16 "Jihadism" as a new religious movement

REUVEN FIRESTONE

INTRODUCTION

"Jihadism" is a term that has been constructed in Western languages to describe militant Islamic movements that are perceived as existentially threatening to the West. Western media have tended to refer to Jihadism as a military movement rooted in political Islam. Some Muslims have claimed that there is nothing authentically Islamic in these movements. Others have claimed that they represent true Islam. The question that will be addressed in this chapter is the extent to which radically violent Islamist movements might be identified as a kind of new sect formation within Islam or perhaps the emergence of a trend that may result in new religious movements. Criteria for examination will include belief structures, rituals, material culture, scriptural interpretation, and iconography in relation to traditional Islam and other religious and political traditions. Whereas NRM studies are usually confined to religious and sociological innovations in the West, the approach adopted here is somewhat different. In the context of the present volume the intention is to challenge this geographical demarcation and suggest a broader understanding of religious innovation.

JIHADISM AND CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS

"Jihadism,"[1] like the word *jihad* out of which it is constructed, is a difficult term to define precisely. The meaning of Jihadism is a virtual moving target because it remains a recent neologism and no single, generally accepted meaning has been developed for it. It would require too much space to parse out the full range of meanings and nuances associated with Jihadism and its root in *jihad* even in recent history, but it is important to articulate a working definition for the purposes of this discussion.[2] Jihadism applies here, therefore, to something akin

to a transnational movement of militant Sunni Muslim activists, often called *jihadi*s,[3] who feel that they must be engaged in a prolonged and perhaps even endless war with the forces of evil defined vaguely as the West, or the "Judeo-Christian" or "Crusader-Zionist" enemy.[4] It arises out of a Muslim religious and cultural context in response to the combination of contemporary Western economic, political, and cultural developments that have tended to be lumped together and defined over the last decade by the term globalism. Because of its genesis in response to conditions defined as globalism and because of its transnational reach, it is sometimes referred to as "global jihad."[5]

Jihadism has some commonalities with the modern, post-colonial trend in Islam called "Islamism," not the least of which is the difficulty of pinpointing the changing meanings associated with both terms.[6] Jihadism was strongly influenced by Islamism and its intellectual founders such as Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and Sayyid Abul-A'la Maududi in India.[7] Like Islamists, Jihadists consider Islam to be more than a creed or conviction that informs individual and group ritual and personal behaviors within a religious community and in relation to members of other religious communities, as religion has largely come to be understood during the last century in the West. That is, like Islamists, adherents of Jihadism believe that Islam has the right and responsibility not only to regulate the behaviors of Muslims, but also to regulate the behaviors of the state and of those residing within the state who are not Muslim. Like Islamism, therefore, Jihadism has a political orientation and can be considered to be situated within a general category referred to by journalists and some scholars and theoreticians as "political Islam." But unlike Islamism, which tends to function within the framework of the nation-state and strives to establish an Islamic state through political action, or a state informed by what are considered Islamic values and ethics, Jihadism does not confine itself to working for political change within the nation-state. It is transnational or global in nature and expresses little interest in articulating national-oriented political goals.

Like Jihadism, Islamism also incorporates many developments or vectors of thought and practice from Islamic tradition and history, and also like Jihadism, it has absorbed notions and patterns that originate outside of traditional Islamic categories (such as modern notions of nationalism and the nation-state for Islamism). A major and defining difference between the two is that Islamism focuses on political goals that can be realized within the framework of the nation-state, while Jihadism is less clear about specific, concrete political goals (if it has any). Islamism incorporates many well-known groups, such as Hamas

in Palestine, Hizbullah in Lebanon, Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan, and the Taliban in Afghanistan. While every Islamist movement shares a vision of a broader world under Islamic rule, they concentrate on their own national territory and function largely as political movements. The conflict between Fatah and Hamas in the Palestinian arena, for example, is a political conflict between secular nationalism (Fatah) and Islamist nationalism (Hamas) within the territorial framework of Palestine.[8]

Olivier Roy notes that, unlike Islamists, the attackers of 9/11 and the killers of Sadat were unconcerned "about the day after" because they never cared to build a true political movement.[9] Jihadism has been defined as an "ethical" rather than political movement because, as Faisal Devji points out, politics are meant to be instrumental while ethics are not.[10] But Pedahzur notes correctly how Jihadi actions against the US embassies in Africa, the USS *Cole*, and the 9/11 attacks were carefully designed to affect the political and military policy of the USA in the Middle East.[11] The distinction is more accurately between the horizons of the two trends' aspirations. Islamism functions within the context of the modern nation-state and aspires to establishing an Islamic political system within it, while Jihadism is a post-modern trend with less specific political goals applied to a much larger world political arena, and with much less ability relative to world powers to actually accomplish them.[12] While it is clear that Jihadism has a vague but grand political agenda, the "politics" of the trend does not invalidate its religious nature or distinguish it particularly from some Christian religious movements that aspire to a world order in which Christianity will become the dominant driver of all human communities and polities.

Jihadism is situated within a larger fundamentalist trend in modern Islam because, like "Salafi" and "Wahhabi" trends, Jihadists claim to return to the fundamentals of Islamic faith and practice that they believe have been neglected as world Muslims acculturate to what are deemed the negative influence and temptations of Western modernity.[13] And like these trends and their parallels in religious revivalism among Christians and Jews, Jihadism is notably anti-intellectual.

Jihadism also exists within a larger trend of belligerent "Islamic radicalism" because it tends to stress narrow aspects of militant traditional Islamic practice and creed while downplaying or ignoring certain foundational Islamic practices and requirements that might counter or contradict its overwhelming militancy. While Jihadis of course claim that they are authentic Muslims, other Muslims have accused them of grossly distorting Islam through their lopsided emphasis on radical militancy and some of their behaviors and Manichaean perspective,

including the practice, called *takfīr* (see below), of considering opponents (whether non-Muslim or Muslim) to be infidels and therefore the enemy that must be destroyed along with the unjust power of the Crusader-Zionist West.

Jihadism thus intersects with a number of other trends in contemporary Islam. We have mentioned the overlap in meaning and association with "political Islam," "Islamism," Wahhabi and Salafi expressions, and fundamentalism. There is a clear intersection also with some aspects of Sufism, including the popular ideals of the *ghāzī* or holy warriors in the Muslim world who were members of Sufi or mystic fraternities.[14]

I categorize Jihadism as a trend or movement rather than an organized group or even association, because while there is a leadership, a hierarchy and a general ideology (or basic perspective and outlook), organization within the trend is extremely loose and dispersed. The most obvious reason for this is its status as a hunted rogue organization whose leadership is sought out for destruction by most Western and many Muslim nations. A second and less obvious reason for its loose and decentralized structure is its transnational role as a kind of franchise or service provider that links a disparate community of individuals lacking any particular psychological profile or cultic or ideological uniformity to bind them together. Pedahzur observes, for example, that the very definition of the name al-Qa'ida ("the base") defines its nature as an umbrella organization that involves, with various degrees of affinity, affiliated groups in more than forty-five countries.[15] Even after his death in May, 2011, Osama bin Laden continues to serve as a symbolic centralizing figure within the movement, but participants within it "are connected by contingency of effects rather than by some common substance."[16]

Jihadism is therefore not merely a negative response to globalism. It is also a *product* of globalism and has been enabled by it.[17] To be more precise, Jihadism is itself a global movement with a certain phenomenological commonality with such global movements as environmentalism or, ironically, the anti-globalization movement. Jihadism is in part a reaction to the Western content and culture of globalism and strives to replace globalism's Western content with a particular expression of what Jihadis define as true Islam.

Now that a general identification for Jihadism has been established, we must ask what groups are included within that trend. That is, if we are attempting to determine whether a religious community is or is not an NRM, we must be able to identify the community so that we can observe its behaviors, learn its creeds, and read its literature or hear

its public statements. This presents a problem in the case of Jihadism because, aside from the obvious al-Qa'ida, many groups either have no names, their names change as they morph in response to attempts to destroy them, or if they are protected within the borders of a national territory, they may represent something that is more akin to the religious/national/territorial movement of Islamism than Jihadism. Most of the information available for Jihadi communities, therefore, comes from studies of al-Qa'ida because of its central position and its obvious influence, but it applies to the larger network of groups – the Jihadi trend.

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT?

Literature on Jihadism rarely reflects explicitly on the relation between this phenomenon and the broader issue of religious innovation as addressed in NRM studies. The question as to whether Jihadism represents nothing more than a normative trend within Islam or whether it fits some definition of the term "new religious movement," and of subcategories such as "sect" or "cult," therefore requires consideration of the terminology employed. Several of the most commonly used labels, however, turn out to be nearly as slippery and difficult to define as the terms we have been struggling with in the previous section. As is well known, their meanings have shifted through the years and decades and depend heavily on religious and political context. In fact, as J. Gordon Melton has shown, a dominant or establishment religion in the United States such as the United Methodist Church can be labeled by the government of a different country as a sect or even "a destructive cult."[18]

One basic distinction that can be made at the outset is between substantive and relational approaches to the terminological question (roughly matching the common dichotomy between emic and etic definitions). A substantive approach could review the various characteristics that the extant literature has identified as typically distinctive of emergent religious movements, and that set them apart from more established trends. We shall shortly return to this question. A relational approach could, on the other hand, focus on whether the religious communities in question are accepted within a local context and are considered normative and legitimate by general consensus as "established" or "establishment" religions.

The determination of whether a particular group is a sect or new religious movement, on the relational view, depends not on any particular creed or behavior, but rather on the relationship of the practices,

expectations, and beliefs of the community in question with those of the establishment religions of its environment. In this schema, there is no particular theological position, ritual practice, or set of theologies or practices that can identify a religious movement as a "religion," a "sect," or "NRM." All three categories rest on a continuum that is dependent on the assumptions and expectations of the religious and political context, and the assumptions and expectations are defined by and large by establishment religions and then negotiated by all the dramatis personae in the larger environment. These "players" consist of establishment religious leaderships, including the leaders of non-dominant but "normative" religions (i.e., those accepted as such within the religious environment), shapers of public opinion and the media, and leaders and members of religious movements and communities that are identified (or identify themselves) as sects or new religions.[19] As documented in a substantial body of literature, these criteria tend to be negotiated differently in different contexts, and they also change over time as they are influenced by migration and immigration, cultural and technological developments, and other considerations.

As with Christianity and Judaism, Islam has always contained within it many discrete religious communities that emphasize particular aspects of creed, practice, ideology, and theology while disregarding or de-emphasizing certain aspects deemed important to others. Usually, such trends remain within the margins of what coreligionists would consider to be authentic, though different. In some cases, they move beyond those margins and are then deemed heresies and/or new religious movements. The question at hand is whether what we define here as Jihadism can be considered a trend, even if a sectarian trend within Islam, or whether it has moved or is moving beyond the margins of traditional Islamic authenticity. One concluding observation: the final arbiter of this negotiation is never the academic, outside observer, or even religious functionary or office within a religious hierarchy,[20] and it is never based on any clearly articulated set of criteria, principles or norms. In the final analysis, it is the religious community in its largest (and most vague) articulation, sometimes with the help of general public opinion that it generates, which eventually negotiates the status of communities within it. The process is elusive and organic.

If such relational (or etic) considerations thus result in the conclusion that Jihadi movements are perceived in very different ways by different interested parties, a substantive (or emic) approach might perhaps yield more unambiguous results. A perusal of some of the literature on movements that are generally characterized by scholars as NRMs

shows that there are a number of commonly accepted criteria. Three such criteria are summarized below: personal commitment, social action, and the historical and mythological relationship with existing religious traditions.

NRMs typically distance themselves from existing religions or existing versions of their own religious tradition by claiming to be, in some way or another, "better": their lifestyle is purer, their enthusiasm for the religious message is greater, their ideals closer to that of the founder, their understanding of the sacred texts more authentic, and so forth.[21] The reaction may furthermore be directed at society at large, which is perceived as too secular.[22] As a result of this self-perception of their own version of the tradition as "better," members of such schismatic NRMs often see themselves as constituting an elite.[23] Concomitantly, NRMs often have members who have actively chosen to be involved in the movement and who engage themselves more in religious activities. Max Weber is perhaps the best-known exponent of the idea that sects, in particular, demand that one actively chooses membership, while church membership is nearly automatic.[24]

NRMs typically suggest that one of the prime consequences of holding strong religious ideals should be direct, social action. James Beckford argues that NRM members belong to either a loosely engaged and numerically stronger cohort of people (with a presumably lower willingness to commit themselves to this social vision), and a much smaller group who are determined to carry out the social agenda of the movement.[25]

Some NRMs will acknowledge that by distancing themselves from their forebears and competitors, they have crafted a novel religious alternative. Most NRMs, however, insist that their seeming innovation is in fact a return to the true and original face of the entire religious tradition. Mormonism, for example, projects an image of itself as a revival of the very first community of Christians. Theosophy claims to represent an age-old wisdom religion traceable to ancient sages, and constructs an elaborate mythology around this theme. Other NRMs suggest that there are more indirect links to venerable, existing religions. Scientology is in many ways a very novel religion, and does in fact suggest that it represents a major advance in human history, but legitimating references to similarities with Buddhism, for example, are nevertheless common in Scientology's texts.

The relationship between the new movement and the parent tradition is usually neither as distant as critics with a theologically normative agenda may suggest or as close as members of the movement

itself can insist that it is. Mormonism is not just a reconstruction of an original Christian Church, nor is it a blatant innovation with no semblance to "true" Christianity. Clearly, Mormon doctrines and rituals reuse and reinterpret extant elements from previous Christian denominations, add a number of innovations created by its prophet Joseph Smith and other influential spokespersons, and do so in ways that give Mormonism a flavor of its own. Other religious movements will similarly select and recombine already existing elements: the new always bears a recognizable relation to the existing.

As we now leave the broad comparative sweep and proceed to survey in greater detail the Jihadi attitude to well-established Islamic religious norms, it should become clear how these are indeed redescribed in order to produce a form of Islam that fits several or all of the NRM characteristics mentioned above.

MAKING SENSE OF RELIGIOUS NORMS IN ISLAM

Below we examine a number of key phenomena (norms, use of symbols, expectations) among Jihadis that may represent innovation and a turn away from established tradition, and add a brief comparative note on similar phenomena in other NRMs. It must be kept in mind, of course, that there is a significant range of thought and practice (and even lack of practice) among Jihadi activists, so we are dealing here with general observations. I have identified the items listed below as reimagined, or reinterpreted norms whose articulation among Jihadis would appear to contradict or at least conflict with current majority views; such an overview will contribute to addressing the question to what extent Jihadi movements constitute a variety of NRMs.

In most if not all cases, however, there is some precedent for the Jihadi views and actions among certain Muslim thinkers and communities in the past. Those past thinkers have tended to be in the minority and the communities have tended to be unconventional. Some have been considered radical, excessive, or labeled as heresies. They have threatened or exceeded the boundaries established by Sunni Muslim scholars and the established schools of Islamic thought and practice. While every one of these changes may have a precedent in Islamic history and tradition, their particular manifestations and combinations which occur in this moment of history and world culture create a unique expression that may or may not lie within the boundaries of Islam as defined by the community as a whole. This, of course, is quite similar to what we tend to find when more traditional NRMs are considered.

AUTHORITY

All dissident forms of religion are confronted with the problem of authority. By what authority can a movement diverge from the established religion and its positions? Unlike classical Christianity, traditional Islamic law is quite flexible, allowing for disagreements and a range of practice in a non-hierarchical structure of religious authority. In the post-colonial world, however, the modernization of Muslim societies under dictatorships has brought authorities of traditional religion into the grip of authoritarian regimes. This kind of relationship between religious jurisprudence and politics was not normative in traditional, pre-modern Muslim societies.[26] The forced centralization of religious authority under modern dictatorships has polarized religious representatives and has alienated many individuals and communities. What is more, the influence of Western norms such as democracy has further upset the traditional system, allowing individuals to claim that they need not follow any of the public authorities who claim to represent Islam.

A common claim for authority among new trends or movements within religion is to declare that it has bypassed the corruption of contemporary religious leaders and scholars and returned to the "original" sources. We observe this quite clearly among Islamic "fundamentalist" movements such as Salafis and Wahhabis, who claim to practice according to the true and authentic practice of the Prophet Muhammad and the very first generations of believers.

A related approach is to retain a semantic community with tradition and the past, but incorporate new content and therefore, meaning. Farhad Khosrokhavar describes this approach in reference to the traditional laws of jihad: "A reinterpretation of Islamic laws that combines what are often traditional minority views with innovations in the conduct of human behavior gives a legal vision a political extension. The political annexes the juridical by justifying itself in the name of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)."[27]

Al-Qa'ida engages in both strategies. In an interview in December of 2001, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden said, "Those youth who conducted the operations did not accept any *fiqh* (traditional Islamic jurisprudence and its legal pronouncements) in the popular terms, but they accepted the *fiqh* that the prophet Muhammad brought."[28] This position is not uncommon among militant radicals, but it completely disregards traditional forms of authority in Islam. It should not be surprising, therefore, that traditional clerical groups

and religious authorities are vehemently opposed to Jihadism. In fact, perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks famously went out to bars and had sex with women outside of marriage in the period just before the attacks, both of which are unambiguously forbidden by all expressions of Islam.[29]

Jihadis do not seek juridical rulings from contemporary religious authorities in order to gain popular or religious credibility in the Muslim world, but they are sensitive to the general acceptance of the classical *form* of juridical rulings among Muslims. Osama bin Laden thus structured his interviews and disseminated remarks according to traditional Muslim public discourse. He did not bother to follow the rhetorical rules of this discourse, necessarily, but utilizing these forms "enables [him] to legitimate himself in relation to different traditions of religious authority."[30] The way in which he cited traditional authorities actually dismantles the very structures of authority that he relied on by personally and independently disaggregating certain rulings from the juridical system out of which they are produced. His claim as an untrained (and therefore untainted) authority reflects the modern, Western trend toward individuation and the authority of personal autonomy to confront scripture and tradition. This, then, contributes to the fragmentation of traditional forms of religious authority through his personalizing the "democratization" of juridical judgments.

Bin Laden thus discredited the operative and contemporary sources of religious authority and in effect dismantled traditional forms of authority by structuring the articulation of his innovations on those very forms. This is hardly a new phenomenon, but it provides evidence of a move away from established religion.

Aside from the structures of authority, the *persona* of authority in Islamic tradition is carefully cultivated by the Jihadi leadership. Within Sunni Islam, for example, the most revered leaders of the *umma* (the Muslim world community) were the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, some of whom became the first four caliphs, known as the *rashīdūn*, the "righteous caliphs." They are portrayed in popular tradition as unpretentious, humble, and living simply and without the luxuries and amenities that typically come with power and wealth. Their only concern was furthering God's will by expanding the *umma*, and they were totally dedicated to "jihad in the path of God."[31] The greatest religious leaders in later periods were likewise abstemious and humble, living modestly or even ascetically. In contrast, the political and religious leaders of the contemporary Muslim world, and particularly Saudi Arabia, are depicted by bin Laden as treacherously abandoning God and

the *umma*.[32] His and other Jihadis' austere living conditions, abandoning of comfort for the jihad, all evoke traditional authority.

JIHAD

In traditional Islamic thought and practice, military jihad is a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāya*).[33] As soon as it is fulfilled by part of the community it is not obligatory on others. This means that engaging in military jihad is required of the community as a whole during military campaigns, but not required of every individual except in case of defense, especially when the defending forces are in danger of being overwhelmed. The term for individual obligation is *farḍ 'ayn*, and it typically applied to the Five Pillars of Islam: witnessing the unity of God, prayer, fasting, required almsgiving, and pilgrimage.

Jihadis reject the classical doctrine that jihad is a collective obligation and consider it to an individual obligation at all times (*farḍ 'ayn*), at least at this period of history.[34] This raises the status of jihad to that of the Pillars of Islam,[35] a blatant contradiction to Islamic tradition. As bin Laden put it in an interview reported on September 18, immediately after the 9/11 attacks, "Al-Qaeda wants to keep jihad alive and active and make it a part of the daily life of the Muslims. It wants to give it the status of worship," which is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.[36] Bin Laden often referred to the defensive nature of jihad at this time and the resultant obligation upon every individual Muslim to engage in jihad at every opportunity.[37] This inclusion of jihad within one's individual required duties is to add a sixth pillar to the five required by orthodoxy.[38]

Including jihad among the Pillars of Islam is not, however, an innovation with today's Jihadists. The radical militant sect known as the *khawārij* or "Kharijites" had already considered militant jihad an individual obligation during the earliest Muslim generations.[39] And parallels between Jihadis and the twelfth-century Isma'ili Hashshāshiyīn have been noted famously by Bernard Lewis.[40] Khosrokhavar shows that many aspects of modern violent activists were already present in early sectarian forms of Islam.[41] He points out a significant distinction in worldview, however, between pre-modern and contemporary militants:

> Members of premodern sects were usually willing to die and to kill their enemies because of their millenarian convictions … and their positive image of the role they were playing … Modern martyrs, in contrast, act out of hatred for a world in which, as they see it, they

are being denied access to a life of "dignity," no matter whether they are Iranian, Palestinian or members of transnational networks such as al-Qaeda. Whereas the sectarian martyrs of the Islam of the premodern age were convinced that their actions would bring about the advent of a new world and the destruction of the old, the actions of modern Muslim martyrs are intended to destroy a world in which there is no place for them as citizens of a nation or of an Islamic community.[42]

This new attitudinal variation within the powerful emphasis on a personal jihad is indicative of the unique situation of today's Jihadi militants, who make up a dispersed, global community that eschews all the many natural Muslim communities to create a cohort of pure activists.

KHARIJISM

Terribly destructive civil wars in the seventh century called *fitna*s (meaning "trial" or "civil strife") tore the early Muslim community into viciously competing communities.[43] One of the opposition groups to emerge from this strife was an extremely militant group called the Kharijites ("seceders/rebels" or "those who go out"). They considered themselves to be pious purists who upheld the true meaning of the Qur'an without exception. They demanded absolute obedience to their understanding of the divine will and totally rejected other Muslims who did not share their views, even to the extent of labeling them apostates (*kāfir*s), an act that is called *takfīr* (see below).[44] As noted above, the Kharijites considered jihad to be an individual obligation and therefore one of the Pillars of Islam.

The Kharijites were violently opposed to the caliphal leadership after the first *fitna* and continued to actively threaten the caliphate and its local representatives for about a century. They insisted that community leaders were required to be absolutely upright Muslims in order to lead, and they engaged in violent attacks and assassinations in order to further their cause. But their violent militancy and accompanying doctrine was rejected by the overwhelming community of Muslims because it was simply too destabilizing. It was finally accepted by most legalists that even if the ruler is not absolutely just, he must nevertheless be obeyed for the sake of the unity of the community.[45] The Kharijite approach was rejected by the community as a whole and their presence faded from history as an organized movement. But Kharijite or neo-kharijite groups continued to exist in the Muslim world on and

off throughout history. They were feared and even hated, yet at a certain level they were also admired because of their pious willingness to die in their insistence on doing what they believed was right for the community.

The image and meaning of "Kharijism" remains a contested issue currently in the Muslim world. For example, the mythic position of Kharijites has become a key issue within contemporary legitimizing (and delegitimizing) discourse in modern arguments in Egypt.[46] Ayman al-Zawahiri, the closest partner of bin Laden, likened his Jihadi followers positively with the Kharijites, and Umar Abd al-Rahman, the leader of the World Trade Center bombing of 1993, also expressed a positive view of the historical Kharijites because of their absolute commitment and activism.[47]

TAKFĪR

Historically, it was the Kharijites who first engaged in the act of *takfīr* – declaring Muslims to be apostates by virtue of their not adhering adequately to a particular vision of Islam. This trend reached its zenith only recently with a radical Egyptian group called Al-Takfir wal-Hijra ("Declaring Apostate and Immigration"), which pronounced *takfīr* on the entire Muslim world outside of its own small community.[48] One of the assassins of Anwar Sadat, Muhammad Abd Al-Salam Farraj (or Farrag), wrote a pamphlet called "The Hidden Imperative" (or "The Missing Obligation" – *al-farīda al-ghā'iba*), in which he made a blanket declaration of apostasy on the Muslim leaders of his day and declared war against all Muslims who failed to implement true Islam.[49]

Most Islamists oppose the policy of *takfīr*, preferring to advocate *da'wa* or active engagement to return Muslims to the true path. Bin Laden defended his use of *takfīr* when criticized by the Saudi interior minister for it in 2001.[50] It is the relatively small community of radical Jihadis that are proponents of *takfīr* and along with it the necessary personal obligation of jihad, including jihad against those Muslim rulers who are, according to their standards, apostatizing.[51]

HIJRA

The phenomenon of *hijra*, or emigration, is another key element of some purist Islamists and Jihadists. It is a highly symbolic emulation of the Prophet Muhammad (and before him, the Prophet Abraham) who left his idolatrous community in Mecca in order to live out Islam away

from the pollution of polytheism. After the Muslim community became strong enough, he returned with his followers to Mecca and took it over by force in order to impose monotheism on all its inhabitants.

The traditional Islamic perspective on *hijra* is to apply it to a situation where a Muslim is living outside of the Abode of Islam (*dār al-Islam*) where proper Islamic religious practice cannot be engaged because of the pressures of dominant non-Islamic religious and political power structures. In the traditional scenario, the world outside of the Abode of Islam is the Abode of War (*dār al-ḥarb*). According to the fourteenth-century Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymiyya, a Muslim who finds her/himself in such a situation is obliged to return to the Abode of Islam where proper religious life can be practiced fully and without interference.[52]

In the new understanding of Jihadis and some radical Islamists, *hijra* applies to living *within* the Abode of Islam because the modern perversion of religious practice within it prevents Muslims from practicing Islam properly. In such a situation, true Muslims must leave and live in separate communities where they can practice properly. In the case of the group called Al-Takfir wal-Hijra, this meant living in caves in upper Egypt until the time would be ripe to take over the corrupted country and impose proper Islam throughout.[53] Bin Laden and others who have departed what they consider the Westernized Muslim world for the caves of Tora Bora, the deserts of Somalia and Afghanistan, and the Frontier Provinces of Pakistan, claim to follow Ibn Taymiyya in their act of *hijra* until, like the Prophet Muhammad, they can return to apply true Islam within the Abode of Islam.[54]

CULT OF MARTYRDOM

Devji notes deep similarities between al-Qa'ida and traditional Sufi or mystical brotherhoods, though Jihadis along with most other fundamentalist trends condemn Sufism as a distortion of true Islam. There is, for example, the very emphasis on military jihad and martyrdom through jihad among proto-Sufis in the early period of conquest, later reinterpreted by Sufis as a kind of spiritual jihad as personal obligation. There is a history of martyrdom among Sufis, who tended to be antinomian and therefore found themselves often in conflict with ruling elites.[55] This trend toward martyrdom became romanticized and developed among some into a cult of martyrs to whom are attributed supernatural powers, including the ability to intercede with God for the salvation of their families. The notion of intervention by martyrs or

others is condemned by traditional Islam and particularly by anti-Sufi groups (based on Q. 2:48, 123), but has been supported by bin Laden himself.[56]

A number of Qur'an verses urge followers of Muhammad to go out and fight because they had been refusing to do so. One of these includes the statement, "Do not consider those killed in the path of God to be dead. No, they are alive with their Lord who sustains them" (3:169).[57] That verse, along with a number of others,[58] has elicited a great deal of interpretation about the fate of those martyred while fighting in the path of God. In the later tradition literature, and particularly under the influence of the Muslim Caliphate's need to promote its own interests through jihad, death in combat became established as "the noblest way to depart this life."[59]

The tremendous honor associated with the martyr in Islam, and especially the battlefield martyr, is naturally extolled in the words and actions of Jihadis. Asiem El Difraoui has conducted extensive research on the media productions of Jihadi groups and has noted the complex interplay between tradition and innovation in their use of martyrdom motifs.[60] Through his work with martyrology videos, he notes that despite the importance of martyrdom and traditional praise for martyrs and their transcendent rewards in the afterlife, Jihadis have far exceeded tradition in their creation of what he calls a "cult of death" that finds no precedent in traditional Islam. The videos impose photographs of suicide martyrs floating in clouds or sitting in gardens depicting a heavenly paradise. They provide a visual "proof" of martyrs already enjoying their heavenly reward, which produces what he calls a "virtual mausoleum" (or, more accurately, cenotaph) to serve as a public monument to the valor and reward of the martyr. This visual imagery immediately challenges the Islamic taboo against portraying the human image, a prohibition that is of the utmost concern among Sunni fundamentalist communities such as Wahhabis and Salafis. In fact it is very reminiscent of Shi'a depictions and, in particular, the common Shi'ite practice of the veneration of martyrs which is regularly condemned by Sunnis, and especially fundamentalist Sunni groups.

The videos also depict funeral rites based on the writings of bin Laden's mentor, Abdullah Azzam. These celebrate martyrdom and depict smiling martyrs, and they include graphic images of the mutilated bodies of the martyrs as well. Some actually depict the sniffing of the body of the martyr for the smell of musk, which the tradition literature teaches comes from the wounds of those who engaged in jihad.[61] This cult of the dead, which includes the expectation of martyrs'

intercession with the powers of heaven on behalf of the living, is an innovation, as is its visual expression.

Devji notes how the videotaping of the martyrs' last testaments have become a kind of reality television show, and observes that the spectacle of martyrdom as a selfless sacrifice actually transforms jihad from the traditional goal-oriented, policy-driven act to a public display of a practice of ethics.[62] This conforms with Khosrokhavar's distinction between the expectation of traditional Muslim martyrs and those of today:

> Whereas the sectarian martyrs of the Islam of the premodern age were convinced that their actions would bring about the advent of a new world and the destruction of the old, the actions of modern Muslim martyrs are intended to destroy a world in which there is no place for them as citizens of a nation or of an Islamic community.[63]

TAQIYYA

Taqiyya is an act among Muslims of dissimulation and concealment of religious ideology and practice when there is a distinct possibility that articulations of these will result in harm.[64] The practice of *taqiyya* was discussed from the earliest period, debated and frowned upon in many cases, but never forbidden. It became a well-known practice among the Shi'a, a minority often in opposition to the dominant Sunni governance. The Shi'ite practice of *taqiyya* has therefore been resented by many Sunnis who condemn Shi'ism in general and therefore any practices that might distinguish them from the practice of "proper" Islam.

We have noted above how some Shi'ite traits or those closely associated with Shi'ism (and therefore criticized), such as the veneration of martyrs, have been absorbed by Jihadis. Another such trait is *taqiyya*, practiced by Sunni Jihadis who pretend they are Shi'ite, not for protection but in order to pass into Shi'ite mosques to blow them up and kill Shi'ites, whom they consider infidels.[65]

TOTAL JIHAD AGAINST NON-JIHADI MONOTHEISM

The Qur'an differentiates between Christian and Jewish monotheists on the one hand, and polytheists on the other. The two famous "sword verses" of the Qur'an are interpreted by Islamic tradition to call for different approaches to fighting monotheists and polytheists. According to

the mainstream interpretive tradition associated with Q. 9:5, "kill the polytheists wherever you find them," God requires the complete elimination of idolatry. But according to the normative interpretation of Q. 9:29, "fight … those who have been given scripture until they pay tribute willingly, as subjects," the object is the hegemony of Islam but not the destruction of other forms of monotheism or their adherents.

In the famous "declaration of war" published in the London-based Al-Quds al-Arabi in August 1996, however, bin Laden reversed this tradition by stressing the importance of war against the "People of the Book." "Those youths know that their rewards in fighting you, the USA, is double than their rewards in fighting someone else not from the people of the book."[66] The absolute evil that is associated with the United States and Israel (the "Crusader–Zionist alliance") places them in the role of a virtual antichrist (Arabic *al-dajjāl*). Although to my knowledge the particular term is not used in the discourse of bin Laden and al-Qaeda, associating the USA and especially Israel with *al-dajjāl* is common on the Internet.

The jihad directed against monotheists is extended by Jihadis also to Muslims who oppose them. However, declaring Jihad against nominal Muslims is not a modern innovation. It was used by Muslim rulers to consolidate their power by declaring jihad against "apostates" rebelling against proper Islamic authority (*murtaddūn*), against dissenting groups denouncing legitimate Muslim leadership (*baghī*), highway robbers, and other violent types. And in some cases, Muslim jurists accepted the notion of jihad against deviant or unislamic leadership.[67] However, Muslim legal authorities gave no free rein either to rulers to pursue their enemies or to rebels fighting against unjust rulers. The moderate stance of the classical jurists has collapsed as the traditional institutions that sustained this discourse have crumbled in the modern world, allowing both the state and their opponents to engage in far more radical actions than allowed by the tradition.[68]

A COMPARATIVE NOTE

All of the sections above discuss links with previous expressions of the Islamic tradition and differences in emphasis and interpretation in relation to the tradition as a whole. Besides such Islamic parallels, similarities with "classical" NRMs can also be highlighted. A few examples can illustrate such broader commonalities.

Legitimating one's own position by stressing continuities with ideologies or practices of earlier sects is not uncommon among Western

NRMs. Among Christian groups, for instance, it is commonplace to identify with the early Jesus movements, and several Hindu- and Buddhist-inspired NRMs will in similar ways forge rhetorical links with movements of an earlier date. All of these will, of course, also construct new ways of being Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist.

Legitimizing one's mode of exercising authority by means of such putative links to the past is also a well-documented strategy. Mormonism, for instance, not only claims to have restored the creed of the original church, but also the structures that ruled this church. As is well known, Mormon leadership in the first decades of the church even adopted polygamy, in a distinct echo of Old Testament patriarchal norms.

What seems to characterize Jihadi movements more specifically, and set them apart from run-of-the-mill NRMs, is their very high level of conflict with surrounding society. However, when one compares these movements with the relatively few truly high-conflict NRMs documented in the literature, many similarities strike the observer. The following paragraphs consider some of these.

While millenarian convictions are common in various NRMs, and the emphasis on the individual's personal piety and personal obligations as well as the need for an inward, psychological warfare against sinful thoughts and impure living are also found in various NRMs, violent activism of the kind associated with Jihadi movements is uncommon in the NRMs described in the literature. Nevertheless, the gas attacks perpetrated by members of the Aum Shinrikyo movement show that extreme violence is not unknown. Perhaps uniquely Jihadi, however, is the elevation to the status of martyr of individuals killed in violent action.

Other high-conflict NRMs conclude that the world is corrupt and should be abandoned. There are a number of examples of movements with a high degree of tension with surrounding society whose members decide to withdraw from the world and build an alternative existence apart from others, whether in the jungles of Guyana (as the Peoples Temple did) or in a commune for the like-minded (as was the case for the Branch Davidians and numerous other "sectarian" groups). Quite a few NRMs polemicize against other versions of the religious traditions to which they belong. The felt need to denounce others as apostates and heretics is, for quite a few movements, part and parcel of their self-presentation as a "better" religious alternative, as discussed above. The higher the degree of conflict, the greater is the temptation to see all others as destined to eternal damnation.

To conclude: while the specifics of the various Jihadi movements are the result of a more or less radical reinterpretation of a shared Islamic heritage, the direction taken by this reinterpretation is to a considerable extent driven by the sheer fact of living in a state of intense tension with outsiders.

CONCLUSION

Through the course of this exercise we have briefly examined seven realia of Jihadism and considered how they are expressed among Jihadis and in relation to established tradition. In virtually every case, the Jihadi expression was not entirely unprecedented. That is, similar expressions occurred or still occur within known expressions of Islam, though often among peripheral groups or, at least, groups that are considered by established Sunni religious leaders to be peripheral. The particular nuances of expression within the particularity of today's contemporary world, and the particular combination that forms the full "package" that is Jihadism are of course unique. But that can be said of any religious trend or movement that is defined as functioning fully within the norms of religious establishments. All expressions have certain commonalities along with certain aspects that are unique, thus representing an expression that is, one way or another, different from all other expressions.

The task, then, is to consider the extent of the unique views and articulations of Jihadism. Do they fit the general criteria we have established for sectarianism within Islam or for new religious movements? Readers will of course judge for themselves, but to this observer, a case can be made for Jihadism as a common term for a set of sectarian new religious movements. Like all sectarian movements within Islam, Jihadism strives to redefine what it means to be a Muslim. It has attracted a certain number of Muslims to its ranks, but it has been far more effective in redefining Islam for non-Muslims. Its overwhelming and bloody actions have significantly influenced citizens of the West to characterize most (if not all) Muslims as Jihadis – radical, militantly religious, violent Muslims. Effective use of the media and outrageously cruel acts of destruction have had a profound impact on Western views of Muslims and Islam. As Devji puts it:

> Islam comes to exist universally in the places where its particularity is destroyed, the presence of its ruins on television screens bearing witness to the Muslim's universality as martyr and militant. What makes Islam universal, then, is the forging

of a generic Muslim, one who loses all cultural and historical particularity by his or her destruction in an act of martyrdom.[69]

While Jihadis wish to project an image of their own take on Islam as "authentic" or "real" Islam, theirs is a particular construction of what it means to be a "true Muslim."

Notes

1   The Arabic term is *jihādiyya* (or *jihādīya*) – جهادية. For a helpful website that provides current information, developments, and analysis of jihadi media and its critics, see the "jihadica" website www.jihadica.com/about/ (accessed November 2011).

2   For the meanings of jihad, see Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York, 1999), pp. 16–18; David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 1–4.

3   It is significant that Jihadi is a new term. The traditional term for a Muslim fighter, including those who engage in military jihad (and the Muslim warriors who fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan), is *mujāhid* (plural: *mujāhidūn*).

4   This terminology is ubiquitous in the articulations of Osama bin Laden. See Bruce Lawrence (ed.), *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London, 2005).

5   Jarret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (London, 2009), pp. 4, 10.

6   For the range of meanings associated with Islamism, see Martin Kramer, "Coming to Terms: Fundamentalists or Islamists?" *Middle East Quarterly* (Spring 2003), pp. 65–77, www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/Terms.htm (accessed May 2010).

7   See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, 2002); Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam* (New York, 2004).

8   Loren Lybarger, *Identity and Religion in Palestine* (Princeton, 2007).

9   Roy, *Globalized Islam*, p. 250 n. 41.

10 Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad* (London, 2005), esp. pp. 4, 165 n. 3.

11 Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 99–103. That bin Laden was interested in influencing US policy is clear from any serious reading of his writings and interviews.

12 A current school of thought led by Olivier Roy sees the failure of Islamism to realize its goals as a powerful motivation for globalized Jihadism; Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, 1995). A response to Roy may be found in François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam* (London, 2003). For a study of the tensions between the two trends as they have played out within Palestinian refugee camps, see Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon* (New York, 2007).

13 On "Wahhabi" and "Salafi" Islamic trends, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft* (New York, 2005).

14 Devji, *Landscapes*, pp. 34–35.
15 Pedahzur, *Suicide*, p. 97. According to bin Laden, the name was not carefully chosen but was simply acquired from an actual training base set up to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan (Lawrence, *Messages*, p. 120).
16 Devji, *Landscapes*, p. 19.
17 Roy, *Globalized Islam*, p. 25.
18 J. Gordon Melton, "An Introduction to New Religions," in James R. Lewis (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 16–35, at p. 25.
19 I am strongly influenced by Melton in this description; ibid.
20 Even a highly organized religious hierarchy such as the Catholic Church has not been successful in determining what is "religion" and what is "heresy" even within the church. These are categories that are constantly interrogated and negotiated by all its members.
21 See, e.g., the classic formulation of this thesis by H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York, 1929).
22 Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* (London, 1984); James A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements* (London, 1985).
23 John Saliba, *Perspectives on New Religious Movements* (London, 1995), pp. 55–56.
24 Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology* (London, 1991 [1948]), pp. 302–22.
25 James A. Beckford, "Introduction," in Beckford (ed.), *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change* (Paris and London, 1986), pp. xiii–xv.
26 Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, trans. David Macey (London, 2005), p. 37. Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 234–94.
27 Khosrokhavar, *Suicide*, p. 36; see also p. 5.
28 www.defense.gov/news/Dec2001/d20011213ubl.pdf (accessed April 2010); Devji, *Landscapes*, pp. 16–17.
29 Such anarchic and antinomian behaviors are also associated with charismatic messianic movements. See also the chapter by Catherine Wessinger in this volume.
30 W. Flagg Miller, cited by Lawrence, *Messages*, p. xvi. See also, Devji, *Landscapes*, p. 113.
31 This term is qur'anic in origin (Q. 2:218; 4:95; 5:35; 8:74; 9:19–20, 41, 80; 49:15; 61:10) but becomes an idiom for piety among many groups ranging from extreme militants to other-worldly Sufis, depending on how the term jihad is understood.
32 Lawrence, *Messages*, pp. 33–38, 45, 212–32, 247–48. He specifically names six Muslim countries that need liberation from their current (Muslim) rulers: Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen (p. 183).
33 Firestone, *Jihad*, pp. 60–61; Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore, 1955), pp. 59–61; James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions* (University Park, PA, 1997), pp. 157–66.

34 Bin Laden repeats this often (Lawrence, *Messages*, pp. 24–30, 41, 46–48, 60–61, 98, etc.).

35 "The new *jihad* is an individual and personal decision. As we shall see, most radical militants are engaged in action as individuals, cutting links with their 'natural' community (family, ethnic group and nation) to fight beyond the sphere of any real collective identity" (Roy, *Globalized Islam*, pp. 41, 179, 254).

36 Devji, *Landscapes*, p. 34. Bin Laden here is repeating the words of his own teacher, Abdullah Azzam, who said: "Jihad is the most excellent form of worship, and by means of it the Muslim can reach the highest of ranks" (Roy, *Globalized Islam*, p. 296).

37 See especially, "Declaration of Jihad," in Lawrence, *Messages*, pp. 23–30.

38 Roy, *Globalized Islam*, p. 179.

39 Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 60, 67–68; Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History* (Princeton, 2006), p. 126.

40 Bernard Lewis, "The Revolt of Islam," *New Yorker* (November 19, 2001) www.newyorker.com/archive/2001/11/19/011119fa_FACT2 (accessed April 30, 2010). Lewis, however, has decided that such militancy is a normative aspect of Islam, which can only be argued successfully when all other vectors of Islamic practice and interpretation are ignored.

41 Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers*, p. 23–24.

42 Ibid., 24–25.

43 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. I, *The Classical Age* (Chicago, 1974), pp. 213–17.

44 Michael Bonnor, *Jihad in Islamic History* (Princeton, 2006), pp. 127–28; J. O. Hunwick, "Takfīr," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn. (Leiden, 2000), vol. X, p. 182.

45 Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, pp. 237–41.

46 Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt* (New York, 2006).

47 Devji, *Landscapes*, pp. 49–50.

48 Kepel, *Jihad*, pp. 83–85. The group's name should be understood as meaning something like "the community that is true to the absolute meaning of Islam and will depart from the larger, polluted Muslim community in order to live Islam properly."

49 Muhammed Abdul Salam Faraj, *The Absent Obligation* (Birmingham, UK, 2000), pp. 24, 42–55, ia301530.us.archive.org/1/items/salamfaraj_obligation/22.pdf (accessed April 2010); Walter Lacqueur, *Voices of Terror* (New York, 2004), pp. 401–3.

50 Lawrence, *Messages*, p. 121. In the very same interview, he stated that whoever befriends Jews and Christians or even helps others to do so "with one word … falls into apostasy." The interviewer then asks him if that is really his position, after which he repeats "even one word" (p. 123).

51 Roy, *Globalized Islam*, pp. 244–45.

52 Andrew March, *Islam and Liberal Citizenship* (New York, 2009), pp. 176–77.

53 Kepel, *Jihad*, pp. 84–85.
54 Devji, *Landscapes*, pp. 46–47.
55 David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 63–73.
56 Devji, *Landscapes*, p. 42.
57 See the larger context: Q. 164–71, and Firestone, *Jihad*, pp. 77–84.
58 See Q. 3:157–58; 4:74; 9:111; 47:6. See Reuven Firestone, "Martyrdom in Islam," in Rona Fields (ed.), *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology and Politics of Self-Sacrifice* (Westport, CT, 2004), pp. 136–45.
59 Eitan Kohlberg, "Shahīd," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. IX, p. 206.
60 Based on telephone conversations with Asiem El Difraoui in April 2010, and two unpublished papers, "Al Qaida et le culte du martyre en images" (2010), and "Wrestling for the Grand Narrative against Al Qaida: An Analysis of Two Saudi Counterpropaganda Films" (2009).
61 "The Prophet said, 'A wound which a Muslim receives in Allah's cause will appear on the Day of Resurrection as it was at the time of infliction; blood will be flowing from the wound and its color will be that of the blood but will smell like musk.'" (Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari – Arabic–English* (Lahore, 1983), Ablutions (book 4), *hadith* no. 238 (vol. I, p. 150). This *hadith* is found repeatedly in the canonical Sunni *hadith* collections.
62 Devji, *Landscapes*, pp. 95 and 102.
63 Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers*, p. 25.
64 R. Strothman and Moktar Djebli, "Takiyya," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. X, pp. 135–36.
65 Devji observes that the more that Sunni fundamentalists take on traits associated with Shi'ism that were markers of separation from Sunni Islam, the more threatened they are by Shi'ism and therefore, the more they hate them (Devji, *Landscapes*, pp. 54–58).
66 www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html (accessed May 2010). Devji mistakenly dates this to 2001. An abbreviated version is in Lawrence, *Messages*, pp. 24–30), but it does not include this section about the added reward for fighting the People of the Book.
67 Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 74–80; Joel Kramer, "Apostates, Rebels, Brigands," *Israel Oriental Studies* 10 (1980), pp. 34–73.
68 Khaled Abou El Fadl, "Islam and the Theology of Power," www.islamfortoday.com/elfadl01.htm (accessed May 2010).
69 Devji, *Landscapes*, p. 94.

Further reading

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Cook, David, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2005).
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