

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE RESEARCH THEME

The dissertation analyses the ideologies¹ espoused by Islamic fundamentalist groups in three specific country case studies, which are elaborated on later. Islamic fundamentalism is a hotly debated and contested issue in the global arena. Rationalist approaches to Islamic fundamentalism are usually conducted from an allegedly objective point of view and tend to pit Islamic fundamentalism as the reactionary opposite to progressive Western elements such as secularism, science and technology. Also, rationalist approaches tend to see Islamic fundamentalism as little more than a reaction to political and socio-economic circumstances, thereby neglecting the aspect of ideology when it comes to Islamic fundamentalist groups. This is problematic in that ideology is crucial in understanding the reasoning behind the existence of Islamic fundamentalist groups, including the actions that they engage in. Adopting a more open-ended approach (the dialogic model of interpretation, which is explained later), this dissertation makes the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa its focus, with the aim of arriving at a more thorough, less judgemental understanding thereof. Islamic fundamentalism as the key concept of this dissertation is dealt with at length in Chapters two and three both in terms of several differing definitions, as well as in terms of the ideas espoused by influential Islamic fundamentalist figures in Muslim history.

This dissertation is relevant to the field of political science in its aim to provide a deeper analysis of the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa than rationalist approaches to Islamic fundamentalism may be able to provide. A more in-depth ideological picture of these Islamic fundamentalist groups may also contribute to a better understanding of the respective political situations in the countries that are examined. These include violent opposition by Islamic fundamentalist groups against the secular regime in Algeria, an abating civil war between the Islamic fundamentalist dominated government and the non-Muslim south in Sudan, as well as the crisis in the Darfur region, and attacks

¹ Ideology, according to the definition in the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics, is here taken to mean “any comprehensive and mutually consistent set of ideas by which a group makes sense of the world”. Islam is stated as an example. Furthermore, according to this definition, an ideology needs to explain how things have come to be as they are at present and indicate where they are heading (provide a guide for action). An ideology also needs to provide criteria for “distinguishing truth from falsehood and valid arguments from invalid and some overriding belief, whether in God, Providence, or History, to which adherents may make a final appeal when challenged by outsiders” (McLean 1996).

launched in the Western Cape region in South Africa by a vigilante movement with alleged strong Islamic fundamentalist influences.

It should be taken into account here that the concept “political” is given a broad meaning. This can be linked to the postmodernist rejection of neat positivist definitions and allows sections of the research that may appear to fall under other disciplines to still be considered as forming part of the field of political science. So, for example, a “political” analysis of the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in the different countries which are discussed is not limited to an analysis of political factors. In fact, it also includes an analysis of ideology, as well as other structural, namely economic and social factors, characterising the situations in the respective countries.

The research theme is relevant to both the fields of political science and international relations. The immediate focus of the study is on the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups within Algeria, Sudan and South Africa, three individual domestic case studies, and thus political science orientated. However, the research theme is also important for international relations. This is because the Islamic groups in the states which are looked at here are influenced by ideas espoused by Islamic fundamentalist thinkers, such as those of Sayyid Qutb (representing the Sunni branch of Islam), which address the global community of Muslims or *umma*. These ideas have to be seen in the context of the relationship between the world of Islam and the West. It is also important to consider some Islamic fundamentalists’ strong criticism of, for example, the introduction of the state in the world of Islam, which they view as an “imported solution” and which has failed to meet the challenges of promoting economic growth and establishing institutions for political participation. The research undertaken is significant, because it rejects a simplified, possibly prejudiced view of Islamic fundamentalism, often posited by rationalist approaches and rather aims to come to a deeper understanding of it.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The dissertation aims to examine the question: What are the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa? As is explained in more detail when justifying the use of the proposed theoretical framework for this dissertation, the dialogic model of interpretation, there is a need for a richer, less condemnatory understanding of Islamic fundamentalism. In the case of this dissertation, a more detailed

account of the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in the case studies may also help provide a better understanding of the socio-political circumstances in the states in question.

A sub-theme connected with the research problem would place the dissertation in the global context of the prominence of Islamic fundamentalist rhetoric and influences in the world of Islam. Here one can argue that a deeper understanding of the ideology espoused by Islamic fundamentalist actors in the three states which are dealt with could also help to better address questions affecting the world's Muslim community as a whole, for example that of the link between religion and politics. The question of the scope of the dissertation also ties in here. While it is restricted to three African case studies, its relevance goes beyond the continent because the ideas of Islamic fundamentalism, which impact on the ideologies of domestic Islamic fundamentalist actors, often pertain first and foremostly to the global Muslim community.

The key concept in this dissertation is Islamic fundamentalism². The dialogic model of interpretation which is used is based on an approach of intercultural communication, where the aim is not to come to a final, universal version of the truth (as rationalist approaches in general tend to claim), but rather to reach a deeper, richer understanding of the matter at hand. Therefore, an equally open-ended approach is followed regarding the examination of the concept of Islamic fundamentalism. The aim is not to come to a final definition, but rather to explore the ways in which the concept has been defined and employed by others. This will be useful when looking at the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa. The dissertation is not entered into with a single fixed definition of Islamic fundamentalism that the ideology would have to conform to, but rather a range of possibilities is at hand with which in mind the research problem can be more closely examined.

² The term Islamic fundamentalism as used here is not to be understood as "radicalism" or "extremism". As a point of departure it (along with Christian and Jewish fundamentalism) is said to have three crucial elements. According to Euben (1999), firstly it is political in nature and refers to the attempts of contemporary religio-political movements to return to the community's scriptural foundations and excavate and re-interpret these to apply them to the contemporary social and political world. Tibi (1998) refers to Islamic fundamentalism as a political ideology and also talks of the politicisation of religion. Secondly, Islamic fundamentalists tend to reject the authority of past religious commentaries on the *Quran* and instead adhere to what the text "really says" (though this is an act of interpretation itself). This makes them subject only to divine authority and allows them to determine once and for all how "true" Muslims are to authentically live in a community. Thirdly, Islamic fundamentalism according to Lapidus (in Euben 1999) is not only a reaction to modernity, and especially its neglect of spiritual values, but also an expression thereof.

The time frame of the political analysis of the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa has its main focus on contemporary events and developments in those states. It is, however, also necessary to discuss the historical rise and growth of Islamic fundamentalism in each of the respective states and to situate the Islamic worldviews to be discussed in the context of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the world of Islam as a whole.

1.3 LITERATURE SURVEY

A diversity of literature has to be looked at in order to successfully analyse this topic. Firstly it is necessary to come to a comprehensive understanding of the concept Islamic fundamentalism. Authors who have written on the subject include Armstrong (2000), Tibi (1998), Choueiri (1997), Euben (1999) and Roy (1994). It is also necessary to look at some modern rationalist approaches to Islamic fundamentalism in order to critique these and justify the use of the dialogic model of interpretation. Some of the authors who are looked at here are Lerner (1958), Sivan (1985), Norval (2001), Becker (in Euben 1999), Hechter (1997), Brennan (1997), Fukuyama (1989) and Huntington (1996). Euben's (1999) work on the dialogic model of interpretation will form the theoretical basis of the study.

The next step is to move onto influential Islamic fundamentalist worldviews and other forms of Islamic revivalism, because of their influence on the ideology of Islamic fundamentalist groups in the case studies. Authors on the subject include Fuller (2003), Husain (1995), Armstrong (2000), Esposito (1991), Halliday (1996, 2002), Noorani (2002), Choueiri (1997) and Ahsan (2002).

Once the theoretical framework has been established, and the general background of Islamic fundamentalist thought has been explained, it is necessary to look at the specific case studies. Sources discussing Algeria include Stone (1997), Takeyh (2003), Spencer (1996), the Europa World Year Book (2003), Pierre and Quandt (1995) and Adamson (1998). The situation in Sudan is discussed by, among others, Zwier (1999), O'Fahey (1996), the Europa World Year Book (2003), Sayeed (1999), Lesch (1998, 2001) and Collins (1999). When discussing Islamic fundamentalist influence in South Africa useful references include Boshoff, Botha & Schonteich (2001), Le Roux (1997) and Burmeister (2000).

Primary sources also contribute to the study. With reference to Algeria, statements made by the Front Islamique du Salut are looked at. These include the official FIS programme of 1989, interviews that were conducted between Denaud (1996) and two members of the FIS leadership, Ghetami Abdelkrim and Ould Adda Abdelkrim, and the FIS's Platform for the Salvation of Algeria. With reference to Sudan, the Constitution of the Republic of Sudan 1998 is included, as well as an interview held with Turabi in the summer of 1994 in Khartoum (in Hamdi 1996). With regard to the South African case study, information containing People Against Gangsterism and Drugs' (PAGAD) aims and objectives (1996) is consulted, as well as statements made by the South African government regarding the vigilante movement.

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

When looking at methodological aspects, one needs to consider what approach to adopt and which methods to employ to address the research problem. Use is made of the dialogic model of interpretation as the proposed framework for the study. A brief explanation follows.

The dialogic model of analysis, as advanced, for example, by Euben (1999), attempts to evaluate Islamic fundamentalist ideas by means of interaction with their respective originators. The idea is to reject the possibility of a final Western rationalist-inspired version of the truth, and rather to aim, through dialogue, to meet the respective Islamic fundamentalist thinkers on their own turf. Put differently, this model questions the validity of a single universal truth and the tendency to dismiss non-Western points of view all too easily. It does not, however, preclude criticism.

In this way, by means of becoming a participant in a dialogue rather than claiming to stand outside the situation with an allegedly neutral, objective point of view, one can come to a richer, more thorough, less judgemental understanding of Islamic fundamentalism. Simultaneously, this approach enables the analyst to grasp the particular attraction that Islamic fundamentalist ideas hold for their followers, rather than merely dismissing Islamic fundamentalism as irrational and its followers as nothing more than rising up in protest against socio-economic depravities or repressive state policies.

Structural factors, the political, cultural and socio-economic conditions in the respective country case studies, are accommodated by the dialogic model of interpretation as well and are looked at in terms of their

impact on the ideology of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa. Ideology can here be viewed as both a dependent and independent variable. It is partially dependent on and heavily influenced by the material conditions it emerges from, but at the same time ideology can also be seen as an independent variable, a force with dynamics of its own, which influences the groups which espouse it and by implication the very surroundings from which it emerges.

The research method primarily used is that of careful critical analysis. When referring to research methods, the means by which information is collected needs to be indicated, as well as whether qualitative or quantitative methods are used and whether the study is inductive or deductive. A broad literature survey is the main source of information for the study. This includes academic and newspaper sources and primary documents.

The research method is qualitative rather than quantitative, making use of careful and critical assessment of the sources which feature. According to Leedy (in Struwig & Stead 2001: 20) various guidelines exist to following either a quantitative or qualitative method when conducting research. Amongst others these include believing in “multiple constructed realities”, having an audience which is “familiar with and supportive of qualitative studies”, an “exploratory and interpretive” research question, “limited or missing literature”, a research focus involving “in-depth study”, a “relatively long time period available”, “a high ability or desire to work with people” and “a low desire for structure”. In the case of this research problem a single, Western-inspired version of the truth is rejected; the likely readers will be more familiar with quantitative than qualitative studies and the research question aims to delve into and interpret the ideology of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa, an action which is also exploratory in the sense that the dialogic model has not yet been extensively used in this specific context. The “in-depth study” required for the research focus ties in here; the research has been completed in one and a half years and the dialogic model is rather open-ended and does not stress the aspect of “structure” too much.

The research method used is deductive rather than inductive. The inductive method of moving from observations (in a variety of contexts) to generalisations which then form the basis of laws and theories (Struwig & Stead 2001: 239) would not go together well with the dialogic model, which as mentioned before, is based on a more open-ended approach. Use can however be made of the deductive method, where conclusions are drawn from certain arguments. Critically looking at the ideology of Islamic fundamentalist

groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa allows for premises to be put forward from which certain deductions can be made.

1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter one serves as an introduction and indicates the research theme, the research problem, the literature survey, methodological aspects and the structure of the dissertation. The structure of the rest of the dissertation is as follows.

Chapter two consists of a discussion of different approaches to the concept Islamic fundamentalism. This is followed by a critical discussion of some rationalist approaches to Islamic fundamentalism as well as reference to their shortcomings to justify the use of the dialogic model of interpretation as a tool to politically analyse the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa. The dialogic model is consequently discussed.

In Chapter three influential Islamic fundamentalist worldviews are described and discussed, because of the influence of these ideas on the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa. They are situated in the context of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the world of Islam as a whole. Particular attention is paid, for example, to the differences between the Sunni and Shi'ite schools of Islamic thought, the opposition to the international system of secular states and the notion of the establishment of an Islamic state.

Chapter four deals with Algeria, where the secular state is being violently opposed and challenged by a range of Islamic fundamentalist groups. Attention is paid to the history of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria and the chapter also includes a detailed discussion of the conflict up to date. The main focus is an analysis of the ideologies of different Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, with particular emphasis on the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS- Islamic Salvation Front), taking into account the influence of structural factors in Algeria and Islamic fundamentalist worldviews on this ideology. The dialogic model of interpretation forms the theoretical framework of this analysis.

A similar approach as above is used in Chapter five for the discussion of Sudan, where an Islamic fundamentalist dominated government has been waging a prolonged civil war against the opposition Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) representing the non-Muslim south. While peace negotiations between the government and SPLM/A have been progressing, a new and frighteningly violent conflict has erupted in Sudan's western region of Darfur. Again a historical discussion helps contextualise the role of Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan. As with Algeria, the dialogic model of interpretation is used to analyse the ideology of the National Islamic Front (NIF), paying attention to the influences that structural factors in Sudan and Islamic fundamentalist worldviews have had on it.

Chapter six deals with the last case study which is dealt with, namely South Africa. The ideology of People against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) as a vigilante group with strong Islamic fundamentalist influences and support is discussed here on the basis of the dialogic model of interpretation. Structural factors in South Africa that have led to the rise of PAGAD are also be considered.

Chapter seven concludes the dissertation and provides a final examination and overview of the findings of the analyses of the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in the three case studies. A tentative hypothesis may be that the diversity of Islamic fundamentalist groups in the three states underlines the need for a deeper understanding not only of ideologies, but also of Islamic fundamentalism in general. By means of an analysis of a combination of ideological and structural factors in the different countries, it is possible to make a number of recommendations that could assist in bringing about future resolutions of the conflicts in Algeria and Sudan, and in the case of South Africa, help contain the threat of urban terrorism that has thus far successfully been placed under control.

1.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ONE

Chapter one presents the introduction to this dissertation. It firstly focuses on the research theme, which is a section in which it is pointed out that the topic of the dissertation is approached by making use of the dialogic model of interpretation. The aim of this model is to arrive at a more thorough, less judgemental understanding of the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa, which is what the research problem, the second section in the introductory chapter, also deals with. In addition to aiming to come to a richer, less condemnatory understanding of Islamic fundamentalism, a more detailed

account of the ideologies of Islamic fundamentalist groups in the case studies may also enable a better understanding of the socio-political circumstances in the states in question. A literature survey then gives an idea of the sources which have been consulted for the writing of this dissertation. The fourth section, dealing with methodological aspects, summarises the functioning and importance of the dialogic model of interpretation. The idea here is to reject the possibility of a final Western rationalist-inspired version of the truth, and rather to aim, through dialogue, to meet different Islamic fundamentalist thinkers on their own turf, without precluding criticism. Structural factors, the political, cultural and socio-economic conditions in the respective country case studies, are also accommodated by the dialogic model of interpretation and are examined in terms of their impact on the ideology of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Algeria, Sudan and South Africa. Finally, a chapter by chapter overview gives an idea of what the dissertation's different chapters deal with.