

*“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)*

The Light **AND** **ISLAMIC REVIEW**

**Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement
for over ninety years**

October – December 2017

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. **The Islamic Review** was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the **hearts and minds** of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words **La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah** (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, **Mujaddids** will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
Guyana	Philippines

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: **Hazrat** Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name **Ahmadiyya** after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name **Ahmad**.

1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981-1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996-2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

Unravelling the “Tangled Knot”

Cause and Effect of 450 Years of Manipulating Qur’anic Revelations (Part 1)

By Hans Drost

[The author, Mr. Hans Drost, is from the Netherlands. He is an ardent student of Islam for over 40 years, and particularly studies the literary works of Maulana Muhammad Ali. He has also assisted in various projects in which books by Maulana Muhammad Ali were translated from English into Dutch. In this article (Part 1 of 2), Mr. Drost provides a fascinating discussion on the role of Qur’anic interpretation throughout Islamic history. In doing so, he also presents insight into the reasons for the promotion of certain interpretations and, in some cases, the spread of unauthoritative “Islamic law” and the development of illegitimate “Islamic States”. Part 2 will be published in a forthcoming issue.]

1.1 Introduction

Islām is the religion God revealed to all the Prophets. But it was Muhammad, the last Prophet, who received the revelations that make up the body of the Qur’ān. This Holy Book is the singularly leading religious text, meant for all mankind to embrace. The Holy Quran 31:2-3 states:

“These are the verses of the Book of Wisdom. A guidance and a mercy for the doers of good,”

See also Holy Quran 31:12:

*“... And whoever is thankful, is thankful for his own soul; and whoever denies, then surely God is Self-Sufficient, Praised.”*¹

It is important to note that the Qur’anic revelations advocate freedom of choice, of creativity, of science and of religion. But they also outline clear parameters regarding individual accountability and social responsibility.

Over the last 450 years, self-serving clergy and politicians have established a power base by manipulating the interpretation of the Qur’anic text in order to secure unopposed, indisputable and lasting control over the mostly illiterate populace. It was a basic but ultimately ‘ingenious’ approach propagating the belief that all individual, social and economic endeavours were subservient to the Islamic State. This system of control is called ‘Islamism’. It is generally associated with dictatorial regimes, enforced by intimidation, oppression and (in some countries) by religious police.

In the 16th century, to exert even more power, the clergy imposed additional controls called *taqlid* – i.e. curtailing and even banning open discussion of religious topics, themes and texts. This is in contrast to the concept of *ijtihad* which promotes open debate.

Although ‘Islamism’ recognizes the Qur’ān as its principal source, in practice the Sunnah² is used for guidance. Note, the Sunnah is mostly silent on any interpersonal relationships between Muhammad and his fellow citizens. But any advice he gave individuals was to solve personal issues and not applicable to situations involving subsequent generations.

1.2 Lines of Thought

Two major entities have contributed to the forming of the Islamic State: political and religious.

Political

During the last ten years of Prophet Muhammad’s life, an Islamic State was formed with Medina as its capital. It was slated to be governed by the Qur’anic revelations and interpreted by the Prophet and his followers.³ Chapter 5 (Al-Mā’idah) of the Holy Quran contains examples of their impact on the fledgling society. It contains 120 verses of which 16 begin with the words: “*O you who believe ...*” and end with “*... and keep your duty to Allāh*”.

The rest of the verses explain the parameters. It is important to note that throughout these verses the concept of individual freedom of choice (within legal and moral boundaries) was always at the heart of the revelations. On this point, the Qur’anic verses are unfailingly consistent (see Holy Quran 4:82)⁴.

After Muhammad’s death the newly formed Islamic State was ruled by the four caliphs (634–661). From 661–750 it was governed by the Umayyad dynasty, which moved the government from Medina to Damascus. In 750 the Abbasid dynasty took control and relocated the capital to Baghdad. In 756 Abdar-Rahmān I, the last ruler of the Umayyad dynasty, fled to Spain where he proceeded to rule al-Andalus from its capital Córdoba.

As a consequence of these events, the Islamic State eventually expanded to include the territories between Spain and India with Córdoba and Baghdad as the capitals.

Religious

From 720 to 855 there were many scholars who studied and interpreted the Qur’anic revelations and in due time incorporated their conclusions into Islamic law. The Abbasids were fervent advocates of Islamic legislation. Four well known scholars from that period were Abu Hanafi, Malik ibn Anas, Shafi’i and Ahmad ibn

Hanbal, who were masters of *ijtihad*. Their main objective was to keep Islām and the revelations as authentic as possible while preserving accurate historic accounts. Because, already in their time many inaccurate stories were told regarding the Prophet Muhammad. They tried to unravel as many as possible in order to separate fact from fiction.

Al-Bukhāri (810–870) was another religious historian who collected, analyzed and reviewed the many oral accounts. About 250 years after his death, scholars compiled most of his works in a series of volumes called the ‘Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad’.

From the 9th through the 13th century many religious historians studied, recorded and discussed their interpretations regarding the revelations. But starting in the 16th century, in order to maintain control over an ever-increasing population, the clergy and politicians tightened their grip through ever more stringent religious laws and regulations. One measure taken in order to exert religious control, was to call the four above mentioned scholars ‘imams’ and converted their legacy into ‘schools of law’.

However, they were also obligated to teach the essence of the Qur’anic verses to the populace. A dilemma they ‘solved’ by introducing mind-numbing ‘madrassas’, whereby (specifically) children were required to memorize the Qur’anic verses through grinding repetition.

When Muhammad received God’s revelations, it was also made clear that he was but a messenger and not responsible for other people’s actions.⁵ On the whole, it is not possible to walk in Muhammad’s footsteps. But his teachings and line of thought can inspire and motivate us in order to enrich our daily lives.

1.3 Internal Struggles

Remarkably, against the odds, an Islamic State formed, which included the territories between Spain and India. Córdoba and Baghdad served as the religious, scientific and cultural centers with Arabic as the official language. The tenth century was the Islamic State’s golden age and people lived together in peace and harmony. All Muslims, Jews and Christians were able to practice their respective religions unmolested. At this time, many scholars, researchers and philosophers contributed to the advancement of technology, health and science.⁶ In fact, they established a Jewish–Islamic–Christian heritage. This proves that mankind thrives when embracing the essence of verse 22:40 of the Holy Quran (i.e. ‘*Respect and honour cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which God’s name is much remembered, as well as all believers in the world*’). This verse also indicates freedom of religion⁷.

By the end of the tenth century, internal political strife resulted in Egypt seceding from the Islamic State. Their caliphs proceeded to conquer Jerusalem in 969 claiming primogeniture by direct linear descent through Muhammad’s daughter Fatima. Around 1031, the region around Córdoba splintered into a number of small kingdoms (*taifas*) and were home to several notable scientists and philosophers, e.g. Averrōes (1126–1198) and Maimonides (1135–1204). In 1085, the Almoravids invaded al-Andalus from North Africa and ruled for approximately one hundred and fifty years. Initially, the intention was to defend the territory against the Spanish *Reconquista*. But in order to exert complete control, they also fought the Muslim population. In the process, they destroyed part of the Alhambra in Granada as well as other palaces (alcazars⁸). Although later, they did restore several of these imposing buildings. Due to the continuous internal religious and political struggles, the Islamic State gradually broke apart.

An interesting parallel emerged regarding the developments between the geographical West and the East. In the West, the Muslim Almoravids aided the followers and descendants of Abdar-Rahman I (who fled to Spain in 756) in the fight against the Catholics and occupied Córdoba in 1085. In the East, the Muslim Seljuk Turks aligned with the Abbasids against the Fatimids. They captured Baghdad in 1055 and by 1071 they had conquered all of Asia Minor. Although the ruling Abbasid caliph remained head of state, the Seljuks wielded political and military power. Often times, Muslim forces were called upon to fight various dynastic tribes after which they occupied and ruled the conquered territories.

In 1146, the Almohads defeated the Almoravids and moved Córdoba, the capital of al-Andalus, to Seville. They began to persecute the population based on religion. For example, in 1158 the philosopher Maimonides had to flee to Egypt because he was labelled a Jew. These persecutions cultivated a growing internal opposition and eventually resulted in fragmenting the region even further.

In 1236, the Spaniards reconquered Córdoba while the Mongols sacked the city of Baghdad in 1258.

Although Egypt⁹ was the most important economic territory in the region (due to the fertile Nile delta), most of the conflicts center on the city of Jerusalem. The history of Jerusalem in a nutshell (637–1244):

- 637 – The Muslims formed a treaty with the Christians, ‘the pact of Umar’ (the second caliph). It allowed the Jews to worship on the Temple Mount.
- 685 – The Umayyad dynasty ruled Jerusalem from Syria. One of the caliphs, Abd al-Malik, built the

Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in 691. This shrine symbolized the ‘Center of the Spiritual World’, it crowned the rock that stood for monotheism. Later the al-Aqsa mosque was built next to the Dome.

- 751 – The Abbasid dynasty ruled Jerusalem from Baghdad.
- 969 – The Fatimids invaded the city and ruled from Egypt allowing all Christians, Jews and Muslims the freedom to practice their respective religions.
- 1009 – The caliph Al Hakim ordered the partial destruction of the church of the Holy Sepulchre¹⁰. This was later used by the Roman Catholics as one of the excuses to initiate the disastrous Crusades (1096–1271).
- 1099 – The Crusaders conquered Jerusalem, killing all Muslims, Jews and Orthodox Christians.
- 1187 – Salah Ed-Dīn recaptured the city.
- 1244– The Mameluks reconquered the city after a 15 year rule by Frederick II, who had been allowed to freely occupy Jerusalem after signing a treaty with one of the Ayyubid rulers in 1229.

Because of the continuing internal strife, the Islamic State eventually ceased to exist. A new world order formed after the Ottomans occupied Constantinople in 1453 and the Catholics reconquered Spain in 1492. Also at this time, European powers began to explore the seas, resulting in the discovery of the routes to the America’s and Japan as well as establishing several overland routes to India and China. By the 16th century two dynastic Muslim empires ruled in the East – the Mughals in India, and the Ottomans in the Middle East and North Africa.

There were two definite periods in history that shaped the present-day Muslim world in the Middle East and North Africa, i.e. the Crusades (1096–1271) and World War I (1914–1918). Their impact and repercussions resulted in several crucial developments. I will elaborate on their influence in the next two sections.

1.4 The Crusades

Throughout recorded history, heads of governments have used religion to conquer territory, increase their power and enrich their coffers. The reasons behind the Crusades were no exception. Although unrelenting propaganda misled the illiterate populace into voluntary participation, the number of Western European countries involved amplified the rulers’ hidden political and economic agendas.

Conquering the affluent East was always first and foremost in the Greek (4th century BC–30 BC) and Roman (27 BC–476 AD) quests for power. Because of their successful military conquests, followed by long

periods of unprecedented wealth and prosperity, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were considered gods on earth. By 395 the Roman Empire was divided into a Western and Eastern Empire. Afterwards, Rome’s enduring quest was to re-unite the two and rule the territories as before.

From 637, Palestine was under Muslim rule for over 400 years, during which time the Christians in the West were allowed to enter Jerusalem for their annual pilgrimage. The Eastern Orthodox Christians (Byzantines) and the Jewish citizens were able to freely exercise their respective religions.

By 1085 the impoverished West turned its attention to the affluent East and called for a ‘holy war’, later termed the Crusades (1096–1271). Some of the main reasons for ‘the holy wars’ were:

- Economic downturn in medieval Europe.
- Political power struggle between the papacy and the monarchs after Charlemagne’s rule (742–814).
- An inefficient feudal system where independent land owners maintained armies and frequently waged war with each other.
- The papacy (Urban II) intended to establish power over the monarchs and the feudal lords by conquering the wealthy East under the guise of war in the ‘glory of God’. If successful, he would then be regarded as the saviour (economically and religiously) of Europe.
- The intention of the Catholic Church was to re-unite the old Roman Empire (the known world) and rule the territories around the Mediterranean in which case the popes would be able to personify the Holy Roman Emperors.
- The Muslims of Spain were just as much at odds with each other as they were in the East (the Abbasids/Seljuks), which enabled the Spanish *Reconquista* to gradually conquer ever more territory.
- In 1071 the Seljuks invaded Asia Minor¹¹ and threatened the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople who responded by soliciting the support of Rome.
- European travellers and the participants of the annual Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem took note of the East’s prosperity, its temperate climate and its scientific advancements.

Gregory VII (died 1085) was the first Pope to plan a campaign to control Western Europe as well as the Middle East, with his eye on Jerusalem¹². His successor, Urban II, put the plan into motion using misleading facts¹³ and incendiary propaganda in order to justify an attack on the Muslim controlled East. Adding fuel to the fire, he made sure to avoid the word ‘Muslims’. Instead,

he utilized dehumanizing terms like pagans, non-believers, Saracens and infidels. He also claimed that it was not he but God who ordered the Christians to expel the ‘heathens’ from the Holy Land. On top of that, to ease the Christian conscience, he promised to bless all participants and guaranteed absolution for any previous and future sins, in particular those committed during the Crusade. The European nobility and aristocracy did not necessarily buy into the propaganda, but the lure of ruling Palestine (‘the land of milk and honey’¹⁴) was too great to ignore.

The first Crusade resulted in the occupation of the territory around the city of Edessa (1098) even though this was not en-route to Jerusalem. To pacify the Byzantines, they promised to return it to the Empire, but failed to keep their word in the end. In 1099 the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem and proceeded to massacre all 100,000 inhabitants, including Muslims, Jews and Christians. This was such a barbaric episode in the history of the Crusades that its memory has lasted throughout the centuries¹⁵. Afterwards, mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was held in the prevailing Latin Catholic liturgy instead of the Eastern Orthodox rites. The goal of the Crusades was to occupy Jerusalem, but the campaign of 1204 was to first conquer Egypt. They set sail for Constantinople¹⁶ (at the time the most important and richest metropolis in the world) and ended the fourth crusade by sacking this Christian Orthodox city.

1.4.1 Conclusions

1. War and aggression usually result in nothing but social devastation and economic destruction.
2. This was the first time religious leaders used propaganda to ‘justify’ a war by classifying fellow monotheists as pagans, non-believers and infidels.
3. In the two hundred years West Europeans settled in the East, they found that the Arab civilisation was much more advanced than Medieval Europe. They took note of improved agricultural techniques, water and irrigation management as well as better medical and pharmacological treatments. They heard about scientists like Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Farabi, Al-Khwarizmi and Ibn Al-Haytham and slowly all layers of European society began to benefit from the more advanced Arab civilisation. This fuelled the beginning of the European Renaissance (1275–1540).
4. The Crusades triggered a long slow decline of the Islamic civilisation.

1.4.2 Aftermath

In 1187 Jerusalem was reconquered by Salah Ed-Dīn and in 1244 by the Mameluks. The Muslims ruled

Jerusalem for the next 700 years with freedom of religion for all inhabitants. Ever since the Renaissance, the term Crusade has fallen into general disuse. However, interestingly, after Napoleon conquered Egypt in 1798 and France colonized Algeria in 1830, the French National Assembly labelled these French conquests and colonisations as ‘an extension of the Crusades’.¹⁷

By the beginning of World War I, most of the Muslim countries in North Africa were already occupied by European powers (France, Italy and Britain). Palestine remained under Islamic rule until December 1917 when the British general Edmund Allanby entered Jerusalem. In order to occupy Palestine, justification was explained by the following ambiguous press release:

“Jerusalem free! After centuries of bondage and suffering under Moslem rule, the Holy City is captured by the Allies – the triumph of Humanity’s Crusade” Hearst – Pathe News

World War One (1914–1918)

In the West, WW I was known as the ‘Great War’ or the ‘war to end all wars’. At the time it was by far the most destructive conflict ever experienced and thought to be so horrific in social, economic and human costs that it was never to be repeated. This war began with a single gunshot and by April 1915 the Allies (France–Britain) were locked in a no-win situation with German forces.

In the Middle East, the dynamics were quite different. The Ottoman Empire, which entered the war in November 1914, had aligned itself with the central powers (Germany–Austria–Hungary–Bulgaria). Some of the reasons the Ottoman Empire declared war on the Allies were:

1. After taking control of the remnants of the original Islamic State, the Empire gradually deteriorated into an autocratic bureaucracy in the ensuing 400 years¹⁸.
2. At the beginning of the 19th century the ineffectual Ottoman Empire, comprised of North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans, was regarded as ‘the sick man of Europe’. In 1830 the French occupied Algeria and Tunisia, the British took control of Egypt in 1882 and the Italians invaded Libya in 1911. In a war with Russia in 1878, it lost territory in East Anatolia and most of the Balkans in several wars with Greece, Montenegro and Serbia in 1912–1913.
3. When Germany won the war against France in 1870, it became the most important economic and military power in Europe.
4. Germany and the Ottoman Empire had been on friendly terms for many years¹⁹. Kaiser Wilhelm II

visited Istanbul in 1889 and Haifa, Jerusalem and Damascus in 1898.

5. In order to compete with Britain, the German government intended to build a railway system from Baghdad to Berlin to facilitate easy access to 'the black gold'.
6. In 1908 the Young Turks (Unionists) removed the ruling Sultan in a bloodless coup. They tried to govern the Empire based on constitutional law. But, facing external foreign pressure and internal neo-nationalistic uprisings, they lost the Balkans and parts of North Africa in 1913. By tightening their grip on the remaining Arab territories, they inadvertently strengthened both Turkish and Arab nationalism, making them even more totalitarian.
7. In 1914, the Unionists signed a secret treaty with Germany.

In 1911, France invaded present day Morocco. In 1914, they sent 45,000 Moroccans to the frontlines, first in Western Europe and later in the Middle East. They also conscripted 170,000 Algerians and 80,000 Tunisians while Britain conscripted approximately 1,200,000 Egyptians (with a casualty of over 500,000). The Ottoman army included 300,000 Arabs from Greater Syria, giving rise to occasional rebellion, as a number of them refused to fight armies which included other Arabs. The Allies (Britain and Russia) intended to conquer Istanbul in order to procure an unopposed southern sea route to Russia. To achieve this goal they tried to invade Gallipoli²⁰ in 1915, but were defeated by the Ottoman army.²¹

When the Ottomans joined the war on the side of the Central Powers, the Allies imposed broad economic sanctions and trade embargoes on the Empire which included several neutral Arab territories. The consequences for these Arab populations were disastrous. Disruption of farming, trade and transport as well as the requisition of livestock created countrywide famine. Destructions of whole villages, internal displacements, executions and wartime epidemics²² carved a lasting memory in the minds of the people.

On the battlefield, the Ottomans were indispensable German allies, as they:

1. Fought the British at the Suez Canal.
2. Defeated the allies in Gallipoli in 1915.
3. Forced the surrender of the Indian expeditionary force²³ in Mesopotamia in 1916.
4. Contained Sharif Hussein's Arab revolt along the Hijaz railway.
5. Forced the British to fight 'door to door' in Palestine in 1918.

Although the Ottoman commanders scored many victories, they had their share of defeats as well. One of the

mistakes they made was to fight on too many fronts, but the worst one was to engage the Russians at Sarakamis in East Anatolia trying to regain territory lost in 1878. They were not the first nor the last to make the fatal error of fighting the Russians in winter. Some 60,000 Ottoman troops perished, one-third in combat and two-thirds of hypothermia and communicable diseases due to unhygienic conditions. The outcome of this defeat had other disastrous consequences. The Unionist government of the Ottoman Empire blamed the Armenians whom they accused of siding with the Russians. The truth of the matter is lost in the fog of war, but the aftermath resulted in the displacement of 1,500,000 Armenians in 1915 resulting in 800,000 fatalities.

Just before the onset of WWI, political and diplomatic colonial manoeuvring by Britain and France had already been established.²⁴ The agreement was that after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire the division of the Middle East between Britain, France and Russia was to be as follows:

1. Istanbul and the Black Sea straits would go to Russia.
2. France wanted the South East Turkish Coast and Greater Syria.
3. Britain aimed for control of the Arabian Gulf and all of Mesopotamia. They also planned to construct a railway from Baghdad to Haifa to ensure an alternate route to India with the added intention of future importation of Gulf oil.

The British called upon Sharif Hussein (custodian of Mecca) and his son Faisal to rise up against the Ottomans. The British promised the Hashemites an independent and sovereign Arab state comprised of present day Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and the whole of the Arabian Peninsula with the exception of the British port of Aden. However, France did not agree with the deal. After the war the Arabs realized that in diplomatic and political terms, national freedom did not necessarily mean actual political independence. In June 1916, the Hashemites kept their part of the bargain and declared war on the Ottoman Empire. In 1918 they joined Allenby's army in the attack on Damascus and then moved north to take Greater Syria.

In November 1917, after the Bolshevik revolution, Russia withdrew from the war. They published all the details of the secret Sykes-Picot agreement²⁵ and labelled it 'a startling piece of double dealing' by the British and French. At the end of the war, Britain and France carved up the Middle East in accordance with the Sykes-Picot agreement, in effect a de facto occupation of the region.

The Paris Peace Conference in 1919-1920 yielded

little result because of the many disagreements. Until an official deal was struck in Paris, the Middle East would be ruled by what the League of Nations (Jan. 10–1920) called ‘the mandate’. Britain made Egypt a ‘protectorate’ while the other countries were ruled by Britain and France under said ‘mandate’. However, no one in the region accepted this arrangement.

In March 1920 in Damascus, Faisal declared himself king of the Syria–Arab territories. The French defeated him at the battle of Maysalun and occupied Syria under ‘the mandate’ until 1936. They divided the (previously desegregated) region along religious lines, i.e. Alawite, Druze, Christian, Sunni and Shia. In June 1920, the British crushed an Iraqi uprising with overwhelming force and in 1925 the Syrians rebelled against French occupation but were defeated after two years of war.

After having lived under the British and French mandates, the Arabs began to look upon Ottoman rule as preferable. The Turks, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (better known as Kemal Ataturk), also refused the terms of the 1920 Paris treaty. They were successful in repelling invading European forces (Greek and French–Armenian) and gained independence in 1923²⁶.

The division of the Middle East by Britain and France resulted in the creation of sovereign states based on religious classification. After World War II, both the Jews and the Palestinians wanted their own independent states. The United Nations voted to divide the region west of the river Jordan in two, while Jerusalem was to remain under UN protection. This agreement was never enforced. Civil war broke out resulting in the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 with David Ben Gurion as its first prime minister.²⁷

The newly created geopolitical situation in the Middle East was the first time the region was divided into independent states. Historically, North Africa and the Middle East have always been part of large empires (Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Roman and the Islamic State). The last empire to rule this region were the Ottomans. Not through occupation but they were merely governed by Istanbul.

1.5.1 Summary

As mentioned previously, the infant Islamic State started out very small with Medina as its capital. As the state grew over time, different cities served as its capital. First it was Medina (630 AD), then Damascus (650), followed by Baghdad (750) and finally Istanbul (1453). All along, war and internal struggles weakened the state and usually preceded the relocation of the Islamic State’s capital. A Muslim historian notes: “The caliphs in Baghdad could not do anything against the Seljuk Turks, whom they had called in to help fight the

Fatimids. They could only sympathize, just as it was with the many problems the Islamic State faced throughout history. All Muslim leaders could do was to condemn these actions in a few well–worn sentences, still repeated today”.

The Muslims were united in faith but divided politically, which undermined the Islamic State. Generally, the ninth, tenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries experienced several prosperous periods called renaissances. However, in the East, due to war and discontent, any scientific, social and economic advances achieved during these centuries soon fell into disuse. An Arab commentator remarked: “World War One has been the greatest calamity for the Arab population since the Mongols in 1260 and the bubonic plague in the 14th century. Although in the end the failure of Arab nationalism, the ineffective role of the State, the warring religious and political elite, internal corruption and sectarianism is rooted in history. Any excuses offered for these failures have always involved the same tiresome scenarios, ideas, slogans and debates”.

Dynastic Rule

For most of human civilization, the known world was governed by polytheistic empires. When at first monotheism began to supplant polytheism (395 AD), these empires continued to flourish with continued economic prosperity, social stability, peaceful coexistence and a profitable tax base. Throughout these dynastic reigns, religious and political power went hand in hand. Separation of church and state was an unknown concept. Initially, this arrangement fostered a climate of political, religious and social symbiosis. The aristocracy and the clergy were the power behind the throne, manipulating and controlling the hereditary monarch and even claiming he was chosen by God in order to import unquestionable legitimacy to the ruler’s position and secure the population’s complete obedience. Not surprisingly, this concept evolved into the subsequent rulers’ conviction that they were indeed part of a divine order dictated by God. Inevitably, this resulted in a reversal of power in which the rulers became absolute monarchs²⁸ and in turn controlled the aristocracy and the religious leaders.

In the beginning, dynastic rule proved to be an advantageous form of government. But over time, due to the rulers’ insatiable quest for power, it was transposed into (eventual self–destructive) dictatorships. The spectacular outward opulence of these dynasties was merely a thin veil covering up intrigue, scandals, betrayals and assassinations. Some of the reasons behind the power plays were:

- Envy of other dynasties.

- Inflexible system of government.
- Keeping the populace in perpetual servitude.
- Maintaining control of all religious and political entities.

The French Revolution of 1789 was the catalyst that triggered the demise of the absolute monarch because the rebelling population demanded education as well as ‘*liberté, égalité, fraternité*’, i.e. liberty, equality, fraternity.

1.6.1 Islamic Dynasties

In the beginning, the traditional Arab way of governing allowed the small Islamic State to grow into a vast empire. But eventually, due to its inherent flawed system of government, it proved ill-equipped to defend itself against determined enemies. Case in point: the Crusaders (1096–1271) repeatedly invaded the empire, encountering little effective opposition. Although afterwards the State managed to salvage some of its former glory, its system of government rooted in tradition, did not adjust to changing times. When World War I broke out, it overwhelmed the Empire and resulted in its demise.

In 622, before the advent of the Islamic State, Muhammad and his followers migrated from Mecca to Yathrib where they joined the local tribal government. After Muhammad was chosen head of government, the city became known as Medina (town of the Prophet). Muhammad did not meddle in nor write about local politics because the revelations indicated that he was but a messenger of God (see Holy Quran 3:144 and 22:49) and his task was to merely spread His word. The Muslims were responsible for their own decisions and actions.

For a time, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632, confusion reigned. Some of the tribes insisted that they owed allegiance to the Prophet and not to the Islamic State. At that time, the only system of government consisted of tribal councils which was in line with the desert Arabs way of governing. Each tribe was represented by several clans who voted to elect a tribal leader. About once a year, the tribes of Mecca convened at a designated location to discuss matters of mutual interest. They resolved disputes, entered into treaties and developed strategies to defend the trade routes. These yearly meetings were held at large trade conventions, strengthening the common bond between the tribes and celebrating unity and continued prosperity.

After the Prophet’s death, deliberations ensued to determine his successor and whether a tribe from Medina or Mecca should govern. After 12 years of unrelated but qualified successors, the ruler was chosen from the Prophet’s extensive family which included the descendants of his great grandfather Hashem and his brothers. At the time, this type of familial patrilineal

type of hereditary rule proved to be the most accepted way of governing the relatively small Islamic State.

After a rule of two years by the first Caliph Abu Bakr, Umar became the second Caliph and under his administration Islām spread to the territories now known as Syria and Egypt. In hindsight, the assassinations of Umar, Uthman and Ali were really not that surprising. This conclusion is partially based on the fact that religious leaders were and still seem to be quite unwilling to unravel the reasons for these murders. Therefore, in lieu of any factual information, their explanation is that the second Caliph Umar was not related to Muhammad and his murder was instigated by nomadic Bedouin tribes who did not respect the Muslim religion. Ali’s assassination (as well as those of his sons) was said to be the result of family power struggles.

As spiritual, tribal, government leaders, these Caliphs wielded absolute power, although they were not inaccessible to the citizens who had the right to an audience with the ruler. Two major reasons the Islamic government failed to rule the empire effectively were:

1. **Taxation without representation:** During Greek and Roman times, taxes levied on Egypt were spent on Athens and Rome. While taxation under Islamic rule tended to be more equitable, dissatisfaction spread over the tax and spend policies of the Islamic State under Medina rule.
2. **Power struggles within the ruling family (a continuing present day problem):** The fourth Caliph, Ali (Muhammad’s cousin), was married to Muhammad’s daughter Fatima. Their descendants were later named Shia (party of Ali) and the descendants of the Umayyads and the Abbasids were known as Sunni. There are no mentionable religious differences between the two groups, the main contention is about their inalienable right to govern.²⁹

In 929, three rival Caliphs controlled the Islamic Empire. In al-Andalus the Umayyads ruled from Córdoba, the Fatimids in North Africa from Mahdiya (later from Cairo) and the Abbasids in the Middle East from Baghdad³⁰. Although all were said to be descendants from Muhammad and his family, their most important objective was to preserve their individual bloodline even at the expense of the state’s welfare.

For a time, the capitals of al-Andalus and the Middle East were flourishing centers of science, literature and architecture. But as these large Caliphates were divided between several eligible heirs due to the policy of multi-fold primogeniture, these centers steadily declined. This disastrous division of land lasted from the 11th to the 14th century when the Osman family in Asia Minor conquered the region and established the Ottoman Empire.

The era of the crusades (1096–1271) did not end quietly. The sting was in the tail of the beast. Around the same time, the Mongols advanced from the East conquering everything in their path. After wreaking havoc in Poland and Hungary, they withdrew from Europe in 1243. Sacking Baghdad in 1258, they killed 80,000 Muslim inhabitants but spared the Christians and their churches. In 1260, they captured Aleppo and Damascus with the aid of the crusaders. But as they advanced toward Jerusalem³¹, they were defeated in the battle of Ain Jalut³² by the Mameluks of Egypt. This was the first time the Mongols lost a major battle which allowed the Mameluks to move north and recapture Damascus and Aleppo.

The victory of the Mameluks over the Mongols was not immediately appreciated by the Muslims. They did not realize that had the Mongols prevailed, they would not only have conquered Cairo and Medina but Mecca as well.³³ A contemporary Arab historian stated:

*The Mameluks desperately needed this victory, because according to the Muslims they lacked blood purity and had taken power by force (in 1250). So the Ain Jalut victory was key in establishing the legitimacy of the Mameluk State.*³⁴

Therefore, this reaffirms that preserving the Caliph's bloodline was more important than the defense of the Islamic State.

Even today, family descent tends to be an obsession among Arab rulers. Although many claim linear descent from the Prophet Muhammad, most cannot be proven. Of course, this does not preclude them from taking the title of Emir, Mirza, Sayyid and Sharif. Because their claims are based on hereditary ownership of land, they are compelled to prioritize the importance of family ties over the welfare, safety and security of the population.

Throughout history, dynastic rule eventually changed into dictatorships. In the 1960's, when newly independent African states had to choose a form of government, they opted for the disastrous one party rule. They reasoned that a multi-party government would stunt economic growth and development by political discord and party wrangling. Of course, the outcome was predictably disastrous. Later, one of the presidents stated that a one party rule created 'liars'. Any government official had to conform to party politics or be ostracized or worse. Any criticism or dissent was dealt with according to the following convoluted reasoning:

*If you were criticizing a politburo member or a regional commissioner, you were against the party – hence you were against the people – hence you were against the government – hence you were an enemy of the State.*³⁵

Before dynastic rulers embraced the narcissistic and vainglorious concept of 'divine rights of kings', the Islamic State expanded relatively peacefully during the reign of the second Caliph Umar. But several of his successors went on to forcefully annex large sections of land on three different occasions which was contrary to the Qur'anic principle of '*qitāl*' (combat in self-defense only). These three periods in history were:

1. In 711, Tariq ibn Ziyād invaded the Iberian Peninsula.
2. In 1071, the Seljuks conquered Asia Minor.
3. Between 1362 and 1496 the Ottomans conquered the Balkans, including Constantinople in 1453 and twice tried to lay siege to Vienna.

Because, these invasions were acts of aggression, the population had no choice but to invoke the principle of '*qitāl*'. It took the Catholics almost 800 years to recapture Spain while the Balkan countries were recaptured in 1913. In the end, as so often happens, the human cost of these invasions were civilian casualties, social oppression and cultural discrimination.

1.6.2 Summary

The first leader of the city-state Medina and its tribal counsel was the prophet Muhammad. His successors were called Caliphs. Once the rulers were chosen only from Muhammad's family, abuse of power followed. And when the ruling family moved from Medina to Damascus, tribal counsels were abolished.

The 'one family' concept of ruling the Islamic State was based on the way the Abbasids ruled Baghdad. The sequence of power fluctuations were as follows:

1. The Umayyads established a one-family rule in Damascus.
2. The Abbasids defeated the Umayyads.
3. The Fatimids conquered Palestine, but were waylaid by the Seljuks and the Abbasids before they reached Baghdad.
4. The Seljuks conquered Asia Minor.
5. The Mameluks defeated the Mongols.
6. After the Mameluk's rule collapsed, the Ottomans took control of the region. .

During the last 450 years, in line with the practices of dictatorships, the Islamic State's rulers employed social repression, military intimidation and civil coercion in order to control the religious, judicial, economic and political establishments. Today, the modern Arab States are either governed by kings or juntas. Constitutional governments are not considered an option.

Societal consequences

Little is known about the role of the clergy regarding

their responsibility to guide and protect the population against dynastic abuses. But by analyzing some of the religious rhetoric, it is clear that they advocated passive acceptance of government corruption, injustice and maltreatment, i.e.: ‘God knows what is good for us’ and ‘We must bow down our heads and repeat the sacred prayers’.

Another method was to keep the population illiterate and fearful. Any serious dissent was dealt with through intimidation and persecution which was supported by the religious establishment. To reward them for their collusion, the government built many mosques with the additional intent for the clergy to indoctrinate even more people. All this may have advanced the ruling class’s agenda, but it resulted in stunted economic and scientific growth.

Kept uneducated and superstitious, people found support and comfort in holy men and ‘pirs’ to whom they attributed healing powers. Even the religious establishment encouraged mystical practices. They advocated carrying pieces of paper inscribed with Qur’anic texts or dissolving the ink on these slips of paper in a cup of water. This water was now ‘blessed’ and by drinking it, people were ensured of spiritual protection as well as good health. On top of that, the clergy encouraged the daily reciting of certain religious phrases intended to re-enforce institutional doctrine. In short, the ruling class appointed and controlled the clergy (muftis)³⁶, they in turn manipulated the people who ended up supporting the ruling class. This created a revolving door policy by which the population was held captive. Of course, people all over the world want peace, justice, economic welfare and government accountability. But when there is no separation of church and state, confusion ensues. These conflicting interests create discord and division, forcing people to choose sides.

1.7.1 Era of Open Discussion

While political power struggles continued to plague the territories from Spain to India, science did manage to make great strides. Between 650 and 1450, scholars were able to study and discuss the Qur’anic revelations in public symposia held in Córdoba and Baghdad. They approached the Qur’ān as a source of inspiration meant to examine and review which required understanding, knowledge and discussions. Only by the free exchange of views and amicable debate of differences can society strive to achieve harmony. Karen Armstrong expressed this concept in one of her TED talks the following way:

“In your exegesis you must make it clear that every single verse of the revelations is a commentary and a gloss upon the Golden Rule (‘Do unto others as you wish others would do unto you’).

The great Rabbi Meir (2nd century AD) said that any interpretation of Scripture which led to hatred and disdain, or contempt of other people – any people whatsoever – was illegitimate. Saint Augustine (354–430) made exactly the same point. Scripture, he said, ‘teaches nothing but charity and we must not leave an interpretation of Scripture until we have found a compassionate interpretation of it.’”

The concerted interpretation of the Qur’anic revelations became the basis of Islamic law. Since most of the Qur’anic text is spiritual and metaphorical, it became imperative to correctly understand its meaning. At the same time, the law had to encompass the moral, impartial and equitable framework of the revelations in order to dispense justice for all. With regard to applying the revelations’ spiritual and secular texts to the justice system, it included the following considerations:

1. *Ijma*, general agreement by a group of peers.
2. *Ijtihad*, investigating sources applicable through *Ijma*.
3. *Qiyās*, applying pertinent precedents.
4. *Tāwil*, analyzing cause and effect (*Istidlal*) or feasible extrapolation (*Istishab*).
5. *Istihsan*, considering public interests as well as the intention and rule of law.
6. *Al-Masalih al-Mursalah*, administering fair resolution to contemporary issues.

The main purpose of the above-mentioned considerations was to provide a fair balance between long-accepted views, laws and rules and the ever changing needs of modern society.

1.7.2 Era of Political Stagnation

Around the end of the 14th century, the political and religious establishments had cemented a rigid line of interpretation regarding the Qur’anic revelations using the Sunnah as its primary source³⁷. This resulted in the gradual banning of *ijtihad*, effectively encasing the political and religious agenda of the ensuing four centuries in stone. However, the only way to explain the Qur’ān is through the Qur’ān itself. The following revelations make clear that the Qur’ān explains all things necessary, i.e.: 6:114; 10:37; 12:111; 16:89 and 17:12. The Sunnah merely supplies details and illustrations and does not dictate religious doctrine³⁸.

Between 1550–1750, public discussions of the Qur’anic revelations as well as the rule of law were gradually banned (*taqlid*). Sunni jurists were only allowed to use one of the following four rules (schools) of law, i.e. Hanafi, Malik, Shafi’I or Hanbal (720–855), thereby assuring their allegiance and legitimizing their position. Around the same time (774–923), there were

actually several additional rules of law, i.e.: Awzai, Al-Zaheri and Tabari. However, to maintain political oversight, society was restricted to the first four rules of law.

By the 16th century, the Ottoman and Mughal Empires had obtained similar cultural and economic wealth. Although, by the end of the 17th century, both empires fell into decline. To control as well as impress the population, the Islamic Empire was elevated to a 'holy' status. The Sultans and the Mughals were regarded as both secular and spiritual leaders and any offence committed against them was not only treason, but, more importantly, a sin as well. Political decisions were made in the name of God while the clergy employed secular symbols like the national flag. Religion and politics were now permanently entwined and a lot of hard-earned economic, social and scientific advancements ended up buried in the quagmire.

The law established by the 18th century was called *Shari'ah* (the right path). Although said to be based on the Qur'ān, in reality its primary source was the Sunnah. This resulted in conflicting and often irreconcilable differences between the written Qur'anic revelations and several of the (unauthenticated) verbal accounts of Muhammad's teachings, ultimately tying the two into a 'tangled knot'. Adding to the confusion is the apparent aloofness of the clergy who have consistently failed to clearly differentiate between the Sunnah and Hadith. They also do not address the dissimilarities between the Sunnah/Shari'ah and the Qur'anic revelations regarding topics like freedom of religion, gender issues or the spiritual content of the Qur'anic text. The reason is transparent, because this way they were able to pick and choose from different religious sources in order to advance their own agendas. Sadly, they are thereby delegitimizing the infallibility of the prophet Muhammad as God's messenger.

In the time of Muhammad, with regard to the source of law, the city-state of Medina was governed by the application of the Qur'anic revelations. But because either Jewish or Islamic law could be dispensed to judicial cases, depending on the wishes of the party involved, conflict was bound to follow. Case in point, the sentence of a Jewish woman under Jewish law was at odds with the sentence for the same offence under Islamic law³⁹.

The 'Tangled Knot' and the Qur'ān

Over time, all monotheistic religions have experienced a similar commingling of divine disclosures, scriptural texts and glorified verbal accounts. Another similarity was the time frame within which these religious oral accounts were documented. It appears that this was inspired by the propensity of the Greek and

Roman societies (400 BC – 300 AD) to chronicle meaningful information. Judaism was the first monotheistic religion to record their oral traditions (Aggadah) and in the span of 1000 years (200–1200 AD) they composed the Talmud. The Christians, based on the teachings of the Jewish prophet 'Isa (Jesus), chronicled the bulk of the New Testament between 900–1200 AD and this sparked the building of many New Testament churches.

Islām did not experience a process of humanism and reform like Judaism and Christianity. But they did record the Sunnah and the Hadith (1250–1750) as well as the Shari'ah. Under the direction and influence of the *Religious Political Complex* (RPC) the Sunnah, Hadith and Shari'ah were extensively intertwined with the Qur'anic revelations, resulting in a difficult to unravel enigmatic 'tangled knot'. ■

Endnotes

1. Verse 35:18 states: "And no burdened soul can bear another's burden. ... And whoever purifies himself, purifies himself for his own good. ..."
2. There are noteworthy differences between the Sunnah and the Hadith. The Sunnah (or 'Prophetic tradition') describes the (daily) habits, rituals and verbal exchanges of the Prophet Muhammad. How one should interpret these remains a subject for debate. The Hadith (or 'the narration of Muhammad') is comprised of Muhammad's explanations regarding the best way to implement the revelations involving secular and religious rules and laws. Because the clergy does not differentiate between the Sunnah and the Hadith, indisputable problems arise regarding interpretations and explanations of Muhammad's life and work. The Hadith (or Ahadith) may be compared to the Jewish Aggadah (or 'the telling'), which is the recorded oral tradition of the Jewish faith in the Talmud – written between 200–1200 AD.
3. See footnote 5:1a by Maulana Muhammad Ali.
4. On its face, there appears to be a contradiction between verses 5:51 and 5:69. The problem lies in the translation of the word *awliyā'*, which is generally interpreted as 'friends'. But in the case of verse 5:51 the word *awliyā'* is used to describe those who do not wish to divulge that which has been revealed by God alone (see 5:67).
5. Apart from the revelations, Muhammad had his own thoughts and ideas as well as his own way of handling certain situations. One example mentions a blind man who came to him for advice while Muhammad was in the middle of a meeting with sceptical tribal leaders regarding Islām. Muhammad did not answer the man but frowned at the interruption. When verses 80:1–4 were revealed to Muhammad, they reassured him not to take 'important people's' rejection of his teachings too seriously and not to forego spending time and energy on those who wish to embrace his message. After this, Muhammad made it a habit to remind his companions of this incident every time he encountered the blind man.
6. Spirituality was first and foremost in the minds of the scholars. A key observation by the Jewish philosopher Saadia Gaon (882–942) reads: "The composition of poems remind(s)

- man of his state of frailty, wretchedness and toil". Where poetry is the way to study and understand our spirituality.
7. See also footnote 22:40a by Maulana Muhammad Ali.
 8. The word *Kasbah* (residence) comes from the Berber language of North Africa. It consists of a family home with a tall tower used for observation. A number of *Kasbahs* form a *Ksar* (village). The more towers in a *Ksar*, the larger the population and consequently strategically and economically of more importance. The word *Alcazar* (palace) was used in *al-Andalus* and is derived from the word *ksar*.
 9. After millennia of polytheistic Pharaonic rule, Egypt's monotheistic Muslim rule can roughly be divided as follows: 641–969: Arabs; 969–1171: Fatimids; 1171–1250: Ayyubids; 1250–1517: Mameluks; 1517–1867: Ottomans; 1867–1914: *Khedivate of Egypt*; 1914–1922: *Sultanate of Egypt*; 1922–1953: *Kingdom of Egypt*; 1953–present: *Republic of Egypt*. In the years between 1798 and 1922 Egypt was twice occupied by Western powers: 1798–1801: French; 1882–1922: British.
 10. After his death (1021), the rights of the Christians were restored by the Muslims, who decided to honour the original treaty ('the pact of Umar') signed by the Byzantine Emperor head of the Orthodox Church.
 11. This was an illegal act of aggression against the Byzantine Empire, which posed no threat to the Abbasids/Seljuks. Just like the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula (the Visigoths) by *Tāriq ibn Ziyād* in 711.
 12. He labelled it 'the Lord's Project', to be implemented by the 'Lord's Wars' through the 'Lord's Militia' or 'the Pilgrimage'. The term 'Crusader' was first used in Germany in the late 12th century. After the last of the Crusades had run its course, the word was defined as 'marked by the cross'. The Muslims never used the word *Crusade*. They called it the Frankish Movement because the Franks (living in France) had initiated the campaigns. They also realised that the Crusades were not religious Christian wars, even though the surcoats, banners and shields of the participating knights depicted a red cross. This was made clear because the Eastern Christians were as much a victim of the Crusaders as the Muslims and Jews.
 13. The destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1009 and the invasion by the Seljuks into Asia Minor in 1071.
 14. The phrase 'the land of milk and honey' was a metaphor; just like the phrase 'the promised land'. It was meant to highlight the difference between monotheism and polytheism, where polytheism signifies spiritual bondage and monotheism spiritual enlightenment.
 15. The contrast between the treatment of the population in the East compared to the West is hereby made clear. For instance, when prisoners were taken in the battles around Medina (623–633) they were able to obtain their freedom by either paying blood money or by teaching ten resident Muslims to read and write. *Salah Ed-Dīn*, known for his chivalry, protected all citizens of Jerusalem – not one single person, no matter their creed, gender or faith, was harmed or killed after he captured the city.
 16. The reason given for sailing to Constantinople instead of Egypt was economics. The Crusaders claimed unable to pay the full fare demanded by the Venetians who supplied the transport ships.
 17. Originally, the Crusades were an attempt to colonize the affluent East in the name of the Cross. But today, the term *Crusade* is a synonym for a long drawn-out struggle against complex afflictions such as cancer and mental illness.
 18. An observation by geographer *Katip Celebi* (1609–1657), at the end of the Ottoman renaissance, reads: "With the coming of the period of decline, the winds of knowledge stopped blowing".
 19. The Ottomans were impressed by German achievements, like national unity, military expansion as well as technological and economic advancements. They admired the way *Bismarck's Prussianism* had modernized the country while the German army played 'god' to the nation and the state.
 20. The failure of this invasion was a valuable lesson learned by the Allies when they planned the invasion on D-Day in Normandy in June 1944.
 21. Two historically famous people were involved in this invasion: Minister of the Admiralty *Winston Churchill* and the Turkish officer *Mustafa Kemal*.
 22. Although there are not many written records, of the four years of war and its aftermath, approximately 14% to 25% of the Ottoman population died in contrast to 11% of the French and 9% of the German population.
 23. The British sent a force of 600,000 Indian troops into *Mesopotamia* (present day Iraq). More died of wartime epidemics like typhoid, cholera and dysentery than those killed in battle.
 24. This may be seen in line with the colonial division of Africa by Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Belgium at the end of the 19th century.
 25. To divide the Ottoman territory in a secret agreement in 1915, the British appointed *Mark Sykes* and the French *Charles F. G. Picot*. Of course, access to Middle Eastern oil was the true motivation behind this geopolitical division. Territory north of a lateral line drawn between the cities of *Acre* and *Kirkuk* would belong to the French and territory south of this line to Britain. Depending on the final outcome of the war, the Arab territories would also be divided along geopolitical lines and governed by hereditary kingdoms. This was not the first time European powers have divide territories. In 1814–1815, the Vienna Congress divided Europe (more or less) along linguistic lines and between 1880 and 1912 various European congresses divided Africa along colonization lines. In the Middle East, division along geopolitical, racial or linguistic lines proved much more difficult as most inhabitants belonged to the Semitic race, spoke Arabic and were of the Muslim religion. The *Sykes–Picot map* marked territories dependent upon religious and tribal groups as the Europeans understood them. They initially marked political, strategic and religious centers, such as *Mecca*, *Medina*, *Constantinople*, *Kerbela*, *Jordan*, *Kuwait*, *Yemen* and the *Hijaz railway*. *Palestine* was marked as 'under international administration, yet to be decided' and *Jerusalem* was marked as the 'Holy Sepulchre and Mount Zion'. The *Suez Canal* was to remain under British control. Noteworthy are the dots on this map thought to mark the locations of Middle East oilfields. They concluded the agreement by October 1916 and Russia supported it in a secret deal. After this war the Middle East was divided into several states and

Sykes even designed the national flags and the symbols of national sovereignty for all the new Arab countries.

26. Kemal Atatürk started his modernization campaign to rid the Turks of their Islamic ways. In 1924 he abolished the office of Sultan (no descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's family) and also the office of Caliph (descendant of Muhammad's family).
27. The idea to establish a Jewish state in Palestine has its origin in the three years David Ben Gurion lived in the United States (1915–1916–1917), visiting 35 cities. He was a Polish Jewish student of law in Thessaloniki and Istanbul. At that time, Thessaloniki was a city in the Ottoman Empire, called 'the Jerusalem of the Balkans'. Many Jews found refuge there after the Catholics reconquered Spain in 1492 and expelled all Jews and Muslims. Mustafa Kemal, the nationalist leader and founder of modern Turkey, was born and raised in this city. In the middle of the 19th century some American rabbis formulated the policy of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine and interpreted the phrase 'the promised land' literally. The desire to achieve this goal was lodged in centuries of exclusions, expulsions and pogroms. Between 1915 and 1917, Britain made separate promises to three incompatible interest groups: 1) According to the agreement with the Hashemites, Palestine belonged to an Arab state; 2) The Sykes–Picot agreement marked Palestine as international territory; 3) The British Balfour Declaration (11–2–1917) supported the Zionist aspiration to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The third point had an underlying geopolitical reason. Britain wished to protect the route to India via the Suez Canal and a British controlled Jewish country north of the canal would provide a strategic advantage.
28. The words Tsar, Shah, Emperor and Kaiser are derived from the name Julius Caesar.
29. The hereditary ruler of the Sunni is called a Caliph and the one of the Shia is known as Imam.
30. The Ottomans adopted the title of Caliph.
31. The Mongols did not try to conquer the affluent city of Constantinople because of the Nestorian Christian's support, followers of Nestorius the Patriarch of Constantinople. In the fifth century, these Christians had been exiled from the Roman Empire and settled in Mesopotamia. Other reasons were that the wife of Hulagu (the Great Khan's son) as well as the Mongol generals were Christians and that Constantinople had already been conquered in 1204 (4th crusade).
32. To inspire his forces, the Sultan of the Mameluks Qutuz repeated the words "Wa Islamā!" (Oh Islam!) four times, indicating that this was their last chance to defend the Muslim State.
33. In 1182, Raynald of Chatillon, who controlled the stronghold Kerak (located along the Pilgrimage route to Mecca) organized the one and only attack on the Muslims with the intent to destroy the cities of Medina and Mecca. They were defeated by Egyptian Muslim forces. To deter the Catholics from future attacks, Salah Ed–Din executed their leaders.
34. The Mameluks, descendants of Turkish slaves, were the backbone of the Egyptian army.
35. This convoluted kind of reasoning was first employed by

Octavian of Rome in 30 BC who was engaged in a power struggle with Marc Antony. In order to persuade the Senate to start a civil war against him, Octavian accused him of being 'an enemy of the State' and therefore to be 'an enemy of the people of Rome'.

36. Mustafa Kemal remarked: "The religion of Islām will be elevated if it will cease to be a political instrument, as had been the case in the past".
37. This dilemma arose because the clergy treated the Sunnah as a revelation and legitimized their claim by quoting the following verses: 4:105; 5:47; 16:44 and 16:64. However, when examining these verses it is clear that they merely dealt with certain specific situations at the time of Muhammad and were not meant to be applied to any future events.
38. See also footnote 16:89b by Maulana Muhammad Ali.
39. This is a well-known case regarding a Jewish woman found guilty of adultery. At the time, Jewish law called for a death sentence by stoning where Islamic law had no such provision. Even so, she insisted on the application of Jewish law, thereby forcing the head of state (Muhammad) to concur with the Jewish verdict. There is no Qur'anic revelation that includes death by stoning. Therefore, had Muhammad been able to apply Islamic law, the adulterous couple would have been punished by flogging only (see verses Q Al-Nūr 24:2 and Al-Nisā' 4:25 with the respective explanatory notes by Maulana Muhammad Ali).

“Respect” and its Significance to the Goal of Peace

Presentation on UN's International Day of Peace

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[This article is a transcript of a presentation by the Editor on the UN's International Day of Peace commemorated in Columbus, Ohio on September 23, 2017. The event hosted by the Universal Peace Federation and the Women's Federation for World Peace, and was titled "Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All". The presentation focused on the meaning of "respect" and its significance to the goal of peace from an Islamic perspective. A video recording of the presentation is available online at: [youtube.com/watch?v=EuY0neNROEU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuY0neNROEU)]

Meaning of “Respect” and its Integral Value to Peace

I've been asked to speak today on the topic of "Respect" and its significance to the goal of "peace", from the perspective of my faith tradition, Islam.

So, to start, what is "Respect"? "Respect" is the recognition of "value" in something. When you respect someone, you believe that person possesses something

of value. So, the showing of respect to others can be an extremely effective medium by which peaceful connections may be created and a foundation from which amicable relations may be achieved. Showing respect to others builds bridges of understanding and forms bonds of friendship. It is in fact an integral basis to any harmonious relationship – whether it is between individuals, communities, or even nations.

As children, we are taught to respect our elders. We respect our parents, our teachers and others in positions of authority. As adults, though, when we become autonomous persons, equals in terms of our rights and responsibilities, it becomes a little more complicated. As adults, we tend to choose who we believe is *worthy* of respect. And oftentimes it is society (and popular culture) that dictates for us who is worthy of respect – celebrities, the rich, the powerful, the famous and even the infamous.

Religion, however, teaches us something different. Religion teaches us that we are to see the value in everyone. Respecting others is considered a spiritual attribute, a high moral quality that one should try to incorporate in one's self. And this applies especially to those who are not famous or powerful – the poor, the weak, the refugee, the under-represented and marginalized members of society – giving respect to such persons is in fact considered a sign of true character.

From an Islamic Perspective

I would like to share with you four ways in which this concept of “respect for others” is presented from the Islamic tradition.

Respect for all people

The first is a general principle of **respect for all people as though mankind is one family**. The Holy Quran – the religious scripture of Islam – teaches that all of humanity is one, and therefore all people are equal and deserve equal respect. It states in 2:213: “*All mankind is a single nation.*” It also states that all people have been “*created of a single being*” (4:1), having descended from the same parents (49:13), and are like dwellers of one home, having the same earth as a resting place and the same sky as a roof (2:22).

This concept of mankind being like one family was beautifully explained by the Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement of Islam. In his book titled “*Message of Peace*”, he addresses the issue of the intolerance and disrespect often shown by people of different faiths towards one another; he writes:

Friends, ponder for God's sake, and say whether such beliefs are acceptable to reason, whether

there is anything in human conscience which responds to them. I cannot see how a rational being can believe, on the one hand, that God is the Lord of the whole universe, and yet say, on the other, that He has withdrawn His fostership and care from the greater part of the world, and that His love and mercy is confined to one people and one country.

...

Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India, have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light ... All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth ... These liberal ways of God teach us that we too should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our respect (for anyone).

Correspondingly, “diversity” among people is understood in Islam as a means of betterment and progress for humanity, not a cause for prejudice and disunity. The Quran states in 49:13:

“O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and nations so that you may know each other.”

The Quranic lesson is that differences in race, national origin and culture aren't meant to divide, but rather to facilitate growth in humanity by learning from one another. It acknowledges that different people have different experiences from which others may learn, and that in respecting these differences lies much value and worth for humanity as a whole.

Respect for Faith Traditions and Religious Personalities

The second way in which Islam advances respect for others – in particular, respect for other religions – is by **upholding the truthful origins of other faith traditions and the integrity of the holy founders of other religions**. See, according to Islam, just as God provides for the *material* sustenance of all humanity, so too does He provide for all mankind's *spiritual* development. And God has done this throughout history by raising prophets and messengers among *all* people on earth, so that *all* people would be equally blessed with God's guidance.

The Quran states: “*For every nation there is a messenger*” (10:47). It also states: “*There is not a people but*

a warner has gone among them” (35:24). Prophet Muhammad is in fact recorded as saying that there were 124,000 prophets in all.

So, the founders and religious personalities of the great religions of the world are respected in Islam as *messengers* of God. It is understood that they were sent to specific people under particular conditions for their guidance and spiritual revival.

These holy personalities taught great truths and were role models of morals and virtues to their people. And when we see so much commonality between the different faith traditions, we know why – because they originated from the same source. And the message was essentially the same: believe in God and do good to others.

“Respect” for other religions and the great religious personalities of the world is an expression of appreciation that is much needed in the world today. In truth, if such a worldview were to become common among people of all faiths, it would be an extremely effective measure against the spread of radical ideologies and the commission of acts of violent extremism that we see causing much havoc today. For, it is when one believes that the group to which he or she belongs is maligned by others, that is what motivates reactions of animosity and hostility. Respecting what is sacred to others is a practical means to stripping extremists of the religious garb with which they often clothe their self-interested political aspirations.

Respect for each Individual as a “Holy Spirit”

The third way in which Islam furthers the concept of respect for others is by **teaching that every single person has the Spirit of God within them (and is therefore inherently holy)**. See, according to Islam, like in other religions, we are not simply physical beings, but also spiritual ones as well. And that is because each one of us has a *soul*. And we are told in the Quran that our soul is in fact the Spirit of God breathed into us.

Now, the Spirit of God within us means that each one of us possesses the divine attributes. Just as God is Loving, Compassionate, Merciful, Forgiving, etc., so too does every human being possess these attributes within them. And exercising these qualities – being loving towards others, being compassionate and merciful in one’s daily interactions, and forgiving others for their faults and mistakes – is what develops these attributes and makes one “closer to God”. As an analogy, the Quran likens the soul to a seed. Just as the seed has certain qualities inherent in it that if cultivated properly can grow into a garden, so too does the soul possess the divine attributes that if developed properly can lead to the spiritual garden of heaven.

And appreciating the divine existence within others is a natural antidote to bigotry and intolerance. It is very difficult to hate another or cause harm to another when you understand that every person has the divine within them. Differences – whether religious or political or even social or cultural – do not rise to the level of considering others to be of no value or worth when you believe they possess the same fundamental spiritual essence as you. History bears witness to the fact that it is the belief in some inherent superiority of one group over another – whether it is a belief in a chosen people, or in racial supremacy, or in national exceptionalism – that has been the root cause of wars, genocides and bloodshed from the beginning of time.

The Quran teaches that the only basis for superiority in the eyes of God lies in piety and righteousness. It is only those who are *God-like* in their actions with others that are considered more “successful”, and that such a determination is only made by God. As Prophet Muhammad explained in his Final Sermon:

*“All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab. A white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white, **except** by piety and good works.”*

Practical Examples from Prophet Muhammad’s Life

Now the fourth way in which Islam furthers the concept of respect for others is through the **practical example of how Prophet Muhammad lived his life**, a model that Muslims try to emulate. Prophet Muhammad’s life is replete with illustrations of his respect and care for all people, in particular the less-fortunate and the vulnerable members of society.

He laid particular stress on protecting orphans and widows, as they were the most helpless members of society at the time. Accordingly, they were the prime recipients of charity from the Muslim community.

In the 7th century, when women were treated like chattel, in essence the property of their male relations, with no independence or autonomy of their own, Prophet Muhammad advanced a revolutionary understanding of respect for *gender equality*. He institutionalized the lessons of the Quran that guaranteed women the right to own and inherit property, the right to engage in financial and business transactions, the right to choose one’s spouse, the right to work (and receive equal pay for equal work), and even the right to be a community leader and political representative. A famous example is of Prophet Muhammad appointing a woman to the position of Superintendent of the Market, basically what is equivalent to Secretary of Commerce today.

His renowned sayings often focused on respect for the importance of women to the family unit. He is reported as saying: “Heaven lies at the feet of your mother”, and “The best of you is he who is best to his wife”, and “Whoever has a daughter and provides for her education, I will intercede on your behalf on the day of judgment.”

There is also a noble lesson on respect learned from the incident referenced in the Quran about Prophet Muhammad’s interaction with a blind man. During Prophet Muhammad’s mission, he was one day busy explaining the doctrines of Islam to leaders of the dignified Quraish tribe. Along came a blind man who interrupted the Prophet and asked a question. Prophet Muhammad was somewhat displeased by this intrusion and showed his displeasure by frowning and turning away from the blind man. The Quran records that it was then revealed to Prophet Muhammad that he should not neglect the blind man over the powerful community leaders for only God knows who is sincere in seeking the truth. Prophet Muhammad then sent for the blind man, spread his own cloth for him to sit on and gave him personal time to discuss whatever questions he had.

Another incident concerns the lady who used to throw garbage on Prophet Muhammad from the balcony of her apartment every day when Prophet Muhammad would walk down that particular street. This was during the early years of his mission, in Mecca, when the small Muslim community was reviled and extremely persecuted. One day, Prophet Muhammad noticed she did not throw garbage on him, so he inquired about her and learned that she was ill. Prophet Muhammad then visited the lady and offered to assist her in her time of need. It was this compassion and respect that he showed her, despite her ill-treatment towards him, that changed her view of him and lead her to accept Islam as her faith.

Similarly, there was an incident about a poor lady who used to sweep the mosque in which Prophet Muhammad used to pray in Medina. One day, Prophet Muhammad noticed she was not there so he inquired about her and was told that she passed away the night before. The people did not inform him about it as they felt it was not important, as she was just a sweeper. Prophet Muhammad immediately gathered the people and he personally led funeral prayers for her, showing his respect for all people regardless of their apparent status or class in society.

These are just a few incidents from Prophet Muhammad’s life that provide practical lessons of how the concept of “respect for others” can be demonstrated in one’s daily life.

Conclusion

Now, what I have presented in this short talk, I’m sure, is relatable to lessons on respect in other faith traditions. And the points I raised are also very consistent with the core principles of UPF. As an honored Ambassador for Peace, I take pride in seeing this congruency.

Certainly, upholding respect as a virtue – as an integral principle to be incorporated in one’s daily life – is a universal truth appreciable by all. And it is the work of organizations like Universal Peace Federation and Women’s Federation for World Peace, and gatherings like we have here today, that further its practical implementation in the world. I would like to thank UPF and WFWP for their good works, and to you all for listening to me today. May God bless us all. Thank you. ■

“Takfir” (Excommunication) in Contemporary Practice

Part 4 – Chapter 3 and Conclusion

By Dean Sahu Khan, Esq.

[Mr. Dean Sahu Khan authored a book titled “Is Takfir (Excommunication) Permissible in Islam?” based on his thesis for a Masters in Arts degree in Islamic Studies from Charles Sturt University in Australia (for which he received “High Distinction”). That book is being published as a series of articles with the above-captioned title for *The Light and Islamic Review*. Mr. Sahu Khan is by profession a Senior Prosecutor with the Office of Director of Public Relations in Canberra. He is also the Chair of the Canberra Interfaith Forum and past, long-term President of the Australian branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. In this series of articles, Mr. Sahu Khan assesses the concept of takfir (excommunication) from an Islamic theological perspective, then discusses the implications of this practice within a legal framework, and finally critically analyzes the motivations for this practice. Produced here is Part 4, the final part of the series, which comprises Chapter 3 and the Conclusion. Here, Mr. Sahu Khan presents a critical analysis of the reasons commonly posited for engaging in takfir and their validity in accordance with the Islamic legal framework articulated in the previous series.]

Chapter 3: Critical Analysis of Rationality and Reasons of Takfir Makers

Having established the place of *takfir* in Islamic theology and law, this chapter critically analyses the Islamic justification and reasoning by certain groups, organisations and their ideologues in justifying the practice of *takfir* in contemporary times. *Takfir* stems from the claims by

each sect, society or group who each claim to have the only right ideology. Giving priority to one's personal sectarian theological position, irrespective of whether it is consistent with Islamic theology, is one of the major reasons for making *takfir* against one another. *Takfir* makers purportedly base their pronouncements under the banner of the religion of Islam and, as Abdullah bin Bayyah warned at a Religion for Peace conference in September 2014, "People who claim to speak for religion are like energy...It can be productive or destructive...People dress heinous actions in the garment of religion" (Global Newsletter, 2014). This study discusses *takfir* as encountered in three contemporary scenarios: by radicals, by the stance adopted by certain Muslim governments and by practices within the context of social and political disputes in major Muslim countries.

Takfir are made by way of *fatawa*. Abdullah bin Bayyah describes *fatwa*-making as an industry subject to certain prerequisites. According to him, just like different political, economic, and social conditions today, *fatawa* have become unregulated and dangerously out of order. He said "Fatwa is not free from such disorder" (Bayyah, n.d.). The factory or industry for *fatawa* on *takfir* does not only continue to produce more of them, but also keeps extending the list of people or communities upon whom *takfir* are made.

Islamic society has been subject to internal divisions and theological differences since the seventh century. Having differences in Islamic theology is not prohibited, but what is prohibited is making *takfir* because of the differences, which may have nothing or very little to do with faith. Some people make *takfir* in ignorance. Umar Kamil argues that religious extremism, classical and modern i.e. the Khawarij and al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra, may be attributed to ignorance of faith. Kamil also accuses the Khawarij, and for that matter all the modern extremists groups, of following Qur'anic verses that are not clearly understood, so they can conveniently give their own interpretations to justify their respective positions. But they abandon verses that are entirely clear (Tamani, 2002, p. 211).

Making *takfir* for selfish, political or any other theologically unethical and invalid purpose creates disunity among Muslims. The formation of sects for such reasons is the natural consequential evil that follows from making *takfir*. Primarily, the consequences are in direct contradiction to a number of verses in the Qur'an, e.g. Allah commands us all "to hold on to the rope of Allah and be not disunited" (Qur'an, Al Imran, 3:303), and in another verse Allah prohibits the formation of sects (Qur'an, Al Anam, 6:159).

Radical Approach

The controversy of the concept of *takfir* in Islam has deteriorated by organisations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who reject the concept as un-Islamic (Tristam, n.d.). This belief, in view of the previous chapter, may be described as deviant and dangerously divisive, as it is more likely to further tear apart the *ummah* than bring it together. Radicals make *takfir* on anyone who denies their brand of truth or rejects its specific ideology, even on issues that have nothing to do with faith. Their declared purpose is to fight anyone who does not fit into their ideology. For ISIS, it is against all *kafirs* (infidels), which includes mainstream Muslims (Ali, 2000). It seems that the contemporary problem of *takfir* is an enduring issue in Muslim societies. The Khawarijites' slogan to be a Muslim was "there is no command but Allah's". If anyone disagreed, the Khawarijites would regard them as *kafir* and felt religiously obliged to kill them with impunity. Qadri believed the Khawarijites genuinely believed what they were doing had good and noble intentions, but no forbidden action can become virtuous and lawful due to goodness of intention (Qadri, 2011, p. 204).

Reuven Paz (2005) in his study discusses the radical interpretation of the Islamic doctrines of apostasy and *takfir*. He mentions Muslims, who are merely perceived as being with the Americans or other Western powers, are also deemed to be apostates or *kafirs*. Such a perception, in their reasoning, could also arise if a Muslim joins any security services associated with America or other Western countries, simply to keep peace in a country. Paz describes these extremists groups as "new ideology of jihad" and asserts "the road map states, Arabs and Muslims who support [Crusader West] are considered like them and must be killed because they are apostates" (Paz, 2005, p. 43). The extremists erroneously equate apostasy with *takfir*; however, rationality or any intellectual dialogue does not appear to come into their equation.

A Sunni extremist group that originated as *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* in 1999, was renamed *Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* and was commonly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq when the group pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2004. On 29 June 2014, the group proclaimed a worldwide caliphate (successor to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who ISIS claims is a descendant of Hussain ibn Ali (d. 681), the grandson of the Prophet, and therefore from the lineage of the Prophet. ISIS claims there is a religious obligation to have a family member of the Prophet as the caliph of the Muslims and that every Muslim has to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi before they die. As a caliphate, it claims religious, political and military authority over all Muslims worldwide. Compulsion in religion is the ideological foundation of ISIS and it believes it has

superior knowledge of God's wishes for mankind (Whitaker 2014). Therefore, ISIS feels entitled, and even required, to act on God's behalf and punish those who fail to comply with the divine will, as interpreted by the group. It even claims to have the licence to 'break the cross' and destroy churches irrespective of Qur'anic injunctions to protect not only mosques but cloisters, churches and synagogues as well. (Qur'an, Al-Hajj, 22:40). To manifest its irrationality, ISIS even blows up Shii'at mosque. If anyone does not accept their interpretation, like the Khawarijites, it will not only make *takfir* on them but brand them as infidels and apostates, and thus justify killing them with impunity. In doing so, it does not, like the Khawarijites, claim to be seeking power for itself, but is merely trying to make the world more holy. ISIS genuinely believes those who do not accept its ideology are infidels and enemies of humanity and the religion of Islam. (Vice News, 2014). Their ideology is based on their claim to have superior knowledge of God's wishes and that anyone outside their ideology cannot be people with *iman* and they therefore, religiously believe, are entitled to kill them to protect the religion of Islam. Those criteria do not legitimatise their otherwise unlawful actions (Qadri, 2011, p. 6; 13). Besides, the ideology of condemning Muslims who do not agree with a particular interpretation is in direct contradiction to what Imam Razi, the great classical commentator of the Qur'an, wrote in his renowned commentary that "Those who interpret differently cannot be called a *kafir*" (Aziz, p. 86).

Government Level

Apart from individuals and groups, governments have also made this significant religious error by empowering itself to have authority to legislate on matters of faith. Freedom of religion is an intrinsic aspect of Islamic law. Religiously, that absolute right should never be curtailed, compromised, restricted or even imposed, in view of the Qur'anic verse (Al -Baqarah, 2:256) that clearly prohibits any compulsion in religion. In the context of this paper, therefore, no nation should have the right to pass any legislation to decide on who is or is not a Muslim. A person qualifies and remains a Muslim by divine law, not by man-made law.

However, laws in Pakistan determine who is not a Muslim. By corollary, it determines who is a Muslim and that particular determination appears to be made contrary to the specific injunctions in the two main sources in Islamic theology, the Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, those laws cannot be valid within the Islamic legal framework. Those laws stem from the non-acceptance, by some political parties and politicians, of Ahmadis as Muslims and therefore use their Parliament to achieve their political or personal ends. If the Qur'an

and the Sunnah are the Constitution, then those laws can be described as invalid or unconstitutional. Without going into details about the ideologies of the Ahmadis or the differences between the two groups within the Ahmadis, Qadianis and Lahorees, it is sufficient, for present purposes, to mention that the Ahmadis recite and believe in the *kalima* (there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah). The Lahoree Ahmadis (Lahorees) believe in the five pillars of Islam, *mujadith* (reformers or rejuvenators), do not accept any sin as lawful and, unlike the Qadianis, also believe in the finality of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), (Lahore, n.d.).

The Ahmadis, therefore, according to the previous chapters, qualify as people with *iman*. However, Article 260 of the Pakistan Constitution declares any person who accepts the claim of Ghulam Ahmad (d.1908) as a *mujadith* is a *kafir* (Ali, n.d.). The Lahorees, in accepting Ahmad as a *mujadith*, rely on the hadith in which Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) prophesied the coming of a *mujadith* at the head of every century (Sunan Abu.Dawud 36:1). The dilemma of the Lahorees does not end at that as Pakistan's 1984 Ordinance further prevents them from calling their places of worship a mosque nor can they enter any mosque to pray. They cannot even recite the *adhan* (call for a Muslim prayer). The Lahorees cannot be seen to be praying as Muslims do or even, when they do pray, it should not resemble a Muslim prayer (Pakistan Ordinance, n.d.). They cannot offer a Muslim salutation, which, when uttered, Allah says is sufficient basis for an injunction to prevent making *takfir* on them (Qur'an, Al-Nisa, 4:94). For any infringement, the Ahmadis can be imprisoned for a period of three years.

The charges against Ahmad are that he claimed to be Jesus and a prophet. His claim to be Jesus was based upon the coming of the Messiah, which means the anointed one, one who will propagate Islam 'Jesus style', peacefully and not violently. For example, he explained that Jihad (struggle) was not to be carried out with a sword but with the pen, meaning by literature explaining Islam as a peaceful and tolerant religion. Ahmad always maintained that prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the last and the seal of all prophets. Ahmad (d.1908) confirmed Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) statement that no prophet would come after him, and the Hadith report "There is no prophet after me" (*la nabiyya ba'di*) was so well-known that no one had any doubt regarding its authenticity" (Ahmad 1898. p.32). He also confirmed that every single word of the Qur'an as absolute, in its noble verse "*he is the Messenger of Allah and the Kha'tam an-nabiyyi'n*" (Qur'an, 33:40). To believe in a prophet after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), he continued, "would have destroyed the entire fabric of Islam" (Ahmad 1898. p.32).

Apart from the curse of disunity and formation of sects, making *takfir* can lead to inhumane activities. A glaring example is the Constitution of Pakistan that declares the Ahmadis, as non-Muslims and this has had significant consequences. This prohibition is so strictly adhered to that, for example, an Ahmadi who was accidentally, or by some administrative error, buried in a Muslim graveyard near Bhalwal in Pakistan was exhumed when the authorities found out about the burial. They took the drastic action because that particular graveyard was for Muslims only and, since the deceased was not a Muslim by virtue of being an Ahmadi, he was not entitled to be buried there (Khan, 2010). For similar reasons, Pakistani Ahmadis, who qualify as Muslims according to Islamic theology, but *kafir* according to the Pakistan Constitution, are prohibited from performing *hajj* (pilgrimage).

In January 2014, in total contrast to the scenario in Pakistan, Tunisia passed a law to criminalise anyone making *takfir*. Despite the stormy discussions and intellectual tug-of-war between different ideologies and political affiliations on the issue, Article 6 of Tunisia's Constitution was passed and it stipulates, "The state protects religion, guarantees freedom of belief, conscience and religious practices, protects sanctities, and ensures the neutrality of mosques and places of worship" (Al-Haddad, 2014). The Pakistan Government, in passing their laws, ignored the principles of Islamic theology including all acceptable definition of who is a Muslim. The irony is that Pakistan was a signatory to the 'Amman Message' that provided an acceptable definition of who is a Muslim. The Lahoree Ahmadis, by that definition, are Muslims as they adhere to the legal and theological schools listed in the Amman Message (Lahore, n.d.). Political power, as in the case of Pakistan, should not and cannot take precedence over principles in Islamic theology in making any decision on issues of *iman*.

Social and Political Disputes

Further, Muslims who carry out undesirable practices have also been condemned as being unbelievers. The Salafists, for example, condemn any sort of mediation between man and Allah. They use this to make *takfir*, as their ideology states anyone who believes in such mediation creates a polytheistic religion and has nothing to do with Islam. Salafiyya is characterised by *al-tawhid* (oneness of Allah). Using this principle, which the Salafis say must be translated into Islamic jurisprudence and rites, they translate this into rejecting individual opinions and interpretations in the religion of Islam. They also criticise those who venerate dead saints as being in some mysterious contact with God, a criticism that may be well justified but not sufficient to justify

making *takfir*. E.g. it is wrong to visit grave of a saint seeking help or cure for some illness or tribulations. Venerating dead saints does not exist in Islam but their mistaken belief does not make them *kafirs*. They also condemn Muslims who give too much importance to local changes at the expense of Islam, again a criticism that may be justified, e.g. changing dressing codes to accommodate local changes that go beyond Islamic injunctions. However, what cannot be justified is the condemnation of people outside their ideology as polytheists or *kafirs*. This illustrates that if one does not adhere to their ideology, then despite the Qur'an and ahadith, they will be condemned as *kafir*. This is yet another example of pronouncing *takfir* using social or sectarian reasoning rather than the Qur'an and Sunnah (Mentak, 2011). This ideology, apart from having nothing to do with *iman*, also has other major flaws. Aside from not having any basis in Islamic theology, it is implicit in their reasoning that the person upon whom *takfir* is made believes in Allah. That belief on its own should be sufficient to prohibit making *takfir* (Aziz, 1987, p. 64). Even if, in the opinion of the Salafists, meditation was a sin, making *takfir* cannot be justified. Ozalp (2010 p.253) reinforced that major sins do not nullify one's faith or make a person non-Muslim. Therefore, undesirable, impermissible or even sinful acts cannot justify making *takfir*. Reformists draw clear distinctions and boundaries between permissible and impermissible ritual gestures in Islam. Prostration, for example, during prayers towards other than Kaba was strictly interdicted. Also, prostrating towards a saint's tomb or circumambulation of anything but the Kaba are practices that should be impermissible as they resemble non-Muslim practices. Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, a Sufi, while condemning such practices as *bida* (religious innovations), said "But if someone engages in this practice, to call him a *kafir* and push him outside the domain of Islam is very undesirable" (Ingram, 2009).

In a published *fatwa*, Bin Jibrin's explanation why Shiites should be condemned as unbelievers is yet another example of making *takfir* outside the Islamic legal framework, which distinctly prohibits making *takfir* on people who believe in God, His prophet, pray and fast. Bin Jibrin in his *fatwa* announced, "Some people say that the rejectionists (*Rafidha*, i.e. Shia) are Muslims because they believe in God and his prophet, pray and fast. But I say they are heretics" (Teitelbaum, p.74). Bin Jibrin's *fatwa* cannot be rationalised in Islamic theology and therefore is unlawful. This is an extreme example of making *takfir* to justify one's personal views irrespective of Islamic theology.

For the Wahhabis, grave worship was the paramount act of *shirk*, or polytheism, a severe accusation, so its practice by the Shiites became a source of constant suf-

fering. According to the Sunnis generally, the Shiites are known as *rawafid* (those who reject the first three caliphs in favour of the fourth caliph Ali and the Prophet's house, known as *Ahl al-Bayt*) (Teitelbaum, 2010, p. 74). The Wahhabis however consider the Shiites as worse than rejectionists: "they are associationists and polytheists (*mushrikin*) who associate people (such as *Ahl al-Bayt*) and objects with God" (Teitelbaum, 2010, p. 74). Wahhabis and Shiite beliefs and practices stand in stark contradistinction with each other particularly with "its strong emphasis on *tawhid*, or the uncompromising unity of the Divine" (Teitelbaum, 2010, p. 74). Many Shiites were killed by when they refused to convert. In 1927, the Wahhabi *ulama* published a *fatwa* calling upon the Shiites to "convert" to Islam. Some Shiite notables complied, while others left Saudi Arabia. (Teitelbaum, 2010, pp. 74-75). Much of education in Saudi Arabia is based on Wahhabi religious material. Al-Hassan wrote:

From a very young age, students are taught that Shiites are not Muslims and that Shiism is a conspiracy hatched by the Jews, and so Shiites are worthy of death. Government Wahhabi scholars, such as Abdulqader Shaibat al-Hamd, have proclaimed on state radio that Sunni Muslims must not "eat their [Shia] food, marry from them, or bury their dead in Muslims' graveyards". (Al-Hassan 2002)

The Government has declared the Qur'an and Sunnah (tradition) of the Prophet Muhammad to be the country's constitution.¹ It has been established that the recitation of the *shahada* should be sufficient to make one a Muslim. The Qur'an is undoubtedly clear on whom *takfir* cannot be made. Both the Shiites and Sunnis believe in the Qur'an and Sunnah. It has also been established that wrong practices and commission of sins do not theologically justify making *takfir*. It becomes more difficult to rationally justify treating Shiites as infidels or apostates when the Constitution of Saudi Arabia is the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The present increasing and rushing trend of making *takfir* will leave very few people, if any, left who will qualify as Muslims. President General Pervez Musharraf, as he then was, in his address to the Nation of Pakistan on 12 January 2002, when there was so much infighting among Muslims and killing each other after making *takfir* to justify their atrocities, said "... I think, these people [those who made *takfir*] have declared more Muslims as *Kafirs* (infidels) than motivating the non-Muslims to embrace Islam" (Globalist, 2002).

Making *takfir* on Muslims is therefore against the command of Allah and His messenger. Justice and faith

(*iman*) are the acceptance of the truth brought by the Prophet, so unbelief (*kufir*) is its rejection. No one has the right to expel anyone from Islam so long as they confess to the unity of God and the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (Ali, 1950, p. 95). People making *takfir* should not play God, as Ghazali "rightly questions the authority of religious scholars and jurists to pass judgments about *kufir*". (Barlas, n.d.). He tags those who rush to condemn people who go against any school of thought as *kafirs* "as reckless ignoramuses" (Barlas, n.d.).

Khaled Abou El Fadl (2003) provided some consolation when he included in his discussion that many secularists accuse others of disbelief, but jurists do not do so. He noted that only the opinions of jurists matter because they give their opinions based on objective rather than subjective criteria (Abou, 2003, p. 281). There is no apparent evidence that, whenever *takfir* was made, jurists were either consulted or involved in the decision-making process. In Islamic law, jurists are known as *ulema*, i.e. those who specialise in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) (Jurists, n.d.).

Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali warned those who hold such a view and think they have a monopoly over the truth are closer to being guilty of both unbelief and contradictoriness (Ghazali, n.d., p. 91). The reason Ghazali gives is "because he puts this thinker in the position of the Prophet, who alone is exempt from committing errors (in doctrine), and through whom alone faith [*iman*] obtains by agreeing with him and unbelief obtains by disagreeing with him" (Ghazali, n.d., p. 91). At the same time, Ghazali acknowledges there may be differences in certain theological positions but stressed that, so long as a person holds fast to the *shahada*, the making of *takfir* on such a person should not be permitted. He continued and explained "Unbelief (*kufir*) is to deem anything the Prophet brought, to be a lie. And faith (*iman*), is to deem everything he brought, to be true" (Ghazali, n.d., p. 92). He further maintained that the status of people who firmly believe in the messages of the Prophet, including the contents of the Qur'an, is a believer, even if they are unable to substantiate the messages. (Ghazali, n.d., pp. 123-124).

Conclusions

If making *takfir* cannot be supported in accordance with the principles in Islamic theology, it should be deemed unlawful. It cannot be made at the whim of any individual or group. Personal views and reasons cannot override the Qur'an and Sunnah. Imam Ghazali, a master jurist and theologian, did not condone *takfir* and explained at length that "most *takfir* occurs due to fanaticism and is hence utterly baseless" (Stewart, 2004). Imam Ghazali's analysis of *kufir* was "Unbelief (*kufir*) is

to deem anything the Prophet brought to be a lie. And faith (*iman*) is to deem everything he brought to be true” (Stewart, 2004). There is no evidence to suggest that the makers of *takfir* ever disagreed or distinguished the propositions on *kufir* and *iman* as expounded by Ghazali, yet they have no hesitation in making *takfir*.

Prejudiced people call all those who do not conform to their particular ideology *kafirs*. The people who make *takfir* accept and follow at least one of the four imams: Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki or Hanbali. However, their calling each other *kafir* is not right because the belief of the trustworthy imams of the schools of thought is that none of the people of the *Qibla* can be called a *kafir*. All the imams have made it clear that if there is any ground for not issuing *takfir*, the ruling should not be made, even if that ground is weak. From the examples discussed, it appears the rationale, evidence and reasoning of the identified groups, sects and organisations, both in classical and contemporary times, cannot justify their respective practices of *takfir* within Islamic theology.

Conclusion

Making *takfir* commenced during classical times with the emergence of the Kharijites in the seventh century. As times progressed, so did the making of *takfir* together with the emergence of different sects in Islam. What has not changed with time is the Islamic legal framework, i.e. the Qur’an and Sunnah. This study has shown, from an Islamic theological perspective, that the recitation of the *shahada* is sufficient to determine a person’s *iman* and there is no need to further investigate deeply into their belief. There does not appear to be any evidence of any challenge by the makers of *takfir* of the proposition that the dividing line between a believer and a disbeliever is the confession of the unity of God and the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Once a person becomes a Muslim, they remain a Muslim until such time as they renounce the *shahada* or they believe a sin to be lawful. Sinning, without believing it to be lawful, practising *bida* and disobedience to the commands of Allah do not remove a person from the fold of Islam.

The common factor in the making of *takfir* appears to be the non-acceptance of each other’s theological ideology, irrespective of whether the ideology is supported in Islam. The irony is that the makers of *takfir* disregard the explicit provisions of the Qur’an and Sunnah on the issue of *takfir*, yet have the audacity to call other Muslims *kafirs*. Making *takfir* is forbidden in Islamic law, according to the two main sources, Qur’an, Sunnah, and also theologians and jurists, as it is made against the commands of Allah and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Both the contemporary and classical practices of *takfir* are therefore un-Islamic according to the established Islamic theology and law. This paper has argued that it is

wrong and dangerous to make *takfir* and highlighted the hadith that the *fatwa* of *kufir* falls back on the maker if the person upon whom *takfir* is made is not a *kafir*.

Within the limitations of this paper, this study is unable to include a number of other groups and their reasons for making *takfir*. To gain understanding of the situation, there is a need to interview refugees who have fled their birth country as a result of religious persecution. There is a need to determine whether people, belonging to those groups who make *takfir*, understand and grasp the ideology behind the group they belong to, or are they simply blindly following their leaders’ instructions.

It would also be of assistance to further explain terms such as apostasy, religious infidelity and heresy and illustrate them with examples. Some makers of *takfir* equate it with apostasy as they believe they can kill apostates with impunity. There is a need to further investigate whether the punishment for apostasy is death since all the *ulema* are not in agreement with each other on this issue. This is vital, as some radicals think they can kill apostates as that is the only punishment for apostasy in Islam. Further study may have some impact on their presumption on the punishment for apostasy.

This study revealed that those who make *takfir*, without realising the theological errors, create serious ramifications for all. There is a grave need to carry out further investigations to better educate the *ummah*, particularly those who rush into making *takfir*, on the true meaning, seriousness and disastrous consequences of making *takfir*. This research therefore needs further probing. ■

Endnote

1. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_in_Saudi_Arabia#Sectarianism

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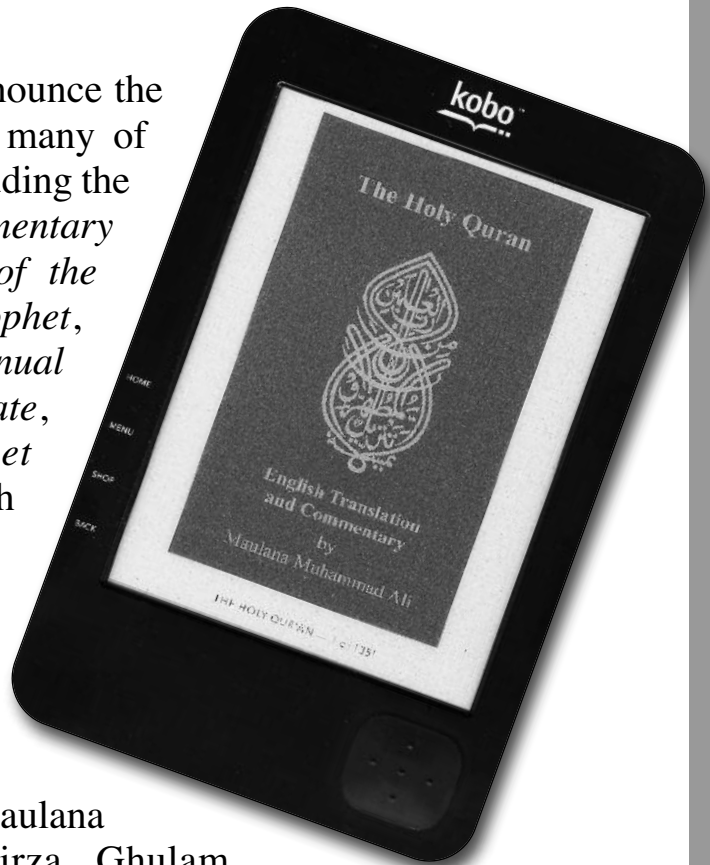
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