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The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context

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Summary: The Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period. Understanding it is crucial to defeating the group.

Forces throughout the Middle East are attempting to roll back the self-proclaimed Islamic State, which seized territory in Iraq and Syria in 2014. But regardless of how the jihadi group fares militarily, its ideology remains a long-term challenge. The Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period. Understanding it is crucial to defeating the group.

A Hybrid Ideology

- The Islamic State presents itself as the representative of authentic Islam as practiced by the early generations of Muslims—Salafism—and it draws on an especially strict brand of Salafism in particular, Wahhabism.

- It is overly simplistic, however, to blame any one ideology for the Islamic State's extremism. Its extremism is the product of a hybridization of doctrinaire Salafism and other Islamist currents.

- The Islamic State relies on the jihadi literature of ideologues who support its stance as well as clerics who do not formally support the group. These clerics adhere to a set of ideas that significantly deviate from mainstream Islam, and many are direct heirs of the *Sahwa*, an intellectual religious movement that began in earnest in the 1970s.

- The *Sahwa* blended Salafi concepts with revolutionary ideas from political Islam in a broad sense, but primarily currents influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. The intermarriage polarized and produced new and unpredictable religious currents.

- Politically submissive Salafism gave way to political *takfirism*—excommunication after one Muslim declares another an infidel or apostate. This ideology carries the banner of caliphate, jihad, and rebellion.

- The Islamic State is part of a legacy of *takfiri* schools and ideas to emerge from al-Qaeda. But the Islamic State's ideological rigidity stands out. Its refusal to bend creates a culture of *takfirism* within *takfirism*.

The Ideology in Practice

- The Islamic State promotes a political ideology and a worldview that actively classifies and excommunicates fellow Muslims.

- The group is adept at cultivating and exploiting preexisting sectarian fissures in the Middle East. The Islamic State taps into communal hatred and religious concepts to recruit and justify its acts, or to foster sympathy and neutralize forces that actively reject it. It has proven particularly powerful in outbidding al-Qaeda for recruits.

- It uses clerics' material to justify the *takfir* of the Saudi state and Muslim rulers across the Middle East, and to support the rejection of official institutions and forces.

- For the Islamic State, clerics offer justifications for its savagery, especially against fellow Muslims. And the group cites stories from early Islamic history to justify its brutal practices to new recruits.

Introduction

Since the self-proclaimed Islamic State swept through large swaths of northwestern Iraq and eastern Syria in the summer of 2014, the origins of its sectarian and ultraextremist ideology have been debated in the region and beyond.[1] The enslavement of hundreds of Yazidi women in Sinjar,[2] the slaughter of at least 1,500 Shia soldiers in Tikrit and hundreds of Sunni tribesmen in Syria and Iraq,[3] and the beheading of Western hostages and Syrian and Iraqi civilians triggered a collective soul-searching that soon turned into a religious and political blame game.[4] A Saudi commentator typified the debate when he said on Twitter that the Islamic State's "actions are but an epitome of what we have studied in our school curriculum. If the curriculum is sound, then [the Islamic State] is right, and if it is wrong, then who bears responsibility?"[5]

Understanding the ideological appeal of the Islamic State is crucial to defeating it. Top U.S. military commanders have repeatedly emphasized the importance of ideology in fighting the group. As Major General Michael Nagata, a former commander of the U.S. special operations forces in the Middle East, has noted, "We do not understand the movement, and until we do, we are not going to defeat it."[6] Field commanders battling the Islamic State in Syria have likewise reported that ideology impedes efforts to mobilize forces against the group. Muslim fighters often refuse to take up arms against the Islamic State on religious grounds, even if they would not join the group themselves. This is especially the case for efforts backed by Western powers. Ideology can therefore have practical implications in the fight against the Islamic State.

The Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period.

There is little consensus on the factors to blame for the Islamic State's violent and confrontational ethos. Some maintain that the Islamic State is the natural heir of a long history of such behavior.[7] Others attribute its rise and brutality to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and to Iran's expanding role in supporting Shia militias in the region. Some commentators point broadly to political Islam as the precursor to the Islamic State's intolerance,[8] while others reduce the Islamic State to an entity whose sectarianism is driven solely by political opportunism fueled by regional political players.[9]

In fact, the Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period. And relying on the titles of books and writings used by the Islamic State can distort, not inform, the understanding of its ideology. Instead, it is important to closely examine how the group selects, understands, and teaches its ideas.

In isolation, Salafism and political Islam do not produce an Islamic State member or catalyze extremism.[10] On the contrary, both Salafism and political Islam have safeguards that may inhibit the kind of extremism adopted by the Islamic State. Similarly, political or moral outrage alone does not drive people to the Islamic State. The group has flourished in a context of political oppression, governance failures, and sectarian fissures, but this same political context can, and often does, lead individuals to insurgent groups that hold moderate views.

This paper explores the Islamic State's ideology and sectarianism in context, drawing on primary sources and direct testimonies from Islamic State clerics and members in Syria and Iraq. It discusses broader themes relevant to the group's ideology to explain the origins of the Islamic State's violent and exclusivist vision. Until the illusion that the group's ideology is traceable straight to Salafism is dispelled, the world will not be able to understand the Islamic State's appeal, or to defeat it.

The Wahhabi Root

The Islamic State presents itself as the representative of authentic Islam as practiced by the early generations of Muslims, commonly known as Salafism. Many postcolonial and modern Islamic movements describe themselves as Salafist, including the official brand of Islam adopted by Saudi Arabia known as Wahhabism, named after founder Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the eighteenth-century cleric who helped establish the first Saudi state with the assistance of Muhammad Ibn Saud.

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Wahhabism is the intellectual legacy of the thirteenth-century Islamic scholar Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah and the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, as interpreted and enforced by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his successors. Marked by extreme traditionalism and literalism, Wahhabism rejects scholastic concepts like *maqasid* (the spirit of sharia law), a principle that many other Islamic schools uphold; *kalam* (Islamic philosophy); Sufism (Islamic spirituality); *ilal* (the study of religious intentions in the Quran and *hadith*, sayings attributed to the Prophet); and *al-majaz* (metaphors).[11]

Its clerics also use the concept of *bidah*—an Islamic term that forbids inventing religious practices unsanctioned by the religion—to label many practices, largely Sufi and Shia, as polytheistic. Wahhabi clerics' fixation on *bidah* creates a slippery slope that sometimes leads to the declaration of a fellow Muslim as an apostate. Adopting saints or their graves as *wasila* (means or intermediaries) to worship God, for example, is considered something that automatically leads an individual out of Islam. Circumambulating graves, slaughtering animals in the name of a saint, or believing in the divine authority of imams are also deemed polytheistic practices. While mainstream Muslims agree that innovation in religion is forbidden, Wahhabi clerics go one step further, drawing on Ibn Taymiyyah's hardline stance to label as *bidah* many practices that other Muslims consider legitimate. Wahhabi clerics reject Sufi and Shia contentions that such practices are not intended as worship.[12]

The Islamic State largely borrowed from Wahhabism the penal code that is already institutionalized in Saudi Arabia and practiced less systematically in other Muslim countries. Wahhabism's greatest contribution to the Islamic State, however, may be the concepts of *wala wal bara* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of un-Islamic ways) and *tawhid* (the oneness of God). While these concepts exist in traditional Salafism as preached by Ibn Taymiyyah and other early scholars, they are interpreted and promoted more extremely by Wahhabi clerics.

According to the concept of *wala wal bara*, it is not enough for a Muslim to dislike un-Islamic practices and non-Muslims; instead, true Muslims must reject un-Islamic practices and non-Muslims actively and wholeheartedly.[13] Ibn Abd al-Wahhab reflected this precept when he wrote, "One's Islam cannot be sound, even if they adhered to the oneness of God and worshipped none but God, without enmity to the polytheists and showing to them hate and hostility."[14] For the Islamic State, this obligation to act in enmity applies to fellow Muslims who do not fulfill the criteria of *tawhid* by recognizing the oneness of God.

A basic tenet of Islam, as preached by Ibn Taymiyyah, is that a Muslim must abide by three criteria of *tawhid*: to worship God, to worship only God, and to have the right creed as prescribed by the Quran or by the Prophet's traditions.[15] Ibn Taymiyyah drew on the three criteria of *tawhid* to excommunicate Shia and Sufis after he established that their practices and beliefs, including the veneration of imams, compromised their worship of God alone.

In areas conquered by the Islamic State, symbols of *shirk* (polytheistic practices) are systematically demolished, notably Sufi and Shia shrines and historical sites that denote a deity. After taking over a town, Islamic State clerics typically launch a campaign against what they deem polytheistic practices, including superstitions and soothsaying. The clerics' doctrine is slowly shaping societies under their control because many of the ideas preached by the Islamic State are based in established Islamic schools.

Because of such beliefs, study of the Islamic State's rigid, hostile, and sectarian ideology has centered on Wahhabism. Also, because the Islamic State cites or preaches the writings of Salafi and Wahhabi clerics, some scholars have concluded that the group is a manifestation of those ideas. But it is overly simplistic to blame Salafism and Wahhabism for Islamic State extremism.

A Hybrid Ideology

The Islamic State's extreme ideology can be viewed as the product of a slow hybridization between doctrinaire Salafism and other Islamist currents.

Many of the extremist religious concepts that undergird the Islamic State's ideology are rooted in a battle of ideas best understood in the context of Saudi Arabia's *Sahwa* (Islamic Awakening) movement in the 1970s, and a similar movement in Egypt, as well as in other countries. In those countries, the interplay of Salafi doctrinal ideas and Muslim Brotherhood–oriented political Islamic activism produced currents that still resonate today. Indeed, the commingling of Salafism and Brotherhood Islamism accelerated in the wake of the Arab uprisings of 2011, filling the void left when traditional religious establishments failed to respond adequately to the aspirations and grievances of the Arab masses. The Islamic State and other Islamist and jihadi groups seized the opportunity to enforce their vision of the role of Islam.

In Saudi Arabia and in Egypt, the marriage of traditional Salafism and political Islam produced new forms of Salafism that were influenced by, and critical of, both movements.[16] Political Islam became more conservative and Salafism became politicized.

In many instances, Salafi concepts were substantially reinterpreted, appropriated, and utilized by a new generation of religious intellectuals who started to identify with a new movement. In Saudi Arabia, the *Sahwa* generation moved away from the Najdi school, the adopted name for the Wahhabi clerical establishment.

The practice of *takfir*, or excommunication after one Muslim declares another an infidel or apostate, became increasingly prominent, first during the 1960s in Egypt and then after the first Gulf War in the 1990s when veterans of the jihad in Afghanistan began to apostatize Saudi Arabia for hosting and supporting Western troops to fight Iraq's then leader, Saddam Hussein.

Politically submissive Salafism, which had rejected political rebellion, began to give way to political *takfirism* that carries the banner of caliphate, jihad, and rebellion. At the same time, the growing influence of Salafi ideals led to the Salafization of the Muslim Brotherhood.[17]

Sayyid Qutb, an Islamist theorist and leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s, drew on Salafi ideals to create an all-embracing *takfiri* ideology.[18] Qutb argued that Muslim-majority societies are living in a state of *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic obliviousness).[19] He believed that all ideologies—including capitalism, communism, and pan-Arabism—have failed, and that the only system that will succeed globally is Islam.[20] Qutb considered Islam the only reference for society (known as *hakimiyya*, or sovereignty of God), and he urged Muslim youth to reject their societies and lead change.

Qutbism provided a political ideology that introduced Islamic supremacism and nationalism, and that rejects many aspects of modern Muslim society and political regimes. It took conservative ideas and

molded them to serve as the foundations of a political ideology that has little sympathy for views that deviate from Qutb's understanding of the Islamic way of life.[21] It is inward-looking and prioritizes internal threats over foreign threats.

Qutbist concepts such as *hakimiyya* and *jahiliyya* shape the Islamic State's dealings with the religious and ethnic communities it controls. The Islamic State believes that local populations must be converted to true Islam and that Muslims can accuse one another of apostasy without adhering to traditional clerical criteria, which stipulate a series of verification measures to ensure the apostasy of an accused person.[22] The group also believes in the Qutbist idea that Muslims have fundamentally deviated from the true message of Islam and that correcting this deviation will require a radical, coercive revolution. As one Islamic State member told the author, "If you think people will accept the Islamic project [voluntarily], you're wrong. They have to be forced at first. The other groups think that they can convince people and win them over but they're wrong. You have a ready project, you should place it on society like a tooth crown and make sure to maintain it."[23]

According to Egyptian researcher Hussam Tammam, the Muslim Brotherhood influenced Salafism through at least two channels. The first was the ideas of Qutb, represented by ideologues such as Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian-born leader of the jihad in Afghanistan.[24] The second was Mohammed Surur, a former Muslim Brotherhood leader from Syria. Surur's influence produced a current somewhere between Saudi Salafism and Salafi jihadism. This current can be discerned in the ranks of Syrian rebel groups that until 2015 made up the Islamic Front, in the group of clerics known as the Syrian Islamic Council, and, to some extent, in the Nusra Front, the al-Qaeda-affiliated group fighting in Syria.[25]

Increasingly, Salafism has shifted from being a *dawa* (proselytism) movement to a political ideology. In an interview with the London-based newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi*, Surur said that the current named after him had "transformed Salafism from one worldview to another" and "destroyed the myth of *wali al-amr* [religiously mandated blind obedience to Muslim rulers] and the obligation to respect them."[26]

The influence of Salafism on political Islam and vice versa led to varying outcomes—broadly referred to by its adherents as *haraki* Salafism, or activist Salafism. In Saudi Arabia and Egypt, some who adopted formulations of these ideas went on to fight jihad in Afghanistan; this included, notably, Osama bin Laden. A vast number of modern jihadists have cited the influence of Islamist ideas next to their study of Salafism, including, arguably, the true spiritual father of the Islamic State, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. He is a Jordanian-Palestinian ideologue who mentored Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,[27] the group's founder in 2004 when it was known as al-Qaeda in Iraq.[28] Al-Maqdisi never met Osama bin Laden, but he taught at al-Qaeda camps.[29]

The Islamic State and al-Qaeda diverge ideologically, but the former continues to rely heavily on the jihadi literature used by al-Qaeda.

The vanguard of activist Salafism transformed Salafi concepts, it did not just borrow them. Qutb's brother, Mohammed, often known as the father of the *Sahwa*, integrated Ibn Taymiyyah's three criteria for monotheism and added a fourth he called *tawhid al-hakimiyya*, or the unity of the sovereignty of God and his laws alone. This fourth criterion was a defining contribution to the *Sahwa* and to Salafi-jihadi thought in general.[30] Jihadi clerics took the Quranic term *taghut* (false deity) and built a full-fledged ideology on it: rulers of the Muslim world have been apostatized, and based on this, a Muslim who works for the ruler— from clerics to civil servants—can be a legitimate target. Democracy has been labeled a religion and democratic institutions as "habitats of apostasy," as a *Daily Beast* article reported.[31]

The Islamic State and al-Qaeda diverge ideologically, but the former continues to rely heavily on the jihadi literature used by al-Qaeda. The Islamic State lacks the religious resources, in terms of committed preachers, both within and outside its territories to develop its own jihadi school reflecting its intense sectarianism.

The same marriage of ideas that helped produce the al-Qaeda generation in the 1990s also produced more conservative Islamist movements that are politically active without endorsing violent jihadism, indiscriminate killing, or genocide. Religious intellectuals such as Kuwaiti Hakim al-Mutairi, for example, called for progressive Salafi ideas, including a multiparty democracy, citing Salafi references.[32] Surur's

followers emphasized the Salafi doctrine of *tawhid*, while vehemently criticizing the Salafi concept of obedience to Muslim leaders, although they remained committed to traditional Sunni authorities.[33]

The schools that emerged from the mutual influence of Salafism and Islamism integrated *aqadi* (doctrinal or creed-based) and *ilmi* (scholastic) aspects of Salafism with the Muslim Brotherhood's political activism and revolutionary concepts.[34] Qutb's concept of *hakimiyya* and other Islamist ideas provided the political and activist ingredients of the new hybrid formulations, while Wahhabism and traditional Salafism provided its jurisprudential and doctrinal basis.

Although the intertwining of Salafism and political Islam has led to diverse outcomes, most reflect a key feature of Salafism: its propensity to narrowly define who is a Muslim. This makes Salafism sectarian almost by definition. Political Islam, meanwhile, galvanizes its followers and provides them with a political ideology that advocates religious rule, the implementation of religious practices, and Islam's way of life. Stephane Lacroix, in his book *Awakening Islam*, explained, "On theological questions connected to creed and on the major aspects of Islamic jurisprudence, the [*Sahwa* generation] adhered to the Wahhabi tradition and considered themselves its faithful heirs. But on political and cultural questions, their view of the world tended toward that of the Muslim Brotherhood, although it was partly reformulated in terms derived from the Wahhabi tradition."[35]

The Islamic State combines ideas such as *wala wal bara* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of un-Islamic ways) and apostasy with a religious penal code to form a political ideology and a worldview actively classifying and excommunicating fellow Muslims.[36] In this sense, revolutionary religious ideas derived from political Islam are as central to Islamic State ideology as fundamentalist ones.

Takfirism to the Extreme

The Islamic State is part of a legacy of *takfiri* schools and ideas to emerge from al-Qaeda. But while the Islamic State was once affiliated with al-Qaeda, the two groups have ideologically parted ways. Comparing the Islamic State's vision with al-Qaeda's, and noting where their paths diverged, helps to shed light on the evolution of the Islamic State's sectarian ideology.

Differences between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State can be traced back to early encounters between Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi differed when they were in Afghanistan in the 1980s, as their successors do today, on the use of extreme violence and the targeting of Shia civilians.[37] According to the Islamic State, the worst enemies of Islam are the enemies within. The group argues that focusing on the far enemy (the West) and ignoring the near enemy (Muslim enemies in the region, especially Shia) is ineffective. Under the Islamic State's vision, the far enemy will be dragged into the region as Osama bin Laden planned, but by attacking the near enemy. This scenario has, in fact, played out since Islamic State fighters took over the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in June 2014, drawing more than 60 countries to the fight against the group.

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The Iraq war in 2003 provided space for al-Zarqawi to spread his sectarian vision. Iraq's distinctly cross-sectarian familial bonds had previously made it largely resistant to sectarianism. Yet, al-Zarqawi's followers succeeded in kindling a civil war after bombing the Shia Askari Shrine in Samarra in 2006. Extremist ideas brought to Iraq by al-Qaeda after 2003 became entrenched as al-Zarqawi's jihadi group evolved into a local movement under the leadership of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who ruled the Islamic State in Iraq from 2006 to 2010, and his successor, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who currently leads the group.

For al-Qaeda, such a focus on Shia would distract from the fight against the West. Furthermore, mainstream Sunni clergy reject a genocidal attitude toward the Shia public. Al-Qaeda's central leadership has admonished the Islamic State (and its earlier incarnations) against attacking Shia civilians. Bin Laden

reportedly favored an alliance between Shia and Sunni groups that would position them to jointly attack the West.[38]

According to a letter published by the U.S. State Department, al-Zarqawi urged bin Laden to focus on Shia. He wrote: "If you agree with us on [targeting Shia] . . . we will be your readied soldiers. . . . If things appear otherwise to you, we are brothers, and the disagreement will not spoil [our] friendship."[39] The Islamic State's current leaders have criticized al-Qaeda's mellow, as they call it, stance toward Shia,[40] and in May 2014, Islamic State spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani said that al-Qaeda was deliberately avoiding confrontation with Iran and Shia.

In July 2005, current al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri addressed al-Qaeda's position on Shia in a letter he sent to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. He cited religious and practical reasons for al-Qaeda in Iraq to steer clear of targeting the Shia public and places of worship. Referencing Ibn Taymiyyah, he wrote that "such acts affect the protected blood of women, children, and noncombatant Shia public, who are protected because they are excused for their ignorance [of true religious doctrine, unlike Shia clerics]. This is the consensus of the Sunni toward the Shia public and ignorant followers."[41]

The rigidity of the Islamic State's ideology stands out even in a jihadi landscape marked by rigidity.

Al-Qaeda officially disassociated itself from the Islamic State in February 2014. Generally, outside Islamic State–held territories, the Islamic State has failed to win the support of any prominent jihadi ideologues, with the exception of a few jihadi clerics. Most jihadi ideologues have criticized the group's indiscriminate violence and sectarian bent. Al-Zarqawi's old mentor Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi has described the group as "deviant," and has criticized its public beheadings and alienation of local Muslim communities and armed groups in Syria.[42]

The Islamic State's ideological divergence from al-Qaeda is discernable in its outlook and actions toward clerics and leaders as well. The rigidity of the Islamic State's ideology stands out even in a jihadi landscape marked by rigidity. Its refusal to bend creates a culture of *takfirism* within *takfirism*, where any leniency is forbidden.

In a video interview posted online in October 2013, Sami al-Aridi—the top cleric of the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front—explained some of the ideas that differentiate the Islamic State from other jihadi groups, including al-Qaeda. In contrast to the Islamic State, al-Aridi cited as legitimate scholars mainstream Wahhabi clerics, such as Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Abd al-Aziz Al al-Sheikh and prominent theologian Abd al-Aziz Ibn Baz.[43] He noted that al-Qaeda adheres to the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence and is more accommodating than the Islamic State of Muslim clerics, often engaging them.[44]

In contrast, the Islamic State considers clerics a key factor in the persistence of tyrannical, illegitimate governments in the Muslim world. The Islamic State believes that *tabayun* (a process of investigation) is sometimes needed to determine whether a person is a true Muslim. According to al-Aridi, the Islamic State declares a Muslim to be *kafir* (an infidel or unbeliever) based on intuitive suspicion, consequentiality, and vagueness.[45]

For the Islamic State, ordinary Muslims receive their religious education from clerics who are aligned with corrupt Muslim rulers who perpetuate Western hegemony. Accordingly, the Islamic State prioritizes the fight against clerics and rulers over the fight against the West.[46]

The Islamic State's particular sectarian outlook is also characterized by the tendency to emphasize *sunna* (the Prophet's traditions) as integral to the faith—a departure from mainstream clerics who consider them nonobligatory secondary practices that only strengthen faith. The Islamic State deems a person who adheres to these traditions to be respectful of the Prophet and those who do not adhere to the traditions to be disrespectful. Abu Mariya al-Qahtani, who served as the Nusra Front's chief cleric before he was replaced by al-Aridi, wrote in February 2014 that the Islamic State distinctly integrated these traditions into Islamic jurisprudence, changing terms from "optional" and "recommended" to "obligatory" and "duty."[47]

This view was also popular among followers of Juhayman al-Utaybi, a Saudi extremist who seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca along with his followers in November 1979 and declared himself the *Mahdi* (an

expected messiah in Islam). According to Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, religious followers of al-Utaybi would often pray in a mosque with their shoes on, and would take them off as they leave the mosque, as the Prophet Muhammad had reportedly done on occasions.[48] Mainstream clerics often dismiss such practices as signs of the Islamic State's lack of religious qualifications, but for the group, these revivalist practices are evidence of adherence to original Sunni traditions.

The Islamic State is also extreme in its application of the Salafi concept of *nawaqid al-Islam*, or nullifiers of Islam. These are a set of conditions with which doctrinaire Salafists believe all Muslims must comply. The founder of Wahhabism narrowed nullifiers to ten acts: engaging in *shirk* (polytheistic practices); accepting intermediaries in worship; failing to deem infidels as infidels, or doubting or justifying infidels' unbelief; mocking religious practices; believing that there is better guidance or rules than those of the Prophet; despising a practice ordained by the Prophet; exercising or accepting black magic; allying with infidels against Muslims; believing some people can do without sharia; and deliberately avoiding learning about or practicing religion.

The Islamic State generally rejects gradation and believes that all acts of unbelief are effectively equal.

While some clerics insist that there are degrees of faithlessness and that a sinner does not necessarily become an infidel by committing certain acts, the Islamic State generally rejects gradation and believes that all acts of unbelief are effectively equal. In the same vein, it believes that a Muslim has a religious duty to identify and label infidels or apostates, and failure to do so can lead one to become an infidel or apostate himself.

According to the Islamic State, a Muslim becomes an infidel if he fails to declare as an infidel another person worthy of being declared as such. The group declared al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri to be an infidel because he sympathized with ousted Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, who endorsed democracy. The Islamic State considers members of the Nusra Front as apostates because they fight alongside foreign-backed groups.

This view and its implications are particularly pronounced among adherents of a movement in the Islamic State known as the Hazmiyya. At least some Islamic State members believe that some Hazmiyya teachings permit them to kill and rob Muslims who have committed any degree of unbelief[49]—which could mean most of the population under their control.[50] The Hazmiyya misinterpreted a fatwa issued by Saudi cleric Omar bin Ahmed al-Hazimi, who is also identified as a member of the *Sahwa* generation that merged Islamist ideas with Salafi concepts. The fatwa, which al-Hazimi later recanted, forbade "the excuse of ignorance" in matters of faith, suggesting that a Muslim would be accountable for an act of disbelief even if that person did not intend to do so.[51] "Hazmiyya say that ignorance is not an excuse," Sheikh Hassan al-Dagheem, a prominent Syrian cleric, said in an interview.[52] In December 2014, the Islamic State produced a video showing the execution of four of its members on suspicion of extremism because they had plotted to rebel against the group for failing to implement the full scope of sharia as it preaches the doctrine.[53]

The Islamic State's Scholars of Jihad

The Islamic State relies on the jihadi literature of ideologues who support its stance to wage war against nominal Muslims. These clerics adhere to a set of ideas that significantly deviate from tradition, as some of them have explicitly stated. The Islamic State typically uses their material to justify the *takfir* of the Saudi state and Muslim rulers across the Middle Eastern region and to support the rejection of all official institutions and forces within those countries. Because of the hostility between the Islamic State and many of those clerics, observers often downplay the profound influence such ideologues have had on the organization.

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Sources include Saudi clerics Khalid al-Rashed, Nasir al-Fahd, Sulaiman bin Nasser al-Alwan, Omar bin Ahmed al-Hazimi, Ali bin Khidr al-Khudayr, and Hamud bin Uqla al-Shuaibi.[54] Others include al-Qaeda ideologues Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz.

Four of these clerics—al-Fahd, al-Alwan, al-Khudayr, and al-Shuaibi—were part of a network that heavily influenced al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia in the early 2000s as well as the transnational jihadi movement.[55] They wrote extensively on Saudi Arabia's apostasy for helping the United States in its regional interventions, especially during the first Gulf War. For the Islamic State, these writings provide the necessary theological foundations for its campaigns against apostates. The fact that these clerics were theologically trained (a rarity for jihadi ideologues[56]) makes them even more of an asset to the Islamic State, as does their disagreement with Saudi Arabia's clerical establishment.[57] Al-Fahd has reportedly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State,[58] and the group considers al-Shuaibi's book on the impermissibility of seeking help from infidels to be influential.

Al-Khudayr and al-Rashed are heavily referenced in the territories controlled by the Islamic State. Al-Khudayr in particular offers the Islamic State a one-stop shop in his writing on one of the most defining facets of the Islamic State's ideology: he stipulates that un-Islamic systems and followers are illegitimate and that adherence to their teachings is inexcusable. Al-Khudayr is unequivocal in his position on modern legislative systems and Muslims who become involved with them. He deems Muslims who voluntarily join a parliament to be infidels. A Muslim who swears loyalty to a constitution, even if compelled to do so, is considered an apostate, and Muslims who oppose a constitution through democratic means are deemed sinners. The idea that ordinary Muslims may not know such practices are illegitimate is no excuse for al-Khudayr.

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The clerics whom the Islamic State mentions in its sermons are particularly critical of Shia, preaching that ordinary Shia cannot be excused for their faith. In a series of sermons titled "The Sharp-Edged Sword on the Evil Shiites," al-Rashed attacked Shia in graphic language. Similarly, al-Fahd has written a treatise on "the permissibility of excessiveness against the *rafidha*," replete with abusive and denigrating language directed at Shia.[59] (*Rafidha*, literally rejectionists, is a pejorative word for Shia.)

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi has also influenced the Islamic State, arguably more than any other religious cleric outside the organization. Because he vehemently opposed the group's expansion in Syria and has criticized its approach to other jihadists, there is a tendency to downplay his ideological influence on the group. Al-Maqdisi, who grew up in Kuwait and studied in Iraq and Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, directly influenced the Islamic State's founder, al-Zarqawi, and the two were jailed together in Jordan between 1993 and 1999. His contribution to its overall ideology is profound; he recently described his influence on the Islamic State, claiming, "I am their sheikh who taught them the concept of *tawhid*."[60]

Although the Islamic State does not publicly promote al-Maqdisi's books, his ideas are cited to repudiate the group's detractors, and his books are distributed in Islamic State–controlled areas.[61] The first issue of the Islamic State's magazine, *Dabiq*, also featured an article about al-Maqdisi's writings. Ahmed Abazaid, a Syrian expert on Islamists and jihadists in Syria, described al-Maqdisi's writings as "the basis of the *takfiri* cancer and the cause of the ease with which the blood of people and mujahideen is shed."[62]

Al-Maqdisi's book *Millat Ibrahim* is particularly instrumental for the Islamic State. The book applies the concept of *wala wal bara* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of un-Islamic ways) to label as apostates a wide range of Muslims who practice un-Islamic ideas or habits, even if they are related to the accuser. In another book, *The Unspoken Scandals on the Apostasy of the Saudi State*, al-Maqdisi declares Saudi Arabia an infidel state. He rules that because abandoning *wala wal bara* leads to *kufr* (unbelief), many of Saudi

Arabia's practices—such as interest-based banking, foreign aid to non-Muslims, membership in the United Nations, and alliance with the West—render it apostate.

Al-Maqdisi's teachings are, of course, readily applicable to all Muslim communities that adhere to practices that the Islamic State deems un-Islamic, including membership in the Baath Party or alliance with Western and regional governments. Even though he is critical of the Islamic State, for example, he condemned Syrian rebels' cooperation with the U.S.-led air campaign against the Islamic State as apostasy.[63]

Extremist ideas about modern institutions and democratic norms are applied by the Islamic State to justify war against members of the military and security forces in Muslim countries.

Another ideologue heavily cited by the Islamic State is Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz, also known as Sayyid Imam al-Sharif and Dr. Fadl, a former Egyptian jihadist who revised his extremist views after his release from prison in the wake of the 2011 uprising. His most influential book is *The Comprehensive Guide for Seeking Noble Knowledge*. Abu Ali al-Anbari, the Islamic State's high cleric, repeatedly cited the book in his lectures, even though he claimed that the author had retracted his views. In one audio lecture, he quoted Abdul Aziz to explain that a Muslim who joins a parliament is an apostate even if he intended to use the platform for advancing a religious agenda. Abdul Aziz's explanation, as quoted by al-Anbari, is directed at former Saudi mufti Abd al-Aziz Ibn Baz, who argued that membership in a parliament depended on the intention of the member.[64]

Such ideas about modern institutions and democratic norms are applied by the Islamic State to justify war against members of the military and security forces in Muslim countries. They are also used to apostatize Islamists as well as mainstream clerics who are part of official religious establishments. Al-Anbari, the longest-serving and highest authority in the Islamic State until his death in March 2016, produced 40 lectures designed to explain his group's religious ideology. The lectures centered on the illegitimacy of institutions in Muslim countries, including mosques and courts. He saved special ire for Shia, Sufis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and mainstream Salafists (he often referred to the latter as *murjia*, a pejorative term for pacifist imams). In one of his lectures, he singled out these Salafists as the "most absurd" among the Islamic State's detractors, a reflection of the fierce ideological battle between the two since the group's recent rise in Syria and Iraq.[65]

The *Sahwa* Link

Many of the clerics that the Islamic State cites to justify its anti-Shia ideology come from the *Sahwa* generation or are otherwise associated with the *Sahwa* movement. These include Ibrahim al-Fares, Muhsin al-Awaji, Mohammed al-Barrak, Hamoud al-Omari, Mohammed al-Nojaimi, Saad al-Durihim, and their contemporaries from Egypt and elsewhere, such as Omar Abdulrahman, sometimes known as "the Blind Sheikh."

These clerics tend to be particularly outspoken against Shia. Al-Fares, for example, wrote extensively about Shia as an "emblem of treason," and once quoted Ibn Taymiyyah as saying: "The origin of all sedition and calamity is Shia and their allies, and many of the swords unleashed against Islam come from them."[66] Some of these clerics, however, notably Hamoud al-Omari, emphasize that while they deem Shia as a sect to be deviant, violence against Shia civilians is unacceptable, in contrast to Islamic State doctrine.

In the Islamic State, Turki al-Binali, from Bahrain, is second to al-Anbari in terms of influence.

According to an online biography, al-Binali is a disciple of Salman al-Awda, a prominent figure in Saudi Arabia's *Sahwa*. Al-Binali claims that the two were close before al-Awda started to "deteriorate," or become more moderate.[67] Al-Binali has been associated with Hajjaj al-Ajmi, an activist Salafi Kuwaiti cleric known for his fundraising activities for radical rebel groups in Syria. Al-Binali has also been influenced by Abdul-Aziz al-Tarifi, a well-known Saudi cleric from the *Sahwa* generation, who was arrested by Saudi authorities

in April 2016 presumably for criticizing Riyadh's Western-driven religious reforms.[68] He continues to speak favorably of al-Tarifi and to recommend his writings.

Before he traveled to Syria in 2013 to join the group, al-Binali had gained credibility as a jihadi mufti through close association with fourteen known clerics in the region. In 2009, al-Maqdisi authorized him to teach and to issue fatwas, which he did in prominent jihadi forums under the nom de guerre Abu Hummam al-Athari. Islamic State members highlight al-Binali's teachings and fatwas to counter attempts to downplay his religious weight by other clerics, including al-Maqdisi.

Although al-Binali is a theological lightweight compared to some clerics, his early jihadi activities help the Islamic State stake a claim in a long line of jihadi jurisprudence. This makes him particularly useful to the Islamic State in defending itself against allegations by other jihadi factions that its ideology is not sufficiently rooted in jurisprudence. One Islamic State cleric has noted that al-Binali's accepted authority prior to his membership in the Islamic State is either a testament to the group's credibility or a testament to its al-Qaeda critics' lack of credibility because they had previously approved of his credentials.

Al-Binali has been at the forefront of building legitimacy for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. As a former al-Qaeda associate, al-Binali is seen as well positioned to win over al-Qaeda supporters. Al-Binali was reportedly dispatched to the Libyan city of Sirte in March 2013 and in 2014 to proselytize for the Islamic State from the Rabat Mosque.[69] And he authored a booklet about Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his claim to the caliphate, *Middu al-ayadi li-bayat al-Baghdadi* (Extend the hands to pledge allegiance to al-Baghdadi).

Al-Binali's sectarian views and background also make him valuable to the Islamic State. In 2007, he was expelled from Dubai, where he was studying, and was later banned from Kuwait, Egypt, Qatar, and his home country Bahrain because of his *takfiri* and sectarian ideas. He has been a prolific critic of Shia and their "warped" ideology, as he and other critics see it. In July 2015, he threatened attacks against Shia mosques in Bahrain in the wake of Islamic State suicide bombings of Shia mosques in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Al-Binali tends to focus on two themes that are central to Islamic State ideology: nullifiers of Islam and *tawhid* (the oneness of God). In Libya, he lectured on nullifiers of Islam, and he wrote a textbook on *tawhid* for use in Islamic State training camps.[70]

While the Islamic State uses terms often associated with Salafists, or Wahhabis, it also cites sermons and writings by individuals who do not belong to the traditional religious establishment. For instance, a recommended list of 196 written, video, and audio items distributed by Islamic State supporters to new members overwhelmingly features work by the clerics mentioned above.[71] On the doctrine of *wala wal bara*, new members are advised to watch sermons by clerics associated with the *Sahwa*, who often comment on the ideas of religious scholars widely accepted by mainstream Muslims.

> While the Islamic State uses terms often associated with Salafists, or Wahhabis, it also cites sermons and writings by individuals who do not belong to the traditional religious establishment.

The influence of *Sahwa*-era scholars does not, of course, absolve Salafism, particularly the Saudi version, of its contribution to legitimizing groups such as the Islamic State. Salafi traditions provide religious fodder for the Islamic State's discourse and help it link itself to traditional Islam. But the group has moved beyond these traditions, and the Islamic State and traditional Salafists have confronted each other on religious grounds. Many of the extremist ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and Wahhabism were already used for political and revolutionary purposes by modern religious intellectuals who influence jihadi ideologies today. The concept of *wala wal bara*, for example, was weaponized during the *Sahwa* era to target not only heretical Muslims but also the West, a reinterpretation that heavily influenced jihadists in the 1990s.[72]

Many of the Islamic State's practices are rejected by traditional Salafists. Suicide bombing, for example, is rejected by most Salafists on the grounds that suicide is forbidden by Islam in all its forms. Islamist clerics, such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, have sanctioned suicide bombing—although he later stated that his fatwa was specific to Israel.[73] Rebelling against rulers, declaring ordinary Shia as apostates, and bombing mosques are some of the practices rejected by traditional Salafists.

Justifying Savagery

The Islamic State's favored clerics offer justifications for its savagery, especially against fellow Muslims. Some of them, however, do so by stoking totalitarian and sectarian hatred rather than directly espousing the type of violence the Islamic State exhibits.

Al-Rashed is known for his fiery remarks, often featured in weepy sermons. In one sermon, he told of the beheading of Khalid bin Sufyan al-Hadhli in the seventh century. According to al-Rashed, Muhammad asked for a volunteer to kill al-Hadhli for orchestrating attacks against Muslims. Abdullah bin Anas volunteered, and killed and then beheaded al-Hadhli. When he returned with the severed head, according to al-Rashed, Muhammad praised and rewarded him. Although this account is disputed, it is repeatedly cited by Islamic State members.

The Islamic State cites two clerics in particular—Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir and Abu Bakr Naji—to justify its gory brutality against opponents.[74] With their justifications for beheading and similar harsh tactics, the writings of Naji and al-Muhajir are indispensable to the Islamic State.

Al-Muhajir is an Egyptian who authored *Questions About the Jurisprudence of Jihad*, a book that Islamic State founder al-Zarqawi studied and then taught at a jihadi camp in Herat.

Naji—whose real name is Mohammad Hasan Khalil al-Hakim—a former member of the Egyptian jihadist Islamic Group, wrote *The Management of Savagery*,[75] reported by an Islamic State–affiliated cleric to be widely circulated among the group's provincial commanders and members. The book's seminal contribution is to differentiate between jihad and other faith matters. The author said that the way jihad is taught "on paper" makes it hard for young people to absorb its true meaning. He stated, "Those who have practiced jihad know that it is nothing but brutality, callousness, terrorism, deterrence and infliction. I am talking about jihad and fighting, not about Islam, so do not confuse the two. Fighting cannot continue and transition from one phase to another unless the first phase includes infliction and deterrence of the enemy."[76] The impact of these two ideologues on the Islamic State is not new: they heavily influenced al-Zarqawi.[77] Al-Muhajir and Naji both justify beheading as not only religiously permissible but also recommended by God and his Prophet. They claim that the spilling of an infidel's blood is "permissible in an absolute way," and that aiding infidels against Muslims is a greater unbelief, which renders a person unequivocally an infidel.[78]

Storytelling and Jihad

In terms of indoctrination, the Islamic State tends to steer clear of exposing new members to teachings that are not directly derived from sharia books. New members are almost exclusively shown religious texts, according to Islamic State–affiliated clerics. Established members or commanders, in contrast, can study manuals such as Abu Bakr Naji's book.[79] Limiting new members' readings to religious texts and historical stories conforms to the group's position that it is an extension of authentic Islam rather than an organization with its own set of teachings.

Stories from early Islamic history (often from the period known as the Apostasy Wars, which followed Muhammad's death) are also cited by the Islamic State to justify beheading, crucifixion, mass killing, and similarly brutal practices to new members. Abu Asaad al-Samaan, an Islamic State cleric, cited the story of Safiyya bint Abdulmutalib, a woman from the Prophet Muhammad's time, to justify beheading as a terror tactic. According to al-Samaan, Muslim women were separated from the men in the city of Medina during the Battle of the Ditch and put in a secured place.[80] But a man, identified in the story as Jewish, managed to climb to the secured place and approached the women. Safiyya asked an old man to kill the intruder, but the old man responded that he was incapable of fighting. Safiyya, who had fought in a previous battle, killed the approaching man, beheaded him, and threw his severed head onto enemy fighters to terrorize them. Islamic State members also reference verses from the Quran that call for the "smiting of necks" and similar tactics, although mainstream Muslim clerics maintain that these verses must be understood in the context of the battlefield.

The Islamic State deliberately employs unusual punishments to shock observers and to highlight similar incidents in Islamic history.

The Islamic State relies heavily on stories and events from Islamic history because they can be more powerful than the citation of Islamic principles, especially if the stories and events support Quranic verses or *hadiths*. The group makes the most of any example it can find, and borrows from what Muslim clerics consider isolated incidents that should not be followed as rules. It uses stories not always to argue a religious idea: they may be offered to help Islamic State members who struggle with committing acts of extreme violence.

The group cites the story of Islam's commander in chief, Khaled Ibn al-Walid, who killed thousands of captives after the Battle of Ullais,[81] contrary to Islamic teachings. Ibn al-Walid had pledged to God that he would make a river of his enemies' blood if he overran them. When he could not find enough people to make that river, he killed the captives and ordered a river's dam to be opened onto their bleeding bodies. The Islamic State points out that the first caliph, Abu Bakr, praised Ibn al-Walid for his victory, and the Prophet Muhammad referred to him as the "Unleashed Sword of God." When the Islamic State kills its captives, it can simply cite this story, relying on what can be described as "kinetic sharia"—events and stories, rather than mere theology.

The Islamic State deliberately employs unusual punishments to shock observers and to highlight similar incidents in Islamic history, as followers of Saudi extremist Juhayman al-Utaybi did in the case of rituals in the 1970s. In December 2014, for example, Islamic State fighters threw a twenty-year-old man accused of homosexual acts from the highest building in Deir Ezzor "as the Muslim caliph Abu Bakr did," according to statements by the Islamic State.[82] Conversations with new Islamic State members suggest that the group's clerics often dig deep into Islamic history for obscure stories or *hadiths* to impress new members and demonstrate that true Islam has been absent from their society. Islamic State member Muthanna Abdulsattar explained, "When you listen to the clerics of the al-Dawla [State, as Islamic State members refer to their group], you are shocked that most of our Islamic societies have deviated from the true religion. They follow a religion that was invented two decades ago, or less."[83]

Mainstream clerics may struggle to deal with the stories of extreme violence upon which the Islamic State relies. They typically abstain from telling such stories in public, creating space for the Islamic State to shape these stories to fit its narrative. Furthermore, mainstream clerics often find themselves unable to engage in discussions around these stories without risking sectarian implications. For example, criticism of Ibn al-Walid, who is highly revered by Sunnis and disliked by Shia, would put a cleric in the awkward position of vindicating members of the opposing sect.

Conclusion

Regardless of how the Islamic State fares militarily in the coming months and years, its ideology remains a long-term challenge. It is a symptom of a broader issue that has been largely overlooked: an unchecked shake-up in Salafism that allows new movements to derive from both Salafism and Islamism. Until the interplay of Salafi and Islamist ideas is recognized, the Islamic State's ideology will continue to be misdiagnosed. The group's emphasis on Islamic theology in its public discourse clouds its revolutionary nature and creates the illusion that its ideology is traceable to Salafism rather than to the confluence of fundamentalist and revolutionary strands.

The central role of Islamist ideas is best captured in a saying popular among Islamic State supporters, attributed to Yemeni journalist Abdulelah Haider Shaye: "The Islamic State was drafted by Sayyid Qutb, taught by Abdullah Azzam, globalized by Osama bin Laden, transferred to reality by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and implemented by al-Baghdadis: Abu Omar and Abu Bakr."[84]

The Islamic State has added a focus on sectarianism to a history of radical views. In particular, it has linked itself to the Salafi-jihadi movement that evolved out of the Afghan jihad. This link has helped the group to authenticate itself, and renders it less subject to ridicule or accusations of deviance. The Islamic State's brand of sectarian jihad is flourishing in the current regional climate. Sectarian polarization; the rise of similarly sectarian militias in Iraq, Syria, and beyond; and the absence of religious and political leadership help the Islamic State to appeal, recruit, and endure. Sectarian media and political rhetoric continue to provide the group with ammunition by stoking communal hatred.

Meanwhile, the messages from mainstream clerics fail to resonate largely because of their links to authoritarian regimes. Moderate institutions were weakened in the wake of the Arab uprisings of 2011, when religious establishments were perceived as complicit with repressive regimes and as failing to address the aspirations of revolutionary youth. The Islamic State and others quickly filled the resulting vacuum, and the group appears to be on track to turn its obscure teachings into an established school as al-Qaeda did over the years, but potentially to greater effect.

Correction: Al-Zawahiri's letter to al-Zarqawi was misreported; it was from 2005, not 2013, and concerned al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Islamic State's predecessor.

Notes

[1] Roula Khalaf, "Rise of ISIS Shakes Arab World From Long State of Denial," *Financial Times*, July 16, 2014, http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9d802a64-0cde-11e4-bf1e-00144feabdc0.html.

[2] Isabel Coles, "Islamic State Seeks to Justify Enslaving Yazidi Women and Girls in Iraq," Reuters, October 13, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/13/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-yazidis-idUSKCN0I21H620141013.

[3] Tim Arango, "Escaping Death in Northern Iraq," *New York Times*, September 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/world/middleeast/surviving-isis-massacre-iraq-video.html?_r=0; and "Islamic State 'Executes 70 Sunni Tribesmen in Iraq,'" BBC, October 5, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34446066.

[4] Liz Sly, "Syrian Tribal Revolt Against Islamic State Ignored, Fueling Resentment," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syria-tribal-revolt-against-islamic-state-ignored-fueling-resentment/2014/10/20/25401beb-8de8-49f2-8e64-c1cfbee45232_story.html.

[5] Ibrahim al-Shaalan, Twitter post, July 5, 2014, 7:07 p.m., https://twitter.com/ialshaalan/status/485605935688065024; and Hassan Hassan, "Now a Caliphate Has Been Declared, the Debate Begins," *National*, July 9, 2014, http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/now-a-caliphate-has-been-declared-the-debate-begins.

[6] Eric Schmitt, "In Battle to Defang ISIS, U.S. Targets Its Psychology," *New York Times*, December 28, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/politics/in-battle-to-defang-isis-us-targets-its-psychology-.html.

[7] Alastair Crooke, "You Can't Understand ISIS If You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia," *Huffington Post*, August 27, 2014, last updated October 27, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html.

[8] Nasim Ahmed, "To Defeat ISIS We Need to Stop Shooting in the Dark and Understand Political Islam," *Middle East Monitor*, October 8, 2014, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/14552-to-defeat-isis-we-need-to-stop-shooting-in-the-dark-and-understand-political-islam.

[9]   William Dalrymple, "The ISIS Demand for a Caliphate Is About Power, Not Religion," *Guardian*, July 13, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/13/isis-caliphate-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-jihadi-islam.

[10] This paper refers to political Islam in its broad sense because Islamist ideas since the 1960s, specifically, influenced new movements that did not necessarily identify with the Muslim Brotherhood. In some cases, as is argued, such movements were influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism but became critical of the two.

[11] Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 20, 2011, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/salafis_sufis.pdf.

[12] Ali Jumuah, "Wasila, Circumambulating Graves and Accusing Others of Shirk and Kufr," trans. Mahdi Lock, Marifah, last updated December 20, 2012, http://www.marifah.net/articles/Al-Watan_Ali%20Jumuah.pdf.

13 Devin R. Springer, James L. Regens, and David N. Edger, *Islamic Radicalism and Global Jihad* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 50.

14 Mohammed bin Saeed al-Qahtani, *Min mafaheem aqidat al-salaf al-salih, al-wala wal baraa fil Islam* [The Islamic concept of allegiance and disavowal as preached by the early noble generations of Muslims] (Mecca, Saudi Arabia: Tayba Publishers, 2014), http://islamhouse.com/ar/books/468544/.

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16 Stephane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

17 Hossam Tammam, *The Salafization of the Muslim Brothers: The Erosion of the Fundamental Hypothesis and the Rising of Salafism Within the Muslim Brotherhood; The Paths and the Repercussions of Change* (Alexandria, Egypt: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2011).

18 Sujata Ashwarya Cheema, "Sayyid Qutb's Concept of Jahiliyya as Metaphor for Modern Society," in *Beyond Textual Islam*, ed. Nadeem Hasnain (New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2008). The chapter is available online as a draft paper at http://www.academia.edu/3222569/Sayyid_Qutbs_Concept_of_Jahiliyya_as_Metaphor_for_Modern_Society.

19 John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

20 Tammam, *The Salafization of the Muslim Brothers.*

21 Ibid.

22 This attitude can be discerned during conversations with Islamic State members. They believe the local population is ignorant of and resistant to true Islam.

23 Interview by the author, cited in Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015), 222.

24 "Al-Salafiyya takhtariq jamaat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi akbar hazza tandhimiya" [Salafism infiltrates the Muslim Brotherhood in the largest organizational shake-up], Al Arabiya, November 28, 2010, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/11/27/127653.html.

25 Hassan Hassan, "New Syrian Islamic Council Repeats the Patterns of Old," *National*, April 22, 2014, http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/new-syrian-islamic-council-repeats-the-patterns-of-old.

26 "Sheikh al-Sururiyyah Mohammed Surur Zein al-Abidine li *al-Quds al-Arabi*" [Sheikh of the Sururiyyah Mohammed Surur Zein al-Abidine speaks to *al-Quds al-Arabi*], *al-Quds al-Arabi*, January 20, 2013, http://alqudsalarabi.info/index.asp?fname=data%5C2013%5C01%5C01-20%5C20z495.htm.

27 Ben Kesling and Suha Ma'ayeh, "Jordan Releases Zarqawi's Spiritual Mentor From Prison," *Wall Street Journal*, June 16, 2014, http://www.wsj.com/articles/jordan-releases-zarqawis-spiritual-mentor-from-prison-1402960962.

28 CNN Arabic's interview with Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Al-Maqdisi li CNN bil arabi: Ibn Baz sabab tarki li jamiyat al-Mosul . . . araftu al-Zawahiri wa al-Zarqawi bi Afghanistan wa lam ubayie al-Qaeda" [Al-Maqdisi to CNN Arabic: Ibn Baz was the reason why I left the University of Mosul . . . I knew al-Zawahiri and al-Zarqawi in Afghanistan and did not pledge allegiance to al-Qaeda], May 24, 2015, http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2015/05/24/me-240515-maqdisi-intv-p1. In the interview, al-Maqdisi stated that in his youth he was influenced by "activist Salafism, a blend of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism." He said Salafi jihadism emerged later during the jihad in Afghanistan, where "different currents merged under so-called Salafi jihadism."

29 Michael Scheuer, *Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.

[30] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 54.

[31] Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Democracy: A Religion!," trans. Abu Muhammad al-Maleki, ed. Abu Sayf Muwahhid, Jihadology, uploaded August 30, 2010, https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/democracy-a-relegoin.pdf; and Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, "Everything We Knew About This ISIS Mastermind Was Wrong," *Daily Beast*, April 15, 2015, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/15/everything-we-knew-about-this-isis-mastermind-was-wrong.html.

[32] Zoltan Pall, "Kuwaiti Salafism and Its Growing Influence in the Levant," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2014, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/kuwaiti_salafists.pdf.

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Al-Qutbiyyah al-ikhwaniyyah wa al-Sururiyyah qaedat manahij al-Salafiyyah al-takfiriyyah" [Qutbism and Sururism: the foundations of Salafi takfiri ideology], al-Arab Online, August 19, 2014, http://www.alarab.co.uk/?id=30798.

[35] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 52.

[36] Ideas such as *wala wal bara* have roots in early Islamic thought and are held by the majority of Muslim clerics today, albeit in much mellower forms. Anti–Islamic State clerics from Syria, such as Ratib al-Nabulsi, Osama al-Rifai, and Moaz al-Khatib, advised Syrians against permanent residency in the West based on the *wala wal bara* principle. See Abdulsattar al-Sayid, "Hiwar hadi bain talameeth al-madrasah al-wahida houl fatwa al-sheikhayn al-fadhilayn al-Nabulsi wa al-Rifai fi mawdhoui hijrat wa iqamat al-Muslimeen fi diyar ghayr al-Muslimin" [A quiet dialogue among the disciples of the same school about the fatwa issued by the two sheikhs al-Nabulsi and al-Rifai about the migration of Muslims to non-Muslim lands], Islam Syria, December 26, 2014, http://www.islamsyria.com/portal/consult/show/792, for example, in which the participants said that no Muslim should live permanently in the West and that Muslims who wish to study in the West can stay there temporarily as long as they have a wife and children who are too young to be influenced by the decadent Western lifestyle.

[37] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "English Translation of Ayman al-Zawahiri's Letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi" *Weekly Standard*, October 11, 2005, http://www.weeklystandard.com/english-translation-of-ayman-al-zawahiris-letter-to-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/article/7397.

[38] Peter Bergen, "Strange Bedfellows -- Iran and al Qaeda," CNN, March 10, 2013, http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/10/opinion/bergen-iran-al-qaeda/.

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[47]　Interviews with Islamic State members in Turkey via the Internet and telephone, over several months in 2014.

[48]　Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi speaks about the Mecca incident and the Juhayman al-Utaybi movement: "Al-haqeeqa al-mughayabah Juhayman al-Utaybi wa hadithat al-haram" [The suppressed truth, Juhayman al-Utaybi and the Mecca incident], YouTube video, 15:01, posted by Ali al-Yafai, September 3, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_zwh8_NDO0.

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[51]　Abu Abdullah Imad Abdullah al-Tunisi, "Taeqeebat ala al-taeleeqat wa naqdh al-fatwa al-tunisiya lil sheikh al–hazeemi . . . taqdeem al sheikh abi muhammad al maqdisi" [Responses to the comments and refutation of the Tunisian fatwa by Sheikh al-Hazimi . . . introduction by Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi], Tawhid and Jihad Forum, December 10, 2014, http://www.ilmway.com/site/maqdis/MS_4872.html. In the introduction, al-Maqdisi wrote: "Many brothers have corresponded with me asking me to respond to al-Hazimi regarding his confusion and excessiveness, whose evil has spread among the youth until it infiltrated the jihadi arena in Syria, and his [fatwa] had a huge effect on bloodshed and violation of honor."

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[53]　Ari Soffer, "ISIS Executes 'Extremist' Members Plotting Rebellion," *Arutz Sheva*, December 23, 2014, http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/189017#.Vm9edYuorHg.

[54]　The list, which is not exhaustive, is based on discussions with two Islamic State–affiliated clerics and another Islamic State member, who provided the names and in one case pictures of a book disseminated by the Islamic State. The book in question, *Clarification About the Unbelief of He Who Assists the Americans*, is authored by Nasir al-Fahd.

[55]　Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[56]　Interview with Thomas Hegghammer via e-mail, December 23, 2014.

[57]　Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Saudi Arabia's Jihadi Jailbird: A Portrait of al-Shu'aybi Ideologue Nasir al-Fahd," *Intelligence Quarterly*, December 27, 2010, http://www.intelligencequarterly.com/2010/12/saudi-arabia's-jihadi-jailbird-a-portrait-of-al-shuaybi-ideologue-nasir-al-fahd/.

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73 List obtained by author in January 2015.

74 Sharia training organized by the Islamic State varies in length: two weeks, one month, forty-five days, six months, or up to one year.

75 This is the English title used by William McCants of the Brookings Institution, who translated the book. See Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. William McCants (Boston: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006). *Tawahush* literally means savagery, and also connotes a power vacuum and chaos; it can also be translated as lawlessness. The term was coined by Abu Qatada al-Filistini, a Palestinian ideologue, who has denied he wrote the book. The author was first to reveal that the Islamic State uses the book as part of its curriculum.

76 The translation used is original and directly taken from the Arabic, *Idarat al-Tawahush*, by Abu Bakr Naji. The Islamic State used the word *tashreed*, or deterrence, as a title for the massacre carried out by its al-Battar squad, a special forces unit, against the Shaitat tribe in eastern Syria in August 2014. It was described at the time as the bloodiest single atrocity committed by the Islamic State in Syria, and featured graphic pictures of Islamic State members beheading tribesmen. See Liz Sly, "Syria Tribal Revolt Against Islamic State Ignored, Fueling Resentment," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syria-tribal-revolt-against-islamic-state-ignored-fueling-resentment/2014/10/20/25401beb-8de8-49f2-8e64-c1cfbee45232_story.html.

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[78] Ibid.

[79] *The Management of Savagery* provides advice to jihadists, including to teach people religion; gradually plant eyes and ears everywhere; construct an intelligence apparatus; deter "hypocrites" and force them to suppress their hypocritical, demoralizing views and tolerate the influential among them to halt their harm; ally with those permissible to work with other than those who are already aligned with the movement; and keep attacking the enemy to make it seek peace. See the McCants translation, https://archive.org/details/TheManagementOfBarbarismAbuBakrNaji.

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