EUI MIDDLE EAST DIRECTIONS

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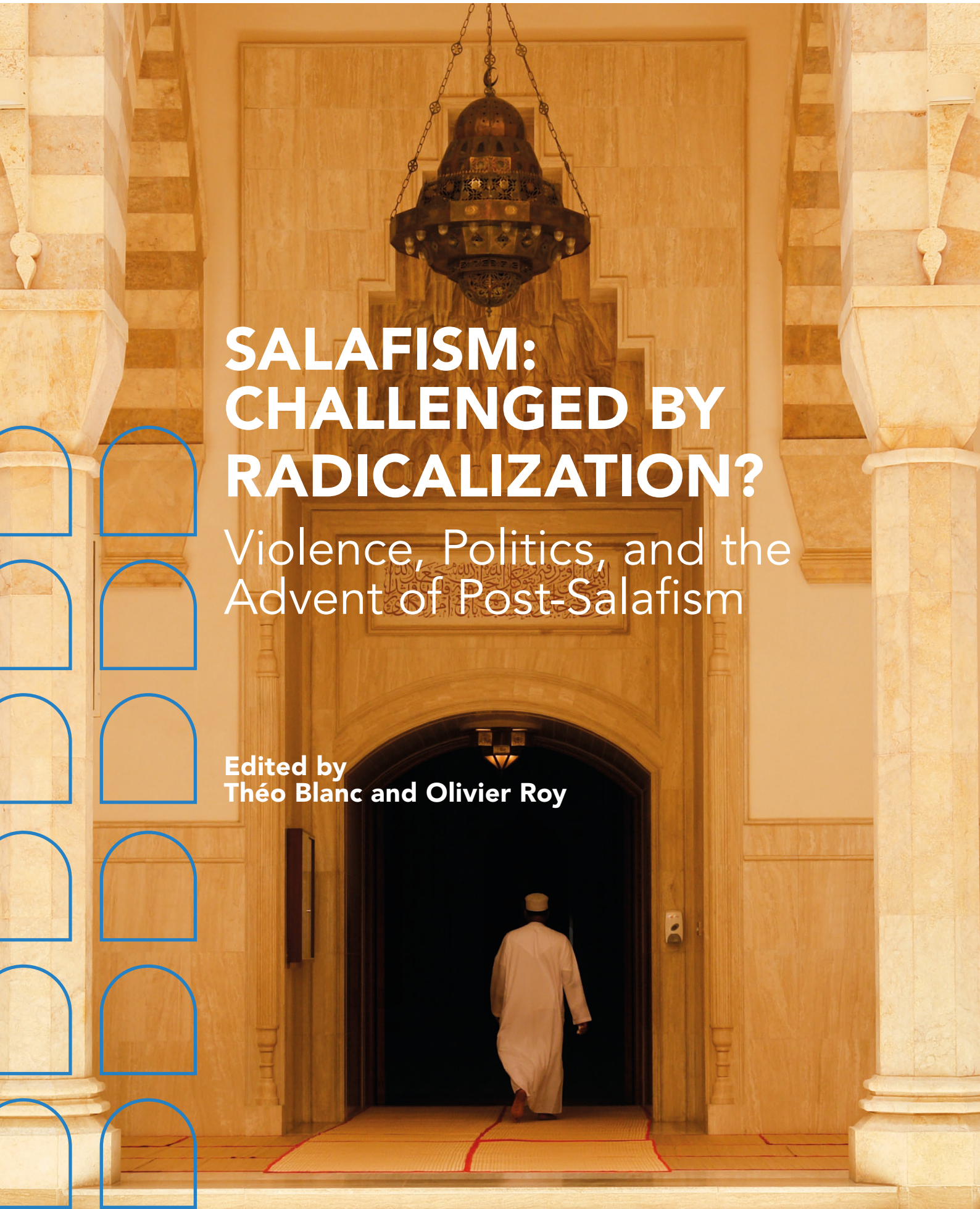

SALAFISM: CHALLENGED BY RADICALIZATION?

Violence, Politics, and the Advent of Post-Salafism

Edited by
Théo Blanc and Olivier Roy

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Salafism: Challenged by Radicalization?

Violence, Politics, and the Advent of Post-Salafism

Edited by:
Théo Blanc and Olivier Roy

prevex PREVENTING VIOLENT

RADEX

This e-book results from a workshop initially planned for 7 April 2020 and convened online on 15 December 2020 by the European University Institute. The workshop was jointly organized by RADEX (Nadia Marzouki), PREVEX (Stéphane Lacroix, Olivier Roy), MEDirections[1]. (Luigi Narbone, Olivier Roy), and Théo Blanc (EUI).

1 Special thanks to Stefano Vannucci and Valentina Gorgoni for their assistance in the workshop organization.

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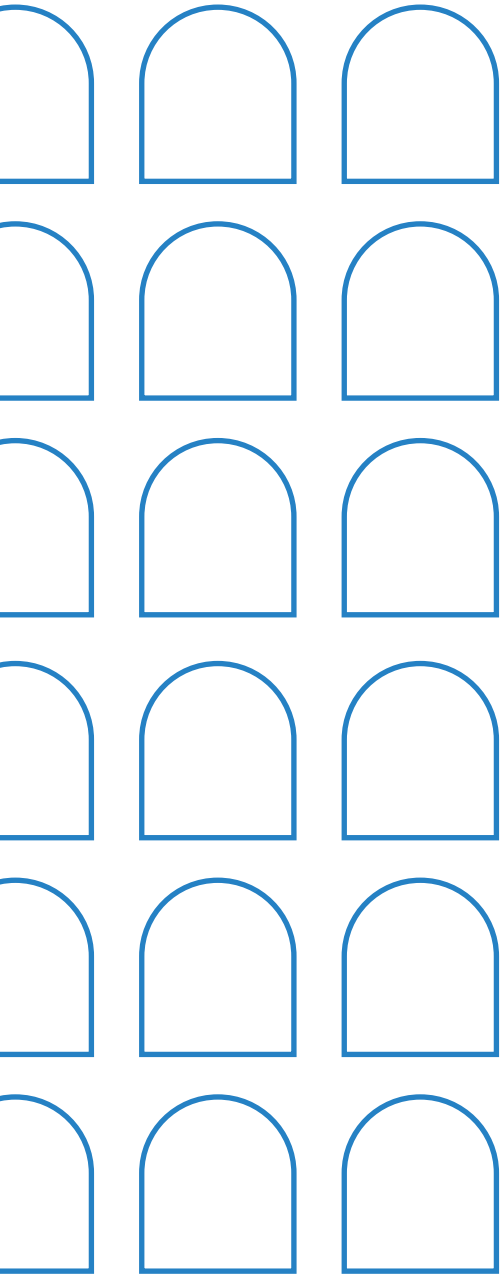

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INTRODUCTION

SALAFISM: CHALLENGED BY RADICALIZATION? VIOLENCE, POLITICS, AND THE ADVENT OF POST-SALAFISM

Théo Blanc

In academic and political discourses on radicalization Salafism is routinely identified as the ideological breeding-ground of violent Jihadism and terrorism in both Western and Middle Eastern contexts. Based on an analysis of its ideological affinity with (violent) Jihadism, some researchers regard Salafism as 'the antechamber of radicalization',[1] while recent attacks in Paris (e.g at the Prefecture on 3 October 2019) have re-launched the debate on passing legislation forbidding Salafism.[2] In parallel, public officials as well as security and intelligence services often perceive Salafism as a security threat and closely monitor Salafi activities.

It remains unclear, despite this alleged ideological proximity, whether Salafism is a socializer or a radicalizing agent of violent (Jihadi) activists. While the majority of European terrorists were not adherents to strict Salafi orthopraxy before resorting to violence,[3] Salafis themselves publicly denounce terrorism, are very critical of Jihadis, and even often claim to be a barrier themselves against violence. At the same time, the fact that Salafi-Jihadism[4] seems to be the prevailing ideology behind terrorist attacks in the West and the MENA alike begs the question of the ideological responsibility of Salafism. Accordingly, is Salafism therefore a facilitator or a bulwark against violent radicalization? Is there a difference of degree or nature between Salafism and Jihadism? How credible can Salafism be as an instrument for the prevention of radicalization and for de-radicalization?

The interrogation of this question is even more important as it occurs in a contemporary context where Salafism is facing a structural crisis: accusations of breeding terrorism, the phenomenon of "Salafi burn-outs", the challenge of young generations ("how to be born from a born again?"[5]), the disappearance of traditional Salafi shaykhs, the end of the Saudi sponsorship of transnational Salafism, the autonomization of Salafism vis-à-vis Saudi tutelage, and unprecedented adaptations to the upheavals of Arab countries' political systems, all participate to the restructuring of Salafism as an ideology as well as a social force. This raises a number of questions: To what extent is Salafism in crisis? Are we now entering a post-Salafi era? What effects did accusations of breeding terrorism produce on Salafism and how exactly have Salafis adapted in the face of such accusations? What are the new venues of activism and modes of engagement through which Salafis 'reinvent' Salafism? To what extent can political Salafis be entrepreneurs of

1 Gilles Kepel, *Terreur dans l'Hexagone. Genèse du djihad français* (Paris : Gallimard, 2015); Gilles Kepel, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West* (Princeton University Press, 2017) ; Alexandre Devecchio, « La querelle du djihad, suite et fin ? », *Le Figaro*, 16/01/2020, https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/la-querelle-du-djihad-suite-et-fin-20200116; Bernard Rougier speaks of a "continuum" between Salafism and terrorism, in « Enquête choc sur l'islamisme en France », *C à Vous*, 09/01/2020, *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTmE9sT1z1o.

2 « Retailleau (LR) appelle à être «implacable» contre la radicalisation », *Le Figaro*, 08/10/2019, https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/retailleau-lr-appelle-a-etre-implacable-contre-la-radicalisation-20191008; « Aude : Valls plaide pour «l'interdiction du salafisme» », *Le Parisien*, 25/03/2018, http://www.leparisien.fr/politique/aude-valls-plaide-pour-l-interdiction-du-salafisme-25-03-2018-7627995.php; « Terrorisme : le Sénat veut inscrire le salafisme sur la liste des dérives sectaires », 10/07/2018, *Public Sénat*, https://www.public-senat.fr/article/parlementaire/terrorisme-le-senat-veut-inscrire-le-salafisme-sur-la-liste-des-derives; « Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet sur le salafisme : "il faut trouver une base légale pour l'interdire" », *Europe 1*, 21/07/2016, https://www.europe1.fr/politique/nkm-sur-le-salafisme-il-faut-trouver-une-base-legale-pour-linterdire-2804341

3 Olivier Roy, *Le jihad et la mort* (Paris : Seuil, 2016) ; Abdelasiem El Difraoui, in Florian Delorme, « L'islam politique, entre réformisme et radicalité (3/4). Essor du salafisme en Europe : la réponse des Etats », Cultures Monde, *France Culture*, 11/04/2018, https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/cultures-monde/culturesmonde-du-mercredi-11-avril-2018

4 Salafi-Jihadism and Jihadi-Salafism are used interchangeably; this variation is mostly due to the semantic choices made by the authors quoted in this paper.

5 Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance. When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (Hurst, 2010)

moderation and inhibitors of violent radicalization? Ultimately, is the crisis of Salafism good or bad news for violent radicalization?

This e-book endeavours to provide the first systematic analysis of these issues. The first section provides a thorough literature review introducing readers to the academic debate around the thesis of Salafism as the breeding-ground of violent Jihadism. The second section then broadens the discussion to the crisis of Salafism and the advent of post-Salafism. Each section ends with an overview of the chapters and main contributions of the e-book.

The Academic Debate: Does Salafism Breed Violent Jihadism?

Quintan Wiktorowicz was among the first scholars to raise the issue of potential passage from Salafism to Jihadism in a 2001 study. Although he distinguished between purist Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism, he argued that the "ideological affinity between violent tendencies and others in the Salafi community […] creates one of the deepest potential recruitment pools for violent activists." He did not, however, provide empirical evidence for this claim which he rather framed in policy-advising terms, urging the United States to refrain from military operations in order to avoid radicalizing the Salafi movement.[6] Some years later, two reference books on Salafism, respectively edited by Bernard Rougier in 2008 and Roel Meijer in 2009,[7] took on the inquiry about whether "passage paths between quietist Salafism and Jihadi Salafism" existed, without advancing empirical proof beyond the already-existing argument of ideological and theological affinity.[8] Numerous other scholars postulated an "easy transition" from Salafism to Jihadism based on the same argument,[9] including Jacob Olidort who contends that the move from quietist to Jihadi Salafi does not require a significant ideological change.[10]

In 2007, a report by NYPD experts Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt proposed a new argument: that individuals attending Salafi mosques – described as radical yet preaching against violence – are considerably more likely to become Salafi-Jihadi and active in terrorism than individuals attending non-Salafi mosques.[11] Some scholars combined this argument with the ideological affinity argument.[12] In their four-step radicalization model (pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and Jihadization), the authors identify step 2 with adherence to "Salafi Islam", before the individual "progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts jihadi-Salafi ideology

6 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad", *Middle East Policy*, 8.4 (2001): 18-38 ; 20, 34.

7 Bernard Rougier, « Introduction », in *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme ?*, Presses Universitaires de France « Proche-Orient »; Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism. Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst, 2009), 3.

8 With the exception of Brynjar Lia's chapter, which criticizes the continuum thesis (see below in the introduction).

9 For example, Marius Lazăr, "The Salafism in Europe. Between Hijra and Jihad". Studia Politica. *Romanian Political Science Review* 4 (2009): 691-707, 697: "The transition from pietistic to radical Salafism is often easy, given the fact that followers of both share the same Weltanschauung and only differ in their methods and the limits of their actions".

10 Jacob Olidort, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 1," *Brookings Institute*, March 13, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/03/13/is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/. There is "not a big conceptual leap to go from quietism to jihadism.", he writes.

11 This contention amounts to a relation of correlation, not causality. One may ask whether Jihadi militants are more likely to go to Salafi mosques.

12 Lauren Fisher, "Islamic Radicalization in the State of Maine," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, 2014, https://www.ict.org.il/UserFiles/IRI%20in%20Maine.pdf: "The reason that Salafist centers are more vulnerable to radical recruiters than traditional Sunni centers is that extremist Islamic ideology (such as that of al Qaeda and its affiliates) has its roots in Salafist-Wahhabist Islam." (14)

and concludes […] that action is required" (step 3), before engaging in violent action (step 4).[13] In Germany, a 2014 study made a similar observation, finding that almost 37 percent of the 110 German jihadists whose attendance at a specific mosque could be verified, had been attendees of just six specific Salafi mosques out of some 2,600 mosques in the country.[14] In other words, the argument goes, Salafis are more likely to radicalize into violent extremism (i.e. Jihadism or terrorism).

Another widespread argument in the literature is that Wahhabism (i.e. Saudi Salafism) is the main ideological inspiration of homegrown terrorists in the West and of Jihadi groups in the MENA region.[15] This argument was popularized in academic, political, and media discourse following the 9/11 attack on the basis that 15 out of the 19 attackers were Saudis. According to Silber and Bhatt, "contemporary Saudi (Wahhabi) scholars have provided the religious legitimacy for many of the arguments promoted by the jihadists."[16] Others similarly designated Wahhabism as a security threat to Europe,[17] and in 2013 a report for the European Parliament identified "Wahhabism" as one of the main sources of terrorism worldwide – a phenomenon termed "Salafist-Wahhabi terrorism".[18]

At the same time, scholars blamed Wahhabism for being the primary ideological fuel of ISIS in the MENA region. In a famous *New York Times* article, Algerian writer Kamel Daoud characterized Saudi Arabia as "an ISIS that has made it", guilty of the same gruesome beheadings while upholding and spreading "Wahhabism, the ultra-puritanical form of Islam that Daesh [ISIS] feeds on."[19] Others pointed out that "ISIS and Saudi Arabia are locked in a theological struggle from which only one can emerge victorious."[20] and that Jihadism, which has "a distinct genealogy to Salafism and Wahhabism", is "far from being an exclusively Saudi or Gulf phenomenon".[21]

It is, however, in French academia that the thesis of a continuum between Salafism and violent

13 Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, "Radicalization in the West: The homegrown threat." New York, NY: New York City Police Department, 2007, 30, 36, 43.

14 Alexander Heerlein (2014), "'Salafistische' Moscheen—Ort des Gebets oder eine Brutstätte für Dschihadistische Muslime?," in *Gefährliche Nähe: Salafismus und Dschihadismus in Deutschland*, Michail Loginov and Klaus Hummel eds., Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 169

15 Khaled A. Beydoun, "Bisecting American Islam? Divide, Conquer, and Counter-Radicalization", Hastins Law Journal 69:2 (2018): 429-498, 451; "Karen: how Saudi Arabia exported the main source of global terrorism," *New Statesman*, November 27 2014, https://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2014/11/wahhabism-isis-how-saudiarabia-exported-main-source-global-terrorism; Ali Shihabi, "Scapegoating Saudi Arabia won't help us fight terrorism," *Washington Post*, May 31 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/05/31/scapegoatingsaudi-arabia-wont-help-us-fight-terrorism/?tid=ss_tw&utm_term=.e1360a330499. The argument was contested by several scholars, for e.g. an edited volume that set out "to unravel the myths that have led to equating Wahhabism with Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism", Mohammed Ayoob and Hasan Koselbalaban (eds). *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and the State* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009).

16 Silber and Bhatt, "Radicalization in the West", 17.

17 Marko Rakic and Dragisa Jurisic, "Wahhabism as a Militant Form of Islam on Europe's Doorstep". *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35:9 (2012): 650-663

18 Claude Moniquet, "The Involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism In The Support And Supply Of Arms to Rebel Groups Around the World," Directorate-General for External Policies, European Parliament, June 2013, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/457137/EXPO-AFET_ET(2013)457137_EN.pdf .The report blames Saudi Arabia and Qatar for backing this terrorism financially (13).

19 Kamel Daoud, "Saudi Arabia, an ISIS That Has Made It," *The New York Times*, 20 November 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/21/opinion/saudi-arabia-an-isis-that-has-made-it.html

20 Nawaf Obaid, "Only Saudi Arabia can defeat Isis," *The Guardian*, 22/1/2015, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/22/saudi-arabia-isis-us-terrorists-coalition

21 Laurent Bonnefoy and Stéphane Lacroix (2016), « Le problème saoudien. Le wahhabisme, rempart ou inspirateur de l'Etat islamique ? », *La revue du crieur*, n° 3

Jihadism was perhaps articulated and argued the most. In 2015, following the attacks in Paris, this thesis was put forward by Gilles Kepel as the main explanation of radicalization in Europe and France more particularly. In his *Terreur dans l'Hexagone. Genèse du djihad français*, Kepel explains the rise of violent Jihadism as the encounter of "foreign Islamist ideology" – which he claims is embodied by the Al-Qa'ida ideologue Abu Musʿab alSuri – and the "new political sociology of radicalized French Salafism". "These radicalized militants who proceed to criminal act do indeed represent a small minority, but they constitute the exacerbation point of a larger Salafi mouvance, whose rapid expansion on the French territory is characteristic of the 2005-2015 decade.", he writes.[22] The case of Mohammed Merah, who assassinated French militaries as well as Jewish children in 2012, is presented as the first representative of this phenomenon which has been "incubating" in French *banlieues* since the 2005 riots.

On the basis of this study, Kepel called his colleagues to "face the specific challenge of terrorist Jihadism and its relationship with the way larger and ambivalent phenomenon of Salafism"[23] and to "analyse the modes of passage from this Salafism to sanguinary Jihadism".[24] This call was taken on by Bernard Rougier (a former student of Kepel) who published a collective work under the title of *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme* in 2020.[25] The book not only contends that there is indeed a "continuum" between Salafism and Jihadi terrorism – thus endorsing Kepel's thesis – but that radicalized militants "easily pass" from one to the other.[26] The argument relies on the notion of "Islamic ecosystems" configurated by various politico-religious actors (Muslims Brothers, Salafis, Jihadis, and Dawa wa-l-Tabligh) that create a communitarian environment propitious to the "socialization" of violent militants. Hence the assertion that "most of those who joined Jihadism were previously socialized in these ecosystems".[27] Hugo Micheron (another student of Kepel) similarly argues in his 2020 book *Le Jihadisme français. Quartiers, Syrie, prisons* that the map of 'Islamic enclaves' can be superposed to the map of departures for jihad in Syria.[28] In the same line of argumentation, Kepel theorized the birth of a fourth generation of Jihadism, which breeds in "enclaved environments" exposed to internet propaganda and to "mosques preaching a cultural rupture with the democratic European society".[29] This thesis of an alliance of various anti-Republican Islamic actors was taken up by President Emmanuel Macron, who voiced his concerns about "the Republic [being] shaken in its foundations by the coalition of its enemies – terrorists, extremists, conspirators (*complotistes*),

22 Kepel, *Terreur dans l'Hexagone*, 114.

23 Cécile Daumas, « Gilles Kepel: «Il faut écouter les prêches du vendredi» », 14/04/2016, *Libération*, en ligne : https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2016/04/14/gilles-kepel-il-faut-ecouter-les-preches-du-vendredi_1446225

24 Gilles Kepel and Bernard Rougier, « «Radicalisations» et «islamophobie» », *Libération*, 14/03/2016, http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2016/03/14/radicalisations-et-islamophobie-le-roi-est-nu_1439535

25 Bernard Rougier eds., *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme* (Paris : PUF, 2020).

26 Rougier, 14, 110, 163, 290 ; Bernard Rougier, in « Enquête choc sur l'islamisme en France », C à Vous, 09/01/2020, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTmE9sT1z1o; « Entretien avec Bernard Rougier », *Le Point*, 15/09/2016.

27 Bernard Rougier, « L'islamisme est un projet hégémonique », *Le Point*, 02/01/2020, https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/bernard-rougier-l-islamisme-est-un-projet-hegemonique-02-01-2020-2355726_23.php ; « Bernard Rougier : les territoires conquis de l'islamisme », *Le Point*, 10/10/2019, https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/bernard-rougier-les-territoires-conquis-de-l-islamisme-09-10-2019-2340296_20.php

28 Hugo Micheron, *Le Jihadisme français. Quartiers, Syrie, prisons* (Paris : Gallimard, 2020). However, it is not entirely clear in the author's depiction whether these enclaves are 'Salafi' or 'Salafi-Jihadi'. This confusion voluntarily or involuntarily feeds the continuum thesis.

29 Delphine Allaire, « Gilles Kepel: après la mort d'al-Baghdadi, le djihadisme est entré dans sa quatrième génération », 28/10/2019, *Vatican News*, https://www.vaticannews.va/fr/monde/news/2019-10/gilles-kepel-apres-la-mort-d-al-baghdadi-le-djihadisme.html

[and] 'communitarianists'."[30]

For the three authors (Kepel, Rougier, and Micheron), the main argument advanced to back-up the continuum thesis is that violent Jihadism constitutes the enactment of the ideological rupture with Western society advocated by Salafism.[31] In Rougier's words, Salafism "provides a legitimation to Jihadism in its absolute condemnation of Western liberalism." In this understanding, verbal or symbolic rebellion foreshadows violent rebellion in such a way that the radicalized "individual has been through these [Salafi] steps before proceeding to violent action".[32] A similar argument is made by Fernando Reinares, for whom Salafism, by promoting illiberal values, is a motivating source of extremism and terrorism in Europe. In his view, the spread of Salafism creates a fertile ground for enrolment into armed jihad; he writes: "The more Salafism […] becomes attractive to identity-seeking and disenfranchised second-generation Muslims in EU countries, the easier jihadist organisations based abroad will find it to recruit young individuals".[33] Overall, therefore, while the passage from Salafism to Jihadism is not systematic, all Jihadis are said to have systematically been socialized in Salafism. In other words, Salafism is posited as a necessary – albeit not sufficient – condition for violent Jihadism.

The Continuum Thesis Under Criticism

On the other side of the debate, four main sets of criticisms have been raised against the continuum thesis: (1) the heterogeneity of Salafi ideology, Salafi-Jihadism being an autonomous and ultra-minority branch, (2) the misleading assessment of an "ideological proximity" between Salafism and Jihadism, (3) the lack of Salafi socialization of most terrorists and Jihadis (in or from Europe), and (4) the aporia of the notion of "Salafized spaces" and the criminal record of many Jihadis and terrorists.

The heterogeneity of Salafism (1) and its classification in three main branches since Wiktorowicz's 2006 seminal article (quietist, political, and Jihadi[34]) complexifies the equation of a Salafi breeding of Jihadism.[35] This classification clearly differentiates between Salafis who advocate political quietism (and often subservience to the authorities), Salafis who engage in contentious politics against the regime, and Salafis who pledge to wage armed jihad against it. According to this categorization, therefore, violence is confined to the Jihadi branch of Salafism. However, one limitation of this categorization according to Brynjar Lia is that it "may mislead us into thinking of contemporary Jihadis as simply radicalised elements within – or as by-products of – a broader Salafi phenomenon."[36] According to Wiktorowicz, indeed, "Al-Qaeda is a radical tendency within a broader Islamic movement

30 Arthur Berdah, « 'Séparatismes' : Macron cherche toujours sa ligne », *Le Figaro*, 22/10/2020.

31 At a global scale, Rud Koopmans argues that Jihadi terrorism has been rising (responsible for 85 % of terror deaths worldwide) "because a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam has become dominant". Ruud Koopmans, "The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the crisis of the Muslim world", SPS Departmental Seminar Series, 19 June 2019, EUI, https://www.eui.eu/events/detail?eventid=153803

32 Rougier, *Les territoires conquis*, 163 ; Bernard Rougier, in « Enquête choc sur l'islamisme en France ».

33 Fernando Reinares, "Jihadist mobilisation, undemocratic Salafism and terrorist threat in the EU," Elcano Royal Institute, 2017.

34 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006): 207–40.

35 For example, Cavatorta and Merone write that Salafism has in the past decades been equated with violent extremism, and mistakenly so, obscuring its complexity and internal dynamics.", (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power* (London: Hurst, 2016), 2.

36 Brynjar Lia, "'Destructive Doctrinarians'. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Critique of the Salafis in the Jihadi Current," In Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism. Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst, 2009): 281–300, 281-2.

known as the Salafi movement."[37] In reality, as Laurent Bonnefoy and Stéphane Lacroix point out, Jihadism has "a distinct genealogy from that of Salafism and Wahhabism". Contemporary Jihadism existed – still exists – in non-Salafi forms and only adopted Salafism as a theological basis from the 1980s and 1990s onwards.[38] The Jihadi theoretician Abu Musʿab al-Suri thus regarded Salafism as a direct albeit belated (from the Afghan jihad, 1979-89, onwards) inspiration for contemporary Jihadism which, according to him, derived from four ideological sources: Qutbism (Sayyed Qutb), the proto-Salafism of the medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyya, Saudi Wahhabism, and the Muslim Brothers.[39] This view is echoed by Joas Wagemakers, according to whom Salafi-Jihadism was "influenced by events and groups not directly linked to Salafi beliefs", including the Qutbist branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Wahhabism, and its politicized version by Muslim Brothers exiled in Saudi Arabia such as Muhammad Surur, the Afghan Arabs (Abdallah Azzam, Osama Bin Ladin, Aymen al-Zhawahiri), and the Gulf war.[40] In the introduction to his 2008 book, Bernard Rougier also acknowledged that the three Salafi currents identified by Wiktorowicz all "trace their origins to Salafism and share basic doctrines and terms with Wahhabism, *but have their own genealogies*, developing *their own particular interpretation of Salafism* based on specific local circumstances and global developments."[41] More than that, "since the September 11 attacks, the demarcations between the three [Salafi] movements have solidified",[42] and scholars such as Samir Amghar and Mohamed-Ali Adraoui have respectively noted the "increasing autonomy" and "autonomization" of Jihadism from Salafism.[43] In this context, Xavier Crettiez writes, "establishing an automatic link between strict religious conduct (Salafism) and violent activism (jihadism) would amount to a dangerous leap that does not take into account the many forms of Salafist engagement".[44] Accordingly, therefore, it seems more adequate to think of Salafism and Jihadism as two distinct albeit not unrelated phenomena rather than as a continuum of militancy.

However, it is true that in practice, the emergence of a Salafi-Jihadi current made the relationship between Salafism and Jihadism more difficult to disentangle, with both continuity and rupture appearing a priori as two plausible avenues of analysis. In particular, the shared common theological basis of Salafism and Jihadism has led some scholars to interpret Jihadis' knowledge of Salafi theology (the principle of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*, reading Abd al-Wahhab's books, quoting

37 Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11", *Middle East Policy*, 10: 2 (2003): 76–92, 77. Assaf Moghadam has the same reading, see "Motives for martyrdom: Salafi jihad and the spread of suicide attacks," *International Security*, 33:3 (2008/2009): 46-78, 62.

38 Bonnefoy and Lacroix, « Le problème saoudien. ».

39 Lia, "'Destructive Doctrinarians'". Accordingly, the claim that "the context within which modern Islamic references to justify violence emerged was the Salafist ideology" is unwarranted (in Sergio García Magariño and Víctor Talavero Cabrera, "A Sociological Approach to the Extremist Radicalization in Islam: The Need for Indicators", *The International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs*, 21:1 (2019): 66-83.

40 Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi. The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 10-15

41 Rougier, *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme ?*, 8 (italics added).

42 Samir Amghar, "Salafism and Radicalisation of Young European Muslims", in *European Islam. Challenges for Public Policy and Society*, Centre for European Policy Studies (2007): 38-51, 50.

43 Amghar, "Salafism and Radicalisation"; Samir Amghar, « Le salafisme en Europe : une mouvance polymorphe de la radicalisation », *Politique étrangère* 1 (2006) : 67-78, 78. The author notes that the continuum thesis could have been proven more valid in the 1990s, when there were "crossovers" between the three Salafi currents in France; Mohamed-Ali Adraoui, "Le djihadisme est en cours d'autonomisation", *Le Monde*, 10/09/2016, https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/08/10/le-djihadisme-est-en-cours-d-autonomisation_4980975_3232.html.

44 Xavier Crettiez, "Thinking about Radicalization. A Processual Sociology of the Variables of Violent Engagement", *Revue française de science politique* 66 :5 (2016) : 709-727.

Saudi Salafi sheikhs, etc) as evidence that they first adhered to Salafism before turning to Jihadism.[45] This interpretation, however, overlooks the ideological hybridization that is precisely constitutive of Salafi-Jihadism. Wagemakers demonstrated very well how the Salafi-Jihadi theoretician Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi utilised purist and quietist Salafi sources and arguments in order to provide a strong theological backbone to Salafi-Jihadis[46] (see Wagemakers' contribution in this e-book). For example, al-Maqdisi reinterpreted the Salafi principle of *al-wala wa-l-bara* (allegiance and disavowal), initially designed to keep Muslims away from un-Islamic practices, into "a revolutionary ideology" obligating Muslims to extend this disavowal to un-Islamic rulers.[47] Hence, there are ultimately "considerable differences in the way Salafis interpret this concept",[48] the same way François Castel de Bergerac acknowledged that his interviewees had a "Jihadi usage" of Abd al-Wahhab's books.[49] What matters, therefore, is less whether Jihadis are Salafi – Salafism having contested meanings among actors and scholars alike – than what their interpretation of Salafism says about the permissibility and conditions of armed jihad. In practice, a majority of scholars who associate terrorism and violent radicalization with Salafism underscores the role of Salafi-Jihadi ideology,[50] while pointing out that its proponents represent an ultra-minority within Salafism.[51]

Moreover (2), the argument of ideological affinity – mostly derived from the common theological base between Salafism and Jihadism – fails to identify key disagreements between them on core issues, such as forced conversion, disobedience to parents, trade of sexual slaves, committing suicide, and the conditions under which the use of violence is permissible. Against this backdrop, the above-mentioned argument that violent Jihadism constitutes the mere enactment of the ideological rupture with Western society that Salafism advocates (i.e. they differ on the means but share ends) overlooks a major divergence between Salafis and Jihadis as to the priority of means and ends. While Salafis value conformity to orthopraxy above all, for Jihadis the ideological value and soteriological benefit of violent attacks

45 François Castel de Bergerac « Rupture jihadiste. Les jeunes femmes de la prison de Fleury-Mérogis », *in* Rougier, *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme*, 2020, 285-332.

46 Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*: "al-Maqdisi, even though he is clearly a Jihadi-Salafi, uses arguments, concepts and terms that show he is very close to the quietist creed. Moreover, his emphasis on the use of dawa shows that he also partly adopts the method of quietist Salafis. Therefore, one might say that al-Maqdisi is, in fact, a 'quietist Jihadi-Salafi'." (10)

47 Joas Wagemakers, "The Transformation of a Radical Concept. *al-wala' wal-bara'* in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi", in Meijer ed., *Global Salafism*, 95.

48 Wagemakers, "The Transformation", 82

49 François Castel de Bergerac, « Rupture jihadiste. », 318.

50 Some examples include: Peter R. Neumann, *Joining Al-Qaida: jihadist recruitment in Europe*, Adelphi Paper 399, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009; Peter R. Neumann and Brooke Rogers, "Recruitment and mobilisation for the Islamist militant movement in Europe", in *Freedom and Security of the European Commission Directorate General for Justice*, ed., London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, King's College London, 2007, http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/terrorism/prevention/docs/ec_radicalisation_study_on_mobilisation_tactics_en.pdf; Marieke Slootman and Jean Tillie, "Processes of radicalization: why some Amsterdam Muslims become radicals", Amsterdam: Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, University of Amsterdam, 2006; Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

51 Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Benard, *Eurojihad: Patterns of Islamist radicalization and terrorism in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); H. Rane, "Narratives and counter-narratives of Islamist extremism. In Anne Aly, Stuart MacDonald, Lee Jarvis and Thomas Chen eds., *Violent extremism online: new perspectives on terrorism and the internet* (Routledge, 2016); Jacob Olidort, "Salafism and the Islamic State", Washington Institute, 2016, https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=fDb-vOBSzNw.

permit temporary deviances from orthopraxy (i.e. *taqiyya*).[52] In other words, the end very often justifies the means for Jihadis, whereas for Salafis the Islamic liceity of the means must not be perverted for the sake of the end.

The use of violence, in particular, constitutes the main point of contention between Salafism and Jihadis who disagree on the modalities of waging jihad (who, how, when, where, and against what and whom).[53] What "distinguishes Jihadi-Salafis from others [is] their specific views on jihad", Wagemakers write.[54] In an article entitled "Should we be Scared of all Salafists in Europe?", Ineke Roex argues that in the Netherlands, Salafis reject violence, make calls not to join jihad in Syria, and oppose Jihadi groups in Europe such as Sharia4Holland/Belgium. "[I]t is [therefore] important to distinguish between the various Salafi strands in terms of security policy", she writes.[55] Similar observations were made by scholars in Norway,[56] the UK[57], Greece,[58] Germany,[59] the USA,[60] France,[61] and the MENA at large.[62]

Jihadis may well frequent Salafi milieus (as studies mentioned above pointed out), but they also see their Jihadi vision being negated and marginalized by Salafis. One case at hand is the Sauerland-Group analysed by Stefan Malthaner. While Salafism "contributed to the formation of a radical perspective" among the members, their support to armed jihad "set them apart from their social environment in the local Salafist milieu"

52 Roy, *Le jihad et la mort*, 108-110.

53 Thomas Hegghammer, "'Classical' and 'Global' Jihadism in Saudi Arabia", in Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix eds., *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 207-230.

54 Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*, 51.

55 Ineke Roex, "Should we be Scared of all Salafists in Europe? A Dutch Case Study", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 8:3 (2014): 51-63; see also Martijn de Koning, *Zoeken naar een 'zuivere' islam. Geloofsbeleving en identiteitsvorming van jonge Marokkaans-Nederlandse moslims* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008): 378

56 Sindre Bangstad and Marius Linge, "'Daʿwa is Our Identity'—Salafism and IslamNet's Rationales for Action in a Norwegian Context", *Journal of Muslims in Europe* (2015): 1-23

57 Uriya Shavit, "Embattled Minority In-Between Minorities: An Analysis of British and German Salafi Anti-Jihadi Campaigns", *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 17 (2017), Edited by Lutz Edzard & Stephan Guth https://journals.uio.no/index.php/JAIS/article/view/6114. For an example of Salafi argumentation against terrorism, see "Combating 21st Century Violent Extremist Terrorism: ISIS, al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria—A Must Read: The Islamic Salafi Position towards Extremist Insurgencies in Light of Quranic and Prophetic Teachings," *Salafi Publications* (Birmingham, Eng.: The Salafi Bookstore, n.d.)

58 Marina Eleftheriadou, "Fight after flight? An exploration of the radicalization potential among refugees in Greece", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 31:1 (2020): 34-60. The author writes: "Greece does not present a prevalent salafi sub-culture that has been associated with radicalization in Europe" (41).

59 Nina Käsehage, "Islam researcher: Not all Salafists are the same", *Deutsche Welle*, 24/04/2017, https://www.dw.com/en/islam-researcher-not-all-salafists-are-the-same/a-38568798

60 Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, "Salafism in America. History, Evolution, Radicalization," The George Washington University, 2018, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Salafism%20in%20America.pdf

61 Samir Amghar, "The Salafist groups in France: a plural and antagonistic movement", in Frank Peter and Rafael Ortega, *Islamic Movements of Europe. Public Religion and Islamophobia in the Modern World* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014): 156-160.

62 See next section.

because Salafi sheikhs "unanimously condemned terrorist attacks in Europe" and thus the group's "decision to engage more actively in violent jihad […] entailed a gradual separation from this environment."[63] Another study in the Netherlands similarly found that if some Jihadis used to attend Salafi mosques, they stopped doing so when acquiring firm beliefs in the necessity of violence.[64] A third case at hand is Umar Abu Qatada al-Filastini, a key al-Qa'ida ideologue who began his religious studies with the quietist Salafi scholar Muhammad Nasir al-Din alAlbani before leaving his study circle due to disagreements over the use of violence.[65]

Accordingly, while "Salafism and Wahhabism may well constitute entry gates to Jihadism in individual trajectories due to its ultra-conservatism, […] the passage to violence necessitates an additional rupture with the quietist Salafi logic.", Bonnefoy and Lacroix write.[66] In other words, Salafism can be a transitory stage in individual trajectories where agency determines the taste for an ideology (e.g. violent Salafi-Jihadism) over another (e.g. quietist Salafism) but it is not a structural determinant of violent radicalization at the ideological and meso (i.e. networks) levels. As Uriya Shavit and Sören Andresen write in an attempt to move beyond the binary of this debate, "The complicated reality is that neither side of the debate is wrong as exposure to radical ideas has varying effects on different individuals", although the vast majority of Salafis has not turned to violent Jihadism.[67]

Empirical studies (3), in fact, tend to demonstrate that Salafism and Jihadism are two distinct phenomena whereby passages from the former to the later exist but are rare. In his study of violent radicalization in Europe, Olivier Roy observes that empirically, almost none of the Jihadis and terrorists recruited in Western countries went through the "Salafi incubator".[68] In Germany for example, where most Salafis (around 10,000) are quietists, Jihadis did not go through Salafism, as shown by Asiem El Difraoui.[69] In France, where the vast majority of Salafis follow the quietist Wahhabi Madkhali school,[70] Ouisa Kies notes that although there are some Jihadis who first were quietist Salafis, "there is not necessarily a bridge between Salafism and the passage to violent act".[71] The Jihadi branch "does [indeed] not represent […] the most important current of Salafism", which in its majority condemns violent Jihadism, according to Haoues Seniguer.[72] In this context, Amghar argues, "it is very difficult for a

63 Stefan Malthaner, "Contextualizing Radicalization: The Emergence of the "Sauerland-Group" from Radical Networks and the Salafist Movement", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37:8 (2014): 638-653, 643-645.

64 de Graaf, "The Nexus".

65 Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11", *Middle East Policy*, 10:2 (2003): 76–92, 81. A case-study of Salafi-Jihadi Omar al-Hammami found the same result, see Elena Mastors and Rhea Siers, "Omar al-Hammami: A Case Study in Radicalization," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 32 (2014): 377–388.

66 Bonnefoy and Lacroix, « Le problème saoudien ».

67 Uriya Shavit and Sören Andresen, "Can Western Muslims Be De-radicalized?", *Middle East Quarterly*, 23:4 (2016), https://www.meforum.org/6272/can-western-muslims-be-de-radicalized

68 "Olivier Roy : « Il faut distinguer violence politique et violence religieuse »", *Chronik*, 17/11/2017, en ligne: https://chronik.fr/olivier-roy-html.html?fbclid=IwAR05aSNIxiSJ5JpZXOimxrCi1Y4rG86c90ezhAp5zE73UUXmZsYKoqT3XDg

69 Florian Delorme, « Essor du salafisme en Europe : la réponse des États », *France Culture* (émission Cultures Monde), 11/04/2018, https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/cultures-monde/culturesmonde-du-mercredi-11-avril-2018

70 Lacroix, Stéphane, *Les islamistes saoudiens : une insurrection manquée* (Paris : PUF, 2010).

71 « Le processus de radicalisation », *France Inter*, 25/11/2015, https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/un-jour-en-france/un-jour-en-france-25-novembre-2015

72 Delorme, « Essor du salafisme en Europe »; see also Omayma Abdelatif, "Trends in Salafism". In Michael Emerson, Kristina Kausch and Richard Youngs eds., *Islamist Radicalisation. The Challenge for Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2009, 69-86.

quietist Salafi to fall into violent radicalization".[73] In his 2017 book entitled *Le nouveau Jihad en Occident*, Farhad Khosrokhavar observed that "in the vast majority of observable cases, the youths fall into Jihadism without going through Salafism."[74] Among the authors of attacks in 2016-2017, "none come from a Salafi neighbourhood or communitization" or even "have a religious past" (with the exception of Khalid Masood).[75] As for Mohamed Merah, presented as the first embodiment of the continuum thesis in France, he was socialized from the very beginning in the Salafi-Jihadi circles of the Algerian GIA in Toulouse and was in contact with Jihadi veteran and preacher Olivier Corel in Lunel.[76] In this regard, therefore, the alleged Salafism-Jihadism continuum very often consists, in fact, in a continuum between Salafi-Jihadi indoctrination and engagement in violence.[77]

Beside indicating that Jihadis and terrorists are rarely "coming from Salafized spaces",[78] several studies criticize the very notion of Salafi "ecosystems" breeding violence (4). Not only is there no "social movement" behind Jihadis and terrorists, many of them were involved in criminality in neighbourhoods yet depicted as Salafi. This is the case for example of the Abdeslam brothers (2015 Paris attacks) who used to sell and consume alcohol and drugs in Molenbeek, often presented as a Salafi neighbourhood in Brussels.[79] In fact, Jihadis with a criminal past are not isolated cases but make up between one and two thirds of Jihadi recruits in Europe.[80] A 2018 study from the French Centre d'Analyse du Terrorisme also reported that 38 % of a sample of 238 individuals involved in Syro-Irakian Jihadi networks had a criminal record.[81] In their 2018 book, Laurent Bonnelli and Fabien Carrié find that the larger category within their sample of radicalized minors in France corresponds to youths known for delinquency and deprived of any religious socialization.[82] Moreover, the high proportion of converts (very often middle class in origin), who account for 26 % of a sample of 137 persons condemned for terrorism between

73 Samir Amghar, in "Quiétistes, politiques, djihadistes : qui sont les salafistes ? », *Le Monde*, 30/11/2015, http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/actualite/quietistes-politiques-djihadistes-qui-sont-les-salafistes-30-11-2015-5122_118.php

74 Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Le nouveau jihad en Occident* (Paris : Robert Laffont, 2017), 11.

75 « Olivier Roy : « Pour passer à l'action djihadiste, il ne reste plus que les "losers" », 28/03/2017, *Le Monde*, en ligne : https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2017/03/28/olivier-roy-pour-passer-a-l-action-djihadiste-il-ne-reste-plus-que-les-losers_5101640_3232.html

76 Hugo Micheron, "Toulouse : la machine de prédication, ou la fabrication sociale du jihadisme" in Rougier, *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme*, 225-252, 250. There is also the case of Mickaël Harpon (Paris Prefecture 2019), cited by Gilles Kepel as an illustration of the fourth generation of Jihadism he theorized and whose radicalization he depicted as the result of his exposure to a Salafi imam; the investigation concluded that "religious radicalization […] would not have been the primary engine of his act", « La piste terroriste ne serait plus privilégiée après l'attaque de la Préfecture de Police », *L'OBS*, 30/10/2019, https://www.nouvelobs.com/terrorisme/20191030.OBS20478/la-piste-terroriste-ne-serait-plus-privilegiee-apres-l-attaque-de-la-prefecture-de-police.html?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1572430756

77 For example, Sami Brahem writes about the Tunisian case that "large groups of Salafi-Jihadi youths […] adopted the Jihadi thought without going through the stage of salafiyya 'ilmiyya", in "al-salafiyya fi manakh tunis (Salafism in the Tunisian Ambit)", *al-Alwan*, 2009.

78 Roy, *Le jihad et la mort*, 65.

79 Olivier Roy, « L'incubation salafiste n'est pas un facteur déterminant du passage au terrorisme », *Le Point*, 02/01/2020

80 Nathalie Funès, « L'islamisme, une histoire devenue française », *L'Obs*, 02/01/2020

81 « La justice pénale face au djihadisme. Le traitement judiciaire des filières syro-irakiennes (2014-2017) », Centre d'Analyse du Terrorisme, 25/05/2018, http://cat-int.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Rapport-Justice-p%C3%A9nale-face-au-djihadisme.pdf

82 Laurent Bonelli and Fabien Carrié, *La Fabrique de la radicalité. Une sociologie des jeunes djihadistes français* (Paris : Seuil, 2018).

2004 and 2017 in France, strongly nuances the thesis of a phenomenon of violent radicalization confined to "Salafized spaces".[83] Between 2018 and 2020, 250 structures were closed in France including 15 cult places, among which only two were closed on counter-terrorism grounds. The vast majority of closures (210) concerned wine taverns, chicha bars, and kebab restaurants,[84] suggesting that violent radicalization may not primarily occur in Salafi mosques. The alleged Salafism-Jihadism continuum may thus actually be obscuring another continuum, one between two forms of violence, criminal and politico-ideological.[85]

Therefore, while a very small number of Jihadis may have initially been socialized in quietist Salafism, focusing on Salafism for counter-terrorism purposes would be misleading as it misses the nuances and scope of the broader picture. At the security level, the question of who makes up the majority of radicalized individuals supersedes the question of whether Salafis might turn to Jihadism, as they would always constitute a small minority.

Salafism: A Bulwark Against Jihadism?

In direct opposition to the thesis of a Salafi breeding of Jihadism, another strand of academic literature has argued that Salafis may in fact constitute an efficient theological and social inhibitor, as opposed to a facilitator, of Jihadism. As far as Salafis are concerned, Amghar writes, "neither their verbal outrage against France, nor their orthodox view of Islam, should be considered a prelude to engagement in jihad (even is such was the case in the 1990s). On the contrary, the militants' religious radicalism and anti-Western imprecations act as a 'safety valve' that discourages followers from taking direct action."[86] Graeme Wood echoes the same view, arguing that quietist Salafis "offer an Islamic antidote to [IS leader Abu Bakr al-] Baghdadi-style jihadism."[87] Ironically, these scholars turned the argument of an ideologically proximity between Salafism and Jihadism used to endorse the continuum thesis on its head in order to argue that quietist Salafis are actually in the best position to provide a theological counter-narrative to Salafi-Jihadism. Responding to Jacob Olidort who argued that ""Quietists," activists, jihadists, and other Salafis are all composed of the same theological DNA." and that there is "not a big conceptual leap to go from quietism to jihadism.",[88] Shadi Hamid wrote: "That there isn't much of a conceptual leap is precisely the point, but it's hard to know when this

83 Marc Hacker, « 137 nuances de terrorisme. Les djihadistes de France face à la justice », *Etudes de l'Ifri, Focus stratégique* n°79, Avril 2018, https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/hecker_137_nuances_de_terrorisme_2018.pdf

84 Christophe Cornevin, « L'Etat face aux mosquées radicales », *Le Figaro*, 22 September 2020

85 Ironically, the last chapter of Rougier's book, which finds that a criminal and violent past predisposes individuals to a taste for Salafi-Jihadi violence, corroborates Roy's "Islamization of radicality" thesis. Peter R. Neumann et Rajan Basra, "Les jihadistes européens et le nexus criminalité-terrorisme", in Rougier, *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme*, 333-351; Renard Basra and Pete R. Neumann, "Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the Crime-Terror Nexus", International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), 2016.

86 Amghar, "The Salafist groups in France", 158.

87 Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants", *The Atlantic*, March 15 Issue, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/

88 Jacob Olidort however endorses the opposite thesis elsewhere, writing that "the works of quietist Salafists such as Albani and his followers may present a legitimate, peaceful counter-narrative to violent groups", in "The Politics of "Quietist" Salafism," The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper 18 (2015), 23.

is a good or bad thing. It can cut both ways."[89]

The issue was taken up in March April 2015 by William McCants who asked ten scholars from different backgrounds to address Graeme Wood's contention. On the one hand, endorsements came from Mubin Shaikh, a former Salafi-Jihadi working on counter-terrorism with government agencies, who argued that "quietist Salafis can be very effective at persuading radicalized youth to consider more constructive approaches to political change" while "Those deemed to be "moderate" Muslims have little to no influence with people who have come under" Jihadism.[90] Post-Salafi Yasir Qadhi similarly wrote that "Pacifist Salafism might indeed be one of the most powerful and effective tools against Islamic radicalization".[91] Farid Senzai likewise argues that "Salafis are in the best position" to discredit theological justifications of violence.[92] Skeptics included Shadi Hamid, for whom the ideological proximity between Salafis and Jihadis entails they are equally susceptible to be convinced by each other's arguments,[93] and Rashad Ali, who thinks that it is possible to challenge Jihadis theologically by using scripture "in a manner that does not buy into any specific religious or sectarian agenda".[94]

On the other hand, some such as Kamran Bokhari consider that "quietist Salafism cannot serve as an effective counter to jihadism" because it is "not interested in the pursuit of an Islamic state" like Jihadis, and while Jihadis may renounce violence, they will not shed politics. Accordingly, Bokhari and Hamid contend that electoral Salafism would be more suited than quietist Salafism in the fight against violent radicalization by providing a (peaceful) political alternative to Jihadis.[95] Charlie Winter suggests yet another possibility, arguing that post-Salafism is "a better bet" than quietist Salafism "to challenge jihadi-Salafism" because it not only rejects violence and the "ideological underpinnings of the justifications for violence", but also embraces religious pluralism, equal citizenship, freedoms of religion and expression, gender equality, and universal human rights (see next section).[96] The problem with endorsing quietist Salafis, as Wagemakers points out, is that they may "convince some potential radicals of the merits of the Islamic State's reasoning, rather than persuade them to abandon that way of thinking."

Scholars were also divided on the question of whether the 'pros' of empowering Salafis against Jihadis outweighed the 'cons'. On the one hand, Wagemakers argues that governments often cannot or should not interfere in religious disputes and, more critically, that "the deep social

89 Shadi Hamid, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 4", March 31, 2015, *Brookings Institute*, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/03/31/experts-weigh-in-part-4-is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/

90 Mubin Shaikh, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 2", March 17, 2015, *Brookings Institute*, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/03/17/experts-weigh-in-part-2-is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/

91 Yasir Qadhi, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 5", April 1, 2015, *Brookings Institute*, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/01/experts-weigh-in-part-5-is-quietist-salafism-the-alternative-to-isis/

92 Farid Senzai, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 8", *Brookings Institute*, April 8, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/08/experts-weigh-in-part-8-is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/

93 Shadi Hamid, "Experts weigh in".

94 Rashad Ali, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 7," *Brookings Institute*, April 7, 2015. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/07/experts-weigh-in-part-7-is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/

95 Kamran Bokhari, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 9", 9 April 2015, *Brookings Institute*, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/09/experts-weigh-in-part-9-is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/

96 Charlie Winter, "Experts weigh in: Is quietist Salafism the antidote to ISIS? Part 10", Brookings Institute, 27 April 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/27/experts-weigh-in-part-10-is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/

conservatism of Salafis is at odds with what most people in Western societies believe". Likewise, in the view of Ali, "the pros do not outweigh the cons" because quietist Salafis may support jihad abroad or the execution of individuals construed as deviant, such as homosexuals and adulterers – these Salafis are "selectively quietist", as Winter notes. For Qadhi, however, the pros of "empowering one strand of Salafism over another" "far outweigh any potential cons", he writes, emphasizing how "I would much rather live next to somebody who thinks I will go to Hell but still be polite with me, than someone who actively seeks to kill me".[97]

While raising key issues of the debate, this conversation remained at a theoretical level and failed to distinguish between two questions: whether Salafis can help prevent violent radicalization and whether they can contribute to de-radicalization (defined as disengagement from violence).

On the prevention side, Salafis often present themselves as the most efficient bulwark against violent Jihadism, which they dubbed *takfiri* (excommunicator) or *khariji* (rebels outside Islam).[98] In Yemen, for instance, Bonnefoy argues that Salafis "contribute to delegitimize violent strategies" by "playing on the same field as armed groups and using theological arguments".[99] Salafis have also developed – in the cases of the UK and Germany studied by Uriya Shavit – discursive strategies "in an effort to disassociate *salafiyya* from al-Qaeda, ISIS and other Jihadi-Salafi movements". These strategies include: the duty "to abide by the Islamic norm of respecting contracts" (visas, citizenship), to follow "the Islamic rules of warfare and jihad", a dissociation of *salafiyya* and *jihadiyya*, the latter being identified with the "modern-day *Khawarij* against whom the Prophet Muhammad warned", and the interdiction to harm "the public interest of Muslim communities and damage the ability to propagate Islam" by committing violent attacks.[100] Salafis emphasize the fact that referential sheikhs such as Ibn Baz (the former grand mufti of Saudi Arabia) "strictly prohibited violent attacks against non-Muslims and required that they be treated gently".[101] This discourse thus has the twofold aim "to refute the accusations that they [quietist Salafis] cultivate radicalisation and to assert the religious legitimacy of their rejection of violence". Hence their targeting at "two audiences: Western governments and publics, whom Salafis aim to convince that salafiyya is not a security risk; and Muslims, whom they aim to convince that violence is not the way of the salaf".[102]

Beyond theological arguments, Salafis also put forward efficiency arguments, stressing the fact that counter-terrorist organisations endorsed by the governments are inefficient because they are not trusted and respected by Muslim communities".[103] In contrast, Salafis claim to benefit from an intimate knowledge of their community and thus from an ability to observe al-Qa'ida activity – often because "they found themselves on the received end of such efforts" and therefore know the arguments Jihadis use to recruit.[104] In fact, on the other side of the spectrum, Jihadi ideologues such as Abu Musʿab al-Suri "feared that [quietist Salafis] could dissuade potential Jihadis".[105] According to Brynjar Lia, "the spread of purist Salafi doctrines in the Jihadi current, rather than being a source of strength and renewal, has instead constituted a considerable obstacle to Jihadi mobilisation […] by embroiling

97 Yasir Qadhi, "Experts weigh in".

98 Amghar, « Le salafisme en Europe ».

99 Laurent Bonnefoy, « Le salafisme au Yémen : l'anti-chambre de la violence ? », *Transcontinentales* [online] 7 (2009 : 5.)

100 Shavit, "Embattled Minority In-Between Minorities", abstract.

101 Ibid, 190.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Lambert, "Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda".

105 Brynjar Lia, "Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Critique of Hard-Line Salafists in the Jihadist Current", *Combating Terrorism Centre* Sentinel 1:1 (2007), 429.

them in schisms and internal conflicts."[106]

In post-2001 UK, police-sponsored Salafi efforts to counter al-Qaida's discourse in the framework of the STREET program were deemed successful.[107] Robert Lambert emphasizes the fact that in the UK, following the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, Salafis "have been at the forefront of ground-breaking community work that successfully counters the adverse influence of al-Qaeda propaganda among susceptible youth" in partnership with the police.[108] The overall "street credibility" of these Salafis proved to be a key asset of the program.[109] The program and its efficacy were praised by scholars such as H.A. Hellyer.[110]

Other examples of government partnerships with Salafi clerics include Indonesia, where they contributed to provide a religious counter-narrative to Jihadism.[111] In Morocco, a report based on 126 interviews with religious scholars, Salafis, and Islamists, recommended to include Salafis in CVE (countering violent extremism) programmes because unlike official religious actors who often lack legitimacy, Salafis "exercise influence among the populations at greatest risk of radicalization".[112]

In Western countries, however, some post-Salafis such as Qadhi and Shaikh warned that government support would automatically discredit quietist Salafis in the eyes of the Muslim community and, most crucially so, with the population susceptible of violent radicalization. Senzai and Wagemakers echo the same view, stating that government sponsorship would be seen by Jihadis as a confirmation that quietist Salafis are regime lackeys. Accordingly, Western governments should not block quietist alternatives but not promote them either (Hamid) or encourage them indirectly instead (Senzai).[113]

While Salafis' inclusion in terrorism prevention programs remains controversial, several studies

106 Lia, "'Destructive Doctrinarians'", 283. In Jordan, Wagemakers advances a more nuanced account, as he "suggests that quietists and Jihadi-Salafis are far apart and that the former may act as a "firewall" against the latter" but that "quietism can act at least somewhat as a "conveyor belt" towards Jihadi-Salafism", Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 233.

107 Lambert, "Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda".

108 Robert Lambert, "Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counterterrorism Case Study", *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 41: 1 (2008): 31-35, 33; J. Barclay, "Strategy to Reach, Empower, and Educate Teenagers (STREET): A Case Study in Government-Community Partnership and Direct Intervention to Counter Violent Extremism", Washington, D.C.: Center of Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2011; R. Garbaye, and V. Latour, "Community and Citizenship in the Age of Security: British Policy Discourse on Diversity and Counter-terrorism since 9/11". *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, XXI :1 (2016) ; James Brandon, "The UK's Experience in Counter-Radicalization," *CTC Sentinel*, 1 :5. (2008).

109 Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Robert Lambert, "Why conventional wisdom on radicalization fails: the persistence of a failed discourse," *International Affairs* 86: 4 (2010): 889–901

110 H.A. Hellyer, part 6, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/03/experts-weigh-in-part-6-is-quietist-salafism-the-antidote-to-isis/ https://www.brookings.edu/research/engagement-with-the-muslim-community-and-counterterrorism-british-lessons-for-the-west/

111 "Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Need for a Rethink", IPAC Report No. 11, Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, June 2014

112 Andrew McDonnell, James Patton, and Yara Zgheib Salloum, "Engaging Salafi Religious Actors in Morocco. The Role of Inclusion in Countering Violent Extremism", International Center for Religion & Diplomacy, October 2018, https://icrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Morocco-Report-Full-10.16.2018.pdf, 3. ""Salafi religious leaders are better suited to influence the extremist sympathizers within their own communities, which tend to be deeply insular and suspicious of others."

113 Senzai, "Experts weigh in".

have pointed out the effective contribution of Salafis in the de-radicalization of Jihadis outside Europe. In Algeria, the regime-sponsored diffusion of quietist Salafi discourse during the civil war (1991-2002) has led many Jihadi fighters to shed violence according to Amghar and Bilel Ainine (see his contribution in this e-book).[114] Similarly, in Lebanon, Tine Gade argues that "the mediation work of Salafi shaykhs to contain the jihadis inside Lebanon explains why Lebanon avoided jihadi violence" despite the Syrian civil war.[115] In Pakistan, Husnul Amin writes that "interpersonal interactions (between the moderate and radicalized Salafists) bring a positive change in the behavior and conduct of the latter category", which he explains by the fact that "moderate" Salafis are able to "deconstruct the jihadist interpretation of the doctrinal sources".[116] In Egypt, Salafis and "post-Jihadis" of the Islamic Group (*aljamaʿa al-islamiyya*) have also contributed to de-radicalize Jihadis in the Sinai, though their efforts were not always successful.[117] In Western Libya, the Salafi militia Rada (Special Deterrence Force, *Quwat al-Radaʿ al-Khassa*) is conducting a religious rehabilitation program for Jihadis, including ISIS members, using texts of Salafi sheikhs al-Albani and Saleh al-Fawzan. In Eastern Libya, the Ministry of Religious Endowments and Religious Afairs has commissioned 400 Madkhali clerics to engage with Jihadi prisoners using texts of sheikh Rabi al-Madkhali and al-Albani.[118] In Saudi Arabia, Salafi clerics are involved in de-radicalization programs that revolve around theological revisions and family interventions. There are, however, no examples of government partnerships with Salafis on de-radicalization in Western countries

Overall, Salafis' contribution to de-radicalization appears more empirically grounded and less controversial than their enrolment in prevention mechanisms within government-sponsored programs. The worry that Salafis may pre-empt one form of radicality by spreading their own in the latter case (prevention) indeed appears less relevant in the former case (de-radicalization) where violent radicalization has already occurred.

To Sum-Up: What Is at Stake?

The debate around the continuum thesis pits four different positions among scholars: those who hold Salafism as a necessary condition for violent radicalization to occur;[119] those that think Salafism could potentially provide a gateway to violent Jihadism in specific conditions;[120] those who consider that Salafism is not "sufficient within itself to constitute jihadi terrorism";[121] and those who do not see "any causal explanation between

114 Samir Amghar, « Le salafisme en France : de la révolution islamique à la révolution conservatrice », *Critique internationale* 40: 3 (2008) : 95-113; Bilel Ainine, *Islam politique et entrée en radicalité violente. Le cas des salafistes radicaux violents algériens*, Thèse de doctorat, Université Paris-Saclay, 2016, 532-535.

115 Tine Gade, "Limiting violent spillover in civil wars: the paradoxes of Lebanese Sunni jihadism, 2011–17", *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 2016, 13-14.

116 Husnul Amin, "Moderate Salafism and the Challenge of De-Radicalization. The Case of Pakistan," *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, 1 (2017): 62-90, 81-82.

117 Omar Ashour, "Jihadists and Post-Jihadists in the Sinai", in "The New Salafi Politics", *POMEPS Studies* 2, October 16, 2012, Middle East Political Science; see also Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (Routledge, 2009).

118 Frederic Wehrey, "Chapter 6. Salafism and Libya's State Collapse. The Case of the Madkhalis", in Wehrey and Boukhars, *Salafism in the Maghreb.* pp. 107-136: 126, 133.

119 Silber and Bhatt, "Radicalization in the West".

120 Rabasa and Bernard, *Eurojihad*; Francesco Cavatorta, « Quand le salafisme fait sa 'révolution' : l'exemple tunisien », *Moyen-Orient* 33 (2017), 34-39.

121 Cyndi Mellen, "When Harry Met Salafi: Literature Review of Homegrown Jihadi Terrorism", *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 7:2 (2012): 239-252, 242.

Salafism and terrorism"[122] and/or consider that "violent radicalization needs not Salafism to occur".[123] The continuum thesis is most often framed by its proponents in terms of a correlation, although some see a causal relation between Salafism and violent Jihadism. Moreover, the sub-question of whether Salafis are a "firewall" preventing radicalization into violent extremism (rather than a "conveyer belt") is still unresolved,[124] although the available evidence compiled above tilts the balance in favour of the latter, especially in MENA countries.

This academic debate is particularly important due to its potentially significant consequences on government policies in the fields of counter-terrorism, de-radicalization, and management of Muslim minorities. Intelligence and security services in Western countries largely perceive Salafism as a security threat today. In the Netherlands, the security services consider that the distinctions between the three Salafi categories are not straightforward and that Salafi beliefs, even if not linked to calls for violence, are nonetheless creating a "breeding ground for radicalization and extremism".[125] They thus defined Salafism as 'anti-integrative, antidemocratic and isolationist' in 2007 and again in 2009 and refused Salafis' offers of partnership in counter-radicalization and integration programs.[126] In Germany, security agencies similarly suppose that Salafism paves the way to violent radicalization and see Salafis as potential recruits for Jhadis (three Salafi groups were banned in 2013).[127] In the UK, "the revised British "Prevent Strategy," the country's main anti-radicalization program, unequivocally stated that cooperation with radical preachers was out of the question."[128] The STREET partnership was terminated and the government shifted its engagement toward liberal and Sufi groups in the framework of the CONTEST-2 program, which seeks to "challenge views which fall short of supporting violence and are within the law, but which reject and undermine our shared values and jeopardise community cohesion." The former Labour Party government's Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, argued that the government must challenge nonviolent Islamists who "skirt the fringes of the law […] to promote hate-filled ideologies".[129] Similar discourses were heard in France, where former Prime Minister Manuel Valls stated in 2015 that Salafism "is often the antechamber of radicalization, which can

122 Magariño and Cabrera, "A Sociological Approach to the Extremist Radicalization in Islam", 77. According to Robert Lamberts, "Salafism and Islamism, as causal or predictive factors, are no more significant to the profile of an al-Qaida terrorist than Catholicism was to the profile of a Provisional IRA terrorist.", in Lambert, "Salafi and Islamist Londoners", 80-81.

123 Bonnefoy and Lacroix, « Le problème saoudien ».

124 Alex P. Schmid. "Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review", *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism,* 2013, https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2013/03/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013_2.pdf, 57; Marc Lynch, "Islam Divided Between Salafi-Jihad and the Ikhwan," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 33: 6 (2010): 468

125 "Salafism in the Netherlands: Diversity and Dynamics," General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), October 22 2015, 8, https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2015/09/24/salafism-in-the-netherlands-diversityand-dynamics

126 de Graaf, "The Nexus"; Lorenzo Vidino, "A Preliminary Assessment of Counter-Radicalization in the Netherlands", *CTC Sentinel*, 1:9 (2008), https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss9-Art5.pdf

127 Jörn Thielman, "Salafism in Germany", in Frank Peter and Rafael Ortega, *Islamic Movements of Europe. Public Religion and Islamophobia in the Modern World* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015): 165-168, 166
"Germany bans three Salafist groups as anti-democratic," Reuters, March 13 2013, available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-salafists-idUSBRE92C09P20130313

128 Uriya Shavit and Sören Andresen, "Can Western Muslims Be De-radicalized?", *Middle East Quarterly*, 23: 4 (2016), https://www.meforum.org/6272/can-western-muslims-be-de-radicalized

129 Quoted in Angel Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez, and Christopher Boucek, "Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists", *RAND Corporation*, 2010, http://www.ppv.issuelab.org/resources/8976/8976.pdf, 129.

lead to terrorism."[130] In Europe more generally, Salafism is identified as a security threat. A European Parliament report issued in 2013 thus identified "Wahhabism" as one of the main sources of terrorism in the world.[131] Salafis are also identified as a terrorist menace in Russia, the North Caucasus, South Asia, and the MENA countries.[132] A repressive management of Salafis may however not be the way to go, as there is evidence from the North Caucasus (in Chechnya Ramzan Kadirov proclaimed Wahhabism to be outside 'true' Islam in August 2016) and Tunisia that the repression of Salafis has contributed to their violent radicalization.[133]

The continuum thesis is part of a broader trend within academic, political, and media discourse to associate religious conservatism with an accrued propensity to use violence (see Thomas Hegghammer's contribution in this e-book). A case at hand is a study of Jihadi women in prison which assesses whether they have de-radicalized based on an evaluation of "the intensity of [their] religious engagement" (e.g. respecting the Ramadan fasting). This study concluded that the interviewees were not de-radicalized because they still upheld Salafi Islam.[134] This association seems to be particularly prevalent in France, where Prime Minister Christophe Castaner introduced a terrorism prevention policy based on "low-level signals" ("*signaux faibles*") following the attack at the Paris *Préfecture* in 2019. These "signals" included growing a long beard, the regular practice of prayer, and the refusal to shake women's hands. The ministerial decree, which arguably allowed to identify, at best, Salafis, at worst, Muslims, has been harshly criticized and eventually withdrawn.[135] Signs used by scholars to determine previous Salafi socialization among Jihadis are also problematic. In their study of European Jihadis, where they argue that 49 % of their sample (175 of 360 individuals) include former Salafis, Hakim El Karoui and Benjamin Hodayé use the dates of conversion and of violent action, external signs and proselytism, frequentations, and travels abroad as proxies for previous Salafi socialization. These criteria do not, however, indicate the individuals' ideological orientation, as they could signal either a Salafi

130 Cécile Chambraud, « L'inquiétante expansion du salafisme en France », *Le Monde*, 20/11/2015, https://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2015/11/20/l-expansion-du-salafisme-en-france-inquiete-les-autorites_4814180_1653130.html

131 Claude Moniquet, "The Involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism".

132 Mubashar Hasan, Kenji Isezaki, Sameer Yasir (eds), *Radicalization in South Aqia: Context, Trajectories and Implications* (Sage, 2019); Elena Pokalova, "Islamic Radicalization in Russia's North Caucasus: Lessons from Russia's Handling of Religious Revival," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 21: 2 (2019): 146-169

133 Pokalova, "Islamic Radicalization in Russia's North Caucasus"; Fabio Merone, "Between social contention and takfirism: the evolution of the Salafi-jihadi movement in Tunisia." *Mediterranean Politics* 22:1 (2017): 71-90.

134 François Castel de Bergerac, "Rupture jihadiste », 292. The fact that the study's interviewees upheld a Salafi version of Islam could also be interpreted as a retreat to a quietist Salafism, religiously ultraconservative but opposed to violence, and thus lend credence to the hypothesis that Salafism may be a gateway to disengagement from violent actions (if not deradicalization, which connotates dis-indoctrination).

135 See for example Z. Fareen Parvez, "Religious conservatism doesn't make a terrorist. But crime and exclusion can," The Guardian, June 6 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/06/religious-conservatism-terrorist-crimeexclusion-theresa-may. The experience of anti-IRA police operations is telling in that regard as police officers acknowledged the "failure to adequately distinguish terrorists from the Republican Catholic communities where they sought support", in Lambert, "Salafi and Islamist Londoners", 83.

or a Salafi-Jihadi conviction.[136] The dates of conversion and of violent action, in particular, could simply encompass a continuum between Salafi-Jihadi ideologization and the eventual turn to violence.

The association between religious conservatism and political radicality is often coupled with the contention that violence derives from certain theological roots. Typically, Sufi groups are often deemed peaceful while Salafis are thought to be more prone to violence. This is however "factually incorrect", according to an article which found that in Southeast Asia and West Africa there were both violent and non-violent Sufi and Salafi groups, thus discarding the idea that one theological orientation has more propensity to lead to violence than another. The authors, who conclude that "Theological orientation cannot be used as a predictor of either violent or nonviolent behaviour", thus call instead to shift attention to "political attitudes and behaviour".[137] This shift is arguably key to providing an answer to the debate around the continuum thesis. According to Frederic Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars in their study of Salafism in the Maghreb, "there is little empirical evidence to suggest that Salafi *beliefs* alone are the main source of jihadi violence or that becoming a devout Salafi makes one prone to carrying out such violence".[138]

In addition, instances of Salafi violence or militarization differ significantly from Jihadi violence. While Salafi-Jihadi groups deploy continuous, systematic, and (often) indiscriminate violence which results in many deaths and can include terrorist attacks, Salafis may engage – though marginally and episodically – in 'riot' violence or rhetorically support armed jihad abroad, as Alexander Thurston indicates in his contribution. In Libya, the militarization of Salafi groups in the context of a civil war does not amount to violent radicalization or a turn to Jihadism, which remains their nemesis.[139] Beyond the dichotomy between violence versus non-violence, one should thus distinguish between different forms of violence, as they are not all tantamount to Jihadi or even terrorist radicalization and are highly contextual.

The academic debate around the continuum thesis carries significant stakes for state policies towards both terrorism and Islam. While the available evidence presented above discards to a large extent the continuum thesis, especially in Europe, despite the lack of systematic quantitative data, there has not been a study addressing this question in a systematic way in the MENA region, nor in Africa and South-East Asia. Available evidence tends to indicate that terrorists rarely hail from quietist Salafi milieus. In Tunisia, according to Vincent Geisser and Eric Gobe, most of those arrested after the violent confrontation between the police and a Jihadi group in Soliman in 2007

136 Hakim El Karoui and Benjamin Hodayé, *Les militants du djihad. Portrait d'une génération* (Paris : Fayard, 2021), 134-6. The time between conversion and violent engagement may also just be the time necessary to mature the project of carrying out violence rather than the evolution from Salafism to Jihadism. Moreover, frequentations do not necessarily indicate ideological agreement, as the case of the Sauerland-Group mentioned above illustrates. Further problems arise from the authors' blurred distinction between Salafism and Jihadism and their conceptualization of a grey zone of "aggressive Salafism" (page 278).

137 Mark Woodward, Muhammad Sani Umar, Inayah Rohmaniyah and Mariani Yahya, "Salafi Violence and Sufi Tolerance? Rethinking Conventional Wisdom," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 7: 6 (2013): 58-78, 59.

138 Frederic Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars, *Salafism in the Maghreb. Politics, Piety, and Militancy* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 15 (italics added). See the book review by Théo Blanc. "Frederic Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars, Salafism in the Maghreb. Politics, Piety, and Militancy", *Sociology of Islam*, 9:1 (2021): 1-5, https://doi.org/10.1163/22131418-00901002.

139 Théo Blanc and Virginie Collombier, « Les salafistes libyens après la révolution », *Confluences Méditerranée*, *forthcoming*.

had no connection to the Salafi current.[140] In post-2011 Libya, Frederic Wehrey writes that "there is little to no evidence of Madkhalis crossing over to become members of […] terrorist groups [i.e. ISIS and AQ]" although they "share some tenets".[141] To this day, however, data remains scarce.

This e-book attempts to bridge this gap by providing a series of original case-studies in European, MENA, African, and South-East Asian countries; these include Algeria and France (Bilel Ainine), Jordan (Joas Wagemakers), Nigeria and the Sahel (Alexander Thurston), Cambodia (Zoltan Pall), and Turkey (Anka Rajkowska).

In his introductory reflections to this section, Thomas Hegghammer highlights the benefits and limits of applying the concept of radicalization to Salafism. Bilel Ainine, a scholar as well as a practitioner of deradicalization, then demonstrates that there is no mechanical link between Salafism and Jihadism among French Jihadis, who unlike Algeria Jihadis in the 1990s, are also not characterized by past political militancy. He also sheds light on the role played by Salafi-Jihadi ideology in radicalization and disengagement processes. Following up on this latter point, Joas Wagemakers delineates, through two case-studies, how the role played by ideology is highly contingent on context, with the same ideological corpus sometimes having different effects on different Salafi actors. In Nigeria and the Sahel region, Alexander Thurston explains how the emergence of Salafi-Jihadi groups such as Boko Haram has put Salafis under pressure[142] and led to accusations of terrorism. Although Salafis are not pacifists,[143] there is no "conveyor belt" from Salafism to Salafi-Jihadism, he argues. In Cambodia, Salafis have also not been a fertile ground for Jihadi recruitment according to Zoltan Pall; here Salafis are well-integrated in the state, are granted significant leeway for activism in exchange for political quietism or loyalty, and report individuals harbouring violent ideas to the authorities. Finally, looking to Turkey, Anna Rajkowska analyses the profiles of male Salafis and female Jihadis and finds no evidence of passages between Salafism and Jihadism. The authors also offer policy recommendations based on their analyses.

The Crisis of Salafism and the Emergence of Post-Salafism

Accusations of breeding terrorism have considerably challenged Salafis, who find themselves caught in a double trap: they are under pressure both from Jihadis, who accuse them of being too moderate and from security services, who see them as too radical. In this regard, Salafis are "collateral victims" of Jihadi terrorism.[144] As Uriya Shavit puts it, Salafis "are challenged by European publics and policy makers (as well as by some rival Muslims) who do not recognise the difference between *salafiyya* and *jihadi-salafiyya*, or do, but suspect Salafi teachings to be a stepping-stone to radicalisation."[145] This twofold pressure has pushed Salafis to deploy discursive strategies in order to dissociate themselves from

140 Vincent Geisser and Eric Gobe, "Un si long règne . . . Le régime de Ben Ali vingt ans après," *L'Année du Maghreb* IV (2008), https://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/464#%20bodyftn13.

141 Wehrey and Boukhars, *Salafism in the Maghreb*, 135.

142 Østebø similarly observed in 2015 that "Boko Haram is […] met with significant opposition from other Salafi actors" and that "Boko Haram has assassinated at least six Salafi ʿulamāʾ who openly criticized Boko Haram". Terje Østebø. "African Salafism: Religious Purity and the Politicization of Purity", *Islamic Africa*, *6*(1-2), 1-29. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/21540993-00602005, 26.

143 Some may indeed endorse jihad struggles abroad. As reported by Bonnefoy, this is the case of Muqbil al-Wadi'i in Yemen, who condemned violence in the country but supported armed jihad in the Indonesian archipelago of the Maluku islands in 2000. Bonnefoy, « Le salafisme au Yémen », 5.

144 Madjid Zerrouky, « Samir Amghar : « Le salafisme est une mouvance ultraminoritaire » », *Le Monde*, 20/02/2016, https://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2016/02/17/samir-amghar-le-salafisme-est-une-mouvance-ultraminoritaire_4867087_1653130.html

145 Shavit, "Embattled Minority In-Between Minorities", 188.

Jihadis (see previous section) and has resulted in greater demarcations between Salafi currents in Europe and the MENA in the post-9/11 era.[146]

This challenge feeds into a broader crisis of Salafism, which we argue contains the seeds of an emerging post-Salafi trend. We identify three areas of Salafi crisis and, simultaneously, channels for post-Salafism: (1) the autonomisation of Salafism from the Saudi-Wahhabi tutelage, (2) political participation, and (3) the re-culturation of global Salafism. While post-Islamism consists in abandoning the objective of establishing an Islamic state implementing sharia law,[147] and post-Jihadism shedding violence,[148] post-Salafism encompasses a revision of Salafis' exclusivist stance through a reinvention of its modes of engagement with society at the religious, political, and cultural levels. These three dimensions all participate to what Wehrey and Boukhars termed the increasing "indigenisation" of Salafism in national territories.[149]

The crisis of Salafism partly derives from the crisis of Wahhabism. The tutelar figures of Salafism, most of them Saudis, disappeared at the turn of the 20th century, including Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1999), Abd al-Aziz Ibn Abdallah Ibn Baz (1910-1999), Muhammad Ibn Salih al-'Uthaymin (1925-2001), and Muqbil Ibn Hadi al-Wadi'i (1933-2001). Other, less prominent figures, such as Saleh al-Fawzan (1933-) and Rabi Ibn Hadi al-Madkhali (1931-) are in their late eighties – early nineties, or do not enjoy the same aura, such as the current mufti of Saudi Arabia Abdelaziz ben Abdallah Al al-Sheikh (1943-), or are controversial, such as al-Wadi'i's successor Yahya al-Hajouri (1967-) or the Egyptian Muhammad Sa'id Raslan (1955-). At the same time, Saudi's crown prince and strongman Muhammad Bin Salman reasserted Saudi authority over Wahhabi clerics by diminishing their domestic prerogatives (e.g. religious police unable to conduct arrests), jailing critical voices, forcing them into public retraction on national TV, and limiting their role in the propagation of Salafism abroad (e.g. offering the Great Mosque in Brussels to the Belgian government). Bin Salman also cracked down on sheikhs historically close to the Sahwa Islamiyya who are proponents of political Salafism (e.g. Salman al-'Awdah). Today, most Salafis who are still somewhat reverential towards Saudi scholars are the Madkhalis, who are particularly strong in Algeria in a quietist form and in Libya in a militarised form.[150] Overall, therefore, Saudi Arabia is not the beacon of Salafism it used to be (see Louis Blin's contribution).

The crisis of Wahhabism goes hand in hand with a phenomenon of "indigenisation" of Salafism in the MENA region, i.e. a trend of nationalisation increasingly disconnected from a pan-Islamist logic. Notably, this is illustrated by the increasing importance acquired by Salafi figures who have emancipated themselves from the traditional Wahhabi condemnation of politics and religious diversity. In Mauritania and Mali, respectively, sheikhs Muhammad ibn al-Hasan Ould al-Dedew al-Shinqiti and Mahmoud Dicko endeavoured to formulate new Salafi theorizations of politics which allow participation in electoral democracy and interactions with non-Salafi forces such as Islamists and Muslim Brothers (see Alexander Thurston's contribution). These figures are part of a broader phenomenon of political Salafism that has developed after the Arab revolutions, especially in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco where Salafis have created or joined political

146 Amghar, "Salafism and Radicalisation of Young European Muslims", 50; Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement."

147 Olivier Roy, *L'échec de l'islam politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 53-57; Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 8-9; Asef Bayat (ed.), *Post-Islamism. The Changing Faces of Political Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

148 Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists*.

149 Wehrey and Boukhars, *Salafism in the Maghreb*, 139.

150 Wehrey and Boukhars, *Salafism in the Maghreb*, 13; Virginie Collombier and Fiona Barsoum, "To engage or not engage? Libyan Salafis and state institutions", *HYRES Research Note*, 2019, https://middleeastdirections.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/HYRES-research-note_CollombierBarsoum.pdf

parties.[151] The revolutionary political openings have meant that Salafis have been faced with the dilemma to preserve ideological purity at the risk of being marginalised or to review their isolationist, exclusivist posture in order to engage positively with the state and society. Other new Salafi experiences include Salafyo Costa, which has been labelled "post-Salafi" due to its organization of dialogues between Salafis, Christians, and liberals, and its use of humour to diffuse prejudices on Salafis.[152]

In the West, a new generation of post-Salafis who wear Westernized dresses also call on American Muslims to involve themselves in political issues such as American foreign policy in the Middle East and domestic counter-terrorism policies. These figures, which include Yasir Qadhi and Omar Suleiman of the al-Maghrib institute in the USA, criticize quietist Salafis in the MENA for their subservience to unjust regimes and often blame Wahhabism for encouraging Jihadi violence. According to Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, this trend "represents a uniquely American form of politically engaged Salafism which is heavily influenced by American culture and politics."[153] In the UK, sheikh Usama Hasan and sheikh Manwar Ali of the JIMAS educational charity, which used to recruit fighters for jihad abroad in the 1990s, can also be categorized as post-Jihadis and post-Salafis.[154]

In Western countries, post-Salafi thinkers have also emerged in conjunction with the phenomenon of "Salafi burn-out". Coined for the first time by the English convert sheikh Abdul Hakim Murad (Timothy Winter) in 2004.[155] This expression was used by a number of Muslim observers who reported a growing phenomenon of Salafis losing their initial enthusiasm, moving towards more tolerance towards religious pluralism and differences of opinion and even abandoning Islam altogether.[156] Testimonies shared online include for example the case of a woman who asked for a divorce because her husband had suffered a "Salafi burnout", before she herself abandoned the burqa, the veil, and stopped practicing Islam altogether.[157] Such cases also raise the issue of filiation, insofar as conversion to the strict Salafi orthopraxy may not be easily transferable from parents to children ("how to be born from a born again?"[158]).

One Muslim observer attributed the phenomenon of Salafi burnouts to the fact that most Salafis had converted in a context of rapid transformation and the modernization of the Arab-Muslim world, which generated identity insecurity. Indeed, he explains, "because they are being propelled into it [Salafism] by this psychic sense of insecurity, rather than by the more normal processes of conversion and faith, they lack some of the natural religious virtues, which are acquired by contact with a continuous tradition, and can never be learnt from a book.'"[159] Interestingly, this

151 Francesco Cavatorta, and Fabio Merone, (eds.), *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power* (London: Hurst, 2016).

152 Josephine van den Bent, "'We are always the ones paying for the drinks'. Egypt's Salafyo Costa as a Post-Salafist Horizontalist Social Movement Organisation", MA Middle Eastern Studies, 201.

153 Meleagrou-Hitchens, "Salafism in America", 95.

154 Winter, "Experts weigh in"; see also Usama Hasan's blog: https://unity1.wordpress.com/

155 Abdul Hakim Murad (2004), in "The Poverty of Fanaticism." *In* Joseph Lumbard (ed), *Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004)

156 Abdul Hakim Murad: "This phenomenon, which we might label '*salafi burnout*', is a recognised feature of many modern Muslim cultures. An initial enthusiasm, gained usually in one's early twenties, loses steam some seven to ten years later. Prison and torture - the frequent lot of the Islamic radical - may serve to prolong commitment, but ultimately, a majority of these neo-Muslims relapse, seemingly no better or worse for their experience in the cult-like universe of the salafi mindset."

157 "Salafi Burnout", 15/11/2008, http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/salafi-burnout

158 Roy, *Holy Ignorance.*

159 « Salafi burnout », Reflections of a Muslim Mind, 12/03/2005, http://reflectionsofamuslim.blogspot.com/2005/03/salafi-burnout.html

view echoes Olivier Roy's analysis of Salafism as the symptom of the "deculturation" of Islam; that is, where a "globalized Islam" (i.e. Salafism) becomes disconnected from the culture of the Muslim world, which it explicitly rejects in the ambition to define a "pure" religion. The result is to find oneself surrounded by impious practices (as seen in the MENA) or alienated by the absence of the 'obviousness of religiosity' (*l'évidence du religieux*) in West European countries.[160]

Faced with this phenomenon, a blogger named *The Usuli* ('The Fundamentalist'), which we may categorize as post-Salafi, deplores the fact that "Many 'burnouts' […] abandon Salafism only for an understanding of Islam without principles, instead adopting whatever understanding of Islam is popular or culturally prevalent" or a "modernist", liberal position. In his view, abandoning Salafism should not lead one to abandon Islamic normativity: "*Fiqh* [jurisprudence], it's general principles (*qawaʿid*) and foundations (*usul*) still exist. There is still such a thing as a 'normative Islam' which you cannot let go of and still claim to call yourself a religious Muslim. The Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) is still important." There is in his opinion, however, a third way between liberal Muslim thought and "the Madkhali disaster(s) of the 90s", which he coins as "traditionalism" and involves digging into "the 1400 years of cumulative Islamic thought"." "Being a Salafi 'burnout'", he elaborates, "is no excuse to join the extremes on the other side of the pond. The Athari [a 7th century anti-rationalist theology associated with ibn Hanbal] is still a valid theological school. And the Hanbali school is still a valid legal school." Instead, one must "Understand the sovereignty of the popular and culturally prevalent in informing your decision of what is true and normative."[161] In other words, Salafi burnouts are invited to reconsider traditional sources of Islam (i.e. juridical schools) which Salafism had discarded. In this understanding, post-Salafism constitutes an endeavour to re-culture the global normativity of Salafism in local territories – something we can, accordingly, term the re-culturation of "globalized Islam".[162]

In the MENA, this trend of post-Salafi re-culturation consists in greater acceptance of religious diversity, especially traditional (juridical schools) and cultural (Sufism) forms of Islam. In some contexts, Salafis seem to come to terms with the nationally prevalent legal schools (*madhhahib*) that they usually reject based on the argument that they did not exist at the time of the Prophet, whose revelation and example (*ahadith*) supersede any other source of Islamic normativity.[163] In Tunisia, for example, Fabio Merone, Théo Blanc, and Ester Sigillò shed light on a trend of 'malikisation' of Salafism, which is increasingly integrating Maliki *fiqh* as a legitimate normative source.[164] This trend may well indicate a broader phenomenon of accommodation by Salafis in the region of traditional Islam, something which this e-book contributes to study while calling for further research.

Post-Salafism also consists in a rediscovery of spirituality. In contrast with the Salafi focalisation on orthodoxy and orthopraxy, post-Salafism attempts to "pair Salafi theology with a more wide-ranging view of Muslim spirituality" (see Alexander Thurston's contribution). Figures such as al-Dedew and Mahmoud Dicko advocate greater tolerance towards Sufis, who Salafis usually see as heretics. Other, earlier figures such as the Moroccan sheikh Abd al-Salam

160 Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2006); Roy, *Holy Ignorance*.

161 Samir Hussain, "On Salafi 'Burnout'," 19/05/2018, The Usūlī RELEVANT & IMPORTANT DISCUSSIONS ON UNDERSTANDING ISLAM, https://theusuli.com/2018/05/19/on-salafi-burnout/

162 Roy, *Globalised Islam*.

163 Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 44.

164 Fabio Merone, Théo Blanc, and Ester Sigillò, "The Evolution of Tunisian Salafism After the Revolution: From *La Maddhabiyya* to Salafi-Malikism," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2021, 1-16. doi:10.1017/S0020743821000143.

Yasin, the founder of al-Adl wa-l-Ihsan, have also been described as post-Salafi due to their openness to Sufism and to spirituality. According to Henri Lauzière, Yasin criticized Salafis and Wahhabis for depriving the *umma* of spiritual guidance by focusing solely on legal instruction and argued that the Prophetic method (*al-minhaj al-nabawi*) emphasised the soul (*batin*) and faith (*iman*) over legalism. In Yasin's view, in fact, "one must combine Sufi spirituality and Salafi legalism to revive Islam and to respond to the problems of the contemporary umma".[165] Although Yasin rejected "philosophical" Sufism (*al-tasawwuf al-falsafi*), he praised "Salafi" Sufism (*al-tasawwuf al-salafi*), which he described as a "shariʿa-abiding type of mysticism".[166] Philosophical Sufism is indeed problematic for Salafis, who see in the Sufi concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unicity of the being) a deviant interpretation of *tawhid* (divine unicity) which fuses the creator with the creator into one being. The most contentious religiosity for Salafis, however, is institutional Sufism (i.e. tariqa, pl. turuq), whose saint veneration is seen as polytheism (*shirk*). Even Yasin, who devoted some of his early publications to saints, stopped mentioning them in later writings due to their controversial character. However, this leaves Sufi spirituality as well as ethical Sufism (al-Ghazali), which is primarily concerned with goodness, as possible areas of convergence with Salafism. This seems all the more likely given that prominent Salafi figures such as Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) praised Sufi spirituality and mystic (*tasawwuf*) in his epistle *al-Sufiyya wa-l-fuqara'*.[167] As Wagemakers and Patrick Haenni have suggested, Salafis are in the process of rediscovering this Sufi heritage, so we may increasingly witness trends of intermingling.[168]

Convergence of Salafism with Sufism may also occur on political grounds. In West Africa and Southeast Asia, for example, Salafi movements who used to declare *takfir* against Sufis now see them "as Muslims of a different type with whom they share common social and sometimes political agendas".[169] Woodward et al. have described this phenomenon as the "domestication" of Salafism,[170] which amounts to the twofold trend of nationalization and re-culturation underlined here. In fact, engagement in politics and re-culturation are often the two faces of the same coin, as they both participate to a phenomenon of indigenisation. This finds an illustration in Shpend Kursani's study of Albanian Salafis, who have in the last years taken "a more conciliatory approach towards the secular state, nations and nationalism" and "shows the 're-culturalized' or 're-nationalized' face of Salafism within this ethnic

165 Henri Lauzière, "Post-Islamism and the Religious Discourse of Abd al-Salam Yasin," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37:2 (2005): 241– 61, 249-251.

166 Lauzière, "Post-Islamism and the Religious Discourse of Abd al-Salam Yasin".

167 Qais Assef, « Le soufisme et les soufis selon Ibn Taymiyya », *Bulletin d'études orientales*, LX (2012) : 91-121 ; Th. E. Homerin. "Ibn Taimīya's Al-Ṣūfīyah Wa-Al-Fuqarāʾ." *Arabica* 32:2 (1985): 219–244. According to some scholars, Ibn Tayiyya was even a member of the Qadiriyya Sufi *tariqa*, Ibn Taymiyya, George Makdisi, "Ibn Taymiyya: A Study of the Qadiriya Order", *American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1977), 118-130. This was contested by Fritz Meier, "Thee Cleanest about Predestination: A Bit of Ibn Taymiyya", in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism,* trans. J. O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

168 Point made during the webinar's discussion by Patrick Haenni.

169 Woodward, Rohmaniyah and Yahya, "Salafi Violence and Sufi Tolerance?", 65-66.

170 M. Woodward, A. Amin, I. Rohmaniyah and D. Coleman, "Muslim Education, Celebrating Islam and Having Fun as Counter- Radicalization Strategies in Indonesia," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 4:4 (2010): 28 -50.

group in the Balkans."[171] Accordingly, as Alexander Thurston writes, post-Salafism also consists in downplaying theology "in favor of postures that facilitate political and social coalitions with other Muslims" (see his contribution). An illustration of this trend is the meeting between the Salafi group Ahl-u Sunna wa-l-Jama'a and the Sufi Muslim Spiritual Board of Dagestan on April 29, 2012, which resulted in a joint declaration and an agreement to establish a common board with equal representation.[172] Additionally, in some sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, Salafis have recently refrained from declaring *takfir* against Sufis and have developed "more accommodating attitudes towards Sufism and the Sufi brotherhoods".[173]

In his own definition of post-Salafism, Charlie Winter stresses its "attempt to harmonize Islamic teachings with the modern world through the revivalist and reformist spirit of early Islam". In practice, he argues, this amounts to a transition (1) from a rejection of the juridical schools (*madhahib*) to an emphasis on *maqasid al-shari'a* (finalities of sharia), (2) from a project to unite Muslims around one pure *'aqida* (doctrine) to religious pluralism, equal citizenship, freedoms of religion and expression, gender equality and universal human rights, and (3) – for Salafi-Jihadis – a rejection of violence and the "ideological underpinnings of the justifications for violence", instead embedding armed jihad "within an internationally recognized legal framework, an understanding of modern war ethics, and the Geneva Conventions".[174]

Based on these elements (indigenisation, politicization, and re-culturation), we propose to define post-Salafism as both a general disposition towards reassessing the priority of theological purity to accommodate pragmatic objectives, and a revision of intolerant stances towards political participation, traditional Islam (*fiqh*), cultural Islam (Sufism), and civil-human rights. This e-book contributes to document the crisis of Salafism and to define and substantiate the concept of post-Salafism through a series of original case-studies in MENA countries, including Saudi Arabia (Louis Blin), Egypt (Wael Farouq), Mali (Alexander Thurston), Tunisia (Ester Sigillò) and Syria (Patrick Haenni and Jérôme Drevon).

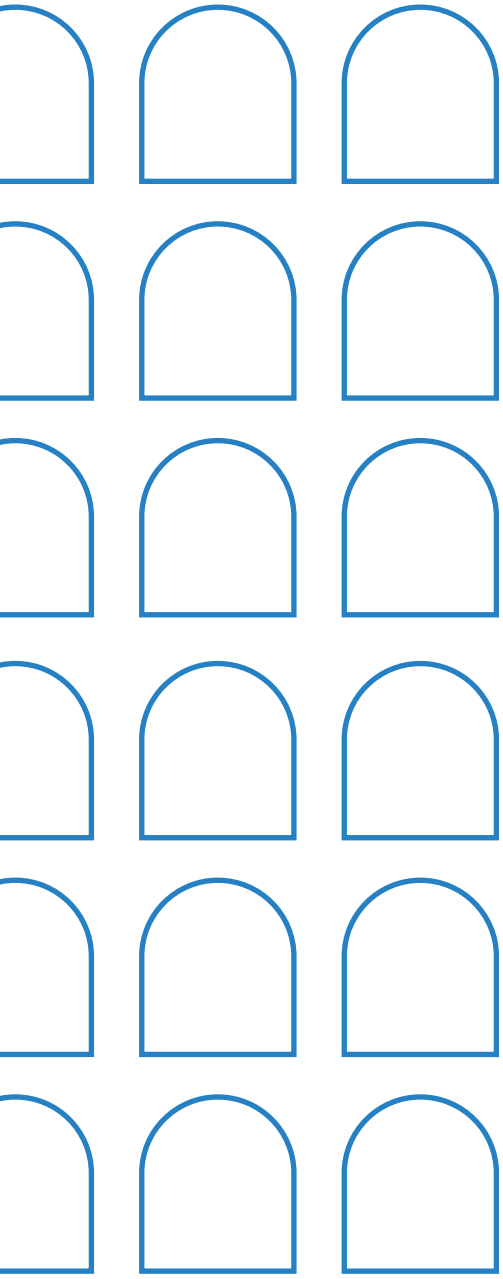
Louis Blin explains how Muhammad Bin Salman's new authoritarian style has broken state Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and has considerably weakened its social grasp on society in conjunction with an increasing societal rejection of Salafism. Wael Farouq then sets out to describe and explain the decline of Salafism in Egypt and the wider MENA region, which he argues stems from several factors: internal fragmentation, closeness and isolationism, the revival of Ash'ari theology, increasing rejection by mainstream society, the lack of authoritative references, the decline of financial support, and the rise of a neo-/post-Salafism more tolerant towards the Other. In a 2018 piece reproduced here, Alexander Thurston analyses the emergence of post-Salafi figures and thinkers in Mali, the MENA, and Western countries, and provides fresh insights on the characteristics and perspectives of this new post-Salafi current. In Tunisia, Ester Sigillò studies the recent emergence of a post-Salafi activist public at the cross-roads of Salafi religious discourse and revolutionary-populist registers of discourse and action. In the context of war-torn Syria, Jérôme Drevon and Patrick Haenni retrace the transformation of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham from a transnational Salafi-Jihadi group into a post-Salafi post-Jihadi group that has accommodated the religious specificities of the local population, the pragmatism of governance, and the need for un-Islamic partners, without however revising their intimate beliefs. The authors also underline the limitations of military responses for such groups to the extent that they substantiate political ways out of terrorist violence. The e-book closes with a conclusion by Olivier Roy.

171 Shpend Kursani, "Salafi pluralism in national contexts: the secular state, nation and militant Islamism in Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 18:2 (2018): 301-317, 314.

172 Andrew McGregor, "Sufis and Salafists Temporarily Unite in Dagestan", *The Jamestown Foundation*, 18/05/2012, https://jamestown.org/program/sufis-and-salafists-temporarily-unite-in-dagestan/.

173 Østebø. "African Salafism", 16.

174 Winter, "Experts weigh in".



PART I

SALAFISM AND RADICALIZATION

Radicalization, Salafism, and the Crisis of Jihadism

Thomas Hegghammer

This article is a synthesis of Thomas Hegghammer's panel presentation

Why we Need "Radicalization"

The notion of radicalization has been debated for the past fifteen years in both Jihadi and terrorist studies as well as political science. It is an imperfect term for which there is no established definition and it has potential for political misuse. At the same time, we are stuck with it: it has become a sociolinguistic reality, both as a media buzzword and as a notion promoted by the security establishment. There has been a real need for it, however, as it serves to describe the grey zone between regular apolitical life on the one hand, and violent activism on the other. The reality is that radicalization is a spectrum, with only a tiny minority engaging in violence. In the Jihadi scene in Europe for instance, the number of individuals participating in an attack cell is very small, but the number of people in the wider networks is much bigger. Therefore, we needed a tool to understand the transition from non-mobilized individuals to militants. The concept of radicalization precisely emerged to capture this grayscale process, with at its potential endpoint the deployment of violence. This concept also applies to other groups, such as neo-Nazis. What do we call those who have not engaged in violence (yet)? And what do we call the process through which an ordinary person becomes an active neo-Nazi? This site of analysis is where the language of radicalization has emerged and, despite various critiques, scholars have not provided a better alternative terminology.

Another added value of the term of radicalization is that it is open to the diversity and the non-linearity of radicalization pathways. No one has ever worked more on this diversity than scholars studying radicalization. We would not have been able to think about that complexity without this term; the alternatives do not provide the same heuristic leverage.

The problem is that radicalization has an intuitive, popular meaning, and a technical, academic meaning. On the academic side, the literature distinguishes cognitive radicalization and behavioral radicalization on the one hand, and social/religious conservatism and political radicalism on the other. The dimension of political radicalism refers to the process through which individuals become more inclined to use political violence. However, on the popular side the notion of radicalization has been politicized and used against things people do not like. In particular, there is a tendency to take indicators of social conservatism as indicators of radicalization. This is where it becomes problematic.

Notably, the distinction between social conservatism and political radicalism is not always a clear one for Salafism today, especially in Europe. In Sweden, for example, the belief that Salafis are apolitical is not always true as they use a lot of political rhetoric (pan-Islamic victimization rhetoric for e.g.).

Salafism and Radicalization

Salafism is intimately context specific. It is very different in Europe and in the MENA. The discussion should thus be region focused. In a non-Muslim society, Salafism has a different appeal (it has to do with identity mostly) than in Muslim countries (identity is already acquired, it is mostly about theology).

That said, does Salafism fuel Jihadism in Europe or not? We have been talking about this issue for the past decade because it remains unresolved. We need more empirical research, perhaps quantitative because most of what we have is qualitative. We need to have numbers, proportions

of Jihadis who have a Salafi background, how much exposure to Salafism they have had, what is their militancy trajectory, etc. In the meantime, this debate is an exercise in speculation.

Jihadism in Crisis

If Salafis are in crisis, Salafi-Jihadis are certainly in crisis. The ISIS experiment has back-fired terribly on the Jihadi world, both in Europe and in the Muslim world. There has been a political backlash as ISIS has triggered countermeasures against Jihadism more broadly, starting from 2015 with a crackdown on their online activities. For the first time, militants find themselves in a position where they have a real trouble communicating and disseminating their ideas.

Related to this is an observable trend of consumerism in Salafi-Jihadism: militants read less and shorter books and consume more social media material. It is difficult to say if this is a cause or a consequence of broader changes and the crisis of Salafism. Is there the same trend in other Salafi currents and what impact does it have on Salafism?

Salafism and Pathways of Radicalization and Disengagement. A Comparative Perspective of Algeria and France.

Bilel Ainine

Introduction

This article proposes to cross-examine two research fields that are clearly distinguished by their political, cultural, and religious contexts. The first research field, located in Algeria, refers to a group of individuals composed of former Jihadis who were active in the maquis (armed resistance) during the 1990s.[1] The second, located in France, concerns individuals incarcerated for acts of terrorism or for "participation in a criminal association for the preparation of an act of terrorism" on French soil.[2]

Across the approaches, mechanisms, and registers (cognitive, emotional, relational, retributive) considered to deconstruct the trajectories of Jihadis, one variable has always been of particular interest: the ideological component embodied by Salafism and its various tendencies. In the Algerian context, Jihadi Salafism took the early initiative with its violent commitment against the regime following the interruption of elections in January 1992. A few months earlier, however, it was a political party with a Salafi tendency, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), and had seemed to not only dominate the political scene, but was moving to do so by achieving power through the ballot box.[3] In France, since the attacks of 2015, questions such as "should Salafism be banned? " or "is Salafism a gateway to armed violence?" have provoked heated debates that make us reflect on the systematic role attributed to this ideological variable in the passage towards violent action; so much so, in fact, that the very concept of radicalization is invoked as soon as one identifies contact with Salafism by incriminated individuals. It is not insignificant that the French judicial authorities have recently deployed, in prison and in open environments, a system that relies in part on "mediators of religious fact (*fait religieux*)" whose main role is to distinguish between purely religious radicalism (rigorist Salafism) and one instilled with violent Jihadism. From this understanding, being characterized as Salafi or as having an engagement with Salafism does not in itself constitute evidence for violent radicalization or even as a factor in that radicalization. Overall, however, the question remains as to the role thatideological motivations occupy in the process of engaging in violent action.

Salafism and the Phenomenon of "Radicalization"

In Algeria, the use of radicalization as a notion by the media, academics, and politicians is more recent than in the West. In the 1990s, the terms "extremism", "violent extremism", or "terrorism" were the core terms used to refer to the phenomenon of radical violence carried out by *Jihadi* Salafism. On the one hand, the term "extremism" was used by the authorities for an essentially domestic audience to signify a break with the dominant religious norms within Algerian society. On the other hand, the notion of "terrorism" was partly intended for a foreign audience to

1 Ainine, Bilel, *Islam politique et entrée en radicalité. Le cas des salafistes radicaux violents algériens*, Doctoral dissertation, Paris, Université Paris-Saclay, 2016.

2 Sèze, Romain, Crettiez, Xavier, Ainine, Bilel, and Lindemann, Thomas. "Saisir les mécanismes de la radicalisation violente", Rapport de recherche pour la Mission de recherche Droit et Justice (Paris 2017) ; Crettiez, Xavier and Ainine, Bilel. *Soldats de Dieu, Paroles de djihadistes incarcérés* (Editions de l'Aube, 2017).

3 Labat, Séverine. *Les Islamistes algériens : entre les urnes et le maquis* (Paris : Seuil, 1995).

insert the discourse regarding the fight against local Jihadism into the logic of the Western-led "global war on terrorism". It is not until the 2010s that "radicalization" as a notion became used more frequently within the official language of the Algerian authorities, something intended to make the Algerian discourse intelligible to the West, especially in terms of its own experience of managing Jihadi disengagement and the fight against radicalization.[4]

Because of its processual dimension, its anchorage in a repertoire of violent actions, and its inscription into an extreme ideological referential, the concept of radicalization proves to be very relevant for the analysis of the process of engagement into violent radicalism in a minority section of the Salafi movement in Algeria. Commitment to violence in the Algerian case follows a gradual logic that seems closely linked to the political trajectory of the FIS. What distinguishes Algerian Salafi Jihadis from the French Jihadis of the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda is in fact a commitment to a form of partisan militancy adopted before the commitment to violence. Although there certainly was a fascination for Salafi literature and the scholars who embodied it at the time (Naser Al Din Al Albani, Abdelaziz Abdallah ibn Baz, Mohamed Ben Saleh ibn 'Uthaymin, etc) by some, the majority of Algerian Salafis were convinced of the need to engage in the political game and follow the lead of the Muslim Brothers already present in the political landscape. The brief experience of local political management by FIS militants in 1990 and 1991[5] was the culmination of this political commitment, which came to an end following the 1992 interruption of the electoral process by the army. The shift towards armed violence would then take place progressively, following the use of a non-violent repertoire of protest action (demonstrations, sit-ins, general strike, and civil disobedience) that proved unable to achieve its objectives. This left the field open to the most radical members of the FIS, the Jihadi Salafis.

Unlike the Algerian case, the vast majority of French Jihadis did and do not go through a stage of political militancy. This is even truer for members of the Islamic State, who are less intellectualized and much less politicized than those of al-Qaeda, with a much higher proportion of individuals with a history of delinquency and criminality. While al-Qaeda profiles most often express respect for Salafi scholars, albeit alongside castigating their immobility and loyalty to Arab regimes, republican or monarchical, Islamic State profiles are completely different and draw on medieval Salafi literature. It is not surprising, therefore, that the claim of belonging to Salafism in its contemporary form is more characteristic of al-Qaeda militants than of those of the Islamic State, as the latter often refuse to be labelled according to their supposed ideological affiliation. For the majority of IS members, the discourse is more oriented towards action and very little towards the so-called "savant" religious corpus, especially since they do not seem to have a fine mastery of it. This is even more palpable among the DCSR (common law detainees susceptible to radicalization) than among the TIS (Islamist terrorists).

Members of the Islamic State also very often have biographical trajectories that seem more chaotic, marked by family problems (single parenthood, domestic violence, etc) and only turn to Islam at the end of adolescence. When they do, they tend to adopt Salafism straight away, because it provides them with the means to break with their previous life but also with the society in which they do not recognize themselves. Hence, a commitment to violence most often occurs when the assimilation of the Salafi corpus proves impossible due to a double failure of education: that of learning classical Arabic, and that of mastering the scientific language and scholarly

4 See for example: " L'Algérie et la dé-radicalisation, une expérience à partager", Ministère des Affaires Etrangères algériennes, September 2015, online : https://www.un.int/algeria/sites/www.un.int/files/Algeria/Documents/derad-fr.pdf

5 Aït-Aoudia, Myriam. "La naissance du Front islamique du salut : une politisation conflictuelle (1988-1989)." *Critique Internationale* n° 30/1 (2006) : 129-144.

lexicon of Salafism. It is precisely due to this twofold failure that the Jihadi Salafi discourse appears more accessible to these individuals, as it is more marked by a logic of action rather than by the logic of "education and purification" that is typical of scholarly Salafism.

Jihadi discourse is also made accessible to individuals with low or non-existent religious and Arabic skills in that it proposes a simplification and a translation (in English, French, Russian, etc) of savant Salafi lexicon. Highly codified Salafi concepts such as *takfir* (excommunication), *Al wala'a wa-l-bara'a* (allegiance and disavowal), *jihad,* and *khilafa* (caliphate) are thus hijacked, revised, and redeployed by Jihadism, which rids them of their theological codification and recasts them into a rationale for violent action.

Salafism as an Alternative Discourse

The notion of "deradicalization" has long been used to characterize the process of exiting violent action. While this notion is still used today in Algerian institutional language, the authorities in France have instead chosen to use the notion of "disengagement".[6] In concrete terms, this "disengagement" refers to a physical form of disengagement from acts of violence, while simultaneously implying the potential resilience of a cognitive radicalism that is still theoretically inclined to violence.[7] This caution with regard to the notion of deradicalization refers to the fact that many DCSR (common law detainees susceptible of radicalization) or TIS (Islamist terrorists) profiles who speak of physical disengagement still seem to present a form of cognitive radicalization.[8] Given this, however, encouraging disengagement among Jihadis necessarily involves questioning their belief system originating from Salafi Jihadism.

For the Algerian authorities, who are faced with the problem of how to move past violence in a post-civil war context, savant Salafism, beyond its stifling rigorism, could constitute a key factor in cognitive disengagement, precisely when it presents itself as a credible alternative that can limit the use of violence. This hypothesis was widely exploited by the Algerian regime, which included in its Jihadi disengagement program an ideological component in the form of theological dialogue. Indeed, as early as the later 1990s, Algerian authorities had called on emblematic figures of Salafism such as Al-Albani, ibn Baz, and ibn ‘Uthaymin to encourage disengagement.

Subsequently, throughout the first decade of the new millennium, a long series of theological debates were initiated to deconstruct the ideological framework of the Salafi *jihad*. To do this, the authorities relied on several well-known preachers to disseminate a religious counter-discourse that focused on the theological non-conformity of *jihad* against Muslim rulers.

This choice of an alternative to the savant Salafi corpus, however, was not without its consequences on the religious and cultural landscape of post-civil war Algeria. Indeed, while an alternative was given, the other side of the coin was that this enabled a nation-wide spread of Salafi discourse, which would soon become the major challenger to the various authorities in charge of religious worship. To cope with this expansion of Salafism across Algeria, these authorities are now considering various measures, including a re-nationalizion of the religious reference system.

The French discursive framework and the stakes of debate are quite distinct from those in Algeria. In the context of France, Islamism in general,

6 Sèze, Romain *Prévenir la violence djihadiste. Les paradoxes d’un modèle sécuritaire* (Paris: Seuil, 2019).

7 John Horgan prefers the terms "behavioral disengagement" and "psychological disengagement" over the terms "cognitive disengagement" and "physical disengagement," See: Horgan, John. "Deradicalization or Disengagement? A Process in Need of Clarity and a Counterterrorism Initiative in Need of Evaluation.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*2:4 (2008): 3-8

8 This in itself may lead to signal them as potentially radicalised individuals.

and Salafism in particular, constitute problems in and of themselves and are the object of virulent exchanges in political debates that are now framed by the notion of "separatism". Therefore, resorting to an alternative religious discourse for the purpose of cognitive disengagement is much less easy, by definition, to accept as a public response.

In addition, it must also be admitted that the role of ideology in the violent commitment of French Jihadis, or presumed Jihadis, turns out to be much less obvious and harder to prove than in the case of Algerian Jihadis. From one profile to another, the degree of ideological indoctrination can vary considerably between those who are highly ideologized, the minority, and those who are moderately or not at all, the majority. It is therefore understandable that reluctance is expressed when it relates to exposing an individual who is identified as being poorly indoctrinated, or not at all, to an alternative discourse of the same type as that which is adopted conjunctively in Algeria.

Nevertheless, there may be a certain pertinence to reflect on this logic of disengagement in terms of stages. The Algerian experience, for which we now have sufficient historical distance, indicates that behavioral disengagement occurs first, and cognitive disengagement only in a second phase. This step-by-step logic can also be adapted to the Western context in general and to France in particular, provided that we accept the idea of results conceived in the medium or long term. The deconstruction and then reconstruction of the universe of religious beliefs, however imprecise they may be, follows a process that can be much longer than that of violent radicalization.

Policy Recommendation

Beyond the indispensable role assumed by the two-person support team ("*binôme de soutien*"), composed mainly of psychologists and educators, in accompanying radicalized individuals, the alternative religious discourse carried by religious workers cannot be designed as a homogeneous model. The radicalized, or potentially radicalized, profiles differ according to their degree of ideological indoctrination as well as to the proven or unproven role played by this instillation of ideology in their violent actions. On the one hand, a highly inculcated profile, said to be “convinced”, evolving in a compartmentalized religious universe and closed to any other form of interpretation will have a greater tendency to be open with a chaplain, an imam, or a mediator of the religious fact who has the capacity to engage in a religious discussion in its most rigorous aspects. On the other hand, a profile that is more easily open and shows a distancing from the Jihadi, or simply rigorist, discourse can express a discomfort or a rejection towards an interlocutor who would impose a purely religious exchange on them; something that may make a less ideological individual feel categorized as radicalized at the outset and thus provoke closure. It would thus be pertinent to align engagement with a scale of indoctrination, with each case adapted according to the individual profile in question, including the most relevant frame of reference, that is the specific religious literature, and to the claimed current of obedience (savant Salafism, Jihadism, Muslim Brotherhood, Sufism, Tabligh, etc).

As the priority is to identify profiles likely to represent a real or potential security risk, it should be specified that, at present, indoctrination with Jihadi Salafism constitutes the most tangible cognitive element in terms of violent radicalization. Other ideological tendencies of the "Islamic movement", whether politicized or pietistic, do not present an obvious mechanical link with violent commitment, especially among French profiles; these can, however, feed debates about societal ruptures with respect to democratic and secular norms. This is even more the case since Jihadi ideology in the last decade seems to have become considerably autonomous and detached from contemporary Salafi literature – not to mention its condemnation of all political Islamic movements as apostates.

The Role of Salafi Ideology among Radicalised Muslims: Two Case Studies

Joas Wagemakers

Introduction

A lot of research has been done on the extent to which (religious) ideology plays a role in mobilising, activating, and building social movements and how this coheres with other factors. This research has shown that, while ideology is certainly not the only (or even main) motivating factor for social movement actors, ideas can certainly play a role.[1] Recent work on the role of ideology in radical Islamist groups has also shown that (religious) ideology should be seen as a relevant factor in processes leading to terrorism, but that these are complex and diverse among different actors.[2] This short chapter seeks to contribute to this topic by discussing two different case studies in which the presence of Salafi ideology is clearly important in mobilising and radicalising people, but in a similarly complex and diverse way.

The Reception of Radical Ideas: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

The first case study dealt with here is that of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (b. 1959), a Palestinian-Jordanian Jihadi-Salafi scholar who is generally seen as one of the most important radical Islamist ideologues in the world and who has been particularly influential in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. With regard to the first country, he wrote a book entitled Al-Kawashif al-Jaliyya fi Kufr al-Dawla al-Sa'udiyya ("The Clear Revelations of the Unbelief of the Saudi State"), which he published in 1989. In this book, al-Maqdisi accuses the regime in Riyadh of being characterised by unbelief because of its unwillingness to apply the shari'a in full, which violates the unity of God (tawhid) in legislation, and its willingness to establish close ties with non-Muslim countries, particularly the United States, which al-Maqdisi views as un-Islamic loyalty to the enemies of Islam. He therefore applies takfir (excommunication) to the Saudi state and believes it should be overthrown through jihad. By writing this, al-Maqdisi not only challenges the Saudi state, but he does so in a way that makes extensive use of the writings of Saudi Arabia's own Salafi scholars as well as Salafi concepts like al-wala' wa-l-bara' (loyalty and disavowal). As such, al-Maqdisi makes a very Salafi case against Saudi Arabia, suggesting that his message will likely appeal greatly to Salafis.[3]

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 and it appeared as if Saudi Arabia would be next, the latter asked the United States for help, leading to the presence of 500,000 American soldiers in the kingdom and, in response, the rise of a social movement that protested this decision and accompanied it with a broader set of political demands.[4] Given that a substantial part of this social movement stemmed from the sahwa (renaissance), a political Salafi trend in Saudi Arabia, and al-Maqdisi's book partly dealt with the Saudi-American ties that this movement protested against, it may seem as if these two would dovetail perfectly. This, however, was not the case. Not only was al-Maqdisi's solution to the problem of the Saudi regime (takfir and jihad) more radical than that of the sahwa (criticism and reform), but his discourse was

1 See, for example, Hank Johnston and John A. Noakes (eds.), Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective (Lanham, MD, etc.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

2 Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, "Terrorism and Ideology: Cracking the Nut," Perspectives on Terrorism 13, no. 6 (2019): 2-15.

3 Joas Wagemakers, A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 104-8.

4 Stéphane Lacroix, Les islamistes saoudiens: Une insurrection manquée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), 189-227.

also built on religious Salafi arguments, which mostly fell on deaf ears among the politically savvy adherents to the sahwa. Despite a shared opposition to the Saudi regime and a common general Salafi outlook, al-Maqdisi's book thus had little influence on the social movement that erupted after the Gulf War.[5]

This changed when al-Maqdisi's book on Saudi Arabia was read by members of al-Qa'ida on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP), a local branch of the broader al-Qa'ida organisation that was much more radical and violent in its opposition to the Saudi regime and rose in the early 2000s.[6] To members of QAP, al-Maqdisi's arguments – grounded in the works and concepts of (Saudi) Salafi religious tradition – were precisely what they were looking for in their own battle against the Saudi state since – being steeped in Salafi tradition themselves – other, non-Salafi scholars would likely not have appealed to them.[7] As such, al-Maqdisi, partly because he framed his opposition to the Saudi state in religious Salafi terms, was quite influential on the Jihadi-Salafi QAP.[8]

In Jordan, where al-Maqdisi has lived since 1992, his influence developed in the opposite direction. During the period when he arrived there from Kuwait, Jordan was in disarray because of an economic crisis, the Palestinian intifada (1987-1993), the Gulf War in neighbouring Iraq and the peace agreement with Israel in 1994. This tumultuous time led to a search for new answers among some, causing a rise in radical Islamist groups in Jordan.[9] Among these disparate youngsters – who lacked a coherent set of ideas – al-Maqdisi's writings provided the radical Salafi ideology they needed, particularly when they also began to focus on issues that Jordanian radicals found objectionable, such as democracy and the country's "un-Islamic" laws.[10]

After the group of Jordanian young men radicalised, were arrested and went to prison, however, the scholarly and Salafi doctrinal strengths that al-Maqdisi brought to the table began to pale in comparison to the tough, physical qualities that another member of the group – the later Jordanian leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi (1966-2006) – provided. As it turned out, al-Maqdisi had been useful in facilitating these youngsters' ideological radicalisation, but it was the radical nature of his ideology, rather than its Salafi arguments, that they were interested in. As a result, many radical Jordanian youngsters left the scholar al-Maqdisi for the fighter al-Zarqawi, particularly when he began to criticise the latter for his excessive use of violence in Iraq as a result of his less than full adherence to Salafi ideological purity.[11]

The Radicalisation of a Leader: Muhammad Ibrahim Shaqra

The second case study involves Muhammad Ibrahim Shaqra (1934-2017), a Palestinian-Jordanian Salafi scholar who was one of the leaders of the Jordanian quietist Salafi community because of his seniority and scholarly credentials, second only to the famous Muhammad Nasir al-

5 Wagemakers, Quietist, 109-19.

6 Thomas Hegghammer, Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979 (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 113-226.

7 Madawi al-Rasheed, Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 139.

8 Wagemakers, Quietist, 127-44.

9 Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Climate of Change in Jordan's Islamist Movement," in Islamic Fundamentalism, ed. Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1996), 123-34.

10 Wagemakers, Quietist, 198-212.

11 Id., "A Terrorist Organisation That Never Was: The Jordanian 'Bay'at al-Imam' Group," Middle East Journal 68, no. 1 (2014): 59-75; id., "Reclaiming Scholarly Authority: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Critique of Jihadi Practices," Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 34 (2011): 523-39.

Din al-Albani (1914-1999). In the 2010s, however, Shaqra increasingly drifted in the direction of Jihadi-Salafi scholars like al-Maqdisi. This has been ascribed to a theological difference of opinion on the nature of faith between Shaqra and other quietist Salafis,[12] but there was actually more going on, which shows how ideology and context can strengthen each other and cause further radicalisation.

Although there was a theological difference of opinion between Shaqra and other Jordanian quietist Salafis, it was not until the question of leadership of their community after the death of al-Albani came up that it turned into a conflict. Shaqra, expecting to be made the new leader of the community, was turned down in favour of younger, less formally educated men who were closer to the often young Salafis they sought to guide than the elderly civil servant that Shaqra himself had become. Frustrated about this, he eventually broke with the quietist Salafi community and, using the theological difference of opinion he had with them as an excuse, radicalised and grew closer to Jihadi-Salafis, who not only agreed with him on his specific views on faith, but – much more importantly – gave him the respect he felt he deserved.[13]

Conclusion

Both case studies dealt with above show that ideology has been important in the radicalisation of certain Salafis, but in very different ways and always greatly influenced by the context in which it occurred. Al-Maqdisi's Jihadi-Salafi writings had little influence among the Saudi sahwa, even though the context seemed quite favourable, because they were quite radical and steeped in religious Salafi tradition; to the Jihadi-Salafi QAP, however, they were of great importance, precisely because of these qualities.

In Jordan, al-Maqdisi's writings first proved quite popular for their radical appeal among disparate youngsters looking for a guiding philosophy; later, however, their radicalism prevailed over their desire for Salafi doctrinal purity and many Jordanian Jihadi-Salafis sided with the tougher and more militant fighter al-Zarqawi. The influence of al-Maqdisi's Jihadi-Salafi ideology among Salafis critical of the regimes they lived under was thus very diverse and highly dependent on the context in which his ideas were received.

The example of Shaqra shows that radicalisation can happen under the guise of ideology (a theological difference of opinion), masking the real reason (frustration about being passed over for a leadership position). While the former connected Shaqra with Jihadi-Salafis, it was the latter that got him to seek their company in the first place. As such, Shaqra's case not only shows the significant (though limited) importance of ideology in radicalisation, but – like in the case of al-Maqdisi – that ideas and context are intimately entangled and cannot be seen in isolation of each other.

12 Daniel Lav, Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 160-6.

13 Joas Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community* (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 131-7.

Salafism and Violence in the African Sahel and Northern Nigeria

Alexander Thurston

Introduction

Salafi-Jihadi movements have contributed to massive insecurity and loss of life in parts of the Sahel region, northeastern Nigeria, and the surrounding Lake Chad Basin. The relationship between Salafism and violence in these regions unfolds in a climate of accusations, often leveled by other Muslims. Such accusations depict all Salafis as crypto-terrorists. Yet mainstream Salafi actors, who are substantially more numerous than the Jihadis, disagree with Jihadis on core issues. For example, and most importantly, mainstream Salafis accept existing political orders as legitimate, even when they criticize the authorities. They also tend to have narrower criteria than Salafi-Jihadis when it comes to declaring other Muslims unbelievers, and have sometimes tightened their criteria in response to the Jihadis' sweeping accusations of unbelief against other Muslims. Nevertheless, mainstream Salafis – here including both "purists" and "politicos," to use one famous typology,[1] although in West Africa there are seldom hard and fast lines between those two categories – are not pacifists. In fact, they have a range of attitudes concerning the use of violence in different contexts. There are also now a few prominent post-Jihadis in the Sahel,[2] some of whom publicly argue against various aspects of the jihadist platform. There have also been state-led attempts, especially in Nigeria and Mauritania, to "deradicalize" and reintegrate suspected Jihadis.

The Plural Roots of Salafi-Jihadism

The Salafi-Jihadi movements in the Sahel and northern Nigeria have plural roots and should not be understood as organizations or individuals that moved along a "conveyor belt" from non-violent Salafism to Salafi-Jihadism.[3] The most prominent armed Jihadis in the region are Boko Haram and its offshoot the Islamic State West Africa Province, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and its Malian subsidiary *Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimin* (the Group for Supporting Islam and Muslims), and the al-Qaida breakaway faction the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. The complex itineraries of some leading Western African Jihadis suggest that Salafi-jihadism is not merely a violent extension of Salafism, but a movement where actors with diverse motivations congregate under a Salafi-Jihadi banner.

For example, the founder of Nigeria's Boko Haram (which translates loosely as "Western education/culture is forbidden by Islam"), Muhammad Yusuf (1970-2009), passed through several religious movements, some of them with an anti-systemic character. These include the Shi'i "Muslim Brothers" (not to be confused with the Muslim Brotherhood), later named the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, led by Ibrahim al-Zakzaky; the Muslim

1 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:3 (2006): 207-239. Wiktorowicz's typology has elicited numerous responses and critiques, and was elucidated with reference to a Saudi Arabian context that sometimes maps poorly onto other countries, but the typology remains influential due to its clarity and utility.

2 On "post-jihadism," see Omar Ashour, "Post-Jihadism: Libya and the Global Transformations of Armed Islamist Movements," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23:3 (2011): 377-397.

3 For an important rebuttal of the "conveyer belt" theory, see Michael Kenney, *The Islamic State in Britain: Radicalization and Resilience in an Activist Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 28-29. Kenney's observations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the relationship between Salafism and Salafi-jihadism in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

Brothers' Sunni offshoot, called *Jama'at Tajdid al-Islam* (Society for Renewing Islam, sometimes rendered *Jama'at al-Tajdid al-Islami*, the Society for Islamic Renewal); and the mainstream Salafi movement, especially the preaching network of the major Salafi cleric Ja'far Mahmud Adam (1961/2-2007).[4] Or to take another example, the pre-eminent Malian jihadist as of 2021, Iyad ag Ghali, has in different phases of his career been a rebel fighting for his home region's autonomy, a religious seeker with *Jama'at al-Tabligh*, a senior consultant and official of the Malian government, and a Jihadi.[5] Ag Ghali's wide range of alliances and contacts, his stated willingness to negotiate with the Malian government, and a complex prisoner exchange between his group and Malian authorities in October 2020 all point to ag Ghali's selective pragmatism and flexibility even amid his Salafi-jihadist phase. The shifting affiliations of these figures, prior to becoming Jihadis, show that understanding Salafism as their conduit into violence would be an oversimplification at best.

Salafi-Jihadis' Impacts on Mainstream Salafis

As Salafi-Jihadi movements have expanded in the Sahel and northern Nigeria since the early 2000s, more mainstream Salafis have felt the effects in multiple ways. First, because mainstream Salafis are often well-positioned to criticize and rhetorically undermine Salafi-Jihadis' theological and interpretive claims, they have sometimes taken it upon themselves – or have been strongly encouraged – to speak against the Jihadis. Mainstream Salafis have sometimes become targets of assassinations and reprisals by Jihadis. As a result of their media interventions against Jihadism, a number of prominent Salafis, such as Ja'far Adam (most likely, although his murder remains unsolved) and Muhammad Auwal Adam "Albani" of Zaria, were killed by Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, especially between 2007 and 2014.

Second, the emergence of powerful Salafi-jihadist movements has led some critics of Salafism to redouble their accusations that Salafism is inherently violent and insidious. For context, the Salafi-Jihadi violence broke out amid legacies of heated rhetoric and occasional clashes between Salafis and Sufis, between (at least in Nigeria) Sunnis and the Shi'a, and between (again, at least in Nigeria) Muslims and Christians.[6] Due to their denunciations of other groups' practices and beliefs, Salafis have made powerful enemies, especially among West Africa's influential Sufi orders. In Nigeria and Mali, Sufi shaykhs, Shi'i leaders and activists, Muslim and non-Muslim journalists, and foreign analysts have all depicted Jihadis as the logical culmination of what Salafis' critics see as the corrosive effects of Gulf funding, "Wahhabi preaching," and/or anti-Sufism.[7] Western or Western-backed "countering

4 Yusuf's itinerary is discussed in my book *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), Chapter One.

5 Ag Ghali's itinerary is discussed in my book *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), Chapter Three.

6 For background on intra-Muslim debates in northern Nigeria, see Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997); and Ousmane Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Removal and Reinstatement of Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

7 For some discussion of these accusations in the northern Nigerian context, see my "Sectarian Triangles: Salafis, the Shi'a, and the Politics of Religious Affiliations in Northern Nigeria," *Politics and Religion*, published online 24 July 2020, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-religion/article/abs/sectarian-triangles-salafis-the-shia-and-the-politics-of-religious-affiliations-in-northern-nigeria/16F725C23ADE008C177C6849794ABFF7. For an example of an analyst arguing that "Wahhabi preachers" prepared the ground for the later emergence of jihadism in the Sahel, see Benoît Delmas, "Terrorisme djihadiste - Olivier Hanne : 'On craint des attentats d'envergure à Dakar et Yaoundé'," *Le Point*, 3 February 2016, https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/terrorisme-djihadisme-olivier-hanne-les-djihadistes-descendent-vers-le-sud-au-senegal-03-02-2016-2015008_3826.php.

violent extremism" programs have also frequently seemed to assume that Salafism is in and of itself a risk factor for violence, and that even non-violent Salafis are in need of religious reorientation.

Mainstream Salafis' actions can reinforce their image as hardliners in detractors' eyes even as Salafis' own actions challenge those same stereotypes. That dynamic was vividly demonstrated when the most prominent Malian Salafi, the Bamako-based Imam Mahmoud Dicko, became the leading figure of the summer 2020 protests that rocked the government of then-President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and that contributed to the August 2020 coup that unseated him. For some observers in Mali and beyond, Dicko incarnated a dangerous irruption of a theocratic impulse into the public domain. Yet Dicko, even prior to the protests, had forged cross-cutting alliances with other religious, civil society, and political actors, including the country's pre-eminent Sufi shaykh, Mohamed Ould Cheickne Hamallah.[8] Indeed, Dicko's alliances and rhetorical shifts raise the question of whether he and certain other prominent religious leaders in West Africa are moving in a "post-Salafi" direction, a question addressed elsewhere in this volume. Even defining what "Salafi" means has become a moving target.

As the example of Dicko demonstrates, Salafis in the Sahel and northern Nigeria sometimes appear to be softening their former harshness toward Sufis and other Muslims. However, Salafis also sometimes still move to crush theological opponents; in northern Nigeria, Salafis have been primary movers in recent blasphemy cases against certain fringe Sufi actors, with Salafis harnessing those cases to cast wider doubt on the orthodoxy of Sufism generally. Who is allied with whom, who is on the defensive against whose critique, and who is able to use state power to constrain rivals – all of these dynamics vary from place to place and moment to moment.

8 For background on Hamallah's community, see Benjamin Soares, *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Mainstream Salafis' Attitudes Towards Violence

There can be a stark contrast between the social-political roles played by mainstream Salafis and the roles played by Salafi-Jihadis. While Salafi-Jihadis operate out of remote areas and live on the run, prominent mainstream Salafis have held major government or government-adjacent positions. For example, Aminu Daurawa of Nigeria headed Kano State's Hisba Board (a moral enforcement body, part of state-backed shari'a implementation) from 2011-2019. Mali's Mahmoud Dicko was head of the country's High Islamic Council from 2008-2019.

Mainstream Salafis have sometimes been accused of playing a double game, concealing or downplaying their sympathies for the Jihadi cause. It is true that, particularly in northern Nigeria, some of the most prominent mainstream Salafi preachers sometimes expressed admiration for Osama bin Laden and/or rhetorical support for violent actors elsewhere in the world. Such rhetorical support, however, is best viewed in a context where preachers and audiences often harbor profound skepticism about the motives and actions of Western powers, Israel, and the Shi'a – actors perceived as conniving against Sunni Muslims, particularly in the early 2000s amid the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. If major Salafi preachers or ordinary Western African Muslims sometimes appeared to perceive bin Laden as an anti-imperialist icon rather than a nefarious terrorist, that does not necessarily mean that preachers or their audiences were itching to overthrow their own governments or join al-Qaida.

Outside the context of Jihadism, mainstream Salafi preachers in northern Nigeria and the Sahel have sometimes fanned the flames of violence, particularly on a rhetorical level, by suggesting that other Muslims are heretics or unbelievers. For example, Salafis sometimes provocatively allege that widespread practices such as celebrating *mawlid* (Prophet Muhammad's birthday) are

heretical innovations.[9] These provocations have sometimes elicited violence on the part of Sufis and others. In such encounters, Salafis can be understood as both contributing to and being victimized by violence. In a loosely similar way, Mahmoud Dicko and his co-organizers dramatically elevated the political temperature in Mali in summer 2020 by staging mass anti-government protests, conceived as non-violent but punctuated by sporadic and bottom-up instances of violence. Dicko and many of his supporters then ended up being targets of violence by the security forces. In political violence or intra-Muslim clashes, the line between instigator and victim can shift rapidly. Moreover, while mainstream Salafis sometimes perpetrate a kind of rhetorical or symbolic violence against other Muslims (a phenomenon by no means limited to Salafis), they rarely cross into organized physical violence.

Post-Jihadism

Northern Nigeria and the Sahel are also home to post-Jihadis or even ex-Jihadis, including clerics and former footsoldiers. The region's most famous post-Jihadi is Mauritania's Abu Hafs al-Muritani (or Mahfouz Ould al-Walid), a former religious advisor to bin Laden. After spending approximately 2001-2012 in varying degrees of restricted freedom in Iran, al-Muritani returned to his home country and began appearing on Al Jazeera and other media platforms to present his refutations of some elements of the jihadist worldview. Al-Muritani has described violent Jihadi uprisings as futile, and has stated that he privately disagreed with bin Laden about the legitimacy of the 9/11 attacks.[10]

In both Mauritania and Nigeria, authorities have created programs to "deradicalize" suspected Jihadis. Mauritania's program, which unfolded mostly in 2010, featured dialogues between selected major clerics in the country (including a prominent Salafi, the Imam of Nouakchott Ahmedou Ould Lembrabott, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood-adjacent, Salafi or post-Salafi cleric Muhammad al-Hasan Ould al-Dedew, who hails from a core scholarly family in Mauritania but who has himself sometimes been in rhetorical and legal conflict with Mauritanian authorities) and a group of accused Jihadis imprisoned in the capital; many of these prisoners were released, and only a few hardliners remained in prison. The Mauritanian program's effects are difficult to assess; recidivism appears to have been low, but beyond that, the causes of the ensuing drop in jihadist violence in Mauritania are debated. The other possible factors causing the drop in Jihadi violence in Mauritania include the dismantling of the country's small and relatively inept local Jihadi network by 2011, which left regional Jihadis and the Jihadis' most promising Mauritanian recruits to seek opportunities elsewhere, especially in neighboring Mali; the increases in Mauritanian counterterrorism capabilities; the shift in Mauritanian policy from intervening in Mali to remaining more aloof from counterterrorism on Malian soil; and, possibly, some level of tacit or explicit understanding between Mauritanian authorities and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb that the two sides would begin to leave each other alone.[11]

In Nigeria, attempted dialogues with leaders and factions of Boko Haram were initiated by various actors, including Sufi and Islamist clerics, NGOs and civil society actors, and foreign governments such as that of Switzerland, sometimes with the reluctant and inconsistent backing of the Nigerian authorities. Such efforts mostly faltered, never

9 One such cycle of events is discussed in my *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), Chapter Five.

10 Al-Muritani's trajectory was the subject of a book: Lemine Ould M. Salem, *L'Histoire secrète du djihad: D'Al-Qaïda à l'État islamique* (Paris, Flammarion, 2018).

11 For more discussion of the dialogues and their impact, see Frederic Wehrey, "Control and Contain: Mauritania's Clerics and the Strategy Against Violent Extremism," *Carnegie Endowment*, 29 March 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/29/control-and-contain-mauritania-s-clerics-and-strategy-against-violent-extremism-pub-78729; and my *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel*, Chapter Seven.

producing lasting effects other than hostage releases. Meanwhile, efforts at "deradicalization" have been implemented amid the insurgency, focusing on ordinary fighters. In 2014, the Office of the National Security Advisor initiated a deradicalization program as part of a multi-faceted "countering violent extremism" program. In 2016, the Nigerian military launched Operation Safe Corridor, which attempts to deradicalize former fighters who surrender. These programs have attracted enormous criticism within Nigeria on the part of an often-sensationalist media. Many citizens voice nervousness about the possibility of former fighters reintegrating into mainstream society.[12] Mainstream Salafis have played a major role in public efforts to discredit Boko Haram's ideology, but have not – at least according to what is publicly known – been prominent faces of Operation Safe Corridor.

The prospects for ending jihadism in the region thus appear slim in the short term. The Mauritanian case appears somewhat exceptional, especially given that what Mauritania suffered were serious but still essentially sporadic terrorist attacks and raids, rather than the extended Jihadi insurgencies that have plagued parts of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad. Defeating such insurgencies militarily appears difficult if not impossible, especially given that security force abuses become core drivers of violence once insurgencies break out. At the same time, efforts to de-escalate conflicts through non-militarily means have also had mixed success. Amid other problems, there is a mismatch between the heavy focus on ideology and theology in deradicalization efforts and "countering violent extremism" campaigns on the one hand, the reported motivations of fighters on the other. Non-ideological factors contribute to the mobilization of fighters, including self-protection, resource conflicts, intercommunal tensions, and revenge-seeking.[13]

12 For one discussion of these programs, see Audu Bulama Bukarti and Rachel Bryson, "Dealing With Boko Haram Defectors in the Lake Chad Basin: Lessons From Nigeria," Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 30 April 2019, https://institute.global/sites/default/files/articles/Dealing-With-Boko-Haram-Defectors-in-the-Lake-Chad-Basin-Lessons-From-Nigeria-.pdf.

Conclusion

The relationship between Salafism and violence in the Sahel and Nigeria is going in two directions simultaneously: a mainstream Salafi elite has become part of or adjacent to the political class; and a Salafi-Jihadi tendency has become a leading force within multiple conflict zones. Accusations of collusion between mainstream Salafis and Salafi-Jihadis appear untenable, and there is no simple "conveyor belt" leading from Salafism to Salafi-jihadism: insurgencies have plural roots, including non-ideological drivers. Mainstream Salafis sometimes use or provoke violence in the theater of politics or intra-Muslim tensions, but essentially work within the existing political system rather than seeking to overthrow it (even if, as in the dramatic case of Dicko and the summer 2020 protests in Mali, mainstream Salafis may participate in attempting to overthrow an individual head of state). Violence associated with mainstream Salafis is thus episodic, reactive, contingent, and limited, in stark contrast to the enduring, mass, and even indiscriminate violence perpetrated by Jihadis.

13 For one discussion of the importance of revenge-seeking as a motivation for fighters, see United Nations Development Program, "Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment," 2017, https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf.

Salafism and Violence in Cambodia: Why Is Jihadism Absent From The Muslim Minority?

Zoltan Pall

Introduction

Salafism is one of the most influential schools of thought among Cambodia's Muslim minority. Jihadi thought, in parallel, never made inroads within the Cambodian Muslim community despite Salafis' extensive educational networks, religious infrastructure, and dense linkages to the Middle East. Low scale communal violence occurred between Islamic groups in the 1990s and early 2000s, but these were hardly organized, and did not result in any loss of life. Attacks associated with transnational Jihadi groups such as al-Qaida or the Islamic state never occurred. This is unlike some other Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and to a lesser extent Malaysia where Jihadi groups have been active in recent decades. Interestingly, unlike other Southeast Asian countries, where Salafis make up relatively minor parts of Islamic communities, in Cambodia they are one of the largest constituents of the Muslim community. This article revolves around a core question: why Jihadi Salafism did not gain followers in Cambodia? As it will demonstrate, the answer to this lies in the sociopolitical context of Islam in Cambodia.

The Islamic Scene in Cambodia

To understand the place of Salafism in Cambodia it is necessary to look at the complex Islamic scene in the country. Muslims make up a 5-6% minority in the country. Around 75% of this community belong to the Austronesian-speaking Cham ethnic group, while 25% are Khmer-speaking Chvea.[1] Most Muslims are Sunnis and follow the Shafi'i *maddhab*, while a minority practice Islam according to Cham traditions and call themselves the community of Imam San.[2]

During the rule of the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979) most Muslim scholars specialists perished, and the Islamic religious and educational infrastructure was destroyed. Significant reconstruction started only after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese occupier in 1989, accelerating in 1992 and 1993 with the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the reconstitution of monarchy.[3] Thousands of NGOs established footholds in Cambodia to rebuild the country, and many of these were Islamic faith-based charitable organizations targeting the Muslim minority.

The employees of these organizations, together with Cambodian Muslims who returned home after spending decades in Malaysia and the Middle East, brought new religious traditions and schools of thought into the country. Connections to the Malay world were re-established, and new linkages emerged between Cambodia and the Middle East. Transnational Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Jama'at al-Tabligh, and Salafism, also found their way into the country.

Salafism appeared in Cambodia in the early 1990s when a number of Cambodian graduates of Saudi Arabian Islamic universities set up educational and proselytizing networks with the assistance of Gulf

1 The term comes from "Jawa" which in this context means Malay.

2 Philipp Bruckmayr. "The Birth of the Kan Imam San: On the Recent Establishment of a New Islamic Congregation in Cambodia." *Journal of Global South Studies* 34:2 (2017): 197–224.

3 For more about the political context see: Sebastian Strangio. *Hun Sen's Cambodia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

based Islamic NGOs.[4] Currently, the backbone of the Salafi movement is a network of around thirty boarding schools throughout the country established and financed by the Kuwaiti Society for the Revival of Islamic Heritage (*Jamai'yyat Ihya' al-Turath al-Islami* – SRIH). These schools provide both the Cambodian national curriculum and Islamic education. Dozens of other, independent boarding schools were established by graduates of Gulf-based Islamic universities which are not under the umbrella of SRIH.

Another important constituent of Cambodian Salafism is the Islamic Educational Forum (*Minbar al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya* - IEF), which is a network of Salafi preachers who graduated in Saudi Arabia and receive their salaries from the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs. IEF's focus is on the organizing of online and offline seminars and lectures. Due to its skilful usage of the social media platforms, especially Facebook, the influence of IEF grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.[5]

Today, Salafism is among the major players of Cambodia's Islamic field that shape the worldview and thinking of Cambodian Muslims. There is an emerging community of local Muslims, who might not subscribe completely to all the rulings of Salafism – such as the prohibitions on listening to music and smoking – but nevertheless adhere to the movement's literalist approach and the rejection of following a *madhhab*. These Muslims mostly read Salafi religious literature and prefer to learn Arabic and English rather than Malay.[6] This essentially divides Cambodian Sunnis into two major categories: traditionalists, who follow a *madhhab*, and Salafis, who do not.

4 Zoltan Pall and Alberto Pérez Pereiro. "Salafī Islam in Cambodia: Institution Building, Transnational Networks and Patterns of Competition in a Muslim-Minority Context." *Welt des Islams* 60:2 (2020): 235–266.

5 Series of interviews in Cambodia, 2017-2019 and observation of IEF's online activities, 2020-2021. See also: Zoltan Pall and Alberto Pérez Pereiro. 2021. "Emerging Islamic Representations in the Cambodian Muslim Social Media Scene: Complex Divides and Muted Debates." *Cyber Orient* (Forthcoming)

6 Pall and Pérez, "Salafi Islam in Cambodia", 258.

Salafism: Barrier or Facilitator of Jihadism?

The relatively large and influential Salafi movement in Cambodia has not been a fertile soil for Jihadi ideas. The only transnational jihad-related incident in which the participation of Cambodian Muslims is suspected was the alleged hiding in the country of Riduan Isamuddin, the mastermind of the 2002 October Bali bombing.[7] Whether or not Isamuddin managed to recruit any Cambodian Muslims to his cause is not substantiated. Low intensity communal violence also occurred between the Tabligh and the Salafis during the 1990s and the early 2000s when the two movements occupied several mosques from each other by force, yet nothing implies that any of these episodes were fuelled by Jihadi discourses either.

There are several reasons why members of Cambodian Salafi networks are unlikely candidates to become proponents of violence. Cambodian Muslims in general have no grievances against the Khmer Buddhist majority or the political regime. This is unlike the Philippines for example, where many Muslims harbour secessionist ideas and intend to create their own country in the southern island of Mindanao. In fact, the Muslim community in Cambodia is well integrated within the state. While formally Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy, its political system is dominated by the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) which maintains authoritarian control through extensive networks of patronage which include the major players of the economy, media, and the country's religious groups.[8] Buddhist temples, for example, receive generous donations from politicians in exchange for keeping in line monks with an

7 The incident led to the closing of Umm al-Qura boarding school sponsored by the Saudi Umm al-Qura charity. The school was later reopened as Cambodian Islamic Center, but most foreign teachers were expelled.

8 Strangio, *Hun Sen's Cambodia*.

oppositional mindset.[9]

Cambodian Muslims get access to state institutions and foreign Muslim NGOs receive government approval in exchange for political quietism or even active support for the CPP during elections.[10] For these reasons, Cambodian Muslims in general do not see the state as their enemy. Furthermore, while the Khmer majority generally does not discriminate against Muslims, the destruction of the religious landscape carried out by the Khmer Rouge period is still deeply ingrained in the collective memory of the latter. As a result, most Muslims regard their good relationship to the authorities as the guarantee of their safety.

Militant movements, therefore, have a hard time finding support within the Cambodian Muslim community, and among Salafis in particular. The type of Salafism that has made inroads to Cambodia can be described as purist.[11] Purist Salafis are predominantly concerned in the minute details of religious practices, the purity of belief, and ritual performances. In their view, any kind of revolt against a Muslim ruler or even criticism against him is illegitimate. In non-Muslim countries where Muslims constitute minorities, they generally advocate staying clear from opposing the government to protect the interests and safety of Muslims.

The main Salafi groups in Cambodia, such as the networks of SRIH and IHE, subscribe to this ideological direction. While the latter completely stays away from politics, the former advocates pro-regime political activism to secure the autonomy of the *da'wa* movement. In exchange for Cambodian Salafis mobilizing votes for the ruling party in Muslim inhabited areas, Gulf-based charities can donate to them large sums of money with the authorities' approval. This good relationship with the CPP also provides a large margin of autonomy for Salafi proselytization which can be carried out unimpeded within the Muslim community.

Cambodian Salafi leaders thus have a good reason to check their own ranks and keep those who harbour Jihadi ideas at bay. For example, whenever some of the Gulf graduates open an independent school, SRIH tries to draw it under its own aegis by offering additional financial support. They also strive to keep in line those who might be influenced by the ideas of transnational jihad and would be eager to launch attacks against the Cambodian authorities or recruit young Cambodian Muslims to fight abroad.

Salafi leaders and religious scholars do not only monitor their followers offline, but actively survey the social media scene online. Cambodian Muslims in general, similarly to other Southeast Asian Muslims, are very active on social media platforms. Facebook has the overwhelming dominance on this field, but there are many subscribers of Twitter and TikTok. Messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, Line, and Telegram are also widely used to discuss religious issues.

Younger, digitally literate Salafi *ustadh* (religious specialist)[12] belonging to the core aforementioned Salafi networks observe the Cambodian Muslim social media landscape. If they identify someone who might be influenced by or propagate Jihadi ideas, they try to contact the individual to convince her or him to refrain from such posts or discussions. In extreme cases, they alert the authorities. Such online surveillance is very much in line with practices in Cambodia, where communal heads and religious leaders, either themselves or via tech-savvy relatives and pupils, regularly monitor the social media scene.

9 Matthew O'Lemmon. "Merit-Making Activities and the Latent Ideal of the Buddhist Wat in Southwestern Cambodia." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 33:2 (2014): 27–57.

10 Pall and Pérez, "Salafi Islam in Cambodia", 261.

11 Quintan Wiktorowicz. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 29:2 (2006): 207-239.

12 In Arabic, *ustadh* means teacher. In its Malay translation, in Cambodia like everywhere in Southeast Asia, *ustadh* generally refers to Muslim religious specialists.

Conclusion

While in other Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines Jihadi groups in some cases successfully target Salafis, Cambodia's Salafi community and Muslim minority in general is no fertile ground for Islamic currents that are seeking political change through violence. Cambodian Muslims in general are well accommodated to the state and society and do not face structural discrimination, therefore Jihadism is unappealing. Cambodian Salafis are overwhelmingly purists who reject political violence and also actively survey their own ranks to identify any elements who harbour violent ideas. With some minor exceptions, Salafi figures maintain a strictly pacifist line, unsupportive of jihad struggles abroad and refrain from getting into trouble with the government.

Policy Recommendation

Cambodia is a positive example in Southeast Asia regarding the integration of minorities in general and Muslims in particular. This contributed to the success of the country to avoid terrorist attacks committed by transnational Jihadi groups. The Cambodian government should maintain its inclusive attitude towards Muslims and should also be encouraged by international organizations and Western governments to do so. In addition, the Cambodian government through the office of the Mufti should aid the integration of the so-called independent Salafi schools, an effort which is currently being made by SRIH. This could include providing salaries to the teachers and at the same time vetting them, while requiring the schools to teach the Cambodian curriculum.

A Continuum Between Salafism and Jihadism? Male Salafis and Female Jihadis in Turkey.

Anna Rajkowska

In this paper, I first present the three Salafi currents in Turkey and discuss their ideological views, particularly their positions vis-à-vis the secular state and on their stance on the usage of violence. I show that there is no direct link between quietist, activist, and Jihadi Salafi currents due to the different courses of action taken by each of these currents. I then, second, analyze the way Salafi men are depicted by the media as well as by Sunni *cemaat*(s) (creeds) and by the state. In mainstream discourse on Salafism in Turkey, all Salafi currents are often assumed to be Jihadi, which leads to the vilification of Salafi men in the public sphere and the mistaken presumption that being a quietist or activist directly leads to violent radicalization. Thirdly, I present how Jihadi women are approached in the case of Turkey and discuss their participation in Jihadi activity through the prism of women's agency. I also engage in a discussion on radicalization patterns of Turkish Jihadi women and show that there is no empirical evidence indicating links with quietist or activist associations previous to their engagement in Jihadi militancy.

Three Salafi currents: Quietist, Activist, and Jihadi

Turkish Salafists are a heterogeneous population of an estimated 20,000[1] people within 1000[2] associations conflicting with each other due to their ideological differences. Turkey's case comprises all three currents of Salafism, namely quietists, activists, and Jihadis.[3] All three currents have in common one objective which is to implement sharia. They are radical in their views (religiously for quietists as well as politically for the activists and the Jihadis), conservative, and oppose the secular state. However, each of these three currents tries to achieve their goals by different means.

Quietists condemn the use of violence and consider Jihadis to be apostates.[4] Along with other quietist associations, Mehmet Balcıoğlu, the most popular quietist figure declared support towards the Justice and Development Party (AKP, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) at the general election in 2018. Balcıoğlu argued that even though democracy should be replaced with sharia law, the AKP is a "lesser evil" when compared with the other political parties in Turkey. Hence, in his view, Salafists have the responsibility to vote for parties supporting the Muslim cause,[5] even while disagreeing with any other political system that is not sharia. Voting, in this case, however, is not a political act per se, but an act of self-protection aimed at decreasing the possibility of state interference within Salafi associations, thus enabling them to retain their ability to continue their teaching.

Salafi activists such as the Tevhid group, on the other hand, openly call for the introduction of sharia law and perceive the Turkish state as an apostate state. They are particularly vocal and spread their message via social media, protests, lectures, and meetings in their book shops. They do not explicitly condemn Jihadis but also do not encourage joining them. While their stance towards Jihadi activity abroad remains neutral, they openly claim that any sort of violence taking place in Turkey is not acceptable.

As for Jihadis, they take part in Jihadi activities

1 İsmail Saymaz, "İşte Emniyet'in selefi raporu: Türkiye tabanları 20 bine ulaştı, bu bir tehdit", *Hürriyet*, 2016. Available at: https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/iste-emniyetin-selefi-raporu-turkiye-tabanlari-20-bine-ulasti-bu-bir-tehdit-40094417 [Accessed 8 Mar. 2021].

2 Maraştan Haber, „Selefileri Selefilerden tanıyalım kaynak", *Maraştan Haber*, 2020.Available at: https://www.marastanhaber.com.tr/selefileri-selefilerden-tanialim-45664h.htm [Accessed 8 Mar. 2021].

3 Quintan Wiktorowicz, ''Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,'' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 29*, no: 3 (2006): 207-239.

4 Ibid.

5 *Demokrasiye inanmıyoruz ama oylarımız Erdoğan'a*, *BirGün*, 2018. Available at: https://www.birgun.net/haber/demokrasiye-inanmiyoruz-ama-oylarimiz-erdogan-a-219670 [Accessed 10 Mar. 2021].

both inside and outside of Turkey. Since the Afghan jihad, various Turkish groups have sent Jihadi fighters abroad while simultaneously establishing domestic networks in Turkey, such as Kaplan's group or Güneş' group.[6] The presence of Turkish Jihadi fighters has been visible periodically in the wars and the civil conflicts that involved Muslim populations in different parts of the world, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Bosnia, and the Ogaden.[7] However, it appears that many Turkish Jihadis involved in the Islamic State are new recruits that were not previously connected with Jihadi networks. According to the findings of Turkish journalist Doğu Eroğlu, most of the men joined the Islamic State through friendship circles, others were approached in sports centers and schools, or even contacted online the Islamic State networks by themselves.[8] Jihadi networks also exploit societal problems in disenfranchised areas, for instance drug abuse, displaced minorities, poverty, and petty crimes, in order to persuade corresponding individuals to join and stay in the network.[9] These findings indicate that Jihadi recruitment in Turkey stems primarily from social and economic motivations, exploited by recruiters, rather than the specific targeting of individuals within, or connected to, quietist and activist groups.

Public Discourse on *Male* Salafis

In the prevalent public discourse on Salafism in Turkey, quietist and activist currents are often assumed to be Jihadi. Within Turkish media the words 'Salafis' and 'Jihadis' are often used interchangeably, which reinforces the confusion between the two terms and erroneously associates all Salafi men with violent extremism. In practice, this discourse mostly concerns Salafi men, with Salafi women largely ignored and sidelined.

6 Aaron Stein, ''Islamic State Networks in Turkey: Recruitment for the Caliphate,'' *Atlantic Council*, (2016): 1-11.

7 Ibid.

8 Doğu Eroğlu, *IŞID ağları: Türkiye'de radikalleşme, örgütleme, lojistik* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018)

9 Ibid.

This discourse can also be observed in the context of rising conflicts between Salafi and Sunni *cemaat*(s). After the military coup in 2016, Salafi associations gained more supporters, something that was potentially threatening to various Sunni *cemaat*(s) that were afraid of losing their influence in the religious and political spheres. The outcome of the coup was perceived by Salafis as a divine punishment directed towards one of these groups, the Gülen *cemaat*, which they accused of having betrayed their religious values by devoting their existence to earthly matters, such as politics, commerce, finance, and capital accumulation.[10] Both Salafi quietists and activists decry the engagement of Sunni *cemaat*(s) within the Turkish political structure. For instance, they criticize their compliance with tax payments, military service,[11] and seeking political positions through agreements with the party in power. For these reasons, Salafi associations are often put on the spot by the leaders of Sunni *cemaat*(s) in public debates. For instance, in one of the most recent cases, a religious leader from the İsmailağa *cemaat* of Naqshbandi *tariqa* claimed that Salafi groups plan to start a civil war and are readying to take up arms.[12] This statement led to the detention of several male Salafists without providing any evidence.[13]

10 Halis Bayancuk/Tevhid Ehli, "Cemaat Liderlerinin 15 Temmuz'dan Çıkartması Gereken Dersler, Ebu Hanzala Hoca", 2017. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5lNACX_pV4&ab_channel=TevhidEhli [Accessed 20 Mar. 2021]

11 Doğu Eroğlu, "Ebu Hanzala'nın Tevhid Dergisi kadrosu anlatıyor (1): Demokrasiyi istemiyoruz", *Diken*, 2018. Available at: http://www.diken.com.tr/ebu-hanzalanin-tevhid-dergisi-kadrosu-anlatiyor-1-demokrasiyi-istemiyoruz-uzlasma-niyetimiz-yok/ [Accessed 13 Mar. 2021].

12 "Bakan Soylu, Cübbeli Ahmet'in Selefi dernekleri silahlanıyor iddiasıyla ilgili konuştu: Bildiklerini anlatacak", *SonDakika*, 2020. Available at: https://www.sondakika.com/haber/haber-bakan-soylu-cubbeli-ahmet-in-selefi-dernekleri-13622437/ [Accessed 13 Mar. 2021]

13 „Selefileri Selefilerden tanıyalım kaynak*", Maraştan Haber,* 2020. [online] Available at: https://www.marastan-haber.com.tr/selefileri-selefilerden-taniyalim-45664h.htm [Accessed 8 Mar. 2021].

The Turkish state, on its part, has developed a habit of detaining or arresting male members of quietist and activist Salafi groups as a means to relieve the public tension after terrorist attacks or accusations directed towards Salafi associations.[14] These detentions and arrests occur in a context of high pressure from public opinion which criticizes the governing party for its lack of action towards the Islamic State and terrorism within the country. Quietist and activist Salafi groups appear as an easy target to blame for the acts of Jihadi violence, due to the fact that they do not recognize the Turkish state as a legitimate entity.

A Conversation on Agency: Turkish Jihadi Women

The discussion on Turkish Salafi women has attracted very little academic attention so far. To be clear, this does not at all mean that there are no Salafi women or that they are silenced. The case of women is rarely raised, and when it is the discussion is reduced to questioning their agency rather than seeing them as valid actors. The Turkish approach does not differ from the mistaken assumption – pervasive in the academic literature – that women who are involved in terrorist groups lack agency.[15] Jihadi women are portrayed as mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives who are the victims of the oppression due to assigned sex,[16] rather than as agents directly involved within, and contributors to, the operational structure of Jihadi groups.[17]

This is precisely what happened in the case for Fadile C., who was accused of membership of the Islamic State and involvement in Jihadi networks operating in Turkey that were responsible for terrorist attacks inside the country. She was acquitted from all charges on the basis of the assumption that women are dependent on the will of their husband and, thus, unaware of the group's agenda. As stated by the court:

> The Islamic State does not accept women as its members, and is treating them as commodities, thus; the only duty of women is taking care of the house, raising the children, and serving the husband. Therefore, our court does not conscientiously believe that the accused had committed a crime and she was therefore acquitted.[18]

Indeed, acquittal from the charge of Islamic State membership in this case was purely based on the assigned sex of the defendant and the victimization approach, rather than evidence regarding her case, which might have proved that she was not a part of the Jihadi network; none of this, however, was considered while providing the verdict.

Certainly, the roles performed by Jihadi women are conservative, anti-feminist, and enforce the patriarchal system.[19] They often willingly join Jihadi groups to live by an ideology that places them in such roles, which supports that ideology and, in turn, helps impose it on others. The fact that Jihadi women may not perform the same roles as Jihadi men, however, by no means legitimizes the notion that they do not have

14 Doğu Eroğlu, *Ebu Hanzala'nın Tevhid Dergisi kadrosu anlatıyor (1): Demokrasiyi istemiyoruz*, *Diken*, 2018. . Available at: http://www.diken.com.tr/ebu-hanzalanin-tevhid-dergisi-kadrosu-anlatiyor-1-demokrasiyi-istemi-yoruz-uzlasma-niyetimiz-yok/ [Accessed 13 Mar. 2021].

15 Eva Herschinger,"Political science, terrorism and gender," *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 39: 3 (2014): 46-66.

16 Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry.*Mothers, monsters, whores: women's violence in global politics*, (London: Zed Books, 2007).

17 Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Women, gender, and terrorism*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2011)

18 İdris Emen, *DEAŞ davasında beraata ilginç gerekçe*, *Hürriyet*, 2019. Available at: https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/deas-davasinda-beraata-ilginc-gerekce-41187491 [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021]

19 Sjoberg and Gentry, *Women, gender, and terrorism*..

agency. Indeed, while women's roles are distinct from the roles performed by men, this distinction is aimed at establishing the state in a gender-segregated manner[20] in accordance with sharia law. Assigning agency only to roles that involve direct violence imposes the understanding that only such violence can be consciously chosen. This understanding overlooks the various roles performed by women in Jihadi groups, such as propagators, recruiters, and educators raising the new generation of Jihadis.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Jihadi women are aware of the agenda of Jihadi groups and its political aims. Based on the profiles of seven Turkish Jihadi women reconstructed from media sources,[21] reports,[22] and video interviews conducted by journalists,[23] three observations can be made.

Firstly, Turkish Jihadi women often self-radicalized through the Islamic State's websites before

20 Hamoon Khelghat-Doost, ''Women of the Caliphate the Mechanism for Women's Incorporation into the Islamic State (IS),'' *Perspective on Terrorism* 11: 1 (2017): 17-25.

21 Alican Uludağ, "Sorguda çözüldü", *Cumhuriyet*, 2017. Available at: https://haber.sol.org.tr/toplum/10-ekim-katliami-sanigi-akp-uyesiyim-184687 [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021] "10 Ekim Katliamı sanığı: AKP üyesiyim!", Sol, 2017. Available at: https://haber.sol.org.tr/toplum/10-ekim-katliami-sanigi-akp-uyesiyim-184687 [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021]

"Katliam sanıkları birbirini suçladı", *Milliyet*, 2018. Available at: https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/katliam-saniklari-birbirini-sucladi-2717963 [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021]

Lindsey Snell, "What I learned in a Turkish jail with women from al Qaeda and ISIS", *The Daily Beast*, 2016. Available at: https://www.thedailybeast.com/what-i-learned-in-a-turkish-jail-with-women-from-al-qaeda-and-isis [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021]

"Gar patlamasında cezalar onandı", *Sözcü*, 2020. Available at: https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/son-dakika-gar-patlamasinda-cezalar-onandi-6080311/ [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021]

"Ankara Katliamı davasında tutuklama kararı", *Cumhuriyet*, 2017. Available at: https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/ankara-katliami-davasinda-tutuklama-karari-671450 [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021]

Mesut Hasan Benli, "Gar katliamı davası: Eşi 'cevap verme' dedi, Hatice sustu", *Hürriyet*, 2017. Available at: https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/gar-katliami-davasi-esi-cevap-verme-dedi-hatice-sustu-40445275 [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021]

22 ''Calibrating the Response: Turkey's ISIS Returnees,'' *International Crisis Group*, no. 258 (2020): 1-33.

23 Video interview with Dafne Bayrak conducted by Ersin Çaksu for Fırat Haber Ajansı (ANF) in 2019: Erk Acarer/Artı Tv, *Haber Peşinde - Erk Acarer - 27 Temmuz 2019*.. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GychIN8os_4&t=1247s [Accessed 14 Mar. 2021].

Among the seven women, five of them joined the Islamic State occupied territories, two women were a part of Jihadi network operating in Turkey.

Gamze Kafar/Media Arsivi, "YPG'nin elindeki DAEŞ'li Türk kadınlar bakın nasıl kullanılıyorlar". 2017. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSly-AUVf4k&t=519s&ab_channel=MedyaArsivi [Accessed 19 Mar. 2021]

reaching out to Jihadi networks to receive help in joining the Islamic State territory.[24] I found no evidence that would suggest that these women pertained to quietist and activist Salafist groups before joining the Islamic State or the Turkish Jihadi networks operating in Turkey. There is no mention of their belonging to any of Salafi groups prior to their Jihadi activity. Central to their decision was the willingness to live in the place ruled by sharia and the belief that the Islamic State has established a legitimate Caliphate. Secondly, Turkish Jihadi women were not necessarily married prior to their decision to join the Islamic State occupied areas. Indeed, some were even strongly advised to enter into marriage with a Jihadi man before migrating to the areas controlled by the Islamic State.[25] In other words, in some instances, marriage was a precondition for joining the Islamic State. Third, all women seem to have joined the group on an ideological basis. Moreover, those who joined the occupied areas of the Islamic State, also demonstrated their willingness to live under the Islamic State established Caliphate, believing it to be their obligation as Muslims.

However, a note of caution is required, this profile is not necessarily generalizable to the entire population of Jihadi women, whose heterogeneity certainly begs for further research. Nonetheless, this tentative analysis does lay the foundation for much-needed and overdue further research on Turkish Jihadi women.

Conclusions

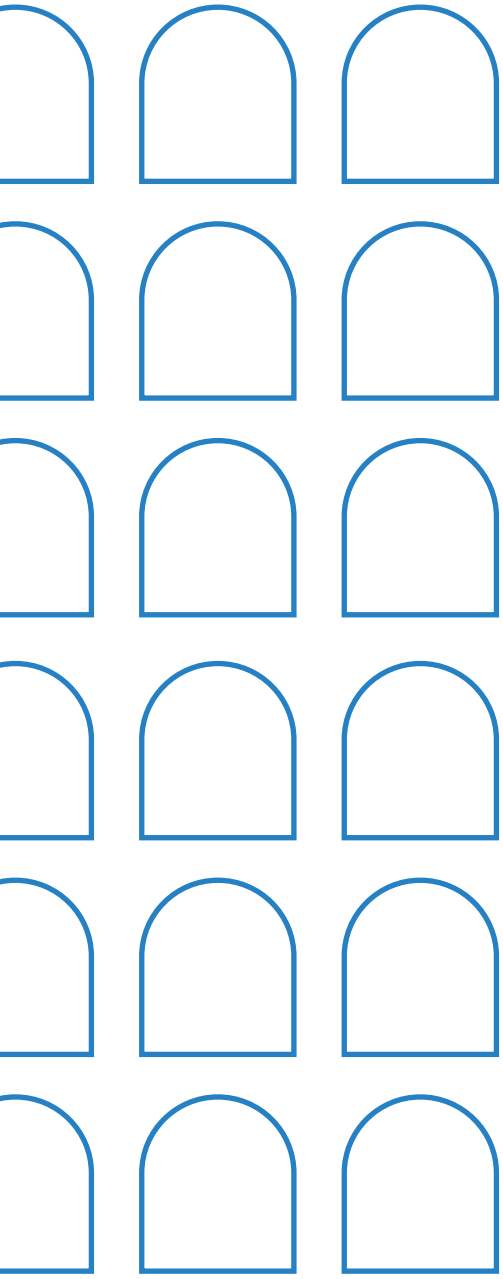
Salafi associations in Turkey are diverse, fragmented, and do not pertain to a single community. This fragmentation is visible both between and within the three Salafi currents (quietist, activist, and Jihadi). Quietists condemn the usage of violence and consider it sinful. Activists display a more nuanced attitude. Both of these groups, however, condemn the use of violence in Turkey. The remaining militants actively support armed jihad domestically and abroad. There is also no sufficient evidence that would unambiguously show the connection between Jihadis and the other Salafi currents regarding the Jihadi's involvement in the latest conflicts in Iraq and Syria. This entails that rather than linking quietists and activists with Jihadis, it is necessary to look at the factors causing violent radicalization, in particular personal incentives, possibly linked to social and economic contexts, to join Jihadi groups as well as in the process of in-group Jihadi radicalization.

Men who are part of the quietist and activist Salafist associations are often intentionally or unintentionally linked with violent radicalization by mainstream media, Sunni creeds, and the Turkish state. This presumption leads to the arrests and detentions of individuals being associated with quietist and activist currents, without providing evidence for the accusations.

Turkish Jihadi women are mistakenly assumed to lack an agency of their own, which is due to the common assumption that Jihadi women are victims who were forced to join the Jihadi group by a male family member or partner. On the contrary, however, it has been demonstrated that women, at least in all the instances explored here, do in fact join Jihadi networks because of their ideological support towards the agenda of the Jihadi group(s) and do willing perform the roles which such an ideology accords to them, strengthening its influence grid.

24 This information applies to five out of the seven women whose profile is studied here.

25 Kafar, "YPG'nin elindeki DAEŞ'li Türk kadınlar bakın nasıl kullanılıyorlar".



PART II
POST-SALAFISM

Is 'Salmani' Arabia post-Wahhabi?

Louis Blin[1]

Since his coming to power in January 2015, King Salman has launched a double move against political Islam and Salafism – although neither him nor his son, Crown Prince Mohammed, [2] have denounced any link between the two, in contrast with the Western view. The two have silenced prominent Salafi shaykhs, dismissed thousands of low-ranking Salafis in Justice, Education and Religious administrations, put an end to the Saudi sponsorship of transnational Salafism, and promoted a few 'enlightened' shaykhs. It is no cosmetic change. The Wahhabi clerics had always been able to bargain their bending to their masters' will in exchange for their social grasp. Saudi Arabia is turning the page on state Wahhabism. This sea change means that we are switching from Saudi Arabia to something new, perhaps to what can be called 'Salmani' Arabia. Do these changes mean that the new Salmani Arabia, is already post-Wahhabi, post-Salafi, or is Wahhabism restructuring as an ideology and a social force?

As much as state Wahhabism/Salafism[3] has been a tool for state building, Mohammed bin Salman's ongoing move against it is a tool he now uses for a project of nation-building.[4] His crackdown is not only directed against the politicized *Sahwa*'s shaykhs, it is now aimed at ridding the Wahhabi grasp on Saudi society as a whole. The Wahhabi clerics used to be the backbone of a system where the Al Saud and their affiliated businesspeople and clients routinely ransomed the country,[5] with a religious blessing. This epoch is now over, as Salmani Arabia is not seeking any more allies in its ruling of the country, be them clerics or businesspeople.

Prior to being governmental policy, there was already a deep social trend against the old patriarchy. It is this very trend, which mainly explains both MBS counter-Wahhabi policy and its success.[6] The social move and the state's crackdown on fundamentalism feed each other.

Wahhabism as an ideology has been both a product and a vehicle of social change since its very beginning. Its revival after 1979 is the result of geopolitical changes, as commonly stated, as well as of demographics and urbanization. These two trends have almost reached their end point given that Saudi Arabia is now near to completing its demographic transition, becoming one of the most urbanized countries in the world. Neo-urbans who used to dwell in marginal suburbs and radicalize, have now become integrated townsfolk.

King Salman's U-turn against Salafism did not come from nowhere.[7] The religious police, which

1 *Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.*

2 On Mohammed ben Salman's rise to power, see Bradley Hope and Justin Scheck, *Blood and Oil. Mohammed bin Salman's Ruthless Quest for Global Power*, New-York, Hachette, 2020;. Ben Hubbard, *MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed Bin Salman*, Tim Duggan Books, 2020;Christine Ockrent, *Le Prince mystère de l'Arabie. Mohammed ben Salman, les mirages d'un pouvoir absolu,* Paris, Robert Laffont, 2018.

3 According to Ibn Saud's official statement in 1936, Saudi Arabia's creed is no more Wahhabism, viewed by many as sectarian, but Salafism.

4 Eman Alhussein, "Saudi First: How Hyper-nationalism in transforming Saudi Arabia", ECFR Policy Brief, 19 June 2019.https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/saudi_first_how_hyper_nationalism_is_transforming_saudi_arabia.

5 MBS has publicly stated in November 2020, that his fight against corruption, beginning with the well-known Ritz Carlton crackdown, had drawn back to the State budget $ 63 billion in three years.

6 Paul Aarts, "Saudi Arabia: More Room for Wahhabism Lite?", *Gulf Insights Series*, 23, April 2020..

7 See David Rundell, *Vision or Mirage: Saudi Arabia at the Crossroads*, I. B. Tauris, 202; Joseph A. Kéchichian, *Saudi Arabia in 2030. The Emergence of a New Leadership*, Seoul, ASAN Report, August 2019.

had been the effective Wahhabi armed wing, suddenly vanished a few days after Salman's rise to the throne, before any public statement from the newcomer on the matter and at a time when the public was just anticipating the opposite. Thus, a fundamental element and tool of the Wahhabi constituency was uprooted right away, meaning that Wahhabism was already weak before the liberal wave. Polls show that although bred by Salafism, young Saudis' views on contemporary issues did not differ at the time from those of other Arabs[8], showing the limited impact of religion on Saudi Millennials' *Weltanschauung*.

Religion *per se* stays out of the scope of this change. Wahhabism faces a move against authoritarianism, not against Islam. Saudi citizens tend to see Wahhabism as outdated, as well as political Islam. They want to get rid of any hijacking of their religion, be it by politics or by patriarchy. They have already dropped the idea of a future grounded on the pious ancestors, but do not yet agree on a new consensus.

Although the game is not over, facts on the ground already indicate that the image of Saudi Arabia as an everlasting citadel of Salafism, one of Salafism mastering the art of brainwashing, were wrong. It is a worldwide blow to Wahhabism, which incidentally happens to be far more resilient in Qatar than in Saudi Arabia, because Qataris, being a tiny minority in their own country, grew to be the most conservative people in the Gulf.

Is the demise of state Salafism enough to assess that Wahhabism is no more a player in Saudi Arabia? The answer probably lies in the inclusiveness of MBS' ongoing economic transformation.[9] I identify four main factors showing that Salafism, although widely outdated, is very much still alive as a social fact, even if not as a creed, in a country where Salafism slipped into every place, every mind, and is still omnipresent.

First, social Wahhabism is a facet of patriarchy, which will not disappear at a glance.

Second, Wahhabism grew so much intertwined with the rentier state, that it became a way of life, meaning that any change at any place to this state of affairs includes de-Wahhabization to some degree. Nonetheless, while Wahhabism may be dead as an ideology, Wahhabis are still alive; it will take at least a generation to remove their social grasp.

Third, Wahhabism has been effective at impeding the shaping of a common narrative and nation-building in a country born as an empire. The ruler now faces the challenge of breaking the taboo of history, which has been replaced by holy history in the curricula, in order to assert his nationalist narrative, in parallel with the de-Wahhabization process.

Fourth, the success of this de-Wahhabization policy depends on the ability of the Saudi leadership to switch from a Wahhabi doctrine of obedience to the ruler to a new social contract based on citizenship and critical thinking, a lengthy process which would require political liberalization.

These four factors show that although both social and political changes have killed state Wahhabism, removing social Wahhabism will remain a work in progress for some time.

Saudi Arabia is a society in transition. It is moving, a Saudi *movida* getting rid of the former social and religious order. Change has been so deep and quick during the last four years that one would have expected some violent reaction in a country where nobody dares to raise his voice. It has not happened. With Wahhabi Salafism being legitimist, radicalization has not been a byproduct of Salafism in Saudi Arabia any more than elsewhere, which means that the fading of Salafism will not automatically weaken

8 Poll conducted in 2015 by *Zogby Research Services* among 5 374 youngsters from 15 to 34 years, originating from eight Arab countries: http://mmgsurvey.tabahfoundation.org/downloads/mmgsurvey_full_En_web.pdf.

9 See Jane Kinninmont, "Vision 2030 and Saudi's Social Contract. Austerity and Transformation", London, Chatham House, July 2017, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2017-07-20-vision-2030-saudi-kinninmont.pdf

radicalization. It is rather the quick pace of social change that Saudis advocate and witness, that explains this fading. Indeed, this social change in Saudi Arabia has led to the fading of both Salafism and radicalization.

Wahhabism is a religious creed as well an anthropological reality and a political matter in Saudi Arabia. Outdated clerics have been sidelined. The official trend is nowadays towards endorsing *Wasati* Islam or *Wasatiyya* (so-called 'moderate Islam')[10] allegedly embodied by the secretary General of the Muslim World League, Shaykh Mohammed Al-Issa.[11] Nonetheless, the historic role of Wahhabism is over and state sponsored Salafism belongs to the past, inside as well as outside the country.

10 Eman Alhussein, "The Enlightened Sheikhs of the New Saudi Arabia", *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, 27 June 2018, https://agsiw.org/the-enlightened-sheikhs-of-the-new-saudi-arabia/; Eman Alhussein, "Saudi Arabia Champions "Moderate Islam", Underpinning Reform Efforts", *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, 15 December 2020, *https://agsiw.org/saudi-arabia-champions-moderate-islam-underpinning-reform-efforts/*

11 Mohammed Al-Issa served as Minister of Justice from 2009 to 2015, at the time of King Abdullah's reform initiatives. He was removed as part of King Salman's first Cabinet reshuffle after succession, then brought back in August 2016 to head the Muslim World League.

The Decline of Salafism: Causes and Future Trajectories

Wael Farouq

Islamic religious discourse has undergone deep transformations as the result of objective changes in reality. Core to this has been the marginalization of the forces that had always been active in the production of religious discourse and were controlling the channels of its reception – political Islam in its different shades and the Salafi and Wahhabi currents[1] – and the gradual return of traditional institutions to the center of action, especially Ash'ari institutions.

As many researchers affirmed, the religious trends that had almost monopolized the production of religious discourse for half a century failed to effectively manage power in many Islamic countries. This failure announced their withdrawal to the margins.[2] The (7) factors that caused the waning of these currents can be summarized as follows:

Fragmentation and conflict. The cooperation that had held together the scientific Salafi trend (*al-salafiyya al-'ilmiyya*), the Salafi jihadists and the Muslim Brotherhood during the jihad in Afghanistan and Bosnia ended with the First Gulf war, when a schism took place between the scientific Salafists and the Salafi jihadists. Then came the events of the Arab Spring and the three currents split further into small groups fighting each other. Militant Salafism split into revolutionaries and reformists, whereas the jihadists started considering themselves as the only true monotheists and advocates of jihad, contrary to others who, in their opinion, had softened and joined the ranks of power. The jihadist current itself was divided on the jihadi model: *Al-Qa'ida* in the center, *Ahrar al-Sham* at the left and *Daesh* at the extreme right. As two famous young Egyptian Salafi scholars, Ahmed Salem and Amr Bassyouni, put it: "The truth is that nothing held these trends together anymore, except some traditional doctrinal roots of little influence on current reality and a narrow methodological framework."[3] Disputes have reached the point of reciprocal accusations of misbelief. No group recognizes the other. The trend as a whole has lost attractiveness, many young people have turned away from it and a large part of its popular base has been lost.

The open world as an enemy. The flourishing of Islamist trends in the 1970s can be attributed to their ability to offer an "alternative identity" and create closed parallel societies. The failure of the post-independence modern state in fulfilling its promises helped Islamists to achieve their goals, so that slogans such as "Islam is the solution" settled in the conscience of a great many people as undisputed truths. The emergence of cassette tape technology, then of satellite TV channels, played a big role in the process of formal, exterior Islamization of Islamic societies. Today, after nearly half a century, information and communication technology is playing the opposite

1 I will refer to all forms of Islamic groups and movements that exploit Islam as an ideology, or "grand narration", in order to bring about social and political change, as "Islamists" or "Islamist trend". These different groups share the same basic ideology, although they may differ in the strategies used to achieve their goals. So, in this sense, the Islamist trend includes political Islam (like the Muslim Brotherhood), Salafists and jihadists.

2 Olivier Roy, "Le post-islamisme", in *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 1999, n.85-86, pp. 11-30; Stéphane Lacroix, *Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism*, Brookings Doha Center, June 2012; Muhammad Abu Rumman, *Anā salafī. Bahth fī al-huwiyya al-wāqi'iyya wa-l-mutakhayyala ladā al-salafiyyīn*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Amman, 2014; Stéphane Lacroix et Bernard Rougier (dirs..), *L'Egypte en Révolutions*, Presses universitaires de France, Paris 2015; Stéphane Lacroix, *Misr: al-salafiyyūn al-brāgmātiyyūn*, Mu'assasat Carnegie li-l-Salām al-Duwalī, Washington DC, November 2016.

3 Ahmed Salem and Amr Bassyouni, *Mā ba'd al-salafiyya. Qirā'a naqdiyya fī al-khitāb al-salafī al-mu'āsir*, Markaz Namā' li-l-Buhūth wa-l-Dirāsāt, Riyad 2015. All Arabic quotations are translated into English by the Author.

role. The open world is the biggest enemy of moral preachers and closed groups. Salem and Bassyouni underline this point:

> Consequently, the Salafi cultural system, whether in the domain of morals, laws and even behavioral rituals in eating and drinking, as well as in human relations strategies, or in the domain of political and social reform mechanisms, is being provided alternatives that compete with extreme ferocity and influence through the mass media and politics […]. The diffusion of this culture, which has conquered areas of Islamist influence in general, and in particular Salafi influence, has reached a high degree with the media revolution, governmental sponsorship and the spreading of Westernization in many sectors of society.[4]

The Ash'ari awakening. By Ash'arism I do not mean only the theological school, but an intellectual umbrella under which are gathered multiple Islamic trends, all united in their opposition to political and militant Islam. The Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib has specified the components of this trend in a conference entitled *Who are the Sunnis?*, held in Groznyj on 25-27 August, 2016. On that occasion, al-Tayyib defined the Sunnis as "the school of the Ash'arites, the Maturidis, the people of the *Hadith* and the Sufis."[5] Ash'arism has thus become deeply entrenched both in society and religion, thanks to its integration with Sufism, which for hundreds of years has imprinted its character on the religiosity of scholars and notables of the region and has distinguished itself as a social movement. The relation that eminent personalities belonging to this trend, such as al-Tayyib, al-Habib al-Jifri, 'Arif al-Nayid and Ahmed b. Bayyah, entertain with Sufism supports this view.

Ash'arism was adopted by al-Azhar in Egypt, al-Zaytuna mosque in Tunisia and by the majority of religious universities, institutes and institutions of the Islamic world. It is the most diffuse and solid doctrinal school, since the majority of followers of the four main juridical schools all belong either to Ash'arism or Maturidism. The enthusiasm shown by religious and state institutions toward Ash'arism is clearly due to their desire to "exclude (militant) Islam, both the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism, and replace it with a Sufi religiosity guided by Ash'ari and Maturidi trends and the four juridical schools."[6] I am therefore inclined to think that when the Sheikh of al-Azhar mentioned "misguided and misguiding, invented and false doctrinal schools, from whose reprehensible preaching the Umma did not obtain other than killing, destruction, ruin, resentment against Islam and hatred toward Muslims",[7] he actually meant the various forms of militant Islam.

The confrontation between Ash'arism and the Islamist trend can be summarized very briefly as follows. The Sunnis generally consider that faith is attestation (*tasdīq*) and acceptance (*qabūl*) and does not require detailed knowledge of doctrinal contents – while not charging with unbelief whoever has a different understanding. Any codified belief is rejected, as long as there is agreement on the impossibility to know God through reason. Hence the radical conflict with the Islamist effort to build an ideological system on the basis of Islamic doctrine, such as transforming sovereignty (*hākimiyya*) into a principle of political legitimacy and an identity for the believing community. In other words, while in Sunni understanding Islam is a voluntary involvement in the believing community, Islamists transform doctrine into a basis for political militancy. As an example, Ash'arism considers the imamate as a conjecture of the Sharia, not as a pillar of religion. The majority of the Sunnis and the books of *Kalām* (speculative theology) conclude that the imamate is a necessity of living together, not a requirement of the Sharia. It is a

4 Ahmed Salem and Amr Bassyouni, *Mā ba'd al-salafiyya*, p. 652.

5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE5FMAbNlNQ

6 Bassam Nasir, "Mādhā warā' taqdīm al-ashā'ira wa-l-māturīdiyya li-muwājahat al-ghuluww wa-l-tatarruf?", *'Arabī 21*, May 20, 2019.

7 *Ibid*.

discretionary and customary matter whose aim is to preserve civil peace and respect justice and public interest, rather than the embodiment of religion. This conception is totally inconsistent with that of the Islamist trend in general, which considers the state as the core of religion and the "Islamic identity", a thesis that has sometimes led to rulers or governments being charged with unbelief and to rebellions against them – even against states and societies as a whole.

The last ten years witnessed a remarkable Ash'ari awakening. Until then, Ash'arism was content to remain in the shadow of political authorities and did not represent a real danger or competitor for Salafism. Recently, however, Ash'arism gained significant influence and presence in society, for example, through the creation of active youth groups from the elites of Ash'ari background. The Ash'ari alternative has managed to end the Islamist monopoly in the field of heritage studies, by revealing inconsistencies and weaknesses in Salafi epistemological discourse that show the Salafists' unfamiliarity with the scientific tools of Islamic jurisprudence. Ash'arism, on the contrary, has offered attractive and coherent models for the epistemological study of Islamic jurisprudence, doctrine and language, highlighting the reduction made by Salafism of juridical pronouncements and the jurists' doctrinal plurality.[8]

The Ash'ari effort was also directed at spreading an enlightened Islam that integrates the believer with his own ideas – in a "non-submissive" way – into the cultural and political systems of the present time. Working along these directions, Ash'arism was able to provide a set of renewed and, at the same time, traditional interpretations which neither restrict themselves to the legacy of *al-salaf* (the pious ancestors) nor reach the extremes of the secular readings.

The rejection of society. The Afghan jihad in the 1970s and the Bosnian jihad in the '90s, were among the factors that made the Islamist trend attractive. The involvement in armed jihad and the support to the mujahidin were a matter of pride. Today, however, the conflict has moved from a fight between the state and the jihadists to a fight between the jihadists and society. After Egypt's experience in the '80s, Algeria's experience in the '90s and Morocco's and Saudi Arabia's experiences after the 9/11 events, the violence jihadists view as legitimate has faced a widespread societal rejection, one that not only negatively impacted the jihadists themselves, but also Salafi and Islamist trends more generally, as the jihadists are broadly considered an extension of the Islamists.[9]

The lack of authoritative references. After the deaths of Ibn Baz, Ibn al-'Uthaymin and al-Albani, the major Salafi authorities, a void was created and none have emerged to fill it. These authoritative figures were part of the official establishment. The state itself helped build their symbolic authority in society, which is why they in turn contributed to reduce conflicts inside Salafi ranks and keep Salafism's relationship with the state and society under control. Saudi Salafism has failed to bring out new authorities that enjoy the same symbolic capital of these figures or could fill the void that they left behind. The same happened in Egypt, in the Levant and in other countries that had a large Salafi presence.[10]

The decline of financial support. Salafi organizations do not possess resources of their own from member subscriptions or economic activities, relying almost entirely on the support of Salafi networks in the Gulf countries. This support began to decline, however, due to the strengthening of international laws and procedures that prevented the money flow from reaching jihadist networks. Today, this decline has become so strong that it poses an existential threat to the Salafi trend.[11]

8 Ahmed Salem and Amr Bassyouni, *Mā ba'd al-salafiyya*, p. 656.

9 'Ammar 'Ali Hasan, *Al-mujtama' al-'amīq li-l-Ikhwān wa-l-salafiyyīn fī Misr*, Maktabat al-Iskandariyya, 2016, p. 40.

10 Ahmed Salem and Amr Bassyouni, *Mā ba'd al-salafiyya*, p. 672.

11 'Ammar 'Ali Hasan, *Al-mujtama' al-'amīq li-l-Ikhwān wa-l-salafiyyīn fī Misr*, p. 26.

Salafi identity and the opening towards the other: the phenomenon of "Salafyo Costa". The transformations that occurred in the region after the Arab Spring and the change of international alliances, have led authorities in many Gulf countries to turn away from Salafism, pushing it to the margins by means of reforms, as seen in Saudi Arabia, that were met with widespread popular satisfaction,. These factors greatly encouraged the opening towards the Other, while Salafists see in it only a major threat to identity.

Salafi identity, in general, is built on self-defense. It is an identity directed inwards searching for purity, 'closed into its shell', even though the degree of closure differs from one Salafi trend to the other. Militant Salafists, for example, are less closed than others. Usually, Salafi identity is not tolerant towards others, because it is based on the dualism of right and wrong, and on the idea of "the saved group". According to Amartya Sen's definition, Salafi identity is not based on recognition of the other, but on exclusion. It views the other neither from the perspective of plurality or diversity, nor on the basis of cooperation and interaction, but with anxiety, fear and antagonism or, at the very least, with reservations.[12]

This rigidity is not diminished by what Ashraf al-Sharif calls political Salafism.[13] In fact, the expansion of the concept of "necessity" (*dharura*) to allow what they see as contrary to Islam – such as contesting elections, entering parliament, accepting the democratic game, forming parties, and nominating women on their electoral lists – was not the result of a process of intellectual re-analysis of these prohibitions: they are still valid, but some things, according to their selective pragmatism, are declared permissible only in the name of necessity. The danger in this approach lies in the implicit message it carries, i.e. that Islam cannot respond to the necessities of our time and thus we are forced to violate it by allowing what it prohibits.

But the Salafi phenomenon should not be reduced only to the intellectual and political dimension. New types of religiosity have emerged in daily life, of which the *Salafyo Costa* group is a good example, a self-financed Salafi movement created after the 2011 Constitutional referendum that has stirred widespread controversy since its foundation. *Salafyo* refers to the pious ancestors, whereas *Costa* is the name of a famous café in central Cairo. The movement was established with the aim to correct the stereotype of the Salafi trend, known for its intellectual rigidity and rejection of the other, and to create an environment propitious to mutual understanding. Accordingly, 25% of the board of directors was assigned to Copts and about 35% to Salafists. Members of the liberal and leftist currents were also invited to join the board. The group thus aimed at ending the polarization of society between the Islamist trends and their liberal and leftist counterparts.[14] The movement created committees for human rights, social development and the media to fight discrimination. Its administrative body consisted of ninety persons, from which five were elected as "Guardians of the Principles".

Salafyo Costa's founder, Muhammad Yusri Salama (d. March 2013), was a dentist and a student of a number of Salafi preachers in Alexandria, most notably Muhammad Ismail al-Muqaddam, who described him as "a brilliant, talented, young Salafi promising great good". He joined the January 25 Revolution in Alexandria and, in contrast with others, had revolutionary ideas in agreement with some Salafi leaders in Egypt. He rejected the 2011 referendum on Constitutional amendments, demanded the exclusion of the Military Council from political life and criticized the Muslim Brothers when they

12 Muhammad Abu Rumman, *Anā salafī*, p. 258.

13 Ashraf al-Sharif, "Tahawwulāt al-salafiyyīn fī Misr: al-tasyīs mufakkik al-īdiyulūgiā", *Qanṭara*, Feb 24, 2014, https://ar.qantara.de/content/lslfywn-fy-msr-thwlt-lslfyyn-fy-msr-ltsyys-mfkk-lydywlwjy .

14 Hani Ramadan, "Misr: harakat Salafiyyū Kūstā tas'ā li-inshā' hizb siyāsī", *BBC Arabic*, Sep 13, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2012/09/120913_egypt_costa_party .

came to power.[15] *Salafyo Costa* was founded by Salama with a group of young people in rebellion against the Salafist Call (*Da'wa Salafiyya*) in Alexandria. After participating in the founding of the *Dostour party* with Mohammed el-Baradei, he clashed intellectually with Yasser Burhami, the second deputy of the Salafist Call and a founder of the *Nour party*.

Salafyo Costa adhered to many principles that distinguished it from other Salafi movements and also made it the target of their criticism.[16] They also adopted many political positions contrary to those of political Islam, represented by the Alexandria Salafist school, *Al-Jama'a al-islamiyya* and the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2012, they demanded that the Constitutional committee, dominated by Islamists, included specific articles in the Constitution to protect antiquities, in order to undermine extremist calls for their demolition or coverage, as some Salafists considered them as idols. At a time when Islamist parties and movements were taking sides to defend the policies of President Mohamed Morsi, *Salafyo Costa* criticized him, stressing that he did not keep the promises made to the currents that had elected him:

> Morsi promised all Salafists to impose the Sharia, so they gave him their votes; he promised liberals freedom of expression and the rule of law, so they gave him their votes; he promised leftists social justice and workers' rights, so they gave him their votes. But in the end, he did not achieve anything he promised.[17]

Currently, *Salafyo Costa* believes that, due to the extraordinary laws adopted by Morsi's ouster, political life in Egypt has come to a complete halt.[18] Hence, the movement's decision to withdraw from political activity. As for the future of Islamist parties, the movement believes it is irrelevant, after the popular rejection they have faced. Therefore, the movement today focuses only on charitable and social development activities that seek to show all components of Egyptian society the openness of many engaged in Salafi ideology.

15 Ahmad 'Abd al-Hamid, "Muhammad Yusrī Salāma: salafī Kūstā al-ladhī sabaha didd al-tayyār", *Al-waṭan*, March 24, 2014, https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/445244 .

16 The *Salafyo Costa*'s statute declares that the movement supports the cohesion of one people; defends the dignity of the Egyptians, based on mutual respect between ruler and ruled and on providing the basic needs of a dignified life; fights against polarization and pursues social peace to guarantee the popular cohesion required to face sectarianism; spreads education and awareness, in order to make people aware of their means, skills and resources.

17 "Salafiyyūn ḍidd Mursī Salafiyyū Kūstā", Ma'had al-'Arabiyya li-l-dirāsāt, Dec 4, 2012, https://www.alarabiya.net/2012/12/04/%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B6%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%88-%D9%83%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7 . The movement also rejected some articles of the Constitutional Declaration issued by President Morsi.

18 After the June 30 Revolution in 2013, *Salafyo Costa* defined its political stance in a statement published on its official Facebook page. The Rabaa sit-in was described as a political fraud, while its dispersion was called a massacre of people who, in most cases, were not terrorists. The bombings in Sinai were defined as terrorist acts. The Muslim Brotherhood was accused of being a large hoax and the army was depicted as a non-democratic institution with a lot of money and tanks, ignorant of democracy. The June 30 Revolution was called a popular revolt as a result of poor living conditions and not a military coup. The Brotherhood's Constitution was described as a normal Constitution that had nothing to do with Heaven and Hell. Pushing people to vote "yes" to the New Constitution was seen as offensive and shameful, while both the *Nour Party* and the Church were seen as to have crossed limits. Finally, they stated that Mubarak's state was over.

Salafyo Costa is part of a wider phenomenon known as "new Salafism"[19] which flourished after 2011, when new youth trends emerged calling for a reform of Salafi thought. Their reformist vision was oriented towards public intellectual and moral space and the social sciences. This new trend included different forms of Salafism, such as socio-political Salafism and its organizations coming from traditional Salafism, as well as youth formations outside any organizational framework. The list also includes academic Salafism, or the "new jurists" and the *shuyukh al-ask* (i.e., whom can be asked), i.e. Salafists who explicitly criticize some aspects of traditional Salafism and its jurisprudential approaches without abandoning the original Salafi school. At the forefront of these academics in Egypt are the already mentioned Salafi researchers Ahmed Salem and Amr Bassyouni.

In conclusion, what appears to be a decline of the traditional Salafi trend, and the Islamist trend in general, may actually be the rebirth of a different form of Salafism that interacts more with wider contemporary culture. However, as long as the state keeps exploiting religious discourse to ideologically justify its policies,[20] without allowing any real enlightened movement to influence the official discourse, the door will remain open for the many forms of Islamist trends to retake the initiative and perhaps control the scene once again.

19 The concept of "new Salafism", which began to circulate in 2011 and describes the new Salafi trends, was not born exactly at that time. Olivier Roy was the first to use a similar term, "new fundamentalism", as seen in his book *The Failure of Political Islam* (1994). According to this account, new fundamentalism is the rising of Salafi thought in periods of historical failure of political Islam. Moreover, Roy has shown how intellectual closure and historical failure are necessarily followed by the transformation into a new, more conservative Salafism, in which the ethical model predominates over political philosophy (See: Islam Maghari and Ahmad Bika, "Salafiyyat Misr al-jadīda.. Madmūn wāhid wa-awjuh ḥadāthiyya mutaghayyira", *Dhāt Misr*, Nov 1, 2020).

20 Aḥmad Zayid, *Tanāqudāt al-hadātha fī Misr*, Al-hay'a al-'āmma li-l-kitāb, al-Qāhira 2006, p. 75.

An Emerging Post-Salafi Current in West Africa and Beyond

Alexander Thurston

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In January 2018, I sat down for an interview with Mahmoud Dicko, president of the High Islamic Council of Mali (HCIM). As I asked Dicko what I thought were relatively innocuous questions about his positions on theology and Islamic jurisprudence, the conversation grew tense. "You're going to write that I'm a Wahhabi," Dicko said, short-circuiting what I had hoped would be a more three-dimensional discussion. "Just go ahead and write that I'm a Wahhabi, if that's what you want."

Actually, I'm increasingly unsure that it makes sense to categorize figures such as Dicko as "Wahhabis" or, to use a term more in vogue now, "Salafis." In terms of Dicko's own views, I think he still fits what I (in the Nigerian context[2]) and others have identified as core markers of Salafism. These markers include theological literalism and an insistence on deriving legal opinions directly from the Qur'an and the Sunna rather than through the framework of major Sunni jurisprudential schools. But in terms of his political behavior, Dicko may be better categorized as "post-Salafi" – an emerging, amorphous category of Muslim scholars who seem to find Salafi theology and activism too narrow when it comes to confronting complex social and political arenas, and especially in terms of interacting with Sufis. If a core part of Salafism is, as Bernard Haykel has written[3], a "muscular discourse that is directed at reforming other non-Salafi Muslims," then post-Salafism downplays this element in favor of postures that facilitate political and social coalitions with other Muslims. Other variants of post-Salafism, finally, are working to pair Salafi theology with a more wide-ranging view of Muslim spirituality.

Comparing Post-Salafism and Post-Islamism

To understand post-Salafism, it is worth summarizing Asef Bayat's well-known observations on what he calls "post-Islamism." According to Bayat[4], "internal contradictions" and "societal pressure" generated soul-searching within Islamist circles by the 1990s. "Following a phase of experimentation," he writes, "the appeal, energy, and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted even among its once-ardent supporters."

This phrasing evokes Thomas Kuhn's well-known understanding of scientific revolutions. In Kuhn's model, science does not change so much through the gradual accumulation of new data as through periodic revolutions. Such revolutions occur when growing anomalies within existing paradigms lead to the emergence of new paradigms that reflect fundamental new assumptions about the nature of reality. In very different ways, then, Bayat and Kuhn both point to a fundamental pattern where worldviews shift in response to internal crises.

Post-Salafism represents another such instance of a paradigm shift. In this case, the anomalies have to do, above all, with politics. As scholars such as Haykel and Quintan Wiktorowicz[5] have

1 https://themaydan.com/2018/10/emerging-post-salafi-current-west-africa-beyond/

2 Alexander Thurston (2016). *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

4 Asef Bayat (2005), "What is Post-Islamism?", *ISIM Review* 16: 1. https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17030/ISIM_16_What_is_Post?sequence=1

5 Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2006). "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29: 207–40.

noted, the Salafi movement is far more unified on questions of theology than it is on politics. Not only is the movement divided on politics, with stances running the gamut from quietism to jihadism, each of these positions also carries internal tensions, as Jacob Olidort has pointed out in his paper "The Politics of 'Quietist' Salafism."[6] Even the foremost jihadist thinker, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, has been called a "quietist jihadi."[7] Salafi theology does not map neatly onto politics, whether one is a regime loyalist, a non-violent dissident, or a violent jihadist.

In thinking about whether post-Salafism is emerging and where it may be headed, it is useful to keep in mind some of the responses to Bayat's "post-Islamism." Comparing Bayat's framework with Olivier Roy's notion of the "failure of political Islam"[8] – and what Roy sees as a turn toward "privatized and individualized" Islam – Peter Mandaville offers important observations[9]. Mandaville writes, "A desire on the part of Muslims to engage in collective action in order to change society toward some conception of an Islamic ideal is still very present. Rather it is the nature and modalities of that collective action that seem to be changing." Michaelle Browers[10], also rejecting the idea of Islamists' "failure," points out that movements such as Hezbollah are still experimenting within an Islamist, rather than a post-Islamist, paradigm. She writes, "[P]erhaps what one should expect in this 'post-Islamist period' is not the failure of Islamist groups or the exhaustion of the Islamic frame of reference for political projects, but the increasing proliferation of ways to do and articulate Islamist politics." In thinking about post-Salafism, one would do well to keep such cautions in mind: it will not always be easy to differentiate between Salafi experimentation and post-Salafi models, nor will post-Salafism represent a retreat of belief to the private sphere.

Modalities of Post-Salafism

In thinking through the case of Mahmoud Dicko I recounted in the beginning of this essay, two themes stand out: Bayat's emphasis on "exhaustion," and the above-mentioned dilemmas that Salafism faces in the political arena. Dicko himself alluded to exhaustion when he told me that Malian Muslims of various stripes had grown tired of debates that raged most fiercely in the 1980s – debates, for example, over the positions of the hands in prayer. At the high point of such debates, one could find Muslims refusing to pray with one another over the issue, but by the 2010s the acrimony had lessened.

Notably, Dicko framed the issue in terms that traditionalist Malian Muslims might accept – praying *qabd* (hands clasped across the chest), he said, was an opinion found in Malik bin Anas' *Muwatta*. The most widespread position in the Maliki school (named for Malik) is to pray *sadl* (arms at one's side) – but by referencing the *Muwatta*, rather than basing his position solely on Qur'an and *hadith*, Dicko offered something of an olive branch to traditionalists. I respect the traditionalists' understanding of authority, he implied, even if I don't adopt their opinions. In any case, even (or especially) in an interview with an outsider, Dicko was reluctant to rehash the issue.

In the political arena, meanwhile, Dicko has increasingly built ties with non-Salafis. In majority-Muslim Mali, the Muslim community is internally

6 Jacob Olidort (2015), "The Politics of "Quietist" Salafism," The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, no. 18. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Brookings-Analysis-Paper_Jacob-Olidort-Inside_Final_Web.pdf

7 Joas Wagemakers (2012), *A Quietist Jihadi. The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

8 Olivier Roy (1996), *The Failure of Political Islam*, Harvard University Press

9 Peter Mandaville (2014), "Is the Post-Islamism Thesis Still Valid?" In *Rethinking Islamist Politics*, edited by Marc Lynch, 33–37. Washington, DC: Project on Middle East Political Science. http://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/POMEPS_BriefBooklet24_Rethinking_web.pdf

10 Michaelle Browers (2014), "Rethinking Post-Islamism and the Study of Changes in Islamist Ideology," In *Rethinking Islamist Politics*, 16-19.

diverse. Salafi activism dating to the late colonial period has only dented, but not overturned, the influence of Sufis, traditionalists, and other constituencies.

A Muslim leader interested in forging nation-wide religious or political coalitions, then, must work with peers from other theological camps. Dicko needed non-Salafi allies to become president of the HCIM in 2008, and he has needed allies to maintain his position there. In 2009, when various Muslim leaders organized mass demonstrations against proposed revisions to Mali's family code[11], Dicko again had to work with different constituencies, including Sufis.

In January 2018, Dicko publicly broke with Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, accusing him of broken promises. More than spelling out what Keïta had done wrong, however, Dicko emphasized that he was explicitly subordinating himself[12] to the religio-political direction of the country's most prominent Sufi leader, the Cherif of Nioro du Sahel. The Cherif's break with Keïta had begun even earlier. The two men's complex relationship began to fray in 2017, with the Cherif's public refusal of the president's gifts amid talk that the president was failing to move Mali forward.

Dicko's critics understand his political maneuvers as evidence of a duplicitous personality. Within Mali and internationally, Dicko has been routinely accused of saying one thing and doing another, particularly when it comes to the country's jihadists. Dicko has periodically put himself forth as a mediator between the state and the jihadists, but detractors allege that he has veiled sympathies for the jihadist project. His alliances with Sufis, then, are viewed skeptically in some quarters. It is worth acknowledging, then, that what I see as post-Salafism – in the sense of downplaying Salafi theology in order to forge cross-cutting religio-political alliances – others see as cynicism and hunger for power[13].

To speak of post-Salafism, however, is not to argue that individual actors have uncomplicated intentions or have abandoned their previous theological commitments; after all, we can never know what is in other people's hearts. Rather, the argument is that some Salafis are frankly and openly re-prioritizing their approach to issues where theological and political imperatives conflict.

Figures such as Dicko are not shy about demonstrating that they now value political leverage in the service of religio-political goals (blocking a new law, or opposing a president) over theological purism. It would be going too far to say that post-Salafism represents a privatization of Salafi theology, but post-Salafism can mean abandoning, or at least de-prioritizing, the goal of discrediting Sufism. If Salafi politics are predicated on the image of purism, then post-Salafi politics endorse pragmatism and coalition-building.

In this vein, another candidate for the label "post-Salafi" would be Mauritania's Muhammad al-Hasan Ould al-Dedew. Reading al-Dedew's official biography[14] or listening to him preach, one could easily conclude (as I did in earlier work[15]) that al-Dedew was a typical Salafi. After all, he is a figure trained and later employed in Saudi Arabia, mentored by prominent Salafis such as 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz, and steeped in Salafi vocabularies

11 Benjamin F. Soares (2009), "The Attempt to Reform Family Law in Mali," *Die Welt Des Islams, 49*(3/4): 398-428

12 *Bamada.net*, 02/03/2018, http://bamada.net/mahamoud-dicko-hcim-tranche-le-candidat-du-cherif-de-nioro-mais-tous-sauf-ibk

13 Sebastian Elischer, "After this month's attack in Bamako, what do we know about fundamentalist Islam in Mali?", *The Washington Post*, 20/11/2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/30/after-this-months-attack-in-bamako-what-do-we-know-about-fundamentalist-islam-in-mali/?noredirect=on

14 http://www.dedewnet.com/index.php/about-us/2010-07-03-07-50-14.html

15 Alex Thurston (2012), "Shaykh Muhammad al-Hasan al-Dedew (b. 1963), a Salafi Scholar in Contemporary Mauritania", *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* no. 11, http://www.cci.uct.ac.za/usr/cci/publications/aria/download_issues/2012/Alex%20Thurston.pdf

such as the Sermon of Necessity.[16] Yet al-Dedew's political and religious behaviors indicate a much more flexible approach – an affinity for the Muslim Brotherhood, both within Mauritania (in the form of the Tewassoul Party) and globally, as well as a willingness to show public fondness for Sufi shaykhs.

In part, al-Dedew exemplifies the "Salafization of the Brotherhood,"[17] but he also exemplifies a form of post-Salafism. In Mauritania, he seems to aspire (quite successfully) to be the pre-eminent national religious figure of his generation, even as his relations with authorities are uneven and currently tense. Globally, he is willing to break with Salafi purism even on Gulf satellite television. He has voiced acceptance for Muslim groups that most Salafis consider errant – Ash'aris, Sufis, and even lay Shi'a – and he has broadly redefined the term "Ahl al-Sunna[18] (People of the Prophetic Model)," a label that Salafis commonly use to exclusively refer to themselves.

Here we would do well to recall that any "post-Salafi" trend is only emergent and experimental. Figures such as Dicko and al-Dedew can be forces for Salafization of the public even as they grapple with the internal contradictions of Salafism's approach to politics. But at the very least, these scholars are finding that purism is inherently in tension with the goal of religious reform and Islamization. In response, they are crafting and maintaining national platforms where they do not, or no longer, present Salafi theology as a non-negotiable element of coalitions for change.

In conclusion, it's worth casting our gaze elsewhere in the world for signs of a post-Salafi trend. One notable case would be the United States, where the prominent Muslim scholar Yasir Qadhi, an Islamic University of Medina graduate who later earned a PhD in Religious Studies from Yale. In 2014, Qadhi authored a thoughtful essay called "On Salafi Islam."[19] Qadhi praised the contributions of the Salafi movement at length before highlighting exactly the kind of internal contradictions that have propelled other intellectual changes, from Bayat's post-Islamism to Kuhn's scientific revolutions. Qadhi wrote (12),

> The understanding of the Salaf includes many fundamental issues that are completely neglected or even contradicted by contemporary Salafī groups. Additionally, there is a methodological flaw in attempting to extrapolate a salafī position (meaning: a position that the salaf would hold) about a modern issue that the salaf never encountered. The 'Salafī position' (meaning one that is held by some scholars of the modern Salafī movement) with respect to questions on citizenship in nation-states, democracy, the role of women in today's society, the permissibility of voting, and the issue of jihād in the modern world, etc., are merely personal opinions (fatāwā) of the scholars who pronounce them and cannot be representative of the views of the first three generations of Islam.

Qadhi went on to list problems that he saw in terms of what he called Salafis' prioritization of abstract theology over concrete piety, their disinterest in spirituality, their "harshness" (14) toward other Muslims, their attitudes toward women, and other issues. Qadhi concluded (19):

> I no longer view myself as being a part of any of these Salafī trends… I do subscribe to the Atharī creed, and view it to be the safest and most authentic creed, Islam is more than just a bullet-point of beliefs, and my ultimate loyalty will not be to a humanly-derived creed, but to Allah and His Messenger, and then to people of genuine īmān and taqwa. Hence, I feel more of an affinity and brotherhood with a moderate Deobandi Tablighi Maturidi, who

16 Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*.

17 https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/12416450

18 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r05ROPFgo7Y&ab_channel=DedewNetVideos

19 https://muslimmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/On-Salafi-Islam_Dr.-Yasir-Qadhi.pdf

> might differ with me on some issues of fiqh and theology and methodology, but whose religiosity and concern for the Ummah I can relate to, than I do with a hard-core Salafī whose only concern is the length of my pants and my lack of quoting from the 'Kibār' that he looks up to.

Any emerging post-Salafi trend, then, is not a coordinated global movement. Rather, it is a set of disparate, parallel responses to the same internal contradictions and limitations of Salafism. As these responses grow, the sense of a shared or parallel process of historical evolution stands out – somehow it was simpler for these figures to commit to full-scale Salafi activist postures in the 1980s and the 1990s than it has been since the late 2000s. Post-Salafism, then, is on one level an argument that the intra-Muslim theological debates of the late twentieth century have partly run their course. The changing atmosphere is giving rise to new conversations and new postures, as the twenty-first century brings surprising rapprochements between post-Salafis and Sufis.

Salafis' Hybrid Trajectories of Socio-Political Engagement in Post-2013 Tunisia. Elements for a Comparative Analysis with Algeria.

Ester Sigillò

Introduction

The fall of the authoritarian regime in Tunisia in January 2011 has led to the electoral success of the Islamist party Ennahdha and the rise of Salafi groups as new political and social forces.[1] However, since 2013 the religious field was reshuffled following the political assassinations of two secular activists, Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi. The Salafi-Jihadi movement Ansar al Sharia – the most popular expression of Salafism in Tunisia after 2011 – was declared a terrorist organization, and the Islamist party Ennahdha was forced to relinquish power in favor of a technocratic government. The Jomaa government, established in January 2014, started a campaign of securitization vis-à-vis religious associations suspected of having ties with Salafi-Jihadi movements inside and outside the country. In October 2014, following the legislative elections, Ennahdha made a compromise with the secular party Nidaa Tounès, counting among its members several remnants of the Ben Ali's regime. This new alliance marked the rupture of the Islamist party's relationship with the Salafi constellation developed in Tunisia after 2011.

As underlined by scholars, most Tunisian people who joined Ansar al Sharia (AST) in 2011 did not have a Salafi background before joining the movement.[2] AST quickly gained ground among a part of the population sidelined by the state in areas suffering from high poverty and low levels of education. The movement's appeal was considerable in marginalized neighborhoods of bigger cities such as Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen.[3] After the ban of Ansar al Sharia in August 2013 and the securitization of the religious field since January 2014, the main question one might raise is: what is left of Salafism and Salafis in Tunisia after 2013? After 2013, Salafis who survived to the securitization campaign found themselves without a symbolic and material reference. Several activists were arrested, others joined Ansar al-Sharia in Libya, some joined local terrorist groups such as Oqba Ibn Nafa', and others readapted themselves to the new context.[4]

This contribution shows how Salafi groups' adaptive strategies go beyond the crystallized categorizations – quietist, political, and Jihadit – outlined in the literature.[5] Based on data obtained from fieldwork visits in Tunisia from 2015 to 2019, this chapter highlights two Salafis' trajectories of engagement as the byproduct of adaptive strategies in a perceived constraining environment.[6] It also shows how Salafis' new

1 After 2011 Ansar al Sharia emerged as the largest Salafi grassroots movement alongside the Salafi party Jabhat al Islah.

2 Fabio Merone, "Enduring class struggle in Tunisia: the fight for identity beyond political Islam", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:1 (2015): 74-87.

3 Stefano Torelli, Fabio Merone, and Francesco Cavatorta, "Salafism in Tunisia: challenges and opportunities for democratization", *Middle East Policy*, *19*:4 (2012): 140-154.

4 On the doctrinal adaptation of Tunisian Salafi groups see: Fabio Merone, Théo Blanc, and Ester Sigillò, "The Evolution of Tunisian Salafism after the Revolution: From La Maddhabiyya to Salafi-Malikism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (2021): 1-16.

5 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:3 (2006): 207-239.

6 Names of individuals and organizations will not be disclosed in order to guarantee the research participants anonymity, upon their request.

forms of commitments go hand in hand with a dynamic of hybridization with populist rhetoric and modes of action, as well as with other transversal ideologies. According to the definition given by Mudde, populism is based on an idea of society which is separated in two antagonistic groups: the pure people vs. the corrupt elite.[7] Thus, the definition of 'people' given by Mudde emphasizes an ideal community of moral integrity, which is compatible with the ideologically constructed community of Salafi believers.[8]

Shifting from Religious to Societal Commitment

The first adaptive strategy of Salafi actors to an increasing securitized environment is the shift from a religious to a societal commitment, in a context where, claiming a Salafi identity entails being tagged as an individual linked to violent extremism.[9] Social work in a charitable or (social and human) development associations thus became the new legitimate form of engagement in a context where any religious reference was viewed with suspicion by local authorities.[10] Associations that before 2013 presented themselves as Salafi-inspired organizations relinquished their religious references after 2014 and changed their names and logos. As acknowledged by the president of an association in Ettadhamen: "Today, being a Salafi in Tunisia means being a terrorist, so I can't tell you that I am a Salafi […]. Nobody will tell you that he is a Salafi […]. But we are all Salafis. Salafi just means being pious, that's all".[11]

Despite these changes, some continuities with a Salafi normativity can be underlined. First and foremost, interviewed actors claimed themselves as apolitical. Engagement in the associative field appears as the purest sphere of engagement, in opposition to politics. Indeed, interviewees were very critical of the Ennahdha party, the Islamist ideology, and also the so-called political Salafis, such as Jabhat al-Islah members, who "got their hands dirty with politics".[12] Professional politics, in opposition to religion, is thus associated with a system polluted by dirty compromises, former regime officials, and a resilient authoritarian mindset. As stated by the president of a charitable association: "We were friends with Ennahdha before 2013, as we had the common goal of developing a more just society. Then, the Islamist leadership made friendship with the gang of corrupt thieves of the old regime. They became political players seeking to secure their power, neglecting the needs of the Tunisian people".[13]

Interestingly, the construction of this civil society-politics dichotomy has progressively been translated in populist terms. As stated by the president of an association of 'human development' in Sfax: "charitable work and human development means to feed people from a material and moral perspective. That's our highest goal, as the people represent the purest sphere of society which needs to be protected and developed against a corrupted political system".[14] Accordingly, the populist register is not at odds with an orthodox religious reference, even if the latter is not displayed as the official goal of the

7 Cas Mudde, "The populist zeitgeist", *Government and opposition*, 39:4 (2004): 541-563.

8 Jasmin Lorch and Hatem Chakroun, "Salafism Meets Populism: The Al-Karama Coalition and the Malleability of Political Salafism in Tunisia", *MEI*, 12/05/2020, online: https://www.mei.edu/publications/salafism-meets-populism-al-karama-coalition-and-malleability-political-salafism

9 Data substantiated by several author's interviews in Tunis, Sfax, Médenine, respectively carried out in December 2015, February 2016, May 2016. See also, Merone, Blanc, and Sigillò, "The Evolution of Tunisian Salafism after the Revolution".

10 Ester Sigillò, *Mobilizing for or through development? Trajectories of civic activism in post-authoritarian Tunisia*, PhD Dissertation (2018), Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence.

11 Author's interview with the president of a charitable association in Ettadhamen, Tunis, July 2019.

12 Author's interview with the president of an association which in 2014 changed its name (initially *Rahma*, meaning mercy), Sfax, July 2018.

13 Author's interview, Ettadhamen, June 2016.

14 Author's interview, Sfax, May 2016.

associations. In fact, interviewees justified their associative activism as a gradual and non-violent way to attain an ideal and pure society. According to the president of an association in Médenine: "we cannot be labeled as a religious association as we don't claim *shariʿa*. This is not a favorable time for including *shariʿa* in our society, because the society is not ready. But the good time will come. We are indirectly working at this project through our mission of social and human development, aiming at recreating a unity from below".[15] From this perspective, specialization in the civil society sphere is considered as a positional warfare in a struggle against the corrupted establishment, the "rotten elite", the political "caste", to denounce an uneven democratization process overly focused on seeking political compromises at the expense of socio-economic justice.

New Forms of Hybrid Political Engagement

The second adaptive strategy is one of hybrid political engagement, with Salafis rooted in the associative field joining Itilaf al-Karama (Dignity Coalition), which positioned as the fourth political actor at the parliamentary elections in 2019. Itilaf al-Karama is not a Salafi party but a heterogeneous coalition which comprises a wide array of highly diverse forces, including Salafis, but also a fraction of the Congress for the Republic (CPR) party, former members of Ennahdha, remnants of the dissolved Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution (LPR), independent journalists and bloggers, and independent preachers.[16] However, and interestingly, the Coalition discourses merges populism with a conservative ideology, that intersects with Salafism in various respects.

First, the Coalition presents itself as a revolutionary force seeking to fulfill the unaccomplished goals of the revolution. Salafis' engagement with Itilaf al-Karama displays a continuity of radical registers linked to new topics. Revolutionary narratives are mostly identitarian and the main goal is to represent the general willingness of the people, by defending Tunisian identity and values. Leading representatives of the Coalition hailing from the Salafi milieu have used anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric to frame the completion of the revolution as being inextricably linked to ending French imperialist domination over Tunisia's politics and economy.[17] During the 2019 electoral campaign, Seifeddine Makhlouf, the coalition leader, threatened to terminate all treaties with France, declaring last May at the Parliament: "I will eliminate the traces of colonialization and I will demand that France presents its excuses. France has to acknowledge that 70 years after the end of the colonialization, they continue to steal from us."[18]

Second, the Coalition positions itself as in politically alignment with the pure side of Tunisian society, framed antagonistically. At the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, al-Karama sought to identify itself with the pure, marginalized people ruled by an uncaring and "corrupted elite." Notwithstanding this Manichean vision of society, the main goal is societal unification. In light of this, the Coalition rejects the party structure, which by definition "fragments the society into parts […]. Instead, we would like to unite society by fighting moral and material corruption".[19] In parallel, Salafis reject politics for the sake of politics and justify their engagement as their duty to pursue a moral order. In this regard, it is not a coincidence that some leading Salafi activists, such as Ridha Jawadi, recently decided to leave the Coalition, as it became too embedded within party coalition dynamics, given its alliance with Ennahdha and

15 Author's interview, Médenine, May 2016.

16 Théo Blanc and Ester Sigillò, "Beyond the 'Islamists vs. Secularists' Cleavage: The Rise of New Challengers after the 2019 Tunisian Elections," *European University Institute (EUI) Policy Brief*, Issue 27: (2019).

17 Blanc and Sigillò, "Beyond".

18 Lorch and Chakroun, "Salafism Meets Populism".

19 Author's interviews with members of Itilaf al-Karama, Tunis, July 2019.

the secular-bourghibist party Qalb Tounes.[20]

Populist, nationalist, and anti-imperialist registers do not overshadow a conservative rhetoric which is close to the Salafi pillars, such as the fight against drugs, alcohol consumption, gay marriage, and equal heritage. In a parliamentary session held in late February 2020, al-Karama deputy Mohamed Affès accused the former Prime Minister from the secular party Ettakatol (Elyes Fakhfakh) of being an "extremist laïcist" and of representing "a prolongation of the francophone mafia that has dominated Tunisia. More recently, with reference to the issue of women emancipation, Mohamed Affès said during his address to the ARP plenary: "What they call women's freedom is debauchery and a lack of morals […]. Women for them are a cheap commodity […]. Women's achievements for them are single mothers, having children out of wedlock, the right to abortion, unhealthy sexual practices, sexual freedom, and homosexuality".[21]

Against this background, it is interesting to note how Salafis engaged in the Coalition positioned themselves vis-à-vis violent extremism, by putting forward a clear emphasis on a non-violent grammar of action. Referring to the case of Professor Samuel Paty, who was killed in France for showing the prophet caricatures to his students, Itilaf al-Karama's leaders strongly condemned the act of ridiculing the Prophet. If on the one hand, this declaration was framed by media as evidence of the Coalition's endorsement of violent action, on the other hand, in several official communications Itilaf al-Karama emphasized its role as a filler of the societal-economic divide, with social justice and societal cohesion being the only solution to terrorism in the country.[22]

20 "Ridha Jaouadi annonce sa démission du bloc Coalition Al Karama", *Espace Manager*, 26/01/2020, online: https://www.espacemanager.com/ridha-jaouadi-annonce-sa-demission-du-bloc-coalition-al-karama.html

21 Mohamed Affès speech on December 3, 2020: see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2KCU4M_8hA

22 https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/tunisie-un-depute-justifie-la-decapitation-de-samuel-paty-une-enquete-ouverte-19-10-2020-8403936.php

Conclusion: Towards A Post-Salafism Paradigm?

What is left of Salafism in Tunisia after 2013? As highlighted in this short contribution, the ban of Ansar al-Sharia left a symbolic and material void in the Salafi milieu. In an increasing securitized environment, several Salafis have undertaken some adaptive strategies which translated into different trajectories, notably those of associative action and engaging in new forms of political participation. The analysis of Salafi trajectories is crucial to understand the transformations of the Tunisian Salafi constellation in a time where many actors relinquished their religious reference in order to survive in the public sphere. The two trajectories presented above resulted in hybrid forms of socio-political engagement where Salafism met Populism. This hybridization leads to questions about the normativity itself of Salafi groups and to an exploration of a paradigm shift through the notion of *post-Salafism*, alongside the better-known category of post-Islamism.

Further research is needed in order to explore a potential normative shift. On the one hand, hybrid forms of Salafi socio-political engagement are not necessarily entirely at odds with Salafi normativity, as actors interviewed justify their new commitments by implicitly referring to Islamic norms and principles. On the other hand, the hybridization of Salafi registers described in the Tunisian context is not an isolated example. The Algerian movement Rachad, including some former members of the Islamic Salvation Front, is another interesting case study of Salafi hybridization with populism and other transversal ideological currents. The movement, founded in 2007, has recently emerged as the most radical actor in the anti-regime mobilizations that started in February 2019. Particularly active in anti-corruption campaigns on social networks such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, the Rachad movement appears as the defender of the people against the political "caste". As stated by its leaders: "we must free the Algerian people from the band of mercenaries seeking to manipulate

the people, with the help of the intelligence services, the real terrorist group in the country".[23] These statements seem to echo the societal duality evoked by Mudde. These populist do not look in contradiction with religious norms, even if religion is not displayed as the driver of the Rachad movement, as for the case of Itilaf al Karama: "Rachad does not support the idea of a caliphate or a dictatorship, whether it be a military or theocratic one. It's written in black and white in the movement's bylaws", a member of Rachad's national board said. Indeed, as seen above, interviewees justified their political activism as a non-violent means of attaining a pure and just society.[24]

23 Author's interviews with Rachad members, Paris, April 2021.

24 Author's interview with a member of Rachad national board, Paris, October 2020.

The Transformation of a Salafi-Jihadi Group after 2011: From *Jabhat al-Nusra* to *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*

Jérôme Drevon and
Patrick Haenni

Introduction

Salafism has been profoundly transformed by the 2011 uprisings.[1] Salafis used to be broadly divided by their political preferences, with scholastic Salafis (*'ilmi*) focusing on education and preaching, *haraki* Salafis participating in political processes, and *jihadi* Salafis advocating violence.[2] A succession of popular uprisings that resulted in political openings or armed conflicts showed that these political preferences are largely contingent on Salafis' political environments. While former proponents of violence joined the political process in Egypt, scholastic Salafis embraced violence as a modus operandi in Libya and Syria.[3] The past decade hence illustrates how Salafis have re-shaped the trajectories of this ideological trend.

Existing research on Salafism has already analysed its roots and construction in different countries in detail,[4] yet *jihadi* Salafis are still mostly studied for their path of radicalism rather than themes of accommodation or pragmatism. The rise of Islamic State (IS) has reinforced this tendency as the group imposed new violent practices – including mass-slavery and slaughter – and became embroiled in episodes of cross-factional violence with al-Qaeda (AQ).[5] But not all *jihadi* Salafis have followed the same trajectory. Others have tried to conciliate their belief systems with forms of restraint too. This contribution intends to highlight this phenomenon based on field-research undertaken with the HTS leadership in Idlib.

Salafi Jihadism on the Eve of the Syrian Uprising (1990-2011)

The past decade has been particularly transformative for *jihadi* Salafis. *Jihadi* Salafism was historically the outgrowth of Islamist mobilisation for the Afghan jihad combined with the strategic failure of other Islamist armed groups to topple domestic Muslim regimes in the 1990s.[6] *Jihadi* Salafism developed a dual anti-American and anti-Muslim regime[7] agenda when its proponents assessed that domestic

1 This research is based on a longer research paper. Drevon, Jerome, and Patrick Haenni. "How Global Jihad Relocalises and Where it Leads. The Case of HTS, the Former AQ Franchise in Syria." *Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS* 8 (2021).

2 This typology was initially presented by Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "Anatomy of the Salafi movement." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:3 (2006): 207-239.

3 e.g. Drevon, Jerome. "The emergence of ex-Jihadi political parties in post-Mubarak Egypt." *The Middle East Journal* 69.4 (2015): 511-526; Collombier, Virginie. "Salafi politics: 'political' and 'quietist' Salafis in the struggle for the Libyan state". EUI-RSCAS/MEDirections/NUPI, 2020/15.

4 e.g. Hegghammer, Thomas. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge University Press, 2011; Wagemakers, Joas. *A quietist jihadi: the ideology and influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

5 Lister, Charles R. *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic state and the evolution of an insurgency*. Oxford University Press, 2016; Hamming, Tore Refslund. "The Al Qaeda–Islamic State Rivalry: Competition Yes, but No Competitive Escalation." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32.1 (2020): 20-37.

6 Gerges, Fawaz A. *The far enemy: why Jihad went global* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); Hegghammer, Thomas. "The rise of Muslim foreign fighters: Islam and the globalization of Jihad." *International Security* 35.3 (2010): 53-94.

7 By Muslim regimes, we mean political regimes of the Muslim world.

regimes would never change if they remained supported by the United States. The American militarised response to 9/11 only served to re-emphasise this paradigm, which swayed smaller non-affiliated *jihadi* groups into AQ's umbrella.[8] The year 2011 changed this paradigm. After a moment of indecision, Western countries no longer stood against domestic political change. They either supported some political opening in Muslim countries, which strengthened local Islamist groups as in Egypt, or helped to militarily topple other regimes such as in Libya.

In Syria, three key features shaped the trajectories of armed groups associated with *jihadi* Salafism during the armed conflict that started in 2011. First, the causes of the conflict were domestic. The war was not a reaction to foreign occupation as in neighbouring Iraq. Repression was both indiscriminate and incredibly far-reaching. Entire cities were assaulted and depopulated by the regime and its foreign allies (Russia and Iran). The regime hence never tried to isolate *jihadi* Salafis from the population, but effectively punished all the civilian population that sided with the opposition. Second, the position of Western countries changed. Western countries quickly sided in favour of regime change – at least on paper. They were willing to support, to some extent, the militarisation of the uprising including its Islamist components providing they did not affiliate with AQ. Lastly, IS quickly rose within the insurgency, started to fight other groups, and imposed a combination of harsh local governance and foreign attacks that antagonised virtually everybody. The combination of these three factors influenced other *jihadi* Salafis or those close to them, who had to develop their own alternative.

The Case of *Jabhat al-Nusra/ Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham* in Syria (2011-2017)

The Syrian group *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS) very much epitomises the changes that affected Salafism for the past decade, especially *jihadi* Salafism. While the group is important in itself as a case-study, its trajectory also raises important questions on existing understandings of the political strategies developed by *salafi jihadi* groups in light of substantial external changes. The case-study also interrogates Western political decisions regarding these groups, including the prospects and practicalities of engagement.

HTS was initially created as *Jabhat al-Nusra* (JaN), literally a "Front of Support" to the Syrian revolution.[9] JaN was the project of an Islamic State in Iraq's (ISI, the previous iteration of IS) commander, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, who wanted to support the 2011 Syrian popular uprising. Al-Jolani and his associates, thought that the non-violent uprising would be a dead-end. Like many other groups at the time, they believed that militarisation was ineluctable. They also viewed Syria differently from Iraq, where militarisation was a response to foreign occupation. The group therefore came to support an armed popular uprising without necessarily planning to impose a strong ideological project on the population at the beginning. The group was initially embedded in the early insurgency, to which it brought critical military expertise from Iraq.

JaN had an ambiguous connection to AQ and IS since its emergence.[10] Jolani and his associates obtained limited financial support and several men from ISI when they created the group. They nonetheless took their decisions independently

8 Mendelsohn, Barak. *The al-Qaeda Franchise: the Expansion of al-Qaeda and its Consequences* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

9 See also Cafarella, Jennifer. "Jabhat al Nusra in Syria." *Institute for the Study of War. http://www. understanding-war. org/report/jabhat− al− nusra− syria* (2014); Lister, Charles. *Profiling Jabhat al-Nusra*. Brookings Institution, 2016.

10 This is based on several interviews with Abu Muhammad al-Jolani conducted in 2020 and 2021.

in Syria based on their own understanding of the situation. Jolani notably refused important orders from ISI, especially when ISI asked JaN to orchestrate high-level attacks against the mainstream Syrian opposition based in Turkey. The relative independence of JaN and its growing popularity underpinned ISI's reassertion from 2013 onwards. ISI became the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) as it tried to impose a re-integration of the two groups in the same organisational umbrella controlled by the Iraqi leadership. Jolani's refusal to reintegrate ISIS motivated his pledge of allegiance to AQ. Jolani thought that the new allegiance was necessary to maintain the loyalty of its prominent commanders and Syrian soldiers and prevent them from joining ISIS. However, JaN never lost its de facto independence since the connection to AQ remained symbolic. Apart from several exchanges of letters between AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and JaN, AQ did not impose its organisational control over the Syrian group, nor did it directly assist the group either militarily or financially.

In relative autonomy, JaN made decisions based on its own understanding of the changing Syrian and international reality. Two key issues started to define its behaviour henceforth. First, JaN gradually articulated a new approach to its regional and international environment. Second, JaN embedded itself locally and started to establish local structures of governance. Both issues would shape the group's actions on the ground for the next few years.

The first issue is international. Although JaN leaders insist that the group never orchestrated external operations against other countries, which it opposed, allegiance to AQ became poisonous for the insurgency after 2014. Even a purely symbolic connection to AQ was considered a real threat to Western countries and an impediment to the unification of the opposition within Syria.[11]

11 This is the context in which the U.S. started to attack prominent Nusra commanders. See Lund, Aaron. "What Is the Khorasan Group and Why Is the US Bombing It in Syria." *Carniege Endowment for International Peace* (2014).

The contradictions between AQ's official two objectives – the replacement of domestic Muslim regimes and the fight against Western countries – became particularly obvious during the Syrian conflict. Although AQ leader Zawahiri insisted that allegiance to the group could be severed for the greater good of the Syrian uprising, AQ's willingness to accept such a step was not evident in practice.

The second issue faced by JaN is territorial control. JaN lost substantial resources when it split from ISIS in 2013. The group therefore tried to embed itself locally in North West Syria in parallel to its organisational recovery following the split from ISIS.[12] For example, JaN joined local courts of justice alongside other insurgents before establishing its own courts in the summer of 2015. JaN's territorial anchoring increased its hegemonic tendencies, which led it to target many independent armed groups cohabiting in its territories. Unable to face all the Syrian opposition simultaneously, however, JaN initially only attacked some groups that it accused of being supported by Western countries before subjugating other Islamist groups when it transformed into HTS.

JaN's transformation into HTS in January 2017 arguably represents one of the most salient turning point for *jihadi* Salafism in Syria and beyond. After severing ties with AQ in Summer 2016, the group tried to unite with the remaining insurgency under the umbrella of a new entity called HTS. Although many important actors refused to join the new umbrella, HTS marked a transformation of the former JaN's territorial project. According to group leaders, HTS was never supposed to be a new faction but was established to be the political and military umbrella of the entire opposition. In absence of broad understanding with the remaining insurgency, however, HTS would subjugate all other insurgents in the next two years, starting with former Islamist allies Ahrar al-Sham – which was the only other group able to unite the insurgency – before facing remaining AQ supporters that were previously in JaN.

12 Lund, Aron. "Syria's al-Qaeda Wing Searches for a Strategy." *Carnegie Endowment for* (2014).

The Transformation of *Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham (2017-2021)*

JaN started to effectively distance itself from *jihadi* Salafism with the establishment of HTS in January 2017. The disassociation from this ideological trend is particularly evident in the group's new approach to governance, religion, and foreign alliances. These three points are largely mutually constitutive since the necessity to nurture domestic and international support has constrained the type of local governance implemented by the group as well as its religious views.

HTS learned two main lessons in governance from the experiments of other *salafi jihadi* groups.[13] First, in the current international environment, the implementing of a harsh ideological programme of governance – like IS and its imposition of violent penal punishment such as public executions– is costly. Direct *salafi jihadi* ideological governance backfires internationally. It antagonises Western countries that could otherwise be willing to accept some self-governance by non-state armed groups. Second, ideological governance alienates local populations. Even a population that supports armed insurgency against a vilified regime does not necessarily acquiesce to the ideological agenda promoted by individual armed groups locally. This is also true for Islamist sympathisers.

In contrast with other *salafi jihadi* groups engaged in governance, HTS has decided not to directly rule the population. HTS has instead favoured the creation of a "technocratic" government, which it has imposed throughout the province of Idlib. The so-called Salvation Government is technically accountable to a consultative council (*majlis al-shura*) that is supposed to represent the province of Idlib. The Government has attempted to co-opt an alliance of local academics, businessmen, and tribes to supplant the revolutionary milieu. The Salvation Government relies on HTS support, especially in the field of security, but HTS does not micro-manage the province. This is a major divergence from previous cases of *salafi jihadi* governance, which was characterised by direct judicial control over the population, especially through the court systems developed from Afghanistan to the Sahel and Somalia. HTS' local governance remains authoritarian – especially against political opponents – but it is qualitatively distinct from the governance previously enforced by *salafi jihadi* actors, as its authoritarian practices are nearly exclusively deployed to enforce political loyalty rather than ideological purity. Repression of civil society has thus primarily focused on public opposition to HTS and the Salvation Government in contrast with the violent imposition of religious norms by other *salafi jihadi* groups.[14]

The transformation of HTS's governance has been accompanied by HTS's own religious evolution. HTS has distanced itself from the relatively horizontal religious approach of *jihadi* Salafism, which emerged in opposition to Muslim regimes and the religious clergies that either support them or are instrumentalised by them. The *salafi jihadi* political opposition to the established order has thus structured its religious authority around non-institutionalised religious scholars sharing its views, who often participated in jihad abroad, especially in Afghanistan. The construction of this parallel clerical authority has historically eroded armed groups' control over *jihadi* Salafism at the benefit of self-proclaimed clerics. In reaction to this weakening religious control, HTS decided to institutionalise local religious authority and (re) turn to the historical schools of jurisprudence (*maddhahib*), especially the *shafi'i* school that is dominant in Idlib, in order to both re-localise itself by adopting the religious references of the population and to reacquire religious control over it. This move on religion entailed severing ties with foreign *salafi jihadi* intellectuals to limit their local influence. The institutionalisation of religious authority within the province and the group itself has marginalised the implementation of the most

13 Lia, Brynjar. "Understanding jihadi proto-states." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9.4 (2015): 31-41.

14 The most stereotypical cases are the application of the Islamic legal punishments (*hudud*) by groups like IS, including public stoning for adultery.

divisive aspects of *jihadi* Salafism, such as the excommunication of other Muslims (*takfir*).

The third main change accompanying the creation of HTS concerns its ties to foreign states. *Jihadi* Salafism was precisely defined by its opposition to Muslim regimes that were considered non-Islamic and to Western States for supporting them. Since the first Gulf war in the early 1990s, *jihadi* Salafism promoted the theological concept of "loyalty and disavowal" (*al-wala' wal-bara'*) to denounce any open collaboration with non-Islamic states.[15] Despite its own previous antagonism to Syrian insurgents receiving support from foreign states, HTS gradually acknowledged the necessity to nurture its own foreign relations with them. The group contends that the Syrian reality necessitates the development of new relations to foreign states, especially Turkey, for the survival of the province of Idlib under opposition control. Despite some tensions, HTS ultimately aligned with the Turkish intervention that started in 2017 and consolidated in 2020, and thus acquiesced to a patronage relationship with a secular state. It now seeks to reach out to Western countries as well.

Considering the group's transformation in the fields of governance, religion, and international relations, does HTS remain *salafi jihadi*? HTS has not undertaken substantial ideological revisions. The group has primarily re-framed its new approach in terms of "*Shari'a* Politics" (*al-siyasa al-shari'ya*) to justify that it is confronted to a phase of subjugation (*marhalat al-istid'af*) where the full implementation of an Islamic order (*tamkin*) is limited. Its religious scholars still insist that they believe in the same key ideological tenets and, for instance, have not renounced their opposition to democracy. The group remains religiously *salafi*, but its current approach to jihad is virtually undistinguishable from the defensive jihad promoted by the remaining Syrian opposition (including its more secular components).[16] The group now defines itself as a revolutionary Islamist group that does not have the means to change local religious practices and clergymen, and therefore suspends the implementation of its religious agenda – without renouncing it – in exchange for local compliance to its political authority. At the same time, the group strives to be more open in its relations to other countries against shared enemies – primarily the regime, Iran, IS, and to a lesser extent Russia. Accordingly, HTS is more politically than religiously driven. HTS has left the *salafi jihadi* sphere and has become much closer to the approach embraced by Islamist groups associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, despite remaining ideological differences.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This case study illustrates the impact of the constraints posed by the Syrian conflict on the strategy of a former IS and AQ affiliate. The exaggerated emphasis on IS and its expansion throughout the Muslim world should not suggest that (violent) radicalism – both ideological and behavioural – is the only way forward for these groups. *Salafi jihadi* groups can react very differently to internal and external constraints. In Syria, the prioritisation of political objectives by HTS has nurtured significant changes including theological re-localisation, management of internal radicalism, and transnational governance through non-affiliated technocrats. While the nature of HTS's project remains difficult to define in the current circumstances, the group has undoubtedly left the transnational *salafi jihadi* matrix. HTS remains *Salafi* in creed but has arguably entered a post-*jihadi* phase.

What does the group's evolution say about the future of this trend, and Western policies toward it? Western countries have conflated their counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism

15 Wagemakers, Joas. "Framing The "Threat to Islam": Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara' in Salafi Discourse." *Arab Studies Quarterly* (2008): 1-22.

16 Virtually all the armed opposition still calls for the capture of Damascus while, in practice, only engaging in the defence of North West Syria.

approaches since 9/11. Many conflicts have been considered under the counter-terrorism paradigm, with a clear emphasis on the risks posed by potential "launch-pads" for foreign attacks. The main response has usually been the military eradication of these groups, either directly or through local partners. The question of engagement and political transformation was rarely ever posed. However, while armed groups were receptive to AQ's sway in the 2000s, when they believed that joining AQ fitted their interests,[17] the structure of incentives can certainly change. Since 2011, the tensions – and potential contradictions – between AQ's two key objectives against local Muslim regimes and Western states have appeared clearly. Many groups are still likely to remain within AQ's orbit, especially when they remain embedded in the same international networks or continue to believe in the same paradigms. But other groups can certainly change course. Instead of deploying only military responses, Western countries should acknowledge that some of them can be engaged with politically and are, or can become, credibly distanced from AQ and IS.

17 Bacon, Tricia. *Why terrorist groups form international alliances* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

CONCLUSION

What Have We Learned?

Olivier Roy

What the different contributions have made clear in this e-book is the importance of context for Salafis. They must react to a complex and changing context, they must take positions even if they would have preferred not to, they have also experienced a lot of pressures and criticisms in the last ten years. The Arab revolutions, the rise and fall of ISIS, the civil wars in Yemen, Libya, and in the Sahel, and terrorist attacks gave them no choice than to make choices. Salafis had a zone of comfort in the context of authoritarian conservative regimes, but since 2011 they must take positions when elections happen, or a civil war erupts. Should they vote or abstain, set up their own party or vote for another one, but in this case which one? Which side to back in a civil war? What to answer when Salafism is accused to have fuelled the radicalization of the terrorists who struck in Paris in October 2015 or the jihadists who joined ISIS in Syria after 2013?

Adapting to Real-World Events and Pressures

The strict normative and legalistic approach of the Salafis was not adapted to these events. They are no more in a position to debate at length on the meaning of fitna, jihad, hisba, takfir, etc. On one side the sheikhs they used to rely on are dead or have been side-lined. On the other hand, they must give answers not according to their own reasoning, which is now only for internal use, but under the terms defined by the surrounding world. For instance, the on-going debate about the nature of the link between Salafism, Jihadism and terrorism constrains them to make their positions more explicit, knowing that subtle casuistic interpretations of what jihad is or isn't, of what is permissible or isn't, will not be audible from non-Salafi public opinions whether secular or religious.

In fact, the papers assembled in this e-book show that Salafis do not apply ready-made theological models anymore but usually adapt to the local situation. The religious references that they use are in practice flexible and follow, more than precede, their real practices.

Nevertheless, this flexibility is not just a consequence of changing events. It has also to do with individual trajectories. It is wrong to think that Salafis are living in closed ghettos and ignore the surrounding world, for different reasons. Firstly, there are individual trajectories and life cycles. One can be a strict Salafi at 20 years old, and live this way in Saudi Arabia, but in a more open society and specifically in the West, one must make life choices: schools for the children, attitudes in the workplace, adaptation (or not) to local culture, change of consumption habits. There is an unavoidable, if not compulsory, formatting of practices to stay compatible with the dominant society, and this formatting of practices entails a need to reformulate them in religious terms.

But there is also pressure. Pressure does not necessarily make people change their mind, but they have to make a choice in explaining their beliefs to a larger audience (the police, local authorities, journalists, neighbours, etc.). In most European countries, if a Salafi group wants to build a mosque, and even if the law protects their freedom of belief, they must explain how they are not a bunch of radicals. They must adopt concrete practices (shaking hands with the female mayor for instance). They are constrained to answer first by words and deeds, not necessarily by theological arguments. But sooner or later they are requested to substantiate their pretence to goodwill and decent citizenship by making theological statements. For instance, the French government pushed the French Council of Muslim Faith (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman) to adopt a charter that would justify "moderation" through quotations of the Coran.

It is thus not enough to adapt one's individual behaviour by calling fatwaonline[1] or contact the

1 https://www.fatwa-online.com/

imam.[2] Real life is not on the internet. They must respond to critics accusing them to be Jihadists, or that they are breeding violent radicalization. They must answer and adapt to this situation. A famous case in France is that of Abu Hudaifa (the so-called "imam of Brest"): he used to call himself a Salafi and was widely criticized for telling children that if they listen to music they will be turned into monkeys. He made a public self-criticism, not by saying that children will not be turned into monkeys, but by acknowledging that he should never have said that to children. Then he claimed that he had changed and ended up advocating tolerance, while calling himself a follower of the more traditional Maliki madhhab.

Post-Salafism

Beyond the post-Salafi evolution of Salafi movements and associations confronted with a new context (an evolution which is well documented in this e-book), there is a more individual dimension to post-Salafism for a very good reason: Salafis stress personal devotion and salvation while the Islamists (the Muslim Brothers) are more concerned with collective mobilization. Post-Islamism is about what happens when an Islamist movement failed in taking or managing the political power (What do you do when it does not work?). Post-Salafism is more a matter of personal experience. Family life, peer relationships, and work interactions that are shaky and changing. And then the issue of transmission arises: how to be born from a born again? The history of Christian revivalisms is precisely a story of waves of renewals ending on the sands of routine and conformism, jumping a generation to wait for the next calling.

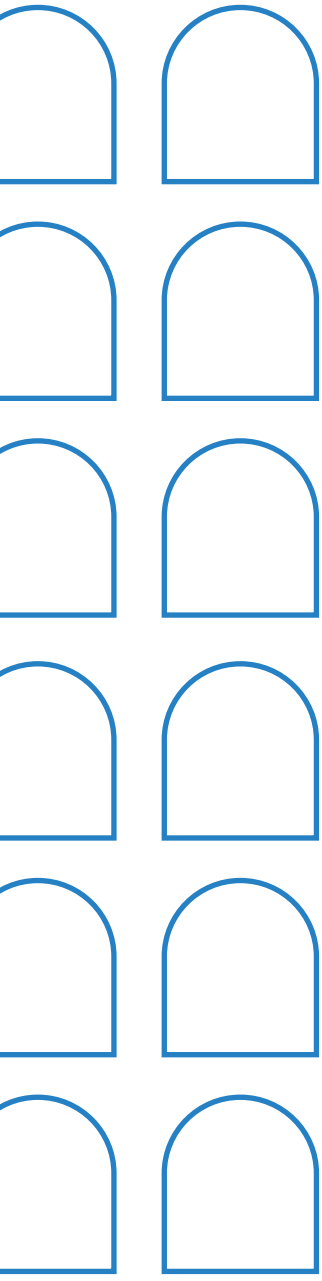
For the Salafis, these contextual changes correspond to a change of generation, with the rise of a new generation born in the 1980-90s that has a more intellectual, pragmatic, and pluralistic approach. They even practice themselves self-criticism and self-deconstruction of Salafism.

The challenge for Salafism today is not so much the competition with other theological schools, even if there are many talks about pushing for such a challenge. Rather they are more confronted with a "devotional fatigue" at a time when more traditional forms or religious practices and sociability, often encouraged by Arab states, are experiencing a new popularity. There are nevertheless tensions inside this return of "popular" Islam between state-sponsored forms (for instance the Moroccan government promotes the Qadiriya boutchichiya) and more grassroots brotherhoods, as in Egypt.

Of course, Salafism in Europe and Salafism in the MENA have two different configurations. In Europe, traditional Islam as an alternative does not exist anymore with the third generation of Muslim migrants. The alternative that is opposed to Salafism is the so-called enlightened, modern, moderate, "European" Islam. But it is not a popular movement. It is top-down construct involving state authorities, Islam experts, and self-appointed "liberal" Muslim intellectuals. Salafism has still something to offer on the identity market: it is not challenged by another religiosity, but it is obviously becoming smoother and open to softer forms of devotion.

In the MENA, Salafism is confronted with a more open religious market, with no clear divide between spiritualist and normative forms of religiosity; there is a Sufi revival; an atmosphere of greater religious tolerance; there is more room for people who do not fast and there is no more use of individual actions in justice to impose hisba (censorship of mores) to prominent people (like, in 1993, the legal appeal to declare void the marriage of the Egyptian professor Abu Zayd for his supposed apostasy). Nowadays these kind of normative legal actions (against adultery, homosexuality, atheism) are conducted at the initiative of state authorities and courts, not the public (that is the case in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco). When moral normativity is back in the hands of state bureaucracies, as seen here, Salafism has less reasons to be popular among a population more and more reluctant towards a state-sponsored religiosity.

2 https://www.icp-pgh.org/contact-the-imam



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