihadi." As Christina Hellmich put it, the tendency to resort to typologies such as "Salafi-jihadism" (and a host of others) represents an "'outside-in' perspective," by which she means that it "assumes a concept of the underlying logic of Al Qaeda without sufficient reference to primary sources."²³⁵ This is particularly evident when we find that al-Qaeda's leaders are themselves concerned about the religious extremism displayed by those who identify themselves as "Salafi-jihadis."

²³³ Note that for the sake of brevity, I am using "Sunnis" and "Jihadis" to avoid repeating "Sunnis (jihadis and non-jihadis)." As I explain in the chapter, jihadis are Sunnis, but differ from mainstream Sunnis over the sources of legitimacy of political institutions.

²³⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 29:3, 207-239.

²³⁵ Christina Hellmich, "Creating the Ideology of Al Qaeda: From Hypocrites to Salafi-Jihadists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31:2, 111-124.

Should "Salafism" or "Salafi-jihadism" feature in our studies of jihadi groups? The short answer is: "No"; but it deserves a longer explanation. At a basic level, implicit in the use of the "Salafi-jihadism" typology are two related assumptions: first is the assumption that "Salafi-jihadism" is virtually synonymous with the religious beliefs of groups like al-Qaeda; second is the assumption that religious beliefs are the *drivers* of terrorism carried out by jihadi groups.

These two assumptions leave a range of issues unresolved. To start with, those who take it for granted that "Salafi-jihadism" is self-explanatory do not pinpoint how the Sunni branch of Islam and Salafism differ. More precisely, it is far from clear what makes Salafis "united by a common religious creed, which provides principles and a method for applying religious beliefs to contemporary issues and problems," as Wiktorowicz contends, in a way that sets them apart from mainstream Sunnis.²³⁶ In other words, do Salafis espouse religious beliefs that mainstream Sunnis negate? Beyond that, we are led to believe that terrorism carried out by "Salafi-jihadis" is *driven* by religious beliefs. While it is true that some jihadis are driven by sectarianism and rigid religious beliefs, we find ample references in the primary sources that show that jihadis like Bin Laden are driven by political grievances, and believe that jihad is the only path to address them. In the latter case, one can easily discern that seemingly rigid religious concepts can be strategically deployed to achieve political objectives. The political component of jihadism will be further developed in Section III.

To avoid an "outside-in" perspective, a useful starting point would be to examine how jihadi groups define and present themselves. In the case of al-Qaeda one observes that Bin Laden's public statements are not addressed to "Salafis" or "Salafi-jihadis." Instead, he consistently addressed himself to "*al-umma al-Islamiyya*" (global community of Muslims) and to "our Muslim brothers," a reference to the Qur'anic verse that stresses brotherhood among Muslims (Q. 49:10). He saw himself as a Muslim concerned about the *umma* and considered al-Qaeda an Islamic group that defends fellow Muslims, transcending national boundaries, ethnicities and race. Based on the Abbottabad letters, Bin Laden's Abbottabad family saw him in this light as well, and staunchly believed that his goal was to "raise the *umma's* standing" and to improve the plight of Muslims.²³⁷ Nowhere in his public statements did Bin Laden indicate that "Salafism" is a privileged or separate system of beliefs.

Bin Laden's public ecumenical disposition is consistent with the views he privately communicated to other al-Qaeda leaders, who also shared his views, among them his successor Ayman al-Zawahiri. Most revealing in the Abbottabad letters is the degree of political pragmatism we encounter among the leaders of al-Qaeda, including the group's legal scholar, Abu Yahya al-Libi (killed 2012), in their interpretations of Scripture. Their pragmatism is manifest in the choices of classical Islamic texts (and passages) they draw on to address the challenging political circumstances they faced and to justify the pragmatic decisions they made. We find in Bin Laden's letters an urgent desire to develop "*fiqh al-waqt*," a discourse that he believes should be premised on an understanding of the contemporary challenges facing Muslims, using vocabulary that does not repulse or alienate the new generation of Muslims. If "Salafi-jihadism" was central to al-Qaeda's worldview, as many analysts and commentators endlessly stress, we would surely expect its leaders to deliberate on how best to develop "*al-fiqh al-Salafi al-jihadi*." Yet, this was not part of their internal deliberations.

²³⁶ Beyond this basic question, the student of Islamic studies who read Yahya Michot's writings about Ibn Taymiyya would be confused by Wiktorowicz's description that Ibn Taymiyya "ardently rejected rationalism," see in particular Michot's "Raison, confession, Loi : une typologie musulmane du religieux," in his series *Textes Spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya*, XIV, <http://muslimphilosophy.org/ibn-taymiyah>. Other questions include describing Ibn Taymiyya as a "Sufi," p. 211. Wiktorowicz's discussion of *kalam* (Islamic theology) makes what is already a highly complicated topic convoluted and beyond comprehension; to my knowledge, *kalam* does not feature as a central concern for al-Qaeda.

²³⁷ Nelly Lahoud, forthcoming.

In 2019, Ayman al-Zawahiri made it clear that he intends to execute the pragmatic vision that Bin Laden was planning. In the lead article of the inaugural issue of al-Qaeda's new magazine, *Umma Wahida* (One Umma) released in March/April 2019, he highlighted (in red) excerpts from Bin Laden's declassified Abbottabad letters, in which he was venting about the numerous mistakes that regional jihadi groups had made and why their conduct has become a liability to jihad. Pointing to their indiscriminate attacks that result in civilian casualties including Muslims, Bin Laden lamented that through this conduct, jihadis may win some battles but they are sure to lose the war. Al-Zawahiri went on to cite more from Bin Laden's plan of action that he was preparing in 2010: "I plan to release a statement [announcing] that we are starting a new phase to correct [the mistakes] we made; in doing so, we shall reclaim, God willing, the trust of a large segment of those who lost their trust in the jihadis."²³⁸ After citing Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri asks: "Do we have this kind of courage to enable us to be a role model for the *umma* so that we may gain its trust and support?" Thus, the vision that Bin Laden conceived of in a letter he wrote in 2010 for internal deliberations among al-Qaeda leaders is publicly adopted by al-Zawahiri in 2019.

Similarly, the "Salafi-jihadi" designation is missing from the public statements of the leaders of the Islamic State – the group that al-Qaeda once welcomed under its official umbrella in December 2004 and publicly disowned nearly ten years later (in February 2014). They address themselves to "*al-muslimun*" (Muslims), not to "Salafi-jihadis." It is noteworthy that "*al-mu'minun*" (faithful/believers) is noticeably more recurrent in the Islamic State's public statements and used interchangeably with "Muslims,"²³⁹ an emphasis which will be revisited later in this chapter. The group's references to the "*salaf*" (pious predecessors) is critical to the Islamic State's worldview, but it is laid it out in a manner addressed to and inclusive of every observing Muslim.

The distinct theological designation that comes up in jihadi literature is the reference to *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a*, which allows us to understand how the *salaf*, not *Salafism*, feature in the jihadis' worldview. According to Patricia Crone, *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a* was a "self-flattering description" of Hadith scholars (*ahl al-hadith*); it emerged during the ninth century as "boundaries hardened" between various groups over theological questions. Many groups, Crone observes, adopted it at the time "without necessarily meaning very much by it."²⁴⁰ In the modern period, this designation is not inclusive of all Muslims, instead it is adopted by Sunnis, often in the short form as *ahl al-Sunna*. In broad terms, it demarcates the Sunnis from the Shi'a, the other major sect in Islam; it also implies that Sunnis are those who follow the teachings of the *salaf*, pious predecessors, meaning the Companions of the prophet and their immediate followers whose disposition is to maintain the unity of the community (*al-jama'a*) to avoid sedition (*fitna*). The emphasis on the *jama'a* needs to be understood in the context of the civil wars that erupted during the early history of Islam and the political and religious contexts that led to the formation of sects.²⁴¹

From the Sunnis' perspective, by virtue of their close proximity to the prophet Muhammad, the *salaf* were able to witness how he translated God's Words into practice, and therefore they consider that they had an advantage to understand the essence of the creed. It follows, according to this logic, that Sunnis today should be led by the example of the *salaf* and that of their immediate followers (*atba' al-salaf*). In some respects, this expands the corpus of religious knowledge from which to draw, that is why the claim to uphold the creed of the *salaf* has been used by those seeking reform (*islah*) in the modern era as well as those who preach an austere

²³⁸ SOCOM-2012-0000019, CTC, Letter from Usama Bin Laden to 'Atiyya, 2010.

²³⁹ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi used it at least three times as the title of his public statements.

²⁴⁰ Patricia Crone, *God's Rule, Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 126.

²⁴¹ The formation of sects is neatly covered in Crone, *God's Rule*, see in particular chapters 2, 7, 8, 11, 16.

version of Islam.²⁴² Both Sunni camps are a variation of what Michael Cook describes as “fundamentalists,” whose “loyalty to a distant past gives [them] greater leeway for jettisoning what they don’t want while recovering what they do want.”²⁴³

Jihadis contend that they too are proponents of *islah*, but because the ruling governments in the Muslim world oppressed all the reform movements, they had to translate theirs into jihad in the first instance.²⁴⁴ Jihadis also present themselves as the adherents of the creed espoused by *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a*. This features in al-Qaeda’s “Bylaws” (*al-lawā’ih al-dakhiliyya*) that were likely put together in the late 1980s in a section that defines the group’s worldview and its goal:

Al-Qaeda is a group of Muhammad’s community, its creed is that of *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a* as understood by the pious predecessors ... it adopts jihad as its path (*manhaj*) to bring about change to make God’s Word Supreme on earth.²⁴⁵

It similarly features in the foundational ideological literature of the Islamic State. According to Abu Suleiman al-Utaybi – the lead judge of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), the parent group of the Islamic State, the group considers itself to be part of *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a*,²⁴⁶ “adherents of right practice and communal solidarity.”²⁴⁷ Al-Utaybi adds a theological layer asserting that *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a* is the same group that shall be victorious (*al-ta’ifa al-mansoura*) and shall be saved (*al-ta’ifa al-najiya*), i.e., destined to paradise.²⁴⁸ Similarly, the new leaders of ISI under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (killed October 2019), also addressed themselves to Sunnis (*ahl al-Sunna*), including the tribal Sunni leaders of Iraq.²⁴⁹ Accordingly, like mainstream Sunnis, both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State use the designation in terms that are inclusive of all Sunnis.

Thus, the “*salaf*” in “Salafi-jihadism” cannot be neatly demarcated from the “*salaf*” that mainstream Sunnis venerate, and in this sense, mainstream Sunnis and jihadis all partake in the pool of religious beliefs that unites *ahl al-Sunna wa-al-jama'a*. As such, the use of “Salafi-jihadism” as a reference point explaining both the religious path to radicalization that engenders terrorism by jihadi groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State and to demarcate their religious beliefs from those that mainstream Sunnis profess is unhelpful. At best, the designation means different things to different people, and most often, it is unintelligible.

“Defeating the ideology”?

A variation of “Salafi-jihadism,” or perhaps a consequence of it, is the facile perception that jihadi groups espouse an “evil ideology” that represents a “perversion of Islam.” This carries the assumption that the terrorism perpetrated by al-Qaeda and the Islamic State will only come to an

²⁴² See “*Islah*”, *EI* (2); and “*Wahhabiyya*”, *EI* (2).

²⁴³ Michael Cook, *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics: The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 375. Cook has a specific definition of fundamentalism and conservatism (pp. 371-5), the two examples may come close to the spirit of his definition if his footnote on the same page is included (“fundamentalists may be unprincipled and conservatives may bend”).

²⁴⁴ See for instance Usama Bin Laden, “*Ila al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Haramayn Khassatan wa-ila al-Muslimin fi Ghayriha`Ammatan*,” December 15, 2004.

²⁴⁵ AFGP-2002-600178, Harmony Documents, Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2013/10/Al-Qa%E2%80%99ida%E2%80%99s-Structure-and-Bylaws-Original1.pdf>

²⁴⁶ Abu Suleiman al-Utaybi, “*Da’wat al-Tawhid*,” 2008/2009. *Ahl al-Sunna wa-al-jama'a* has featured continuously in the Islamic State’s public statements, the latest is in the public statement of its spokesman in January 2020.

²⁴⁷ As translated by Patricia Crone, *God’s Rule: Government and Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 126.

²⁴⁸ Abu Suleiman al-Utaybi, op. cit.

²⁴⁹ See Abu Muhammad al-Adnanani, “*Inna Dawlata al-Islami Baqiya*,” July 8, 2011. This is probably the first public statement of al-Adnanani, and it is interesting to note that in it, he eulogized Usama Bin Laden and announces the names of the new ISI leadership.

end once the ideology is eradicated. Many politicians understandably resort to this mantra, often in response to terrorist attacks carried out by jihadi groups in the name of Islam.²⁵⁰

How useful or indeed feasible is it to “defeat” the ideology? The religious references that jihadi groups, like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, emphasize are themes that they consider to be fundamentals to Islamic teachings. They draw on the classical Islamic corpus that they have in common with mainstream Sunnis, and as noted in the previous section, one cannot draw a neat line where Sunni Islam ends and “Salafi-jihadism” takes over. Accordingly, to distinguish between Sunni Islam and the ideology underpinning “Salafi-jihadism” as a way of understanding jihadi groups would merely confuse the students of Islamic studies and political science alike. Since the understanding of these groups is essential to security, especially as it relates to terrorism carried out in the name of Islam, the “Salafi-jihadism” label would likely mislead counter-terrorism (CT) practitioners. That is because all Sunnis, including al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, claim to adhere to the beliefs espoused by *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jama'a*. In which case, what is the ideology to be defeated? More precisely, if jihadi groups do not profess beliefs that are explicitly negated by mainstream Sunnis, is it possible to demarcate between the religious beliefs that Sunnis profess and the “evil ideology” of jihadis? For the most part, studies drawing on the “Salafi-jihadi” designation skirt such questions.

As far as the religious beliefs are concerned, the (politically incorrect) answer is that jihadis and mainstream Sunnis are all equally Sunnis. This is to say that all jihadis are Sunnis, but not vice versa. The differences between jihadis and non-jihadis are not about substance, instead they differ over the interpretation of substance and often in their selection of themes they choose to emphasize in support of their respective interpretations. In the first instance, the differences concern the interpretation of the Qur’an, which observing Muslims believe to be God’s Word as revealed to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. Differences over interpretation extend to variations in emphases that are manifest in the selection of hadiths (i.e., reported sayings and deeds of Muhammad) and choices of texts (or passages) from the classical Islamic corpus that are cited in support of certain norms and practices.²⁵¹

For instance, a Muslim pluralist can authoritatively cite Qur’an 2:256 in which God decrees that “there is no compulsion in religion” in support of religious pluralism in Islam. A literal reading of the verse suggests that God disapproves of coercing people into adopting religious beliefs that they do not profess in their heart; and it is possible to infer from the same verse that pluralism is rooted in the Qur’an.²⁵² The leaders of the Islamic State have equally authoritatively cited another verse in the Qur’an (Q. 9: 5) when in 2014 they enslaved the Yazidi minority in Sinjar, Iraq for refusing to convert and submit to the sovereignty of the Islamic State in the area. In that verse, God commands believers to “kill the mushrikin [i.e., infidels] wherever you find them, and capture them, and besiege them ... But if they repent, establish prayer, and give zakah [i.e., alms], let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”²⁵³

It is in the interpretive sphere that the Muslim pluralist and the Islamic State supporter part ways. The Muslim pluralist would not negate the verse that calls on Muslims to “kill the mushrikin” (Qur’an 9: 5), but would argue that the historical context in which the verse was revealed necessitated such measures; that the historical circumstances are not the same today and the Islamic State is in violation of the intended spirit of the verse, for God is “Forgiving and

²⁵⁰ See for instance Theresa May’s speech following the London Bridge attacks on June 4, 2017, <https://time.com/4804620/theresa-may-london-attack-speech/>

²⁵¹ See Asma Afsaruddin, “Absolutism vs. Pluralism in Islam Today,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, Winter 2008, Vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 23-27.

²⁵² For the historical context of this verse, see Patricia Crone, “No pressure, then: religious freedom in Islam,” *Open Democracy*, November 7, 2009, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/no-compulsion-in-religion/>

²⁵³ The verse is as translated in “The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour,” *Dabiq* 4, Sept.- Oct. 2014: 14-17; the article was reproduced in French, in Issue 5 of *Dar al-Islam*. Both *Dabiq* and *Dar al-Islam* are official Islamic State publications.

Merciful”; and would cite Qur’an 5:32 to contend that the killing of an innocent person is tantamount to the killing of all mankind in Islam. The Islamic State supporter would likely respond that killing the infidels and saving an innocent person are not mutually exclusive. The group considered its enslavement of the Yazidis – including distributing their captive women (*sabaya*) as spoils of war (*ghanima*) among Islamic State fighters to be used as sex slaves (*jariyat*) – as a sign of its political and military success. The Islamic State explicitly stated that it was following in the footsteps of the prophet Muhammad, and its practices are in line with the rules of engagement Muslims and non-Muslims practiced in the pre-modern era.²⁵⁴ As devastating as this was and continues to be for the Yazidis, and as repulsive as it was for the modern sensitivity of most Muslims and non-Muslims, the Islamic State was not *perverting* the Islamic tradition.²⁵⁵ Accordingly, it would be futile for the neutral outsider to search for the “true” meaning of Scripture in such debates, and would have to settle for an assortment of religious truths. It follows that if CT practitioners are driven solely by the religious beliefs of suspects engaged in terrorism in the name of Islam, they would likely find themselves positing that every Sunni is a terrorist, at least *in potentia*, until proven otherwise.

This is not to diminish the gulf between mainstream Sunnis and jihadis. Indeed, the differences over interpreting Scripture and the sources of legitimacy underpinning political institutions can assume irreconcilable divisions between the two camps. As will be discussed in Section IV, some jihadis are prepared to shed the blood of fellow Muslims, including fellow jihadis, over such differences. This explains why the politically correct stance that contends that jihadi ideology is “a perversion of Islam” – however analytically incorrect it is, resonates among mainstream Muslims. According to one survey conducted in the Middle East in 2015, at a time when the Islamic State was at its territorial peak, “at least three-quarters of millennial respondents” perceived groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State to represent “either a complete perversion of Islam’s teachings or mostly wrong.”²⁵⁶

The differences over the interpretation of religious beliefs are not just between mainstream Sunnis and jihadis, but are also most prevalent among jihadis. In this respect the designation “Salafi-jihadism” is even least helpful; indeed, when ideological differences emerge within jihadi groups, a greater level of incomprehension ensues if one is to be guided by analysts who designate these groups as “Salafi-jihadis” whose ideology should be defeated. What might be the next step for the CT practitioner who safely assumed that “Salafi-jihadism” is self-explanatory as far as religious beliefs that engender terrorism are concerned? Should s/he look for something more or ultra “Salafi-jihadi” to explain the differences between the religious worldviews of the Islamic State when compared to those of al-Qaeda? Taking such designations to their logical conclusions would be to come up with more unintelligible designations, such as the “moderate Salafi-jihadism” of al-Qaeda versus the “extremist/ultra Salafi-jihadism” brand of the Islamic State. These are hardly the analytical tools that CT practitioners would find useful.

The Politico

In her seminal article “The Causes of Terrorism,” the doyen of terrorism studies Martha Crenshaw identified a range of factors that need to coalesce for terrorism to emerge.²⁵⁷ “The first condition that can be considered a direct cause of terrorism,” Crenshaw argues, “is the existence

²⁵⁴ See Nelly Lahoud, “Empowerment or Subjugation: An Analysis of ISIL’s Gendered Messaging,” UN Women, June 2018, pp. 16-18, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lahoud-Fin-Web-rev.pdf>

²⁵⁵ See Lena Salaymeh, “Early Islamic Legal-Historical Precedents: Prisoners of War,” *Law and History Review*, Fall 2008, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 522-43. My thanks to Robert Hoyland for drawing this article to my attention.

²⁵⁶ Cited in Jack Moore, “Three-Quarters of Young Middle East Muslims View ISIS as ‘Perversion of Islam,’” *Newsweek*, January 15, 2016, <https://www.newsweek.com/three-quarters-young-middle-east-muslims-view-isis-perversion-islam-416109>

²⁵⁷ Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Jul., 1981), pp. 379-399. Though Crenshaw does not examine jihadi groups in her article, the conceptual framework she outlines that covers “preconditions” and “precipitants” is particularly useful for the dispassionate study of jihadi groups.

of concrete grievances among an identifiable subgroup of a larger population.” When a social movement develops to address those grievances, Crenshaw continues, terrorism could result by “an extremist faction of this broader movement.”²⁵⁸

Though political grievances may not be identical across all jihadi groups, they nevertheless permeate jihadi ideological literature. The late historian Patricia Crone provides a broad conceptual framework that identifies a set of grievances that marry political and cultural factors, and it serves as a helpful lens through which to study jihadism. She compares jihadis to Moses who rebelled and led his people out of slavery; in her mind, Moses serves as a paradigmatic model for nativists, nationalists and other rebels across history and cultures. In that light, Crone considers a jihadi as the “acculturated native who rebels,” by which she means:

A person hailing from a politically subordinate culture who is living in the society of a politically dominant culture and who finds that his ancestral rules are incompatible with the society in which he is living and in which he may even have been born but against which he now takes political action ... They [i.e., jihadis] are not always immigrants in the literal sense of having migrated from a specific country to another, but they have always migrated in cultural terms ... They have all suffered colonization of the mind ... They have all assimilated and internalized at least some of the beliefs and values of the conquerors and they come to feel that they don't belong, they all want to go home. And here they face the problem of what home is there for them to go to. Sometimes the imperial power has destroyed their native polity, sometimes they turned it into a puppet state ruled by collaborators ... in effect the jihadist born in the Middle East can also be classified as acculturated Westernized natives who turned rebel ... He hasn't got a political home to go to, he has to create it, or as he sees it, he has to recreate it or he will find it in the past.²⁵⁹

Crone neatly captures several key factors that permeate the jihadi literature, and they allow us to pinpoint the political parameters relevant to the study of jihadism. These include in the first place why and how the past is put to use by today's jihadis to (re)create a political home, drawing on Westernized modern tools to achieve their end. The past the jihadis enlist to achieve their goals assumes the form of an Islamic religious heritage, with religion being more than “just piety and devotion,” to borrow a neat description that Robert Hoyland made, but also about “power and identity,” which allowed Islam to be “integral to the conquests and the evolution of an Islamic empire.”²⁶⁰ An extension of this religious heritage, the past also translates into a geopolitical space (*umma*) that serves the jihadi project with two purposes: the first is a tangible global resource that could serve to supply jihadis wherever Muslims may live, the second is an aspirational goal of recreating the geographical map of the *umma* in the form of the caliphate – the historical global Islamic State of the *umma*.

It is through issues that are fundamentally political that the differences between mainstream Sunnis and jihadis become apparent. As noted earlier, the differences between Sunnis and jihadis are not over foundational religious beliefs (e.g., Qur'an, Hadith, law and theology), but are centered on the sources of legitimacy underpinning political processes and institutions, such as citizenship, elections, the global world order of nation-states and international law. The non-jihadis would embrace citizenship or at least not contest it; have loyalty to or at least not contest the legitimacy of the nation-state and of its national government, and they may work in government or enlist in the army; and depending on where they live, they may vote, run for

²⁵⁸ Crenshaw, p. 383.

²⁵⁹ Patricia Crone, “The Acculturated Native Who Rebels,” IAS, December 2, 2009, <https://video.ias.edu/file/21454> Crone's lecture is not published (to my knowledge), my transcribed passages may therefore include some minor inaccuracies.

²⁶⁰ Robert Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 5.

election as part of a political party, and would either support (or not contest) the legitimacy of regional and international institutions such as the United Nations.

Jihadis, on the other hand, reject the legitimacy of all of these political processes and institutions, and the arguments they put forward range from the political to the theological, and at times they marry both: they would argue that citizenship divides Muslims along geographical, national, and ethnic lines when in fact Muslims are united by their brotherhood and sisterhood through Islam (they would add that converts are welcome). Muslims, they assert, do not need nationalities, they associate with believers through *wala'*, bonding with those who love God and obey Him; and they do not exclude believers on grounds of ethnicity, race or nationality, instead they dissociate from (*bara'*) those who, unlike them, do not love God and hate his enemies. The jihadis further contend that the nation-state is an illegitimate polity that serves to divide the *umma* as a geopolitical entity, and by extension government institutions are also illegitimate; and they reject the legitimacy of political parties, including those that advance their political agenda on the basis of Islamic teachings such as the Muslim Brotherhood, since they conform to positive law (*al-qawanin al-wad'iyya*), when God is the sole Legislator and Sovereignty belongs to Him alone. Of course, the same line of argument extends to rejecting the legitimacy of international institutions. In the jihadi literature, these arguments go hand in hand with the articulation of concrete political grievances that point to the autocratic nature of the regimes of most Muslim-majority states; the corruption of their leaders; the oppression, imprisonment and torture of those who seek genuine reform; and, very importantly, they point to the support Muslim autocratic rulers receive from Western democracies. This last point allows jihadis to argue that democracy is not the answer that could address the plight of Muslims around the world; instead, jihad is the only solution that would rid Muslims of their despots.²⁶¹

It is ultimately with the role of jihad that the differences between mainstream Sunnis and jihadis assume a degree that is worth the attention of the counter terrorism practitioner. Mainstream Sunnis who do not contest the legitimacy of their nation/ality are unlikely to resort to (global) jihad or organized political violence against their governments, (un)consciously accepting that the state has a monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force within its territory, even if they have not read Max Weber.²⁶² Since jihadis reject the legitimacy of the nation-state itself, and have amassed ample grievances against it, they call for and resort to jihad to bring about a radical change to the nature of the polity itself. Drawing on the classical legal theory of warfare that medieval jurists developed, jihadis contend that jihad today is *defensive (jihad al-daf)*, and as such, it is the individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*) of every Muslim. Their jihad, they assert, is to be waged not just against the infidels, but also against their own rulers who are in apostasy of Islam. In this respect, the designation "jihadism" (and not "Salafi-jihadism") captures the political identity of jihadis. It encapsulates the perceived legitimacy of their jihad, which they establish by drawing on Islamic legal norms and practice, commensurate with pre-modern warfare in Islamic history, and in defiance of international law and the laws of the modern nation-state.²⁶³

Differences within Jihadism

If the first three sections of this essay argued that religious designations are not helpful to the understanding of the differences between jihadis and non-jihadis, this section contends that an understanding of theological differences are critical to navigating the jihadi landscape. This is not to suggest that political considerations are marginal, far from it. But since all jihadis, despite their differences, reject the legitimacy of any framework that could be remotely compromised by

²⁶¹ I have developed these points in my "The Evolution of Modern Jihadism," *Religion: Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, August 2016.

²⁶² This is not in the absolute sense. Of course there are groups with militant wings, such as Hamas, Hizbullah, among others, but these groups are not global jihadis, they have political wings/parties that contest elections and do not call for the radical transformation of the state itself. When they engage in international terrorism (e.g., Hizbullah), they do so not as global jihadis but as state-proxies.

²⁶³ Ibid.

positive law, their political references are rooted in religion and are necessarily articulated in Islamic theological vocabulary. Indeed, religion serves as the sole basis for their political platforms. In other words, whereas political positions separate mainstream Sunnis from jihadis, understanding religious debates within jihadism serve as a necessary guide to the ideological strength/cohesion of jihadi groups and could even project the kind of frictions that may develop and lead to more violence when groups seek to outbid each other. It was such differences within jihadism that led to the proclamation of the Islamic State/caliphate in 2014, which saw the Iraq-based group seek to outbid al-Qaeda, its parent group. In what follows, I focus on this key difference that predates the proclamation of the caliphate.

Statehood/caliphate

In February 2014, al-Qaeda released a public statement dissociating itself from the group that was about to eclipse it. As debates in policy circles raged on whether to refer to the rising group as "ISIS," "ISIL" or "Daesh," al-Qaeda's designation proved to be the most undermining; it cut ISIL down to size by dismissing its claim to statehood and referring to it as a "group" (*Jama'at al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa-al-Sham*).²⁶⁴ The rift between the two groups had been brewing behind the scenes since at least 2006 when the Iraq-based group proclaimed itself the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), and designated its leader Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi (killed 2010) as *amir al-mu'minin* (Leader of the Faithful), one of the titles of the caliph. In late 2006 or 2007, a letter reached Bin Laden concerning "the Iraqi issue," penned by someone close to the scene, who, in his words, "I know [the Iraqi file] closely and I deal with it directly through various parties that are influential on the battlefield." The letter includes the following passage:

The proclamation of the Islamic State is the most significant event of late. I doubt that your eminence by virtue of your precedence [in jihad], your long experience, including your extensive dealings with various parties, would approve of this adventurous and hasty step that endangers the jihadi enterprise in Iraq. [The state was proclaimed] even though it has no presence in reality, it is meaningless and the jihadis do not govern territory, and the authority and all government institutions are in the hands of the enemy. The jihadis cannot even be visible on the streets of Iraq.²⁶⁵

We know from other Abbottabad letters and open source information that many jihadis rejected the legitimacy of the Islamic *State* of Iraq (emphasis on the "State" in its name) on Islamic legal grounds. Two key issues were raised, (1) ISI's lack of territorial strength (*tamkin*), and (2) its leader was unknown. Though Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi released numerous audio statements, he never appeared in public; and according to Islamic law, Muslims cannot be expected to pledge their allegiance to a leader whose identity is in doubt.

After Abu 'Umar's death in 2010, the new leaders of ISI maintained that they had *tamkin*, and introduced their new leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi also as *amir al-mu'min*. It is worth noting that in his first public statement, though al-Baghdadi acknowledged the death of Bin Laden, he did not pledge allegiance to al-Zawahiri.²⁶⁶ But since the group's area of influence was limited to certain provinces in Iraq, the proclamation of the state did not initially affect jihadi groups other than those who were Iraq-based. That is perhaps why al-Qaeda's leaders sought to manage the differences internally.

²⁶⁴ Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad – al-Qiyada al-'Amma, "Bayan bi-Sha'ni 'Alaqaat Jama'at Qa'idat al-Jihad bi-Jama'at al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa-al-Sham, Markaz al-Fajr li-al-'Ilam," *Shabakat al-Fida' al-Islamiyya*, February 2, 2014.

²⁶⁵ ODNI, 2016, <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/arabic/Arabic%20Letter%20Regarding%20Working%20in%20Islamic%20Countries.pdf>

²⁶⁶ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "Wa-Ya'ba Allah Illa an Yatimma Nurahu," August 2012.

In late 2013, with the war in Syria attracting foreign fighters, the fortunes of ISI changed. It captured territories in Iraq and Syria; in June 2014, it dropped all geographical references in its name, proclaiming itself *the* Islamic State; its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi appeared in public in the al-Nouri mosque in Mosul, thereby making his identity known for the first time; and in November the same year, the Islamic State launched its *wilayat* (provinces) project.

Did the Islamic State meet all the Islamic legal requirements before it took this ambitious step? So confident was its leaders that two months before the state was proclaimed, its spokesman Abu Muhammad al-'Adnani made a public supplication (*mubahala*), imploring God to reward his group with victory if their state was indeed legitimate. But if it was an lawful state that was made up of "dissenters" (*dawlat khawarij*),²⁶⁷ al-'Adnani went on, God should unleash His wrath on it, break it up and kill its leaders.²⁶⁸ When the group maintained its momentum, the same al-'Adnani proclaimed the Islamic State, and claimed that it the Islamic State is the same state God promised in His book (*wa'du Allah*), according to Q. 24: 55, hence the title that accompanied the proclamation, "This is God's Promise."

In view of the rapid territorial gains that the Islamic State made within a relatively short period, al-'Adnani was able to match the Promise with facts on the ground. Not only did the Islamic State meet God's Law, according to al-'Adnani, but it would have been sinful, he contended, not to proclaim it. He affirmed that the group had territorial strength (*tamkin*), such that "God's Law (*hudud*) is fully enforced, the gaps [threatening] the state's frontiers are closed ... and people's lives and properties are secured."²⁶⁹ Reminding Muslims of their religious duties, he added that "the only thing that's missing, and it is a communal duty (*wajib kifa'*) [on Muslims], the *umma* would sin if it neglects it ... namely, the [establishment] of the caliphate."²⁷⁰

In Islamic legal parlance, an Islamic State is the caliphate. Thus, what are the differences, if any, between the Islamic State of Iraq that was proclaimed in 2006 and the Islamic State of 2014? If there were no differences, why proclaim the state twice? Such questions could have been forcefully made by al-Qaeda in 2014, but they were not because the 2006 proclamation went uncontested by Bin Laden for years. The 2014 proclamation had a lot to do not just with the group's territorial strength by then but also by intra-group rivalries. By then, it was in a stronger position to oust al-Qaeda; and though it was not successful at doing so, the Islamic State undoubtedly eclipsed its parent group. Thus, if al-Qaeda represents the "acculturated natives who rebel" against the West and their autocratic rules, the leaders of the Islamic State are the *nouveaux* rebels who sought to oust the *anciens* jihadis.

From al-Qaeda's perspective, the proclamation of the Islamic State in 2014 was a unilateral decision on the part of the Iraq-based group. Though the 2006 proclamation raised concerns within al-Qaeda internally, its leaders maintained their public support for the group, and sought to diminish the importance of the new name. In 2014, al-Qaeda was facing a more powerful jihadi group. Since the decision was not done in consultation (*shura*) with other jihadi groups, Ayman al-Zawahiri swiftly rejected the legitimacy of al-Baghdadi as caliph, and painted him as an usurper of the title.²⁷¹ It is possible that the leaders of the Islamic State reasoned that they had no obligation to consult al-Zawahiri given that he had dissociated his group from ISIL four months earlier. But the Islamic State did not even attempt to make any "brotherly" outreach/diplomacy towards regional jihadi groups that had pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda (e.g., al-Shabaab, AQAP, AQIM) in an attempt to win them to its side. Instead, al-'Adnani called on

²⁶⁷ The Khawarij is a derogatory reference to a seventh century group that rebelled against the nascent Islamic establishment at the time. See Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*, chapter one.

²⁶⁸ Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, "Ma Kana Hadha Manhajuna wa-lan Yakun," April 2014.

²⁶⁹ Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, 'Hadha Wa'du Allah,' 29 June 2014.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ayman al-Zawahiri, 'al-Rab' al-Islami (1),' March 2015.

them to pledge allegiance to the caliph, and failing that, he declared that “the legitimacy of your groups and organizations has ceased,” now that the caliphate is established.²⁷²

The inevitable path to greater religious extremism

While it remained under the shadow of al-Qaeda, the ISI sought to distinguish itself from its parent group through greater religiosity, manifest in the public statements of its leaders. For example, while Bin Laden addressed “Muslims” in his public statements and highlighted political causes to incite Muslims to join the jihad, the two al-Baghdadis favored religious themes instead, addressing themselves to the “Faithful/Believers,” and many of their public statements were colored with sectarian references. This reflected ISI leaders’ disposition to a more rigid understanding of the Islamic creed, and it also positioned them to make a greater claim to be the defenders of the faith; and in 2014, to turn this into reclaiming the dignity of the Faithful by giving Muslims political and military superiority (*shawka*). In some respects, the Islamic State’s religious rigidity and its propensity towards more violence, e.g., public beheading and stoning, was inevitable. The group justified its actions by using examples drawn from the classical Islamic corpus, and it successfully (and lawfully) presented itself to its supporters as the *nouveau regime* of jihadism. The dynamics at play should be understood through both a theological lens and a political one. It allows the Islamic State to make a greater claim to upholding the Islamic faith through a greater level of violence than its competitor al-Qaeda was prepared to do. Equally importantly, a greater level of violence is inevitable if the Islamic State is to be successful in outbidding al-Qaeda and ousting it as the leader of global jihad.²⁷³

The Islamic State’s disposition towards greater rigidity in its interpretation of the Islamic creed, however, has been a double-edged sword. While this allowed the group to outbid al-Qaeda, it is the case that the jihadis’ religious rigidity lends itself to internal factionalism and dissent.²⁷⁴ In the eyes of its jihadi rivals, the group’s territorial losses undermined the credibility of the Islamic State’s religious claims, not least because they could contend that its territorial losses were God’s way of signaling to His believers that it is not the state that He promised. Even from within the Islamic State, the group’s rigid parameters have paved the way for dissenters who took to drawing on religious arguments to mount their opposition, signaling splintering and potentially more violence.²⁷⁵

Concluding Remarks: The Prospects of the Islamic State

The Islamic State’s caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who saw both the group’s conquests (*futuhat*) and its territorial losses, was killed by U.S. Special Forces in Idlib, Syria, in October 2019. During his leadership, two broad narratives defined the Islamic State’s highs and lows: the first centered on *tamkin* as a sign of God’s Promise, allowing the group to claim divine legitimacy with its territorial gains as proof. The post-territorial narrative has shifted, centering instead on the Promise of *tamkin*. Lest his supporters doubt that God’s (second) Promise after the Islamic State’s territorial losses, al-Baghdadi assured them that this is a test of their faith, because when “God wants to bestow dignity and victory upon his worshippers, he breaks them first”,²⁷⁶ perhaps God may want to bestow airpower on the state that He promised next time around.

²⁷² Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, ‘Hadha Wa’du Allah.’

²⁷³ The outbidding dynamics are discussed in the study of suicide bombing by Palestinian groups in Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

²⁷⁴ Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-Destruction*, London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2010.

²⁷⁵ See Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, “Opposition to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: Testimony on ‘Repentance’ Cases in Wilayat al-Furat,” October 26, 2019, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/23413/opposition-to-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-testimony-on>; See Cole Bunzel, “The Islamic State’s Mufti on Trial: The Saga of the ‘Silsila ‘Imiyya,’” *CTC Sentinel*, October 2018, Vol. 11, Issue, 9, <https://ctc.usma.edu/islamic-states-mufti-trial-saga-silsila-ilmiyya/>

²⁷⁶ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ‘Wa-Bashshir al-Mu’minin’, transcript available in al-Naba’ (145), August 2018. pp. 1, 11-15.

Yet despite *tamkin* being aspirational in its current narrative, the leaders of the Islamic State have not let go of their claim that their state endures and expands "*baqiya wa-tatamaddad*." This even featured in the group's statement announcing the death of al-Baghdadi and introducing his successor, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.²⁷⁷ To continue to make such a claim requires that the Islamic State supporters maintain not just their "patience" and "steadfastness," as the same statement calls on its supporters to do, but also arm themselves with a large dose of creative imagination to convince themselves that their virtual caliphate is in fact expanding. Interesting to note that in his January 2020 public statement, the spokesman of the Islamic State, Abu Hamza al-Qurashi, stressed "*baqiya*"/endures several times, but in reference to the *milla*/religion rather than *dawla*/state.²⁷⁸

Are we then witnessing an end of an era for the Islamic State in light of the group's territorial losses and the death of al-Baghdadi? It is important to recognize that the weakening of a terrorist group does not necessarily mean that the threat it poses is automatically diminished. Indeed, in the short term, the threat may even increase, and judging by the Islamic State's ongoing attacks in Iraq and Syria, the threat it poses endures, even if its territory does not. It is also likely that the group's fighters will keep up the fight, since surrendering does not promise anything more than detention centers in northeast Syria, particularly since various states are reluctant to repatriate their captured nationals (fighters, wives and children). It is also the case that the Islamic State's provinces and "soldiers of the caliphate" outside Iraq and Syria have their own *raison d'être* to exist, based on their own respective *milieu* and irrespective of the conditions facing Islamic State core. As such, the Islamic State endures (*baqiya*) through the output of violence in its name.

However, the Islamic State is clearly undergoing an end of an era of a certain kind. In addition to becoming a state that endures, not in reality, but in the collective imagination of its supporters, the death of al-Baghdadi has accentuated some additional challenges it faces. While a successor to al-Baghdadi and a deputy were named in a timely fashion, the identity of the new caliph was not established soon thereafter through a public appearance, as legally required. Yet it is noteworthy that the Islamic State's official media outlets have reported that the new caliph has received the *bay'at* of numerous provinces and/or soldiers of the caliphate (about 22 at the time of writing) in the form of photographs of some men raising their guns and seemingly pledging their *bay'a*. It is unexpected that they do so before Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi's identity is established, because, as noted earlier, Muslims are not expected to pledge allegiance to a leader whose identity is in doubt. It is to be remembered that in 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made his first public *début* (July 4th) within days of the proclamation of the caliphate (June 29th); this was clearly orchestrated before the provinces were launched in November that same year. During the Islamic State's ascent, the *bay'at* were in the form of official statements, audio or video, unlike the mere photographs reported this time.

The provinces continue to be important for the Islamic State, but it is possible that the group is struggling to keep them all in the fold. The group's spokesman announced a "a new phase" in January 2020, with the principal goal of "fighting the Jews" and "reclaiming what they stole," namely *bayt al-maqdis* (Palestine). Towards this end, he appealed in particular to the province of Sinai (Egypt/Gaza) to launch its deadly weapons, including its "chemical weapons" and ignore the likes of Hamas, "the apostates and collaborators," who are nothing but "the dogs and slaves of Iran."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ *Al-Naba'*, Issue 206, October 31, 2019.

²⁷⁸ Abu Hamza al-Qurashi, "Dammara Allahu 'Alayhim wa-lil-Kafirina Amthaluha," January 2020, accessed on Jihadology.net.

²⁷⁹ This is consistent with the position of all jihadi groups, often at pains to distinguish themselves from the political platforms of Islamist groups like Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. In the eyes of jihadis, Islamist groups are compromised because they embraced the legitimacy of the nation-state, form political parties and contest elections. In doing so, they let go of the legitimacy of jihad.

It is noteworthy that some provinces who have been active since October 2019 are yet to pledge their allegiance to the new caliph, but it is not clear if this is due to the fact that his identity remains obscure. Of course, even if Abu Ibrahim al-Hashim does indeed exist, making a public appearance would certainly risk his security. But if he does not establish his identity, the Islamic State's jihadi rivals may well point out that the group lacks *shawka* and undermine the group's legitimacy in the eyes of its supporters. This may also fuel speculations that the new caliph does not exist, comparable to the speculations made about Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, and dissent and rebellion may ensue within the Islamic State and its provinces. Should such a scenario develop, one or more of the ambitious provinces may decide that the center of the caliphate should shift outside the Middle East.

Salafist Mindset: Jihadist Dialectic or the Salafist-Jihadist Nexus

By
Nico Prucha

Much has been written and said about Salafis, Salafists, or Salafism and the relationship to terrorism. Since September 11, 2001, when the world was shocked by the devastating terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., Salafism has often been linked to al-Qaeda, and later, to the Islamic State. Hence, Salafism and Jihad/ Jihadism are almost intimately tied from an 'outsider's' perspective, linked to terrorism, and it is this outsider's perspective, that oftentimes does neither have the breadth or depth of analysing the rich corpus of Arabic language sources jihadists are so prolific to share, curate and disseminate to justify their actions. Within this Jihadist wealth of materials, shared and disseminated on- and offline, specific Salafist writings are featured prominently and recurring over the past decades.

While much contemporary academic attention is focused on infographics, pictures, and English language magazines, the Sunni jihadist movement mainly seeks to attract native Arabic speakers, specifically native Sunni Arabs is their prime target audience. As a result, the Jihadi movement is "almost entirely directed in Arabic and its content is intimately tied to the socio-political context of the Arab world"²⁸⁰ – and thus embedded in the Arabic Jihadist ecosystem, specific Salafist theologians are a key component. Furthermore, as Rüdiger Lohlker has argued, Salafists are proclaiming a pre-eminence of Arabic as sacred language. "Yet because of the emphasis on the Qur'an as an Arabic document [...] Arabic itself becomes disproportionately privileged in the creation of a pure Islam." (Reinhart 2010: 108) [...] mastering the Arabic language becomes another marker of religious identity (cf. Devji 2008) enabling the Salafi believer to understand "the fixed, stable nature of the meaning of the qur'anic text" (Duderija 2010: 78) by simply reading it."²⁸¹

Salafism, or identifying as a Salafist, per se, by no means inclines the use or sanctioning of violence of any kind. Salafists are, simplified, (ultra-) orthodox Sunni Muslims, for who Qur'an and Sunna, the written multivolume collection of Prophet Muhammad's deeds and sayings, are the normative source. Immersing oneself into this normative framework, the intention is to return, or live as authentic as possible, to the ethics of the *al-Salaf al-Salih*, "the pious ancestors of Islam."²⁸² Most Salafists are peaceful, quietist, non-activist and reject violence, promoting a "theology of peace" as opposed to the pro-jihadist Salafists promoting of their "theology of violence."²⁸³ Muslims who would identify themselves as Sunni Salafists have a diverse lingual, cultural and social context, such as in Indonesia where the tradition of pluralist Islam is embedded in society without employing derogatory references for non-Muslims on a wide scale to Salafists in Europe, living within non-majority Muslim countries nevertheless, seek to emulate the lifestyle of early Muslims, following a peaceful path. For peaceful Salafists the Islamic theology of tolerance²⁸⁴, inclusion and respect for others is at the centre while being (ultra-)

²⁸⁰ Reuven Paz, "Reading Their Lips: The Credibility of Jihadi Web Sites as 'Soft Power' in the War of the Minds." The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM), Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, vol. 5, no. 5, (2007).

²⁸¹ Lohlker, Rüdiger. "The Forgotten Swamp Revisited." *New Approaches to the Analysis of Jihadism. Online and Offline*, herausgegeben von Rüdiger Lohlker 125 (2011).

²⁸² Itzhak Weismann: A Perverted Balance: Modern Salafism between Reform and Jihad, Die Welt des Islams 57 (2017), 33-66, 34.

²⁸³ As coined by Rüdiger Lohlker.

²⁸⁴ 'Abd al-Husayn Sha'ban, *Fiqh al-tasamuh fi l-fikr al-'Arabi al-Islami – al-thaqafa wa-l dawla*, Dar Aras: Erbil, 2011. All translations from Arabic by the author, unless otherwise stated.

conservative, observant of clothing rules, not giving women the hand, attending the obligatory five prayers a day, taking Arabic scripture and the Sunna as literally as possible and much more. The Qur'an, the *kalimatu-l Allah*, the "speech of God", is the ultimate guidance for believers and the direct link between the human individual and the divine. The Sunna (literally the tradition), the collected sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad, serve as a further component in the believer's quest of authenticity and credibility, understanding prophet Muhammad as the most noble human and thus the ultimate role model. Salafists seek to re-enact the lives, the acts and deeds of early Muslims, the companions of prophet Muhammad, who had lived under the guidance of the prophet. In this regard, the prophet, just as much as "the speech of God", are authoritative guidance for present-day Sunni Muslims. As is often expressed in religious literature, extremist and non-extremist alike, the importance is set on the "speech of God", as "whoever serves Muhammad – Muhammad verily died; and whoever serves God – God verily is alive and does not die, as God, exalted is He, said: "Muhammad is only a messenger before whom many messengers have been and gone. If he died or was killed, would you revert to your old ways? If anyone did so, he would not harm God in the least. God will reward the grateful."^{285,286}

This article, however, addresses the evident dialectic – or nexus - between jihadist groups and actors with Salafists, who share wide parts of the jihadist theological understanding and their identity. It should be needless to state, the dominant language of the 300,000 pages of PDF's by al-Qaeda and IS is Arabic. As visualized, of the IS produced 138,700 pages, 62% are books and writings by historical and contemporary Salafists, used to boost the Jihadist' legitimacy, credibility and authority, claiming divine representation based on Qur'an and Sunna.

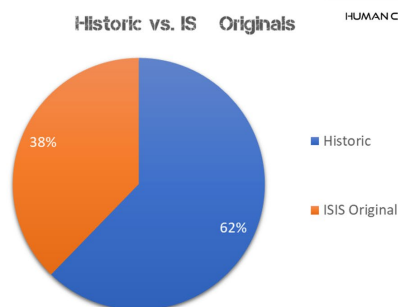
IS have produced over 138,700 pages

Written in Arabic
Demonstrates coherence
Systemically ignored by research

- 86,355 Historical and contemporary rereleases
- Salafi output actual consumed -> online operations -> influencing var. actors
- 52,368 Original

Similarly largely ignored:

- 206,796 pages of pre-IS Majalla, Ideologues and Handbooks



The core language of jihadist videos is of course Arabic and features in wide parts, to the well-initiated reader of jihadist text productions, the practical application of the theoretic theology of these writings. In a nutshell, based on the study of the Arabic language texts by jihadist groups, a matrix of most important Salafist texts and authors becomes evident. This mix of theology provided by Salafist authors, which we can refer to as Salafist legacy materials, is then mixed on a textual basis by contemporary al-Qaeda and IS ideologues to enhance the ultra-hardcore Jihadist ecosystem. These texts are the very foundation of Jihadist videos, are referred to in

²⁸⁵ Qur'an 3:144. All Qur'an translations by Muhammad A. S. Abdel-Haleem, The Qur'an, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁸⁶ Abu 'Ubayda al-Jaza'iri, al-Zarqawi shama fi jabin al-tarikh, part 1, al-Jama'a Magazine, no.8, 1427. Al-Jama'a had been the electronic magazine of the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la predication et combat (GSPC). Abu 'Ubayda al-Jaza'iri bases his account on the writing "Constants on the Path of Jihad" (thawabit 'ala darb al-jihad) by Yusuf al-'Uyairi, clarifying Prophet Muhammad and with him his companions, the sahaba, are the ultimate human role models, yet worship is for God only. All translations of Arabic sources by the author unless otherwise stated.

read-out statements, in explanations of various acts caught by the camera to provide proof of authenticity of what Jihadists claim to be fighting for, in distinguishing the Jihadists' understanding of Sunni Islam from other Sunni Muslims, validating violence against Shiites and minorities and so on and so forth. Theological texts are the very fortress of the Jihadist mindset and it incorporates specific areas of the Salafist ecosystem, sharing a similar range of theology, scholarly work, hermeneutical reading of the Qur'an, specific interpretations of Qur'an and Sunna – with the fundamental difference that Jihadists translate the theology of violence into action.

Jihadist key ideologues and groups refer to themselves as being Salafists and repeatedly identify as Sunni Muslims, as being of the *ahl al-Sunna wa-l jama'a*, by claiming re-enacting the lives of early Muslims and engaged in combat to safeguard religion.

According to one of the most renowned first generation of al-Qaeda on the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) ideologue, Faris al-Zahrani (aka Abu Jandal al-Azdi), "knowledge (*ilm*) distinguishes two branches: knowledge of Islamic law issues obligatory related to all matters and worldly knowledge as a result of power related issues. Regarding the knowledge of Islamic law, al-Qa'ida enabled to re-invoke the example of Muhammadan methodology of Salafi-jihadism;²⁸⁷ they are Salafists bound by and complying with Islamic legal texts, in the full meaning, with the legal obligation to call for Jihad and to prepare the education of individuals on the grounds of centralizing the understanding of jihad in Islamic education as the sahaba had practiced."²⁸⁸

Jihadist groups position themselves as the only "true" representatives of Sunni Islam, claiming to being full "servants of God", shaming 'nominal' Sunni Muslims as incomplete worshippers, or worse, stating they are apostates legitimate to be killed, that any believer who does not fulfil the divine command of jihad cannot be serving God as intended by God's command. This is only a small percentage of Sunni Muslims worldwide. As often, a radical minority is very active, claims authority of "Sunni Islam" in general, is prolific online (from audio-visual content on open platforms to sharing writings), seeks positions on the street²⁸⁹ receives too much attention by the mainstream media, further boosting their self-made image. For violent Jihadists just as for pro-Jihadist Salafists, the importance is set on theological-historical writings that command and outline how early Muslims under the command of Prophet Muhammad acted and justified their doings, linking statements by the Prophet to selected verses of the Qur'an. Verses of the Qur'an and sources of the Sunna are embedded in the corpus of literature that is produced. Ayat, verses of the Qur'an, in combination with selected hadith, are used in theological texts frequently by Jihadists and a multi-lingual network of activists worldwide, who are in the proximity to Jihadist groups, yet in most cases do not openly advocate violence. These global activists often identify themselves as Salafists and seek a position of authority for Muslims in their locality, often introducing Arabic texts by scholars and authors that too often matter to the Sunni Jihadist movement.

Neglecting this readily available massive corpus of Arabic writings is part of a wider problem within contemporary terrorism studies. Problems with credible data and empirical research are not a new complaint in the field of Terrorism Studies. Magnus Ranstorp highlighted over a decade ago the ongoing problem, citing also Alex Schmid and Berto Jongman, who originally identified back in 1988, that "there are probably few areas in the social science literature in which so much is written on the basis of so little research."²⁹⁰ As a result, much of the writing in Terrorism Studies is "impressionistic, superficial, and at the same time often also pretentious,

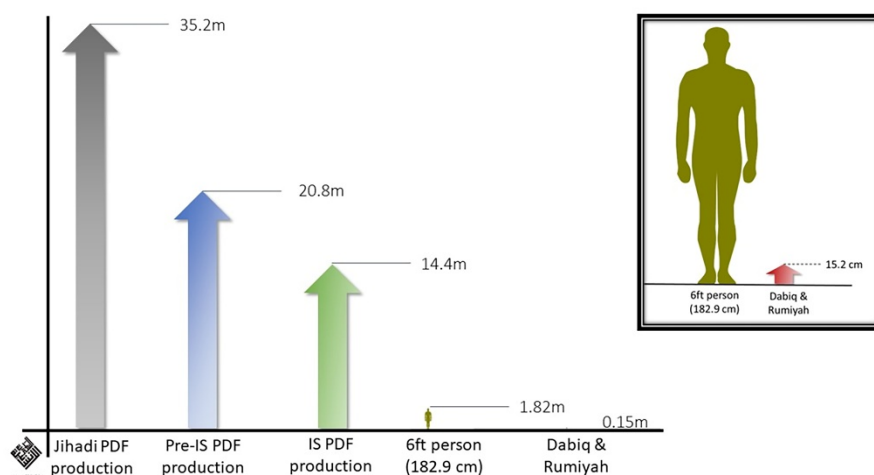
²⁸⁷ *Al-salafiyya al-jihadiyya*.

²⁸⁸ Faris al-Zahrani (known as Abu Jandal al-Azdi), Usama bin Ladin – mujaddad al-zaman wa-qahir al-Amrikan, *Minbar al-tawhid wa-l jihad*, electronic version (2003), 242.

²⁸⁹ Within Europe this had been the "Lies!" (Read!) group,

²⁹⁰ Ranstorp Magnus, *Mapping Terrorism Studies after 9/11: An Academic Field of Old Problems and New Prospects*, in: *Critical Terrorism Studies – A New Research Agenda* (eds. Jackson, Smyth, Gunning), Taylor and Francis: (2009) <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203880227/chapters/10.4324/9780203880227-9>

venturing far-reaching generalisations on the basis of episodal evidence.”²⁹¹ Often, analysts focus on the English-language output of Jihadist groups and do not follow up with the Salafist sources used therein. Without meticulous research on a lingual and theological foundation to understand the rich Arabic language corpus, a core component of the understanding of the contemporary Sunni Jihadist movement is missing: the Salafist-Jihadist nexus and to that extend, the continued ability by Jihadists to foster global support networks based on the foundation of a shared theology.



In comparison, stacking all Arabic PDF output by al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, results in a 35.2-meter-high tower of printed paper; stacking the English total pages of IS’ Dabiq and Rumiyya is a mere 15.2 cm, including many pictures.

To address what are the shared elements and common denominators between jihadist groups and Salafist actors, that Mohamed-Ali Adraoui terms as “Salafism and Jihadism: a common doctrinal heritage”²⁹², the Arabic materials must be at the core and center. This link, which bears the necessity to “analyse the jihadists’ claim that they are Salafists”²⁹³, referred to as the Salafi-Jihadi nexus in this article, is evident for anyone able to access the rich corpus of Arabic language writings shared and written by jihadist groups. Salafism, for jihadists, is a core tenet revolving around the theological parameters of tawhid, or oneness of God. By referring to “*salaf*” or “*salafi*” in Arabic publications – and of course by choosing this term as part of a jihadist group, such as the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC), Jihadists seek to assume a total monopoly over what it means to be a ‘pure’ or ‘true’ Sunni Muslim. As such, Salafism, is one undercurrent of what empowers and enables the Sunni jihadist movement, with groups such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda keen to derive legitimacy not only from Qur’an and Sunna, but also from a vast corpus of theological literature of historical and contemporary scholars. As the leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, stated in 2008, in defence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), formerly known as the GSPC:

“our creed (‘aqida) is that of al-salaf al-salih, the noble companions of prophet Muhammad, their followers, and those that followed them; the spearhead of the salaf is the guiding messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him. Therefore, it is an obligation for every Muslim and Muslima that the jurisdictions of the book [Qur’an] and Sunna are enforced in its entirety, in all regards of ‘aqida,

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Mohamed-Ali Adraoui, *Salafism, Jihadism and Radicalisation: Between a Common Doctrinal Heritage and the Logics of Empowerment*, in: *Militant Jihadism – Today and Tomorrow*, Seafettin Pektas, Johan Leman (eds), (Leuven University Press: 2019): pp. 19-41.

²⁹³ Ibid, 20.

[divine and worldly] rulings or morals, not rejecting any element thereof or interpreting (ta'wil) either [Qur'an or Sunna]."²⁹⁴

This is a core component of the writings produced by Sunni jihadist groups for decades and filled with citations by non-jihadist Salafi authors. Jihadist literature is in parts very academic with footnotes, references and sources to the vast body of theological literature, to elevate the arguments made and deliver proof²⁹⁵ to what jihadist authors authoritatively produce. Not only are the Qur'an and Sunna cited and referred to within propaganda videos to attract a wider audience, but a range of Salafist authors are cited and referred to. The Salafist authors appearing within the body of jihadist online and offline works range from historical scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), Muhammad 'ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350), Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), Imam Shawkani (d. 1839), Sulayman bin 'Abdallah bin Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1818), and many others to contemporary scholars such as Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri, ibn Qasim (d. 1972), Muhammad b. Salib Ibn 'Uthaymin (d. 2001), Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), al-Walid b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Fariyan, Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi'i (d. 2001) among many.

The Caliphate Library on Telegram – the Salafist-Jihadist Nexus

For a sustained period IS curated a channel on the encrypted social media platform Telegram called "The Caliphate Library." The content of this "library" is small scale representation of what type of materials and writings jihadist groups in general share online and demonstrates how the jihadist movement thrives on lengthy documents that define their theology, beliefs, fostering the Salafi-jihadi dialectic. This individual library was deleted end of November of 2019 in a concerted attempt to ban IS networks on Telegram²⁹⁶ and its materials re-surfaced shortly after on Telegram and other platforms, such as TamTam or Nandbox, that had not been used by IS before.²⁹⁷ Within the original library on Telegram, 908 PDF documents, containing collectively over 111,000 pages, had been featured, user friendly in terms of downloading and being able to handle the data for their audience. 73% of these documents had been produced by Islamic State media groups or under the predecessor the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), meaning that some of these documents are from the era of 2006-2013. 83% of pages are theological texts from contemporary and historic Salafist authors and provide a comprehensible insight into the diverse nature of documents which comprise the Salafi-Jihadi nexus.

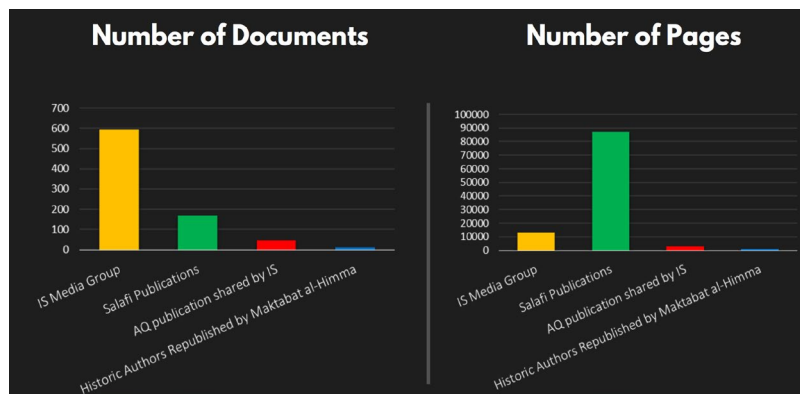
²⁹⁴ Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Liqa' al-maftuh ma'a al-shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Sahab Media, 1429 a.H.

²⁹⁵ Within the Arabic-religious literature, arguments are backed by 'proof' (*dalil*), consisting of Qur'an, Sunna and renowned historical or contemporary scholars.

²⁹⁶ Adriana Hamacher, Why Telegram's Europol endorsement matters for TON, Decrypt, <https://decrypt.co/12535/why-telegrams-europol-endorsement-matters-for-ton>, November 27, 2019.

After a brief period of taking down IS and AQ networks and Telegram, the takedowns stopped, allowing both extremist networks to repopulate on Telegram while ensuring resilience by using more platforms similar in nature to Telegram.

²⁹⁷ Nico Prucha, Back to the Nashir – Total Decentralization and Enhanced Resilience, Onlinejihad, <https://onlinejihad.net/2019/12/31/back-to-the-nashir-total-decentralization-and-enhanced-resilience/>, December 31, 2019.



This data set is representative for both IS and AQ. AQ in the 2000s laid the foundation of modern online jihad activism as part of the ongoing da'wa effect and to project global influence. Already back in 2006/7, AQ provided similar textual data sets – or libraries – called the “Mujahid’s bag”. Four volumes of “bags” had been shared, each as a single compressed file (*.zip). In sum, all four “bags” contained over 1,500 WORD documents and in addition texts as html documents, rtf and some videos.²⁹⁸

The IS library, as visualized in the pie-chart on the right side above, shows the quantity of documents. The number of IS and ISI documents are greater than the Salafist writings, but the number of pages of Salafist books (green 87,000 pages) is far greater than the number of pages of IS/ISI documents (yellow 13,000 pages).

The chart on the right shows the number of pages of each category. The categories are:

1. AQ era (without ISI/IS) in red;
2. IS media group in yellow;
3. Salafist books by contemporary and historical authors in green. These writings are neither banned nor illegal in most countries around the world and provide the religious ecosystem to degrade humans, consist of hate-speech against LGBTQ groups, sanction violence against and define the ‘other’ as enemy and so forth. A core enemy in this type of literature that is adamantly used by Jihadist groups are theological texts by historic and contemporary scholars to define Shiites as “rejectionists”, as not being Muslims and obligatory to kill. During 2013/2014 when IS was able to occupy both the urban and rural spaces in parts of Iraq and Syria, dozens of videos had been released documenting the cleansing of ‘Sunni’ lands from “rejectionist”, that is Shiite, presence. The total demolitions of Shiite mosques had been justified by these textual sources, with citations by Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Taymiyya, ‘Abd al-Wahhab and others appearing in the videos to project Islamic authority and credibility. The idealization of highlighting al-jihad in its militant form by taking example from the Sahaba, the companions of the prophet, finds a modern expression in this data sample. A book from 2009 is featured that outlines the “manners of jihad by the Sahaba – special jihadist operations realized by a selected group of the companions.”²⁹⁹
4. Blue shows the dedicated re-publication of such legal extremist Salafist writings by IS’ Maktabat al-Himma, marking the importance for the extremist constituents. These books,

²⁹⁸ Apart from the “bags”, AQ media operatives had been keen to produce image files (*.iso), that are user-friendly as compact discs (CD) could have either been written directly using these image files, or simply virtually mounting the image providing a comprehensive file structure and easy access to text documents, videos, images, audio-files.

All data is in the possession of the author.

²⁹⁹ Salih ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, Suwar min jihad al-sahaba – ‘amaliyyat jihadiyya khassa tunafidhuha majmu’at khassa min al-sahaba, Dar al-Qalam: Damascus / Dar al-Bashir: Jeddah, 2009 (third edition).

as outlined below, feature the books by Ibn Taymiyya on the permissibility to kill anyone insulting the prophet or, to be read as a handbook to establish an Islamic state, Ibn Taymiyya's "The book of governance according to the shari'a."

For this article, the focus is set on the Salafist books and writings, shared or re-published by IS' Maktabat al-Himma.

Historic and contemporary Salafist Books and Writings

The distributed historical and contemporary Salafi writing intersect with modern Sunni jihadist theology. This constitutes a classical jihadist text data set, featuring a wide range of classical theologians whose work is pitched together with jihadist writings and products to deliver an authoritative wholesome package to their target audience, demonstrating on the one hand the application of theology by jihadist actions, on the other delivering the theoretical-theological framework.

Of the non-IS branded Salafist writings shared by the Library, not all works are to be associated with the extremist segment.³⁰⁰ What makes the Salafist writings shared by the Library to be defined as extremist, however, is set on two principles:

1. Promoting the theology of violence. The Salafist writings are linked to modern jihadist groups based on the shared theology, using the same language and referencing oftentimes the same religious sources to justify violence. Legitimizing, for example, killing those who insult prophet Muhammad (ibn Taymiyya 1263-1328 AD) is put into practice by AQ in the 2000s (following the Muhammad cartoons), sanctions the murder of Theo van Gogh (Amsterdam, 2004) and the main theme of a major ISI/IS themed video series (2012-2014). The writings are the basis of modern jihadist theology, relating the jihadist religiosity to violence against the defined unGodly, unholy or simply unhuman 'other'. The explanation and demonstration of jurisprudence, in Arabic *fiqh*, is a major category within the Jihadist ecosystem. *Fiqh* is a core component within both Salafist and Jihadist literature, whereas Jihadists claim to be applying *fiqh* in full and hence are wholesome Sunni Muslims. Based on authoritative *fiqh* writings by historical scholars, contemporary Salafists try to model their lives as much as possible to try to meet the outlined requirements to be as close as possible to avoiding sin or sinful deeds. *Fiqh* for Jihadists, likewise, citing historical and contemporary scholars, take this to the full and include violence as a part of governance internally and externally.
2. Historical and contemporary extremist Salafist textbooks that continue to inspire and fuel the Sunni jihadist movement as such. This is not limited to historical Salafist writers such as of 'Abd al-Wahhab (and relatives throughout the centuries), ibn al-Qayyim, but includes modern extremist Salafist thinkers who are as outspoken in their works. While jihadist produced materials often get removed in the open internet, Salafist writings rarely get removed and are often integral part of Arabic language religious data bases freely accessible online with many books originating from the Gulf States.

Looking at the Arabic produced content of jihadist groups allows to reference and link the sources, identifying the key religious "narratives" that are, to be precise, theological concepts. Without aspects of this theology, Islam from a Salafi / Jihadi understanding is simply not valid or

³⁰⁰ The writings by Imam al-Nawawi, especially his famous 40 hadith, are an example of Islamic scholarship that are often part of any Islamic library. Another example is the Arabic Grammar book al-Ajrumiyya by Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad al-Sinhaji, which appears in such collections to boost the jihadist image of being well-versed in the use of Arabic, as it is the "speech of God", to claim more credibility.

legitimate – scholars who disagree are referred to as “palace scholars”³⁰¹ or attributed to some kind of conspiracy as a concerted effort to distort true Islam from an extremist perspective. Mainstream moderate Sunni groups and local traditions are in this reading of religious sources led astray and are targeted by Salafists and Jihadist operations alike. For example, Sunni Muslims in the Sahel are considered as misguided and at fault. While the Islamic State regroups in the Sahel to stage attacks against military and civilian targets³⁰², a massive Saudi funded campaign is underway to open da’wa centres to educate local Muslims about true – Wahhabi – Islam, dispatching African scholars trained in Mecca and Medina to project influence in their local languages with the aim to replace the local Sunni manhaj.³⁰³ Between the hard-core IS manhaj and the current soft-power Saudi manhaj, the religious framework, behaviour codes and methodology, books such as the ones outlined below are a common denominator.

Sample 1: Ibn Taymiyya’s echo from the killing of Theo van Gogh (2004) to the Islamic State



The Salafist books featured in the Caliphate Library Channel by far outweigh in number of pages the jihadist documents. Apart from classical works by Imam Shawkani or Ibn al-Qayyim, the “shaykh al-Islam”, Ibn Taymiyya is overrepresented. Ibn Taymiyya, died 1328, was a prolific writer and member of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. His work has influenced the Wahhabi movement of which the theological jihadist branch is the most extremist extension thereof. Within the 300,000 penned pages by AQ authors and IS productions, Ibn Taymiyya is referenced over 40,000 times. His jurisprudential (fiqh) works justify the persecution and killing of non-Muslims and provide a clear-cut definition of when Sunnis become apostates – the very essence of almost every contemporary jihadist author (and applied in the videos of jihadist groups). Ibn

³⁰¹ The “shuyukh al-Salateen”, the scholars in the service of repressive regimes, are often named, stating that “the blood of Muslims” is cheap to them, spreading mischief (fasad), violating true tawhid and fostering ignorance in favor of the tyrants they serve. As an example, the posting by user Ra’id al-Su’ub, claiming to be from Jordan, on the al-Shefaa forum, <http://forum.ashefaa.com/showthread.php?t=110209>, October 21, 2010. Accessed January 14, 2020.

Using this terminology to describe how regimes secure worldly power and project legitimacy within conservative-religious circles, using “religion as the most powerful weapon in the hands of dictatorships” in MENA, Muhammad Amnun, “Shuyukh al-salateen” – hayna yasbah al-din aqwa silah bi-yadd al-dictatoriyya, al-Jazeera blog, <https://bit.ly/2RrIbMp>, February 24, 2019. Accessed January 14, 2020.

³⁰² Boasting attacks and framing their actions on fiqh and scripture in their writings and videos, following the usual modus operandi. I.e. al-Naba’ number 213, 19 December 2019. On the cover is the claim of over 100 killed Nigerian soldiers and having taken booty (which is justified following historical samples by the sahaba and fatwas penned by various Salafist and Jihadist scholars), a major video was released January 10, 2020.

³⁰³ For example, the Université du Sahel is based on religious trainings and manuals of the Saudi University of Medina. The picture shows a female professor and her student in the classical Salafist/Wahhabi clothing style, <https://www.facebook.com/africanulama/photos/a.310460882368596/2106022352812431/?type=3&theater>.

Taymiyya is renowned for his “characteristically juridical thinking”³⁰⁴ and has a high level of competence as a legal scholar expressed in his writings that are based – at least in parts – on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Ibn Taymiyya is frequently cited in Sunni extremist writings since the 1980s and accordingly referred to and quoted by jihadist ideologues in audio-visual publications.

The “Islamic State” is basing all of its audio-visual output on the theology that has been penned by AQ since the 1980s – with the significant difference, however, that IS has had the territory to implement and enforce this corpus of theology upon the population of the self-designated “caliphate” – which as of 2019 serves as the filmed legacy and pretext for the return of IS. Featured in the Caliphate Library is the over 4,000-page long multivolume “tafsir shaykh al-Islam”, the exegesis of the Qur’an by Ibn Taymiyya and his notorious book “The drawn sword against the insulter of the Prophet” (*al-sarim al-maslul didda shatim al-rasul*). Within the Sunni extremist mindset, the sword must be drawn upon anyone who opposes their worldview and specific interpretations of Qur’anic sources, the hadith or frame of references that have been penned since the 1980s. Ibn Taymiyya’s book has been used by Muhammed Bouyeri to justify killing Dutch filmmaker and Islam critic Theo van Gogh in November 2004 in Amsterdam and is part of a long list jihadist operations in recent years. Jihadists have also used the writings of Ibn Taymiyya to justify specific attacks. For example, Muhammed Bouyeri cited Ibn Taymiyya’s book before killing Dutch filmmaker and Islam critic Theo van Gogh in November 2004 in Amsterdam:

“Shortly before he [Bouyeri] killed van Gogh, he circulated the theological tractate on the “heroic deed” of Ibn Maslama³⁰⁵ per e-mail to his friends. It is one of the 56 texts Bouyeri wrote or distributed. The fatwa of Ibn Taymiyya was among them also in a short leaflet-form downloadable from tawhed.ws titled “The drawn sword against the insulter of the Prophet” (*al-sarim al-maslul didda shatim al-rasul*). It is likely that the text not only influenced Bouyeri’s decision to assassinate van Gogh, but also his method.

The text details how and why to kill targets, first of all because of insult (*shatm*, *sabb*, *adhan*) of Islam. Bouyeri tried to sever van Gogh’s head with a big knife after he had shot him several times. In the text we find the passage: “the cutting of the head without mercy is legal if the Prophet does not disapprove it.” Moreover, the text advises multiple times to use assassination as an act of deterrence. The slaughter of van Gogh in open daylight seems like a one-to-one translation into reality of the directives we find in the text.”³⁰⁶

This work is part of a wide ecosystem of Jihadist and pro-Jihadist Salafist operations and activities:

AQ alluded to the writings of Ibn Taymiyya in a video claiming responsibility for a suicide bombing targeting the Embassy of Denmark in Pakistan in 2008³⁰⁷ after a Danish newspaper published cartoon depictions of Muhammad.

Ibn Taymiyya’s book was made prominent within the extremist movement by the work by Jordanian-Palestinian jihadist scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. Al-Maqdisi stands out in its

³⁰⁴ Wael b. Hallaq: *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians*. Translated with an introduction by Wael Hallaq, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, xxxiii.

³⁰⁵ As the author of the citation Philipp Holtmann explains, “terrorists are called upon to identify with the Muslim Ibn Maslama who volunteered to kill Muhammad’s critic Ka’b bin al-Ashraf.” Philipp Holtmann, *Virtual Leadership in Radical Islamist Movements: Mechanisms, Justifications and Discussion*. Working Paper, The Institute for Policy and Strategy, Herzliya Conference February 6-9, 2011, <http://www.herzliyaconference.org/eng/Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/PhilippHoltmann.pdf>

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ A video entitled *al-qawla qawla al-sawarim*, “the words [are now about action and hence] words of the sword”, shows the testimony of the suicide operative identified as a Saudi by the nom de guerre Abu Gharib al-Makki [the Meccan]. The one-hour video justifies the attack: “the time to talk is over, the time for actions (i.e the swords must be drawn) has come to avenge the insults of Prophet Muhammad”.

attempt to clearly outline who can be killed legitimately for insulting Prophet Muhammad. Al-Maqdisi extends this beyond individuals, and says any government deemed to have insulted either the Prophet, God or religion in general is a legitimate target for reprisal.³⁰⁸ This had had a lasting effect with many Jihadist figures and an IS four part video series 2012-2014, with the last part showing IS consolidating Sunni territories under their control at the time and punishing those, that had been considered as having violated Sunni Islam by collaborating with US Forces or who served the Syrian or Iraqi governments.

In June 2012 the *Jund Allah* (soldiers of God) media outlet of the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* published a German language video featuring Moroccan-German "Abu Ibraheem" (Yassin Chouka) calling on his associates in Bonn from Waziristan to kill members of the German right-wing party Pro-NRW, based on the framework by Ibn Taymiyya, to kill any insulter of the Prophet.³⁰⁹ In the video Chouka cites sources used by Ibn Taymiyya such as the hadith by al-Imam Ahmad that "whoever insults the prophet, no matter if Muslim or kafir, must be killed."³¹⁰

Months before the video was released, members of the *salafist* movement protested several times in North-Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) against public events of the "Pro NRW" party. The right-wing party provoked individuals identifying as Salafists by publicly exhibiting the controversial Muhammad caricatures by Danish daily Jyllands-Posten.³¹¹ Violence emerged during several protests between the two extreme camps and German police officers were wounded repeatedly in these clashes.³¹² The clashes and subsequent arrest of Salafists had been used for the propaganda cause immediately, including in the video featuring Chouka, framing the German police – and as such the state and society – as protecting the right-wing "Pro NRW" and the arrested Muslims as victims of this conflict. In this framing the salafist, the 'true' Muslim, is arrested for defending the honor of Prophet Muhammad, as stated by scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya as an obligation for every believer. A video appeared after a major clash in Solingen in May (and hence a month before the Chouka video) 2012 entitled "In Rank and File they Stood for *Rasulullah* [the Prophet of God]"³¹³ showing how the 'true' Muslims engage to defend their brothers and the Prophet Muhammad, being well aware and conscious that punishing anyone who insults the Prophet is obligatory.

Summarizing Ibn Taymiyya's demand that anyone insulting the Prophet must be dealt with violently, the German Salafist media repeatedly conjured their readiness to sacrifice themselves, as Abu 'Azzam al-Almani, a German media *Mujahid*, claimed: "By God, may all of *Millat Ibrahim* [the community of Prophet Abraham], man by man and sister by sister be extinguished, wiped out and murdered. We prefer this over the Prophet being insulted by just one word."³¹⁴

Foreign fighters, former pro-jihadi Salafists that then became jihadists, turned into role models and heroes for the stay-at-home Salafist milieu. With the outbreak of violence in Syria in 2012 and the emergence of AQ affiliated groups and The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, which then morphed into IS, this communication increased in relation to the fighters arriving in Syria from Germany. However, in the years before the war in Syria, jihadists like the brothers Mounir

³⁰⁸ Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, al-Sarim al-maslul 'ala sabb al-rabb aw al-din aw a-rasul sala l-llahu 'alayhi wa-salam, *Minbar al-Tawhid wa-l Jihad*.

³⁰⁹ Yassin Chouka, *Tod der Pro NRW, Jundallah media*, May 20, 2012.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ John Ward Anderson, *Cartoons of Prophet met with outrage, The Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/30/AR2006013001316.html>, January 31, 2006. Accessed February 12, 2014.

³¹² Hubert Gude, *Die Ehre der Löwen, DER SPIEGEL*, May 14, 2012.

³¹³ In Reih und Glied standen sie für Rasulallah, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?CRVgZdl5Zx0>, July 14, 2012. The original video had been removed, however, it has been uploaded again several times, for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IzTMuAFga4>, March 18, 2014. This edition has Farsi subtitles.

³¹⁴ Abu Azzam al-Almani, *Wir machen, was Allah uns befohlen hat!*, Interview with Abu Usama al-Gharbib, *al-risalah.de*, <http://alrisalah.de/component/k2/item/60-interview-mit-abu-usama-al-gharib>. Accessed May 31, 2012.

and Yassin Chouka from Bonn had produced about 40 German-language videos and *nashid* for years. By this footprint and by their in-depth sermons and religious lessons from Waziristan, Pakistan, they projected fulfilling the jihadist lifestyle in a most appealing manner for their audience who wish to be able to re-enact these two brothers and engage in physical combat with the framed “enemies of God”, including German soldiers in Afghanistan.

The professional and frequent use of the Internet has transformed the Chouka brothers not only into role models but also into ideological transmitters who are able to influence local movements in their former country of residence. Shortly after the violent clash in Solingen Yassin Chouka reacted in a video entitled “Death to the Pro NRW”. In this message, Yassin Chouka a.k.a. “Abu Ibraheem” called on the Salafists in Germany to avoid the “Pro NRW” protests in the future and instead conduct a systematic hunt against the right-wing extremists, to kill them one by one.³¹⁵ In his talk, Abu Ibraheem uses a specific language to justify his order, thus replicating Arab ideologues in German. His words have a certain authority within the scene in Germany as he has moved out to fight, having proven his readiness to die and become a martyr. These role models are the one who are fulfilling, living out, re-enacting the presumed acts and deeds of early Muslims, thus transforming themselves by their own acts – and most importantly their own words documented by the digital lens – as the only ‘true’ believers and real men. The jihadist is a practitioner of verses of the Qur’an, by his belief and standards, directly exercising the divine command by God’s words.³¹⁶ Being alive in our contemporary times is a punishment, with the wishful dream to fight alongside the prophet. The collective is unified by the imagined taking part in historical battles together with Muhammad – these battles, for the prophet and for God, are re-enacted today in the mindset of the Mujahidin, backed by the theological Salafi mindset that sets the normative framework upon the believer receives the divine calling to act.

This exact notion was picked up by German speaking Global Islamic Media Front activists in 2012 in the wake of the violent protests in parts of the Islamic world in response to the movie “Innocence of Muslims.” A German translation of al-Maqdisi’s pamphlet, presumably by Austro-Egyptian jihadist Muhammad Mahmud, enriched the fatwa by the Egyptian pro-jihadist Ahmad ‘Ashush calling for the death of anyone involved in the movie project.³¹⁷

In January 2015 two brothers, apparently trained by al-Qaeda on the Arab Peninsula in Yemen, attacked the offices of the French satire magazine Charlie Hebdo. The Kouachi brothers after the massacre are seen and heard in one video made by a bystander shouting “we have avenged the Prophet” (*li-intiqamna al-rasul*), and then shoot wounded French police officer Ahmad Merabet in the head.³¹⁸ A video published on January 11, 2015 by the IS affiliated media outlet, *Asawitimedia*, praises the attacks. The video is entitled “The French have insulted the Prophet of God – thus a merciless reaction.”

³¹⁵ Yassin Chouka, Tod der Pro NRW, *Jundallah media*, May 20, 2012.

³¹⁶ As the German jihadist Abu Adam states in the video “Boden der Ehre, part 1” (Waziristan, March 2010), the *Mujahidin* are “practitioners of the verses” of the Quran, unlike most Muslims. Therefore, most Muslims dwell in the unchanged status of sin, particularly the diaspora in western countries while the *Mujahidin* have by their contribution to *jihad* and by undertaking the emigration (*hijra*), ‘cleansed’ of such sin and neglect of God and His religion.

³¹⁷ Nico Prucha, Fatwa calling for the death of the director, producer, and actors involved in the making the film “Innocence of Muslims”, *Jihadica*, September 18, 2012, <http://www.jihadica.com/fatwa-calling-for-the-death-of-the-director-producer-and-actors-involved-in-making-the-film-%E2%80%99innocence-of-islam%E2%80%99/>

³¹⁸ A detailed oversight is provided by the BBC, outlining in depth also the attack by IS member Amedy Coulibaly who executed several hostages in a Jewish supermarket, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30708237> Amedy Coulibaly uploaded a video where he pledges allegiance to al-Baghdadi. Part of his video is used in one of the ‘official’ IS videos to applaud the January 2015 Paris attack, Risala ila Fransa, Wilayah Salah al-Din, February 14, 2015.

The Salafist-Jihadist Nexus by Maktabat al-Himma

In 2014/2015 historical Salafist writings had been re-published by IS through *Maktabat al-Himma* (MH), especially after the declaration of the caliphate. MH is a theological driven publication house of IS republish writings by authors of the 'Abd al-Wahhab family, mainly Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab. His writings are the backbone of modern-day Wahhabism that constitutes the state doctrine of Saudi Arabia and had been radical-revolutionary at his time. Banning veneration of graves and being outspoken anti-Shiite, the work of 'Abd al-Wahhab gave birth to modern jihadism where a clear Sunni identity is laid out in cohesive literal format and with the Islamic State 2013 onwards, demonstrating the power of applying this form of extremist theology in audio-visual format to appeal to a less text-affluent zeitgeist on the Internet. Apart from extremist Salafist books re-published through MH, using own created covers featuring the MH and IS logo with the slogan "upon prophetic methodology"³¹⁹ many Salafist writings shared by the Library channel are scans made available as PDFs.

Part of the books rebranded by the MH logo is another milestone work by Ibn Taymiyya.

³¹⁹ Nico Prucha, Upon the Prophetic Methodology and the Media Universe, Islamic State Briefing part 2, Onlinejihad, <https://onlinejihad.net/2017/08/01/part-2-upon-the-prophetic-methodology-and-the-media-universe/>, August 1, 2017.

Sample 2: Ibn Taymiyya's "The book of governance according to the shari'a."

A version of Ibn Taymiyya's "Book of Governance according to the Shari'a", is available online as a scanned PDF, published by the Saudi Ministry for Islamic Affairs, released 1418 a.H.³²⁰ It is easy to find and has on some sites been downloaded over 100,000 times.³²¹ In 2015, 1436 anno Higræ, IS' Maktabat al-Himma released a version thereof, but shortened from 136 pages to a little over 50. The core chapters are featured, outlining the structure of a Islamic state, the connection between the religious and worldly authority required, the application of divine laws for the human community or citizens, questions of internal and external policies, war and peace and legal rulings on how to deal with groups resisting the state doctrine.

Essentially, IS projects being the sole honest Sunni representative, having "established religion in full in all affairs of daily life, propagating the Islamic faith (da'wa), safeguarding religion and actively supporting it, commandeering good and forbidding what is wrong, opposing the people of hypocrisy and bid'a (innovation) who are spreading mischief/corruption (fasad) on earth."³²² The chapters by Ibn Taymiyya are the same in both the Saudi and the Maktabat al-Himma document, of course the foreword was rewritten by IS as well as the selected chapters re-arranged. The main message for the MH version is "the caliphate upon the prophetic methodology" has been re-established and is actively being "governed according to the shari'a." The MH version in the first chapter gives a definition of an Islamic State: "An Islamic state is a group of Wilayat – political organized (...) the ruler or caliph or leader of the faithful is the head thereof, this is the source definition for the term "dawla" among the Islamic scholars concerned with shari'a law, the legal affairs of worldly authority and as a consequence it is possible to say that the state consists of three principles: territory, population and sovereignty."³²³

A "state", by this definition, is legitimized in its existence to benefit "the religious and worldly interest of the Muslim population."³²⁴ Within the realms of Islamic State's rich video output, consisting of about 3,000 productions from its various Wilayat during its territorial height, many theological obligatory elements as described by Ibn Taymiyya's book are seen as in practice, applied and as an active force of authoritative state power, where the state holds the monopoly of violence. This ranges from mundane views of Islamic Police (*al-Hisba*) patrolling in the caliphate enforcing clothe regulations, the separation of men and women, ensuring shops are closed during prayers to applying *hadd* punishments, executions of alleged homosexuals, spies, wizards, or apostasy and rich visual content of IS in the active roles of "commandeering good and forbidding what is wrong."³²⁵ Part of al-Hisba operations had been within the Caliphate to

³²⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyasa al-shar'iyya*, Wizara al-Shu'un al-Islamiyya, King Fahd Library, Riyadh: 1418 a.H. (2007).

³²¹ See for example: <https://archive.org/details/FP162512FP>. This version is interlinked to many mundane online libraries concerned with Islamic affairs among other subjects.

³²² Ibn Taymiyya, *Taw'iyya al-ra'iyya bi-s siyasa al-shar'iyya*, Maktabat al-Himma, 1436. The title of this version differs slightly to Ibn Taymiyya's original book as it has been shortened. The added taw'iyya al-ra'iyya seeks to enhance this version, stating the title in full as "consciousness raising of the citizens for the governance according to the shari'a", underpinning the handbook nature of this publication for the Islamic State in 2015, 23.

³²³ *Ibid*, 7.

³²⁴ *Ibid*.

³²⁵ In a three-part video series IS pitched itself as those, who are actively commandeering good and forbidding evil, Jumadi al-awwal, 1436. The expression of "commanding good and forbidding evil" is the Islamic police body, al-Hisbah. The videos demonstrate the application of this doctrine by destroying pre-Islamic cultural heritage sites and hunting and punishing alcohol and tobacco smugglers (who by this spread fasad, or mischief), re-educating Sunnis caught smoking. This follows the same doctrinal commitment of the Saudi Committee of "Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice", in a different translation, with the Islamic police, al-Hisba, as its executive body. For an overview of its function inside the Kingdom: Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, https://adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015.03.31_Ch.-1-CPVPV.pdf, March 2015.

enforce “the ruling of the creator (God) upon the thief”³²⁶ as internal policing operations while controlling markets for food regulations.

This written volume is a good example on how jihadist groups use historical theological writings and claim being the sole group of Sunni Muslims to truly live accordingly to divine will.³²⁷ The short period of time that IS was able to pitch and project influence in multiple languages on Twitter enabled the group to provide simple and clear messages, using visual communication, brief translations, non-Arabic subtitles in Arabic videos, of otherwise sometimes intellectually complicated writings by scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya. For Sunni extremists, no matter if part of the hardcore jihadist, ultraorthodox Salafist, or conservative Wahhabi spectrum, the integral importance revolves around the element of *tawhid*, the oneness of God. Every other tenet is derived or related to *tawhid*. This is where the role models of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, the *sahaba*, are idealized as warriors, as Mujahideen, embodying the divine-human relationship of total commitment to God and thereby ensuring Sunni Muslim life on earth is guaranteed. While some Salafist torrents refrain from violence and this limited understanding of early Islam, for others the aspect of violence can be acceptable.

The *sahaba*, the first Islamic community, the *ahl Sunna wa-l jama'a*, are seen as pure Muslims and only by re-enacting their decision-making process, by copying their clothing style, by following their path, the “Salaf” can claim authenticity in modern times. The violent aspect is of course reserved for Sunni Jihadist groups that claim the engulfing role models of the Salaf as both pure Muslims and warriors at the same time. This book by Ibn Taymiyya meets this angle of being a handbook on being a Muslim citizen of an Islamic State, perceived as the ultimate fulfillment of the role models of early Muslims and the absolute divine-human relationship. Hence, “the most important aspect to establish an Islamic State is the message brought by the messenger of God, that the people worship their Lord. Worship in its truthfulness means that people, free of any coercion, serve their Lord, that everything [in their lives] is set for God, exalted is He, that is the true [tawhid] “there is no God but God.” This is the honest human loyalty – expressed by their faith (iman). Thus, the conflict between iman and kufr (disbelief) is in reality a conflict over the right by God to be the commander of good (amir nahiy) on earth.”³²⁸ Ibn Taymiyya cites Qur’an 43:84, that God is both high in the skies as well as the all-seeing, all-hearing on earth, to back his argument of the divine presence.

For *tawhid* to be safeguarded by human believers as gatekeepers on earth, a leader for the Islamic community, a functioning Imam, is needed. Ibn Taymiyya provides several verses of the Qur’an as argumentative proof³²⁹ that in turn are used within the framing of the Islamic State to justify and enforce their power. Chapters republished by MH include details on giving the pledge of allegiance (*bay'a*), ruling when the *bay'a* is violated, groups that oppose the imam, the obligations of the imam, religious duties that constitute Sunni Muslim life, but also practical aspects such as securing the borders of the state and issues related to warfare, “protecting religion and worldly affairs.”³³⁰ This worldview defines two abodes (*dar*), *dar al-Islam*, physical territory where Islam is practiced and Islamic jurisprudence applied, and *dar al-kufr*, the abode of disbelief. Ibn Taymiyya was clear by stating “the Salaf scholars and their successor had not disagreed over this issue, the division of the world in two abodes, not three, as revealed in the book (Qur’an) and the tradition (Sunna) of the messenger.”³³¹ *Dar al-Islam* is defined by the form of governance within, “the legal scholars agree who applies the hadd punishments in dar al-

³²⁶ Hukm al-khaliq bi haqq al-sariq, wilaya Nineveh, June 4, 2015.

³²⁷ Spreading across borders and being used by Arabic speakers as guidebooks outside of the classical Arabic language zone, suggesting at least an ideological relationship by finding this particular MH book by DRC soldiers. Robert Postings, The Tentative Ties Between the Allied Democratic Forces and ISIS, The Defense Post, <https://thedefensepost.com/2018/12/04/tentative-ties-allied-democratic-forces-isis-dr-congo/>, December 4, 2018.

³²⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, Taw'iyya al-ra'iyya bi-s siyasat al-shar'iyya, Maktabat al-Himma, 1436.

³²⁹ i.e. al-hadid:25; 4:59.

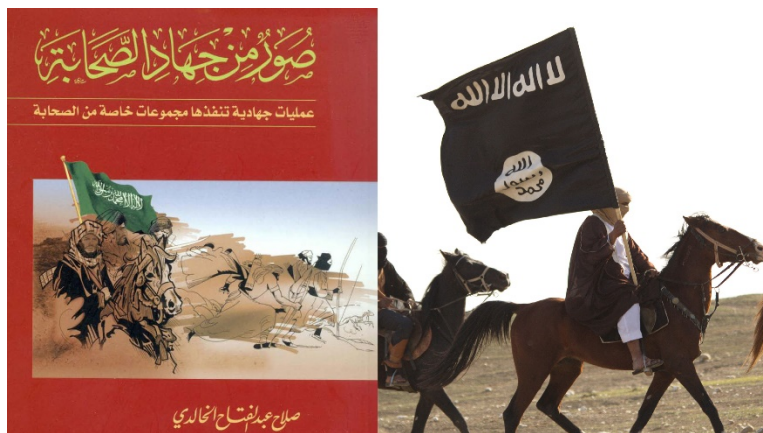
³³⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, Taw'iyya al-ra'iyya bi-s siyasat al-shar'iyya, Maktabat al-Himma, 1436, 23.

³³¹ Ibid, 40.

Islam, is the imam or his vice, no matter what apostates comment (...). The Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, applied the hadd punishments in his lifetime, and his successors thereafter."³³² Notions such as these are backed and enriched by selective readings of the rich Islamic history and theological writings of the past 1,400 years. Hence, Salafists and Jihadists share a mindset of the ideal understanding what 'Islam' should be, with varying parameters of enabling violence, yet stories of the companions of Prophet Muhammad, selected sources of the Sunna and historic as well as contemporary Salafist authors are used for an all-comprising projection of 'Sunni identity'.

Sample 3: Idealizing the violent component of the Companions of the Prophet

A book with the title "The Fashion of the Jihad by the Companions [of Prophet Muhammad] – Special Jihadist Operations Groups of the Companions", is part of the Caliphate Library data set. A scanned PDF of the 233 pages comprising book, second edition, 2009 (1430 a.H.) features a band of raiders on the cover with one warrior bearing the flag of Saudi Arabia.³³³



This book is the third part of a series about Islamic history and theology, with the intention by the author, Salih `Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, to "offer in our age knowledge of Islamic history for Muslims."³³⁴ The first two volumes of the series had been about (i) "The Rightly Guided Caliphs between internal strife and martyrdom" and (ii) "The Messenger, the Revelator." The second volume focuses on the "revelation by Prophet Muhammad and da'wa, the spreading of the message of Islam to the kings and worldly rulers at the time of Muhammad."³³⁵ For this volume, al-Khalidi announces, "my intention with this book is to present the noble reader the radiant jihadist fashions used by the sahaba, the Mujahideen, may God be pleased with them, who undertook marvelous jihadist operations, who thus had been Mujahideen on the path of God. They are the ones who realized the jihadist confrontations conveyed in al-kitab (the Qur'an) and Sunna, guided by the example of their messenger, the Mujahid."³³⁶

Just as is the case for much of the extremist literature, prophet Muhammad is only considered in a militaristic-warrior fashion, reducing the spread and tradition of Sunni Islam to theological-historical elements confined to the violent understanding of jihad. Al-Khalidi points this picture clearly, the companions of the prophet had established "special Mujahideen groups, under the

³³² Ibid, 46.

³³³ The title on the cover of the book is slightly different in the inlay where "special" stated twice, reading: "Special jihadist operations by special/selected groups of the sahaba." Three publishing houses are listed: Dar al-Qalam (Damascus), al-Dar al-Shamiyya (Beirut) and Dar al-Bashir (Jeddah).

The green flag of Saudi Arabia features the Islamic shahada and a sword.

³³⁴ Salih `Abd al-Fattah al-Khalidi, Suwar min jihad al-sahaba – `amaliyyat jihadiyya khasa tunafidhuha majmu'at khassa min al-sahaba, Dar al-Qalam: Damascus / Dar al-Bashir: Jeddah, 2009 (third edition), 5.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid, 6.

direct command of the messenger, peace and blessings upon him."³³⁷ Al-Khalidi then recommends a historic book to his readers to enforce his understanding of the Prophet and his companions which is also shared as a PDF in the Caliphate Library. "The best book on jihad is by the Imam, the martyr, Ibn Nahhas who attained martyrdom in jihad against Crusaders in the year 814 anno Higræ." Ibn Nahhas' book 1241 pages long and is an integral part of literature shared by AQ who often reference his work likewise.

Further following a classical Wahhabi theology that is so intimately tied into the theology of Sunni jihadist groups, al-Khalidi outlines two jihadist principles based on his understanding of selected religious sources. First, *jihad al-thubat*, the jihad by specialized individuals, firm in their belief and steadfast, referring to "a group of Mujahideen less than a dozen committed to special jihadist operations." Second, *jihad al-jami'*, or the general jihad obligatory for any able Muslim, based on the parameters of "heeding to the call" (*nafir*). For al-Khalidi, and idealized by terrorist key ideologues such as al-Uyairi or leaders such as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as the wishful thinking of "mobilizing an army of Mujahideen consisting out of groups of individuals dedicated to fighting in various raids, skirmishes or large battles."³³⁸ Al-Khalidi then continues to outline (p. 8-10) ten samples of jihadist operations by the *sahaba* that are detailed throughout the book. All these examples are often featured in the extremist literature and videos produced by contemporary jihadist groups, especially in regards of defining and punishing the "*mushrikeen*". *Shirk*, and thus the *mushrikeen*, are those that associate partners next to God and thus violate the theology of tawhid, the oneness of God. It had been the slogan of the first generation of al-Qaeda on the Arab Peninsula (AQAP), based on the saying by prophet Muhammad, "to expel the mushrikeen from the Arab Peninsula" that led to attacks and staged executions of non-Muslims in Saudi Arabia in the early 2000s. Al-Khalidi delivers a whole chapter on the "groups of companions led by 'Abdallah bin Jahhash that killed the first mushrik in the holy month of Ramadan. The first Mujahid group to succeed in killing a mushrik; enslaving two mushrikeen, seizing a caravan of Quraysh merchants. Their jihadist operation took place in the month of Rajjab, in the second year of the Hijra."³³⁹

The centrality of the theological theme of "*mushrik*" is highlighted by searching for this specific key word in its varying grammatical appearance in Arabic in the Sunni jihadist texts. In the documents by both AQ and IS, the term appears over 50,000 times and is of course, due to the textual authority, often mentioned in jihadist videos where often the graves or shrines are demolished and those practicing shirk executed.

Thus, in the early days of the Islamic State in 2013 and 2014, the same theological principle was applied when for the first time in Iraq and then Yemen, Shiite mosques, Sufi sites, graveyards, Yazidi temples, Christian churches and many others had been physically conquered. As the conquered area was to become part of the territory of the Islamic State, any place where shirk is practiced and where tawhid violated, must be annihilated. Citing historical scholars such as Ibn al-Qayyim, a disciple of Ibn Taymiyya, the justification for destruction, is thus projected by IS as the mere application of what is referred to as the 'correct' methodology as "it is not permissible [for Sunni Muslims] to leave the sites and places of *shirk* and idols³⁴⁰ untouched once the power to destroy them is established, even if just for one day. For these are the symbols of *kufir* and *shirk*, the greatest of evil. Therefore, it is not permissible to rule while maintaining these sites after conquering them."³⁴¹

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid, 7.

³³⁹ Ibid, 8.

³⁴⁰ In Arabic, *tawaghit* (plural of *taghut*), is a term used in reference to worldly tyrant rulers and idols who are worshipped in violation of *tawhid*. The fight against *taghut* in the jihadist mindset is bound by both elements – fighting worldly un-Islamic Arab regimes and the restoration of the 'true' Islamic community (*umma*).

³⁴¹ Ibn al-Qayyim, "Zad al-ma'ad fi hadi khayr al-'abad " (1/506).

<http://katarat1.com/forum/showthread.php?t=968>

Books such as this one by al-Khalidi deliver a valuable milestone for militant-extremist groups, by nature keen to use such publications, to boost their authority in their mission of projecting influence and credibility. Emulating the companions of the Prophet – and of course Prophet Muhammad himself – modern jihadist terror groups frequently express the claim to be re-enacting the era when Islam was first revealed. Thus, derived from this understanding and corpus of theological literature, Sunni Muslim communities following a differing understanding are targeted, their members often declared as apostates (*murtaddin*), and executed on camera with speakers referring to such a framework of theology. In the hundreds of thousands of pages shared by jihadist groups, religious books by Islamic scholars especially originating from the Gulf States appear frequently in the online realms and libraries of Sunni jihadist groups that have a clear-cut theological definition of who is a Sunni Muslim and who should be excommunicated (and thus killed); providing a wholesome ideology based on theological parameters and sources to dehumanize the 'other'; targeting especially Shia Muslims worldwide and focusing on the annihilation of Shiite communities, using a theology of violence to explain the killings of Christians, Yazidis and other minorities in particular in Iraq and Syria.

Videos by the Islamic State demonstrate the application of such a theology and thus can be appealing to a wide target audience that is familiar with such books by authors such as al-Khalidi. While al-Khalidi describes "jihad as the soul of Islam" and furthermore "jihad is the foundation not only of this religion, but of any religion preceding Islam, as every prophet came with a jihad, as every book sent by God narrates about jihad, demanding Mujahideen as a consequence, who as a reward are allowed by God into Paradise,"³⁴² fighting against kufr, disbelief, is a divine obligation and a necessity, with "jihad the hump of Islam."³⁴³ Al-Khalidi continues: "God ordered the believers to fight against the kuffar, annihilating them by wrathful force, as God, exalted is He, said: "9:123."³⁴⁴ For jihadist scholars and ideologues, a foundation of values that is part of the Salafi mindset and tradition is present and easily incorporated and reframed to a certain angle within their own Sunni jihadist mindset.

Conclusion: The battle for your reality

"The battle for your reality begins in the fields of digital interaction"

- Douglas Rushkoff

At the dawn of mass access to the internet, some, including legendary author of "Cyberia" Douglas Rushkoff,³⁴⁵ foresaw that dissident groups would use technological innovation and the networks of our postmodern society in unconventional ways and toward subversive goals. Groups such as the Islamic State have developed a multiplatform online distribution system which is based on emergent behaviour in complex systems – projecting a unique set of coherent content to its followers, sympathisers, and their target audiences. Islamic State has fully adopted a similar approach to that which Rushkoff outlined;³⁴⁶ For Islamic State, the "battle for your reality" is one of religious identity.³⁴⁷

Any release by IS – as much as by AQ – seeks to inform, educate and convince the consumer that the jihadis are the only "true" Muslims, following the correct "prophetic methodology"³⁴⁸

³⁴² Al-Khalidi, 11.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Al-Khalidi, 14.

³⁴⁵ Douglas Rushkoff, *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995 (reprint).

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Further discussed in: Nico Prucha, "IS and the Jihadist Information Highway – Projecting Influence and Religious Identity via Telegram", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 10, No 6 (2016), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/556>

³⁴⁸ AQ often referred to 'aqida (creed) and minhaj (methodology) when outlining what defines a Sunni Muslim. This ranges from proper prayer conduct to destroying graves of holy men (awliya') whenever possible. The claim to re-enact the lives of early Muslims under the command of prophet Muhammad, acting on said "prophetic

This ideational content echoes an earlier prediction about an internet-enabled ideological struggle over the definition of reality. In this vision, warfare would be “conducted on an entirely new battleground; it is a struggle not over territory or boundaries but over the very definitions of these terms”³⁴⁹ where IS seeks to maintain hegemony over concepts such as the “prophetic methodology” and other theological concepts expressed by key words.

The battle for these definitions occurs in the physical landscape and equally on the digital platforms that comprise the information ecosystem. The Salafi-Jihadi dialectic is evident in the literature of terrorist groups and use the rich body of Salafist writings to justify militant-terrorist actions worldwide. Salafist networks and actors, state and non-state alike, that promote the shared doctrinal heritage have a common objective – to inject their theological interpretations, which are claimed as unique and untainted understandings of divinity, into Sunni Muslim communities to authoritatively ‘re-educate’ and ultimately guide people to the ‘right’ Islam. Salafist theological texts that matter to Jihadists include, for example, guidelines and justifications to destroy non-Sunni mosques, Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, sites of veneration for Sufis, Yazidis, and other minorities. As outlined in Salafist authoritative religious verdicts (fatwa) from Saudi Arabia, available on sites such as Islamhouse.com, there is no question about who is a kafir (disbeliever), and that any kafir is subject to “falsehood” (*batil*), as opposed to the “truth” (*haqq*).³⁵⁰ Salafists just as Jihadists have extensively written and conducted sermons on the such issues such as who is part of *batil*, who and when is to be considered on the path of *haqq*, portrayed by Roel Meijer as a “conflict of the program of truth (al-*haqq*) versus the program of falsehood (al-*batil*).”³⁵¹ Jihadists propagate to combat all forms violating the principle of *tawhid* with Salafists identifying as *muwahideen*, as those who profess *tawhid*, yet abstain from combat or violence. A further line of demarcation is to stress the ‘correct’ practice of *tawhid* in sharp contrast to everyone else – thus, based on theological writings and religious jurisprudential verdicts, *fatwa* and *ahkam* (authoritative rulings), an identity of exclusion is maintained.

To explore the question of how Jihadists – in their own words – describe themselves as Salafists and justify their actions, the Arabic writings freely disseminated electronically by jihadist groups online for decades matter. Unfortunately, this massive corpus of ideology, that is full of theological arguments, books, references to build an extremist religious identity for individuals, is often overlooked and even neglected by analysts. Sunni extremists, Jihadists and pro-Jihadi Salafists alike continue operating freely online, expanding their existing databases of texts (theory) and videos (practice) for future generations. The videos are a form of legacy, in the case of the Islamic State demonstrating what had been achieved, tied into the Salafist legacy materials that promote what IS claims on camera. The Jihadist movement has always tried enabling consumers to read into a set of curated books by historical writers to map out that they are a modern ‘revivalist’ movement, enforcing theological sanctioned violence against Shiites,

methodology” and applying divine laws as opposed to man-made laws is not new. Abu Mus’ab al-Suri (2004) romanticized about this as one of the objectives for any mujahid in his 1600 page long book “Global Islamic Resistance Call” (pages 42, 92). Al-Suri referenced a popular hadith, predicting “the return of the caliphate upon the prophetic methodology.” Ayman al-Zawahiri in his “fourth open interview” (2007), conducted online and published by al-Sahab, demanded that Sunni jihadist organisations in Iraq ally with “the Islamic State in Iraq” to liberate territory and consequently re-establish the “abode of Islam” by introducing the “prophetic methodology”.³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ The question of who a kafir is has been answered in the fatwa section, available in numerous languages on the site. For an impact on what that means for Muslims living in the West confronted on whether or not it is permissible to congratulate Christians and Jews on occasions of religious holidays: Muhammad Salih al-Munajjid, Is saying to a kaafir “I wish you well” or “I wish you all the best on” on his festival regarded as congratulating him?, fatwa number 409863, <https://islamhouse.com/en/fatwa/409863/>, 2012.

³⁵¹ Roel Meijer, Yusuf al-Uyairi and the Making of a Revolutionary Salafi Praxis, in: Die Welt des Islams – International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam 47 (2007), no. 3-4, 422-459. Furthermore, the exegetical study of the “Sharia judge of the Islamic State of Iraq” should be considered. Abu Sulayman al-Utaybi, al-Furqan bayna ‘l-*haqq* wa-*l* butlan, Minbar tawheed wa-*l* jihad 6.4.1427 (2.5.2006), <http://tawhed.ws/?i=f3dkkksv>.

Sunni Muslims defined as apostates, and non-Muslims – all while claiming fighting for 'justice' and combatting repressive regimes in the Islamic world.

As 'Abdallah 'Azzam wrote in the 1980s, "I learnt that being truly alive is the life of jihad and being a mujahid. Therefore, my age right now is only seven, for my life has been driven by jihad for six years in Afghanistan and one year and some months in Palestine. This is the opinion of some of the mufassirin [interpreters of Qur'an and Sunna] in the reading of the verse: "Believers, respond to God and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life."^{352,353}

For Salafists, and jihadists alike, the relationship to God is at the very centre. The pledge of allegiance, although it can be expressed to the "representative of God", the caliph, is given to God and hence independent of any human medium. The "pledge of allegiance" is a pledge of submission to God and bears a pro-active understanding of divine law and obligations. As 'Abdallah 'Azzam wrote in his article in 1985, "To Every Muslim in the World", in the fourth edition of the al-Jihad magazine, "our work in Afghanistan enlivens our souls of jihad within us and renews the covenant and the pledge of allegiance with our lord to continue the way, wrapped in sacrifices, great losses and with exorbitant personal obligations."³⁵⁴

³⁵² Qur'an 8:24.

³⁵³ 'Abdallah 'Azzam, fi khadm al-ma'araka, part 2, electronic version (2002), undated original.

³⁵⁴ 'Abdallah 'Azzam, "To Every Muslim in the World", Al-Jihad Magazine 4, March 1985, 22-27, 24.

Salafist Environments and Mosques in Denmark

by
Lene Kühle

During the 2004-2006 mapping of mosques in Denmark, a small mosque, al-Furqan, at Radvadsvej in Copenhagen showed up. On the internet it presented itself as "Copenhagen's first Salafi mosque",³⁵⁵ and in the interview it revealed itself as a very unusual mosque: English and Danish along with Arabic were the main languages spoken in the mosque and ethnicity was of little relevance. This was in marked contrast to most other mosques in Denmark at that time which almost all had a clear ethnic profile which showed itself in the language spoken in the mosque.³⁵⁶ This mosque was, however, tiny and not very visible.

About this time, Muslim interlocutor Omar Shah described the Copenhagen Islamic youth scene as divided into four categories: Salafi, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Euro-Muslims and Sufis.³⁵⁷ Shah described the dedicated Salafi as few in numbers, but visually significant due to their insistence on correct clothing. However, as they tended to isolate themselves, they were quite separate from the overall Muslim environment.³⁵⁸ In the following decade, Salafism, however, attained a public face in Denmark as an identity, however, fluffy and as a basis for activism.³⁵⁹ The activism has been both violent and non-violent, ranging from the handful of Danish Salafi-jihadist inspired terror cells and plots which has been uncovered³⁶⁰ to the establishment of Sariah zones and other media-savvy events.³⁶¹ In fact, Salafi voices became so central to media representations of Muslims in Denmark, that they despite of their small number overshadowed all other voices claiming to represent the picture of Islam and Muslims painted by nationwide newspapers.³⁶²

In 2012, individuals began to travel to Syria. Danish authorities estimate that about 150 persons have travelled to the conflict area.³⁶³ While the concept of 'Islamism'/'violent Islamism'/'extreme Islamism' was a central concept in the Action plans against Radicalization and Extremism,³⁶⁴ Salafism emerged concurrently as a policy term. The concept of Salafism has been used by for instance the Municipality of Copenhagen and the Ministry of Integration to describe similar ideas,

³⁵⁵ Kühle, Lene. *Moskeer i Danmark. islam og muslimske bedesteder*. Vol. 1. udgave. (Højbjerg: Univers. 2006): p.114.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Shah, Omar. "Muslimsk ungdom, tradition og modernitet." i Larsen, Lena/Rasmussen, Lissi: *Islam, kristendom og det moderne*, (København Tiderne Skrifte forlag, 2004): p.41.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010).

³⁶⁰ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "Making a case for going to court: militant islamism in Denmark." *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 22 (1) (2013). Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "Plebeian Jihadism in Denmark: An Individualisation and Popularization Predating the Growth of the Islamic State." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (6) (2016a). Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. *Anti-democratic and violence-promoting environments in Denmark that subscribe to islamist ideologies: What do we know?*. DIIS Report (2012a).

³⁶¹ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. 2016b. "Plebeian Jihadism in Denmark: An Individualisation and Popularization Predating the Growth of the Islamic State." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (6) (2016b); Jacobsen, Sara Jul, Tina Gudrun Jensen, Kathrine Vitus, and Kristina Weibel. *Analysis of Danish media setting and framing of Muslims, Islam and racism*: SFI (2013).

³⁶² Jacobsen, Sara Jul, Tina Gudrun Jensen, Kathrine Vitus, and Kristina Weibel. *Analysis of Danish media setting and framing of Muslims, Islam and racism*: SFI (2013).

³⁶³ Center for Terroranalyse, "Vurdering af terrortruslen mod Danmark", Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (2018).

³⁶⁴ Regeringen. En fælles og tryk fremtid. Handlingsplan om forebyggelse af ekstremistiske holdninger og radikalisering blandt unge (2009); Regeringen. Forebyggelse af radikalisering og ekstremisme. Regeringens handlingsplan (2014). Regeringen. "Forebyggelse og bekæmpelse af ekstremisme og radikalisering. En national handleplan." (2016).

organization and actions, which the Danish Security and Intelligence Service would describe as Islamism, with militant Islamism being the main focus of the activities of the agency.³⁶⁵

One main difference between employing the concept of Islamism and the concept of Salafism is that the former is an etic concept, i.e. not a concept used by Danish Muslims as a basis of identifying, while the concept of Salafi is an emic term, i.e. a concept being used in Muslim environments themselves. However, with the emergence of Salafism as a policy term follows a tension between those who are identified as Salafi and self-identifies as those "who self-identify as something else, and sometimes it is not sufficiently clear when usage is etic rather than emic."³⁶⁶ When in 2019, the Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism under the Ministry of Immigration and Integration announced a mapping of Salafism, this tension became clear in the words of the spokesperson of the Aarhus Waqf mosque, i.e. the mosque at Grimhøjvej in Aarhus (also known as the Muslim Assembly or the Aisha mosque), Oussama El-Saadi, who has openly declared an identification as Salafi, and who stated that: "It hurts me when the ministry wants to do a study on Salafism, as if it's a bad thing. The problem is not Salafism, but the prejudices surrounding our religion" (Oussama El-Saadi 2019, my translation).³⁶⁷ El-Saadi's comment pinpoints one of the methodological problems associated with study of Salafism, namely the contentious nature of identifying with it. Both as an emic concept of Muslim milieu and as an etic concept of political and policy debates, identifying as Salafi has consequences, which may lead some self-identifying Salafi to deny this identify.³⁶⁸ In the words of Swedish scholar Susanne Olsson, Salafism "is used as a self-designation by Muslims claiming authenticity, and it is often used by outsiders in a negative sense, designating reactionary and conservative Muslims, at times violently inclined."³⁶⁹

The current chapter will approach the complicated question of the relation between Salafism and mosques by firstly presenting what is already known about this topic (with emphasis on two mosque mappings³⁷⁰ and a study of Salafism in Aarhus),³⁷¹ then discussing how to identify Salafism, leading to developing a typology of relations between mosques and Salafism before finally engaging in a discussion on what may be said about the relation between Salafism and mosques in Denmark. The chapter will end with a conclusion on the presence of Salafism in relation to the mosques in Denmark.

Empirical studies of mosques in Denmark

The empirical material on which this paper is drawn mostly from three different projects. The first project is the mapping of mosques in Denmark, which has conducted by a team of students and researchers led by Lene Kühle and published in the book *Moskeer i Danmark* from 2006³⁷² and

³⁶⁵ Center for Terroranalyse, "Vurdering af terrortruslen mod Danmark", Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (2018).

³⁶⁶ Sedgwick, Mark. "Salafism, the Social, and the Global Resurgence of Religion." *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8 (2012): p. 60.

³⁶⁷ <https://ditoverblik.dk/undersogelse-skal-kortlaegge-ekstreme-islamistiske-miljoer-i-danmark/>

³⁶⁸ When I (together with Lasse Lindekilde) did a study of radicalization in Aarhus in 2009, one interviewee strongly denied that he was associated in anyway with Salafism. When he after the interview suggested that we should stay in touch and therefore gave me his e-mail address, which read www@salafi.xxx, the situation became awkward. He never responded to my e-mails.

³⁶⁹ Olsson, Susanne. "Proselytizing Islam — Problematizing "Salafism". *The Muslim World* 104 (1-2) (2014): p. 176.

³⁷⁰ Kühle, Lene. *Moskeer i Danmark. islam og muslimske bedesteder*. Vol. 1. udgave. (Højbjerg: Univers. 2006); Kühle, Lene, and Malik Christian Reimer Larsen. "Moskeer i Danmark II: En ny kortlægning af danske moskeer og muslimske bedesteder." (2017).

³⁷¹ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*: The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010).

³⁷² Kühle, Lene. *Moskeer i Danmark. islam og muslimske bedesteder*. Vol. 1. udgave. (Højbjerg: Univers. 2006)

(in English) in a chapter in an edited volume.³⁷³ The study identified about 115 mosques in Denmark, of which about 90 % were Sunni. The study was based on interviews with representatives of about 95 % of the mosques in Denmark. There was no clear pattern of non-response (mosques where it was impossible to make contact, or which did not want to participate). This study was not designed to collect information about Salafism but did include some information with relevance for the study of Salafism in Denmark.

The next study is the study of Salafism and radicalization in Aarhus, which was conducted by Lene Kühle and Lasse Lindekilde in 2009. This study is different from the above mentioned as it only concerns one locality, Aarhus, and also it did not take its point of departure in the mosques, but in a question of who was considered by journalists, community workers and other Muslims as 'the radicals of Aarhus'. When contact was made, further interview persons were found with snowballing techniques and through extensive field work in the milieu (another difference from the mosque mapping project, where fieldwork was scarcer). The study found two Arab mosques (of which one was later disestablished), both considered Salafi, to be centrally placed in the milieu. One of the local Somali mosques was also considered as mainly attended by Salafis.³⁷⁴ The project argued that the strong position of Salafism made it markedly different from the milieus in Odense and Copenhagen, which host strong Sufi milieus intensely criticizing Salafi milieus. While by no means all mosques in Aarhus were supportive of Salafism, its presence was generally accepted.³⁷⁵

The third study is a follow-up study of mosques in Denmark, conducted in 2016-17 by a team of students and scholars led by Lene Kühle and Malik Larsen. This study followed a similar methodology as the 2006-mapping and thus did not pay particular attention to Salafism, a topic which would be difficult to cover systematically on the basis of short interviews with mosque representatives. Obviously, this study is of more relevance for the current situation of Salafism in Denmark as the other two studies above both pre-date the IS caliphate era. However, the study was not able to achieve the same very high response rate as the previous mapping. The response rate of about 70 %³⁷⁶ is not bad for studies like this, but a number of the mosque identified below as of relevance for studies of Salafism and/or radicalism were not, as will be discussed later, willing to participate.

What we know about Salafism and mosques in Denmark

As argued above, identifying as Salafi may have social consequences, particularly due to the emergence of Salafism as a policy concept. It is therefore unsurprising that few individuals and mosques chose to identify as Salafi. Yet a number of mosques has been identified as Salafi by scholars, journalists and politicians. Politician Naser Khader (Conservative Party) estimated in 2015 that there was about five Salafi mosques in Denmark, and pointed beyond the mosque at Grimhøjvej, specifically to the Taiba mosque in Copenhagen.³⁷⁷ Yet most attention has been paid to Jihadi Salafism.

³⁷³ Kühle, Lene. "Mosques and Organizations." *Islam in Denmark: The Challenge of Diversity*, Lexington Books, Lanham MD: (2012): p. 81-94.

³⁷⁴ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010): p.80.

³⁷⁵ Ibid: p.42.

³⁷⁶ Kühle, Lene, and Malik Christian Reimer Larsen. "Moskéer i Danmark II: En ny kortlægning af danske moskéer og muslimske bedesteder." (2017): p.95.

³⁷⁷ <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/samfund/salafist-provokerer-her-er-hans-vilde-udsagn/5595566>

Sara Jul Jacobsen identifies "The Call to Islam"³⁷⁸ (Kaldet til Islam), the Muslim Youth Centre (MUC Aarhus), and Islamic Teaching (Islamisk Undervisning) as Jihadi-Salafi organizations operating in Denmark 2010-2015 (Jacobsen 2016). Members of "The Call" was known to attend the Taiba mosque (previously Heimdalsgade, now at Titangade), the MUC was formerly a youth organization under the Waqf mosque at Grimhøjvej in Aarhus. Islamic Teaching was located in a mosque named the Masjid Quba in Copenhagen.³⁷⁹ According to media accounts, the main religious authority from the Quba mosque, Abu Ahmed, used to teach at the Islamic Cultural Centre (another Copenhagen mosque) until the Danish Security Service, PET, warned the mosque board about him.³⁸⁰

Newspaper articles and books by Jacob Sheikh,³⁸¹ a journalist who has written extensively on Danish Jihadi Salafis, give a short list of mosques, which beyond the already mentioned also include a Somali mosque, Masjid Tawhiid, at Nordre Fasanvej in Copenhagen. The Islamic Faith Community at Dortheavej in Copenhagen is also mentioned by Sheikh, but ambivalently both as a mosque which has invited Salafi preachers to give sermons, but also as a mosque which the Jihadi Salafis consider too moderate. There are other mosques which have been in the spotlight for hosting radical elements. A man who attacked prophet cartoonist Kurt Westergaard in his own home in 2010 used to be a board member in the Aalborg mosque (Kulturel Forening for Børn og Unge i Aalborg).³⁸²

The report *Extreme Salafi Groups* from 2011 describes how one scholar from a Salafi milieu, which in the report is referred to under the pseudonymous Tawhêdforum, has taught Salafi Jihadi lessons in different mosques, but the report does not mention which.³⁸³ Another scholar, a very well-educated authority within the Salafi environment, is said to be adamant to stay clear of mosques and Islamic centers.³⁸⁴ The report also identifies a Salafi environment in Odense, to which the Tawhêdforum was in the process of establishing relations.³⁸⁵ The report also emphasizes that Saudi (Salafi) literature may be readily available in many Copenhagen mosques.³⁸⁶

A report of the name *A mapping of radical Islamist millieus* from 2014 investigates radical Islamism (with emphasis on Jihadi Salafism and Hizb ut-Tahrir). It locates the Call to Islam in relation to a small mosque at Torveporten in Copenhagen, which is called Dawah-centret, and also mentions the Dawah-carriers (Dawah-bærere), an internet site, that recruits to Hizb ut-Tahrir³⁸⁷ as well as the Muslim Youth Centre as important groupings in the radical environment. The report also mentions a Salafi mosque in South Eastern Jutland.³⁸⁸

In her PhD thesis, Anne Sophie Hemmingsen successfully used courtrooms, the Glostrup-trial (January-March 2008), the Glasvej-trial (August-October 2008) and the SÛ-trial (November 2008) as well as the appeal of the Glasvej-trial (May-June 2009) and the appeal of the SÛ-trial (August

³⁷⁸ Jacobsen translates the name as the Call for Islam. While Kaldet til Islam can be translated in both way, the translation 'call to' more clearly underlines the dawa dimension of the concept.

³⁷⁹ Jacobsen notices how this is also known as Islamic Cultural center, which however is also the name of one of the oldest mosques in Denmark situated at Horsebakken.

³⁸⁰ <https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indblik/serie/ECE8242746/broedrene/>

³⁸¹ *Danmarks børn i hellig krig* fra 2015

³⁸² Ritzau 11. januar 2010.

³⁸³ Jensen, Tina Gudrun, and Kate Østergaard. "Ekstremistiske miljøer med salafi-grupperinger i fokus." (2011): p.7.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.:p.8. "Der findes således en sheik med en lang uddannelse fra Medina, som holder sig udenfor de andre centre og moskeer. Denne sheik er meget eksplicit omkring sin salafi-troslære"

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.: p.7. "Meget af den islamiske litteratur, der er oversat til dansk og engelsk og sælges fra islamiske boghandlere eller uddeles fra moskeer, er således af saudisk oprindelse"

³⁸⁷ Pedersen, Lisbeth. Antidemokratiske og ekstremistiske miljøer i Danmark: En kortlægning. SFI – Det nationale forskningscenter for velfærd (2014): p.57.

³⁸⁸ Ibid: p.61.

2009), as a site for research on Salafism. The cases were strongly related as the defendants in the three cases knew each other and clearly was part of the same group of people.³⁸⁹ Mosques are mentioned several times in court cases; when an interlocutor broke with a mosque,³⁹⁰ but also when a defendant "was unemployed and living in the Mosque",³⁹¹ and when a suspect met infamous Jihadis like Slimane Hadj Abderrahmane in a mosque.³⁹² The names of these mosques was not mentioned. The role of mosques for the accused group of Jihadi Salafis includes the identification of the father of one of the suspects as one of the founders of the Taiba mosque.³⁹³ The son was, however, unhappy about his father's mosque: "You hardly get any knowledge in the mosque" and "the Imams in the mosques don't relate to life here".³⁹⁴

Overall, the importance of mosques in Denmark was overshadowed by the numerous references to the Grand Mosque in Lahore and the Red Mosque in Islamabad.³⁹⁵ Following the method of attaining information about mosques in Denmark through court cases, the 2014 court case against Said Mansour, a long-term key person in the Danish radical Islamist/Salafi environment can provide information about which mosques he attends. In the hearings in the district court of Frederiksberg, he states that he occasionally met with a well-known member of the Call to Islam, who have been killed in Syria, in different mosques in Copenhagen (he knows of 16).³⁹⁶ He also explains that he has collected money for charity in different mosques in Copenhagen, but not which.³⁹⁷ In addition, he explained that the latest occasion on which he preached in a mosque was in Helsingør in 1983.³⁹⁸ In the Eastern High Court, he additionally explained about meetings in the mosque in Nørrebro,³⁹⁹ in Heimdahlsvej,⁴⁰⁰ and in Odense.⁴⁰¹

The available material overall suggests that there are relations between Salafi milieus and (a relatively limited number of) Danish mosques. In some cases, the specific mosque is mentioned – in others not. Said Mansour's testimony, for instance, includes a number of at least halfway identifiable mosques. It also indicates that he attended many different mosques and while the concurrent reference to a mosque may indicate something – in particular when these mosques also come up in other accounts – it is less clear what to make out of the occasional attendance in numerous mosques by Salafists like Mansour: Are his choices of mosques set by conveniences or are they strategic? Sheikh has pointed out that his interviews with people from the Copenhagen area who had travelled to Syria did not find their inspiration for radical thoughts in the mosques:

"When respondents were asked by whom and from where they got their religious inspiration (apart from religious texts, audio sources, and visual sources), none pointed to the mosques. In fact, the interviews conducted imply that militant Islamists are quite skeptical towards the mosques, especially mosque that are

³⁸⁹ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "The attractions of Jihadism." An identity approach to three Danish terrorism cases and the gallery of characters around them. (2010): p.75.

³⁹⁰ Ibid: p.25.

³⁹¹ Ibid: p.93.

³⁹² Ibid: p.75

³⁹³ Ibid. p.95

³⁹⁴ Ibid: p.96.

³⁹⁵ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "The attractions of Jihadism." An identity approach to three Danish terrorism cases and the gallery of characters around them. (2010): p.135.

³⁹⁶ SS-7156/2014 Retten på Frederiksbergs dom af 4. december 2014. Politiets nr. 0100-70295-00001-13.

(page.8) <http://domstol.fe1.tangora.com/media/-300016/files/211-2015-BYR.pdf>

³⁹⁷ Ibid. p.15.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. p.27.

³⁹⁹ S-3475-14 Østre Landsrets dom den 1. juli 2015. (page.26) <http://domstol.fe1.tangora.com/media/-300016/files/211-2015-%C3%98L.pdf>

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid: p.42.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. p.44.

considered to be “moderate” by mainstream society. Several respondents even accused these mosques of being right-hand men for PET”.⁴⁰²

Yet it has been consistently stated that the youth organization associated to the mosque at Grimhøjvej, the Muslim Youth Centre, accounts for about 22 of the 27 Aarhus Muslims, which travelled to fight in Syria before 2014.⁴⁰³ Also, the fact that Sheikh’s interlocutors claim that they did not get the inspiration to radicalism from the mosque, may not exclude that they received the impulse to radicalism in the mosque through activities arranged by others, with or without the knowledge of the mosque board members. If, as it has been claimed,⁴⁰⁴ Salafi groups tend not to be organized through boards and memberships, they may exploit – or even be depending on exploiting – the infrastructure and resources of the mosques. The question of the relationship between Salafism and mosques is therefore complex. Part of the complexity stems from the concept of Salafism itself.

What is Salafism?

The well-known chairperson of the mosque at Grimhøjvej, Oussama El-Saadi, states in an interview with the Danish daily *Kristeligt Dagblad* that:

“I would also call myself a Salafist. But I think that it is a slightly misunderstood term, because I believe that all Muslims are Salafists. All Muslims should base themselves on the Prophet Muhammad, the Hadiths and the way it was originally described.”⁴⁰⁵

The quote illustrates one of the difficulties with discussing Salafism, namely the openness of definitions, and the associated complexity of identifications. El-Saadi identifies all ‘true’ Muslims as Salafi referring to *al-salaf al-salih* (the pious predecessors), the first generations of Muslims, which hold a particularly honorable position within Islam. El-Saadi’s interpellation (cf. Althusser) of all Muslims as Salafis is, however, countered by the way other interlocutors in Muslim environments in Denmark may consider Salafi a useful tool for everyday classifications. As one girl from Aarhus explains in the report *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus* from 2010:

“It is not like I would say that I [belong to] a group or something or that I am ... because I am, as it is, a Muslim. I would prefer to say that I am a Muslim, but the trouble is that Shi’as would also say, ‘I am a Muslim’, a Sufi would say ‘I am a Muslim’. Everyone says ‘I am a Muslim’ so you are in kind of need to ... establish that I am not a Shi’a, I am not a Sufi; you may say that you are Sunni, following the Salafi path (Pernille).”⁴⁰⁶

Other interlocutors from the same milieu, cited in the report describe Salafi as an aspiration: “I don’t really think that you can call yourself Salafi because Salafi is huge and means that you follow the right path (Khaled). ...When we are dead they call us Salafi, which means the one who came before you. That is the only thing that Salafi means (Ahmed).”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰² Sheikh, Jakob. “‘I Just Said It. The State’: Examining the Motivations for Danish Foreign Fighting in Syria.” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (6) (2016).

⁴⁰³ Jacob Sheikh “Politi advarer mod kontroversiel moske i Aarhus” 9. 03.2014.

⁴⁰⁴ Pedersen, Lisbeth. Antidemokratiske og ekstremistiske miljøer i Danmark: En kortlægning. SFI – Det nationale forskningscenter for velfærd (2014): p.58.

⁴⁰⁵ “Og jeg vil også kalde mig selv salafist. Men jeg synes, at det er et lidt misforstået begreb, for jeg mener, at alle muslimer er salafister. Alle muslimer bør tage udgangspunkt i profeten Muhammed, haditherne (overleveringer om Muhammed, red.) og den måde, det oprindeligt er beskrevet” (<https://www.kr.. isteligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/regeringen-vil-kortlaegge-yderligtqaaende-islam>)

⁴⁰⁶ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010): p.81.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid: p.80.

This kind of thinking makes some interlocutors from the same milieu in Aarhus reject the category of Salafi as a useful category: "But we are not Salafi. We don't have a creed. We just have our reliable source, that is the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet and then we follow the Prophet. We don't have a specific name for ourselves (Ali)."⁴⁰⁸

The struggle over definitions is further complicated by the recent arrival of Salafism as a term used in public debates and policy. In 2012, Historian and Scholar of Islam Mark Sedgwick identifies Salafi as an emic term, "still relatively little used by the media",⁴⁰⁹ but warns that Salafism risks becoming "if not an imagined category, certainly an imprecise and over-used one" if its usage as a category of public concern grows.⁴¹⁰ It may be seen as an aspect of the process of increasing use and overuse that Salafism is often used interchangeable with Islamism, a master concept in Danish anti-radicalization policies. In 2009, the year of the first Danish anti-radicalization action plan, Manni Crone from the Danish Institute for International Studies thus warns that "the young men from the Danish terror cases - at least those from the Copenhagen area - are not Islamists, but Salafists."⁴¹¹

Yet, the relation between Salafism and Islamism is more than a question of conflation of terms. Muslim interlocutor Omar Shah distinguished in his piece from 2004 between *Ikhwani* Salafi and *Najdi* Salafi. The Ikhwani Salafi, which are Muslims associating with Muslim Brotherhood kind of Islamism but inspired by Salafism is called 'soft Salafi' and Shah stresses that these will not identify as Salafi. The *Najdi* Salafis, which can be divided into the pro-Saudi Salafis and the Jihadi Salafis, hold a distinct Salafi identity.⁴¹² The concept of Ikhwani Salafi is mesmerizing as the Muslim Brotherhood has been a major opponent of Salafism.⁴¹³ However, despite their initial and continued very different stances, a "Salafization" of the Brotherhood since the 1970s has been described.⁴¹⁴ In Denmark, this kind of inspiration has been identified in the Arabic language Friday sermons given at the mosque of The Islamic Faith Community in Copenhagen from 2005 to 2011, where a shift from a political Islamist discourse to a more apolitical Salafist discourse seems to have taken place.⁴¹⁵

The trouble with pinpointing Salafism is therefore not only a question of the use of the concept but also reflects characteristics of Salafism itself. Swedish scholar Susanne Olsson thus argues that the topic of Salafism is in itself difficult to get a hold of: "Salafism is not a homogeneous movement, nor a homogeneous interpretative stance, but should rather be understood as an umbrella term that frames something rather fragmented and contradictory, albeit with some characteristics in common."⁴¹⁶ A similar description was included in a 2008 report from the Change Institute, which states that

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid: p.80.

⁴⁰⁹ Sedgwick, Mark. "Salafism, the Social, and the Global Resurgence of Religion." *Comparative Islamic Studies* (8) (2012): p.59.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid: p.58.

⁴¹¹ Som sagt er de unge mænd fra de danske terrorsager – i det mindste dem fra Københavnsområdet1 – ikke islamister, men salafister

⁴¹² Shah, Omar. "Muslimsk ungdom, tradition og modernitet." i Larsen, Lena/Rasmussen, Lissi: *Islam, kristendom og det moderne*, (København Tiderne Skrifte forlag, 2004): p.41.

⁴¹³ Lynch, Marc. "Islam divided between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (6) (2010).

⁴¹⁴ Hammond, Andrew. "Salafi thought in Turkish public discourse since 1980." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (3) (2017): pp.419. The concept documents along with the concept of Salafi Sufi, which is a self-identifying term used by Danish Imam Abdul Wahid Pedersen, that theological opposites may be combined in lived realities of everyday life.

⁴¹⁵ Mathiasen, Andreas Lysholt. "Ummaen, ungdommen og fordringen om enhed og reform: En analyse af den arabiske fredagskhutba i Det Islamiske Trossamfund." *Tidsskrift for Islamforskning* 6 (1) (2012): pp.83-105.

⁴¹⁶ Olsson, Susanne. "Proselytizing Islam — Problematizing "Salafism"." *The Muslim World* 104 (1-2) (2014): p.176.

"Salafism is fissiparous and has similarities with un-churched Evangelical Christianity, producing small communities based around charismatic religious leaders (sometimes religiously trained, sometimes lay) who align themselves with more senior scholars who stand somewhere within the Salafi spectrum."⁴¹⁷

Lene Kühle and Lasse Lindekilde concludes in *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus* similarly that the milieu they have been studied in Aarhus

"is not a milieu full of Salafists (or Islamists for that matter), but a milieu occupied by activists inspired by salafiyyah. Some of these activists embrace the identity as Salafi, but many do not. They are, however, all engaged in conjuring up the frameworks of their life as Muslims taking their point of departure in the Quran and the exemplary life of the prophet."⁴¹⁸

Salafism's fragmentation and heterogeneity is thus a major analytical challenge when writing on Salafism.⁴¹⁹ Despite (or due to?) the numerous references to the itinerant and ephemeral character of Salafi identities, attempts to categorize Salafism abound. It is common to divide Salafis into quietist, reformist, and jihadist, though the origin of this so-called "tri-partite typology" is not completely clear.⁴²⁰ Quintan Wiktorowicz' differentiation between purist-, politico- and Jihadi Salafis is among the most cited,⁴²¹ and seems to be the basis of the categorization used by the Municipality of Copenhagen distinguishing between Puritan Salafism, Activist Salafism, parliamentary Salafism and militant Salafism.⁴²² The Municipality of Copenhagen suggests that most Salafis in Denmark adhere to the puritan wing, and while there according to the municipality are no examples of parliamentary Salafi parties in Denmark, it is emphasized that many Danish Salafis, also in Copenhagen mosques, call for participation in national elections. For activist Salafis in Denmark, they do not only want to distance themselves from democracy but actively try to get Muslims away from participation in democracy at all levels as a defined goal.⁴²³

Some scholars have complained that the priorities of policy-oriented security studies, which have dominated the literature on Salafism,⁴²⁴ has led to an emphasis on the categories themselves rather than on the processes behind the categories. On the basis of Wiktorowicz's distinction between purist-, politico-, and Jihadi Salafis, debates have emerged: Should "purist" and "politico" be "scholarly" and "activist" or "predicative" and "political"? Or should the distinction be between a 'movement' Salafism, influenced by Muslim Brotherhood ideology advocating non-violent politics in order to Islamize society, and 'scholarly' Salafism, which denounces political

⁴¹⁷ Ahmad, A, H Aydin, J Barou, N Kakpo, S Rizvi, and Y Birt. *Studies into Violent Radicalization; Lot 2 The Beliefs, Ideologies and Narratives*. London: Change Institute, (2008).

⁴¹⁸ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010): p.82.

⁴¹⁹ Bangstad, Sindre, and Marius Linge. "'Da' wa is Our Identity'—Salafism and IslamNet's Rationales for Action in a Norwegian Context." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 4 (2) (2015): pp.174-196.

⁴²⁰ Hegghammer, Thomas. "Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism", in Roel Meijer (ed.): *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London/New York): (Hurst & Co, 2008).

⁴²¹ Bangstad, Sindre, and Marius Linge. "'Da' wa is Our Identity'—Salafism and IslamNet's Rationales for Action in a Norwegian Context." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 4 (2) (2015): p.6.

⁴²² VINK. "Hvad er salafisme?". Municipality of Copenhagen, (2014).

⁴²³ In Denmark there are no examples of parliamentary Salafi parties but there are many Danish Salafists, who advocate in Copenhagen mosques, participation in national elections. For activist Salafists in Denmark it is not enough to distance themselves from democracy as they actively and with a declared goal seek to divorce Muslims from participating in democratic processes at all levels. This is due to the fact they perceive democracy as incompatible with Islamic beliefs and sharia.

⁴²⁴ Hammond, Andrew. "Salafi though in Turkish public discourse since 1980." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (3) (2017): p.420; Meijer, Roel. "Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement." (London: Hurst, 2009.): p.2.

activism unless decreed by the ruler?⁴²⁵ Several scholars⁴²⁶ recommend the work of Roel Meijer and his edited volume *Global Salafism* as an approach, which goes beyond classifications of Salafism. Meijer does not reject the existence of different currents within Salafism, but his focus is beyond classification exercises and on gaining theoretical understandings on the basis of tensions within Salafism, which makes Salafism dynamic:

"The basic tension derives from the contradiction between expounding a rigorous doctrine of complete submission to God, represented in the doctrine of the Oneness of God (tawhid), and the demands this makes on the believer to adhere to this creed. In part, this is a political issue. Can the believer implement this fundamental injunction by accepting political power, even if the ruler does not adhere to Islamic law, the shari'a, and should the believer in that case concentrate on tarbiya (education) and da'wa (spreading the faith) in order to create a purified Muslim society? Or should the true believer correct the deviant ruler by verbally upbraiding him or even rising up against him? In other words, is Salafism primarily quietist or activist, and to what degree should it be one of these alternatives?"⁴²⁷

Interestingly, Meijer's approach to Salafism resembles a well-known approach within the Sociology of Religion, which suggests the existence of three ideal types of new religious movements: world-rejecting, world-affirming and world-accommodating.⁴²⁸ The world rejecting are the Jihadi Salafis, the political Salafis are closer to the world-affirming type and quietist Salafis are closest to the world-accommodating type. Orientations to the world are not necessarily stable but may change over time due to new leadership or a change in attitude among adherents.⁴²⁹ From this perspective, quietist Salafis may become more political or Jihadi Salafis more quietist.

Meijer regards Salafism as emerging in complex dialectical relations with Wahhabism with tensions related firstly to the dogma of returning to the sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the hadith, without the mediation of a school of law, while in fact the Hanbali school of law has been the basis. Secondly, Salafism claim to be universalistic, but retains boundaries towards non-Salafi/Wahhabi Muslim in general and Shias in particular.⁴³⁰ Salafi claims to clarity and the simplicity of commanding right and forbidding wrong is thirdly challenged by how "diverse, contradictory, ambivalent, and fragmented it appears to be in its local variations".⁴³¹

While general accounts of Salafism may set the frame of the discussion, it is important to pay attention to the dynamic aspects of the tensions as well as to which concepts and ideas are of relevance in the specific Danish/Scandinavian context. If we therefore move to the question of how practical to distinguish Salafism from other Muslims in this context, it is clear that this is not always easy. Non-Salafi Muslims may also hold the first generations of Muslims in high regard, and accept Tawhid, the oneness of God, as a central Islamic dogma. Olsson points to certain

⁴²⁵ Bangstad, Sindre, and Marius Linge. "'Da'wa is Our Identity'—Salafism and IslamNet's Rationales for Action in a Norwegian Context." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 4 (2) (2015): p.7.

⁴²⁶ Mårtensson, Ulrika. "Norwegian Ḥarakī Salafism: "The Saved Sect" Hugs the Infidels." *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8 (1-2) (2014): p. 113-138; Hammond, Andrew. "Salafi thought in Turkish public discourse since 1980." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (3) (2017); Bangstad, Sindre, and Marius Linge. "'Da'wa is Our Identity'—Salafism and IslamNet's Rationales for Action in a Norwegian Context." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 4 (2) (2015).

⁴²⁷ Meijer, Roel. "Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement." (London: Hurst, 2009.): p. 3.

⁴²⁸ Wallis, Roy. *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, x+156pp, London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

⁴²⁹ Björkqvist, Kaj. "World-rejection, world-affirmation, and goal displacement: some aspects of change in three new religious movements of Hindu origin." In Holm Nils (ed.) *Encounter with India: studies in neohinduism*. (1990): pp. 79-99.

⁴³⁰ Meijer, Roel. "Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement." (London: Hurst, 2009.): p. 11.

⁴³¹ *Ibid*: p. 29.

typical aspects of Salafism being an emphasis on "a purification of Islam (*taṣfiyya*) in order to educate (*tarbiyya*) and to unite Muslims under one method and one dogmatic teaching, and thus extinguish *shirk* (idolatry), *kufr* (unbelief) and *bid'a* (innovation), as well as blind following (*taqlid*)".⁴³² Clearly, education is key for many Salafis and while concepts like *shirk*, *kufr* and *bid'a* are not exclusively Salafi, a massive presence and intensive focus appear to be indicative of Salafi influences.

Kühle and Lindekilde stresses "a return to the teachings of the Quran and the practices of the Prophet (*sunna*) without the mediation of the traditional Law schools" as one characteristic,⁴³³ emphasis on Tawhid, the oneness of God as another,⁴³⁴ and prominently also anti-Shia attitudes. One interlocutor interviewed in the 2010 study of Salafism in Aarhus thus underline how he acknowledges the existence of other groups, "But of course there are other groups, like Shia and such. But we keep them apart. In our eyes they are not Muslims" (Kareem).⁴³⁵ Hemmingsen's work on Jihadi Salafism emphasizes among other things: 1) a strict interpretation of Islam, emphasising the wrong-doing of other Muslims and efforts to make them heretics (*takfirism*), 2) rejection of democracy and other man-made systems as they are regarded as illegitimate innovations, and 3) justification of the use of violence against enemies by references to a narrow interpretation of the Islamic concept of Jihad.⁴³⁶

In some cases, Salafism may best be identified through a *via negativa* approach, which will clearly point to non-Salafi as following an Islamic school of law, celebrating the birthday of the prophet (*mawlid*; rejected by Salafis as *bid'a*), having interaction with Shias or being clearly Sufi-oriented (which by Salafis are rejected as *shirk*). This obvious does not mean that all Muslims who do not celebrate *mawlid* are Salafis, but only that those who does, cannot be Salafis. The rejection of the madhhab is probably the main point of criticism of Salafi within the general Muslim environment⁴³⁷ and some Salafi voices will therefore emphasize that they do not reject the *madhhabs*. This includes for instance Ali, interviewed by Kühle and Lindekilde, who says "We follow all madhhab. We follow the one who has the strongest proof from al Quran or sunna or the friends of the prophet. We do not follow any madhhab 100 percent."⁴³⁸ The urge to return to the sources lead to Salafis being regarded by Muslims from other milieus to have a heavy use of Scriptural references.⁴³⁹ But the emphasis on the text may provide a good example of the above-mentioned Salafization, i.e. how Salafism has inspired other Muslims.

A similar point in regard to Salafism is *da'wa*, or the effort to call non-Muslims as well cultural Muslims to Islam. It is often stated how Salafis have been distributing missionary pamphlets at mosques and in the streets of Copenhagen,⁴⁴⁰ and how it is a notable tendency in Scandinavia that Salafi communities "establish themselves in all major cities and perform active missionary

⁴³² Olsson, Susanne. "Shia as Internal Others: A Salafi Rejection of the 'Rejecters'." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28 (4) (2017): pp.410.

⁴³³ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010): pp. 41-2.

⁴³⁴ Ibid: p.88.

⁴³⁵ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010): p.90.

⁴³⁶ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "Salafi Jihadism: Relying on fieldwork to study unorganized and clandestine phenomena." *Ethnic and racial Studies* 34 (7) (2011): pp. 1201-1215.

⁴³⁷ Liengaard, Inge. Normalt er islam jo en fælles ting – Religiøse autoriteter og etableringen af et islamisk felt i Danmark. Aarhus Universitet: Det Teologiske Fakultet. (2007).

⁴³⁸ Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, 2010): p.89.

⁴³⁹ Renders, Johannes. "Freedom through Submission: Muslim-talk on Human Volition, Destiny, and Liberation in Denmark." PhD, School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University (2019): p.194.

⁴⁴⁰ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie.. Anti-demokratiske og voldsfremmende miljøer i Danmark, som bekender sig til islamistisk ideologi: Hvad ved vi?: DIIS Report. (2012b).

work (*da'wa*) through lectures and preaching, to increase their influence".⁴⁴¹ While there is no doubt that Salafis are very much into *da'wa* (and it is remarkable how often this name is used in relation to Salafi organisations), the individual duty and reward related to *da'wa* has been an inspiration for Muslims beyond Salafi circles.⁴⁴² Processes of Salafization obviously complicates the debates on the significance of Salafism among Danish Muslims, and could lead to both exaggerations and underestimations of the presence and importance of Salafi presence.

Typology of mosque association to Salafism

The empirical material already presented indicates that it is crucial to distinguish between different ways in which a mosque can be related to Salafism: Salafi can 1) be a self-identification of the mosque or key Salafi beliefs can be presented or official material from the mosque. A mosque can, however, also be Salafi to the extent that 2) key persons in the mosque (imams, chairpersons) could identify as Salafi or speak in ways clearly identified as Salafi or 3) as acceptance of Salafi influences in the mosque despite the key persons not supporting Salafism. It is also possible that 4) Salafi activities take place in the mosque without key representatives' or ordinary mosque attenders' knowledge. Finally, it might be the case that 5) official communication from the mosque or key representatives of the mosque clearly oppose Salafism. The distinction between the different categories may be difficult to draw clearly, but the distinction may still prove helpful to clarify debates as well as a basis for theories on changes in religious affiliation of mosques to be build.

An example of the first way a mosque can be related to Salafism, i.e. through self-identification as Salafi, is represented by the Furqan mosque mentioned in the beginning of this article, which identified as a Salafi mosque. This mosque was very different from all the other mosques interviewed for the study in numerous ways. One example was the name of the mosque, al-Furqan, which the interviewees emphasized meant 'what separates truth from lie', which indicates a typical Salafi belief of following the clear path. It was emphasized that topic of the Friday sermon was timely issues and monotheism (*tawhed*), where the latter is also a typical Salafi trait. The group also did clearly oppose the question of which school of law they followed stressing that they only followed *Ahl al-Sunna*. They also reacted to the question of which religious festivals they celebrated by stressing that they would only celebrate *Eid*: "all other are *bid'a* (illegitimate innovation)".

They also clearly disassociated themselves from Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jamaat, and all types of modern Islam, which was considered *bid'a*. They also presented their aim as the re-introduction of the caliphate and directly identified Salafism as an inspiration for establishing the mosque. Their imam, Abu Abdallah, was trained in Libya and Saudi Arabia. The mosque was very tiny, only about 20 members and 30 who were interested. None of the other mosques resembled their profile. This certainly appeared as a unique mosque. There were surely a small number of imams and religious leaders, which had Salafi inclinations at that time as shown by Inge Liengaard's PhD dissertation from 2007. In the interviews with 19 (17 were Sunni, 2 Shia) educated religious leaders working in Denmark, only one did not identify with a school of law and one adhered to the Hanbali law school.⁴⁴³ One of these clearly represented Salafi points of view in other matters. He would for instance strongly emphasize his dislike of Shias, who he considered heretics. One of the other authorities identified Salafism with the rejection of the law schools but stated that Salafism had not been successful and also would have little chances in the future.⁴⁴⁴ Even if the

⁴⁴¹ Olsson, Susanne, and Simon Sorgenfrei. "Islam and Islamic Studies in Scandinavia." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. (2019).

⁴⁴² Renders, Johannes. "I want you to be a Muslim." *Tidsskrift for Islamforskning* 12 (1) (2018).

⁴⁴³ Liengaard, Inge. *Normalt er islam jo en fælles ting – Religiøse autoriteter og etableringen af et islamisk felt i Danmark*. Aarhus Universitet: Det Teologiske Fakultet. (2007): p. 109.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: p. 117.

Salafi and the Hanbali authority stood alone with some of their opinions, some of the other authorities within the Arab mosque milieu would still cooperate with them.

Today, similar to the situation then, few mosques identify as Salafi in a clear way. This can for instance be seen from the website <https://www.salatomic.com/>, which describes itself as the “most comprehensive guide to mosques and Islamic schools.” Salatomic allows for five categories of identification: Sunni (traditional), Sunni (Salafi), Shia (Jafari), Sufi (all tariqa) and non-denominational. Though by no means all mosques in Denmark are registered on the website, in fact only 64 of the about 170 Danish mosques are registered, it is an interesting source of information about mosques in Denmark. Among the 38 mosques registered in the Copenhagen area, 29 identifies as Sunni (traditional), five as Shia (Jafari), two as Sufi and one as non-denominational. Among the nine in Jutland, eight are classified as Sunni (traditional) and one Shia. One of the mosques registered as Sunni (traditional) is the mosque at Grimhøjvej (under the name Islamic Wakf). Only in the regional areas of Southern Jutland and Fyn is there a mosque, which is classified in the category of Sunni (Salafi), namely Wakf Odense Islamic Faith Community at Ørbækvej in Odense. It does not say a lot about the mosque except that the mosque is open for all five prayers, that the community is multicultural, that the sermons are in Arabic, that a separate prayer area for women is available as is parking. Registration at Salatomic is done by users. The editorial team at Salatomic then review the submission for accuracy and “take appropriate action within the next 1-2 days”. It is not stated who did the registration, which was done in 2011 and it is therefore not known if the mosque board agreed to the registration and/or whether they’ll agree to it today. Danish Muslim-owned registers of mosques, like for instance the app as-salah, do not use mosque categories.

Salafism beyond Salafi mosques

When we turn to the second category, which is a clear association by key mosque representatives as Salafi, we have previously discussed how the chairperson of the Aarhus Waqf mosque, El-Saadi self-identified as Salafi. The fact that a key representative is identifying as a Salafi does not necessarily mean that all representatives of the mosques will have this identification too. It is in fact known that some mosques are torn by conflicts even if it is not always clear whether the conflict is between different positions as such as there could be other reasons for conflicts. It is thus not clear from the statement posted on well-known imam Abu (Abo) Bilal’s Facebook page in February 2019, where he declared that he would leave the Aarhus Waqf mosque, why this was the case, other than it was after conflicts with El-Saadi and the board (fueled by a WhatsApp message).⁴⁴⁵

In general, Danish mosques are run by voluntaries and finances are low. Almost all mosques are set up as democratic structures with a board and general assemblies, but it is sometimes unclear who decides and who is responsible for what. In some mosques, almost anyone can be invited (or permitted) to preach, while this is highly controlled in other mosques. If Salafi preachers are invited to preach or are involved in teaching in a mosque or turn up in the mosque to collect money, it is therefore always a good question, whether this means that the mosque board accept some Salafi influence (third category) or whether they are unaware of the Salafi content of (some of) his teachings (fourth category). In relation to the fifth category – opposing Salafi influence – this is equally difficult to determine. According to court documents, Hammad Khurshid from the Glasvej-trial was turned down in several mosques when he asked if he could collect money for the Red Mosque in Pakistan: “They all said no [...] I asked if I could collect money for victims of earthquakes and they also said no”.⁴⁴⁶ It is difficult to assess whether this was due to a rejection of the Jihadi Salafi agenda of Khurshid or for other reasons. The typology of associations between Salafism and mosques is therefore a starting point rather than an ending

⁴⁴⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/ImamAboBilal/videos/2282784615196291/>

⁴⁴⁶ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "The attractions of Jihadism." An identity approach to three Danish terrorism cases and the gallery of characters around them. (2010): p.138.

point of discussions. It highlights the need for more information about how precisely Salafism is included in mosque environments beyond the presence of Salafi teachings or persons in a specific mosque.

Description of the mosques which have any kind of Salafi dimension

On the basis of the discussions above, we now turn to a discussion of Salafism in Danish mosques on the basis of the 2017 mapping. The material is as stated previously not ideal for this purpose for two reasons. First, the mapping of mosques in Denmark managed to attain interviews with representatives from about 70 % of the mosques identified by the project.⁴⁴⁷ This is generally satisfactory, but the groups which did not want to participate include many of the mosques mentioned previously as of interest to a discussion of Salafism in Denmark. Neither the Islamic Faith Community on Dortheavej or the Quba mosque thus wanted to participate. The Masjid Al-Iman (Amager Kulturforening) at Sundholmsvej in Copenhagen, which is founded by a group of people who used to pray at the Quba mosque, did also not agree to participate. Very few of the Somali mosques agreed to participate, including Masjid Tawhiid at Ndr. Fasanvej. Masjid al-Faruq which was established at Heimdahlsgade in the rooms previous used by the Taiba mosque, did also decline to participate. The mosque is generally perceived as the head quarter of Hizb ut-Tahrir. While the organization may be described as Islamist or neo-fundamentalist, Hizb ut-Tahrir is generally not considered to constitute a Salafist movement. However, Hizb ut-Tahrir does constitute a part of the 'radical scene' in competition (over adherents and attention) with organizations like the Call to Islam. Another mosque, the Furkan mosque, which is associated with the transnational Furkan movement established by the Islamic scholar Alparslan Kuytul, also did not want to participate. In Turkish news reports, the organization has been called "a Salafi Islamist firebrand who calls for a Sharia-based law system in Turkey".⁴⁴⁸ A breakout group from Furkan, Misaq, which is not organized as a mosque but focuses on education, is also active in the Southern part of Jutland besides their main activities in the Copenhagen area.⁴⁴⁹

Five of the mosques, which agreed to be interviewed, have one way or another been associated with Salafism: Waqf in Odense is as mentioned a mosque, which was identified as a Salafi mosque at the Salatomic website. The Aarhus Waqf mosque at Grimhøjvej is as mentioned a mosque, where the chairperson self-identified as Salafi. The Taiba mosque, which has been mentioned in several of the terror plot court cases also agreed to be interviewed as did the Islamic Cultural Centre at Horsebakken and the Aalborg mosque. Compared to numbers associated with the average of mosques in Denmark, there are a number of issues, where the five mosques stand out. First, they all own their own mosque building. This only applies to 60 % of mosques in Denmark. Compared to Danish mosques in general who generally are content to collect money among members and in mosques in Denmark and perhaps Scandinavia and Germany,⁴⁵⁰ these mosques are also much more oriented towards receiving financial support from broad. Four of the five mosques have experiences with foreign funding for their mosque. At the interview in early 2018, Taiba told us that they had been looking for donors in the Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi-Arabia so far without luck but soon after, they received a donation of DKK 4,927,949 from an unknown foreign donor.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ Kühle, Lene, and Malik Christian Reimer Larsen. "Moskéer i Danmark II: En ny kortlægning af danske moskéer og muslimske bedesteder." (2017).

⁴⁴⁸ Abdullah Ayasun "Erdogan's Government Takes on Islamist Dissent in Turkey" 23.02.2018 <https://turkey.theglobepost.com/erdogan-islamist-alarslan-kuytul/> Kühle, Lene, and Malik Christian Reimer Larsen. "Moskéer i Danmark II: En ny kortlægning af danske moskéer og muslimske bedesteder." (2017).

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid: p.90

⁴⁵⁰ Kühle and Larsen (2019).

⁴⁵¹ <http://www.km.dk/andre-trossamfund/trossamfundsregistret/liste-over-anerkendte-trossamfund-og-tilknyttede-menigheder/>

The Waqf mosque at Grimhøjvej was also in the process of locating donors in Europe, the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Waqf mosque in Odense informed us that the former board had ambitions to find donors abroad, but without any luck. The Islamic Cultural Centre in contrast said that they have received many funding offers, but had rejected these, as they want to remain independent. The Aalborg mosque is the only mosque among the group with no experience with foreign donors, except that they have received some donations from Germany.

Three of the five mosques, the Taiba mosque, the Islamic Faith Community in Odense and the Islamic Cultural Centre, are recognized as religious communities by the Danish state.⁴⁵² This means that the number of recognized religious communities in this group (60 %) is higher than for mosques in general (35 %). The five mosques are also large size mosques if we count the number of attenders at Friday prayer, except for the Waqf mosque at Grimhøjvej, which with 150 men and 50 women attending Friday prayers is a medium size mosque. The group of five appears as more multiethnic and more oriented towards the use of Danish language than the average Danish mosque, which in most cases can be related clearly to one diaspora community. Though all five mosques are embedded in the Arab mosque milieu, they all report much ethnic diversity among attenders, and this is in some cases also represented on the board level. Among Danish mosques in general, 40 % only have Friday sermons in the ethnic languages of the majority of their attenders. Among the five mosques, all except the Islamic Cultural Centre have sermons either entirely or mostly in Danish. They similarly appear more willing to allocate space to women and pay attention to the needs of young people.

The Waqf mosque at Grimhøjvej comes out as an unusual mosque in several ways. While chairpersons can be quite powerful in some mosques, it is similarly unusual, that it is the chairperson, El-Saadi, rather than the religious leader, the imam, which is the face of the mosque.

It is also organized as a foundation in relation to the Danish foundation legislation and emphasizes that they are *not* as most other mosques in Denmark an association. To use foundation as the form of organization of a single mosque is quite unusual (only the Furkan mosque, mentioned above, share this form of organization), and it is not clear why this form of organization, which gives the public more insight into the workings of the mosque as public budgets are to be published on a yearly basis, has been selected.

Basically, there could be two explanations: first, it could be the first stone in a foundational structure which would make finances available to the benefit of other mosques (which is the way the Danish legislation on foundations are used by the Diyanet and the Milli Görüs inspired mosque networks). But it could also be an attempt to organize the mosque as an authentic Islamic foundation, a waqf, reflecting the name it carries.⁴⁵³

Salafism: Continuity and change

The mosque milieus in Denmark are changing over time. The Aalborg mosque argues – as many other mosques across the country – that the income of Syrian refugees has changed the ethnic composition of the mosque. The Odense Waqf mosque agrees and underlines that while 90 % of mosque members were of Arab background ten years ago, it is only 40 % of the members and 30 % of the attenders today. Many mosques talk about the increased use of Danish language in the mosque, which is caused by the emergence of new generations born and raised in Denmark

⁴⁵² <http://www.km.dk/andre-trossamfund/trossamfundsregistret/liste-over-anerkendte-trossamfund-og-tilknyttede-menigheder/>

⁴⁵³ Kühle, Lene and Malik Larsen. 2019. "Indblik: Finansiering af moskéer i Danmark." *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 22.05. 2019. <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/finansiering-af-moskeer-i-danmark>.

and with Danish as their native language, and the emergence of more space and access to power of women in the mosques is evident in many places.⁴⁵⁴

Overall, the mosques have changed over the last decade. The mosques, which have closer relations to Salafism, appear even more mutable than the average mosque. Several of the mosques discussed above speak about the changes they have experienced. The Aarhus Waqf mosque mentioned the increased media scrutiny, which has "made this mosque into a monster" and according to the mosque has challenged their freedom of speech. The Islamic Cultural Centre and the Taiba mosque both contemplate the radicalization processes within their spaces during the previous decade. The Islamic Cultural Centre mentions that different types of Muslims, including (assumedly) Ahmadiyyas and Shias as well as 'radicalised types' and Hizb ut-Tahrir, attend their mosque. The latter come, according to the imam, to follow ('spy on') what is being preached in the mosque. The Taiba mosque mentions how members from Hizb ut-Tahrir used to attend the mosque and Abu Ahmed used to teach in the mosque, but that both had been asked to leave the mosque. Both groups were, however, considered far less problematic than the Call to Islam, which was so "challenging and loud" and very difficult to keep out of the mosque as "It is a problem in the mosques, you might find that every Wednesday at 7, there is no one else in the mosque and the they could meet and make their own little clique".

The emergence of the Call to Islam, however, lead the Taiba mosque and other Copenhagen mosques to realize that "we need to have an alternative for the young" as one of the interlocutors at the mosque posed it. Because Salafi preachers often are controversial figures, they are likely to be expelled or excluded from mosques (or leaving them themselves), as has been the case for Abu Ahmed (who started out in the Taiba mosque, later taught in the Islamic Cultural Centre, and who now appears to be without a mosque association as the Quba mosque has been shut down). Preacher Abu Bilal, who previously was at the Waqf mosque at Grimhøjvej (and before that at another mosque at Grimhøjvej) is also an example. Also, though chairperson El-Saadi has assured that it was not theological differences which was behind the decision to replace the Muslim Youth Centre with a new youth branch at the mosque, Salafism may provide a language for the youth criticizing the traditional teaching of the mosques or in other ways opposing the authority of the older generation. In the case of Salafism in Denmark, many of the people associated with two of the formerly prominent Salafi groups, the Call to Islam and the Muslim Youth Centre, left for Syria and some have not come back. While the Muslim Youth Centre is still active on Facebook,⁴⁵⁵ the Facebook account of the Call to Islam has not been updated since March 2015.⁴⁵⁶ Other Facebook accounts have, however, been established, which employ vocabulary inspired by Salafi thinking.⁴⁵⁷ New mosques have also emerged and some of these may be Salafi inspired. One example would be the Al Quraan & Sunnah mosque in the city of Svendborg, which mainly attracts Syrian refugees. The fact that the mosque cites Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, former Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia (1993-1999), on their Facebook site,⁴⁵⁸ suggests a certain Salafi influence, though it is hard to tell from the site alone which form it takes.

The authors of the 2011 report on Salafi extremism suggested that apart from the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Islamic radicalism is not strong in Denmark, and the Salafi milieu, which gather around Salafi sets of beliefs and educational activities are minor.⁴⁵⁹ In 2019, Olsson and Sorgenfrei, however, suggested that Salafis have increased their influence in Danish cities and

⁴⁵⁴ Kühle, Lene and Malik Larsen. "Moskéer i Danmark II: En ny kortlægning af danske moskéer og muslimske bedesteder." (2017).

⁴⁵⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/mucaarhus/> 11.663 likes and 11.558 followers, 22.11.2019.

⁴⁵⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/abukaldet.tilislam.3/> 1288 likes, 1299 followers, 22.11.2019.

⁴⁵⁷ This includes for instance Islams Klare Budskab, Dawah team Denmark, Kaldet til Koranen og Sunnah, TeamDawah, Da'wah i Fokus.

⁴⁵⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/QSMOSKE/>

⁴⁵⁹ Jensen, Tina Gudrun, and Kate Østergaard. "Ekstremistiske miljøer med salafi-grupperinger i fokus." (2011).

"have a vivid activity on the web and they engage in lecturing to spread their message".⁴⁶⁰ They also mentions that Denmark is the only country in which Hizb ut-Tahrir is active. There is no doubt that since 2011, Salafism has increased its influence in Denmark, but it is less clear that the influence has been growing recently. The Centre for Terror Analysis under the Danish intelligence service suggested in its 2018 yearly report that "support for IS within Islamist milieus in Denmark is less noticeable than previously. AQ has been overshadowed by IS but still meets support among individuals in Denmark. The support for AQ may increase as IS weakens".⁴⁶¹

The 2010 study of Salafism in Aarhus suggested that the relations between mosques and Salafism may in fact take a very different form in Aarhus than what has been described in reports and literature based on knowledge about Salafi environments in Copenhagen. In contrast to the marginalized position of Salafism in the Copenhagen mosques, the study found that the Salafi environment in Aarhus spanned several mosques.⁴⁶² This observation is important as it suggests the need to look into the different logics and histories of Islam in different locations. In her PhD theses Hemmingsen makes reference to Davidsen-Nielsen & Seidelin's book, *The Dane at Guantanamo*,⁴⁶³ that describes how Slimane Hadj Abderrahmane wanted to go on jihad in Chechnya and decided to seek persons with the relevant contacts in the Arab mosques in Aarhus as: "It's only Arabs who have that type of contacts. That is why I didn't go to the Turkish mosque in the centre of the city. There's no way Turks would know anything about these matters".⁴⁶⁴ Time, place and religio-ethnic background may along with gender and age be important variables in understanding the position of Salafism in Danish mosques. The fact that Danish Turks did not know about radicalism, did not protect Danes with a Turkish background from the fascination associated with the vision of re-erecting the Caliphate initiated by the prophet himself. The question of whether or how this dream will prevail among small groups of Danish Muslim is for the next decade to tell.

Conclusion

A discussion of the role of mosques in Denmark at the end of the IS caliphate era is complicated. The departure of 150+ young men and women to fight for IS and other Jihadi Salafi groups in Syria will leave long traces in the Muslim milieus in Denmark. While it may in most cases be true that "Most respondents stated that they travelled to Syria with a group of friends, adding that the mosque had no say or influence on their decision to leave Denmark",⁴⁶⁵ the exodus was a wake-up call for mosques: Mosques without Salafi inclinations may unintended act as meeting places for people with radical and extreme ideas,⁴⁶⁶ and mosques must offer activities for young people to compete with the activities promoted by Salafis. If Salafism has in fact become less noticeably in the mosques compared to previously, this probably means that Salafism has transformed rather than disappeared: now existing online, in closed circles, or in new forms.

⁴⁶⁰ Olsson, Susanne, and Simon Sorgenfrei. "Islam and Islamic Studies in Scandinavia." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. (2019).

⁴⁶¹ Center for Terroranalyse. "Vurdering af terrortruslen mod Danmark." *Politiets Efterretningstjeneste*. (2018).

⁴⁶² Kühle, Lene, and Lasse Lindekilde. *Radicalization among young Muslims in Aarhus*. The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation & Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, (2010).

⁴⁶³ Danskeren på Guantanamo.

⁴⁶⁴ Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie. "The attractions of Jihadism." An identity approach to three Danish terrorism cases and the gallery of characters around them. (2010): p.159.

⁴⁶⁵ Sheikh, Jakob. "'I Just Said It. The State': Examining the Motivations for Danish Foreign Fighting in Syria." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (6). (2016): p.62.

⁴⁶⁶ Jensen, Tina Gudrun, and Kate Østergaard. "Ekstremistiske miljøer med salafi-grupperinger i fokus." (2011).

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Female-specific Jihad Propaganda in Denmark

by
Sara Jul Jacobsen

Introduction

Women's involvement in terrorist activities is not a new phenomenon. In the 60s and 70s, women were an active part of the left-wing terrorist organisation the Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany. Women have similarly played decisive roles in separatist movements, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and they have been warriors in movements such as the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). There are, moreover, several examples of women who have been involved in the planning of terrorist attacks carried out by jihadist groups and others who have served as suicide bombers during, for example, Hamas, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram or as 'black widows' in Chechnya.⁴⁶⁷

However, the high number of Western women who in various ways have joined the conflict in Syria and Iraq nonetheless constitute a relatively new phenomenon – at least on the scale that we have seen in recent years.⁴⁶⁸ Since 2012, Western women have left their homelands for Syria and Iraq in order to join jihadist groups – including, but not limited to, the terror organisation known as Islamic State (ISIS).⁴⁶⁹

With nearly 30 citizens leaving for Iraq and Syria per one million inhabitants, Denmark has more so-called foreign fighters⁴⁷⁰ per capita than most other EU member states, only slightly outscored by Belgium. At least 150 individuals have travelled from Denmark to Syria and Iraq and, according to the latest assessment from the Danish Security and Intelligence Service, the number is estimated to be even higher. The vast majority of those leaving for Syria and Iraq are young men, but also a noticeable proportion of women have left in recent years. Today, every seventh of the total number of Danish foreign fighters is a woman.⁴⁷¹ Moreover, in their latest assessment of the threat of terrorism against Denmark, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service estimate

⁴⁶⁷ Bloom, Mia. "Bombshells: Women and Terror." *Gender Issues* 28 (1) (2011a): pp.1–21; Sjoberg, Laura & Caron Gentry. *Women, Gender and Terrorism*. Georgia: (University of George Press., 2011); Vogel, Lauren, Louise Porter & Mark Kebell. "The Roles of Women in Contemporary Political and Revolutionary Conflict: A Thematic Model." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37 (1) (2014): pp.91–114.

⁴⁶⁸ Among other cases is the Spanish Civil War in the 30s. On a much smaller scale, a number of Western women have also been involved in foreign conflicts in the 60s and 70s. Some travelled for example to Yemen to be trained in a military camp under the PFLP or joined the FARC in Colombia (Sjoberg & Gentry 2011; Bloom 2017; OSCE 2019).

⁴⁶⁹ Also known as ISIL, IS, Daesh etc. Henceforth ISIS.

⁴⁷⁰ In the absence of a better alternative, the article employs the designation 'foreign fighters' in reference to people who have left their homelands in order to go to Syria and Iraq. The article defines the concept in accordance with the definition established by the UNSC. In this 'foreign fighters' are defined as "those who travel to a State other than their State of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including a connection with armed conflict" (United Nations Security Council, 2014). The designation is thus used about people who have in various ways joined the conflict, including cases where the person has not actually carried weapons. This is an important detail to keep in mind – also when it comes to the numbers of so-called foreign fighters.

⁴⁷¹ PET. 2018. "Vurdering af terrortruslen mod Danmark." Center for terroranalyse: <https://www.pet.dk/Nyheder/2018/~/media/VTD%202018/VurderingafterrortruslenmodDanmark2018pdf.ashx> (accessed 20 Sep 2019).

this to be serious. The threat comes mainly from militant Islamism and it also emanates from women.⁴⁷²

While much has been written about the male foreign fighters,⁴⁷³ who have travelled in order to engage in the conflict in Syria and Iraq, rather less is known about the women.⁴⁷⁴ And, although social media play an increasingly essential part in jihadists' female-specific recruiting strategies, studies of these organisations' use of social media for targeting women are few⁴⁷⁵ – and in the Danish context almost non-existent.

Moreover, de-radicalisation initiatives and preventive measures targeting radicalisation generally have a tendency to ignore the gender aspect.⁴⁷⁶ This is also the case for Denmark, which has no initiatives or programmes that specifically focus on women. In this way, women's radicalisation processes and their involvement in violent, extremist organisations are underestimated, and the notion that violent extremism and terrorism constitute an exclusively male domain is still prevalent. The common understanding of men as the sole perpetrators of acts of violence leads to gender-blind policies, while the tendency within terror studies to describe jihadist women by referring to their relationships to men (wife, bride, widow etc.)⁴⁷⁷ further distorts women's position and engagement in terrorism.

In light of the current situation, a more detailed knowledge about women and terrorism is needed both in terms of the scholarship and for the purposes of preventive work. And the latest OSCE⁴⁷⁸-report requests, on behalf of a range of international bodies, a better understanding of the gender norms as well as of female-specific jihad ideology and propaganda.⁴⁷⁹

The aim of this article is therefore to examine how the jihadi-Salafi organisations based in Denmark call on women to take part in jihad.⁴⁸⁰ The article examines which positions the Danish organisations discursively assign women, how they seek to motivate women to take part in jihad and, in particular, the female-specific jihad propaganda's potential to mobilise. The main argument of the article is that emotions play a central role within the female-specific jihad propaganda and also have an effect on the propaganda's potential to mobilise women to take part in jihad. The article starts by discussing the roles assigned to women in Danish jihad propaganda and briefly elaborating on the female-specific motivation narratives. This shows that emotions play an important part in calling on women to take part in jihad, and the mobilising potential of the female-specific jihad propaganda will be discussed within this frame of reference.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ See e.g. Barrett (2015), Bjørgo (2016), Crone (2016), Hegghammer (2011; 2013), Hemmingsen & Castro (2017), Jensen & Larsen (2019), Lindekilde & Bertelsen (2016), Lindekilde, Bertelsen & Stohl (2016), Neumann (2013), Ranstorp (2016), Ranstorp & Hyllengren (2013), Saltman & Winter (2014), Stern & Berger (2015), Thomas et al. (2014), Winter (2015b).

⁴⁷⁴ See e.g. Bakker & de Leede (2015), de Leede et al. (2017), Hoyle et al. (2015), Malik & Rafiq (2015), Pearson (2018), Pearson & Winterbotham (2017), Peresin, & Cervone (2015), Sjoberg (2018), Speckhard (2015), Winter (2015a), Winter & Margolin (2017).

⁴⁷⁵ See e.g. Huey & Witmer (2016), Jacobsen (2016); (2018), Pearson (2015), Saltman & Smith (2015), Tarras-Wahlberg (2016), Jacobsen (2016; 2018).

⁴⁷⁶ See: Sjoberg & Gentry (2011), Sjoberg (2013), Sjoberg (2018).

⁴⁷⁷ See e.g. Sjoberg & Gentry (2007), Gentry (2010; 2012) for a more detailed presentation of this tendency within the scholarship.

⁴⁷⁸ OSCE – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe was founded in 1973 under the name of CSCE, but changed its name to OSCE in 1990. This is the world's largest, regional security organization with 56 participating countries from Europe, Central Asia and North America.

⁴⁷⁹ OSCE (2019).

⁴⁸⁰ The Arabic verb *jahada*, from which the noun 'jihad' is derived, means to struggle or exert oneself (Ali & Leaman 2008). This struggle need not always refer to fighting, but, in this article, that is the specific focus.

The article is based on an open-source study of textual and audio uploads posted by three Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations on their sixteen official social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In total, 925 uploads concerning women and jihad(ism). All textual and audio materials were uploaded by the jihadi-Salafi organisations themselves, not by followers or members. The data include uploads posted by the organisations from the point when their social media accounts were created until the end of 2015. All told, the data cover a time period of over five years. This period is particularly interesting in relation to online jihadi narratives because online anti-radicalisation initiatives at that time were less developed than they are today. More specifically, Danish anti-radicalisation initiatives had not yet begun to force takedowns⁴⁸¹ of online material from social media in the 'fight against online radicalisation'. Thus, online censure on social media platforms was nearly non-existent and Danish jihadi-Salafists were able to speak (almost) freely online. Large parts of the materials collected for this article no longer exist on social media today.

The textual and audio uploads were systematised and analysed with the help of qualitative software programs. In order to narrow down the dataset to those uploads that specifically deal with women and jihad(-ism), data were coded by data-driven⁴⁸² jihad- and female-specific codes. All uploads in which jihad-specific codes appeared were included in their full length, which for textual uploads vary from three lines to twenty pages and for audio uploads from three minutes to almost four hours. Most uploads were in Danish, a few in English and almost none in Arabic. Variant spellings in Danish, English and Arabic as well as the nouns in singular and plural were included in the coding process.⁴⁸³

Methodologically, the article builds on Jonathan Potter & Margaret Wetherell's psychological discourse analysis (1987) and their social constructionist perception of language: that is, that the world is socially constructed through language, both spoken and written, and that language shapes identities, social relations and understandings of the world. Accordingly, social media texts, such as the texts and audios uploaded by the jihadi-Salafi organisations, construct a version of world situations, rather than merely reflecting or mirroring them.⁴⁸⁴ More specifically, the present analysis builds on Judith Butler's theory⁴⁸⁵ on how subject positions are social, discursive constructions. According to Butler, subject positions are created when we are interpolated; that is, when we are 'called' by someone or something and given an identity via that call.⁴⁸⁶ Thus, subject positions are an effect of repeated speech acts that call the subject into a gender identity and thereby construct a position for the subject. According to Butler, language should therefore be understood not only as meaning making, but also as discourse praxis with reality-producing effects.⁴⁸⁷ Lastly, the article builds on affect theory for an understanding of the online space as a type of social networks that are constructed around emotion and affectual relationships. As Sara Ahmed⁴⁸⁸ stresses, shared feelings such as anger, pain, shame, and love are inherently politicising emotions both in 'the real world' and online. According to Ahmed emotion can be instrumental in creating online communities of shared feelings. And Ahmed regards emotions as a materialized rhetoric, which has affective power and agency. These theories are brought in to complement each other in the analysis of how the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations call on women to take part in jihad.

⁴⁸¹ I.e. the removal of uploads from social media.

⁴⁸² The jihad-specific codes thus emerge from readings of the raw data. Data-driven codes involve five steps to inductively create codes for a codebook: (1) reduce raw information, (2) identify subsample themes, (3) compare themes across subsamples, (4) create codes and (5) determine reliability of codes (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2011).

⁴⁸³ All codes were truncated, which means that all words beginning with the letter composition were included. For example 'jiha*' includes 'jihad', 'jihadi', 'jihadism' etc. For further elaboration on methodology, see the author's forthcoming dissertation (to be completed in 2019).

⁴⁸⁴ See: Potter & Wetherell (1987).

⁴⁸⁵ Judith Butler (2007; 2011).

⁴⁸⁶ Butler (2011, 81f).

⁴⁸⁷ Butler (2007, 2011).

⁴⁸⁸ Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2004).

The three Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations included in this article are the Call to Islam (*Kaldet til Islam*), the Muslim Youth Centre (*Muslimsk UngdomsCenter*) and the Islamic Culture Centre (*Islamisk Kulturcenter*).⁴⁸⁹ The article focuses on these three specific organisations because, at the time of data collection, they were among the most influential jihadi-Salafi organisations in Denmark, both online and offline. More specifically, these organisations have been among the main establishers of a Danish online jihad narrative – in the sense that they have shared most material online and have undoubtedly been the ones most cited and the ones whose uploads have most frequently been shared by other online organisations within the Danish jihadi-Salafi milieu. Their online material is still cited and largely shared today. The organisations have moreover been the main base of large clusters of Danish foreign fighters who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join contemporary jihadi organisations, such as, but not limited to, ISIS. In a variety of ways, they have also been involved in several Danish cases of terrorism, including the Glasvej case (also known as ‘Operation Dagger’) and the Glostrup case (also known as “the Sarajevo case”).⁴⁹⁰ All three are termed “organisations” in order to emphasise that they exist or existed in real life as well as online and are not simply online debate forums.

The term jihadi-Salafism is used to refer to the Danish organisations because they in various ways position themselves via their textual and audio uploads on social media within a violent faction of conservative Islam known as jihadi-Salafism.⁴⁹¹ Simply put, the concept of Salafism is derived from the Arabic expression *as-salaf as-Salih* (the righteous predecessors), which refers to the Prophet and the first generations of the rightly guided Muslims. Salafism, as a general approach to the interpretation of Islam, is thus embedded in the idea of following in the footsteps of these early generations and deriving religious guidance directly from the sources.⁴⁹² The markers by which this is done include explicitly stressing that the organisations adhere to conservative Salafism or normatively construct the “right Islam” in a textually rigorous way rooted in pre-modern time. The organisations furthermore place a strong emphasis on being jihadists by, for example, legitimising violent defence of Islam, glorifying martyrdom and paying tribute to specific martyrs.

To a very large extent, the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations share the same concepts of the enemy, the same ideologies and key political issues. They desire an Islamic state wherein Islam alone forms the foundations of the state. But there have also been internal disagreements between them. These disagreements range quite widely and include amongst other things discussions of where, when and how the establishment of an Islamic state and sharia is to take place as well as diverging interpretations regarding less fundamental parts of Islamic classical sources holy scripture.⁴⁹³

The three Danish organisations declare their support for a number of international jihad organisations, such as Hamas, al-Qaeda, ISIS and several sub-groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra. They refer diligently to their interpretations of the traditional jihad doctrines and cite well-known figures such as Abdallah Azzam⁴⁹⁴, Anwar al-Awlaki⁴⁹⁵, Abu Musab Zarqawi⁴⁹⁶ and Abu Bakar

⁴⁸⁹ Also called ‘Masjid Quba’ and ‘Islamic Teaching’.

⁴⁹⁰ Hemmingsen (2012); Crone (2011).

⁴⁹¹ Wiktorowicz (2006).

⁴⁹² Wiktorowicz (2006).

⁴⁹³ See the author’s forthcoming dissertation (to be completed in 2019) for further elaboration on the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations. See also Hemmingsen (2012) and Crone (2011) for further elaboration on the Danish jihadi-Salafi milieu.

⁴⁹⁴ This man was an Islamic learned figure central to al-Qaeda.

⁴⁹⁵ Also a central figure in the al-Qaeda movement.

⁴⁹⁶ Former leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Ba'asyir.⁴⁹⁷ However, none of the three Danish organisations are officially sub-groups of the international ones.

Subject positions and motivation narratives: Emotions as central

Turning to the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations' female-specific jihad propaganda, they construct three conceptual positions for women to take in jihad; 'mother', 'martyr wife' or 'mujāhida' i.e. female fighter. They thus assign women militant as well as non-militant positions in jihad. The non-militant position as mother involves giving birth to and raising next generation of potential jihadists, but also more symbolically being the mother of jihadism as an ideology and more generally Islam as a religion. An example of this is the following text:

Example I

"(...) Sisters, it is important to understand that we women are the ones to raise our children. We must understand that Islam has given us a great honour (...) We are the ones who are to stand up for deen ul haqq [the religion of truth], we are the ones who have to fight for la ilaha illah, we are the ones to carry our beautiful nation [Islam] into the future. Sisters, we are the ones who must give birth to little lions of Islam who will fight for deen ul haqq (...)" (Islamic Culture Centre, February 2013, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

The other non-militant subject position, martyr-wife, focuses more on the Muslim man and the woman's primary role in this position is to support and encourage her husband strive for martyrdom. The woman's role in this position is also to glorify both martyrdom and the status of martyr widowhood. An example of this is the following quote from a video, which portrays a woman who recently became a martyr widow:

Example II

"(...) I say this full of pride. My husband has left – for the Ummah and for the pride of all Muslims – this Dunya and the delusive luxury behind and decided for himself, along with me and our daughter, for a life in freedom. For a life in Jihad. To our family I would like to say, don't grieve for him. 'Cause Allah says in the Quran: "Do not think those who are killed in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord". I have decided for myself for this life here. And I will keep on achieving my obligation to Jihad. My beloved sisters, I advise you to achieve your share and accompany the Mujahideen (...)" (Islamic Culture Centre, January 2013, word-for-word transcription of the subtitles).

In the construction of women as excluded from armed combat, however, the intention of the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations is neither to neglect women's position nor to construct women's role as passive or unimportant. On the contrary, the success of jihad is explicitly constructed as dependent on this non-militant support from women.

The Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations also assign women a militant position in jihad. This position is referred to as mujāhida and is the specific focus of the article. Within the position as mujāhida, women's active participation in violent jihad is constructed as an obligation. The arguments supporting this are based on classical doctrines of defensive jihad. Classical jihad doctrines are a theory of warfare developed by Muslims jurists long before the emergence of the Moderns nation state to distinguish between offensive and defensive warfare. In brief, offensive jihad (*jihād al-talab*) refers to waging war against other states, while defensive jihad (*jihād al-daf'ā*) calls on all

⁴⁹⁷ Leader of the terrorist organisation *Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid* and spiritual leader within the terrorist organisation *Jamaah Islamiyya*, which is associated with al-Qaeda. In 2014, he moreover declared his support for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of ISIS.

Muslims to fight if their own territories are being invaded. Thus, offensive jihad was associated with military conquest, expanding the geographical boundaries of the community and was considered a collective duty (*fard kifayya*) for all mature, able-bodied men. In contrast to this, defensive jihad was related to the defence of Islamic lands and was considered an individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for both men and women.⁴⁹⁸ According to the classical doctrine, the individual obligation of defensive jihad applies to those residing in a territory that is under attack or to those who are nearby.⁴⁹⁹ However, modern jihadi-Salafists, including the Danish jihadi-Salafists on whom this article is based, left this distinction because they perceive the enemy (the West, apostate regimes, etc.) as being (unrightfully) in charge of Muslim territories and Islam as being under attack, and they therefore call on all Muslims to defend themselves.⁵⁰⁰ In this way, the organisations have discursively turned defensive jihad away from a territorially oriented doctrine into a contemporary global military program. Thus, the classical doctrines about defensive jihad have become the foundations for a global call to jihad. The following text provides an example of this:

Example III

" (...) When jihaad is fardh 'ayn, i.e. obligatory for every individual, then there are no excuses, then you must go out and have tawakkul in Allah [i.e. trust in Allah] that He Azza wa Jall [the mighty and majestic one] will look after your children (...) Jihad is in principle not an obligation for women except in state of emergency – if, for example, kuffaar [non-believers] attack a Muslim country – in this case, jihad becomes an obligation for women to the extent that she is able. If a woman is unable to fight then she is not obligated to do so, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): 'Allah does not burden a person beyond his range / ability' (...)" (Al-Baqarah 2:286). (Islamic Culture Centre, June 2013, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

These three roles are conceptual female positions, which women have also been assigned by al-Qaeda, ISIS etc. What is particularly interesting in terms of the Danish jihad propaganda aimed at women is that it explicitly calls the woman to take part on the battlefield while, at the same time, international jihad organisations exclude women from combat.⁵⁰¹ The present article thus finds that the Danish jihad propaganda stands out in explicitly and repeatedly calling on women to take the position of female warriors.⁵⁰²

Turning now to the questions of how the jihadi-Salafi organisations seek to motivate Muslim women to take on the role of the mujāhida, the article finds that women are motivated to take part in jihad by referencing classical doctrines of defensive jihad and by means of records of charismatic female fighters from the time of the Prophet. However, the female-specific motivation narratives are as contemporary and empowering as they are regressive and founded in classical sources such as the Quran, ahadith and Sira. The Danish motivation narratives thus merge a focus on classical doctrines of defensive jihad and records of tradition with contemporary narratives, which address complex identity issues peculiar to Muslim women in the West today. In particular, they motivate Muslim women to take part in jihad by counter-narrating a (perceived) Western essentialism in which Muslim women are (according to them) seen as the passive victims of oppressive male-dominated ideologies.

⁴⁹⁸ See Lahoud (2014), Wiktorowicz (2006), Hegghammer (2008; 2013)

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ ISIS only recently called on women to take part on the battlefield. It was not until after the collection of data for the present article had finished.

⁵⁰² For further elaboration on the assigned roles of women in Danish online jihad propaganda, see Jacobsen (2016).

An example is the following textual upload in which the jihadi-Salafists counter-narrate a (perceived) hegemonic and stereotyped view of 'the Muslim woman' as oppressed and weak. Instead, they (de-)construct Muslim women as strong and self-confident. The Danish jihadi-Salafists refer to female fighters in the Prophet Muhammad's army, fighting and defending Islam against the enemy. They refer especially to the heroic actions of Umm 'Umara⁵⁰³, who according to Islamic sources was one of the Prophet Muhammad's female followers. She fought side by side with the Prophet in several battles, amongst them the Battle of Uhud in 625.⁵⁰⁴ The Battle of Uhud was a struggle between the first Muslims of Medina and the Meccan Qarish tribe from which Muhammad came in 625. The narratives in the Danish jihad propaganda tell of Umm 'Umarah's courage and heroic fighting on the battlefield as well as of how she killed the man who had slain her son 'Umarah and how she lost her hand during close combat with that man. Another oft-mentioned female warrior from the days of the Prophet is Khawlah Bint al-Azwar. Khawlah was, according to the sources, a prominent woman warrior known for her bravery and her leading role during several conquests in what is now Syria, Jordan and Palestine.⁵⁰⁵ These women, according to the Danish Jihadi-Salafists, disprove the Western perception of Islam as oppressive against women. And the Danish jihadi-Salafists ask the question of whether contemporary Muslim women have the strength to follow in the footsteps of the female warriors of the past:

Example IV

The perception of the Muslim woman as a weak, oppressed and passive is widespread in the West. That women in the western world are forced to be walking sex objects is called 'freedom'. However, the Muslim woman – as defined by Islam in its writings in the form of the Quran and the Sunnah – is strong and self-confident (...) when the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was in conflict with the local infidel tribes in the Arabian peninsula, his army of faithful soldiers was joined by many women fighting on equal terms with weapon in hand defending Islam against the enemy. Especially well known is Nasiba Bint Kaab Al Mazini, who was always in the lead. In one battle, she was wounded 13 times, lost one hand, and killed in close combat the man who killed her son Umara (...) Khawla bint Al Azwar saved her brother in a battle by killing his opponents (...) The West rejoices women who can contribute to the distorted perception of Islam as women's oppressive and reactionary. The West allows the woman to show off her body; to degrade her to a sex object. It allows her the right to do many things, but not to the right to be Muslim. The West will not recognize women who choose Islam. According to the West's mind, women who choose Islam must be forced to do so by their husbands. In the ideological crusade against Islam, the West uses the Muslim woman as hostage. Women's oppression is a problem we all must help fight. But the solution – the liberation – is not called free sex (...) it is called Islam. Islam's historical and brave women have shown the way to it. But are Muslims today strong enough to follow? (Islamic Culture Centre, October 2012, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

According to Danish jihadi-Salafists, the West sees Muslim women as oppressed and male-dominated. The motivation narratives to the mujāhida-position counter-narrate this view by referring to the female warriors of the past and presenting Islam as the source of female strength and liberation. In doing so, they (de-)construct 'the Muslim woman' in motivation narratives that rely heavily on jihadi-Salafism, not only as an important source of authenticity but also of strong self-identity and (em)power(ment).

⁵⁰³ Called 'Nasiba bint Kaab Al Mazini' in the following upload. She is also called Umm 'Amara and Umm 'Imara in the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda.

⁵⁰⁴ Ahmed (1992): pp.70ff

⁵⁰⁵ Ahmed (1992).

When studying how the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations allot women different positions in jihad and try to motivate women to partake in jihad, it becomes clear that emotions play a central role in the propaganda that targets women. A relevant question therefore is what meaning emotions have within the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations' call on women. This question will be treated in what follows. The aim is to discuss the driving, emotional force of the Danish female-specific online jihad propaganda in relation to this propaganda's ability to mobilise women to take part in jihad.

Mobilising potential: The role of emotions

Given the fact that jihad organisations have increasingly used social media to recruit people for jihad, the question of the online propaganda's ability to mobilise has been central to studies on the issue during the past decade⁵⁰⁶. However, very few of these studies focus on women. Those that do find that the social media constitute a crucial tool in the radicalisation of the women, who have in recent years joined ISIS and other jihad organisations in Syria and Iraq.⁵⁰⁷ The studies are based primarily on analyses of networks and an extensive mapping of these women,⁵⁰⁸ and discuss the question of whether the women have been recruited and radicalised in the virtual or in 'the real world'. These studies focus on how women became attracted to jihadism, but they forget to ask why jihadism is attractive.

On the basis of Ahmed's theory of affect,⁵⁰⁹ this article will look at how jihad(ism) is made attractive in the female-specific jihad propaganda online. The role of emotions will be the starting point of the discussion and Ahmed contribute to the discussion by the way in which she turns the question of *what affect is* into the question of *what affect 'does'*.⁵¹⁰ Ahmed's Butler-inspired question of what affect 'does' thus becomes an analytical tool for a discussion of what the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda 'does'.

Ahmed's overall point is that emotions establish a sticky relation between signs and bodies.⁵¹¹ Especially relevant to the present article is the way in which Ahmed regards emotions as a materialized rhetoric, which has affective power and agency.⁵¹² This means that when the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations on social media claim to hate someone or something, or when they use different speech acts internally to shame people, they activate, according to Ahmed, a range of cultural forms of consensus regarding what hatred and shame are and how you should react when encountering those emotions.⁵¹³ In this way, the discursive construction of emotions in the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda may potentially create an urge to act in women.⁵¹⁴

Anger, pain and hope

According to Ahmed, emotions and specific readings of the world are what make an individual a politicised subject.⁵¹⁵ Ahmed is speaking from her position as a feminist and reflects on the role played by emotions in becoming a feminist subject. Here, Ahmed emphasises that, although it is not one particular emotion that politicises the individual, anger is especially important to this process.⁵¹⁶ Likewise, anger is the most prominent emotion⁵¹⁷ in the Danish jihad propaganda and therefore constitutes the main starting point for this section.

⁵⁰⁶ See e.g. Conway (2016), Gill et al. (2015), Briggs & Strugnell (2011), Briggs & Feve (2014), Neumann (2013).

⁵⁰⁷ See e.g. Klausen (2015), Pearson & Winterbotham (2016), Saltman & Smidth (2015)

⁵⁰⁸ See also e.g. Alexander (2016), Hoyle et al. (2015), Huey & Witmer (2016), Tarras-Wahlberg (2016).

⁵⁰⁹ Ahmed (2014).

⁵¹⁰ Ibid: p.191.

⁵¹¹ Ibid. p.16f; 194f

⁵¹² Ibid. p.8-12; 24ff; 194f

⁵¹³ Ibid.: p.48, 59f; 113-20.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.: p.103.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid:p.171ff.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

According to Ahmed, what we experience never happens against an empty background, but plays into earlier, socially constructed categorisations of emotions. Of importance for this article is Ahmed's emphasis of the fact that it may also be the experiences of others that make certain emotions stick to our bodies. Therefore, it is not only our own experiences that move us (physically as well as psychologically), but also the shared experiences of others.⁵¹⁸ This is particularly relevant in light of the ways in which the Danish organisations arrange their motivation narratives for the mujāhida position around (their perception of) the Western view on 'the Muslim woman' as an oppressed, passive victim of a male-dominated ideology. Narratives about the gender-based discrimination that Muslim women (feel that they) encounter in the Western societies of today (often presented by a female voice) thus become motivational as 'shared emotions'.⁵¹⁹ And in relation to Ahmed's point about how speech acts activate a range of cultural forms of consensus on how you ought to react when you encounter a particular emotion,⁵²⁰ it is interesting that these accounts are usually accompanied by stories from the days of the Prophet about brave, authoritative women warriors' eager for violence.

Seen from an Ahmed perspective, the Danish jihad organisations' narratives about contemporary as well as historical women and their emotions thus influence modern Muslim women's experiences of their own emotions. In this sense, the female-specific jihad propaganda 'does' that the individual is 'always already' 'in place', ready to be influenced in particular ways.⁵²¹ And this affects the way in which the individual reacts in her encounter with these emotions.⁵²² Feelings of social exclusion and marginalisation communicated by sisters in the present as well as the anger of women warriors of the past may stick to the body on the other side of the computer screen. And the female-specific jihad propaganda thus crosses time and space in establishing potential emotional relations that cut across 'the real world' and 'the virtual world'. In such crossings, taking action – by engaging in jihad – can be a way of responding to the anger felt by others in cases where you cannot directly respond.⁵²³ Thus the female-specific jihad propaganda can potentially create an urge to act.

This is also relevant in relation to women in the war-zones of the Middle East, whose call for help is also clearly communicated through the social media profiles of the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations. An example of this is the following text-upload, which rages about the situation in Syria and Iraq, including rape and torture of women. The text presents women's cry for help and ends by calling Muslims to take part in jihad:

Example V

"(...) During the recent many years we have seen how Muslims have suffered and wallahi we have seen with our own eyes how their tears have turned to blood ... Ya Munimeen! We call ourselves Muslims and yet we turn our backs? While our relatives are screaming for help! YA MUNAMIEEN! Our sisters are being raped in the most horrid ways and they make her suffer until her soul leaves her bloodied body ... Ya Allah Ya Allah will you be satisfied with us at all? While our siblings have been crying for help! While they have lost everything. Ya Allah can you forgive us? (...) OUR SISTERS ARE BEING RAPED. YOUR SISTERS! BROTHERS, OUR MOTHERS ARE BEING RAPED!!! THEY ARE SCREAMING FOR HELP!!! BROTHERS, OUR BELOVED BROTHERS HAVE GONE OUT FISABILILLAH [For the sake of Allah⁵²⁴]. GO WITH THEM!" (Islamic Culture Centre, June 2013, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

⁵¹⁷ That is, the emotion featured most frequently in the coding of den female-specific jihad propaganda.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid: pp.1-10.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid: p.96.

⁵²⁰ Ibid: p.9; 24ff.

⁵²¹ Ibid: p.9; 24ff.

⁵²² Ibid: p.24ff

⁵²³ Ibid: p.172ff

⁵²⁴ 'Fi sabillillah' is used in the Danish jihad propaganda as a synonym for armed jihad.

As this text exemplifies, both the situation in the Middle East and the anger they felt about it are clearly portrayed in the Danish online jihad propaganda. It is of particular relevance that, according to Ahmed, it is women's encounter with violence, rape and injustice that holds the greatest potential not just in becoming a politicised subject, but also in relation to the formation of an (ideological) collective with the ability to mobilise.⁵²⁵

If we think about the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations in the same way as Ahmed thinks about feminism – that is, as awareness-creating groups that transform anger and pain into unity and opposition⁵²⁶ – then we find yet another important aspect. Ahmed argues that such awareness-creating groups are crucial because the individual needs to know that it is not alone to dare question the dominant discourses, power structures and politics of society.⁵²⁷ The Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations constitute exactly such awareness-creating groups that make it possible to link women together by means of their shared feelings and the socially constructed categorisations of these. The online forums preoccupy themselves especially with the present-day structural power relationships in the Middle East. An area of the world which, they say, the West has given up on. Anger with the situation in the Middle East may then become the driving force for turning to jihad, which in turn comes to look like a place for dealing with this anger and pain.

But in order for pain and anger to act as driving forces, they need to be accompanied by hope.⁵²⁸ As Ahmed points out, anger at the past and the present carries within itself a hope for the future: "Crucially, anger is not simply defined in relation to the past, but also to opening up the future. In other words, being against something does not end with 'that which one is against'".⁵²⁹ According to Ahmed, anger may lead to a sort of despair if you only repeat that which you are against. Thus a political ideology needs hope in order to create a sense of unity and collective reactions.⁵³⁰

This is definitely also the case with the Danish jihad narratives in which historical pain and anger are relevant to the present in a shared hope for the future. The future, however, is constructed around the idea of the afterlife and hope is thus linked to the hope of a good position in Jannah, i.e. Paradise, and to Allah's mercy on judgement day. But hope is also linked to the re-establishment of an Islamic caliphate and Muslim honour. An example of this is the following monolog from one of the organisations, which calls on men and women to take part in jihad from their position in Syria. Here, women as well as men are encouraged to contribute to the establishment of the Caliphate and the rewards of martyrdom, including life in Jannah, are emphasised:

Example VI

"(...) And I will tell you another thing, my brothers and sisters who live in Denmark: Oh my sisters and brothers – and your wives – if you think that the comfortable life is to live there, in safety, wallahi [by Allah], it holds no safety. Safety is here. We are safe here. We heard bombs and we smiled at each other. Allah, He gave us the opportunity to attack the enemy and they threw bombs and we smiled at each other. Allahu Akbar, we smiled at death. We will always be victorious, oh my brothers and sisters, you will always be victorious. If you go with Allah, subhan wa taallah⁵³¹, He gives you life. This 'fi sabilillah' [for Allah's sake⁵³²] it gives you life. It is not death. You do not lose anything. You will have Jannah. (...) We invite all people of this

⁵²⁵ Ibid: p.172

⁵²⁶ Ibid: pp.171-78

⁵²⁷ Ibid: p.176ff

⁵²⁸ Ibid: p.175ff

⁵²⁹ Ibid: p.175

⁵³⁰ Ibid: p.184

⁵³¹ A praising of Allah.

⁵³² A synonym for jihad.

world and we say: Come here! Migrate, my Muslim brothers and sisters. Come here to this land and be a part of establishing this unique Islamic state. With this unique Islamic state you will have Izza [honour] (...) Come here to this land. You will be honoured by Allah. You will be given life. Do not think that you will lose your life. You will have Jennah. You will have Izza, and the best of the best – do you know what that is? You will be the founders – for a second time- of an Islamic state here on earth and they will shout Allahu Akbar [Allah is great]. Allahu Akbar.” (Islamic Culture Centre, November 2013, my transcription, word-for word from the audio file).

As the transcribed text exemplifies, the Danish jihad propaganda constructs hope from the longing for what is not yet here. According to Ahmed, it is when ‘what is not yet here’ strikes upon us in the present that hope has the potential to mobilise action. Because this is the point at which hope can create a feeling of having to do something in order to turn that which we long for into our future.⁵³³ Thus, seen from an Ahmed perspective, the potential of the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda online lies in its ability to communicate anger and pain, but also in its ability to express hope.⁵³⁴

Shame and love

Not just feelings of anger, pain and hope, but also feelings of shame and love are the most central within the Danish jihad propaganda, and these emotions are therefore likewise relevant to the discussion of the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda’s potential to mobilise.

According to the Danish online jihad propaganda, refraining from taking part in jihad is shameful, both because you abstain from doing your obligation and because this says something about whom you are. Therefore, Ahmed’s definition of shame is relevant because it points to shame as a affect whose power lies in the fact that it confronts us with ourselves.⁵³⁵ More specifically, Ahmed regards shame as the individual’s experience of self and thus as the most reflective of all affects⁵³⁶ Because of this, focusing on shame will provide deeper insights into self- and world perceptions. And, as Ahmed stresses, shame is first and foremost relational, which means you have to study it as it emerges between individuals in a social context.⁵³⁷

As noted above, the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations call on women to take up specific positions in jihad and in doing so they make clear the expectations relating to these positions. This establishes the possibility for (self-)reflection. With this in mind, Ahmed’s perception of shame as ‘the individual’s experience of itself’⁵³⁸ invites a closer look at the extent to which shame is reduced or intensified in the Danish jihad propaganda. An example of intensification follows in the text below, which encourages the individual to act on her sense of shame. The text speaks from a female position and refers to the hearts that do not feel shame at the situation of women in the Middle East as black, cold and evil. It encourages women to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad, even at the cost of their lives:

Example VII

“(…) Wallahi if we do not weep! If we are not ashamed or if we do nothing, our hearts must be black! Wallahi our hearts must be black, cold and evil. Your sisters and brothers are fighting fisabilillah right now! subhanAllah our beloved Prophet gave all that he had for deen ul haqq! Together with those who followed him on the deen

⁵³³ Ibid: p.184

⁵³⁴ Ibid: pp.183-89.

⁵³⁵ Ibid: pp.10f; 103ff; 214f.

⁵³⁶ Ibid: p.103.

⁵³⁷ Ibid: pp.10ff; 103ff.

⁵³⁸ Ibid: p.103f.

of truth! Ya sisters what are we waiting for? Allah has given us the message of truth for us to pass it on! Even if it costs blood and tears! (...) WAKE UP! YOUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS ARE DYING AND YOU JUST FOLLOW MAN-MADE LAWS??? HAVE WE FORGOTTEN OUR DEEN??? AND WHAT OUR DEEN TELLS US??? WALLAHI WE DO NOT NEED HELP FROM HYPOCRITS AND KUFFAR! INDEED WE WILL HAVE VICTORY!! HE WHO HOLDS MY SOUL IN HIS HAND HAS PROMISED ISLAM VICTORY! IT IS ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME!!!! Remember why, dear sisters and brothers, we are here. We live only once so let it be *fi sabilillah*, In shaa⁵³⁹” (Islamic Culture Centre, March 2013, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

It is especially relevant to the social construction of shame in the online jihad propaganda that shame, according to Ahmed, may also result in a positive investment in the object that activates this feeling. One of Ahmed’s points is that feeling shame simultaneously constitutes an opportunity for the individual to make clear her positive investment in it: “my shame confirms my love”.⁵⁴⁰ In relation to the Danish jihad propaganda online, this means that if you feel shame at not participating in jihad, this reflect that you feel love of jihadi-Salafism as an ideology – and perhaps more specifically that you are longing to take part in jihad. Thus, shame can be understood in other ways than just as an assistant to the moral police: It may also be an emotion that reflects love.

Seen from this angle, the shame of not taking part in jihad gives the individual the opportunity to confirm her sense of belonging to jihadi-Salafism. Ahmed thus links the affective economy that is embedded in the sensitivity to shame with the sense of belonging: Shame is exactly the fear of not living up to what you recognise as being right. And shame is felt even more keenly when the one you want to be recognised by (authoritative figures, the women within the environment, Allah etc.) is looking at you online. An example of this is the following short text-upload, which seeks the forgiveness of Allah:⁵⁴¹

Example VIII

“Sins destroy the heart in the same way as poison destroys the body.

YA ALLAH FORGIVE US, WALLAHI I AM ASHAMED... YA ALLAH LET US STAND UP FOR HAQQ! YA ALLAH LET US SACRIFICE EVERYTHING FOR YOUR SAKE!!! #FISABILILLAH!!!” (Islamic Culture Centre, March 2013, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

The shame of feeling ashamed and of being seen as someone who ought to be ashamed may result in the urge to act. According to Ahmed, this is due to the fact that you wish to be rid of the shame and long to release the positive emotion associated with being worthy of recognition.⁵⁴²

Apart from what shame ‘does’, another important question therefore is, according to Ahmed, who has access to the individual’s shame.⁵⁴³ Ahmed points out that too great or too little opportunity to feel shame, or none at all, reflects the individual’s extent of belonging. In this, only subjects who are already recognisable as representatives of the community have the opportunity to confirm their love through shame.⁵⁴⁴ This means that the mere fact that you feel shame in the first place confirms that you are part of the community.⁵⁴⁵

⁵³⁹ ‘*fi sabilillah*’ is used in the Danish jihad propaganda as a synonym for armed jihad.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid: pp.105ff; 139ff.

⁵⁴¹ Other examples include example V, which also seek Allah’s forgiveness.

⁵⁴² Ibid: pp.110-20

⁵⁴³ Ibid: pp.107-13. This question is asked by other theorists in a different context; see e.g. Frederiksen (2013).

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid: pp.107-13.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

Asking the question of who has access to the sense of shame in the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda, it is noteworthy that the Danish jihad propaganda not only shame women who do not take part in jihad. It also calls on men by shaming them for not taking part in jihad. In this way, the female specific jihad propaganda does not speak exclusively to women, because it also use women as a 'mobilisation tool' in a call for men. The Danish female-specific jihad propaganda shames men who do not take part in jihad by praising the historical women who have taken part in armed jihad. An example is a video that tells of Umm 'Umarah, who, as mentioned, was active on the battlefield during the days of the Prophet. In the video, women are encouraged to follow her example and it emphasises, among other things, how "many men wish that they were as brave as she was" and that Umm 'Umarah "had good characteristics, which many men today don't have"⁵⁴⁶. Another example is a text in which one of the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations relates of Khawlah, who, as mentioned, was a female fighter in the days of the Prophet. The text-upload presents in glorifying terms how she is said to have pursued and forced men, who were attempting to escape combat, back out onto the battlefield:

Example IX

"(...) During another battle the Muslims were overwhelmed by a much larger Roman army. Many soldiers ran away, but not for long. Khawlah and the other women met the fleeing soldiers, thus questioning their courage and forcing them to return to the battlefield. The men were inspired when they saw Khawlah swinging her sword and leading yet another attack. They turned their horses around and entered into combat, which they subsequently won. On that day, one of the knights said: "Our women were tougher on us than the Romans were. We felt that returning to the battle, to fight and die, was easier than looking our women in the eye later on." Khawlah became legendary even during her lifetime and she remains legendary to this day. She sets an example for men and women because we have to fight for what we believe in and we must never accept defeat! (...)" (Islamic Culture Centre, April 2013, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

Thus, the men who do not partake in jihad are put to shame by various ways of making it clear that men today, like men in the past, lack the courage and character that the women warriors of the past had.

The shaming of men also occurs in references to women who suffer in different parts of the world while the men do nothing about it. Examples of this are the series 'Liberate our sisters' and 'Our imprisoned sisters are calling'⁵⁴⁷, which tell of women in various places across the world who have been imprisoned for attempts at terrorism and are exposed to torture and the like in prison. Several text-uploads report on the everyday lives of these women, for example through letters allegedly written by them. In these, the men who do not act on the women's sufferings are shamed and men who do not take part in jihad are written off as true Muslims. Shaming those Muslim men who do not engage in jihad is a way of invalidating their belonging to jihadi-Salafism. An example is the following text-upload that cites Aafia Sidiqi, who is imprisoned for attempting a terror attack in the US⁵⁴⁸ and who supposedly said the following:

Example X

"(...) I am a proud Muslim, adherent of Muhammad (SAW), daughter of Abu Bakr (RA), Umar (RA), Usman (RA), Ali (RA) and their true descendants. I do not wish to be your sister (...) You are my protectors, but I will seek Allah's help and not yours. My so-called Muslim Ummah – has millions of soldiers, tanks, automatic weapons, battle plans, and submarines and yet they did not rescue me. Do not worry about

⁵⁴⁶Audio-upload by the Muslim Youth Centre, April 2015, my transcription, word-for-word from the sound file.

⁵⁴⁷ Both of these are featured by the Call to Islam.

⁵⁴⁸ Aafia Sidiqi was associated with al-Qaeda and ISIS had previously offered an exchange of prisoners involving her – among others with James Foley.

Judgement Day; you will not be able to answer because you are not my brothers in Islam. You are Arabs, Pakistani, Persians, Palestinians, Africans, Malaysians, Indonesians, South-Asians, but not Muslims” (The Call to Islam, June 2014, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

It is especially interesting how the focus on emotions shows that the Danish jihad propaganda is not just a jihad manifesto, but also a handbook of emotions containing guidelines for how you should react when encountering certain emotions. This is also the case in the following text, which appeals for action by presenting strong accounts of women’s situation in the Middle East:

Example XI

“If you were in my shoes, what would you say? I see and I hear my sisters being raped, one after the other, while a soldier holds a gun to my head – what would you do if they were your sisters? (...) I see pregnant women having their bellies cut open and be beaten up, I hear them screaming until their souls leave their bodies – what would you do if that was your mother? (...) This is just a fraction of what everyday life is like for me, can you still look at yourself in the mirror, knowing that my life and the lives of your sisters and brothers are like this?” (Islamic Culture Centre, January 2013, my translation, Arabic as in the original).

The texts presented in this article are examples of how the Danish jihadi-Salafi organisations use shame and love to call women (as well as men) to jihad. Moreover, the article has discussed how the emotions employed in the jihad propaganda online are socially constructed and have the potential to create a need for action within the individual.

The findings of this chapter are in particularly relevant in light of the high number of women who within recent years have left Denmark in order to join jihad organisations in Syria and Iraq – in particular ISIS. The latest military efforts to combat ISIS in Syria and Iraq have reduced the territory of the terror organisation. Instead, ‘the caliphate’ takes on a more abstract form, and militant Islamist propaganda encourages support of ‘the caliphate’ by committing attacks in one’s home country, especially in the West. It is in this context important to note that, although ISIS has lost a great deal of territory, their military defeat has not necessarily reduced the appeal of their ideological online propaganda.

The Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) estimates in its latest assessment that the threat of terror against Denmark is significant. The threat still emanates primarily from militant Islamism and comes from women also. The conflict in Syria and Iraq and ISIS remain the key factors in the threat picture and attacks with simple means and short planning are the most likely forms of terrorist attack in Denmark.⁵⁴⁹

With ISIS’ loss of territory the Danish Security and Intelligence Service assesses that many European foreign fighters will seek to join militant Islamist groups in countries such as Afghanistan, North Africa or Southeast Asia or return to their home countries, which can increase the terror threat in Europe.⁵⁵⁰ However, leaving the conflict zone is difficult. Several of the Danish foreign fighters who have gone to Syria and Iraq in recent years have returned. But many women and children are still in Syria and Iraq and live in refugee camps made up of the wives and children of ISIS fighters, who have died, become imprisoned or have fled. An example of this is the refugee camp al-Hol in which over 73,000 people live. 90% of them are women and children. The women who live in the Al-Hol camp are those who stayed in the IS caliphate until its last days. Where other IS sympathizers fled earlier, the women in al-Hol stayed in Baghouz until they were evacuated and moved to the refugee camp in the Kurdish-controlled part of northern Syria. Reports describe abuse, illness and infants dying from diarrhoea, and there is a

⁵⁴⁹ PET 2018

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

shortage of everything from medicine to food. A current issue is therefore whether the al-Hol and similar refugee camps are at risk of acting as 'nests of radicalization' or contribute to further radicalization. Namely, according to research, the recruitment of vulnerable individuals to extremist Islamist networks occurs primarily from socially vulnerable environments,⁵⁵¹ such as refugee camps. Here, individuals are isolated from the outside world, lacking educational and employment opportunities as well as close relationships outside the 'vulnerable environment'.⁵⁵²

Of particular interest to this article is also that ISIS prior to its 'fall' called on women to take part in armed combat. This means that ISIS has gone from recruiting women primarily as 'home builders' and establishers of the caliphate to also calling on women to take part in defensive jihad. This provides a new context for the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda, which has been calling on women to take part in jihad many years before ISIS began to do so. Potentially this may also affect the Danish jihad propaganda's driving force in mobilizing women to take part in jihad. In the future, Danish Security and Intelligence Service will have to take this into account in the fight against terrorism.

However, in Denmark, and in the research field more generally, we have limited knowledge on women and gender in jihadism. This is quite problematic. As this article shows, gender plays a central role and an ideological- as well as practical function in terms of recruitment and legitimate access to organisational violence. And the obvious point; that military conquest alone is not able to combat ideologically motivated violence, cannot be stressed enough. Military action contributes to overcoming the threat posed by violent extremism, but it does not remove the fundamental reasons for its existence. We need other initiatives, too, which in different ways attempt to counteract the individual's acceptance of violence as a legitimate means of defending or promoting an ideology. This article seeks a greater understanding of Danish female-specific jihad propaganda's call for women to engage in jihad with the intention of contributing to a more complexity-aware approach to preventing and countering the threat of terrorism today. This requires in the first-place recognition of the fact that, while men occupy most of the militant positions in jihad, women also play decisive roles within violent and extremist organisations.

Conclusion

This article elaborated on Danish online female-specific jihad propaganda. The analysis of subject positions and motivation narratives found that emotions play a central role in the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda. Ahmed's Butler-inspired question of what emotions 'does' was therefore used as an analytical tool to discuss what emotions in the Danish jihad narratives online 'does'. Building on Ahmed's affect theory, the mobilising potential of the female-specific jihad propaganda was discussed. The aim of the article was to look at how emotions are discursively constructed in the Danish jihad propaganda as well as what the bodily reactions to this might be.

The main argument of the article was that the emotions communicated in the online female-specific jihad propaganda 'sticks' to women across time and space and that emotions play an important role in the jihad propaganda's potential to mobilise women to engage in jihad. The argument was supported and further developed by presenting several text examples. And focusing on the most dominant emotions in the Danish jihad propaganda: anger, pain, hope, shame and love, the article discussed how these emotions potentially trigger an urge to act. Throughout the article, it has been shown that the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda is not merely a jihad manifesto, but also a handbook of emotions with specific guidelines for how to act when encountering certain emotions.

⁵⁵¹ See, e.g., Basra et al., (2016).

⁵⁵² Ibid.

It is particularly interesting that the jihad propaganda targeting women also call on men, both directly and indirectly, to take part in jihad. Female fighters, both from the past and modern-day, are presented as an even greater source of inspiration than male warriors. In this way, the jihad propaganda that targets women may also influence men's eagerness for battle and their general involvement in jihad.

Throughout this article, it has been put forth that the discursively constructed emotions in the Danish jihad narratives are both socially conditioned and religiously communicated. The article thus contributes to the current discussion within the research field about the role of religion in processes of radicalisation.⁵⁵³ Within this discussion, one position regards Islam and religiosity as a crucial driving force behind radicalisation and terrorist attacks, while the other position argues that radicalisation is linked to societal issues and political discontent. This article thus positions itself between these two points of view arguing that the existing scholarship appears to overlook the entanglement of the different factors.

Last but not least, women have long played a decisive role in jihad. However, this is still underestimated within the research field and, in the Danish context, there is until now no existing studies that deals with this issue. This article has sought to lessen the gender bias that exists in this field and to put forth knowledge the Danish female-specific jihad propaganda. In its approach, the article offers an alternative to the general trend within the research field to go for large-scale international mappings of women who have joined ISIS. Instead, this article has focused on the propaganda rather than on the women. In doing so, the article look to contribute with an understanding of why jihadism may seem attractive, rather than how individuals are attracted by jihadism.

In a wider perspective, it is also relevant that women also increasingly engage in right-wing extremist terrorist activities. In recent years, right-wing extremist organisations have been the perpetrators of several terrorist attacks in the West and they, too, increasingly recruit women in their online propaganda.⁵⁵⁴ With this in mind, the arguments presented in this article, particularly within the discussion of the mobilisation potential of online propaganda, are also relevant in a wider perspective.

⁵⁵³ See for instance Crone (2010); (2016), Roy (2017), Hegghammer (2017), Hemmingsen & Castro (2017), Lindekilde, Berthelsen & Stohl (2016), Bjørgo (2005).

⁵⁵⁴ See e.g. Amadeu Antonio Foundation (2014), Claire & Whyte (2018).

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Salafism in Germany - Proselytising Efforts and Jihad

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Introduction

About 1.8 billion people worldwide identify themselves as Muslims, with 4.4 to 4.7 million of them living in Germany. Like other world religions, Islam also has various currents. A particularly radical current of Islamist extremism is so-called Salafism. Salafists present themselves as the "only true Muslims". Among the Muslims living in Germany, they are only a small, but relatively rapidly growing, extremist minority, though.

Salafists have already been active in Germany since the late 1990s. However, the term has only been used in everyday language since the public appearance of Salafist organisations, for example with information stands or Koran distribution campaigns.

Varieties of Salafism

The German domestic intelligence services distinguish between political and jihadist Salafism. Both currents share the same ideological convictions, but choose different means to establish a "Salafist religious state", which would be incompatible with the free democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Political Salafists try to disseminate their ideology mainly through extensive propaganda activities. They call it "proselytising" ("dawa"). They strive for changing society according to Salafist rules in the long run. In this context, they usually show a great sense of mission. The majority of Salafists in Germany and of Salafist preachers making public appearances are classified as belonging to this group. Political Salafism may be the basis of jihadist Salafism ("jihadism") and a first step towards an individual radicalisation process. This process may again result in the approval, support or even use of violence in the name of "true Islam" – either in Germany or abroad. Political Salafists do not generally reject violence as a means of achieving their aims, but often say that it is "not helpful for now".

Jihadist Salafists ("jihadists") strive for the establishment of a religious state with violent means. They interpret the term "jihad", which most Muslims understand as a (personal) effort in their individual religious life, as armed combat against the "infidels" ("kuffar"), and they idealise it as a form of "worship service". For them, jihad is the individual duty ("fard al-ayn") of each Muslim and hence one of the pillars of Islam. Jihad as a "defence of Islam" is to be waged not only in countries with a mainly Muslim population but also in countries with a Western orientation. Particularly in jihadist Salafism, the concept of "takfir" plays a role, according to which even Muslims can be declared "infidels" and hence enemies of Islam who have to be fought. The majority of Islamist extremist terrorists is currently classified as belonging to jihadist Salafism.

There is a big twilight zone between the two currents of Salafism. Single individuals or groupings cannot always be clearly identified as belonging to one or the other. This is also due to the fact that both currents show an affinity towards violence. Although political Salafists present

themselves in public as refusing violence, they support at least the idea of introducing the Salafist interpretation of the Sharia including corporal punishment. Most Salafists in Germany likely know that they cannot realise and implement their concepts of law and society in the Federal Republic of Germany, but they still try to apply them to the greatest extent possible.

Social problems caused by Salafism

For German society, Salafism involves many problems. For the domestic intelligence services, it is relevant that it is incompatible with the fundamental values and convictions of democracy.

Incompatibility between Salafism and democracy

Salafists do not only reject the rules of democracy, but they also claim to determine each individual's life in detail. Salafism leaves no space for individual decision-making or self-determination.

A Salafist preacher openly expresses this claim:

"Democracy is for the infidels and comes from the infidels, dear brothers and sisters. [...] Politics are part of our religion. And everything belongs to our religion, dear brothers and sisters. Economy belongs to our religion [...] The school system belongs to our religion, and medicine and health [...], even how we cut or trim our hair belongs to our religion, even how we relieve ourselves and how we eat and drink and sleep belongs to our religion [...] this religion is all-encompassing [...] and has left nothing out!"

Nonviolent Salafism, too, poses a threat to the democratic society. Its ideology and practice are incompatible with the free democratic basic order.

Salafism as a breeding ground for violence

Preachers belonging to the spectrum of political Salafism usually use pacific language. Nevertheless, their dissemination of Salafist ideology may be a breeding ground for violence, since they spread an absolute black-and-white-thinking: On the one side, there are the followers of Salafism who are stylised as the elite ("tali'a", a term invented by Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian ideologue of the "Muslim Brotherhood" and the mastermind behind "jihadism"). On the other side, there are the alleged "infidels".

Important elements of this dualism are conspiracy theories and enemy concepts. Common enemy concepts of Salafism are, for example, the USA and/or "the West" or Israel and/or "the Jews". Anti-Semitism is an integral part of Salafism. But Muslims of other Islamic beliefs—especially Shiites—also belong to the groups Salafists fight against. Salafists find apparently religious justifications for all enemy concepts, making them resistant to any critics. At the same time, they present themselves as victims of "the fight against Islam". One essential function of enemy concepts is to dehumanise (political) opponents. They are seen as inferior, and they are deprived of their fundamental rights, even of the right to live.

Radicalisation

There are different indicators possibly suggesting a radicalisation towards Salafism or the severity of such a radicalisation. For instance, the frequent visit of an Islam seminar that is given by Salafist preachers may be an entry into the scene. However, in the past there were also cases of so-called self-radicalisation via the Internet that progressed very quickly—even without links to Salafism in the real world. An involvement in Salafist structures is hence not imperative for a radicalisation.

Factors that foster or trigger radicalisation may be of a social or personal nature. Examples include: vulnerable identity, lacking self-esteem, experiences of exclusion, lack of perspective, ignorance of Islam, thirst for adventure or financial problems.

Of course, such factors do not necessarily lead to radicalisation. There are radicalisation processes without any of these factors playing a role.

Prevention of integration

There is a clear discrepancy between the Salafist ideology and Western convictions. Muslims who do not behave in accordance with Salafism, are either mocked and rejected by Salafists or the latter try to lead them onto “the right path”. Salafism prevents integration, is a counter-concept to the Western community of shared values, and it fosters the development of parallel societies that reject the German government and public authorities.

This is especially important in the context of large immigration flows. Since 2015, Salafist protagonists have been trying to increasingly exert influence on refugees – particularly Muslims – all over Germany, in order thus to prevent such persons from being “swallowed” by Western society, which they fear. Salafist mosques are visited also by an increasing number of refugees. However, this is not always due to a broad acceptance of the Salafist ideology, but to the availability or proximity of mosques or prayer rooms.

Salafist efforts in Germany

In Germany, there are hardly any established, supraregional Salafist structures such as Salafist umbrella organisations. Instead, there are Salafist mosque communities and associations as well as loosely organised student-teacher networks. In the past years, prominent members of the scene have lost ground. Instead, the importance of Salafist leaders and relevant structures of the scene becomes increasingly limited to a certain region.

One reason for the fact that there are only a few established structures within the Salafist scene might be that – if religion is translated into practice in such a detailed manner – there are many differences of opinion among Salafist authorities.

Currently, it can be observed that the Salafist scene is becoming less and less active in public. Proselytising activities in the streets that are perceptible in public or public rallies have become very rare. This is likely due to the successful investigations by the state in the last years which resulted in the ban of the Salafist Koran distribution campaign “Lies!” or in the closure of several prominent Salafist mosques, for example. At the same time, however, the abandonment of public activities has made the security authorities’ investigations more difficult.

In various forms, Salafist structures exist in all German federal states. With their relatively strong Muslim infrastructures, the region of Cologne/Bonn, the Rhine-Main area and Berlin constitute local hotspots.

Like other Islamist groups, Germany-based Salafists time and again receive support from abroad. On the one hand, so-called travelling preachers mainly come to Germany at the invitation of local mosque communities. On the other hand, Salafist publications are translated into German and published abroad and subsequently sent to Germany. In addition, there are numerous Internet

offers in German or other languages that are hosted abroad and that are aimed at Germany-based individuals. Partly closed groups in social networks also play an important role.

How Salafism finds and binds its adherents

Over the past years, Salafism has won new adherents although the extremely conservative elements of the ideology scare off many individuals. On the other hand, Salafism especially attracts those who feel marginalised by the majority society.

Salafism as a world of its own

Salafism is not only a political ideology but also a sect-like world with social rules. There are, for example, Salafist rules for the "correct" upbringing of children or the "correct" behaviour of a wife towards her husband. Due to its ultimate claim to truth, Salafism offers simple answers to all questions of life. Therefore, it can seem attractive especially to individuals who are in complex or difficult situations and who are in search of identity and personal respect.

There barely is any aspect in an individual's life for which Salafists do not have a suitable rule. This can e.g. be observed on the Internet where, in numerous videos, Salafist preachers give instructions by providing religiously binding answers to seemingly trivial questions of everyday life. Video titles such as "What do you say when you go to the toilet?" or "Is it allowed to swallow one's spit in Ramadan?" are thus created. The background of these videos is that many Salafists are really afraid of making "mistakes" when practising their religion and going to hell for that reason. Therefore, many of them partly meticulously take care of adhering to even the most detailed instructions by Salafist authorities although they can also be contradictory. At the same time, these instructions give them stability and structure in their daily routine.

The attraction of Salafism, especially for immigrants and their children, also results from the fact that the Salafist scene is characterised by a strong ethnic heterogeneity. Basically, Salafism is open to all ethnic groups and rejects racism. Moreover, it promises its adherents a kind of "new start". All parameters that used to play a role before an individual's turning towards Salafism are no longer relevant afterwards. Social origin, nationality, way of life or confession of an individual before turning towards Salafism are null and void later. This "new start" is illustrated by the choice of an Arab name ("kunya") which additionally emphasises the membership of the Salafist "family".

Another important point is the accessibility of the ideology. In Germany, Salafist preachers mainly hold their lectures in German and thus specifically address Muslims of German origin as well as younger Muslims. In addition, many of the preachers grew up in Germany and are familiar with the difficulties encountered by Germany-based adolescents. Therefore, many listeners consider them more attractive than Imams having entered Germany from Turkey, for example, and preaching in Turkish. Salafism in Germany is not an imported extremism, but it is substantially shaped by the Germany-based Salafists.

Rules and language codes

In public, the partly slavish implementation of detailed religious rules is particularly illustrated by the dress code. In this field, too, Salafists try to adhere to the rules imposed upon them as accurately as possible and to bring others to do so as well. In this context, they orientate themselves towards the early Islamic period and the traditional appearance of the Prophet and his companions. Generally, men ensure that their ankles are not covered. According to the widely-spread opinion of the Salafist scholar Muhammad N. al-Albani, women have to veil

themselves completely, with the exception of their hands and face. Besides the hijab which is often used as a headscarf, stricter female Salafists wear the niqab which only leaves an opening for the eyes. However, for reasons of modern dressing, single conservative garments are also combined with modern dress styles and brands.

The attempts to emulate the Prophet also touch the field of dental care. Some Salafists do not use a toothbrush but only a traditional wooden stick ("miswak"). In Salafism, music is forbidden. An alternative is a speech song known as "nashid". As a rule, such a song has a purely religious content, but in the Salafist scene it is mainly used for the purpose of Jihadist propaganda and as a call for jihad.

Besides the clothes, the language codes used are the reason for Salafism sometimes being described as a subculture or an adolescents' subculture. Arabic terms are integrated into everyday language. The use of terms such as "akhi" and/or "ukhti" (Arabic term for "my brother (in faith) and/or "my sister") creates the feeling of community and/or of a dissociation from those who do not use or know these terms.

The same applies to symbols. The single index finger pointing upwards—titled "IS finger" by the media—probably is the best-known symbol. It symbolises the indivisible unity of God ("tawhid") which is to reflect the unity of religion and state also here on earth. It is not only used by IS followers but also by their sympathisers and Salafists.

Salafist propaganda

Although Salafism is an extremely retrograde tendency of Islam, it wins more and more followers among young people, too. This can i.a. be explained by an efficient propaganda strategy. The Internet plays a prominent role in fully developing the broad impact of Salafism. Salafist ideologies are accessible on a large number of websites, in social networks as well as on video platforms. In the past years, the number of German-language websites with Salafist tendencies has continued to increase, and their design is quite professional. Besides Salafist associations and mosque communities, individual Salafist preachers, too, maintain presences of their own on the Internet.

However, proselytising methods that are orientated towards actions and events are important, too. In that context, Salafists have established different forms of action—reaching from information stands in pedestrian zones to Islam seminars. Especially these seminars mostly lasting several days are of great importance since they give a platform to popular Salafist preachers who attract numerous visitors. The participants partly arrive from all over Germany and the neighbouring countries to attend the seminars. Therefore, such meetings might not only serve indoctrination and radicalisation but also networking purposes.

Salafists used information stands especially in the framework of the "Lies!" campaign of the association "Die wahre Religion" (DWR / The true religion). However, since DWR was banned by the Federal Minister of the Interior on 15 November 2016, this kind of propaganda has strongly decreased. DWR/"Lies!" (including its branches which were banned, too) was directed against the constitutional order as well as against the idea of international understanding. DWR supported an ideology which aimed at eliminating the constitutional order without replacement and advocated armed jihad. Moreover, it constituted a recruitment and gathering point for jihadist Islamists as well as for individuals who intended to depart for Syria and/or Iraq because of jihadist-Islamist motivations, which was unique on a Germany-wide level. In total, at least 140

individuals left Germany to join terrorist organisations in Syria or Iraq after they had participated in "Lies!" actions.

Isolation

Most Salafists vigorously distance themselves from other Muslims and non-Muslims. Usually, in the course of their radicalisation, individuals who join the Salafist scene are increasingly urged to distance themselves from non-Salafist individuals belonging to the circles they were previously associated with. This serves the purpose of avoiding allegedly detrimental influences that are inconsistent with Islam. As a matter of principle, Salafists are required to only seek contact with infidels if it serves proselytising purposes. If these proselytising efforts are not successful, the contact is to be broken off. In addition, the mere appearance and behaviour of Salafists usually leads to their isolation from the majority society.

This isolation results in followers of Salafism having difficulties in escaping from their Salafist surroundings because from a certain point in time, they exclusively maintain contact with other Salafists. They are convinced that individuals who leave "true Islam" behind and become "apostates" deserve death.