

INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGIC PAPERS

# Shaping positive Muslim identity: a policy approach to understanding the formation of prejudice—and building social resilience—in childhood

Andrew Wimhurst

MARCH 2017

VICE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE  
Australian Defence College  
Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies



## The Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies (CDSS)

CDSS is the senior educational institution of the Australian Defence College. It delivers a one-year Defence and Strategic Studies Course, a professional development program that places emphasis on practical rather than theoretical research, on teamwork and support for the personal and professional goals of students. Students and staff share a commitment to achieving professional excellence. Students graduate with a range of postgraduate qualifications in strategic studies, policy and politics, and business administration.

In addition, CDSS is home to the Centre for Defence Leadership and Ethics (CDLE) and the Centre for Defence Research (CDR). CDR manages the publications on behalf of CDSS staff and students.

## Indo-Pacific Strategic Papers

This range of papers reflects coursework and research submitted by Australian and international students and staff of the Defence and Strategic Studies Course. The papers have been chosen for publication based on their scholarly attributes and strategic relevance. The topics of the papers relate to Australia's area of primary and enduring strategic interest—the Indo-Pacific region—and present analyses and assessments that concern Australia's policy interests.

For further information about CDSS publications, please visit  
<<http://www.defence.gov.au/adc/publications/publications.html>>

## Copyright

© Commonwealth of Australia 2017

This work is copyright. It may be downloaded, displayed, printed and reproduced in unaltered form, including the retention of this notice, for personal, non-commercial use or use for professional purposes. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, all other rights are reserved. To replicate all or part of this document for any purpose other than those stipulated above, contact the Editor at <[CDSS.Mailbox@defence.gov.au](mailto:CDSS.Mailbox@defence.gov.au)>

## Disclaimer

This work is the sole opinion of the author, and does not necessarily represent the views of CDSS or the Attorney-General's Department, or the Australian Government more broadly. The Commonwealth of Australia will not be legally responsible in contract, tort or otherwise, for any statement made in this publication.

## The author

Andrew Wimhurst graduated from the Australian National University in 1994 with an Honours degree in English literature. He joined the Attorney-General's Department in 1995, initially working on foreign policy matters. Andrew was seconded to the Department of Defence in 2001, before returning to the Attorney-General's Department to work on security policy development.

From January 2007, Andrew worked as a Director managing several policy advice sections across a range of areas, focusing on legislation development and implementation advice, and social cohesion policy advice. Andrew has studied Arabic in Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia. He attended the Defence and Strategic Studies Course at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies at the Australian Defence College in 2016, graduating with a Master of Arts (Strategic Studies) from Deakin University.

## Abstract

This paper presents a policy approach designed to mitigate the threat from Salafi-jihadi ideology in Australia. Instead of the traditional policy approach of targeting adults who may be vulnerable, or seeking to correct Salafi ideology at a late stage, it argues that policy-makers should complement efforts aimed at adult counter-radicalisation by encouraging Muslim parents to shape positive ideology in the home, aimed at children in primary-school age groups.

The advocated policy includes social research activity that would provide Muslim communities with a means to better understand their role in shaping young minds, supported by scholastic materials. This would provide the agency to demonstrate to their fellow Australians that they are a key and willing element in building resilience and encouraging social participation in shaping the formation of an Islamic identity compatible with the secular liberal norms underpinning Australian society.

# Shaping positive Muslim identity: a policy approach to understanding the formation of prejudice—and building social resilience—in childhood

## Introduction

Salafi-jihadi terrorism presents a wicked policy problem for Western leadership. Salafi-jihadist violence is on an upwards trajectory. The frequency of incursions into Western states rises as awareness grows among jihadists that high-impact, high-coverage operations are achievable using the simplest of domestic means. This trend line continues regardless of well-intentioned attempts by Western leaders to re-frame the narrative of responsibility away from acknowledgement of the theological and doctrinal sources. Instead of delegitimising extremism, the policy may become twisted into a tool for recruitment, as seen in recent ISIS propaganda. Efforts to uncouple the religion from Islamically-motivated violence produce scorn from the perpetrators of violence and are viewed by Salafi-jihadists as illustrative of the moral weakness and corruption of the secular West, and as validation for their divine mission.<sup>1</sup>

As public concerns are downplayed or dismissed as ignorant or prejudiced, constituencies may become frustrated and marginalised and possibly drawn to the fringe. Such fringe commentary may succeed in attributing blame in a manner superficially appealing to such concerns but that risks further contamination of the policy debate by reinforcing racist and prejudiced ideologies. The July 2016 Australian election results support this analysis, with the election of four One Nation candidates to the Senate. Muslim migration, extremism and perceptions related to integration were among factors in the success of One Nation, with its leader Pauline Hanson later calling for a ban on Muslim migration to Australia.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than reflecting a minority view, recent polling heightened concerns when it showed half of voters aggregated across all parties held support for such a policy.<sup>3</sup> In analysis of this polling, the pollster noted:

This [is] not a 'basket of deplorables' who sit outside the confines of polite society, that is 49% of the men and women who make up our nation. Yes, they are more likely to vote Coalition or 'other' but 40% of Labor voters and one third of Greens agree too. Look around you right now, there are people in your workplace, in your street, on your train, who agree with Hanson.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, a more recent poll showed a (relatively) more positive result, indicating only 33 per cent of Australians opposed Muslim migration.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, while One Nation is unlikely ever to achieve government, its ability to influence policy may persist, with additional polls showing that support for One Nation had increased since the election, including a doubling of support in Queensland to 10 per cent,<sup>6</sup> and concerns that at least ten seats were at risk of falling to One Nation at the forthcoming state elections.<sup>7</sup> This trend could impact both major parties in Australia, with voter preferences moving from the traditional centre-right and centre-left parties in favour of a deeply reactionary movement.

Equally, failure to admit honestly the doctrinal legitimacy of Salafi-jihadism is a disincentive to Muslim communities and their leaders to consider the sociological, doctrinal and theological origins of Islamic extremism and thus to consider their role in correcting them.<sup>8</sup> If Islamic terrorism has 'nothing to do with Islam', then it is not an issue that Muslims are responsible for addressing.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the aspirational narrative employed has the unintended consequence of leading to growing disenfranchisement in the case of some non-Muslim constituencies and a perceived failure of Muslim communities to act. These perceptions are complementary and increase the problem. A lack of progressive, clear and unified Muslim leadership contributes to a growth in anti-Muslim rhetoric and demagoguery, and leads to further isolation of Muslim citizens.

This thesis presents a policy approach designed to mitigate the threat from Salafi-jihadi ideology and give Muslim researchers and communities a key role in its development. It does not argue that

the risk can be negated entirely. Ideology, especially one that has cultural traction, can never be extinguished. As the American journalist Asra Nomani has said, '[i]deology doesn't need a passport.... It crosses borders'.<sup>10</sup> Instead of the traditional policy approach of targeting adults who may be vulnerable, or seeking to correct Salafi ideology at a late stage, it proposes an educative model to assist Muslim children in primary-school age groups.

The objective would be to shape formation of an Islamic identity compatible with secular liberal norms underpinning Australian society, equally to provide children with a level of resilience both in confronting the challenging nature of Western society and the temptations and exhortations of jihadist demagogues. In support of developing this model, the policy advocated includes social research activity that would provide Muslim communities with a means to understand better their role in shaping young minds. This would provide the agency to demonstrate to their fellow Australians that they are a key and willing element in any solution.

### Background – 'nothing to do with Islam'

An earlier paper by the author debunked efforts to uncouple Islam from violent expressions emanating from terrorist groups self-identified as Sunni Muslims.<sup>11</sup> The essay focused on the most pressing extremist movement of our age, Salafi-jihadism. This 'ancestralist' strand of Sunni Islamic religious observance seeks to limit adherence to a purified form of Islam focused on the Quran and the example set by Mohammad and the early generations (the *Salaf* or ancestors).

Salafism rejects the role of additional, later sources. Salafism is puritanical, merely prescribing a stricter adherence to core tenets of Islam that are central to the religious practice of all Muslims. Salafism exists on a spectrum within Islam and, in the sense that it makes efforts to model its doctrines in stricter emulation of the religion's founder, Salafism is arguably more proximate to the origins of Islam. This proximity is the wellspring of its legitimacy and attractiveness to a growing number of Muslims.

In political responses to Salafi-jihadi violence, Western and Muslim apologetic commentary consistently seeks to distance the Salafi sect—specifically its jihadist manifestation—from Islam. While this political narrative is aimed at social cohesion, it denies the credible concerns of the wider public who may accurately draw a link between the rhetoric of perpetrators and their acts of violence. If Salafi-jihadism is 'nothing to do with Islam', Islamic communities can credibly avoid self-examination, and justifiably reject calls for responsibility in monitoring and addressing the problem.

Uncoupling Salafi-jihadism from Islam and demonising Salafi adherents risks polarisation of Muslims who may share many of the values of Salafism (such as modes of conservative attire, controls on interaction between the sexes, and limiting of dealings with non-Muslims), while not subscribing to their stricter prohibitions on doctrinal innovation. Furthermore, denial of the militant nature of Islamic jihad or cherry-picking of Quranic verses (while avoiding others) as a means to uncouple Salafi-jihadis from the panoply of Muslim communities is intellectually dishonest and has not impeded the appeal, growth and reach of Salafi-jihadi ideology.

In order to expose the ahistorical flaws in this narrative, the earlier paper traced the genealogy of Salafism historically and ideologically, from the early centuries of Islam to the rise of Salafi-jihadism in the 1980s. Noting that 'Salafism' is a modern political designator, the essay identified genealogical sources linking modern adherents of ancestralist Sunni Islam to their forebears in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries—particularly focused on monotheism (*tawhid*) as the central pillar of Islam. The essay drew a straight line from the *Ahl Al Hadeeth* movement through to political activists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Muslim Brotherhood movement who were pivotal in the transition of ancestralist Islam into political action.

Finally, the essay analysed a key fatwa issued by the Salafi-jihadi ideologue Abdallah Azzam showing the synthesis of Islamic doctrine with the political ideas of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al Banna, and his successor Sayyid Qutb—which were in turn ancestralist reiterations of core Islamic ideas around the conflict between pure monotheistic Islam and ignorance (*al jahiliyya*). Thus, the analysis provided in the paper showed that attempts to create a

political narrative that uncouples Salafi-jihadism from Islam are ahistorical, inaccurate and counter-productive.

## Part 1: Understanding the policy problem

### Belief and the Western failure of imagination

Addressing this issue within Western nations requires acceptance of the likelihood that indoctrination of Islamic spiritual beliefs leads to action by Muslims in the temporal world. This has proven to be a difficult issue for many politicians and some academics working in counter-terrorism to accept.

ISIS now exploits what it frames as the Western failure of imagination or wilful avoidance in admitting what many policy-makers likely know to be true but find too appalling to contemplate publicly—that Islam is a central factor in Islamic terrorism. Shortly after the earlier paper was submitted, ISIS released Issue 15 of its online propaganda platform, *Dabiq*, providing commentary that aligned with the thesis presented. In an article titled ‘Why we hate you & why we fight you’, the movement mocks the contortions (and perceived motivations) of Western commentators in their efforts to find alternative, temporal explanations for Salafi-jihadist violence, asserting that:

Many Westerners, however, are already aware that claiming the attacks of the mujahidin to be senseless and questioning incessantly as to why we hate the West and why we fight them is nothing more than a political act and a propaganda tool. The politicians will say it regardless of how much it stands in opposition to facts and common sense just to garner as many votes as they can for the next election cycle. The analysts and journalists will say it in order to keep themselves from becoming a target for saying something that the masses deem to be ‘politically incorrect’. The apostate ‘imams’ in the West will adhere to the same tired cliché in order to avoid a backlash from the disbelieving societies in which they’ve chosen to reside. The point is, people know that it’s foolish, but they keep repeating it regardless because they’re afraid of the consequences of deviating from the script.<sup>12</sup>

The article then spells out the six religious motivations for ISIS’ jihad, in priority order. The first two are the obligations of *tawhid* (monotheism) and the secular West’s transgression of the divine legal sovereignty that is central to *tawhid*. Atheism and disrespect for Islam and the Prophet Mohammed are the third and fourth, with perceived crimes against Islam fifth, and invasions against Muslim territory as the sixth and last. A valid interpretation of this propaganda is that it is intended as a provocation to goad Western leadership into explicitly connecting the group with Islam.

The strategy here is that such a connection would offend and alienate Muslim communities and assist recruitment to radicalism. Equally, and not incompatibly, exists the possibility that ISIS legitimately views the West’s unwillingness through the prism of its belief system: Islam. Failure to identify the true theological motivators is then a sign of weakness and ignorance and—far from being frustrated by Western political messaging—ISIS identifies it as driven by fear and an alarm at ISIS’ growing appeal. It thus becomes validation for ISIS’ view that the West represents *al-Jahiliyya* (ignorance prior to receiving Islamic enlightenment), which makes it an excellent rhetorical device to assist recruitment.

That a policy approach of denying or downplaying the link between Islam and Islamic violence has guided Western politics over the past decade is illustrated by a revealing series of interviews with US leadership revealed in an April 2016 piece in *The Atlantic* titled ‘The Obama doctrine’, where then US President Obama is revealed to be cautious about the social implications of honest discussion around the issue—the implication being that the non-Muslim public cannot be trusted in its reactions to such a debate:

Valerie Jarrett, Obama’s closest adviser, told him people were worried that the group would soon take its beheading campaign to the US. ‘They’re not coming here to chop our heads off’, he reassured her. Obama frequently reminds his staff that terrorism takes far fewer lives in America than handguns, car accidents, and falls in bathtubs do. Several years ago, he expressed to me his admiration for Israelis’ ‘resilience’ in the face of constant terrorism, and it is clear that he would

like to see resilience replace panic in American society.... Obama modulates his discussion of terrorism for several reasons: he is, by nature, Spockian. And he believes that a misplaced word, or a frightened look, or an ill-considered hyperbolic claim, could tip the country into panic. The sort of panic he worries about most is the type that would manifest itself in anti-Muslim xenophobia or in a challenge to American openness and to the constitutional order.<sup>13</sup>

The article notes that '[Obama's] advisers are fighting a constant rear-guard action to keep Obama from placing terrorism in what he considers its "proper" perspective, out of concern that he will seem insensitive to the fears of the American people'. Obama's leadership in this area does not match the internal views of the Administration, resulting in 'frustration among Obama's advisers', including Secretary of State John Kerry who was forced to walk back comments in the article directly contradicting Obama's more sanguine view.

Obama's comments on the fear of ISIS attacks occurring in the US and the rhetorical device of comparing the threat to domestic accidents are illustrative of the disconnect between policy and the reasonable concerns of wider society (and his close colleagues). Whether one views terrorism as a strategic threat depends on whether toxic ideology is viewed as an existential threat. Answering that question depends on a values proposition. But the asymmetrical and random nature of terrorism, and the debate over what motivates it, lead to confusion. The tendency to explain Islamic action through the prism of motives more comprehensible to a secular mind underlines the cognitive dissonance experienced in Western analysis.

This leads to rhetoric aimed at invalidating rational concerns—evident most famously in Obama's analogy. Yet to compare terrorism to domestic accidents is a logical fallacy—a form of category error used to trivialise such concerns. Saying that more people die from car crashes in the West than from terrorism is a *non sequitur*, akin to saying more people died in the West from car crashes than died from Stalinism. It says nothing about the value in defeating Stalinism as a toxic ideology and says nothing about the strategic, civilisational value in defending Western ideology against military and ideological threats.

Obama's analogy was a category error because it fails to acknowledge the predictability of traffic accidents and that the likely circumstances and locations in which they will happen is also predictable, as opposed to terrorism which erodes confidence and certainty by happening unpredictably in incongruous locations such as nightclubs, workplaces, primary schools and other 'safe spaces'.

It also says nothing of the asymmetric harm: while a car accident involves loss of life and impact on local economies, terrorism undertaken by limited, non-state actors might affect tourist economies or destroy an entire parliament or infrastructure resource. For the population, traffic and bathroom accidents are a comprehensible, socially acceptable risk devoid of the asymmetric harm of terrorism. Such rhetoric—comparing an asymmetric ideological threat to a domestic accident—therefore fails to address the deeper issue of sociological impact. Terrorism impacts confidence, which impacts behaviours and culture, in turn driving policy changes. It forces subtle and not-so-subtle accommodations. It challenges and forces us to modify our values.

This awareness clearly informs policy, despite the public rhetoric. That eradication of terrorism (or at the very least its mitigation) is considered a good policy objective rather than a mere distraction—and regardless of the economies of scale at play between the threats of terrorism and Stalinism—is demonstrated by the significant expenditure made by successive US governments in the military, law enforcement, intelligence agencies and in social cohesion programs intended to address jihadi ideology.<sup>14</sup>

The disconnect between political strategic messaging and public perception has been mirrored in other Western nations. It is clear, for example, that French President François Hollande has adopted a strategy that mirrors the Obama doctrine, on various occasions specifically denying that Islamic terrorists were even Muslim.<sup>15</sup> However, Hollande's recent candid revelations to his official biographers have shocked the French public because they drastically contradict his previous public statements. For example:

On the politically toxic subject of immigration, the French president goes on to acknowledge that 'there have been too many arrivals, too much immigration'—and that an aggressive form of Islam constitutes a 'problem' for France.<sup>16</sup>

This change in rhetoric might suggest a strategic repositioning, aimed at preventing the flow of votes to extreme right-wing parties. Hollande's course-correction on public messaging might equally be seen as an acknowledgment of public concerns and a setting of the scene for a national debate on Islamic terrorism, Islamic identity and the idea of French national identity more generally. These revelations thus suggest a realisation within the French leadership that attempts to decouple Islam from Islamically-motivated violence are discordant and unconvincing—and have not progressed efforts to arrive at social policy solutions.

It appears likely that Australian policy-makers have arrived at the same conclusion, with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull willing to draw the connection in a manner that is nuanced, balanced and less likely to lead to community tensions. In comments in June 2016, preceding the July election, Turnbull warned against attempts to deny the link existed while noting that the problem rests within a minority grouping of Muslims:

Mr Turnbull said he had already made the connection and emphasised his belief it was incorrect to deny a link between terrorism and Islam.

'We should not be so delicate as to say that ISIL and its ilk have got nothing to do with Islam but neither should we tag all Muslims or their religion with responsibility for the crimes of a tiny terrorist minority', he said, 'That is precisely what the extremists want us to do. So, of course, saying it has nothing to do with Islam, that's not right'.

Mr Turnbull indicated he had conveyed this to Islamic leaders at a recent Ramadan *iftar* dinner at Kirribilli House.<sup>17</sup>

Turnbull's observations, like Hollande's but made publicly, again provide fresh opportunity for a more open discussion of the connection between Islamic ideology and Islamic violence. They tacitly acknowledge the growing concerns of the Australian electorate and its frustration surrounding the perceived manner in which the discussion has been handled.

### Community responsibility

Another obstacle arises in discussion of how much responsibility (if any) Muslim communities should accept for the phenomenon of terrorism. The debate here often is confused between personal responsibility of peaceful Muslims—which of course should be nil—and social responsibility arising from support for an ideology that motivates violence, which arguably requires examination.<sup>18</sup> The difficulty arises in proving that the latter responsibility exists, due to the huge diversity of expressions of Islam and their competing truth claims.

A Sunni Muslim, for example, cannot be responsible for the alleged ideological misdemeanors of a Shia Muslim because the veracity of each sect is in dispute. With multiple expressions claiming legitimacy, no-one is responsible for the misinterpretations of those whose claims may be characterised as divergent or fraudulent. This is why the approach of uncoupling Salafi-jihadism from its origins is counter-productive. The problem is compounded when, for example, Australia's most prominent Muslim leader links terror attacks such as the Paris massacres to temporal causes such that 'all causative factors such as racism, Islamophobia, curtailing freedoms through securitisation, duplicitous foreign policies and military intervention must be comprehensively addressed', but fails to examine or apportion any responsibility to Islamic ideology.<sup>19</sup>

While Muslim commentaries in the West deny linkages or decry them as 'demonisation', and as Western intellectuals and politicians engage in what Sam Harris has called a 'pornography of self-doubt', Middle East-based Muslim commentators, though heavily in the minority, have shown some new willingness to engage the public courageously with the truth.<sup>20</sup> Three examples should suffice. In a program broadcast on *Rotana Khalijiyya* on 3 April 2016, Saudi TV host Nadine Al Budair noted that whenever there is a terrorist attack, 'smart alecks and hypocrites' in the Muslim world vie to claim that the attack has nothing to do with Islam and the perpetrators do not represent Muslims.<sup>21</sup>



Al Budair asserted that '[w]e witness people competing in an attempt to be the first to prove that everything that is happening has nothing to do with the Muslims, and that the terrorists are highway robbers and homeless alcoholics and drug addicts', before pointing out that Europe has many more non-Muslim drug addicts and homeless people who pose no threat of terrorist violence. In order to address the issue, she argues that '[w]e must admit that they are present everywhere, that their nationality is Arab and that they adhere to the religion of Islam'. In another example, on 22 March 2016, Egyptian TV personality Amr Diab underscores the hypocrisy of blaming the violence of Muslims on the West instead of analysing the ideology, saying:

Should I quote from early history? It was Muslims who killed Hussein.... [T]hree of the righteous caliphs were killed while praying! Did Belgium kill them or did England? Or maybe it was done by the CIA?<sup>22</sup>

Finally, in a speech delivered on 22 May 2016, Egyptian intellectual Sayyed Al Qemani mocked Western figures including Ban Ki Moon and François Hollande, who have become 'self-appointed experts' on Islam by denying the linkage between the ideology and the atrocities experienced in France and elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> In doing so, Al Qemani sarcastically quips that they follow the example of Islamic scholars who also make such denials in contradistinction to the actual example set by the life of the Prophet Mohammad, saying that '[i]f you compare the views of the various Islamic groups on what true Islam is, you will find that the Prophet Mohammed was the only one who did not know true Islam'. Al Qemani provides a stark warning regarding denying the risk posed by anti-contextual doctrinaire Islam:

Any Muslim who thinks that his religion is suited to all times and places is a terrorist by definition. All scorpions sting. But some scorpions have actually killed someone, while other scorpions have not killed anyone yet. The only difference between them is that the latter have not had the opportunity to kill. They have not had the chance to perform the best act that brings you closest to Allah. The best act in Islam is to storm into the enemy's midst. The best act that brings you closest to Allah is the duty of jihad.

Although these examples are recent, they echo commentary made by other Arab intellectuals and political figures extending into the last decade, including the Saudi writer Ibrahim Al Buleihi,<sup>24</sup> Professor Abd Al-Hamid Al Ansari, former Dean of Islamic Law at Qatar University,<sup>25</sup> Kuwaiti political scientist Nasser Al Dashti,<sup>26</sup> the Shia Iraqi politician Ayad Jamal Al Din/Deen,<sup>27</sup> Parisian community leader Ghaleb Bencheikh,<sup>28</sup> Kuwaiti author Ibtihal Al-Khatib,<sup>29</sup> the Syrian poet Adonis,<sup>30</sup> and others. Together, they show a deeper level of historical and textual understanding, honesty and courage than is often seen in Muslim communities in the West, where Muslim leadership is perceived as avoiding the issue or appears to lack the language and public relations skills to communicate more effectively.<sup>31</sup>

## Part 2: Analysis

Addressing the issue of Salafi-jihadi violence entails an intellectual confrontation between the modern ideology of Western liberalism and a religious ideology that is almost uniquely resilient to reform.<sup>32</sup> Western policy-makers are ill-equipped to navigate the deep currents of a belief system of which most have little historical and theological knowledge. Increasingly they have adopted an aspirational strategy that seeks to sell a laudable but ahistorical progressive interpretation of Islam as representative of all Muslim communities. In order to confront the real problem, and to understand the approach that will be presented here, policy-makers need to acknowledge several fundamental concepts relevant to Islam and its predominating effect on Muslims.

- **Islam's source is immutable.** While expressions of Islam are diverse, the core source of Islam (the Quran) is immutable. This means that the centrality of Prophet Mohammad's example (contained within the *Hadith*) is fixed by the Quran and cannot be challenged (Quran; 33:21: 'You have indeed in the messenger of God an excellent example for the one who longs for God and the last day, and remembers God abundantly'.<sup>33</sup>).
- **Mohammad's example can be problematic when removed from its historical context.** While the authenticity of Prophetic traditions (the *ahadith*) has been challenged over time,

there is now a substantial longstanding canon of authenticated *ahadith* that is fixed.<sup>34</sup> For Sunni Muslims (and Salafi-jihadists), the key sources are *Sahih Al Bukhari* and *Sahih Al Muslim*. These sources contain examples of behaviour that are pious, tolerant and peaceful—alongside examples that are warlike and intolerant and antithetical to Western liberal concepts. All such authenticated examples are equally valid, and thus problematic if applied outside of historical context.<sup>35</sup> That means, for example, that such ISIS atrocities as brutal punishments and executions of captives and dividing up women as spoils of war (sex slaves) may have valid precedent (as asserted by jihadists) on the basis of doctrinal sources [Quran 5:33, 5:24], supported by scholarly exegesis.<sup>36</sup>

- **Belief informs action.** Devout Muslims undertake actions in the temporal world informed on the basis of spiritual belief, modelled on the ideal behaviour of the Prophet Mohammad. Because this is such a controversial assertion, and pivotal to the policy approach, it will be explored in more detail below.
- **Belief systems are hard-wired in early childhood development.** There is extensive research showing that the development of prejudices is shaped in childhood, from liberalism through to racism. Ideology develops in the home and in the heavily managed community engagements experienced by children. Islam is an ideology like any other, that is shaped by early experience—whether by explicit instruction or by passive reception through environmental circumstances. Islam itself acknowledges this fact in an authenticated *hadith* stating that parents determine the religious ideology of their children.<sup>37</sup> This aspect will also be discussed in more detail in the following section.
- **More research is required to understand Islam’s impact on childhood development.** While substantial research exists on the development of racist or prejudicial behaviour in ‘white’ children, there is comparatively little research mapping the childhood development of anti-social prejudice within Muslim communities. Studies of this kind, especially if undertaken by Muslim scholars, would be useful in encouraging and shaping Muslim community approaches to minimising inculcation of elements of Islam that inhibit integration in Western society. Again, this element will be examined in more detail below.

### Belief informs action

In contrast to ISIS and its supporters, some academics, experts and politicians continue to seek explanations for Islamically-motivated violence in environmental and circumstantial factors such as poverty, dispossession and lack of opportunity.<sup>38</sup> Marc Sageman, by contrast, has challenged the conventional view that a cocktail of temporal factors, psychopathology and religious indoctrination in adulthood are key factors in radicalisation, focusing his thesis on bonds developed in social networks.<sup>39</sup> Thus religious ideology is not entirely discounted by Sageman and other researchers. As Sageman has more recently noted, ‘[t]here is no doubt that ideology, including global neo-jihadi ideology, is an important part of any explanation in the turn to political violence, but we still don’t understand how’.<sup>40</sup>

The author takes the view that the full combination of temporal factors contributes to decisions to act with violence but that—in the case of Salafi-jihadism—those factors are interpreted through the prism of religious ideology. One might note that comparative analysis of the same factors existing for other religions co-located with Muslim groups in identical circumstances does not produce similar violent responses, whether regionally or within diaspora populations. No Christian Arab suicide terrorists have emerged from Lebanon, Syria or Iraq in recent decades, despite sharing linguistic, cultural and economic circumstances—and often ethnicity.<sup>41</sup> In Iraq, Christian Arab minorities have endured sustained abuses and humiliations at the hands of their cohabitants but without provoking an extreme retaliation.

In efforts to minimise the role of religion, Islamically-motivated suicide terrorism is often compared with the suicide terrorism undertaken by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) operatives. What becomes clear however is that the LTTE case parallels the role of religion in Islamically-motivated suicide bombings because of the cult-like charismatic leadership of LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran. What is also less well known is that LTTE did not undertake suicide

operations until after its contact with Hezbollah—a Shia Islamic organisation that has used the same methodology.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that organisations using suicide tactics are overwhelmingly Islamic or of Muslim cultural origin (in the minority cases of PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party] and a few others) is stark when researching credible databases.<sup>43</sup> A process of elimination suggests Islam as the prevailing influence yet, despite the weight of evidence, Islam remains the factor to be avoided, denied or defended when discussing the phenomenon. As Mary Habeck notes:

The consistent need to find explanations other than religious ones for the attacks says, in fact, more about the West than it does about the jihadis. Western scholars have generally failed to take religion seriously. Secularists, whether liberals or socialists, grant true explanatory power to political, social, or economic factors but discount the plain sense of religious statements made by the jihadis themselves. To see why jihadis declared war on the United States and tried to kill as many Americans as possible, we must be willing to listen to their own explanations. To do otherwise is to impose a Western interpretation on the extremists, in effect to listen to ourselves rather than to them.<sup>44</sup>

There is understandable resistance to the possibility that Islamic belief might be the key source of Islamically-motivated violence because the threat then becomes insurmountable as the problem of determining the distinction between quietest piousness and dangerous radicalism becomes abstract. In other words, the gradations of ideological belief can be infinitesimally small at the conservative end such that identifying the internalised point at which someone traverses from purist conservative to political radical to activated violent extremist becomes indeterminate.

In the absence of mind-reading or the frank admission of Muslims, knowing when someone crosses over is a matter of entirely subjective assessment, whose accuracy can only ever be judged retrospectively after an act of terror is undertaken. Rationalisation of causes of violent jihad based on temporal factors thus becomes attractive because—for practical policy purposes—the implications to be drawn in connecting Islam to Islamic violence are too depressing to contemplate.

But belief does inform action. Religious belief is no different to any other set of values that delineate right and wrong action: whether liberalism or conservatism, racism or libertarianism, communism or fascism. Like any ideology, religion structures and explains a shared reality. It centres the individual within a community of belief and provides reassurance. Scott Gibbs and others describe religious belief as a means of coping with the anxiety experienced in confronting the unanswerable question of meaning.<sup>45</sup> Religious doctrine and practice are a neurotic defence essential to cope with such existential angst. Religion, according to Gibbs, is 'the avoidance of self-affirmation in an attempt to avoid the anxiety of the disintegration of the psychic self' and is essential to development, depending on the individual's circumstances, because it provides 'self-affirmation, particularly psychic self-preservation, through participation in the philosophy, structure, and authority of the group'.

As is well known, Islam's essential message is submission to the will of Allah, who is the supreme legislator of the cosmos [Quran 12:40].<sup>46</sup> The word 'Islam' is the verbal noun (*masdar*) which translates as 'submission'. Islamic-naming conventions are linked to the names of God and submission to the religion, so that 'Abdullah' means slave (or servant in modern usage) of God, 'Abdulrahman' means slave of the merciful God, 'Abdul Wahid' means slave of the one God, and so on. The covenant of submission in Islam is *salvific*—in sacrificing independence of will, Muslims obtain meaning as creations of a divine being who orders the universe, with the promise of ascending to an immortal, idealised afterlife. Certitude in this belief must be maintained, even in the face of challenges increasingly thrown up by modern technological advances and the historical ascendancy of non-Muslim societies. As Gibbs notes:

This sacrifice seems to accurately depict the choices made by violent, extremist Muslims and more than likely those made by the vast majority of conservative and neo-traditional Muslims, particularly those living by a strict, prescribed code of conduct as outlined in the *Qur'an* and Islamic law. Both groups are at risk of doubt. The former attempts to extinguish it through violence; the latter attempts to deny its existence, often by attempting to silence or discredit the source of doubt.

Other psychological studies support the view that social responsibilities and values derived from shared religious beliefs are a stronger driver in violent behaviours than political factors or economic deprivations.<sup>47</sup> Scott Atran, for example, notes that:

Those who believe suicide terrorism can be explained by a single political root cause, such as the presence of foreign military forces or the absence of democracy, ignore psychological motivations, including religious inspirations, which can trump rational self-interest to produce horrific or heroic behavior in ordinary people.<sup>48</sup>

The question is why Western political examination of Islamic violence treats the ideology of Islam as an exception—as an ideology disconnected from real world consequences. The means to break down this cognitive bias is to increase awareness of social science research that underlines the crucial role that religion plays in bonding communities together under an identity underpinned by moral values and concomitant defences and expiatory measures. Recent research, for example, argues that religious belief more generally arises as a result of selection pressures in which evolutionary success flows from membership of a larger, ideologically cohesive group in which ‘interlocking systems’ of morality are expressed through shared ritual that suppresses selfishness and ‘play a part in encouraging social cooperation’, which:

[F]its well with McCulloch and Willoghby’s (2009) self-regulation theory, in that the religious exercise of the ‘self-control muscle’ is usually done socially, via group rituals and practices; even prayer done in isolation can be seen as a continuation of this exercise, suppressing selfishness by continually keeping the moral community and its shared values in mind.<sup>49</sup>

Other research focused on Muslim communities in Europe suggests that Muslim religious identity is a ‘significant negative predictor’ of (host) national identification for immigrant communities, with the independent effect of ethnic identity found to be ‘not significant’ and that ‘for the great majority of Muslims, Muslim identity was a given ... [and that] not being, or being somewhat of, a Muslim was not a real option’.<sup>50</sup> The authors further contend that:

Dutch disidentification was higher among participants that were more strongly involved in actions and practices that directly implicate Muslim identity and among participants that more strongly endorsed Muslim political organization. This suggest that it is no so much identity importance but rather the content and meaning of Muslim identity that makes Muslim and national identity more incompatible.<sup>51</sup>

This research suggests that religious faith binds communities and defines in-group and out-group identification, and that plurality and tolerance of external societies may be negatively impacted by the degree of religious conviction experienced within the in-group. Since this is a significant predictor of group behaviour among adults, it stands to reason that examination of the in-group formation of such identity should be a priority, connected to the existing predisposition toward examination of external factors.<sup>52</sup>

### Islam’s lessons for developing minds

Social scientists are well aware of the impact that environment plays in shaping ideologies (including harmful ones such as racism) in early to middle childhood.<sup>53</sup> Research shows that such ideology is fixed and difficult to correct after the crucial period of cognitive development, though modified according to perceived norms and freedoms of expression.<sup>54</sup> Thus older children and adolescents become adept at concealing aspects of ideology on the basis of their rapid assessments of whether its reception would be well received or otherwise. They conceal their actual beliefs in circumstances that are less accepting but, nonetheless, those beliefs remain and are the prism through which their cultural identity and values are shaped. Such studies show that belief is a real issue that impacts society, that it can be measured through some agreed metrics and suggest that it can be shaped consciously and subliminally.

As cited, many of these studies focus on understanding negative ideologies fixed in childhood, transmitted through modelling of the parents’ beliefs and those of their close community. There is a heavy weighting of research in the area in the formation of racist ideology in ‘white’ families, its impact on non-white identity groups, and advancing pedagogical approaches to addressing the issue. In recent years, much study has focused on the related issue of prejudice against Muslims—

how it forms and spreads, and its impact on Muslim opportunity and acceptance of Muslims by non-Muslims.<sup>55</sup> By contrast, there is no comparable body of research investigating the experiences of prejudice in the home and local community that shape young Muslim minds and that may make some individuals more sympathetic and vulnerable to extreme expressions of Islam later in life.

Thinking about Islam this way—as hard-wired belief—is anathema to Western thinkers due to a post-Saidian caution surrounding Western cultural and historical examination of non-Western societies, and the tendency to reject the idea that religious beliefs rather than temporal factors inform mundane social actions, let alone being central to violent radicalisation.<sup>56</sup> It is also anathema to Muslims because it requires an acceptance that Islam contains some negative aspects if applied outside historical context (and thus that it is no different in this regard to Judaism and Christianity). In contrast to social science research on the development of racist ideology in childhood, which is well accepted socially, the idea that religious belief shapes action—especially negative action—remains taboo (as discussed in the earlier paper). Addressing resistance to the idea that belief counts is key to implementing a policy solution.

While most (but not all) Muslims may initially be resistant to the idea that Islam’s message is binary, they may nonetheless be receptive to the idea that their messaging in the home environment shapes younger minds. Muslims will be aware that there are many specific Quranic and *hadith* injunctions that support a segregated view of the world by Muslims (see for example Quran 5:51).<sup>57</sup> Any non-Muslim speaker of Arabic who has worked closely with Arab Muslims—and developed real friendships with them—knows that Islamic society displays conscious and unconscious prejudice against non-Muslims. It is a ubiquitous fact of Arab media and a frequent experience in everyday verbal interaction for non-Muslims to be identified as *kafir* or *kuffaar* (plural). This is an element of ordering Islamic society, key to determining who is part of the in-group and who is in the out-group.<sup>58</sup>

In my own experience, *kafir* and *kuffaar* have been used as a term of theological art—in discussions with religious scholars and also, ironically and jokingly, by friends and colleagues. My own anecdotal discussions with Muslim men and women exploring the casual use of such terminology in the home suggest that it is common. One colleague confided they often had to chastise their spouse because of concern the use of such terms might influence prejudices in their children. It is the case in my own experience of living near mosques in the Gulf and the Levant over a decade that the terms are used during almost every *khutba* (sermon) delivered at *jumaa’* (Friday) prayers—often with great enmity in sermons that starkly warn about injustices and infidelities of the non-Muslim out-group.

Even used in everyday conversation by adult Muslims, whether ironic or unconsciously, it is a term that divides the world and that subliminally may impact childhood development. For most Muslims, it comes with years of socialisation and pedagogical reinforcement in Arabic schoolbooks and religious instructions that set a valence between God’s chosen people and those who remain in ignorance or reject Islam. For those who are better informed, it also resonates with the legal classification and conditions established historically (by Muhammad’s example) for those non-Muslims who live in sacralised humiliation under Muslim rule. This is made explicit in the Quran [9:29] in a passage dealing with payment of the *jizya*, a tax levied on subjugated non-Muslims who wish to live under Muslim rule.<sup>59</sup> As the Iraqi Shia politician (and proponent of secularisation in the Middle East) Ayad Jamal Al Din has noted in arguing for the separation of religion from politics and governance:

Under the rule of Islam, there is no equality among people. Absolutely not. A Muslim is not like a *dhimmi* [a Jew or Christian living under Muslim rule]. The term *dhimmi* embodies a great deal of scorn and contempt. It is as if the Christian is saying: ‘I am under your protection, under your thumb’. This is what it means.<sup>60</sup>

This inculcation is arguably a factor complicating the difficulties in integration experienced by some Muslim migrants to the West. It is by now a clichéd and non-controversial observation that some young Muslims may experience a dissonance as a result of the pressure between traditional cultural expectations and the competing influences and attractions of their adopted societies. The othering of non-Muslim society in the doctrinal sources and within community narratives must be of relevance here. Regardless of the differing syncretic factors evident within the diverse

expressions of Islam, the shared and immutable doctrinal sources are intrinsic to Muslim cultural identity.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, Muslims raised on the cultural superiority of Islam are likely to be confronted by an inverted world order characterised by the technological and military strategic power of Western civilisation and by the perceived humiliation of Muslims. This is an existential challenge that has been well-observed by numerous commentators. David Cook, in one such example, writes, '[b]y the 1920s, the only areas of the Muslim world not directly or indirectly controlled by Europeans were those that no one wanted.... For Muslims, all of this was a major shock'.<sup>62</sup> The decline of Muslim power in the Middle East thus became a factor that fuelled radical narratives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to the present day—as surveyed in the earlier paper by the author.<sup>63</sup> Any rational consideration must therefore be that this conscious and unconscious ordering of the world must also have a prejudicial effect on early development within Muslim societies, and plays a role in the alienation of communities displaced within the West.

The tragedy is that no significant exploration has been undertaken into unhelpful prejudice-formation within Muslim families and societies, hence the digression here into personal anecdote. Structured social research into how this messaging occurs socially would be useful in encouraging Muslims to examine their possible role in shaping younger minds, which will be addressed in Part 3.

### The problem of context

Salafi-jihadism is merely a modern designator. A focus solely on Salafi-jihadism (or even its related manifestation within political Salafism) reflects an effort to compartment the problem and recast it as separate from an idealised 'mainstream' concept of Islam. A more useful approach is to refer to any uncompromising, anti-contextual ancestralism as presenting a potential threat profile in Islamic societies.

Self-doubt is not a defining characteristic of Islam.<sup>64</sup> Unlike Christianity, in particular, Islam has managed to absorb the rapid arrival of technological and intellectual developments without experiencing significant existential doubt. Rather than threatening the privileged place Islam has as the prism through which the world is understood, such advances are quickly subsumed within the context of the divine narrative, redefined in subservience to the superiority of the Islamic world-view.

These challenges of course have arrived externally and rapidly and have not evolved within Islamic society itself, as they did over a long process in the West where they had time to pervade and reshape cultural perspectives, building on the enlightenment and the shift towards rational secularism. Instead, Islamic scholars absorb such developments into Islam's core truth claims. Thus we see, for example, a Saudi Muslim scholar, Abdurahman al Sheha, make the claim that the Quran predicted scientific developments even on the sub-atomic scale.<sup>65</sup> This is easily done because the key source of Islam has a mechanism allowing Muslims to accommodate developments within Islam's ability to predict all possible eventualities.<sup>66</sup> A standard example of this can be seen in an article by the very popular Saudi scholar Salman al-Oadah, who cites many Quranic references to Allah as the all-knowing creator with knowledge of all that is seen and unseen:

For instance: 'Knower of the unseen and the seen' [*Sūrah al-An'ām*: 73] and 'Knower of the unseen, from whom not an atom's weight is hidden' [*Sūrah Saba*: 3].

Allah's knowledge is complete and perfect. It comprehends the past, present and future and always corresponds to reality. Allah says: 'Does He not know what He has created, and He is the Most Kind, the All-Aware' [*Sūrah al-Mulk*: 14].

Allah's knowledge is neither acquired through learning nor preceded by ignorance. Allah's knowledge compasses all things, as does His mercy and wisdom. Nothing in the heavens or on Earth escapes His notice. Allah says: 'There falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the Earth, nor anything green nor withered but it is all in a clear book' [*Sūrah al-An'ām*: 59].<sup>67</sup>

The fact that the Quran has ambiguous passages that can be interpreted widely—often assisted by obscure or long-forgotten lexical meanings—also assists in the flexibility of such exegesis.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, many Muslims believe that the Quran can only be understood in Arabic because that was the language chosen by God for its transmission.<sup>69</sup> This combination of actual and claimed opacity of meaning married to an ideology designed to easily adapt new developments as being predictable within the theological world-view creates a major difficulty in addressing Islamically-motivated violence. It means that Islam can place external challenges into its own context but not the reverse. For ancestralists, Islam dismisses the idea that different contexts exist at all. There is no difference between the life and times of the Prophet Mohammad and modern ages. There is only one context: the world created by God.

If the Quran and the *Hadeeth* (and medieval Muslim exegesis) exist as repositories for an ideology of militant expansionism, containing elements of anachronistic cultural misogyny and prejudice, then anti-contextual ancestralism is the pathway to actualisation of that ideology.<sup>70</sup> While there is absolutely no doubt Islamic religious sources contain peaceful messages adaptable to a modern context, equally there is no doubt the same texts—shared across sects—contain exhortations to behaviours problematic for Western liberal freedom.

This is not to say the same problems have not existed in other religions such as Christianity and Judaism.<sup>71</sup> But in most cases, those issues have been pushed from the public square as a result of developments in science and critical reasoning—and especially through efforts (willingly or otherwise) to place them within their proper historical context. Equally, it could be inferred the success of most Muslim communities in adapting to or even embracing Western life is on the basis of successful contextualisation. Adoption of a more flexible approach to belief entails accommodation of contextual compromises. The problem remains that the Quran exists as the received word of God—verbatim and unchangeable. So even for the peaceful majority of Muslims, the text is not open to revision. If the text is not open to variation or negotiation, it then follows that the pragmatic starting point in countering negative ideology is to draw on the positive aspects available within the source material.

### Part 3: Theological solutions and new social research

Noting that Islam is an ideology—a set of beliefs—no different to any other in its reception and inculcation during early childhood development, the answer lies in working selectively with the theological source material. With the awareness of the fact of the malleability of young minds and the ossification and fixing or hardwiring of such beliefs as humans develop to the point that it is extremely difficult to address in later life, policy-makers and Muslim communities should influence development positively through control of environmental messaging (including conscious and subliminal signalling).

Young Muslims should receive knowledge of the source material in a phased and highly selective manner, building resilience by setting and reinforcing preferences for positive behaviour modelled on the best examples from Islamic source material, and unimpeded by contact (until unavoidable) with elements less compatible with a diverse, liberal society. This would build resilience in young minds and provide biases to increase their chances of resisting Islamic demagogues in later life.

This policy paper presents two complementary initiatives that would assist Muslim communities, working with authorities, to cultivate Muslim ideals that are compatible with liberalism.

- **Development of a *Hadith*-based early-learning program** to be delivered in primary schools that inculcates awareness of the Prophet Mohammad's most tolerant examples, including his resilience in the face of criticisms and challenges to his beliefs. This program would be aimed at increasing resilience in young Muslims as they mature into the high-risk period of adolescence—hard-wiring cultural views and providing the conceptual and rhetorical tools to resist indoctrination when confronted with counter-factuals derived from the Prophetic traditions.

The aim would also be to identify cultural values that align with non-Muslim values in order to encourage and ease Muslims towards an Australian identity, promoting integration and

assimilation. The objective would be to present Muslim cultural identity as compatible with Australian identity. The central component in this policy is the creation of a *hadith* guide for teachers and community leaders. The essay will discuss two similar documents that could be drawn on to visualise the approach. Those documents are aimed at adult audiences, whereas the approach advocated here is aimed at primary-school children.

- **Establishment of social research grants** aimed at understanding the shaping of prejudicial views in early development in Muslim families. While, as discussed in Part 2 above, there are extensive academic studies of racist and prejudicial domestic attitudes shaping the development and later behavioural disposition of white children as they mature into adulthood (and the impact on non-white ethnic communities), comparable research is rare with regard to the shaping of prejudices within Muslim communities. These studies would have to be undertaken by Muslim social-scientists—ideally working with non-Muslim peers—in order to provide credibility that would make them persuasive in encouraging self-examination by Muslim communities of their role in counter-radicalisation.

The above inter-related policy approach is based on an understanding that early shaping is likely to be more successful than later intervention, the standard approach adopted by governments. Later intervention is complicated and resource intensive, and primarily left (in an ad hoc and reactive sense) to over-stretched law enforcement and security agencies. The potential return of hundreds of unreconstructed and combat-experienced terrorists from Syria and Iraq is a concern to authorities because the task of monitoring them all, let alone de-radicalising them, is impossible. Far better to provide means of inoculating young Muslim minds against negative ideology before it has a chance to take hold.

#### What is meant by 'a *hadith* guide for early childhood education'

While Part 2 has argued the need for social research to better understand how ideological vulnerabilities might occur in childhood, it is important to flesh out what is meant by the *hadith* guide proposal.

The interconnected policy proposal is focused on educational programs for childhood development, linked to social research, and aimed at hard-wiring a tolerant pluralistic form of Islam and building social skills and resilience. While Islam (like many other religions) contains passages that reflect military solutions, violence, prejudice and retributive justice, the aim would be to avoid or limit exposure to these elements until much later. The material should ideally be drawn from the two key sources that form the basis of Sunni adherence: the Quran and the *ahadith*. Inclusion of materials from medieval scholarly exegesis should be avoided because the breadth of opinions and contradictory views would be too complicated for the target group. In order to demonstrate the types of material that should be drawn on in designing class materials, some examples are provided below.

The Quran celebrates the rich diversity of the universe as evidence of the immanence of God in all things, for 'among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours' [30:22].<sup>72</sup> This rich diversity in the temporal world is part of God's plan for humankind, a fact that we are told must be acknowledged and respected by believers for, as the text reveals, '[v]erily in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge' [30:22]. The meaning here is that to be a true believer, you must acknowledge the rightness of all things to exist.

The Quran thus encourages an awareness of the diversity of human kind, instructing that God 'made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another' [49:12].<sup>73</sup> This is further underlined by the revelation of Muhammad's central role in salvation for all living things, for He is advised, '[w]e sent you (O Muhammad) not but as a mercy for the '*Ālamîn* [mankind, *jinn* and all that exists]' [21:107].<sup>74</sup> Contained within this message is an explicit acknowledgment of the diversity of expressions of belief and, importantly, that it is not for Muslims to judge the rightness of one expression over another:



We have established rites for every community to observe, so do not let them draw you into dispute about the matter, but appeal to God, for you are certainly following guidance that is sound. If they argue with you, then say, 'God knows best what you are doing'. God will judge among you, on the Day of Resurrection, regarding what you differed on [22:67-69].

This verse is an explicit appeal to a reasoned, non-violent reaction when confronted with such diversity—thus in opposition to the concept of *takfir* (declaring a person to be an apostate). Each person is to worship according to his or her practice, without concerning himself or herself with the modes of others: judgment is for God alone in the next world.

Moving to the examples from the *ahadith*, it is possible to draw a very human picture of the Prophet Muhammad, useful in creating a positive role model for developing minds. In one famous tradition, we see the Prophet's compassionate rejection of divine retributive violence in favour of allowing those who rejected Islam to arrive at the truth in good time:

[Mohammad] said: '[...] the hardest treatment I met from them was what I received from them on the day of `Aqaba. I betook myself to Ibn `Abd Yalil b. `Abd Kulal with the purpose of inviting him to Islam, but he did not respond to me as I desired. So I departed with signs of (deep) distress on my face'.... The angel in charge of the mountains (then) called out to me, greeted me and said: 'Muhammad, God has listened to what thy people have said to thee. I am the angel in charge of the mountains, and thy Lord has sent me to thee so that thou mayest order me what thou wishest. If thou wishest that I should bring together the two mountains that stand opposite to each other at the extremities of Mecca to crush them in between, (I would do that)'. But [Mohammad] said to him: 'I rather hope that God will produce from their descendants such persons as will worship Allah, the One, and will not ascribe partners to Him'.<sup>75</sup>

This is an example of *ahadith* used in counselling adults but equally contains a richly narrated tradition with supernatural imagery appealing to young children, with symbolic lessons on resilience they could easily map against their own childhood tribulations.<sup>76</sup>

In another tradition, we see the Prophet Muhammad deliver a lesson on commonsense and the separation of spiritual and temporal affairs that echoes the Christian advice to 'render unto Caesar what is Caesar's':

Rafi' b. Khadij reported that Allah's Messenger came to Medina and the people had been grafting the trees. He said: 'What are you doing?' They said: 'We are grafting them', whereupon he said: 'It may perhaps be good for you if you do not do that', so they abandoned this practice (and the date-palms) began to yield less fruit. They made a mention of it (to the Holy Prophet), whereupon he said: 'I am a human being, so when I command you about a thing pertaining to religion, do accept it, and when I command you about a thing out of my personal opinion, keep it in mind that I am a human being'.<sup>77</sup>

The *ahadith* contain many similar examples that deliver significant wisdoms in a simple narrative that would be comprehensible to younger minds. These include general humanistic lessons such as Muhammad's admonition to his followers to stand in respectful observance of the funeral procession of a Jewish citizen; 'When he was told that it was the coffin of a Jew, he said, 'is it not a living being (soul)''?<sup>78</sup> They also include very specific guidance on Islamic concepts such as jihad:

Narrated `Abdullah bin `Amr: 'A man came to the Prophet asking his permission to take part in Jihad. The Prophet asked him, "Are your parents alive"? He replied in the affirmative. The Prophet said to him, "Then exert yourself in their service".<sup>79</sup>

As these examples show, the core theological texts of Islam provide a rich resource to be drawn on in shaping impressionable minds. The policy solution then requires a pragmatic and discriminating selection of source material to shape ideological behaviours and to develop resilience based on acceptance (by policy-makers) of the centrality of the *ahadith* in Islamic ideology. The examples of the Prophet Muhammad are the guiding principles for Islamic belief, shaping interpretation of worldly events, whether mundane or of strategic significance, and setting behaviours in managing such events.<sup>80</sup> They are a critical tool in cognitive development in Muslim communities. It is undoubtedly the case that the majority of Muslim parents draw extensively on these positive

examples in raising their children, a fact supported anecdotally in my own interactions with Muslim friends and colleagues.

The approach here is different because it seeks to limit exposure to the full breadth of alternative examples contained in the *hadith* until an appropriate maturity is reached. (It also seeks greater awareness, engagement and control among Muslim parents regarding the exposure that their children may get to non-positive examples as a result of religious education and social interaction occurring outside the home). At this point, the charge may be levied that this approach involves 'cherry picking' of doctrinal material, and that this essay and the one that preceded have criticised policy-makers for the same approach when used to uncouple jihadist violence from Islam. The difference here is twofold. First, the approach proposed honestly admits to the strategy employed. Second, and importantly, the intention is not to obscure influences contained within Islamic ideology that might impede social engagement but to delay their reception until the point at which developing minds are better able to contextualise them on the basis of a positive, engaged and tolerant Islamic identity.

The aim, then, is to build resilience. This is a developmental issue affecting young people generally but it becomes acute when a sub-group whose religious group identity is centrally important to cultural cohesion interacts with a secular supra-majority. Ideological acculturation provided in childhood provides a narrative filter of obligations and social expectations that influences the way adolescents and adults interpret their successes and failures, and guides choices in reacting to them. In the case of young Muslims in conservative families, they become products of a narrative of spiritual superiority and mandated cultural separateness that plays on the promised restitution of Islamic civilisational glory leading to salvation.

But Australian society makes no accommodations for young men of no accomplishment. The absence of achievement or progress in young lives—married to a cultural expectation of respect on the basis of identification as a Muslim—can leave self-entitled young men vulnerable to recruitment by ideologues because it makes them psychologically brittle in the face of Western society's disinterest in their belief system. In a secular society, there are no prizes for religious identity. Thus, a closer focus on shaping resilience in earlier years may increase the chances that young people will be able to contextualise their failures, cope with them positively and make the right decisions.

#### **Proof of concept: similar examples targeted at countering radicalisation in adults**

Despite debate over the role religion may or may not play in driving violent jihad, some efforts have been made to counter violent extremism on the basis of theological sources. These materials, while aimed at adult audiences, provide a useful starting point in the development of curricula for a younger audience. Two notable examples are explored below, including identification of their strengths and weaknesses with regard to the current policy proposal.

Hannah Stuart and Rashad Ali's *A guide to refuting jihadism: critiquing radical Islamist claims to theological authenticity* refutes jihadist convictions that their violent ideology is supported within the schools of Sunni jurisprudence, using citation of core texts and the exegesis of scholars.<sup>81</sup> This guide—the first in English—has policy value in delineating possible counter-arguments to Salafi-jihadist ideology.<sup>82</sup> For example, the manual provides succinct arguments and jurisprudential citations supporting the concept that respect for the laws of an adopted homeland and loyalty to that country flow from the examples of Muslim observation of treaties (such as the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah). This incorporates jurisprudential examples across the major schools of Sunni jurisprudence, including interpretations by Hanbalist scholars, the school most closely aligned to Salafism. The manual thus forms an excellent basis in presenting persuasive counter-narratives to vulnerable Muslims.

The manual's practical application is not without problems. As the authors note, '[t]he existence of traditional legal opinion which differs from that of modern jihadists contradicts their claims to theological authenticity and, more significantly, exclusive truth'. The second assertion is correct—the multiple interpretations of Islam (and other religions) show the diversity of human truth claims around spiritual belief. I would disagree, however, with the first assertion, which the

authors later recast when they summarise their report to have shown ‘the aims and methods of jihadist groups as well as the support they receive from some conservative Sunni and Islamist scholars is antithetical to the normative values displayed within classical Sunni jurisprudence’.<sup>83</sup>

Asserting a normative Islam that trumps Salafi-jihadism is problematic since Salafists draw on primary theological material that predates later jurisprudential sources. The Salafist creed’s approach to monotheism which involves a rejection of later heretical accretions is both a valid interpretation of Islamic doctrine (as valid certainly as any other drawing on a strict interpretation focused solely on the example displayed by the authors of the core religious materials) and thus it both necessitates and validates a rejection of later interpretations that do not align. By ‘normative’, we take the authors to mean a ‘good’ Islam as opposed to a ‘bad’ Islam.

Disaggregating the various competing sectarian claims of provenance over the former may be problematic but we agree with the objective suggested by the approach—that theological arguments can be made to define a ‘better’ approach to Islam as aligned with liberal values, or at the very least distanced from the nihilistic, anti-civilisational aspects of Salafi-jihadism. The key approach to success with such a guide would involve intervention prior to or at the earliest point of indoctrination, well before the subject had amassed sufficient knowledge of Salafi-jihadi doctrine to develop intellectual arguments sufficient to discredit the evidences provided in the manual.

The issue of the inverse relationship of the timing of interventions being impacted by Islamic knowledge of the subject raises another risk associated with manuals of this nature.<sup>84</sup> At the time of publication, the manual received limited criticism from commentators but with one writer noting the key problem of the contradictory nature of Islamic theological source material: for every example that shows Islam as a model for tolerance and plurality, there arguably can be found an equally valid source supporting illiberalism and the violent propagation of the religion. Such criticism is Christian-polemical in nature and thus has its own unhelpful biases but is nonetheless valid.

For example, the commentator notes Stuart and Ali’s citation of al-Ghazali’s (1058-1111) proscription against killing women and children as contradicted by another al-Ghazali passage that allows collateral harm when using siege engines.<sup>85</sup> Historians of Islam and indeed Muslim scholars and commentators have acknowledged the ideological difficulties presented by the two key phases of Mohammad’s political life—reflected in the change in approach between the Meccan and the Medinan phases.<sup>86</sup> The former phase presents a peaceful, negotiated approach to proselytisation, while the latter sees the commencement of the Islamic conquests. This change in approach has been noted by earlier scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyya,<sup>87</sup> as well as by modern commentators. For example, the Iraqi Shia politician Ayad Jamal al-Din notes that confusion in Islamic motivations arises from the contradictory examples established between the phases:

The Prophet Muhammad lived in Mecca 13 years, as a herald and a warner. He had no police force, no army, and no money. In Al-Madina, he lived for 10 years, as a herald and a warner, but he also had military power, and [political] authority.... The first negative phenomenon of the ideological state—even under the rule of the Prophet Muhammad himself—is that it produces people with a split personality. Hypocrisy is a reaction not to religion but to the ideological state—even if this ideological state is ruled by the Prophet Muhammad himself, not to mention when it is ruled by others.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the theological sources are contradictory—and that contradiction is further complicated by the chronological order of the revelations in the Quran. Passages that may support tolerance and pluralism may be abrogated by incompatible messaging revealed at a later time. This highlights the need to minimise childhood exposure to the latter revelations until younger Muslims have absorbed the ideological values conveyed in the earlier revelations.

Another template that might be adapted for the primary education context can be found in the ‘Open letter to Baghdadi’ project.<sup>89</sup> The advantage here lies in the impeccable Islamic scholarly credentials of the authors and those who have since ratified its arguments. Published in 2014, the letter draws together ‘hundreds of Muslim leaders and scholars worldwide’ as co-signatories to an open letter to the ISIS leader.

Although nominally addressed to al-Baghdadi, the project is squarely aimed at deflecting a vulnerable mainstream adult readership prior to committing to jihad. The letter demonstrates that refutations of Salafi-jihadist ideology require citation of valid and persuasive religious precedent, and the letter provides detailed supporting evidence from the Quran, the *Hadith* and the writings of revered scholars throughout Islamic history. The document includes a useful executive summary of prohibitions and injunctions, which outlines the structure for the text that follows, refuting with full analysis and citation the contrary positions held by ISIS. An example is point 4, which encourages tolerance of differences in opinion:

It is permissible in Islam [for scholars] to differ on any matter, except those fundamentals of religion that all Muslims must know.<sup>90</sup>

This is expanded in the text that follows:

The more severe opinion should not be considered more pious, religious or sincere to God [*Subhana Wa Tala*]. Indeed, in severity there is exaggeration and extremism; God says in the Qur'an: 'God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you' (*Al-Baqarah*, 2: 185). Moreover, the Prophet said: 'Do not be severe with yourselves lest God be severe towards you. A people were severe with themselves and then God was severe towards them'. There is delusion and vanity in severity, because severe people naturally say to themselves: 'I am severe. Anyone less severe than me is deficient'; and thus: 'I am superior to them.' Herein lies an inherent attribution of ill-intention to God [*SWT*], as if God [*SWT*] revealed the Qur'an to make people miserable. God says: 'Tā hā. We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you should be miserable' (*Ta Ha*, 20: 1-2).<sup>91</sup>

The executive summary—and the text—thus covers off on the full range of excesses advocated and perpetrated by ISIS including slavery, harming of non-combatants and emissaries, suicide operations, torture and disfigurement, treachery against one's adopted nation, and the denial of human rights. The text is aimed at an educated readership likely at the upper-secondary level, with clear analysis that rarely becomes abstruse, and use of theological precedent which is easily comprehensible to both Muslim and non-Muslim readers.

The 'Letter' would form a useful discussion point on the path to developing a more practical tool for use with primary-age children. The lead in reshaping of such material for younger minds must come from Muslim academics, Islamic scholars and especially community members engaged in primary-age schooling. The scholarly origins of the 'Letter' give it credibility that would lead to better traction in Islamic communities than a similar guide produced by a secular think-tank, such as the one published by The Henry Jackson Society.

Key figures in drafting the 'Letter' include the Moroccan-Saudi Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah and his prominent student, the American Sheikh Hamza Yusuf. As noted on the website, there are hundreds of prominent Muslim figures who have endorsed the letter, including the current Grand Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Shawqi Allam, and a former Grand Mufti, Sheikh Ali Gomaa, and HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan. Although these figures would be easily dismissed by adult Salafists as being part of the heretical establishment, they would resonate strongly across mainstream expressions in Australian society.

Reshaping the 'Letter' into a format tailored for use within a scholastic context would be useful in encouraging a non-threatening cooperative dialogue between community members, academia and officialdom, placing key responsibilities on Muslim voices. In engaging communities, the appeal to the authority of the religious leaders in the 'Letter' is intended only to generate confidence in the legitimacy of the approach. It is not meant to infer a handing of control over to religious leaders and *shura* councils in local mosques—people who are themselves the product of ideological and pedagogical modes this policy is intended to address.

Thus, while Muslim communities and academics would play a key role in developing scholastic materials, especially in advocacy, non-Muslim academics with appropriate knowledge of Islamic doctrine, early learning and community dynamics should also be engaged as partners in the research and development of materials. This would crucially assist with balance and maintenance of the original policy objectives.

## Conclusion

Rather than seeking temporal answers to ideologically-driven violence, policy-makers should re-examine their 21<sup>st</sup> century secular assumptions and accept that religious ideology shapes behaviour. Islam is a belief structure—it is the lens through which humans interpret and find answers to questions of existential meaning, applied to real-world challenges. While Islam, like any religion may produce positive outcomes, it also has strong defence mechanisms to eliminate doubt by confronting epistemological challenges directly, including a culture of silencing critics by intimidation or violence.

Importantly, and like any other ideology received culturally, Islam is strongly shaped in the home and local community. Understanding the power of belief and noting the social research showing hard-wiring of ideology in early development, policy-makers should complement efforts aimed at adult counter-radicalisation by encouraging Muslim parents to filter and shape positive ideology in the home, supported by scholastic materials. The objective would be to provide the context that is missing in extreme interpretations. This approach would build resilience and encourage social participation. It would build trust and confidence across society by allowing Muslim communities to make a crucial contribution in the countering of radical and violent extremism. If Islam is the source of the problem, Islam must be the solution.

## Caveat

At certain points, this essay has drawn on material translated by MEMRI (the Middle East Media Research Institute). The author is aware of the research focus of MEMRI, an organisation that primarily reports on negative aspects of Middle Eastern media discourse. The service is most useful (to the present author) when it increasingly provides accurate translations of new liberal voices in the Islamic world, making them accessible to non-Arabic speakers. In almost all the cases cited, the author has obtained and reviewed the original un-translated material via online postings by the originating media source, and can provide links on request.

## Notes

---

- 1 See Islamic State, 'Why we hate you & why we fight you', *Dabiq* #15, pp. 30-3, available at <<http://www.clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/islamic-state-magazine-dabiq-fifteen-breaking-the-cross.pdf>> accessed 27 August 2016. WARNING: THE MAGAZINE CONTAINS EXTREMELY DISTURBING GRAPHIC CONTENT.
- 2 Chris Kenny, 'Pauline Hanson raises widely held unease on Islamic extremism, Muslims', *The Australian*, 22 September 2016, available at <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/chris-kenny/pauline-hanson-raises-widely-held-unease-on-islamic-extremism-muslims/news-story/1d4c698e2a6c0c5e872dbefeaf0c9a01>> accessed 13 October 2016.
- 3 Essential Media Communications, 'Essential report', *Essential Media Communications* [website], 21 September 2016, available at <<http://www.essentialvision.com.au/ban-on-muslim-immigration>> accessed 13 December 2016.
- 4 Peter Lewis, 'Progressives can attract Hanson supporters. But not by insulting them', *The Guardian* [website], 21 September 2016, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/21/progressives-can-attract-hanson-supporters-but-not-by-insulting-them>> accessed 13 October 2016.
- 5 Roy Morgan Research, 'Majority of Australians support Muslim and asylum seeker immigration; and 58% want Australia's population kept under 35 million', *Roy Morgan Research* [website], 25 October 2016, available at <<http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/7017-australian-views-on-immigration-population-october-2016-201610241910>> accessed 13 October 2016.
- 6 Phillip Hudson, 'One Nation soars post-election, Newpoll shows', *The Australian*, 17 October 2016, available at <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/newspoll/one-nation-makes-soars-postelection-newspoll-shows/news-story/c0c4d53600cc59b21a72bf30e8ae77fd>> accessed 22 October 2016.
- 7 Sarah Vogler and Sarah Elks, 'One Nation on track for 10-seat, Queensland haul', *The Australian*, 18 October 2016, available at <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/one-nation-on-track-for-10-seat-queensland-haul/news-story/8fb58929c8fa53f1db897e072b8bf1e9>> accessed 18 October 2016.
- 8 Qanta Ahmed, 'How to save Islam from the Islamists', *The Spectator* [website], 17 January 2015, available at <<http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/01/how-to-save-islam-from-the-islamists/>> accessed 13 October 2016, which notes that 'At last, on New Year's Day, the president of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, did what no other leader of the Muslim world has done to date: he named Islam's real enemy.... Sisi's speech is significant because the Islamic world has precious little record of leaders discussing Muslims' collective responsibility for the toxic ideologies within our midst. President Sisi's candour has shone light upon the most critical issue of our time: the urgent need for the Muslim world to denounce Islamism as the imposter and explain the real meaning of the Quran'.
- 9 Robert Asghar, 'Explaining the crisis of leadership in the Muslim world', *Forbes* [website], 16 November 2015, available at <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/robasghar/2015/11/16/explaining-the-crisis-of-leadership-in-the-muslim-world/#752c1dd54823>> accessed 30 October 2016.
- 10 Asra Nomani, available at <<https://twitter.com/asranomani/status/567594474356752384>> accessed 23 August 2016.
- 11 Andrew Wilmhurst, 'Nothing to do with Islam': the historical origins, ideology and strategic threat of global Salafi-jihadism, *Indo-Pacific Strategic Papers* [website], November 2016, available at <[http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Wilmhurst\\_IPSP.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Wilmhurst_IPSP.pdf)> accessed 13 December 2016.
- 12 See 'Why we hate you & why we fight you'. WARNING: EXTREMELY DISTURBING GRAPHIC CONTENT.
- 13 Jeffrey Goldberg, 'The Obama doctrine', *The Atlantic* [website], April 2016, available at <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>> accessed 30 August 2016.
- 14 In prosecuting the 'war on terror', the Bush and Obama administrations 'added \$2 trillion to the \$19 trillion US debt. That's more than 10 per cent': see Kimberly Amadeo, 'War on terror: facts, costs and timeline', *The Balance* [website], available at <<https://www.thebalance.com/war-on-terror-facts-costs-timeline-3306300>> accessed 20 March 2017.

- 
- 15 Josh Feldman, 'French President Hollande: attackers "have nothing in common" with Muslim faith', *Mediaite* [website], 9 January 2015, available at <<http://www.mediaite.com/online/french-president-hollande-attackers-have-nothing-in-common-with-muslim-faith/>> accessed 13 October 2016.
- 16 *France 24*, 'Wear a veil or be French: Hollande shocks with views on Muslims and migrants', *France 24* [website], 12 October 2016, available at <<http://www.france24.com/en/20161012-french-president-hollande-book-islam-veil-sarkozy-trierweiler-gayet-migrants>> accessed 13 October 2016.
- 17 Joe Kelly, 'Malcolm Turnbull affirms terror link with "tiny Islam minority"', *The Australian*, 23 June 2016, available at <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/federal-election-2016/malcolm-turnbull-affirms-terror-link-with-tiny-islam-minority/news-story/38441d1c37f387e13edc580843f54919>> accessed 18 October 2016.
- 18 See, for example, Omar Alnatour, 'Why Muslims should never have to apologize', *Huffington Post* [website], 24 March 2016, available at <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/omar-alnatour/why-muslims-should-never-have-to-apologize\\_b\\_9526296.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/omar-alnatour/why-muslims-should-never-have-to-apologize_b_9526296.html)> accessed 29 October 2016.
- 19 Alexandra Sims, 'Paris attacks: Australia's grand mufti sparks outrage after comparing attacks to 'racism and Islamophobia'', *The Independent* [website], 17 November 2015, available at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/paris-attacks-australias-grand-mufti-sparks-outrage-after-comparing-attacks-to-racism-and-a6737721.html>> accessed 31 October 2016.
- 20 Islam in Australia, 'Joint statement: Muslim community rejects Abbott Government's demonisation and condemns moves to silence legitimate critique', *Islam in Australia* [website], 19 February 2015, <<https://islaminaustralia.com/2015/02/19/muslim-community-rejects-abbott-governments-demonisation-and-condemns-moves-to-silence-legitimate-criticisms/>> accessed 13 December 2016; see also Sam Harris, 'What do jihadists really want?', *Sam Harris* [podcast], available at <<https://www.samharris.org/podcast/item/what-do-jihadists-really-want>> accessed 9 October 2016. Harris provides commentary on *Dabiq* #15 in the same spirit as the argument made earlier by Habeck. See, for example, the passage from which the 'pornography of self-doubt' observation is drawn:
- 'To read this magazine is to discover that the oft-mocked line that was delivered by George Bush in his Texas drawl, "they hate us for our freedom", is actually true. It is especially true if you include freedom of speech and belief. And those among you who think that they must have some other motive—that they must hate us for our foreign policy, as any rational people would in the aftermath of colonialism—well you're simply wrong. And dangerously so, as they make absolutely clear. So everything that has been said and written by people like Noam Chomsky and Robert Pape and Glenn Greenwald, and the dozens of prominent Muslim apologists about the motivations of jihadists—this whole pornography of self-doubt that they've been pedalling for more than a decade—all of this is pure delusion. The people who are attracted to the jihadist cause are actually concerned about the work of Darwin, and Marx and Nietzsche and Durkheim, and Weber and Freud who they call "the engineers of Western decadence".'
- 21 The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), 'Saudi TV host Nadine Al-Budair takes to task apologists who claim terrorists have nothing to do with Islam and the Muslims: they emerged from our schools and universities', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 3 April 2016, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5436.htm>> accessed 9 October 2016.
- 22 MEMRI, 'Egyptian TV hosts argue on air about who should be held accountable for Brussels attacks: Islam or the West', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 22 March 2016, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5411.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.
- 23 MEMRI, 'Egyptian author Sayyid Al-Qemany: Islam in its present form is a threat to the world, all scorpions sting', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 22 May 2016, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5542.htm>> accessed 9 October 2016.
- 24 MEMRI, 'Saudi Shura Council member Ibrahim Al-Buleihi: terrorism is the product of a flaw in Arab and Muslim culture', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 23 May 2006, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1174.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.
- 25 MEMRI, 'Qatari Prof. Abd Al-Hamid Al-Ansari analyzes the ideological roots of terrorism: something is wrong in our cultural order', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 3 June 2016, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5522.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.
- 26 MEMRI, 'Secular and Islamist scholars clash during Kuwaiti TV debate on Arab youth engagement with terror organizations; Nasser Dashti: time to remove religion from public life', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 11 July 2016, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5597.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016

- 27 MEMRI, 'Former Iraqi MP Ayad Jamal Al-Din: a civil state is the only solution to combat ISIS', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 17 October 2014, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/4556.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.
- 28 MEMRI, 'French-Algerian intellectual: we must shake the dust off our Islamic heritage', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 6 July 2014, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/4510.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.
- 29 MEMRI, 'Kuwaiti author Ibtihal Al-Khatib: ISIS emerged from our heritage books; if we do not reform our discourse we will become extinct', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 20 November 2015, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5179.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.
- 30 MEMRI, 'Syrian poet Adonis: unless the Arabs separate religion and state, they will become extinct', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], 22 May 2016, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5530.htm>> accessed 10 October 2016.
- 31 AAP, 'Australia's imams council denies grand mufti justified Paris attacks', *The Guardian* [website], 18 November 2015, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/18/australia-imams-council-denies-grand-mufti-justified-paris-attacks>> accessed 29 October 2016.
- 32 Scott Gibbs, 'Islam and Islamic extremism: an existential analysis', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 2005, pp. 156-203. See, for example, at p. 201, 'Given this structure and given the force behind many beliefs (eg uncompromising monotheism, *jihad*, Muhammad as "Seal of the Prophets" etc) and the emphasis on actualization of a disciplined code of moral behavior, it is clear that Islam is one of the most powerful existential holding containers on earth. Indeed, it may be *the* most powerful'.
- 33 Muhammad Muhsin-Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, Darussalam: Riyadh, 2011, p. 750.
- 34 In this paper, *hadith* is used for singular, *ahadith* for plural. *Hadith* translates as a tale, narrative or account: see, for example, Rohu Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid, a modern Arabic-English dictionary*, Dar El-Ilm Lilmalayin: Beirut, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1997, p. 458. It is thus a thing said or done by the Prophet or his companions.
- 35 By authenticated, we mean *ahadith* that have been declared *sahih* (true or authentic) by Al Bukhari or Muslim, or a similarly revered scholar related to a Sunni school (*madhab*) of jurisprudence, such as 'Ahmad' (Hanbal). Lower ratings such as *hasan* (fair) are persuasive but, for the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on the highest-ranked *ahadith*.
- 36 Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, pp. 210-11, which states that "The recompense of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and do mischief in the land is only that they shall be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet cut off from opposite sides, or be exiled from the land. That is their disgrace in this world, and a great torment is theirs in the Hereafter". See Quran 4:24, p. 158, 'Also [forbidden are] women already married, except those (slaves) whom your right hands possess'. See also Averroes (Ibn Rushd), *Bidayat al-Mudjtahid*, cited in Andrew G. Bostom (ed.), *The legacy of jihad*, Prometheus Books: New York, 2005, p. 149; and Al-Ghazali, *Kitab Al-Wagiz fi Fiqh Madhab Al-Imam Al-Safi'i*, cited in Bostom, p. 199, 'If a person of the *ahl al-kitab* [People of the Book – Jews and Christians, typically] is enslaved, his marriage is [automatically] revoked'.
- 37 Sahih Muslim, 'The book of destiny', Book 46, *Hadith* 40, available at <<http://sunnah.com/muslim/46/40>> accessed 29 October 2016: it says 'The mother of every person gives him birth according to his true nature. It is subsequently his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian. Had his parents been Muslim he would have also remained a Muslim. Every person to whom his mother gives birth (has two aspects of his life); when his mother gives birth Satan strikes him but it was not the case with Mary and her son (Jesus Christ)'.
- 38 David H. Schanzer, 'No easy day: government roadblocks and the unsolvable problem of political violence: a response to Marc Sageman's "The stagnation in terrorism research"', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2014, pp. 596-600: see p. 598 which says "The predominant stream of thought was once that a distorted form of religiosity drove some Muslims to seek out terrorist organizations and engage in violence. Our more sophisticated view is now that many factors (which may have nothing to do with religion) push individuals to adopt radical political views. Some (but not all) of these individuals become immersed in fundamentalist religious practices and their interaction with like-minded extremists can contribute to the move toward violence. This more nuanced explanation of radicalization neither over-emphasizes nor discounts the role of religion in radicalization'.
- 39 Marc Sageman, *Understanding terror networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 2004.



- 
- 40 Marc Sageman, 'The stagnation in terrorism research', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2014, p. 567.
- 41 The sole recorded instance of a Christian Lebanese group claiming credit for a suicide bombing occurred in 1985: see Ihsan A. Hijazi, '5 die in Lebanon suicide bomb attack', *New York Times* [website], 13 November 1985, available at <<http://www.nytimes.com/1985/11/13/world/5-die-in-lebanon-suicide-bomb-attack.html>> accessed 13 December 2016.
- 42 A.J. Caschetta, 'Does Islam have a role in suicide bombings?', *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2015, pp. 7 and 9.
- 43 See, for example, The University of Chicago's Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, 'Suicide attack database', *University of Chicago* [website], 12 October 2016, available at <<http://cpostdata.uchicago.edu/>> accessed 13 December 2016. Of the 106 groups listed by the study (not including one duplicate and the category of 'unknown group'), five are political groups composed of Arabs or Kurds (who are historically and culturally Muslim), two are non-Muslim but religiously motivated (Christian Arab and Sikh) and only one group is politically motivated but likely operating on cult-like basis akin to religion (LTTE). The remainder (92.45%) are Islamically-motivated organisations or Muslim groupings motivated by objectives that cannot be disaggregated from their religious dimensions (that is, the liberation of Palestine).
- 44 Mary Habeck, *Knowing the enemy*, Yale University: New Haven, 2006, p. 7
- 45 Gibbs, 'Islam and Islamic extremism', p. 164
- 46 Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, pp. 426-7, which says 'You do not worship besides Him but only names which you have named (forged)—you and your fathers—for which Allah has sent down no authority. The command (or the judgement) is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him (ie His Monotheism); that is the (true) straight religion, but most men know not'.
- 47 Jeremy Ginges and Scott Atran, 'What motivates participation in violent political action?', *Values, Empathy, and Fairness across Social Barriers*, Issue 1167, 2009, pp. 115-23.
- 48 Scott Atran, 'The moral logic and growth of suicide terrorism', *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2006, p. 144.
- 49 Jesse Graham and Jonathan Haidt, 'Beyond beliefs: religions bind individuals into moral communities', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2010, pp. 145-6.
- 50 Maykel Verkuyten and Ali Aslan Yildiz, 'National (dis)identification and ethnic and religious identity: a study among Turkish-Dutch Muslims', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 33, No. 10, October 2007, pp. 1452 and 1454.
- 51 Verkuyten and Yildiz, 'National (dis)identification and ethnic and religious identity', p. 1459.
- 52 And this is indeed a recommendation in the Verkuyten and Yildiz paper, which asserts that 'future studies on both the origins and consequences of ethnic, religious and national identifications, and studies among various ethnic and religious groups, including Muslim subgroups, should contribute to a further understanding of identification processes in relation to the nature of the groups and the intergroup context': Verkuyten and Yildiz, 'National (dis)identification and ethnic and religious identity', p. 1461
- 53 See, for example, Terry Husband, Jr. 'He's too young to learn about that stuff: anti-racist pedagogy and early childhood social studies', *Social Studies Research and Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2010, pp. 61-75; V.D. Ausdale and J. Feagin, *The first R: how children learn race and racism*, Rowman & Littlefield Inc.: Maryland, 2002; Dalila Xavier de Franca and Maria Benedicta Moneiro, 'Social norms and the expression of prejudice: the development of aversive racism in childhood', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 43, 2013, pp. 263-71; Clark McKown and Rhona S. Weinstein, 'The development and consequences of stereotype consciousness in middle childhood', *Child Development*, Vol. 74, No. 2, March-April 2003, pp. 498-515; Maria Benedicta Monteiro, Dalila Xavier de Franca and Ricardo Rodrigues, 'The development of intergroup bias in childhood: how social norms can shape children's racial behaviours', *International Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2009, pp. 29-39; Marian de Souza, 'The spiritual dimension of education in addressing issues of identity and belonging', *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2016, pp. 125-38.
- 54 Tobias Raabe and Andreas Beelmann, 'Development of ethnic, racial, and national prejudice in childhood and adolescence: a multinational meta-analysis of age differences', *Child Development*, Vol. 82, No. 6, November/December 2011, pp. 1715-37.
- 55 See, for example, Nasar Meer, 'Semantics, scales and solidarities in the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2013, pp. 500-15; Rachel A.D. Bloul, 'Anti-

- discrimination laws, Islamophobia, and ethnicization of Muslim identities in Europe and Australia', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 1, April 2008; Gary D. Bouma, 'Islamophobia as a constraint to world peace: the case of Australia', *Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 22, Issue 4, October 2011, pp. 433-41; Sherman A. Lee *et al.*, 'Fear of Muslims: psychometric evaluation of the Islamophobia scale', *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2013, pp. 157-71; Sherman A. Lee, Jeffrey A. Gibbons, John M. Thompson and Hussam S. Timani, 'The Islamophobia scale: instrument development and initial validation', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, Vol. 19, Nos. 92-105, 2009; and Walter D. Mignolo, 'Islamophobia/Hispanophobia: the (re) configuration of the racial imperial/colonial matrix', *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, Vol. 1, Fall 2006, pp. 13-28.
- 56 For discussion of the negative effect of Said's work on Western scholarship, see Irfan Khawaja, 'Essentialism, consistency and Islam: a critique of Edward Said's *Orientalism*', *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 4, October 2007, pp. 689-713; Herbert S. Lewis, 'The influence of Edward Said and Orientalism on anthropology, or: can the anthropologist speak?', *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 4, October 2007, pp. 774-85; and W. Hughes, *Islam and the tyranny of authenticity*, Equinox: Sheffield, 2015.
- 57 Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, p. 216, which says 'O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as *Auliyā'* (friends, protectors, helpers), they are but *Auliyā'* of each other. And if any amongst you takes them as *Auliyā'*, then surely he is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not those people who are amongst the *Zālimūn* (polytheists and wrongdoers and unjust)'.  
58 Gibbs, 'Islam and Islamic extremism', p. 190.
- 59 Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, p. 345, which says 'Fight against those who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad), and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (ie, Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued'. The term 'subdued' is also translated as 'humbled': see <<https://quran.com/9:29>> or 'brought low' or 'in a state of subjection', see <<http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=9&verse=29>>. See also, for example, Dario Fernandez-Morera, *The myth of the Andalusian paradise*, Isi Books: Wilmington, 2016, on the historical practices associated with humiliation of subjugated peoples. See also Stephen J. McKinney, 'Echoes of the dhimma: discriminatory vestiges of an ancient Islamic covenant', *Regent Journal of International Law*, Vol. 6, 2008, pp. 229-69 for a historical analysis from a legal perspective.
- 60 MEMRI, 'Former Iraqi MP Ayad Jamal Al-Din in a TV debate about separation of religion and state: the combination of the Quran and the sword is more dangerous than nuclear technology', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project* [website], November 2010, available at <<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/2689.htm>> accessed 18 October 2016.
- 61 Islam is both ideology and culture. Which is why it's dissonant to read commentary in the press claiming that Muslim practices incompatible with Western standards are in all cases the fault of culture rather than originating within Islamic doctrine. An example of this is the claim that female circumcision is an African tribal anomaly when in fact it is mandated by two of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence (Shafi'i and Hanbali) and encouraged by the remaining two, and thus is the fate of millions of women from Egypt through to Indonesia: see, for example, 'Circumcision of girls and some doctors' criticism thereof', *Islam Question and Answer* [website], available at <<https://islamqa.info/en/60314>> accessed 1 March 2017.
- 62 David Cook, *Understanding jihad*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 2005, p. 93.
- 63 Andrew Wilmhurst, "'Nothing to do with Islam": the historical origins, ideology and strategic threat of global Salafi-jihadism', *Indo-Pacific Strategic Papers* [website], November 2016, available at <[http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Wilmhurst\\_IPSP.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Wilmhurst_IPSP.pdf)> accessed 13 December 2016.
- 64 Gibbs, 'Islam and Islamic extremism'. See, for example, p. 201 which says, 'Given this structure and given the force behind many beliefs (eg uncompromising monotheism, *jihad*, Muhammad as "Seal of the Prophets" etc) and the emphasis on actualization of a disciplined code of moral behavior, it is clear that Islam is one of the most powerful existential holding containers on earth. Indeed, it may be *the* most powerful'.
- 65 See, for example, 'Quran on the atom', *The Key to Islam* [website], available at <<http://www.thekeytoislam.com/en/scientific-explanations-quran-atom.aspx>> accessed 13 September 2016.

- 66 Internet searches show numerous similar apologetic interpretations of later scientific developments foreshadowed in the Quran; see, for example, <[https://www.google.com.au/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=quran+science+miracles&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gfe\\_rd=cr&ei=tjIQWPaSC7Du8wf6\\_KLYBQ](https://www.google.com.au/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=quran+science+miracles&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gfe_rd=cr&ei=tjIQWPaSC7Du8wf6_KLYBQ)>. Such claims are challenged by various scientific atheist commentaries online: see, for example, <[https://www.google.com.au/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=islam+scientific+claims&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gfe\\_rd=cr&ei=w5JQWN2aFbDu8wf6\\_KLYBQ](https://www.google.com.au/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=islam+scientific+claims&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gfe_rd=cr&ei=w5JQWN2aFbDu8wf6_KLYBQ)>
- 67 Salman al-Oadah, 'Al-'Alīm – Allah is all-knowing', *Islam Today* [website], 16 February 2011, available at <<http://en.islamtoday.net/artshow-429-3946.htm>> accessed 20 October 2016.
- 68 Ibn Warraq (ed.), *Which Koran? Variants, manuscripts, linguistics*, Prometheus Books: Amherst, 2011. A controversial attempt to resolve ambiguities of meaning in the Quran can be found in Christoph Luxenberg, *The Syro-Aramaic reading of the Koran: a contribution to the decoding of the language of the Koran*, Prometheus Books: Amherst, 2007.
- 69 Aaron W. Hughes, *Muslim identities: an introduction to Islam*, Columbia University Press: New York, 2013, p. 71. As an example of the phenomenon by which the term 'translation' is to be carefully avoided, the source for Quranic material cited in this essay is Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali's *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, which is a dual Arabic-English version.
- 70 See, for example, Andrew G. Bostom, *The legacy of jihad: Islamic holy war and the fate of non-Muslims*, Prometheus Books: Amherst, 2005; Cook, *Understanding jihad*; and Fernandez-Morera, *The myth of the Andalusian paradise*.
- 71 See, for example, Sam Harris, *The end of faith*, W.W. Norton & Co.: New York, 2005. Chapter 3 details problematic Christian doctrine and history (which is also available in podcast at <<https://www.samharris.org/podcast/item/the-end-of-faith-sessions-3>>)
- 72 Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, p. 726.
- 73 Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, p. 925.
- 74 Muhsin-Khan and Al-Hilali, *Interpretation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English language*, p. 596.
- 75 Sahih Muslim, *The book of jihad and expeditions*, Book 32, *Hadith* 135, available at <<http://sunnah.com/muslim/32/135>> accessed 29 October 2016.
- 76 From a discussion between the author and a Gulf-based Islamic scholar.
- 77 Sahih Muslim, 'The book of virtues', Book 43, *Hadith* 185, available at <<http://sunnah.com/muslim/43/185>> accessed 29 October 2016.
- 78 Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Book of funerals (Al Janaa'iz)', Book 23, *Hadith* 71, available at <<http://sunnah.com/bukhari/23/71>> accessed 30 October 2016.
- 79 Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Fighting for the cause of Allah (Jihaad)', Book 56, *Hadith* 213, available at <<http://sunnah.com/bukhari/56/213>> accessed 29 October 2016.
- 80 Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's legacy in the medieval and modern world*, Oneworld: Oxford, 2009, p. 3.
- 81 Hannah Stuart and Rashad Ali, 'A guide to refuting jihadism: critiquing radical Islamist claims to theological authenticity', *The Henry Jackson Society* [website], 4 February 2014, available at <<http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2014/02/04/refuting-jihadism/>> accessed 17 October 2015
- 82 Or at least, the first guide in English developed for public release as opposed to government use.
- 83 Stuart and Ali, 'A guide to refuting jihadism', p. 92.
- 84 Specifically, the problem identified at the beginning of Part 3 of this paper.
- 85 Mark Durie, 'Response to "A guide to refuting jihadism": critiquing radical Islamist claims to theological authenticity', *Lapidomedia – Centre for Religious Literacy in Journalism* [website], 4 February 2014, available at <<http://www.lapidomedia.com/response-guide-refutingjihadism-critiquing-radical-islamist-claims-theological-authenticity>> accessed 17 October 2016. Another likely obstacle might also be the fact that al-Ghazali is heavily associated with Sufism and thus not a persuasive source of advice for Salafists.
- 86 This was a key element of the Sudanese reformer Mahmud Taha's (1909-1985) reconceptualisation

---

of Islam (Taha was executed by the Sudanese government for apostasy). See, for example, Khalid Duran, 'An alternative to Islamism: the evolutionary thought of Maḥmūd Ṭāhā', *Cross Currents*, Vol. 42, Winter 92/93, pp. 453-67; and Mahgoub El-Tigani Mahmoud, 'Quest for divinity: a critical examination of the thought of Mahmud Muhammad Taha', *Contemporary Islam*, Issue 3, 2009, pp. 177-85.

- 87 Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Siyasa Al Shariyya*, cited in Andrew G. Bostom (ed), *The legacy of jihad – Islamic Holy War and the fate of non-Muslims*, Prometheus Books: New York, 2005, p. 166.
- 88 MEMRI, 'Former Iraqi MP Ayad Jamal Al-Din in a TV debate about separation of religion and state'.
- 89 Available at <<http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com>>
- 90 'Open letter to Baghdadi', English version available at <<http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/#translations>>, p. 1
- 91 'Open letter to Baghdadi', p. 7.



<http://www.defence.gov.au/adcc/publications/publications.html>

