

---

## РЕЛИГИИ МИРА

---

### The War Against Modernity: The Theology and Politics of Contemporary Muslim Extremism

D. CHIROT\*

\***Daniel Chirot** – Herbert J. Ellison Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies, University of Washington, Seattle. Address: box 353650, Seattle, WA 98195, USA. E-mail: chirot@u.washington.edu

**Citation:** Chirot D. (2017) The War Against Modernity: The Theology and Politics of Contemporary Muslim Extremism. *Mir Rossii*, vol. 26, no 1, pp. 127–151

*This article explores the social history of fundamental Islam in the Middle East and beyond. The rise of fundamentalism is regarded as a conflict against the global forces that inadvertently promoted the evolution of radical ideas in Islam. Salafism or the original trend in fundamental Islam is rooted in the failure of secular trends of development in the Islamic world. Once a glorious Caliphate that challenged the power and influence of other states, the world of Islam ended as a conglomerate of states deeply mired in backwardness and dependent on others. The weakness of the Islamic states led to their colonial subjugation at the hands of Western powers. Awareness of the Islamic states' inferior status led to conflicting trends in Islamic thought. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it gave rise to a nationalism that brought to power modernizing regimes in Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and other states with a mainly Islamic population. However, in most cases secular modernization and anti-colonialism failed, giving birth to corrupt and inefficient forms of government and a lack of visible success in economic policy. The obvious failure of secular nationalism provided grounds for the renaissance of Islamic fundamentalism that sought to explain the failure of nationalism and modernization by the obvious departure of the Islamic societies from the so-called true and pure Islam that had led it to success in the times of Caliphates. Islamic theologians such as Sayiid Q'tub called on Muslims to return to pure Islam and rid themselves of Western domination. Fundamentalist ideas increased their influence in the urban areas where social despair increased social pressure. The political factor also played a role in the spread of fundamentalist ideas. The Saudi regime struck a compromise with Wahhabism and secured its own power by funding the fundamentalists' drive to proselytize beyond what became Saudi Arabia. Islamic thinkers gradually evolved an even more violent set of ideas that came to fully reject modernity, and a reliance on a military confrontation that would put an end to the domination of the West and result in the final battle when Islam would restore its past glory. The inept policies of Western powers including the war in Iraq and Afghanistan poured oil on the fire of local frustrations. These ideas formed a basis for the creation of ISIS that has now spread its influence to many countries where*

*Muslims are in the majority. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism emerges as a concurrence of historic trends when historic memories, the resentment of modernity, social desperation, failed hopes of nationalism and a game of global contradictions form the basis of violent extremism.*

**Key words:** modernity, nationalism, development, fundamentalism, Salafism, conflict

Religious extremists, whatever their particular faiths, share several core traits. These are the insistence on their exclusive possession of divinely decreed truth, contempt for those outsiders who deny this, and the refusal of the right of individuals within the group to question those truths. Some extremists may be proselytizers, others not. Some are more violent in enforcing or imposing their beliefs, others much less so, or not at all. Some base their orthodoxy on long traditions of textual analysis and highly intellectual commentary. Others rely more on new doctrines, raw emotion, or some combination of all of these to energize their followers.

Extremist versions of many religions have arisen in recent decades and some have gained political influence [*Juergensmeyer* 2008]. This has come as a surprise to social analysts who had predicted in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that the role of religion was on a downward slope as modernization caught on. There are Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jewish examples of this revival of intolerant extremisms that claim to be returning to the fundamental, that is the original, pure versions of their religions despite the fact that much of that claim is based largely on mythology. All have some violent versions, but in the past three decades it has been several Islamic varieties that have been responsible for more widespread killing and terrorism than any of the others.

This is not to say that negative stereotypes that label all Muslims as terrorists have the slightest merit or that the founding holy texts of Islam are unambiguously extremist. There are many different kinds of Muslims and interpretations of the religion that share only a general acceptance of the guidance to be found in the Qur'an as it was delivered to the divinely appointed prophet Muhammad. However, within that absolute truth and the elaborations to be found in the Hadith, texts about what Muhammad did and said that were written after his death, there is a vast area open to different interpretations. Therefore, most scholars of Islam say, it is a serious error to think that all of Islam is in any sense bound to be violent and lead to terrorism<sup>1</sup>.

The same might be said of Christianity, or any other religion. Not all believers are fundamentalist believing that some absolute, infallible truth can be discerned in the original religious texts. Even among fundamentalists or evangelicals, for example among those American Christians who call themselves that, there are different interpretations of what this means [*Montgomery, Chirot* 2016, pp. 336–378].

Nevertheless, there is no denying that when it comes to Islam a violent strain of fundamentalism has gained millions of adherents. Only a small minority have been involved in terrorism, but many more condone it. A 2015 survey of public opinion by the Pew Research Center found that the large majority of Muslims reject the Islamic Caliphate that was set up in Syria and Iraq. (This is the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, or ISIS, called Daesh in Arabic.) But a significant minority approves and accepts the notion that their religion needs to be purified of polluting elements and to fight internal as well as non-Muslim opponents in order to return to Islamic roots and regain the world altering power of the first generations of Muslims. These are what should properly be called violent Salafists.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the writing of C. Kurzman [*Kurzman* 2011].

What is at the heart of all Salafism? It is a belief that the Salaf—the several generations of immediate followers of the Prophet—were so extraordinarily successful in conquering an enormous empire because they practiced a pure form of Islam. Therefore, if Muslims were to return to the level of unsullied faith and practice that existed in the seventh century, they would recover Islam’s greatness and power.

Because ISIS is the most visible and successful ultra-violent Islamic political movement to have appeared in recent times, approval or rejection of its behavior and program is a good proxy for attitude toward violent Salafism. At the extreme, 9% of Pakistanis have a favorable opinion about ISIS, 28% an unfavorable view, and 62% are unsure. Even in generally moderate Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim society, 4% have a favorable view, 79% an unfavorable one, and the rest are unsure. Malaysia, also considered a moderate Islamic society, has an 11% favorable rate for ISIS. In Turkey 8% approve of ISIS, and among West African Muslims the approval rate varies from 8% in Burkina Faso to a high of 14% in Nigeria despite the vast majority who despise Boko Haram, an exceedingly brutal ISIS ally in Northern Nigeria. In all these countries disapproval rates are anywhere from 60% to 73%. Therefore, large majorities disapprove, but significant minorities do not [In Nations with Significant Muslim Populations 2015].

A 2007 Pew survey of Muslims living in Western countries found that 16% of those living in France believed that suicide bombing of civilian targets was often or sometimes justified. The number was similar, 15% to 16% among Muslims living in Britain and Spain, but only 7% of those in Germany. In Egypt 28% believed suicide bombing of civilian targets was justified often or sometimes, in Turkey 17%, in Pakistan 14%, and in Indonesia 10%. Among younger Muslims living in Western countries, the numbers were higher. In Britain 19% of those between the ages of 18 and 29 answered that suicide bombing was often or sometimes justified. The percentage in that age group in France saying that was also 19%, in Germany 13%, in Spain 17%, and in United States 15% said so, though among older Muslims those in America are more moderate than those in Europe [Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream 2007, pp. 49–55].

However we interpret those numbers, it is safe to say that if there are about 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, and over half are old and aware enough to have opinions about such matters, there are somewhere on the order of 80 to 100 million who have some sympathy with this kind of extremism. Of course only a small minority of these will ever commit terrorist acts, but being able to find a sympathetic audience among their fellow co-religionists plays a role in sustaining those who do decide, for whatever personal reason, to act.

Without some theological grounding in Salafism, even the most frustrated or disturbed youths who engage in terrorism would not turn to their religion to channel their activities. Criminal gangs, various secular politically extreme movements similar to what anarchism spawned in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, or any number of other organizations, movements, or ideologies would receive them. There are many explanations for the rise of violent Salafism, but it would be a serious mistake to think that it has no connection to a deep theological tradition that has been present as a minority ideology in Islam almost from its origins. That minority version of the religion has flourished particularly in moments of crisis.

Today we are experiencing one of those critical times. The desire to purify Islam is bringing this extreme tradition back into prominence. Given that this is the case, it is worth looking at its theological origins and at the role played by the modern ideologues who have popularized violent Salafism. It has to be noted that there are also different kinds of Salafists, and some are far less politically active. Many do not condone violence, but these are not the ones being discussed here.

No influential 20<sup>th</sup> century Muslim ideologue expressed the need to violently purify Islam to return it to its Salafist roots more clearly than Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian school

teacher and member of the Muslim Brotherhood whose writings have inspired so many Salafists since his execution by Egypt's dictator, Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser (usually written as Gamal Abdul Nasser), in 1966. In his most famous text, *Milestones*, Qutb wrote in 1964 about the Salaf, the original followers of Muhammad this way:

*This generation, then, drank solely from this spring and thus attained a unique distinction in history. In later times it happened that other sources mingled with it. Other sources used by later generations included Greek philosophy and logic, ancient Persian legends and their ideas, Jewish scriptures and traditions, Christian theology, and, in addition to these, fragments of other religions and civilizations. These mingled with the commentaries on the Holy Qur'an and with scholastic theology, as they were mingled with jurisprudence and its principles. Later generations after this generation obtained their training from this mixed [some translations say "corrupted" instead of "mixed"] source, and hence the likes of this generation never arose again [Qutb 2006].*

What Qutb rejected as polluting was, first of all, the influence of classical Greek philosophy. But that infusion of classical Greek into Muslim thought played a key role in the golden age of Islamic science and philosophy in the Middle Ages. In fact, a substantial portion of the Greek philosophy that was transmitted to the West and contributed to the Renaissance came from Arab translations of the Greeks. Jewish and Christian theology was also deeply absorbed by Muhammad himself and is evident in the Qur'an. Persian institutions, literature, art, and even aspects of its pre-Islamic religion played an important role in shaping the early, great Muslim Empires, especially that of the Abbasids. It was the enrichment of all of these traditions that made it possible for Islamic civilization to reach the heights it attained from Spain to Central Asia, so rejecting them is a way turning one's back on all of that<sup>2</sup>.

This rejection goes beyond a denunciation of the past. It also demands that Muslims reject the Western Enlightenment that has been the intellectual basis of modernization from the push for greater individual freedom to the creation of liberal democracy to the industrial revolution. How did this happen, and why, after at least two centuries, in some cases longer, in which various Muslim societies tried to catch up to the West by adopting some of that modernization, is such rejectionism catching on and actually going far beyond just the minorities who believe in violent Salafism?

## The Historical Background

To answer this question we need to go back to some basic history. Some parts of Western Europe, including the United States, were transformed by the liberating ideas of the Enlightenment, its scientific revolution, and eventually the economic growth it engendered. They became the richest, ultimately the freest, and most powerful societies on earth [Mokyr 2004; Mokyr 2012]. Yet, even there, resistance was always present, at least since the time of the French Revolution. In some cases it took the form of a rejection of modern science, and even more widely, hostility to the rise of individual freedom and democracy [Montgomery, Chirot 2016, pp. 281–417]. Still, despite the need to constantly struggle, Enlightenment ideas took root and spread through much of the world.

<sup>2</sup> For a classical history of the flowering of Muslim high culture, see [Hodgson 1974, Volume I, pp. 410-472]. For the Abbasid period, see the more current book by A.K. Bennison [Bennison 2009, pp. 158–202].

The Enlightenment, however, has had a far harder time in the Muslim world, even if much of the opposition has not been as extreme as that of the violent Salafists who have been so much in the news since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Partly this can be explained by the fact that the Enlightenment was a Western, European invention, and so remains somewhat tainted everywhere else as a foreign imposition that often arrived as a companion of colonialism. That is not, however, a sufficient explanation because at least parts of the Enlightenment, and in some cases quite a bit of it have gained successful entry into some Asian societies, but also because a century ago, at the height of colonial European power, it seemed quite likely that this could happen among Muslim societies as well. There were distinguished Muslim thinkers who tried to work out a compromise that accepted modern, even partly liberal ideas and tried to blend them with religious faith [Kurzman 2002]. There were also secularist intellectuals who were even more eager to westernize their societies by adopting much of the liberal Enlightenment agenda. Yet, today such thinking appears less likely than ever to succeed in Muslim societies.

Given the much earlier flowering of Islamic high culture and science in Umayyad and even more in Abbasid times, why has there been so much resistance to the Enlightenment in modern Islam? There are several explanations for why this “golden age” of Islamic scholarship and science failed to continue and, in fact, had declined to a small rivulet by the 14<sup>th</sup> century. One account blames the enormous destruction brought by the Mongol invasions, in particular the siege of Baghdad in 1258, that led to a terrible sacking of the city, with many of its scholars massacred and its magnificent libraries and the famed House of Wisdom utterly destroyed. Modern historians, however, emphasize that other thriving portions of Islamic culture, such as Spain, were not affected [Huff 1995; Lewis 2001; Lewis 2002].

Another explanation focuses on the enormous influence of the Persian-Arab philosopher Abu-Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111). His exceptionally learned writing concluded that ultimately most of the Greek-inspired high Arab philosophy was unworthy except in very limited ways, since it could not be used to confirm the truth of Islam or to instill faith, but instead raised too many doubts. Hasan Hanafi, a noted contemporary Egyptian professor of philosophy has summarized his influence by writing: “...al-Ghazali launched a conservative revolution that stifled this (prior) pluralism and transformed Islamic culture and society according to an absolute and state-enforced doctrine” [Hanafi 2012, p. 72].

Still another idea for the decline of Islam’s “golden age” was the lack of social space for more neutral inquiry into nature, there being very few patrons and no corporate-type entities, such as universities, available to support any such extra-religious investigation. Finally, there was also the problem of translation, another key influence. The rise of scholarship and science in early Islam was directly fed by the great period of translation, drawing from Greek, Syriac, and, to a lesser extent, Indian sources. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, this process was long over and the number of Muslims who knew both Arabic and Latin or any European vernacular was extremely small. To deal with the West they used refugees from the West, or minorities living in Muslims lands like the Greeks [Huff 1995, pp. 47–84; Lewis 2002, pp. 45–47]. There were almost no translations of western books until the 19<sup>th</sup> century so that Islam had essentially no knowledge of the European Renaissance or Scientific Revolution.

Though Islamic philosophy and even questioning the traditional religious orthodoxy did not stop entirely after the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the western part of Islam, which had developed a somewhat separate intellectual culture from that of Baghdad and Persia, it did slow to a trickle. The Spanish-Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126–1198), known in Europe as Averroes, produced exceptional summaries and commentaries on the works of Aristotle, as well as Plato’s *Republic*. He further began what Spinoza and

others would later do in Europe by writing that some of the Qur'an was allegory, and not to be taken literally if it contradicted the truths arrived at by philosophical inquiry. Even a century later, there could still be great thinkers in the sciences, such as the polymath Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201–1274), who wrote a number of important works on mathematics and astronomy and even improved the Ptolemaic model of the solar system (without, however, placing the Sun at the center). But, overall, Ibn Rushd and al-Tusi came at the end of the great era of scholarship and science. In particular, Ibn Rushd's was a daring step that is strongly rejected by important Salafist thinkers to our own day, notably Sayyid Qutb. Ironically, his influence was limited in his own society in direct contrast to the enormous impact it had in Europe, where it helped revive scholarly interest in Greek philosophy and science [Hourani 2002, pp. 172–175].

The politics of the Islamic world in the early second millennium turned ever more against the kind of open intellectual speculation that had characterized the high point of Arab civilization. This happened as successive waves of tribal nomads conquered its centers and sought to legitimize themselves by allying with conservative urban *ulama* (literally, “people of knowledge,” learned legal scholars who are often influential leaders). These less educated, nomads, most importantly Turkic or in North Africa and Spain, Berber tribesmen, therefore imposed more puritanical, restrictive, and closed versions of Islam to show that they were good Muslims. There were, of course, periodic attempts to recapture the former openness. But typically, political authorities backed unquestioning faith against such speculation, as did the religious urban masses in the main cities [Gellner 1981, pp. 77–81].

Over the next centuries, as a great transformation took place in Europe with the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, Islamic learning stagnated and ceased to innovate or absorb much outside learning. Even as original a thinker as Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), the Tunisian-Arab statesman, philosopher, economist, and historian had no lasting influence. Like the great 15<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance Italian, Niccolò Machiavelli, Ibn-Khaldun broke away from explaining history in terms of divine influence, instead explaining it in terms of changing, human driven social structures. He also perceived that in his time the Europeans on the other side of the Mediterranean were making admirable and important advances in philosophy, whereas for most of the Muslim world until the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was very little interest in what Europeans were thinking and writing [Gellner 1981, pp. 86–90; *Ibn Khaldun* 1967, pp. vii–xiv; *Kuran* 2004, pp. 134, 137–138].

In the Ottoman Empire, which at its height in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries ruled the entire Middle East, North Africa, and southeastern Europe, elites began to notice the growing disparity between their military technology and that of the more advanced Europeans. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Ottomans, having suffered serious military reverses, were worried. They even turned to Ibn Khaldun's theories about why sedentary empires once built by vigorous nomads tended to get soft and decay to explain their problems, but they drew the wrong conclusion, thinking they should go back to their original vigorous ways instead of becoming more accepting of Western knowledge [Kasaba 2009, p. 65]. An awareness of this falling behind did not lead the Ottomans to an understanding that it was a gradual shift toward greater tolerance and open inquiry in a few western societies that was providing the impetus for greater innovation; it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that attempts at reform would go beyond “... a search for the old forms that had been the underpinning of earlier Ottoman centuries.” Until then there lacked the will at the center to push for reforms that displeased the religious authorities and might be unpopular with most elites [Faroghi, McGowan, Quataert, Pamuk 1997, p. 640].

In general Islamic societies relied too much on stultified traditional schooling that discouraged original thought. Social customs were too strongly communal so that they

discouraged the individualism that could produce innovative entrepreneurial activity as opposed to more established ways of making money. Merchants in even the most commercial cities never gained the kind of political strength that they established in the leading Italian, Dutch, and later other Western cities. The guilds that used their political clout to restrict innovation and competition were able to prevent change [Kuran 2004, pp. 139–147].

Of course pressures against change existed in Western Europe, and in the agrarian kingdoms and empires throughout the world. What happened in Europe was that the combination of greater individualism, urban merchant independence, and a few openings for greater tolerance and intellectual speculation broke through such restrictions [Chirot 1985, pp. 181–195].

### *Islamic Modernism*

By the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had become clear to many Muslim thinkers that something had to be done to catch up to the West, and in the hundred years that followed this became ever more obvious as European powers took control of almost all of the Muslim world. Russia conquered Central Asia and the Muslim Caucasus. The British extended their rule over all of greater India, including its very large Muslim population, as well as taking over vast Muslim parts of sub-Saharan Africa, of Malaya, of the Persian Gulf emirates, and they gained effective control over Egypt and the Sudan. The Dutch extended their East Indies empire to include all of what is today Indonesia; the French conquered North Africa and those African Muslim territories not taken by the British. Italy seized Libya and parts of Somalia. After World War I the French and British divided up most of what had been left of the Arab portions of the Ottoman Empire. Only Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan remained independent, though the latter two, like theoretically independent Egypt, were actually dominated by Britain. This was such a humiliating, complete reversal of history, when Muslim power had rivaled the West, that it obviously required a reconsideration of the validity of traditional religious beliefs.

The most prominent Muslim scholar to attempt to modernize Islam was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1898) who took the name al-Afghani to conceal the fact that he had been born as an Iranian Shi'i. In the Sunni part of Islam, which was some 90% of all Muslims, the writing of a Shi'i would have been less acceptable. Al-Afghani spent most of his career advising Sunni governments about reforming education, and trying to demonstrate that Western science and education were compatible with Islam. He was most active in India, Afghanistan, the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt, but he also spent time in Paris where he learned more about the West, wrote, and lectured. He tried to convince Muslims that the scientific, philosophical advances of earlier centuries were something to be proud of, and to which they needed to return. Also, he insisted that the West was a source of new knowledge that had to be accepted [Kurzman 2002, pp. 103–110]. In a speech he gave in Calcutta, India, in 1882, he said:

*Philosophy is the science that deals with the state of external beings, and their causes, reasons, needs, and requisites. It is strange that our ulama read... [Afghani now cites a couple of orthodox, conservative Muslim scholars from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century who were still being used to justify traditional rejection of 'philosophy'] ...and vaingloriously call themselves sages, and despite this they cannot distinguish between their left hand from their right hand, and they do not ask: Who are we and what is right and proper for us? They never ask the causes of electricity, the steamboat, and railroads [Kurzman 2002, pp. 105–106].*

In 1883 Ernest Renan suggested in a public lecture that in the golden age of Muslim science it was Greek and Persian influence that had made the key contributions, and not the Arab tradition, and this had only succeeded because Islam as a religion was still relatively unsure of itself and weak [Renan 1883]. Once it felt more secure and strong, it rejected this cosmopolitan influence. Al-Afghani was then living in Paris and responded by agreeing with Renan that Muslim societies had indeed become scientifically backward, but countered that, after all, Christian societies had once been as well, and that it was entirely possible for Muslims to modernize. Al-Afghani wrote:

*If it is true that the Muslim religion is an obstacle to the development of sciences, can one affirm that this obstacle will not disappear someday? How does the Muslim religion differ on this point from other religions? All religions are intolerant, each one in its own way. The Christian religion [...] has emerged from the first period to which I have just alluded; thenceforth free and independent, it seems to advance rapidly on the road to progress and science [...]. I cannot keep from hoping that Muhammadan [a term no longer used but acceptable until not so long ago] society will succeed someday in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely...after the manner of Western society [Kurzman 2002, p. 108].*

It is not entirely surprising that al-Afghani was repeatedly expelled from the Muslim countries where he was serving as an advisor. However much he was renown, and some Muslim elites agreed with him, he sometimes sounded more like David Hume than like a pious Muslim. He claimed to be a true Muslim, but it is quite obvious why a later fundamentalist like Sayyid Qutb insisted on utterly rejecting the polluting influence of Greek and Persian influence and to condemn the long gone age of Islamic cultural ascendancy.

Al-Afghani was hardly unique. Charles Kurzman's collection of what he calls "modernist Islamists" from 1840 to 1940 includes a large number of intellectuals from throughout the Muslim world. Some were more religious, some less so, but all knew that something had to be changed if Muslims were to meet the competition from, and counter the aggressive colonialism of the West. All of them agreed that the point was not to reject Islam or religion, but to allow it to adapt. So why did the modernizing project fail?

By the 1930s, a bifurcation was occurring. The modernizing tendencies in Muslim societies were being captured by openly secular ideologies: nationalism, fascism, and socialism. On the other hand, there was a strong reaffirmation of conservative religiosity that rejected the need to imitate the West [Kurzman 2002, p. 26]. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928 to promote conservative Islamic values and mobilize them to fight British colonialism. At the same time a very conservative brand of Wahhabi Islam consolidated its hold on Saudi Arabia with the unification of that kingdom by Ibn Saud in the 1920s and 1930s. After World War II, as it became rich from its oil, Saudi Arabia was able to send out missionaries and influence the growth of its own brand of Islam. Modernizing Islam did not die a sudden death. It survived and gained ground in Indonesia, where it allied itself to the anti-colonial nationalist cause, and it exists elsewhere [Hefner 2005]. But in its Middle Eastern heartland, the religious reformers lost ground.

After World War II Islam continued to lose more of its potential supporters to secular ideologies. Fascism was less openly admired, but various brands of socialism and communism combined with nationalism were on the ascendant. From the late 1940s to the late 1960s it seemed that the secular modernizers would triumph over religious conservatism, but they did not. Most of the secular modernizing projects, not only on the left but also more conservative ones, especially in the Arab Middle East, Iran, and Pakistan failed to honor their promises. Instead they delivered public evils — inequality,



corruption, oppression, poverty, and weakness in the face of Israel's own potent successes both economic and military. All of which opened the way for the rise of conservative Islam, including the rise of extremist Salafism which began to seem a viable option.

### *The Rise and Fall of Secular Nationalist Modernization*

It is a tragedy for the Middle East's Muslim societies that secular modernization in most ways failed, except to a considerable extent in Turkey. This is most obviously the case for Arab societies, but could be extended to Iran and South Asia as well. In Southeast Asia and Turkey modernization and some form of secular reform did succeed to an extent, although even there the issue is not yet fully settled by any means and seems far less sure today than it did in the early 2000s.

As far as the Arab lands are concerned, modern nationalism was a reaction to British and French colonialism. After World War I, and into the 1940s, proponents of nationalism, most prominently Sati al-Husri (1882–1968), developed a pan-Arabic philosophy that proclaimed the need for all Arabs to unite into an anti-colonial, independent single nation. First in Iraq and then in Syria Husri, from the 1920s to the 1940s, was appointed to create school systems that taught its students to be pan-Arab nationalists and to reject European domination. Husri was inspired by German theories of nationalism that emphasized the unity of those with shared blood and language, and the need, first propounded by the German philosopher Herder in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that each such nation deserved its own unified state. He also felt that even if most Arabs were Muslims, there were different kinds of Muslims, and also Christians who were Arab, and that common blood and language were more important than religion in the modern world [*Dawisha* 2003, pp. 49–74].

In Egypt and across North Africa as well, the Arab nationalism that stressed the need for some sort of unity and modernization in order to overcome the colonial power came from intellectuals trained in British and French ways, who were aware of European nationalism and eager to enlist their own people in their cause. Because the colonial period also saw the rapid growth of cities and an uprooted migrant population who could be mobilized in those cities, it was inevitable that anti-colonialism would ultimately unite a sufficient number of Arabs to throw out the Europeans. But this was only a first step. Liberated nations had to be made more prosperous and stronger. There was always tension between the pan-Arab ideologues and the more localized, particularly Egyptian forms of nationalism. Yet everywhere, new school systems, broader education, and anti-Western passions prevailed. After World War II, the rise of a Jewish Israeli state provided a further unifying pan-Arab common cause [*Dawisha* 2003, pp. 75–134].

In 1947 the Arab Socialist Ba'ath (Renaissance) Party was founded by three men: Michel Aflaq, a Damascus born, French educated Christian intellectual; his friend, Salah al-Din al-Bitar, a Sunni Muslim from Damascus, who had also been to the Sorbonne; and Zaki Arsuzi, a Syrian Alawite and one time Sorbonne student [*Makiya* 1989, pp. 185–189]. The Party was secular, multi-confessional, pan-Arab, and socialist (Alawites are an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam but combine elements of Islam, Christianity, and their own practices). Within a few decades, Ba'athists took power in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, an Alawite family, the Assads, assumed control in the name of this party in 1970. This family continues to hold on to power (albeit tenuously) in 2016. In Iraq, the Ba'ath first took over the government in 1963, and one of its members, Saddam Hussein, inspired by the writings of Aflaq, ruled from 1968 until he was overthrown by an American invasion in 2003.

Ba'athism was not alone. Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, who led the overthrow of the corrupt Egyptian monarchy in 1952, and became Egypt's dictator from 1954 until he

died in 1970, espoused a similar socialist, nationalist philosophy and became a key rival of the Ba'ath for Arab allegiance. Sadly for Egypt, his ideas contained the same fatal flaws. The Ba'ath admired the Soviet Union, while rejecting Arab communist parties as not being loyal nationalists or sufficiently respectful of Islam. Nasser did the same, and differed from the Ba'ath chiefly because they both claimed to be the leaders of the Arab world, not because of significant ideological disagreements [*Makiya* 1989, pp. 250–253].

It was not just in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq that socialism became an ideal. The entire Third Worldist movement in Africa, Asia, and Latin America was enraptured by its promise. This was true whether the light shone on Maoist China, the Soviet Union, or the more nuanced version practiced by Tito in Yugoslavia. But in practice, what Third World regimes did was to nationalize some of the more efficient parts of their economies against the will of many of their people, turning over state enterprises and purchasing boards to inept, corrupt bureaucracies. The results typically were economic stagnation and falling legitimacy, which necessitated greater repression to keep the regimes in power. If Iraq could temporarily escape this problem because of its oil wealth, Syria, Egypt, and most other Third World cases could not. From the start all these movements believed that a revolutionary elite deserved to run affairs, and it was counterproductive to have real elections. Nasser once said that the Egyptian masses were “a caravan lost on a wrong path” so that “it is our duty to lead the convoy back on the correct road [...to] allow it to keep on its way” [*Malley* 1996, pp. 102–103].

The ultranationalist side to the new philosophy, at least in Egypt and the Ba'athist countries, led to militarization and an aggressive posture toward Israel, which could be used as a rallying cry. This encouraged a series of wars with Israel, most dramatically the 1967 war that humiliated Nasser after his braggadocio about how well he had prepared Egypt for this confrontation was exposed as a fraud. The problem was that Arab armed forces were run by the same corrupt and inept political allies of the dictators as the ones who were in charge of economic matters. They were good at suppressing internal dissent by mostly unarmed civilians, but not up to the task of facing a modern army and air force [*Ajami* 1981].

Failures made all these regimes increasingly brutal and repressive, as this was the only way to stay in power. That opened the gate to something very different from what the secularizing modernizers had wanted. It became clear, in short, that these modernizers failed to appreciate the religiosity of their masses, and did not have a way to satisfy their people's material aspirations either. They could mobilize their nationalism, but even that yielded poor results. It did not take long for Islamic religious fervor to grow and expand in rejection of the corrupt, oppressive, and religiously impure dictatorships [*Malley* 1996, pp. 204–249].

It needs to be emphasized that Iran's explicitly anti-socialist and increasingly anti-Islamic modernization efforts led by its authoritarian Shah (“King”, though he called himself the “King of Kings”) was no more of a success. On the contrary, the Shah's modernization from above that benefitted a relatively small elite and infuriated the larger part of his population who remained devout also proved to be a disaster. In a sense, as it began to bear fruit in producing a modernizing middle class, the Shah's boastful, expensively wasteful, repressively militaristic regime and nasty secret police that persecuted those who wanted more democracy alienated that very middle class that should have been his natural supporter. When the Shah was overthrown, it was the religious Shi'ite establishment, led by the noted Muslim conservative scholar and theologian, Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini (1902–1989) who took power [*McDaniel* 2014; *Keddie, Richard* 2006].

Other similar failures led to the rise of extremist Muslim political forces as well, even where they were unable to seize power. In Algeria, the 1990s saw a terrible civil

war between the corrupt military establishment and radical Islamists who had gained strength from the failures of the regime. In Pakistan, repeated bouts of inept military rule, defeat in wars against India, failing government services, huge inequality, and massive corruption, also fed religious extremism among those who felt that the promise of modernizing nationalism had failed [Malley 1996; Talbot 2012]. Even in relatively successful Tunisia, an authoritarian and increasingly corrupt secular dictator wound up being overthrown, and in the most secular, most advanced Middle Eastern Muslim nation, Turkey, the flood of new rural and devout immigrants into the cities set the stage for the electoral victory of an Islamist party that began as moderate but has turned ever more authoritarian and religiously conservative [Owen 2014; White 2014].

The rise of religious extremism, therefore, has many causes. But at the heart of it all is the fact that after more than a century and a half of attempted religious reforms, various experiments in modernization, the rise and fall of secular nationalism (socialist or not), and boastful claims that success was at hand, the main goals had not been achieved. Few of the Muslim economies have been able to find employment for their huge number of youth. None could claim to have come close to catching up to the more advanced West, or in the case of Middle Eastern Arabs, to the hated Jewish Israel. Even in the most successful Muslim societies, notably Turkey and Malaysia, conflict between secularism and Islam is very far from resolved, and the trend is toward more conservative Islamism.

The wealthy Arab oil states on the Persian Gulf have only managed a very superficial modernization. Their oil wealth allows them to hire enough foreigners to build modern infrastructures and cities, but their economies are fragile and their power ultimately depends too much on support by the United States. Saudi Arabia, the only real power in that region, has used its wealth to spread its own form of Salafism throughout the Muslim world, thereby greatly increasing the attraction of extremist fundamentalism [Jones 2010].

## **The Rise of the New Salafism: From Modernism to Qutb and al-Qaeda**

A pre-modern starting point for twentieth century Salafism is the writing of Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), who lived in Damascus at a particularly troubled time. Islam had suffered the biggest defeat in its history at the hands of the Mongols, who, even after converting to Islam, were still viewed as foreigners and outsiders. They had conquered Muslim Persia and destroyed the last of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Egypt and Syria had been taken over by the Mamluks, slave soldiers used by the Arabs consisting mostly of Turkic mercenaries from Central Asia and others mercenaries from around the Black Sea. Seeking religious legitimacy, they enlisted the urban populations, whose Islam was conservative and relatively purer than that of the rural peasants. They were also the first Muslims to defeat the continuing Mongol expansion, and eventually they drove out the remnants of the Christian Crusaders who were still clinging to the coasts of Palestine. Ibn Taymiyya reacted to all this by insisting that only a very pure, original form of Islam should be practiced in order to restore Muslim greatness, and that anyone, including rulers, who did not adhere to this prescription was not a true Muslim, and therefore evil. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century neither the Mongols nor the Mamluks were much of an issue, but the Crusaders in the form of the intervening European (and later American) powers, were very much around. Ibn Taymiyya's texts were therefore found to be of great use by the modern Salafists, chief among them Sayyid Qutb, and an Indian-Pakistani Muslim admired by him, Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903–1979) [Toth, Qutb 2013, pp. 64, 70, 195–96, 306 (note 32); Euben, Qasim Zaman 2009, pp. 79–85].

It is not, however, possible to draw a straight line from Ibn Taymiyya to modern times, even if his writings were an inspiration. It took the 20<sup>th</sup> century record of repeated failures by secular modernizers to give greater visibility to the Muslim thinkers who had never accepted modernism. Their calls to return to the purifying theology of the past could then sound promising to younger Muslims seeking a way out of their societies' weaknesses and domination by the West.

### *The Increasing Importance of Urban Islam*

Ernest Gellner's analysis of modern Algeria offers a sociological explanation of the changes that have occurred in Islamic societies [Gellner 1981, pp. 149–173]. For a very long time the heart of the more learned, purer form of orthodox Islam has been urban. Rural societies, including both nomadic and peasant ones, tended to be follow the leadership of various local saints and preachers whose religious leadership was often unorthodox, or based on local beliefs and practices that overlapped with tribal allegiances and held communities together, but were not more widely acceptable. As noted above it was common for conquering tribal federations of nomadic origin or slave mercenaries with no inherent legitimacy of their own to become rigorously orthodox in order to buttress their appeal to a wider constituency, including the urban centers they needed to control. Islam has always had great respect for scholars, so that exceptionally persuasive learned men could sway even illiterate rural tribesmen. In fact, many of the most successful religious brotherhoods were started by men who had studied in leading urban centers of knowledge, and then gone back to rally more rural tribesmen to their cause while also converting them to greater orthodoxy. This pattern created a permanent tension in the Islamic world between the more and the less orthodox practices as well as between the purer versions of urban centers and more parochial, tribal forms.

Since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a basic demographic change has occurred to alter this ancient dichotomy. What were once mostly rural societies have become far more urban as rural migrants have been drawn in by the greater job and mobility opportunities available in cities. And what was once widespread nomadism has drastically shrunk as it is a way of life no longer viable in the modern world. Thus, as Islamic societies have urbanized, the more rigorous, orthodox kind of Islam has become more dominant than ever. This has occurred at the very time that secular modernization in most Muslim societies seems to have failed. It has come when the West, first Europe, then America and its perceived client state of Israel, have risen to be far richer and more powerful than Muslim states. The closer we get to the present, the more the hallmarks of these states, from sub-Saharan Africa to Pakistan, came to include widespread urban youth unemployment, economic frustration, and a kind of stifling stagnation.

### *The Wahhabi Anomaly*

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, it came to the attention of the world that 15 of the 19 terrorists involved were from Saudi Arabia. This was where the prevailing Muslim doctrine was inspired by an 18<sup>th</sup> century Arab scholar and politically active, puritanical Salafist preacher, Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792). At the time, the royal family of Saudi Arabia were local chieftains, whose leader, Muhammad

bin Saud, formed a pact with al-Wahhab to take control of most of Arabia and establish the first Saudi state, which would bend to the spiritual zeal of Wahhabist teachings. Despite future struggles, a close relationship with Wahhabist beliefs and practices has since persisted to the present day. Saudi leadership was contested during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Egyptian and Ottoman rulers and lost some of its influence. Yet, under the leadership of Abdulaziz Ibn Saud (1876–1953), the family fortunes revived and most of Arabia was reconquered, leading to the establishment of the present Saudi kingdom in 1932, with Wahhabism as its official religious doctrine. Given that this doctrine has ruled Saudi spiritual life ever since, while the country has remained a dynastic kingdom (since Ibn Saud's death in 1953, rule has passed to several of his sons in succession), the association of Islamic terrorism with Wahhabism remains plausible [Jones 2010].

The reality, however, is more complicated. Some analysts, for example Natana DeLong-Bas 2004 have pointed out that Wahhab's actual writings are not nearly so bloodthirsty as the version of Islam that guided Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorists, and that, in any case, the 18<sup>th</sup> century puritanical call for a return to the fundamental practices of early Islam had little or nothing to do with the West. Wahhab himself railed against Ottoman corruption and laxness (with more than a little justification), not against Europeans. Indeed, the aim that most energized the original Saudi campaign was to drive Ottoman influence from the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Wahhab's reformism was in fact part of a whole set of similar Reformation-type movements across the Muslim world, from West Africa to Java in the East Indies, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that came in response to a perception that Islam was drifting away from its original purity [DeLong-Bas 2004; Robinson 1982, pp. 118–119].

This reformist wave was not the first in Islamic history. There had been others in the past. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries had seen the rise of the Hanbali legal tradition that established the most severe of Islam's jurist schools and to which Wahhab himself belonged. There were many other cases, as well, ranging from the Almohad Caliphate in Morocco and southern Spain in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, to the Mughal Emperor Awrangzeb, who turned to the Naqshbandi order emphasizing greater purity of Islam in 17<sup>th</sup> century India [Hodgson 1974, Volume II, pp. 269–271 and Volume III, pp. 93–98]. In almost all cases, as with Wahhabism, fundamentalist scholars and preachers sought to lead puritanical reform movements, denouncing Muslims who had become lax or had absorbed more tolerant non-Islamic traditions. None of these particular examples were modern responses to the rise of the West. But by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the larger situation was rapidly changing.

At this point, Wahhabism was already somewhat out of touch. Still focusing on less pious Muslims, its leaders had failed to realize that the major challenge to Islam was now European expansion, which could, and did lead to the colonization of almost the entire Muslim world. Indeed, some of the more sophisticated reform movements of the time were much more aware of this new development. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wahhabism was even more of an anachronism, especially as it was practiced in the Saudi kingdom [Hourani 2002, p. 349]. Had it not been for the subsequent discovery of oil in the kingdom, and the enormous amount of money that it provided the royal family, it is likely that a version of Wahhabism would never have become a global phenomenon influencing Muslims everywhere.

Yet, though current Wahhabi religious leaders may claim they are pure traditionalists, what they practice is no longer the original version. It is something much newer and modern, dating from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and grafted on to traditional Saudi Wahhabism in a most curious way. In this transformation, the writings of Sayyid Qutb and other extreme Salafist texts have been influential. How Qutb, and other modern

versions of Salafism have come to exercise so much power over the minds of so many Muslims is the real story of how violent anti-Westernism and anti-modernism have flourished. Before we turn to this subject, however, a bit more needs to be said about the contemporary form of Wahhabism. For this, Gilles Kepel's analysis is exceptionally enlightening [*Kepel* 2004, pp. 152–196].

When Ibn Saud conquered most of Arabia after World War I, his kingdom was a heterogeneous collection of many tribes and diverse versions of Islam. To western eyes, this diversity may seem unexpected, even striking; it shows, however, the degree of variability in Islam as interpreted by different social groups up to modern times. In Saudi Arabia, it ranged from more open, cosmopolitan and tolerant forms in the Hijaz (along the Red Sea Coast and including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina), to the severe orthodoxy of the Najd (the center of Arabia and the home of the Saudis), to the Shi'ite northeast (considered heretical by Wahhabis), and finally to the less strict and, especially with respect to women, less restrictive forms practiced by many Bedouin nomadic tribes. For the sake of national unity, the Saudis imposed their own strict orthodoxy throughout the kingdom, giving free reign to the Wahhabi *ulama*, at least up to a point. Ibn Saud did have to repress an uprising by the most extreme Wahhabis who objected to his relations with the British helping to finance his conquests. But he regained favor by giving the *ulama* control over education and higher learning in the kingdom and imposing most of the puritanical rules they insisted on. After World War II, British influence was replaced by America and its oil companies that opened up the huge Saudi fields. As oil money started pouring in, the royal family gave ever more funding to the *ulama* in order to maintain their own legitimacy that was increasingly tainted by their ever more lavish life style and dependence on American support. The Saudi state encouraged Wahhabi missionary activity throughout the Muslim world, partly in order to keep its most activist Islamists busy outside the Kingdom, but also to support more conservative religiosity throughout Islam. Saudi Arabia also allowed the entry of Salafist Muslim scholars who were fleeing repression in the secularizing Arab states, particularly those ruled by Egypt's Nasser and the Ba'ath. This included Muhammad Qutb, the brother of Sayyid Qutb who became a respected and influential professor of Islamic theology after his brother's execution. This also suited the Saudi rulers whose greatest fear from the 1950s to the late 1970s was that their monarchy would be overthrown by Third Worldist revolutionaries who had taken power in other Arab countries. Devotion to strict Islam was seen as the best counter strategy.

The result was a new form of Wahhabism, stricter still, far more anti-modern, and now deeply anti-Western. In 1979, when radical Islamists briefly took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the main site for the holy annual pilgrimage, killing many worshippers and security forces, they had to be crushed in an extended, bloody confrontation that lasted two weeks and ended in the beheading of 63 surviving militants. This finally woke up the Saudis to the danger they had created. But by then, the situation was no longer what it had been in the earlier days of the Kingdom. A rapidly rising urban population, youth unemployment, and growing inequality, combined with the power conservative clerics held over Saudi education all contributed to creating a radicalized reactionary Islamist constituency. Even now, almost forty years later, a portion of the Saudi elite has not come to terms with what these policies have fostered and subsidized, nor quite how precarious they have helped make their entire monarchical system [*Jones* 2010, pp. 236–244]. Be that as it may, the many missionaries, the subsidized mosques, and the financing of Salafist converts throughout much of the world, including in certain Western countries with Muslim immigrants, have done their work implanting the neo-Wahhabi, anti-Western synthesis throughout a great many Muslim communities.

*From Puritanical Reform to Rejection of Modernity*

Third World anti-imperialism and anti-Westernism was a growing movement that became the basis for nationalist, socialist, and frequently anti-Israeli sentiment throughout much of post-colonial Africa, Asia, and parts of Latin America. The puritanical, violent version of Salafism became a religious version of the same sentiments, though it naturally completely rejected secular ideologies. Again it is worth looking at Sayyid Qutb's writings because they expressed the essence of this neo-traditional Salafism after he became associated with the Muslim Brotherhood at the start of the 1950s.

The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 had grown beyond Egypt, especially after World War II when branches were established throughout the Arab world. The founder, Al-Bana, was murdered by Egyptian government agents in 1949, but his program to use Islam as a source of unity against Western colonialism continued to spread. Qutb took this farther by saying that not only supposedly Muslim Egypt but all existing Islamic societies were steeped in *jahiliyya* (a term originally used to describe Arabs before Muhammad who were ignorant of the true faith). Therefore, Muslim societies were no longer following the correct way because they ignored the true faith. They had to be reconverted. While Qutb became a leading promoter of the Brotherhood's ideas, he moved ever more toward its most radical segments, as opposed to the more moderate side that preferred compromise with the authorities [Calvert 2010].

Israel, since its victory against combined Arab armies in 1948 now occupied an important place in Qutb's thinking. In order to justify his increasingly visceral hatred of Jews, Qutb turned to a part of the Qur'an that told the story of how Muhammad, after his flight to Medina, had become an ally of prominent Jewish tribes there, but then turned against them when they betrayed his trust. These Jews were therefore condemned as hypocrites and traitors whose men had to be exterminated. This was part of what some analysts have called Qutb's ever more "paranoid" thinking [Calvert 2010, pp. 165–171].

In his most widely disseminated work, written near the end of his life, Qutb insisted that modern science and technology were acceptable, even if invented by the impure West, but not if taken to the point of trying to explain the origins of life and the universe, and certainly not if science were to be used as philosophy to expound on morality and the meaning of culture. To do so would deny God's role and inject materialist thinking into what ought to remain the proper domain of Islamic worship. Attempts to use Western science to impinge on religious faith and Islamic culture were a deception meant to weaken Islam. He wrote:

*...this statement about culture is one of the tricks played by world Jewry. Whose purpose is to eliminate all limitations, especially the limitations imposed by faith and religion, so that Jews may penetrate into body politic of the whole world and then may be free to perpetuate their evil designs. At the top of the lists of these activities is usury, the aim of which is that all the wealth of mankind end up in the hands of Jewish financial institutions which run on interest [Qutb (n.d.), p. 111]<sup>3</sup>.*

It was not just Jews who were to blame, but all of Western thinking. Here, Qutb's mistrust of what was an essential part of the Western Enlightenment, particularly the cultural liberalism that allowed free thinking about the origins and meaning of life and the universe, not to mention skeptical examination of religious dogma, was not

---

<sup>3</sup> This is a different edition than [Qutb 2006]. There are many versions that are almost identical but have some slightly different choice of English words in the translations from Arabic.

particularly unique. As Paul Berman's examination of anti-liberalism in the modern world has suggested, Qutb's views were consistent with all of the totalitarian, violent movements, religious or not, that existed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Qutb's version rejected atheistic communism, but also Western democracy because, "[It] restricts God's domain to the heavens [...]. Freedom in a liberal society seemed to Qutb to be no freedom at all. That kind of freedom was merely one more expression of the hideous schizophrenia – the giant error that places the material world over here, and God over there" [Berman 2004, pp. 80–81]. In that sense, Qutb's dissatisfaction with the liberal separation of church and state was not very different from that of a good many religiously conservative Christians and Jews who have viewed such separation as contrary to scripture; however, by phrasing his hatred of the West, of Jews, and of Enlightenment liberalism in pious Muslim, Qur'anic terms, Qutb's writings appealed directly only to discontented Muslims and portrayed Jews and Christians as enemies.

In *Milestones* and the much longer, multi-volume textual analysis of the holy book, *Under the Shade of the Qur'an*, Qutb ascribed Islam's failures to an improper or insufficiently careful reading of the Qur'an. Thus, not only the West, but also existing Muslim state institutions, including Egypt under Nasser, had to be combatted. Muslims had to return to the pure faith of the founder and his immediate followers. There should be freedom to choose the proper faith, he wrote, and if illegitimate restrictions were removed, all would naturally do so. In other words, he advocated freedom of choice only if the right choices were made. Therefore, it was right to destroy those who stood in the way, which turned out to be those who disagreed with pure Islam. Nor was it necessary to use centuries of scholarly accretions to the faith, especially those parts influenced by impure outside sources such as Greek or more recent Western philosophy. Return to the basic text, he wrote, and every Muslim, not just an educated elite, would understand what needed to be done. No political system or material power should hinder the way of preaching Islam, and any that do should be destroyed. Enemies of Islam have to be either killed or else submit and relinquish power of any kind. This, Qutb said, was the true meaning of *jihad*, not the weak version that claims it should only be "defensive war," much less the mere struggle by individuals to attain a higher level of faith and morality [Qutb (n.d.), pp. 40–41, 57].

Why did this become so appealing to so many? Because, for a true believer, the rightful order of the world had been overturned. "Crusaders" and "Zionists" had taken over. The Qur'an, while it certainly has anti-Jewish and anti-Christian passages, also prescribes tolerance for those who pay a special tax and submit. Qutb did not disagree, and insisted that Islam should not be forced on others as long as they were free to convert, or if not, agreed to submit. For most of Islam's history, the majority of Christians and Jews under its various empires and kingdoms were indeed tolerated, but only as long as they remained submissive [Cohen 1994]. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, Christians had ruled Muslims and dominated them, and the once subservient Jews had created a powerful state in the middle of the Arab world. This should not have happened; it was nothing less than a violation of what the Qur'an had called for. Seeking an explanation from within his ever more radicalized faith, Qutb could only assume that what had gone wrong was part of a gigantic world plot that God had allowed to play out because His true believers had lost their way.

Had the more secular Third Worldism of Nasser and the Ba'ath worked, Salafism would have continued to exist, but not as such a widespread phenomenon, and Qutb's influence would never have become so widespread. But secular modernization did fail, and even among the Muslim majorities that reject the most violent forms of Salafism, there is widespread acceptance of the notion that a return to original Islamic based on interpretations of the Qur'an is required to recover righteous government.



A 2016 Pew Research Center survey found that 78% of Pakistanis believed that their laws should strictly follow the Qur'an's teachings and 16% believed that they should somewhat follow these teachings. In Jordan 54% believed in strictly following the Qur'an in determining Jordanian law and 38% somewhat. In Indonesia these numbers were lower with 22% wanting a strict adherence to the Qur'an and 52% only somewhat. In Turkey those numbers were 13% and 38%, but in Senegal 49% wanted their law to be strictly Qur'anic and 33% somewhat. One of the findings of this survey was that on the whole the more educated people were in these countries, the less likely they were to think that the Qur'an should determine the legal system [The Divide Over Islam 2016]. Needless to say, this does not mean that all those who think the Qur'an should guide their legal systems support violent jihad, but it does suggest that there is a deep skepticism about relying on secular law, one of the fundamental building blocks of the liberating power of the Western Enlightenment. This shows up as well in the growing trend in Muslim societies to reject the idea that biological evolution has shaped life on earth [Hameed 2008, pp. 1637–1638].

Of course we should remember that two-thirds of white American Evangelical Protestants (but only 15% of other white Protestants and 50% of African-American Protestants) believe that God put humans on earth as they are now and that evolution had nothing to do with it. 43% of American who call themselves Republicans also believe this [Public's Views on Human Evolution 2013]. Not surprisingly, many of those evangelicals and Republicans reject a good bit of modern science and many of the liberal positions of the Enlightenment too.

When Sayyid Qutb was hanged on Nasser's orders because his writings had inspired Muslim Brotherhood rebellion against the dictator in 1966 he became a holy martyr to his cause. An extraordinary video of a serene Sayyid Qutb, looking calm and almost saintly, being led to his execution is available on YouTube. He was a small, quiet, sickly man dressed in a western suit and tie, with large ideas that have gained a huge following. That Egypt's army was utterly defeated a year later by Israel must have come as no surprise to those convinced that Qutb was correct in labeling Nasser a *jahili*, a corrupted, ignorant, and inauthentic Muslim who was more like the evil biblical pharaoh portrayed in Exodus than a righteous leader of an Islamic people [Kepel 1993].

When Qutb was executed the news deeply affected a 15 year old Egyptian middle class boy named Ayman al-Zawahiri. This boy became a medical doctor and one of the leaders of a very radical Egyptian Islamist group dedicated to the violent overthrow of the secular regime in power. Eventually he joined Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to help in the war against the Soviet Union's occupation force and its Afghan communist allies. Together, they ultimately founded al-Qaeda ("the base") and, after a series of other bombings and killings, plotted and organized the dramatic attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001. In all this, Zawahiri, the more scholarly and intellectual of the two, continued to be inspired by Qutb, except that the repeated failure of domestic plots in Egypt and Saudi Arabia convinced him that the war had to be carried abroad to weaken the Western defenders of corrupt Muslim political elites who would fall if not supported by the Americans. The intent was to frighten the United States into abandoning the Middle East after which these corrupt regimes would more easily be destroyed [Kepel 1993, pp. 70–107].

After Osama bin Laden was killed by American military action in 2011 while he was being hidden in Pakistan, Zawahiri, who is still securely in Pakistan, became the leader of al-Qaeda. Despite massive American intervention in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and continuing pursuit of al-Qaeda supporters in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, and other places, the organization has survived and been skillfully guided into spreading its influence throughout much of the Muslim world. It seeks alliances, and provides

doctrinal and some logistical guidance for radical Islamists in West, North and East Africa, in the civil war in Syria, for Sunni extremists in Iraq and Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to a lesser but still important degree in Muslim Southeast Asia. It also has served to inspire alienated radicalized Muslim immigrants in Europe [Pargeter 2013].

Qutb was not the only major intellectual Salafist figure, and despite his increasing posthumous visibility, most of his ideas have been contested. Many Islamists decry the extremism he advocated, and there have been other influential theorists. But the clarity, powerful simplicity, and sincerity of his credo captured the essence of the resentment, anger, and need for action people felt. His justification of violent jihadism remains as relevant and inspirational as ever. Nor should we forget that Qutb led what can be celebrated as an exemplary, clean life unencumbered by any hint of self-seeking or devious political maneuvering. The way he was martyred for his writings further contributed to his becoming the most cited of all Islamist theoreticians by radical Salafists worldwide [Filiu 2011, pp. 70, 136].

### **The Desperation of Apocalyptic Salafism and the Future of Islamic Extremism**

Even a casual traveler who has been visiting Muslim societies ranging from West African countries such as Niger or Senegal, to Egypt or Turkey in the Middle East, or further east to Bangladesh and Malaysia will observe that an increasing number of women are veiled, reversing the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century trend in the other direction. More dramatic is the notable increase of extremist assaults in many Muslims societies on religious minorities and also on Muslims who are not strict followers of their version of Sunni Salafism. All too frequently now governments are afraid to crack down, and in some instances, they willingly join in persecuting both religious minorities and Muslim voices of moderation by accusing them of blasphemy<sup>4</sup>.

The spread of violent Salafist extremism does not, however, help with the problems they face. They remain a distinct minority among Muslims no matter how many adherents and sympathizers they attract. Even more seriously they cannot solve, or even begin to solve, the problems of either majority Muslim societies or of large diasporas living in the West. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, their puritanical fanaticism made life unbearable for many Afghans, not only women but also those who enjoyed a more modern way of life in cities or among rural populations that wanted peace and security, not endless puritanical fanaticism. Taliban rule doomed Afghanistan to continued backwardness and poverty [Rashid 2010, pp. 211–216]. Despite this, as we all know, the Taliban have recovered from the defeat inflicted on them by America's invasion in 2001. They continue to be a credible force in Afghanistan because of Pakistani support, but mostly because of the corruption and incompetence of the American supported governments that replaced them after the invasion. Nor have the Americans helped the situation with what amounts to a bungled occupation [Chayes 2015, pp. 3–66]. If the Taliban regain control of Afghanistan, or any other area, it will not be possible for them to do much better because their ideology is deeply at odds with progress. Unfortunately this does not prevent them from remaining effective in the fight against infidel outsiders and inept, corrupt domestic government forces. The disarray and failures of the struggle

---

<sup>4</sup> A sample of examples can be found in the following *New York Times* (NYT) articles: [Roger 2012; Anam 2015; Searcy 2015; Youseff, Walsh 2016; Gall 2016; Manik, Najjar 2016; Shane 2016; Masood 2016; Sweis, Baker 2016]. Many more examples can be found at the NYT and many other news sources.

against violent Salafist jihadists in Afghanistan, and also in Iraq, has only intensified the widespread sense among many Muslims that some sort of religious extremism may be the only way to escape growing chaos, insecurity and to fight off foreign intervention.

What happened after the American intervention in Afghanistan, and much more so after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was that many Muslims became convinced that the West, led by America, was waging war against their faith. The rage of those most affected by America's blundering and murderous occupation of Iraq, its large Sunni minority that was suddenly stripped of its previously dominant role, fed directly into the rise of what has come to be called ISIS.

Led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who hated the Shi'ite Muslim majority in Iraq as much as he loathed the Americans, an offshoot of Al-Qaeda began a campaign of murder and mayhem. Zarqawi himself was killed by the Americans in 2006, but his movement survived [*McCants* 2015, pp. 7–15].

The ideology of Zarqawi's followers developed in a distinctly new way that departed from both al-Qaeda and the theories of Sayyid Qutb. They tapped into an apocalyptic tradition in Islam that had been present for a long time, but until fairly recently was not widespread. This saw the catastrophes befalling Islam as a prelude to the end of days that would be marked by a great, final battle and the return of a savior who would usher in the end of the world. This apocalyptic vision will be familiar to many Christian evangelicals who believe exactly the same thing, and in fact the Muslim version also has Jesus Christ returning to earth. According to the Islamic variation Jesus has been completely misinterpreted by Christians and will actually come back to destroy Christianity as well as the evil Jews who are the source of the greatest evil on earth. This apocalyptic vision, however, has hardly been limited to Iraq but has now spread widely in the Middle East as disorder, continuing economic failure, division, and violence seemed indeed to presage the coming end of days [*Filiu* 2011; *Akyol* 2016].

A Pew Research Center survey in 2012 found that 68% of Turks, 62% of Muslim Malays, 83% of Afghans, 72% of Iraqis, 67% of Tunisians, and 51% of Moroccans believe that the Mahdi (the messianic 'divinely guided one') will return soon to usher in the end of days. In other Muslims countries lower, but still very significant numbers believe this. 41% of Jordanians, 40% of Egyptians, 29% of Bangladeshis, and 23% of Indonesians think the same thing. A similar pattern exists in Central Asia, and it is interesting to note that among Russian Muslims 27% share this apocalyptic belief. The proportions are lower in Muslim parts of the Balkans, but still include between 10% and 20% of those populations [*The World's Muslims* 2012, pp. 8–9].

The failure of the Arab Spring that began in 2011 and collapsed into new dictatorships and civil wars except in Tunisia increased this sense that the end was nigh. This pervasive belief became the basis for the establishment of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq as Zarqawi's followers launched the project to establish a new Caliphate that would inherit the world and bring about the necessary conditions for the final battle to be waged, as it happens, near Aleppo in Syria. The chaos in Iraq and Syria allowed them to establish exactly such a state, which is generally called the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, or ISIS. While its extraordinary viciousness and incapacity to provide anything close to a decent life for those under its control doom ISIS to defeat on the ground, the idea behind it, and its metastasizing branches from Northern Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, to Muslim diasporas in Europe suggest that the phenomenon is not going to go away. What may seem to many Western observers to be mindless violence is actually a well thought out program to hasten to arrival of the apocalypse [*Wood* 2015]. As ISIS loses ground in its Caliphate in Syria and Iraq it is successfully recruiting new supporters through the internet who will use violence and skillful propaganda to remain very dangerous for a long time [*Schmitt* (1) 2016; *Schmitt* (2) 2016].

Unfortunately, the social basis of this disaster has no obvious immediate cure. Muslim societies have made adaptation to the modern world all the more unlikely because of their turn to more radical forms of Islam. Post-colonial secular modernization failed. Moderate Islam reformism promises no solutions and is a weak, divided ideological force. Obviously most Muslims do not welcome the violence, repression, and continuing misery imposed by the radicals, but the underlying frustrations that have led to the rise of extremism are farther away from being solved than ever. So significant minorities will condone the extremists, and some proportion among these will join the ranks of the most active participants in a fruitless quest to impose their ideas of religious war on the world. American and other Western intervention may kill many, but only at the cost of perpetuating the notion that the West is waging a war against Islam that can only be fought by the most violent jihadists.

The trend from reform minded Islam in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the Muslim Brotherhood, and then to its more extreme version preferred by Sayyid Qutb, to al-Qaeda's terrorism, and most recently to ISIS's apocalyptic bloody mass cruelty suggest that it will get worse before it ever gets better.

## References

- Ajami F. (1981) *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice since 1967*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Akyol M. (2016) The Problem with the Islamic Apocalypse. *New York Times*. October 3, 2016. Available at: <http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/10/04/opinion/the-problem-with-the-islamic-apocalypse.html>, accessed 31 October.
- Anam T. (2015) Bangladesh on the Brink. *New York Times*. November 4, 2015. Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/05/opinion/bangladesh-on-the-brink.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Ftahnima-anam&action=click&contentCollection=opinion&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=6&pgtype=collection](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/05/opinion/bangladesh-on-the-brink.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Ftahnima-anam&action=click&contentCollection=opinion&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=6&pgtype=collection), accessed 31 October 2016.
- Bennison A.K. (2009) *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the 'Abbasid Empire*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Berman P. (2004) *Terror and Liberalism*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Calvert J. (2010) *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Chayes S. (2015) *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Chirot D. (1985) The Rise of the West. *American Sociological Review*, vol. 50, no 2, pp. 181–195.
- Cohen M.R. (1994) *Under Crescent and Cross: the Jews in the Middle Ages*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dawisha A. (2003) *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- DeLong-Bas N.J. (2004) *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Euben R.L., Qasim Zaman M. (2009) *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Faroqhi S., McGowan B., Quataert D., Pamuk S. (1997) *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Vol. 2: 1600–1914*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Filiu J.-P. (2011) *Apocalypse in Islam*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gall C. (2016) How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS. *New York Times*. May 21, 2016. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/world/europe/how-the-saudis-turned-kosovo-into-fertile-ground-for-isis.html>, accessed 31 October 2016.

- Gellner E. (1981) *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hameed S. (2008) Bracing for Islamic Creationism. *Science*, vol. 322, no 5908, pp. 1637–1638.
- Hanafi H. (2012) Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society: A Reflective Islamic Approach. *Just Wars, Holy Wars, and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchanges* (ed. Hashmi S.H.), New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hefner R.W. (2005) *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hodgson M. (1974) *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. Volume I, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hourani A. (2002) *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Huff T.E. (1995) *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China and the West*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ibn Khaldun (1967) *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, New York: Pantheon.
- In Nations with Significant Muslim Populations, Much Disdain for ISIS (2015). *Pew Research Center*. November 17, 2015. Available at: [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/), accessed 31 October 2016.
- Jones T.C. (2010) *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Money Forged Modern Saudi Arabia*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Juergensmeyer M. (2008) *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to Al Qaeda*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kasaba R. (2009) *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees*, Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Keddie N.R., Richard Y. (2006) *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kepel G. (1993) *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kepel G. (2004) *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kuran T. (2004) *Islam and Mammon: The Economic Predicaments of Islamism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kurzman C. (ed.) (2002) *Modernist Islam, 1840–1940: A Sourcebook*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis B. (2001) *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Lewis B. (2002) *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Makiya K. (writing as Samir al-Khalil) (1989) *Republic of Fear: Inside Saddam's Iraq*, New York: Pantheon.
- Malley R. (1996) *The Call From Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution, and the Turn to Islam*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Manik J.A., Najar N. (2016) Militant Islamists Are Suspected of Slaying Hindu Priest in Bangladesh. *New York Times*. June 7, 2016. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/08/world/asia/bangladesh-hindu-priest-killed.html>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- Masood S. (2016) Suicide Bomber Kills Dozens at Pakistani Hospital in Quetta. *New York Times*. August 28, 2016. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/09/world/asia/quetta-pakistan-blast-hospital.html?mtrref=query.nytimes.com&gwh=F0AC1C9422A645F76517C83A7FEFD669&gwt=pay>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- McCants W. (2015) *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Domsday Visions of the Islamic State*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- McDaniel T. (2014) *Autocracy, Modernization, and Revolution in Russia and Iran*, Princeton: Princeton University Library.
- Mokyr J. (2004) *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mokyr J. (2012) *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain 1700–1850*, New Haven: Yale University Press
- Montgomery S.L., Chirot D. (2016) *The Shape of the New: Four Big Ideas and How They Made the Modern World*. 2nd edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream (2007). *Pew Research Center*. May 22, 2007. Available at: [www.pewresearch.org/files/old-assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf](http://www.pewresearch.org/files/old-assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf), accessed 31 October 2016, pp. 49–55.
- Owen R. (2014) *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Public's Views on Human Evolution (2013). *Pew Research Center*. December 30, 2013. Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/12/30/publics-views-on-human-evolution/>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- Pargeter A. (2013) *The New Frontier of Jihad: Radical Islam in Europe*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Qutb S. (n.d.) *Milestones* (Cedar Rapids edition).
- Qutb S. (2006) *Milestones* (ed. al-Mehri A.B.), Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers. Available at [www.kalamullah.com/Books/Milestones%20Special%20Edition.pdf](http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Milestones%20Special%20Edition.pdf), accessed 31 October 2016.
- Rashid A. (2010) *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Renan E. (1883) *L'Islam et la Science*, Montpellier: L'Archange Minotaur. Available at: [www.disons.fr/?p=31807](http://www.disons.fr/?p=31807), accessed 31 October 2016.
- Roger B. (2012) Indonesia's Rising Religious Intolerance. *New York Times*. May 21, 2012. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/22/opinion/indonesias-rising-religious-intolerance.html>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- Robinson F. (1982) *Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500*, New York: Facts on File.
- Schmitt E. (1) (2016) As Isis Loses Land, It Gains Ground in Overseas Terror. *New York Times*. July 3, 2016. Available at: [www.nytimes.com/2016/07/04/world/middleeast/isis-terrorism.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/04/world/middleeast/isis-terrorism.html?_r=0), accessed 31 October 2016.
- Schmitt E. (2) (2016) Caliphate in Peril, ISIS May Take Mayhem to Europe. *New York Times*. September 17, 2016. Available at: [www.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/us/politics/caliphate-in-peril-more-isis-fighters-may-take-mayhem-to-europe.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/us/politics/caliphate-in-peril-more-isis-fighters-may-take-mayhem-to-europe.html)?, accessed 31 October 2016.
- Searcy D. (2015) Senegal, a Peaceful Islamic Democracy, is Jarred by Fears of Militancy. *New York Times*. December 15, 2015. Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/world/africa/senegal-islam-extremism-boko-haram.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fdionne-searcey&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/world/africa/senegal-islam-extremism-boko-haram.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fdionne-searcey&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection), accessed 31 October 2016.
- Shane S. (2016) Saudis and Extremism. *New York Times*. August 25, 2016. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/26/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-islam.html>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- Sweis R.F., Baker P. (2016) Writer Charged With Insulting Islam is Killed as Extremism Boils Over in Jordan. *New York Times*. September 25, 2016. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/26/world/middleeast/nahed-hattar-jordanian-writer-killed.html>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- Talbot I. (2012) *Pakistan: A New History*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- The Divide Over Islam and National Laws in the Muslim World (2016). *Pew Research Center*. April 4, 2016. Available at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/04/27/the-divide-over-islam-and-national-laws-in-the-muslim-world/>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity, Chapter 3 "Articles of Faith" (2012). *Pew Research Center*. Available at: [www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-3-articles-of-faith/](http://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-3-articles-of-faith/), accessed 31 October.
- Toth J., Qutb S. (2013) *The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- White J. (2014) *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wood G. (2015) What ISIS Really Wants. *The Atlantic*, March 2015. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>, accessed 31 October 2016.
- Youseff N., Walsh D. (2016) Egypt Sentences Coptic Teenagers to Prison for Insulting Islam. *New York Times*. February 25, 2016. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/26/world/middleeast/coptic-teenagers-sentenced-egypt.html>, accessed 31 October 2016.

## **Война против идей и практик модерна: теология и политика современного исламского экстремизма**

Д. ШИРО\*

\***Дэниел Широ** – Herbert J. Ellison Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies, University of Washington, Seattle. Address: box 353650, Seattle, WA 98195, USA. E-mail: chirot@u.washington.edu

**Цитирование:** Chirot D. (2017) The War Against Modernity: The Theology and Politics of Contemporary Muslim Extremism // Мир России. Т. 26. № 1. С. 127–151

В статье исследуются причины, приведшие к возрождению и усилению фундаменталистских идей в исламе. В любой системе религиозных идей существуют течения экстремистского характера, призывающие вернуться к изначальным, «чистым» от внешних влияний верованиям, однако, как правило, число их сторонников невелико. Большинство мусульман отвергают необходимость и возможность насилия против иноверцев, но нельзя отрицать, что в современных государствах с исламским населением идеи фундаментализма получают поддержку миллионов сторонников.

По данным исследования, проведенного центром Пью в 2015 г., большинство мусульман отрицают необходимость исламского халифата в Ираке и Сирии, именуемого на арабском языке ДАИШ<sup>5</sup>, но при этом значительная доля опрошенных полагает, что ислам должен быть очищен от «вредных примесей» и вести борьбу против внутренних врагов и иноверцев для того, чтобы вернуться к своим корням и восстановить влияние, позволявшее первым поколениям мусульман изменять мир.

Поскольку ИГИЛ – это наиболее очевидное и в некотором смысле успешное политическое движение, исповедующее крайние формы насилия, поддержка его программы и практик является хорошим индикатором отношения в салафизму. Около 9% пакистанцев имеют положительное мнение об ИГИЛ, 28% оценивают его программу и действия отрицательно, 62% заявляют, что не имеют определенной точки зрения. Даже в такой умеренной стране, как Индонезия с наибольшей концентрацией мусульман в мире, 4% относятся к ИГИЛ положительно, 79% – отрицательно, остальные затрудняются с ответом. Малайзия также считается страной, где руководство стремится избегать политические крайности, но и в ней ИГИЛ поддерживают 11%. В Турции, еще недавно проводившей светскую политику, за ИГИЛ высказываются 8%. В Нигерии эта организация имеет поддержку 14% населения, несмотря даже на то, что большинство нигерийцев презирают и ненавидят Боко Харам – жестокого союзника ИГИЛ в Северной Нигерии.

Опросы, проводимые центром Пью, показали, что 16% мусульман, живущих во Франции, считают, что террористические акты, направленные против гражданских лиц, часто или иногда оправданы. В Великобритании и Испании доля тех, кто поддерживает террор, примерно такая же – 15–16%. В Германии сторонников террора меньше – 7%. В Египте 28% полагают, что теракты оправданы часто или иногда, в Турции – 17%, в Пакистане – 14%, а в Индонезии – 10%. Также следует подчеркнуть, что среди молодых мусульман доля тех, кто выступает за теракты, выше,

<sup>5</sup> «ад-Дауля аль-Исламийя фи-ль-Ирак уа-аш-Шам».

чем в группах старшего возраста. С учетом того, что в мире живет 1,6 млрд мусульман, есть все основания утверждать, что от 80 до 100 млн чел. поддерживают экстремизм. Разумеется, было бы неверно предполагать, что все они готовы совершать террористические акты, но именно в этой среде экстремисты ищут и находят сочувствующих их целям.

Объяснение этого явления следует искать в истории государств с преобладающим исламским населением. Изначально ислам развивался как любая другая религия, впитывая в себя достижения нескольких цивилизаций, их идеи и опыт развития. Греческая философия, персидская идея, касающаяся институтов управления, литература и искусство Ближнего Востока доисламского периода внесли свой вклад в развитие идей ислама, сделали его привлекательным для народов Востока. Молодая религия стала базой новой цивилизации, границы которой простирались от Центральной Азии до Испании, однако впоследствии влияние исламских государств пошло на спад. Исламские теологи объясняли этот упадок тем, что исламские страны отошли от идей истинной веры и попали под влияние чуждых им идей европейской цивилизации. Эти идеи оставались маргинальными до XX в., т.е. до того времени, когда страны Ближнего Востока и Центральной Азии сделали попытку войти в тренд развития. При этом следует отметить, что идеи Просвещения в мусульманском мире прививались с трудом. По всей видимости, это можно объяснить тем, что Просвещение было западной, европейской, идеологией, часто отождествляемой с колониальным владычеством западных стран. Но тем не менее были все основания полагать, что мусульмане не останутся в стороне от идей прогресса. Выдающиеся исламские мыслители пытались выработать компромисс между идеей модерны, окрашенной отчасти в либеральные цвета, и религиозной верой. В мусульманских странах появлялись интеллектуалы, стремящиеся вестернизировать общество, принимая на вооружение значительную часть либеральной программы Просвещения. Однако в настоящее время подобные попытки вряд ли увенчались бы успехом.

Принимая во внимание расцвет высокой культуры и науки в исламских обществах во времена Омейядов и даже Аббасидов, невозможно понять природу сопротивления Просвещению в современном исламе. Существует несколько объяснений причин, по которым прервался «золотой век» исламской мудрости и науки. Согласно первому объяснению, огромный ущерб исламским обществам нанесло монгольское вторжение, в особенности осада Багдада в 1258 г., завершившаяся разгромом города, чудовищными разрушениями, смертью выдающихся ученых, уничтожение великолепных библиотек и знаменитого Дома Мудрости. Второе объяснение коренится в получившем распространение в исламских обществах учении Абу Хамида Аль Газали (1058–1111 гг.). В его текстах прослеживалась мысль о том, что арабская философия, впитавшая греческую мудрость, не имела настоящей ценности для мусульман, потому что не стала основой истинной веры. Третье объяснение связывает закат «золотого века» с отсутствием социального запроса на научные исследования: в отличие от обществ на Западе, где они концентрировались в университетах, наука на Востоке не получала поддержки в обществе ни на институциональном, ни на корпоративном уровне. Четвертое объяснение фокусируется на соотнесенности упадка науки в исламских странах с последовавшим за этим сокращением числа переводов и уменьшением образованной прослойки, владевшей несколькими языками. Изменения политической ситуации в исламском мире привели к истощению сил, которые питали интеллектуальную полемику «золотого века».

Тем не менее идеи модернизации продолжали циркулировать в исламских обществах. Одним из исламских ученых, пытавшихся модернизировать ислам,



стал Джамаль аль Дин Аль Афгани (1836–1897 гг.). На протяжении всей жизни он работал советником при правительствах в исламских странах, занимался развитием науки и образования в соответствии с идеями ислама.

В новейшей истории идеи модернизации, сыгравшие определенную роль в подъеме национализма и исламского социализма, были использованы в политических программах преобразований, и в частности в программе партии Баас (баасистские режимы пришли к власти в Ираке и Сирии). В большинстве случаев националистические режимы оказались неэффективными агентами модернизации, породив коррупцию и застой в экономике и социальной сфере. Крах идей модернизации на фоне увеличивающегося отставания от стран Запада и успеха Израиля, нарастающей экономической и военной мощи в самом сердце арабского мира, создал социальные предпосылки для подъема оппозиционных движений фундаменталистской ориентации. Разочарование населения стало базой поддержки идей исламских мыслителей, выступающих за возрождение исламских государств на новой идейной основе и предлагающих очистить ислам от тех влияний, которые обогащали его на этапе становления, и прежде всего от идей модерна. На этой волне возникло учение Сеййда Кутба, подхваченное экстремистами из «Братьев-мусульман» в Египте, лидерами ваххабитского движения в Саудовской Аравии и исламистами Талибан в Афганистане. Военное вмешательство западных стран (и прежде всего США в Ираке и Афганистане) только ускорило ферментацию идей фундаментализма, стимулировало возникновение Аль-Каиды, а затем и запрещенной в Российской Федерации ИГИЛ.

Деконструкция идеи фундаментального ислама в исторической перспективе дает возможность разглядеть в его основании социальные причины, включая неудачи модернизации и глобализации, влияние международной политики и мобилизующую роль идей, проникающих из области смыслов в область реальной политики.

**Ключевые слова:** современность, национализм, развитие, фундаментализм, конфликт