

Bad Ideology Leads to Bad Behavior: Why Muslim Reformers Must Present an
Authoritative, Comprehensive, and Compelling Counter-Narrative to Islamism

by

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ABSTRACT

Belief affects behavior and rhetoric has the potential to bring about action. This paper is a critical content analysis of the ideology and rhetoric of key Islamist intellectuals and the Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, as stated on the website <http://english.hizbuttahrir.org>. The responses of specific Muslim Reformers are also analyzed. The central argument underlying this analysis centers on the notion that such Islamist ideology and its rhetorical delivery could be a significant trigger for the use of violence; interacting with, yet existing independently of, other factors that contribute to violent actions. In this case, a significant aspect of any solution to Islamist rhetoric would require that Muslim Reformers present a compelling counter-narrative to political Islam (Islamism), one that has an imperative to reduce the amount of violence in the region. Rhetoric alone cannot solve the many complicated issues in the region but we must begin somewhere and countering the explicit and implicit calls to violence of political Islamist organizations like Hizb ut-Tahrir seems a constructive step.

*For the thirty victims of the Park Hotel suicide massacre
on March 27, 2002 in Netanya, Israel*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
OVERVIEW.....	1
CHAPTER	
1 THEORETICAL & METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	6
Methodology.....	11
2 ISLAMISM.....	15
Definition of Islamism.....	15
Modern Day Islamist Impact.....	16
Violent Islamism.....	18
Uncreated Nature of the Quran.....	26
Doctrine of Abrogation.....	29
3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAM.....	33
Mu'tazilite/Ash'arite Struggle (ninth century).....	33
Islamist Ideology.....	39
Short-Lived Modern Reforms.....	43
Muslim Brotherhood.....	49
4 Modern Middle East History.....	54
5 Islamic Law.....	58
Hermeneutics within Islam.....	62
Ijtihad - Independent Reasoning.....	64
Ijtihad closure.....	68
HT and hermeneutics.....	73

CHAPTER	Page
6. Islamists.....	78
Islamist Syed Abul ala Mawdudi.....	79
Islamist Sayyid Qutb.....	80
Dr. Fadl - Before and After.....	87
Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT).....	94
7. Muslim Reformers.....	104
American Islamic Forum for Democracy.....	109
The Quilliam Foundation.....	112
Reformist versus Islamist tenets for Muslim Identity.....	119
8. Conclusion.....	123
REFERENCES.....	125

Overview

The reflection that what we believe is not merely what we formulate and subscribe to, but that behaviour is also belief, and that even the most conscious and developed of us live also at the level on which belief and behaviour cannot be distinguished, is one that may, once we allow our imagination to play upon it, be very disconcerting. – T.S. Eliot

Islamist ideology and its rhetoric is considered to be a significant contributor to the deployment of violence and my ultimate goal in this thesis is to have a small part in reducing the amount of violence in the Near East, hereafter referred to as the Middle East. Consequently, in this thesis I analyze the rhetoric and ideological claims of the English language website of a key Islamist organization, Hizb ut-Tahrir. Hizb ut-Tahrir (hereafter referred to as *HT*) was selected for scrutiny because: it has members worldwide that are estimated in the millions; they have a global reach through their websites and literature they distribute on college campuses that is primarily in English and Arabic but also in Turkish, German, Urdu, Dutch, French, Danish, Spanish. Further, they have headquarters in several countries along with the export of HT recruits back to their respective home or familial countries (Malik, 2004). As such HT are viewed as key proponents of the rhetoric of Islamist ideology that fuels violent Islamism; that is, HT propagates violence. Indeed HT have been banned from participating in many Arab/Muslim governments throughout the Middle East for their subversive ideology and activity (BBC News, 2009). However, to understand the rhetoric and ideological claims deployed by HT, it is necessary to appreciate the

connection of Islamic theology and the ideology that forms the foundational beliefs or positions of the Islamist intellectuals that inform HT's position. Equally, any discussion of Islamist ideology must consider the position of the Muslim Reformers (hereafter referred to as *Reformers*) and what they have done to challenge the dominance of Islamist discourses within Islam, given that these discourses have led to forms of action as detailed by Whine (2006). Some examples of such action include the more notable HT members include Salih Sarriya who tried to assassinate Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the assassins of Syrian cleric Muhammad Amin Yakan, the Mike's Place suicide bombers who killed three and injured 50 in Tel Aviv among many others (see pages 26 and 27). In addition, Abu Musab Al Zarqawi was reported to have been a member of HT. Zarqawi was a well known terrorist who was responsible for terrorist activities including the Madrid bombing in 2004, where 191 people were murdered and 1,800 were injured (Hamilos, 2007), the bombing of Shiite worshippers in Iraq that same year, a suicide attack in Basra, a total of four different attacks, is also reported to have been a part of HT (Teslik, 2006). Steven Brooke in the Weekly Standard says "While in Jordan he [Zarqawi] also associated with Hizb ut Tahrir, an angry, anti-Semitic conclave devoted to the restoration of Islamic rule" (Leiken & Brooke, 2004).

It is important to acknowledge that violent Islamism is one version of Islam, but also to appreciate that their discourses are fairly dominant, widespread and widely publicized. Robert Hefner in speaking of the struggle between a Democratic form of Islam and Islamism says, "The rivalry seen here in Indonesia

between a civil Islam and an anti-democratic regimist Islam is illustrative of a line of contestation widespread in today's Muslim world" (Hefner, 2001 p. 509). Islamism is considered what Hefner refers to as the anti-democratic regimist version of Islam.

Since the West cannot speak for Islam, it is essential that Muslims speaking for the majority of Muslims challenge the inherent power that resides within Islamist ideology. My target audience is Muslim Reformers and I urge them to reach out to Muslim youth in the United States and Europe to provide a positive alternative to Islamism and engaging them before they are recruited by organizations like Hizb ut-Tahrir. Ultimately the counter-narrative must be initiated and disseminated by Muslim Reformers to influence Western youth who I argue could otherwise be recruited by Islamist organizations that communicate a narrative that places the blame of Islam's struggles at the feet of the West.

There are many economic, political, military, and socio-cultural problems that must be addressed to provide an enduring solution to violent Islamism. Certainly it will take more than rhetoric to solve the many complicated issues in the region yet we have to begin somewhere. Indeed, an investigation into the rhetoric of Islamism could provide a fuller understanding of one key element in the cycle of violence enabling a strategic positive displacement or counter-narrative mediated by Muslim Reformers to mitigate the violence. Taking this perspective, my approach focuses on the role of ideology as a key element that has been enacted in Islamist rhetoric to impel violence, beginning with a theological interpretation that produces an ideology that enables powerful

interpretations of the Quran and Islamic law to remain in the hands of a select few. Thus my analysis primarily focuses on a key theological argument in Islam, the ideological practices that arise from this position, and the manner in which it is communicated.

While the focus of my analysis is on Islamist intellectuals, HT and a Reformer-led counter-narrative, I do not deny Western influence upon Islamism; the West has had an impact upon violent Islamist ideology and there has been a political response to this in some Islamic societies. However, I have chosen not to address what some refer to as Western imperialism due to my specific focus on ideology and rhetoric combined with a lack of space to do so. Equally, many conflicts have occurred in the Middle East that arguably have nothing to do with the West (see page 13). Thus, while I acknowledge politics and economics have contributed to some of the instability in the region, my focus is on ideology. Consequently, although I am unable to provide a solution to all the problems that perpetuate violent Islamism with this specific focus, I believe my thesis contributes to a small piece of the solution.

I include a necessarily brief historical discussion of modern Middle East history, Islamic Law, Islamism and Reformers to critically consider the power structure of Islamist ideology and to address how this ideology has become a powerful discourse even though this view is not representative of what he says is an “overwhelming majority of Muslims” (Arkoun, p.18, 2003).

In chapter one I provide my theoretical and methodological perspective to investigate the modern day Islamist impact and provide a working definition of

Islamism. In chapter two I provide my methodology, and discuss two primary Islamist doctrines: the doctrine of abrogation and the uncreated nature of the Quran. I then differentiate between Islamism and violent Islamism. In chapter three I discuss a brief history of Islam, include the Mu'tazilite/Ash'arite struggle, Islamist ideology, short-lived modern day reforms and the Muslim Brotherhood. In chapter four I continue the historical discussion into modern Middle East history. In chapter five I discuss Islamic law, which necessarily includes hermeneutics within Islam and ijihad, also known as independent reasoning. In chapter six I discuss Islamism - several Islamist intellectuals and the Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir. In chapter seven, I discuss Muslim Reformers including the American Islamic Forum for Democracy and the Quilliam Foundation. I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of Muslim identity. My conclusion then analyzes the entire discussion and I provide policy recommendations to ensure Islamism does not become the prevailing majority discourse.

Chapter 1

Theoretical & Methodological Perspective

Belief affects behavior. If I believe something to be true, I will act as if that is true. Ideology then plays a very powerful role in affecting output, or behavior. Bad belief does not necessarily lead to bad behavior but it certainly creates the conditions that allows for it. Applying this to a discussion of Islamism (i.e., defined as *political Islam*) is of critical importance for Islam and the world and it will be argued that caustic ideology quite often leads to bad behavior (Whine, 2006).

Muslim Reformers at the very least should publicize the stories of men like Hassan Butt and Noman Benotman, former Islamists who have renounced violence. Public acknowledgement of these is ideal since awareness of such examples will continue to chip away at the ideological underpinnings of Islamism. Indeed, Benotman wrote an open letter to Osama bin Laden urging him to re-examine the hermeneutical approach of al Qaeda and violent Islamism and to go back to the Islamic scholars to determine if what they are doing is correct. Benotman said in his open letter to Osama bin Laden

In urging you to halt your violence and re-consider your aims and strategy, I believe I am merely expressing the views of the vast majority of Muslims who wish to see their religion regain the respect it has lost and who long to carry the name of ‘Muslim’ with pride. (Benotman, 2010 -

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/10/an_open_letter_to_osama_bin_laden)

I agree with Benotman and Mohamad Arkoun that Islamism is not the majority view of ordinary Muslims (Arkoun, 2003, p. 19), however, unless clearly demonstrated otherwise, Islamists will continue to control the public discourse (Anderson, 2005).

I support a moderate approach to religion where one can disagree with any religion but still co-exist peacefully as promoted by Reformers. Although certain rhetorical structures within Islamist ideology pays lip service to peaceful co-habitation, they mean something quite different where non-Muslims are allowed to live as second class citizens in their ideal society and must pay the jizya (tax) for the privilege of not converting to Islam. On their English website HT says their method for carrying the message of Islam to unbelievers is Jihad until the unbelievers embrace Islam or pay the Jizya (tax) and submit to Islamic rule and quote verses from the Quran saying “And fight them on until there is no more strife and there prevails the Deen [faith] of Allah everywhere” (8:39) and "Until they pay the Jizyah [tax] with willing submission and feel themselves subdued (9:29).” (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2010c). HT’s ideology promotes a supremacist brand of Islam where all non-Muslims must submit to Islamism. However, the Quran (2:256) also says “Let there be no compulsion in religion.” Reformers can highlight this latter text and others like it as authoritative. Yet Reformers cannot simply remove a caustic ideology only since nature abhors a vacuum but they must replace Islamism with an authoritative, comprehensive and compelling

counter-narrative. To illustrate this point, in 1967 when Israel defeated Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq's armies in six days, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's secular pan-Arabism, the then prevailing ideology at the time was defeated along with the military defeat of his army. As a result, Islamism filled the void that was vacated by the overwhelming defeat of pan-Arabism (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2008). Najjar (2004 p.198) claims the fall of Nasser's pan-Arabism opened a space for Islamists to present themselves as the only alternative to the existing order. Therefore, Islamists were then able to argue that secularism had no solutions and Islamism was the only solution to restore the caliphate and defeat the West. We see this today on the "Khilafah" [caliphate] website maintained by HT that presents Islam as "a challenge to the current chaos, inequality, despotism and international disorder - all a consequence of Western liberalism (Capitalism)." (The Khilafah.com Editorial Team, 2008) This narrative places the blame of all the world's ills solely at the feet of the West and Western ideologies and seeks to fill this need through the return to a global caliphate that was dissolved upon the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 (Cleveland, 2009). I will argue that if Muslim Reformers can provide a counter-narrative that is authoritative, compelling and comprehensive, thus allowing for an inclusion with Modernity, then this could displace the destructive narrative of violent Islamism.

However, this counter-narrative can only become authoritative if it comes from within the Muslim community and certainly not from the West, as Islamists will immediately dismiss this as un-Islamic and an attempt to subvert Islamic society. I differentiate very markedly between Islam and Islamism as my primary

concern is with the caustic ideology espoused by violent Islamism that begins with Islamist ideology, and that this can lead to violent action.

Many in the media, public policy and academia use the terms *radical jihadist*, *Islamic extremist*, and even *Islamists*. I avoid the use of the former terms; however, I utilize the latter term *Islamist* to refer to political Islam and the desire for a global caliphate. There are those who use the former terms in the same sense; however, I avoid these entirely because they are loaded and do not further the conversation. Jihad has two different meanings and ordinary Muslims can utilize the version that emphasizes a struggle within one's soul versus the definition utilized by HT that emphasizes a violent struggle against the unbeliever (see *Jihad in Islam*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a). Additionally, Karen Hughes, advisor to former President George W. Bush requested the Bush Administration stop using the terms "Islamic extremists" and "radical jihadists" because Muslims view this as an attack on their faith and that this is the type of world Osama bin Laden wants them to have (Associated Press, 2010).

I also develop the idea that Islamism has existed for centuries and that one's interpretation of Islam necessarily will impact one's behavior. I emphasize hermeneutics as critical to my thesis and the several differences in interpretation between the Islamist and the Reformer as noted by Rahman (1980) and Codd (1999). This hermeneutical struggle is not unique to Islam as other religions share the same struggles in principle as illustrated by the several differences between orthodox and liberal Christianity, c.f. The Jesus Seminar and orthodox Christian philosophers/theologians (Copan, 1998).

There are several conflicts in the Middle East that have seemingly little to do with the West or Israel but are merely territorial, religious or political conflicts confined to the region. For example, Afghanistan refusing to give up its claim of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province; Pakistan and India's territorial dispute; Pakistan and Iran's dispute over territorial waters in the Arabian sea; Iran's claim of supervision over Iraq's holy shrines; Iran's dispute with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Azerbaijan over the Caspian Sea; Iran's ethnic cleansing of Arabs in its oil rich Khuzestan province; Qatar's issue with the Saudis over the oil rich area of Khor al-Udaid; Saudi Arabia and Kuwait's differences over oil resources; Jordan's claim to control the Saudi province of Hejaz in which Mecca and Medina reside; Yemen's inability to define its border with Oman along the Gulf of Hauf; both Syria and Iraq's claim on the Turkish province of Iskanderun; Egypt annexing portions of Sudan; Egypt's occasional conflicts with Libya; Libya's territorial disputes with Chad, Sudan and Tunisia; and Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania's struggle over the Western Sahara to name a few. In addition, we would have to explain the Iran/ Iraq war in the 80s (Taheri, 2007). There is no dispute that the United States supported Iraq during the Iran/Iraq war as we pursued an anti-communism approach but it would be a major stretch to blame the United States for the start and continuance of their war. At some point, Islamic/Arab countries must take responsibility for their own actions and not lay a *casus belli* between Arab/Muslim countries at the feet of the West.

Methodology

My thesis is a critical analysis of the content attributed to key Islamist intellectuals with a particular focus on the Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), their ideology and rhetoric along with the response of Muslim Reformers.

I utilized a critical approach for several reasons. Critical Theory initially emerged due to a frustration with inherent power structures within academics. Zou and Trueba (2002, p. 88) say “Impressed by critical theory’s dialectical concern with the social construction of experience, [the Frankfurt School] came to view their disciplines as manifestations of the discourses and power relations of the social and historical contexts that produced them.” My concern here is primarily with discourses and the historical contexts that produced them vis-à-vis Islamism, specifically those companions who were closest to the Prophet Muhammad whose interpretation of the holy texts are still considered valid for today by Islamists - regardless of the current social and cultural context. In addition, Critical Theory acknowledges that interpretation is inherently problematic and linked to issues of power, aiding insights into current social reality, and for some scholars enabling the identification of actors to change the current social reality and providing clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). In this particular instance, I utilize Critical theory and apply the actors as Muslim Reformers and ultimately Muslim American youth who seek to achieve practical goals for social transformation.

Critical theorists argue one cannot separate hegemony from ideology. Although it is my understanding most scholars focus their examination of domination within class, race, gender or economics, I apply this same rigor to religion and religious claims here as another form of domination. Zou and Trueba (2002, p. 93) say

If hegemony is the larger effort of the powerful to win the consent of their 'subordinates,' then dominant or hegemonic ideology involves the cultural forms, the meanings, the rituals, and the representations that produce consent to the status quo and individuals' particular places within it.

Further, "Ideology vis-à-vis hegemony moves critical inquirers beyond simplistic explanations of domination that have used terms such as propaganda to describe the way media, political, educational, and other socio-cultural productions coercively manipulate citizens to adopt oppressive meanings." Again, my focus is not on socio-cultural issues; however, I do apply these same principles of hegemony to ideology by way of religious claims and definitions as mediated by Islamists.

Although I would have preferred to conduct several interviews with both Islamists and Muslim Reformers, given the already sensitive nature of the issue, I decided it best to ground my research in content analysis of both Islamists and Muslim Reformers and depended upon literature and current reports from key organizations and individuals.

I develop a critical theory approach on Islamist discourse and challenge the belief that Islamist ideology is the majority discourse of *orthodox* Muslims. I argue, from a critical perspective, that one can maintain a Muslim identity and concurrently have a moderate approach to governance all of which is contingent upon one's hermeneutical interpretation of the holy texts. As such, I spend a fair amount of time on *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as this discussion determines whether ordinary Muslims must depend upon Islamic law and therefore practical action as defined by those closest to the Prophet Muhammad (hereafter referred to as *Muhammad*) and Muslim scholars, or whether ordinary Muslims can employ their own reason to make room for modernity. *Ijtihad* is crucial given that if Muslims cannot employ their own reasoning, then they would necessarily be dependent upon whoever is in authority telling them how the Shari'a ought to be interpreted and thus lived out. Further, depending upon how those in authority are interpreting the Shari'a could potentially lead to violent action and the Muslim would be compelled to obedience regardless of whether the interpretation is reflective of Islamic injunctions. So a Muslim could engage in violent activity where no such Islamic injunction exists.

My approach is grounded in the analysis of primary source materials from HT, Sayyid Qutb and Dr. Fadl. As my Arabic is basic and it takes me a fair amount of time with an Arabic dictionary to translate, I depend upon English translations of those primary source materials from the Arabic. However, HT's work I refer to is in English as they have official English websites for each country they are located in <http://www.hizb-america.org/> - (scroll to bottom of

site). I also ground primary source material from Reformers as translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute along with primary English language source material from the Quilliam Foundation and the American Islamic Forum for Democracy.

Chapter 2

Islamism

Definition of Islamism

Islamism is defined as *political Islam*, in which Islam is a religion and a political system that necessarily includes the desire for a global caliphate in which all of humanity, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, must submit. This Islamic caliphate is ruled by the caliph who is compelled to submit to the interpretation of the holy texts as interpreted by what the religious authorities believe Allah has commanded (The Khilafah.com Editorial Team, 2008). Because the Islamist organization HT is so clear in what the ideal Islamist state will look like, they help us to understand the necessary components of Islamism through their English website. They urge an Islamic Revivalism through the ideology of Islamism that combines both idea and methodology together which means their version of Islam would be implemented in Islamic countries first then throughout the entire world. The ideology is Islam as defined by HT that governs all the affairs of the Ummah [Muslim community] and provides solutions to all of life's problems - personal and public. They seek to confine their methodology of establishing Islam (as defined by HT) in one or several countries until they are able to establish it worldwide. HT says "the Islamic state would be founded and she would grow naturally until she engulfs all the Islamic countries first, then she would carry Islam to the rest of the world, because it is her Message and because it is an eternal and universal Message for all mankind." (see *Hizb ut-Tahrir Party Structure*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a).

We immediately see not just a desire for a regional caliphate but a movement toward their version of Islam that would first take over all Islamic countries, then all non-Islamic countries later. Note this particular Islamist organization does not claim the use of force in this particular instance to arrive at this end but they merely focus on Islam as an ideology. Nonetheless, below I show how they also deploy jihad to mean initiating fighting against infidels even in the absence of aggression (see page 24).

Modern Day Islamist Impact

Until recently, Islamists did not have much political power but the rise of Islamist parties such as Hezbollah and Hamas have demonstrated that Islamism is no longer merely shaping public opinion on the “Muslim street,” but is indeed shaping public policy through direct involvement in the political process. Hamas overwhelmingly won legislative elections in the Palestinian territories in early 2006 (Wilson, 2006). Although Hezbollah does not currently have a majority in the Lebanese government, they are being financed by the Iranian government and maintain a separate, well established infrastructure and military (Agence France Presse, 2008), and have often been referred to as a state within a state (Frontline World, 2003). This gives Hezbollah a very real impact upon Lebanese politics even as the minority party. Hezbollah also has a very real everyday practical impact upon Lebanese affairs through their separate military as illustrated by the 2006 war with Israel along with the social services they provide to the Lebanese. One cannot travel very far or have an impact upon local or national politics in Lebanon without encountering Hezbollah.

One can also make a good case that if The Muslim Brotherhood submitted all the required information to the Egyptian government to function as a political party and were allowed to participate in elections, they would win many seats, if not take over a majority of Egypt's 454 legislative seats (Khoury 2010). Farr (2008) says "If free elections were held [in Egypt], the Muslim Brotherhood would very probably win" (p. 27). Further, the al Qaeda inspired Islamist group Al Shabaab has sought to take over the government of Somalia and has taken over key cities in Somalia along with nearly overtaking the capitol city (Hussein, 2010).

I am concerned that there is a trend toward Islamism that for the most part has until recently been received poorly in the Arab/Muslim world. Susser (2003) says on the ruins of Nasserism, Islamists offered a supposedly authentic route to modernity minus secularism. He mentions the ayatollahs of Iran, the Islamist inspired military regime in Sudan and the Taliban in Afghanistan as that of repeated Islamist failures. He quotes Isam Ikrimawi in *al-Quds al-arabi* who said "The Islamists offered no realistic policy alternatives other than a totalitarian vision of their own." (2003, P.5) Since this piece was published in 2003, violent Islamists have gained more inroads into Islamic communities as noted, and I am concerned this trend will continue and spread to other Arab/Muslim communities where the acceptance of the ideology along with the acceptance of the social services from Islamist organizations will become more prevalent. As Islamists further this type of approach, their ideology could take over as the dominant discourse stifling all other discourses and Muslim identities where ultimately a

Muslim can only be a “true” Muslim if they adhere to the Islamist interpretation of the holy texts as understood by those closest to Muhammad and interpreted by Islamism.

Violent Islamism

If the definition of Islamism I have provided is an accurate one, then it follows to define violent Islamism as the ideology that agrees with the same ends of the Islamist who seeks a global caliphate but adds the use of violence as a method to achieve this same desired end. What the United States Military Academy calls Jihadi ideology I refer to as violent Islamism yet we agree on what the end goal is for Islamism, namely, the establishment and governance of Islamic state(s) based upon Shari’a law, an Islamic caliphate as understood by the first generations of Muslims closest to Muhammad (McCants, Brachman, & Felter, 2006). However, where my argument goes further than the U.S. Military Academy is that non-violent Islamism provides the grounds for the intellectual foundation for individuals to transition very easily from Islamism into violent Islamism. I detail several examples of this later on. Again, there may be those who claim to be part of an organized religion that commit violent acts but the critical difference is if the violence is done in the name of a particular religion. What we should pay attention to is if someone claims to be a part of a religion and commits the act of terrorism **in the name of** a particular religion (bold added for emphasis). And further, if done in the name of a religion, then we must examine if those within the religion in question repudiate that person versus promote and honor them.

HT protests any claims that they partake in or even promote violence, however there is much evidence that contradicts this claim. The BBC's Newsnight found HT's website promotes "racism and anti-Semitic hatred, calls suicide bombers martyrs, and urges Muslims to kill Jewish people." (BBC News, 2003). On HT's English website they have a book titled "Jihad in Islam" in which they refer to jihad as having been distorted by the West. They say

the West resorted to distorting the concept of Jihad and started to spread among the Muslims, through some of the scholars who had been beguiled, that Jihad was merely a struggle against the soul and to repel aggression rather than initiate fighting against the kufr [infidel] so that they may embrace Islam, because there is no compulsion in religion. (see *Jihad in Islam*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a)

So, according to HT, the undistorted nature of jihad is not merely a struggle against the soul but necessarily includes the initiation of fighting and repelling aggression with whom they define as infidels until they embrace Islam. As mentioned earlier, I do not use the term *jihadist* because jihad can be interpreted as a struggle within one's soul.

In another HT book *Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir* they clearly describe the proactive nature of jihad. HT says

they interpreted jihad as being a defensive rather than an offensive war, thus contradicting the reality of jihad. Jihad is a war against anyone who stands in the face of the Islamic Da'awa [call to

preach and propagate Islam], whether he is a belligerent or otherwise.

In other words, the aim of HT's Jihad is to remove every obstacle by force if necessary that stands in the face of the Islamic Da'awa (see *The Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a). Although the Catholic Church and Jehovah's Witnesses are two of many examples of religious groups that urge their members to spread the word, the difference is they do not urge the use of force against anyone who stands in the way of their proselytizing. HT teaches otherwise by using rhetoric such as jihad being an offensive war against anyone, including non-belligerents if they stand in the way of their version of proselytizing.

Further, in HT's *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilizations* they say

Those saying Islam is a deen of peace deny offensive jihad i.e. initiating fighting with the disbelievers. They confirm the defensive war and deny the offensive war (qital ut-talab) i.e. initiating the attack. Some of them believe there is no necessity for this matter, as it is possible to overcome the material obstacles and convey the da'wa to disbelievers without colliding with these obstacles, by using the internet, media, books, leaflets, building mosques and Islamic centres in the heart of the countries of disbelievers, and live contacts with individuals to make them enter the deen of Allah. They claim that this takes the place of offensive war. This view collides with the texts of the

Book, Sunnah and Ijmaa Us-Sahabah that all command that we initiate fighting against them, even if they do not initiate against us, if they do not accept Islam or pay the jizyah and submit to the rule of Islam. These texts are not reasoned with the reason (illah) that Jihad is only obliged in the situation of inability to convey verbally. (Al-Khilafah Publications, 2002)

HT's rhetoric urges followers to initiate fighting with unbelievers, and not to interpret jihad as merely a propagation of Islam saying that view contradicts what their holy texts clearly teach, namely, initiating fighting with unbelievers unless they either submit to Islam or pay the jizya (tax) that gives the unbeliever the privilege of not converting yet still ultimately submitting to Islam. Offensive jihad can therefore be seen as a principle that HT advocates and openly works toward regardless of whether Islam is being attacked as part of the propagation of their ideology. HT takes this rhetorical approach and although it may not be practical to openly engage in violent activity as an organization or at all, it by no means prevents them from immersing recruits into this type of Islamist ideology.

Ed Husein, co-founder of the Quilliam Foundation (i.e., self-described as the world's first counter-extremist think-tank, hereafter referred to as *Quilliam*) and a member of HT for three years said HT focuses on recruiting students, in particular Arab students, "for the purpose of carrying out military coups. Efforts were made to recruit them, and then send them back to their home countries to

carry out coups d'etat” (Al Shafey, 2010). Husein’s account parallels with the rhetoric of HT and their method of offensive jihad.

If the discourse is presented in such a compelling and authoritative manner and the ideology convinces individuals that such activity is necessarily wrapped up in Muslim identity it is not a huge leap to move from Islamism into violent Islamism. HT has called on Muslims to ask if their loyalties lie with the country they currently reside in or with Islam. An HT promotional video says “I think Muslims in this country need to take a long, hard look at themselves and decide what is their identity. Are they British or are they Muslim? I am a Muslim. Where I live, is irrelevant” (BBC News, 2003). BBC’s *Newsnight* spoke to many Muslims who expressed concern with HT but were afraid to criticize other Muslims publicly. However according to the BBC, one influential Muslim expressed concerns on camera and said

I believe that if Hizb Ut Tahrir are not stopped at this stage, and we continue to let them politicise and pollute the youngsters minds and other gullible people minds, then what will happen in effect is that these terrorism acts and these suicide bombings that we hear going on around in foreign countries, we will actually start seeing these incidents happening outside our doorsteps. (BBC News, 2003)

With religion as the primary identity marker, HT makes it harder for Muslims to separate church and state and compel Muslims to have to choose –

either religious identity or nationality, for on HT's view these are mutually contradictory.

Regardless of HTs' participation in violent acts, I argue that non-violent Islamism, even if only pro forma, provides the intellectual and ideological framework that allows for an easy transition into violent Islamism. It is not Islam itself but Islamism that allows for an easy transition into violent Islamism. For example, Omar Bakri, the founder of Al-Muhajjirun, a violent Islamist organization that publicly advocates the use of violence was a former member of HT Britain, of which Richard Reid, the British "shoe bomber" belonged to (Doward & Wander, 2007). HT has also openly acknowledged its ties with terrorist entities as in 2005 when an HT spokesman said senior HT leaders met with the Ayatollah Khomeini after the Iranian Revolution to discuss *Islamization* along with seeing Mullah Omar to determine whether he had declared a caliphate as the goal of the Taliban. HT said "We have given all these movements assistance in following the road back to Khilafat [Caliphate]" (Carpenter, Jacobson, & Levitt, 2009). This and the information below provided by Michael Whine, along with their espousal of violence (even if they do not personally commit violent acts), can be seen as a conveyor belt organization or supporting role to move members to participate in and produce violent acts.

Michael Whine provides a partial list of terrorists who were members of HT or were influenced by its teachings, which number in the 100s (Whine, 2006). Whine also provides a quote from HT's Arabic online journal Al-Waie in an article titled "Martydom Operations" which says the texts that permit the killing

of unbelievers do not impose restrictions on how to actually kill unbelievers.

Whine quotes HT as saying

According to these texts, all ways and means which a Muslim uses to kill unbelievers is permitted as long as the enemy unbeliever is killed—whether they are killed by weapons from afar or if their ranks are penetrated; whether their stronghold is captured and penetrated before their eyes, or whether you blow up their planes or shoot them down; or whether you blow yourself up among their military encampments or blow yourself and them up with a belt of explosives. All of these are permissible means of fighting unbelievers (Whine, 2006).

While this is in marked distinction to HT's other claims to utilize only non-violent means to establish the caliphate, it is easy to see how the rhetoric reported later (on page 100) could convey a recruit from non-violence into violence or allow for the conditions for the recruit to find an organization that does espouse violence. One could argue since HT is such a large organization it is therefore comprised of individuals with differing views and could include those who do not support violence. However, to have such conflicting, mutually contradictory public views is unusual for any organization, especially as it relates to violence. Nonetheless contradiction is a common enough occurrence, suggesting that relations are complex and that one position does not necessarily negate or override the other – especially if the existence of both is accepted and not amended. As such, it can be assumed that the violent response is an accepted organizational position given its

continued representation on the HT website.

At the very least, HT has close ties to terrorist organizations (Whine, 2006) and Iran (Carpenter, Jacobson, & Levitt, 2009) who has made no small noise in its desire to wipe Israel off the map. Quilliam also makes the claim on the transition from what they refer to as *conveyor belt* groups like HT into radicalization saying “These groups do not condone violence per se, but they do contribute to the radicalization process... Through these groups as the State Department describes, individuals can turn ‘by stages, into sympathizers, supporters, and ultimately, members of terrorist networks” (Carpenter et al., 2009 p.4). Quilliam argues although these groups may not participate in terrorist activities, they lay the foundation for violence through the intellectual framework that allows for such activity, hence the term *conveyor belt*: They convey or pass on recruits from ideology into violent activity.

Of course this is not to claim all recruits will become violent Islamists. Neither Quilliam’s nor I take reductionist positions that suggest every person, or even most people, indoctrinated into HT ideology will commit violent acts, but they do provide the potential for such activity. Islamist ideology is necessary but not sufficient for violent Islamism. Without the ideology, there would be no Islamist related violence.

Kuwaiti liberal Arab author Khalil ‘Ali Haydar sees no distinction between violent and non-violent Islamist groups because they both share the same enemy and the only difference between the two is the means to arrive at the desired end, namely, a global caliphate. He says

Notwithstanding the differences in means... and in the forms of [these] organizations and movements, most of the ultimate strategic goals are similar and are agreed upon, by [both] the extremist terrorist groups and the other groups and political Islam parties. (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2007b)

Of course, the emergence of HT and Islamism did not come out of a vacuum. There is historical precedent. I will discuss a brief history of Islam and discuss the origins of Islamism but first the uncreated nature of the Quran and the doctrine of Abrogation need to be addressed as these are integral to understanding the increased likelihood of unquestioning acceptance of doctrine that can exacerbate the possibility of the ‘conveyor belt’ process. By not questioning either doctrine, this can lead to a dependence upon authorities and unwillingness to think for ones self to arrive at the correct interpretation and thus behavior.

Uncreated nature of the Quran

A discussion of the uncreated nature of the Quran and the doctrine of abrogation are critical to the discussion as they both have very real implications in the modern era for Muslims and the interpretation of the holy texts and impacts my entire argument.

An issue of major importance to Islam that was disputed vociferously in early Islam between the Mu’tazilites and Ash’arites that continues in the modern era with very real life implications is whether the Quran was created or uncreated and therefore co-existent and co-eternal with Allah. Islamists argue the Quran is

uncreated and therefore society, regardless of time, people or place must conform to the Quran and not its converse. Given the influence Islamists have upon the “Muslim street” and certain Islamic/Arab governments, Islamists have a very real impact upon shaping public policy.

In the ninth century until the present time, scholars struggled with a controversy on whether the Quran had been created. The Mu'tazilites believed the Quran had been created, whereas the Hanbalis, led by Ahmad ibn Hanbal believed in the uncreated nature of the Quran. Imam Hanbal at the time was recognized as the leading authority for orthodoxy. His school became the only juristic school that represented the other three juristic schools - the Malikis, Shafi'is and the Hanifas that later became dominated by the Ash'arites (Saalih ibn 'Abdil-Azeez Aal ash-Shaykh, 2005). The Hanbali doctrine of the uncreated nature of the Quran became the orthodox belief and remains so among Sunni Muslims (the majority of Muslims) even until today.

According to Ruthven, this doctrine remains important to Muslims in the same way that Christians hold to the nature of Jesus of Nazareth's divinity, an essential doctrine for Christians both Catholic and Protestant (Ruthven, 2006). If correct, this means it is essential and non-negotiable to a Muslim's faith. As such, the Hanbalis approach the holy text with a literalistic interpretation versus an allegorical or particularized approach for certain people and times in certain places. This matters for many reasons, but primarily for modern interpretations of the holy text since this would naturally lead to the same conclusion that HT has, namely, that society must conform to the literalistic interpretation of the Quran

and not vice versa. For if the Quran is uncreated and therefore eternal, it matters not what time period the Quran happens to appear in, but must be followed regardless of peoples, places or time period.

In contrast, the Mu'tazilites believed the Quran was created in time and therefore could be interpreted with considerable allowances for time grounded changes due to historical and social conditions. Thus, the Quran could be interpreted in light of modern conditions and Modernity does not need to conform itself to allow for an interpretation of the Quran as understood by those closest to and in the earliest generations to Muhammad. Although as we shall see later, the Mu'tazilites lost the political struggle along with their less literal approach to the Quran, although the doctrine of abrogation survived albeit in a more restricted form (Ruthven, 2006). The doctrine of abrogation was both an Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite position. What matters for our purposes now is who gets to determine which verses are abrogated and which are not.

HT in their English website and book titled "The Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir" argue for the timelessness of the Quran's interpretation regardless of the time period and that society must conform to the Quran, not its converse. They say

Islamic texts started to be interpreted in a farfetched manner so as to conform with the existing societal reality. In fact, society ought to have been changed to conform with Islam, and not attempt to interpret Islam so as to make it compatible with society, because the point at issue is the

presence of a corrupt society that needs reforming with an ideology; hence, the ideology must be implemented as it is and society as a whole must be radically changed on the basis of this ideology. In other words, those who attempted reform should have implemented the rules of Islam as they were, irrespective of the society, the era, the time and the place. (see *The Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a).

Islamists criticize those who would allow the holy texts to be interpreted in such a way that they would conform to modern society. Conversely, they say society must conform to their understanding of Islam. In their words, this ideology as defined by them must be imposed upon society to bring about radical change regardless of peoples, places or times.

And as we saw much earlier, HT said in their desire to carry Islam to Islamic countries first and then the rest of the world “because it is her Message it is an eternal and universal Message for all mankind.” (see *Hizb ut-Tahrir Party Structure*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a). HT believes society must bend to their interpretation of their holy text and not vice versa regardless of time, place or peoples.

Doctrine of Abrogation

The doctrine of abrogation is another component of prime importance to our discussion as it has a very real impact upon practical behavior. This doctrine states that when there are two mutually contradictory passages found in the

Quran, one of the verses will always abrogate [replace] the other verse. These are particularly important to reconcile passages from the earlier Meccan period of Muhammad with the latter passages of the Medinan period, which Islamists argue is usurped by the Meccan verses. Islamists prefer to hold onto the Medinan verses. Therefore, whoever gets to define which verses are abrogated and which are not controls the discourse, especially if the Quran is viewed as uncreated as this means ordinary Muslims have limited means to resist the authorized dominant version (unless there is an alternative authoritative approach stating differently; hence the importance of an authoritative Reformer version).

To deal with issues of apparent mutually contradictory statements, the exegetes developed this doctrine known as “abrogation,” which they take from Surah 2 verse 106 (2:106) that says “Any verse/message [aya] which We annul or consign to oblivion We replace with a better or similar one” This doctrine came about due to criticisms by non-Muslims who said Muhammad commands his companions to do one thing then later commands the opposite. The Persian exegete and Mu’tazilite Abu al-Qasim al-Zamakhshari says regarding this doctrine:

To abrogate a verse means that God removes it by putting another in its place Every verse is made to vanish whenever the well-being [of the community] requires that it be eliminated - either on the basis of the wording or [by] virtue of what is right, or on the basis of both these reasons together, either with or without a substitute. (Ruthven, 2006, p. 87)

Whoever then controls how the holy texts are interpreted controls the behavior of the people. This includes which verses can be abrogated in light of other verses and that person or group wields much power within the Islamic world. There is always a fear that the ruler will utilize specific verses to maintain power over others but not according to the reality of what is, but they can take any particular verses to fit their personal or political whims at any given moment. Thus a Reformer can say the verses that command the Muslim to kill the infidel was given to a specific peoples in space/time history, versus the Islamist who has the theological justification to say the verse that states “there is no compulsion in religion,” is now abrogated [replaced] by the verses given to Muhammad in the period of his life that stress submission to Islam by the use of force. If the Quran is uncreated, it naturally follows that it must be interpreted literally for all peoples places and times, and because this is considered the orthodox view, Islamists claim this is the only approach to the Quran. Further, Islamists say only their accepted religious authorities are able to interpret the holy text and abrogate whatever scriptures they choose thus leaving open the potential for political subjectivity and manipulation. This means dictators can do un-Islamic activities and force their citizens to do whatever the accepted religious authorities tell them to. For example, if a Muslim leader wants to start a war with a non-Islamic society due to the Muslim leaders’ view on the uncreated nature of the Quran which means every society must conform to their understanding of Islam, then the citizen must submit to that decision. Reformers can still continue delivering their message but unless the view of what is orthodox changes, then the Reformers’

message will have little impact, if any. This is a struggle that has occurred for centuries as I will demonstrate in the next chapter and unless something major changes, the struggle will continue without any fruitful change

Chapter 3

A Brief History of Islam

Mu'tazilite/Ash'arite struggle (ninth century)

I begin the discussion of Reformers throughout history with the Mu'tazilite, Ibn Rushd and then later discuss modern Reformers including Quilliam and The American Islamic Foundation for Democracy. Space prevents the mentioning of the many other Muslim Reformers throughout history to the present. I include this list for several reasons and although I would have preferred writing an entire paper on Muslim Reformers, I seek to communicate much more than simply a historical perspective of Reformers. I begin with the Mu'tazilites because their struggle for the primacy of reason vis a vis taqlid [imitation] continues to this day as a major issue affecting Islam. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) played a substantial role within Islam and is recognized as one of the preeminent Muslim philosophers. I later discuss modern day Reformers and include Quilliam due to their former involvement with HT and their role as the world's only counter extremist think tank. I also include Dr. Zuhdi Jasser and the American Islamic Forum for Democracy due to how prolific this organization is in all forms of media, primarily in the United States and Canada and the American legislative process.

I argue the story of Islamism begins close to the introduction of Islam with the philosophical struggle between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites in the tenth century. I have not seen any other organizations or individuals make this claim as of yet, but if we define Islamism as political Islam, then one can make a good case

that Islamism began with Muhammad himself, including the use of violence as a methodology. The connection of political Islam and the tenth century is the deferral to one of the four Sunni Islamic schools of thought, the literalness of the Quran due to its uncreated nature and the doctrine of abrogation. This ideology allows violent Islamists to have theological cover for arguing the literalness and practical applicability today to “behead the unbelievers” (Surah 47 [Muhammed]:3 and Surah 8 [al-Anfal]:12) as a literal injunction.

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) framed the claims of Islamism and has had a monumental influence in the Arab and Muslim world. Pakistani philosophy professor M. Abdul Hye said Al-Ghazali “made the Ash’arite theology so popular that it became practically the theology of the Muslim community in general and has continued to remain so up to the present time.” (Reilly, 2010, p. 119).

We also see echoes of Al-Ghazali in the work of the foremost modern violent Islamist thinkers, for example, Sayyid Qutb who emphasized action over contemplation and like Al-Ghazali denigrates the role of reason while espousing anti-rationalism (Reilly, 2010, p. 120). Reilly quoting Rahman says “...The truth is that Ash’arism held its sway right up until the twentieth century and holds sway even now in the citadels of Islamic conservatism.” (Reilly, 2010, p. 122) If they are correct in this then we have serious issues given what Al-Ghazali had to say about reason and Islamism.

G.B. MacDonald says in the Encyclopaedia of Islam “Al-Ghazali taught that intellect should only be used to destroy trust in itself” (Reilly, 2010, p. 120)

thus making this approach anti-intellectual. Further, Reilly mentions a fatwa Al-Ghazali issued in which he described philosophy as:

“the foundation of folly, the cause of all confusion, all errors and all heresy. The person who occupies himself with it becomes colourblind to the beauties of religious law, supported by brilliant proofs...As far as logic is concerned, it is a means of access to philosophy. Now the means of access to something bad is also bad. **All those who give evidence of pursuing the teachings of philosophy must be confronted with the following alternatives: either execution by the sword, or conversion to Islam,** so that the land may be protected and the traces of those people and their sciences may be eradicated.” (Reilly, 2010, p. 123) (bold added for emphasis).

According to Al-Ghazali, philosophy is the foundation of all folly, the cause of all confusion, errors and heresy. He provides his proscription for any would be philosophers and that is either death or conversion to Islam. If Al-Ghazali were held to the margins of society and had no greater impact than that beyond his own particular community in his particular era, I would not even mention his name. However, it is because of his substantial impact that I raise his ideas here now. As Islamists have adopted Al-Ghazali’s Islamist approach as orthodoxy, his discourse has dominated Muslim society and continues to permeate Islamic society even today. Al-Ghazali assumes philosophy is in

principle anti-Islamic and positions reason against revealed truth. However, there have been and continue to be Muslim philosophers who disagree vehemently with this claim.

Since Al-Ghazali popularized Ash'arite theology in such a manner that it continues to dominate the theology of Muslim society today, it is important to note what this theology consists of, as Ash'arite theology impacts Islamic theology today in no small manner. Ruthven says Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (873-935), was "philosophically anti-philosophical, rather in the manner that Shafi'i's jurisprudence was rationalistically anti-rational. Whereas the Mu'tazilites and their successors fought for the primacy of reason, in the belief that a God who was good could not be other than rational." (Ruthven, 2006, p. 195).

Contrast this worldview with that of the Mu'tazilites and the modern neo-Mu'tazilites who believe in the created nature of the Quran and the essential role of reason in approaching the holy texts. Although the Mu'tazilites lost the political battle and prominence in the 10th century, of the more notable Muslim philosophers are Averroes, Al-Farabi, Al-Kindi and Avicenna and their impact lasted through roughly the 12th centuries in spite of a political defeat but not much longer than that in the Islamic world (Craig, 2000, p. 3). When Al-Ghazali wrote "The Incoherence of the Philosophers," Averroes responded by writing "The Incoherence of the Incoherence." Averroes lost his political battle and in Cordoba, Spain, in 1195, the Islamists burned 108 of his books and banned the teaching of philosophy. He was never to have an ideological impact upon Muslim society again (Reilly, 2010, p. 121). Without the freedom to question, Muslims

society was left with deferring to the holy texts as interpreted by their respective Muslim jurists.

On the history of the Mu'tazilites, Craig says "This school of Islamic theology came into being through controversies involving the interpretation (ta'wil) of the Quran in its anthropomorphic descriptions of God and denial of free will. The Mu-tazilites denied literal interpretation of these Quranic passages and affirmed man's free will, whereas the orthodox traditionalists adhered to literalism and determinism." (Craig, 2000, p. 4). We still see this struggle today in the modern era with the traditionalist affirming a literal interpretation of the Quran with Reformers denying a literalist interpretation of the holy texts thus embracing man's free will and denying fatalism. Craig (2000) says the Mu'tazilites were well positioned not only to know their faith was true but to know **how** it was true and defend it thusly with the use of reason (bold added for emphasis). They therefore rendered their beliefs intellectually respectable instead of deferring to the anti-intellectual Al-Ghazali position of a repudiation of philosophy and conversion or death. Thus Islam is not in principle anti-intellectual, and Muslims can approach their holy texts to allow for compatibility with modernity.

Craig goes on saying after Islam conquered much of the known world including the Byzantine and Persian empires which both were centers of Hellenic learning they were confronted by Christian apologetics suffused with Greek philosophical concepts. As such, the Ummah [Muslim community] were forced to deal with this new philosophical worldview and had to struggle with the role of

reason and if it was a tool they could utilize. They had to answer questions such as how much of the world could they understand through reason and could they use it to understand their revelation? It was at this time the Caliph al-Mamoun sponsored the first Arabic philosopher al-Kindi of the first fully developed Muslim theological school, that of the Mu'tazilites. (Estrin, 2010).

For a brief insight into Islamic philosopher al-Kindi's (805-873AD) thought is one of his more notable sayings -

"We ought not to be embarrassed of appreciating the truth and of obtaining it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. Nothing should be dearer to the seeker of truth than the truth itself, and there is no deterioration of the truth, nor belittling either of one who speaks it or conveys it."

Modern day Reformers seem to take the same approach as al-Kindi, namely, that if something is true, it matters not the source from where it originates from. It could come from the Quran or even from the West. One would be hard pressed to find even one Islamist who holds a similar viewpoint. One is reminded of Aristotle who also said "it is the mark of an educated man to entertain an idea without accepting it" along with the French philosopher and scientist Blaise Pascal who said "those who do not love the truth disregard it on the grounds that it is disputed." I mention this because al-Kindi's approach toward truth is very similar to that of both Aristotle and Pascal. This illustrates that it was not merely the West that was thinking such thoughts about ontology, metaphysics and

epistemology but there were indeed Muslim philosophers who approached truth in a similar fashion and, as such, there is nothing within some understandings of Islam that prevents such an approach.

Islamist Ideology

Islamist ideology originated in literalistic, non-allegorical hermeneutical understandings of the holy texts as understood and propagated by those closest to Muhammad in both time and relationship. This approach was continued for centuries by Islamic jurists and continues through to today.

Najjar (2004, p.207) notes

in an attempt to save the 'obvious sense' of the religious text against the practice of reason, the Ash'arites, which enjoyed hegemony in the east under al-Ghazali asserted the use of reason is solely for legal purposes and further denied free will arguing, as Allah is the cause of everything, including good and evil, they therefore denied the law of nature and the harmony of philosophy and science. From this view there are no natural laws for it is Allah directly doing these things at every given moment, since Allah is pure will and is not constrained by reason or anything else. Accordingly, reasoning, as a human effort, generates no knowledge; it is simply an occasion after which knowledge is created by God. God is the only Creator, He creates in the human being power and choice.

The Islamists could then order any actions, irrational or not, and claim it was Allah's will. And no one could gainsay the Islamists, because they would in effect be gainsaying Allah, for the Islamist controls the public discourse and claims to receive their directives directly from Allah. Taking away individual reasoning from the outset ensures hegemony over interpretation, public discourse and actions.

Michael Marmura says the Ash'arites denied causality to retain the idea of Allah's omnipotence as understood by their conception of the Quran. He says Ash'ari "adopted the occasionalist doctrine that causal efficacy resides exclusively with the divine will" (Marmura, 1973 p.286). Thus, what appears as uniformity found in the laws of nature is merely Allah constantly creating and keeping together the components of physical substances and seeming causal relations. So, what appears to be uniform laws that govern the natural world Islamists believe is merely Allah constantly creating and keeping together all of reality. On this view, Allah by his will is the *cosmic glue* that keeps the universe running smoothly. Muslim philosophers opposed this view and instead embraced Aristotelian metaphysics, which includes causality. The Ash'arites (8th to 10th centuries) called this *shirq* [heresy] for these Muslim philosophers are giving an attribute to humanity that is reserved only for Allah, namely, agency (will). Dr. Craig says,

In opting for a metaphysics of atoms and accidents which are continually being re-created by God, the Islamic theologians necessarily had to reject Aristotle's actuality/potency distinction

and its attendant analysis of causality... Thus the metaphysics of atoms and accidents inevitably led the Islamic theologians to deny the presence of any secondary causality in the world. (Craig, 2000, p. 5)

This Islamist view is known as *Occasionalism*, where Allah is the only cause of any and all action in the world without any secondary causality. They believe Allah directly mediates all interaction between mind and body. The appearance of direct interaction between mind and body is maintained by Allah, including the appearance of cause and effect where the actor intends to perform an action and does so, his mind does not act on his body directly but is mediated by Allah (Occasionalism, 2010).

So, what looks like cause and effect to the human mind is merely Allah creating and keeping together what he wills. This belief resulted practically in a denial of man's free will, something all religions have and continue to struggle with. The age-old epistemological question of "how do you know you're not a mind in a vat being stimulated by a mad scientist?" has turned the scientist into Allah where every human action is directed by Allah as mankind is stimulated by Allah to do his will and cannot not do the will of Allah (which certain sects of Christian also affirm, in particular five point Calvinism).

Ruthven (2006) claims the Quran reaffirms the notion of creation as a continuous process rather than a single act initiated by the Creator freeing itself from the creation at the beginning of the Bible. He argues the idea of Allah constantly creating is at the core of Quranic doctrine. As a result, he says "Reality

can never be grasped empirically, but must forever recede toward a horizon of inexhaustible appearances” (Ruthven, 2006, p. 103). This leads directly to fatalism where every single event in life is caused by Allah and no Muslim can ever be found guilty of transgressing any law or regulation for they are merely doing Allah’s will whatever that may be at any given moment. The key for Muslims is then finding the way to follow Allah’s will or plan. Such an ideology is potentially very flammable when one couples an arbitrary will of a deity with verses that command Muslims to kill infidels along with Muslim jurists who take these passages literally. This is exactly how bad interpretation can lead to bad behavior.

In quoting Fakhry, Dr. Craig says the metaphysical system of Al-Ghazali was “just as responsible as the doctrine of the Quran for the fatalism that characterises the religion of Islam” and Dr. Craig notes the Mu’tazilites were uncomfortable with the determinism that necessarily followed the denial of secondary causality (Craig, 2000, p. 6). Al-Ghazali valued the will of Allah over all of his other virtues, which included reason. Thus, the supremacy of Allah’s will became the orthodox view where everything that happens, happens necessarily due to the will of Allah. This necessarily includes military defeats and humiliations. On the Islamist worldview, however, this merely fortifies within them a doubling up of religious fervor for defeat can only mean that they were not committed enough and Allah taught them a lesson to motivate even more fervency in their religiosity and actions (Susser 2002).

The Mu’tazilites dominated Islamic theology for sixteen years from 833-

848; however, in 848 Caliph al-Mutawakkil repudiated Mu-tazilism and gave Ahmad ibn Hanbal (founder of one of the four Islamic schools - Hanbali) the freedom to repress the Mu'tazilites in an attempt to restore conservative orthodoxy in the early to mid ninth century (Craig, 2000, p. 6). This loss of political power led to the undermining and devaluing of their version as the dominant discourse. Their view of free will, causality, and the use of one's reason was no longer seen as orthodox, whereas the Ash'arite view came to dominate as the orthodox view.

Short-lived modern reforms

From the tenth century onward, the Islamist view was the dominant public discourse and has remained until today with a few short lived exceptions including modern day Turkey (although this may be fading) and Egypt recently enjoyed reforms both philosophical and practical from the mid-nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century beginning with the Albanian Muhammad Ali through his grandson Khedive Ismail who ruled Egypt. Ali and Ismail brought about education reforms, adopted Western laws and had a free press; however, the crushing defeat of then-Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's secular Pan-Arabism in 1967 (see page 11) led to what an Egyptian professor called an increasing theocratization of the Arab world (Najjar, 2004, p. 196). The Reformist movement has yet to recover on any notable scale being left to intellectual circles but not among ordinary Muslims. Najjar (2004, p.212) argues the impact of the reformist movement is negligible, as their ideas are inaccessible and above the reach of ordinary citizens:

Most Egyptians, as well as most Arabs and Muslims, are either illiterate or too poor and too busy with the problems of daily living to be more than oblivious and indifferent to intellectual endeavours. Most of them depend on their religious leaders and-mosque preachers for guidance; the intellectual elite are too remote, and too arrogant, to have any appeal for them. Economic, social and educational disparities have created a chasm between classes, sharp enough to preclude any meaningful communication, not to say dialogue.

If Reformers are going to make inroads into the public discourse within Muslim society, they will have to find ways to reach the “Muslim street.” This data is confirmed by the United Nations 2009 Arab Human Development Report, which shows adult illiteracy between 20-40% in certain Arab/Muslim countries (United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2009). Eight years ago there were 65 million illiterate Arab adults. This new report indicates that rate has gotten worse and gone up. This means Reformers will have to work with imams to ensure those who have no access to written texts can receive a public discourse that is not a literalist understanding only but that there are other options available to them that are orthodox. Additionally, poverty is a rampant problem and has only gotten worse since the last report. This leaves ordinary Muslims dependent upon their local imams for providing access and interpretation to the holy texts. Of course, this does not include all ordinary

Muslims but even in a highly literate Muslim/Arab society, if poverty is a rampant problem, then this leaves little time for contemplation of philosophy and the back and forth struggle between Islamists and Reformers when it is more convenient to simply attend the mosque as a faithful Muslim go home to ones responsibilities. This leaves little time for ordinary Muslims to engage in issues such as the ontology of the Quran, causality, Occasionalism and other issues of fierce debate that have occurred since the ninth century.

Muslim theologian and philosopher Ibn Hazm (994 - 1064 A.D.) adhered to the Zahiri school of jurisprudence, which emphasized the literalness of the Quran and stepped away from reasoning by analogy and the Quran as metaphor. He said that Allah's power is such that he may decide to punish the obedient and to reward the disobedient and no one can gainsay him. Allah is unaccountable and there is no standard of judgment to him because all he does is just (Makdisi, 1979, p. 4). We see this exact discussion in Plato's *Euthyphro* where Socrates asks if the gods approve an act because it is just or is it just because the gods approve it. Those who emphasize the will of Allah would side with the former, namely, that a thing is just because Allah wills it.¹ Allah could just as easily order an individual to run over an old lady with one's car as to help her across the street. And no one can question this directive. The problem with this view is the arbitrariness of Allah's actions, at least as commanded by those in authority. So, if those in authority decide to pursue what would seem to be a clearly unjust act would have

¹ Christian theologians have gotten around this dilemma by arguing God commands something that is good as the command stems from his nature. For example, it is wrong to lie because God is truth. It is wrong to steal because God is just etc. This takes away the arbitrary nature of Occasionalism.

no argument against it because Allah wills it. The jurist interpreting the holy text gets to say whether Allah wills it and therefore it becomes an issue of hermeneutics. It has the potential to become a world like that described by Syrian philosopher Sadik Jalal Al'Azam in an interview with Qatar's Al-Raya Daily (The Middle East Media Research Institute 2008) who said

In my estimation this [scientific knowledge] has grown even worse today. There is greater ignorance. There are opinions, especially in fundamentalist Islam, that completely reject modern science, the West, and all that it produces. If you take their thinking to its logical conclusion, they will become [like] the Taliban on this issue.

Although there are certain Christian fundamentalist sects (e.g., David Koresh of the Branch Davidian Compound, the Westboro Baptist Church) that had/have respectively extremely charismatic leaders who claim to speak for the will of God which only they can provide for their followers, the difference is these groups are by no means mainstream and have limited impact except to their small group of followers. The prevalence of Islamist discourse with such an ideology has increased exponentially since 1967 in the modern era and without a counter-narrative to oppose this worldview, they will continue to have a monopoly on the discourse.

Hassan Butt, who was a member of what he terms the British Jihadi Network scoffs at the idea of Western foreign policy as the key motivator for his actions and those of his fellow violent Islamists who were committed to violence.

By those who blamed the foreign policy of the U.K. government for their actions, Butt says they did their propaganda work for them and “they also helped to draw away any critical examination from the real engine of our violence: Islamic theology” (Butt, 2007 p.1). What truly motivated Butt and what he terms as “British extremists” was not the deaths of fellow Muslims around the world but “a sense that we were fighting for the creation of a revolutionary worldwide Islamic state that would dispense Islamic justice” (Butt, 2007 p.2). Butt argues the Violent Islamist argument is as follows:

First Premise: There is either Dar ul-Islam (The Land of Islam) or
Dar ul-Kufr (the Land of Unbelief)

Second Premise: There is no pure Dar ul-Islam (The Land of
Islam)

Third Premise: Islam requires Muslims to wage war against
unbelief

Conclusion: Therefore, the entire world is reclassified as Dar ul-
Hulb (a Land of War) and any means are accepted to
achieve the pure Dar ul-Islam. (Butt, 2007 p.2)

Butt argues it is the responsibility of Muslims to engage with the passages in the Quran that instruct on killing unbelievers, to challenge centuries old theological debates, admit the extremism in their communities and Muslim scholars must

come forward with a refashioned set of rules and a revised understanding of the rights and responsibilities of Muslims whose

homes and souls are firmly planted in what I'd like to term the Land of Co-existence...and perhaps we will discover that the concept of killing in the name of Islam is no more than an anachronism. (Butt, 2007 p.3)

Indeed, this must occur within Islam, beginning with religious institutions. Muslim scholars created the jurisprudence that allows for violent Islamism and it remains Muslim scholars who carry the most authority within Islam, even above that of the caliph since not even the caliph can create law but must merely depend upon Muslim scholars to provide the correct jurisprudence. Therefore, a re-visiting of the Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) to allow for interaction between Dar ul-Islam (The Land of Islam) and Dar ul-Kufr (the Land of Unbelief) is critical and must be presented in the form of an authoritative, comprehensive and compelling counter-narrative to the current discourse of violent Islamism.

Butt does not speak for all Muslims, yet there are others who criticize Islamism. One female critic, who goes by the pseudonym Umm Mustafa (2008 p.2) for fear of reprisal, states:

I realised that Hizb ut-Tahrir has devised a set of political ideas and goals which are in fact separate from Islam. Its tactic of convincing young people that its political goals are synonymous with Islam is its most dangerous and deceptive trick. In reality, its aims come from one man's socialist ideals, mixed with his own interpretation of Islamic scripture.

Even more encouraging is that Noman Benotman, a former leader of the Islamist Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, wrote an open letter to Osama bin Laden asking him to give up armed jihad citing his actions as “un-Islamic” and harmful to Muslims worldwide. He says, “Most Muslim communities wish to embrace and engage in democracy; they seek justice, peace, freedom, human rights and peaceful coexistence with the rest of the world. Instead, where there was harmony, you brought discord” (Benotman - 2010

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/10/an_open_letter_to_osama_bin_laden).

He urges Osama bin Laden to make sure the jihad of al Qaeda “reverts back to the path of ahl al sunnawal jama’a (the people who follow the example of Muhammad and the majority) and realigns its acts and policies with authentic Islamic rulings” (Benotman, 2010

http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/10/an_open_letter_to_osama_bin_laden). Note, that Benotman is appealing to Islamic sources for authority. He merely disagrees with the interpretation bin Laden has utilized to arrive at his violent actions.

Muslim Brotherhood

Islamism is not resigned to the eras of Islamic history but continues and, I argue, is gaining more influence. In recent modern history, Islamist ideology has been propagated through the Muslim Brotherhood, which is why I include a discussion on this organization here. Al Jazeera English reports that they are considered the world’s most influential Islamist movement with an

estimated 300,000 dedicated members, a massive bureaucracy and a very conservative constituency

(<http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/2010/11/2010111681527837704.html>)

It was in the conditions of poverty and a lack of education opportunities that Hasan al-Banna, founded the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen, the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 in Cairo. al-Banna believed the key to reform was to resist Western secular ideas and to conversely promote political Islam. The Ikhwan adopted the motto - “Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Qur’an is our constitution. Jihad is our way. Martyrdom is our highest hope” (G. Hussain, 2010, p. 2). The conditions were such that ordinary Muslims were susceptible to such an ideology coupled with a lack of time and inclination to search out the answers on their own. This motto remains the Brotherhood’s motto.

al-Banna focused for the next two decades on building relationships with mosques, welfare associations and neighborhood groups. “By joining local cells, members could access a well-established and well-resourced community of activists who would help them in all aspects of their lives. The foundations of what we now know as Islamism were being laid” (G. Hussain, 2010, p. 4). Thus, in that party, al-Banna was able to spread his ideas through the help he provided to his community and their dependence upon the social services the Brotherhood’s infrastructure provided. This approach has proven to be very successful in gaining inroads within Islamic communities and is the same approach Hezbollah has taken in Lebanon to fill the void by the Lebanese government – socially, economically and even militarily. The troublesome aspect

of this approach is it is difficult to accept help from either organization without also supporting their cause, which in the case of Hezbollah and Hamas includes violent Islamism, and with the Brotherhood, Islamist ideology.

Muslim Reformer Dr. Ahmad Al-Ruba'i says in an Al-Arabiyah interview the beginning of all religious terrorism originated with the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology of takfir [apostasy] where Muslims accuse other Muslims of apostasy (Al-Ruba'i, 2008 <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/3076.htm>). Al-Ruba'i lays the blame for this ideology at the feet of Islamist Sayyid Qutb. He says

Sayyid Qutb's book Milestones was the inspiration and the guide for all of the takfir [apostate] movements that came afterwards.

The founders of the violent groups were raised on the Muslim Brotherhood, and those who worked with bin Laden and Al-Qa'ida went out under the mantle of the Muslim Brotherhood. (Al-Ruba'i, 2008, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/3076.htm>)

In it, Qutb divides the world into two halves - the world of unbelief and the world of Islam. Qutb argues if Islam is to once again lead the world then the Muslim community must be restored to its original form. There is still a desire to this day to return to the *pure* form of Islam; however, it is unclear what exactly this looks like practically in reality; however, men like Abul Ala Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb nonetheless make cases for such a reality along with that of their followers and those who remain influenced by it to this day.

Islam did have a brief time of an appreciation of the role of reason within Islam as a system of thought in the public discourse. Of course there are many Muslim thinkers and Reformers who have started philosophical societies who engage with not only the arguments of the day but science as noted earlier. This is not to say there is no reason in Islam as a system nor for any particular Muslim. However, with the triumph of Ash'ari and the consequent deferral to Islam as understood by those closest to Muhammad along with a refusal to use independent reasoning to arrive at legal opinions nor to value the role of philosophy and reason, has led to a dependence upon the respective authorities for daily living and taqlid [imitation]. As we have seen, if the respected authority provides the intellectual framework of violent Islamism, this does in fact lead to destructive behavior.

Fuller (2003) argues that throughout much of Islamic history, Muslim scholars were either the primary or only interpreter of Islamic texts and Islamic jurisprudence; however, moving forward into modern history, the twentieth century saw the rise of Islamic intellectuals not trained as clerics but earned degrees from Western universities. These modern Muslim intellectuals also relied upon their own reading of the holy texts. "Their knowledge of Islam is based on their own readings and study of the Quran and the Hadith - reminiscent of the Protestant Reformation when Christians were encouraged – indeed, required – to go back to the texts and understand them for themselves" (Fuller, 2003, p. 58). From a Reformers perspective, this is very encouraging indeed. The Protestant Reformation certainly had its fair share of wars and killing in the name of

Christianity including a schism in the church; however, the for the majority of people and nations currently practices allow for a freedom to worship as one so desires within Christianity. One can only hope for the same within Islam.

Chapter 4

Modern Middle East History

Susser (2003) highlights recent history as a major reason why much of Islam's perception of the West is not friendly (2003, P.3). Fast forward from the tenth century to the seventeenth century to the Battle of Vienna in 1683, which marked the beginning of the end of the last Islamic caliphate. This defeat and continuous defeats of the caliphate lasted until World War I, from which the modern borders were drawn, mostly by the French and English, and the collapse of the Ottoman empire in 1923 (Cleveland, P.183).

From this defeat of the Turks in the battle of Vienna in 1683 and on, the Muslim world experienced recessive, repetitive defeat, including: Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, the British conquest of Egypt in 1882, defeat at the hands of the newly formed modern Jewish state in 1948, to continued defeats in 1956, 1967,² 1973, 1982 by Israel, and the defeat of the largest standing Arab army in 1991 in Saddam Hussein's Iraq by the United States. There have certainly been historical defeats of the West by Islamic armies; however, my intent is to focus on modern history.

The Six Day War in 1967 has a particular importance to my discussion given that Islamism has since filled the void of President Nasser's secular pan-Arabism. This allowed Islamists to claim the utter inadequacy of secularism, modernity and provide Islamism as the sole solution to all of the Muslim/Arab

² At the National Military Museum in Cairo, the museum moves from "the Suez Campaign" in 1956 directly into the 1973 war with no mention whatsoever of the Six Day War. This defeat was so humiliating for Egypt to where they don't even recognize a war took place.

world's ills. Even the term Six Day War is an Israeli term, a term of the victors. In two days, Israel defeated the Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, Iraqi and Lebanese armies. The name itself is humiliating. That defeat was not just a military defeat of Egypt, but also a defeat of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the second president of Egypt's entire secular political philosophy of Pan-Arabism (<http://www.meforum.org/518/requiem-for-arab-nationalism/>). The reason why Nasser merits such a lengthy discussion viz. 1967 is Egypt was the leading Arab power at this time and his Pan-Arabism was expected to re-create a powerful Arab world. To illustrate the significance this defeat had not just upon President Nasser but the Arab world, Anwar Sadat, who succeeded Nasser said in his personal memoir that for those who knew Nasser,

the events of June 5 [1967] dealt him a fatal blow. They finished him off. Those who knew Nasser realized that he did not die on September 28, 1970, but on June 5, 1967, exactly one hour after the war broke out ... that was how he looked at the time, and for a long time afterwards – a living corpse. (Sadat, 1981, pp. 179-180).

Sadat stressed here how critical this war was and the collapse of his political philosophy also destroyed the man himself beginning on June 5, 1967. Even more importantly, the Six Day War was a turning point in the Middle East for both Israel and the entire region.

Nasser's secular nationalism lost its appeal and not just one but five Arab armies suffered a monumental defeat of epic proportions by a Westernized country in the heart of 22 Arab countries. This was merely another reminder of

Arab humiliation. Although the Egyptian media highlighted the fake victories of the Egyptian armies over the Israelis, the reality was quite the converse. So, although Egyptians cheered in the streets for the *victories* over Israel, the opposite had actually happened. When this became known, Nasser was publicly ridiculed by Egyptians, his own people, along with his entire political philosophy (Sadat, 1981).

President Nasser's secular pan-Arabism took such a defeat that it would never recover and could only open up a space for a separate ideology to fill that void, in this case, Islamism. Confirming this view, Syrian philosopher Sadik Al'Azm concurs with Susser's view on the crushing defeat the Six Day War had on pan-Arabism. He says

[The pan-Arab failure] increased the feelings of humiliation, marginalization, and a sense of failure that formed a sudden and unexpected vacuum, which was filled by the Islamist movements. A number of critics – myself included – grasped this phenomenon after the defeat in June 1967. (The Middle East Middle Research Institute, 2008

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/2786.htm>)

If there was ever a monumental turning point in the Middle East, this was it given that Susser (2002, Summer lecture series) argues this crushing defeat of Nasser's political philosophy gave way to two processes:

1. *Pragmatization of politics*. Instead of Arab unity, pragmatically they did what was possible and turned into

realists. The state order was legitimized and accepted. State interests were protected. The right of Arab states to do as it pleases with self-interest against Arab unity of all nations. Islamists see themselves Muslim first, citizen second, seeing the nation state as a Western creation and through various means pursue a global caliphate.

2. *The emergence of Islamic radicalism*, which still refuses the West. Islamism filled the ideological vacuum left vacant by Gamal Abdel Nasser's Pan Arabism.

Islamism still fills this void in Middle Eastern countries either through the political process or more noticeably through the ideology that controls a dominant discourse through the social and public sphere.

Chapter 5

Islamic Law

Islam is a religion of law. Therefore, to better understand Islam, we must understand Islamic law and the very real impact it has on Islamic society and their interaction with non-Muslims.

Bernard Weiss (1978, p. 200) says the sacred texts, which all rules of Islamic law are derived from are: the Quran, the Sunna and the Consensus of the Muslim community. The Sunna consists of the inspired sayings and acts of Muhammad as recorded in the Hadith. The Consensus of the Ummah [Muslim Community] is less authoritative but is still a source that law is derived from and also subject to *ijtihad*.

If this is true, then it is critical the hadiths that are accepted as reliable are accurate reflections to the reality of what is, or what Muhammad actually said and did in history. The origins of hadiths attributed to Muhammad himself are to this day the subject of dispute which are contained in all six canonical collections. Hadith collectors constructed these hadiths, the most well known being Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari (810-870 A.D.) and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (died in 875 A.D.) who travelled vast distances to find whom he considered to be reliable sources who recounted Muhammad's allegedly true sayings and actions (Ruthven, 2006, p. 131). Given the weight the hadiths play in interpretation and understanding, it is therefore critical to determine which hadiths are true and which are not. Additionally, the hadiths that made the accepted list of true hadiths have a major impact upon Muslim society.

These hadiths were collected more than 200 years after Muhammad lived and therefore had to be verified as to its reliability. Historians use various tools to verify the accuracy of a text, one of the main factors being eyewitness accounts that are early viz. the events they report on. Gary Habermas says that “when scholars have ancient sources that are both very early and based on eyewitness testimony, they have a combination that is very difficult to dismiss” (Habermas, 2005, p.3). What holds even more weight among historians is those texts that agree with one another and therefore corroborate the testimony of the early, eyewitness accounts. And we cannot employ the circular reasoning of the Quran and hadiths are true because the Quran and the hadiths say they are true. We must utilize an outside verification of the holy texts to ensure their reliability. The same holds true for Christianity as well.

The reliability of these hadiths are critical as the acceptance of certain hadiths over others as true will impact the everyday behavior of Muslims given its acceptance as a necessary component of the holy text. For example, if the Hadith (Ishaq:324) that “He said, 'Fight them so that there is no more rebellion, and religion, all of it, is for Allah only. Allah must have no rivals'" is considered an accurate reflection of reality, then there will be some who will act out upon this belief. It seems Muslims put much faith in hadiths that were collected and constructed hundreds of years after Muhammad’s death and so ensuring their accuracy is of prime importance given the prime importance they play in shaping the beliefs and actions of Islamic society.

Ruthven quotes Hallaq who said

law has been so successfully developed in Islam that it would not be an exaggeration to characterize Islamic culture as a legal culture. But this very blessing of the pre-modern culture turned out to be an obstacle in the face of modernization. The system that had served Muslims so well in the past now stood in the way of change – a change that proved to be so needed in a twentieth-century culture vulnerable to an endless variety of western influences and pressures. (Ruthven, 2006, p. 135, as cited in Hallaq, 1997, p. 3)

As I note later under Muslim identity, the Islamist has sought to portray any Western influence as anti-Islamic and therefore to be avoided altogether.

Horowitz (1994) says within an Islamic system, because the essential character of law comes from a divine source as revealed to Muhammad, change is merely relegated to how one applies these revealed principles. Therefore, one can never create Islamic law, one can only discover it. And once one has discovered it, the societal changes that are needed come about merely from applying its already revealed truths to modern day issues. If true, this means one can never come up with a new interpretation of the Quran, but merely an application given the current circumstances. So, for example, if an abrogated verse says the Muslim is obligated to kill the infidels wherever they find him, then the question is not one of interpretation but of applicability. Unless the verse is abrogated by a verse that suggests otherwise, the issue of killing infidels is already settled. Now the only question that remains is the best means to apply this interpretation (see Appendix A).

Bernard Weiss (1978) argues Islamic tradition affirms with great emphasis the Shari'a is not given to man ready-made to be passively received and applied but actively constructed on the basis of the sacred texts which are its acknowledged sources. This means Muslims must depend upon the interpretation by Muslim scholars to help them arrive at the correct interpretation. To further complicate matters, whereas Allah has laid down the rules for man's behavior, it is man's duty to derive them from their sources. In Islamic metaphor, only the roots are given; however, it is man's duty to arrive at the branches or the fruit via human husbandry. Although the sacred texts contain the law, the law must be extracted from the texts and are therefore considered sources of law but not law itself. This means the ordinary Muslim cannot arrive at the law with his own level of understanding but must defer to those whom they consider the most orthodox source and therefore comes closest to the rules as prescribed by Allah. Otherwise, they could be in jeopardy for their salvation. (For fuller discussion see following section *Hermeneutics within Islam*)

Within Islam, the respective Muslim states have no legislative authority in principle. They derive their authority from the interpretation of Shari'a by way of the respected authority of jurists who have discovered what Allah has decreed. Not even a caliph [ruler of Islamic super state] could create law. This demonstrates the point of how truly important hermeneutics is to Islamic society. This means Muslim jurists have much control over society because they control the interpretation of the law. This can lead to violent acts as those in authority can

use this to justify any types of behavior saying it is the will of Allah. Dr Ahmad Al-Ruba'i on Al-Arabiya television said

the rulers who persecuted the people summoned the clerics and said, 'Go to the mosques and tell the people that man has no free will.' This would justify all the crimes committed by the rulers, because they are the will of Allah. And so the story goes on. (Al-Ruba'i, 2008 -

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/3076.htm>)

This does not mean that the rulers will take advantage of their citizens, but it does demonstrate that the potential for abuse is there. If there is no accountability, then the ruler can do whatever he pleases so long as he gets legal backing from the jurists.

Hermeneutics within Islam

Because belief affects behavior, as in any other religion, how the Reformer and Islamist interprets the holy text will determine how one applies the text. The Reformer says the holy text must be interpreted in light of historical events whereas the Islamist says the holy text is applicable for all peoples, places and times regardless of variance with modernity. For the Islamist, current society must adapt to the holy text, not vice versa.

Nor can a Muslim receive the holy text directly from Allah as Mohammad did, as Muslims believe the angel Gabriel gave the holy texts to Muhammad directly. Given the seemingly conflicting accounts within the Quran, the Muslim

is left to either interpreting the holy text for one's self or depending upon a [mujtahid] trained legal scholar to do so.

There is precedent within Islam that allows those who consider themselves orthodox or true Muslims to interpret the holy texts in such a manner that anyone who disagrees with their interpretation is in a state of jahaliya (ignorance) thereby demonstrating they are a kufr (unbeliever/infidel). Ruthven says Tirmidhi (824-892 AD) one of the six universally recognized Sunni canonists preserved a hadith of Muhammad that says anyone who interprets the Quran according to his personal opinion and not according to ilm (knowledge, the recognized methodology) "has proved himself to be a kafir (infidel)." (Ruthven, 2006 p. 109). He says further, "at the intellectual level" Muslims would undermine the social power of the mujtahids (religious scholars) by providing "unauthorized interpretations" of Scripture, as they deviated from the hermeneutical principles devised by the mujtahids (Ruthven, 2006, p. 109).

Although Rahman (1970) notes that family law is considered fairly straight forward and therefore has little need for explanation, but even this aspect of holy text is still interpreted at variance by both Islamist and non-Islamists, and the ordinary Muslim can never get to the meaning of the text without interpretation by whoever they trust to interpret the texts in accordance with Allah's directives. Because the Reformer is more concerned with one's personal relationship with Allah they are not as concerned with regulating behavior; however, Islamists are very concerned with who and under what conditions the true meaning of the text as defined by them is interpreted.

If true, the question becomes “whose interpretation?” This is critical, because whoever gets to interpret the text gains more power and credibility. Michel Foucault (2006 - <http://www.michel-foucault.com/quote/2005q.html>) says “Knowledge appears to be profoundly linked to a whole series of power effects. Archaeology is essentially this detection.” Even though Islamists for the most part have little sway on public policy through Muslim/Arab governments, they are currently the only option for most Muslims in the Arab world (Fuller, 2003, p. 24). No individuals or groups have challenged their authority with much force and are seen as more orthodox than Reformers.

Ijtihad - Independent Reasoning

Ijtihad is a crucial term, without which, no Muslim can ever come to a jurisprudential conclusion on their own but must be dependent upon the trusted Muslim authority to interpret their particular issue given their understanding of Islamic law. Ijtihad is the term used to extract Islamic law from its sources and is literally defined as “striving” or “exerting.” In a jurisprudential sense, ijtihad is defined as “the capacity for making deductions in matters of law in cases to which no express text or rule already determined by Ijma (consensus) is applicable.” It is commonly referred to as “independent reasoning” or “rethinking” (Ali-Karamali & Dunne, 1994). I will discuss the several definitions for ijtihad and why those distinctions matter, what Muslim scholars argue if Muslims are allowed to practice it today, why this is important to this discussion, and how looking into this particular issue will help us better understand who has the recognized authority within Islam.

Before I discuss the several definitions over the years, to help understand *ijtihad*, its converse is *taqlid*, which means the acceptance of a rule on the basis of authority. The individual submitting to *taqlid* therefore does not reason for one's self but merely trusts the interpretation of a *mujtahid* (individuals who are legal and religious experts in Islamic law and can practice *ijtihad*). In practice, someone utilizing *ijtihad* will think through with their own reasoning the rule of law viz. the particular issue at hand. Conversely, with *taqlid*, the Muslim imitates or submits to the authority of the *mujtahid* who is considered an authority. His authority stems from his methodology or how valid his derivation of the textual source is. This is primarily considered consent of the Ummah [Muslim community]. If one submits to the consensus of the Ummah (*taqlid*), then there is no need to interpret and derive rulings from the holy text for one's self (*ijtihad*), as these have already been decided upon by the earliest generations of Muslims closest to Muhammad.

Wiederhold (1996, p. 243) defines *taqlid* as the adoption of a legal opinion (imitation) without examining its underlying legal merits because they lack the capacity to arrive at the most appropriate decision for a particular legal question. Therefore, because Islamic law can only be discovered and not created, those in authority argue everything necessary for living in society has already been defined and one must defer by *taqlid* to Islam as defined by those who were closest to Muhammad no matter the new advances in society and concepts never even dreamed of by those in the seventh through ninth centuries, AD. The Muslim must therefore find a trusted *mujtahid*, provide him with the particulars of their

concern and ask for him to provide the religious ruling. The reason why *ijtihad* is critical to this discussion is if one cannot practice *ijtihad* today, then one can never derive a new legal opinion. Instead, Muslims can only imitate what has already been decided by the first few generations of Muslims closest to Muhammad as explained by the mujtahid (legal and religious expert). If this public discourse is followed, then ordinary Muslims will continue to depend upon Islamists to interpret the holy texts as understood by them, thereby impacting behavior. Thus, we are back to the Islamist idea that modern society must bend to Islam, because the matter of legal interpretation has already been settled.

Defining *ijtihad* remains an ongoing issue and can be very contentious. Over the last 150 years there have been several definitions of *ijtihad*, some more nuanced than others. Given its role on everyday behavior, subtle variations in definition can have a very real impact on practice. Ali-Karamali and Dunne (1994, p.240) provide various sources of nuanced definitions of *ijtihad* with some definitions mentioning Muslim jurists and others do not. The definitions that include jurists necessitate their inclusion. The definitions that do not mention jurists could assume individual Muslims may be able to exercise *ijtihad*. al-Muhairi (1995) says there is a consensus within the scholarly community of the role of *ijtihad* where the Muslim jurist (Mujtahid) exercises *ijtihad* through interpreting the law of God and extending it to cover new legal problems but never to create new legal rules. Hence the jurist discovers the rules as prescribed by Allah and does not create new rules. This is a very important distinction. Although Allah has decreed the rules for man to live by, the formulation of those

rules is not axiomatic. The jurist must draw out what is present but not obvious in the sacred texts. Muhairi also agrees that a jurisprudential rule using *ijtihad* is not equal to the authority of a rule clearly laid out by the Shari'a texts, as the mujtahid deduces a legal rule by way of human reason which is always subject to error, therefore is never viewed with the same authority as Shari'a texts. It is the mujtahid's opinion and nothing more. What is self-evident is knowledge or "Ilm". What is derived from the text is a jurist's opinion or "Zann." Again, a Muslim jurist can only discover and not create new law, however, if scholars are unable to apply new rulings for modern situations, then Reformers will not have the opportunity to speak to new issues and Muslim society must defer to Islamists in their interpretation as understood by them. This approach fosters dependence upon the jurist since the ordinary Muslim cannot practice *ijtihad*.

For practical examples of the inability of Muslims to arrive at the proper interpretation of the jurisprudential ruling, see the website *Islamicity* (<http://www.islamicity.com/qa/>) that allows a Muslim to submit a question to a religious scholar in the "ask an imam" section. There is a caveat that the answers are opinions only and intended to help the Ummah (Muslim community) but nothing more. These are not viewed as a detailed fatwa (religious ruling) since that would take much more time for the religious scholar to arrive at the proper interpretation viz. the particular issue. Since the believer cannot use *ijtihad* he/she is left with finding an authoritative jurist to rely upon.

Next I will discuss the question of whether the closure of the gate of *ijtihad* has arisen in reality. How the ulema (Muslim scholars) approach this

discussion as it has very real implications on action, particularly within modern society. Yet if ijtihad remains open for today, then who can practice ijtihad (however it is defined) also becomes crucial.

Ijtihad closure

Scholars refer to the modern discussion on ijtihad as the “gate of ijtihad,” with scholars in the last 100 years falling into one of three categories regarding ijtihad - ijtihad is closed altogether, ijtihad was never closed, and indecision on whether ijtihad is closed, each with their own problems in making their arguments. Thus the scholars who say the gate of independent reasoning has not been closed have the burden of defending whom and under what conditions ijtihad can be practiced. This adds a burden upon the Reformer who must then explain before even beginning the question of hermeneutics how ijtihad has not in fact been closed. Until Reformers provide an authoritative, compelling counter-narrative to Islamist ideology and ideas such as taqlid, Islamists will continue to have the upper hand concerning the authoritative narrative and they will continue to pursue a global caliphate whether through violent or non-violent means. Ordinary Muslims will have no choice but to follow if there are no opposing, authoritative views.

The term itself “closure of the gate of ijtihad” is a recent development as scholars began using the term after Joseph Schacht’s (1902-1969) work titled “An Introduction to Islamic Law” in 1964 on the subject. Weiderhold (1996) says the Western understanding of Islamic jurisprudence has been deeply influenced by Joseph Schacht’s claim of the closure of the gate of ijtihad and Codd (1999) holds

the prevailing view of Islamic law after approximately 900 A.D. referencing Schacht as well and others deferring to Schacht's "closure," the gate of ijtiḥād was closed resulting in stagnation of Islamic Law. As a result of this perceived closure, Islamic Law was never to evolve into a system of positive law, and ijtiḥād was replaced with taqlid as the norm.

I believe that although the so-called closure may have not occurred in reality, since this was the perception among scholars, the closure has therefore become the de facto reality. What this means is that although Muslims are able to allow for ijtiḥād to deal with matters of modernity, for those who believe the gate was already closed, no true Muslim could be allowed to come up with a new interpretation but must simply defer to imitating Muhammad regardless of the peoples, places or time period. Instead of allowing the interpretation of the holy texts to conform to modernity, everyone living in the modern era must conform to the holy texts as understood and defined by those closest to Muhammad in time and relationship.

Wiederhold (1996) argues there are two discourses between Muslim scholars going back to the ninth century. The first allows for the practice of ijtiḥād under certain conditions with the second discourse that of Western scholars who in the nineteenth century asserted there was a consensus among Muslim legal scholars on the closure of the door of ijtiḥād yet without sufficient evidence to support this assumption. I do not argue these Western scholars invented the idea of the closure of the gate of ijtiḥād but they merely recognized the belief of the ulema (Muslim scholars) as their belief in the closure, which became the

dominant discourse and remains the dominant discourse among Islamists to this day (Ali-Karamali & Dunne 1994, p.254)

Ali-Karamali & Dunne (1994) say most scholars who agree that ijtiḥād is now closed defer to the four orthodox Muslim schools (madhāhib) as the arbiters of orthodoxy. This means the gate of ijtiḥād officially closed from the ninth century A.D. onward. Ali-Karamali & Dunne (1994) note several twentieth century authors who deny the closure of the gate of ijtiḥād including Wael Hallaq (1984), Mohammad Iqbal (1930), Abdul Rahim (1911), Albert Hourani (1962) and H.A.R. Gibb (1962). Hallaq (1984, p. 4) says ijtiḥād was indispensable because it was the only means by which jurists could reach the judicial judgments decreed by Allah. He further makes the case for the non-closure of ijtiḥād by arguing jurists capable of ijtiḥād existed at all times, ijtiḥād was used in developing positive law **after** the formation of the schools (bold added for emphasis), until 500 years after Muhammad's death there was no mention of the closure or anything related to it, and the controversy about the closure of ijtiḥād and the extinction of *mujtahids* (i.e., individuals who are legal and religious experts in Islamic law and can practice ijtiḥād) prevented jurists from reaching a consensus on the closure. Additionally, Hallaq (1984) asks why none of the four founders of the madhāhib [Muslim schools] mentioned this, nor any of their followers if the gate to ijtiḥād closed. Such a significant event would probably not be left unmentioned if this actually occurred in reality. Hallaq claims that given the lack of any evidence in the affirmative this was more than likely that the

founders of the four schools believed the gate to ijtiḥād was not closed and the idea is a modern invention with very real life impact.

Ali-Karamali and Dunne (1994) state that even when scholars asserted the gate of ijtiḥād was closed they also offered seemingly contradictory statements that it had not in fact been closed. Further, they claim Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) is noted by many as the father of modern Islamic law yet he never mentioned a closing of the door of ijtiḥād. One more pivotal issue is they ask if the closing of the door of ijtiḥād were such a critical and importance concept in Islamic law and history, then how could this have been left unmentioned by the father of modern Islamic scholarship? They say Goldziher may not have mentioned this because the phrase never became famous until Count Leon Ostrorog (1867-1932). Rahman says, “It was not until very modern times that an attempt was made by means of the doctrine of taqlid [consensus/imitation] to confine the Court and the jurists to one of the four Schools of law from the others” (Ali-Karamali & Dunne, 1994, p. 249). Thus we see two widespread, oppositional camps within Islam. On the one hand we have Islamists who think the closure of the gate of ijtiḥād has closed for all times with scholars saying the door never closed but is open under certain conditions.

Of course, one could argue the principles apply, but then we are still left with the dilemma of who interprets the principles for modern day issues and under what guidelines? There are certainly those who make claims on what the U.S. Founding Fathers intended for today but these are principles, not every day practical rules to follow regarding modernity. These are issues Islamists are

forced to argue for given twenty-first century issues were not even dreamed of in the ninth century as the Islamist argues for much more than just principles but seeks to control behavior of both Muslims and non-Muslims through their understanding of Islam as defined by those closest to Muhammad.

Muhammad is reported in Hadith 1/116 to say “my Ummah shall not agree upon error.” Therefore, if the consensus of the community argues for anything, then according to Muhammad, it must be accepted. If the gate of ijtiḥad has closed, then the Ummah must have come together at some point and actually agreed upon banning independent thinking. To my knowledge, there are no Islamic scholars who have described such a meeting let alone an agreement upon banning ijtiḥad. Further, this ban on independent thinking would appear to be a performative contradiction given that each member of the Ummah would have to arrive at a ban of independent thinking by their respective independent thinking. This is similar to those who use logic to argue that one should not use logic. Or it would be akin to writing “I cannot write anything in the English language.” Therefore, it does not make any sense that the Ummah would ban independent thinking unless they want to continue with the anti-rationalism espoused by Al-Ghazali (which I will touch upon later) because the Muslim community is comprised of individuals by definition. And if the individuals decide to cut off individual thinking they must utilize their individual thinking to do so. Rahman (1994) confirms this untenable position by noting that to establish Hadith (part of the necessary makeup of Shari’a) one needed Ijma (consensus), which closed the door of ijtiḥad; however, once hadith had been established by consensus, it ousted

consensus by its very logic. So, individual scholars arrived at consensus one assumes by independent reason to say there was no independent reasoning and collectively concurred that there was only one version of acceptable Hadith and ultimately Shari'a.

To use an American example to illustrate, ijtiḥād is to state law what clearly delineated rules are to federal law. The U.S. doctrine of pre-emption ensures state law cannot pre-empt federal law. In the same way, neither can ijtiḥād pre-empt clearly spelled out rules in the Quran and Hadith (Shari'a). So, for the mujtahid [Muslim scholar], as long as the scholar's ijtiḥād does not displace the Shari'a, it is considered valid. What this means is that if the Quran is silent on any given issue, then the mujtahid can provide a ruling on modern problems as they arise. Therefore, the modern day Muslim need not live in paralysis with anything not already clearly spelled out by the Quran and can appeal to a mujtahid to clear up any confusion that the Quran is silent on. As noted, the Muslim can even go to a website to ask an imam what their ruling is on any given subject. What this means practically is that one can still be a faithful Muslim and live in the modern world. This also takes away the Islamist narrative that the uncreated word of the Quran is inimitable along with the Hadith and already sufficient to speak to every affair in the Muslim's life, which I develop further in the next chapter on Islamic law.

HT and hermeneutics

Although interpretation concerns are by no means unique to Islam, what is unique is the logical conclusion of the strident belief in the uncreated nature of the

Quran and therefore the potential desire for Islamists to apply the holy text for not just Muslims but violently towards all non-Muslims. This is more than a doctrine found within a religious book but has a very real impact upon Muslims given the reverence with which the Islamic holy texts is accorded due to its uncreated nature that dictates a literalistic interpretation only.

HT demonstrates a case for why the non-Muslim scholar must depend upon a qualified Muslim jurist to interpret the holy text for them hence fostering dependence, presumably upon them. HT Britain says

Do you know all the various laws of *Deen*? Are you capable of extracting and deriving the laws pertaining to *wudhu*, *salaah*, *zakaah*, etc. directly from the Qur'an and Hadith? Do you know which *Hadith* has abrogated another? Do you have the ability to reconcile between the various *Ahadith* which apparently contradict each other? Do you know which verses of the Qur'an are general in their application and which verses are qualified by other texts?
(Khan, 2003 p.3)

Such questioning could intimidate even an Islamic scholar, not to mention someone untrained in the legal nuances and complexities found within Islamic law. Thus it fosters a dependence upon organizations like HT and others who claim to do the work for them that is orthodox and therefore authoritative.

Interpretation of holy texts (hermeneutics) has been utilized by Muslim scholars since the beginning of Islam to apply Islamic principles to new situations

never addressed by Muslim scholars; however, Fuller says many current Islamists claim these interpretations have no merit. He says

Many modernist Islamists claim that past interpretations of Islamic scholars lack any inherent authority and are of interest and worthy of respect only as a reflection of the Muslim experience in the past. They are in no way binding or necessarily even relevant to contemporary needs. (Fuller, 2003, p. 14)

Fuller allowed for many versions of Islamism, saying Political Islam will continually change and that there will be multiple understandings and interpretations of Islam in politics and society and it is more accurate to refer to *Islamisms*. This of course is the struggle between the Islamist and the Reformer - whether the holy text as understood by those closest to Muhammad in the early generations of Islam have said all there is to say about the holy text or if a Muslim can interpret the text in light of modern conditions.

Professor Sadik al'Azm says of Muslim religious institutions that

They [Islamic religious institutions] are filled with repetitiveness, ossification, regression, protecting [particular] interests, perpetuating the status quo, and submission to the ruling authority. If the state is socialist, the Mufti becomes a socialist; if the rulers are at war, the clerics are pro-war; if the governments pursue peace, the [religious authorities] follow them. This is part of the barrenness of these institutions. This [forms a] vacuum in religious thought that is filled by the [intellectual] descendants and followers

of Sayyid Qutb, for example, and that type of violent fundamentalist Islam. (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2008 - <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/2786.htm>)

This is the danger I have sought to portray of putting the power in the hands of Islamist ideologues for any ruler can make any claim and pursue any action so long as they receive the support of the religious authorities. Without independent reasoning, ordinary Muslims are left to follow the authority of their rulers without having any recourse. Unless Reformers can come along with a counter-narrative that is first constructed by Muslim jurists to put in the place of Islamism, ordinary Muslims will continue to have no other options if the majority discourse is that of Islamism which can lead to violent Islamism.

Ideally, one can only represent Islam after much religious training. However, this is not always the case and can leave interpretations open to anyone who can take specific verses out of context or disregard for the particular historical events and situation in which the verse was recorded and the verse(s) may not be for all people's for all places and for all times. Nor may the verse call for a literalist interpretation but the individual may interpret it as such and again, use it to justify any particular worldview, which could include the use of violence. Thus the danger of not knowing who has the authority to represent Islam is anyone can apply their own interpretation of Islam and select verses that justify their respective worldview; as Osama bin Laden, Zayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab Zarqawi have done to justify murder (as three examples of many).

Muhammad Sa'id al-'Ashmawi, a specialist in comparative and Islamic law at Cairo University says that Shari'a is different than Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and that scholars must newly interpret Islamic jurisprudence in every time period. Therefore a blind acceptance of the existing corpus of Islamic jurisprudence is highly debatable and must be subject to constant interpretation (Fuller, 2003). This is critical because if Shari'a and fiqh function on separate tracks, then it is the responsibility of the Muslim to understand the decrees of Allah given their particular time and location. This then sits in direct contrast with the Islamists belief that Islamic jurisprudence and Shari'a are one and the same and therefore are not subject to constant interpretation regardless of the particular time, place or peoples, that society must conform to their understanding of Islam and not vice versa. This means Islamists can claim a literalist interpretation of Islam and stress the violent verses in the Quran as abrogating the non-violent ones.

Chapter 6

Islamists

It necessary to investigate whom these Islamist beliefs originated with given the approach of this paper that belief affects behavior and conversely that behavior affects belief. So, in looking at violent Islamism, we must begin with the intellectual foundations that foster the conditions for violent Islamism. I argue the intellectual foundation of modern Islamism includes Hasan al-Banna, Abu Ala-Mawdudi, Sayid Qutb, and Sayid imam al-Sharif (Dr. Fadl), respectively. French scholar Gilles Kepel says, “The theoretical basis for the Islamist movement was devised in the late 1960s by the ideologists [Sayid Abu A’la] Mawdudi in Pakistan, [Sayid] Qutb in Egypt, and [Ayatollah] Khomeini in Iran” (Gilles, 2006, p. 5). I also include Hasan al-Banna in this foundation because he is the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. I end with Dr. Fadl as a transitional figure between Islamist and Reformer although I would not put him in the Reformer category. Dr. Fadl was the spiritual leader (emir) of al Qaeda but has since distanced himself from his earlier justification for violent Islamism and repudiated it through an updated work titled “Rationalizing Jihad in Egypt and the World.” His earlier work titled “The Essentials of Making Ready for Jihad” however still has a residual impact as Zayman al Zahiri modified it to suit al Qaeda’s violent Islamist ends. When talking about the intellectual foundation of Islamism, most discussions focus on Mawdudi and Qutb. I also include al-Banna since he started the Brotherhood, a significant political organization that functions independently in several countries.

Syed Abul ala Mawdudi

Mawdudi was a pioneer in Islamist ideology and influenced Sayyid Qutb in no small manner. If he only influenced Qutb, that would have been enough to make a significant mark in modern Islamism, but he was also a prolific writer and political organizer. Nasr (1996) says the ideas of men like Mawdudi, Ayatollah Khomeini and Qutb are essential to understanding contemporary Islamic thought. He says Mawdudi is of particular importance because he was “one of the first Islamic thinkers to develop a systematic political reading of Islam and a plan for social action to realize his vision. His creation of a coherent Islamic state, constitutes the essential breakthrough that led to the rise of contemporary revivalism.” (Nasr, 1996, p. 3) He essentially brought about the marriage of mosque and state. Before Mawdudi, the ideology for the most part has always been around since the first few generations of Islam; however, the systematic political structure really took tangible form with Mawdudi.

Mawdudi wrote a book called *Jihad in Islam* in 1927, which called for jihad as the means to establish political Islam and to forcibly spread this ideology to the entire world. As noted, this is a new turn within Islamism, namely, jihad as the means to obtaining a global caliphate and spreading Islamism to the entire world. Although mainstream scholars denounced him at the time, he did grow in popularity and established a political party he called Jamaat-i-Islami (*A Brief History of Islamism*. The Quilliam Foundation, p.7). Global Security, a comprehensive online source for global security related issues says of Mawdudi, “Perhaps no other Muslim intellectual in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

offered such elaborate ideas on political, economic and social dimensions of Islam as we find it's in the writings of Sayyid Maududi" (GlobalSecurity.org, 2000-2010 - <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/pakistan/ji.htm>).

Quilliam concurs and goes further saying

He [Mawdudi] continues to be an inspirational figure for a number of 'revivalist' movements which are still active in the UK and North America. His popularizing of religious slogans as a means of galvanizing the masses continues to be a popular tactic adopted by political parties in Pakistan...Mawdudi also left behind a body of works that provide inspiration for Islamists and Jihadists all over the world. His work also influenced the ideas of a young Egyptian man, who had just returned from a difficult spell in the US (*A Brief History of Islamism*. The Quilliam Foundation, p.8-9).

This Egyptian man was Sayyid Qutb who needs no introduction in Islamic circles.

Sayyid Qutb

Qutb is a major figure in Islamist ideology, and I devote considerable time to his primary source material from his 1964 work *Milestones*, as both Islamists and Reformers agree that this particular work has played a significant role in Islamist ideology. The United States Military Academy says of Qutb that he is the foremost and the most influential "Jihadi theorists" noting "jihadis" (i.e., what the U.S. Military Academy calls *jihadis*, I refer to as *violent Islamists*) cite Qutb more than any other modern author (McCants et al., 2005). Similar to when a scholar is

cited on numerous occasions by her colleagues, so too Qutb holds sway among Islamists, having been cited more than any other Islamist according to the U.S. Military Academy. The recognition of Qutb by other violent Islamists is an accurate indicator of influence Qutb has on the modern era's discussion of violent Islamism.

Qutb's main argument is Muslim societies all over the world reverted to jahaliya (ignorance) or pre-Islamic ignorance because they did not refer to Allah in all matters. This argument was not the first time it was used; however, it was the first time it was combined with Islamism. He also popularized the idea of forcibly removing governments through armed struggle and vehemently opposed Democracy. Qutb was charged with treason due to his connection to a plot by the Brotherhood to assassinate the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (Isseroff, 2008) and was summarily executed by the Egyptian government in 1966 by hanging (*A Brief History of Islamism*. The Quilliam Foundation, p.11).

Just like Al-Ghazali did in the ninth century with his work *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, so too Qutb at the outset of his work *Milestones* ensures that no one can question Islam on a theoretical basis. Recall that Al-Ghazali is the one who said all those who pursue the teachings of philosophy have two options - execution by the sword or conversion to Islam. He creates the conditions such that one cannot even question his interpretation of Islam. Qutb does this when he says Islam is not a theory to be studied saying this theoretical approach brings Allah's method into a manmade system. He says,

When we try to make Islam into a ‘theory’ to be studied, we remove the Divine method and Divine outlook from its character, and we reduce it to the level of a man-made system of thought, as if the Divine method were inferior to man’s methods, and as if we wanted to elevate the system of thought and action ordained by God to the level of the systems of His creatures! (Qutb, 1964, p. 41)

He justified his “theory” by arguing that all Allah cared for was submission, i.e. practical action and not theorizing. He believed that by his writing of *Milestones* he was submitting to the will of Allah and leading other Muslims into the true purity found in Islam as originally intended when much of what he saw was jahaliya (ignorance) and similar to the conditions before Gabriel delivered the holy texts to Muhammad.

However, the problem still remains that without understanding the first principles of Islam and contemplating the theory behind Islamic doctrine, the Muslim cannot determine whose interpretation of Islam they must follow but instead will defer to whichever authority they trust and therefore who has the power by way of controlling the discourse. Quite often, this happens to be whatever local Islamic community one belongs to. The difficulty lies in that the Muslim must still at some level utilize their reason to decide who they will follow. But if reason is negated from the outset, and especially with problematic passages found within the holy text, the Muslim can in reality only hope (or have faith) that they are obeying the true will of Allah.

Qutb says “Only in the Islamic way of life do all men become free from the servitude of some men to others and devote themselves to the worship of God alone, deriving guidance from Him alone, and bowing before Him alone” (Qutb, 1964, p. 11). This raises the question of faith viz. reason which is beyond my scope here, however, Qutb does beg the question, the Islamic way of life as defined by whom? Qutb nowhere argues that individual Muslims get to decide on their own through independent reason, but must submit to Allah’s voice on earth as defined, presumably by him or any other accepted authority. And guidance from the Quran and Hadith as interpreted by whom? How does one know, especially without ijthihad that the guidance is indeed from Allah and not merely another man’s interpretation of Allah’s guidance? These types of questions are already answered for the Islamist but the Reformer is not content and stresses the importance of ijthihad to arrive at these answers by the use of one’s independent reason.

Qutb believes he had historical precedence in turning only to the Quran by saying Muhammad intentionally limited the first generation of Muslims to one source of guidance only - the Quran. He juxtaposes this with Umar, a contemporary of Muhammad who turned to a different source other than the Quran saying Muhammad was displeased with Umar for doing so. Qutb says

In fact, the Messenger of God – peace be upon him – intended to prepare a generation pure in heart, pure in mind, pure in understanding. Their training was to be based on the method

prescribed by God Who gave the Qur'an, purified from the influence of all other sources. (Qutb, 1964, p. 17)

These other sources Qutb referred to were Greek philosophy and logic, ancient Persian legends and their ideas, Jewish scripture and traditions, Christian theology along with fragments of other civilizations and cultures.

Qutb framed his argument in such a way that it would be impossible for the *true* Muslim to defer to any other source, including the utilization of one's reason. Qutb's *Milestones* was first published in 1964 and before the 1967 Six Day War that left such an indelible mark upon Islamic society. Thus, the timing of this work was perfect to have the maximum impact upon the religious and decision makers in Islamic society given the religious vacuum filled by the defeat of Nasser's Pan-Arabism. If the Muslim society was ever ready to embrace the void of President Nasser's secular pan-Arabism, it was very shortly after the publication of Qutb's magnum opus. The void of Nasser's pan-Arabism left Islamic society with little else other than the Hanbali/Ash'ari/Al-Ghazali fundamentalism that Qutb was so powerful in explicating and applying for the modern era. It is statements like this where Qutb says

Thus we can say without any reservations that the main reason for the difference between the first unique and distinguished group of Muslims and later Muslims is that the purity of the first source of Islamic guidance was mixed with various other sources, as we have indicated. (Qutb, 1964, p. 17)

He gave a shell-shocked Islamic community a nostalgia for the past and a hope for the future (Susser, 2002). A hope that could only come about through a doubling up on religiosity and going back to the purity once believed to be in the earliest years of Islam.

Qutb stressed cutting off altogether from all influences of jahaliya (ignorance) and return to the pure source of the Quran as the only source of guidance from which the Muslim also derive their “concepts of life, principles of government, politics, economics and all other aspects of life” (Qutb, 1964, p. 21). The Quran is all sufficient for everyday living and all affairs of man on Qutb’s view, even if it is silent on modern affairs.

It is no surprise that Qutb’s views on the sovereignty of Allah are strikingly similar to the Ash’ari and Al-Ghazali view since they all approach the holy texts in a literalistic manner. Qutb refers to Allah’s sovereignty as his greatest attribute (Qutb, 1964, p. 25). I see no distinction between the Ash’arite view of Voluntarism and Qutb’s view, as they both valued Allah’s sovereignty as the highest of his virtues at the expense of all other virtues and reason itself. This Voluntarism that is shared by both means Allah’s power is not even limited by the laws of logic including the law of non-contradiction, one of the many laws that governs reason. They both would deny Aristotle’s supposition who said

Neither can there be an intermediate between contradictories, but of each subject it is necessary either to affirm or deny one thing. This first becomes evident when people define what truth and falsity are; for to say that what is, is not, or that what is not, is, is

false; and to say that what is, is, or that what is not, is not, is true. Hence he who affirms that something is or is not will say either what is true or what is false. But neither what is nor what is not is said to be or not to be. (Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Bekker number 1011b23-29)

Of course this means Qutb runs into the same logical contradictions that the Ash'ari did where a thing can be both true and not true at the same time. if Allah has willed it to be so. On the Ash'arite view, Allah is not subject to the laws of logic. Thus, Ash'ari, Al-Ghazali and now Qutb can accuse anyone of takfir [apostasy] for saying Allah cannot approve violence if he wishes to pursue whatever ends he so desires that abrogation seems to solve. A seemingly horrific act of terrorism can become a just act simply because Allah has willed it to be so based upon their understanding of Allah's directives as applied to modern day situations. This is of no consequence to Qutb for what he values is action, not theory (Qutb, p.33). The reader will recall Qutb's denigration of contemplation and his emphasis on action when he said Islam is not intended to be studied like a theory and brought into a man made method (Qutb, p.41)

Thus, one must not understand to act, one needs only to act and submit. As noted earlier, this can have detrimental consequences for society if the authority says it is Allah's will to murder non-Muslim civilians, those who are inclined toward this ideology will commit acts of murder as already mentioned. Therefore to prevent the actions without the use of force is to counter the ideology, which I will discuss later under the section on Reformers. Thus while reformers may believe

individual Muslims can find own understanding, they still need to provide a strong version to direct those who just follow.

Regarding the Muslim's role in society and the allowance for submission to an individual or state that does not interpret the Shari'a as Qutb does is forbidden. Qutb says

It is necessary that the believers in this faith be autonomous and have power in their own society, so that they may be able to implement this system and give currency to all its laws. (Qutb, 1964, p. 33)

Further, "true social justice can come to a society only after all affairs have been submitted to the laws of God..." (Qutb, 1964, p. 27). I believe one can make a good case that the closest resemblance we see to Qutbism or Qutb ideology is found in Saudi Arabia or the Taliban in Afghanistan. Imagine if the entire world lived under the same type of religious and political structure as Saudi Arabia and you will have a good idea of what Qutbism looks like in practice. This would be a world where women are unequal to men, human rights are trampled, women cannot drive, someone's hand could be cut off for stealing and the death penalty for conversion to another religion as a few examples (BBC News, 2002 - http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2366419.stm)

Dr. Fadl - Before and After

Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, primarily known as Dr. Fadl, was a former leader of the Egyptian group al Jihad and part of the original core of al Qaeda, being

their spiritual leader. He was also one of the first members of Al Qaeda's top council.

I devote considerable time to Dr. Fadl, most of which is taken from Lawrence Wright's New Yorker piece (Wright 2008), because his example demonstrates that it is indeed possible to counter the narrative of violent Islamism from within Islam even though he does not go far enough in denouncing violent jihad. He is a perfect example of the great counter-narrative work that can come out of a violent Islamist position into a repudiation of that same violence. Wright has also written *the Looming Tower* (2006), which is the most comprehensive account we have of al Qaeda to date. What Wright's piece illustrates is if the spiritual leader of al Qaeda and the man who literally wrote the book that justifies the violent ideology that drives al Qaeda could recognize and publicly acknowledge the error of such an ideology, it can be done within other organizations as well. What exactly can we learn from this example and how can we apply it moving forward if indeed this is considered a good approach? I hope to answer these questions in the discussion.

David Blair, writing in a British newspaper notes Dr. Fadl's impact on the violent Islamist movement and says "Twenty years ago, Dr Fadl became al-Qaeda's intellectual figurehead with a crucial book setting out the rationale for global jihad against the West. Today; however, he believes the killing must be justified and the killing of innocent people (as defined by him) is both contrary to Islam and a strategic error. "Every drop of blood that was shed or is being shed in Afghanistan and Iraq is the responsibility of bin Laden and Zawahiri and their

followers," writes Dr Fadl." (Blair, 2009, p.1). Yet, he clearly has a major role in the same bloodshed he accuses bin Laden and Zawahiri; however, it is encouraging to see such a transformation and the world has yet to see what kind of impact this repudiation will have upon future generations of would be violent Islamists because of his newfound role as former insider turned critic.

Dr. Fadl had memorized the Quran by the sixth grade and became so respected that most of al-Jihad assumed he was the emir rather than Zayman al-Zawahiri (al Qaeda's current second in command under Osama bin Laden). Al-Jihad was the Egyptian terrorist group that eventually became the core of al Qaeda leadership. Zawahiri often deferred to Fadl in Islamic jurisprudence. Fadl's writings had a monumental impact upon al Qaeda, specifically in the use of violence and its justification via the Quran. This is why his renouncement of violence with Islamic jurisprudence to back up these new claims was a devastating blow to al Qaeda and one of the main reasons Zawahiri and al Qaeda sought so desperately to discredit him (Wright 2008). For when Dr. Fadl spoke, people listened. His two books became two of the most important books in Islamist discourse (Wright, 2008). His renunciation was all the more important because he challenged the authority of al Qaeda. It's one thing for an outsider to question the jurisprudential interpretation of Islamism and the justification of violence; however, coming from within carries much more weight. Daaa Rashwan of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies said the renunciation by Dr. Fadl was genuine and was a cause for shock and confusion in the Islamist world because "Jihadis will see hundreds of their former brothers criticising

their most fundamental ideas. That's why Zawahiri is so bothered by it." (Black, 2007).

Dr. Fadl's new work weakened the underpinnings for the ideology that drives the recruitment, retention and violence that comes about due to violent Islamist ideology. While in Tora prison, Egypt, Dr. Fadl sent a fax stating "We are prohibited from committing aggression, even if the enemies of Islam do that." (Wright, 2008, p.2) As we have seen, this flies directly in the face of Islamist ideology as propagated by HT and others who argue for offensive jihad as the means to establish a global caliphate.

As a historical anchor, Dr. Fadl and Zawahiri lived during the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt (1956-1970) which, as discussed above, pan Arabism and nationalistic fervor took hold in much of the Islamic world until Nasser was resoundingly and publicly defeated by Israel. This is argued to have resulted in an increasing number of Egyptians becoming disillusioned with Nasser's secular political ideology and instead turning to the mosque and Islam for answers (Wright, 2008).

Fadl's text "The Essential Guide for Preparation" appeared in 1998 and is the first work that al Qaeda used as justification for perennial conflict and violent Islamist ideology. It begins with the premise that jihad is the natural state of Islam. Muslims must always be in conflict with nonbelievers, resorting to peace only in moments of abject weakness. Because jihad is, above all, a religious exercise, there are divine rewards to be gained. He who gives money for jihad will be compensated in Heaven, but not as much as the person who performs jihad.

The greatest prize goes to the martyr. Dr. Fadl continued the argument saying every able-bodied believer is obligated to engage in forcible jihad, as most Muslim countries are ruled by infidels who must be forcibly removed, to bring about an Islamic state. He wrote, “The way to bring an end to the rulers’ unbelief is armed rebellion” (Wright, 2008, p.6).

Dr. Fadl’s second work “The Compendium of the Pursuit of Divine Knowledge” first appeared in 1994 and begins saying salvation is available only to the perfect Muslim. A lengthy overview of this book is necessary as it had such a monumental impact upon Islamism and al Qaeda in particular. Fadl stated that even an exemplary believer could wander off the path to Paradise with a single misstep. He also stated the President of Egypt and the rulers of Arab countries are apostates of Islam, and therefore are fair game. This gave Muslims the theological justification to commit coup de tat whenever possible. Dr. Fadl says

The infidel’s rule, his prayers, and the prayers of those who pray behind him are invalid. His blood is legal...I say to Muslims in all candor that secular, nationalist democracy opposes your religion and your doctrine, and in submitting to it you leave God’s book behind. (Wright, 2008, p.8)

He later repudiated his second work with a new book to “synthesize” his previous views on the justification for jihad and attacking both non-Muslims and Muslim rulers. His book “Rationalizing Jihad” was published in November-December of 2007 and establishes a new set of rules for jihad and restricts the possibility of holy war to extremely rare circumstances (The Middle East Media

Research Institute, 2007c). Wright says every word of this new treatise assaulted the world view of the violent Islamists and “brought into question their own chances for salvation” (Wright, 2008, p.18). The reason why this particular point is so critical is because when one’s eternal salvation is on the line, whether this is true to the reality of what is matters not for this is the truth of the believer and another reason why belief is so critical to understanding. For bad belief leads to bad behavior.

If one thinks that one is commanded/compelled/mandated to kill someone who either does not claim the name of Islam or one who does but does not live externally according to the precise interpretation of those whom one trusts to explain the Shari’a accurately, then one has no choice but to take their life. Because Allah commands it, it is now accepted and is not murder. Especially in certain cases where such behavior is glamorized, honored and highly valued in certain societies and one’s family is taken care of, it makes such action all the more enticing because it is now legitimated and honorable through the glorification of martyrdom.

Dr. Fadl continues in the new rules for rationalizing violent jihad. He says

there is no such thing in Islam as ends justifying the means... There are those who strike and then escape, leaving their families, dependents and other Muslims to suffer the consequences. This is in no way religion or jihad. It is not manliness.

(Wright, 2008, p.18)

This is still considered forcible jihad, however, there are now rules and regulations one can only commit jihad under that will be acceptable to Allah according to Dr. Fadl. Since these new requirements for jihad came from the man who wrote the proverbial book on the justification for violent jihad, this new work carries much more weight than a criticism from the outside, especially a criticism from the West. Such a respected Muslim, a jurisprudential scholar who has such a depth of Shari'a understanding who calls terrorism a sin carries much more authority and is very likely the only way violent Islamists will turn to non-violence. As the Quilliam Foundation has noted, a counter-narrative must be presented, and it must be presented from within the Muslim community (Ummah), preferably from respected authorities. Dr. Zuhdi Jasser of course is a notable figure who is a practicing Muslim that offers such a counter-narrative. For a counter-narrative to succeed it must therefore be:

- From within the Muslim community
- Comprehensive
- Authoritative (perceived to come from a respected source)

What we can learn from Dr. Fadl's example is that reform is possible. He repudiated violent Islam but in a different way than Reformers do, however, he has shown us that it is possible, even if only in degrees. The most violent of Islamist can turn away from such an ideology if presented new information. Second, an Islamic reformation must come from within Islam for any counter-narrative from outside of Islam will be attacked immediately as un-Islamic, foreign, anti-Islamic, false and therefore will be repudiated. Such a repudiation is

most effective by former Islamists who attack the violent Islamist ideology as promoted by Mawdudi, Qutb, al-Banna and al Qaeda and then provide a positive, comprehensive, authoritative counter-narrative in its place. It is yet to be seen if Dr. Fadl will turn into a credible Reformer, however, I note his contribution here simply to show that even someone in what most of the entire world considers the worst of organizations in al Qaeda can change their point of view and combat such destructive ideas.

Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)

We have already touched on HT but it is necessary to go even further into their history and ideology given their worldwide reach and appeal. HT began through the work of an appeals court judge from Palestine named Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1909-1977). Like Qutb, Nabhani was concerned about the emerging influences of Western political ideas and the establishment of the modern state of Israel. Nabhani formed HT as a political party with the aim of establishing an Islamist super state. He was close to the Muslim Brotherhood and for a time many people thought of HT as an offshoot of the Brotherhood in the same way Hamas is considered the Palestinian arm of the Brotherhood (Quilliam 2010). Because Nabhani was a former member of the Ba’thist party, he was also heavily influenced by Arab nationalism. “He maintained his Arab-centric outlook but presented it in the Islamic language of a super ‘Islamic’ state – concentrating on the Arabic-speaking Muslims – superimposed on his Arab super-nation state concept (*A Brief History of Islamism*. The Quilliam Foundation, p.5).”

Nabhani was the first to take Islamist ideology and what arguably began

with Hasan al-Banna and produced a detailed constitution for this future Islamic supremacist state that included social, political and economic systems. “Nabhani maintained that Islam was not a faith but a political ideology that pre-defined how a government should be structured and run. Whilst al-Banna had spoken in vague terms about ‘Islamic governance’, Nabhani crystallized these ideas and produced a blue print (*A Brief History of Islamism*. The Quilliam Foundation, p.7).”

Although HT floundered for decades, they flourished in the United Kingdom having been given the freedom to speak and recruit and they then exported their Islamist ideology back to their respective home countries (*The Quilliam Foundation* 2010). They have a substantial global impact through their recruitment and export their methodology to achieve their end goal, namely, a global caliphate.

HT’s public website indicates they do advocate violence (as also demonstrated earlier). However, the innuendo can be subtle. For example, HT’s website states:

The teachings of Islam oblige Muslims to call for Islam and spread its guidance wherever and whenever possible. This necessitates Jihad and the conquest of other countries to enable people to understand it and contemplate the truthfulness of its rules. It also gives the people the choice between embracing Islam or retaining their faith if they so wished provided that they adhere to its

rules related to matters of transactions and penal code.

(Bold added for emphasis; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2010a)

I interpret this statement of jihad and the conquest of other countries as violent because this is the language that HT and other Islamists use when they refer to jihad. As noted earlier, HT says in *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilizations* (p.23) jihad properly understood means initiating fighting with unbelievers, even if unbelievers do not initiate fighting with them.

This also fits with the purely political approach to Islam advocated by HT.

Although the third sentence might suggest tolerance and a non-Muslim can retain their faith, what this means is certain peoples do not have to convert but they have to pay the special tax for the privilege of not converting to Islam

(religionfacts.com, 2004-2010). If one can believe HT at their word, it could suggest a lack of violent retribution once under Islamic rule as defined by them (assuming non-Muslims do as they are told). This is what is meant by adhering to matters of transactions. Most citizens pay taxes and adhere to the respective penal codes, however, it is unheard of for a citizen to pay a tax for not belonging to a particular religion. Further, adhering to the penal code means the non-Muslim would have to submit to Shari'a law even though they are not a member of the faith. In HT's ideal society, non-Muslim would never be allowed to rule over Muslims and could never participate in any government structure. It also depends upon how one defines jihad; however, the reader will note an earlier quote from HT which makes it clear they refer to jihad in the sense of offensive attack against who they deem to be unbelievers. HT says, "...they interpreted jihad as being a

defensive rather than an offensive war, thus contradicting the reality of jihad.”
(see *Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a).

HT is not hesitant to seize complete power through the establishment of the caliphate in whatever respective countries their organizations function. They say

The period of attaining and seizing the reins of power through the Ummah [Islamic community] to implement the ideology in a comprehensive manner, because it is forbidden to seize partial power. Hence, the arrival at the ruling must be total and the implementation of Islam must be comprehensive. (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008b)

HT is unabashed in bringing back the caliphate, or global Islamic rule; however, they publicly say their organization only does this through non-violence although they have no problem in indoctrinating as many Muslims as possible within this ideology as they are active all over the world (GlobalSecurity.org, 2003) and have global conferences including recent ones in the United States and Australia. HT’s official websites include: HT Australia, HT Britain, HT Bangladesh, HT Denmark, HT France, HT Germany, HT Indonesia, HT Lebanon, HT Malaysia, HT Netherlands, HT Pakistan, HT Palestine, HT Spain, HT Turkey and HT Ukraine. They also have their global website and they also run and maintain the www.khilafah.com website.

HT publicly states their advocacy is for political action only and not violence (YouTube, 2007). Dr. Nazreen Nawaz, a spokeswoman for HT was

asked on BBC if HT supports a global caliphate based upon purely peaceful means. She responds by saying absolutely and that HT has never advocated terrorism. Of course this is where definitions are so critical and one must define advocate and terrorism. Maajid Nawaz, co-founder of the Quilliam foundation recounts his time as an HT party member where his recruitment of other Muslims into HT and his responsibility for creating the atmosphere on the college campus they were at the time that led to the murder of a Nigerian student by a Somali Muslim. Nawaz was not found guilty since he did not actually commit the murder. He says his responsibility was in teaching the ideology that conveyed others into violent Islamism (Nawaz, 2006). HT members may not actually commit violent acts themselves, but they certainly foster the conditions that give others the theological justification to do so. See section titled *Violent Islamism* above that discusses HT's ideology and causally linked violence.

Mohammad is quoted as saying there are two forms of jihad. The lesser jihad in which one struggles within ones' self and the great jihad of holy war. Even if HT can make the argument that the teachings of Islam necessitates jihad as the former, critics of HT consider such an ideology a conveyor belt approach that provides the intellectual framework for Muslim youth to pursue extremism/violent Islamism (Washington Institute, 2009, p.4). Yet even this argument is difficult to make given the statements found on their public web sites in America, the United Kingdom and elsewhere advocating for jihad and conquest that deploys the second understanding of a holy war (see earlier chapter and discussion below).

Walid Phares says of HT and their 2009 conference titled “Down with Capitalism” – “Hizb ut-Tahrir is part of the chain that produces terrorism. They do not blow up themselves. They are the ones who create the suicide bombers, intellectually” (YouTube, 2009a - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiMS-bVsWkU&feature=related>). And Frank Gaffney from the Center for Security Policy says of HT “they wish to use our civil liberties and free speech to destroy the West and civil liberties/free speech” (YouTube, 2009b <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PobtVFYbO4A&feature=related>). I do not have a particular response to these statements by Phares and Gaffney as they stand on their own, however, HT has publicly said they do not engage in violence although as noted earlier they have been linked to and advocate for violent activity. However, I argue this is still HT’s responsibility since they are crystal clear in the call to mobilize armies coupled with their definition of jihad to include initiating fighting with unbelievers (see p. 102). Further, they include quotations such as “Jihad is a war against anyone who stands in the face of the Islamic Da’awa [call to preach and propagate Islam], whether he is a belligerent or otherwise.” This does not matter if HT leadership actually engages in violence because they are conveying others through their ideological indoctrination and as noted have direct ties to several terrorist attacks (*Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir*; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2008a). Thus, without a change in the use of such language and definitions, HT’s claim that it does not promote violence must remain highly suspect and problematic.

In spite of HT's public declaration of non-violence to establish the caliphate, they have no issues with publicly saying the State of Israel must be destroyed through force. For an organization that claims to only utilize the political process to install the global caliphate, they still call for the mobilization of armies as the only solution to the "Jewish question." They say

O people: indeed Hizb ut-Tahrir strengthens your determination and firms up your resolve, so do you now not know that **there is no solution except to mobilize armies, gathering the capable soldiers and fight the Jews?** The armies are of your sons, and they must mobilize to fight, without fearing a ruler or an oppressor, rather they must stand in their faces and uproot them, for Allah alone has the greatest right to be feared and He alone is the Mighty, the Wise. (Bold added for emphasis; Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2010b)

Thus while HT can claim they do not commit violent acts, however, they are certainly encouraging violence forthrightly. One would assume a non-violent organization would encourage a two state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and urge a peaceful resolution to the issue, not mobilization of armies. If they are willing to proactively encourage violence towards the Jews, there is little to discourage them from promoting violence towards anyone, even if they do not commit the actual violent act. Like Maajid Nawaz, their conveyance makes them just as responsible for the violence.

Where does HT stand on the hermeneutical approach to the holy text and why is this relevant to our discussion? HT says

To embrace Islam as a way of thinking and a way of action is a difficult task. Those who are willing to compromise on the commandments of Islam for various reasons (e.g. Islam is flexible and adaptable) are praised as moderates and modern, whereas those holding fast to the ahkam [commandments] of Islam are labeled as extremists, radicals and backward. Regardless of the label they apply on us, we are only permitted to adopt thoughts and actions based on daleel (i.e. evidences from Qur'an and Sunnah). We cannot allow anyone to reshape Islam to suit their whims and desires. Instead we must make Islam the source of our thoughts and actions. (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2010c)

After discussing how HT defines jihad and their belief in the uncreated nature of the Quran and therefore applicable for all peoples, places and times, HT takes the source of their thoughts which is the holy texts as defined by them and turns them into actions. They do this by defining the commandments of Islam to include offensive (and therefore violent jihad), the Muslim is compelled to keep the commandments of Islam, therefore the only logical conclusion the Muslim who is submitting him/herself to HT ideology is to act on offensive jihad. Given their belief in the offensive nature of jihad, the applicability of the holy texts for all peoples, places and times which includes beheading infidels and the other

violent passages discussed in the latter years of Muhammad, this is a dangerous combination and can lead to really bad behavior without a counter-narrative in its place. For HT and their followers, to conform the holy texts to modern society would be to compromise the commandments of Allah according to HT or the Islamist generally, but instead strictly adhere to the holy texts as interpreted by those closest in time to Muhammad.

HT claims to value and uphold the true, orthodox position and denigrate the modernist for “compromising” the holy texts. HT thus makes it impossible for the Reformer to allow for a modern interpretation of Islam and instead must follow the *ahkam*, Islamic commandments as derived from scholarly jurisprudence as understood by the early generations of Muslims who were close to Muhammad as the only acceptable form of Islam.

Again, HT has created the conditions as such where a Muslim who seeks to interpret the Shari’a by using one’s own reason and updating it for modern concerns is considered a collaborator with the *colonialists* (HT term) or the West, are doing dirty work and angering Allah. They make it impossible to provide another interpretation than the interpretations already passed down by Islamist scholarship that is now considered immutable. Not even a Muslim is allowed to interpret the Shari’a differently or HT will position them as compromising the commandments of Islam and therefore collaborators with unbelievers. As noted earlier (see page 24), HT says Muslims must initiate fighting with unbelievers even if the unbeliever does not attack first. HT uses a rhetorical strategy yet again of demonizing any Muslim who does not uphold their Islamist approach to all

aspects of life and accuses them of collaboration with the West, which in some cases is punishable by death, as we have seen with Hamas, the Palestinian arm of the Brotherhood (Macintyre, 2009).

Chapter 7

Muslim Reformers

The modernist approach towards Islam is to reinterpret the holy texts that creates a modern understanding of Islam that is indeed compatible with modernity and provides an intellectual framework of freedom of thought and a high valuation of the role of reason.

Reformers for the most part justify their approach to Islam as follows (Fuller, 2003):

1. Allah gave mankind the powers of intellect, rationality and freedom of choice which he clearly intended for mankind to use
2. Each individual must find their way to awareness of God and the message of Islam
3. Human understanding of Allah's message in the Quran has changed and grown over time but is never perfect
4. Even though mankind will make advances in understanding Allah's message and purpose, no one will ever attain a perfect understanding
5. A Democratic state provides the best grounds for intellectual freedom which best enables individuals to understand Allah's message and its relevance in modern society (Fuller, 2003, p. 56)

Rahman (1980) provides practical applications of a Reformist approach to the Quran viz. an Islamist interpretation and begins with a general approach the modernist must take to be effective in reform. He says this approach is never going “beyond a certain limit in his legal reform and can only lay down certain moral guidelines according to which he hopes his society will evolve once it accepts his legal reforms” (Rahman 1980, p. 452).

Some practical examples include the following. Regarding polygamy, the Quran allows for four wives but with a moral rider that if a man was afraid of not treating all wives equally, then he should only have one wife. The Islamist was confused as to why the Quran would permit up to four wives then why include the moral rider? They interpreted the permission clause of marrying four wives as absolute but the rider a matter of private judgment for each man to determine on his own.

Modernist Muslims however in trying to abolish polygamy flipped this argument giving legal import to the riders and dismissed the permissive clause as lacking primary import. The modernist in this particular issue states the Quran gave permission for polygamy only under exceptional circumstances and when there were many war widows and orphans, thereby noting the permission was rooted in history, a position the Islamist would never take stating the Quran is the uncreated word of Allah and therefore immutable and for all peoples for all places and for all times regardless of historical rootedness.

Further, Rahman notes the interpretation of the Quran on the status of women and where “men are but one degree superior to women” (Quran 2:228) the

Islamist holds this statement as a normative statement and that although the female can possess and even earn money, what is spent on the household is always the primary concern of the male. Conversely, the Reformer “argues the Qur’anic statement is descriptive, that, with the inevitable change in society, women can and ought to become economically independent and contribute to the household and hence the spouses must come to enjoy absolute equality” (Rahman, 1970, p. 453).

In another instance, when acting as a court witness the Quran states one male testimony is equal to two female testimonies. Of this, Rahman says “the conservative [Islamist] believes that a woman is inherently inferior to man in this respect” (1980, p.453). However, the Reformer claims such a statement must be interpreted in any given sociohistorical situation where man was at one time the essentially operative factor in society but that when social situations change, then the law must change as well. Rahman provides other examples and says the hesitancy by the traditionalist [Islamist] to embrace reform among other reasons is a fear that such legal reform is based upon a Western and therefore infidel model.

What I think of prime importance is the different approach to the interpretation of the Quran stems from the Islamist who adheres to an absolute unchanging interpretation for all peoples, places and times regardless of the historical context in which the Quran was received nor the Hadith was collected versus the Reformer who says one must utilize practical wisdom in each particular situation to determine the best interpretation. The former approach fosters dependence upon the interpreter versus the latter approach that allows the

individual Muslim to determine for themselves based upon their reason and understanding of holy text how best to apply it given practical issues as they arise. If the individual depends upon the interpretation of the trusted authority, they must adhere to the interpretation or risk upsetting Allah, something no Muslim by definition seeks to do but to be as pleasing to the Absolute as possible.

Abd Al-Hamid Al-Ansari, former dean of Islamic law at Qatar University urges Arab societies to abandon a culture of fanaticism and instead tolerate others in practice and not just theory, which can only be achieved by education. He says the social infrastructure throughout Muslim history has led young Arab men to love perdition and death that “suppressed, discriminated, and marginalized [both] Muslims and non-Muslims.” He says, “Unfortunately, inhuman religious commentaries have supported them... The fanatical and discriminatory tradition - which contradicts Muslim principles - is the one from which some of our sons have drunk” (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2009). Note that Al-Ansari says the root problem is education by way of religious commentaries, i.e. theology. Thus, to change the behavior, one must change the theology of the educational process. If a Reformer can present an authoritative counter-narrative that is theologically acceptable that includes compatibility with modernity, then Muslims will have an alternative approach to unbelievers and will not believe they are compelled to initiate fighting with them.

Abd Al-Khaliq Hussein, an Iraqi Reformer wrote a piece in December 2006 following Pope Benedict XVI’s Regensburg Address concerning the inconsistency of Islamists who claim tolerance meanwhile threaten to kill anyone

who offers any apparent criticism or merely raises questions of Islam. Hussein says “For this reason, the Islamic countries are considered the greatest crematorium for books and the greatest slaughterhouse for freethinkers in history, and we see that the majority of freethinkers in Arab and Islamic countries are either expatriates or have chosen to keep silent to remain safe.” (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2007 - <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/2045.htm>). Until Reformers provide an authoritative, compelling counter-narrative to Islamist ideology, Islamists will continue on the path of pursuing a global caliphate whether through violent or non-violent means and ordinary Muslims will not have a choice but to follow if there are no opposing, authoritative views.

As I argue, such beliefs are critical to our discussion on very practical actions even in our modern age. As one example, if someone is taught that their eternal salvation is contingent upon killing those who do not submit to Allah as defined by the authority, then we do in fact see such behavior played out. As one example, Shahzad Faisal, who failed to detonate a car bomb on Times Square on May 1, 2010 believed himself a Muslim soldier and believed in a global caliphate as the only true form of a just society. He believed he was defending Islam and his Islamist brethren against America and the West (http://www.nydailynews.com/news/ny_crime/2010/06/22/2010-06-22_faisal_shahzad_rage.html). Colonel Hasan Nadal who on November 5, 2009 murdered 13 soldiers and injured 32 others on an army base in Texas after attending the mosque of Anwar al-Awlaki, the same mosque that was attended by

two of the September 11 hijackers (CBC News, 2010). Nadal is believed to have visited many Islamist sites and exchanged lengthy emails with Awlaki. There are countless more examples including the September 11 hijackers where belief in the ideology of violent Islamism directly shaped their behavior.

One need not look very far to find the data that supports violent Islamists' responsibility for the majority of terrorist attacks (Free Republic, 2008) thereby providing evidence that the interpretation of these texts by Islamists conveys individuals by stages of support:

- the first stage of violent Islamism is sympathy with the ideology
- the second stage includes those who provide material and emotional support to the cause
- the last stage is individuals who commit terrorist acts (see page 28).

Further, Islamism has been the dominant discourse for decades in many Muslim and Arab countries and does have theological backing by Islamic religious leaders on a large scale. In many cases Islamists hold legislative offices and serve as the minority party opposition in several Muslim or Arab countries.

American Islamic Forum for Democracy

The American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AIFD) was founded by Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, a Phoenix doctor in nuclear medicine and former president and current board member of the Arizona Medical Association whose family is from Syria. Dr. Jasser is extremely prolific in his commentary on Islamism, Islamic Reformation and current issues. His organization is devoted to provide commentary and scholarship that articulates an understanding of Islam that

separates religion and state and is in complete harmony with the United States Constitution.

Jasser says there are two primary transitions to indoctrinate someone into what he refers to as a jihadist, what I refer to as Islamism. He says the first step is supporting through advocacy such conveyor groups as HT or others like it and seeking after global political Islam, a global caliphate. The second phase is actually the perpetration of violence. Note that although Hamas considers itself the Palestinian wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas is responsible for much violence and terror attacks, so I do not include Hamas under the umbrella of *non-violent Islamism*. In concurrence with this theory is Kuwaiti columnist Khalil ‘Ali Haydar who says it is the above ground, or the so-called conveyor belt groups that allows for the grounds that allows individuals to go from non-violent Islamism to violent Islamism. He says “What makes the task of the clandestine terrorist groups easier is the brainwashing that has been carried out by the above-ground political Islamist groups for over ... half a century Thus, the terrorist groups are not treading through rough paths” (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2007b - <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/2194.htm>). Of course, one of the most prominent above ground Islamist groups is HT.

Jasser sees this struggle not as Islam versus the West, but Islamism versus Islam. He claims, “The real jihad in 2010 is within the House of Islam against the Islamists and those advocates of political Islam and its radical manifestations that have hijacked the spiritual path of Islam” (Jasser, 2010 - <http://bigpeace.com/mzjasser/2010/07/22/a-muslim-soldier/>).

Jasser is also featured prominently in a documentary produced for *PBS* titled *Islam versus Islamism: Muslims Against Jihad* (2008). Ahmad Shqeirat, the imam of the Tempe, Arizona Islamic Community Center who is interviewed in the documentary says a majority of Muslims in America do not agree with American foreign policy and that it is unfair and a bias of policy against Islam and Muslims.

Jasser does not believe imams should be using their messages to discuss foreign policy but instead believes in a strict separation of mosque and state. Most Reformers would agree that the mosque is not the place to criticize U.S. foreign policy or to inject politics into the sermons but to merely emphasize ones personal relationship with Allah. In 2004, Jasser held a rally in Phoenix titled *Muslims Against Terror*. He approached the Muslim community in Phoenix and they would not support it. Jasser says “The cancer that is within our community is a minority of a minority that are radicalized or violent. If we hand them the mantle of religion they seek to exploit for their own geopolitical issues all across the globe, then we are really going to lose this war.”

Shqeirat (PBS, 2008) disagrees with Jasser saying he does not believe the establishment of an Islamic state is a threat to anybody and that implementing Shari’a law in civil life was a positive experience. Further, Shqeirat claims the majority of Muslims in any country whenever they can vote or choose will choose to be governed by Islamic law, which he considers the mainstream view versus what he considers the extremist view. Shqeirat thinks he is mainstream and Dr.

Jasser is an extremist liberal. This depends upon perspective, and the belief in separation of mosque and state is considered an extremist view for an Islamist.

The Quilliam Foundation

Quilliam in particular has been at the forefront in the United Kingdom in confronting the ideology of Islamism that emanates from groups like HT.

Quilliam is self-described as “the world’s first counter-extremism think tank...to counter the Islamist ideology behind terrorism” (James, 2009, introductory description). They have devoted much time to publishing and conducting interviews on Islamism, a possible Islamic Reformation and the various ideologies that support Islamists. Their organization exists to educate the public, the government, the media and others on how to stem what they refer to as Islamic extremism, Islamism. Two former members of HT lead their organization (E. Hussain, 2010).

Ed Husain, co-founder of the Quilliam Foundation in the Times says Muslims must move beyond Medieval laws and criticizes Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Sudan for taking a “harsh, literalist” approach to the Shari’a and stoning women for alleged adultery. Husein says they draw their support from hardline male clerics who draw rulings from medieval textbooks that have no place in the modern world. “This clerical opposition to modernity stems from a crisis of scholarship within contemporary Islam, an institutional failure to understand religious text within a twenty-first century context.” Husein says this paralysis has led to clerical silence on Iran’s desire to stone a 40-year-old woman for alleged adultery and even though the Muslim scholars he has talked to in

private who disagree with the practice of stoning fail to say so publicly, as they do not want to lose their scholarly credentials among their more conservative peers (E. Hussain, 2010)

In response to this article, two Islamic forums – Ummah Online and Islamic Awakening have contributors who have no qualms with calling Husein an unbeliever thus seeking to undercut the entire thrust of the article. A sampling of comments include the following:

Khalid_88: Ed Hussain is just another hypocritical opportunist. Why [sic] anyone pays any attention to what he says I may never understand. He is not muslim and does not represent Islam. He pretends to be muslim so he can write garbage on how "we muslim" should reform Islam and makes lots of money doing it. If he came out of the "I'm a muslim" closet no one would care what he has to say and he would be labelled an Islamaphobe. But then he would lose his fame and money. (Islamic Awakening, 2010)

s@z: ed, what edward, is this guy even a Muslim?

ahaneefah: he claims to be one

dawud_uk: then he is a liar as well as a murtad [apostate traitor]. (Ummah Forum, 2010)

Interestingly, anyone who makes a post in defense of Husein or attacking those attacking Husein are labeled as *Quilliam folks*. As if no true Muslim would ever

make such an argument independently unless they were affiliated with Quilliam. This makes it convenient not to engage with the argument but to merely dismiss it from the outset. What is of note is the immediate dismissal of Ed Husain as a *true* Muslim would never say or do such things on an Islamist perspective. This rhetorical and discursive approach can therefore attack the man instead of examining whether what Husein says is true. What this shows is in principle, these and other critics of Quilliam employ the same tactic as HT and argue anyone who criticizes Islamism is therefore not even a believer and therefore can be summarily dismissed. This makes it difficult for the Reformer to even begin the argument as they are undermined from the outset and have to justify their Muslim identity. By defining who is a Muslim, these contributors to this website and HT can control the discourse, which raises the dilemma of the need for an authoritative counter-narrative where Muslims like Ed Husein can raise such questions without being labeled a non-Muslim.

I have reached out to Quilliam on what such a criticism would entail or if they could point me in the right direction but have yet to hear from them. Of course, one must first know the teachings of Islamism before one can counter it, but I am untrained in Islamic jurisprudence, so it would behoove me to find an organization like this that could better equip someone with the knowledge to provide counter claims.

Quilliam and AIFD are not the only organizations along with individual Reformers. Dr. Muhammad Qadri (2010) is a Reformer and published a 90-page piece originally written in Arabic titled *Fatwa on suicide bombings and terrorism*

and I would include as part of the “curriculum” that comes from within Muslim society that counters the Islamist narrative. Dr. Qadri is the founding leader of Minhaj-ul-Qur’an International (MQI), an organization that is located in more than 90 countries in the world and works for “the promotion of peace and harmony between communities and the revival of spiritual endeavour based on the true teachings of Islam” (<http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/8718/A-Profile-of-Shaykh-ul-Islam-Dr-Muhammad-Tahir-ul-Qadri.html>)

He wrote this piece with two purposes in mind. First, he wanted to remove the charge against Muslims and Muslim scholars in particular that they do not do enough to condemn terrorist attacks and second, to provide crystal clear injunctions for the impressionable Muslim youth from extremism and radicalism.

Dr. Qadri says the killing of Muslims and the perpetration of terrorism are unlawful, forbidden and makes one an unbeliever. He says, “Through reference to the expositions and opinions of jurists and experts of exegeses and Hadith, it has been established that all the learned authorities have held the same opinion about terrorism in the 1400 year history of Islam” that terrorism is unlawful and forbidden in Islam (Ul-Islam & Tahir-Ul-Qadri, 2010, p. 30).

Similar to Pope Benedict XVI’s Regensburg address, Dr. Qadri says that forcing one’s religion upon another is wrong and that one can only use persuasion as the means to convince another of the truth of Islam. Meanwhile he condemns violent Islamism in the process and says

Islam has kept the door of negotiation and discussion open to convince by reasoning, instead of the taking up of arms to declare

the standpoint of others as wrong, and enforcing one's own opinion. Only the victims of ignorance, jealousy and malice go for militancy. Islam declares them rebels. They will abide in Hell. (Ul-Islam & Tahir-Ul-Qadri, 2010, p .36)

Farr (2008) confirms that the point that the refutation of Islamism must come from within Islam. He says

The difficult task of containing radical Islam requires altering the *theological* (italics by author) dynamic that sustains it, a task that can be accomplished only by Muslims themselves. External actors can have an influence on this process, but no agenda is likely to succeed if it ignores the theologies that drive political culture in the lands of Islam - theologies that already provide the poison that sustains radicalism, and must provide its antidote as well. In short, only liberal democratic political Islam can defeat radical Islam.

(Farr, 2008, p. 25)

Another organization that has analyzed Islamism and radicalization is The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), a think tank located in Washington D.C. They compile a report for recommendations to the current Administration every year and in 2009 delivered this report to the Obama White House on U.S. policy viz. violent Islamism. They note as non-affiliate terrorist actors increase and al-Qaeda's core strength is diminishing the United States is at war with a larger enemy, namely, the extremist ideology that fuels and supports Islamist violence. "Unfortunately, the United States is not well equipped to fight

on this ideological battleground, and U.S. efforts to confront the ideology worldwide have not kept pace with more successful military targeting of high-level al-Qaeda leaders”

(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=332>). If accurate, then it seems the solution is indeed that if one disproves and discredits the ideology that fuels such toxic behavior, one can prevent future generations from getting involved with extremism and instead provide a positive counter-narrative.

To successfully defeat Islamist terrorism at its most fundamental source, the same WINEP report argues that, rather than avoid any mention of the religious motivation behind the terrorism of al-Qaeda and other like-minded organizations, **the Obama administration should sharpen the distinction between the religion of Islam and the political ideology of radical Islamism”** (bold added for emphasis). The report has core, structural, strategic and functional recommendations, all of which include at some point countering the intellectual narrative that creates some of the conditions that allows for violent Islamism.

WINEP also hosted Ambassador Daniel Benjamin to address some methods on confronting the radical ideology of al Qaeda. Like Quilliam and the AIFD, he too says the Islamist narrative must be countered and thus prevent the radicalization of vulnerable or alienated individuals. Although al Qaeda’s support has declined due to their indiscriminate targeting of Muslim civilians, Benjamin says it is not enough to merely wait out al Qaeda and hope for the best; however, credible, local voices from within the respective Muslim communities must take the lead in presenting counter-narratives that discredits violent Islamism.

Benjamin says the United States will not be the most credible source in countering the narrative but lists ways the U.S. can indeed help out including working to identify reliable partners and amplify legitimate voices. The United States can help empower these local actors through programmatic assistance, funding, or by simply providing them with space – physical or electronic – to challenge violent extremist views. Non-traditional actors such as NGOs, foundations, public-private partnerships, and private businesses are some of the most capable and credible partners in local communities. The U.S. government and partner nations are also seeking to develop greater understanding of the linkages between Diaspora communities and ancestral homelands. Through familial and business networks, events that affect one community have an impact on the other. (Benjamin, 2010, p.6)

Note, two major themes emerge in all of Benjamin's recommendations that I have argued throughout – countering the ideological foundation of Islamism, and the sources of such claims must come from within Islam and not without.

Egyptian diplomat Ashraf Mohsin who deals with counter terrorism says
If you want to rob these people of their cover you have to take away their legitimacy The way to deprive them of their ability to recruit is to attack the message. If you take Islam out of the message all that is left is criminality. (Black, 2007 - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/27/alqaida.egypt>)

By utilizing former Islamists to use Islamic jurisprudence to attack the message as Dr. Fadl has done and going further than he did by replacing it with a counter-narrative, you take away the inspiration for violent Islamism and give those within and without of violent Islamism another space to operate.

Reformist versus Islamist tenets for Muslim Identity

I would be remiss without at least touching upon the issue of Muslim identity and what are the essential, necessary components of being a Muslim. Hasan (1995) says it is assumed that orthodox [Islam] represents true Islam and the interests of its adherents. That liberal and modernist trends are secondary to the more dominant ‘separatist’, ‘communal’ and ‘neo-fundamentalist’ paradigms. This has a substantial impact for the average Muslim on the street, Muslim leaders, policymakers and non-Muslim governments and drives the discussion and practices. If one cannot be a *true* Muslim and a Reformer (modernist), then one cannot speak for Muslims and therefore can contribute little, if anything to shaping public opinion and therefore action.

Dr. Jasser believes Muslims should not open a debate on who is and who is not a Muslim as it empowers a theological hierarchy and a person’s Muslim or Islamic identity is between them and God. He does however call the actions of violent Islamists as evil and barbaric. He says

These thugs [violent Islamists] spread an evil in the name of a warped version of the faith they believe in Islam; however, I become like ‘al Qaeda’ if I refuse to call them ‘Muslim’ and commit takfir (determining who is and who is not a Muslim) by

saying they are not 'Muslim.' (Lopez, 2007 -

<http://www.mzuhdjasser.com/3306/a-muslim-american>)

Not many Reformers would have a problem with submitting to Allah in all things. What they will disagree with Islamists on is what the system of rules (Shari'a) looks like in practice. The question that must always be asked is a true Muslim must submit their actions to Allah as defined by whom? This is the point where the Reformer and the Islamist have much at variance. Further, this is why hermeneutics is so critical, because whoever can define and therefore control the discourse on what it means to be a true Muslim has much power over other Muslims and has a very real impact upon every day actions.

Arkoun (2003) says that what he refers to as Islamic revivalism, aka Islamism and its real or perceived proponents have monopolized the public discourse on Islam. That social scientists have ignored what Arkoun refers to as "the silent Islam" – "the Islam of true believers who attach more importance to the religious relationship with the absolute of God than to the vehement demonstrations of political movements" (Arkoun 2003, p.19). He refers to the thinkers and intellectuals within Islam who are having great difficulties inserting their critical approach into a public discourse that is presently dominated by militant ideologies. Arkoun's stated goal is to utilize ijihad to separate orthodoxy, which is currently perceived as a militant ideology versus a way for man to discover the Absolute. This would allow for man to have a direct relationship with the Absolute without dependence upon Islamists nor the violent ideology that goes along with it until a counternarrative can be presented as authoritative. The

discourse Islamists use is that one is not considered a *true* Muslim unless one accepts the Islamist version of Islam. This contrasts with the Reformist version that proposes it is a way merely for the Muslim to come to a knowledge or experience of Allah and his truth. Thus, one can have a Muslim identity without adhering to Islamist ideology.

Mayer (1987) notes there is a tendency within Muslim Middle Eastern countries to associate modernization and progress with the West and utilizing Western law with Western imperialism. To accept the former necessarily entails accepting the latter and from the beginning of the Westernization process, Muslims would denounce any Muslims who engaged with the West either culturally or through the borrowing of the law saying those Muslims sought to imitate the *infidel* West. Thus, any Muslim who supported Westernization was open to being labeled a traitor to Islam. Mayer says “Many Muslims associated loyalty to Islam and traditional institutions with patriotic resistance to the encroachment of European influence” (Mayer, 1987, p.128). In struggling with what it means to be a Muslim, Reformers have the additional burden of proving they are *true* Muslims while embracing anything previously labeled as non-Muslim (e.g., Western).

However, this approach by Islamists commits what is referred to as the genetic fallacy (2010 - <http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallacy/>) Genetic fallacy is where one seeks to discredit a claim simply due to the origin of the argument instead of actually engaging with the argument. For example, if Bill Clinton gave me marital advice, I would have to examine the truth-value of his claim regardless of the

source of the claim. As such, attempts to discredit anything coming out of the West through appeals to its western origin regardless of its content or whether it is true or beneficial for society commits genetic fallacy. The Islamist says a thing is untrue simply because it originated from the West instead of asking the question if it is true. Islamists can thus simply discredit anything a Reformer says by simply attacking the source of the claim versus the claim itself. Of course, as a rhetorical device, Reformers can use the same approach. However, in my reading of key Reformist authors I have seen most focus on the substance of the arguments proposed by Islamists and rarely if ever simply discredit them based upon where the claims originated from. Instead of attacking the source of the argument (Islamists), Reformers could merely present a strong counternarrative. However, it seems if Reformers wanted to be perceived as having an authoritative alternative they would do well to attack the source of the argument and denounce the individual in addition to the argument itself. While they could be perceived as being just as guilty of committing the genetic fallacy as Islamists, they would not need to merely stop at only denouncing the source of the argument but can and should effectively counter the Islamist argument as well provide a positive counternarrative in its place. When voters decide to vote for a new candidate they must make two choices - to vote for the new candidate but also to vote against the incumbent. The same principle seems to apply here where the Reformer must not only provide a positive reason to “vote” for them, but also to provide a negative reason to “vote” against the Islamist.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

I am unable to provide a solution to all the problems in the Middle East with this one narrow slice yet I believe this contributes to a piece of the solution. As I have noted there are many economic, political, military, and socio-cultural problems that permeate the complexity of this issue, however my approach to violent Islamism as a communication studies student has been a focus on the rhetoric and the ideology that fuels that rhetoric and, therefore, impacts understandings and outcomes. Certainly it will take more than rhetoric to solve the many complicated issues in the region yet we have to begin somewhere. I began with ideology as the one variable I can impact, so independent of economic, political, military and cultural issues, I investigated ideology and the manner with which it is communicated. I would like to see as one practical solution a point-by-point refutation from the holy texts that demonstrate authoritatively Muslims can maintain their religious identity within modernity as opposed to a criticism of al Qaeda ideology solely. As noted at the end of the previous chapter, Reformers would do well to attack the Islamists, refute point by point their ideology and provide an authoritative counternarrative in its place.

Both the Quilliam Foundation (Quilliam Foundation, 2008) and AIFD have stated the need for what I refer to as a counter-narrative and the need to refute Islamist ideology that calls for a caliphate. What is lacking is the actual curriculum. Certainly there are those within both organizations who can refute each charge as they come in, point by point; however, there must be a systematic

refutation – both scholarly and popular for the general public. Regardless of where one’s sympathies lie, this ought to be done if only to provide a different perspective, so one is not forced to choose between an Arab dictator or an Islamist organization and that there is indeed a third option. I have reached out to the Quilliam foundation to see if any such curriculum exists but they have yet to provide any feedback or at the very least point me in the right direction.

Such a curriculum should be available in Arabic, Farsi and English in both written form and websites and should be comprehensive, authoritative, compelling and should come from within the Muslim community. So, I would like to see as one practical solution a point by point refutation from the holy texts demonstrating authoritatively that Muslims can maintain their religious identity within modernity and not a criticism of Islamist ideology only. So, instead of merely telling violent Islamists they are wrong, Muslim Reformers can show Muslim American youth through their own holy texts they are in error with this message mediated by Reformers. I intend on working with Reformers and the education community to develop such a curriculum and work with them so they can provide a much-needed solution to a problem that can have real life impact if done well.

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