MAP 1 Forty-Nine Muslim-Majority Countries (2018)

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Violence and Peace

Followers of world affairs frequently see news about terrorist attacks and military conflicts in which Muslims took part. From 1994 to 2008, Islamist groups perpetrated three-fifths of the 204 high-casualty terrorist bombings that occurred throughout the world.[1] In 2009, there were six wars and thirty-one minor conflicts in the world (each having two main sides). Two-thirds of the sides in the wars (8 out of 12) and two-fifths of the sides in the minor conflicts (24 out of 60) were Muslim-majority states or Muslim groups.[2] These rates of participation are disproportionate, as Muslims constitute only one-quarter of the world's population and Muslim-majority countries make up only one-quarter of the world's countries (see Map 1).

Muslims' association with violence is disproportionate only in terms of political violence (including war, minor conflict, and terrorism). That association is also a recent phenomenon. When it comes to homicide (measured as homicides per 100,000 people in a year), the average rate of Muslim-majority countries is lower (2.4) than that of non-Muslim countries (7.5).[3] Even regarding political violence, Muslims did not have a disproportionately high involvement until the late twentieth century.[4] They played a very limited role in the World War I and World War II. Until the 1980s, Muslims generally experienced less state violence domestically in comparison to several communist and fascist regimes in the Soviet Union, China, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. From the 1940s to the 1980s, the major terrorist organizations were also primarily socialist, not Islamist. Thus, the disproportionate Muslim

[1] Fish 2011, 151. [2] Harborn and Vallensteen, 2010, 506–7. [3] Fish 2011, 9, 120.

[4] "Are Muslim countries more war-prone? Not necessarily, if we look at data for the whole period after World War II. But in the post–Cold War era, most wars are civil wars and Muslim countries have a disproportionate share of these." Gleditsch and Rudolfsen 2016, 1.

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participation in political violence is mostly a phenomenon of the last three decades.[5] If this is the case, what explains the recent surge of Muslim involvement in political violence?[6]

The chapter begins by critically reviewing the impact of Western colonization and occupation on Muslims' relations with violence. It then critically explores the complex relations between Islam and violence. Next, the chapter examines the role of the ulema in the problem of violence. Finally, it analyzes how authoritarian rule has been a major factor for terrorism, civil wars, and interstate wars in the Muslim world.

WESTERN COLONIZATION AND OCCUPATION

Several analysts have blamed Western colonialism for the rise of violence in various Muslim societies. For Frantz Fanon, French colonialism in Algeria did not leave many options to the Algerian people other than using violence against the colonizer to regain not only their independence, but also their dignity.[7] More recently, Mohammed Ayoob has presented Western colonialism as a cause of the popularity of radical Islamists at the expense of quietist ulema in the eyes of many young Muslims, who have seen the former as more resistant and compelling in their responses to Western colonialism and occupation.[8]

Western interventions in the Middle East have not been confined to direct colonization and occupation, but have taken various forms.[9] The history of Saudi Arabia provides an example. Saudi Arabia has unapologetically been a leading force in spreading Salafi ideas around the world. Salafism is a Sunni reform movement that claims to purify Muslim thought and practice of what it takes to be corrupt traditions.[10] It received its name from the word *salaf* (predecessors), because Salafis regard the earliest (three) generations of Muslims as the exemplars of true Islam and criticize the traditions established by the ulema, with such exceptions as the works of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya. Notwithstanding their general criticism of the ulema's authority, Salafis have their own ulema today in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.[11]

Salafis take the Quran and hadiths very literally and reject any innovative interpretation. Salafis' literalism is a source of their opposition to Sufis' mystical understanding of Islam. Moreover, given their rejection of any spiritual

[5] Some scholars make a distinction between "religious" and "non-religious" conflicts. Fox 2004; Toft 2007. I do not use such categories because most conflicts are multifaceted, with religious, ethnic, economic, and other dimensions. See Cavanaugh 2009.

[6] For the sake of simplicity, from now on, I will simply use the term "violence," instead of "political violence."

[7] Fanon 2004 [1961], 1–43. [8] Ayoob 2007, esp. 27. [9] Salt 2009; Khalidi 2004.

[10] For a comparison between Protestant and Salafi puritanism, see Goldberg 1991.

[11] The Saudi ulema "have arguably unrestricted capacity to educate the Saudi public about religious matters." Ismail 2016, 3. See also Mouline 2014.

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mediator between man and God, Salafis have strongly opposed Sufis (who venerate both living and dead shaykhs) and Shiis (who venerate both living and dead imams).[12]

A particular version of Salafism, so-called Wahhabism, has been the official religious doctrine of Saudi Arabia.[13] Wahhabi control of Mecca and Medina (which enables them to preach millions of pilgrims) and of nearly 20 percent of the world's oil reserves has been crucial for the spread of Salafism around the globe. The recent destruction of Sufi shrines by Salafis in Mali and of various historical buildings by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is reminiscent of Saudi Wahhabis' demolition of Sufi shrines and historical buildings in the Arabian Peninsula in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Particularly following their conquest of Mecca and Medina, the Saudi Wahhabis destroyed historical sites, including the tombs of the Prophet Muhammad's companions,[14] as well as certain historical texts. [15]

A Western observer can hold Muslims responsible for letting a puritanical interpretation of Islam dominate in the two holy cities of Islam. Yet it was not Muslims but Britain that let this happen. The Ottoman Empire, with its mainstream Sunni understanding of Islam, ruled the two cities for four centuries until the World War I. At that time, Britain and its Arab allies led by Sharif Hussein forced the Ottomans out. Britain was deeply concerned about the Ottoman caliph's influence in its colonies, especially India.[16] The removal of Ottomans from the Arabian Peninsula and the abolishment of the caliphate by the new Turkish Republic suited British interests in this regard. Yet Britain's ally Sharif Hussein, who was also a mainstream Sunni, declared his own caliphate to fill the vacuum left by the Turks. There was, however, another British ally in the Arabian Peninsula – the Saudi tribe defending Wahhabism. At least for some British diplomats, Saudis were preferable partners, since Ibn Saud had assured them that he had no interest in becoming a caliph and theologically "his Wahhabi sect did not recognize any caliphs after the

[12] Sufism generally seems to have provided a peaceful understanding of Islam. Nonetheless, various examples, including the anti-colonial armed struggles of Abd al-Qadir in Algeria against France, Omar Mukhtar in Libya against Italy, Muhammad al-Mahdi in Sudan against Britain, and Shaykh Shamil in Northern Caucasus against Russia, show that Sufis can be violent as well. Green 2012, 191–205; Trimingham 1971, 239–41.

[13] Some observers define the nineteenth-century modernist thinker Muhammad Abduh of Egypt as the historical founder of Salafism. This definition is confusing because today's Salafi movement is far from being modernist. It is more instructive to trace the roots of today's Salafism to the eighteenth-century scholar Muhammad Abdul-Wahhab of the Arabian Peninsula; Wahhabism is named after him. See Brown 2013, 25–9; Afsaruddin 2008, 148–51; Lauzière 2016. One reason for the perceived blurry boundary between Abduh and Wahhabism was that a prominent student of the former, Rashid Rida, ultimately became a propagandist of the latter. Hourani 1983, 231–2; Abu Zaid [Zayd] 2006, 45–6; Zaman 2012, 4–15.

[14] Sardar 2014, esp. 4, 346.

[15] Abou El Fadl 2014, 229, 251.

[16] Fromkin 2001, 97, 106, 327, 426.

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first four."[17] Ibn Saud defeated Sharif Hussein and eventually established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.[18]

In fact, Saudi Arabia, together with Turkey and Iran, is one of the exceptional Muslim countries that were never directly colonized. Western impact on colonized Muslim countries has been much deeper. In the Muslim world and elsewhere, the colonialist "divide and rule" policy exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions. Even at the end of their colonial rule, Western policy-makers drew borders of many countries based on their interests and caused border disputes. A well-known example of these sorts of colonial effects has been the Arab-Israeli conflict; British colonial rule left behind disputed borders and contributed to this ethno-religious conflict.

The overwhelming majority of Muslim countries are young, post-colonial states. Young states tend to be weak in terms of the Weberian criterion of monopolizing the legitimate use of force and need time to establish stable institutions. State weakness is directly linked to civil wars and terrorism, while post-colonial border disputes have led to several interstate wars.

The Algerian War (1954–62) was a landmark event for colonized Muslims. Algerian independence after a bloody war against French colonialism demonstrated the effectiveness of violence as a means of resisting and removing the colonizer. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked a turning point, particularly in the rise of Islamist violence.[19] With the support of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, Afghan *mujahideen* (those who engaged in jihad) fought against the Soviet Union for about a decade. US support was so enthusiastic that President Ronald Reagan dedicated the launch of the Space Shuttle Columbia to "the people of Afghanistan" in 1982 and met with representatives of the Afghan *mujahideen* in the Oval Office a year later.[20] Osama bin Laden was one of the Arab participants in this anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan.[21] Later, especially following 9/11, when jihad gained a totally pejorative meaning, the old, positive term *mujahideen* was replaced by a new, derogatory term – jihadists.[22]

[17] Fromkin 2001, 108. See also Abou El Fadl 2014, 237–9.

[18] "Britain played a crucial role in Ibn Sa'ud's expansion" by providing him with subsidies and weapons and by abandoning Sharif Hussein. Al-Rasheed 2002, 42–9, esp. 47. See also Provence 2017, 154–5. Additionally, Britain helped House of Saud to crush the rebellious Ikhwan – religious zealots who initially provided strong support to the Saudis. Alatas 2014, 132–5, 137; Salame 1990, 34–8, 44–5.

[19] Gerges 2005, esp. ch. 5.

[20] In the online archive of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library, a photo with *mujahideen* is recorded as "President Reagan meeting with Afghan Freedom Fighters to discuss Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan, 2/2/83": https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/photographs/large/c12820-32.jpg, accessed on March 30, 2016.

[21] See Robert Fisk's interview with and depiction of Osama bin Laden: "Anti-Soviet Warrior Puts His Army on the Road to Peace: The Saudi Businessman Who Recruited Mujahedin Now Uses Them for Large-Scale Building Projects in Sudan," *Independent*, December 5, 1993.

[22] Mamdani 2005, 119–77; Ayoob 2007, 144–66.

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In the Middle East, particularly between the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Islamism gradually replaced socialism as the ideology of violent anti-Western groups. This is visible in the rise of Islamist Hezbollah as an alternative to the secularist and older Amal movement among Shii Arabs in Lebanon, and in the emergence of Islamist Hamas against the secularist and older Fatah among Palestinians. Their fight against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and Palestinian lands helped Hezbollah and Hamas, respectively, gain popularity among their communities.[23]

A more recent foreign occupation was the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Right after the invasion, the United States abolished two pillars of the Iraqi state – the Baath Party and the military. Amid the political chaos, most Iraqis turned to their ethnic and sectarian identities for survival.[24] The rise of ISIS through radicalization of local Sunnis and the influx of jihadists from neighboring countries and Europe cannot be explained without reference to the chaos created by the occupation of Iraq.

The anti-colonial approach has some power in explaining the problem of violence in certain Muslim countries. But Western colonization/occupation is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for violence. It is not sufficient, as there have been non-Muslim and Muslim countries that were colonized or occupied but where many influential agents did not choose to use violence. Such leading figures as Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–98)[25] and Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), for example, adopted a position of non-violence against British colonization in India. Western colonization/occupation is not a necessary condition either, because several non-Western countries and groups have fought each other for various reasons. The long list includes the Iran-Iraq War and recent civil wars in several Arab countries. In Turkey, violence has continued between the Turkish state and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) for more than three decades, regardless of whether Turkey was ruled by secularists or Islamists, and regardless of whether the PKK defended or renounced Marxist-Leninist ideology.[26]

The anti-colonial approach overemphasizes the impact of Western countries' policies toward other parts of the world while downplaying the role of non-Western countries' own domestic and regional dynamics.[27] Hence, it cannot explain why Muslims have experienced interstate wars, civil wars, and terrorism by and against other Muslims, rather than simply fighting against Western colonial powers and occupiers. In the last decade or so, jihadists have killed more Muslims than non-Muslims. According to one official US report, "In

[23] Robinson 2004, 124–5; Ayoob 2007, ch. 6. [24] See Hashemi and Postel 2017.
[25] See Chapter 7. [26] Gürbüz 2016; Tezcür 2016; Şahin 2011.
[27] The US invasions of Germany and Japan at the end of the World War II led to political order, while its recent occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq produced political disorder. The difference cannot be explained by disregarding country-specific characteristics.

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cases where the religious affiliation of terrorism casualties could be determined, Muslims suffered between 82 and 97 percent of terrorism-related fatalities" between 2007 and 2011. According to the report, the top five countries having the greatest numbers of attacks involving ten or more deaths in 2011 were all Muslim-majority – Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, and Nigeria.[28]

Various weaknesses of the anti-colonial approach in explaining violence are related to its preoccupation with material and international factors. This problem points to the need to analyze the roles of ideas and states. The following sections undertake such analyses.

THE ROLE OF ISLAM

Some scholars have argued that – based on its texts or history – Islam has some essential characteristics that are associated with violence. Referring to its history, Max Weber defined Islam as originally a "warrior religion."[29] Focusing on contemporary Muslims, Bernard Lewis claimed the existence of a general "Muslim rage." For Lewis, Muslims are angry and anti-Western because they cannot accept the fact that they lost their historical supremacy and fell behind the West.[30] In a similar vein, Samuel Huntington defined Islamic civilization as in a position of clash against Western civilization and asserted that "Islam has bloody borders."[31]

A more recent example of an essentialist explanation is the Arab poet Adonis's *Violence and Islam*. Adonis depicts Islam as a religion of violence and tries to prove that by quoting several Quranic verses. In his words, the Quran is "an extraordinarily violent text."[32] He seems to ignore the role of human actors in interpreting religious texts. Adonis also alleges that Arabs are somehow perpetually violent: "For fifteen centuries, the war between Arabs has not ceased ... The history of Arabs is a perpetual war."[33] He overemphasizes the history of intra-Arab wars and virtually ignores the Crusader and Mongol invaders; the Turkish, Circassian, and Berber rulers; and Western colonizers in the last millennium of the Arab world.

[28] The National Counterterrorism Center 2012, 14.

[29] In Weber's (1978 [1922], 626) words, "The ideal personality type in the religion of Islam was not the scholarly scribe (*Literat*), but the warrior." See also Weber 1978 [1922], 623–7. According to Bryan Turner (1974, 143), "Weber completely overstated the social role of the Muslim warrior and was probably unaware of the importance of merchants in shaping the values of early Islam."

[30] Lewis (1990) developed this claim as an alternative to the argument that anti-Westernism in Muslim societies has been caused by Western support of Israeli policies against Palestinians.

[31] Huntington 1993, 135. There have been persecuted Muslim minorities in Chechnya (Russia), Kashmir (India), Moro (the Philippines), Palestine (Israel), Rakhine (Myanmar), and Xinjiang (China). The blood on "Islam's borders," as claimed by Huntington, is mostly Muslims' blood.

[32] Adonis 2015, 48; also 49–58.

[33] Adonis 2015, 28, 30; also 25–41, 60–74.

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The essentialist explanations have several shortcomings. By singling out Islam as the cause of violence, they disregard the fact that violence is a general human problem.[34] Millions were killed in historical atrocities perpetrated by various ethno-religious groups, from the Mongol massacres to the colonization of the Americas,[35] from the Taiping and Dungan rebellions in China,[36] to the two world wars.

More specifically, for the last two centuries, it is Western powers, not Muslim countries, who have militarily dominated the world. The British Empire has "invaded, had some control over or fought conflicts in the territory of something like 171 out of 193 UN member states in the world today."[37] In 2006, the United States had 833 military installations in more than a hundred countries and territories (766 in other countries and 77 in US territories).[38] In 2012, the US military expenditure was $682 billion, which constituted 39 percent of world's entire military expenditure.[39]

Individuals justify violence in many ways, including by invoking religion.[40] In the words of Alfred Stepan, all religions are "multivocal"[41] and thus can be interpreted to promote peace or violence.[42] In other words, religions do not have unchanging "essences" regarding violence. Critics of this view have pointed to Buddhism as essentially peaceful, unlike Islam and Christianity. Yet recently Buddhist monks' participation in massacres against the Muslim minority in Myanmar revealed that Buddhism is no different from other religions, as far as the potential for violence is concerned.[43] Similar incidents have also occurred in Sri Lanka and Thailand: "It's a faith famous for its pacifism and tolerance. But in several of Asia's Buddhist-majority nations, monks are inciting bigotry and violence – mostly against Muslims."[44]

[34] Anger is a human faculty (together with appetite and reason); thus each human being has a potential to commit violence. Plato 1945 [c. 380 BCE], 120–9; Aristotle 1996a [c. 350 BCE], 268–71, 437; Sloterdijk 2012.

[35] In Hispaniola, one of the Caribbean islands Columbus reached and where the first Spanish colonial settlement was established, the population was estimated to be more than a million in 1492. The native population continued to decline until it became extinct by 1535. Levene 2005, 10. For Mongol massacres, see Chapter 5.

[36] In China, the population declined "from around 410 million in 1850 to 350 million in 1873" due to the brutal conflicts during the Taiping, Dungan, and other uprisings. Millions of Muslims were among those who died. Levene 2005, 286. See also Davis 2001, 113; Maddison 2006, 244.

[37] Laycock 2012, 7. [38] Cooley 2008, xii, 6. [39] Perlo-Freeman et al. 2013.

[40] Armstrong 2014.

[41] Stepan 2001, 234. For diverse political strategies of the Catholic Church in different political contexts, see Gill 1998; Kalyvas 1996.

[42] For different Muslim views on peace and violence, see Denny 2004. For Jewish and Christian violent fundamentalism, see Perliger 2015.

[43] Juergensmeyer 2017, ch. 6. Human Rights Watch (2012, 2) notes that in Myanmar "local Buddhist monks have initiated a campaign of exclusion, calling on the local Buddhist population to neither befriend nor do business with Muslims."

[44] Hannah Beech, "The Face of Buddhist Terror," *Time*, July 1, 2013, 42.

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Particularly following 9/11, some pundits have held Islam solely responsible for suicide bombings and asserted that terrorists seek to be martyrs. Robert Pape emphasizes that suicide bombing is a strategic tool through which terrorists fight against regimes they see as occupiers. He defines suicide bombing as a tactic pioneered by socialist Tamil Tigers and only later adopted by Islamist groups. Thus suicide bombing is not "Islamic" in logic or origin.[45] Nevertheless, the perceived linkage between suicide bombing and Islam has been, at least partially, based on some irresponsible fatwas, in which certain ulema have legitimized violence. In an infamous fatwa in 2003, Yusuf al-Qaradawi endorsed suicide bombing attacks by Palestinians:

> The martyrdom operations carried out by the Palestinian factions to resist the Zionist occupation are not in any way included in the framework of prohibited terrorism, even if the victims include some civilians ... What weapon can harm the enemy, can prevent him from sleeping, and can strip him of a sense of security and stability, except for these human bombs – a young man or woman who blows himself or herself up amongst their enemy?[46]

Violence is a multicausal phenomenon that cannot be explained by simply referring to religious texts. Moreover, religious texts are open to multiple interpretations. The Bible, for example, includes numerous passages about violence.[47] It is the interpretations of these passages, rather than their sheer existence, which really matter.[48] Khaled Abou El Fadl explains that the Quran is understood differently due to the diversity of human readers. For pro-violent interpretations of the Quran, he points to the problem of puritanical readers, who disregard the text's historical and moral contexts. Instead, Abou El Fadl interprets the Quran as a text promoting peace and tolerance.[49] Yaser Ellethy also interprets the Quran prohibiting wars of aggression; for him, jihad is only permissible either for a defensive purpose or for offense against an oppressive regime.[50]

Despite Quranic discouragement, Muslims have killed each other in many cases. The Quran says: "Whoever slays a believer willfully, his recompense is Hell, abiding therein. God is wroth with him, and curses him, and prepares for

[45] Pape 2003.

[46] Al-Qaradawi 2007 [2003], 469–70. Like Shii Khomeini, Sunni Qaradawi is both an Islamic scholar and an Islamist. Egypt's Muslim Brothers invited him to serve as their supreme leader, which he declined. For an analysis of Qaradawi's views on jihad, see Zaman 2012, 261–81, 304–8.

[47] According to Eberhard Bons and Erik Eynikel (2011, 17), depending on the definition, the number of biblical passages about acts of violence varies between 600 and 1,700.

[48] "Terms for killing and destruction were in 2.1 percent of the Qur'an, 2.8 percent of the New Testament, and 5.3 percent of the Old Testament." Tim Barger, "Bible, Qur'an, and Violence Computerized Software Uses Scripture to Show What Text Analytics Can Do," *The Blade*, February 6, 2016.

[49] Abou El Fadl 2003. See also Abou El Fadl 2004.

[50] Ellethy 2011, 35–42.

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him a mighty punishment" (4:93).[51] The subsequent verse prevents believers from declaring those who greet them with peace as infidels and further restricts the possibility of Muslims killing each other: "O you who believe! When you go forth in the way of God, be discerning, and say not unto him who offers you peace, 'You are not a believer,' seeking the ephemeralities of the life of this world" (4:94). Notwithstanding these verses, there have existed Muslims who killed their co-religionists in interstate conflicts, civil wars, terrorist attacks, and government persecutions. This further problematizes the alleged links between the Quran and violence committed by Muslims. Hence, we should analyze how human actors, particularly the ulema, have interpreted the Quran and hadiths regarding the issue of violence.

THE ULEMA

The previous section has examined both pro-peace and pro-violence interpretations of Islam. Pro-violence interpretations reflect the political conditions of not only modern Muslim societies (under occupation) but also medieval Muslim societies. The latter is problematic because in the Middle Ages the perception and experience of violence had differences from what we perceive and experience today. There was no international law or international institutions at that time, nor were there concepts of war crimes, human rights, or domestic violence. The contemporary ulema generally aim to protect the Islamic tradition rather than produce new Islamic perspectives. The tradition includes various medieval perspectives, some of which contradict our modern notion of peaceful relations.

According to medieval and early modern interpretations, Muslims would be beaten, imprisoned, or even executed for not performing daily prayers. Apostasy was a capital offense. This judgment was typical of the age; apostates were to be killed in the medieval and early modern Christian tradition too.[52] As a result of the persistently traditionalist preaching of the contemporary ulema in mosques, Islamists in party gatherings, and shaykhs in Sufi orders, medieval conceptions of physical punishment have not only survived but also spread throughout the Muslim world. Recent polls indicate vast acceptance of the idea of killing apostates in contemporary Muslim societies. According to Pew Research Center's 2013 survey, the median percentages of Muslims who favor

[51] A similar verse with a broader implication (i.e., not limited to the killing of Muslims) is the following: "whosoever slays a soul – unless it be for another soul or spreading corruption upon the earth – it is as though he slew mankind altogether, and whosoever saves the life of one, it is as though he saved the life of mankind altogether" (5:32). The translations of Quranic verses in this book are generally from Nasr et al. 2015.

[52] For the medieval and early modern executions of alleged apostates in Catholic and Protestant societies, see Angenendt 2011, 53–9. For the Orthodox Byzantine society, see Mez 1937, 32. For the executions with apostasy charges in the late fifteenth- and the early sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, see İnalcık 2000 [1973], 178, 182.

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making sharia (Islamic law) the law of the land in various regions is as follows: South Asia, 84 percent; Southeast Asia, 77 percent; Middle East and North Africa (MENA), 74 percent; Sub-Saharan Africa, 64 percent; Southern and Eastern Europe, 18 percent; and Central Asia, 12 percent. Among those who support sharia, the median percentages of those who favor "executing those who leave Islam" are: South Asia, 76 percent; Southeast Asia, 27 percent; MENA, 56 percent; Sub-Saharan Africa, no data; Southern and Eastern Europe, 13 percent; and Central Asia, 16 percent.[53] In the last three decades, public acceptance of capital punishment for apostasy seems to have muted reactions to certain executions and assassinations of public figures declared to be apostates in some Muslim countries.[54]

There have been many Muslims who oppose the punishment of apostasy, even when facing the risk of being declared as apostates themselves because of this opposition.[55] Some Muslim intellectuals have offered Islamic criticisms of the punishment of apostasy,[56] but such criticism could not become mainstream, since the ulema have claimed a monopoly over interpreting Islam, and Muslim masses have largely upheld the ulema's claim. In Shii Islam, the ulema's authority is based on a clergy–laity dichotomy largely similar to that in Catholicism.[57] Theoretically, there is no such a dichotomy in Sunni Islam, but in practice, the Sunni ulema have also enjoyed something resembling clerical authority in matters of religious interpretation.

The ulema have raised the bar for making a new interpretation (*ijtihad*) very high,[58] even for its junior members – requiring years of studying Arabic grammar, memorizing hadiths, etc. The long processes of memorization and socialization generally lead the junior ulema to eventually lose their creativity. If some exceptionally creative junior ulema still produce new interpretations – as

[53] Pew Research Center 2013, 16, 23.

[54] Mahmoud Mohammed Taha, a reformist Muslim thinker and activist, was defined as an apostate by a sharia court and later, in 1985, executed by the Sudanese state. Taha 1987; Mahmoud 2000; Packer 2006; El-Affendi 2014. In Egypt, in 1992, some Al-Azhar scholars declared Farag Foda, a reformist Muslim scholar and activist, to be an apostate. A few days later, he was assassinated by two Islamists. Radhan 2014, 234–61; Kassab 2009, 221–4.

[55] In Pakistan, a Christian woman was sentenced to death for blasphemy against Islam. In 2011, the governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer (a Muslim), and the federal minister of minority affairs, Shahbaz Bhatti (a Catholic), were both assassinated due to their opposition to her sentence and Pakistan's blasphemy law.

[56] Barakat Ahmad (1989) writes that capital punishment for apostasy historically emerged as a political choice and is not a part of Islam as a religion. Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed (2004) argue that the punishment of apostasy by death contradicts the Quran and hadiths. Mohsen Kadivar (2006) develops a similar argument from a Shii perspective. See also Moosa 2014, 169–88; Kurucan 2006, esp. 123–142, 153.

[57] Momen 1985, esp. 189–207, 246–9. In Iran, the Shiia ulema have referred "themselves as 'clergymen' (*ruhaniyyan*)." Halm 1997, 106.

[58] See Abou El Fadl 2014, 210–14; Weiss 1998, 127–34; Hallaq 2009, 110–13.

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happened in the previously mentioned case of Abdel Razek – the senior ulema discourage and even punish them. This conservatism is the main reason why Muslim thought has been stagnant for centuries and recently caught unprepared to respond the jihadist claims of Al-Qaeda and ISIS.[59]

Many terrorists have adopted Jihadi-Salafism, a strand of Salafism, as their ideology.[60] A basis for radical interpretations of Islam for Jihadi-Salafis and others is the idea that the so-called sword verse (9:5) about attacking the polytheists abrogated a large number of other Quranic verses, up to 140, which encourage peace, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, and freedom of conscience.[61] This verse says, "Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, capture them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent, and perform the prayer, and give the alms, then let them go their way. Truly, God is Forgiving and Merciful" (9:5). For those who accept this particular idea of abrogation, there remains almost no textual basis for a peaceful relationship with non-Muslims, or even with various Muslims.

An influential defender of this radical idea was Sayyid Qutb (1906–66). In his *Milestones*, Qutb extensively quotes Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350) to explain that Islam's relationship with violence experienced various stages during the Prophet's lifetime. Qutb argues that the Quran initially ordered Muslims to preach Islam peacefully, that later it allowed them to engage in defensive war, and that ultimately it enjoined Muslims to use force offensively "for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* [ignorant] system."[62] For Qutb, contemporary Muslims should read all Quranic verses through the lens of this last, offensive stage and not confine jihad to defensive war.[63]

According to Qutb, contemporary Muslims are supposed to use force worldwide to affirm that sovereignty belongs to God, to liberate people from servitude to their own desires, and to enforce sharia by abolishing man-made laws. Qutb equates all modern societies to the pagan society of pre-Islamic Arabia, in terms of being in the state of ignorance (*jahiliyya*), as if international law and even domestic legal systems do not matter.[64] For him, there should be two options for non-Muslims: submission (in the form of special taxes) to Muslims or war against

[59] Even worse, according to Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2005, 67–8), in Pakistan, most of the ulema reject the idea of equal citizenship, while many leading ulema regard jihad against unbelievers as "a continuing obligation" and "maintain varied links with the radical sectarian militants."

[60] Wiktorowicz 2010, 270–1; Esposito 2015, 1071–5.

[61] See Qadhi 1999, 252–4; Ellethy 2015, 117–18.

[62] Qutb 2002 [1964], 55; also 53–76.

[63] "When God restrained Muslims from *jihad* for a certain period, it was a question of strategy rather than of principle ... Only in the light of this explanation can we understand ... the Holy Qur'an." Qutb 2002 [1964], 76.

[64] Qutb 2002 [1964], 57–8, 61–3, 69–70, 80–4, 93, 110.

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them.[65] By defining all existing Muslim societies as *jahili*, Qutb also legitimizes the use of violence against Muslim political leaders and their supporters.[66]

Qutb's radical ideas and selective reading of Quranic verses were shaped by his personal views and experiences, including his anti-Americanism[67] and the torture he and other Muslim Brothers endured in Egyptian prisons for about a decade. Similarly, his main reference, Jawziyya, reflected a particular understanding of jihad in the context of anti-Crusader and anti-Mongol sentiments of the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Mamluk Empire. This context was also influential on Jawziyya's teacher Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), one of the most prominent Islamic scholars ever.[68] Ibn Taymiyya had such deep animosity against the Mongols that he endorsed jihad against the Mongol rulers in the Middle East (the Ilkhanids), even after they converted to Islam, with the justification that they did not implement sharia.[69]

Although Qutb's perspective has influenced several radical groups, it is far from becoming the mainstream Muslim approach. The idea of the abrogation of certain Quranic verses on peace and other issues has remained controversial.[70] Some argue that there is no such thing as abrogation, while others disagree on its particular application. The defenders of peaceful interpretations of Islam propose that the meaning of the so-called sword verse (9:5) is limited by its historical context, that it does not abrogate any Quranic verse at all, and/or that the verse itself is abrogated by the subsequent verse (9:6) – "And if any one of the idolaters seeks asylum with thee, grant him asylum until he hears the Word of God. Then convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who know not."[71] In fact, the designation "sword verse" was a late construction: no commentator "before Ibn Kathir (d. 1373)" referred to the

[65] Qutb 2002 [1964], 63–4, 70, 73. On Muslims' relations with non-Muslims, Qutb's views depend on his interpretation of the Quranic verse 9:29. Muhammad Asad (1984, 261–2) interprets this verse more peacefully by arguing that the general message of the Quran is based on defensive, not aggressive, war. Yet Asad also interprets the verse as rejecting the idea of equal citizenship.

[66] Qutb 2002 [1964], 82.

[67] Jackson 2002a, 21–5. See also Abu-Rabi' 1995, chs. 4 and 5.

[68] Laoust 1939, 45, 60–5, 117–20. Ibn Taymiyya's hostile views against the Nusayris (today's Alawites) in Syria were also shaped by their political tension with Sunni Mamluk rule. Laoust 1939, 59–60, 124–5; Laoust 1971, 951–5. For more on Ibn Taymiyya, see Chapter 5.

[69] "In modern times the position known as 'accusing the ruler of unbelief' is inspired by a *fatwa* of Ibn Taymiyya that was directed against the Ilkhanid rulers of this time. Since the 1980s, this argument has been used to legitimise militant political actions of radical Islamic groups." Griffel 2007, 133. See also Kadri 2012, 144–78; Ahmad 1989, 13–14.

[70] According to Jane McAuliffe (1990, 114), while commenting on the so-called sword verse 9:5, the eminent scholar Fakhr al-Din al-Razi "did not even raise the possibility of abrogation" of the verse 2:256. ("Let there be no compulsion in (the) religion. Right has been distinguished from wrong, so whoever disbelieves in idols and believes in God has grasped a firm, unbreakable handle.")

[71] Burton 1990, 184–5; Badawi 2014, 303; Ellethy 2015, 119–22; Dagli 2015, 1808–9.

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verse with this name.[72] In fact, the word "sword" does not exist in this verse or any other verse in the Quran.[73]

Several Muslim scholars have emphasized peace as a general objective of Islam.[74] According to Sherman Jackson, peace treaties are sanctified in the Quran. For him, the Quranic verses endorsing and even encouraging armed struggle should be understood in the context of the state of war that existed in the Arabian peninsula before and during the revelation of the Quran. Today, however, the development of international law and institutions necessitates an overall rethinking of the concept of jihad, which was historically interpreted in terms of offensive military actions.[75]

Pre-modern jurists divided the world into the *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) and the *dar al-harb* (abode of war). These concepts contradict the modern ideals of the establishment of equal citizenship in Muslim countries, integration of Muslims into Western societies, and development of a more peaceful international system.[76] This contradiction is so deep that it makes a new interpretation of these two concepts impossible. Jackson, for example, interprets Mawardi's definition of *dar al-Islam* "as *any* land in which a Muslim enjoys security."[77] Yet in fact Mawardi encouraged Muslims to remain in lands "[w]here a Muslim is able to protect and isolate himself, even if he is not able to proselytize and engage in combat."[78] He did not legitimize Muslims' residence under non-Muslim rule as a normal condition. Rather, he legitimized their residence as contingent on the idea that they would gradually foster the necessary conditions to convert these lands into a genuine *dar al-Islam* ruled by Muslims. Hence, even a sincere and clever attempt to reinterpret these medieval concepts seems ultimately ineffective.

As the previous section has elaborated, essentialist explanations exaggerate possible links between Islam and Muslims' violent actions. Yet a particular interpretation of Islam, Jihadi-Salafism, has been associated with terrorist activity. The ulema share responsibility for this problem, because their monopolization of the interpretation of Islam has led to the stagnation of Muslim intellectual life. As a result, Muslim societies have not been intellectually dynamic enough to produce effective counterarguments against Jihadi-Salafi propaganda.

Terrorism and other types of violence are complex phenomena; they are not simply caused by religious or secular ideas alone.[79] Other factors, especially political and socioeconomic conditions, also lead to violence. Moreover,

[72] Afsaruddin 2015, 128; also 123–7. [73] Fatoohi 2013, 121; also 114–20.

[74] See Shaltut 2005 [1948].

[75] Jackson 2002a, 15, 25–6. See also Donner 1991, 34. Jackson (2002a, 18) argues that even after the establishment of Muslim states, a sense of insecurity continued, because "throughout the Middle Ages, while one could live as a Jew in Morocco, a Christian in Cairo, or even a Zoroastrian in Shiraz, one could not live as a Muslim in Paris [or] London."

[76] See Ramadan 2003, 65–77; Mayer 1995, 196. [77] Jackson 2011, 174 (emphasis in original).

[78] Quoted in Jackson 2011, 187n13. For more on Mawardi, see Chapter 4.

[79] Philpott 2007, esp. 522; Kuru 2011, 173–4.

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pro-violence or pro-peace interpretations of religions do not emerge in isolation, but rather are formed within a political context. The next section will examine how the authoritarian state has provided conditions conducive for both religious radicalism and violence in many Muslim countries.

THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE

Democratic peace theory argues that democracies are not likely to wage wars against each other. This theory helps us understand possible mechanisms linking authoritarianism and war. The theory argues that democratic norms and institutions strengthen mutual understanding between societies. In contrast, authoritarian norms and institutions might promote mutual distrust. Another mechanism for maintaining peace is that democratic institutions and open public conversations constrain decision-makers.[80] Authoritarian rulers, on the contrary, are neither checked by representative institutions nor held accountable by open public debate. Thus authoritarian regimes are more likely to wage war due to their rulers' unaccountable decisions.[81]

When we compare the Middle East and East Asia, we find some historical commonalities. Both regions had a colonial experience, faced Western interventions since decolonization, and consisted mostly of authoritarian states until the late 1980s. During the last three decades, however, East Asia has achieved a process of democratization; currently, half of the countries (nine of eighteen) in the region are electoral democracies. Eten Solingen has also noted an important divergence between the two regions in terms of war and peace. She observes that in the aftermath of World War II, both regions encountered multiple military conflicts. From 1965 to 2007, however, "the incidence of interstate wars and militarized conflicts has been nearly five times higher in the Middle East, as was their severity ... By contrast, declining militarized conflict and rising intraregional cooperation has replaced earlier patterns in East Asia."[82] Solingen explains these two diverging trajectories with opposite models of governance in these two regions: "Leaders in most East Asian states pivoted their political control on economic performance and integration into the global economy, whereas most Middle East leaders relied on inward-looking self-sufficiency, state and military entrepreneurship, and a related brand of nationalism." In other words, while in East Asia, export-oriented economies have led to regional trade and peace, in the Middle East, a particular version of authoritarianism, which is based on inward-looking model of governance, has exacerbated militarization and regional conflict.[83]

[80] Doyle 1983; Russett 1993. For a critique, see Layne 1994.
[81] For the association among authoritarianism, corruption, and violence in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Egypt, and Nigeria, see Chayes 2015.
[82] Solingen 2007, 757–8. [83] Solingen 2007, 761.

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Authoritarianism also leads to terrorism and civil conflicts by blocking peaceful power transition and radicalizing dissenting groups. Ideas and money support government as well as opposition in a democracy. When the system is authoritarian, violence is more likely to be used by both the government and the opposition.[84] In many Muslim countries, authoritarian regimes have survived by suppressing the opposition, leading the latter to turn to the use of force in order to capture the power.[85] In this condition of mutual violence, peaceful groups have had much less opportunity to survive than they would have had in democratic conditions.

The historical and socioeconomic roots of the authoritarian state have been so strong in most Muslim countries that it has persisted regardless of whether the official ideology is Islamism or secularism. In the twentieth century, secularist leaders, including Atatürk of Turkey, Reza Shah of Iran, Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt, and Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, established authoritarian regimes, which led to the radicalization of various Islamist and socialist groups. After the Iranian Revolution led by Khomeini, Islamists have shaped politics in many Muslim countries by becoming either a part of the government or an influential opposition.[86] Additionally, other Islamic actors, the ulema and Sufi shaykhs, have also gained more political influence in these countries. The increasing political influence of Islamic actors has not helped Muslim countries solve the problems of authoritarianism and violence; in fact, these Islamic actors have made these problems even more complicated. In short, the authoritarian state, regardless of whether it is dominated by secularists or Islamic actors, has been associated with terrorism, civil conflict, and war in many Muslim countries.

Recently, Sunni and Shii ulema have contributed to the escalation of violent sectarianism in the Middle East.[87] Sectarian tension has in turn fueled civil wars and terrorism in such cases as Iraq and Syria. The civil wars and the rise of ISIS in these two countries cannot be fully grasped without also exploring the roles of secularist and Islamist authoritarian regimes. Syria has been ruled by the Arab Socialist Baath Party controlled by the Alawite minority for half a century. Hafez al-Assad and later his son Bashar al-Assad conducted massacres against various Sunni insurgent groups, including Islamist Muslim Brothers, which ultimately helped ignite the current civil war. Political chaos engendered a safe haven for thousands of jihadists coming from Europe, MENA, and elsewhere, who formed various groups, including ISIS.

[84] Regan and Greed 2005, 334; Hegre et al. 2001.
[85] Hafez 2003; Wiktorowicz 2004; Khalid 2007, chs. 6 and 7; Rashid 2002, 144–55.
[86] Lust 2011; Akyol 2011, esp. 201.
[87] "The positions of the Saudi *ulama'* in relation to the Shi'a are explicable first and foremost by their theological and doctrinal opposition to Shi'a beliefs and practices." Ismail 2016, 199. Muslim sectarianism is not limited to the Middle East. In Pakistan, there has been a sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiis since the 1980s, in which many Sunni ulema are "hostile to the Shi'a." Zaman 2005, 67.

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In Iraq, the Arab Socialist Baath Party was controlled by the Sunni minority and ruled the country from 1968 to 2003. Saddam Hussein waged a decade-long war with Iran, invaded Kuwait, and massacred thousands of Shii Arabs and Kurds. After the US invasion, the Shii Islamist politicians dominated Iraqi politics. The Shii-dominated regime became so sectarian that many Sunnis joined Al-Qaeda and later ISIS.[88] In short, the Iraqi and Syrian civil wars and the rise of ISIS in these two countries had a complex background, including secularist and Islamist regimes, both of which were authoritarian.

This section has summarized how authoritarian states have caused wars, civil conflicts, and terrorism. Needless to say, authoritarian rulers are not the only cause of these problems. Violence is characteristically a multicausal phenomenon.[89] Previous sections revealed the roles of the colonial legacy, Jihadi-Salafism, and the ulema. There are also several socioeconomic factors, such as urban poverty[90] and the "youth bulge,"[91] which affect the authoritarian state, violence, and the relationship between the two. Muslim countries have generally suffered from these socioeconomic problems,[92] as elaborated in the subsequent two chapters.

CONCLUSION

During the last three decades, Muslims have participated in violence at a disproportionately high level. This cannot be explained by referring simply to some "essential characteristics" of Islam, because religions are open to diverse and contradictory interpretations. Beyond the diversity of theological views, there is also a gap between theology and human practice. The former is supposed to be based on religious texts, whereas the latter depends on human choices affected by structural conditions. Violence is a particularly complex phenomenon that is not confined to religious or secular ideas. Western colonialism has been a major condition for Muslims' engagement with violence. Yet Western colonialism has been neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for non-Western actors' engagement in violence.

[88] The pro-Iranian Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki discriminated against Sunnis in Iraq. He made a court sentence Sunni Vice-President Tariq al-Hashimi to death in absentia. When ISIS occupied Mosul few years later, Hashimi was among those who declared it better than Maliki's rule in the city.

[89] Dixon 2009; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Gupta 2008; Collier and Hoeffler 2004.

[90] Mousseau 2011; Collier 2007, ch. 2; Fish et al. 2010, 1337.

[91] Urdal 2004; Cammett et al. 2015, ch. 4. See also Shaykhutdinov 2011.

[92] Süveyda Karakaya (2013, 8) notes that "Muslim-plurality states are indeed disproportionally involved in domestic armed conflicts, but these states are also characterized by lower GDP per capita, oil dependency, state repression, autocracy, and youth bulges, all of which correlate strongly with domestic armed conflict." See also Sorli et al. 2005.

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Although depicting Islam as an essentially pro-violence religion is inaccurate, there is a particular interpretation of Islam, Jihadi-Salafism, which has been associated with terrorism. Muslim societies have largely been unable to counter the propaganda of ISIS and other jihadist groups. This inability has to do with the ulema's ambition to monopolize the interpretation of Islam and the resulting intellectual stagnation among Muslims. The ulema themselves could not produce effective counterarguments either, due to their focus on protecting the tradition rather than producing new ideas. The fact that Salafis, who have confronted the traditional authority of the mainstream ulema and Sufi shaykhs, ended up producing even more radical interpretations of Islam, has paradoxically made some Muslims more cautious about questioning the ulema and shaykhs.

The problem of violence cannot be understood without analyzing the problem of authoritarianism in many Muslim societies. Regardless of whether they are ruled by secularists or Islamists, most states in the Muslim world have continued to be authoritarian. These states have pursued oppressive policies and thus led to war, civil conflict, and terrorism. Chapter 2 will analyze why the overwhelming majority of Muslim-majority states have been authoritarian.

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