ABSTRACT

(IM)POSSIBLE MUSLIMS:

HIZB UT-TAHIR, THE ISLAMIC STATE, & MODERN MUSLIMNESS

Hasan Azad

Founded in 1952 by the Palestinian jurist Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909-1977), Hizb ut-Tahrir’s (HT) raison d’être is the re-establishment of the Caliphate. HT currently has a presence in over forty countries, an estimated membership of a million people, and some millions of supporters across the world. My dissertation examines how HT’s formulation of the caliphate—particularly as it expresses itself in Britain—functions as a site of “Muslim modernity.” It is my contention, in other words, that HT’s ideas of the caliphate are inseparable from, and are thought through—consciously and unconsciously—modern western notions of being and thinking which permeate “the unconscious of knowledge” for people around the world, for the crucial reason that colonialism fundamentally reconfigured knowledge systems across the world, not least the Muslim world. I argue, therefore, that contemporary modes of being Muslim—whether religiously, politically, culturally, ethically—are necessarily inflected by modern western notions of being, as they form the backdrop to our global sense of being in the world. As such, HT’s modern Islamic political project—or any Islamic project, for that matter—is not so much an alien mode of thinking about politics—or ethics, or culture, or religion, or what have you—vis-à-vis western modes of being and thinking, but rather is part and parcel of modern western life writ large.
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A project of this nature necessarily accrues debts, and such debts are not only financial. More significantly, they are personal. They say, or at least used to say, it takes a village to raise a child. To raise a dissertation out of what at first—so many years ago, at the start of one’s project—appears to be almost barren ground, takes a village, a community of interlocutors, teachers, love(r)s, children, parents, siblings, and, sometimes, enemies.

There were (and are) a few vital people without whom this dissertation would not have seen the light of day (or the dark of night, for that matter), and they are, first and foremost, my initial advisor at Columbia University, Rachel McDermott. Rachel somehow saw something in me the first time I ever sat in her office one summer afternoon in 2008 when I was discussing the possibility of doing a PhD at Columbia, studying something very different from what later became the focus of my dissertation research—Sufism in Bengal during the 16th and 17th centuries. Were it not for Rachel’s seemingly endless belief in me, when, more often than not, I lacked belief in myself over the years, I would certainly be in a different place today, and very much intellectually impoverished for it.

My subsequent advisor at Columbia University, Katherine Pratt Ewing, who took over my reigns from Rachel a year after joining the Religion faculty, mainly because I had decidedly moved away from Sufism in Bengal to look at the notion of the Islamic political—initially through the lens of HT, but later to encompass a wider lens in the form of the present study—has been a remarkable mentor in every sense of the word. Kathy’s mentorship is often subtle, never disparaging—which is a rare feat for any advisor—always astute, and, whenever necessary, challenging, the latter of which will typically strike me with a pang of annoyance, but, surely enough, with the benefit of a small amount of hindsight (say a week or two or three), it is always just what is necessary for me at the time.
I would like to thank all the members of the dissertation committee. Souleymane Bachir Diagne has seen the progress of my work almost since the beginning. My chapter on Iqbal began as a paper I wrote for him in his class on Islamic philosophy back in 2009, where I learned that professors at Columbia can be spiritually engaging at the same time as being philosophically rigorous. Bachir’s quiet support of me over the years has been a tremendous blessing. Katharina Ivanyi was a much needed sounding board for not a few of my ideas, and she very rightly pointed out where they needed tightening and fleshing out. Thank you for being a friend. John McGuckin is a towering spiritual-intellectual presence in the hallowed halls of the academy, and no words can fully convey my appreciation for his sagacity when I have needed it the most.

Now to say a little about my parents (this is not the obligatory nod to one’s parents that every writer is meant to make, at least in the first instance of a significant work or achievement): I am only very recently, at this somewhat late stage in my life—but always better late than never!—beginning to appreciate just how much I owe them. While they have shown their support in some somewhat unobvious ways over the years, they have also been a huge engine—perhaps one of the main engines—behind everything I think and do and aspire to achieve. My father is one of the most driven and hardworking people I know, and his passion for his own work, which is in the realm of business, I have always lived knowing and seeing. If it were not for those “genes,” I’m not sure anymore I would have embarked on a PhD in the first place, let alone do one at Columbia University, and actually have the courage to complete it—for, as anyone who has ever done a PhD will assure you, it takes a terrifying amount of grit to actually see a PhD to completion.

My mother is one of the most generous-hearted people I have ever met, and, as I say, it is only quite recently that I am coming to really appreciate how much of an
influence—consciously and unconsciously—my parents have been in my life. My mother’s deep trust in God and fortitude in the face of life’s difficulties—and she has certainly had her fair(?) share over the decades—are two other traits I am more and more appreciative of, and am more and more aware how much I owe her for the glimmerings of the same qualities I glimpse within myself from time to time.

There are so many more people I would like to thank, but simply am unable to within the confines of a dissertation’s “acknowledgements,” but I am eternally grateful to them—to you—all, more than can be done justice with a few sentences. I would like to end by making a final acknowledgement, and that is not of a person or persons, but of a place. The Hungarian Pastry Shop has been my daily refuge for a few years now, and today it is an undeniable fact that I pretty much get all my writing done there. (Indeed, I am writing these very words there right now.) Were it not for the incredibly generous spirit of the staff there, and the magical air of creativity that never fails to amaze me—even today, after so many years and countless times (sometimes twice, even thrice, in a day) I have been there—I quietly shudder to think what would happen to my writing. They say that every artist/writer/poet/thinker needs her/his muse. My muse is The Hungarian Pastry Shop, and I bow my head in deep, humble gratitude to her/him/it.
Dedication

For Zayn: although you will likely not read this for some years yet, the fact remains that you have been one of the profoundly motivating forces in my life—consciously and unconsciously. You have an immense spirit—one that is palpable to all—and I pray you go on to fill the world with hope and joy, just as you are endlessly joyous and hopeful.
Introduction

How does the influential Islamic political group Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) imagine the caliphate as a site of Muslim modernity and future for HT Muslims living and planning their futures in Britain? What is it about the idea of the caliphate that requires it to be singled out as a specter of radical disjuncture between Muslims and the West?

My dissertation examines this little-studied transnational (and transhistorical) Islamic political group and its concept of the caliphate, which it sees as the purpose of and means for all “Islamic” life. I consider how the caliphate enfolds ideas of Muslim being and becoming, perfection and imperfection, and an ideal(ized) past projected forward into an ideal(ized) future. Founded in 1952 by the Palestinian jurist Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909-1977), HT currently has a presence in over forty countries, an estimated membership of a million people, and some millions of supporters across the world. My dissertation examines how HT’s formulation of the caliphate—particularly as it expresses itself in Britain—functions as a site of “Muslim modernity.”

In a landmark speech delivered on July 20th, 2015, at Ninestiles School in Birmingham, then British Prime Minister David Cameron outlined his 5-year plan to fight extremism, remarking that extremist ideology is the “struggle of our generation.” During the course of his speech Cameron implicitly mentioned HT as a group that needed to be banned—harking to an explicit declaration made in 2007 by Cameron’s predecessor Tony Blair for the need to proscribe HT. The speech in 2015—which has been described as Cameron’s “extremism speech”2—has important connections

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1 The idea of “the Islamic” is a fraught one. On the one hand, scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr have argued for an

and continuities with his 2011 speech in Munich,\(^3\) in which he announced that it was necessary for a “muscular liberalism” to replace the multiculturalism that was to blame for the rise of extremism in Britain. In his extremism speech Cameron announced that “we need everyone—government, local authorities, police, schools, all of us—to enforce our values right across the spectrum.”\(^4\)

Now, while the actual qualities that go into defining extremism/extremists are being ironed out in Whitehall, some of the qualities have already been mentioned by Prevent—the government program for preventing radicalization\(^5\)—in discussions carried out by extremism experts (advised by organizations such as The Quilliam Foundation\(^6\)) surrounding such watchwords as “jihad,” “foreign policy,” “the ummah,” the “shari’a,” and the all-encompassing notion of “the caliphate.” Cage (a public advocacy group that represents people who have suffered what it sees as unjust jail terms and other losses of civil liberties as a result of the War on/of Terror) revealed documents to The Guardian provided by Prevent and its £120 million initiative for identifying potential extremists,


\(^4\) Although the speech expressly identifies “extremism” as found amongst Muslims as well as the far-right—such as with the English Defence League (EDL)—and despite Cameron’s anti-extremism proposal recently facing obstacles over questions with defining extremism, it is widely understood amongst Muslim commentators across-the-board—from HT to Salafi, from Sufi to Jama’ati—that it is Muslims as such who are the primary target of this initiative. Many non-Muslim secular commentators share this view.

This analysis is held to be true by these (supposedly) divergent camps, despite Cameron’s rather sophisticated rhetorical tropes, such as: “it’s only the extremists who divide people into good Muslims and bad Muslims.” The sophistication of this formulation emerges once we consider Mahmood Mamdani’s Good Muslim, Bad Muslim, whose central thesis is exactly the opposite of what Cameron is suggesting: that the US-led War on/of Terror, which has been adopted around the world, casts Muslims as either “good Muslims” (“moderate”) or “bad Muslims” (“extremist”). See Mahmood Mamdani, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004).

\(^5\) “The Prevent Agenda”: “Prevent is one of four work strands which make up the government's counter-terrorism strategy – CONTEST. The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism.”, http://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/the-prevent-agenda

\(^6\) The Quilliam Foundation is an “anti-extremism think tank” that receives significant government funding and support. It is widely criticized by Muslims for being a “irresponsible” pronouncements vis-à-vis Muslims and Islam and the extent of their sympathy for “extremist” views.
which is proving “naïve and dangerous,” even being responsible for questioning an eight-year-old boy about his religious beliefs after teachers at his school mistook his T-shirt as ISIS propaganda.

The concern for people in Whitehall raised by the watchwords (as well as the assumption that animates the monitoring of Muslims) is that “Muslims qua Muslims cannot be represented” in the West, and that they must be scrutinized for their suitability and either made to conform (they must be reformed), or they must be expelled, their organizations banned, and troublemakers jailed and/or deported. (In his extremism speech, Cameron mentions the case of Omar Bakri Mohammad, the former leader of HT, who later formed a splinter organization, al-Muhajiroun, and was deported to Jordan). All the watchwords (“jihad,” “the caliphate,” “foreign policy,” “the ummah,” and the “shari’a”) are subsumed under the idea of “the caliphate,” a notion that has a great deal of currency for members of HT and other Islamic political actors.

On the other hand, there is a strong sense even amongst many Muslims who are eminently not drawn to these all-too-often media-politically sensationalized notions—at least not in the media-political senses of these terms10—that the idea of the caliphate holds for them hope for true

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Similar styles of monitoring Muslim populations for fear of extremism exist in the US (as well as in the UK), where people's online activities are monitored by PRISM (GCHQ in the UK), whereby—through the combined efforts of companies such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Apple, Skype, and others, in coordination with governmental agencies, such as MI5, MI6, the CIA, and the FBI—potential national security threats are (supposedly) identified, and the necessary actions taken.


10 There is a growing body of academic literature on these very “watchwords” examining the complex and layered connotations that these terms have had and continue to have within an historical Islamic intellectual tradition. For example, see Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)
religious-political-ethical sovereignty. (All of this, however, is necessarily in an ideal(ized)—utopian—sense, as I argue during the course of my dissertation, and is always already doomed to fail.) There was a semi-academic panel discussion held at SOAS in April of 2016, in which the panelists—comprising academics, including Salman Sayyid, the author of *Recalling the Caliphate*[^11] and Reader of Rhetoric at the University of Leeds, as well as activists—discussed the needs for Muslims that would be fulfilled by a caliphate, not least of which would be political self-determination.

But these factors alone do not fully explain the way(s) in which the caliphate is of such major concern for Muslim actors. My question in the dissertation is, why the caliphate? What is it about the caliphate that makes it the focus of so much energy—in favor of, in opposition to, in defense of?

Time magazine ran an article in 2014 called “What is the Caliphate?”[^12] In it the author argues that the caliphate is an idea that is alive and well amongst Muslims of various stripes, from “extremists” to “moderates,” and that, according to some Muslims, it is just a matter of time—according to ISIS it is already here—before the caliphate returns:

> [M]any moderate Muslims like the idea [of the caliphate] as well. Some cite the dysfunction of the Arab world as defined by colonial borders, especially compared to Ottoman times. Others note that Catholics have their pope. “The concept of the caliphate is very much alive in the collective memory of society,” a Turkish author, Ali Bulac, once told me. “There is absolutely nothing to keep Muslim society together at the moment.”[^13]

Faisal Devji argues that the caliphate in contemporary times should be understood in solely metaphysical terms.[^14] For Salman Sayyid, who disagrees with Devji, the ideal of the caliphate


[^13]: Ibid.

[^14]: “The caliphate is not a political vision [so much?] as a metaphysical category. It remains only an ideal, with neither a description or any concrete plan to set it up. And in fact the caliphate’s rule thus far is simply conceptual, allowing the *jihad* to abandon the political geography of the Cold War, made up of national states grouped into various alliances, for a completely de-territorialized and even anti-geographical space, since the caliphate imagined by the *jihad* possesses neither center nor periphery…. After having been a dead letter for well over half a century, the caliphate has suddenly re-
appeals to the ummah as a “global diaspora.” Mona Hassan argues in *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* that the end of the Ottoman and Abbasid Caliphates in 1924 and 1258 respectively marked a significant trauma for Muslims across the globe: the implication being that this trauma has not yet been overcome by the world’s Muslims. It is my contention, as I discuss more fully later, that trauma narratives are often constructed in retrospect, and, as such, as far as the narrative of the trauma of the end of the Ottoman Caliphate is concerned—and as far as such a narrative constitutes the very raison d’être of HT’s mission—it should not to be taken as a given.

These answers don’t explain enough. Simply put, the caliphate is a signifier of far reaching ideas—and their attendant consequences—that have an impact on people’s (Muslims’ and otherwise) lives in complex, hitherto unthought-of ways. Further, the idea of the caliphate arguably does not hold major existential sway for the majority of today’s Muslims. A major study conducted by Gallup, whose findings were published by John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed as *Who Speaks For Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think* in 2007, finds that the majority of Muslims do want some form of shari’a in their lives. However, the understanding of what shari’a means, and to what extent it is to be applied varies. Tellingly, the study finds that most Muslims want some form of democracy—and not a “theocracy” or caliphate—in the countries in which they live.

So, what is it about the idea of the caliphate—and its attendant watchwords—that require its singling out as a sign and threat of radical difference between Muslims and the West? Some studies convincingly argue for the need for contextualizing the idea of the caliphate in our contemporary

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moment. For example, the edited volume *Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts* explores first “the immediate historical responses to the fall of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924 among Muslims as far as Jakarta….” The authors argue that “calls to re-establish the caliphate are not anchored in a pristine, traditional, scholastic longing for a bygone past but are a response to modernity and its conditions.”\(^{18}\) This is a significant departure from Hassan’s argument in that it posits a variegated and context-based approach to understanding how the caliphate has been understood—and continues to be remembered—historically and today.

In other words, we cannot take for granted the binaries that are posited: Islam/West; Democracy/Caliphate; Modernity/Tradition. These binaries fail to capture the complexities of the topics under consideration. “Rather, they are polemics that in fact create their own reality: incompatible cultures, a clash of civilizations” in the words of Joan Wallach Scott in her study of *The Politics of the Veil*.\(^{19}\)

I argue that the idea of the caliphate—for members of HT, as well as for other Muslims—functions as a complex site of Muslim modernity, which both inhibits and allows Muslims to partake in the modern (western) project of life and living. The idea of the caliphate both marks and unmarks, makes and remakes Muslims as political, epistemologically-grounded consumers of this contemporary post-colonial moment that we are all inevitably inhabiting—some more than others, others a little less so, but inhabiting nonetheless.

My decision to focus on the idea of the caliphate—rather than any of the other aforementioned “watchwords,” for example—jihad, foreign policy, the ummah, the shari’a—apart from its particular salience in current media-political discussions—is because it is a rich site for

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investigating the charged nature by which Muslims, their politics, their sense(s) of identity, their sense(s) of religiosity, their sense(s) of relating to the world are constructed both by media-political representations and themselves. The idea of the caliphate—within mainstream discourse—would appear to provide the final “argument” against the notion that Muslims might have any meaningful role to play in the (post)modern world (which appears to be the increasingly loud clarion call within the so-called developed world). It is my contention that the very notion of the caliphate—variously understood, and from the varying vantage points by which I examine the notion, with HT as the focal point, in fact ensures a real place for Muslims within the global political maelstrom and calm that constitute the modern world.

Hizb ut-Tahrir: history, ideology, methodology

The aim of Hizb ut-Tahrir is to resume the Islamic way of life and to convey the Islamic \( da'wah \) to the world. This objective means bringing the Muslims back to living an Islamic way of life in \( Dar al-Islam \) (land of Islam) and in an Islamic society such that all of life’s affairs are administered according to the Shari‘ah […] under the shade of the Islamic State.”

The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by Kemal Ataturk’s new Turkish Republic in 1924\(^20\) led Muslim intellectuals to seriously consider how such a tangible defeat of Islam and Muslims could have occurred and how it could be reversed.\(^21\) Many notable Islamic political thinkers argued that the Islamic Caliphate, or “Islamic State,” had to be revived in order for Muslims to once again be ascendant. Such Islamic political thinkers, including Abul A‘la Mawdudi (1903-1979), Hasan al-

\(^20\) See Mona Hassan’s *Longing for the Caliphate.*

\(^21\) During the mid- to late 19\(^\text{th} \) century, as well as during the early 20\(^\text{th} \) century, significant Muslim intellectuals questioned why the Islamic world, once indomitable, had been overtaken by the West. These early Islamic reformers concluded that this was due to Muslims’ straying from the true teachings of Islam, arguing that a thorough reconstruction of Islamic thought was necessary for Islam to regain its former glory. Such thinkers included Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abdur, and Muhammad Iqbal. See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, [1962] 1983), for an excellent overview of the kinds of questions that were being asked by the Muslim intelligentsia. See Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 2001), for Iqbal’s own assessment of the circumstances faced by Muslims.
Banna (1906-1949), and Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909-1977), founded important organizations (Jama’at-i Islami, The Muslim Brotherhood, and Hizb ut-Tahrir, respectively) which have garnered significant followings throughout the world.²² Although these organizations share many platforms, such as the importance of the (re)establishment of the Islamic Caliphate and the central role of the shari’a within the Islamic State, they have historically differed significantly in their methodologies and ideologies.

Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani witnessed first-hand some of the far-reaching changes undergone by the Muslim world in the first half of the twentieth century. The most significant changes for the Azhar-trained jurist from Palestine were the dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 and the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. As a result of these experiences, between the late 1940s and early 1950s, Nabhani drew a preliminary conclusion that would prove to be momentous. Contrary to Arab nationalists of the same period, he thought that the revival of the Arab world would be possible only through the formation of a vanguard party shorn of nationalistic sentiments, whose members were inspired individuals who would influence society and thereby unite the Arab world. This initial conclusion²³ was later elaborated into the pan-Islamic vision of the revival of the Caliphate by which HT has come to be identified.²⁴

The method for the reestablishment of the Caliphate, according to Nabhani and HT, was not to be through violent means; nor was it to be through parliamentary elections, for the nation-

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²² It is estimated that the total number of MB members and supporters are in the many millions. Source: The American Foreign Policy Council’s World Almanac of Islamism, http://almanac.afpc.org/muslim-brotherhood. JI’s exact current global membership is unknown, but it is estimated that it runs in the hundreds of thousands. For the estimated million members in HT see Shiv Malik, “For Allah and the caliphate,” New Statesman, September 13, 2004, http://www.newstatesman.com/node/195114.


²⁴ Al-Nabhani’s ideas for the reestablishment of the Islamic State, as well as how the Caliphate would function once established, together with its operational details of Hizb ut-Tahrir and its ideologies, are presented in such key works as Taqi al-Din al-Nabhan, Nidham al-Islam (Al-Quds: Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1953); al-Dawlat al-Islamiyyah (Al-Quds: Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1953); and Shakhsiyyah Islamiyyah, 3 vols., (Al-Quds: Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1953).
state is a “political unit that HT believes to be anathema to Islam.”

Rather it would be through the (re)education of Muslims about “true” Islam, wherein the Caliphate is of paramount importance. Muslims who did not strive for the return of the Islamic State are deemed to be in a state of jahiliyyah, a term classically applied to the pagan Arabs before the coming of Islam, and which means ignorance. They base this judgment, as they do with almost all their pronouncements, by quoting from the Quran and hadith texts. In this case they cite the hadith, “Whosoever dies without having a bay’ab (pledge of allegiance to the Khaleefah) upon his neck, dies the death of jahiliyyah.” It is important to note that bay’ab simply means “pledge of allegiance,” and it has classically, and most commonly, been used in the case of a spiritual aspirant’s pledge of allegiance to his/her spiritual master within a Sufi order, but HT interprets it to apply solely to one’s oath of allegiance to the Islamic ruler. What is important to mention here is that HT members consider themselves to be the intellectual/ideological vanguard of Sunni Islam(ism) and it is their duty to make Muslims aware of their global Muslim brotherhood, together with their responsibilities as Muslims—that is adherence to the “pillars” of Islam—all the while being reminded of their past greatness, and how, through colonial and neo-colonial conspiracies, the Caliphate has been wrested from the hands of Muslims. For HT the original brilliance of Islam had already begun to lose its luster by the 2nd century AH.

For example, in Hizb ut-Tahrir, which very much reads as the party manifesto, it is said the Islamic ummah must be revived:


27 Zeyno Bayran, “Fighting the War of Ideas,” Foreign Affairs 84, no. 6 (November-December, 2005), 68.

28 The five pillars of Islam are “iman, belief,” “shahadah, testimony,” “salat, prayer,” “zakat, the poor tax,” and “hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah.”
from the decline that she has reached, and her liberation from Kufr thoughts, systems and laws, and from the domination and influence of the Kufr states—all this must be achieved by raising her intellectually through the fundamental and comprehensive change of the thoughts and concepts that led to her decline and bringing about within her the Islamic thoughts and concepts, and by shaping her attitude towards life solely according to the thoughts and laws of Islam.29

“Londonistan”: locating HT and political Islam/s in London

Hizb ut-Tahrir (“The Party of Freedom/Liberation”) seeks to replace all current forms of government—whether “secular” or “Islamic”—with a global caliphate that “correctly” and “fully” implements the shari’a. HT is secretive and hierarchical, practices which are among the guarantors of the rather surprising ideological unity amongst its members. It has a network of national branches in the UK—as is the case in other countries of its operation, such as France, Germany, Holland, Turkey, Australia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Bangladesh—each one of which is overseen by an emir (leader) who is in turn accountable to an overall leader based in Palestine. Affiliation with the group entails distribution of HT’s literature, and eventual membership is a process in which new recruits must prove their loyalty. They aspire to become daris, or students, who in turn seek to become full members. Both men and women are expected to use all social situations they participate in to recruit new members. This policy accounts for HT’s enthusiastic adoption, compared to other Islamic political groups, of the internet and social media platforms. Once new recruits have proved their commitment they are assessed by a committee and allowed to attend the weekly halaqa. The halaqa (literally meaning “circle,” which is typically translated as “study circle”) takes its name from the historic method of learning where students would sit in a circle on the floor of a mosque or a teacher’s home with the teacher, or shaykh, sitting at the head of the circle. It is a method of teaching and learning that is still widely used by Muslims throughout the world. Halaqas can cover any range of topics that are deemed “Islamic” and which are covered by

29 Hizb ut-Tahrir, 6-7.
the five pillars: theoretically, because Islam is seen as “a complete way of life” by self-identified “practicing Muslims,” all subjects are relevant for study. In their balaqas, HT members also listen to readings from books by Nabhani, whose central message is the re-establishment of the caliphate. At the lower levels, members do not discuss the party’s goal. Members are expected to accept that, through the hard work of party members, each country will embrace HT’s idea of the caliphate and demand that there be a peaceful transition to it.

Members are not allowed to question the party line—which was foundationally outlined by Nabhani, but later added to by Abdul Qadeem Zallum, the second leader of HT. If members have any questions or concerns with party positions, they are expected to raise it through “the structure,” but, as Umm Mustafa, the pseudonymous author of the 2008 New Statesman article “Why I left Hizb ut-Tahrir,”30 and others have found, such challenges are consistently responded to by senior members in terms of their inability to speak beyond the “party jargon or look at the other side of an argument.”31 Freely expressing one’s opinions or making “challenging statements” is frowned upon. If a member persists in their questions, they are eventually reported to the leadership as a “breakaway” member, which is “party code for anyone who questions the party’s principles.”32 Such a person must either recant or resign their membership.

Regarding London’s suitability for the presence of HT—as many people consider it to be the de facto headquarters of HT—this goes back to the late 1980s when the phenomenon pejoratively referred to as “Londonistan” (also known as the “Covenant of Security”33) was underway. During


31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

this initiative, Britain gave refuge to Islamic political actors from around the world on the understanding they could continue to oppose regimes in their countries of origin, but they would not carry out violent acts on British soil.\[^{34}\] This policy brought many senior Islamic political actors to the UK, including members of HT, Jama’at-i-Islami, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Many of these leaders set up organizations that were to have a major impact within the UK. Perhaps most significantly, they politicized first- and second-generation Muslim immigrants who were torn between a Britain that seemed hostile to their presence\[^{35}\] and the “folk-Islam” of their parents’ generations. The ummah-centric Islam of Islamic political actors allowed them to find a global identity as Muslims, over and above any racial, ethnic, or British sense of identity.\[^{36}\]

The Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’at-i Islami should be examined “together,” as it were, since historically they each have responded to the same demand of trying to create an Islamic State under modern conditions; furthermore, Jama’at-i Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood have for some years exhibited considerable overlap within Britain, as far as their understanding of the need to be accommodating of local political conditions. Also, there appears to be a great deal of fluidity between the two organizations. The Islamic Foundation UK (a Jama’at-i Islami-inspired organization, of which the prominent Jama’at-i Islami thinker Khurshid Ahmad is chairman) regularly publishes books by both Mawdudi and al-Banna (the founders of Jama’at-i Islamic and the Muslim Brotherhood, respectively).\[^{37}\] The Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’at-i Islami have shared


\[^{35}\] The overt racism of the 80s and the 90s led many leading British Islamists to adopt an ideological form of Islam, according to former HT member, and Chairman of The Quilliam Foundation, Maajid Nawaz. See his memoir Radical: My Journey from Islamist Extremism to a Democratic Awakening (London: W.H. Allen, 2012).


\[^{37}\] Its titles (under the new imprint of Kube Publishing) include: Mawdudi’s Towards Understanding Islam, The Islamic Way of Life: Islam: A Historical Perspective; and The Islamic Movement: Dynamics of Values, Power and Change; Khurshid Ahmad’s Islam: Its Meaning and Message; Tariq Ramadan’s Islam, the West and the Challenge of Modernity and To Be a European Muslim; Hasan al-
many religio-political forums: for example the Muslim Brotherhood member Kamal Helbawy moved to Khurshid Ahmad’s Institute of Policy Studies in Pakistan in 1988, before finally moving to Britain where he was for some time the Muslim Brotherhood’s official spokesperson in the West.\textsuperscript{38}

Former senior members of both groups have formed other Islamist organizations in Britain. Both Jama’at-i Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood share many of HT’s ideological positions, such as the need to re-establish the Caliphate, an anti-western stance (most recently, with regard to British foreign policy in the Middle East, and its endeavors in Afghanistan and Iraq), and the belief in the centrality of the shari’a. Nevertheless, both Jama’at-i Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood look upon HT as a group of limited significance. There are a few reasons for this: first, HT is seen as too ideologically driven and impractical for insisting on the re-establishment of the caliphate according to their understanding; second, it is seen to be too critical of (British) governmental policies; third—and this relates to the other two points—it is seen as not being accommodating enough as far as its relationship to the wider (British) publics.

The idea of the shari’a has for a long time amongst Muslims—at least since colonial times, and especially in the past few decades since the so called Islamic revival in the 1970s—taken on the specter of an all-encompassing, almost mythical quality, under which all of life’s activities are subsumed. Wael Hallaq has argued over the years that the shari’a as an institution has long been, if not entirely defunct, then at the very least significantly limited. Hallaq has perhaps definitively described the far-reaching consequences brought about to the historic institution of the shari’a, which, according to Hallaq, was primary ethical, and not punitive, rooted as it was in the people.

\textsuperscript{38} See “Profile: Dr. Kamal Helbawy,” Islamism Digest 2, no. 10 (October 2007), 7. Islam Digest is published by the Center for the Study of Terrorism (CFSOT), chaired by Helbawy.
The traditional institution of the shari'a—that is, since the evisceration of the historic shari'a by colonial powers beginning in the 18th century—\(^{39}\) is now no more, according to Hallaq, for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the simple fact that the precolonial epistemological-economic-structural conditions that allowed for it to thrive as it once did, are no more.

At the same time, I would argue Hallaq’s description of premodern shari'a still falls within the parameters of an ideal that must remain, and perhaps always was, an ideal—never entirely realized:

The law of the Muslim God is the Sharia, plain and simple. And the Sharia is the moral code, a representation of His moral will, the first and final concern. The rest is details, including the technical body of the law and, more importantly, any form of worldly political rule. The Sharia, God's Law and Will, precedes any and all such rule both logically and in time.\(^{40}\)

Shahab Ahmed’s posthumously published masterwork, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* unsettles any neat—and hegemonic—notions of what it means to be “Islamic,” arguing that Muslims throughout history have had a complex, and oftentimes contradictory relationship to God, Revelation, the Prophetic wont, and the Law.\(^{41}\) In this regard, and as a further mode of problematizing Hallaq’s all-embracing notion of the shari'a, I am reminded of Saskia Sassen’s notion of the “penumbra,” and how, when there is a “powerful” theory that sets out to categorically explain things, Sassen argues for the need to unearth what things such grand theories (for our present purposes, that of Hallaq) leave out, as far as more fine-grained analyses of things.\(^{42}\)

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All this being said, however, HT, Jama’at-i Islami, and the Muslim Brotherhood do see the shari’a as an all-embracing reality, akin to that of Hallaq’s analyses, and this is where the three groups overlap considerably. Where HT on the one hand, and the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’at-i Islami on the other, seem to part ways is in their position with regard to jihad. HT does not believe that the type of jihad conducted by al-Qaeda (which traces its ideological roots back to the one time member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb [1906-1966]) or Hamas (the splinter-group of the Muslim Brotherhood operating in Palestine) is in accordance with Islamic principles, while senior Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’at-i Islami members have spoken in praise of Iraqi “insurgents,” for example. It is in fact a foundational ideological position of HT that jihad can only be prosecuted by the Caliph\(^{43}\) (a position, incidentally, in keeping with classical and medieval theories of jihad \(^{44}\)).

HT’s disavowal of violence is initially surprising, given that of all Islamic political groupings no other group has been as systematic and trenchant in its critique of Western powers as far as their hegemony in Muslim lands, as HT has been. The somewhat surprising reason why Jama’at-i Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood are considered less threatening than HT is because the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’at-i Islami-led organizations do not publically advertise themselves as such, but rather as various non-affiliated Islamic educational and religious-cultural centers. A good example of this is the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre—constituting the largest mosque and cultural center in Europe, it has members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’at-i Islami in its highest positions of leadership.

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\(^{44}\) See for example: Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyar al-Muluk*, *Rules for Kings*; Al-Mawardi, *Kitab al-Abkam al-Sultaniyah*, *The Ordinances of Rule*; al-Ghazzali, *Naviñat al-muluk*, *Advice to Kings*. In all of these texts the fortunes of *din* and *dawla*, or religion and rule, are intertwined. It is expounded that the Caliph (or Sultan, or King, depending on the language being used) must be continually engaged in the “spreading of Islam,” that is conquering lands for the establishment of Islamic rule. It is noteworthy that these texts were primarily apologia, written in the face of contrary political realities where concessions to the ideal presented by theorists of governance had to be constantly made in the interests of political stability. Cf. Hamilton Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 142.
HT’s attitude towards jihad is a crucial aspect of HT’s program for the “(re)education” of Muslims, and it remains one of its pillars—maintained by its members with the stringency required of them by their party, in an endless supply of leaflets, magazines, and online articles—all pointing out the continual hatred (as HT has it) towards Islam and Muslims that is exhibited by the West (led, since the end of the Second World War, by the US45). Most significantly, though, the major difference between HT and the other two groups is in the manner in which they “speak” about jihad in public. HT members are very clear that Muslims need to actually learn about “the rules of jihad” according to the traditional Islamic understanding. They contend that if Muslims actually knew about these rules, then there would be no possibility of violent acts being carried out by Muslims. As for the other two groups, they would appear to be more mealy-mouthed on the topic. As HT members would put it, they “talk a good talk in public” about the need to stamp out extremism in order to appease media-political pressures; however, they speak of jihad in praising terms amongst themselves. At the same time, Jama’at-i Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood lack a clear program for jihad, while HT insists that it must—and can only be—pursued by an/the Islamic State.

The implications of the above are that HT presents itself—for its members, sympathizers, and detractors—as a clear (some say radical) alternative to western modes of being and thinking, upholding (and preaching) a clear message of political, epistemological, and religious-ethical unity in the face of an overweening West. Jama’at-i Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, are inconsistent, and, as far as members of HT are concerned, far too willing to compromise Islamic principles in order to appease media-political narratives in Britain and beyond.

Islamic “decoloniality”: Hizb ut-Tahrir and the “Other”

My dissertation as a whole seeks to address the notion of a decolonial Islam—increasingly being taken up by people writing on Islam in the West, as has been described by Salman Sayyid, and also—implicitly but perhaps more definitively as far as the idea of the shari’a is concerned—by Wael Hallaq. The idea of decolonial Islam seeks to recuperate a pristine, premodern/precolonial Islam from the modern western epistemic entanglements of contemporary Islam. In many ways, HT’s idea of the caliphate and its critique of western political-economic endeavors in the Muslim world can be located within such a decolonial Islamic discourse, as for example HT’s program for reeducating Muslims by providing a critique—ideological, ethical, religious, political—of western modes of living and being. In *Enemy in the Mirror*, Roxanne Euben argues that the critiques of the West by Muslim thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb, Jamal al-Din Afghani, and Ayatollah Khomeini can be compared to the critiques of the West—in terms of its “crisis of authority,” “moral decay,” and “decline of community”—made by western thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Alisdair MacIntyre, and Robert Bellah.46 I examine the limitations on HT’s thought in relation to its critique of the West placed by the British imaginaire as far as political and media representations of HT as an “extremist/radical Islamist” group.47 In addition, I examine the self-limitations HT—and other Islamic formations—places upon their (own) modes of critical discourse.

In *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tabrîr and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*,48 Suha Taji-Farouki traces the history of HT, from Nabhani’s earlier days as a jurist in Palestine, until the Arab defeat in 1948, when he fled to Syria, to when he returned to Palestine and al-Nabhani’s association with a


group of western-educated emerging leaders whose ideas were similar to those of the Ba‘ath party. Analyzing Nabhani’s writings, which are central to HT, Taji-Farouki argues that the revolutionary streak running through the party’s ideas were likely inherited by the founder’s early associations with the group of western-educated intellectuals. In this way, although she does not explicitly say as much, Taji-Farouki is pointing to the way/s in which HT’s and Nabhani’s discourses surrounding Islam seek to create an alternative—decolonial—religious, ethical, political model to that of the West.

Emmanuel Karagiannis’s, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*49 examines the rise of political Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia, as well as the origins and current status of Hizb ut-Tahrir—its rise in the region from Kazakhstan to Russia and China. Karagiannis ends his work with an assessment of the “threat” of HT to the region, wherein he argues that the continued absence of violence on HT’s part can be explained by the stringency of the group’s ideology, in this case vis-à-vis violence. Here also, the idea that HT provides an alternative, decolonial, and empowering narrative to the dominant models of political and ethical life for an impoverished stratum of society comes to the fore.

Reza Pankhurst’s more recent *Hizb ut-Tahrir: The Untold History of the Liberation Party*50—Pankhurst was until recently a member of HT—provides a sympathetic account of the history and practices of HT. His work, however, suffers from some crucial theoretical gaps. For example, Pankhurst assumes—in keeping with HT’s wider narrative—that the history of HT’s thought has drawn on “normative” Islam. What I argue in various ways throughout my dissertation is that there can be no “normative” (contemporary) Islam that has not already been thought through—consciously and unconsciously—modern western paradigms of thought. Furthermore, and in keeping with the above, unlike many studies of the Islamic political, however, it is not my argument (at least not my

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central argument) that HT provides a simple counter-narrative. My contention is that Hizb ut-Tahrir must be examined from the perspective of religious doctrine, inter-group “rivalry,” as well as “borrowing”—locating it amongst the discursive traditions of Islam—and the complex ways in which it relates to other groups, and the ways in which it redefined by its context. In addition, and significantly, I shed light on the western ethical, cultural, media-political, epistemological context within which HT locates itself (consciously and unconsciously), and the ways in which this context significantly (re)shapes HT’s discourse. As such, my underlying premise is that the idea of decolonial Islam is an impossibility.

Thus, when Reza Pankhurst’s The Inevitable Caliphate: A History of the Struggle for Global Islamic Union, 1924 to the Present provides a history of some of the movements in the twentieth-century—The Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, al-Qaeda, and less well-known groups such as Tanzeem-e-Islaami and Tahreek-e-Khilafat—and their claims to the call for a caliphate, he seeks to present the caliphate “on its own terms.” My argument, in contrast, is that the theorization of the/a caliphate (implicitly and explicitly) in contradistinction to modern western political formations, means that aspects of the modern nation-state—its law, its bureaucracy, its culture, among others—become incorporated into the very formulations of the/a caliphate. Claims of splendid (theoretical) isolation vis-à-vis the dominant political-epistemological-theological paradigms become less tenable upon closer scrutiny. The counterpoint to Pankhurst’s thesis is provided in particular by my chapter “The Islamic State is Not a Dream’: Hizb ut-Tahrir’s Thinking Through the Modern State.”

The volume Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts (2012)—briefly mentioned earlier—explores first “the immediate historical responses to the fall of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924 among Muslims as far as Jakarta…. Rather than perpetuating an

unfounded claim that Muslims have not recovered from the fall of the Ottoman caliphate and are continuing to suffer a humiliating crisis and a desire to reverse the turn of events, we find that Muslim reactions were as diverse as the cultural, historical, and national contexts in which they lived.”52 The authors therefore “dismiss sensational generalizations about the psychological communal trauma suffered by all Muslims the day after the Ottoman caliphate was abolished.”53 Second, the volume examines the diverse contemporary Muslim debates surrounding the caliphate, which either “glorify” it, “condemn it, or reinterpret it,” and highlights how they draw on the “diverse historical memory following 1924.” The authors argue that “calls to re-establish the caliphate are not anchored in a pristine, traditional, scholastic longing for a bygone past but are a response to modernity and its conditions.”54 I agree with the final portion of the above analysis; however, again, I shed different light. A portion of my analysis and argument (in “The Islamic State is not a Dream,” and “The Khilafah is On the Horizon”) examines how certain conditions of possibility create a sense of loss. Trauma—as we know from psychoanalytic theory—can be “discovered” much later on in the history of a person (or community’s in this case).55 Thus, HT’s sense of Mourning vis-à-vis the end of the Ottoman Caliphate—which some have argued has permeated the narratives of many Muslim actors as well as their organizations—is part of a significant sense of Muslim self-identification with regard to a “Caliphate-to-come.” This “inevitable caliphate”—to borrow from the title of Pankhurst’s aforementioned book—according to the majority of Sunni Muslim scholars and intellectuals argue from a variety of religious-political viewpoints—from the overtly Islamic political to the overtly apolitical—has been promised by the

52 Al-Rasheed, et al., Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts, 22.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 30.
Prophecy himself. It is my contention that the contemporary context cannot be divorced from this theological-historical memory, shaped as it is by a major Prophetic tradition (and of course, the Prophetic traditions form one half of Muslim scholastic memory, which, despite the authors of *Demystifying the Caliphate* insisting otherwise, is inseparable from Muslim religious-political formation[s]).

I therefore problematize Mona Hassan’s reading of the “traumatic” end of the caliphate. I argue—in keeping with critical theorist Dominick LaCapra’s groundbreaking intervention into the subject of trauma studies—that the idea of “trauma” poses many problems for historians and analysts, and cannot be taken as an empirical given, so to speak, as we look back into history, and even to our present moment(s). I examine the manner in which the idea of the end of the Ottoman Caliphate is imagined and experienced as the object of Mourning par excellence, and, as such, it cannot ever be retrieved.

For Salman Sayyid—also mentioned earlier—in *Recalling the Caliphate: Decolonization and World Order*, the concept of the caliphate is “a metaphor for the struggles between Muslim aspirations to re-order the postcolonial world and the investments in the continuations of the violent hierarchies of coloniality.” Sayyid argues that Orientalism, in the widest sense of the term, creates an Islam that restricts Muslims from participating in meaningful dialogue between the power/knowledge brokers

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56 According to a famous Prophetic tradition found in the hadith collection of Ahmad ibn Hanbal: “Prophethood will last among you for as long as God wills, then God will take it away. It will be followed by a rightly guided caliphate according to the ways of Prophethood. It will remain for as long as God wills – then God will take it away. Thereafter will come hereditary leadership, which will remain for as long as God wills – then He will lift it if He so wishes. Thereafter will come great oppression, and it will last for as long as God wills, then He will lift it if He so wills. Thereafter will come a rightly guided caliphate according to the ways of the Prophethood.” Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: Muassisa al-Risala, 1999), no. 17680. This hadith is often cited by HT members as proof of the inevitable return of caliphate, since – as it is also widely interpreted by Sunni Muslims of various affiliations – Muslim history has passed through all of the stages mentioned in the tradition. Muslims have for some time been in the penultimate stage, and are awaiting the return of “the rightly guided caliphate.”


of the West. For Sayyid, what is essential is that Muslims re-articulate their subjectivity in contrast distinction to the West. “Recalling the caliphate,” argues Sayyid, “is a decolonial declaration, it is a reminder that Islam is Islam, and for Muslims that is all it needs to be.”\textsuperscript{59} It is my contention that the dialogue between the power/knowledge of the West has been happening since the early history of colonialism, and not least of all since Muslims have become firmly instated within Western countries, such as the UK, and have been attending western schools and colleges. The “Islamic subjectivity” that Sayyid argues ought to be re-instated and reclaimed by Muslims has been going on for some time. An important example of this emerges in the writings of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} century’s most important Muslim thinker, the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), in his formulation of the Muslim self, as I argue in my chapter “Reconstructing the Muslim Self: Muhammad Iqbal, Khudi, and the Modern Self.” It is my contention that Iqbal’s formulation(s) of the modern Muslim self is deeply indebted to modern western notions of the self. In a similar fashion—although with some key differences—I argue in the chapter “Nabhani’s (Modern) Islamic Personality” that HT’s idea of the Islamic Personality, who is meant to go forth into the world and (re)establish the Islamic State, is inseparable from modern western assumptions of the self.

**Methodology and description of chapters**

Methodologically, I use a tapestry of approaches. I examine a range of “texts”—texts published by HT; interviews conducted with members of HT during the summer of 2011 and between October 2012 and May 2013; interviews conducted with former HT members at various times during the course of the past decade; newspapers articles; TV shows. I utilize critical-psychoanalytic readings informed by Slavoj Žižek. I use a range of historical and philosophical readings, too numerous to enumerate here. What I will mention is an insight from Michel Foucault.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 191.
Foucault writes of “a fundamental arrangement of knowledge” in his *The Order of Things*.\(^{60}\)

According to Clare O’Farrell:

What [Foucault] means by this is that each historical period orders knowledge and constructs concepts according to certain rules. These rules can be deduced from a study of the traces of past knowledge and practices. It is far easier to see these in hindsight than deduce the rules that underlie our current practices. Foucault also uses the terms ‘the unconscious of knowledge’, the ‘archive’ and ‘implicit knowledge’ and ‘conditions of possibility’ to refer to the same ideas. \(^{61}\)

This idea of “the unconscious of knowledge” informs—explicitly and implicitly, consciously and unconsciously—my own attempts at un-weaving the oftentimes knotty problems surrounding the notion the caliphate as it pertains initially to HT, but more broadly to Muslims and their Others.

In chapter 1, “Founding HT: History, Theory, Practice,” I examine HT’s history, their theories, and their practice. I do so by examining their literature, and do so significantly—though not solely—through the two key works by Reza Pankhurst. The first is the already mentioned *The Inevitable Caliphate*, and the second is his even more recent *Hizb-ut-Tahrir: The Untold History*. I argue that the two works—published by academic presses, function as both secondary and primary texts, and, as such, I employ something of a deconstructive reading as far as HT’s ideas are concerned. How the works function as secondary sources is obvious enough. As for their functioning as primary texts—that is, as far as enunciating HT’s own perspectives on things—Pankhurst was until fairly recently a senior member of HT Britain. However, he does not mention this crucial point in his first work, when he was still a member of HT during it publication. As for the second, it was published after he left HT, and the publication of the work was delayed as a result. And yet, his

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membership in HT is only mentioned in passing. All of which is to say there are some fascinating slippages from Pankhurst the academic (he obtained his PhD in political science from the London School of Economics), and these lend themselves to reading(s) against the grain. I also examine the notion of “influence” as far as the “originality” of HT’s thought—specifically that of its founder, Nabhani. I contend that it is impossible for anyone to be original, not because there is nothing (or no new ideas, in our case) new under the sun, to (mis)quote Ecclesiastes 1:9, but because we all inhabit—whether we are aware of it or not—the unconscious of knowledge, and, therefore, whenever we enunciate “new” modes of thinking—whether political, religious, ethical, economic, or what have you—we are always already doing so by implicit reference to that backdrop of ideas and modes of being and thinking.

In Chapter 2, “The Islamic State is not a Dream: Hizb ut-Tahrir’s Thinking Through the Modern State,” I argue that the concept of the caliphate/Islamic state, as theorized by HT, is articulated by modern conditions of possibility, particularly those which animate the modern state. I look at the complex ways in which the modern construct of the “nation” is thought through in order to imagine the nation of the Islamic state. I argue that the institution of the modern nation-state becomes normalized—even while HT eschews the idea of the nation-state, arguing that it is “un-Islamic.” I examine how the (invented) trauma of the end of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924—which occupies a central place within HT’s narrative—relates to the eighteenth century creation of the modern self and the concurrent invention of trauma. For HT, the idea of the trauma of the end of the caliphate is inextricably bound to the way in which the modern Muslim self is imagined within the borders of the Islamic state. I argue that such a modern Muslim self is analogous—though not equivalent—to the modern self formed in the milieu of subcontinental nationalism. Finally, I posit that, just as the modern state assumes a particular subjectivity (a citizen who is equal to all other citizens, and who is subject to the same all-encompassing law of the state), similarly, HT’s Islamic state constructs a
citizenry that is subject to an all-embracing, codified shari’a—whereas, under premodern conditions, the shari’a was never predetermined.

Chapter 3, “‘The Khilafah is on the Horizon!’ Or, How the Islamic State Must Always Be Postponed: Some Žižekian-Psychoanalytic Reflections on HT,” is an examination of some of the key concepts of HT—such as the notion of a “truly Islamic” identity; the progressive “decline” of the Muslim ummah; the need for (re)establishing the Caliphate; HT’s use of technology; their very postmodern self-hood—through a critical-psychoanalytical lens, particularly as afforded by a close reading of philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek in his lecture “A Plea for Fundamentalism,”62 and by Fethi Benslama’s *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam.*63 I argue that, taking into consideration Freud’s idea of Mourning, and how the object of Mourning can never be truly reconciled—and reading the end of the caliphate as the object of loss *par excellence* within HT’s Islamist imaginary—the Caliphate must always *necessarily* remain an object of loss, and therefore it can never be re-realized. In this regard I differ from Mona Hassan’s reading of the *givenness* of the trauma following the end of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 (as well as the end of the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258). I problematize Hassan’s reading, arguing (in keeping with critical theorist Dominick LaCapra’s64 intervention in trauma studies) that the idea of “trauma” poses many problems for historians and analysts, and cannot be taken as an empirical. I examine the manner in which the idea of the end of the Ottoman Caliphate is *imagined* and *experienced* as the object of Mourning *par excellence,* and, as such, it cannot ever be retrieved.


64 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History,*.)
In Chapter 4, “Reconstructing the Muslim Self: Muhammad Iqbal, Khudi, and the Modern Self,” I examine one of the 19th and 20th centuries’ most influential Muslim thinkers, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) and his radically new understanding of Islamic selfhood. For Iqbal, the self (khudi) was marked by an individuality that made it distinct and inherently equipped to overcome colonial incursions. Iqbal put this down to Ibn ‘Arabi’s (1165-1240) “Neo-Platonist doctrine of sheep” of wabdat-al-wujud. The chapter examines the ways in which Iqbal’s ideas of the self derive from a specifically modern, Western notion of the self that has its history in Rene Descartes’ cogito ergo sum—a modern selfhood entailing independence and uniqueness, and which became the standard in Europe after the 18th century. It is a self whose worth is measured by what it produces, and by its relationship to the world as a creator. When Iqbal writes that “man becomes unique by becoming more and more like the most unique individual [God],” the chapter investigates how Iqbal’s approach to the Muslim self is thought through Western categories—beginning with the self, but extending to the pan-Islamic nation (the ummah), and nationalism—and how such an imagining delimits his very (re)construction of Islam, thereby further imbricating “Islam” within Eurocentric power-knowledge. The chapter reflects on the importance of examining perhaps the foundational theoretical assumption of the modern Muslim experience—Muslim selfhood—and how such an examination is essential for the process of decolonial thinking to begin. My decision to focus on Iqbal is precisely because of his reflecting upon and reflections of the weltanschauung, which, according to Foucault’s conception of “the unconscious of knowledge,” necessarily informs all who live and breathe within this milieu. This chapter, therefore, paves the way for my examination of


66 My insistence on the pervasiveness and persistence of modern western paradigms is not to sound a triumphalist horn, but to state a widely recognized reality, the coming about of which—not to mention sustainability—is owed in no small part to an active program of re-education of the colonies by colonial projects.
Nabhani’s idea of the Islamic Personality, in Chapter 5, and his own way(s) in which he enunciates an Islamic selfhood (implicitly or explicitly) by recourse to modern western notions of selfhood.

In Chapter 5, “Nabhani and Hizb ut-Tahrir’s (Modern) Islamic Personality, I argue that the idea of the Islamic Personality formulated by the founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, is developed as a means for countering (neo)colonial incursions in the lives and lands of Muslims throughout the world. The very name Hizb ut-Tahrir means The Party of Liberation. It is my contention, however, that in enunciating such an Islamic Personality, Nabhani and Hizb ut-Tahrir (unconsciously) make use of modern western paradigms about how the self is thought of, what the relationship of that self is to the rest of the world, and how the “Islam” that is upheld and (supposed to be) implemented by the same Islamic Personality is dependent on western/Orientalist notions of Islam.

In Chapter 6: “When Islam(ism) Came from the West: The Realities of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Bangladesh,” I examine the rise and the eventual banning of HT in Bangladesh (HTB), and as part of my analysis of HTB I grapple with a particular line of inquiry—why it is that HTB is largely comprised (although not solely) of members of, what Ali Riaz identifies as, the “urban elite-centric.” My decision to examine HTB is threefold: First, it allows me to examine the formation of a branch of HT in a majority Muslim country, which is significant because according to HT members (and as also echoed by Pankhurst) the formation of an Islamic state is meant to occur within a Muslim majority country. Second, it sheds light on the manner in which the UK functions as de facto headquarters for HT (although HT member strenuously deny this, and this position is echoed further by Pankhurst) as it seeks to established HT outposts in the Muslim world. Third, it allows me to examine the manner in which “secularism” (violently) manifests itself in the context of

a country whose relationship to democracy is a checkered one, and which is considered an ally of the UK. Such an examination sheds light on some of the ways Islam(ism), (western?) secularism, and democracy are inextricably entangled.

As part of my analysis I consider some of the rhetorical strategies used by HTB—such as the narrative of neo-imperial machinations by the US, as well as “westernization” and its associated ills. I also consider what some of the implications of Sheikh Hasina’s government’s coming down so hard on HTB, a group with no proven links to terrorist activities, are. This part of my analysis focus on a Bangladeshi talkshow, “Point of Order,” broadcast on the satellite TV channel BanglaVision on October 26th, 2009, whose topic of discussion was the banning of HT in Bangladesh. In my conclusion I evaluate some of the implications of the ban on HTB in relation to the latest news emerging from Dhaka. I also evaluate to what extent HT/HTB’s main goal—the (re)establishment of an Islamic Caliphate—is in fact viable. I also examine the “modular” nature of HT’s ideas, which is to say their ideas and practice carry over almost wholesale from continent to continent, and, in this way, mirrors the modular nature of western modernity, which, I am arguing, it is inseparable from.

In Chapter 7, “HT and the (Im)Possibility of Islamic Reform,” which follows from the previous chapter as far as showing the complex entanglements between Islam(ism), (western?) secularism, and democracy. I argue that Muslims across-the-board—from Wahhabis to Sufis, from those committed to an Islamic-political project (such as HT) to those who are apolitical—have internalized the (western) logic of the need to reform—as a type of self-surveillance (a la Foucault68), even as many abjure the notion of reform, as the notion of the need for “reformation” and

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68 In Discipline and Punish, Alan Sheridan (translator), (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), Foucault argues that Jeremy Bentham’s late eighteenth-century designs for the ideal prison system, the Panopticon—with its central watchtower surrounded by backlit prison cells, which render prisoners constantly observable-causes prisoners to internalise the logic of the prison, and effectively regulate themselves. Foucault argues further that this ideal of surveillance runs through prisons, hospitals, schools, and factories. It is my contention that this kind of self-surveillance is part and parcel of Muslim questions of reform.
“enlightenment” go to constitute Foucault’s idea of “the unconscious of knowledge.” I examine HT’s criticisms of British governmental (media-political) pressures on Muslims to reform, and the recent “Marrakech Declaration”\textsuperscript{69} (where “hundreds of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with representatives of Islamic and international organizations, as well as leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities, gathered in Marrakesh…to reaffirm the principles of the Charter of Medina). I then examine a recent conversation between former HT-member and director of the influential “anti-extremism think tank The Quilliam Foundation, Maajid Nawaz, and Sam Harris—one of the “Four Horsemen of New Atheism,” alongside Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and the late Christopher Hitchens—published as \textit{Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue},\textsuperscript{70} in which the question of the need for Islamic reform is front and center. In all of these discussions I am concerned with how the critiques leveled against British secularism and governmental politics and policies by HT can be seen to resonate within the varied and various types of Islam—from the “progressive” to the “extreme.”\textsuperscript{71}


\textsuperscript{71} David Tyrer argues that the idea of “moderate” Muslim vs. “extreme” Muslim is a racist binary in relationship to which the Muslim subject must always try to locate him/herself in order to be acceptable to “the wider” (dominant culture). Increasingly—as promoted by Quilliam and the British government, as well as significant players in the US—it is not enough to be a “moderate” Muslim, but secular, liberal, progressive Muslim. See David Tyrer, \textit{The Politics of Islamophobia: Race, Power and Fantasy} (London: Pluto Press, 2013).
CHAPTER 1

Founding HT: History, Theory, Practice

Questioning academic objectivity

Reza Panhurst’s *The Inevitable Caliphate? The History of the Struggle for Global Islamic Union, 1924 to the Present* and *Hizb-ut-Tahrir: The Untold History* are important documents in two regards. On the one hand they are both scholarly works that examine HT. On the other hand, the first of the two was written and published while Pankhurst was still a member of HT—however, there is no mention of this in the book itself. As for the second work, it was published after Pankhurst left HT, but it was completed while he was still a member, and, in fact its publication was delayed by over a year—as far as I can tell—to take into account the fact that Pankhurst had left HT. Nevertheless, it only mentions in passing the fact that Pankhurst was a member of HT, and a senior one at that.  

I mention all of this not to cast aspersions on the “academic objectivity” or “rigor” of the works. The notion of objectivity is a passé one in scholarly circles across-the-board, from the humanities to the social sciences to the hard sciences and back again. What I do find curious is that Pankhurst—a political scientist who obtained his doctorate from the London School of Economics—chooses to omit discussing this matter entirely from the first book, and only brings it up in passing in the second one. What was his thinking behind these choices? When I spoke with him in 2013, while he was still a member of HT, and when the first of the books had already been published, he mentioned how his academic advisor at LSE had raised some concern about Pankhurst’s not mentioning that he was a member of HT. Pankhurst explained this omission to me.

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in the following terms: “Why should it matter if I’m a member of HT? I’ve written a well-documented work, and my membership in HT should not cloud the publics’ reception of it [The Inevitable Caliphate].”

From one perspective, it should not matter if Pankhurst is a member of HT. Suspicious aspersions cast in the direction of Muslims are a real and persistent problem, with a long past, and—if the current trend of news reports in general vis-à-vis Muslims is any measure—the tendency not only does not show signs of going away, it seems to be intensifying. From another perspective, the solution—if one can be so bold in characterizing it as such—seems to me to lie, not in obfuscation (would that not lead to more suspicion?), but in tackling head-on some of the discursive regimes that give rise to these suspicions and discriminations in the first place. (In my small way I do this in the Epilogue of this dissertation, where I discuss some of the prevailing assumptions that necessitate that I explicitly discuss my “personal” views as far as HT are concerned—as if the dissertation does not (always) already contain my views by virtue/vice of my having written it?

In any case, to return to Pankhurst, I mention all this to say that I use his works as both academic (and, therefore, “secondary” sources on HT), but also, in a sense, as reflective of some of Pankhurst’s (and therefore, HT’s) ideological position/s on many issues (and, for that reason, as “primary” sources). This is not a small point to make—putting aside my claims that these works are both primary sources and secondary sources. What I do, therefore, is engage in something of a deconstructive reading (where necessary) of Pankhurst—and therefore HT—in order to elucidate my own account of HT’s history, ideology, and methods.

Nabhani and the question of “influence”

Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909-1977) was born in Ijzim in the Haifa district of Palestine into a family of distinguished Islamic scholars, with both his parents being scholars of the shari’a, while his
maternal grandfather Yusuf al-Nabhani was “a famous Sufi scholar and prolific writer who authored more than forty-eight works on various Islamic subjects,” and who had served as “the head judge in several of the Ottoman courts and had close links to the political classes.”\textsuperscript{73} According to Pankhurst, Nabhani’s close relationship with his grandfather meant that he “was affected by the awareness of and involvement of his grandfather in the political issues of his time.”\textsuperscript{74}

After gaining a formative education at the hands of his grandfather, Nabhani travelled to Cairo to attend al-Azhar University, the oldest and most prestigious university in the Muslim world (although the Qarawiyyun in Fez, Morrocco, also makes the same claim) and the Dar-ul-Ulum teachers’ training college. After returning to Palestine as a graduate from both institutions he taught at various levels, most significantly in 1938 when Nabhani was appointed as a legal assistant in the Islamic court system of British-mandated Palestine, and, in 1945, by the Supreme Muslim Council as muf\textit{ti} in the Islamic court of Ramleh. After the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 Nabhani left Palestine to seek refuge in Syria, and in 1951 in Amman, Jordan, where he was lecturer in the faculty of Islamic sciences for some years.

Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, Nabhani drew an initial conclusion that would prove to be momentous in its final outcome: the revival of the Arab world— unlike the views held by Arab nationalists of the same period— would be possible only through the formation of a vanguard party shorn of nationalistic sentiments (Nabhani saw nationalism as part of a western conspiracy), whose members were inspired individuals who would influence society and thereby unite the Arab world. This initial conclusion—which was outlined in Nabhani’s first book, \textit{Ingadh Filastin}, \textit{Saving Palestine}\textsuperscript{75}—was later

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{The Inevitable Caliphate}, 99.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 99.

\textsuperscript{75} Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, \textit{Ingadh Filastin} (Damascus, Syria: Ibn Zaydun Press, 1950). Suha Taji-Farouki argues that the loss of Palestine had a lasting impact on Nabhani’s thinking, and, in turn, on that of HT as a whole. It is noteworthy that the very name of Hizb ut-Tahrir, The Party of Freedom/Liberation clearly points to the idea that Muslims are in need of liberation/freedom—politically, ideologically, economically, epistemologically—from external forces. Relatedly,
elaborated into a pan-Islamic vision of the revival of the Caliphate, by which HT has come to be identified.

Nabhani and his (peer group of) supporters Dawud Hamdan, Munir Shuqayr, ‘Adil al-Nabulsi, and Ghanim ‘Abduh applied to the Jordanian Interior Ministry for permission to establish HT on 17 November 1952. The application, however, was rejected and a second application made in January 1953 was also turned down on the grounds that HT did not accept Arab nationalism, or the Jordanian monarchy, but rather emphasized Islam as the basis of social cohesion.76 In March 1953 the Jordanian government banned HT, forcing the group to go underground, and Nabhani to go to Syria, and in 1959 to Lebanon. During a visit to Iraq in 1973, he was arrested by security services and severely tortured.77 Nabhani, the founder and supreme leader of HT, died in Beirut on 20 December 1977. He was succeeded by ‘Abd al-Qadim Zallum (1924-2003) who resigned his position just forty days before his death in 2003. The current global leader of HT is Ata Abu Rashta (b.1943).

Nabhani’s views were influenced by his disdain for western imperialism, and his determination to reverse the damage it had wrought in Muslim lands, through a return to “true” Islam. However, in contrast with Hasan al-Banna, Nabhani held that Islam and the West were diametrically opposed. Viewing Islam as a complete and self-sufficient totality—echoing his contemporary Abu’l-A’la Mawdudi—Nabhani set out to show that Islam was a thoroughly modern

76 Taji-Farouki, Fundamental Quest, 6.
77 Karagiannis, Political Islam in Central Asia, 39.
ideology, entirely fit (and ultimately ascendant) as compared to its rivals, capitalism and socialism
(nationalism for Nabhani was not an ideology; the term ideology only applied to thought-systems). He thus set out to provide theoretical justification for the required revolution.

Nabhani conducted a thoroughgoing critique of neo-colonialism, whereby the ideologies of the West self-propagated their hegemony in neo-colonial lands. For example, as early as 1953
Nabhani warned that although Muslim countries had gained their independence, this was only a façade. In reality, all such lands were militarily, economically, politically, and culturally dominated by
the former colonial powers, in order to continue their exploitation of them, as well as to further
entrench their capitalist ideology within their societies. Of all the political Islamic groupings, no
other group has been as systematic, and trenchant in its critique of western powers as far as its
hegemony in Muslim lands, as HT has been. This is a crucial aspect of HT’s program for the
reeducation of Muslims, and it remains one of its strongpoints—maintained by its members with the
stringency required of them by their party.

Highlighting the cultural and intellectual “authenticity” that Nabhani sought to show in his
expression of Islam as an ideology, he constantly referred to it by the Arabic term mabda’ (literally,
“principle”), excoriating the use of the Arabized term idiyyu’ju’iya. The Islamic ideology for
Nabhani—rooted in the Qur’anic principle of tawhid, divine unity, but with a political Islamic twist—is an ideology of human perfection in the realm of Islamic politics. That is, the Islamic Personality is
infused with the ideas of HT—to do with the sovereignty of shari’a (not the sovereignty of God, as
enunciated in traditional Islamic texts); the absolute imperative of establishing the Caliphate (which

78 Taji-Farouki, Fundamental Quest, 39.
79 Ibid., 37.
80 Ibid., 40.
81 Ibid., 45.
Nabhani saw as a collective duty, incumbent on every Muslim\textsuperscript{83}; seeing through the machinations of the West so as to be fully aware of the plight of the umma at all times—to the extent that, for an Islamic personality, the formation of ideas and inclinations proceeds solely on the basis of the Islamic doctrine, thereby determining thought and conduct in a self-contained, self-perpetuating cycle.\textsuperscript{83} It is by means of such Islamic Personalities, who are to form the vanguard of the da'wa, the umma as a whole will be able to realize the truth of the Islamic ideology, and thereby join in the efforts for the reestablishment of the Caliphate, without which, and without whose divinely ordained guidance, Muslims continue to suffer the world over. HT’s Islamic Personality in many ways, therefore, epitomizes the Islamic-activist self. (In Chapter 5 I examine how HT’s idea of the Islamic Personality depends—consciously and unconsciously—on the modern western notions of selfhood.)

Nabhani condemned democracy as a system of unbelief—in keeping with his vigilance against alien notions—insisting that it is incompatible with Islam, which holds the shari'a, rather than the people, as sovereign.\textsuperscript{84} As outlined in Nabhani’s writings, and summarized in various books published by HT, the organization seeks to restore the Islamic State through a three stage process: 1) cultivation of a core membership, 2) dissemination of the message by that core group, and 3)

\textsuperscript{82} Al-Nabhani regularly adduced the juristic principle “whatever is indispensible for the accomplishment of something obligatory is itself obligatory” to substantiate his views (see Ibid., 61). What this means is that the classical legal requirement that there be a Caliph and a Caliphate for the correct governance of Muslims according to shari'a—which, according to classical jurisprudence, is not considered a collective duty—becomes a collective duty for Nabhani. For otherwise, according to the framework within which he constructed his views, the shari'a could not be fully implemented. [In shari'a terminology: fard 'ayn (a collective, incumbent, responsibility, as, for example, learning the essentials of Islamic belief and practice) as opposed to fard kifaya (a responsibility whose incumbency is fulfilled if a few members of the community fulfill it, as in the study of medicine, for instance).] He also insisted, against the majority scholarly opinion, that collective duties are ultimately duties of each and every Muslim (Cf. Ibid., 62).


political struggle against corrupt Muslim regimes to establish the Islamic Caliphate.\footnote{Stage three is suggestive of a willingness on HT’s part to use violence if necessary; however, HT members I have so far interviewed have skirted around the topic. In addition, in an interview I conducted with a senior member of HT in 2011, it was revealed to me that HT believes that it is at stage two in Britain, and is not seeking to achieve an Islamic Caliphate in Britain.} As far as Nabhani—and HT in general—is concerned, the person cultivated within a democracy enjoys (illusory) freedoms that make him/her into a person who follows his/her base instincts, as it is subservient to a neoliberal rule of law that has consumerism at its center, living for the purpose/s of fulfilling his/her \textit{nafs} (lower self) in contradiction to one’s higher purpose \textit{vis-à-vis} God, as overseen by an Islamic State.\footnote{The award-winning documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis’s four-part documentary \textit{The Century of the Self} (London: \textit{BBC}, 2002), examines how—during the course of the 20th century—people have been controlled and manipulated by their unconscious desires through a concerted program by PR-men, led by Sigmund Freud’s nephew, Edward Bernays, to become mass consumers, whose primary sense of self and individuality is created through the process of consumption.}

It has been suggested (by Taji-Farouki and others) that Nabhani was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood before forming HT. Reza Pankhurst counters this position, writing: “al-Nabhani explicitly denied ever being part of the Muslim Brotherhood, and as far as he was concerned if he was given the opportunity to address people with his ideas [by delivering lectures at Muslim Brotherhood centers] then it was only natural that he would take it.”\footnote{Pankhurst, \textit{Hizb-ut-Tahrir}, 52.}

Pankhurst writes further that in al-Khayyat’s journal, to which Nabhani and Hamdan contributed:

\begin{quote}
[A]-Banna’s ideas were interpreted in a way that matched the philosophy of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which had not yet officially been established. So al-Banna was praised as having a clear call, having understood Islam as \textit{fikra} (thought) and \textit{tariqa} (method), recognising that Islam had a unique set of systems, and following a methodology that began with building individuals who would then win the trust of the people. These individuals would be elected as the people’s rulers, at which point they would implement Islam in a revolutionary manner in one go rather than the misunderstood gradualism of previous reform attempts, all of which corresponds to the ideas of Hizb-ut-Tahrir.\footnote{Pankurst, \textit{Hizb-ut-Tahrir}, 52.}
\end{quote}
In another context, Pankhurst writes:

While Taqiudeen’s parents and siblings adopted the political Sufism, commonly associated with this latter period of the Ottoman state, which his grandfather promoted, Taqiudeen himself was largely unaffected. The example of his understanding of karamat highlights this. He later wrote that miracles were specific to Prophets as a way of confirming the message they were being sent with, and so karamat could not be miraculous in nature unless they were confirmed by an Islamic text from the Qur’an or Prophetic narrations. On the other hand, his grandfather [who had otherwise influenced Nabhani considerably, as Pankhurst mentions with some force] had written a two-volume book narrating various karamat reported to have been performed by religious Muslim figures throughout time, with his stated belief that any miracle a Prophet performed could also be repeated as a miracle for those close to God as a further proof of the Prophethood and the truth of the message and Islam.89

My point here is this: The idea of influence, or lack thereof (and Pankhurst is very much concerned with ascribing originality to Nabhani, that is, as far as originality of Islamic political movements are concerned, and insofar as HT’s unadulterated grounding—as Pankhurst has it—in the Islamic intellectual tradition), derives from an insufficient theorization of intellectual history. It is the view that people are influenced in a linear manner as far as intellectual and artistic productions are concerned. This understanding can be schematically depicted by:

\[ A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \]

where A is the original progenitor of an idea, and B the first person to pick it up and pass it along to C, who then passes it on to D. Of course, it could (and perhaps should) be countered that such a schema is too reductive. People influence one another as much as (if not more than) an unidirectional manner; thus the schema could be depicted as:

\[ A \leftrightarrow B \leftrightarrow C \leftrightarrow D \]

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But even such a depiction does not go far enough. What is more accurate, in my opinion—and which is still necessarily limited, given the inherent limitations of diagrammatic representations, despite their illustrative function—would be a triangle, or a rectangle, or a square for that matter, that represents the realm of exchange of ideas, and which plays its own transformative function as far as ideas are concerned, and at the outskirts of which figures A, B, C, D and so on reside. What is important to point out here is that no one person is tasked with the origination of an idea; nor is any one person considered to be the direct recipient of an idea wholesale. Rather, there is a great deal of translation that occurs, and we are, each and every one of us, swimming in the unconscious of knowledge, so to speak.

What does occur—and this adds another layer of complexity—is that in any given period there are a priori modes of thinking (“episteme”\textsuperscript{90}) that significantly shape the surrounding discourses. In the case of HT, its formulations of the Islamic political project, the formation(s) of the Islamic self, and the attendant modalities of being and thinking and politicking it is responding to, thinking through, reacting against, seeking to surmount (as are all Muslim thinkers in some shape or form—from moderates to extremists, from reformists to fundamentalists, from Sufis to Wahhabis) are significantly shaped by modern western paradigms of thinking and being.

As Hallaq writes:

The political, legal, and cultural struggles of today’s Muslims stem from a certain measure of dissonance between their moral and cultural aspirations, on the one hand, and the moral realities of a modern world, on the other—realities with which they must live but that were not of their own making.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{90} “[T]he episteme or ‘epistemological field’ is in fact a subset of the historical a priori and describes the underlying orders, or ‘conditions of possibility’ which regulate the emergence of various scientific or prescientific forms of knowledge during specific periods of history. These ‘epistemological fields’ give rise to ‘the diverse forms of empirical science.’” Cited in Clare O’Farrell, 63.

That is, it is precisely because “the political, legal, and cultural struggles of today’s Muslims stem from a […] dissonance between their moral and cultural aspirations […] and the moral realities of a modern world […] [which are] realities with which they must live but that were not of their own making” that Muslims of all stripes must actively seek—for better and for worse—to re-make the world according to the aspirations of their (imagined) tradition. What is also important to mention is that the idea of a normative tradition that is so often invoked by Muslim actors (public intellectuals and academics alike, and which is also invoked by Pankhurst) is itself (re)shaped by outward forces. Talal Asad famously describes the way(s) in which orthodoxy is shaped in the Islamic tradition, significantly by power:

[F]orms of interest in the production of knowledge are intrinsic to various structures of power, and they differ not according to the essential character of Islam or Christianity, but according to historically changing systems of discipline.\(^{92}\)

It is my contention, however (and I take cue here from Hallaq’s *The Impossible State*, which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter), that “the forms of interest in the production of [Islamic] knowledge” are not only *intrinsic* to structures of Islamic centers of knowledge production, but they are also *extrinsic*, whether consciously or unconsciously. This is one of my main contentions in this dissertation, and because it sits uncomfortably with many commentators—Muslim and otherwise—insofar as it suggests that people/Muslims lack agency, it bears some unpacking.

The idea of agency has for some time in the academy been an overwrought one, and Asad’s essay “Thinking about agency and pain”\(^{93}\) helps to complicate the commonly held assumptions around the notion of agency. He problematizes our idea of agency as an universal and

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undifferentiated human given, arguing that it emerges from a specifically modern secular understanding of the political and ethical self, and that agency cannot be assumed to be universal and undifferentiated; rather it is highly contextual, differentiated, “whose senses emerge within semantic and institutional networks that define and make possible particular ways of relating to people, things, and oneself.” The notion of agency furthermore reminds us of the related notion of free will. It is interesting that Asad doesn’t mention the idea of free will, given its provenance in Christian and Islamic understandings of the individual and her/his relationship to the world in which s/he lives and acts—contexts which are of interest to Asad. There is a growing body of scientific literature indicating that free will/agency (the two terms are used interchangeably) is “a trick the brain plays on itself,” and that in reality we are driven by significant unconscious inner and outer forces that are largely beyond our control. All of this is to say that originality of thought and actions are largely part of the academic’s (self-)deception in attempting to make sense of intellectual history. (This is a topic I return to throughout my dissertation.)

**HT’s ideas and methodology—further details**

According to Pankhurst, although HT was formed “after the trauma of the establishment of the State of Israel and the dislocation of the Palestinians therein, the true roots of the it raison d’être lie in the period of decline before 1924. While the Muslim Brotherhood was formed on the back of the eager requests of al-Banna’s followers…the Hizb was formed by al-Nabhani after he had actively sought to win over many people to his ideas, amongst them other scholars from al-Azhar.” The narrative that is promoted by HT—as demonstrated by Pankhurst—is one that insists on the

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94 Ibid., 78.


96 Ibid., 100.
“originality” of Nabhani’s ideas, which is to say that he came to form these ideas by himself and not due to any extraneous “influence.”

As far as I’m concerned, the notion of influence is not sufficiently problematized by historians as they examine ideas, their (supposed) progenitors, and the degree to which they are influenced by other people, as well as the extent to which they are original. My argument in this regard—which I discuss in detail above—is that modes of thinking and being in every age exist along the lines of Foucault’s “discourse,” which is to say that there is a body of ideas that are taken as a given, as a paradigm, and it is almost impossible to think outside of that discourse. That being said, there are individuals who exhibit degrees of creative contestation with the received body of knowledge(s) and modes of being and thinking; however, the irreducible complexity of how ideas interact with each other, and the equal, if not even greater, complexity of the various forces that impact upon a person’s life, mean that it is a much harder exercise than intellectual historians will have us believe it is to show who or what influenced whom and where and when and how.

Nonetheless, it can be stated with certainty that HT insists more than any other group upon the “adherence to its defining culture and ideas, which have remained largely unchanged since its inception.” Any changes that have been made have been to details rather than the core ideas and beliefs held by the party, while its strategy has remained consistent despite varying political circumstances and conditions. Pankhurst contends that al-Banna’s leadership was based primarily on “his charisma and political activity,” while he did not have a fully developed “program of ideas, goals and methods.” Since al-Banna’s style of politics “aimed to generate co-operation between the different parties,” in practical terms it meant that “up to and after his death [the Muslim Brotherhood’s] program remained vague and based upon slogans rather than a defined ideology, leaving the group in chaos and searching for substance after his death, with its gradualist approach

97 The Inevitable Caliphate, 100-101.
making the movement more pragmatic than ideological.” The “pragmatic” nature of Jama’at-i-Islammi has also been pointed out, and they are—together with the Muslim Brotherhood—understood as being politically quite fluid, which, according to many analysts accounts for their successes in the South Asia—and in the Middle East. In the case of HT, however, they are known—to the point of virtual pedanticism—for not being willing to alter any of their ideological positions (which I describe in detail below).

Methodologically, HT:

[U]nderstands its work as being composed of three main stages based on their *ijtihad* and derived from how the Prophet went through various stages while establishing a state in Medina. It would begin with the intensive ideological culturing of individuals who would form the party, carrying its ideology before then entering the public arena and engaging in discussion to address and mould public opinion, and finally engaging in political struggle when they would seek support for a radical change, uprooting and replacing the current political system. This would be the “Islamic state” or caliphate, which the Hizb defined as “a caliph implementing the *shari’a*,” or the “political entity which governs the affairs of its citizens in accordance with the *shari’a* rules.”

According to Pankhurst, HT’s understanding of the caliph:

differed from many of the prevailing ideas of the time that saw it as a title or position to be filled by a charismatic leader rather than a unique form of government, such as the [Muslim] Brotherhood, who first envisaged making the national state Islamic (hence their understanding of the construction of “Islamic State”) before the formation of some loose form of coalition or unity to appoint a figurehead caliph. The Hizb [HT] rejected this conception as it considered it to be built upon the Western definition of the state as a “collection of territory, inhabitants and rulers,” whereas they considered the Islamic understanding of the state to be expansive and encapsulating people of multiple ethnicities, races and languages. Rather, ‘any mass who respond’ to the call of Islam and believe in it “become part of its subjects, and their land ‘become a part of its land.’”

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98 *The Inevitable Caliphate*, 101.


100 *The Inevitable Caliphate?*, 114.

101 *The Inevitable Caliphate?*, 114.
While it is indeed true that the Muslim Brotherhood’s understanding of the formation of the Islamic State entails that there be an Islamization of the society before the formation of what they understand to be the Islamic State—as Pankhurst puts it—as “some loose form of coalition or unity to appoint a figurehead caliph,” what is important to note here—and which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2—is that HT (consciously and unconsciously) presuppose the western definition of the (modern) state in their formulations of the Islamic State, since, as Wael Hallaq argues in The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity’s Moral Predicament, it is well-nigh impossible to think outside of the modern state.

Put differently, any theorization of state politics, policies, and formations, must be thought through the modern state as it is the only mode of political thinking and being, and constitutes, as I would add, “the unconscious of knowledge” as far as the very psychology of thinking about the modern state. As I already mentioned, I go into some of the complex details as to how HT’s formulation(s) of the Islamic State occur through the paradigm and the “form properties” of the modern state in Chapter 2; however, I will comment here that (as Pankhurst characterizes it) HT’s “Islamic understanding of the state” as something “expansive and encapsulating people of multiple ethnicities, races and languages,” is not necessarily out of odds with how western states conceive of their self-identity—at least not as far as the state’s self-mythology is concerned.

The fact of the matter is that when the state thinks of itself—both in its originary, constitutitional moment, as well as time progresses and it matures as a nation—it always assumes a multiplicity of identities (“ethnicities, races and languages”) living under one banner. It is really in the practical, day-to-day workings-out of the nation, as political realities, expediencies, and identifications are articulated that certain groups are excluded and others included. In other words,

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102 In his essay “Muslims as a ‘Religious Minority’ in Europe” Talal Asad writes about the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Muslims within Europe, arguing that these contradictory processes have less to do with “Islamic
in the final analysis, it is not so clear that HT’s “concept of the Islamic State is one completely different to other political systems.”

HT sees its idea of the Islamic State as being uniquely different because:

it completely rejects the idea of the state being theocratic, since it is neither ‘holy’ nor ‘sanctified’, but rather it ‘derives its authority from the Umma’ who are represented by the state’ which acts as the ‘implementer of the shari’a’ rather than as “a sanctified ruler.” The position of caliph was thought to be a human, civil position to which one was elected by the people rather than an infallible, ordained representative of God on earth, and so therefore it was only obligatory to obey the ruler if he implemented the rules of Islam given that his legitimacy was derived solely from his adherence to enforcing the shari’a. Any deviation from this would incur an obligation on the part of the people to hold him to account and correct him. In addition, the laws implemented would also not be considered as sanctified since they are rules derived from Islamic jurisprudence and are therefore ‘open to discussion’ and to ‘change, correction and removal according to the correct ijtihad’.

At the same time, though, the idea that the Islamic State is not a theocracy is not entirely convincing. HT’s idea of the shari’a is that it is precisely a divinely sanctioned means of ruling in the world. While HT argues that the caliph’s powers are proscribed by the rule of the people (isn’t that the rhetoric of every democratically self-imagined country? And yet, “the people” in practice have very little say in the everyday affairs of the state), the reality is that—even according to the writings of HT—that the caliph is elected, not by the people in a democratic form of election, but by a shura—i.e. a council [of elders, or people who are knowledgeable in the intricacies of the Islamic tradition]—and it is not clear at all how the caliph would practically be corrected, let alone removed from power, if he (the caliph can only be male) strays from the divine mandate of the shari’a. It also ought to be pointed out that historically, caliphates—as with other kingships in the world, as are all modes of rule dependent on some metaphysical and/or ideological mythology for their legitimacy—always sought legitimacy through claims to divine facilitation. The point being, while HT insist that

fundamentalism,” and more with European notions of “secular time” and “history” as well as notions of “majority,” and “minority.” In Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 159-180.

103 The Inevitable Caliphate?, 114.

104 The Inevitable Caliphate?, 115.
theirs is not a theocracy, their understanding of the shari'a—even if it be proscribed through
ijtihad—makes it difficult to be entirely convincing. That being said, all modern political philosophy
is in some shape or form derivative of notions of divine kingship, and therefore is in some shape or
form related to the notion of theocracy. For example, Carl Schmitt writes:

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological
concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred
from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became
the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of
which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.105

Although there isn’t a one-to-one correspondence between the secularized-theological state
that Schmitt describes and the religiously-grounded modern state, which I’m arguing HT’s Islamic
State is, at the same time it is not entirely possible to disentangle the theological from either of them.

According to Pankhurst, “Though the [Islamic] state was also defined as not having fixed
borders, and therefore open to expansion, it was claimed that it was not imperialist since ‘the Islamic
way of ruling is to establish equality between the subjects in all regions of the state’, whether Muslim
or otherwise.”106 Pankhurst does not problematize the notion that, according to HT, all subjects
living in the Islamic State are equal. As is a well-known historical fact—and as is raised by many
people who are vocally critical of Islam and Muslims—dhimmis (non-Muslim subjects under Islamic
rule) did not have exactly equal status under Islamic rule as their Muslim counterparts.

A closer reading of HT’s ideas

HT sees itself as unique among Islamic political groups, in that it is the only one to have
systematically formulated the idea of the Islamic State. What sets it apart from the Muslim

105 Carl Schmitt, Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty, George Schwab (translator), Tracy B. Strong
(foresword) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 36.

106 The Inevitable Caliphate?, 115.
Brotherhood, for example, is that HT have consistently aimed to establish the Islamic State.\textsuperscript{107} According to Emmanuel Karagiannis, HT are the only group to have consistently pushed for the (re)establishment of the caliphate, so much so that the caliphate is their hallmark.\textsuperscript{108} In fact, this point is something of a point of derision amongst many practicing Muslims who will often quietly roll their eyes when members of HT start speaking in public, because it is a forgone conclusion that following whatever critique or analysis that HT will make about a given issue, the catch-all solution to be offered is the (re)establishment of the Islamic State. It has also been pointed out that, while other groups can and do have slogans about the establishment of the caliphate, they do not necessarily accord with actual ideas regarding the establishment of the caliphate.\textsuperscript{109}

According to Zeyno Baran, HT can be credited for having made the idea of the (re)establishment of the caliphate mainstream amongst Muslims over the decades. I’m not sure how one measures such a thing as “influence”—and I argue, of course, that it cannot in the end be measured, and that, if anything, it is part of a certain (self-)deception of historicism. There exists very little academic work on HT prior to 9/11, and that which does exist post-9/11 is “inaccurate, polemical in nature and rarely undertaken academically, with singular web pages, interviews with unnamed sources and unsubstantiated claims.”\textsuperscript{110} According to Jean-Francois Mayer, HT is the “perfect candidate” for a narrative of posing a threat as there are no known experts on it, while at the same time it has a radical discourse that can instrumentalized by commentators.\textsuperscript{111} I would add to this observation that HT have also not discouraged such a portrayal, insofar as “controversy” is a

\textsuperscript{107} The Inevitable Caliphate?, 95.

\textsuperscript{108} Emmanuel Karagiannis, Political Islam in Central Asia (London: Routledge, 2009), 56.


\textsuperscript{110} The Inevitable Caliphate?, 96.

tool that they have been using since their inception—beginning with their founder—as a means for propagating their message.

For example, in the 90s—which were the heyday for HT in the UK—HT members were notorious for raising the question of the caliphate and injustices committed throughout the Muslim world by corrupt rulers at ISoc (UK University Islamic Society, which are the equivalent of Muslim Students’ Associations [MSAs] at universities in the US) events, which were typically Wahhabi/Salafi oriented. I myself had many an occasion to debate with members of HT in London, from ’97 to ’98 when I was a student—only for two semesters—at Queen Mary, University of London, which had (and still) has a significant Muslim population, a Wahhabi-led ISoc, and also with a considerable number of members of HT. (As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5, HT targets university students, to propagate their message—whom they see as prime candidates, since they are young, intelligent, and, although they HT does not explicitly use this term, impressionable.)

My point is this: HT sees itself as the progenitor of the idea of the need for the resuscitation of the Islamic State, and it has become known as such both within academic circles, as well as among Muslims themselves. Pankhurst writes:

[“O]n 17 November, 1952, al-Nabani, along with four other men, made a formal application to the Jordanian government for recognition of the establishment of a political party, Hizb-ut-Tahrir (the Liberation Party), whose stated aim was to “restart the Islamic way of life” through the establishment of “the single Islamic State which implements Islam and calls the world to Islam.” […] The application was promptly rejected as being unconstitutional, since it refused to acknowledge hereditary rule, rejected Arab nationalism, and asserted that the Islamic bond was the basis of solidarity rather than the bond of nationality.”]

According to Taji-Farouki, HT’s ideology was “the response of an Islamic scholar and talented intellectual to the break-up of the Ottoman empire, the fragmentation of its territories into

112 The Inevitable Caliphate, 95.
nation-states, and the creation of Israel and the impotence of Muslim societies in the face of neo-
colonialism.”

However, according to Pankhurst:

[As regards] the Hizb (“the Hizb” is HT members’ preferred method of referring to the
group) it can be seen that it was not initially engaging in an explicit and direct public call for
a return to the caliphate, but rather arguing for a liberation from the intellectual legacy of colonialism,
which according to them would be achieved by establishing a public consensus within
society such that Islam becomes the reference in all societal relationships. It would be at this point
that society would demand that the State applies the shari’a to regulate those relationships in a manner
in accordance with Islam, which would be through the caliphate system of government. This required a
rehabilitation of the image of the caliphate from the ineffectve Ottoman system that was
overtaken by the West to a single solution for the revival of the Muslim peoples. In other
words, they were not seeking to build the legitimacy of the caliphate as a political program
based on the last known example, but rather upon a legal basis which would build credibility
in the proposed political system.”

The italicized portions above are all still true as far as HT’s current ideological and practical
program for liberating Muslims around the world. It is not accidental that Hizb ut-Tahrir means the
Party of Liberation. The raison d’être for HT, while articulated in concrete terms, so to speak, as the
(re)establishment of the Islamic State or caliphate, the caliphate is first and last the means for Muslims’
intellectual and political liberation globally.

To take the italicized portions points (from the block quote above) individually:

“Liberation from the intellectual legacy of colonialism.”:

This point is articulated in various ways in the literature of HT. For example, Nabhani’s
grandfather, Yusuf al-Nabhani, who was a reputable Ottoman scholar (whom I mention above, and
who played a significant role in his grandson’s intellectual and political formation) was extremely
critical of the Islamic modernists such as Rashid Rida (1865-1935), and Ali Abdul Raziq (1888-1966)

113 A Fundamental Quest, x.

114 The Inevitable Caliphate?, emphasis added, 98.

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(as well as Taha Hussein [1889-1973), arguing that they imported western modes of thinking into their interpretations of Islam.

Pankhurst writes elsewhere:

The liberation targeted by Hizb ut-Tahrir is one from the intellectual chains of colonialism, which according to them will be achieved by Intellectively elevating Muslims such that Islam becomes their reference in all societal relationships, until they demand that the state applies Islam upon them to regulate those relationships according to the Islamic system. The caliphate is the practical embodiment of that demand, since the Islamic state is not simply made up of the rulers, but rather, according to the Hizb, it is “the Umma practically under the authority of the caliphate,” which in their construction means that “the whole of the Umma is the State.”

As mentioned earlier, Salman Sayyid has argued that the caliphate as an object of longing for many of today’s Muslims represents an imaginary home—religiously, politically, intellectually, economically, culturally—for the global Muslim diaspora to aspire towards, in an age when their aspirations are constantly thwarted by the machinations of western-led neo-imperial forces in the Muslim world itself, while in the West Muslims are all but second-class citizens, and their future is increasingly uncertain. My contention, however, is that the idea of complete intellectual liberation from “the intellectual chains of colonialism” is as impossible as complete liberation from the economic and political chains originally planted by colonialism, which continue as neo-colonial enterprises throughout the world. The intellectual, the political, and the economic are all intertwined of course, but putting aside the political and the economic—just for the sake of argument for now—the intellectual freedom sought by HT and Sayyid and others is not really possible because of the enmeshed nature of modern Islamic discourses vis-à-vis western paradigms of thought. The very fact that these same people are thinking and arguing by making use of the English language, for example, speaks to their deep entrenchment in western discourses.

115 The Inevitable Caliphate?, 126.

“[T]he State applies the shari’a to regulate those relationships in a manner in accordance with Islam, which would be through the caliphate system of government.”

While I discuss this point in greater detail in the next chapter, I will mention here that the shari’a, as far as HT is concerned, is seen as a single, monolithic structure—much in the same way that the shari’a is understood in everyday parlance in the West, whether by media outlets, or as understood by the public. It is of course a source of much disdain and nervousness in the contemporary imaginary, and HT—not a group that by any means has any intention of (consciously) kowtowing to “the West”—does nothing to assuage such fears. For HT, the shari’a is meant to be applied “as a whole” and “without any compromise”—as though the shari’a were representable, as with western legal law, in a single canon. The fact of the matter is that the shari’a is more a mode of thinking than a set of rules—although, of course, rules do factor into it. As Wael Hallaq—easily the world’s leading authority on the shari’a in the West—argues, Islam is an ethical system of being in the world; and it is a system that depends in a significant way on the shari’a for creating the parameters for how one as a Muslim lives, acts, thinks, worships, and so on, in the world.

The penal aspect of the shari’a which receives the greatest amount of attention in western media, is but a small part of it—as Hallaq contends—at least as far as the historic shari’a is concerned. Colonial powers in the Muslim world systematically dismantled the complex system of the shari’a, which included educational systems that functioned at the level of modern day universities, pious endowments that allowed for people who wanted to make learning their vocation to do so,117 and scholarly networks that covered the entirety of the Muslim world, from Morocco to Indonesia. As a result of dismantling and/or severely limiting the historic institutions of the shari’a,

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117 The oldest university in the world, the Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco, which is very much a shell of its former self, was founded on a pious endowment made by a Muslim woman. As far as the critical impulse for seeking knowledge, the great Orientalist Franz Rosenthal argued in his book Franz Rosenthal in his Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2007) that the single defining characteristic of the historic Islamic tradition was the seeking of knowledge.
the shari’a itself was less and less what it used to be—a complex, contextual system of thinking about the most optimal (materially as well as spiritually, as the two were understood to be inseparable) mode(s) for people to live, and which necessarily varied from place to place, and even from individual to individual, since every person’s life is a unique constellation of circumstances requiring individually thought-through “rulings” (fatawa), which, incidentally, were non-binding, and people could, and very often did, seek alternative opinions from other scholars—and became more and more an undifferentiated system of rulings that became a blunt instrument of coercive power. All of this is to say that the shari’a, as understood by HT, is thus a “total” system of injunctions that are meant to be enforced by the (Islamic) State, and, as such, cannot be cherry-picked, so to speak. For HT, the shari’a is synonymous with Islam, and, for this reason, the Islamic State, which perforce (as with the modern state) is meant to govern all of life’s affairs, must necessarily do so through the medium of the shari’a—understood this way.

“Its becomes the reference in all societal relationships.”:

Just as with the shari’a, the idea of Islam is understood as a monolithic notion, which supposedly was wholly constitutive of culture in Muslim countries when the Islamic political, or the political Islamic was hegemonic. As mentioned above, Islam and the shari’a are seen as synonymous by HT, and, as such, to live as a “good Muslim” one must practice the shari’a fully and without leaving anything out. The political weakness of Muslim countries in the face of dominant, neo-colonial western powers is seen by HT as the result of a lack of adherence to Islam in its entirety—and the only way that that can be remedied, the only way that Muslims would be able to return to the true and complete practice of Islam is by (re)establishing the Islamic State. Incidentally, it is not the case that HT sees the Ottoman empire as having established an Islamic state that was in keeping

Paradoxically, of course, the idea of a “good Muslim” amongst Muslims is the inverse of the notion of the “good Muslim” as it is presented in mainstream media-political narratives. I’m referring in the latter case, of course, to Mahmood Mamdani’s idea of “good Muslim” in his Good Muslim, Bad Muslim.
with the Quran and Prophetic example (Sunnah). As cited above, the Ottoman Empire was seen as having implemented many un-Islamic practices and rules, which HT sees as having brought about the slow but inevitable demise of the once resplendent empire.

Islam, for HT, is an ideology, and as proponents of various ideologies are wont to argue—as with proponents of Marxism, for example—the failure of the systems based on certain ideologies is not due to the shortcomings of the ideologies, but due to the partial and/or incorrect implementation of the ideologies. Thus, examples such as Saudi Arabia and Iran—which are by some accounts Islamic states—are failures (with their massive human rights abuses and inner political fractiousness) precisely because they have not implemented Islam (or the shari'a) fully, and, as such, are not examples of the kind of Islamic State that HT is proposing. Thus, when it is said that “Islam becomes the reference in all societal relationships,” the assumption is that Muslims, in living in an Islamic State—are aware, in everything they do, and in all their social interactions—whether they be economic, marital, legal, economic, or simple everyday social intercourse—of a notion of “Islam” that must perforce guide those actions. In this way, again, the idea of Islam is very much akin to the notion of ideology in everyday parlance—and as has been commented on and critiqued by Marxist theorists—it is the hidden (as well as not so hidden) guiding principle in all aspects of life.

I would now like to examine the following from Pankhurst’s The Inevitable Caliphate?, which is a lengthy quote, but is important to examine in full as it illustrates some key ideas held by HT, as well as illustrating some of the interesting slippages that occur between Pankhurst the academic and Pankhurst the member of HT, I mentioned at the head of this chapter:

[T]he revival and decline of a people are linked to their intellectual state. The decline of the Muslims is identified as occurring from around the 18th century, with the cause identified as the “severe weakness” which “destroyed the ability of the minds in understanding Islam.” This, in turn, resulted from three factors. The first was the detachment of the Arabic language from Islam, which resulted in the weakness engaged in *ijtihad*, and since *ijtihad* was the manner by which problems are resolved in accordance with Islam, it is the key which would keep the ideology alive. As a result of this, by the mid-nineteenth century Islam was being used to justify non-Islamic rules (such as the constitutions adopted by the Ottoman
state), which resulted in the “detachment of Islam from life.” The second factor was the influence of Indian philosophy, which ingrained the idea of spiritualism and “self-deprivation” among Muslims leading to the adoption of a “passive life.” Finally, the Western cultural invasion had led Muslims to adopt material interests ahead of everything else.

It is this final cultural invasion, which is seen as the true colonialism, since it is a colonization of the intellect which therefore prevents the possibility of any revival. As Western nations progressed through an intellectual and industrial revolution, the Ottoman caliphate remained paralyzed in the face of the development of the sciences due to the lack of capability of true *ijtihad*. There was a confusion which led to a failure among Muslims to distinguish between industry and inventions which “Islam encourages Muslims to acquire,” irrespective of the source, and “culture and ideology,” which must be adopted from Islamic sources alone. As a result, European achievements were seen by Muslims in general and by the religious establishment in particular as being antithetical to Islam, and consequently the adoption was prohibited. This created a dichotomy in society between two camps, one rejecting technological advances like the printing press while accusing “every intellectual of being a disbeliever,” the other made up of those who had been educated in the West and wanted to adopt Western cultural facets along with scientific advancements wholesale. It was this industrial revolution, emerging in a “remarkable manner,” which left Muslims confused, and ultimately saw a shift of the balance of power toward Europe. Once intellectually dominant, a new set of crusades took place, which were to be more than just military invasion into Muslim lands, and were designed to “uproot the Islamic state” and “uproot Islam from the souls of the Muslims,” leaving behind only “spiritual rites.” It was this lack of clarity between what could be adopted by Muslims irrespective of its source, meaning technologies without any intrinsic ideological values, and what had to be rejected as contrary to Islamic teachings, such as the ideas of nationalism, secularism and democracy, which the Hizb identified as the core reason why the Islamic state was unable to generate a coherent position in the face of the rise of the European powers, as evidenced by the Ottoman State’s adoption of Ottomanism, pan-Islamism and nationalism at different junctures during its decline.

To take the quote section by section:

*The revival and decline of a people are linked to their intellectual state. The decline of the Muslims is identified as occurring from around the 18th century, with the cause identified as the “severe weakness” which destroyed the ability of the minds in understanding Islam.*

Here it is first of all taken for granted that Muslims/the Muslim world declined. This narrative of the decline of Muslims is one that of course relates to the dwindling political powers of the Ottoman empire with the ever-encroaching powers of colonialism. This narrative, however, was not and indeed is not held by Muslim thinkers—and Muslims in general—across-the-board. There were (and are) serious voices who contended that the political decline of Muslims in the face of
encroaching European powers was not a question of “material” limitations on the part of Muslims, since God says in the Quran that He gives “victory” to whom He wills, and that He changes not the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves; but also, further, that when all is said and done, the final victory belongs to those who are victorious in the eyes of God in the afterlife (which recalls the biblical verse “The last shall be the first.” [Mathew 20:16])

This narrative of the decline of the Muslim world was and is one that is popular amongst Orientalists. This is not to say that this narrative originated with them, as it was also popular among the Muslim modernists, amongst whom Muhammad Iqbal is quite possibly the most famous (and, dare I say, “influential”?!).

Broadly speaking (although these divisions are in reality arbitrary, since individuals in any one camp oftentimes exhibits ideas and trends belonging to other camps), Islamic modernists (who are also referred to as the Islamic reformists)—such as Rashid Ridah, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Iqbal—argued that the decline of the Muslim world was related to its inability/refusal to incorporate western technological and intellectual advancements, while at the same time becoming mired in hair-splitting arguments amongst the ulama, which only benefited their intellectual curiosities. The Islamic fundamentalists (who can also be categorized as Islamic reformists, since their call for an Islamic reform is akin to that of the Protestant Reformation) argued that Muslims needed to return to the originary texts of the Quran and hadith, and that the decline of the Muslim world was traceable to its fundamental mis-interpretation of Islam for the previous centuries. As far as they were concerned—and their representatives include Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, the eponymous founder of Wahhabi Islam—the traditional interpretations of Islam were innovations, and all innovations were destined for “the hell-fire.”

One of the major “innovations” that were brought into question, and was seen as a major cause of Muslim decline—ethically, spiritually, politically—was Sufism, which, in line with many
Orientalist readings, was imported into Islam through Indian influences. The traditionalists (who were oftentimes Sufis) would frequently say that the decline of the Muslim world and the dominance of the Europeans was a “punishment” from God for Muslims’ having become too concerned with material wealth and for not being fearful of the afterlife and working accordingly. They argued that the first (three) generations of Muslims (considered the best of generations, based on a hadith of the Prophet) were materially and technologically very poor; however, they were spiritually very rich, and it was for this reason that they were able to be so successful in the world, having spread Islam to the far corners of the world in less than a century.

All of these explanations are commentaries, in some shape or form, on the inability “of the minds in understanding Islam.” And, as it so happens, HT draws (whether consciously or unconsciously) from all these major trends.

This, in turn, resulted from three factors. The first was the detachment of the Arabic language from Islam, which resulted in the weakness engaged in ijtihad, and since ijtihad was the manner by which problems are resolved in accordance with Islam, it is the key which would keep the ideology alive.

The primacy of the Arabic language in understanding Islam has been a narrative that came about not least because the Quran is in Arabic, and because part of its “miracle” (mu’jiza) lies in linguistic brilliance, as Muslims scholars are wont to retort. At the same time, it is an historical fact (as well as being eminently true today) that the vast majority of the world’s Muslim population did not/does not know Arabic. And even within the regions where Arabic is the lingua franca, Muslim scholars are quick to point out that the language of the Quran requires years of study to master, and that the everyday Arabic spoken in the streets of Cairo to Casablanca is not remotely the same language. Furthermore, it is undeniable that the scholarly classes—who would know the requisite Arabic—were always comprised of a small strata of society—and necessarily so. All of this is to say that the idea of “the detachment of Islam” from Muslim life comes from a particular line of thinking—one which is both specific to the uleimatic classes, and one that did not affect the vast
majority of Muslims either way. The fact also remains that the language of choice for Islamic intellectual endeavors—over and above Arabic—was Persian. The number of works in Persian dealing with Islamic matters far outnumber those in Arabic.

However, HT’s point is this: it is by *detaching* “Arabic from Islam” that it opened up the tradition to foreign—that is, *non-Islamic*—ideas. The question of *ijtihad*—which is the idea of arriving at new scholarly (whether juridical or otherwise, although the notion is primarily associated with the shari’a)—is seen, according to HT, as being inexorably connected with the Arabic language, and, therefore, if detached from Arabic and done through other languages, then it means that “the ideology” of Islam becomes diluted, if not irrevocably changed.

The criticism here is being leveled against Ottoman rule, which made liberal use of Turkish as the official language. One cannot help but feel that this critique on the part of Nabhani and HT is particularly Arab-centric, and emerges out of a milieu—at the height of pan-Arabism—where the centrality of Arab literature and culture was being promoted as a crucial means for revitalizing an Arab world that had become—as a result of colonialism—Anglophone and Francophone.

Finally, one of HT’s trademark notions is: “Islam is an ideology.” The idea—it has been commented on by people such as Hamza Yusuf—emerges from within a wider milieu in which Islam is one amongst a number of competing ideologies, such as capitalism and socialism, and Islam is the better one of the three. Iqbal, for example—who does not refer to Islam as an ideology, however—writes about Islam striking a middle ground between the selfish excesses of capitalism, and the personality destroying extremes of socialism. HT insists that Islam *is* an ideology insofar as it is a system of ideas that shapes people’s outlook on life, and in these terms it is of course correct. Critics of HT argue that “Islam is a *complete* way of life,” and, as such, it pervades *every* aspect of one’s life—and, in any case, ideologies are “*(hu)*man-made,” whereas Islam, their critics argue further, is from God. HT members’ point, though, is this: if Islam is to win the battle of ideas—as they say it
must, and they see themselves as playing a major role in bringing this about—then it must speak to people in an idiom which is comprehensible to them.

Incidentally, Pankhurst writes about the fact that HT uses “thoroughly modern terms such as mabda (ideology), dawla (state) and dustor (constitution)” by essentially repeating HT’s own position, without any further critical examination on his own part:

[The use of such words] to articulate the Hizb’s ideas has prompted the accusation that they are in fact engaging in a form of apologetic politics similar to other ‘modernists’ who adopted democratic discourse, as argued by Farouki. The Hizb frequently respond to this charge by arguing that such words are neutral terminological definitions rather than ideological expressions and the importance is not the form of the word or its origin but the meaning that it represents. Accordingly, while the terms constitution and state do not represent a specific type of constitution or state and are therefore ideologically neutral, the word democracy has ideological connotations which are seen as contradictory to Islam.119

The point that is not made by Pankhurst, however, which would have gone towards a more critical engagement with HT, is that every single word in the English language—in any language, for that matter—has certain ideological and political connotations. Languages emerge from and in turn constitute particular worldviews. An example that I have heard Hamza Yusuf use to illustrate this point by comparing English and Arabic, for example, is his point that there is word for the verb “to be” in Arabic. What this means, Yusuf argues, as far as thinking about arguments regarding the existence/non-existence of God, linguistically such a discussion does not make sense in Arabic—whereas, in the English language, it is built-into the language. “Being” in Arabic is wujud, which relates to the word wajada, which can mean both “to find” and “to be ecstatic.”

In other words, the Arabic language suggests that one comes to know God, or can find God, in the very core of one’s being—by being present. Being in the English language, however, is inseparable from a material understanding of the world. Thus, when one asks “Can you prove the existence of God?” what one is implicitly and explicitly asking is: Can you show that God, as a

119 The Inevitable Caliphate?, 116.
physical being, within the context of a worldview that gives primacy to sensorial realms, exists? To argue, as HT—and Pankhurst—does that the words “ideology” are neutral and are not associated with any ideological positions is to be ignorant of the fundamental nature of any language—which is that it is an intricate system, and assumes certain modes of thinking about things. For example, to take the etymology of the word “ideology” from the Online Etymology Dictionary:

ideology (n.)
1796, “science of ideas,” originally ‘philosophy of the mind which derives knowledge from the senses’ (as opposed to metaphysics)
[...]
Meaning ‘systematic set of ideas, doctrines through which the world is interpreted’.

Thus, the word assumes a materialistic view of the world, and it also assumes that there are other systems for thinking and viewing the world—whereas, the assumption from an Islamic doctrinal perspective is that Islam is not one among a plethora of ways in which the world can be viewed—which is fundamentally that of divine unity, or tawhid—but that the tawhid is the essential way in which to live and breathe in the world. Any other mode of being and thinking is fundamentally flawed.

As a result of this, by the mid-nineteenth century Islam was being used to justify non-Islamic rules (such as the constitutions adopted by the Ottoman state) which resulted in the “detachment of Islam from life.”

One of the central tenets of HT is that “all of life’s affairs must be ruled according to the shari’a”—this is crucial for Muslims if they are to be “acceptable in the eyes of God,” in the words of one popular turn of phrase amongst Muslims. Furthermore, by having their lives in order—in accordance with the shari’a—Muslims, according to HT, ensure their success in this world. The point here, therefore, is that since Muslims, under the aegis of the Ottoman Empire, were not living according to “Islamic” rules, but by “non-Islamic” ones, hence their vanquishment at the hands of European colonial powers. I examine in greater detail in the next chapter how the shari’a is re-imagined through the lens of the modern state as being monolithic (as “one size fits all,” in the words of Muslim thinker and lecturer of Islamic Studies at Cambridge University, Tim Winter).
What I will mention here is that the idea of the “Islamic” as opposed to the “non-Islamic” is a relatively recent construction, which traces its roots—perhaps unsurprisingly—to colonialism, in that the categories of religion, including Islam\textsuperscript{120} (at least as it has been understood in Orientalist circles as a monolithic terms, insofar as there is a “high” or “scholarly Islam” versus a “low” or “popular Islam—and ne’er the twain shall meet).

When the notions of a high Islam—or of Islam as such—spread amongst the educated classes, and especially amongst the intellectuals in the Muslim world, and this idea was cast in opposition to non-Islamic, western notions (not least of all in order to create a distinction between ideas that were “foreign”—the ideas of the western Other), then it became necessary to sift through the very texts of the newly imagined Islamic world (it is important to note that the idea of \textit{Dar al-Islam}—“the abode of Islam” – is very different from the idea of the Islamic world, insofar as the former is more of a political designation, where “Islam,” albeit nominally, was/is the dominant force, while the idea of the Islamic world assumes the idea of “the Islamic” that necessarily excludes the un-Islamic\textsuperscript{121})

\begin{quote}
The second factor was the influence of Indian philosophy, which ingrained the idea of spiritualism and “self-deprivation” among Muslims leading to the adoption of a “passive life.” Finally, the Western cultural invasion had led Muslims to adopt material interests ahead of everything else.
\end{quote}

As I discuss in detail in my chapter on Iqbal as well as on the chapter on the Islamic Personality, there is a strong sense amongst Muslim modernist-reformers—such as Iqbal and Nabhani—that Sufism was an accretion to the Islamic tradition, which has/had its origins in Indian

\textsuperscript{120} See, for example, Tomoko Masuzawa’s \textit{The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism} (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), for her treatment of Islam in these contexts.

\textsuperscript{121} For more on the idea of “the Islamic,” see Shahab Ahmed’s masterful (posthumously published) \textit{The Importance of Being Islamic} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), in which Ahmed argues that the idea of “the Islamic” has meant various and varied things during the course of Muslim history – thus, he contends, it was not unheard-of to have wine-drinking and womanizing men who attended brothels. Interestingly, it was in fact a common reaction to their experiences in Muslim societies that European Christians, prior to and during colonialism, who were of a more puritanical bent to remark at what they deemed “the licentious” nature of Muslim societies.
philosophy, such as yoga. This perspective was proposed originally by Orientalists, as has been convincingly argued by Toshiko Masuzawa in *The Invention of World Religions*. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr—as I have heard him mention in various lectures over the years—it was simply the case that *Orientalists could not imagine something as beautiful as Sufism could come from Islam*. The idea here being—an attitude which is reflected by Iqbal and even by decidedly un-Orientalist scholars such as Wael Hallaq—that was primarily a shari’a-based, legalistic religion. All of this is to say that the idea of “Indian influence” in creating Islamic mysticism has been adopted by HT, and is blamed for the “fatalism” and “passivity” of Muslims in recent centuries, and their lack of intellectual and material advancement.

It is for this reason, according to HT, that “the Western cultural invasion” penetrated Muslim societies, which caused the latter to “adopt material interests ahead of everything else.” As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 7, on the Islamic Personality, HT sees Islam as constituting a singular culture, and that this Islamic culture has/had permeated all Muslim societies. In being a singular, monolithic culture, when Islam has its foundations disturbed—as with the disturbance of the foundation of the shari’a by colonial powers—then the introduction of foreign rules and ideas means that there is a significant dilution of Muslim society and Muslims, all for the apparent sake of certain (westernized) material benefits.

That Islamic culture, incidentally, rests on the full implementation of the shari’a which, again, HT understand in monolithic terms. Now, since the incursion of western ideas, values, and modes of being have diminished the presence of Islam in the Muslim world—HT members often like to

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122 Iqbal wrote in his doctoral dissertation-turned-book about the “dry-as-dust” desert religion of Islam; while Hallaq, in far less loaded terms, argues that the Islamic tradition stands and falls on the shari’a. This perspective—which in many ways is also just a reflection of the dominant ulamātic perspective which had/has a vested interest in presenting Islam as being sharia-centric—is significantly nuanced when we read works on and about Sufism. The idea of a shari‘a-orthodoxy has historically been at the center of much of the controversies around the validity or not of various Sufis.
state that “no Muslim countries rule according to Islam,” citing in this regard the Quranic verse that orders “believers” to “enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil,” and that they must “follow God and His messenger” in order to properly realize that—and it is only possible to fully implement Islam/the shari'a (the two are interchangeable for HT) through the Islamic State, then it follows that it is necessary for Muslims to (re)establish the Islamic State if they are to lead “true” lives as Muslims.

**Conclusion**

In the next chapter, though, as mentioned earlier, I examine the ways in which the Islamic State as formulated—and imagined—by HT is significantly shaped by the assumptions that go into thinking about and implementing the modern state. What this means, therefore, as we shall see, and as I argue during the course of this dissertation, is that the notions of the “Islamic” and “Muslimness”—as thought of by HT as well as by wider media-political narratives—are not separable from modern (western) modes of being and thinking.
CHAPTER 2

“The Islamic State is not a Dream”\textsuperscript{123}: HT’s Thinking Through the Modern State

Hizb ut-Tahrir’s (HT) central doctrine is the establishment of an Islamic state through the “return” of the Caliphate. Growing worry about HT’s presence in Britain is based on the assumption that HT’s political goal of establishing an Islamic state is incompatible with the modern nation-state. While HT’s doctrine assumes that the Islamic state is a \textit{sine qua non} for Muslims to be truly Muslim, does this mean that the idea of an Islamic state is fundamentally incompatible with the modern political project, founded as it is on the nation state? Are Muslims, as imagined by HT (and by British secular publics), necessarily apart from the rest of British society, simultaneously \textit{a part of it} but always \textit{apart from it}, never fully belonging? I argue in this chapter that HT’s theorization of the Islamic state is \textit{perforce} done through the paradigm of the modern nation-state.

Since its founding in 1953 by the Palestinian jurist Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, the transnational Islamist group HT has directed all its activities towards the (non-violent) reestablishment of the Islamic caliphate, whose last incarnation under the Ottomans was abolished in 1924, and which HT sees as a \textit{prerequisite} for being “truly Islamic.” HT has more systematically theorized the Islamic State than has any other Islamist organization. For HT, the caliphate is a fundamentally ethical project, which organizes Muslim experience into a narrative assembling past, present, and future into an interpretive frame specifying the range and meaning of ethical, Islamic practices.\textsuperscript{124} The need to


\textsuperscript{124} For HT, the ethical is fundamentally Islamic, and the Islamic is fundamentally ethical. The perfectly ethical, Islamic life (it is imagined) will come about with the (re)establishment of caliphate. And in order to achieve it work must be done on the “political” level to bring about a change in people’s consciousness; but also, simultaneously, work must be
(re)establish the caliphate, according to HT, is to reverse the centuries’-long “decline” of Muslims, which it accounts for as follows:

1. The influx of Hindu, Persian and Greek philosophies, and the endeavours of some Muslim philosophers to reconcile these philosophies with Islam despite the complete contradiction between them.  
2. The scheming of malicious people against Islam who promoted certain thoughts and rules that are not from Islam, in order to defame and deviate Muslims away from it.  
3. The negligence in using the Arabic language in understanding and delivering Islam, and its detachment from Islam in the 7th century AH, in spite of the fact that Islam cannot be understood without the Arabic language. Moreover, the deduction of new laws for new situations and issues through *ijtihad* cannot be achieved without the Arabic language.  
4. The missionary, cultural and then the political invasion from the time of the 17th century CE launched by the Western *Kufr* states who wanted to distort the Muslims’ understanding of Islam and distance them from it, for the purpose of demolishing it.

done on the level of “religious” practice—the division between “the political” and “the religious” being seen as non-existent.

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125 This is a common reason given by some prominent Muslim reformers. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), perhaps the greatest of the Muslim reformers, deplores the attitude of a Sufism—one which according to him dominated the intellectual landscape of Islam for centuries—that adopts Plato’s doctrine of “sheep.” And Nabhani’s thought, which is central to HT’s ideology, was no doubt influenced—whether consciously or unconsciously—by such prevalent ideas of his time. In Chapter 3, “The Reconstruction of the Modern Muslim Self,” I examine the ways in which Iqbal consciously and unconsciously adopted modern western notions of selfhood in his (re)formulations of Islamic thought.

126 Although not expressly stated here of course, the authors may have in mind the thesis of western-led power politics in the Muslim world which sought to replace religion with Arab nationalism, and the ultimate fall of the Ottoman Empire—a thesis central to David Fromkin’s classic work *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1989).

127 There are two salient aspects to this formulation. The first, that Arabic as a language was/is not used amongst the vast majority of Muslims since the 7th century AH. From a practical point of view this was inevitable, given Islam’s rapid expansion within a century throughout the world. This is especially true today as the vast majority of Muslims live in the South and South East Asia, and mostly do not know Arabic. It is interesting to note that, in spite of a lack of understanding of Arabic, the canonical prayers, and the recitation of the Qur’an, are done through the medium of Arabic which is in keeping with mainstream Islamic principles. In other words, it was not classically, nor is it understood today, from a traditional point of view, that in order to be Muslim, or even a pious Muslim, one must actually know Arabic. The second salient point here is that for the sake of *ijtihad* (a technical legal term meaning “independent reasoning”) the Arabic language is essential. While this point cannot be denied, it is also undeniable, that, contrary to the now commonly held notion that *ijtihad* is the forgotten institution of Islam that allowed for original and groundbreaking developments in the field of juristic studies, historically *ijtihad* necessarily had a vast range of prerequisites, such as a profound knowledge of the extensive body of traditional Islamic sciences, amongst which a firm grasp of the Arabic language was one requirement. The weight given here to *ijtihad*—minus, it seems, the extremely difficult to attain prerequisites, sometimes taking a lifetime of learning—is another particularly modern/reformist Islamic concern.

128 [This is a widely accepted aspect of colonial history, that colonialists progressively set out to reform the traditional madrasa system whose medieval splendor is described in great detail by Franz Rosenthal in his *Knowledge Triumphant*. On the transformation of educational and legal patterns that occurred in the nineteenth-century understood as “enframing,” where a conceptual colonization replaced the old “invisible” order, see Indira Gesink, “Islamic Reformation: A History
HT’s methodology for the reestablishment of the Caliphate is divided into three distinct stages, as discussed earlier. In the first stage the focus is on “recruitment and propaganda,” where prospective members are schooled in/indoctrinated into (HT’s understanding of) Islam. Those deemed suitable are invited to join the party after a period of a few months, after which potential members have the idea of the method of the party individually described to them. “Whoever accepted the basic idea, the Party would organize for him intensive study in its circles, so that the candidate became purified by the thoughts and rules of Islam as adopted by the Party and thus in the process became an Islamic personality.”

In the second stage the party interacts with the Muslim community in order to affect an intellectual, cultural, and ultimately a political transformation whereby the umma is encouraged “to work towards HT’s revolution.”

“In this second stage, HT members must focus on what they believe...in order to achieve their aim of infiltrating and controlling law enforcement, military and bureaucratic institutions. In most parts of the world where HT operates, it is in this second stage.” (HT “has been called a ‘vanguard party’ for its interest in achieving power through ‘hundreds of supporters in critical positions’ rather than ‘thousands of foot soldiers’.”) The third stage is the “stage of establishing government, implementing Islam generally and comprehensively, and carrying it as a message to the world.”

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131 Ibid., 22.


In recent years HT has been following a more fundamentalist, conservative form of Islam (which differs from HT’s work during the 90s\textsuperscript{134}), while rejecting British governmental politics—however, now with a focus on a shari‘a-conscious ummah in Britain,\textsuperscript{135} as well as other parts of the Western world.\textsuperscript{136} This is an ummah-centric vision of Islam and Muslims, which transcends any racial, ethnic, or British sense of identity—a vision that HT shares with other Islamic formations.

\textsuperscript{134} In my own interactions with members of HT during the 90s, it was often said that “normative” practices of Islam—the so-called “five pillars”—were not imperative to be followed in the absence of a caliphate. While critics of HT at the time would often cite this as an example of HT’s clear “deviance,” it is important to mention their idea finds grounding in classical sources on the necessity of a caliphate in order for certain fundamental Islamic rites to be fulfilled: such as the Friday prayer and the collection of zakat. These questions have not entirely satisfactorily been resolved, not least because of the almost defunct nature of the shari‘a as an institution, as Wael Hallaq argues—for these questions would have to be resolved, and, from the point of view of Sunni Islam a consensus (ijma) would have to be reached. It is therefore telling that The Reliance of the Traveller, Umdat al-Salik, a classical manual of shafi‘i fiqh, translated into English by the American convert Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller—which is quite widely read by neo-traditional Muslims in the West—has appended to it, by the translator himself, a section on why it is necessary to have a caliphate for the very reasons I mention above. Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1994). Additionally, The Reliance has mentions includes the classical fatawa on apostasy: namely, the apostate would be asked to repent and recant, and, if s/he does not, s/he would be put to death: http://mappingsharia.com/?page_id=79

\textsuperscript{135} The shari‘a-consciousness amongst Britain’s Muslims was explicitly recognized by the now famous lecture delivered at the Royal Courts of Justice on February 7, 2008, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, entitled, “Civil and Religious Law in England: a religious perspective.” An example of this recognition is to be found in Williams’s reference to the Islamic Shari‘a Council which is “much in demand for marital questions in the UK.” The general thrust of Williams’s lecture—which has polarized the larger British public—was that it is possible, and indeed important, to create “a just and constructive relationship between Islamic law and the statutory law of the United Kingdom.” For the full transcript of Rowan Williams’s lecture, see “Civil and Religious Law in England: a religious perspective”, The Guardian, February 7, 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/feb/07/religion.world2. For a scholarly appraisal of some of the issues that emerge from Rowan Williams’s lecture see: Rex Ahdar and Nicholas Aroney eds., Shari‘a in the West (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010).

\textsuperscript{136} HT still aims to bring about the Islamic Caliphate in the Muslim world, which it seeks to achieve by peaceful means, through the formation of vanguard groups that will spread the Islamic ideology. According to Zeyno Baran, HT’s “greatest achievement to date” is to have created a worldwide ummatic consciousness, and, conterminously, a consciousness regarding the need to re-create the Islamic Caliphate. Zeyno Baran, Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam’s Political Insurgency (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004), 48. It is important to note, however, that HT has not been the first Islamist group to call for the re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate. This need has been expressed (with differing modes) by Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979), the founder of Jama’at-i Islami (The Islamic Group), as well as Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), the founder of Ikhwan al-Muslimeen (The Muslim Brotherhood) – and others. What is significant is that HT’s ideology (as enunciated by al-Nabhani, and which has surprisingly remained consistent, for the most part) has as its very raison d’être the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate, to the apparent detriment of other aspects of Islam as a “complete system.” (Although the rigidity within HT’s methodology appears to have been changing over the past decade or so. This change in HT’s methodology is something I examine during the course of my dissertation.) On the other hand, groups such as MB and JI have the establishment of the Caliphate as their utopian ideal; while, in practice, they are willing to conform to the political realities in which they find themselves.
Reza Pankhurst writes in his examination of Hizb ut-Tahrir that, emerging as it did in 1953 during a time when “people’s hopes for liberation, independence and honor (sic) was increasingly articulated in terms of Arab nationalism,” HT “appeared as an anomaly.”

I disagree with this assessment. It is my contention that, rather than being an anomaly, HT’s thought is actually articulated by implicit or explicit recourse to some of the ideas that it claims to be thinking against, perhaps most notably the nation-state, which, as a “political unit,” HT believes to be “anathema to Islam.” I argue in this chapter that HT’s theorization of the Islamic state—whether as something to be re-realized, or as something that was already realized by the Prophet Muhammad, and by subsequent generations of Muslims through the centuries until the dismantling of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924—is necessarily fashioned according to the (un)conscious standards of the modern nation-state. As such, the supposedly “Islamic” credentials of HT’s project are rendered suspect.

Thinking Through the Modern State

In the introduction to his The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity’s Moral Predicament, Wael Hallaq writes: “Muslims today, including their leading intellectuals, have come to take the modern state for granted, accepting it as a natural reality. They often assume it not only to have existed throughout the long course of their history but also to have been sanctioned by no less an authority

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137 Pankhurst, The Inevitable Caliphate?, 129.


139 “His [the Prophet’s] emigration to Medina was simply the selfless pursuit of the Islamic da’wah [propagation of Islam] and the necessary establishment of the Islamic State to further that objective” (Nabhani, The Islamic State, 40).

140 The Islamic state “always remained one state with one caliph who was the only body with mandatory powers engulfing the whole state, including the small villages” (Nabhani, The Islamic State, 132). See also “The Destruction of the Islamic State,” ibid., 203–213.

than the Quran itself.”\textsuperscript{142} Although Hallaq does not make the following explicit observation, there are nevertheless sufficient suggestions that lead me to argue: \textit{Muslim thinkers necessarily think through the paradigm of the modern nation-state}. And this thinking \textit{through} the modern state (which is not only true for Muslim thinkers but also for large sections of western intelligentsia,\textsuperscript{143} as one of the significant aspects of the academy is to think \textit{through} the modern state\textsuperscript{144}) occurs due to the givenness of the modern state as a fact on the ground, due to the very \textit{paradigm} of the modern state.\textsuperscript{145}

Hallaq identifies the attributes which articulate the modern nation-state: (1) The modern state has a specifically European history,\textsuperscript{146} with a narrative of timelessness and universality attached to it.\textsuperscript{147} (2) The modern state is sustained by the abstract notion of sovereignty, which emerges with the imagined construct of the nation. Once brought about with the state, sovereignty “has the

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., x.}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{143} I reproduce this politically charged dichotomy of “Muslim/western thinkers” in no small way due to the existent limitations of language and discourse. The highly problematic nature of the dichotomy between the western intelligentsia and Muslim intellectuals has been commented upon by, amongst others, Hamid Dabashi. See, for example, his essay “For the Last Time: Civilizations,” where Dabashi argues that the binary opposition between “Islam and the West” is a major narrative strategy of raising a fictive center for European modernity and lowering the rest of the world as peripheral to that center. Hamid Dabashi, “For the Last Time: Civilizations”, \textit{International Sociology} 16 (2001), 361.}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{144} “On the whole, academia thinks the state – nay, the world – through the state” (Hallaq, \textit{The Impossible State}, 102). And again: “through state schools…an education regulated by state law (which destroys earlier forms), a paradigmatic scholarly elite is created and re-created as a cultural domain responsive to the state’s overall penetration of the social order” (Ibid., 35). See also, significantly, Russell Jacoby, \textit{The Last Intellectuals American Culture in the Age of Academe} (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), in which Jacoby writes of the professionalization of American intellectuals, and their necessary celebration of the nation, to a lesser or greater extent. And again: “According to Time, Jacques Barzun, the Columbia University professor and writer, represented a new species, ‘a growing host of men of ideas who not only have the respect of the nation, but who return the compliment.’” Russell Jacoby, “Intellectuals and Their Discontents,” \textit{The Hedgehog Review} (Fall 2000), 38.}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{145} Deriving from Foucault, Hallaq writes that “paradigms represent fields of ‘force relations’, encompassing opposing and competing discourses and strategies.” Significantly though (and in keeping with Foucault), while Hallaq notes the “diversity within unity” in his account of paradigm, he insists that subversive forces “are not positively determinative of the central domain, although they may negatively be so by virtue of the responses the central domain provides to meet their challenges,” so long as there does not occur a paradigm shift (Kuhn), in which case “a paradigm or former central domain will join the ranks of the subversive forces or just vanish altogether.” It is in this way that one can speak of “a paradigm of the modern state (constituted by a central and subsidiary domains).” Hallaq, \textit{The Impossible State}, 9–10 (emphasis in original).}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 23. Hallaq cites Martin L. van Creveld’s \textit{The Rise and Decline of the State} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{147} Hallaq, \textit{The Impossible State}, 24.}
quality of being like a religious miracle: it has no reference except the fact that it is,” as argued by Carl Schmitt. 148 (3) The state’s sovereign will gives rise to the law, which is imbricated with the state’s power, which in turn (forcibly, violently) implements the law domestically and internationally. 149 (4) The state’s administrative order—which is both integral to and an extension of the legal order—exhibits rationalized domination. 150 (5) The modern state has an essential state/culture dialectic whereby the state penetrates culture in order to achieve uniformity, and which ensures the stability of the state. 151 All of these properties of the modern nation-state necessarily intersect with each other in complex ways. In what follows I expound upon HT’s formulations of the Islamic state and the ways in which they relate to the attributes of the modern nation-state as identified by Wael Hallaq.

The Nation of the Caliphate

Nabhani writes that the Prophet’s “emigration to Medina was simply the selfless pursuit of the Islamic da’wah [the propagation of Islam] and the necessary establishment of the Islamic State to further that objective.” 152 The nation as an imaginary myth is timeless, it has always been. 153 Given that thinking outside of the paradigm of the modern nation-state is virtually impossible, it follows that the Islamic state must be insisted upon as always having existed. For, since the modern state has become the most natural of political arrangements, and Islam, for Nabhani and HT, is the most

148 Ibid., 28.
149 Ibid., 29.
150 Ibid., 31.
151 Ibid., 34.
152 Nabhani, The Islamic State, 40.
natural of religions (al-dīn al-fitrāh), then the archetypal Islamic political arrangement must presage the modern state. That is, the Islamic state is seen as necessarily having been sanctioned by the Prophet’s own example (which is considered to be the paradigmatic “commentary” on the Qur’an).

What is also at work here—historically, that is, during the periods of decolonization in the Muslim world and after, and in the present—through banal mechanisms of reproduction, is the normalization of the institution of the modern state through the idea of nationalism. It is therefore significant that Nabhani’s formulation of the Islamic state (just four years after the founding of Israel, for which reason it has been argued that Nabhani’s ideas were initially meant to provide the substance of an Islamically-revitalized Palestine) is in important ways a “response” to Arab nationalism, which was seen by Nabhani as a western, kufr ideology whose function was to disunite Muslims. And by “response” what I mean is that Nabhani’s Islamic state is both a counter-proposition as well as being a means of an (unconscious) accommodation of nationalism.

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154 Taji Mustafa (HT executive committee member), interview, April 11, 2013. One of the most vocal modern Muslim scholars to identify din al-fitrāh with Islam is Ismail Faruqi (1921–1986). See Ismail Faruqi, Islam and Other Faiths (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998).

155 As Hallaq observes: “They [Muslim thinkers] often assume it [the modern nation-state] not only to have existed throughout the long course of their history but also to have been sanctioned by no less an authority than the Qur’an itself” (Hallaq, The Impossible State, x).

156 “Certainly you have in the Messenger of God an excellent example (to follow) for him who hopes in God and the latter day and remembers God much.” (Qur’an, 33:21)

157 See Michael Billig, Banal Nationalism (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1995), where the author argues that the everyday acts, concepts, and interactions that reinforce the idea of the nation become so habitual and normalized that they pass unnoticed, and cumulatively contribute towards the recreation of the nation.

158 I’m not arguing that the articulation of the Islamic state has a one-to-one correspondence with the articulations of a modern nation-state. However, its ideas are necessarily made through the model of the modern nation-state. As such, in the case of nationalism, while the explicit adoption of the idea is rejected as being un-Islamic, the articulation of the ummah of the Islamic state takes on the coloring of nationalistic language, as I will expound upon below.

159 Al-Rasheed, et al., Demystifying the Caliphate, 6.

160 Perhaps the two most far-reaching challenges underwent by the Muslim world in the first half of the twentieth century, and witnessed first-hand by Nabhani – the Azhar-trained jurist from Palestine – were the dissolution of the
Put differently, drawing on Foucault and his idea of “the unconscious of knowledge,” whereby different modes of knowing in the world are arranged in a fundamental way—“a fundamental arrangement of knowledge”—Nabhani’s arrangement of the Islamic state must necessarily be done according to the unconscious givens of the nation and nationalism. Put another way still, to set up an idea (that of the Islamic state) against another idea (that of nationalism) is to necessarily have aspects of the oppositional concept embedded in the concept of one’s imagining: The idea of opposition, which relates to the late fourteenth century astrological term for the situation of two heavenly bodies exactly across from one another in the heavens, is to say that one of the heavenly bodies derives meaning from its opposite. Or as the Arabic adage puts it, “Things are known by their opposites.”

Or to consider the Taoist symbol taijitu, it reveals not only the containing within the black teardrop an eye of white or within the white teardrop an eye of black, but also the black’s desire to encompass the white as its tail extends and elongates and disappears into nothingness, as does also the white.

Nabhani writes of the Islamic state that “it is not a dream, nor is it a figment of the imagination, for it had dominated and influenced history for more than thirteen hundred years.” It is my argument that the Islamic state must be insisted upon as not being a dream, for the reason that the nation (which Nabhani and HT see at one and the same time as the Islamic state and the

Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. It was as a result of these experiences that Nabhani drew a preliminary but not insignificant conclusion. Contrary to Arab nationalists of the same period, the revival of the Arab world would be possible only through the formation of a vanguard party shorn of nationalistic sentiments, whose members were inspired individuals who would influence society and thereby unite the Arab world. (See Suha Taji-Farouki, A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate [London, UK: Grey Seal, 1996], for a fairly detailed examination of the Marxist-Leninist connections with Nabhani’s ideas.) This initial conclusion was later elaborated into a pan-Islamic vision of the revival of the Caliphate, by which HT has come to be identified. See al-Nabhani, Inqadh Filastin.

161 “Innama tustaban al-ashya’ bi-āddadiha.” This expression is sometimes given as a hadith, and it is frequently quoted by Islamic mystics. See for example, Jalal al-Din Rumi’s Mathnawi, I, 1131.

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163 Nabhani, The Islamic State, 2.
ummah or community of the faithful) is the very stuff of (modernity’s) dreams. In Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Benedict Anderson explores how the modern nation is constructed as a coherent whole, as an imagined community, through the socio-political apparatuses that go into shaping the nation—by means of a common language and discourse as molded through print capitalism. The idea of the ummah (rendered as the “community”) has a prominent place in the history of Islam, going back as it does to the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions. At the same time, modern imaginings of the ummah, due to the (post)modern conditions of possibility—which include globalization, and post-colonial nation-states—have meant a change in thinking about the ummah. In premodern times the ummah denoted “the totality of believers who are, as believers, equal to each to other in value and thus stand undifferentiated before God,” with no claims being made as to a discrete, self-contained identity in opposition/contrast to other comparable self-contained identities. However, with the institution of the modern nation-state, people’s identities solidified around ideas of nation and religion, and the concept of Muslim

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164 Hallaq writes: “In Islam, it is the Umma that displaces the nation of the modern state” (Hallaq, Impossible State, 49). This is the ideal, paradigmatic condition of Islamic governance, which was a reality in premodern times, as Hallaq argues. Thus, it follows, in the context of the modern structure of relations, in the modern state – apart from which existence is not possible – the nation displaces, or, in the Islamist imaginary, becomes synonymous with, the ummah.


166 “The believers, in their love, mutual kindness, and close ties, are like one body; when any part complains, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever” (Muslim, Kitab al-birr wa al-silah wa al-adab, bab 15, no. 6258, on the authority of Nu’man al-Bashir). “The faithful are like one man: if his eyes suffers, his whole body suffers” (Muslim, Ibid, no. 6261, on the authority of Nu’man al-Bashir). “Every Muslim is a brother to a Muslim, neither wrongdoing him nor allowing him to be wronged. And if anyone helps his brother in need, Allah will help him in his own need; and if anyone removes a calamity from [another] Muslim, Allah will remove from him some of the calamities of the Day of Resurrection; and if anyone shields [another] Muslim from disgrace, Allah will shield him from the disgrace on the Day of Resurrection.” (al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Mazaaliin, 3 on the authority of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, and Muslim, Kitab al-birr wa al-silah wa al-adab, bab 13, no. 6250 on the authority of Salim). For references to the ummah in the Qur’an see: 2: 213, 3:110, 16:120, 12:45, 21:92, and 23:52.

167 Hallaq, Impossible State, 49.

168 Sudipta Kaviraj writes that traditionally people “rarely, if ever” belonged “to a community which would claim to represent or exhaust all the layers of their complex selfhood,” Kaviraj, Imaginary Institution, 56.
identity took on a necessarily political charge. It is for this reason that when HT members speak of the need for “Muslims to protect their Islam in a non-Muslim environment” such as Britain, this kind of language is immediately comprehensible for their Muslim audience as meaning Muslims must be “good Muslims” by practicing their religious duties, and not be drawn into the disbelieving ways of “non-Muslims.”

In other words, the *ummah*, or the nation—as HT and Nabhani understand it—is marked by its modernity, by the attendant modern conditions of possibility, formed in the crucible of the *new collective imaginary*, and projected forward as a self-actualizing, self-perfecting collective project, and backward as an always already emerging reality. For, the ground has been prepared since the beginning of (recorded) history (which, from an Islamic perspective, as adopted by the second Caliph, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, begins with the Prophet’s migration to Medina) for the coming of the (new) caliphate. The caliphate shares in the nation-state’s self-imaginary history, as well as in its (endless) projection into the future. It has yet to be brought about again, but that is not of concern for HT, since “The Khilafah [Caliphate] is on the horizon!”

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170 “The basic characteristic of the nation and everything connected to it is its modernity.” Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14. This is the opening sentence of the first chapter of Hobsbawm’s study.

171 Following the rapid spread of Islam through conquest in Arabia – beginning with the first caliph Abu Bakr, but especially during the time of the second caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab – ‘Umar “stressed Islam as the basis of Arab life. […] For the life of the Muslim garrison towns, full of undreamed-of wealth from tribute, [led ‘Umar] to establish sharp and clear standards to prevent rapid demoralization. The spirit of the new order [established by ‘Umar] was symbolized in the era which [he] adopted: it dated from the Hijrah of Muhammad…. The very term *hijrah* was likewise applied to the migration of an individual or a tribe to the new military camp-cities: in joining the active Muslim community, each individual repeated for himself the essential step which had launched the Muslim community as a whole.” Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. I (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 209, 211.

172 This is why the Islamic calendar, for example, begins with the *hijrah*, that is the Prophet’s migration from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE.

173 When pressed by the presenter of BBC’s HARDtalk to answer to what degree Hizb ut-Tahrir actually enjoyed widespread support of the Muslims worldwide, Dr. Imran Waheed, the “representative of Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain” used this slogan, popular among Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters – before going on to detail how he felt that that was true. Imran
While Madawi Al-Rasheed, Karool Kersten, and Marat Shterin, the editors of the volume *Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts*, are at pains to stress the highly contested nature of the concept of the caliphate—through history, and today—it nevertheless emerges in their description of its historical valence that the caliphate is an ideal that has been, and continues to be, evoked by Muslim thinkers.\(^{174}\) As such, it is my argument that the idea of the caliphate serves the function of an imaginary construct, whose significance lies in (and is not diminished by) contestations over its meaning. As with all imaginary institutions—such as the nation—debates surrounding the concept contribute towards its very imaginary, dream-like, “mythological” nature. That is, as an idea—as an institution that was sanctioned by the Prophet Muhammad, and which was followed by his companions, and through history, and which will return to the world\(^{175}\)—it is not open to question since “a mythology” (as Linda M. G. Zerilli describes it):

> cannot be defeated in the sense that one wins over one’s opponent through the rigor of logic or the force of evidence; a mythology cannot be defeated through arguments that would reveal it as groundless belief. . . . A mythology is utterly groundless, hence stable. What characterizes a mythology is not so much its crude or naïve character—mythologies can be extremely complex and sophisticated—but, rather, its capacity to elude our practices of verification and refutation.\(^{176}\)


\(^{175}\) According to a famous Prophetic tradition found in the hadith collection of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: “Prophethood will last among you for as long as God wills, then God will take it away. It will be followed by a rightly guided caliphate according to the ways of Prophethood. It will remain for as long as God wills – then God will take it away. Thereafter will come hereditary leadership, which will remain for as long as God wills – then He will lift it if He so wishes. Thereafter will come great oppression, and it will last for as long as God wills, then He will lift it if He so wills. Thereafter will come a rightly guided caliphate according to the ways of the Prophethood.” *Musnad* (Beirut: Muassisa al-Risala, 1999), no. 17680. This hadith is often cited by HT members as proof of the inevitable return of caliphate, since—as it is also widely interpreted by Sunni Muslims of various affiliations—Muslim history has passed through all of the stages mentioned in the tradition. Muslims have for some time been in the penultimate stage, and are awaiting the return of “the rightly guided caliphate.”

The Trauma of the Caliphate

To consider the wider function of the idea of the caliphate: from one perspective, as it relates to the thought of Nabhani and HT, it is a means of understanding—that is, coming to terms with—colonialism. Mona Hassan examines the “loss of [the] caliphate”177 and the mourning that ensued, utilizing theories of loss and mourning in understanding the communal cohesion that the trauma provided. In considering the trauma of colonialism and the loss of Muslim power, which have deeply troubled some of the best Muslim minds for generations, I contend that the (unconscious) use of the caliphate as a site of mourning also means that it allows Muslims to come to terms with colonialism (recall that for Freud mourning is a means of coming to terms with loss), with the loss of Muslim power, unity, and proof of God’s favour.178 However, contrary to Mona Hassan, it is my contention that the “trauma” of the end of the caliphate is not a given, but has to be invented and kept alive in each generation. In this way, it is akin to the trauma-narratives that are central to subcontinental nationalism. Priya Kumar writes about the manner in which Amitav Ghosh, Qurratulain Hyder, and Shyam Benegal produce fiction as “an immediate response to [the] founding trauma of subcontinental nationalism [which] becomes an eloquent witness, and perhaps the only witness, to an unspeakable and inarticulatable history.”179

However, the “unspeakability” and “inarticulatability” of the history of the trauma of the end of the caliphate is of a different register in relation to the “invented” nature of the trauma-narratives that constitute subcontinental nationhood. The trauma of the end of the caliphate, so central to the message of Nabhani and HT, constituting as it does the already imagined nationhood


of the Islamic state to come, cannot find material in millions of lives displaced and lost, as was the case with the partition of India. Its imagined history must narrate almost aphoristically how “the Messenger of God established the Islamic State…and how the disbelieving colonialists destroyed it”; also, how the Islamic state should be reestablished “so that the light that guided the world in the darkest of ages returns to enlighten humanity once again.” The rhetorical force of aphoristic writing is that it presents itself as self-evident truth, much in the way that the narrative of a nation’s history is presented as self-evidently true.

Looking at the invention of trauma and how it relates to Nabhani and HT a little more closely, the authors of Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties explore the universalization of the psychoanalytic subject through psychoanalysis as utilized by the late-colonial state as well as by anti-colonial movements. The volume sheds light on the ways in which ideas of the self have been shaped discursively between western, colonial, and post-colonial peoples. Elsewhere, Fritz Breithaupt argues in his essay “The Invention of Trauma in German Romanticism” that the invention of modern selfhood in late eighteenth century Europe (“around and after 1770 selfhood becomes a prerequisite for the modern man”) necessitated the invention of trauma “as a possible remedy for the impossibility of the self.” Trauma, as it were, provides some respite from the immense dislocation faced by an independent, isolated, unique self suddenly thrust into the world. It is the existential isolation of a cogito which cannot bridge the gap between


181 The full quote is: “This book about the Islamic State is not meant to narrate its history but to explain how the Messenger of God established the Islamic State, and to show how the disbelieving colonialists destroyed it. It demonstrates how Muslims should re-establish their State so that the light that guided the world in the darkest of ages returns to enlighten humanity once again” (Nabhani, The Islamic State, 3).


183 Fritz Breithaupt, “The Invention of Trauma in German Romanticism,” Critical Inquiry 32 (2005), 77.

184 Ibid., 78.
*ergo sum* and *ergo est*—as Stanley Cavell has argued in a slightly different context—between “therefore I am” and “therefore s/he is.”

Thus, in a (post)colonial Muslim world, as imagined by Nabhani and HT, the paradigmatic trauma inflicted by colonialism is the trauma of the end of the caliphate, in the wake of a Muslim subject interpellated by western notions of selfhood. Nabhani and HT’s idea of the caliphate acts as a (re)invented tradition attempting to recoup Muslim greatness in an imminent future. As David Lloyd notes in his article “Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?”, “State-oriented nationalisms respond to [the] paralysing sense of loss [of precolonial material history] therapeutically by seeking to constitute a new culture and subjecthood around a reinvention of tradition.” The modern, western, post-colonial self is carried forward in Nabhani and HT’s formulations of the relation of the Muslim self to the state. It is a self which is both singular and collective (the ummah is one and indivisible, while at the same time the self arises and initiates the bringing about of the caliphal-consciousness)—and, in the end, it is subsumed by the state (the individual seeks to *willingly* uphold the precepts of the religion by virtue of his/her piety, while at the same time the state *enforces* the shari’a). David Lloyd continues, “[State-oriented nationalisms] reproduce the effects of


186 In all of my interviews with members of HT to-date, which number over thirty, my informants answered – when asked by me what the most traumatic or serious blow experienced by Muslims in the past one hundred years has been – that it was the end of the Islamic Caliphate (which is seen as having happened due to colonial intrigue) meaning the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate. Of the twenty or so interviews I have conducted with non-HT affiliated Muslims, roughly two-thirds of them responded that it was the end of the Islamic caliphate, when I posed the same question, while the other third were unsure.

187 Taji Mustafa mentioned the Khilafah conference in Jakarta, Indonesia on June 2, 2013—where Mustafa himself spoke, and where an estimated 120,000 people attended—as a sign of the strength of the idea of the caliphate, and that it is just a matter of time before it becomes a reality. Taji Mustafa, interview, July 23, 2013.


colonial modernity by selecting and canonizing elements of the colonized culture that can be refunctioned within the terms of the modern state.”\footnote{191} HT’s Islamic state responds to the sense of loss of the caliphate by canonizing the trauma of colonialism and the loss of caliphate, which is then—in an imminent, imaginary future—“refunctioned” within the terms of the Islamic state, which is itself thought through the modes and modalities of the modern nation-state.

The Law of the Caliphate

Nabhani and Hizb ut-Tahrir’s Islamic state conceives of itself—“An imagined community always imagines itself”\footnote{192}—in ways and means that are thinkable only in the modern context, and in particular through the modern nation-state. Crucial to this self-conception is the notion of “citizenship.”\footnote{193} Basing his analysis on Etienne Balibar’s insights (and to expound upon the above-mentioned late eighteenth century invention of the modern self) Stathis Gourgouris draws our attention to the “new form of subjectivity” marked by the French Revolution’s a Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, drafted in 1789.\footnote{194} Article III of the Declaration—“The nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty; nor can any INDIVIDUAL or ANY BODY OF MEN be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it.”—suggests complete heteronomy,\footnote{195} “an epistemic rupture [where 1789 is the primary reference point] in the psychopolitical sphere where the citizen comes to

\footnote{191}“Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?”, 219.


\footnote{193} “[F]or a body politic…to form itself in the image of a fully realized state, it must presuppose a particular subject/subjectivity, viz., the citizen.” Hallaq, The Impossible State, 21.

\footnote{194} Gourgouris, Dream Nation, 23.

\footnote{195} Ibid.
occupy the position of the subject (the governed subject—namely, the object of sovereign power, the feudal /Christian subjectus).”

Citizenship allows for the rule of law, which is “sovereignty’s most paradigmatic manifestation in the practice of governance,” and the quality of absoluteness which the latter exerts over the former. Nabhani writes: “The domestic policy of the Islamic State is to execute the rules of Islam internally.”; and “All those who hold the Islamic citizenship are subjects of the State, their guardianship and the management of their affairs is the duty of the State, without any discrimination.” The citizen of the Islamic state is therefore bound in a horizontally absolute sense—not in the vertically absolute sense of shari’a, that is “divine law”—by the “rules of Islam,” that is, the laws of the state. These laws are applied “without any discrimination,” which is to say they are executed en masse. “The institution of the citizen appears to put an end to the divine delegation of rule…first, by lending each citizen the properties of legislator and second, by making legislation the work of a plural political subject, a new domain in which all individuals are bound together by virtue of political equivalence.”

And the law (rendered as shari’a by Nabhani) exists, in the end, for the preservation of the Islamic state and its sovereignty, where the three of them—state, sovereignty, and shari’a—are mutually-constitutive, as Nabhani writes regarding sovereignty and the shari’a, that the adoption and

196 Ibid.
197 Hallaq, The Impossible State, 29.
198 Nabhani, The Islamic State, 134.
199 Ibid., 140.
200 Hallaq, Impossible State, 142.
201 Gourgouris, 23 (emphasis added).
implementation of the shari'a is the sole right of the Caliph\(^{202}\); that the ummah “does not reserve the right to remove the Khaleefah”\(^{203}\); and that leadership “is singular and not collective.”\(^{204}\) While on an initial reading this seems to be contrary to liberal democratic notions of what constitutes the role of the state, its sovereignty, and the function of the law, upon reading Carl Schmitt—one of the most significant legal and political theorists of the twentieth century\(^{205}\)—and his reflections on these issues, the difference collapses: “[W]hoever takes the trouble of examining the public law literature of positive jurisprudence for its basic concepts and arguments will see that the state intervenes everywhere. […] There always exists the same inexplicable identity: lawgiver, executive power, police, pardoner, welfare institution.”\(^{206}\)

Part of the myth of the caliphate as always having existed as an indivisible whole (“it is not a dream, nor is it a figment of the imagination, for it had dominated and influenced history for more than thirteen hundred years”\(^{207}\)), is the assertion that “Muslims”—constructed as a united, indivisible whole and with one consciousness—“never differed about the appointment of the Caliph.”\(^{208}\) Here the significant and essential notion of the Muslim imaginaire—a notion which derives from the modern state’s idea of its citizenry and which is coupled with the notion of the ummah—can again be seen to be at work. Nabhani writes further that Muslims “never differed about the [religious]


\(^{203}\) Ibid., 122–6.

\(^{204}\) Ibid., 139–43.

\(^{205}\) See Tracy B. Strong’s *Politics without Vision: Thinking without a Banister in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 218–262, for some excellent reflections as to the continued relevance of Schmitt’s political philosophy.


\(^{207}\) Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, 2.

\(^{208}\) Ibid., 129.
obligation of implementing Islam comprehensively.”

Islam is therefore cast as a comprehensive system—also significantly suggested by Abu-l-A’la Mawdudi—wherein all aspects of the system are imagined as coming together to form a single, inextricable whole, which is said to be embodied by the shari’a.

The way in which the system of shari’a is conceived is through an imagined cultural unity of the Islamic state. According to Nabhani—who shared this position with Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) and Mawdudi—Islamic culture is founded on (an ideological understanding of) the “Islamic ‘Aqeedah [creed],” which he describes as being “the entirety of the Prophet’s message,” since “Islam is an indivisible whole” and “belief in the separation of the Islamic Deen [religion] from life’s affairs or from the state is indisputably kufr (disbelief).”

Elsewhere, Nabhani describes the Islamic culture as being radically different from other cultures, and that: “1) It is founded on the Islamic ‘Aqeedah [creed]; 2) The criterion of actions in life is based on Allah’s commands and prohibitions, i.e. life is based on Halal and Haram and nothing else (such as benefit or Maslaha); 3) The meaning of happiness is to gain Allah’s pleasure, i.e. permanent peace of mind cannot be achieved without first gaining Allah’s pleasure.”

For Nabhani, in order to achieve a unity of Islamic culture, it is

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209 Ibid., 129.


212 Maslaha, or “common good,” is a traditional fiqh principle which entails taking into consideration the public/common good on the part of the faqih in arriving at a legal ruling. What this has meant – in theory and in practice – in the history of Islamic thought, is that the so-called door(s) of ijtihad have had to be kept open to take into consideration changing circumstances and conditions. See Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38-43.

213 Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, 55.
necessary to have an Islamic state “that fully implements Islam and executes its rules without exception.”

In keeping with the above, Reza Pankhurst writes that one of the critical aspects of HT’s thought—which he notes as having preceded any other Islamic movement—is that the shari’a “as a corpus of legislation” cannot be separated “from the concept of the state, which [is] required to implement it.” However, Pankhurst does not problematize the underlying assumption of the neutrality of the (modern) state on the part of HT, while, it is my contention, the state can never be neutral. Roxanne Euben observes the following with regard to the (pre)construction of ideas, and their adoption by “fundamentalists”: “Orientalists, among others, have identified [a supposed] intimacy between religion and politics as the timeless ‘essence’ of Islam, one brought into sharpest relief in contrast to the ‘essentially secular West’.” Euben writes further that “Interestingly, such claims are today most emphatically embraced by fundamentalists for whom precisely this “essential Islam”—and its absolute opposition to an equally essentialized ‘West’—is both premise and argument.”

Of course HT assumes this essentialized understanding of Islam and its intimate relationship with politics, together with the essentialized understanding of the West as the polar opposite of Islam. The assumption by HT of the essential nature of Islam relates to one of the underlying premises of this dissertation, and that is modern, western paradigms of thought shape(d) Islamist styles of thinking. Thus, returning to the central argument of my dissertation—that Nabhani and HT (necessarily) think the Islamic state through the modern state—the way in which Islam can be

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214 Ibid., 55.
216 Euben, Enemy in the Mirror, 49.
217 Ibid., 51.
implemented, the only way in which Islam can be actualized in the lives of Muslims, is through the
state’s systematic and complete application of Islam: “Shari’ah, for its part, aims to ideally shape
society which attains the pinnacle of human perfection through its systems, laws and solutions to
life’s problems. This vision makes man proceed according to Shari’ah constantly and willingly or
compulsorily through the influence of the State.” Thus, law for the modern nation-state and the
Islamic state alike, is universal and undifferentiating in its application.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the various ways in which HT’s idea of the Islamic state is
constrained by the paradigm of the modern nation-state. In “the nation of the caliphate,” I have
looked at the complex ways in which the modern construct of “the nation” is thought through in
order to imagine the nation of the Islamic state. I have argued that the institution of the modern
nation-state is normalized through the idea of nationalism—even while HT claims to eschew the
very idea, arguing that it is “un-Islamic.”

In “the trauma of the caliphate,” I have examined how the (invented) trauma of the end of
the caliphate—which occupies a central position within the narrative of HT—relates to the
eighteenth century invention of the modern self and the almost simultaneous invention of trauma.
For HT, the idea of the trauma of the end of the caliphate is inextricably bound to the way in which
the modern Muslim self is imagined within the borders of the Islamic state. I have further argued
that such a modern Muslim self has analogues—although not one-to-one correspondences—with
the modern self formed in the milieu of subcontinental nationalism.

Finally, in “the law of the caliphate,” I have looked at how the creation of the modern
subject goes hand-in-hand with the conception of the modern citizen of the state. One of the

218 Hizb ut-Tahrir, Al-Dawlah Al-Islamiyyah Wa Al-Dawlah Al-Madaniyyah (Beirut: unknown imprint, 2011), 22.
underlying assumptions of a state’s citizenry is that the law is applied *en masse*, and without
differentiation. Looking at the law, or shari'a, of the Islamic state, it is imagined as an
undiscriminating system that is implemented throughout the nation. As with the modern nation-
state—law, sovereignty, and state coalesce into an insuperable whole, whose logic is indomitable and
well nigh uncomprehending.

Modernity, whether in the form of the epistemological or in the form of the political, is all-
pervasive. What I am assuming here, and which I have tried to show during the course of this
chapter, is that “the modern” is not a singular expression, but nevertheless has form properties, such
as a specific type of realization of the subject, of the relation of the subject to herself, to others, and
to the State. The Islamic-political is therefore inseparable from the modern-political. *The Other*, in
other words, is not apart from the Self that seeks to exclude it.

In the next chapter I examine—through a reading of Slavoj Žižek’s lecture “A Plea for
Fundamentalism”—how HT’s traumatic attachment to, and Mourning of, the end of the Ottoman
Caliphate is part and parcel of a creation of a selfhood that cannot allow for the (re)establishment of
the Caliphate, given that the object of Mourning *par excellence*—the Caliphate—must always remain
out of reach for the coherence of the identity of the mourner(s) to remain intact.
CHAPTER 3

“The Khilafah is on the horizon!”
Or how the Islamic State must always be deferred: Žižekian-psychoanalytic reflections on HT’s Islam(ism)

In the wake of news reports of Britons joining the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS/ISIL)—from “Jihadi John”219 to the “ISIS/Jihadi brides”220—then British Prime Minster David Cameron spoke publicly about the need for Muslims in Britain to “integrate” and adopt “British values.”221 British Muslims are being accused of harboring “extremist” views—such as an implicit support of the idea of an Islamic Caliphate, and not being loyal to Britain. British Muslims themselves have been responding that not only are they “integrated” and “loyal” to Britain, but in fact they feel more loyal than their non-Muslim counterparts.222 In this fray HT has been coming

219 Dominic Casciani, “Islamic State: Profile of Mohammed Emwazi aka 'Jihadi John',” BBC News, accessed September 23, 2016,

220 Lizzie Dearden, “Isis 'jihadi brides' trying to radicalise girls and encourage UK terror attacks online as they remain trapped in Syria,” The Independent, August 13, 2016, accessed September 23, 2016,


222 Leon Moosavi, “Muslims are well-integrated in Britain – but no one seems to believe it,” The Guardian, July 3, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2012/jul/03/muslims-integrated-britain. For Tariq Ramadan, the question of Muslim “integration” says more about wider media-political narratives and self-conceptions than it does about western Muslims themselves. According to Ramadan, Muslims have long been integrated in western societies and Islam is a decidedly western religion. Ramadan’s contention is that the problem lies with such media-political narratives and their purveyors who refuse to integrate Muslims in their mind. Tariq Ramadan, “Muslims and/in the West: Past, Present, Future,” Columbia University, March 30, 2017.
under pressure for being “a conveyor-belt for terrorism,” and Cameron sounded the warning that they would be banned.223

In this chapter I examine some of the key concepts of HT—such as the notion of a “truly Islamic” identity; the progressive “decline” of the Muslim ummah; the need for (re)establishing the Caliphate; HT’s use of technology; HT’s very (post)modern self-hood—all through a critical-psychoanalytical lens, particularly as afforded by a close reading of philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek’s lecture “A Lacanian Plea for Fundamentalism.” This chapter is also informed by Fethi Benslama’s Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam.224 Taking into consideration Freud’s idea of Mourning, and how the object of Mourning can never be truly reconciled because it can never be retrieved—and reading the end of the Ottoman Caliphate (in 1924) as the object of loss poor excellence within HT’s Islamist imaginary—I argue that the Caliphate must always necessarily remain an object of loss, and therefore can never be re-realized.

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223 Peter Oborne, “‘Extremist is the secular word for heretic’: the Hizb ut-Tahrir leader who insists on his right to speak,” The Guardian, July 24, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jul/24/david-cameron-extremism-struggle-generation-abdul-wahid. Incidentally, HT has faced threats of banning since at least Tony Blair’s Prime Ministership. The question of whether Islamic political groups should be allowed to have a voice in secular democracies is one that raises the ire of many a commentator. According to many Muslims who see themselves as actively non-political as far as their attitudes to political Islam (of course, the question of whether apoliticality is even possible is one that tends to be answered with a definitive “no”), they feel that permitting Islamic political groups to thrive in western societies serves as a means for keeping Muslim populations in check: the idea being that as Islamic political actors voice (and perform) various views (and actions) that are “read” as being against western ideals and values, such views and actions give permission to law makers to restrict Muslim populations at large. On the other end of the spectrum so to speak—for the Other is always already contained in the self, which is one of the leitmotifs of my dissertation—commentators such as Melanie Phillips write about how “multiculturalism,” “weak policing,” “cultural relativism,” and “victim culture” work together to create the ideal circumstances for Islamic terrorism to thrive in Britain. Melanie Phillips, Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within (New York: Encounter Books, 2006). Incidentally, Encounter Books, Phillips’ publisher, is an American conservative publishing company specializing in books that promote a right-wing agenda: www.encounterbooks.com.

224 Fethi Benslama, Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam. Robert Bononno, trans. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). In using Benslama’s work I have confined myself to applying his insights into Islamic radicalism (more broadly speaking) as they appear in Chapter 1 because, while the later chapters are highly insightful, I do not see them as being especially fruitful for the purposes of this essay. (Chapter 2 begins with a psychoanalytic reading of the significance of the figure of Hagar within Islam, and it and subsequent chapters are concerned with unearthing the significance of the repressive processes underlying the symbolic and institutional structure of Islam—primarily in relation to the figure of the feminine. To go into a longer analysis, by making use of Benslama’s latter chapters, is beyond the scope of this paper, but in no way do I mean to suggest that they are not important. Benslama’s work is quite unique in its application of psychoanalytical principles to the study of Islamism, and the insights that he is able to retrieve—not least because Benslama writes as an “insider” of the Islamic tradition, so to speak.)
Žižek and his “A Lacanian Plea for Fundamentalism”

In his lecture “A Plea for Fundamentalism” Slavoj Žižek—the popular Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic—begins with the Lacanian notion of the “big Other,” “the intricate cobweb of unwritten, implicit rules—[which are] never explicitly stated…. [However, they] are prohibited to be pronounced publicly.” Žižek claims, through a Hegelian-Marxian argument, and employing Marx’s notion of “real abstraction,” “that our social reality itself is already ruled [and] governed by abstractions. […] [R]eality itself already has in it this abstraction. Abstraction is not only the procedure of our thinking, it is inscribed in social relations themselves.”

Žižek’s foundational theory upon which he bases his lecture is the relationship between Mourning and Melancholia, as enunciated by Freud. Žižek claims that the unwritten rule, the “doxa,” which has to be followed is the Freudian rule. Žižek argues that “Freud opposed the normal mourning—the successful acceptance of the loss, to the pathological melancholy—the subject exists in his/her narcissistic identification with the lost object.” This is in contrast to a successful mourning following the death of a loved one whereby one “come[s] to terms with this loss through the work of symbolization, or internalization—you renounce the real object but you internalize his or her meaning.”

Melancholy is thus failed mourning where one is “unable to perform the aufhebung, the sublation of the immediate reality of the object in his or her meaning.” According to today’s unwritten rules “mourning is the betrayal of the fidelity to the object, and that…there is an indivisible remainder, there is something which resists this Hegelian sublation, and true fidelity is the fidelity to this remainder. So, in other words, melancholy is the truly ethical stance of fidelity. You

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225 All references in this section are to Žižek’s lecture, and hence, for the sake of fluidity, and to not encumber the paper with unnecessary, repetitive citations, I refer the reader to the lecture itself. See Slavoj, “A Lacanian Plea for Fundamentalism”, 2000, https://slought.org/resources/a_lacanian_plea_for_fundamentalism.
don’t accept, you do not renounce the object—the one who accomplishes the act of mourning is the…traitor, to put it in a simplified way.” Žižek points out how this notion of mourning is given a sociological twist, as in the example of the postcolonial subject who, while participating in “the global capitalist game,” nevertheless retains his fidelity to his lost ethnic roots, which, in an important philosophical twist that is typical of Žižek, he argues that “it fits perfectly, this sticking to the loss…this continued attachment to the ethnic roots, renders perfectly the ideal structure of subjectivity of today’s so-called postmodern, global…subjectivity.” “[The] fetish” he argues, “provides something of a field—in a way [she] can control truth, because here is the element which tells [her] […] which allows [her] to maintain a distance towards the truth….” For Žižek, fetishists are not “crazy people who live in the world of strange beliefs.” On the contrary, he sees in the solution of the fetishist who has faced a traumatic event, something “magic…almost nice, realistic,” in that they (re)organize their universe “so that they can very much survive in an extremely cynically-realistic way.” Life becomes livable for them once again, because constant reference to the fetish allows them to “maintain a necessary distance.” Žižek reemphasizes his disagreement with those who argue that today’s cynicism precludes the need for such coping mechanisms, positing that “people are cynical at a certain superficial level, but they always…set fetishes to support their cynicism.”

Žižek moves on to make a radical claim (again not so surprising coming from Žižek): the way in which Buddhism functions in the West (what he calls western Buddhism), has an ironic parallel with western Marxism—the reason being, it plays the same fetishistic role. His explanation is as follows: Just as European technology and capitalism enjoy global hegemony, at the same time, with the diminishing of the Judeo-Christian legacy, the void is being filled by Asiatic thought—whether it be Buddhism or Taoism—and is “establishing itself as the hegemonic ideology of global capitalism.” Žižek relates the success of western Buddhism to its philosophy of detachment from
the world—wherein, in any case, the world is seen as a dream—and an attitude of “inner distance and indifference towards this accelerated social process” known as “future shock,”226 where one is simply incapable of “trying to cope with the accelerating rhythm of [technological] progress.” In this rendering of the social function of Buddhism in the West, Žižek makes a conscious move away from the mainstream (self-)presentation of western Buddhism “as the remedy against the stressful tension of the capitalist dynamics, allowing us to uncouple, to retain the inner peace.” Thus, in Žižek’s estimation, western Buddhism “actually functions as the perfect ideological supplement to global capitalism.”

Žižek claims, again quite radically, that Tibetans are this way because they are “true fundamentalists,” and also “almost multiculturalist, truly tolerant.” Expounding upon this, he notes that the so-called “moral majority” as well as the “postmodern multiculturalist”—“although one of them is seen as tolerant and the other kind in the intolerant mode”—both share a “fascination with the Other,” which is bound by a “logic of envy.” On the other hand, Žižek argues that “truly radical fundamentalism” renounces such envy. This is his argument regarding Tibetans. If one reads their writings, he pointedly notes, they have an attitude of utter self-sufficiency: “We are the center of the world, we have what we want, we don’t envy the Others,” as Žižek puts it. This is because they lack the very logic of envy, and it is because of this logic they are tolerant. Again, to compare this attitude with that possessed by the moral majority fundamentalists, it is their “logic of envy” which is problematic for Žižek.

Žižek concludes his lecture with a final meditation on trauma, which he sees as “the Judeo-Christian legacy, and the legacy of psychoanalysis,” and in which he sees the originary impulse that “makes human beings, human beings….” The ultimate trauma, in both the Judeo-Christian

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226 See Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York, NY: Bantam, 1984), wherein Toffler, who coins the phrase, examines the effects of rapid industrial and technological changes upon the individual, the family, and society.
tradition as well as in psychoanalysis, “is the encounter of the other desire—of the desiring other in its/her/his impenetrability. It is this trauma that Žižek sees as worth saving in the human (universal) legacy.

Reading Žižek, (mis)reading Hizb ut-Tahrir

In this section I take my summary of Žižek’s lecture and apply it to the case of HT. Sometimes I employ a “straight” critical-psychoanalytic reading of HT—as afforded by Žižek. I occasionally also make use of Fethi Benslama’s insights into Islamic politicality, and at times I employ what I call a “deconstructive-psychoanalytic” reading of the text. At certain points I deploy a Bloomian misreading of both Žižek and HT to make my arguments. For fluidity of expression I use HT/Islamist or Islam(ism)/Radical Islamist interchangeably. While I am aware of the theoretical problems of such usage, it appears that the overwhelming glut of terms designating an oftentimes nebulous notion renders such usage favorable.

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227 Here, as in the previous section, unless explicitly stated, quotations are taken from Žižek’s lecture. See Slavoj Žižek, “A Lacanian Plea for Fundamentalism”, https://slought.org/resources/a_lacanian_plea_for_fundamentalism.

228 At times one paragraph at a time, but (inevitably?) not always, referring as I do at times to aspects of his lecture that are found outside the immediate paragraph in question. I take cue for this method of reading—although, again, I stress, it is not always that I employ this—from the notion of the “hermeneutic circle,” the idea that one’s understanding of the text as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts, and, at the same time one’s understanding of each individual part is by reference to the whole.

229 Fethi Benslama argues that, following the publication of *Satanic Verses*, and the ensuing Muslim outrage, Rushdie was simply reflecting a prerogative that had its precedent in the founding figures of Islam(ism)—that one must transcend traditional religious authority and go straight back to the sources—and, in a similar fashion, in Rushdie’s own response to Muslims, he was proposing that “every man is an ‘author’,” “Everything is literature.” It is important to combine Benslama’s direct references to the *Satanic Verses* with his references to the founding figures of Islam(ism) to allow for my argument here for reading HT as “text” See Benslama, *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam*, 14-17, 25-26.

228 See Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), in which Bloom, building on his seminal *The Anxiety of Influence*, examines how poets misread their precursors’ works in an effort to establish and announce their own presence upon the scene.

230 Benslama—taking cue from Olivier Roy’s reflections on the confusion arising from the use of the word “Islamism,” in that it prevents one from distinguishing between Islam as a “phenomenon of faith” and the “militant political movements” inspired by Islam—in fact argues that Islamism “is a damaged concept and has ceased to exist.” He marks the “death of Islamism,” precisely by striking through the term See Benslama, *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam*, 42.
As far as the “cobweb of unwritten, implicit rules” which “are prohibited to be pronounced publicly” and HT are concerned, it is an implicit rule—not forming part of an “intricate cobweb,” but instead set in concrete. That is to say, as a Muslim one has his feet immovably set in stone—that as a Muslim one is part of the global community of Muslims, the ummah, and to deny this is not only to denounce one’s heritage, it is to deny one’s essential identity, it is to fall into the chasm of self-exiled despair. Not only that, it is to invite the Islamic ruling of heresy—for to say that one no longer belongs to the Muslim community, or even to say that s/he feels ambivalence towards that community, is to say—even if not explicitly stated, but the concreteness of Islamist (self-)identification is so immobile—that one is no longer a Muslim. And the implicit/explicit punishment for heresy is death. Thus, to return to, the abstraction—Muslimness à la HT—is inscribed in one’s “social relations” as a Muslim, and this inscription is indelible, the measure of its indelibility being the imaginary (in the sense of unreal, untrue) sense of HT’s (or transnational Islamists’ of all stripes) strength of the ummah’s unity.

Regarding the foundational theory upon which ’s lecture is based—the relationship between Mourning and Melancholia, and how this relates to Hizb ut-Tahir: members of HT mourn the loss of the Islamic Caliphate in 1924. Their literature is replete with explicit and implicit references to

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My use of a multiplicity of similar terms is not a denial of Benslama, but rather it is an attempt to highlight the very problematic of using such terms—and is not meant to confuse the reader, but in fact to hopefully provide something of a better grasp of the complexities involved.

232 “One of the key features of transnational Islamism is that it emphasizes the “Muslim identity” as opposed to national identities bounded by culture and geography. Reference to the umma and the responsibilities of the Muslim community remain central to the transnational Islamists’ message.” See Riaz, “Interactions,” 85.

233 “Openness is the originary signifier of the Muhammadan religion (al-fath al-muhammadi) and its spirituality.” See Fethi Benslama, Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam, 12-13.

the late Ottoman Caliphate. In a 2010 collection of short essays entitled *21st Century Imperialism and the Return of the Caliphate*, written and collated by HT member Abid Mustafa, the actual word “Ottoman” or the phrase “the Ottoman Caliphate” appears four times, which does not initially convey much. The word “Caliphate” appears a total of 68 times, and the Arabic word *Khilafah* only once—again not so impressive, considering that the document is roughly 30,000 words in length. But if something cannot be measured “empirically,” it certainly can be understood by means of the traces that it leaves, the unspoken omissions, the implicit suggestions, the unconscious meanings. The references to the Caliphate are of course implicit references to the Ottoman Caliphate—which fulfills the role of the fetish. It replaces the loss of Muslim hegemony—to use HT’s reification of a united Muslim front throughout history—and it at the same time stands in for Muslim Caliphs throughout history. As a fetish it occupies, fulfills, becomes, ends, as the apotheosis—a tragic apotheosis, the final gasp—of Muslim greatness, past, present (for Islam and Muslims are always

Also, refer back to the previous chapter, where I contend that the caliphate’s functioning as a site of mourning also means that it allows Muslims to come to terms with colonialism, with the loss of Muslim power, unity, and proof of God’s favour.


236 In his most direct address to the topic, the 1927 essay, “Fetishism,” [Freud] argues that a fetish is a special form of penis substitute. For the boy who apprehends his mother’s (and other women’s) “lack” of a penis as the representation of his own possible castration, the woman’s genitalia generate a “fright,” which, Freud surmised, is universal. The woman's genitalia are henceforth an object of horror and fear for the boy, although the “normal” adult man learns to transform it into an object of desire. For some individuals, such adjustment is impossible, the trauma is too great; in the effort to overcome it, the male psyche finds a substitute, which then constitutes a “permanent memorial” to the boy’s initial experience of horror. The language of memorialization is significant, and the structure of substitution as the normal (and normative) mechanism for overcoming loss recurs throughout Freud’s writing. In the essay on fetishism, this substitute is the fetish: both a “token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it.”


That is, the fetish of the caliphate serves the role of re-cuperating the Muslim (male?) psyche in the face of (symbolic) political castration.
already great by virtue of their submission to God),\(^{237}\) and future. Its apotheosis of failure is its “magic,” which is why it is the fetish par excellence of Isla(mist)/HT's (un)conscious.

HT’s mourning of the Caliphate, then, is a failed mourning, simply put, because they have failed to “come to terms with this loss”; they have failed to “internalize” its meaning. From the point of view of Sufi metaphysics, the Caliphate is not so much an external, political superstructure, but rather *khilafah* (which also functions as an adjective from a Qur’anic perspective), or vicegerency, is the rightful and needful fulfillment of our God-given function in the world. This is because we are God’s individual representatives on earth, each and every one of us, and each of us bear testimony to the oneness of God through our having fully realized our potential as mirrors of the Divine attributes.\(^{238}\) HT members exhibit signs of melancholy, where they are “unable to perform the *aufhebung*, the sublation of the immediate reality of the object in his or her meaning.” However, according to ’s analysis of the unwritten rules that inscribe the individual-social body, this is in keeping with the doxa that “mourning is the betrayal of the fidelity to the object, and that...there is an indivisible remainder...and true fidelity is the fidelity to this remainder.” To successfully mourn is to betray, to become a “traitor,” and HT members—as is true of other Islamic political actors—refuse to accept their fate (however imaginary or real it may be). According to Benslama, this is part and parcel of the “despair of the masses”\(^{239}\) that HT is able to tap into. It is “the despair that wills to be itself [whether one has insight as to what that “itself” actually is is of course another matter],” as Kierkegaard puts it.\(^{240}\) Žižek argues that this refusal to come to terms with loss, the refusal to

\(^{237}\) “Indeed we have granted you (lit. opened for you) a manifest victory (lit. opened),” Quran 48:1.


\(^{239}\) See Benslama, *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam*, 7.

\(^{240}\) Ibid., 5.
participate with one’s entire being in “the global capitalist game”—or what HT would describe as the neo-imperial machinations of an overweening West, led by the US[^241^]—“renders perfectly the ideal structure of subjectivity of today’s…postmodern, global…subjectivity.” And in this regard, the fetish—the fetish of the Caliphate for HT—allows the political Islamic subject to “control truth,” “to maintain a distance to the truth….” Once again, the “magic” of the fetish allows the Islamist to (re)organize his/her imaginary universe in order so that s/he can “survive in an extremely cynically-realist way.”[^242^] And yet again—for the nature of the fetish is that it never goes away, because the trauma never goes away, resurfacing as it does, over and over—the forever-returning repressed—life is livable because the continued reference to the fetish allows them to “maintain a necessary distance.”

Just as the mainstream claim made by Buddhism in the West is that it is “the remedy against the stressful tension of the capitalist dynamics, allowing [one] to uncouple, to retain inner peace,” similarly (although the language is necessarily theocentric) political Islamic rhetoric presents Islam(ism) as the only remedy for the “spiritual void” created by secularism. In the article “Why the West has lost the Ideological War against Muslims”[^243^] Mustafa writes that, “secularism always leaves a spiritual void, especially when confronted by problems which they are unable to solve. Separating God from temporal matters only accentuates this feeling. It is this intellectual weakness—where, HT avers, the spiritual-intellectual-political matrix of what makes us human and whole, has been severely attenuated—that has contributed to “the dramatic rise of political Islam under the secular


[^242^]: One need only browse any one of the plethora of websites maintained by HT to get a sense of the almost endless stream of articles pointing to the “evils” of the West, and in particular the US, towards the Muslim world. The cynicism is directed wholesale at the West itself, while the realism is also paradoxically in facing the cold, hard facts of realpolitik. A particularly good website is www.khilafah.com, [http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/the-khilafah](http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/the-khilafah).

autocratic rule that pervades much of the Muslim world.”244 This, taken together with an earlier statement two pages prior, that “In the West, Islam is the fastest growing religion both amongst immigrants and the indigenous community,”245 constitutes a clear indication of what HT sees as Islam(ism)’s goal as far as speaking to the “inner” human being. Of course, unlike ’s western Buddhism, Islam(ism) does not seem to be enjoying the function of being “the hegemonic ideology of global capitalism,” put simply, because it cannot countenance “the adoption of secular liberal capitalist values that have led to a society driven by consumerism and individualism, which has led to a breakdown in family life, a rising culture of disrespect, worsening antisocial behaviour and violent crime, the exploitation of women and a widening gap between rich and poor.”246

That being said, however, we cannot conclude that Islam(ism) does not fulfill something of a function similar to that of ’s western-Buddhism, although, as the following analysis will show, it takes a slightly different coloring. As far as “future shock” and the (post)modern subjectivity’s being simply incapable of “trying to cope with the accelerated rhythm of [technological] progress,” Islam(ism), according to Benslama’s reading, is plying a very interesting trade. He argue that Islam(ism) (and here he is describing Islam(ism) in general terms, hence a portion of his analysis may be amiss vis-à-vis HT—and he himself notes that variants of Islam(ism) have various points of emphases247) “denounces the expropriation and [in fact] encourages [it], unawares…. [T]hrough the illusion of the neutrality of technology, it feeds the scandal of fanaticism and its fury.”248 Benslama

244 Ibid.

245 Ibid.


247 Benslama, Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam, 41.

248 Ibid., 41.
continues, “Islamist ideology is not simply a fundamentalist religious movement…. [t]he whole is the product of historic mutation, a new species of identity myth I suggest calling national-theo-scientism.”

In being very much enmeshed in technology—the internet being the major platform for the dissemination of ideas—and given their pretensions to global domination (at least their pretensions to a global Muslim community in the form of the Caliphate)—it might be argued that Islam(ism) is fast becoming the dominant ideology of global-Islamist-capitalism. From a theological point of view—at least the one emphasized by Islamists, for a Sufi approach provides a rich counterpoint, representing the world as radically different—Islamists view the world as being very real. Science and technology are taken as “neutral,” as Benslama points out, and, as it were, logical and unproblematic extensions of contemporary life—the fact that modern science and technology emerge from a particular worldview, beginning with the Enlightenment, is lost on them. As Benslama further observes:

The acceptance of science and technology did not occur through a process of creative integration but took place passively and was accompanied by amazement, and discoveries were grasped as if they had fallen from the sky. In the absence of any critical function, without any accompanying ethics or aesthetics, we could say that this modernization took place without the necessary work of culture (Kulturarbeit, as Freud expressed it).

To continue with Benslama then, before returning to Žižek, Benslama is very much conscious of the emergence of a Muslim subjectivity in the form of the Islamic political subject—one shorn from tradition—this idea has been touched on above in looking at the notion of “every

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249 Ibid., 41.

250 “[W]hile God is absolutely transcendent with respect to the Universe, the Universe is not completely separated from Him; that the “Universe is mysteriously plunged in God.” It signifies that to believe in any order of reality as autonomous apart from the Absolute Reality is to fall into the cardinal sin of Islam, namely polytheism (shirk), and to deny the Shahadah (La ilaha ill’-Allah)—that there is no reality other than Absolute Reality. The formula begins with a negation in order not to imprison the Principle in any affirmation whatsoever. The world and the things in it are not God but their reality is none other than His; otherwise they would be completely independent realities, which is the same as considering them to be deities along with Allah.” Nasr, Three Muslim Sages, 106-107.

251 Benslama, Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam, 45.
man is an ‘author’. This particular form of Muslim subjectivity, he argues, “has precipitated into a form of historical action that overflows the field of consciousness.” It is a form of “historical action” that has no historical sense, in that it seeks to be transhistorical, and transcultural—the interpenetration of history and culture are crucial for any historico-cultural subject who does not seek to leap above and beyond the arc of history, but is firmly rooted-in, is firmly aware of his position vis-à-vis historico-cultural unfoldings. It is precisely for this reason that this (post)modern Islamic subjectivity has an unbounded consciousness—it is a consciousness that seeks to be another, it is a conglomeration of various tidbits of information, gathered secondhand. But, as Benslama pointedly asks: “Who was this other? Marx’s revolutionary? Freud’s unconscious subject? Sade’s libertine? Segalen’s ‘exote’? Rimbaud’s verbal alchemist? A universalist? A citizen of the world? He was all of them at the same time….”

Ibid., vii.

Ibid., 2.

“[T]he task of transhistorical and transcultural translation, an essential condition of a politics of modernity, needed for ‘continuity in the mental life of successive generations,’ as Freud put it…would disappear beneath the twofold burden of the rapid extension of technology and the mechanics of ‘expropriation’ of global capitalism.” Ibid., 4.

Ibid., 2.

“[A]s for the Sunnah, Nafi’a reported saying: ‘Abdullah ibn Umar said to me that he heard the Prophet (saw) saying: ‘Whosoever takes off his hand from allegiance to Allah (swt) will meet Him (swt) on the Day of Resurrection without having any proof for him, and whoso dies whilst there was no Bay’ab (allegiance) on his neck (to a Khaleefah), he dies a death of Jahlilyyah (ignorance).’” “The Re-establishment of the Khilafah is an obligation upon all Muslims,” The Khilafah, June 24, 2007, http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/the-khilafah/issues/597-the-re-establishment-of-the-khilafah-is-an-obligation-upon-all-muslims.

“[T]he abrogation of origin, which occurred when the theoretical foundations of Islamism were established in Egypt, by Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), and in Afghanistan, by Abu Ala Mawdudi (1903-1976), at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Egyptian Sayyid Qutb continued their work and shaped into a doctrine whose central idea is that Muslims have returned to the time of the jahiliyyah, that is, the period before the foundation of Islam, or the preoriginary period. Sayyid Qutb arrived at this astonishing conclusion through the following argument: He first makes a
Benslama contends with some force:

It seems that this ideology was possible, as a new composite myth, only in societies where the breakdown of religion had been under way; to the extent that it was no longer possible to restore its former authority and thus become necessary to incorporate other elements and sources of authority. […] It is the avowal of a shocking truth: we have entered the age of the inevidence of the Islamic Self and the lack, not of homogeneity, which has never existed, but of its former coherence. The inevidence of self is always a mark of the confusion of the modern identity. One Islam has ended.257

This Benslamaian interlude having been put in place, I would like to return to Žižek and his idea that Tibetans are “true fundamentalists,” and are also “almost multiculturalist, truly tolerant.” This he argues is due to their lack of a “logic of envy,” and due also to their lack of “fascination with the other”—qualities (that is the “logic of envy” and a “fascination with the other”) which the so-called moral majority fundamentalists and the multiculturalists share. It is to these twin lackings on the part of Tibetans that Žižek attributes their tolerance. As seen earlier, the Islamic political idealist is both desirous of being an-other and paradoxically, at the same time, desirous of being its own true self. However, from the above analyses provided by Benslama, we also find they are no longer capable of being their true selves—“The inevidence of self” which is the “mark of the confusion of the modern identity,”258 is an “inevidence” because the self has no evidence to offer in and of itself; but also because it has exceeded itself, both in its killing of tradition, of origin, but also because it resides in a “present [which is] constantly compared to a distant past and perceived as a palimpsest

257 Ibid.

258 Ibid.
of that past, which, in floating back to the surface of lived time, submerge[s] the present.”

That is to say, the “eternal now” of tradition becomes an eternity of false past(s), which continue into the future with no sense of beginning—for that Islam has been killed, and with no hope for the present—for with no past or future, there can be no present, except that this present is one of fetishism and despair—and the two are inseparable from one another. Needless to say, Islamic political idealists/HT are anything but “true fundamentalists.”

In concluding his meditation on Fundamentalism, Žižek remarks that trauma is the dual legacy of Judeo-Christian civilization and psychoanalysis. From the above analyses, I think it is evident that trauma, if not part of the legacy of Islam per se, Islam(ism) is nevertheless an active participant in that reality. continues that the trauma of encountering “the other desire —of the desiring other in its/his/her impenetrability” which “makes human beings, human beings.” And it is this trauma—the facing of radical alterity—that is worthy of saving within the human legacy. Whether this generous appraisal of the trauma of the radical alterity of the other can be applied in the case of Islam(ism)/HT is not clear.

**Conclusion**

In the question and answer session following the lecture, Žižek mentions the dialectic described by Hegel, and that is, according to ’s paraphrasing, “the very procedure by means of which you try to

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259 Ibid., 10.


262 “Having come on the scene with a moralizing language that implicated the body and our anxieties about existence, Islamists erected a monolithic Islam free of internal contradiction; they polarized the opposition between Islam and the West.” Ibid.
assert something undermines the goal.” Now, combining this Hegelianism with the “critical-
psychoanalytic” position I have adopted throughout the preceding section in analyzing Hizb ut-
Tahrir and their relationship to the trauma of the loss of the Caliphate—that is, their insistence on
the need to establish the Khilafah being the essential fetish for the despairing (Muslims) masses, and
its being the means by which political Islamic idealists are able to maintain a semblance of normalcy
within their singular, (post)modern lives—it is for this very reason that the Caliphate can never
become a reality, for the unconscious will not allow it, it will in the end necessarily thwart it. This, I
contend, is because the trauma of the decline and fall of Islamic civilization—as imagined by
political Islamic actors—is a trauma, a loss, that cannot be successfully mourned by the
(post)modern subjectivity, as discussed above.

As such, the state of melancholy facing Islamic political idealists such as HT needs to have the
fetish of the Caliphate to continue fulfilling its much needed “healing” function (although of course
there can never be complete healing; that is built into the very nerve-structure of Melancholy), or shall
we say the function of ever-repeating normalization? For the (post)modern Islamic political subject
can never sublimate the loss, and must always mourn, and the fulfillment of the asserted goal will
deprive this melancholic of his melancholy—and to be deprived of his melancholy would mean that
he would become an “in-fidel” (the word choice is intentional). That is, he will betray his fidelity to
the (imagined) greatness of Islam (which simply cannot be) without his actually embracing the
radical alterity of the vast majority of his Muslim Others—those who, for him, are necessarily
infidels, in that they have given up their fidelity to the trauma of the Great Loss, having successfully
mourned and internalized its greater meaning. For this latter group, and for traditional Islam as

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263 In psychoanalytic theory, sublimation is a form of mature defense mechanism, whereby socially inappropriate impulses are (unconsciously) transformed into socially acceptable actions, which cause a long-term conversion of the initial impulse.
such, life is not a constant act of mourning losses, but rather a continual process of internalization of meanings that ultimately come from God.  

The latter group is represented by such figures as Hamza Yusuf and Zaid Shakir—the co-founders of the first accredited American Muslim liberal arts college, Zaytuna College—and the influential Islamic studies professor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr.  

264 The latter group is represented by such figures as Hamza Yusuf and Zaid Shakir—the co-founders of the first accredited American Muslim liberal arts college, Zaytuna College—and the influential Islamic studies professor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr.
CHAPTER 4

Reconstructing the Muslim Self: Muhammad Iqbal, *Khudi*, and the Modern Self

In this chapter I examine the formulation of the (modern) Islamic self by perhaps the most influential modern Islamic thinker of the last hundred years, Muhammad Iqbal. My argument is that Iqbal’s formulation of *khudi* (the [Islamic] self) is significantly done—consciously and unconsciously—in relation to modern western formulations of the self. Further, with Foucault’s idea of “the unconscious of knowledge” forming the conscious and unconscious backdrop of my own thinking, it is my contention that just as Iqbal draws on modern western notions of selfhood, so also does HT’s idea of the Islamic personality, which is considered to be the foundation for the re-realization of the Islamic State, draw on the modern formulation of the self. The underlying assumption here is that a one-to-one notion of “influence,” while occupying many an historian of religious thought through the ages, is not easily “provable,” and indeed may in the end be something of a futile exercise. This question of influence has been thought through more rigorously in the context of literary history than in the history of religious thought, and this is perhaps unsurprising given the “anxiety of influence,” in Harold Bloom’s memorable turn of phrase, that bedevils every poet worth his/her salt.

In *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Bloom argues that poets are hampered in their creative process by the ambiguous relationship they necessarily maintain with previous poets. While admitting the influence of extra-literary experience on every poet, Bloom argues that “the poet in a poet” is inspired to write by reading another poet’s poetry and will tend to produce work that is in danger of being derivative and weak. Because poets historically emphasize an original poetic vision

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in order to guarantee their survival into posterity, the influence of previous poets inspires a sense of anxiety in contemporary poets. Bloom suggests a process by which the small minority of “strong” poets are able to create original work in spite of the pressure of influence.

In the context of (western) intellectual history the trend has been for thinkers from Plato to Aristotle, from Freud to Jung, from Foucault to Derrida, to seek to simultaneously build upon as well as undermine the thinking of one’s predecessors. This is one of the significant points made by Richard Tarnas in his magisterial *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our Worldview*. In other words, there is a double-movement of affirmation and negation. For Foucault, the idea of influence in the more personal one-to-one sense is almost, if not entirely, absent. This notion of influence assumes that human beings are reducible to discrete thoughts and actions—and, consequently, their thoughts and actions can be traced through history in a chain of thoughts and actions through their predecessors. This approach to reading and doing history is encapsulated by Foucault’s idea of ‘genealogy’ which

[D]iffers from the history of historians in being without constants. Nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as a basis for self-regulation or for understanding other men. The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled.

All of which is to say that modern western notions of selfhood constitute the metaphorical air which apparently divergent thinkers such as Muhammad Iqbal (typically described as an Islamic modernist) and the founder of HT, Taqi al-Din an-Nabhani (typically described as an Islamist) breathe in order to formulate their ideas of the (modern) Islamic self. My choosing to focus on Iqbal in this chapter—which will strike many readers as coming from leftfield—is precisely to


267 Quoted: Clare O’Farrel, *Michel Foucault*, op. cit., 68.
illustrate the extent to which modern notions of selfhood have pervaded “Islamic” understandings of the self, consciously and unconsciously. And it is within this broad range of intellectual influence(s)—the unconscious of knowledge—that both Iqbal and HT/Nabhani have to be located as far as their conception of the (modern) Islamic self.

To discuss an “anxiety of influence” closer to home, in Chapter 9 of *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam*, Katherine Pratt Ewing—who is also my academic advisor—examines “Sufi discourse about the subject without privileging the Western idea of the autonomous ego or self.” Ewing argues that by reading Abu Hamid al-Ghazali—whom Iqbal uses significantly in his philosophical treatise, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*—one can thereby read Iqbal “from the perspective of European theorists who set aside the idea of an autonomous ego,” in particular Lacan, and consequently one is able to “characterize Iqbal’s project for a modern subject without imposing on it at least that particular European assumption.”

It is Ewing’s contention, therefore, that it is not the case that “Iqbal is simply giving the western goal of developing the autonomous self a bit of Sufi window-dressing, contrasting his formulation with the traditional, passive Sufi goal of ‘becoming free from the self’.” Rather, for Ewing, Ghazali’s understanding of the (Sufi) self—where s/he attains to the highest level of spiritual realization “with the positing of God as an other that cannot be gazed upon, that cannot be named or interpellated. [Where] God is the object of an impossible desire, and the Sufi keeps the

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269 *Arguing Sainthood*, 256.


271 Ibid, 256.

272 Ibid., 255.
impossibility, the limitlessness, of this desire firmly before him.”\(^{273}\) has significant parallels with Lacan’s Other, the Symbolic Order, “[which] is not that specular image but rather the unseen form of the mirror [in which one mistakes one’s image for the its whole self] itself. The gap can never be fully closed. The self of the Sufi is not God, but an existent non-being, illuminated only by a borrowed light.”\(^{274}\) As with Lacan’s understanding of the self as a fragmentary thing, with “an absence at the heart of the subject”\(^{275}\) so too, Ewing contends, does Ghazali understand the (Sufi) self as one that has “no existence in itself.”\(^{276}\)

It is my argument, however, that Ewing’s very rich comparisons between Sufism (à la Ghazali and Iqbal) and Lacan notwithstanding, she overlooks some crucial aspects of both historic Sufism (à la Ghazali and Ibn ‘Arabi, the latter of whom Iqbal engages with by dismissing tout court, and whose influence in Islamic thought has been nothing short of monumental\(^{277}\)), as well as that of Iqbal’s thought. As far as Ghazali (and Ibn ‘Arabi, but I will limit these preliminary comments to Ghazali, as I discuss Ibn ‘Arabi in fuller detail later in the chapter) is concerned, while it is certainly true that for Ghazali—and as far as traditional Islamic theology is concerned—all of creation derives its being from “the ground of being,” called wajib al-wujud in Arabic, or “Necessary Being”—while the being of created things is mumkin al-wujud, or “contingent (lit. “possible”) being.” At the same time, creation, *to the extent that it participates in, or reflects the light of God’s countenance* (“Wheresoever ye turn, there is the Face of God” [Quran 2:115]), *it is real*. Ghazali makes this point in his *Mishkat al-Anwar*—which Ewing references—as [“Each thing hath two faces, a face of its own and a face of its

\(^{273}\) Ibid., 263.

\(^{274}\) Ibid., 262.

\(^{275}\) Ibid., 260.

\(^{276}\) Ibid., 261.

Ibn ‘Arabi famously referred to this paradox of existence—its simultaneous existence and non-existence—by the formula He/Not He (huwa, la huwa). Further, while it is true that the self has a fragmentary, non-essential quality to it, it is in God, in divinis, that that same self finds wholeness and substance. The image that is popular among the Sufis, and which was also used by Ghazali, is that of a piece of iron placed in fire. The iron does not itself become the fire; at the same time, however, the iron cannot be distinguished from the fire when it glows red hot while in the furnace. Comparisons between Ghazali and Lacan, therefore, while extremely important as far as bringing out some illuminating (not to mention edifying) similarities—insofar as it is important that academic work demystify the Islamic subject—can at best serve as an initial foray into the subject matter.

Regarding Iqbal, it is my contention, as I discuss more fully later in the chapter, that we cannot take for granted that his reading of Ghazali—or of Sufism in general, or of Islam as such—is not itself very much a product of his time and place. Iqbal read Sufism and Islam as someone who lived very much with one foot in the West and another in the East, no matter how much he sought to transcend the two. And the preponderance of western thought in Iqbal’s life—intellectually and contextually—and his project for overcoming British colonialism, and (by extension) dominant western (intellectual and political) discourses (given the knowledge/power dyad) meant that, as with HT and the idea of opposition discussed in Chapter 2, the ideas which one is opposing are very much

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279 “Where can I find God?” Wherever He is present, which is everywhere, since all things are His acts. But no act is identical with God, who encompasses all things and all acts, all worlds and all presences. Though He can be found everywhere. He is also nowhere to be found. He/not He.” Quoted: William C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination (Stony Brook, N. Y.: State University of New York, 1989), 6.
embedded in one’s own thought—“the other who is already within us,”\textsuperscript{280} to quote Ewing from another context. Further, to quote Kristeva, whom Ewing also makes use of: “Analytic experience reveals that the discourse of the father, king, prince, or intellectual is your discourse. It is a logic that is within you, which you can domesticate but never dominate.”\textsuperscript{281} In other words, Iqbal's readings of Islam and Sufism were necessarily inflected by western understandings of the very same categories that Iqbal was examining, which in broad terms are: “the self,” how the self interacts with “the world,” “the nature of the world,” “the world of Islam,” and “the nature of the Prophet's mission in the world” (understood in relation to how Iqbal conceived of the self). I examine all of these nodes of Islamic expression—as far as Iqbal is concerned—in detail during the course of this chapter.

Having thus enunciated the anxieties around my own influences as far as my reading of Iqbal, I move now to a fuller discussion of Iqbal, which, once again, is to serve as a lens for making sense of HT’s understanding of the Islamic Personality in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{280} Arguing Sainthood, 262.

\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 262.
had made it so great in the past.\textsuperscript{282} Unlike the mainstream of Muslim reformers, however, Iqbal did not advocate a wholesale (re)adoption of reason, and especially not scientism, a term that has been importantly contrasted with science as a “spirit of inquiry” by Souleymane Bachir Diagne as far as Iqbal’s attitude to science is concerned.\textsuperscript{283}

Iqbal proposed a complicated approach to the problem of intellectuality that included both intuition and spiritual awakening, aspects marginalized in western discourses on modernity. But for Iqbal, the root cause of Muslim “debasement” lay in its approach to the “self.” And it was for the sake of addressing this debasement that Iqbal’s thought was dedicated—as a means for re-empowering the Muslim self. My motivations for focusing on Iqbal are on the one hand his significance as a thinker, and, on the other, his reflecting upon and reflections of the weltanschauung, which, according to Foucault’s conception of “the unconscious of knowledge,” necessarily informs all who live and breathe this milieu. It thus lays the groundwork for looking at Nabhani’s idea of the (modern) Islamic Personality in the next chapter. I intentionally move away from a psychoanalytic understanding of the self—as described in the previous chapter—to bring out other understandings. Throughout, I make brief connections with HT, which are further fleshed-out in the next chapter.

Iqbal argued that under the influence of Neoplatonism Muslims, and in particular the Sufis, conceived of the self as something that had to be overcome and ultimately annihilated. In the active pursuit of such an ideal these “pantheistic” Sufis, as he called them, who taught the doctrine of \textit{wahdat al-wujud}, or the “oneness of being”—exemplified for Iqbal by Ibn ‘Arabi and his school of thought—became more concerned with “hairsplitting” arguments and less concerned with “action” and “achievement,” which were for Iqbal the basis of past Muslim greatness. Eventually their entire

\textsuperscript{282} See Albert Hourani, \textit{Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

\textsuperscript{283} Souleymane Bachir Diagne, \textit{Islam and Open Society Fidelity and Movement in the Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal} (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria Books, 2011).
lives became that of “quietism” and “decadence,” and finally, Iqbal argues, this far-reaching influence led to the downfall of the Islamic world vis-à-vis the West.\textsuperscript{284} Iqbal was dedicated to counteracting the influence of this type of Sufism. While acknowledging the contribution of Greek thought to the Muslim world, Iqbal ultimately argued for an anti-classicism that was a reflection of what for him was the anti-classical spirit of the Quran: “[W]hile Greek philosophy very much broadened the outlook of Muslim thinkers, it, on the whole, obscured their vision of the Quran…. The spirit of the Quran [is] essentially anti-classical.”\textsuperscript{285}

As representatives of the two types of Sufism, the “old” and the “new,” Iqbal commended the life-affirming and active Sufism of Rumi (whom he considered to be his spiritual guide), while warning against the “intoxicated” and “inactive” Sufism of Hafiz. Regarding the latter he said “Beware of Hafiz the drinker,/His cup is full of the poison of death.”\textsuperscript{286} As Reynold A. Nicholson put it, “Only by self-affirmation, self-expression, and self-development can the Moslems once more become strong and free. [Iqbal] appeals from the alluring raptures of Hafiz to the moral fervour of Jalaluddin Rumi.”\textsuperscript{287} Iqbal was concerned with reinstating the “self” which had been “gambled away” by previous generations of Muslims.\textsuperscript{288} In The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, which Iqbal considered to be the most significant of all his works, he quotes the Qur’anic verse, “Verily We proposed to the Heavens and to the earth and to the mountains to receive the trust, but they refused the burden and they feared to receive it. Man alone undertook to bear it, but hath proven unjust,

\textsuperscript{284} See Muhammad Iqbal, Complaint and Answer (Shikwa and Jawab-i-Shikwa), A. J. Arberry (trans.), (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1955).


\textsuperscript{286} Malik, ed., Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher, 294.


senseless!” Here Iqbal interprets “the trust” as meaning the trust of personality (self/ego), while historically the trust was interpreted either as the trust of tawhid and obedience to God. Iqbal makes a fundamental break from the traditional interpretation in an effort to re-vitalize Muslims towards action. For Iqbal, the discovery and cultivation of the ego marks the pinnacle of religious life. Unlike in “pantheistic” Sufism, which emphasizes the dissolution of the ego, or fana, and only after which the self in the higher sense can be adorned with the Divine attributes (which is also known as baqa, and the final end of the path), for Iqbal the strengthening of the ego with the divine principle is the true end (without recourse to the notion of fana) as it allows man’s fulfillment of his God-given role as His vicegerent on earth. Iqbal thus conceives of man as “independent,” “creative,” in charge of his own destiny, constantly “evolving,” “life-affirming,” “active,” “modern,” and yet “religious.” This attitude towards the (Islamic) self relates to HT’s understanding of the Islamic Personality which seeks to re-make the world according to Islamic principles, as I discuss in the next chapter.

The Iqbalian man is in relation to God, not as “nothing,” but as His servant (‘abduhu). He is constantly moving towards perfection as the Perfect Man, whose responsibility is as God’s creative agent in the universe, “recreating” it in ever-increasing perfection. (By contrast, HT’s Islamic Personality seeks to achieve perfection in the political realm, in the shape of the-Islamic-State-to-come, which, I argue in the previous chapter, is destined to forever be postponed.) This chapter is

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289 Iqbal, Reconstruction, 11.

290 See below in Contentions for more details.

291 “The climax of religious life…is the discovery of the ego as an individual deeper than his conceptually describable habitual self-hood. It is in contact with the Most Real that the ego discovers its uniqueness, its metaphysical status, and the possibility of improvement in that status.” Iqbal, Reconstruction, 184.

292 While I am of course aware of the sexism inherent in such language, for the sake of fluidity of expression I use the term “man” in its generic sense as connoting “human being,” as a translation of the Greek word anthropos, and also since this is the term that Iqbal uses.
therefore an examination of Iqbal’s (re)construction of the Muslim self, the ways in which he
un/consciously borrows from a modern, western understanding of selfhood, and the implications
this has for his “Islamic project.” This chapter provides much of the interpretive framework—the
broad-based lines of the “unconscious of knowledge”—for the next chapter.

**Hallaj and Prophetic Perfection; God, Man and Society**

The life and thought of Mansur al-Hallaj (858-922) has been the object of much reflection and
debate in Islamic history. In his (in)famous utterance “Ana al-Haqq,” “I am the Truth,” many Sufis
argued that it was the divine principle speaking through the mouth of Hallaj in his having
successfully annihilated his self. Iqbal felt that this was a mistaken interpretation which was the
result, initially, of Neoplatonism, and later on of Ibn ‘Arabi’s school of thought, which taught the
doctrine of wahdat al-wujud, or the “unity of being,” whose pantheistic philosophy entailed that
everything is immersed in God. Through this interpretation God’s pure transcendence was
diminished.

In contrast to interpreting Hallaj’s utterance from such a perspective of ‘itissal, or union, in
his extensive studies of Hallaj, “[Louis] Massignon…succeeded in showing that in the theology of
Hallaj God’s pure transcendence is maintained.”293 Iqbal, who read Massignon’s work, used this
interpretation to support his thesis on the individuality and personality of the self. He wrote: “The
contemporaries of Hallaj, as well as his successors, interpreted [his] words pantheistically, but the
Fragments of Hallaj, collected and published by the French Orientalist L. Massignon, leave no doubt
that the martyr saint could not have meant to deny the transcendence of God. The true
interpretation of his experience, therefore, is not the drop slipping into the sea, but the realization

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and bold affirmation in an undying phrase of the reality and permanence of the human ego in a
profonder personality.” According to Iqbal, this type of spiritual direction was exemplified by the
Prophet, who is the exemplar par excellence in Islam: “The Quran says of the Prophet’s vision of
the Ultimate Ego [God]: ‘His eye turned not aside, nor did it wander.’ […] [According to this ideal]
the moment we fix our gaze on intensity [or God], we begin to see that the finite ego must be distinct,
though not isolated, from the Infinite.”

And most importantly for Iqbal, given his philosophy of “action,” which I shall address
more fully a little later, “the psychological difference between the prophetic and the mystic types of
consciousness” is that “the mystic does not wish to return from the repose of ‘unitary experience’;
and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large.
The prophet’s return [however] is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with
a view to controlling the forces of history, and thereby to creating a fresh world of ideals.… Thus,
his return amounts to a kind of pragmatic test of the value of his religious experience [in the manner
in which he succeeds in transforming the world].” The most Perfect Man is the most perfect
vicegerent, whose function is as master of the world, of the universe, of all things.

For Iqbal, man in his life-trajectory, which is directed by love, is essentially solitary: “Reason
draws life towards manifestation, //love draws life towards solitude.” However, man’s solitary
movement is only with regard to other people, for in his quest he is always getting closer to God.
Indeed, God is forever present, as Iqbal notes citing the Qur’anic verse: “I am closer to him than his
jugular vein,” indicating that if there is a lack of awareness of this fact then it is merely a

294 Iqbal, Reconstruction, 96.
295 Ibid, 118.
296 Ibid., 124.
297 Iqbal, Javid Nama, verses 307-8.
“perceptual” weakness, or a weakness of “intuition”: “…we are blind, and Thou are present. / Either draw aside this veil of mysteries / or seize to Thyself this sightless soul!”

For Iqbal, man’s function is to attain to an ever-increasing individuality and freedom, which can only be achieved through proximity, or “realization” of that proximity, to God: “The Ego attains to freedom by the removal of all obstructions in its way. It is partly free, partly determined, and reaches fuller freedom by approaching the Individual who is most free—God. In one word, life is an endeavor for freedom.” This proximity is in a sense a “proximating” of God, which derives from the famous tradition Takhallaqu bi-Akhlaq Allah, “Create in yourselves the attributes of God,” that is, “man should attain more and more nearness to a unique God. Thus man becomes unique by becoming more and more like the most unique individual.”

Such an individuality is not, as mentioned earlier, for Iqbal the case of the “drop slipping into the sea,” but it is to become a shining pearl in the bosom of the sea, which is superb in its individual luster, but at the same time could not have come into being without the sea. As Iqbal writes in kulliyaat-e iqbaal urduu, “If I am an oyster-shell, then in your hand is the brightness/honor of my pearl, / if I am a pottery-shard, then make me a royal pearl!” Thus the individualities of God and man exist in a dynamic and creative tension in Iqbal’s philosophy, a tension that he does not resolve entirely satisfactorily. S. A. Vahid writes, for Iqbal “The Ultimate Ego holds the finite egos in its own self, without obliterating their existence” which “on the one hand emphasizes the reality of the finite ego, and on the other hand brings to light the individuality and egohood of the Infinite.” Contrastingly, the Islamic Personality seeks its

298 Ibid., verses 66-68.


300 Malik, Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher: 298.

301 See Prof. Francis Pritchett’s translation of Iqbal’s poetry on her website: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/iqbal/gesuetab.html.

“perfection” in subservience to the shari’a, and in a specifically communal/state context. For HT, God manifests himself in the world through the Islamic State. (I would like to stress that while Iqbal also, quite clearly, imagined a communal solution for Muslims in India, his emphasis was on the perfected individual, while for HT the points of emphases are in reverse.)

As part of man’s creating in himself the attributes of God, one of the main qualities that he achieves is that of “creator,” which again he gains through proximity to the Ultimate Reality: “Of all the creations of God [man] alone is capable of consciously participating in the creative life of his Maker.” However, in order to overcome the tension between the “creator man” and the “Creator God,” Iqbal says that God consciously limited His omnipotent will: “It [this limitation] is born out of His own creative freedom whereby He has chosen finite egos to be participators in His life, power and freedom.”

For Iqbal, the universe is therefore not static and complete, but rather is forever evolving—“It is not a block universe, a finished product, immobile and incapable of change. Deep in its inner being lies, perhaps, the dream of a new birth”—as is man constantly evolving. It is man’s role to direct the universe to ever-increasing perfection, which he does through the pull of love/desire, without which he becomes as though “dead”: “Life is latent in seeking,/Its origin is hidden in desire,/Keep desire alive in thine heart/Lest thy little dust become a tomb./Negation of desire is death to the living,/Even an absence of heat extinguishes the flame.” Through this constant movement man molds his very destiny: “Do not fetter thyself with the chains of Taqdir [destiny],/for with this canopy of heaven there is a way out./If thou dost not believe rise and discover that no

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304 Ibid., p.307.
305 Iqbal, Reconstruction, 10.
sooner hast thou released thy feet findest thou a free field."\textsuperscript{307} In this way the Iqbalian man is the one who manifests God’s decree: “the Momin (believer) is himself the destiny of God, so that when he changes his own self, his destiny also changes.”\textsuperscript{308} As Iqbal writes: “\textit{Abdudhun} [the servant of God] is the fashioner of Destiny…”\textsuperscript{309} (HT’s understanding of the Islamic State, however, is one which, while it is brought about by the Islamic Personality, the (imaginary) Caliphate is itself thought of as being largely static. The Islamic State, in being conceived of in opposition to the secular liberal state—which is itself imagined in broadly static terms—as well as being imagined in idealized terms that hark back to (selective) memory of the Islamic past, must necessarily be constructed as a fixed entity.

It is because of its failure to recognize this creative, active and destiny-fashioning role of man that Iqbal criticizes pantheistic Sufism. Regarding this state of mind Iqbal writes: “we find a strange similarity in Hindu and some of the Muslim thinkers who thought over [the] problem of the self. The point of view adopted by Sankara in the interpretation of Gita was the same that was followed by Ibn ‘Arabi in the interpretation of the Quran.\textsuperscript{310} That is, its state of mind is one of inaction, fatalism and quietism. The Iqbalian man, on the other hand, is constantly striving and has within him the state of creative “tension” through which he constantly perfects himself: “Personality is a state of tension and can continue only if that state is maintained…. Since personality, or the state of tension, is the most valuable achievement of man, he should see that he does not revert to a state of relaxation.”\textsuperscript{311}


\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., p151.

\textsuperscript{309} Malik, \textit{Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher}, 210.

\textsuperscript{310} S. E. Ashraf, \textit{A Critical Exposition of Iqbal’s Philosophy} (Patna, India: Associated Book Agency, 1978), 44.

In this conception of “higher” Sufism, as he calls it, Iqbal envisions the “human ego [as] rising higher than mere reflection, and mending its transience by appropriating the eternal.” For him action is the very basis of life—it is the way of the Prophet and of God Himself. Thus, through the untiring action of Iqbalian man, society’s wellbeing is ensured and maintained: “The fate of a people does not depend so much on organization as on the worth of and power of individual men.” Without such an effort society becomes decadent—which of course for Iqbal is the current state of Muslims. (HT parallels Iqbal’s thought insofar as it imagines “action” as the route to achieving worldly success for Muslims; but, as mentioned earlier, the difference between Iqbal and HT lies in their points of emphases: the individual in Iqbal’s case, the community/the (Islamic) State in HT’s case.)

Through the inner, creative tension of man, an evolutionary picture of his ascent is put forward, which borrows from Bergson’s *élan vital* and Nietzsche’s will-to-power. This picture is in spite of the description of the “perfectability” of man as seen earlier, since for Iqbal there can never really be a complete and final perfection of man: “in his inmost being, as conceived by the Qur’an, is a creative activity, an ascending spirit who, in his outward march, rises from one state of being to another: ‘It needs not that I swear by the sunset redness and by the night and its gatherings and by the moon when at her full, that from state to state shall ye be surely carried onward.’” Thus “the joy of the journey is not in the arrival, but in the perpetual tramp…. Ceaseless effort and

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313 Ibid., 197.
315 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 151.
not repose is what gives zest to life, and so Iqbal prefers humanity in its imperfect state." In Iqbal’s own words, “Man marches always onward to receive ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality which ‘every moment appears in a new glory.’”

Iqbal saw in the constant striving to realize the perfection of the individual epitomized by Hallaj’s *ana al-Haq*, as described earlier, the ideal of the nation itself. Regarding this Annemarie Schimmel notes: “In a group of quatrains in his posthumous work (*Armaghan-i Hijaz*), the ideal nation is that which realizes *ana’l-haqq* in its striving, i.e. which proves to be creative truth, a living, active reality which witnesses God’s reality by its own national—or supranational—life.” An idea that seeks to reconcile the opposition between Iqbal’s perfect man being an individual, and his responsibility to society. Indeed the Iqbalian man is at once separate from society and bound to it in an inseparable manner. This conception of man and society is in fact mirrored in Iqbal’s notion of man’s relationship to God, as a simple verse summarizes his entire attitude to the problem: “The men of God do not become God,/but they are never separated from God!”

HT members might say, by contrast: The men of God do not become the Islamic State,/but they are never separated from the Islamic State!

**Contentions**

It is important to reflect on why Sufism—and specifically Ibn ‘Arabi’s school of Sufism—is singled-out for critique by Iqbal as the *cause célèbre* for explaining the Muslim world’s “falling behind” the West. To address this, I would like to begin by considering Iqbal’s education. While he did receive

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321 Ibid., 376.
primary education in a Qur’an school, his subsequent formal education was almost entirely modern and Western. In *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India*, Sanjay Seth examines how modern, Western education—with its very different epistemology and attendant subject formations, as compared to indigenous forms of knowledge in (pre)colonial India—contributed towards (re)shaping Muslim subjectivities. To be sure, Seth shows that there wasn’t a wholesale displacement of indigenous modes of knowing; however, a significant rupture occurred, resulting in a rethinking of indigenous learning—and it is within this intellectual milieu (which included such important figures as Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi) that Iqbal should be located. In other words, *Indian intellectuals consciously and unconsciously thought through, against, and in relation to modern, western ideas and categories of politics, philosophy, culture, and religion*.

A fascinating illustration of the way in which Iqbal accepted western constructions of Islam and Muslims is expressed by Iqbal in a handful of letters. Iqbal writes about his feeling of being torn between his “constitutional” inclinations towards the traditional Sufism of his forefathers, and what he understood to be the “true” Islam of the Qur’an and the Prophet of Islam. As discussed earlier, he positioned himself against the pantheistic Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi. In the above-mentioned letters (referred to by Javed Majeed in his important study on Muhammad Iqbal), Iqbal writes of his natural disposition towards the *fana* of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufism, which he had so resolutely dismissed in his writings. However, Iqbal was “*constrained by the needs of the time* to define himself against the notion of *fana*.” While Javed Majeed puts this down to Iqbal’s “*willed alienation* from the tradition he defines himself against,” it is my contention that it is important to examine Iqbal’s intellectual

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322 Premodern knowledge – and therefore premodern subjectivity – entailed a fundamental inseparability of the knower and the known. Modern knowledge entails a fundamental separation between the knower and the known, resulting in the subject/object dichotomy that is central to modern epistemology.

323 Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal*, 29-30, my emphasis.

324 Ibid., my emphasis.
formation to shed further light, which will in turn illuminate the idea I am putting forward—
thinking in the modern world is significantly modulated by western paradigms.

It is noteworthy that Iqbal’s doctoral dissertation “The Development of Metaphysics in
Persia” in many ways reproduces Orientalist ideas about Sufism as being an aberration inserted into
the “dry,” “legalistic,” “desert” religion of Islam. He writes in the introduction of his dissertation-
turned-book, “The student of Islamic Mysticism who is anxious to see an all-embracing exposition
of the principle of Unity, must look [at] the Andalusian Ibn al-‘Arabi, whose profound teaching
stands in strange contrast with the dry-as-dust Islam of his countrymen.”325 In other words, Iqbal
accepted Orientalist constructions of Islam and Muslims, thereby positioning himself within a
discursive formation as far as his reconstruction of Islamic thought. (HT also assumes Orientalist
constructions of Islam and Muslims, as I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.) I am
arguing, therefore, and in keeping with Talal Asad’s reflections on the problem with the idea of
“agency,” that “the structuration of conditions and possibilities” necessitate that an Iqbal, a Tagore,
or a Gandhi do things a certain way, and the “consciousness with which one does them” is really of
another order.326 It is in this way that Iqbal’s (little-known) ambivalence towards his own adopted
position vis-à-vis traditional Sufism can be (begun to be) better understood. This also sheds light on
Iqbal’s understanding of Sufism, since Sufism was constructed as an accretion to Islam by
Orientalists. In this regard, Tomoko Masuzawa writes in her important work The Invention of World
Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism:

Seen through the mystic kernel of Sufism, all the parochial and miserly laws, childish
dogmas, and ceremonial encrustations that have constituted orthodox Islam seem to fall


away. In effect, through deep contemplation, this kernel would come to seem something other than Islam proper, or Islam in the usual sense.  

To be sure, Iqbal was not alone among the modernists in casting aspersions on Sufism for bringing about the decline of Muslim civilization—Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Muhammad ’Abduh, and Rashid Rida all singled-out Sufism for blame (for Nabhani/HT, while Sufism is not explicitly singled-out, it is effectively identified as a major culprit in the decline of Islamic civilization, as I discuss in the following chapter). What made Iqbal different from other Islamic modernists was the fact that he did not—at least not at the outset—seek to dismiss Sufism tout court. Rather, his reconstruction of Islamic thought was in significant ways a reconstruction of Sufism, a reimagining and reinvigoration of Sufism, which he called “higher Sufism,” and a reassessment of the role of the self within Sufi metaphysics. According to Quranic-Sufi cosmology, the self/soul (nafs) is graded according to three levels: the soul that commands to evil (nafs al-'ammara); the self-reproaching soul (nafs al-lawwama); and the soul at peace (nafs al-mutmainna).

The soul, according to this understanding, attains to the highest level through striving to do good deeds—in obedience to God—which, by the methods of spiritual realization handed down from master to disciple, ultimately allows one to train the soul so that it becomes in tune with the divine. For Iqbal, this amounts to a denial of the essence of what makes humans human, and also what he argues is the crucial aspect of the Qur’anic narrative: that, when God offered the “trust” [amanah] to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, they refused; but when He offered the trust to man, he accepted (Qur’an 33:72). This trust, according to Iqbal, is the trust of “egohood,” whereas, according to traditional Islamic cosmology, the trust is considered the trust of tawhid, and

327 Tomoko Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions, 203.

of upholding the precepts of the religion.\textsuperscript{329} It would appear to be clear that Iqbal is making a radical break from the historic Islamic tradition. And while it may be argued on behalf of Iqbal’s interpretation (in an attempt to reconcile it with traditional commentary) that when God created Adam he did so in order to create a vicegerent on earth (Qur’an 2:30), therefore, by being a vicegerent of God (if we read “egohood” as Iqbal’s gloss on vicegerency) on the earth one is fulfilling “the trust”—one really does not get a sense of such an understanding from Iqbal. Instead, the idea of “egohood” or “selfhood” is \textit{instrumentalized} for the sake of (re)producing Muslims as active agents of change in the world.

To consider Iqbal and his relation to Rumi together with Hafiz and Hallaj (if we recall that Iqbal considered Rumi to be his spiritual guide, while regarding Hafiz he wrote that his “cup is full of the poison of death,” and Hallaj was regarded by Iqbal as embodying the meaning of egohood): while it has been suggested that Rumi’s poetry more readily lends itself to being read in terms of Islamic morals, while in the case of Hafiz this is much less the case\textsuperscript{330}—my question is regarding the extent to which Iqbal was reading these poets, including Hallaj, \textit{through} Orientalism. It is pertinent that his appreciation of Hallaj and his (apparent) affirmation of “the individual ego” was through Massignon’s studies on Hallaj.\textsuperscript{331} As for Hafiz and his wine,\textsuperscript{332} the following from William C. Chittick is significant:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Trust} is understood as relating to the dictates of faith and belief, as in a famous saying: “Whosoever has no trust has no belief” (Q, Sy). Many relate \textit{the Trust} to obedience (IK, Ts, T, Z), and it is thus understood by most as a reference to the requirements (\textit{farāʾ ʿaḍ}) of religion (I, J, Q, T), though others see it as a reference to prayer alone (Q). \textit{The Trust} can also be understood as pertaining to the manner in which one manages each aspect of one’s being, such as the tongue, the eye, the stomach, one’s private parts, etc. (I, J, Q). Thus some connect it to 8:27: \textit{Betray not God and the Messenger, and betray not your trusts knowingly} (M). It is also said that \textit{the Trust} pertains to faith inwardly and performing the requirements of religion outwardly (Aj). Some also allow that \textit{the Trust} refers to the pact or covenant of \textit{tawḥīd} and the witness to God’s Lordship taken with all of humanity before they came into this world (Aj) (see 7:172c).” \textit{The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary}, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (editor), Caner K. Dagli (editor), Maria Massi Dakake (editor), Joseph E. B. Lumbard (editor), Muhammad Rustom (editor), (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{329} \textit{33:72} \textit{The Trust} is understood as relating to the dictates of faith and belief, as in a famous saying: “Whosoever has no trust has no belief” (Q, Sy). Many relate \textit{the Trust} to obedience (IK, Ts, T, Z), and it is thus understood by most as a reference to the requirements (\textit{farāʾ ʿaḍ}) of religion (I, J, Q, T), though others see it as a reference to prayer alone (Q). \textit{The Trust} can also be understood as pertaining to the manner in which one manages each aspect of one’s being, such as the tongue, the eye, the stomach, one’s private parts, etc. (I, J, Q). Thus some connect it to 8:27: \textit{Betray not God and the Messenger, and betray not your trusts knowingly} (M). It is also said that \textit{the Trust} pertains to faith inwardly and performing the requirements of religion outwardly (Aj). Some also allow that \textit{the Trust} refers to the pact or covenant of \textit{tawḥīd} and the witness to God’s Lordship taken with all of humanity before they came into this world (Aj) (see 7:172c).” \textit{The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary}, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (editor), Caner K. Dagli (editor), Maria Massi Dakake (editor), Joseph E. B. Lumbard (editor), Muhammad Rustom (editor), (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015).

\textsuperscript{330} Personal conversation with Javed Majeed, March 17, 2014.

No doubt when Hafiz speaks of wine, he means wine. The question is, “What is wine?” All Sufi thought goes back to a cosmology and metaphysics. In order to understand the nature of wine, we must refer to the philosophical and metaphysical beliefs of the Sufi poets who employ the image. For example, Sufi thought of the school of Ibn al-‘Arabi […] holds that the things of this world are not just things, rather they are created by God, derived from God, and ultimately Self-Manifestations of God, loci of His Theophany, places in which He reveals the “Hidden Treasure,” mirrors in which the Beauty of the Beloved can be contemplated. God, or if one prefers, “Absolute and Nondelimited Being” (wjûd-i mutlaq), is the Origin of all creatures, of all relative and delimited existents.333

And also:

If Sufis speak of their beloved, they may not be referring only to God, but they also are not referring to “so-and-so” as such, but only insomuch as she is a reflection of the true Beloved. Wine likewise may be wine, and music, music. But if so, they are only dim reflections of true Wine and true Music.334

In other words, “wine” must not be read simply as an intoxicating drink; rather, it is to be seen significantly as symbolizing God Himself. The question I am asking is in the end perhaps a simple one: To what extent was Iqbal reading Hafiz literally instead of symbolically?

Now, while Iqbal levels his critique against “pantheistic” Sufism—embodied for him by Ibn ‘Arabi’s school of Sufism, whose influence was extensive—his criticism derives from his idea that the spirit of Qur’an is anti-classical (henceforth, until the end of the chapter, there are some very significant parallels with HT/Nabhani, which I will leave for the chapter itself for greater explication). It is therefore worth considering what he means by this: That the spirit of the Qur’an is against pantheism? That it is against metaphysical speculation of the kind that was adopted by Muslim philosophers and mystics (the two designations typically being applicable to the same

332 “Beware of Hafiz the drinker,/His cup is full of the poison of death.”


334 Ibid.
individuals)? That it is “radically monotheistic,” as has portrayed by Orientalists?\(^\text{335}\) (Perhaps Iqbal means to suggest all of the above?) The question that also arises is: To what extent was Iqbal drawing on a Eurocentric understanding of the relationship between ancient Greek thought and Muslims—an understanding that suggests there was a fundamental opposition (or incompatibility) between “Islam” and Greek philosophy, whereby Muslims preserved and carried down ancient Greek thought as though they were mere vessels, without adding or subtracting anything. That is, Muslim thinkers played no role in interpreting and re-presenting Greek thought within their own intellectual milieu, for that would run counter to the Eurocentric thesis of European exceptionalism:

*Greek thought was inherited in its entirety, unaltered, and intact from its ancient origins, by the true heirs of such knowledge—modern Europe.* This thesis is of course to a large extent continued—albeit unconsciously—in the very manner in which “the Western canon” is taught at universities around the world, with very little consideration given to complicating the study of “world history”—and where world history is taught, western, European history is still seen as separate from the rest of the world.\(^\text{336}\) It is also important to consider that Orientalists, in the process of attempting to discover the originary language(s) of Europe, constructed Greek “polytheism” as a fundamentally creative force in history, and whose heir western Christianity was seen as being—while the monotheisms of Judaism and Islam were seen as being opposed to creativity, with Islam being seen as the least creative of the two (Judaism, at least, was productive of Christianity, or so the logic went).

As for Iqbal’s inversion of the traditional Sufi understanding of the self, and his emphasis on the centrality of the self for human achievement and being, it is my contention that this

\(^{335}\) See Olender, *Languages of Paradise*.

\(^{336}\) See also J. M. Blaut’s *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000). Blaut critiques the work of a diverse group of Eurocentric historians who have strongly shaped our understanding of world history. Blaut focuses in depth on Max Weber, Lynn White, Jr., Robert Brenner, Eric L. Jones, Michael Mann, John A. Hall, Jared Diamond, and David Landes. He describes the role of each of these thinkers in generating colonialisit understandings of history, and uncovers the fallacious assumptions on which their arguments are based. I would argue, in other words, that Eurocentrism is in the very fabric of the modern (western) university.
understanding of the self is significantly informed by a modern, western understanding of the self going back to Descartes, and which therefore departs significantly from an understanding of the self Iqbal insists derives from the Qur'an. Like Descartes, Iqbal posits “being” in man, and not in Being, as it is the case in premodern Islamic metaphysics, thereby diminishing the function of God as the source of all being. Iqbal makes the point that the ritual prayer (salat) in Islam symbolizes both negation and affirmation, which of course is also at the root of the Islamic doctrine: *La ilaha illa Allah*, “No god but God.” However, it may be argued that the negation being first (*La ilaha*, “No god”), it must mean a denial of the self first and foremost, and only then can there be an affirmation (*illa Allah*, “but God”), which, according to traditional Sufi metaphysics is done by God Himself. And so the human self is from the beginning non-existent.

Also like Descartes, Iqbal’s point of departure is the self, as he writes: “To exist in pure duration is to be a self, and to be a self is to be able to say ‘I am.’ Only that truly exists that can say ‘I am’…. But our ‘I-amness’ is dependent and arises out of the distinction between the self and the not-self.” He goes on to describe the Ultimate Self (God) as existing by Himself without any need of the other selves, while of course these other selves are in need of Him. The “proof” of God that he formulates is reminiscent of Descartes’ “*cogito, ergo sum*” whose radical skepticism allowed him to begin from his own “thinking” self, and then go on to prove God’s existence. In this case, being

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337 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 9293.

338 “Now, as Muhyi-d-Din ibn ‘Arabi says in his ‘Epistle of Unity’, the *Risalat al Ahadiyyah*: ‘…None grasps Him save Himself by Himself. None knows Him but He Himself…. He knows Himself by Himself…. Other-than-Him cannot grasp Him. His impenetrable veil is His own Oneness. Other-than-Him does not cloak Him. His veil is His very existence. He is veiled by His Oneness in a manner that cannot be explained. Other-than-Him does not see Him; whether prophet, envoy, or perfected saint or angel near unto Him. His prophet is He Himself. His envoy is He. His message is He. His word is He. He has sent word of His ipseity by Himself, from Himself to Himself, without intermediary or causality other than Himself…. Other-than-Him has no existence and so cannot bring itself to naught…..’” Titus Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism*, D. M. Matheson, trans. (Wellingborough, UK: The Aquarian Press, 1976), 28-29.

339 Ibid., 56.

is posited in one’s self, prior to that of God. In the end the doctrinal formulation—according to Iqbal—would appear to read: “Man says: No god but God.”

As far as Iqbal’s use of the word “pantheistic” with regard to Ibn ‘Arabi’s school of thought, it is significant to remember that this was for a long time the kind of language used to describe Sufism by Orientalists. In his path breaking work, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Subhawardi, Ibn Arabi*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes:

The basic doctrine of Sufism, especially as interpreted by Muhyi al-Din [Ibn ‘Arabi] and his school, is that of the transcendent unity of Being (wahdat al-wujud) for which he has been accused by many modern scholars as being a pantheist, a panentheist, and an existential monist… All of these accusations are false, however, because they mistake the metaphysical doctrines of Ibn ‘Arabi for philosophy and do not take into consideration the fact that the way of gnosis [knowledge of God] is not separate from grace and sanctity. The pantheistic accusations against the Sufis are doubly false because, first of all, pantheism is a philosophical system, whereas Muhyi al-Din and others like him never claimed to follow or create any “system” whatsoever; and, secondly, because pantheism implies a substantial continuity between God and the Universe whereas the Shaikh [Ibn ‘Arabi] would have been the first to claim God’s absolute transcendence over every category, including that of substance.\(^{341}\)

Also consider the following lines from Ibn ‘Arabi’s magnum opus, *Futuhat al-Makkiyah*:

From the time man begins to climb the ladder of ascent (mi’raj), he receives divine self-disclosure in accordance with the ladder of his ascent. Each individual among the Folk of Allah has a ladder specific to him which no one else climbs. […] When you reach the last step, He manifests Himself in His Essence to your nonmanifest dimension, and there remains no self-disclosure whatsoever in your manifest dimension. *All this takes place because the servant and the Lord always remain together in the perfection of the existence of each in himself.* The servant always remains servant and the Lord Lord throughout this increase and decrease.\(^{342}\)

In saying all of this it is my intention to shed light on the extent to which Iqbal was informed—whether consciously or unconsciously—by western, Orientalist constructions of Sufism and Islam; and how this subsequently impacted Iqbal’s re-formulation of the self, or *khudi*.

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\(^{341}\) Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 104-05 (my emphasis).

\(^{342}\) Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 219-20 (my emphasis).
Javed Majeed writes that Iqbal saw his project as being one of “redefining Islam in response to colonialism,” as a means of achieving the freedom, independence and self-creation that could only be achieved with the removal of colonial powers from Muslim lands (recall that his was a pan-Islamic vision). But what does it mean to say: “Life is an endeavor for freedom.”? What is the freedom that is being sought? It is of course fundamentally a freedom from colonial rule. (I argue in the next chapter that HT’s fundamental goal is achieving freedom from neo-colonialism, through the Islamic State, brought about by the Islamic Personality.) This is the central concern of Iqbal’s writing. He is not so much concerned with the perfection of the human self (since, for him, and deriving from Nietzsche whose idea of human perfection in the Overman is an endless process of realization, perfection as a never-ending quest, which Iqbal refers to as the “perpetual tramp”) as he is with perfecting selves, who, in their constant striving to re-create the world, ultimately free society from the bondage of colonial rule.

The question, for the sake of problematizing an ideal that is taken for granted, is: Is “freedom” (liberty) necessarily a desirable thing? It is of course an Enlightenment ideal—perhaps the central Enlightenment ideal—but why is it a universal given? What does it mean to be free in a premodern society? Sanjay Seth provides some fascinating insights on this as to the differences in the ideal of freedom between ancient Greece and the modern world:

The term slave is for us moderns a social category, meaning that we understand “slave” to signify a free man en-slaved, rather than, as for the Greeks, understanding it to denote a form of selfhood. Our idea of human selfhood or subjectivity has, in other words, a certain notion of “freedom” already built into it. Words like freedom make us think of Rousseau and Kant and the French and


American revolutions, and of “fuller” conceptions of freedom—not just freedom as non-enslavement but as autonomy, as choosing our ends, and the means towards them. These associations are of course apt, and are part of what I have been invoking in insisting that modern knowledge presumes a form of subjectivity—active rather than passive, and so on. But the “first” sense of freedom—first in the sense of being both logically prior and historically earlier—is freedom in the sense of being merged into the background, lost into nature like animals and slaves, nomos rather than physis. The Greeks did not think that all men possessed this freedom, and thus it was not built into their conception of what it means to be a human self.

My point is not that “enslavement” to colonial powers is or was desirable; and I am also not referring to the “ethics” of slavery in Islam. Rather, my point is this: the modern, western notion of freedom—from which it is well nigh impossible to extricate our thought—has the notions of “autonomy, as choosing our ends, and the means towards them” already built into it. And this notion of freedom and the attendant idea(s) of subjectivity—the idea of the Muslim self that Iqbal is (re)constructing—rethinks the traditional Islamic idea of “slave of God” (‘abd Allah), which is the status of all human beings before God, as “the fashioner of Destiny.” What I am also suggesting is that the ideal of self-determination only becomes possible in the presence of the discourse of nationalism, whose parameters are set from without. That is, political thinking in a (post)colonial world is always already delimited from the outside.

346 Seth, Subject Lessons, 43-44.

347 To be sure, there isn’t a single “ethic,” although slaves in the Muslim world had a very different status in ancient Greece, as well as in the modern Europe. See William Gervase Clarence-Smith, Islam and the Abolition of Slavery (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

348 This idea of the “fashioner of Destiny” is a significant departure from historic Islamic theological accounts of the relationship between free will and predestination, where the doctrine of Acquisition (kasb) was favored as the median position between the two extremes. See Tim Winter, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8.
To explain: in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, Partha Chatterjee provides a “critical study of the ideology of nationalism” as a problem of epistemology and political philosophy, arguing how nationalist thought is inseparable from post-Enlightenment, rationalist notions of knowledge. In accepting Orientalism’s category of the Oriental, while granting him a subjectivity that is active and autonomous, rather than passive and non-participating, nationalist thought nevertheless operates “within a framework of knowledge whose representational structure corresponds to the very structure of power [it] seeks to repudiate.” That is, while nationalism succeeds in ostensibly liberating the nation from colonialism, it does so through the very knowledge systems of a post-Enlightenment west, which continue to dominate and operate unknowingly. More recently, Sudipta Kaviraj makes a significant gesture to this as yet little-expanded line of thought when he observes that “colonialism ruptures the self-relation of a society through time in such a fundamental way that it becomes difficult to imagine what would be right” politically, culturally, epistemologically, religiously. Now, while Iqbal described nationalism as being antithetical to Islam, however, he also famously expressed the need for Muslims in pre-partition India to have a separate homeland. It is for this reason (due to the epistemological strictures within which he had to think) that Iqbal, who on the one hand thought territorial nationalism to be

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349 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*.

350 Ibid., 1-30.

351 Ibid., 10-11.

352 Ibid., 36-39.

353 Ibid., 38.


355 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*.
contrary to Islam, at the same time saw Islam as being a uniform “culture” which all Muslims had to assimilate in order for them to achieve their long lost political vitality.356

“Cultural uniformity” is one of the “form properties” of the modern state (as discussed in detail in Chapter 2), and which seeks to remove local particularities. In other words, Iqbal was calling for a leveling of local Islamic expressions (or “islams”357) in favor of a singular, reconstructed Islam. The tension between Talal Asad’s358 idea of “orthodoxy” and al-Zein’s “islams” requires, I believe, a differentiation between “dogma” and “expression”: where the idea of orthodoxy can be said to be contained by “dogma,” which tends towards greater consolidation, while “expression,” of necessity, tends towards greater diversity. However, Iqbal collapses the two under the rubric of a singular culture.

That being said, Iqbal did not believe in “freedom at any price,” and he quotes the Muslim scholar of Spain, Tartushi as saying: “Forty years of tyranny are better than one hour of anarchy.”359 Thus, the question I want to pose—and have been pointing to during the course of this chapter—is, Is freedom at the price of delimiting of one’s thought desirable? Perhaps this is the double bind of being Muslim in the modern world; that is, a premodern notion of the Muslim self must be subsumed by a modern, western notion of selfhood?

Contra Iqbal, Nabhani’s project of (re)establishing the Islamic State is fundamentally rooted in the idea of freedom—at any price, so long as it is embedded in his and HT’s understanding of the Islamic tradition (let us recall that Hizb ut-Tahrir literally means The Party of Liberation). That

356 Jalal, Self and Sovereignty, 179.


price has meant that members of HT have lost their lives for their cause, as they have sought over the decades to create awareness of the need for Muslims to (re)establish the caliphate, as various governments through the world have violently clamped-down on them (I examine the phenomenon of violent suppression of HT in the context of Bangladesh in Chapter 6, “When Islam(ism) Came from the West”). In the next chapter I examine how Nabhani’s idea of the Islamic Personality—which defines the person who is meant to strive towards the (re)establishment of the Caliphate—is also dependent on modern notions of selfhood, although with differing points of emphases—since HT’s raison d’être is an explicitly political one, while for Iqbal it is only incidentally so.
CHAPTER 5

Nabhani & HT’s (Modern) Islamic Personality

In this chapter I argue the idea of the Islamic Personality formulated by the founder of HT, Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, is developed as a means for countering (neo)colonial incursions in the lives and lands of Muslims throughout the world. The very name Hizb ut-Tahrir means The Party of Freedom. It is my contention, however, that in enunciating such an Islamic Personality, Nabhani and HT (whether consciously or unconsciously) make use of modern western paradigms about how the self is thought of, what the relationship of that self is to the rest of the world, and how the “Islam” that is upheld and (supposed to be) implemented by the same Islamic Personality is dependent on western/Orientalist notions of Islam. My argument takes the previous chapter as its launching pad.

To recap some of the salient points from the previous chapter, I argue that the idea of “influence” in the usual one-to-one sense is largely passé—at least as has long been discussed and understood in the context of literary theory and history. The picture that emerges, therefore, is a much more complicated one from the still largely mainstream understanding of how people—poets, artists, musicians, writers, thinkers—are influenced in their work. Layers of complexity are added of course when we factor in Foucault’s notion of “the unconscious of knowledge,” according to which people in each age—allowing for degrees of overlap and spilling over between time periods (not least because historians are wont to artificially erect boundaries between different times, and they often disagree about such divisions, in any case; furthermore, people themselves do not live in neatly constructed time frames)—so to speak, inhabit an intellectual landscape that comprises
certain key modes of thinking and being which are all-too-often not well thought through (if at all), and are rather the result of the complex factors going into their subject formations, from parental upbringing, schooling, culture, the arts, politics, social media and so on (and of course there are significant amounts of interweaving and overlap between these categories).

This is all to say—as I describe in greater detail in the previous chapter as well as in Chapter 1—that HT/Nabhani’s formulation of the Islamic Personality, whose task it is to go out into the world and propagate for and ultimately bring about the Islamic State, is necessarily—consciously and/or unconsciously—thought through broad-based parameters and assumptions about what it means to be a (Muslim) self in a modern world. Many of these assumptions have been discussed in the previous chapter as I examine the ways in which Iqbal’s idea of *khudi* (or Muslim selfhood) are refracted through the prism of modern western selfhood. Some of these assumptions include the idea of a self that fundamentally derives its being from itself. I examine this problem with regard to Iqbal, via Descartes, and the manner in which, while the historic (Sufi and otherwise) understanding of the Islamic self’s relationship to God is one where, ultimately, the divine him/herself speaks through the mouth of the believer as he professes her/his testimony of faith (*al-shahadah*), thus maintaining both God’s transcendence (*tanzih*) and immanence (*tashbih*)—which are both crucial for a fuller understanding of humanity’s relationship to God in the Islamic universe.361 In the case of Iqbal and HT’s formulations of the Islamic self, it is (no doubt, unconsciously) articulated in

360 In a striking argument for emphasizing the all-encompassing nature of the divine immanence, Ibn ‘Arabi criticizes certain theologians who insist that the divine transcendence is paramount, and, as such, speaking of divine immanence—which has always been the particular forte of the Sufis—Ibn ‘Arabi contends that in making such an argument, such theologians are in fact limiting the divine transcendence, for, as the Akbarian argument goes, the fullness of God’s transcendence means that it must also allow for radical immanence. [See Ibn ‘Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980).] It is for this reason—that is, in order to not give precedence to either of the two “sides” of God, that Shaykh al-Akbar (“the greatest shaykh,” as he has been designated by posterity) Ibn ‘Arabi creates the formula “He/not He,” as mentioned in the previous chapter.

terms that imply a *subservience* of divine transcendence as well as divine immanence to a more rationally-centered human (Muslim) self, when—for Iqbal and Nabhani both—the divine unfolding *needs* the human will to think, act, and bring about change in the world. There is an undeniable *rationalism* in both Iqbal and HT’s understandings of the (Muslim) self—which is a (*conscious* and *unconscious*) trait common amongst many Muslim thinkers responding to colonialism. It is in light of this rationalism, in fact, that other moves on the part of Iqbal and HT alike can be better understood—while, at the same time, recognizing that Iqbal was not a straight-forward rationalist, any more than Nabhani was, for the foundational reason that they were both religious believers, and were working hard (always already consciously and unconsciously) to accommodate their understandings of Islam, Islamic thought, Islamic practice, and Islamic politics—with their own points of emphases—within a broad-based rationalistic understanding of the world set for them by a colonial West.

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363 It is important to note here, reason has not had a singular, consistent history in the West. Further, as has been the domain of much ethnographic work over the years different cultures and societies have their own constellation of rationalities, and are no less “reasonable” than any other, seen and understood within the correct context of thought. At the same time, to bring the point home—as has been noted by Sanjay Seth, and others—colonial modernity did mark a significant break in the history and thought systems of colonized peoples:

“Let us call this complex of attitudes *Reason*, or more accurately, the commitment to an idea of a Reason that is singular and universal. Let us note that although this Reason has not been dethroned, under the combined but variegated assaults of feminism, queer theory, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and other intellectual currents, it is nonetheless (to switch metaphors) tottering on its pedestal. But the nature of the challenges raised by these currents, and the movements that have often provided their conditions of emergence, differ. It is an important argument (if by now a commonplace one) that the very idea of Reason was constituted in part through a series of exclusions—of madness, of woman, and so on.

The case of the non-West is somewhat different, for unlike Woman, say, the savage and the Oriental were not so much the excluded Other of Reason as something that fell short of it. Historicism, the idea that the savage and the Oriental were backward and belonged to a time past, even as they inhabited the present, was the main mode by and through which the reason of the non-West was declared to be lesser.” Sanjay Seth, “*Reason or Reasoning? Clio or Siva?*” *Social Text* 22.1 (2004), 85-6. It is this break, and the active supplanting of “local” knowledges by colonial forces that have so radically re-shaped the very senses of self of subject peoples. There is a vast body of literature on this, which is of course referred to as “postcolonial literature.”
**The Islamic Personality**

According to Nabhani, the human being is made up of his/her mentality (*aqliyyah*) and disposition (*nafsiyyah*), and these two constitute the personality, whether Islamic, Communist, Capitalist, or Anarchist. The guiding principle in the Islamic Personality is the Islamic creed (*aqeedah*), according to which a person performs the *fard* (compulsory) actions and avoids the *haram* (forbidden) acts, strengthening one’s *nafsiyyah* with superogatory (*sunna*) actions, which enhance the Islamic Personality and set it on “the path towards a sublime pinnacle.” In addition, s/he further strengthens her/his *shakhsiyyah* (personality) with Islamic culture.\(^{364}\)

\(^{364}\) “[H]uman personality [*Shakhsiyyah*]” as such “consists of his *Aqliyyah* (mentality) and his *Nafsiyyah* (disposition).” “The mentality is the tool used for understanding things; i.e. the mode for linking reality with information; this being done by measuring it against specific standards. From this stem different types of mentalities, such as the Islamic mentality, the Communist mentality, the Capitalist mentality, the anarchist mentality or a monotonous mentality. […] [T]he criterion against which man measures information and reality before being linked is the most important factor that affects the development of the *Shaksiyyah* [personality]. […] Islam has provided a complete solution for man to create for himself a particular personality distinct from all others. With the Islamic *‘Aqeedah* (creed), it treated his thoughts, making for man an intellectual basis upon which his thoughts would be built and according to which his concepts are formed. […] The Islamic *Aqliyyah* is that which thinks on the basis of Islam as the general criterion for all thoughts related to life. The Islamic *Nafsiyyah* is that which bases all its inclinations on Islam as the only general criterion for satisfaction of all man’s needs and desires. […] A person with this *Aqliyyah* and *Nafsiyyah* thus becomes an Islamic personality, irrespective of his level of knowledge or the extent of his worship. […] Islam encouraged the performing of actions beyond the *Fard* actions and the avoiding of actions beyond the *Haram* to strengthen the *Nafsiyyah* that it would be capable of deterring any inclination incompatible with Islam. All this is intended to enhance the Islamic personality and set it on the path towards a sublime pinnacle. However, those personalities below this standard are not necessarily un-Islamic. Rather, this is a picture of the level of the ideal Islamic personality. […] Islam is realistic; it deals with realities and it is not difficult to implement. It lies within the potential of every human being, who can thus implement Islam upon himself smoothly and easily after he has comprehended the *‘Aqeedah* and holds an Islamic *Shaksiyyah*. […] The only task that he should be performing is strengthening his *Shaksiyyah* with the Islamic *Thaqafah* (culture) so his *Aqliyyah* will grow, and doing recommended acts of obedience to strengthen his *Nafsiyyah.” Al-Nabhani, *The Islamic Personality Vol. 1*, 1-5.

I have quoted at length from Nabhani’s *The Islamic Personality Vol. 1*, which, together with *Vol. 2*, is considered a more advanced text members of HT read when they reach a particular level of competence. *The Islamic Personality* isn’t readily available for public consumption, unlike HT’s other texts, such as *The Islamic State*.

As with the invention of “religion” as a category by western (colonial) modes of thinking—as has been argued by Talal Asad (1986/2009) and Toshiko Masuzawa (2005)—so too was “culture” invented in the West, paradoxically enough, just as religion was on the wane. This is one of Terry Eagleton’s major contributions to the discussion of the place of culture in the study of people, in his *Culture and the Death of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). Anthropologists have for some time been discussing the role of culture in the shaping of religious practice(s) and vice versa. As has been pointed out by Katherine Pratt Ewing,
Nabhani writes:

Islam treated man’s inclinations with the Shari’ah rules; it regulates the instincts but does not attempt to destroy them. It does not leave the instincts free and unrestricted but puts them in harmony. [...] Once the Muslim has acquired the Islamic Aqliyyah [mentality] and Nafsiyyah [selfhood], he effectively becomes qualified to act as a soldier and a leader simultaneously. He truly understands life, so he seizes this worldly life and takes from it only what he needs, and achieves the hereafter by striving for it. He does not drift with religious ecstasy or Indian asceticism. He is a hero of Jihad and a resident of the prayer room.  

For HT, unlike the liberal subject, who is given the greatest leeway as far as her necessity to follow daily rules (or so it is assumed), the Islamic Personality is fashioned according to an

“[The anthropological] concept of culture has a specific history associated with the discipline of anthropology and its colonial past. It can be traced back to German Romanticism and Herder’s idea of the Volkgeist (the “spirit” of a people), a distinct and incommensurable worldview that characterizes each ethnic group. By way of Frank Boas, the term became central in American anthropology refocused by the interpretive anthropologist Clifford Geertz to mean “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols,” including religious symbols and meanings. A pluralized concept of culture was a way that anthropologists could characterize social difference without immediately imposing an explicit hierarchy of value, as the word “civilization” does. It opened up a conceptual space for cultural relativism.” Katherine Pratt Ewing, “‘Islam is not a Culture’: Reshaping a Muslim Public for a Secular World,” in Religion in Diaspora: Cultures of Citizenship, Sondra S. Hausner, Jane Garnett (editors) (Palgrave McMillan, 2015), 33.

Incidentally, Ewing discusses the role of the idea of “culture” in the thought of Tariq Ramadan—when he asserts that “Islam is not a culture.” Ramadan’s contention is that Islamic principles stand over and above any cultural conditions or contingencies. Ewing poignantly argues that the universal principles of secularism, as they tend to be promoted, are not the only “universals,” and that

“When Muslims who stress that Islam is not a culture find equivalences between secular principles and their understanding of Islam, this becomes the foundation for their claims that these secular/Islamic principles are culture-free and universally applicable, thereby building a Muslim public that is deeply embedded in American and European life.” Ibid.

In the case of Nabhani’s above invocation of “Islamic culture,” which prompted this note, however, and as it is imagined by many Muslims living in the West and in the rest of the world, Islam is indeed constitutive of a culture, and one that significantly finds western culture at odds with itself. It is in relation to this latter point that the next quote—in the main body of this chapter—ought to be considered.

365 Al-Nabhani, The Islamic Personality, volume 1, 5. (emphasis added).

366 Appellations such as “liberal,” and “secular” hold significantly negative, anti-religious connotations among the majority of “practicing” Muslims in the West. The Islamic Personality is in a very real sense, therefore, imagined in relation to, in contradistinction to, in combative conversation with the idea of the western liberal subject. And this point—together with previously discussed instances where the self is realized, contains, and is inseparable from its Other—is one which needs to be repeated. The (modern) Islamic Personality contains aspects of the modern western (liberal) self—consciously and unconsciously—which come to the fore, and are articulated through the very manner(s) in which
extensive body of rules—from how one eats to how one relieves him-/herself, from how one conducts business transactions to how one has sex with his/her spouse, and everything in between.\textsuperscript{367} Hence, it is frequently heard among Islamic political actors as well as “everyday” Muslims who consider themselves to be “practicing”\textsuperscript{368} that “Islam is a complete way of life.” This

\textsuperscript{367} “[A]ll acts are regarded as shari’a (i.e., subject to the regulation of the Shari’a and therefore pronounced as law—“law” being a moral-legal commandment), and are categorized according to its norms. The first of these is the category of the forbidden, which entails punishment upon commission of an act considered forbidden, whilst the second category, that of the obligatory, demands punishment upon omission of an act whose performance is regarded as necessary. Breach of contract and theft are infractions falling within the forbidden category, while prayer and payment of pecuniary debts are instances of the obligatory. Both categories require punishment upon non-compliance.” Wael B. Hallaq, \textit{An Introduction to Islamic Law} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20.

On the fashioning of Islamic ethical subjects also see Saba Mahmood’s \textit{The Politics of Piety} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Hallaq also discusses at length the ways in which Foucault’s notion of “the technologies of the self” allows us to understand what Hallaq considers to be the \textit{fundamental} ethical imperative of Islam. See Wael Hallaq, \textit{The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity’s Moral Predicament} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 98-138. It may be countered, of course, that it is not the case that the liberal subject is \textit{not} ethical, but rather that it is constituted along differing lines of discursive power, with different start points and different end points. This is, after all, central to Foucault’s entire intellectual project—unearthing the ways in which the subject is fashioned in all manner of ways by systems of logic and institutional affiliations and streams—from schools, to hospitals, to prisons, to parent-child relationships—and how those fashionings then \textit{re}produce the logics of the systems of which they are a part. Those logics might as well be termed \textit{ethics}, for there is an ethic of liberal capitalism as much as there is an ethic—however imaginary—that is constitutive of the Islamic State.

To bring this back full circle, however, insofar as the Islamic State cannot but be imagined except through the broad-based parameters of the modern state, as I discuss in Chapter 2, by extension the (modern) Islamic Personality is also significantly constituted by the logics of the modern state. And, given that the \textit{dominant logic} shaping all people across the world—from China to America, from Morocco to Indonesia—is that of consumerism, the subjects that are produced are necessarily constituted along neoliberal lines. Although he does not make my exact point, since he is interested in providing a political science (and specifically, foreign affairs) perspective, Vali Nasr lays the groundwork as far as arguing for the rise of a consumerist middle class in key Middle Eastern nations in \textit{Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What it Will Mean for Our World} (XX: Free Press, 2009). Another significant work, which discusses the ways in which contemporary forms of “spirituality” and “religion” together function as “an opiate of the bourgeoisie” across the world, and, as such, is (re)shaping a very specific (religious) subject—which must perforce include the modern Islamic subject—is Craig Martin’s \textit{Capitalizing Religion: Ideology and the Opiate of the Bourgeoisie} (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

\textsuperscript{368} The idea of the “practicing Muslim,” versus the “non-practicing” or “bad Muslim,” is a significant distinction in western Muslim circles, which has no direct linguistic equivalent in non-western languages. The idea is that a practicing Muslim “practices” the “pillars of Islam,” as opposed to a bad Muslim who does not practice the pillars of Islam. Although I have not yet been able to trace the exact genealogy of the idea of “practicing Muslim,” it is worth noting that the idea has come into provenance in recent decades in the West, as Muslims seek to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims, through a distinctly visible Islamic religiosity. Underlining these gradations of Muslimness is the understanding that a Muslim is Muslim in relation to the community of Muslims, about which Salman Sayyid writes: “We ‘learn’ to be
formulation is partly saying what is deemed to be true among Muslims, but it is also, crucially, an act of speaking truth to power: the power of liberal democracy, and essentially “western” ways of living and being in the world, whereby—unlike the Muslim who lives under the rules of the shari’a, such that his/her instincts are brought into harmony—the instincts are not only given free reign, they are also fanned by the consumer culture of which s/he is a victim, to the point that s/he lives well below his/her potential. The Quranic verse “Have you seen the one who takes as his god his own desire?” (25:43) is often cited in Muslim circles to highlight this point.369

Conversely, the Islamic Personality truly understands life, so s/he seizes this worldly life and takes from it only what s/he needs, and achieves the hereafter by striving for it, reshaping the world in his/her Islamic image. It is worth noting that while Nabhani and HT present the world in binary terms, the idea of being master of one’s desires to derive the benefits of “worldly life,” while working diligently for the afterlife, is in keeping with the Protestant work ethic.370 And, dare one say, the “new model” of entrepreneurship that has been championed for many decades by “life coaches” Muslims by knowing how those around us, the networks and associations that we are thrown into, comport themselves as Muslims. Being a Muslim does not…mean being an automaton; nor, however, does it mean being atomised sovereign individual consumers randomly selecting what it is to be Muslim.” Recalling the Caliphate, 165.

369 “As for the American campaign to make Capitalism an ideology for all nations and people of the globe, it meets no resistance except in the Islamic world.

This is because the rest of the nations and people of the world either already embrace Capitalism as is the case with the US, Western Europe and their followers such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand or others like Russia and the states of what once were known as the Eastern bloc who have renounced Socialism and started to mould their lives on the basis of Capitalism. Although states like China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba are still raising the slogan of Socialism, in reality they no longer believe in it and gradually turn to Capitalism without any official proclamation. Other nations and peoples of Latin America, the Far East, South East Asia and some countries and tribes in Africa who continually did not have any ideology, do not perceive Capitalism as a doctrinal rival.

The Islamic Ummah is the only nation from amongst the non-Capitalist nations that has an ideology which she embraces, despite the fact that currently she neither lives according to it nor conveys it to the world.” “The American Campaign to Suppress Islam,” Hizb ut-Tahrir (Beirut, Lebanon: [no publisher given], 1996), 3-4. The above was written in 1996, and there have been significant changes in the Muslim world since then as far as its adoption of neo-liberal models of commerce and consumerism (see above); nevertheless, members of HT still hold that Islam and Muslims offer the only significant challenge to western hegemony. Members of HT argue that the penetration of neo-liberalism into the Muslim world is precisely because of the failure to “implement” Islam in its totality there.

such as Stephen Covey\textsuperscript{371} and Tony Robbins,\textsuperscript{372} is in keeping with this notion, also: the idea that we have not been put on this world to merely consume, but to reach our full potential and to give back to world.\textsuperscript{373} Nevertheless, Nabhani and HT are writing within a framework wherein Islam is pitted against the West—that has a certain discursive provenance going back to colonialism and current world events, driven by the War on/of Terror—which therefore provides some explanation as to their response.

\textsuperscript{371} “Recognized as one of Time magazine’s 25 most influential Americans, Stephen R. Covey was one of the world’s foremost leadership authorities, organizational experts, and thought leaders.” Stephen R. Covey, accessed September 21, 2016, https://www.stephencovey.com/about/about.php


\textsuperscript{373} This idea is connected with the modern idea/understanding of the individual and his/her relationship to the world, discussed in the previous chapter, whereby s/he is as an active creator, not a passive witness as Iqbal avers is/was the modus operandi of historic Sufism. For a rich history of the “self help” industry see One Simple Idea: How Positive Thinking Reshaped Modern Life (New York: Crown Publishers, 2014). Also see Craig Martin’s Capitalizing Religion: Ideology and the Opiate for the Masses (cited above) for a critical examination of the ways in which consumer culture in the West and new forms of self-help spirituality are mutually constitutive. As I mention in an earlier note, the “ideals” presented by HT as far as the Islamic Personality’s relationship to the world, to God, to the ummah, and the Islamic State and politics, and towards non-Muslims will always remain ideals, as ideals are wont to do. Which is to say, the realities on the ground are all-too-often far from the mark. And this is always the case with ideals—they are necessary always slightly beyond reach, otherwise they would no longer be ideals. This attitude towards “ideals” as opposed to the “realities” was one that was historically understood by Islamic scholars such as qadis, who essentially functioned as elders in their communities. As such, their role was not to “judge according to Islam” (which is a turn of phrase favored by members of HT), so much as it was to maintain communal cohesion by making allowances and “turning a blind eye” to minor infractions of “the letter of the law.” For the “spirit of the law” was, for them, always guided by God’s Mercy. Such nuances are mostly lost on today’s Islamic political groups, as I argue in Chapter 2, as a result of reading shari’a through the lens of modern (state) law. Furthermore, it is my contention that the Islamic Personality of HT’s imagining is cast in significantly individualistic terms:

“Once the Muslim has acquired the Islamic Aqliyyah [mentality] and Nafsiyyah [selfhood], he effectively becomes qualified to act as a soldier and a leader simultaneously. He truly understands life, so he seizes this worldly life and takes from it only what he needs, and achieves the hereafter by striving for it. He does not drift with religious ecstasy or Indian asceticism. He is a hero of Jihad and a resident of the prayer room.”

Historically, manuals that came closest to The Islamic Personality were those of the Sufi Shaykhs—and, no doubt, Nabhani had them in mind—however, the nature of such manuals, even if they do address a singular person, that person’s selfhood is always subsumed under, first the Shaykh, second the Prophet, and third God, and the related metaphysics is outlined in such manuals. As far as The Islamic Personality, while it assumes the existence of the just-mentioned hierarchy, the individual Muslim becomes “the very source” of good in the world, so to speak. I write in more detail about this in the section “contentions” when I discuss wo/man’s enunciation of the shahadah, the foundational Islamic profession of faith, and how, according to traditional metaphysics it is God who speaks the affirmation of Himself through the mouth of the believer. Whereas, as an individual, active agent in the world, who is meant to bring about change in the world, the Muslim—in HT’s and other Islamic political formulations’ understanding—the self is, in a very real sense, self-directed.
Significantly also, the world in which they live is seen as discordant with the world of their highest religious aspirations, and it is this discord they are trying to address, as Wael Hallaq puts it (and as mentioned earlier):

The political, legal, and cultural struggles of today’s Muslims stem from a certain measure of dissonance between their moral and cultural aspirations, on the one hand, and the moral realities of a modern world, on the other—realities with which they must live but that were not of their own making.\(^{374}\)

It is my contention, therefore, that HT members seek to re-make the world according to (their understanding of) Islamic principles, thereby hoping to concurrently create the political, legal, and cultural conditions under which Muslims would (they believe) be able to thrive morally and culturally. The Islamic Personality goes out into the world—acts—and invites people to adopt the Islamic way of life (\textit{da’wah})—and \textit{da’wah} is considered a religious obligation for all Muslims, and for this they are in need of the structures of the Islamic State, without which Muslims have no ʿizzah (glory), and will be punished by God:

The Muslims believed that Allah (SWT)\(^{375}\) addressed the whole of mankind with the Islamic Shari'ah [Quran 34: 2]. […] They believed that any hukm [rule] not from Islam was a hukm of kufr (disbelief), adoption of which was prohibited. Whoever accept[ed] such a belief and acted upon it, couldn’t take from other than the hukm of Islam, especially in the early period, of the Islamic conquests, when the Muslims would open up other countries to carry the Da’wah of Islam to them. They conquered other countries for the purpose of saving the people from the rule of kufr [disbelief] and bringing them to the rule of Islam.\(^{376}\)

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\(^{374}\) Wael Hallaq, \textit{The Impossible State}, 3.

\(^{375}\) “SWT” is the abbreviation of the formula \textit{Subhana hu wa ta’ala}, which literally means “Glory be to Him [God], the most High.

\(^{376}\) Al-Nabhani, \textit{The Islamic Personality}, volume 1, 223. It is significant that Nabhani writes that the Muslims believed these things – that the rule of Islamic law was essential for all of humanity’s correct functioning. Apart from being an observation according to HT as far as (their understanding of) history, it is also an important commentary on the issue
And:

Muslims saw their lives as having significance only for the sake of Islam, and they saw their existence as being for the sole purpose of conveying the Islamic message. Islam was the sole basis of their unity and the sole reason for their revival. Islam is the only source of their dignity, glory and hope. That is why their souls and minds became possessed by it. And they devote themselves to it, studying it and comprehending it.  

And again:

How are they to please their Lord if the ‘Izzah [glory] in their countries does not belong to Allah, nor to His Messenger, nor to the believers? How are they to be safe from His punishment if they do not establish a state that would prepare its military might, defend its territory, implement Allah’s rules and rule by what Allah has revealed? Therefore, the Muslims must establish the Islamic State, for Islam would not have an influential existence without it, and their land would not become Dar al-Islam unless it is ruled by that which Allah has revealed.

The existence of the Islamic State is therefore an existential concern for Muslims—as Nabhani and HT understand their place in the world, as well as providing a place to aspire to for Muslims without a home—which is the entire ummah—as Salman Sayyid characterizes them in Recalling the Caliphate. In becoming the symbol of Muslim unity, power, and God’s favor in the world to come, just as it had been in the past, the Caliphate also serves to upend the perceived

of current state of affairs. As far as HT is concerned, the Muslim world has largely—though not entirely—forgotten the imperative of living under the “shade” of the Islamic State. Incidentally, the idea of living under the shade of something (as for example Sayyid Qutb’s famous Quranic commentary, Fi-Zilal al-Quran, In the Shade of the Quran) is a fairly common motif in Islamic discourses.

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377 Al-Nabhani, The Islamic Personality, volume 1, 159.

378 Al-Nabhani, The Islamic State, 3.

379 “[I]t might be helpful to think of the ummah as a global diaspora, because Muslims are homeless in this world. The assertion of a Muslim subjectivity when there is no overarching political structure that can represent this subjectivity at the global level creates a condition in which a substantial group of people are increasingly alienated from the world order. […] The diasporic condition of Muslims, however, does not admit a spatial redemptive return, as they are not connected to any specific global territory, and, because the homelessness of Muslims is global, there is no specific place to return to. Thus, for Muslims redemption lies not in a return to a homeland but a rooting in the world. That is, a resolution of the discrepancy created by assertive subjectivity and its marginalization within the world order requires an overarching political structure able to suture Muslims as Muslims to the so-called international community. The caliphate seems to promise such a rooting.” Sayyid, Recalling the Caliphate, 118.
power, unity, and (lack of God’s) favor of the West. For, a common theme in Islamic political discourse is that the reason the West has superseded the Muslim world and has for so long been controlling them, is not so much because of any innate superiority on the West’s part, but because of the Muslim world’s failure to adhere to the teachings of Islam as a whole (this is notably—apparently—different from Islamic modernist thinkers, such as Iqbal, who insisted that the West had outstripped the Islamic world because of its adoption of Reason, while the latter had forgone the use of Reason):

Attention should be drawn to the fact that embracing the Islamic ‘Aqeedah means belief in the entirety of the Prophet (SAW)’s message, and those detailed matters whose evidence is beyond doubt; and the acceptance of all this must be matched with contentment and submission. It should be known that mere knowledge is insufficient and that refusal to accept even the most minor of matters definitely proven to be part of Islam ostracises the person and detaches him from the ‘Aqeedah. Islam is an indivisible whole as far as belief and acceptance is concerned and relinquishing even a fraction of it is Kufr (disbelief). Hence belief in the separation of the Islamic Deen from life’s affairs or from the state is indisputably Kufr.  

At the same time, the idea of the caliphate, based on the Islamic Personality, is inseparable, on the one hand from the idea of the modern nation-state (as I argue in Chapter 1), and from the idea of the modern, western self.

Nabhani’s (Modern) Islamic Personality

Underlying the Islamic modernist-fundamentalist-reformist concern with the state of the world—that the world has been reshaped by the West in ways that do not accord with their cultural and

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380 “SAW” is an abbreviation of *sall Allahu 'alayhi wa-sallam*, which literally means “God sends salutations of peace upon him [the Prophet], so send [your] salutations of peace upon him [also],” and is a common Islamic formula used whenever the Prophet’s name is mentioned. It derives from the Qur’anic imperative to do so: Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. “Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect.” (33:56).

381 Al-Nabhani, *The Islamic Personality*, volume. 1, 10.
moral norms, and that they have had little do with this reshaping—are the ideas: (1) that they, as Muslims, can indeed know what is good and what is bad; that they have an ultimate measure of things—in accordance with a God’s-eye-view of things; (2) that the world is definitively being reshaped—by outside forces—for the worse; (3) that, as people who bear (knowledge of) the truth, it is their duty to “change” the world for the better.

Of these three, at least (1) and (3) are reflective of a modern, western notion of things: that “man is the measure of all things”\(^{382}\) (recall Descartes’ \textit{cogito ergo sum} discussed in the previous chapter); that man, as the measurer of all things, is also the shaper of the world—for good and ill—and can and must do so for the greater good. This is definitively in tune also with the Promethean spirit of the modern age: that man, having stolen fire (knowledge) from the gods, can and must, again, reshape things.\(^{383}\)

Although somewhat less well known than his peers, Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani lived and breathed in the same historic socio-political-religious milieu as the Islamic modernist-reformist-fundamentalists as Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) and Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928)—as well as Mawdudi, Hasan al-Banna, and

\(^{382}\) This dictum, which goes back to Protagoras (486-411 BC), was revived by the Renaissance Humanists who sought to show artistically how man reconciles both the circle and the square—as in da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man”—which was considered a perennial problem in architecture, the arts, and the sciences in general. Mathematically, the circle and square, between them, contain—in theory—\textit{all geometric possibilities}. Symbolically, in reconciling the square and the circle—the famous ancient problem of “squaring the circle”—in his drawing, whereas traditionally the circle (representing the heavenly realm) and the square (representing the terrestrial realm) could only be reconciled “vertically,” that is, by recourse to a religious-spiritual tradition, da Vinci overturns the very need for traditional metaphysics (whether he does this consciously or not is really immaterial, for he represents in his work the spirit of the age—hence the image’s symbolic power in representing the Renaissance—the unconscious of knowledge). Thus, man becomes “the measure of all things,” because he contains all possibilities, as represented by the circle and the square. This “spirit” has been handed down through successive generations in the West, and has been adopted/enforced in colonial lands through colonialism. Thus, when Nabhani writes of the Islamic Personality, he does so, inevitably, with a conscious/unconscious knowledge of this paradigm. Humanity—Muslims—must remake the world according to their (own) understanding of Islam. Notably, the notion of remaking the world in anyone’s image or in accordance with anyone’s understanding was significantly absent from traditional Islamic expositions—a fact that led many a western commentator, as well as many Muslim commentators after them—to label them as \textit{fatalistic}, as Iqbal and Nabhani both aver, as we have seen.

Rashid Rida. For Nabhani, as was the case for all Muslim modernist-fundamentalist-reformers, there was a deep sense of disquiet regarding the political and economic ascendancy of the West over the Muslim world, manifested in the colonization of vast swathes of Muslim lands beginning in the 18th century. The question troubling Muslim thinkers was “what had gone wrong?” Muslims, it was believed, had been divinely promised “victory” (whether political, economic, cultural, or technological) over the rest of the world, and history had largely borne this out—until, of course, European powers exceeded the Islamic world and colonialism took root in formerly Muslim-led lands.

For Muslim thinkers the world over, the Islamic world’s current civilizational inferiority was due to its failure to live up to the original teachings of the Qur’anic-Prophetic paradigm. While they may have differed as far as their respective points of emphases—for example, the Islamic “modernists” emphasized the importance of Reason, while the Islamic “fundamentalists” emphasized the importance of the Qur’anic and Prophetic sources, in fact these were, again, no more than a difference in emphasis, as I will discuss below, the idea of Reason for both camps was paramount. Both camps argued from the position of the fundamental “reasonableness” of Islam and the Qur’anic-Prophetic teachings. The archetypal Islamic “modernist” Syed Ahmed Khan was adamant that in rare instances where revelation and reason were not (explicitly) in alignment, revelation would, as always take precedence; while for as seminal a Muslim “fundamentalist” as Mawdudi, reason was “a hermeneutic tool.”

Discussing the relationship between Islam and science, Sayyid Ahmad Khan said that ‘true reason is Islamic’—that is, not only is faith predicated on reason, but, more important, reason leads to faith. Mawdudi used this basic premise to interpret Islam, but in his interpretation reason was not merely the means for fostering a dialogue between Islam and modern science, it was a hermeneutic tool. In Mawdudi’s works, however, rationalism was often modified by his apologetic posturing vis-a-vis Western thought. The need to defend

384 “Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest” (48:1).
Islam using the rational method often led him to what H. A. R. Gibb called a ‘[shocking] . . . method of argument and treatment of facts . . . [and] writing to a predetermined conclusion’. He stretched rationalism to its limits and, at times, found himself in rather untenable positions.385

As part of the insistence upon the reasonableness of Islam and the Qur’anic-Prophetic worldview, Sufism was identified as one of the culprits for Islam and Islamic civilization’s decline. One of the interesting differences between this majority position amongst the Islamic modernist-reformist-fundamentalists and Nabhani is the fact that he does not lay blame upon or with Sufism, at least not explicitly, although, as I argue later, he does implicitly criticize it:

Firstly, they studied Islam in a way different from the method of study required to understand it. Islam’s method of study is to study the Shari’ah rules as practical questions for application by the State in what concerns it, and by the individuals in their affairs as an individual. […] Muslims, studied Islam for the purpose of mere theoretical knowledge as though it were a fanciful philosophy. Through this the juristic rules (ahkam) became hypothetical and impractical, and [the] shari’a came to be studied as a set of spiritual and moral matters, and not as rules to treat the problems of life. This is as far as the study is concerned. […] Thus the people who studied Islam became either inanimate ulema, or guiding preachers who regularly preach the boring sermons (khutba) without producing any effect in society. They did not understand the meaning of culturing with Islam, teaching Muslims the matters of their Deen in a way that produces a change in their emotions, and reminds them of the punishment and wrath of Allah, so that a Muslim becomes a dynamic personality when his emotions are linked to his mind as a result of learning the verses of Allah and the method of its teaching.386


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386 Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir 7-8. The Following from Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism, 19, regarding Mawdudi is also instructive:
Nabhani’s Islamic Personality is not one who is subservient to either an Islam of the ulema that has become irrelevant due to its lack of action. The Islamic Personality is in essence one who knows the comprehensive teachings of the Qur’an, the Sunnah, Islamic history, world history and current affairs. He is able to apply his knowledge dynamically, engaging in *ijtihad* where necessary, all the time seeking to better the condition of the *ummah*, which has been suffering for far too long—under colonialism, and today, from neo-colonial machinations around the world. Not least because of Muslims no longer have an Islamic State under whose “shade” they can all reside, and under whose aegis all of life’s affairs are taken care of according to the comprehensive rule of the shari’a.

**Contentions**

It is important to reflect why the dyad of colonialism and Islamic scholarly and educational stultification is singled-out for critique by Nabhani and HT as the *cause célèbre* for explaining the Muslim world’s takeover by the West. To address this, let us begin by considering Nabhani’s education. He studied at the radically reformed Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and, having been taught by both his grandfather (a prominent jurist under the Ottomans) and his father (who was also a prominent jurist in his own time), he was aware of the major reforms carried out in al-Azhar that had been brought about by Muhammad ‘Abduh. While the reforms of Al-Azhar were not accepted wholeheartedly by the ulematic classes, it does appear Nabhani was welcoming of them, as

“In his later years, Mawdudi explained that during his stay in Delhi he had concluded that the division into traditional and modern education among Muslims and the absence of any links between the two were not merely unproductive but actually dangerous. He therefore had decided not to restrict himself to the regimen of either educational system, but to benefit from both:

‘I do not have the prerogative to belong to the class of Ulema. I am a man of the middle cadre, who has imbibed something from both the systems of education, the new and the old; and has gathered my knowledge by traversing both paths. By virtue of my inner light, I conclude that neither the old school nor the new is totally in the right’.”

he mentions the issues of scholarly/educational stultification and the related notion of *ijtihad*,\(^{388}\) both matters close to ‘Abduh’s heart.

As with Iqbal, as a result of colonialism’s rupturing of the historic (Islamic) intellectual tradition, Nabhani was grappling with the teachings of Islam in an effort to harmonize, counteract, respond to, and delimit the influence of western knowledge/s. An interesting illustration of the way in which Nabhani responded to western constructions of Islam and Muslims emerges in his riposte to the idea—prevalent amongst Orientalists—that the shari’a was greatly influenced by Roman law. He writes:

This claim meant that in the time of the Tabi’un [the first generation after the Prophet] and those who came after them, the Muslims adopted Roman laws from Roman jurisprudence. As evidence they say that in the days of the Islamic conquests, schools of Roman law existed in the Wilayat [province] of Sham [Syria] in Qaysariyyah on the coasts of Palestine, and Beirut. In that area, there were also courts that proceeded in their system and rules according to Roman law. […]

The claims made by the Orientalists are wrong for a number of reasons: First: No one reported about the Muslims that any Muslim, whether a jurist or not, has ever pointed to Roman jurisprudence or law, neither by way of criticism or support or quotation. […] Some Muslims translated works of Greek philosophy, but no Roman book or body of jurisprudence was ever translated. This strengthens the case that these books and laws were abolished from the country when conquered by the Muslim armies.

Second: At the time when they claimed there were schools of Roman jurisprudence and courts which made decisions according to Roman law in the Wilayat of Sham [Syria], this province was full of mujtahidin [pl. of mujtahid, the highest rank attainable in Islamic jurisprudence] from the ‘Ulema, judges and rulers. It is natural that any claimed Roman influence would have been noticed in those fuqahaa (jurists). The reality is that there is no sign of any Roman influence in the fiqh of these fuqahaa, nor any mention of it. Their jurisprudence and ahkam were based on the Kitab [the Quran], Sunnah [the Prophetic example] and the Ijma’a [consensus] of the Sahabah [the companions of the Prophet]. […]

Third: The Muslims believed that Allah (SWT) addressed the whole of mankind with the Islamic Shari’ah. […] They believed that any hukm [ruling] not from Islam was a hukm of kufr (disbelief), adoption of which was prohibited. Whoever accepts such a belief and acted upon it, couldn’t take from other than the hukm of Islam, especially in the early period of the Islamic conquests, when the Muslims would open up other countries to carry the

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Da’wah [message] of Islam to them. They conquered other countries for the purpose of saving the people from the rule of kufr and bringing them to the rule of Islam. \textit{It would be then inconceivable for them to conquer the land, and instead of replacing the rule of Kufr they had come to destroy with the rule of Islam, they later take it.}

Fourth: It is wrong to say that the civilisation and culture brought by the Muslims to the lands they conquered was inferior to that of the opened lands. If this was the case, they would have abandoned their culture and adopted the culture of the conquered countries. The tangible reality is that those lands previously ruled and occupied by the Romans, adopted thoughts about life contradictory to Islam.\textsuperscript{389}

It is significant that so much detail should be devoted to countering the Orientalist charge that the shari’a borrowed from Roman law. It is important from the point of view of HT—and for Muslims in general—since, as Wael Hallaq writes, “[T]he boundaries and defining concept of the [Muslim] Community is the Shari’a. Islam, unless eviscerated, stands or falls on the Shari’a.”\textsuperscript{390} It is important also because, as Nabhani puts it: “\textit{It would be then inconceivable for them [Muslims] to conquer the land, and instead of replacing the rule of Kufr [disbelief] they had come to destroy with the rule of Islam, they later take it.}” In other words, as the message of “truth,” Islam must necessarily vanquish falsehood. It is not simply a matter of rhetoric—although rhetoric is also very important—it is very much an \textit{epistemological-existential} issue. Just as the aspirations towards the Caliphate to come is an existential issue on the plain of lived experience, so to speak, so also is the idea of the \textit{coherence} of Islamic thought—which again, for HT, is governed by the shari’a—a matter of existential concern on the plain of “thought,” without which a people cannot be said to have legs of their own to stand on.\textsuperscript{391}

This is certainly how the Orientalist project is viewed within Muslim circles—Orientalists seek to undermine Islam by casting aspersions as to its origins—and it is for this reason that it must be

\textsuperscript{389} Al-Nabhani, \textit{The Islamic Personality}, volume 1, 222-224 (emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{390} Hallaq, \textit{The Impossible State}, 49.

\textsuperscript{391} Colonial knowledges and their dismantling of indigenous knowledges as a key means of colonial rule have been extensively written about. Perhaps the foundational text in this regard is Barnard Cohn’s \textit{Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
challenged head-on. Islam, the shari’a, and Islamic culture are re-asserted as complete and self-contained. This is the re-assertion of intellectual, spiritual, and cultural “superiority” vis-à-vis western modes and knowing and being, which is central to any decolonial project. Nevertheless, what is also important to examine is the manner in which an “ideology” (the ideology of Islam, as HT characterize it) is marked by another ideology or worldview or history at the same instance or by the very act of attempting to distinguish the first ideology in question (Islam). The idea of “the West” and its self-distinction—historic and otherwise—from “the Rest” has also been written about, and it as been argued that the two are not mutually exclusive. The Other, in the very act of othering, always already contains aspects of oneself, and aspects of the Other always already are contained within oneself. In other words, the shari’a—which is not “Islamic law,” or in any way related or relatable to “paradigmatic modern law [which] is positive law” as argued by Wael Hallaq—is already read through the lens of paradigmatic modern law by Nabhani.

Considering “the rule of Islam” that Nabhani mentions as having taken over the lands which were brought into the fold of “Dar al-Islam,” it is assumed to be comprehensively contained by the imaginary whole of the shari’a, just as—equally—the imaginary whole of “Islam” is imagined as having


393 Talal Asad’s path-breaking work in this regard is notable. See, for example, his *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

394 “Paradigmatic modern law is positive law, the command of the fiction of sovereign will. Islamic law is not positive law but substantive, principle-based atomistic rules that are pluralistic in nature and ultimately embedded in a cosmic moral imperative. For Muslims today to adopt the positive law of the state and its sovereignty means in no uncertain terms the acceptance of a law emanating from political will, a law made by men who change their ethical and moral standards as modern conditions require. It is to accept that we live in a cold universe that is ours to do with as we like. It is to accept that the ethical principles of the Qur’an and of centuries-old morally based Sharī‘a be set aside in favor of changing manmade laws, laws that have sanctioned nothing less than the domination and destruction of the very nature that God has given humankind to enjoy with moral accountability. Whether to accept or not to accept is a question that only Muslims can answer for themselves. Our own point, however, is that—observed from a distance—Muslims have very little reason to opt for the modern state’s law, when they have enjoyed a legal culture that has insisted for more than twelve centuries on a law paradigmatically structured and fleshed out by an overarching moral source.” Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 67.
existed through history, down to the present, and having been “implemented.” All of this is akin to the comprehensive rule of law of the imaginary and whole nation and its state. I write about these points in greater detail in Chapter 1. What I am arguing here, to bring it more to the fore—and this is another point that goes hand-in-hand with the above—is that, given the prevalence of Orientalist readings and characterizations of Islam and Muslims amongst educated circles, Nabhani (like Iqbal) accepted Orientalist constructions of Islam and Muslims as much as he rejected them. Take, for example, his reading of the history of Greek Philosophy:

[A group of Muslims] were influenced by Greek philosophy, and this is the reason for their misguided reasoning. This is because Greek philosophy came with thoughts and discussions about things beyond the natural world. It sets out to discuss the existence of God and His attributes (sifat). […] They tried to reconcile philosophy with Islam … such as the debate about the createdness of the Qur’an (khalq al-Qur’an), debates about whether the attribute (sifat) was part of the object being described or something distinct to the thing being described, and other such discussions. These discussions remained within the limits of the Islamic ‘Aqeedah. […] There was a small number of people who plunged headlong into Greek philosophy without restricting themselves to the Islamic ‘Aqeedah. They studied the Greek philosophy on a purely rational basis without adhering to Islam. […] These are Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi, Ibn Rushd, and their peers. This philosophy was not Islamic, nor was it the philosophy of Islam concerning life; indeed it had no relationship to Islam. It is not considered as Islamic culture because the Islamic creed was not a part of its study. Rather, when they discussed it, they did not give Islam any attention. It had no relationship to Islam or the Islamic ‘Aqeedah.395

Islamic thought has had a long and complex relationship to Greek thought. For example, Plato was referred to as “the first philosopher” by many early Muslim thinkers. Neo-Platonism played a significant role in Islamic metaphysical speculation from early on. Aristotelean logic was incorporated into Islamic legal thought, as Wael Hallaq has demonstrated, and even Ghazali, the great anti-philosophical Sufi-theoretician, utilized philosophical modes of reasoning to refute the

395 Al-Nabhani, The Islamic Personality, volume 1, 157-58.
philosophers in his *The Incoherence of the Philosophers.* It is said that in fact it was Ghazali’s *Incoherence* that dealt the deathblow to philosophical speculation in the Muslim world. However, this reading again, interestingly, goes back to Orientalists. If we consider that one of the most influential thinkers in Islamic history, Ibn ‘Arabi, was significantly indebted to Neo-Platonism—as Iqbal was to aver and blame for the “decadence” and “inaction” of the Muslims and their eventual downfall at the hands of the West—then it could logically be surmised that philosophy could never have disappeared from Islamic thought, as it was part and parcel of the metaphysical speculations of the Sufis, who have been omnipresent in their influence throughout Islamic history.

What Nabhani is doing, therefore, in keeping with his reformist-modernist-fundamentalist peers, is re-asserting the primacy of a “pure” Islamic doctrine (*‘aqeedah*) in the face of the various disputed and disputable strains and styles of thought that had existed amongst Muslims since early Islamic history. For the Islamic *‘aqeedah* is the one thing that is undisputable. It is the one thing that all Muslims can, without fail, agree upon. And in times of crises—and colonial and post-colonial times constitute one long “nightmare” for Muslims worldwide—it is vital that people emphasize the things with which they agree. And, in order to emphasize the things with which people agree, it is sometimes necessary—imperative even—to discard things they do not agree upon. This is part of the reformist ethos. But significantly it is also part of the decolonial spirit. All of this is important also because it points to a particular conception of the Islamic Personality. The Islamic Personality is, as Nabhani understands it, radically different from/opposed to the modern, western self. And

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398 This idea has been a frequently emphasized refrain amongst Muslim public intellectuals especially post-9/11; but its prevalence can be seen at various times of “crisis,” as for example during the Khilafat Movement in the early part of the 20th century.
yet, as I am arguing, it is in that very enunciation of radical difference that major lines of convergence emerge.

Nabhani writes:

The orientalists rely on the false proposition, and some Muslim scholars themselves have fallen prey to this, when they claim that foreign cultures such as the Persian, Roman, Greek and Hindu cultures had an effect on the Islamic culture. Their false argument claims that many of these foreign cultures penetrated the Islamic culture. The reality is that the Islamic culture entered the conquered lands, and affected the indigenous culture to the extent that these cultures generally ceased to exist. The Islamic culture generally replaced these cultures in their capacity as the original culture and it became the sole culture of the country.399

Although Nabhani does not explicitly criticize Sufism—which I take to be a conscious move on his part, given the enormous influence of Sufism amongst Muslims through history, during his time, and even today, as far as seeking not to distance Muslims, since the objective of HT has always been to unite all Muslims, regardless of their schools of thought and particular religious leanings—I read his reference to the “false proposition” that foreign cultures such as the Persian, Greek, and Hindu cultures as having had an affect on Islamic culture to imply Sufism itself. Many Orientalists have attributed the presence of Sufism in Islam to a foreign insertion, gained from the same countries and their sources. In distancing Islam from such sources, and from such influences, and given that Nabhani casts Islam as the conquering culture that “replaced these cultures in their capacity as the original culture and … [becoming] the sole culture of the country,” and further, given that the Islam practiced by members of HT is very much a Salafi/Wahhabi inspired version of Islam, with no Sufi leanings, I am quite certain in this reading. Put differently, if Islam was always a fully-fledged “culture” since the lifetime of the Prophet—as HT insists it was—then the entrance of this fully formed culture into new lands must always have abjured foreign elements, and all apparently foreign elements could be no more than accretions.

399 Al-Nabhani, The Islamic Personality, volume 1, 153.
Of course, Nabhani was not unique among the modernist-reformist-fundamentalists in distancing Islam from Sufism.\footnote{See Sirriyeh, Sufis and Anti-Sufis.} What distinguished him from others is the fact that he did not—at least not at the outset—seek to dismiss Sufism \textit{tout court}. Rather, his (re)construction of the Islamic Personality was, by its very (re)construction—and in this way mirroring Iqbal’s reconstruction of the Muslim self—a disbanding of the Sufic, or more accurately, the traditional understanding of the human self. In traditional Islamic cosmology, the self/soul (\textit{nafs}) is graded according to three levels: the soul that commands to evil (\textit{nafs al-‘ammara}); the self-reproaching soul (\textit{nafs al-lawwama}); and the soul at peace (\textit{nafs al-mutmainna}). The soul, according to this understanding, attains the highest level through striving to do good deeds—in obedience to God—which, by the methods of spiritual realization handed down from master to disciple, ultimately allows one to train the soul so that it becomes in tune with the divine. Nabhani bypasses this understanding of the human being, and his relationship to his teacher, in favor of a notion of a personality (\textit{shakhsiyyah}) made up of mentality (\textit{aqliyyah}) and selfhood (\textit{nafsiyyah}) that is self-driven and self-fashioning as far as his relationship to the world around him and to the ummah.

This is a particular understanding of the human self as an individual, as “I am.” What I mean is that, contrary to an historic Islamic anthropology, whereby \textit{man} is because \textit{God} is, man’s existence is de facto assumed, and God’s existence is an almost secondary consideration (although the language does not say this explicitly, it is implicit in the text). This is the reason, for example, that HT reads Islam as an “ideology”—like other ideologies, whether Communist, Capitalist, or Anarchist—that can be inserted as one chooses into the otherwise neutral spaces of the \textit{aqliyyah} and \textit{nafsiyyah} (whether “Islamic,” “Communist,” “Capitalist,” or “Anarchist”) in order to create the \textit{Shakhsiyyah Islamiyyah}, The Islamic Personality.
As with Iqbal, Nabhani’s inversion of the traditional Sufi understanding of the self and his emphasis on the centrality of the self for human achievement and being is significantly informed (whether consciously or unconsciously is irrelevant, given that such thinking was part of the “unconscious of knowledge”) by a modern, western understanding of the self going back to Descartes. This, therefore, departs significantly from a traditional Islamic understanding of the self. Like Descartes (and Iqbal), Nabhani assumes “being” in man, and not in Being as such, as it is the case in premodern Islamic metaphysics, thereby diminishing the function of God as the source of all being. Furthermore, the idea of the Islamic Personality and its uniqueness vis-à-vis non-Islamic personalities also assumes the modern western paradigm of the self as something that is self-contained and separable from the rest of existence. The one distinguishing factor—which moves Nabhani’s Islamic Personality away from the purely Cartesian self, of course—is the ‘aqeedah, or the Islamic creed, which is summarized by the “double testimony” La ilaha ill Allah, Muhammad ar-Rasul Allah, There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

Nevertheless, strictly speaking, Nabhani’s theology, in beginning from the position of the independent personality, appears to read: “Man says: No god but God.” And this is the problem with all of Muslim modernist-reformist-fundamentalist-activist theology: it always begins from the position of man’s self-contained existence, which then affirms the existence of God when, historically, Muslim theology—which found its greatest expression in Sufi metaphysics—has emphasized the contingent nature of man and his being, and the necessary nature of God’s Being.

As mentioned earlier, Nabhani’s and HT’s project is conceived as a project of freedom from neo-colonial machinations—whether political, ideological, or epistemological. Nabhani and HT are not so much concerned with the perfection of the human self in relation to God as they are concerned with the perfection of human being in relation to the political realm. Or, put differently, they are concerned with the (Islamic) perfection of the political realm per se. I examined the
premodern notion of freedom in the previous chapter, in relation to Sanjay Seth’s enunciation of the topic. I will not repeat myself here.

What I will do is question the modern assumption of (political) freedom assumed by HT. As also mentioned in the previous chapter, the modern, western notion of freedom—from which it is quite impossible to detach our thought—has the notions of “autonomy, as choosing our ends, and the means towards them” already built into it. And this notion of freedom and the attendant idea(s) of subjectivity—the idea of the Islamic Personality that Nabhani and HT are (re)constructing—rethinks the traditional Islamic idea of “slave of God” (‘abd Allah), which is the status of all human beings before God, as the perfecter of the Islamic-political realm. What I am also suggesting is that the ideal of self-determination only becomes possible in the presence of the discourse of nationalism (which I examined in Chapter 2), whose parameters are set from without. That is, political thinking in a (post)colonial world is always already delimited from the outside. And while Nabhani and HT consider nationalism to be antithetical to Islam, their very central idea of the Islamic State cannot be thought of without recourse to the modern nation-state, as I argue in chapter 1. The question that needs to be asked, then, is any price considered too great for Nabhani and HT? Given HT members’ willingness to suffer severe consequences—sometimes even death—for the sake of the ideologies animating the Islamic Personality, would answer would appear to be “no” (while, for Iqbal, as discussed in the previous chapter, he did not believe in freedom at any price). This has also been confirmed for me in my various conversations with HT members over the years.

**Conclusion**

One of the central concerns of this chapter has been to highlight the extent to which western categories and ideas are always already, somewhat paradoxically, enmeshed in Nabhani’s (and HT’s) thinking as far as his idea of the Islamic Personality specifically—and the thinking of his reformist-
modernist-fundamentalist peers in general. Thus, the project of trying to salvage a pristine Islam (which is the project of almost every “practicing” Muslim today) is fraught from the start. For, there is no Islam without specific “contexts” (to make use of Derrida401). The context today calls for examining how a figure such as Nabhani (and HT) sought (and seek) to re-empower Muslims in an age where western notions of the self—politically, existentially, epistemologically—always already tend towards western modes of thinking and being.

In the next chapter, I examine how the Islamic Personality manifests his/her work in the context of Bangladesh, and the violent pressures it has been facing from the secular government of Bangladesh as a result. The freedom/liberation from western-inspired ideologies—from the perspective of HT—is thus a global problem, and certainly not limited to the West. There are a number of reasons behind my choosing to look at Bangladesh’s relationship to HT. First, Bangladesh offers a rich case study of how HT has been (un)successfully exported to a Muslim country from Britain. Second, Bangladesh is considered an ally of the UK and US. As far as the War on/of Terror, UK intelligence has extra-judicially rendered “extremists” through the Bangladeshi system that lacks the legal checks and balances that tend to be found in the UK. The secular government of Bangladesh and its engagement with HT therefore offers a rich case-study of both how an example of Islam(ism) functions there, and also how Islam(ism) becomes an (im)possible reality on its soil. Finally, this chapter provides an interesting comparison for the final chapter as far as the construction of Muslims and Islam(ism) by and in the UK.

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When Islam(ism) Came from the West: 
HT in Bangladesh

In 2010, 60 Minutes, CBS’s premier news magazine, aired a segment entitled “Jihadists And ‘The Narrative’,” an investigation of Islam(ism), and what the main interviewee, Maajid Nawaz, a “reformed” Islam(ist), calls the “the narrative” of Islam(ism). The narrative, according to Nawaz, is that “America is waging a war against Islam. It invaded Iraq because it hates Muslims, it invaded Afghanistan because it hates Muslims, and that the only way to stop this war is for Muslims to start fighting back on all fronts against the West.” Before becoming “reformed” Nawaz had spent thirteen years as an active and important member of HT. Where Nawaz used to travel abroad on behalf of HT in an effort to spread “the narrative” and thereby recruit HT members, he now spends his time both at home in Britain, and abroad, including increasingly in the US, “rebutting the very narrative he once passionately promoted.”

402 “Islam(ism)” attempts to capture the notion that Islam is viewed as inherently political—and political in a manner that is unacceptable—by a secular liberal imaginaire.


404 "Ex-Extremist", 60 Minutes.


406 "Ex-Extremist", 60 Minutes, HT are very much active in Pakistan. After being proscribed by Pakistani President General Musharraf in 2004, HT subsequently had the ban lifted after a legal challenge against its proscription in the Lahore High Court. According to “a senior Obama Administration official” interviewed by journalist Seymour Hersch in 2009, HT has “penetrated the Pakistani military and now have cells in the Army.” Hersch reports that the Pakistan Army denies this. About Hizb ut-Tahrir’s activities in Pakistan and subsequent political crackdown Multan Bench of the Lahore High Court said in March 2005: “Hizb ut-Tahrir has shown dissatisfaction on the policies of the [Pakistan] government that is the right of each and every citizen ... I am unable to understand as to how distribution of
And just as Nawaz had in a former life journeyed to Pakistan, the land of his forebears (he is a third generation British immigrant) in order to “spread the word” as the presenter of 60 Minutes, Lesley Stahl put it, so too are British Bangladeshis returning to their motherland for the sake of spreading the message of HT.  

HT has been active at a grassroots level in Bangladesh since at least 1992, however, “HT was officially launched in Bangladesh (HTB) in November 2001 and founded chapters at public and private universities, such as Dhaka University and North South University, in order to target students and young professionals.” It is thought that the suspected current leader of HTB, British national Zituzzaman Hoque, a professor at a private university in Bangladesh, played a considerable role in the setting up of HTB in its current form.

According to former HT member Ed Husain, “Britain remains vital to the Hizb, for it gives the group access to the global media and provides a fertile recruiting ground at mosques and universities.” From its headquarters in Purana Paltan, Dhaka, HTB had regularly published scathing critiques of the Bangladeshi government’s involvement in what it sees as the United States’ neo-imperial machinations in the country, which are planned in tandem with the “polytheist” state of India. On April 22nd, 2010 HTB issued a “press release” on its website www.khilafat.org condemning the arrival in Bangladesh of the US Ambassador to India, Timothy J. Roemer, “to discuss India-Bangladesh relations and ways to strengthen counter ‘terrorism’ programmes.” The these pamphlets in the general public was termed as terrorism or sectarianism.” “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” Wikipedia article, consulted May 12th, 2010.


409 Ibid.

press release saw in this a repetition, but this time on Bangladeshi soil, of US-mandated realpolitik as was implemented in Pakistan under General Musharaf’s rule when “Pakistan collaborate[d] with the polytheist state [India] to prevent the rise of Islam as a political ideology in the region as well as to contain China.” Not at all averse to using incendiary rhetoric, the press release continued: “The [US] crusader enemy has the same design for Bangladesh.”\textsuperscript{411} As is common in such press releases and other articles “exposing” the government of Sheikh Hasina—or that of Begum Khaleda Zia before her, for all forms of democratic governance are inherently corrupt, given that they do not rule by God’s law\textsuperscript{412}—for their corruption and for bowing to foreign (primarily US) demands, this particular press release called upon “Muslims” (implying that it is a religious duty) to:

[S]tart an immediate political struggle against the imperialists and their agents. The imperialists installed Sheikh Hasina in power to serve their purpose. Crusader America and polytheist India reached a compromise whereby America will instruct the rulers in the region (especially Pakistan and Bangladesh) to solve the long standing issues with India which will free India’s hands and then these two enemies of Islam can develop their partnership to consolidate their foothold in the region. Therefore we see that on the one hand Sheikh Hasina is giving in to India’s demands and at the same time securing American presence in the country, especially her military’s presence, so much so that Bangladesh has become a training base for America’s murderous soldiers whose hands are drenched with the blood of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan.

No doubt such inciteful remarks, which are a regular feature in HTB’s rhetorical arsenal, played no small role in the proscription of HTB by Sheikh Hasina’s government on October 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2009, although, ostensibly, the ban came “a day after a bomb attack target[ed] a ruling party


\textsuperscript{412} “Allah (swt) has obliged Muslims to implement Islam throughout all of life’s affairs, to rule with Islam and to make their constitution and their various laws on the basis of Shari’ah rules which are derived from the Book of Allah (swt) and the Sunnah of His Messenger (saw). […] Ideologies other than Islam, like Capitalism and Communism (which includes Socialism), are corrupt ideologies which contradict human nature and are man-made. Their corruption has become evident, their defects apparent, and they contradict Islam and its laws, so their adoption is prohibited.” Ahmed and Stuart, \textit{Hizb ut-Tahrir}, 4-6.
lawmaker, and a relative of the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina,”\textsuperscript{413} together with HTB’s “‘anti-state’, ‘anti-government’, ‘anti-people’ and ‘anti-democratic’ activities in the country.”\textsuperscript{414} It is important to remark that any connection with the bomb attack, or indeed any terrorist activities, were not proven. During this period of supposed investigation of HTB the Chief Coordinator and Spokesman of HTB, Mohiuddin Ahmed, an assistant professor of Dhaka University’s prestigious Institute of Business Administration, has been kept under house arrest without any charges being pressed against him, and without allowing him legal representation. In another press release entitled “The government of Sheikh Hasina fabricates cases against the Official Spokesman of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, in Bangladesh, Mohiuddin Ahmed,” HTB claim that:

The government of Sheikh Hasina is making a mockery of the so-called rule of law and democracy which they and their imperialist masters trumpet by fabricating cases against the Official Spokesman of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, in Bangladesh, Mohiuddin Ahmed. They had him under house arrest for six months, during which police guarded his front door and the locality, preventing him from leaving his home. Now these lying degraded oppressors are alleging that he organized the activities of Hizb-ut-Tahrir even though they confiscated his phone and computer, cutting off all his means of communication.\textsuperscript{415}

At the beginning of 60 Minutes presenter Lesley Stahl observed that “Intelligence agencies in the US and Europe have been grappling with a bewildering phenomenon, that a surprisingly large number


\textsuperscript{414} Animesh Roul, “Bangladesh Proscribes Hizb ut-Tahrir,” \textit{Counterterrorism Blog}, October 24, 2009, http://counterterrorismblog.org/2009/10/bangladesh_proscribes_hizb_ut.php (The link has, since my writing of this chapter in 2010, become dead; this does not surprise me—I only recently realized this—given the wide-ranging steps that have been taken by Hasina’s government in the intervening years to silence dissenting voices of all stripes, under the banner of “terrorism.”)

\textsuperscript{415} http://www.khilafat.org/newPages/PressRelease/Resources/PR_ENG_100421_01.pdf
of Islamic radicals are relatively well-off and well-educated westerners.” \( ^{416} \) In this chapter I look at the rise and the eventual banning of HT in Bangladesh, and as part of my analysis of HTB I pursue a similar line of inquiry—why does HTB largely comprise members of the “urban elite-centric”? \( ^{417} \) As part of my analysis I consider some of the rhetorical strategies used by HTB—such as the narrative of neo-imperial machinations by the US, as well as “westernization” and its associated ills. I consider what some of the implications of Sheikh Hasina’s government’s coming down so hard on HTB, a group with no proven links to terrorist activities, are. This part of my analysis focuses on a Bangladeshi talkshow, “Point of Order,” broadcast on the satellite TV channel BanglaVision on October 26th, 2010, whose topic of discussion was the banning of HT in Bangladesh. In my conclusion I evaluate some of the implications of the ban on HTB. Finally, I reflect on the thought of HTB in relation to HT’s thought in general, and how it relates to western epistemological hegemony.

**HTB’s urban elite-centric membership**

HT poses a challenge to the widespread analytical model used by analysts of radical Islam(ism). The latter holds that Islamic political activism provides a crucial outlet for the disenfranchised, the dispossessed, and the desperate peoples of the Muslim world, especially amongst the youth who constitute the so-called “youth-bulge.” \( ^{418} \) As one analyst, Alan Richards, in his “Socioeconomic Roots of Middle East Radicalism,” understands the phenomenon—it is one of a rapidly increasingly youth population in the Middle East and other Muslim countries, whose majority population are

\( ^{416} \) “Ex-Extremist,,” 60 Minutes.


young, however, “the first time in history, many of these youths have received some amount of education,” however, “the quality of education leaves much to be desired…. Expectations have been raised, but the skills needed to meet those expectations have not been imparted. Millions of young men now have enough education to make the old, dirty jobs unsatisfying but have not acquired the skills needed to perform successfully in the modern, hypercompetitive, global economy.” This surge in seeking mass education has come after “Decades of government job guarantees for graduates, [but] governments cannot now provide the necessary jobs, and statist policies impede private-sector job creation.” With high levels of unemployment, and with unemployment figures set to rise further in the years to come, those primarily affected are “young, uneducated urbanites, whose anger is fuel for political unrest.” Richards concludes that the political consequences of such dispossession is that “It provides a fertile recruiting ground for opponents of regimes and therefore poses a challenge to governance […] and some of the poor, particularly the younger ones with limited education, join violent opposition movements.”

In the case of HTB this analytical model does not hold. HTB’s recruits came primarily from amongst the private, elite, universities of which, “Since the enactment of the Private University Act 1992, Bangladesh […] has seen a sharp increase.” The numbers of students joining from these

419 “[H]alf the Arab population, 54 percent of Iranians, and 52 percent of Pakistanis are younger than twenty years old.” Ibid., 26.

420 Ibid., 28.

421 Ibid., 29.

422 Ibid. 29.

423 Ibid. 30.

424 Ibid. 31.

425 Mahfuz Sadique, “Islam’s new face?”, from Hizbut Tahrir in Action: A Bâloé Exclusive, source: Muktadhara.net, May 9th, 2001, http://muktadhara.net/hizbutahirbd.htm. (Here, also, the link is dead. See my comments on this in 377.)
institutions was said to be “phenomenal”—at least in 2001, some eight years before the proscription of HTB by Sheikh Hasina’s government in 2009. Before being placed under house arrest, HTB’s chief spokesperson Mohiuddin Ahmed, held monthly Chhatra Sabha (Student Society) sessions where he spoke to an estimated 250-300 students, who were not always the same people. As is noted by Mahfuz Sadique, author of a report on HTB which came out in the Bangladeshi English-language daily tabloid, Blitz, “religion-based student politics is nothing new at the nation’s higher educational institutions…” However, HTB’s focus on the above-mentioned strata of students marks a sharp shift from that of big Islamic students organization, such as Islami Chhatra Shibir, who, although they “have made inroads into the student bodies of most public universities, their conservative views, actions, and also the unfavourable image among general students towards its parent party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, has prevented them from capturing a larger support base.” According to Sadique’s analysis, HTB’s success amongst this particular grouping of students may be attributed to a few interrelated factors.

After the anti-Ershad movement in the eighties which saw the coming together of students of all backgrounds, in the nineties there was “a gradual fallout phase which has resulted in a great vacuum…a great intellectual lapse [had] engulfed the universities, and wait[ed] to be filled by a convenient force.” It is this vacuum that is filled by HTB. For Sadique, HTB’s success lies in its ability to speak to students about issues that are taboo for other Islamists: topics such as the “Existence of God” [presumably such a topic is deemed taboo by other Islamists because it must be taken as a given that God exists, and to even ask the question of his existence smacks of heresy];

426 Ibid.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid.
429 Ibid.
“pre-marital sex” [for ultra-conservative Islamists, such as the Islami Chhatro Shibir, the mere broaching of such a topic would be deemed too shameful]; “Drugs and Alcohol” [again, topics that must raise the ire of traditional Islamists who come from conservative madrasa backgrounds, for whom such matters are simply evil and cannot be given validation by their discussion]; “Communism” [once more a subject that cannot be discussed because of its atheistic underpinnings—and to discuss is to entertain the notion, which is to somehow become morally implicated].

The willingness on the part of HTB to discuss such topics is a potent tactical move given that these issues are of great interest to the said strata of society for whom westernization and its associated ills/thrills are realities that are not at all taboo as far as their own circles. Indeed, there now exists—at least in the capital city, Dhaka—an enormous recreational drug using culture that is sexually promiscuous, and religiously nonchalant. Why the likes of HTB has traction amongst such youth is a question that I explore in the course of this section, but it ought to be noted at the outset that Bangladesh still remains a deeply religious society where Islam is very strong as far as its

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430 These parenthetical observations are my own and come from a personal familiarity with some of the thinking and emotions that go hand-in-hand with a type of “traditional” Islamism. For an interesting study examining what it calls “the mere contemplation effect,” see P.E. Tetlock, O. V. Kristel, and S. B. Elson, “The psychology of the unthinkable: Taboo trade-offs, forbidden base rates, and heretical counterfactuals,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78, no. 5 (May 2000), 853-870. The study observes how for fundamentalist Christians (although the study is not limited to that particular grouping) the mere contemplation of heretical notions (in Christian terms) that depict the life of Christ as extremely contingent, for example, require moral cleansing on the part of the fundamentalist Christian participants of the study. It is along a similar line of reasoning that I am imagining that the mere contemplation of the above-mentioned topics are not permissible from the moral point of view of what I call the traditional Islamists, for to contemplate the unthinkable/taboo is to somehow participate in it, psychologically speaking, and such thinking is therefore to be shunned for fear of moral taint.

431 For a special report on the widespread use of drugs in Bangladesh see: Nader Rahman, “The Inevitable Crash,” *Star Weekend Magazine* 5, no. 111, September 5, 2006, http://www.thedailystar.net/magazine/2006/09/02/cover.htm. Regarding the rise in sexual promiscuity amongst the youth of Bangladesh see Lazeena Muna’s Romance and Pleasure: Understanding the Sexual Conduct of Young People in Dhaka in the Era of HIV and AIDS (Dhaka, Bangladesh: The University Press, 2005), where the author notes how “the combined effects of education, modernisation, global media, and gender advances are gradually changing expectations of male-female relations and are starting to exert a profound impact on sexual behaviour among unmarried young people” [from jacket].
visibility and palpability,\textsuperscript{432} with a significant increase in recent years in the wearing of the \textit{hijab} by women, and of full-length beards and traditional Islamic dress for men. As such, at the very least, the questions that HTB are willing to tackle cannot be too far from the minds of a youth population, no matter how westernized in their own social milieu. HTB’s willingness to tackle issues that other Islamists deem taboo shows on the one hand HTB’s incredible confidence to take on “westernization” itself, as it were, which in no small part must be attributed to HT’s having to deal with the very same topics within their western settings in Europe and America. And their success must be seen as being part of that very reason—being well-versed in the lifestyle(s) of the West (as mentioned earlier, at least one of the senior HTB members is a British national), one cannot rule out that there might be a sense amongst the audience of hearing things, as it were, straight from the horse’s mouth. As an indication of the potential convincing power of such an approach—hearing from “reformed” westerners, or people who were once westernized and averse to religion, but are now living the life of (HT’s vision of) Islam—it is perhaps not too oblique a reference to make mention of a study that examines the (inadvertent) use of Donald Cressey’s method of using “differential association” for the changing of criminals, in this case for the “treatment” of drug addicts.\textsuperscript{433} In the study of “Synanon,” an organization founded by former drug addicts, current drug users come of their own volition to live amongst former drug addicts in a familial type of unit where strict rules are applied against the use of drug-related habits—such as sneaking in a “hit,” “talking the language of the street,” describing the feelings that one gets from a “hit.” The study is a strong indicator of the convincing power of associating with people who have been through the same trials (in this case drug addiction), and having successfully overcome them how they can exercise an

\textsuperscript{432} Ali Riaz notes this “increased religiosity among the Bangladeshi population, palpable changes in dress, social behavior, and increased sensitivity towards religious issues…” Riaz, “Interactions”, 80.

authority that other drug users are happy to obey in order to “kick the habit.” Although my analogy is not backed by empirical evidence, it is noteworthy that new recruits to HT require undergoing a strict regimen of Islamic (re)education, spend extensive periods of time with other, more “seasoned” members of the party, and, in the very living of their new Islamic lifestyle demonstrate their leaving of their old ways—the last of which is a salient element of religious “conversion.”

An interesting illustration of my argument can be seen in the case of Maajid Nawaz’s process of “reformation.” As was discussed in CBS’s 60 Minutes segment, while living in Egypt, as part of “a post-9/11 crackdown,” Nawaz, together with other Islamic radicals, was convicted and sentenced to prison for five years. He was kept with the assassins of Anwar Sadat, who were former leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. Interestingly, these former jihadists had given up their radical views in the twenty or so years of their imprisonment, and as they spoke to Nawaz he began to “doubt the strength of [his] own convictions,” and it was that doubt that eventually led him to abandon HT after he returned to HT in 2006. Furthermore, the following from Imtiaz Selim, head of HTB’s activities at private universities, is revealing:

And we didn’t shy away from talking about sensitive issues which had surfaced at private universities, or even those which contradicted our principles. We talked about pre-marital sex, we talked about drugs, we talked about alcohol, and we even talked about communism, as there was no other place these students could discuss that. Many of these discussions were not at all superficial in nature, rather intellectually engaging. And after having an open discussion, we presented to them the ideologies that Hizb ut-Tahrir believes in. We presented the Islamic way of life as a solution to all of their problems.434

One leaflet found in the “Youth” section in khilafat.org entitled “Dilemma of a Muslim Youth: Fao time pass or Islam”435 combines Bengali (youth) slang, and a high level of English, which,

434 “Ex-Extremist”, 60 Minutes.,

435 “Dilemma of a Muslim Youth: Fao time pass or Islam,” http://www.khilafat.org/newPages/Youth/Resources/YouthDilemmaENG.pdf (The link has since become dead. See
for one student of Dhaka’s prestigious and extremely expensive private university, North South University, was an example of “nothing less than guerrilla marketing.” “Their leaflets are minimal but attractive in design and many of them are in English, which conveniently caters to the psyche of private university students.” The very well-produced leaflet highlights—with the tone of an insider’s vantage point—how today’s youth are “bombarded and enticed to a world of fake glamour,” with the pressures of socio-sexual laxity (“kothin free mixing”), drinking, and “smoking pot.” The leaflet targets the person who still contains within himself/herself a sense of Islamic morality, and urges that s/he does not give in to the false promises of a western culture as others have: “Some people will accept everything from the western kufr culture wholeheartedly and totally forget Islam.” It urges the audience—who is in fact potentially anyone of the youth, even those who have given into the “wiles” of western life, for at heart the leaflet, as indeed HT envisions its broader purpose, is directed at every Muslim—to reclaim his/her rightful Islamic identity.

After a brief warning against “compromising” one’s Islam—“the one who drinks but doesn’t get drunk has compromised with [sic] Islam, the one who smokes pot but doesn’t get high has compromised with Islam, and the one who misses his daily prayers has also compromised with Islam.”—it claims that “compromise” is the very cause of what it sees as the “Identity Crisis” within the Muslim youth. Thus, the need for youth to experiment with sex and drugs is depicted in binarized terms: our (Muslim) culture versus their (western, Kufr) culture—the very binary used

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436 Mahfuz Sadique, emphasis added, op.cit.
437 “Dilemma of a Muslim Youth,” p.1, op.cit.
438 Ibid., p.1.
439 Ibid., p.1.
440 Ibid., p.1.
by HT the world over. To stay within the boundaries of an Islamic way of life is to be true to one’s God-given identity; to go outside of such bounds is to have gone to the other side, to have become one of them, the “Other.” The leaflet is an invitation to those who have questions—the so-called “unthinkable” questions such as “Why am I a Muslim?”, “What is my purpose in Life?”, “Is there anything after death?”—to pose those very questions, and presumably to the people behind the leaflet itself, as the leaflet provides a (now inoperative, no doubt because of the ban on HTB) telephone number, and ends with the organization’s name in a stylish font, “Liberated Youth,” the now also proscribed youth branch of HTB. All of this being said, however, it needs to be emphasized that HT/HTB function around a strict “regime” of thought. That is to say, while difficult/taboo questions are entertained, it is always understood that potential recruits, once they have passed this initial stage (which is stage one in HT’s methodology mentioned previously), will necessarily come in line with HT’s ideology, and room for freedom of thought as such is not really an option.

Now the “intellectual” void that is being addressed by HTB also, crucially, deals with the issue of political identity, as touched upon earlier. It is the lack of a political identity felt by this strata of students that is addressed, and its needs filled. As Mohiuddin Ahmed observes, “University students are embracing our vision as it is a viable solution compared to the misdirected philosophies of other political camps.” There is clearly a method to HTB’s operations. Mustafa Minhaz, Media and Promotions Secretary of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s central committee, and a lecturer at the University of

441 Ibid., p.2.

442 In fact, HT “is a totalitarian organization which tolerates no internal dissent.” Sergei Blagov, “Moscow Turns Up Heat on Radicals,” Asia Times Online, July 22, 2003. Quoted: Baran, Hizb ut-Tahrir, 24. Baran rights also that, “Therefore, if HT members deviate from the party philosophy, they must renounce their membership.” Ibid.

Asia Pacific tellingly reveals, “We have studied, and scrutinized major political movements of history. For example, in our own country, if you look at the phenomenal rise of the left student movement during the sixties and seventies, the key element in their success is their ability to galvanize a large support base within university students. And in doing this they first engaged the intellectually aspiring students and in turn these students had been able to attract a larger mass. We have also taken a similar path though we believe our philosophy has a larger appeal as it is based on faith.”

**Philosophy and faith—faith and philosophy**

But what is the philosophy that HTB is promoting, and what is the faith? The philosophy is more of the same philosophy of HT worldwide—that of the fall of the Caliphate, how and why it came about, western/imperial machinations then and now, how *kufr* thought has taken over the minds of the Muslims the world over. And the faith? It again revolves around a basic understanding of Islamic principles—the five pillars, with a requisite amount (perhaps the bare minimum) of knowledge of shari’a, for no contemporary HT person of prominence is known for his/her knowledge of the Islamic tradition approaching an appreciable degree where they would be considered scholars in the traditional sense of the term.

The “political identity” offered by HT, however, is not through attachment to any single party, for HT do not participate, nor do they believe in participating, in parliamentary elections. As Maajid Nawaz noted in his interview, once

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444 Ibid.

445 As mentioned earlier, HT consider the nation-state, and consequently parliamentary elections, as being anathema to Islam.
he was recruited by HT he was no longer British, but Muslim.\footnote{Stahl: “They [the Islamists] broke you down so that you were no longer British. You, a person who had no religion, became a Muslim.”} One’s identity as a Muslim is conceived in relation to the global community of Muslims—the \textit{ummah}.\footnote{Nawaz: “Yes, along came the Islamist activists and said: ‘You’ve been targeted by [the skinheads] because you’re Muslim, and non-Muslims hate Islam.’ […] Stahl: And you bought it? Nawaz: Yes, as an angry, young, naïve fifteen/sixteen year-old. […] And I became a Muslim, not just in faith, but a Muslim in politics. Someone whose politics became pre-defined by politics in Islam.” “Ex-Extremist”, 60 Minutes.} One’s participation in that global community is—or \textit{should} be, and this is of course what HT are working to bring about—as a member of the global Islamic Caliphate, and one’s allegiance is to the appointed Caliph. It is in this context of reviving the \textit{ummah} “from the decline that she has reached”\footnote{“One of the key features of transnational Islamism is that it emphasizes the “Muslim identity” as opposed to national identities bounded by culture and geography. Reference to the umma and the responsibilities of the Muslim community remain central to the transnational Islamists’ message.” Ali Riaz, “Interactions”, 96.} that HTB’s political rhetoric, which largely comprises scathing attacks of Sheikh Hasina’s government and her policies of accommodation towards an overweening United States and India, is enunciated.\footnote{Ahmed and Stuart, \textit{Hizb ut-Tahrir}, 6.} The logic being, as long as we (Bangladeshis—although the national qualifier is never used, since it would be a tacit acknowledgement of statist politics, which HT does not accept) as Muslims are bound by foreign, \textit{kufr}, coercive powers, and Sheikh Hasina (or whoever else is in power for that matter), kowtows to their demands, we will never be able to be free to achieve our Muslim right to freedom in the form of the Caliphate. To cite Ali Riaz’s analysis in “Interactions of ‘Transnational’ and ‘Local’ Islam in Bangladesh”:

\footnote{See introduction.}
The importance and influence of the Islamists in general, particularly those which represent Islam as a transnational political ideology, will depend on the domestic political environment as much as global political developments. If global politics encourages the strengthening of the sense of Muslim victimhood, due to the role of the Western countries, particularly the United States, their appeal to the common masses in Bangladesh is likely to strengthen. Bangladesh’s domestic political environment over the past two decades allowed the Islamists to consolidate their position; consequently, it opened the space for transnational Islamist groups to operate with state support. If the situation remains unchanged, the space for operation will widen further. 450

As far as the formation of the (new) Islam(ist) subjectivity a la HTB, Riaz points to the “study group” (halaqa) as a particularly new aspect of Islamist practice. He cites Maimuna Huq’s insightful study of Jamaat-i-Islami women activists’ halaqas451 where she observes that they are a key site for “the production of a particular form of Islamic subjectivity.”452 Huq notes further that:

[These] lesson circles play a central role in the sustenance and expansion of Islamic movements in Bangladesh. They do so by helping reshape activists’ conceptions of self, religious duty and others through a rhetoric that deploys specific notions of religiosity and religious identity, culture, state, the global Muslim community or ummah, and the current world order.453 Although Huq’s study looks at Jamaat-i-Islami women activists, if we consider stage one in HT’s methodology (“Whoever accepted the basic idea, the Party would organize for him intensive study in its circles, so that the candidate became purified by the thoughts and rules of Islam as adopted by the Party and thus in the process became an Islamic personality.”454), then the parallels are quite remarkable.


452 Riaz, “Interactions”, 95.

453 Ibid.

454 Ibid.
Significance of the HTB ban: Bangladeshi Talkshow “Point of Order” talks back

The private satellite TV channel, BanglaVision, aired its talkshow “Point of Order” on October 26th, 2009.\(^\text{455}\) The topic of the show was the banning of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bangladesh four days earlier. The three members of the panel were Awami League MP, Advocate Yusuf Hossein Humayun, Chairman of Amar Desh Publication, and Sabek Jalani Upodeshta (Former Energy Advisor), Mahmudur Rahman, and writer and columnist Roisuddin Ahmed. Some crucial issues were discussed as to what the banning of HTB portended. It was admitted by Yusuf Hossein Humayun off the back that the ban came before a full investigation had been carried out regarding HTB’s alleged links with terrorism. For Mahmudur Rahman this was extremely problematic, for a ban was the most extreme action that could be carried out by a government against any organization, and it was done so in this case without any legal justification. In his opinion HTB’s connection with terrorism was highly unlikely. For Roisuddin Ahmed it was troubling to hear governmental rhetoric on the supposed extent of terrorism in Bangladesh, which made it appear as though, in his own words, “our country has exceeded Afghanistan and Iraq in its level terrorism—but it’s nowhere near any such level.”

When the presenter raised with Mahmudur Rahman the point that $4,600,000 had been requested by the US State Department to fight terrorism in Bangladesh, he responded that the US was trying its utmost to portray Bangladesh as a nation of terrorists. He felt that there was a certain “history” to this. Just weeks before the 2008 general elections the “Harvard International Review” published an article written by Sajeeb Wazed (Sheikh Hasina’s son) and Carl Ciovacco, an officer for the United States Army with previous duties in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The article entitled

\(^{455}\) All translations of the program are my own. A recording of the show can be seen on YouTube, in six parts, accessed September 23, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oT0zrdK3N0
“Stemming the Rise of Islamic Extremism in Bangladesh”\textsuperscript{456} stated that 35\% of the Bangladeshi army comprised soldiers who had madrasa schooling—the implication being they were Islamists. Mahmudur Rahman continued that soon after the elections came the brutal murders of members of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR),\textsuperscript{457} at which point, without any investigations the Financial Minister claimed that this was the work of terrorists, although subsequent investigations mentioned no connections with terrorism. For Rahman, the terrorism line was/is one being promoted by the US and India, and it is one which the current government is following. In his opinion the work that HTB was doing had the country’s best interests in mind. He cited their vigorous campaign against Bangladesh’s signing of the bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the US,\textsuperscript{458} one which individuals with strong credentials are also highly critical of. For example, Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, Assistant Professor of International Relations at Dhaka University, writes in a blog, “If anyone browses the text of TIFA, s/he would see that it contains basically the agreement on forming a joint council to facilitate trade and investment of the US. There is no commitment of market access for the developing counterparts in the agreements.”\textsuperscript{459} Rahman further cited HTB’s vociferous protest against the building of the highly controversial Tipaimukh dam on the Barak river which, critics fear, will have massive consequences for Bangladesh’s


\textsuperscript{457} According to HTB, the massacre of members of the BDR was part of a “long term plot carried out by India and her agents inside and outside the government. Quoted: “Statement of Protest of from Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bangladesh,” Hizb ut-Tahrir Media Office, April 30, 2009, \url{http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/info/english.php/contents_en/entry_3298}.


\textsuperscript{459} Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, “TIFA and Bangladesh: A Critique,” \textit{Megh Barta} January 27, 2009, \url{http://www.meghbarta.org/nws/nw_main_p01b.php?issueId=6&sectionId=14&articleId=588}.
Rahman continued, “When they [presumably meaning the US] are setting their sights on our oil and gas, they [HTB] are against that. When those who are India’s supporters…and they are trying to create a corridor [for India to access her North-Eastern states] through Bangladesh, they [HTB] are protesting that vociferously.”

Rahman then produced the constitution of Bangladesh and cited Article 38: “Freedom of Association,” which states, “Every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of morality or public order…” In Rahman’s mind the banning of HTB prior to the carrying out of an investigation did not amount to “reasonable restriction,” and was not lawful. It ought to be mentioned here that to-date neither Mohiuddin Ahmed, nor HTB, have been formally charged with having links to terrorism.

Roisuddin Ahmed added that the fact that the US had allocated hundreds of thousands of dollars in order to eradicate terrorism in Bangladesh, “ipso facto means that Bangladesh is a terrorist state.” In his estimation, given the history, the culture, and the nature of politics in Bangladesh, there simply can never be the level of terrorism that is being portrayed as existing in the country, “for the people of Bangladesh will not allow it to happen.” In response to the matter of the US allocation of money, Yusuf Hossein Humayun argued that the government will not “play the cards in the same way as Pakistan,” to which point Rahman added shortly afterwards that if Bangladesh was to “fall into the US trap, then our country will cease to be free. They [the US] are giving

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461 In a blog article entitled “India’s Corridor Through Bangladesh,” Dr. Firoz Mahboob Kamal writes, “Although India has ostensibly projected expansion of trade and mutual co-operation as the only motive, the corridor is primarily to enhance her defence strategy.” http://www.firozmahboobkamal.com/english-articles/42-miscellaneous/118-indias-corridor-through-bangladesh.html

Pakistan billions of dollars—but what is the result [...]? It’s [now] questionable whether the country [Pakistan] itself will last.” He added that it is disconcerting that “the Bangladeshi government has become exceedingly in favor of US policies.” “This is especially surprising,” he continued, “given that Awami League member Abu Sayeed had written a book on the death of Sheikh Mujib, where he places the blame directly on the US and the CIA […] so for Awami League to now be cooperating with the US and to present Bangladesh as a country of terrorists—I can’t see the meaning of this.”

By way of rounding off what he saw as being some of the underlying motivations of the banning of HTB, Rahman pointed to the fact that the proscription came a day after the attack on one of the country’s leading lawmakers (see introduction), and therefore he felt that the government was using the attack—despite the fact that to-date no one has claimed that HTB were actually behind the attack—“against those who are anti-government, anti-American, and anti-India. They [the government] are preventing people of their democratic rights.”

Islamic “normativity” and political violence

A repeated refrain in this chapter has been that there are no proven links between HTB and terrorism. In this regard I would like to draw attention back to the reversal of the British government’s decision to ban HT Britain after the 7/7 bombings, “after warnings from police, intelligence chiefs, and civil liberties groups that [HT] is a non-violent group and driving it underground could backfire”463—especially since no links between HT and the London Underground bombings could be shown. What a ban would have meant of course is that, as a result of HT’s subsequent operations becoming clandestine, they would become extremely difficult to monitor, and they could then indeed turn violent. The British governmental perspective is one

which I share, since it makes good sense to allow a Islam(ist) party to function—and perhaps even flourish\textsuperscript{464}—within the confines of a democratically permissible freedom of speech. This view would seem to go against that held by Zeyno Baran, that HT is “a conveyor belt for terrorists,”\textsuperscript{465} a view which at first might suggest that a proscription of HT is advisable. However, Baran does not believe that banning HT is the solution, rather HT must be taken on at the ideological level, which would involve “helping moderates [sic] win the civil and ideological war currently taking place in the Muslim world.”\textsuperscript{466} Baran also believes, however, that HT’s self-created image as a peaceful organization is a fraud, and that they should be exposed for being as such.\textsuperscript{467} And this perspective brings us squarely back to the issue of proscription, at least as far as the Bangladeshi context is concerned. For it is precisely the line favored by Sheikh Hasina’s government—HTB are not a peaceful organization—that led to their ban in the first place.

At first glance the proscription of HTB would seem to have borne fruit. The latest news, as far as HT, is that there has been a successful silencing of HT. In addition, in recent years, Hasina’s government has extended its program of silencing dissenting Islamic voices of protest/politics by conducting widely publicized trials against the so-called 1971 trials that have been criticized by international lawyers’ associations as being legally riddled with holes.\textsuperscript{468}

\textsuperscript{464} While he does not of course condone the views of the Islamic radicals, whom he refers to as the “ultra,” leading Muslim intellectual and lecturer at Cambridge University, Timothy Winter (aka Abdal-Hakim Murad), acknowledges with a sense of dismay the very flourishing of groups such as HT: “There was a time, not long ago, when the ‘ultras’ were few, forming only a tiny wart on the face of the worldwide attempt to revivify Islam. Sadly, we can no longer enjoy the luxury of ignoring them.” Abdul-Hakim Murad, “Islamic Spirituality: the forgotten revolution,” \textit{Masud}, \url{http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/forgenrevo.htm}

\textsuperscript{465} Baran, “Fighting the War of Ideas,” 68.

\textsuperscript{466} Ibid., p.78.

\textsuperscript{467} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{468} Staff writer, “Another kind of crime: Bangladesh’s war-crimes tribunal is sulling its judicial and political systems,” \textit{The Economist}, 23 May, 2013, accessed September 23, 2016,
Following preliminary interrogations of the “militants” they “gave vital information about [the] involvement of Mohiuddin [Ahmed] in regrouping the members of the organisation that led to his arrest…. ‘We have found some links with militancy and foreign funds, but since this is an ongoing investigation I cannot reveal anything,’ said Arman [presumably the police source being consulted by the newspaper where the story was broken].”

After these revelations from the arrested members of HT, Mohiuddin Ahmed has been taken into police custody from his house arrest that lasted for the previous six months since the ban of HTB was first put in place in October 2009. Recently, a number of leading newspapers in the country, quoting detective sources, have claimed that HTB have close ties with another banned organization, Jama’atul Mujahideen of Bangladesh, Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, and the Pakistani based militant group Jaish-e-Muhammad. It is also reported that, through conducting interrogations, it has emerged that HT operatives “planned to hijack an airplane belonging to Bangladesh Biman to avenge the ban on its activities…” However, according to Arman, the police hadn’t heard about any such plan. “‘HT was plotting to carry out anti-government activities in the country’, police sources said without elaborating.”

A few points ought to be considered. As scathingly pointed by Mahmudur Rahman, Chairman of Amar Desh Publication in the talkshow “Point of Order,” one finds that the Goyenda Songshtha’s (Investigative Bureau’s) reports always favor the current government. He gave the example of the recent “so-called interim government” and the Songshtha’s considering the present


470 Ibid.

471 Ibid.
Prime Minister a threat to national security. “If we listen to what they say, then this country’s future is bleak!” he added.\(^{472}\) But to leave the argument at that, that it is simply a conspiracy on the part of the Bangladeshi government, is not entirely satisfactory. Thus, to look at the “facts” of the investigation and the interrogations: members of HTB have admitted that they were plotting to hijack a plane “to avenge” their ban. This resonates with my point made above, that when a group is forced to go clandestine then there is the serious risk of their making use of terrorist methods which in the past they had no need for—for the basic, but crucial, fact that HT abjure terrorism as a legitimate means of promoting their teachings.\(^{473}\)

The same can be said of their alleged links with the terrorist groups mentioned above. If indeed there is a connection with the said groups and HTB, then a significant amount of attribution needs to be made to their ban.\(^{474}\) For the question that must be asked, why has it taken the *Goyenda Songsha* this long to prove HTB’s links with terrorist organizations—over six months—when

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\(^{472}\) “Point of Order,” op.cit. It is of significant interest to note that Farooq Sobhan, ed. *Countering Terrorism in Bangladesh: A Strategy Paper* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: The University Press Limited, 2008), put together after an extensive body of specialists on terrorism from the Bangladeshi academy as well as from the army came together in 2008 to discuss terrorism in Bangladesh, found it necessary to mention HTB only once in the 185 page (excluding annexures) report, and even that was in the context that HTB do not appear on the State Department’s list of terrorist organizations: “A new trend in Bangladesh has been the growth of ideological digressed groups, with Islamic charter that have no populist appeal mainly due to their promotion of puritanical and in some cases intolerant ideology model. The most important of these groups include Jama’atul Mujahideen of Bangladesh (JMB), Harakat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI), Ahle Hadith, Allahr Dal, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. None of these groups appear on the US State Department’s list. […] This seems to seriously undermine their credentials as international Islamist terrorist organizations with affiliations with al-Qaeda or any other terrorist group opposed to the West.” The quote then continues to describe how the terrorist activities of HUJI “all appear to have been directed at the internal political, social and religious structures and beliefs systems of Bangladesh.” But there is no mention of HT’s terrorist activities within Bangladesh, or of any possible links between them and other terrorist organizations (pp.24-5).

\(^{473}\) Emmanuel Karagiannis and Clark McCauley, in their article, “Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: Evaluating the Threat Posed by a Radical Islamic Group that Remains Nonviolent,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 17, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2005), 315-334, make an important point, and that is that HT’s “Fifty years of opposing violence deserves to be taken seriously in evaluating the group’s potential for violence. The content of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s ideology, which is based on a selective interpretation of Islamic theology and history, serves as a barrier to the adoption of violence as a method for the establishment of an Islamic state.” (emphasis added, p.329).

\(^{474}\) This viewpoint is echoed by Karagiannis and McCauley, *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, 331: “[T]his kind of targeting—banning Hizb ut-Tahrir in Western states where it is currently legal, for instance—is likely to be the first step toward moving the group—or its splintered remains—toward violence.”
previously there was never any mention of any such connections. It seems likely that if such connections are indeed true, then they must in no small part be seen as a recent development in the strategy of HTB under current circumstances. (It is noteworthy that in 2003 the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, a terrorist organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda issued a press release entitled “A New Insight Into Weak and Moderate (Muslims),” listing HT’s stance against violence as weak, and accusing it of being moderate, rather than strictly religious.)

Now, given HT’s structure—which is both “hierarchical and decentralized, resembling the Marxist-Leninist groups that operated during the Cold War”—it is extremely difficult to both infiltrate HT by intelligence services, as well as to imagine that HT can ever be defeated by means of bans and so forth. In fact, as mentioned before, it appears that the popularity of HT is increasing worldwide, although it is impossible to gauge with any accuracy HT’s global membership because of its highly secretive cell structure. It is therefore my opinion that, given HT’s pyramidal structure of command, as well as its international reach and methods of its functioning—through websites that can be managed from anywhere in the world, where leaflets can then be published and printed in the respective countries/localities as required—then the banning of HTB will have negative consequences for the Bangladeshi government in the long run; and it is perhaps in this sense that it can be said that HT are a conveyor belt for terrorists, in the sense mentioned above, that when a group is forced to adopt clandestine means for the propagation of its ideas, it must also make use of violent means in order to have its voice heard. The ban of HTB is also suggestive of a weak Bangladeshi government that has to resort to such extreme measures in order to silence the voices

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475 See my reference to Countering Terrorism, above.


477 Baran, Hizb ut-Tahrir, 24.
of its critics, and ultimately lends credence to their criticisms.\textsuperscript{478} Perhaps the major threat posed by HTB for the Bangladeshi government is that their criticisms are coupled with the Islamic “alternative” which presents a major fear to US and Indian interests in the region, interests, as we have seen before, the Bangladeshi government is eager to uphold.

As far as HT/HTB’s call for the Caliphate, this seems to be quite unrealistic, given the nature of global politics, and especially given the authority exerted in the region of South Asia by the United States, for a major “Islamic bloc” in the region would be entirely against US (as well as Indian) interests, as already mentioned. These considerations aside, it has to be borne in mind that the nation-state poses an intractable problem for the establishment of the Caliphate. And it is not simply the case of HT’s condemnation of the nation-state as being anathema to Islam, for HT, rather contradictorily, are condemned to work within the confines of the nation-state, whether they like to or not. Rather, the nation-state poses a very practical problem—not to mention a very real epistemological problem also, as I discuss in detail in chapter 2.

And even if one could imagine for a moment that such a thing could happen across Muslim lands, then the single most important question that remains is who would become the Caliph of this long-awaited Caliphate?\textsuperscript{479} Hizb ut-Tahrir have general guidelines as to the qualities that such a person ought to exhibit, such as moral uprightness and strict adherence to the application of the shari’a, but in practical terms how such a person would be chosen from no-doubt a plethora of able and qualified people the world over is impossible to fathom. The same intractable problems apply, I would argue—and it doesn’t take a great deal to reach the same conclusions—in the case of the

\textsuperscript{478} See the section “What the banning of HTB portends: Bangladeshi Talkshow ‘Point of Order’ talks back,” above for some of those criticisms.

\textsuperscript{479} As an interesting aside, when the late Ayatollah Khomeini came to power after the Iranian Revolution members of Hizb ut-Tahrir approached him and requested that he become the Caliph of what they saw as being their soon to be realized pan-Islamic Caliphate (to suggest in this way that a Shia’ cleric effectively become leader of the Islamic world—which comprises a majority of Sunni Muslims—is in no way contradictory to HT ideology, since they envisage a Caliphate that must needs accept all Muslims). Needless to say the late Ayatollah duly rejected the offer.
shura, or committee of able men and women to be established for the choosing of, and ultimately overseeing, the Caliph.

All of this being said, it is noteworthy that, at least according to Baran’s estimation, “HT’s greatest achievement to date is that it has shifted the terms of debate within the Muslim world. Until a few years ago, most Islamist groups considered the notion of establishing a new caliphate a utopian goal. Now, an increasing number of people consider it a serious objective.” As far as HT’s sloganeering is concerned—“The Khilafah is on the horizon!” (see chapter 3) is one of theirs—it is of immense significance that the largest poll to-date of Muslims around the world conducted by Gallup, and whose results were published under the title Who Speaks for Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think, found that the majority of Muslims want shari’a at least as “a” source of legislation. What this means, however, when looked at more closely, is that the same Muslims are not in favor of a theocracy, nor do they want a secular democracy, “but rather a model that integrates faith and democratic values.” But as John Esposito makes clear, “what respondents mean by Sharia can vary widely from no law that contradicts Sharia to laws based on Sharia.” Is this then the fruit of HT’s works for over fifty years, as Baran describes it? It is certainly not clear, as we shall see shortly.

I would like to now draw attention to the commonly held view that Islamists are simply “reactionary,” and how this is an unsatisfactory analysis, which comes with its own (western)

480 Baran, “Fighting the War of Ideas,” 69.

481 When hard-pressed by the presenter of BBC’s HARDtalk to answer to what degree HT actually enjoyed widespread support of the Muslims worldwide, Dr. Imran Waheed used that very slogan—“The Khilafah is on the horizon!”—before going on to detail how he felt that that was true. Waheed interview, HARDtalk.

482 Esposito and Mogahed, Who Speaks for Islam.


484 Ibid.
philosophical presuppositions. Talal Asad speaks to this point when he notes that when these Islamist movements are called “reactionary,” the underlying assumption is that “Western modernity is not only the standard by which all contemporary developments must be judged, but also the only authentic trajectory for every tradition.”

Asad continues:

One of the things the existence of such movements ought to bring into question is the old opposition between modernity and tradition, which is still fashionable. […] This kind of description paints Islamic movements as being somehow inauthentically traditional on the assumption that ‘real tradition’ is unchanging, repetitive, and non-rational. In this way, these movements cannot be understood on their own terms as being at once modern and traditional, both authentic and creative at the same time. The development of politico-religious movements ought to force people to rethink the uniquely Western model of secular modernity.

It is my contention, however, that Asad’s analysis does not go far enough. It is not just the case that there is a false dichotomy created between tradition and modernity. Yes, it is necessary “to rethink the uniquely Western model of secular modernity” in light of “[Islamic] politico-religious movements.” And this type of rethinking does decenter western secular modernity—but not in the way that Asad implies, along the lines of alternative modernities per se, but along the lines of an Islamic political modernity that is very much in conversation with, thought through, and articulated in opposition with modern western modernity and its attendant epistemological assumptions, which, once more, is my key argument. Thus, the picture which emerges is not so much constituted by compartmentalized modernities—as the idea of “multiple modernities” suggests—but so much as these “outwardly”

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486 Ibid.

487 “The notion of “multiple modernities” denotes a certain view of the contemporary world […] that goes against the views long prevalent in scholarly and general discourse. It goes against the view of the “classical” theories of modernization and of the convergence of industrial societies prevalent in the 1950s, and indeed against classical sociological analyses of Marx, Durkheim, and (to a large extent) even of Weber… They all assumed…that the cultural
differing cultural contexts begin to show remarkably consistent inner logics. In this regard, it is worth thinking about the example of pop music. While the pop music—originating significantly in the US\textsuperscript{488}—of different countries is obviously articulated in different languages (outward differences), inwardly, in terms of the music’s “inner syntax,” as far as the rhythms and melodies, they are remarkably coherent across-the-board, from the point of view of music theory—thereby exhibiting a very real modern western cultural hegemony, which entirely does away with the incredible diversity of traditional musical forms of various regions.\textsuperscript{489} The call for thinking about political Islamic movements in “intrinsic terms”\textsuperscript{490} found in both Asad and Roxanne Euben’s writings, for example—or, what amounts to something very similar, “normative Islam”—while immensely important as far as the development of postcolonial thought, and the realization that “the natives” can think after all\textsuperscript{491}—may in some ways be traced to a motivation for “intellectual” or “epistemic disobedience”\textsuperscript{492} and “agency”—the latter of which is incidentally a notion that Asad criticizes, as program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world. […] The actual developments in modernizing societies have refuted the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of this Western program of modernity. […] All developed distinctly modern dynamics and modes of interpretation, for which the original Western project constituted the crucial (and usually ambivalent) reference point [my emphasis]. Many of the movements that developed in non-Western societies articulated strong anti-Western or even antimodern themes, yet were all distinctly modern.” S. N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” Daedalus, Vol. 129, No. 1, Winter 2000, 1-2. It is my contention of course that the western project, in constituting “the crucial [if even “ambivalent”] reference point” for all non-western societies, it becomes the conscious and unconscious lens through which those same societies come to measure themselves and articulate the parameters of their own “version(s)” of modernity. As such, it is my further contention that these variously constituted societies—in practical terms—on closer inspection begin to show significant epistemological coherence. In this regard, I refer the reader back to Sanjay Seth’s important Subject Lessons, referenced in chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{488} For an excellent history of pop music see Bob Stanley’s Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!: The Story of Pop Music from Bill Haley to Beyoncé (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).

\textsuperscript{489} See for example Martin Clayton’s Time in Indian Music: Rhythm, Metre, and Form in North Indian Rag Performance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Alan R. Thrasher’s Qupai in Chinese Music: Melodic Models in Form and Practice (New York: Routledge, 2016).

\textsuperscript{490} Asad, “Modern Power and the Reconfiguration of Religious Traditions,” 5.


\textsuperscript{492} The phrase “epistemic disobedience” is Walter Mignolo’s. See his “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom,” Theory, Culture & Society 2009, Vol. 26(7–8): 1–23. It is not my argument that intellectual
mentioned earlier. It is my argument that ideas of intellectual disobedience and agency, while important as far as the realm of identity politics is concerned, as well as providing psychological coherence, as it were, are, in the final analysis, (relative) fictions—even if necessary ones. It is for this reason that HT’s attempts to create outposts around the world (in this case, in Bangladesh), while having its de facto ideological center in the UK is not just motivated for practical reasons. It is also symbolic, and thereby points to something far deeper. Britain—historically, and today—in so many ways provides the epistemological, educational, and (in certain respects) the existential basis—consciously and unconsciously—of HT’s functioning—not least because Britain was until recently (in historic terms) the colonial power par excellence, and against which the rest of the world had for so long (France’s claims to intellectual superiority notwithstanding)—and in many ways still does—measured itself.

My point, therefore, is this. HT in Bangladesh, while utilizing certain pragmatic, and contextually different tropes—the targeting of the Bangladeshi government’s abuses of power, and its collusion with western powers; producing literature in a Bengali idiom, but also targeting well-to-do English-speaking students—exhibits unchanging ideological tropes as to what it means to be Muslim in the modern world, and, intimately tied to that, how one is to express his/her political identity. And those tropes are of course deeply inflected by modern western modes of being and thinking, and not only in an ambivalent sense, but in a self-consciously chosen one—for the precise reason that such an identity is set up in opposition to a (modern) western one.

or epistemic disobedience is not desirable or even unimportant. Rather, it is my intention to raise questions regarding the extent to which such things are even possible.
CHAPTER 7

HT ☵

the (Im)Possibility of Islamic Reform

The killing of Fusilier Lee Rigby on May 22nd, 2013, in Woolwich overshadowed completely the NSA scandal that came out around the same time. The revelations by journalist Glenn Greenwald—through thousands of documents leaked by the former security company employee Edward Snowden—that massive surveillance operations are being carried out by the NSA in the US and GCHQ in the UK, shows that there is no place to hide, to borrow from the title of Greenwald’s book. Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain’s leader Imran Waheed spoke on this issue a couple of weeks later—at a half-day event organized by HT in East London—stating that Prism (the clandestine surveillance program under which the United States National Security Agency [NSA] collects internet communications from at least nine major US internet companies) is not just being used to monitor Muslims, but everyone. Greenwald mentions in No Place To Hide, in which he argues that throughout history surveillance systems initially (allegedly) brought in to monitor “unsavory” individuals and groups (dissidents), were later used against the entire population—and this, Greenwald points out, was the impetus behind the American War of Independence, to reject British forcible entry into homes.


495 It is almost an academic commonplace at this point, but one cannot but mention Foucault’s analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon in his Discipline and Punish, Alan Sheridan (translator), (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), in which Foucault argues that Jeremy Bentham’s late eighteenth-century designs for the ideal prison system, the Panopticon—with its central watchtower surrounded by backlit prison cells, which render prisoners constantly observable—causes prisoners to internalise the logic of the prison, and effectively regulate themselves. Foucault argues further that this ideal
The archetypal unsavory individual today is represented by the “Islamic extremist”—which, as far as designations are concerned, all too readily slips into representing Islam and Muslims in general. This particular point is repeatedly pointed out by Muslims and social commentators. What is not analyzed more carefully are the very epistemological and ideological reasons for such ready slippage. The question raised time and again, whenever the latest terrorist attack occurs in the West and is broadcast on the news networks (terrorist attacks in non-western, oftentimes Muslim countries, do not receive anywhere near the same coverage) is why it is that, while “homegrown,” white supremacists have caused more deaths in the US,\(^{496}\) for example, they are never designated as “terrorists,” and are nearly always described as “lone wolves,” who have a history of mental health problems,\(^{497}\) while, in the case of “Islamic extremists,” violence done by them is readily attributed to Islam (even if the responsibility for such violence is claimed by ISIS these days). The answer to such

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\(^{496}\) Esther Yu His Lee, “Trump Lied. Right-wing extremists—not foreigners—commit more terror attacks in the U.S.,” ThinkProgress, thinkprogress.org

\(^{497}\) Kathryn Seifert, “Lone Wolf Terrorists and Mental Illness: How can we reduce the risk of violent acts carried out by lone-wolf terrorists?”, Psychology Today, Jan, 20, 2015, psychologytoday.com
a question is typically made by reference to the “hypocrisy” of the West. And, while hypocrisy is certainly a factor—as hypocrisy is a virtually unavoidable human quality—the ideological and epistemological reasons are perhaps more significant. It is ideologically (as well as epistemologically) the case that the West has in a very real sense created its self-image in opposition to the Islamic world, as documented by Edward Said in his *Orientalism.*  

Epistemologically (as well as ideologically), the West sees itself as heir to the ancient Greek intellectual tradition—which is held up as representing the supreme height of intellectual achievement in human history. All other intellectual traditions—whether Islamic, Chinese, Indian or what have you—are seen as necessarily relatively deficient, and to the degree that the West is seen as the beacon of human progress and enlightenment, then the others are cast as necessarily inferior; furthermore, given the evolutionary model of human development that is widespread, then the others are perforce located along the continuum of this evolutionary model. Here Islam, Islamic thought, and Muslims, are considered—as far as mainstream discourse is concerned—as not only at the furthest distance from the West, its thought, and its people, it is also its inverse in all respects—its “Other,” in Said’s (via Foucault) well-known language. This is really at the heart of why it is that Islam, Muslims, and their thought are regularly cast in such negative terms by the dominant myth-making machines (whether the news, television, movies, literature, and even a large number of academic works). This reality is not set to change any time soon, since, it is my contention, such views are built into the very ideological and epistemological self-identity of the West.

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498 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). See also Cemil Aydin’s recent *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), which adds another dimension to this discussion. Aydin argues that while the idea of the Muslim world was conceived as the antithesis of western Christian civilization in the late 19th century when European empires ruled the majority of Muslims, at the same time, Muslim intellectuals also played a role in imagining an idealized pan-Islamic society that was superior to European cultures.

499 A landmark work as far as the analysis of culture’s intimate entanglements with political power is Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). As far as the news media’s production of ideological hegemony, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s *Manufacturing Consent*, 1989.
Thus, when Muslims are monitored today—as is everyone else, I hasten to add, but not with quite the same political and ideological repercussions—such monitoring occurs as part of an historic system of surveillance built into the West’s institutions as well as part of an historic attitude towards Islam and Muslims. I argue that today’s monitoring of Muslims goes hand in hand with the notion of the need for Islamic reform\textsuperscript{500} (or, put differently, the reformation of Muslims\textsuperscript{501}). It is a telling idea, since it suggests that “Muslims as Muslims” not only cannot be represented in the West/Europe because of the political metrics of how majority ways (and practices) take precedence over those of minorities,\textsuperscript{502} but also that they are unfit for location within the heart of western democracies: they are representatives of the vestiges of pre-modern living the West has (mythologically\textsuperscript{503}) given up (as far as (un)reason, pre-science, anti-justice, gender and sexual equalities).\textsuperscript{504}

In this chapter I argue that Muslims across-the-board—from Wahhabis to Sufis, from those committed to an Islamic political project (such as HT) to those who are apolitical—have in many ways internalized the (western) logic of the need to reform, and cannot help but do so, given the ways in which (dominant) discourses function, that is, they go into creating people’s everyday sense(s) of

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\textsuperscript{500} Various “experts” over the years have been insisting on the need for an Islamic reformation along similar lines as the Protestant Reformation. Perhaps the most vocal (that is most widely known) of such voices is Ayaan Hirsi Ali. See, for example, her Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2016). For a critical examination of the politics surrounding the discourse of Islamic reformation, see Saba Mahmood’s “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation,” Public Culture 18:2, 2006. Mahmood argues that the discussion around the need for an Islamic reformation is intimately tied-up with US imperialism.

\textsuperscript{501} The idea that Islam requires a reformation means of course that Muslims themselves need to be reformed, for Islam is seen as fundamentally constitutive of Muslim being in the world. Although this is not really the place to go into the extent to which Islam does or does not inform today’s Muslims (as if there is a single “Islam,” as if there is a monolithic way of being Muslim, what I will mention here is the assumption—which is as paternalistic as it is racist—that it is the duty of the West to ensure Muslims are brought into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

\textsuperscript{502} Asad, Formations of the Secular, 2003.

\textsuperscript{503} See note 177 on the question of “mythology”: “What characterizes a mythology is not so much its crude or naïve character—mythologies can be extremely complex and sophisticated—but, rather, its capacity to elude our practices of verification and refutation.”

\textsuperscript{504} An increasingly frequent trope in the (western) news media is the ways in which Muslims must modernize and bring their thinking and their religion up-to-date and in line with western modes of being and thinking. This line of thinking is not set to change any time soon, and, if anything, is set to become intensify with the passage of time.
being, living, and thinking—as a type of self-surveillance, even as many abjure the notion of reform, as the ideas of the need for “reformation” and “enlightenment” go to constitute the modern western “unconscious of knowledge.” I examine HT’s criticisms of British governmental (media-political) pressures on Muslims to reform, and the “Marrakech Declaration”\(^505\) (where “hundreds of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with representatives of Islamic and international organizations, as well as leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities, gathered in Marrakesh…to reaffirm the principles of the Charter of Medina.”)\(^506\) I also examine a conversation between former HT-member and director of the “anti-extremism think tank The Quilliam Foundation, Maajid Nawaz, and Sam Harris—one of the “Four Horsemen of New Atheism” alongside Richard Dawkins, Daniel Denet, and the late Christopher Hitchens—published as Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue,\(^507\) in which the question of the need for Islamic reform is front and center. In all of these discussions I am concerned with how the critiques leveled against British secularism and governmental politics and policies by HT resonate within the varied types of Islam—from the “progressive” to the “extreme.”\(^508\)

In Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity,\(^509\) Samira Haj examines Islamic revivalism “on its own terms” through the thought of Muhammad ibn ‘Abdul Wahhab (1703-87) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), “in terms of the manner in which they engage with

\(^505\) [http://marrakeshdeclaration.org/marrakesh-declaration.html](http://marrakeshdeclaration.org/marrakesh-declaration.html)

\(^506\) Ibid.


\(^508\) David Tyrer argues that the idea of “moderate” Muslim vs. “extreme” Muslim is a racist binary in relationship to which the Muslim subject must always try to locate him/herself in order to be acceptable to “the wider” (dominant culture). Increasingly—as promoted by Quilliam and the British government, as well as significant players in the US—it is not enough to be a “moderate” Muslim, but a secular, liberal, progressive Muslim. See David Tyrer, The Politics of Islamophobia: Race, Power, and Fantasy (New York and London: Pluto Press, 2013).

\(^509\) Samira Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 200
and speak from a historically extended, socially embodied set of arguments that have their own internal standard of rational coherence. We can accordingly then grasp their “intellectual” production, not simply in its proximate political function but also in its relation to a set of enduring arguments that have been central to Muslim scholarship in general and thus to the two reformers’ conceptual formation.”

My contention regarding HT, and the wider Muslim population and intellectuals in general, however, is that their thinking is done in relation to/in contradistinction to the (perceived) dominant paradigm(s)—whether implicitly or explicitly—and therefore cannot be separated from it.

Of course, there is a lot that has been said and written about the need to imagine/think about Islam “from within”—as Muslims themselves understand it—but, not to put too fine a point on it, Muslims themselves do not know why and/or how they come to decide on certain things over others. Do any of us? Hence, the importance of Foucault’s notion of “the unconscious of knowledge,” which is the backdrop to my own thinking throughout this dissertation, cannot be overstated.

Performing Islam: HT and the politics of (Islamic) reform

On May 22, 2013, two Muslim men, Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale—both Muslim converts—murdered off-duty British Army soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich, claiming vengeance for the lives of Muslims lost as a result of the War on/of Terror. The media-political maelstrom that

510 Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition, 1.

511 I write War on/of Terror, because it is experienced as a war of terror by countless Muslims around the world. It is telling that Afghan carpet weavers are incorporating motifs of drones into their rugs. Cosimi Cosimo Bizzari, “Drones Are Now Appearing on Afghan Rugs: Art imitates life as carpet-makers weave images of war into their creations,” The Atlantic, October 30, 2015, accessed September 19, 2016, http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/01/drones-are-appearing-on-afghan-rugs/385025/ . The Middle East Eye reported that “the Washington DC-based Physicians for Social Responsibility … released a landmark study concluding that the death toll from 10 years of the ‘War on Terror’ since the 9/11 attacks is at least 1.3 million, and could be as high as 2 million. The 97-page report by the Nobel Peace Prize-winning doctors’ group is the first to tally up
ensued following Lee Rigby’s murder is significant, because it was not the case that media
commentators raised the question of British foreign policy as an incitement to political violence. It
was and continues to be cast as “(Islamic) terrorism,” which assumes—that is, the discourse around
it assumes—Islam is inherently productive of violence.512 The (purely) “political” motivations of
such acts—which are notably spectacular, that is, they are conceived of as a “spectacle”513—are


512 In On Suicide Bombing, Talal Asad examines the ways in which a uniquely “Islamic” form of violence—terrorism—is cast by western discursive regimes, as far being in opposition to the necessary while unfortunate violence of western powers against foreign, oftentimes—though not uniquely—Muslim populations:

In the long perspective of human history, massacres are not new. But there is something special about the fact that the West, having set up international law, then finds reasons why it cannot be followed in particular circumstances. I find this more disturbing than the sordid violence of individual terrorists. It seems to me that there is no moral difference between the horror inflicted by state armies (especially if those armies belong to powerful states that are accountable to international law) and the horror inflicted by insurgents. In the case of powerful states, the cruelty is not random but part of the attempt to discipline unruly populations. Today, cruelty is an indispensable technique for maintaining a particular kind of international order, an order in which the lives of some peoples are less valuable than the lives of others and therefore their deaths less disturbing.” On Suicide Bombing (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 94.

513 Guy Debord, in his landmark Society of the Spectacle (1967), writes in Chapter 1, aphorism 3: “The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, and as an instrument of unification. As a part of society it is specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness. Due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is the common ground of the deceived gaze and of false consciousness, and the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of generalized separation.” Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle (Kalamazoo, MI: Black & Red Books, 1977), 2.

In other words, the spectacular nature of the killing of Lee Rigby became (for the Muslim actors as well as the non-Muslim media-spectators, who are as much a part of the production of the spectacle as the actors) a presentation of all of society—of Muslims experiencing the War of/on Terror, and of “non-Muslims.”

[The idea of the “non-Muslim” is of course a descriptor that is part of Muslim discourse vis-à-vis the religious Other. At the same time, it is adopted by the said non-Muslims as they describe themselves in relation to Islam/Muslims. I want to problematize the idea of the non-Muslim as a descriptor: not least because of the political nature of the term—from “both” sides of the divide, and also because it is not a Quranic concept. The term kafir (which is typically glossed as unbeliever as well as non-Muslim) literally means “the one who covers over [the reality and knowledge of God],” and does not have the current politicized notion of Otherness, as Muslims—according to the Quranic narrative can fall into a state that is worse than that of the kafir—hypocrisy, nifaq. In addition, the Quranic narrative and the Prophetic example—in addition to the historic Islamic spiritual-tradition—provides ample evidence for a sophisticated ecumenism, that is arguably much more all-embracing than secular liberal models of religious freedom. For more on this topic, see Reza Shah-Kazemi’s The Other in the Light of the One: The Universality of the Qur’an and Interfaith Dialogue (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 2006).]
subsumed within a notion of “the religious,” which, when applied to Islam, becomes the specter of an atavistic reflex that must be expunged from the collective human body. Islam is, in other words, the obstinate reminder that portions of humanity still need to be brought into the modern world—by persuasion, or, what is becoming more and more common, by coercion. And persuasion and coercion are both part and parcel of the discourse surrounding the need for Islamic/Muslim reform.

HT organized a half-day conference, attended by 300 people mostly of Bangladeshi descent, following Lee Rigby’s death, held at the Water Lily, East London titled “Muslim community under pressure: How should we respond?” I attended the conference, which, as is common for HT events, was well organized, with a striking banner—a computer generated image—forming the backdrop for the speakers. The three speakers were: Jamal Harwood, Imran Waheed, and Taji Mustafa.

The Chairman of the Executive Board, Dr. Imran Waheed, begun his presentation with the comments that every time there is an “action” like this Muslims think: “I hope this person isn’t a Muslim!” This sentiment is shared by all Muslims I know, as well as by all liberal non-Muslims I

514 “Although it is without theological derivation, Islam is not fully political. It is not political through and through. As a condition of the political, Islam, the struggle against Islam, is also a figure beyond, beyond the political. “Beyond” because, as Derrida explains, the war with Islam is “more than a political war.” It is a struggle with the political at stake, a struggle for politics” where the political itself is therefore under question from a certain outside. As paradoxical as it seems, Islam remains the exemplary political enemy, but it is also an enemy that would no longer even be a political enemy but an enemy of the political. The site of Islam — its interiority and exteriority — vis-a-vis Europe and vis-a-vis the political — is therefore troubled and unsettled insofar as this site, Islam, is both political and nonpolitical.” Gil Anidjar, The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 49.


know—the unstated understanding being that if it was indeed a Muslims who committed the “action,” then the repercussions against Muslims, both home and abroad, would be significant, and, most likely, disproportionate. Waheed commented also that the NSA scandal—the leaking by former security agency, Booz Allen Hamilton employee, Edward Snowden, of many thousands of documents showing the massive surveillance operation(s) by the US and UK governments—was eclipsed in the media by the Woolwich murder. (Waheed’s unstated, but accepted in the context of the conference, assumption here is that the media, including the BBC, manipulates and all-too-often spins news stories that are most expedient for the British government.517)

Waheed posed the question: “Why do we—Islam and Muslims—get blamed?” I believe this again is significant because of the manner in which Islam and Muslims are conceived within the wider western imaginaire. It is, it could be argued—drawing on David Tyrer’s The Politics of Islamophobia518—because of the manner in which Islamophobia is part of the wider politics of racism. Tyrer writes:

The attempt to deny the racist nature of Islamophobia is of utility in extending a particular racial politics without risking the accusation of racism, and in doing so it also centres problematic ideas of phenotypal racial difference, not by labeling Muslims as biologically bounded but by contrasting Muslims against other minorities who are held as such. It thus guarantees the continued hold of race as the basis for organising society and distinguishing between subjects, because it holds phenotypal race as the logical arbiter of whether racism can be said to exist. However, it also constructs Muslims as a lack—as lacking raciality.519

517 The BBC’s role in being “the mouthpiece of rapacious power” has been pointed out time and again by the investigative journalist Jon Pilger, as, for example, in his article “War by media and the triumph of propaganda,” 5 December, 2014 http://www.johnpilger.com/articles/war-by-media-and-the-triumph-of-propaganda


519 Ibid., 26.
In other words, by denying that Islamophobia is racist, “Islamophobes” both reconfirm a politics of racism, where society is organized hierarchically by “race” (which, let us recall, is a modern western construct that was historically, and till now, used to categorize differences among peoples for the purposes of ruling over them by white Europeans, the master race, or, which amounts to the same thing, the race which is un-marked), and they make disparaging comments regarding Muslims and Islam (that they and their religion is/are backwards, that they need to “reform,” that they are “irrational,” that their religion is “inherently violent” and so forth). What Tyrer is arguing, therefore, is that Islamophobia is a constituent element of the wider politics of racism, and is not separate from it.

Put differently still, because Islam and Muslims are seen as constituting an undifferentiated bloc—“Muslims are depicted as a collective body that is (or ought to be) responsible for the misdeeds of its criminal element, who have “transformed” the faith into an ideology”—and, as such, because the sins of one person makes the entire group responsible, we may begin to answer Waheed’s question: “Why do we—Islam and Muslims—get blamed?”

The reason why Islam and Muslims get blamed can be reduced to how Islam is both expressed and perceived by the wider public. It relates to the co-constitution of Islamophobia and Islamophilia.

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520 Andrew Shryock argues that the epithets “Islamohobe” and “Islamophile”—while useful in political terms, are not useful in analytical terms: “Applying these labels is an exercise in negative characterization, a fact that makes the labels invaluable for political purposes, but potentially misleading for analytical and interpretive ones.” Andrew Shyrock, Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 10. I still use the term/s because it is my contention that it is well nigh impossible to speak of “the Islamic”—political or otherwise—without being political.

521 For a powerful analysis of the history of “the invention of white race” in America, with its origins in England, for example, see Theodore W. Allen’s The Invention of the White Race, volumes 1 and 2 (New York: Verso, 2012).

522 Shryock, Islamophobia, 5.

523 A line of thinking I pose only as a question right now is: To what extent is the idea of the entire group bearing the sins of a single man or woman the attributable to a Christian (and specifically western Christian) understanding of original sin, which goes back to Augustine? On a slightly different, but not un-related note: “collective guilt’ and the element of fate that it implies is central to our understanding of citizenship, nationhood and political commitment.” Samantha Ashden, “The persistence of collective guilt,” Economy and Society, vol. 43, 2014, 55-82, Dec. 18, 2013.
When we talk about public expressions and perceptions of Islam, the reality is that both the expressions and the impressions are tied-up in a discourse whose limits are often set from without.

To consider some of the discussions surrounding the murder of Lee Rigby: It was immediately cast as a terrorist event by media-discourses, and Muslims responding to the event had to/have to negotiate the borders of what it means to be Muslim in relation to the “action.” I attended a dinner party at a family friend’s house in London shortly after the killing. The party was attended by other friends of my parents, all of whom are British-Bengalis. The host of the party—Mr. Ashfaq Ahmed, who is a lawyer by profession, and is considered to be “religious” and also “religiously learned” in relation to the rest of the attendees—brought up the topic of Lee Rigby’s murder, and stated flatly that “they [his killers] are not Muslim” (ign to Musalman nai, in the dialect of Sylhet, a northern district in Bangladesh, that he speaks).524

This is noteworthy. It serves the function of distancing oneself from the killers, who claimed to be killing in the name of Islam and for the blood of Muslims shed in “Muslim countries” by British armed forces. It also serves the function—whether consciously or unconsciously—of fulfilling what Waheed describes later in his talk (and which I discuss in greater detail below) as “making takfir” of the killers—that is, of declaring them “non-Muslim.” The idea of making takfir has historically been considered a highly undesirable thing, from a traditional Islamic point of view, given the hadith according to which if a Muslim calls another Muslim kafir, then indeed one of them

524 This mode of self- (as well as collective-) identification is regularly used by Muslims to cast themselves as “good” Muslims, as opposed to “bad” Muslims (a la Mamdani)—or really, what takes the discussion even beyond the idea of good Muslim/bad Muslim binary, is the notion that certain self-proclaimed Muslims are not in fact Muslims. This point was recently made by one of my interlocutors—a British woman, Muslim, of Bangladeshi descent, and a self-described “bad Muslim,” insofar as she is not observant of Islamic practices—when, in describing the most recent ISIS-led London Bridge attack (on June 4, 2017), she said, without any hesitation, that “they aren’t real Muslims.” I’m interested in the both the “internal” politics of such a naming and distancing by Muslims, as well as the “external” politics (and the two are intertwined) of a media-political discourse that is intent on “uncovering” (as though Islam and Muslims are bearers of certain unfathomable secrets) what Islam and Muslims really are about. This narrative of the need for “uncovering” Islam and Muslims has a long colonial history, and relates, in part to the “politics of sight,” as far as the Muslim woman is concerned, according to Meyda Yegenoglu in Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
is a kafir.⁵²⁵ According to members of HT, engaging in takfir serves the political interests of western powers who are intent on dividing Muslims. The question of takfir continues to be a question of some importance amongst Muslims today—and may become more and more important with what many (myself included) anticipate will be greater frequency of attacks in the West—whether by groups claiming affiliation with ISIS, or otherwise. Following the suicide bombing at Manchester Arena in Manchester, England, by Salman Abedi—who claimed an affiliation with ISIS—at a concert by the American singer Ariana Grande, as well as the London Bridge attacks on June ⁴ᵗʰ, 2017, high profile Muslim figures have publically declared that the perpetrators of such acts have “nothing to do with Islam,” “are not Muslim,” and are not to be given Muslim burials.⁵²⁶ The significance of this declaration was commented on by Jamal Elias—who is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania—on his Facebook page:

It might seem trivial, but such a declaration is not something that pious Sunni Muslims take lightly. It is a cornerstone of the theology of most of them that a Muslim does not have the right to pass judgement [sic] on the eternal soul of another—if the latter says s/he is Muslim, however heinous her/his crimes, s/he is to accorded basic Muslim funerary rights and the rest is to be left to God. It is a sign of the seriousness with which such communities take incidences of terrorism and wanton violence that they are taking this radical position.⁵²⁷

From the perspective of HT and its members, however, such takfir plays into the hands of western governments, as it is their intention to divide Muslims, while—according to HT, as well as other Muslim commentators—Muslims are required by God to maintain unity, and to condemn someone who claims to be Muslim as non-Muslim is (almost) tantamount apostasy, because of the

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⁵²⁵ “On the prohibition of takfir (a Muslim calling another Muslim a unbeliever),” Islamopedia, April 22, 2010, accessed September 24, 2016,

http://www.islamopediaonline.org/fatwa/prohibition-takfir-muslim-calling-another-muslim-unbeliever


⁵²⁷ Jamal Elias, Facebook, June 8, 2017.
aforementioned hadith. (Incidentally, when Tariq Ramadan was recently interviewed on BBC Radio a on this issue, he mentioned the traditional position that if a person claims to be Muslim, then it is not another Muslim’s right to call them non-Muslim. However, Ramadan insisted that it is “our duty as Muslims” to condemn the actions of terrorists and say that they have nothing to do with Islamic principles.)

The idea of takfir gains further salience in light of the following from Katherine Ewing’s groundbreaking *Stolen Honor: Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin* (2009):

Among the most visible public expressions of affect are moments of crisis with what Stanley Cohen has dubbed *moral panics*: “A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests…. The moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially-accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions” (Cohen 1980: 9). The media play an important role in a politics of anxiety associated with moral panics. I argue that such moral panics acquire their emotional force by drawing rhetorical links between a current issue and latent, historically configured social fantasies associated with a national imaginary. Moral panics are an important means by which the public renews its emotional investments in a national imaginary.528

To re-cast Ewing, just as “moral panics”—such as the killing of “one of our boys” (Lee Rigby) by terrorists living in our midst—plays the role of renewing the public’s “emotional investments in a national imaginary” (“our boys,” “our British values” vs. “their hatred of our freedoms,” “their mistreatment of women,” “their hyper-masculine men/savagely masculine men who perform barbaric acts of violence”)—Ewing argues in her work that the Muslim man in Berlin (typically of Turkish origin) is cast as “stigmatized ‘other,’ a positioning that affects the possibilities for the Muslim man’s cultural citizenship or sense of full belonging529)—so too does it “force” Muslims (men and women) to not only “deploy and resist prevailing stereotypes,”530 it also creates a

529 *Stolen Honor*, 3.
530 Ibid., 20
type of psychic disposition according to which there is the felt need to “re-think/re-form” Islamic and Muslim narratives themselves as a means of psychological recuperation, as it were. Put differently, the problem of being “doubly-othered,” as a result of living through the critical gaze of the West (to re-cast W.E.B. Du Bois via Hatem Bazian\textsuperscript{531})—is countered, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, by recourse to a re-imagined Islamic tradition.\textsuperscript{532}

Waheed refers to the murder of Lee Rigby as the “action”—a (self-)consciously chosen word. (And can Muslims be anything other than (self-)conscious when they are speaking in public? I know I can’t/couldn’t be.\textsuperscript{533}) There are moments when Muslims, during conversations about Islam in public spaces—in cafés, for instance—every so often dip their voices, similar to the manner in which people dip their voices when talking about things that are private—but, unlike them, it is as if

\textsuperscript{531} In his AlJazeera opinion piece, “The Souls of Muslim Folk,” Hatem Bazian writes: “It is important for me to bring Du Bois’s concept of double consciousness into the discussion of Muslims, the colonial and the post-colonial, because of my personal interest as a Palestinian in his work and in all issues related to race and racism; and because of my conviction that ‘double consciousness’ is a condition that afflicts all who inhabit the modern Eurocentric world. […] The colonized Muslim has been through a total mental, physical, political, economic, cultural, educational and social domination program.” Hatem Bazian, “The souls of Muslim folk,” AlJazeera, October 31, 2013, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/10/souls-muslim-folk-20131029124336544563.html

\textsuperscript{532} The Invention of Tradition, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), examines how many traditions that are often thought of as ancient were in fact invented relatively recently. Terence Ranger’s Chapter 6, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa” examines how radical movements opposing dominant colonial modes of thinking and being in colonial Africa invented their own counter-traditions. Talal Asad discusses how power plays a significant role in the creation of Islamic orthodoxy in different periods in “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,” Qui Parle, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2009), pp.1-30. The way in which Asad conceives of power in this essay, however, is within the context of an Islamically-oriented culture, so to speak. What I am arguing here—modifying Asad—is that “Islamic orthodoxy,” or how Muslims think about their religion is significantly—almost irreducibly—inflected by discursive regimes of truth experienced as western discourses on and around Islam and Muslims—and this is where the idea of a re-imagined or invented Islamic tradition comes in.

\textsuperscript{533} In a slightly different yet related vein, Franz Fanon argues that people of color have to “confront the manufactured histories about their cultures and origins placed upon them in colonialist history.” As such, in Fanon’s words, “As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others.” “Franz Fanon argues no ‘being through others’ for people of color in 1952,” Zachary Siegel, Critical Theory December 10, 2014 www.critical-theory.com. Reading Fanon in the context of today’s British Muslims living and being in tension with, in conversation with, in opposition to, and through the manufactured histories placed around them and about them by the West, these Muslims must then necessarily experience a radical sense of dis-location as far as their place in wider British society, and, as such, their sense of self is necessarily a self-conscious one—which is to say that it is always already emotionally spilling-over (whether this is outwardly observable or not), and, for this reason it registers at some levels as complaint, in others as compromise, and yet others still as conflict.
Muslims are ashamed to be associated with Islam\(^{534}\); and/or—what amounts to something similar—they are afraid of being castigated (if even silently) for “espousing” problematic views.

A significant portion of Muslim public discussions, it seems, is geared towards proving they are not “extremists,” that they are just like everyone else\(^{535}\)—everyone who is not Muslim, especially white liberals. To be Muslim is the ultimate political act, and the ultimate political constitution\(^{536}\) (self-constitution and externally-constituted-constitution of the self—and are there ever any constructions of the self that are not always already enmeshed in external-internal force[s]?). Muslims are always already constituted as political—whether by choice or, which is more common, by force.

Waheed mentioned in his talk that there were more condemnations of the “action”—that is, the killing of Fusilier Lee Rigby—by Muslim leaders than there were condemnations of the then documented 1,600 drone strikes (against primarily civilian populations in Afghanistan and Pakistan).\(^{537}\) The psychology of the drone is such that it views (and mirrors) its operators as gamers (there is active recruitment from within the gaming community into the military; indeed, games manufacturers work closely with the US military).\(^{538}\) The medium is not just the message (a lâ Marshal McLuhan\(^{539}\), it is also fundamentally constitutive of who we are.\(^{540}\) And if we—or the drone operators—are

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\(^{537}\) Marina Fang, “Nearly 90 Percent of People Killed in Recent Drone Strikes Were Not the Target”, *The Huffington Post*, October 15, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/civilian-deaths-drone-strikes_us_561fafe2e4b028dd7ea6c4ff](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/civilian-deaths-drone-strikes_us_561fafe2e4b028dd7ea6c4ff)

gamers, then the images of those who are killed on the screen are just that—images of people, simulacra…and “terrorists” in addition to that, so they are so many times removed from western consciousness that they are a shadow of a shadow of a shadow of who “we” (the gamers) are (within this post-modern moment of western consciousness).  

We—in the age of mass social media proliferation are all expected, more and more, to be actors (and players) in our own movies (and plays), whether on YouTube or on Facebook or on Instagram or SnapChat or YouPorn—conceive of others (and Others) as actors and players in our personal stories and plays that are increasingly disjointed and meaningless, as we are progressively concerned with “presentism,” (which, according to Douglas Rushkoff, is an ever elusive state of being always and forever at the peak of a digital world of being-ness that is endlessly unfolding) struck as we all are by “present shock,” unable to formulate and follow with any depth serious narratives).

For us—in this never-ending present driven world (and mono-(hyper-)culture)—it is very apt to refer to ourselves and others as actors, more so than ever before in history. We are all eking-out our non-Hollywood existences, upon our non-Hollywood stages, which we snap and chat and film and narrate, in an attempt to give it all a sense of meaning where there is none. To be Muslim in the media-political atmosphere of Britain, and responding to or keeping silent regarding various “actions”—as are dramatized for Muslims on the media-political screens of the world, wherein they are actually not their own subject—is fundamentally “performative.” This performance entails “being” in relation to dominant-white-western-heteronormative structures. At the same time, it

541 It is telling that in the 2015 documentary Drone, despite its laudable efforts to humanize the victims of drone strikes in Waziristan, the center stage is given to one of the four former drone operators who have become conscientious objectors. It is, in the end, a tale of American heroism.

542 Douglas Rushkoff argues brilliantly in Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now (New York, NY: Current, 2014) that as a result of the dissonance between our digital selves—which is endlessly updating itself and being re-imagined—and our analog bodies, we have been thrown into a new state of anxiety: present shock.
relates to the idea of being “good Muslims” who are endlessly in “reactionary” / “defensive” alertness. To bring it back to the murder of Lee Rigby: the idea of the end of narrative Rushkoff writes about in *Present Shock*—and the need for creating a presentist narrative for ourselves, shorn of history—is in many ways what Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale were re-creating as Adebolajo “narrated” to onlookers holding up their phones.

Waheed’s point with regard to the lack of condemnation by Muslim leaders of drone strikes carried out by western powers is that Muslims are performing roles of subservience and pliancy and “moderation” (and self-reformation) in relation to the wider audience. In the act of performing conventions, by inscribing ourselves—our bodies and our minds—with those ideas and fictions, we make them appear natural and necessary. By performing conventions we make them “real,” although they are always artificial. Judith Butler concerns herself with “gender acts” that lead to changes in one’s ideational and bodily selves:

“One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one’s body and, indeed, one does one’s body differently from one’s contemporaries and from one’s embodied predecessors and successors as well.”

To misread Butler (in the Bloomian sense): One is not simply a Muslim body, but, in some very key sense(s), one does one’s Muslim body—in the sartorial sense (*how* one wears or does not wear the hijab; *how* one wears or does not wear one’s beard; *how* one wears or does not wear one’s hair); in the somatic sense (*how* one walks—with head held aloft in pride for being Muslim, or

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543 See Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*.


cowering in shame for the same reason); in the linguistic sense (how one speaks, with what kind of accent, with what kind of register, with what kind of expletives)—indeed, one does one’s Muslim body differently and similarly—in conversation with, in tension with, in opposition with—one’s contemporary “fellow” Muslims and one’s fellow(?) “non-Muslims,” and from one’s embodied and intellectualized (not that embodiment and intellectualization happen separately) predecessors and successors as well.^[546]

While we tend to believe, in this (post)modern-western moment we all inhabit, that our subjectivity is the source of our actions and modes of being, Butler contends our sense of independence and self-willed subjectivity is a retroactive construction that comes about through reaction to, discussion with, and re-interpretation of social conventions:

[G]ender cannot be understood as a role which either expresses or disguises an interior ‘self,’ whether that ‘self’ is conceived as sexed or not. As performance which is performative, gender is an ‘act,’ broadly construed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority.^[547]

To reread Butler again: Muslimness cannot be understood as a role which either expresses or disguises an interior (Muslim) “self,” whether that (Muslim) “self” is conceived as religious or not, whether that (Muslim) “self” is conceived as political or not, or as immoral, or as retrograde, or as inappropriately masculine or inappropriately feminine, or excrescent in relation to the wider, dominant, mainstream society. As performance which is performative, being Muslim is an “act,” broadly construed, which constructs and reaffirms the fiction of its own psychological interiority, and difference, and inferiority. For the Muslim is always already constructed as political (in the


debased sense of politics, wherein the Muslim/Islam is synonymous with the religiously-political, or the politically-religious)—whether by “choice,” or, which is more common, by force.

Butler understands gender to be “a corporeal style, an ‘act,’ as it were.” That style has no relation to essential “truths” about the (fe/male) body but is significantly ideological, and exists beyond and prior to the subject who enacts the conventions:

The act that one does, the act that one performs is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.548

And the Muslim actor, according to HT—who constitutes the wider Muslim leadership and populace (although not HT members themselves, in their self-conception)—“acts” both in speech and lack of speech, in actions and lack of action. Thus, the “Islamic” act that one does and performs has been going on before one arrived on the (mise en) scène. The “Islamic” actor—the Muslim—is not only enacting actions that s/he “traces” back through her/his tradition, s/he is in a very real sense enacting religiously, politically, actions that are inseparable from their always already being constituted—through colonial history—and refracted through the critical (that is, criticizing) lens of the secular liberal imaginaire. Hence, Muslimness—and Islamic practice—is an act which is always in the process of being re-rehearsed and re-realized by individual Muslims as a reality that struggles to find its self-origins.549

The Marrakech Declaration, Sam Harris, and Maajid Nawaz

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548 Ibid., 272.

549 If we consider the emergence of Islamic modernism, it was a movement that sought to create an Islam that was in keeping with modern western thought (political, philosophical, scientific, sociological). Cf. Albert Hourani’s classic work Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983). The movement, which is often characterized as Salafism today, has undergone many changes. See Henri Lauziere, The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
It is in relation this narrative—and self-consciously constructed posturing and performance—that the Marrakech Declaration must be, at least to a degree, understood. The Marrakech Declaration—which seeks “the historic revival of the objectives and aims of the Charter of Medina [vis-à-vis the rights of non-Muslims in Muslim countries], taking into account global and international treaties”—came in response to ISIS as well as western governmental pressures in the West upon Muslims to “prove” their belonging in the world, and not just in the West.

I spoke to Usama Hasan, one of the signatories to The Marrakech Declaration (just a week prior to his trip to Morocco for the purposes of attending the conference that culminated in the signing of the declaration). Hasan is also the senior Islamic studies scholar at the Quilliam Foundation—co-founded by Maajid Nawaz, who is a former member of HT—which bills itself as the world’s only anti-extremism think tank. I spoke to Hasan about the question of Islamic reform, and, indirectly, regarding Saba Mahmood’s critique of (liberal) Islamic/Muslim reform, and the degree to which it is influenced by western policies (for example, the US-funded Muslim World Outreach, which backs Islamic initiatives and Muslim actors who seek to bring Islam more in line with secular liberal principles)—a line of critique that has parallels with HT’s criticisms of moderate Muslims, when they say that they are “sell-outs.” I also posed to him Wael Hallaq’s provocative question “can the shari’a be restored?” and his suggestion that it cannot be. (This question is an important one in the context of the question of Islamic reform, for a couple of

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550 Marrakesh Declaration, [http://marrakeshdeclaration.org/marrakesh-declaration.html](http://marrakeshdeclaration.org/marrakesh-declaration.html)


552 Members of HT consider people like Hamza Yusuf (who played a major role in the bringing about the Marrakech Declaration) and Tariq Ramadan as having diluted Islam to the point of recognizability for the sake of “pleasing” western powers.

reasons. First, when Muslim intellectuals at the forefront of discussions around the “reform” of the shari’a, or, what amounts to the same, the reinterpretation of shariite edicts in light of modern contingencies—such people include Tariq Ramadan, and, in recent years, Hamza Yusuf—they are really speaking to one of the core concerns that non-Muslim critics of Islam and Muslims have—that the way life of Muslim, which is encapsulated for many Muslims by the shari’a, itself needs to be reformed. And when people such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Sam Harris (among others) say that Islam cannot be reformed, their fundamental point is that the Islamic tradition is at root incompatible with western values and ideals, which is evinced by certain key Quranic verses, and given that the Quran is one of the foundational texts for the shari’a, then it follows that the shari’a cannot be reformed. Of course, when Hallaq suggests that the shari’a cannot be reformed, his starting point is significantly different. Hallaq argues that the epistemological, material, social, and economic bases of the historic shari’a were so radically altered by colonial powers—who recognized the need to do so in order to establish power in the lands they colonized—that it is well nigh impossible to recreate the former conditions that allowed the shari’a to operate as a fundamentally ethical system.)

Hasan responded that while he considers Hallaq to be an “excellent academic,” the problem he has with his work is that he is not engaged with “realities on the ground” in the way that himself and others are. For him, the reality is that Muslims have ongoing issues and concerns that pertain to everyday living, which Muslim scholars have to deal with on a daily basis. Hasan commented that what he is really concerned with is the aspect of “mercy” that is—he stressed—all-too-often forgotten in relation to how the shari’a is imagined in many circles (Muslim and otherwise). He argues that, no matter which terms are used—whether islah (repair) or tajdid (renewal), both of which are Quranic terms554—his work is geared towards the rethinking of Islamic law in the western

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554 Samira Haj writes: “As many scholars have noted, contemporary Islamic revivalism is neither an innovation nor a novelty, for it is deeply embedded in the Islamic tradition, which conceptualizes human history as a continuum of renewal, revival, and reform (tajdid, ilya’, and islah).” Samira Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition, 7.
context. Hasan (who is a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, as well as having studied fiqh under his father, Shaykh Shoaib Hasan, a respected Wahhabi scholar based in London, for many years) has given controversial fatwas about the permissibility of drastically shortening the length of one’s fast during the month of Ramadan, when the day can be as much as eighteen hours long. Even more controversially—as he received death threats as a result—Hasan has argued that Muslims should accept the theory of evolution, and not engage in “school-grade level discussions” on the topic. It is my contention, however, that Hasan’s position on the one hand, and that of Mahmood and Hallaq on the other, essentially make up two sides of the same coin. Both positions try to—or are in pursuit of—(re)imagining a more “authentic” Islam, all the while positing the radical Otherness of secular liberalism. As such, neither are separable from the very paradigm they are critiquing/trying to think through, given that both positions live and breathe the very air of secular liberalism.

It is my contention, in other words, and as I have mentioned in different ways during the course of this dissertation, is that thinking and writing about Islam and living and being Muslim today is necessarily done through modern western paradigms of thinking and being. All of this is not so much a criticism of “Islamic authenticity” or of “Muslim agency,” so much as it is a recognition of the inherent porosity of intellectual and religious borders—and that the elements that

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Hasan, who considers the influential American Muslim scholar Hamza Yusuf to be one of his major inspirations, differs in this regard from Yusuf, whom I have heard saying that if one understands the theory of evolution as it is understood and taught in western schools and universities, one must know that it is unacceptable from the point of view of traditional Islamic cosmology, according to which God created Adam ex nihilo. In the words of another influential figure, Seyyed Hossein Nasr—about whom Yusuf speaks very highly—“I do not believe that Christ came from the mud.” Incidentally, when I spoke with Reza Pankhurst in 2013—an academic and former member of HT, whose monographs are The Inevitable Caliphate?: A History of the Struggle for Global Islamic Union, 1924 to the Present and Hizb ut-Tahrir: The Untold History of the Liberation Party [op. cit.]— he criticized Hamza Yusuf (as well as Zaid Shakir, with whom Yusuf founded the first accredited liberal Muslim college Zaytuna College), accusing him of being a “sell-out.” As for someone like Usama Hasan—whose colleague Maajid Nawaz is the chairman of Quilliam, and a self-professed “ex-extremist,” having formerly been a part of HT for many years, and having shared an Egyptian prison-cell with Pankhurst—he is quite beyond the pail.
infuse modes of thinking and being are, in each and every age, determined by the discourses undergirding them. Put differently, Islam, Muslims, Islamic law, become very much modern western enterprises defining equally modern and western modes of being and thinking in the world—much to the contrary of what so much of mainstream analyses will have us believe—including the self-positions of so many Muslim actors (although, it ought to be pointed out that Tariq Ramadan has described Islam as a western religion, as has Seyyed Hossein Nasr, although their point stems less from epistemological basis, and more from the very “fact” of Islam’s presence in the West in the last century or so.

Be that as it may, Hasan believes he is doing important bridge-building work, between “the West” and “Islam.” The Director of Quilliam, Maajid Nawaz, a former member of HT, and a much despised figure—the word is not an exaggeration: Jonathan Brown, professor of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, referred to Nawaz early in 2016 as “the slimeball” on his own Facebook wall while sharing an “expose” of Nawaz—as far as mainstream Muslims on both sides of the Atlantic are concerned, recently had a “conversation” with Sam Harris. Harris—a self-professed atheist and a significant figure amongst the so-called New Atheists (which includes the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, the late journalist Chris Hedges, and the philosopher Daniel Dennet)—has written seven international bestsellers, six of which deal with the intellectual and ethical pitfalls of religion, and how humanity at large must embrace an enlightened reason. Harris, who has referred to Islam as “the mother lode of bad ideas,” writes in Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A

Dialogue, the book that emerged out of the discussion with Nawaz, published by Harvard University Press:

The tensions you’ve been describing are familiar to all religious moderates, but they seem especially onerous under Islam. The problem is that moderates of all faiths are committed to reinterpreting, or ignoring outright, the most dangerous and absurd parts of their scripture—and this commitment is precisely what makes them moderates. But it also requires some degree of intellectual dishonesty, because moderates can’t acknowledge that their moderation comes from outside the faith. The doors leading out of the prison of scriptural literalism simply do not open from the inside. In the twenty-first century, the moderate’s commitment to scientific rationality, human rights, gender equality, and every other modern value—values that, as you say, are potentially universal for human beings—comes from the past thousand years of human progress, much of which was accomplished in spite of religion, not because of it. So when moderates claim to find their modern, ethical commitments within scripture, it looks like an exercise in self-deception. The truth is that most of our modern values are antithetical to the specific teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And where we do find these values expressed in our holy books, they are almost never best expressed there.

The concerns that Nawaz raises (“taking a snapshot of the state of Islam and Muslims today and assuming that’s how things always were”); that “variety in [Islamic] theology will lead us to secularism and liberalism” to which Harris refers (“moderation comes from outside the faith. The doors leading out of the prison of scriptural literalism simply do not open from the inside.”) are held by such prominent “ex-Muslim” critics of Muslims and Islam as Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

The way in which Harris posits the problem is similar to how the majority of commentators—from the right to the left—set it up: from within a largely predetermined

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558 Ibid., 65.


560 Ibid., 64.

561 Ibid., 65.
That is, Sam Harris’s pointing out of the problem occurs within a prearranged, media-political framework—there are moderate Muslims, and there are extremists—and all Muslims fall into one of two categories—where the moderates are those who are more in keeping with modern, western, secular, liberal values, and are considered “good Muslims,” and the former are considered “bad Muslims” (a là Mahmood Mamdani). The framework of this discussion is set up in such a way that, increasingly (a là Hirsi Ali, Harris, and Irshad Manji) the epistemological question is not whether or not there are in fact Muslims who are interested in “reform,” but whether the religion is, in itself, conducive of reform. For Harris it is not, hence his comments that the impetus must come from outside—more so for Islam than any other religion.

For Hirsi Ali, for Harris, and others, the question of Islamic reform is the most important question in the world. However, the question is not so much if Islam can be reformed. The concern is that Islam (as it is currently understood, as depending on the Quran and the Sunna) cannot be reformed to fit the prescribed modalities of a secular liberal worldview. This is a concern that was raised by Waheed in the question and answer session at the event in East London. (It is not my concern to address here whether in fact Islam can be reformed or not. This question has been

562 This is in keeping with the manner in which the majority of public discussions or topics of significant political-ideological import are set up, as Chomsky argues in relation to the discussion between the Doves and the Hawks during the Vietnam War. While the Hawks called for the continuation of the war in Vietnam—the continued presence of US troops—the Doves called for bringing the troops back. Chomsky points out that, at no point was the question posed: Was the US war in Vietnam correct in the first place? In other words—as Chomsky mentions elsewhere in Chronicles of Dissent: Interviews with David Barsamian (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2002)—the parameters of discussion and debate are always already set; and if one were to speak from outside those parameters they would either have to do a great deal of legwork (for which reason, Chomsky argues, if he is asked to give a TV interview, he has to spend at least five minutes providing the background for the discussion.


http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-reformation-for-islam-1426859626

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addressed at length by a number of authorities—the most prominent, and, in my opinion, the most important being Tariq Ramadan.)

Waheed mentioned the example of former Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who said that “it is not enough for Muslims to denounce (Islamic) terrorism in principle.” What this suggests (and I have not been able to find the reference for this exact quote) is that the root causes of “Islamically-inspired terrorism” need to be identified and they need to be removed. The inherent assumption—the parameters of the discussion, or, what amounts to the same, Foucault’s “force relations” here, once again, is that it is Islam and Muslims who are to blame, and that they need to reform/be reformed. Also, the normative claims of secular liberalism are necessarily true. Thus, the question posed by Waheed: “Why do we—Islam and Muslims—get blamed?”, can be answered: Because Islam and Muslims are the archetypal Other of the western imaginary.

Muslims act, and are acted upon—and—subjectivated, so they are forced to (that is pressured) to respond, and thus be.

**Conclusion**

I have argued in this chapter that the idea of Islamic reform—both as it is discussed by outsiders peering in, as well as by those who belong to the Islamic tradition—is part of a discursive regime

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566 “Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization: as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or even reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.” Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1* (New York: Vintage Books), 92.

567 Harris references “scientific rationality, human rights, gender equality, and every other modern value…” assumed as being necessarily true of western secular democracies, such as that of Britain. *Islam and the Future of Tolerance*, 65.

that is rooted in an understanding of Islam and Muslims as needing reform in order to bring them up-to-date with (western) modernity. I argue that this narrative consciously and unconsciously inflects Muslim actors—from Wahhabis to Sufis, from members of HT to Muslim liberals. As such, Muslim actors are always already secondarily creative of their own sense(s) of self.

Of course, the question of Islamic reform is not a new one, and in fact is part of the historic Islamic intellectual tradition, as it predates colonialism. What is different in this moment of history are the pressures faced by Muslims of all stripes to formulate their Islam in relation to an (ostensibly) anti-theistic worldview. What will be of interest to see in the months and years ahead is how Islam continues to be (re)configured—consciously and unconsciously—and how, in turn, the secular liberal landscape is (re)shaped.

As a final note, it is worth mentioning an intuition that has emerged from my research. Muslims frequently point to the hypocrisy of the West as far as its own murderous campaigns in Muslim countries, while continually blaming Muslims en masse for “the actions of a few bad apples.” My intuition is this: It is not that western powers are intentionally hypocritical—such an analysis does not take us beyond pointing fingers. It is my sense that there is a deep sense of guilt—centuries old—that the western imaginaire bears due to its long history of bloody rule around the world. And it is by projecting the guilt upon the victim that there is a degree of respite.

Time will tell if the “guilt” will come full circle and the repression—whether in the form of surveillance, or in the form of detentions and so forth—of Muslims and other minorities becomes a more widely utilized mode of “reforming” and “keeping in check” society at large.

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EPILOGUE

Modern partakers in the caliphate, all of us…

No study of Islamist politics situated within the Western academy can avoid engaging with the contemporary critique of Islamic ethical and political behavior, and with the secular-liberal assumptions that animate this critique. This owes to the fact that the “problem” giving rise to current scholarly concern surrounding Islam centers on this tradition’s (potentially dangerous) divergence from the perceived norms of a secular-liberal polity. – Saba Mahmood

The above is the opening from the epilogue of Saba Mahmood’s The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject,570 her monograph examining the women’s mosque movement in Cairo, Egypt, in which she argues that the movement is fundamentally concerned with the creation of pious subjects which are (typically) illegible to secular-liberalism, insofar as the women’s piety movement is constitutive of a feminist subject rooted in the Islamic tradition, with its own standards of women’s rights and freedom.

The quote summarizes well the concerns animating my own dissertation. My study of the Islamic political in the form of Hizb ut-Tahrir—as well as the politically-subjectivated Muslim as s/he is categorized by media-political discourse—locates itself in relation to “the contemporary critique of Islamic ethical and political behavior, and with the secular-liberal assumptions that animate this critique.”

However, contra Mahmood, it has been a key objective of mine to indicate the manifold ways in which the Islamic political subject—as imagined by HT, as well as the (modern) Muslim subject as such—is significantly shaped by modern western notions of politics and subjectivity. It is my contention that the Islamic political subject (as imagined and practiced by HT or otherwise) is inseparable from modern western, indeed, liberal assumptions—this is whether secular-liberalism

constitutes the metaphorical air Islamic political interlocutors breathe, or, relatedly, because their formulations of an Islamic political project, in describing itself in opposition to the dominant paradigms of being and knowing, necessarily contain aspects of those modes of being and knowing they oppose.

The endlessly accumulating “events” of September, 11, 2001; 7/7; Madrid; the Paris Bombings the list goes on, and of course it does not include the even more extensively murderous “events” occurring within the Muslim world itself—for Islam and Muslims to repent and explain themselves before “a secular-liberal inquisition.”571 A study such as mine, which focuses on a group that emphasizes the (re)establishment of the Islamic caliphate, must face even greater scrutiny, given the knee-jerk assumptions that attach to the idea of the caliphate, not least because of the (current) prominence of ISIS in news headlines.572 While Saba Mahmood could write in 2005 that “Far more than democracy and tolerance, the ‘Woman Question’ has been key within the development of the Western critique of Islam, even for writers who express distinctly antifeminist views when it comes to women in the West,”573 and while the “Woman Question” is still a major cause of anxiety among western critics of Islam and Muslims, the very question of (a secular-liberal) democracy—while not taking center-stage—brings to the fore the overarching concern vis-à-vis Islam and Muslims: Islam is an inherently violent religion, its violence being acted upon women, minorities, non-Muslims, gays,

571 Ibid.

572 Today it is ISIS. Before that it was Al-Qaeda. Before that it was the Taliban. It appears that the idea of the Islamic bogeyman—the Other, a la Edward Said—is not going to disappear from our consciousness any time soon. There is a deeper reason (which I am only able to go into in a schematic fashion here) as to why the Islamic Other is such a perennial one.

In The Courage To Be, Paul Tillich writes about Stoicism as being “the only real alternative to Christianity in the Western world.” Tillich’s argument for this is: Christianity had a common basis with the religious syncretism of the ancient world, that is the idea of the descent of a divine being for the salvation of the world. In the religious movements which centered around this idea the anxiety of fate and death was conquered by man’s participation in the divine being who had taken fate and death upon himself. Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 11.

573 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 189.
free speech—in short, all the freedoms held sacred by democracies (which includes the right of women to dress and use their bodies—sexually and otherwise—as they wish; the right of people in general to use their bodies (sexually and otherwise) as they see wish; the right to speak one’s mind and/or the right to offend\textsuperscript{574}).

And the notion of the caliphate—which is understood as directly opposing these freedoms, as exemplified at this historical moment by ISIS—is seen as a real-life manifestation of all that is wrong with Islam and Muslims in the media-politically fashioned minds of westerners, but not only because of recent history. The idea of the caliphate is/was also a significant challenge to western modes of rule (let us recall that the undermining of and eventual dissecting of the Ottoman caliphate was significantly orchestrated by European colonial empires, an endeavor in which otherwise competing powers were united\textsuperscript{575}). Incidentally, when ISIS originally declared its Islamic State, HT declared it null and void, arguing that it did not adhere to the Quranic-Prophetic principles of how an Islamic State needed to be formed.\textsuperscript{576} (As described earlier, HT’s methodology for the reestablishment of the Caliphate is divided into three distinct stages. In the first stage the focus is on “recruitment and propaganda,” where prospective members are schooled in/indoctrinated into (HT’s understanding of) Islam. In the second stage the party interacts with the Muslim community in order to affect an intellectual, cultural, and ultimately a political transformation whereby the umma is encouraged “to work towards HT’s revolution.” In the third stage is the “stage of establishing government, implementing Islam generally and comprehensively, and carrying it as a message to the


\textsuperscript{575} See, for example, David Fromkin’s magisterial A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East (New York, NY: Holt Publishers, 2009).

The intention behind mentioning the persistence of such views is not to imply that the idea of the Islamic caliphate—whether imagined in idealized terms or through the lens of history—is exempt from critique, “but that it is the reductive character of this framing, one that orchestrates an entire chain of equivalences associated with Islam, that needs to be questioned.”

I do this questioning by endeavoring to undermine the very binary Islam/West (Muslim/non-Muslim) that is central to the “framing” to which Mahmood refers. Hence, throughout I have unpacked the ways in which the Islamic political/Muslim Other is in so many ways similar to the secular-liberal subject in that it adopts many of the assumptions of secular liberal discourse.

After providing the background to the formation of HT in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2, “The Islamic State is not a Dream: Hizb ut-Tahrir’s Thinking Through the Modern State,” I argued that HT’s ideas surrounding the Islamic state are articulated by modern conditions of possibility animating the modern state. In Chapter 3, “The Khilafah is on the Horizon!’ Or How the Islamic State Must Always Be Postponed: Some Žižekian-Psychanalytic Reflections on HT,” I examined some of HT’s key concepts through a critical-psychoanalytical lens, as afforded by Slavoj Žižek’s lecture “A Plea for Fundamentalism,” and by Fethi Benslama’s Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam. I argued that, taking into consideration Freud’s idea of Mourning, and how the object of Mourning can never be truly reconciled—a distinctly modern understanding of how the self deals with bereavement—the Caliphate must always necessarily remain an object of loss, and therefore it can never be re-realized. In Chapter 4, “Reconstructing the Muslim Self: Muhammad Iqbal, Khudi, and the Modern Self,” I examined Muhammad Iqbal’s radically new understanding of Islamic selfhood. I looked at the ways in which Iqbal’s ideas of the self derive from a specifically modern, Western

578 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 190.
notion of the self that has its history in Rene Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*—a modern selfhood entailing independence and uniqueness, and which became the standard in Europe after the 18th century. The motivations for focusing on Iqbal were on the one hand his significance as a thinker and, on the other, his reflecting upon and reflections of the weltanschauung, which, according to Foucault’s conception of “the unconscious of knowledge,” *necessarily* informs all who live and breathe this milieu. It thus laid the groundwork for looking at Nabhani’s idea of the (modern) Islamic Personality.

Following from the previous chapter, in Chapter 5, “Nabhani and Hizb ut-Tahrir’s (Modern) Islamic Personality, I argued that the idea of the Islamic Personality formulated by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, is developed as a means for countering neo-colonial incursions in the lives and lands of Muslims throughout the world. I contended that, in enunciating such an Islamic Personality, Nabhani and HT make use of modern western paradigms about how the self is conceived, what the relationship of that self is to the rest of the world, and how the “Islam” that is upheld and implemented by the same Islamic Personality is dependent on western/Orientalist conceptions of Islam. In Chapter 6, “When Islam(ism) came from the West: The realities of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Bangladesh,” I examined the rise and the eventual banning of HT in Bangladesh (HTB). As part of my analysis I considered some of the rhetorical strategies used by HTB—such as the narrative of neo-imperial machinations by the US, as well as “westernization” and its associated ills. Finally, I examined the thought of HTB—and hence by extension HT in general—by making use of what Talal Asad and Roxanne Euben identify, each in their own way as, “intrinsic terms”579—that is through a lens that is normatively Islamic. I then went on to argue that the idea of Islamic “normativity” is itself a modern western notion of Islamic knowing and being that has come about

in recent years—not least as a reaction against “Islamic extremism,” which—it is argued by significant proponents of “indigenous” modes and modalities of Islamic thinking and being such as Hamza Yusuf and Tariq Ramadan—is seen as antithetical to normative (read: “true”) Islam. My argument in Chapter 7, “HT and the (Im)Possibility of Islamic Reform,” is that Muslims across-the-board—from Wahhabis to Sufis, from those committed to an Islamic political project (such as HT) to those who are apolitical—have *internalized* the (western) logic of the need to reform—as a type of self-surveillance, even as many abjure the notion of reform, as the idea of the need for “reformation” and “enlightenment” go to constitute Foucault’s idea of “the unconscious of knowledge.”

Thus, while Islamic political actors and thinkers as well as secular-liberal actors and thinkers insist on the radical difference between the “opposite” camp—and that, in each instance, the opposing group has a particularly corrosive effect on the self and community with which one identifies—there are perhaps more similarities than initially meet the eye. My research in many ways adopts a comparative religion(s) approach—although the latter (secular-liberalism) is hardly cast as a religion in mainstream discourse. I submit secular-liberalism be read as a religion, if we allow for a definition of religion as either:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.\(^{580}\)

Or,

A religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and

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clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.\footnote{Clifford Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures} (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 90.}

Of course Talal Asad has famously critiqued Geertz’s definition of religion.\footnote{See Talal Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” in \textit{Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam} (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27-54.} Asad’s contention is that the very idea of defining religion “is itself the historical product of discursive processes’, i.e., within the cultural location of secular modernity.”\footnote{Ibid., 114.} However, if we expand the definition of religion to be \textit{inclusive} of secular modernity, then the radical difference that it assumes for itself vis-à-vis religion in the old sense diminishes, and Asad’s critique need not necessarily apply. When Asad asks “What might an anthropology of secularism look like?”\footnote{Talal Asad, \textit{Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity} (Redwood City, CA: Standford University Press, 2003), 22-66.} his question is posed in the context of the academic concern—historically and currently—with studying religion, as it is typically understood, through the lens of anthropology. In presenting his provocation to rethink the way/s in which we look at the world, Asad is asking to make the familiar (“secularism”) appear less familiar, opening it up to critical scholarly reflection.

[I]t is common knowledge that religion and the secular are closely linked, both in our thought and in the way they have emerged historically. Any discipline that seeks to understand “religion” must also try to understand its other. Anthropology in particular—the discipline that has sought to understand the strangeness of the non-European world—also needs to grasp more fully what is implied in its being at once more modern and secular.\footnote{Ibid., 22.}

It has been my aim in this dissertation to make the less familiar (the Islamic political) more familiar and, as a result, perhaps make the more familiar (the secular-liberal) a little less so—or, at
the very least, to unsettle received assumptions (which are more often unconscious than not, and certainly not well-thought-through) of what it means to be secular (and modern).

So, Durkheim’s definition of “religion” could be appropriated for secularism as:

Secularism is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden to be encroached upon—such as freedom of speech, sexual equality, and religious and racial equality. Such beliefs and practices unite into one single moral community called a Secular State, all those who adhere to them.

And Geertz’s definition may be re-configured as:

Secularism is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in women and men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence—such as a scienti-fic/stic model of reality, and equality for all—and clothing those conceptions with such an order of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely real(istic).

Thus, while Mahmood writes—

One of the basic premises of this book is that in order to understand Islamism’s enmeshment within, and challenges to, assumptions at the core of the secular-liberal imaginary, one must turn not to the usual places of political struggle (such as the state, the economy, and the law) but to arguments about what constitutes a proper way of living ethically in a world where such questions were thought to have become obsolete.  

—By contrast, it has been my (implicit and explicit) contention that one must indeed turn to the usual places of political struggle (such as the state, the economy, and the law), though not in the way/s in which they are typically examined—in order to highlight difference; but rather because these usual places of political struggle reveal themselves to be, on closer scrutiny, not to be all that different after all. (Incidentally, it is because of the prominence of Mahmood’s work in current scholarly circles vis-à-vis the construction of an (ethical) Muslim selfhood that is distinctly—or at least significantly different—from the secular liberal self, and also because of the notion highlighted by

586 Mahmood, Politics of Pity, 192.
the above quote—that “one must turn not to the usual places of political struggle”—that I choose to have something of an extended conversation with her here.)

In conclusion, I would like to examine some of the questions concerning the Islamic political with which I began the dissertation. What is it about the idea of the caliphate that requires it to be singled out as a symbol of radical disjuncture between Muslims and the West? What is it about HT that causes it to be designated “extremist,” even though it has a proven record over seven decades of never using violence?

These two questions can be answered at the same time. The idea of the caliphate is cast—in mainstream discourse—as a marker of fundamental difference between Islam/Muslims and the West. If the West does politics, it only does so because it is done in the pursuance of the “sacred” ideal of freedom in its manifold dimensions. Whereas, when Islam and Muslims do politics—and, lest we forget, they can never not do politics, because Islam/Muslims is/are fundamentally political—then it is inescapably the kind of politics that is bad. Its politics is the kind that works in the opposite direction of freedom and democracy. This discourse is as much a product of media-political stories surrounding groups such as ISIS, as it is the product of the long history of Othering of Islam and Muslims that informs the West’s self-identity.

Put differently, when HT is cast as extremist—and when media-political commentators equate the Islamic political with extremism—it is because any notion of doing politics “differently” from the hegemonic western paradigm/s is always already beyond the pail, for the very reason that it (it is assumed) construes itself without reference to the said paradigms. However, as I have argued in the preceding chapters, the Islamic political—as it is constructed by HT—is not so much different from western paradigms of thought as it is dependent on them, for the very reason that they are hegemonic.
And this brings me to the third and final question (and this leitmotif presents throughout the dissertation): What does it mean to be modern?

To be modern assumes a subjectivity that is individualistic, that sees the self as being constructed by its own volition (whereas in practice it is subjectivated by the modern conditions of the state and its attendant institutions: the educational, the cultural [the arts, the televisual, and the internetic]). Its attachment to a notion of God or Church—in the older senses of the terms—is not incidental to its formation, and if it is part of its formation, then it does not really detract from its (otherwise secular) formation.

My aim throughout has been to show the way/s in which the Islamic political subject, its notions of politics, its understanding of the self, its reactions to western discourses that cast it as the Other, are intimately intertwined with modern western notions of selfhood and politics. In other words—and to repeat a point that bears repeating—we cannot take for granted the binaries: Islam/West; Democracy/Caliphate; Modernity/Tradition. They fail to capture the complexities of the topics under consideration. They fail to capture the much larger matter at stake: What does it mean to be human? The idea of the caliphate—for members of HT, for other Muslims, and, I will aver, for people of no allegiance to Islam per se—is a site of modernity as such, allowing and preventing as it does Muslims and otherwise, by the mere fact of engaging with it as an idea—however impossible it may be, and the more impossible, the more it draws us into its imagination—to partake in the modern (western?) project of life and living. The caliphate, then, both marks and unmarks, makes and remakes people as political, epistemologically-grounded consumers of this contemporary moment we are all inhabiting—some more than others, others a little less so, but inhabiting nonetheless.

It would appear that a discussion of a topic as fraught as the Islamic state—and by especially by someone with a clearly Muslim name—cannot go without including an explicit discussion of my
own stance(s) on the topic(s). I would hazard that the same would not be true if I were discussing, say, the idea of democracy in the West, or, say, liberalism. The very nature of the Islamic political—its (apparent) inherent tension with western modes of being (politically and otherwise)—renders it suspect, and, therefore, a person who is discussing the topic (especially if s/he is of Muslim/Islamic provenance) is rendered suspicious by the same token. It is not just an academic (or ethnographic one for that matter) conceit that necessitates the subject discussing her/his topic must “explain” her-/him-self in relation to the matter at hand. It has been my argument in chapter seven, for example—but also really throughout the dissertation—that the modern Islamic subject must always already (in that choice turn of phrase originating with Derrida) perforce justify and/or identify her-/him-self (consciously and unconsciously) in discussion with, in diatribe and defense against (modern) western discursive regimes of thinking that thrust themselves upon the Muslim/Islamic imaginary (both in the sense of that which is imagined and that which constitutes the world of thought) landscape. It is my contention that this is true whether because of (modern) western modes of thinking and being that constitute the unconscious of knowledge—or, to borrow from the language of the philosopher of science, Peter Paul Feyerabend (1924-1994), “the [broad] paradigm[s]”—through which we must think and be, or because of the related discourse (in Foucault’s sense of the term) which is manufactured and disseminated by media outlets—a significant portion of which goes into “covering Islam.”

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587 I’m here thinking of Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s seminal Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988) which proposes that the mass media (in particular in the US, although the same argument can and has been leveled against mass media around the world—whether in the West or in “the rest” of the world) “are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function, by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without over coercion.” Ibid., 306.

All of that being said—and my “complaint” as it were being lodged,\textsuperscript{589} then it may be assumed that it is not really necessary to go into an explicit exposition of my position on things. I am reminded here of the fact that Foucault famously despised speaking in a “personally” or “autobiographically”—arguing that such positions were ultimately of little consequence. Of course, I am not Foucault, and I have the double-bind of my “Muslimness” and brownness to contend with. Thus, here are a few lines by way of a personal reflection on HT and its thought.

I personally find HT’s thought to be somewhat abhorrent. This may come as a surprise—given the forgoing chapters—and not least because language that is so clearly not dispassionate is frowned upon in the academy. But it is a word I will stick with, for now. For me, groups such as HT do—have done—and will continue to do for some time to come, it seems—an immense disservice to the wider Muslim population(s) both in the West and in “the rest” of the world. Groups such as HT and their thought provide justifications for western governments (although whether such excuses are always necessary is an open question) to enact oppressive laws against Muslim communities, whether at home or abroad. Groups such as HT are also to blame for a bifurcated notion of “us” versus “them” between Muslims and non-Muslims, which is intellectually and existentially unsustainable. And, as I have argued in the foregoing chapters, such bifurcated notions—whether existentially or intellectually—do not hold up under scrutiny. At the same time, despite my aforementioned “personal” abhorrence of groups such as HT and their thought—engaging in an academic fashion with them has afforded me a considerable degree of space as far as thinking through the very thorny problems of the Islamic political subject. I, however, personally do not think that an Islamic state is either possible nor desirable for Muslims (or “the rest”) or the

\textsuperscript{589} Insofar as an academic note can be said to register as a complaint, and perhaps, from one point of view, the entirety of my dissertation can be read as something of a “complaint” on my part, for being always already cast as a subject with certain proclivities and partialities (whether or not I ever actually have them/had them) for no other reason than because of my Muslim/Islamic provenance.
world) at large—the discussions of self-described decolonial Muslims such as Salman Sayyid and a
growing minority of academically as well as non-academically-minded Muslims notwithstanding.
The argument of such decolonial Muslims, in a nutshell, is that political autonomy would allow
Muslims the world over the right to self-rule (politically and intellectually), and would provide
something of an imaginary (in the sense mentioned above) place of refuge for the global Muslim
diaspora—which, according to Sayyid, is the entirety of the global Muslim population.

I do not think that an Islamic state is possible or desirable because of a similar line of
thinking put forward by Wael Hallaq in his Impossible State, in which he argues that the fundamental
imperative of Islam is an ethical one, while the modern state is largely amoral (if not in fact largely
immoral). As such, as Hallaq argues, the Islamic state—which necessarily thinks through the form
properties of the modern state (as I discuss in chapter 2) is a contradiction in terms. Taking
Hallaq’s argument seriously, the Islamic Republic of Iran, for example, is already a highly
functioning Islamic state, and one which is riddled with ethical problems, its largely successful
democracy and intellectual richness notwithstanding.

I will end, therefore, by recapping my central thesis. Muslims—whether in the West or in
the rest of the world—are always already modern, as well as being ineluctable partakers (as well as
contributors, although the two are often difficult to disentangle) in the western project of
(post)modernity. As such, groups such as HT and their members are necessary outgrowths of the
modern western project (although it is hard to speak in definite terms of an agentive project, I do see,
to repeat a point that perhaps bears repeating, that there are unconscious forces that shape
discourses and modes of thinking and being that can be seen around the world, and which are of
decidedly modern western provenance). As such, irrespective of my “personal” views of HT, it is
also my “academic” view (as though the two are so neatly separable, but permit me this heuristic

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590 The Impossible State, 2012.
myth) serves an important function of holding up a mirror to the West. For the purpose of all mirrors—as long as they are not shrouded by dust, or speckled by deterioration, or indeed clouded over by smoke—is to offer something of a means for reflecting upon ourselves—and for this reason HT and its thought are not only in some ways inevitable as today’s Muslims make sense of their political, existential, and intellectual selves, it is also very much necessary for “the West” itself—to use one last time this thoroughly problematic shorthand—to make sense of itself.
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