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The development and rise of Islamic State (IS) and the violence it manifests: A theoretical perspective

Thesis fulfilment of the requirements of the PhD degree, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria

by

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DECLARATION

I, declare that this thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Multi-Disciplinary D Phil (Jurisprudence) at the University of Pretoria, is in my own words and has not been previously submitted by me for this degree at this institution or any other tertiary institution.

Student: Quraysha Ismail Sooliman

Signature: _Sooliman_

Date: 12th November 2017/23 Safar 1439

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Acknowledgements

None of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.

Narration from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

This work is dedicated to the millions of Syrian and Iraqi refugees and victims, my brothers and sisters in Islam caught in the midst of a proxy war between the most heinous of greedy states, regimes and persons.

With every word that made its mark on these pages, I could not give enough thanks to a God who is Most Kind (*Al-Lateef*), Most Generous (*Al-Kareem*) and Most Wise (*Al-Hakim*). It is only through His generosity towards me that I was able to conduct this research, put together these ideas and present this complete work. Any goodness and truth in it is by His Grace, any errors are as a result of my own weaknesses and shortcomings. It is also from His Honour (*Al-Azeez*) that I was able to stay sane and manage my emotions as I read page upon page of the pain and suffering of the ordinary people in these lands. Despite all the madness and schizophrenia in South Africa, I was grateful to be here and not in the *Shami* theatre, yet my heart was strongly attached – to Damascus, Busra, Baghdad, Beirut, Homs, and Fallujah…and the list goes on. This is the attachment of *Ummah*.

Allahu-Akbar![1] God is Great, I absolutely LOVE HIM.

It is from the love of our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him that I learnt to be empathetic, to think carefully before uttering words and to always speak the truth- even in the face of an oppressor. I may not always succeed, but I do try. This is about standing up to injustice. We are in an age of extreme anger and injustice and these emotions are tangible even in South Africa. From my religion Islam, I have internalised the value of peace and kindness, of generosity and *sulh* – reconciliation, where forgiveness should be the preferred option in a situation that seeks to bring justice. To get to this point, there must be justice. This research project has been developed with that intent – write with a just thought, with a just argument and to attain a just epistemology. In this way I can do what Islam prioritises. Always maintain justice.

This has been a long journey for me. As a categorised "person of colour" we were afforded few opportunities during the apartheid years. As a result, I embarked on my postgraduate

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[1] For those who read this work and struggle with Allahu-Akbar because of cognitive dissonance, please read: Imam Omar Suleiman "What 'Allahu Akbar' Really Means" http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/01/opinions/allahu-akbar-meaning/index.html I could not have articulated it any more eloquently.

Where there is justice, there is hope, where there is hope, there is love. We pray for justice in Iraq and Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and for the Rohingya in Myanmar.

ACRONYMS

GIA	-	Armed Islamic Group
HDI	-	Human Development Index
IS	-	Islamic State
ISI	-	Islamic State of Iraq
ISIS	-	Islamic State of Iraq and the Syria
MENA	-	Middle East and North Africa Region
MMC	-	Muslim Majority Countries
OPEC	-	Oil Producing Export Countries
PBUH	-	Peace be upon him
PRIO	-	Peace Research Institute Oslo
PSR	-	Physicians for Social Responsibility
R2P	-	Responsibility to Protect
SNHR	-	Syrian Network for Human Rights
US	-	United States of America
WMD	-	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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Abstract

IS is a new phenomenon in the face of an on-going conflict in the Middle-East in what I refer to as the *Shami* theatre. It evolved from a fledgling affiliate of al Qaeda into a powerful and organised "pseudo-state" under the leadership of Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi and operates largely in the *Shami* theatre. The *Shami* theatre with its core group of actors has been scripted into a region of conflict, through a toxic approach from 1916 till now (2017), a hundred years and counting. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), of the 203097 civilian deaths recorded from March 2011 until November 2016, IS has been responsible for 1.48% (2998) of the deaths. Considering this fact alone, it had to be asked, "Why the obsession with IS"? This project considered the rise and development of IS and its choice of violence in the context in which it exists. Violence and the defining of violence have been contested for centuries, mainly because violence involves and refers to different conditions, actions and processes. The consequences of violence may be immediate, short-term or long-term and may be contextualised within an interpersonal framing or as the result of an inherent social condition. What is peculiar about the way in which violence is defined and which aspects of the definition of violence are included or excluded will determine the human experiences being examined and the conclusions drawn. In this regard the study examined the various templates of violence and interrogated the manifestation of these different forms of violence in the context in which IS functions. The research considered a plurality of reasons and motivations drawn from IS's magazine *Dabiq* and other academic and news sources to explain IS's lure for foreign fighters, its use of violence and the claim about its "clash" with western values. It then considered the difference in terms of theodicy vs. theology, so that the question was no longer "why are Muslims so violent?" but "why has this specific group of persons resorted to violence?" Significantly, consolidation of persons under extreme circumstances does not necessarily imply a 'unity of ideology.' From this aspect of the theorisation it became evident that limiting the discussion on IS and its attacks on foreign soil to a monologue about religion or demanding a theological reform of Islam to more 'liberal traditions,' or to claim that the genesis of IS is to be found in theology has largely been disingenuous. Widening the lens of analysis is a tool of academic integrity when the research demands it, and is not an attempt at denying religious ideology. There is an element of religious ideology certainly, but it cannot be divorced from its social context. What it does is to animate the role and impact of human action. IS has used the tools of language, religion and sectarianism to justify its violence. IS has destroyed shrines, libraries and schools, exhibited blatant intolerance of difference and independent lifestyles and choices and it has

specialised in significant levels of barbarity, the killing of the elite and citizens. In this regard the study interrogated the "clash of civilisations" claim by exploring the possibility of explaining the violence and actions of IS in terms of western epistemological fraud and western methods of violence learned from the violence of colonialism/coloniality. The study linked all of these issues to the continuity of the history of dehumanisation and control of the space, bodies and belief of the Muslim subject. Although IS has attacked westerners, the majority of its victims are Muslims. The rabid sectarianism of Maliki and the unspeakable torment and torture committed by Assad has spurred further extremism which will at some point contribute to the rise of IS 2.0 unless an amicable and just political solution is achieved. All the templates examined ultimately led to the plausible conclusion that the violence of IS is motivated by revenge, the greed for power and control and in many ways manifests as the dark side of modernity. Religion is the currency invoked to draw supporters, sympathy and recognition, and to seek legitimacy. But religion, specifically Islam does not constitute the motivation for the violence. This study concluded that IS and those powers unleashing violence on the largely Sunni Syrian and Iraqi populations have been targeting a very specific enemy, with the aim to completely destroy it – they are attacking Islam and the Islamicate. The narrative, the tactics, the behaviour, the propaganda, the ongoing epistemicide and the pacts between Assad, the changing Iraqi regimes, the US, and IS all point to this. And attacking Islam and the Islamicate includes attacking the inheritors of Islam. This is the consolidation of the theorising.

Contents

Chapter 1: Identification of the research theme

1. 1 Research Problem

The research problem of this study is to theorise the development and rise of Islamic State (IS) and the violence it manifests.

In order to understand IS and to comment on it, it was necessary to first conceptualise IS, which required that I incorporate multiple levels of analysis. This required a pluralising of epistemologies, by giving space, context and meaning to the different voices that speak and conceptually linking the different dimensions and episodes of the occurrence of actors and their actions to stigmergy. According to Heather Marsh, stigmergy is

> a mechanism of indirect coordination between agents or actions. The principle is that the trace left in the environment by an action stimulates the performance of a next action, by the same or a different agent. …[thus] subsequent actions tend to reinforce and build on each other, leading to the spontaneous emergence of coherent, apparently systematic activity.[2]

Although the subject matter of this study is rooted in violence and conflict, the reasons, contexts and factors that contribute to these actions, when meaningfully interrogated, should offer substantive insights that can be used to seek a conducive and lasting peace. Or as the theatre metaphors come to light in the following chapters- it should help to lift the shroud of darkness from a censored script. This work is necessary because peace "provides opponents with a one-word language in which to express values of concern and togetherness" where peace refers to the "absence of violence."[3] At the same time, talking about peace as the absence of violence requires making a definition of violence. There are many types of violence and these definitions must "include the most significant varieties, yet [be] specific enough to serve as a basis for concrete action."[4] Thus the search for peace and a definition of peace requires paying attention to problems that are on the "political, intellectual, [and] scientific agenda."[5] In paying attention to the violence of IS and the problem of IS it was necessary to consider all of these agendas and more. It required a sustained unpacking of the political, the intellectual, the scientific, the social, the psychological and the economic agenda.

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[2] H. Marsh *Binding Chaos*: *Systems of Mass Collaboration* 2013 https://georgiebc.wordpress.com/2013/05/24/binding-chaos/
[3] J. Galtung "Violence, peace and peace research" *Journal of Peace Research* 1969 6(3) 167-168
[4] Ibid 68
[5] Ibid 68

According to Galtung, violence can manifest as a visible action with a "clear subject-object relation" or it can be "built into structure" where the condition of structural violence can also be referred to as "social injustice."[6] What is significant about structural violence is that it can and is often used to "threaten people into subordination."[7] Thus, if the criterion searched for when trying to resolve a conflict is peace, there should then be a determined effort to direct action to the analysis of personal and structural violence.[8] Having noted the fact that violence manifests in different forms and effects different outcomes and consequences it is significant that, "…studies that address Islamist violence remain at the level of description."[9] Considering this gap, "the validity of socioeconomic and psychological explanations of Islamist rebellions must be challenged on both empirical and theoretical grounds."[10] There is thus a need to broaden the explanation and analysis of violence perpetuated by groups who are identified as Muslim and who may/may not use religious rhetoric based on their interpretation of sacred texts and the currency value for that interpretation, when justifying their actions. After having done considerable research on IS, Christoph Reuter states that

> "[t]here is essentially nothing religious in its actions, its strategic planning, its unscrupulous changing of alliances and its precisely implemented propaganda narratives. Faith, even in its extreme form, is just one of many means to an end. Islamic State's *only constant maxim is the expansion of power at any price* [my italics]."[11]

It is necessary to broaden the explanation and analysis because often groups are identified as Muslim without there being a clear conceptualisation of that identity as distinct from the cause/reason/motivation for the violence/conflict/rebellion. In this regard, consider that the "alliance between Assadist Syria and Shia-theocratic Iran is political and not religious"[12] and that despite the propensity to keep referring to the conflict in Syria and Iraq (which includes IS as one of many actors), as religious and sectarian, often, very pertinent, alternate details are either overlooked or wilfully ignored.

In this regard, the research question that I have considered is, *"How can the development and rise of IS and the violence it manifests be theorised?"*

1.2 Research questions

Based on the above, the following research questions were posed:

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[6] Ibid 170-171
[7] Ibid 172
[8] Ibid 172
[9] M.M. Hafez *Why Muslims Rebel* 2003 9
[10] Ibid 9
[11] P. Oborne "No, Channel 4: Islam is not responsible for the Islamic State" July 2017
https://www.opendemocracy.net/peter-oborne/no-channel-4-islam-is-not-responsible-for-islamic-state
[12] R. Yassin-Kassab & L. Al- Shami *Burning Country* 2016 112

1. "What has contributed to the rise and development of IS and the growing support it receives from foreign fighters?"
2. "What is the conceptual history of the violence of IS?" This entails a critical analysis of the conceptual history of the violence.
3. "Is the violence of IS a response to modernity/coloniality and/or the result of a clash with western values and ideals only?"

1.3 Methodology

This study is a critical discourse analysis and adopts a qualitative research design and methodology. A qualitative research methodology seeks to develop explanations of social phenomena such as the phenomena being researched. The qualitative method was chosen for this study because the aim was to explore, describe and explain the selected participant's experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification but instead, through critical analysis of contextual data or words.[13] Each qualitative research is guided by particular philosophical stances which has already been identified as the "body-politics of knowledge" because of the social values in knowledge production and the fact that our "knowledges are situated."[14] Interpretivism is an epistemological position that requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action.[15] Interpretivism is a way to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving our comprehension of the whole. Interpretivism proposes that there are multiple realities, not single realties of phenomena, and that these realities can differ across time and space and in this study it was evident that multiple realities continue to exist which are fluctuating all the time.

In this regard, this study aimed to break away from prescriptive paradigms that promoted specific explanations or outcomes that limit the scope of an analysis. The ultimate aim of this study was to contribute new insights and augment epistemological pluralism in research, where the multiple levels of analysis allowed for a speaking from more than one system of knowledge. All knowledge can be useful when considered holistically, which contributes to the pluralising of epistemologies rather than rejecting one in favour of another. In this regard, I have considered different theories and approaches to analyse each sub-theme. However, the

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[13] E. Fossey, C. Harvey, F. McDermott, & L. Davidson "Understanding and evaluating qualitative research" *Aust Psychiatry* 36(6) 2002 717

[14] R. Grosfoguel "The epistemic decolonial turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms" Cultural Studies 21(2-3) March/May 2007 213

[15] A. Bryman *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* 2004 540

concept of stigmergy links all the different approaches, events, episodes and theoretical explanations. This will become apparent in each chapter. Stigmergy, as explained in the foregoing paragraphs is "a mechanism of indirect coordination between agents or actions," it is action based. It occurs when a perception can no longer be contained, when agents perceive an injustice and act on it. It is the trace element left in the environment that stimulates the "performance" of the next action. The actions can be performed by the same agent or by different agents and each action builds on the previous action. This concept is useful as an analytical tool to analyse the layered responses and counter responses of the multiple-actors that perform simultaneously in the context of IS and its violence.[16] It is possible that the eclectic approach may be criticised on the grounds that a theory from a single discipline may be more grounded and structured. However, most theories are limiting of and by themselves and to adopt a single theory approach, grounded in a single disciple is tantamount to replicating a western epistemological mind-set which would dilute the study in its entirety and erode the potential for a comprehensive analysis of this subject. For instance, in International Relations there has been limited work on race and international relations yet this is crucial for understanding the othering of the Muslim subject and the invasion of their homelands. According to Vitalis in Harrison, "international relations are driven by a longstanding unspoken 'norm against noticing' race"[17] which thus pays little attention to the dehumanisation of the other, the suspension of ethics and the naturalisation of war as is discussed in chapter four. Consider also that in political theory very little attention has been paid to emotion as a factor in conflict and violence yet this constitutes a crucial aspect of the analysis when evaluating the rationales of the fighters in IS.

There are different writing styles and approaches that a researcher can draw on in order to enunciate the ideas and themes explored. More specifically, the writing style will influence the manner in which the material presented is understood. I have explained in the introduction that the information sessions and events around IS are mediated to a large extent by and through the media[18] and it was thus necessary to imagine the situation, the contexts and the experiences in order to weaken the dominant templates about the kinds of discourses that are given prominence in these media sessions so that all the other voices are equally

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[16] H. Marsh *Binding Chaos*: *Systems of Mass Collaboration* 2013 https://georgiebc.wordpress.com/2013/05/24/binding-chaos/

[17] F. V. Harrison "Global Apartheid, Foreign Policy, and Human Rights" (2002) Race and globalisation

[18] See Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah's comment, "And then the other thing, I think there are people that speak out. I think they don't get a lot of airtime. ...They had a major conference about Somalia...CNN was invited, they didn't cover it. June 2016
https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-shaykh-abdallah-bin-bayyah

amplified. This is particularly necessary in discourses where there is a substantial amount of stereotyping and othering. With this in mind I have tried to unsettle some of the narratives and theoretical claims of and about IS, whilst being cognisant of the possibility that there may be some measure of error in my analysis. Essentially, all observation is fallible. In this regard it can be claimed that all theory can be revised and does not contain absolute truths. If one has to consider that the "critical realist is *critical* of our ability to know reality with certainty"[19] then in the context of Baudrillard's explanation of the "hyperreal" and the manner in which the 'war' on IS has been framed, it is evident that in this context, we have to be "*critical* of our ability to know [the] reality [of the 'war' on/with IS] with certainty."[20] Can there be absolute certainty about a war – a theatrical exchange that is largely mediated through the media? I ask this question because of the very obvious contention that arises as a result of the impact of media ownership and oligarchies which are often overlooked in following the single-story narrative. Although there may be many stories, there usually is only one narrative in the main stream media.

In considering the impact of both the tone and the style, I chose to write this thesis as a response to the theatre imagery (whilst incorporating language from cinematography for impact), used by the main actors in this context – IS uses the word theatre, Obama refers to the Dark Knight. Many other authors, those who are western oriented and those from the MENA region have commented on the MENA, invoking the theatre imagery, highlighting the play between reality and deception and the interconnectedness between perception and portrayal.[21] To achieve this effect I made reference to key signifiers and to particular language whose common usage and understanding animates the images and meanings associated with the theatre of war. Thus in opening the scene we have the theatre, which is geo-politically located in the MENA. In chapter four, there is a reference to the final curtain, but I leave open the space for the reader to imagine the likelihood of a sequel. This imagining is tied to the impact and effect of the trace elements left in the environment, as inferred and understood from stigmergy. Ultimately, it should be recognised and acknowledged that because of the researchers own values and subjectivity, no research can be value free and

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[19] Social Research Methods "Positivism and post-positivism" October 2006 http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/positvsm.php
[20] Social Research Methods "Positivism and post-positivism" October 2006 http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/positvsm.php
[21] See E. Ziter's *Political Performance in Syria: From the Six-Day War to the Syrian Uprising* 2015; N. Ulaby "Iraq's Drama: An Easier Sell OnThe Stage?" November 2008 https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96754864; K. Kellaway "Theatre of war" August 2004 https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/aug/29/theatre.politicaltheatre

even the language, writing style and tone would to some extent carry the researcher's biases. In this regard, the same limitations apply to this research.

1.4 Motivation and rationale for the research

Presumption of equality has ensured enslavement of many to the whims of a few
Heather Marsh[22]

In undertaking this research, I was motivated by the fact that a meaningful and pragmatic understanding of, approach and solution to the conflict in Iraq and Syria was urgently needed in order to reduce and hopefully counter the rising tide of Islamophobia and hatred that has been allowed to fester against Muslims, migrants, refugees and those intentionally portrayed as the *other*. This study aims to bridge the gap in the literature and study of IS that would allow the reader, the scholar and the lay-person, to move beyond the rigid explanations of IS thus far produced, as a manifestation of "Islamist violence" and of the imposed consensus of IS as a phenomenon reflecting the clash between Islam and the West. In this regard, I believe that this study is of importance in contributing to knowledge that is crucial for building cohesiveness, tolerance and understanding of diverse peoples and their struggles and also for reigniting the question of diversity as opposed to the demagoguery of populist leaders today who are promoting a singular identity and integration into one value system. It will also allow for those engaging with this work to critically consider how diverse peoples are "allowed" or "denied" integration into a western state/system and then dealt with, yet it is a system/state that claims freedom, equality and prosperity for all. I believe that an honest reflection on the above will then promote critical and unbiased interrogations of the push-back from the various approaches that ultimately embody some form of othering.

The inhumane effect of this conflict on large Muslim populations, together with the rising fascist and Islamophobic tendencies against Muslim minorities living in the West because of the negativity generated from IS's actions as being intrinsic to Islam, demanded that the single-story narrative which has alluded to Islam as a problem for the West needed to be interrogated. Furthermore, as a result of the conflict and the mass movements of victims from these spaces of conflict and violence into western, mostly European cities, the increased inflow of foreigners combined with an Islamophobic narrative and rising economic uncertainties has allowed for a shifting of blame from weak, inefficient and often corrupt governance to a fingering of the other as a 'facilitator of all the evils and suffering.' The

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[22] Marsh 2013

negativity towards the refugees is also experienced to a certain degree in Turkey and neighbouring Arab states. IS's blatant provocations of the West and the authoritative and undemocratic leaders in the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA)[23] countries has raised significant questions about democracy and governance, about the consequences and effects of modernity/coloniality[24] and about the costs and benefits of the 'progress' narrative weaved into understandings about modernity and the Enlightenment. It has called for new understandings about religion, secularity, sovereignty and statehood. What is essential to consider in all of these descriptions is that IS operates in the context of the state and it is first and foremost in a contestation with the state and with state power. Secondly, it should be noted that the rise and development of IS and its violence is in the context of the state.

Bearing this in mind, the events unfolding on the ground in an on-going seemingly never ending cycle of violence, has indicated that whatever approaches, methods and strategies that have been employed thus far have yielded little positive results. As the "living nightmare"[25] of the children of Aleppo plays out, and comments such as "I envy the dead"[26] grind into the consciousness of those who value and cherish life; the horror of this conflict and its escalation into a proxy war fought by different parties in the land of another people is an indictment on the consciousness of all ethical, moral and just persons.

Although some analysts may say that we need to step away from the 'blame game', undoubtedly and unapologetically, there needs to be accountability for the massive civilian deaths. Even discourses that hide behind 'complexity' and 'nuance' can serve power by softening the critical edge of critique and should be approached with caution. Considering all these factors, it has become necessary to theorise IS and its violence in order to remove the smoke screens and mirrors. The eschewing of relevant content results in the generation of very specific narratives that have sought to entrench the idea that essentially, the conflict in

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[23] The term MENA presents as a conceptual problem for many scholars because it locates the countries in the "middle of the East?" It also suggests that this region is homogenous and that all the countries situated in this "region" can be dealt with similarly. It is a conceptual question that needs to be interrogated.

[24] Coloniality refers to the process and forms of continued colonial domination of entities even after the colonial administration has left and is considered the most widespread form of domination in the world today. According to Nelson Maldonado-Torres in "The Coloniality of Being *Cultural Studies* 2007 21:2 243 "Coloniality emerges in a particular socio-historical setting" and "refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations." It describes a global power structure that is sustained by asymmetrical power relations. The racial categorisation of individuals according to specific hierarchies, an exploitative world economy and the dominance of European epistemological thought.

[25] K. Dwyer "Children of Aleppo Are Trapped in a 'Living Nightmare'" September 2016 https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/children-aleppo-are-trapped-living-nightmare/30934

[26] Z. Al-Shimale "'I envy the dead' The living nightmare of Aleppo gravedigger" October 2016 http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/aleppo-gravedigger-syria-siege-assad-1360375820

Syria and Iraq, and specifically, the responses by IS are rooted in religion, sectarianism and the reality of a clash of civilisations. More specifically, the narrative conflates IS with Islam so that what is projected is that this conflict is a manifestation of Islam's war with the West, with western values, western progress and western modernity. In this regard, I provide a contextual background and introduction to this study.

1.4.1 Introduction and background

In the course of one hundred days, during the summer of 2014, the politics of the Middle East was transformed by IS. IS refers to the group Islamic State (*al-Dawla al-Islamiyya*), as it called itself from June 2014 to the present or merely "the State" (*al-Dawla*), which goes back to 2006. It was also known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI, between October 2006 and April 2013) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS, between April 2013 and June 2014). IS has been referred to as *Daesh* and constitutes a largely Sunni opposition to the governments of Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, many of its leaders and fighters are individuals who have been exposed to conflict, invasion, occupation, trauma and violence in Syria, Afghanistan and Palestine, the Balkans and parts of Africa whilst others have experienced a decade of war in Iraq. Some of the leaders and many more fighters have faced extreme violence, suppression and oppression inside Syria under the Assadist regimes. Carrying the burdens and scars of these episodes, together with battle experiences, hatred, and a sense of alienation, for many of the Iraqi fighters the dismissal from Iraq's military and civil service under the process of de-Baathification, has provided enough reason and motivation for them to join IS, even if it is as a last resort in responding to the humiliating and degrading life circumstances. De-Baathification was a policy instituted in Iraq after the 2003 invasion under the auspices of Paul Bremer and led by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Essentially the entire military, security and civil service were disbanded. CPA Order Number 1, banned the Ba'ath party, a process known as de-Baathification; and CPA Order Number 2 dismantled the Iraqi army.[27]

The rapid growth and the well-oiled propaganda machines of IS have resulted in IS securing a significant amount of media coverage – largely portrayed through western lenses. But IS has also reached its targeted audiences through its own publications and suave manipulation of the internet and social media. The boldness and aggression of IS unravelled in Iraq and

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[27] J.P Pfiffner "US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army" *Intelligence and National Security* 25(1) 2010 76

Syria towards the end of 2014, to the extent that western powers and the Arab national bourgeoisie that had imposed a form of control over these populations were caught in the grip of a growing phenomenon whose activities and actions were highly problematic. This phenomenon manifested violent reactions to the forces of imperialism, neo-colonialism, local and foreign domination and oppression, authoritarian dictatorships and puppet-regimes that characterised the lands of Iraq and Syria. A cursory reading of that sentence ideally and logically would lead one to say, "But surely that should be the response?" Yet, what would ordinarily be considered as a non-pacifist reactive force to oppression and violence, in the case of IS is considered as *Islamist-terrorism*. Why?

Based on this sleight of hand, the origin of the phenomenon referred to as IS needed to be considered through the varied lenses that capture the context of the conflict, the imbrications of power, the upheaval in the fabric of these societies, the denigration of the dignity and human essence of the people in these lands, and others - unleashing catastrophe upon catastrophe, in Iraq and Syria from as early as 1916. Considering that there have been many groups that have been formed over the years in violent opposition and as a response to what they have perceived as an on-going oppression of their values, ideals and identities, the question of interest to me is, "Who is IS and how is it that there has been such a dramatic shift in the narrative that involves a focus only on IS in such a short time frame?" Essentially, there has been a shift from the constant hammerings about al Qaeda as the number one threat to global security to the absolute obsession and preoccupation with IS. Why? Specifically, why, when the stench of death and destruction in Iraq and Syria prevailed long before the rise and violence of IS?

Sami Moubayed, maintains that the consequence of the US's military invasion of Iraq to topple and ultimately remove Saddam Hussein was to "produce Islamic terrorism in Iraq in the form of ISIS,"[28] whilst Patrick Cockburn states that "the US, Europe, and their regional allies in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates" are all responsible for creating the conditions that gave rise to ISIS.[29] I must state here that the term *Islamic terrorism* is problematic as it continues a narrative that propagates the common sense understanding that it is Islam *per se* that is directing these transgressions. A quick survey of the propaganda written about IS, refers to IS's rise and violence from myopic standpoints[30]

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[28] S. Moubayed *Under the Black Flag* 2015 117

[29] P. Cockburn *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the new Sunni Revolution* 2015 9

[30] I. Saleh "ISIS conundrum" March 2015 https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/17371-the-isis-conundrum & M. Hafez Why Muslims Rebel 2003 1-9

where IS is contextualised stereotypically. This is evident from the manner in which IS as a phenomenon has been constructed, contested and instrumentalised in the language and through the definitions and descriptions attributed to it.[31] However, there is a surfacing of questions and comment that have begun to break through these narrow contentions.

In effect, IS has been structuring its own narrative and charting its own trajectory in shaping the narrative that it wants to dominate. IS's actions can be understood through the words of Mark Gonzalez, who stated that "…one does not shift a narrative by responding to it. One shifts, by authoring a new narrative…."[32] It is possible that in *developing* or creating a new narrative, the process can be fundamentally negative or inherently violent, where the spaces of violence can only be eliminated by more violence. IS has sought to contextualise its resistance by referring to the re-assertion and re-instating of their (the people's) human dignity and value. This is evident from the rhetoric in *Dabiq*, IS's official magazine.[33]

The story of IS and the violence it portrays is a story told by the media. It is the spectacle of the theatre, where wars are staged and from whence different acts emerge, where the battle is oversimplified, information is manipulated as media personnel are embedded and only part of what is happening is disclosed. But there is another more sinister hand at play. In seeking to report on the full reality of the events at hand Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists have been blocked from reporting anything that did not substantiate western propaganda and claims about *Muslim barbarity and terrorism* whilst countless other reporters revealed the extent to which their stories were either censored, edited or rejected by US editors who did not want to project the reality that Muslims "were actual human beings who might suffer as a consequence of the military strikes."[34] There is an old adage in the US media which is, "if it bleeds, it leads."[35] So this is where we are. In the theatre of war and violence, in the consumption of war and violence, using difference and signification, where IS vs. the rest, are seeking to enact themselves meaningfully in a context of exchanges and relationships in which each is embroiled in the hyperreal.[36] All this happens whilst we think we are free, yet we are "locked in an ideological maze with walls of democracy preventing us from seeing or

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[31] J. Schwedler "Why academics can't get beyond moderates and radicals" *in* Islamism in IS age *POMEPS Studies* 2015 12; also see Chapter 2, the section titled "encrypting the treasures of the Ummah" and the analysis of the term Salafi-Jihadism

[32] M. Gonzalez http://www.oninstagram.com/profile/tazirigadmourartist 4 June 2015

[33] *Dabiq* is a digital magazine series that the IS has produced as part of its public outreach programme.

[34] S.A. Mcclennen "We mourn Manchester, but not Kabul: How biased coverage of terrorist attacks drives us apart" June 2017 http://www.salon.com/2017/06/03/we-mourn-manchester-but-not-kabul-how-biased-coverage-of-terrorist-attacks-drives-us-apart/

[35] Cockburn 2014 115

[36] Hyperreality-is a type social reality in which a reality is created or simulated from models and where the division between reality and imaginary disappears.

participating in the true structures of power and debate."[37] Often when individuals are presented with only a certain subset of information, it is possible that mistakes can be made or there can be errors in judgement. It is possible that we are trapped in these walls in our analysis, understanding and perception of IS, Islam and Muslims which occurs through different mediums such as the media, education, ideology and/or language.

According to Heather Marsh the coercive nature of language cannot be denied. To show how language is manipulated, Marsh makes use of her understanding of the New Orwellian Dictionary (NOD) which mentions words and then describes what they actually mean. Time and care has been taken to deliver a specific message and because of the overabundance of information, barrage of coercive messages and the "knowledge differential between those presenting information and those receiving it," people allow themselves to be "governed by memes and slogans."[38] Consider the following: active theatres: 1. Places being bombed; 2. expeditionary warfare: Empire expansion; 3. endanger the troops: Publish the truth; 4. collateral damage: Dead people not from the US; 5. axis of evil: Countries that are going to be hard to conquer, but are first on the list; 6. due process: Impunity for the powerful; 7. enhanced coercive interrogation technique: Torture; 8.our way of life: World domination; 9.stabilizing: Occupying; 10. terrorist: Men with guns in the Middle east or predominantly Muslim parts of Africa; 11. terrorism: 1. Threats to powerful men or corporations. 2. An excuse to invade / occupy / control Middle Eastern countries; 12.threats to our way of life: Countries fighting back.[39] Number 11 and 12 are of particular note.

In the discussion on Muslims and IS particularly, focus has largely been to repeat the narrative of Muslims as terrorists and of IS as being another al Qaeda determined to destroy the West.[40] Certainly, one should be able to acknowledge that there is no pause or separation in the way that this narrative projects the claim that IS's fundamental objective is to destroy the West and that this hatred is underwritten by Islam. The mainstream media[41] and certain

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[37] H. Marsh "Free will and seductive coercion" April 2014 https://georgiebc.wordpress.com/2014/04/22/free-will-and-seductive-coercion/

[38] ibid

[39] H. Marsh "New Orwellian Dictionary (NOD)" November 2010 https://georgiebc.wordpress.com/2010/11/03/new-orwellian-dictionary-nod/

[40] M. Toft "Getting religion? The puzzling case of Islam and civil war" *International Security* 31(4) 4 2007 99

[41] HuffingtonPost "CNN Mistakenly Spots ISIS Flag At London Pride, Doesn't Notice Banner Is Made Up Of Dildos And Butt Plugs" June 2015 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/06/27/cnn-spots-isis-flag-at-london-pride_n_7679244.html & DailyMail "CNN confuses black and white flag covered in sex toy symbols for that of ISIS during London Gay Pride parade" June 2015 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3142221/CNN-confuses-black-white-flag-covered-sex-toy-symbols-ISIS-London-gay-pride-parade.html & MediaMatters "TIMELINE: How Fox Got It Wrong In Its Rush To Link The Chattanooga Shooting To An ISIS Tweet" July 2015 http://mediamatters.org/research/2015/07/17/timeline-how-fox-got-it-wrong-in-its-rush-to-li/204461

think-tanks[42] have advanced these myopic viewpoints which have intensified the narrative of 'terror' as being perpetrated *only* by Muslims.[43] Mediatenor, a leading organisation that does research on strategic media intelligence reviewed approximately one million items about Muslims in the US and European media outlets. More than eighty percent of the media coverage on NBC and CBS were negative and presented Muslims as militants, whilst none of the programmes that discussed these issues included in their panels a Muslim who was a featured expert on the subject matter.[44] Thus the visible absence of Muslim experts and analysts on mainstream news media who are invited to discuss debate and contribute to an understanding of issues that affect and impact on Muslim lives suggests an intentional slant in the presentation which allows for the permeation of very specific narratives.[45] In referencing Edward Said's work *Orientalism*, Beydoun states that, "Muslims are fundamentally subjects of study and scrutiny for western outsiders, systematically excluded from the enterprise of contributing and commenting on their very existence."[46] The reality of this action is made explicit throughout the following chapters as I highlight the discrepancies in the discourses of the 'speaking of westerners' on behalf of IS and other Muslim related issues, and then contrast that with the 'speaking of IS and Muslims' of and by themselves in response to the same issues.[47] Thus, when the only information that viewers are constantly receiving is not only negative but also only about one extremely unusual subset, it is probable that the entire community of Muslims will be misunderstood. In reality, this is exactly what has happened. In this chosen approach, the actions of a miniscule proportion of the population of Muslims are conflated with the actions of all Muslims. Furthermore, the vacuum of knowledge that exists about Muslims and Muslim Majority Countries (MMC) was markedly apparent in the poll result from the US based organisation Public Policy Polling which polled one thousand Americans, both Democrats and Republicans. Approximately 30% of those polled, favoured the bombing of Agrabah, an imaginary kingdom presumably because it is in the Middle-East.[48] These results indicate that the fear that has been generated, has justified the othering

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[42] The Clarion Project http://www.clarionproject.org/

[43] Islamophobia Network https://islamophobianetwork.com/

[44] S. Habib "Islamophobia is on the rise in the US. But so is Islam." September 2016 http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-09-09/muslims-america-are-keeping-and-growing-faith-even-though-haters-tell-them-not

[45] K. Beydoun "Why can't Muslims talk about the Muslim ban on US TV? US cable news media's coverage of Trump's 'Muslim ban' featured predominantly white men instead of Muslims." February 2017 http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/muslims-talk-muslim-ban-tv-170213090653137.html

[46] Ibid

[47] See Chapter 4, Cameron's comments in the introduction and IS's response to those comments.

[48] The Guardian "Poll: 30% of GOP voters support bombing Agrabah, the city from Aladdin" December 2015 https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/18/republican-voters-bomb-agrabah-disney-aladdin-donald-trump

of individuals, societies and even nations.[49] Muslims are now considered as the other. Significantly, the study highlighted the level of ignorance about Muslims and their geo-political spaces.

In contrast, a recent report on terrorism published in 2013 which measured all terrorist activities on the START Global Terrorism Data Base from 1970-2012 indicated (contradictory to what is portrayed) that "only 2.5% of all terrorist attacks on US soil between 1970 and 2012 were carried out by Muslims."[50] In other words, 97.5% of terrorist attacks in the US during this period were carried out by non-Muslims. Furthermore, the Pew Report of April 2013 indicated that of the 39 countries surveyed, the majority of the Muslims in the survey rejected and did not justify violence in the name of Islam.[51] A 2014 opinion poll that surveyed the attitudes and beliefs of refugees found that 70% of those surveyed objected to the formation of a "religious-based state" and it was evident that the majority of the Syrian refugees polled were not *Islamists*.[52] Pertinently, research conducted in 2012 by the Voices of Syria project revealed great support for a democratic system of governance by *Islamist* identified fighters. Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham fighters constituted 60% of those interviewed. They considered democracy preferable over other forms of governance.[53] To support these findings and others, working papers from institutions such as the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) have begun to challenge the very limited academic focus employed when analysing conflict in MMC and the language used to describe the various insurgent, rebellion or terrorist groups.[54]

The fact that these alternate and critical works are filtering into the mainstream indicate that many more academics are beginning to acknowledge that much of the engagement thus far has relied on traditional/essentialist Eurocentric discourse which has inadvertently perhaps, settled into the understanding of many individuals that there is a clash of civilisations between Islam and the West, based on the thesis advanced by Samuel Huntington. The Clash of Civilisations theory suggests that a cultural division exists between "Western Christianity" and "Orthodox Christianity and Islam" and that this division is most likely to fuel conflict.

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[49] E. Graham-Harrison "How Islamic State is expanding its empire of terror" February 2015 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/21/islamic-state-empire-al-qaida-isis
[50] Globalresearch "Non-Muslims carried out more than 90% of all terrorist attacks in America" May 2013 http://www.globalresearch.ca/non-muslims-carried-out-more-than-90-of-all-terrorist-attacks-in-america/5333619
[51] Pew Research Center April 2013 http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/
[52] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 121
[53] Ibid 127-128
[54] Islamism in IS Age *POMEPS Studies* 2015 12

According to Huntington, the Muslim world does not espouse the political values needed to entrench representative democracy and this claim overlooks in-numerous other factors and variables that affect democratic transition and cultural meaning. Contrary to Huntington's claims, democracy as a political model has global appeal, specifically, even in Muslim majority countries. Central to Huntington's theory is the fact that conflict in the world will neither be economically nor ideologically driven but as a result of religion and cultural differences. Essentially, Huntington espoused, a clash between civilisations where religion is considered as the focal point of conflict in global politics.

According to Kwame. A. Appiah, "there is no such thing as Western civilisation." Appiah states that the name "West," which was used to describe a "heritage and object of study" is a modern phenomenon and only really manifested during the 1890s.[55] Significantly, Ramon Grosfoguel also challenges the claim of a clash of or between civilisations, maintaining that from the moment of European colonial expansion the world was left with one planetary system which has destroyed all other social/civil/political systems. Thus the only system that has remained and perpetuated itself is what is known today as 'western civilisation.'[56] Edward Said's clash of ignorance thesis serves as a critique of Huntington's clash of civilisations on the basis that civilisations are not monolithic and that conflict occurs due to a failure of "intercultural communication and understanding". Said broadens the paradigm of analysis "to include various actors whose respective distortions of knowledge symbiotically promote conflict with each other."[57] Furthermore, the clash of civilisations thesis ignores historical evidence and centuries of lived experience where Muslims and non-Muslims have managed to peacefully and constructively interact and co-exist in many spaces and geographical places over extended periods of time. This serves to advance the common understanding of portraying IS simplistically propagating the narrative that *these Muslims, they hate us, they hate our civilization, they hate our modernity, they hate our progress and our success as western nations*. Significantly, what is deflected from Huntington's thesis are very salient facts which requires that westerners step outside the adopted attitude of moral triumphalism and review the relations between the West and the civilisations it is entangled with and the role of the state and international violence in what has effectively been constituted as 'the West' vs. 'the rest.'

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[55] K. A. Appiah "There is no such thing as western civilisation" November 2016
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/09/western-civilisation-appiah-reith-lecture
[56] R. Grosfoguel Granada Summer School 2016 Day 1
[57] K. H. Karim & M. Eid "Clash of Ignorance" *Global Media Journal -- Canadian Edition* 5(1) 2012 7

Additionally, the manner in which Huntington's theory is applied and promoted is to suggest that most civilisations, barring the western civilisation, are pre-modern, underdeveloped and prone to irrationality and violence whilst ignoring the complete reality and violence of modernity as a historical episode entwined with coloniality and imperial domination. .Coloniality is seen as a major problem in the modern age because of the inherent racist, exploitative and repressive systems it embodies and it refers to the processes and forms of continued colonial domination of entities even after the colonial administration has left. Coloniality is considered the most widespread form of domination in the world today where the "local elite … reproduce global tendencies of exploiting others."[58] In this regard, coloniality refers to the occurrence of "colonial situations" in the present which are expressively found in "cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialised/ethnic groups by dominant racialised/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations."[59] Based on the foregoing, it should be clear that coloniality is not the same as colonialism and that these structures of domination clash with the values and ethos of the Muslim societies in which they prevail. The eradication of colonial administrations has not led to a decolonisation of the world. In spite of the juridical-political decolonisation of nation states, we have moved from a system of "global colonialism" to "global coloniality."[60] This is because global colonial entities had embedded their systems and structures into the global political, economic and social organisation of the world. This included (and still includes) control of the economy, of authority, of gender and sexuality and control of the subjectivity and knowledge of the non-European in what has been termed as the "colonial matrix of power." The "colonial matrix of power" is a term that was coined by Peruvian Sociologist Aníbal Quijano; where he conceptualised the present world-system as a "historical-structural" heterogeneous entity comprised of a specific power matrix, which he identified as a "colonial power matrix". Grosfoguel extends the definition of "colonial power matrix" to include an "intersectionality of multiple and heterogeneous global hierarchies ("heterarchies") of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation." [61] The colonial matrix of power thus considers the impact of the living legacy of colonialism on previously colonised peoples. Essentially, what we have is a continuity of the colonial past

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[58] R. Grosfoguel "Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality"
http://www.humandee.org/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=111 2008
[59] Grosfoguel 2008
[60] Grosfoguel 2008
[61] See, R. Grosfoguel "Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality" 2008
http://www.humandee.org/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=111

with the prevailing global colonial/ racial hierarchies which constitute coloniality, in the present.

It is through these processes that the spheres of influence are entrenched. Essentially modernity is an episode imbricated in Europe and thus a part of colonial domination. When this reality is not acknowledged, the discourses proposed are not intended to enlighten, but to perpetuate a Eurocentric claim which involves categorising the 'hated other' and their civilisations (in this case, the Islamic civilisation) as a threat to themselves and western civilization. When this dysfunctional reality is manifested, it justifies and legitimises attacking the Muslim other in their homeland. Huntington's clash of civilisation's theory also promotes the claim of western superiority and progress and refers to the aspirations of other civilisations which lack development as a source of aspiration to become *like* the West. Yet this may not necessarily be so. Furthermore, those who oppose this desire for likeness are considered as being opposed to the West and a threat to western values. Significantly, the progression in this narrative to a "people without democracy"[62] is of relevance in relation to this research, mainly because there exists a negative correlation between democracy and oil[63] and this aspect is rarely interrogated when continuously claiming that the Orient and by inference, Islam and Muslims *per se*, are averse to democratic practise. Accordingly, in IS's magazine, *Dabiq*, Issue 1, Ramadan 1435, the declared Caliph, Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's tone and meaning resonates with these ideas as he states that IS,

> … ha[s] a statement to make that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, and boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy, and uncover its deviant nature.[64]

IS has thus identified this correlation and is defying the constituted subjectivity and social imaginary of the hegemon/coloniser/imperial power and has chosen to challenge what it considers as 'religious extremism.' I refer to religious extremism because of the language employed by IS when referring to the "idol of nationalism" and the "idol of democracy." The chosen words are indicative of the extent of manipulation evident in language and in definitions, in order to emit and conjure specific understandings of politically charged terms, situations and occurrences.

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[62] R. Grosfoguel "A Decolonial Approach to Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Border Thinking and Global Coloniality"2009 http://www.postkolonial.dk/artikler/kult_6/GROSFOGUEL.pdf

[63] See T. Falola "The Politics of the Global Oil Industry: An introduction" 2005 40 ; Al-Jazeera series "The secret of the seven sisters" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSX6DMnFBDI and J.Perkin's "Confessions of an economic hitman" (2004) 108-113

[64] Dabiq "A new era has arrived" Issue 1 Ramadan 1435 8

From the above, it is evident that there are many lenses that can be used to analyse the conflict and violence of IS, which should be cognisant of the politics of religion and the politics and violence of the state. In this regard, this research is different as it interrogates and theorises the rise and development of IS and the violence it manifests as a response not only to religious ideology but as a manifestation of the different forms and contexts of violence that exist. I consider the different critical theoretical perspectives on violence and focus to a large extent on discourse analysis because the language used and the narrative disseminated about IS have largely been controlled through a very technical medium – that of the media. The reality of western modernity as a historical episode entwined with coloniality and imperial domination constitutes a fundamental aspect of this theorisation because of the structural violence embedded in these systems. The presence and occurrence of these different types of violence produces stigmergic effects.

Thus, by analysing these instances, manifestations and episodes I intended to offer a synthesis of the variables and dynamics (that fuel this rise and violence), than most contemporary analysis or comments on IS. Although the colonisation of Iraq and Syria is often alluded to or briefly mentioned, very little analysis has been done on tracing the impact of the colonisation on the state and state autonomy in cases of conflict and uprisings, the subsequent division of these spaces culturally and physically and the actual division of peoples and the resultant emotional impact in the study of IS. This is because the emphasis has been on religion, or religion vs. the secular. Furthermore, the impact of coloniality on the minds, psyche, emotional well-being and development of these populations has received little attention. This study sought to enunciate this reality.

This study was not about "some uncommon taste for the violence" but sought to act as an interpretive tool of the situation and the occurrence[65] and to reject certain institutionalised ways of thinking about the world, Islam and Muslims that foreclose particular kinds of analysis, questions or considerations from entering the debate. In this regard, although the truth may be complicated, as an academic committed to a better world it is necessary to never remain silent for fear of complexity. Sometimes what needs to be uncovered and discussed is more complicated and detailed than what the circumstances allow us to say, but it needs to be done irrespective. In this regard, the focus is on the locus of enunciation rather than the enunciated. It is necessary to be aware of the conceptual potentials and pitfalls of the various discourses in order to appreciate the complexity of theorising IS and the various socio-

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[65] F. Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 1963 13

economic-political-religious components that have contributed to this phenomenon. After all, bad ideas and bad ideology cannot be tackled without understanding first, and then dealing with the material factors that produced them. Furthermore, ideas cannot be deprived of their context; they do not have a life of their own specifically. In fact ideas and ideologies exist and operate in concrete material and social contexts. It should be noted that I endeavoured to steer away from *only* analysing or focusing on the religious texts used by IS to justify its actions. I believe that a lot of the focus has already been channelled in this regard. Although the religious texts have been given consideration, they have been placed in the broader context of the geo-political reality of the MENA, the role of the state and the opposing conflicting actors' use, misuse and subversion of religion in that reality.

This study also considered the plausibility of stating that the main concern around IS is not with the violence *per se*. This is because violence has been the preferred means of engagement for all the actors who have participated whether overtly or covertly in the conflicts in Iraq, and Syria. Nation states have always *regulated* violence; they are not against violence or against eliminating violence. After all, violent action is a normal part of the force of history. The main concern, it seems, is with the public expression of this violence by IS and the *choice of the subjects* on whom the violence has been conferred. Can it therefore be said that the violence which has been generated by colonial injustice and sustained in 'independent' Iraq and Syria through coloniality and imperial structures and institutions is a significant factor in the violence displayed by IS? If this is the case then based on the concept of stigmergy, and the unresolved traces left in the environment, the recurrence of violence and conflict in the MENA region are likely to be a permanent feature of these spaces each time specific actors encounter the trace elements and determine the necessity to act in response. The violence is thus a tool of communication used by actors to modify their environment and how they (these actors) perceive their spaces.

However, this is but one possible explanation and is certainly not exhaustive on and of its own. These alternate conversations raise many new and challenging questions which need critical research rather than narrow claims of religious violence and references to *Islamic terrorism* (where certain understandings are implied but not thoroughly interrogated). Such research and in-depth probing is still lacking in relation to IS. At this point, it is necessary to

state that the majority of Muslim scholars the world over have renounced the violence as being contrary to Islamic theology and practice.[66]

1.5 Theoretical framework

1.5.1 Theorising the rise and development of IS

IS is a new phenomenon in the face of an on-going conflict in the Middle-East. It has evolved from being a fledgling affiliate of the branded terrorist organisation al Qaeda, initially known as Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) which acted as an umbrella body for al Qaeda in Iraq under the leadership of Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, into an entity that some analysts describe as a "pseudo-state".[67] In spite of the metamorphosis of the entity and its growing capacity as outlined by Audrey Kurth Cronin,[68] President Obama[69] and others, and as inferred from the report by Emma Graham-Harrison in the UK *Guardian* entitled "How Islamic State is expanding its empire of terror"[70] there remains a fixation with labelling the entity as a terrorist organisation. The entity itself (IS), when referred to as a terrorist organisation in the media by politicians and analysts, has debunked this labelling, stating that it is in fact a Caliphate (Islamic State)[71]. This aspect of the narrative is elaborated by Iman Saleh who maintains that

> ISIS needs to be understood for what it is: a violent and radical manifestation of postmodernist angst, wrapped in a Messianic veil of ideological prophecy and mobilised through the physical conquest of territory and resources.[72]

Considering these various interpretations, and the fact that Cronin states that IS is neither a terrorist organization nor an insurgent group and though it uses terrorism, she adds that,

> [t]errorist networks, such as al Qaeda, generally have only dozens or hundreds of members, attack civilians, do not hold territory, and cannot directly confront military forces. ISIS, on the other hand, boasts some 30,000 fighters, holds territory in both Iraq and Syria, maintains extensive military capabilities, controls lines of communication, commands infrastructure, funds itself, and engages in

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[66] See: Associated Press February 2015 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/06/muslim-clerics-denounce-jordanian-pilot-execution-kasasbeh ; Washington's Blog "Muslim Leaders Worldwide Condemn ISIS" August 2014 http://www.globalresearch.ca/muslim-leaders-worldwide-condemn-isis/5397364 ; Brand South Africa http://www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com/democracy/4205-south-african-muslim-clerics-condemn-is & the letter signed by more than 120 Muslim scholars who openly reject the establishment and the practices within the Caliphate as not being legitimate from an Islamic theological analysis- Open Letter to al-Baghdadi http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/
[67] Saleh March 2015
[68] A.K. Cronin "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat" March/April 2015 http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/143043/audrey-kurth-cronin/isis-is-not-a-terrorist-group & F.Umana "Islamic State: More than a terrorist group?" April 2015 http://www.e-ir.info/2015/04/03/the-islamic-state-more-than-a-terrorist-group/
[69] President Obama. "Obama's ISIS speech" October 2014 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/10/obama-isis-speech-text_n_5801200.html
[70] Graham-Harrison February 2015
[71] Dabiq "Khilafah Declared" Issue 1 Ramadan 1435 7
[72] Saleh March 2015

sophisticated military operations. If ISIS is purely and simply anything, it is a pseudo-state led by a conventional army.[73]

Supporting the various explanations put forward about IS is another authoritative voice. According to Phyllis Bennis, "[t]he origins of ISIS, are in fighting against the [American] occupation."[74] In this regard, the contesting definitions and explanations warrant a theorisation of IS to sift between the obscure, the imagined, the fabricated and the reality. The manner in which an entity or phenomenon is defined and theorised will inevitably determine the manner in which it is perceived and responded to. This will in turn influence the legitimacy and validity of the response and the ability to justify any action against it. In essence, who controls the definition, controls the power to influence and dominate the narrative.

IS described itself as a state, with territory, a military and citizens who have been regulated by a body politic and governance mechanisms within this defined territory. In issue 12 of *Dabiq*, IS published an article entitled *Paradigm Shift* by John Cantile, stating that the international refusal to recognise IS's state was based on political expediency because,

> [p]eople understand the words 'terrorists' or 'jihadists' and will largely support any military action against them. But it loses its urgency when you're fighting soldiers from a state. It just doesn't conjure up the same images of extremely imminent danger for a politician's speechwriter.[75]

The refusal to recognise IS as a state, allows "the public a hook on which to hang their hat,"[76] but also highlights a cloaking of other aspects of IS that are documented yet not discussed. For instance Stephen M. Walt, describes the governance mechanisms of IS as that of "…a revolutionary state-building organization" which has routed out corruption and crime, instituted environmental policies to protect natural resources, successfully implemented traditional courts for mitigating legal issues and established regulatory frameworks for identification and travel emergencies which are favourably considered by the populace they govern.[77] According to Cantile, "many of them are saying that life now is better than it was under the Assad and Shia-led regimes in Syria and Iraq," and although the claim needs to be considered in the context of IS propaganda, Walt's referencing of such progressive developments in conjunction with Cantile's assertions, presents the possibility that IS are not necessarily "wild-haired barbarian" terrorists. It also presents the possibility as per Walt, that if IS "manages to cling to power, consolidate its position, and create a genuine *de facto* state

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[73] Cronin March/April 2015

[74] S. Nevins "How The US, Its Allies And Syria Unwittingly Corporatized ISIS" February 2015
http://www.mintpressnews.com/how-the-us-its-allies-and-syria-unwittingly-corporatized-isis/201748/

[75] Dabiq Issue 12 Safar 1437

[76] J. Cantile "Paradigm Shift" *Dabiq* Issue 12 48

[77] Dabiq Issue 12

in what was previously part of Iraq and Syria" then in recognition of its claim to adherence with Islamic principles, "a truce with Western nations is always an option in Sharī'ah law."[78] Considering that this is unedited comment published in issue 12 of *Dabiq* which IS has not censored, refuted or contradicted, I would infer, that IS has considered a political solution to the conflict and to its positionality in the international system, conditional to it being recognised. It also implies that IS is not averse to peace, and from its actions and governance regulatory frameworks, it is not opposed to progress. Significantly, it implies that Muslims are not averse to peace with and recognition of the West. If IS is not averse to peace and is willing to make a truce with western nations, can it still be claimed that the only solution in dealing with IS as an actor in the multi-pronged conflict is a military solution? If that is the approach of western states and its allies, then one must ask, "Who benefits from war?"

In a documentary on Al-Jazeera entitled the *Secret of the Seven Sisters*, the producer brings to the fore startling evidences on the nature and extent of the exploitation of the oil resources in the Middle-East, initiated under the Achnacarry Agreements of October 1928 which involved three major western corporations - Royal Dutch Shell, Standard Oil (Exxon) and BP.[79] From then on, oil became the blood of almost every battle in the Middle East to the extent that the CIA even intervened to establish foreign oil companies in Iran. The othering of Arab people certainly served a material and financial agenda which was extended to the manner in which corporations and the media responded to the formation of OPEC (Oil producing exporting countries) in 1960. The Washington Post referred to the Arabs as a "belligerent conglomerate of camel-riding emirates."[80] These revelations, when considered in relation to the history, the consequences and the continuous unfolding of conflict in the region confirm the negative correlation between democracy and oil. In effect, it questions the system of coloniality in these states and the effect thereof. It is not that the states in the Middle East cannot realise their potential for legitimate rule, whether through secular processes or political Islam, rather, it is as Tariq Ramadan questions, "Is the West ready for *uncontrolled* democracies in the Middle East?"[81]

Furthermore, the conflation of different groups such as Boko Haram, al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood and IS all as *Islamist terrorists* is also dysfunctional. This is because it contributes to the space of fear-mongering and fails to significantly note the

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[78] Ibid

[79] A. Genova &T. Falola *The Politics of the Global Oil Industry: An introduction* 2005 40

[80] M.Bachuretz "Rethinking energy security: The Carter doctrine in a changing energy landscape" Published Master's thesis Central European University 2013 14

[81] T. Ramadan "Uprisings and political Islam" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxzymilM9jo

difference in ideology and approach by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood who have largely operated and functioned on the basis of non-violence. In the case of Syria for instance, Islamic names given to different groups or events reflected the country's and people's culture. Naming neighbourhoods/brigades according to prominent Sunni episodes/identities/personas was "more communitarian than religious" because most (affected Syrians) identified themselves as Muslims not *Islamist*. Syrians are generally knowledgeable of the fact that many *Islamist* groups pursued political projects (Ahrar-al-Sham and Alloush's Jaysh al-Islam) whilst other Islamists like Liwa al-Tawheed were defending and representing the "conservative culture of rural Aleppo."[82] An awareness of these nuances confirm that from the onset the revolution and uprising simply did not have a religious association and cut across all sects, ethnicities, cultures, religions and professions. So why has it been that the overall framing of the conflict in this region is described as a clash between Islam and the West? Furthermore, why is there a determined effort to eradicate the nuances and complexities by offering only binaries instead?

Significantly, many of the studies and reports on the conflict and on IS ignores the impact of international actors and states in contributing to the rise and responses of these militant groups and the approaches they take. Consider for example that most of the states in which religious conflicts and uprisings have occurred recently (1990-2015) are states that are named as *secular*, autocratic regimes or procedural democracies. The majority of the citizens in these states are Muslims who identify with an Islamic ethos yet may not necessarily endorse *Shariah* law as the official law of the land.[83] The majority of the Muslim citizens in these states express a desire for democratic rule.[84] But, the majority of these citizens are also prevented from expressing their democratic aspirations because of state repression from these secular, autocratic regimes. Consequently, at some point, it is plausible to infer that repression will lead to resistance and that the violence manifested includes violence that stems from the economics of fear and not necessarily, violence sanctioned by religion. To begin to unravel these complex questions, a natural starting point would be to acknowledge that IS is more than a terrorist organisation.[85] It must be enlarged as a political actor and its actions and behaviour must be read into the larger political, social and historical context. This includes a history of the colonisation of Iraq and Syria, the persistent effects of coloniality

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[82] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 121
[83] Pew Report 2013 on "The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and society"
[84] Ibid
[85] Cronin March/April 2015

and the effects it has had on these societies and communities at large. This is also an interrogation of a history written by the West, from the moment that the script of the *Shami* [86]theatre had been imagined. It is a script that described the division of the world into two imaginary camps; one Muslim, the other being the West. These imaginary camps/countries are placed on an imaginary map where the "liquid countries" are unstable, conflict ridden, "evil" and identified as the MMC, whilst the more stable, solid and safe countries constituted the West. From this division, this binary, comes the narrative of backwardness in the MMC and the need for development, human rights and democracy in the MMC advanced by a narrative of a moving history and the West's "progressive hand" which would help these regions to catch up to its standards. Contained in this narrative is the idea of the success of the liberal order- the success and progress of the West in comparison to the failures, violence and backwardness of the MMC.

1.6 Structure/Outline

The current chapter provided a broad outline of the research problem and the research questions and it discussed the different approaches and theoretical frameworks that have been incorporated in order to answer the research questions. In essence it gave a broad overview of the research project by considering ideas and themes from some of the literature. I did not include a full discussion of all the literature perused or used specifically as these are dealt with in significant detail under each relevant section. Marsh's concept of stigmergy was incorporated as a theoretical and conceptual factor to explain what would in a spiritual sense be described as 'karma,' or from the coloquial expression give meaning to the feeling that 'what goes around comes around.' It is possible that in trying to adhere to the often rigid constraints of academic criteria we overlook basic realities because we struggle to find the right concept or measurement to describe what is obviously 'out there' and what is being felt and experienced but which cannot be integrated into a clever 'academic' term. Often language is limiting and by its very nature, can be exclusionary. However, in grasping with the pulse and heart-beat of the region and the feelings, ideas and thoughts of the people on the ground the most significant works came from authors, journalists and academics who are of Arab origin; individuals who simply express these complexities, realities and experiences. The ethnicity of these authors was of particular importance to me when discussing the geo-political context inside Syria and Iraq. These individuals are familiar with the contexts, the

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[86] Sham= the lands of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Historic Palestine (which includes the newly formed Zionist State of Israel from the land of historic Palestine)

nuances, language, custom, tradition, history and memory of these countries. It was essential then to consolidate these 'simple' explanations into a framework using a concept that could be academically measured as substantive and not just 'emotive.' In this regard, stigmergy was used as the primary link to the various explanations for the rise and development of IS and its violence and presented in chapter one.

Chapter two presents a brief background to the historical developments inside Iraq and Syria that have contributed to the tensions inside modern day Iraq and Syria. It considers the Realpolitik that spurred the development and the rise of IS and its lure for foreign fighters. In this chapter I considered the works of many authors and journalists. Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami's book *Burning Country* and Moubayed's *Under the Black Flag* provided invaluable insight into the realities and complexities of the conflict. In considering the changing context, the fluidity and shift in the conflict on the ground in real time, I gave preference to the writings and comment of Tallha Abdulrazaq a researcher at the University of Exeter's Strategy and Security Institute who focuses on Middle Eastern security and counter-terrorism issues and to Nafeez Ahmed who is an investigative journalist tracking what he calls the "crisis of civilization." Chapter two also outlines the ideology of IS as this is a sticking point in most mainstream analysis of IS without there being any substantive conceptual clarity as to what exactly is meant when describing IS as "Salafist," "Islamist," or "Wahhabist." Chapter two also incorporates an analysis of the "foreign fighters" because in reality, significant news time and talking minutes have been devoted to the problematic around this issue especially where it has been advocated that the foreign fighters are "fundamentalist." These haphazard descriptions have fuelled the rise of Islamophobia and the sedimentation of Islam as a religion of violence. In this regard, Hegghammer's *The rise of Muslim foreign fighters* and other works such as Vidino's *European foreign fighters in Syria: dynamics and responses* and investigative reports such as Werleman's How leaked ISIS documents make a joke of the Muslim reformers were engaged with.

Chapter 3 focuses on a critical analysis of the conceptual history of violence in light of the rise and development of IS. Violence is often discussed or analysed in very narrow conceptual terms and it was evident from the documentaries that I watched and from the words used by the IS fighters that their choice to take up arms was intricately entwined with a multitude of experiences. Much of my understanding of the dehumanisation and emotion of the IS fighters as well as their rationales was initially developed by watching Medyan Dairieh's documentary, *My journey inside the Islamic State*. This documentary was used as a

framework or checklist against the information that I subsequently gathered from all the different sources. Dairieh's documentary was a valuable source of information because it allowed for a speaking from within and it was necessary to pay attention to, listen and to hear what the fighters themselves had to say. Considering the obvious dangers in doing field work, IS's official magazine, *Dabiq* served as a primary source to decipher the voice, ideas, ideology, motivations and thought of IS. In addition, Zizek, Fanon, Arendt, Churchill and Hafez's writings on violence provided the theoretical foundations for theorising the violence of IS and for developing the templates to interrogate the different possibilities for understanding and evaluating violence. Sayyid's book *Recalling the Caliphate* and his lectures during the Granada Critical Muslim Summer School allowed me to rethink the importance of language in defining terms and concepts and the contestation with establishing or calling for Muslim political agency. These concepts are discussed in chapter three with the desire to generate new research into the politics of the state and the politics of violence when analysing IS and the shaping of a mind-set that is complicit to the harm of Islamophobia.

Chapter 4 is a critical analysis of the Paris attacks of November 2015. It interrogates the language and the history that advocated that the violence of IS and by implication, the violence 'inherent' in Islam is a response to modernity/coloniality and a clash with western values and ideals. With regards the historical aspect, chapter four traces specifically Christendom's antagonism to Islam and the creation of a distorted image of Islam that translates into obscurantism as described by Grosfoguel. It highlights the manner and method of othering Muslims and the continuation of this discriminatory and racist practise to contemporary times and IS's response to this form of racism, dehumanising and othering as manifested through its use of violence. It also considers the contestation and conflict in race, religion and empire. For these insights I consulted the decolonial writings of Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres and Ali. Although the focus of this research has been on the developments inside Iraq and Syria specifically, incorporating the Paris attacks as a critical discourse analysis was a strategic calculation. This is because the Paris attacks animates one of the driving themes in the selective discourses used to frame IS, that of the clash of civilisations. The Paris attacks poignantly highlight the difficulty with divorcing the meta-context from the local and of the need to question the validity of imposing dominant texts or readings on a particular phenomenon. The flash-back projection in the theorising requires noting that all empires require violence to sustain themselves and that the violence perpetrated by imperial powers at the periphery usually flows back in one form or the other to the centre (think

attacks on foreign soil in Paris, Manchester / the use of the term blowback), which will be considered through stigmergy. In contemporary times, this violence has taken on a racial character and thus the othering of the Muslim, the negative and problematic language used in association with Muslims and Islam all serve to sediment this process. From the Paris attacks it will become apparent that violence occurs as a result of the projects and agendas of political elite engaged in the creation of an ideological enemy and spreading the myth of all Muslims as radical. The discourse then centres on 'their culture' not 'our politics.' With this shift in reality the process is rife for the depoliticisation of Muslim opposition to empire, coloniality and foreign control of their resources and a culturalist naturalising of conflict between Islam and the West, what Maldonado-Torres calls the suspension of ethics. Once ethics has been suspended there occurs the space for a dehumanising legitimisation of violence against Muslims. In this fashion, the cultures of racialised groups and exploited populations become politically insurgent. The focus here is on the meta-context, where the violence of IS is contextualised in this single moment amidst the noise of the mainstream media and the propaganda arms of both IS and the different states. By following this approach, I am questioning the validity of imposing dominant texts or readings on a particular phenomenon. The Paris attacks consolidates all of this theorising – it is only when one extricates IS from the MENA and locate its violence in western cities can these various discourses about Islam, Muslims, IS, the clash with western values and the ideological enemy be fully comprehended. What is peculiar about the way in which violence is defined and which aspects of the definition of violence are included or excluded usually determine the human experiences being examined and the conclusions drawn. This is evident in the way in which the Paris attacks of November 2015 were framed, affirming the sedimentation of ideas and discriminatory practises developed from a past couched in obscurantism. The contestation between describing violence and defining violence is the link between chapters three and four.

Chapter 5 is a concluding chapter on the findings and analysis of the previous chapters. It highlights the main challenges of the research, suggests areas for further research and provides guidelines and recommendations in responding to the conflict between IS and the main antagonists.

Chapter 2 : Historical flashbacks, ideology and the lure of IS

Chapter two presents a brief background and flashback of the historical developments inside Iraq and Syria that have contributed to the tensions and escalating conflict in modern day Iraq and Syria. It considers the Realpolitik, the historical contexts and the stigmergic effect[87] that has spurred the development and the rise of IS and its lure for foreign fighters. In this regard, the research question for this chapter is, "What are the historical antecendents/ origins of the rise and development of IS and the growing support it receives from foreign fighters?" The recruitment of foreign fighters constitutes a substantive aspect of the conceptualisation of the rise and development of IS because of the fact that foreign fighters provide the necessary human capital needed to sustain the momentum and onslaught by IS against its enemies. Additionally, foreign fighters are considered a threat to the international community premised on the assumption that these fighters have the 'potential' to retaliate on the homeland once they return.

2.1 Introduction

> *It is true that... [the revolution] includes various factions representing the diversity of the street...but mostly the initiators are young and not influenced by ideology. They have no dogmatic concept of freedom but rather a realistic view which implies that the totalitarianism of the regime is the only obstacle to freedom.*
>
> *Mazen Km al-Maz*[88]

The rise of IS in the first hundred days of the summer of 2014 marked a change in the way in which the theatre of war had been scripted to narrate the history, map the present and deliver the future of Iraq and Syria. Despite being established since 2006, IS gained momentum in 2013 and 2014. During this time it managed to capture most of the majority Sunni populated areas inside Iraq and then declared itself the Caliphate. In *Dabiq*, Issue 1 of Ramadan 1435, IS writes,

> [t]he victories in Ninawa, al-Anbar, Salahuddin, al-Khayr, al-Barakah, and elsewhere, all aided the declaration made by the Islamic State on the first of Ramadan 1435H, in which the Khilafah was officially announced.[89]

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[87] Recap - stigmergy as explained in Chapter 1 is "a mechanism of indirect coordination between agents or actions. The principle is that the trace left in the environment by an action stimulates the performance of a next action, by the same or a different agent. ...[thus] subsequent actions tend to reinforce and build on each other, leading to the spontaneous emergence of coherent, apparently systematic activity." In the stigmergic process individuals are responsible for their own actions and when feelings of injustice extend beyond the point of tolerance "stigmergy ensured the idea would not be suppressed." Thus, in the instance of ongoing injustice in Iraq and Syria, once the levels of tolerance for the situation traversed the breaking point, stigmergy ensured that from the traces of the past, of revolt, rebellion and an incomplete liberation, the idea for freedom, liberation and justice would not be suppressed – giving rise to action.

[88] R. Yassin-Kassab & L. Al- Shami *Burning Country* 2016 57

[89] Dabiq Issue 1 Ramadan 1435 40

This declaration was significant as it signified the intentional cancellation of the artificial borders set by the Sykes-Picot Agreement since 1916 which had shaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle-East. It was also significant because it now challenged the modern concept and meaning of a nation state and sovereignty. The debate on the state in the MENA is an integral aspect in analysing the violence of non-state actors because the state shapes the method and content of politics. The Sykes-Picot Agreement had remained as a symbol of the betrayal of Arab expectations and a determined effort to initiate an on-going conflict and instability in the region. IS's declaration was thus an anti-imperial declaration. It was also an informed declaration, an awareness of the theatre of power in the killing fields of the Middle East. Ultimately, it was a declaration of contestation for the interpretation of the script and the right to not only retell the story on its terms, but the right to own the story.

IS had engaged in a full blown propaganda programme for eight years (since 2006), and its ambitions, political project and ideology are available on various platforms, communicating different messages to its Arab and Muslim audience on the one hand and to its enemies on the other. It's messaging and propaganda has been strategically constructed to have the greatest impact on the audience it is speaking to, but the propensity to publish and update has decreased since the beginning of 2017. This has been due to the onslaught on IS strongholds by foreign military interventions and the fight to retake Mosul and other areas inside Iraq and Syria. IS is by no means a 'shadow' organisation and the fact that it had remained in obscurity till 2013/2014 raises pertinent questions. Suddenly, it seemed as if the curtains had lifted from the stage and IS emerged – from guest appearance to main actor. Even IS was cognisant of the nature and context of the space it occupied and the theatre effect that shaped the discourse of the region. IS makes reference to this contextualisation and narrative in issue 1 of *Dabi*q, stating that there was a "coordinated campaign to completely remove it (IS) from the *Shami* theatre…"[90]

From 2013, the scrolls unravelled, revealing a plot based on the political history of the region; the *Al-Sharq*[91] would be used as a theatre to show power. Significantly, a 100 years down the line, (from 1916 till the present) the same theatrical imagery of the political history of the *Al-Sharq* is being played. In an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg, President Obama explains the emergence of IS according to metaphors taken from the theatre,[92] claiming that

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[90] Dabiq Issue 1 49
[91] *Al-Sharq* is the Arabic term for the East
[92] J. Goldberg "The Obama Doctrine" April 2016 https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/

IS was an actor disturbing the balance that had been established in the "power-sharing arrangement among the gangsters."[93] Citing Christopher Nolan's 2008 film, *The Dark Knight*, Obama refers to IS as the Middle-East's "Joker" who "soon turns this balance upside down,"[94] because of its capacity "to set the whole region on fire. That's why we have to fight it."[95] The use of the joker metaphor is striking and deeply telling. It continues the narrative of an age-old claim of evil Muslims vs. good westerners,[96] reinforcing the political mantra of westerners as saviours or what is commonly understood as the 'good' actors in the scene. What is also telling about Obama's response is the manner in which the fiery scene and the actors are described in what is obviously an ambiguous and complicated geopolitical theatre of power which accommodated approximately 89 coups d'état in the MENA between 1950 and 2013.[97]

Ironically, Obama's manner of eschewing the role of the US as one of the "power-sharing gangsters" by referring to the US as the Knight reconciling between the gangsters, is of and by itself telling.[98] This is especially so for the occupied, invaded, tortured and degraded people of Iraq and Syria and the *Ummah* (the global Islamic community) in general. Furthermore, the gangster imagery is not lost on anti-war activists. On the home-front anti-war American intellectuals have written about American gangsterism, specifically in its foreign policy. The extent of US gangsterism in the military has been reported by various news outlets including the Chicago Sun-Times which revealed the existence of "increasing gang activity in the Army in the United States" and it was estimated that approximately "320 admitted gang members" have served in the US army in *Iraq* since 2002.[99] According to Justin Raimondo, it is unsurprising that "the cult of thuggery" would manifest in US foreign and military policy," a foreign policy touted as being "'unilateralist,'" but in actual fact reflects an organising principle of US foreign policy in the Bush II era which was ultimately about "might makes right." Sedimented deep into this foreign policy and its principle of

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[93] B. Nafi "America's wars in Syria and Iraq are dangerous and shortsighted" November 2016 http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/dangerous-and-short-sighted-american-policy-north-syria-and-iraq-47272951
[94] Ibid
[95] Ibid
[96] This is explained in detail in Chapter 4 which traces the historical development of the idea of the evil Muslim/Moor and the programme of extensive exclusion of all those who are different - in colour, in religion and in ethnicity amongst other categories.
[97] O. Aslan Conference presentation "Colonialism giving way to military dictatorships" at the Afro-Middle East Centre Conference on *The Future of the state in the Middle East and North Africa Region* 17 October 2017 Sheraton Hotel Pretoria
[98] Nafi 2016
[99] J. Raimondo "American Gangsterism" May 2006 http://original.antiwar.com/justin/2006/05/22/american-gangsterism/

"might makes right" was the "theory of pre-emption" which had been incorporated into the US military as an official doctrine.[100] To substantiate his claim, Raimondo states that,

> [a] gangsterish foreign policy requires a mercilessly brutal gang of enforcers, and that, from all accounts, is what the U.S. military is turning into in Iraq. The latest evidence of this is what happened in Haditha, where U.S. Marines cut down at least 15 Iraqi civilians in cold blood. A young Iraqi girl testifies, 'The Americans came into the room where my father was praying and shot him.[101]

This then, is the story of the joker, the gangsters and the Dark Knight in the *Shami* theatre. Scripted through a toxic approach from 1916 till now (2017), a 100 years and counting, from the time of the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate and the conniving of the Sykes-Picot agreement the ultimate aim it can be argued was to divide, destroy and dismantle the region. The continuation of the gangster tradition and the gangster imagery is scripted on the walls of Baghdad as a result of the US invasion where

> [t]he Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords [who] were born decades ago in Chicago's most violent neighborhoods, [n]ow, [have] their gang graffiti … showing up 6,400 miles away in one of the world's most dangerous neighborhoods – Iraq.[102]

The script would read the story of exploitation and control. Of colonial powers, (or gangsters?) who would function as devilfish in the water to exert power and dominate the people of the *Al-Sharq* through external leverage whilst controlling their resources. The plot would involve the creation of sectarian differences to foster hatred and conflict. After having masterfully generated the script in a toxic climate of divisions, a renegade actor surfaced to challenge the devilfish, the Knights and the gangsters by redirecting the theatrics. Yet this actor, the Joker of the Middle-East is playing by the same rules, using the same tactics of those who devised the plot, choreographed the action and directed the development of the Middle-Eastern theatre. It is an unwelcome understudy, it is IS.

2.2 History of violence and colonialism in Iraq and Syria

2.2.1 The legacy of the divide-and-rule strategy

When comparing the violence of the understudy, the Joker, to the violence of the main actors it is obvious that the use of violence by IS in Iraq and Syria is by no means a new occurrence. Violence has been the preferred means of engagement for European role players in the Middle East and in MMC. In 1923, British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, a man who played an instrumental role in supporting and propping up Mustafa Kemal and in organising the Lausanne conference, stated in the House of Commons, "The situation now is that Turkey

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[100] Ibid
[101] Ibid
[102] Ibid

is dead and will never rise again, because *we have destroyed* (my emphasis) its moral strength, the Caliphate and Islam."[103] The colonial and imperial strategy was and still is about sowing divisions in this region and maintaining the degraded status of the world's Muslims in order to harness and secure the prolific resources of the *Al-Sharq*; resources which have been subject to the depredations of colonialism and imperialism. The nature of this domination and pillage is referenced by Juan Cole after the Manchester bombings of 2017. According to Cole,

> [b]eyond ISIL, Western Europe had colonised most of the Muslim world for centuries, in a concerted quest to steal its resources, tax its people and put its inhabitants to work on colonial plantations.[104]

Cole refers to the extent of coloniality – "economically colonised and politically subordinate to the old colonial master" - in these countries even after attaining independence.[105] The effects and consequences of these episodes have been, will be and are to be borne out until and unless there is in the perceived imagining of the 'victims' of these episodes, a realisation of justice. As David Morrisson, and Peter Osborne state, the "Iraq war made terrorism more likely in Britain" and that

> our involvement in Iraq radicalised…a whole generation of young people… not a whole generation, a few among a generation … saw our involvement in Iraq, on top of our involvement in Afghanistan, as being an attack on Islam.[106]

Thus the violence of the western state and its subordinate political elite in these countries is part of a violent process of coloniality, which justifies the project of oppression in the name of the saviour. The intent of the imperial strategy was made clear by Henry Kissinger when he stated that, "[w]e've had five presidents that considered Hosni Mubarak the best way to achieve U.S. objectives in the region."[107] In a briefing report by Ahmed and Curtis about the Manchester bombings May 2017, the authors state that the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) was considered "by the UK as a proxy militia to promote its foreign policy objectives,"[108] objectives that are primarily based on maintaining instability in the region, disunity and disarray and control of the resources and leadership base in the region.

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[103] A. Kareem "European colonialists conspired to destroy the Khilafah state" 2007 http://www.khilafah.com/european-colonialists-conspired-to-destroy-the-khilafah-state/

[104] J. Cole "Terror and geopolitics: Manchester 2017 and 1996" May 2017 http://www.herald.co.zw/terror-and-geopolitics-manchester-2017-and-1996/

[105] Ibid

[106] D.Morrison & P. Osborne "Proving the link between British foreign policy and domestic terrorism" July 2015 http://www.middleeasteye.net/essays/proving-link-between-british-foreign-policy-and-domestic-terrorism-516596279

[107] A. Prado "In the Arab world, Islam means democracy and the West dictatorship" translated by Roberto Hernández http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/in-the-arab-world-islam-means-democracy-and-the-west-dictatorship.html

[108] M. Curtis & N. Ahmed "The Manchester Bombing as Blowback: The latest evidence" June 2017 http://markcurtis.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Manchester-Blowback.-3-June-2017.-Final.-PDF-version.pdf

The above corroborates Curzon's vision and policies when, after the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate he said,

> [w]e must put an end to anything which brings about any Islamic unity between the sons of the Muslims. As we have already succeeded in finishing off the Caliphate, so we must ensure that there will never arise again unity for the Muslims, whether it be intellectual or cultural unity.[109]

According to Curtis, since 1956, Anglo-American governments have interfered and meddled in Syria to overthrow regimes that were not favourable to them; specifically "governments [which] included officials of the nationalist Baath Party, who supported Nasser's anti-imperial policies and promoted close relations with Moscow." The dynamics of the British plotting was to install "a more pro-Western Syrian government – to 'swing Syria on to the right path'", and (significantly) to "'attach Syria to the Iraqi state.'"[110] According to the September 1957 "Preferred Plan Report," Britain and its American allies strategised to arm the different political factions with various military capabilities whilst using their expertise in the field and their training in psychological coercion to stir tensions in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon.[111]

Likewise, the British would ferment agitation through the initiation and execution of violent false-flag operations. The intention behind these false-flag operations was to direct blame to official enemies and would function similar to the strategy which had proved successful in removing Musaddiq of Iran from power.[112] IS operates in these spaces. Its actions and propaganda are governed by a response to the deep-seated animosity which has persisted in this region as a result of the colonial violence of the British and the French and now, as a result of their coloniality. It is cognisant of the hands that have been played, of the effect of the strategy and the devastation of the outcome; what it refers to as the rape and pillage of "the Islamic world for that industrial object of desire: oil."[113] These false-flag operations and blame tactics also constituted an on-going strategy to unravel the fibres of coexistence amongst ordinary people which existed despite internal altercations in the Middle East. Consider for instance that inside Syria, Kurds and Islamists had been considered as the "traditional sources of subversion and popular unrest," but in the uprisings and revolt that erupted in 2011, this was not the case. In fact, it is noted that the protest movement managed

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[109] Ibid

[110] M. Curtis "British plans to overthrow the Syrian government, 1956-7" an edited extract from Secret Affairs: Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam November 2016 http://markcurtis.info/2016/11/16/british-plans-to-overthrow-the-syrian-government-1956-7/

[111] Ibid

[112] Ibid

[113] A.M. Agathangelou "Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11" International Studies Quarterly 2004 521

to unite and bring together people from different religious, ethnic and sectarian boundaries because such cohesion had existed. Furthermore, protestors and revolutionaries clarified their objectives. It was not about religion but rather, about the law. The PR campaign produced billboards which read, "I am with the law, but where is it?" another read "I am free."[114] The only association with religion to this last statement was that Syrians understood freedom to be the way "God the almighty wants it, not like what tyrants want."[115]

In order to break this unity of purpose, the sectarian divide in Syria as in Iraq was deliberately manufactured, provoked and manipulated by the ruling regimes and a multitude of secondary actors in order to split the populations that had initially lived side by side and protested non-violently, shoulder to shoulder to demand the right of the people to self- determination. Very specifically, it was a protest about the right to political participation and choice without foreign interference or manipulation. It was a protest for freedom and liberation from coloniality. But what was instituted instead as a response to the protests was a continuation of what I call the Curzon doctrine. The sectarian divide and the false-flag operations that had been orchestrated as a result of this tension and due to the protests served to imitate the blame tactics of the British. The focus was to shift the attention from the geo-political and imperial dynamics of the conflict as well as the reality of imposed rulers, to an elaborate focus on the clash of Islam with western values. This story was told and reinforced through the stature of the new bogeyman on the scene, the Joker, IS. Yet IS does not represent the majority of the resistance and although well-organised and technologically efficient, its restrictive readings of the scripture did not serve as a magnet for legitimation because the struggle was not defined in religious terms from the outset. If the protests were not about religion, if they were not about Islam and the West, what were the demands of the protestors and why was there an uprising in the first place?

2.2.1.1 Maintaining the divide

In the protests in Syria, there were no religious articulations, no call for a Caliphate and no demands for a singular religious identity. In Syria as in Iraq, the demands as expressed by the popular will and collective voice of the people was neither religious nor secular. What people were asking for was that political rights be applied to all citizens.[116] Instead, Bashar and the Iraqi regime under US control strategised to divide and control the respective populations

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[114] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 40
[115] Ibid 43
[116] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 45

through excessive tactics of violence. There was no need for a colonial administration; the devilfish's tentacles had penetrated well and the hierarchies in the divide-and-rule plan had been implemented by preferring one sect over the other. The strategy of divide-and-rule under the guise of sectarian conflict and hatred served as a tool in the battle for power, resources and territory. This worked well in a conflict which I claim is certainly not a *prima facie* case of a dispute about theology nor is it about a clash of civilisations. US policies post the 2003 invasion allowed for an increase in sectarian tensions and carved Iraq according to "a tripartite lens allowing for only three actors: Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurdish" into an "imagined community," that would live their social death according to Condoleezza Rice's doctrine of "creative chaos."[117] According to this doctrine, the culturally and intellectually integrated Iraq would not be allowed to exist. The US would systematically introduce policies that would continue the destruction of the cultural and intellectual unity (the bond of the *Ummah*) in line with the Curzon doctrine of 1923, as well as the destruction of the Iraqi state and the common Iraqi national identity. This would be achieved by allowing for "sectarian-minded actors" to occupy the spaces where power vacuums manifested, spaces which emerged as a result of the occupation, the de-Baathification strategies and the resultant collapse of the Iraqi state. In these geographies of violence, the sectarian actors would be allowed to act unhindered to guarantee the breakdown of the national fabric.[118]

According to Shaykh bin Bayyah, the occurrence of the sectarian divide is "…not just a problem of belief or a legal problem, it's actually a very complex political problem as well… it has to do with who yields power in the region…"[119] Although these hierarchies existed in Saddam's Iraq, the Iraqi national space and political affiliation had been managed primarily through a *secularist* approach whilst "ethnic nationalist extremism was violently suppressed." Additionally, "social divisions primarily reflected levels of urbanization, class attainment, political power, tribal membership, or national identity rather than sectarian affiliation."[120] Under Saddam, sectarianism was not allowed to flourish and Sunnis and Shias lived a reasonably integrated life. The same system applied in Assad's Syria where discussions on sectarian differences were made "taboo" and details regarding the Alawi, Ismaili and Druze

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[117] N. Al-Tikriti "US Policy and the Creation of a Sectarian Iraq" July 2008 http://www.mei.edu/content/us-policy-and-creation-sectarian-iraq

[118] Ibid

[119] cfr.org "A Conversation With Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah" June 2015 https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-shaykh-abdallah-bin-bayyah

[120] N. Al-Tikriti "US Policy and the Creation of a Sectarian Iraq" July 2008 http://www.mei.edu/content/us-policy-and-creation-sectarian-iraq

faiths were intentionally silenced, making it more salient.[121] Thus, although sectarian identities persisted, sectarian violence had not persisted as a "social constant" in Iraq and Syria; well at least not until the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. This can be affirmed by bin Bayyah's comment, when he spoke about the coexistence and tolerance between different sects so that "60 years ago, all the Sunnis prayed behind Kashif al-Ghataa', one of the great Shi'a scholars in Jerusalem, but that's not possible today."[122]

A master stroke of genius in the divide and rule strategy was that the unravelling would occur at the hands of the Arabs themselves so that it would not be difficult to 'blame' Islam and 'fundamentalist Islamic ideology' for the divide. IS's rhetoric and violence in many aspects, served to consolidate this plan and justify both the Syrian and Iraqi regime's attacks on civilian populations by incorporating the language of collateral damage. This strategy played out in Syria in a similar fashion; the Kurds in the north-east rarely encountered any military resistance or violent response to their demonstrations and the Damascenes were "dispersed by clubs and tear gas rather than live fire,"[123] whilst the young protestors from wealthy families and from "areas with large minority populations, were treated more gently." This selective application of violence to particular categories of protestors would gradually contribute to Sunni resentment and nurture the sectarian conflict initiated, masterminded and instigated by Assad.[124] It would also garner support for IS in spite of IS's violent tactics, both from those locally affected and traumatised and from sympathetic foreigners. But for Assad, this was a necessary tactic because he felt threatened by the 'non-Islamist' civil activist. What he needed was a *smokescreen*. As a result, the fomenting of a sectarianism strategy would afford him the opportunity to earn the support of and secure the legitimacy he wanted from the international community. However, the success of this strategy depended on Assad's ability to frame this uprising in *religious terms* – specifically as Islamic terrorism and to re-iterate the narrative of his 'victimhood' and the suffering of 'his people' at the hands of the barbaric Islamists/*jihadists*. The plan was simple, stir communal tensions by initiating false-flag operations that divided Sunni from Alawi. On another front, the coalition of regimes and foreign forces simultaneously targeted Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham, killing dozens of innocent civilians including women and children yet both these organisations were fighting IS, both were on the "frontlines against Assad and both might have contained a majority of

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[121] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 117

[122] cfr.org "A Conversation With Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah" June 2015 https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-shaykh-abdallah-bin-bayyah

[123] Yassin Kassab and Al-Shami 49

[124] Yassin Kassab and Al-Shami 49

foot soldiers who *do* [my emphasis] subscribe to democracy."[125] Again, one must ask, "Why?" Military force by the US and its coalition were not unleashed against the savagery of Assad or clearly identifiable IS targets, instead the actions of the US, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and Assad all point to a deliberate effort to destroy the voice of the revolution - the voice that has collectively called for self-autonomy, political equality and democracy - whilst claiming to attack *Islamic terrorists*. Why? There should be no confusion into believing that the US is an "ethical" actor and that because it is leading the coalition against Assad it has not aligned with Assad on certain occasions. The situation on the ground has been fluid, and coalitions and allegiances have morphed into what each actor considers strategic for itself at that moment. These realities cannot be overlooked. In the case of IS, Assad, Iraq and the US, the consequences of the shifting alliances/allegiances has had very obvious outcomes – the death of mostly Muslims, the destruction of Islamicate infrastructure and an attack on Islam. Thus, by highlighting the different pacts or alliances, this does not suggest that IS is a Western invention – what is obvious is that IS has certainly served specific western interests. This can be clearly understood if one ask, "Who benefits from IS?" Undoubtedly, not Islam and not the Muslims.

There are many twists and changes in the story. Many of the IS fighters have been beneficiaries of Assad's 'amnesty,' the regime bought oil from IS and released approximately "1500 of the most well-connected *Salafist* activists from its prison."[126] If the *Salafists* and the 'fanatical ideology' of the *Salafists/Wahhabis* constituted the 'enemy' and those driving sectarian conflict inside Syria, why did Assad release so many of them, and why did he grant important figures a form of 'amnesty' by overlooking their actions and the areas in which they operated? Furthermore, when the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and IS fought, why is it that "Assad's planes bombed the FSA?"[127] The Assadist regime had formed a pact with IS for months and attacked all the areas in and around Raqqa, including the Syrian opposition groups that had fought and driven out IS from different towns and suburbs, except the "obvious ISIS headquarters."[128] This has been largely ignored in analysing the conflict, and the question that must be asked is 'Why?' Whilst these underhanded collaborations existed, and even when protests were still largely peaceful, the Syrian state media claimed that "armed *takfiri* gangs" were killing soldiers and security agents. Additionally, they propagated

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[125] Yassin-Kassab & Al-Shami 2016 141
[126] Ibid 120-132
[127] Ibid 136
[128] Yassin-Kassab & Al-Shami 2016 131

news from false-flag operations stoking fear of a sectarian war being orchestrated by the revolutionaries. These harrowing calls reminded the Alawis of the "narrative of historical persecution" letting loose "the monster of fear…and reinforc[ing] once again the link between homeland and sect."[129]

These tactics mimicked the British policies from as early as 1956. The Syrian national elite had looked and learnt. To do this Assad used the infamous "*shabeeha*" (Shabha=ghost), "substate thug militias" who went around in Sunni neighbourhoods shooting from their cars and threatening rape and torture. These militias/ghosts then pretended to be Sunnis and did the same in Alawi neighbourhoods, playing a key role in sectarianising the conflict[130] amongst a people already gravely traumatised, hypnotised by fear, death and brutality and bombarded with propaganda that made everyone suspicious of everyone. It was the creation of a schizophrenia and hysteria and IS conveniently emerged in the role of villain, representing that image of the barbaric Islamist unleashing *Islamic* terrorism. What the media story did was to direct the lead line to the actions of the Joker, it was not about a people reacting to decades of oppression against a dictator supported by foreign western, imperial powers. And it certainly was not about a people who despite their diversity were united in their call for a free democratic society.

The slant in the narrative was possible because of IS's public displays of violence against westerners and the foreign aid workers which catapulted IS into full view by 2013. *Remember, if it bleeds, it leads. It was a camera close up. Camera zoom in.* In labelling the evil, in highlighting the violence, IS was named as the main villain. This is what was seen, shown and paraded, leaving little opportunity to interrogate this status or the meta-context. By naming IS as the "destabiliser" in the region, the automatic response to that naming was to generate a very specific, framed question, "why is IS attacking westerners, foreigners and minorities?" The structuring of the 'why' question in my opinion was carefully located in a theological framing that discussed IS only within the parameters of this framing. This was possible by the zoom in, by focusing only the small number of non-Muslims targeted by IS, whilst ignoring IS's main victims – the Muslims. However, the zoom out (my lens) broadens the extent of the focus on the stage of the theatre and I ask, "if IS 'became' to avenge the oppression of the regime, and the historical injustices which perpetuated anti-freedoms, why has IS been such an asset to the very same regimes and such a liability to the Muslims?"

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[129] Ibid 116
[130] Ibid 47-48

Instead of building the opposition and strengthening the resistance, IS actually divided the resistance and weakened the opposition's attacks on the regime. It also made the populations – in particular, the vulnerable, more exposed to harm from the foreign intervening states and the regime's military power. The response to an IS presence generally resulted in an all-out attack that killed more innocents than it contained insurgents. This has culminated in a cyclical production of anger, hatred and desire for revenge from those affected (of the civilians). Hence, although IS may have been disdainfully shunned for its unethical and violent ways, it was gradually embraced by some as the only option when seeking retribution because of its capacity, capability and military organisation and because of its bragging that it had the potential to impose maximum fear. IS's capacity, capability, tactics and propaganda attracted different people for different reasons – it has certainly not been an attraction of theological impetus. Despite calling for a Caliphate, and for some form of unity of the *Ummah* by centering a new Islamic fabric, IS's actions have been exclusionary, contradictory to the essence and ethics of the *Shariah* and it has killed more Muslims than non-Muslims. If anything, IS's vision of the Caliphate embodies aspects of the Westphalian state (one identity, intolerance of minorities and others, assimilation and not diversity) and in many ways, the effects of its actions produces the outcomes desired in terms of the Curzon doctrine. There is thus a double operational standard in IS, the cost of which is being borne by the ordinary citizens of the two states and by Muslims in general. Furthermore, this vision contradicts Sayyid Qutb's understanding of an Islamic society, because in Milestones he states,

> The Islamic society… promoted man's human qualities, nurtured them and made them the dominant factor. Among the concrete and brilliant results of this attitude was that the Islamic society became an open and all-inclusive community in which people of various races, nations, languages and colours were members.[131]

But IS's bravado gained currency when by 2014 positions and identities inside Syria had hardened, most significantly pitting the Sunni Arab majority against the Alawis and fostering a heightened sense of group fear and resentment where the exploitation of power was used to create communal tensions from contemporary political theatrics.[132] The exploitation of power had already sowed the seeds of division and hatred and predictions were made as early as 2005 that the US would resort to an "El Salvador option" which was akin to "unleashing a reign of terror on Iraq's increasingly anti-U.S. civilian population… [where] Shi'ite 'death

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[131] S. Qutb Milestones *Ma'alim fi'l-tareeq* A.B. al_Mehri (ed) 2006 59; for a more extensive discussion on Qutb see chapter four section 4.3.2.3
[132] Ibid 109-110

squads' and party militias… execut[ed] Sunnis and anyone else they don't happen to like."[133] Despite the fact that the militia manifested as a political problem for the US and local authorities; "one wonders if, as in El Salvador during the 1980s, a good number aren't on the U.S. payroll."[134]

Considering the depth of meaning and the opportunities for speculation implied in "creative chaos" and "payroll" it can be inferred that the Rice doctrine successfully achieved the process of unravelling the Iraqi state by allowing for sectarian actors to fill the power vacuum and systematically destroying "symbols of common national identity."[135] What is significant at this point about these developments, strategies and tactics I would like to claim is that IS, the understudy, mimicked the process of "creative chaos." . In the case of IS, the violence of colonialism and coloniality has been mirrored to perfection, the only difference has been the names given to the systems i.e. "from neck-tie to long-beard fascism,"[136] where politics, society and in this instance, religion have also become warped. Let it be noted that this mirror language is employed by IS to garner support for the "collective good" (Muslims, all of whom on whose behalf it believes it has a right to speak) against the 'demonic West', the same tactic employed by Cameron in his speech after the Paris attacks. IS has used the tools of language, religion and sectarianism to justify its violence. IS has destroyed shrines, libraries and schools (epistemic genocide of Islamic knowledge and tradition), exhibited blatant intolerance of difference, independent lifestyles and choices and it has specialised in "exemplary barbarity" and the killing of "the elite of revolution"[137] just as the US did when it invaded Iraq. IS, like the Assadist and Maliki regimes and foreign powers, attacked civil activists, media and aid representatives and diligently focused on disseminating extensive propaganda to justify its actions holding up the mirror - the 'barbarity' of the puppet regimes and foreign powers. IS and those powers unleashing violence on the largely Sunni Syrian and Iraqi populations have been targeting a very specific enemy, with the aim to completely destroy it – they are attacking Islam and the Islamicate.[138] The narrative, the tactics, the

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[133] Raimondo 2006
[134] Raimondo 2006
[135] Ibid
[136] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 131
[137] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 131
[138] "Islamicate" is a term coined by the historian Marshall Hodgson regarding that which "would refer not directly to the religion, Islam itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims" in M.Hodgson The venture of Islam: Conscience and Historyin a World Civilization. Volume 1 The Classical Age of Islam 1974. Islamicate as expounded by Hodgson was to encompass the vastness of trying to define what is Islam, as it was more than religion. He coined the term Islamicate where the "ate" referred to the "social and cultural palette

behaviour, the propaganda, the ongoing epistemicide and the pacts between Assad, the changing Iraqi regimes, the US, and IS all point to this.

And attacking Islam and the Islamicate includes attacking the inheritors of Islam. Eye witness accounts from Red Crescent volunteers indicated that the children in Syria have been brutally traumatised, narrating stories of "dismembered headless bodies" that they had seen,[139] whilst spokespeople referred to accounts of volunteers from different committees, of children convulsing and foaming at their mouths, about the dead bodies of children in their beds, in Zamalka and Ain Tarma during the chemical weapon's attack on the civilian populations of the Ghouta suburbs. Assad, together with his militia, had pursued a "scorched earth" policy and "regime associated webpages" celebrated the attack.[140] Likewise, the US-led coalition has been accused of using the banned chemical weapon white phosphorous on civilian populations in Raqqah in June 2017. Citizen journalists who have been documenting abuses in the IS stronghold of Raqqah, posted video footage online showing the "signature spread of airburst white phosphorus" which was not denied by the US military. According to US Army Colonel Ryan Dillon, the US military "employed it in 'accordance with the law of armed conflict'" adding that the US military used white phosphorous "for screening, obscuring, and marking in a way that fully considers the possible incidental effects on civilians and civilian structures."[141] Ommitted from this explanation is the fact that in densely populated areas such as Raqqah and Mosul it is almost impossible to distinguish between combatants and civilians and that although the US boasts about "precision weaponry" the carnage it unleashes on civilians is "blamed on mistakes, inescapable 'collateral damage', intelligence failures [and the] enemy use of 'human shields.'"[142] There are no human victims here. No tragic loss of life. Just a toxic legacy from weapons upgraded with depleted uranium (DU). No deaths – just collateral damage. *An affirmation of the suspension of ethics and the naturalisation of war.*

Just as the foreign invaders and illegitimate rulers fostered divisions and created chaos as detailed above, IS engaged in the same strategy depending on which area it occupied. Almost

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that emerged from Islamic rule, encompassing and influencing non-Muslims as well as Muslims. Islamicate, with the –ate tacked on to the end, adds oddity and resonance to what becomes the heritage of Islam for world civilization.

[139] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 90

[140] Ibid 90-92

[141] PressTV "US-led coalition appears to be using white phosphorus in Syria, Iraq" June 2017
http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2017/06/10/524797/USled-coalition-Syria-Iraq-white-phosphorous

[142] C. Boggs "Imperialism and the Logic Of Mass Destruction" May 2017
https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/05/04/imperialism-and-the-logic-of-mass-destruction/

every strategic, violent episode of IS is a recreation, a replay of an episode in which western actors and their allies have played a dominant role and enacted a specific tragedy.

2.2.1.2 Role playing, epistemic and cultural genocide and selective amnesia

IS has proven astoundingly apt at reproducing acts. Its strategies, tactics and actions are in no manner unique, innovative or creative. IS, like the West, engages in prostituting violence. In destroying the statues, sculptures and engravings of the Assyrians in Wilāyat Nīnawā, and other ancient sites, IS was bolstering the West's claim that these ruins belonged to the 'cultural and national' heritage of Iraqis and Syrians.[143] Yet there was another more sinister agenda at play, where the focusing on heritage sites being destroyed by IS allowed for the illicit satisfaction of a material want. Many artefacts and valuable items were stolen and traded on the international market to western buyers.[144] There was profit in pain and profit from contesting narratives and both IS and its western counterparts were benefitting from this enterprise.

Which brings me to the question, "if artefacts and archaeological masterpieces are important markers of cultural-heritage and national identity, then why have western/foreign armies and their allies bombed, *specifically* cultural heritage sites related to the Islamic tradition but cried foul only when IS desecrated heritage sites? During the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US bombed the National Library and State Archives of Iraq. According to historian, Zainab Bahrani, one of the casualties of the invasion was the destruction and removal of the "collective memory of a nearly 5,000-year-old civilization, stretching from ancient cuneiform on clay tablets" to other personal documents relating to Saddam Hussein and his secret police. Bahrani describes the destruction of Iraq's "collective memory," artefacts, heritage, culture and history and states that "[t]he first two years of war and occupation were a violent time of horrendous destruction."[145] Significantly, there was neither uproar nor comment about this pillage, yet the consequences have been and are phenomenal. The destruction did not only relate to material or cultural heritage, but to human heritage as well. Thousands of Iraqi intellectuals and professors were killed or assassinated, at a time when the US was occupying Iraq, and like the Iraqi war dead, no records were kept of these deaths. Rice's plan it seems had been achieved. The effects thereof are summed up by Bahrani because the,

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[143] Dabiq Issue 8

[144] R. Shabi "Looted in Syria – and sold in London: the British antiques shops dealing in artefacts smuggled by Isis" July 2015 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/03/antiquities-looted-by-isis-end-up-in-london-shops

[145] WORLDPOST "Iraq National Library Destruction: The Incredible Fight To Save Iraq's Collective Memory (PHOTOS)" March 2013 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/05/iraq-national-library-destruction_n_2813825.html

> [d]estruction of archives incites a collective amnesia, an eradication of memory by means of erasing its documentary and historical apparatus, consigning it to the flames. Because of the destruction of documents and the record of the history of kinship and ties to place that all the peoples and religions of Iraq have, those who wish to incite ethnic hatred and religious intolerance can rewrite history as they please. When documents are confiscated by foreign powers the result is similar; without them there can be no reconciliation for Iraq, and there can be no peace.[146]

In February 2015, IS was reported to have destroyed thousands of books, documents and artefacts in the Mosul library. The destruction of these historical texts and cultural pieces were described as "cultural cleansing." It was a co-ordinated and intentional effort to destroy the heritage of the Iraqis but also of Islam whilst continuing with the persecution of minorities in order to eradicate the "cultural diversity that is the soul of the Iraqi people."[147] IS, the *Islamic fundamentalists*, the Joker, were emulating the foreign gangsters. Both were engaging in "cultural cleansing," yet each advanced a different justification, "purification of blood" vs. "purification of religion." But are these justifications really different?[148] Significantly, the word "fundamentalism" first emerged in the 19th Century from the American Protestant tradition which espoused a belief in the literal translation of the Bible - an approach adopted by IS with regards the Quran, yet not endorsed by the majority Muslim scholars. Although IS is calling for a return to the past and to associated understandings of the past, its memory, its remembering and reading of the past has been determined by a western, colonial framing and epistemology driven by material concerns and an ambitious desire for power. The fact that IS has meticulously imitated those it claims to be fighting against indicates that IS has not broken free of its colonised mentality. IS functions as a mirror- image of those who birthed it. IS is a product of western modernity, its reasoning and logic; and its thinking and actions stem from this episode. Significantly, in all the comments about IS's destruction of heritage and historical sites as a manifestation of a resentment and violence in Islam and Islamic beliefs, there seems to have been one very pertinent omission. Many of these documents, books, artefacts are by and about Islam, about Islamicate heritage, culture, traditions, discoveries, sciences and technology. All of these sites, documents, books and artefacts have been preserved, protected, collected and (many were) authored in MMC. They are all spaces of Islam, they have been spaces of Islam for hundreds of years, and they have been under the supervision of a 'collective' Muslim ethos and understanding where

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[146] Ibid

[147] M. Fadhil "Isis destroys thousands of books and manuscripts in Mosul libraries" February 2015
https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/26/isis-destroys-thousands-books-libraries

[148] See the section under Ideology in this chapter and the link between empire, race and religion in Chapter 3 for a further analysis of this question

none of these were endangered, damaged or destroyed, except from the onset of the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq. Why?

2.2.2 More legacies: Shariah before the occupation, Caliphate after

2.2.2.1 Sectarian tensions and the call for a Caliphate

It is clear in following the story line that the actors in the *Shami* theatre – specifically the gangsters, the Knight and the Joker, have rehearsed from the same script, and that the choice in naming the villain as *Islam* through the image of the Joker is a continuation of a tradition long established and which I explain in greater detail in chapter four. What is also clear is that the people of Syria and Iraq have been used as pawns, manoeuvred on the chess board where different kings seek absolute control and power irrespective the cost to the nation, the people, the culture and the traditional belief systems. Each actor is working to establish complete control at any cost, and IS is no different from those it claimed were its 'near' and 'far' enemies.

To establish complete control and legitimate that ownership of power, IS declared itself a Caliphate. Of particular importance is the need to interrogate IS's declaration of a Caliphate and the buy-in it needed (and which it essentially never got) for this declaration from the *Ummah*. Without the *Ummah's* 'buy-in' the legitimacy of the Caliphate becomes highly contested. How did the idea of a Caliphate evolve and why did IS declare itself a Caliphate? When Robert Fisk interviewed bin Laden prior to the occupation of Iraq and asked him to describe the system of governance he would like to live under, bin Laden referred to *Shariah* Law only. At this point in time, there was no mention of a Caliphate. However, after the 2003 occupation of Iraq, bin Laden's language changed and he made reference to a Caliphate. This shift was supplemented by the logic and motivation of bin Laden's mentor Abdullah Azzam who said that the "jihad of *today* [my emphasis]" was necessary "until the last piece of Islamic land is freed from the Disbelievers."[149] What motivated this change in ideology and vision? Significantly, the shift in paradigm occurred after the invasion and occupation of Iraq, more than 90 years after the last Caliphate was abolished by the secularist Turkish leader Ataturk. The language of the Caliphate vision had not existed before in any of the other al Qaeda narratives and more pertinently, *IS had not existed before the occupation.* According to IS, the Caliphate was necessary and had to be established because of the degradation that Muslims faced from western imperial powers. Yet the declaration of the

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[149] Moubayed 2015 15

Caliphate divided the Muslims further because it "means that anyone who does not pledge allegiance to them will be declared an apostate and sentenced to die."[150] Again, a double operational standard; one that claims unity but in essence effects division.

Just as in Iraq, the re-writing of history and relationships in Syria were manipulated to produce a specific outcome, orchestrated through the creation of a sectarian flare up and channelling that division in multiple ways. Sunni sacred sites were destroyed (the one thousand year old minaret of the Umawi Mosque in Aleppo, the minaret of the Deraa Omari Mosque erected in the seventh century by Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab was bombed and destroyed) and Sunni civilians were randomly killed even when not protesting. A number of state sanctioned sectarian massacres were executed in the areas between Homs and Hama during 2012. The suffering of large Sunni communities who were placed under siege in the "starve or surrender" policy whilst provisions were sent to nearby majority Shia neighbourhoods were all measures intentionally used to target the Sunni population of Syria, many of whom had not really asserted nor acknowledged their 'Sunnism' till that point. After the waves of violence, even atheist Syrians "began asserting their Sunnism" which for them had more meaning as a social rather than as a religious identity.[151] Amongst the Syrian masses, the Syrian national identity slowly unravelled into "sub-national fragments" and even at this stage, there was no absolutist religious identity but the merging of sectarian identity with group and political identity as a tactic of self-preservation. For the Alawis,

> if the sect provided both identity and privileges, then it became the homeland; an attack on the sect became an attack on the homeland; defence of the sect was defence of the homeland; sacrifice for the sect was sacrifice for the homeland's sake.[152]

As these measures intensified, the Assadist regime "threw its arms around the neck of the Alawi community, advertising its complicity in its crimes and making it a potential target for *revenge* [my emphasis]".[153]

Furthermore, the areas which saw the greatest escalation of violence have historically also been sites of resistance. Homs was the residence of Sheikh Mustapha al-Sibaii who was considered as the father figure when it came to political Islam in modern Syria. al-Sibaii formed what became known as the "nucleus" of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, founded the *Al-Manar* newspaper and worked with committed youth (just as in the start of the Syrian

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[150] R. Mortada "What does ISIS' declaration of a caliphate mean?" June 2014 http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/20378
[151] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 110
[152] Ibid 113
[153] Ibid 110-111

uprisings), to end the French mandate of Syria which had been in place since 1920.[154] al-Sibaii was committed to political change but never resorted to violence. When the Baathists came into power, they considered him a threat, and banned his books and writings together with the works of Qutb.[155] According to Moubayed, "his death marked the end of 'gentleman' politics amongst Syrian Islamists," and signified the failure of trying to "achieve an Islamic state in Syria through ballots, not bullets."[156] An ending and a memory that gradually surfaced as Assad's violence enacted the "baptism of horror."[157]

2.2.2.2 An unresolved past, a new generation, a new response, a new vision

And the curtain rose again, this time to reveal a dark, bloody scene. In the memory of a failed 'gentleman's politics' and the incarnations of previous horrors, the IS entity represented a new generation – a new, more organised, more suave (for its Arab audience) and more technologically savvy phenomenon which rose to the fore (though it had existed since 2006) during 2013- 2014. It exhibited a willingness to violently challenge the forces of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, domestic domination, political violence and oppression that characterised the lands of Iraq and Syria. IS was able to work from within the frames that had been structured and set decades ago, frames that produced counter revolutionary formations in Aleppo and Hama and underground cells that had started forming in the mid-1960s. These cells had also launched a jihad against the Baathist regime. Marwan Hadid known as the founder of militant *jihadism*[158] in Syria, hailed from Hama. Hadid was the founder of what became known as the "Fighting Vanguards of the Muslim Brotherhood." Although inspired by the Muslim scholar ibn Taymiyya, his resentment towards the Baathists stemmed from his dislike of their "liberal and entirely secular lifestyles."[159] Hadid's rebellion in Hama (1964) was crushed violently. Thereafter soldiers killed his supporters in the Grand Umayyad Mosque showing once again that in Syria, there was no scope for 'gentleman' politics, "seemingly on both sides of the spectrum. Both sides were willing to kill, either to seize power or to retain it."[160]

In contemporary Syria, history repeats itself.

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[154] Moubayed 2015 24

[155] B.M. Nafi *The Islamists: A contextual history of Political Islam* 2017 181

[156] Moubayed 2015 26

[157] Ibid viii-ix

[158] *Jihadism* is often used descriptively as a synonym for 'violent Islamist' and what most Muslims would deem illegitimate violence. For Arab speaking Muslims, illegitimate militant groups that claim an 'Islamic' essence are not jihadists but refer to them amongst others as "*irhabiyyun*" (terrorists) or "*munhafirun*" (deviant).

[159] Ibid 31

[160] Ibid 32

Pause. Stop. Rewind. Replay.

The Vanguards escalated their attacks during Hafez Assad's regime which began in 1970. By February 1982, the Hama bloodbath that had ensued between the Vanguards and the regime resulted in the destruction of almost a third of the historic city and the death of approximately 20 000 civilians.[161] At the start of the uprisings in 2011, the youth of Hama, the "children and grandchildren of those slain in 1982" participated in the demonstrations and occupied many urban spaces.[162] *Rise phantasma and the story replays.* The "ghosts of Hama and the bloody struggle between the Baathist state and the Muslim Brotherhood" are considered central to the *jihadi* narrative today, when discussing either IS or Jabhat al-Nusra.[163] Thirty seven years after the death of Hadid, the Marwan Hadid Brigades were founded in Hama in 2013.[164] This is the stigmergic effect.[165] The unresolved struggle, the "ghosts" and the memory channelled the opportunity for IS and other opposition groups to rise and exploit the idea, to energise an action based on the "people's torments at the hands of a well-armed occupier" – in Iraq the Americans and the Shia militia, in Syria the delegitimised regime and the Iranian militia.[166] IS has presented as a troublesome question and aggravation to the domestic, power elite, their foreign allies, and to the Muslim *Ummah*. With regards IS as a problem for the *Ummah*, it is evident that IS has presented as an opportunity for maintaining the status quo – its exploits allowed for continued support to illegitimate rulers, for further foreign interventions and for the continued dehumanising of all Muslims. The majority of IS victims are Muslim. The extended occupation and continued exploitation and interference in these countries have been justified in the language of power politics as a defence of secularism, western freedoms, civilisation and democracy against a barbaric Islamic entity – IS.

2.2.2.3 In the Arab world, Islam means democracy and the West dictatorship

But this defence of secularism and a western vision, a dream of and by foreigners about another 'foreign people and their land', has resulted in continuous nightmares for those who do not endorse nor participate in the dream. It is in these nightmares of unresolved historical conflicts and injustices and the continued existence of these memories that extremism has

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[161] Ibid 32-33
[162] Ibid 41
[163] Ibid 40-41
[164] Ibid 34
[165] Considering that stigmergy is the "action based twin of an idea based system" the action ie. the response developed from the unresolved idea of "freedom." At any point in time, for as long as the idea is not satisfactorily achieved – freedom, good governance, liberty, justice etc. there will be an actor that will respond and act.
[166] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 129

been bred and nurtured;[167] where retaliation and armed resistance has been justified. Considering the course of action, the plans and policies, the manoeuvring and behaviour since the 1950s, it can be asked, "Has anything changed"? This act, this scene, this play, this theatre is symbolic of a stuck record. Is it prudent then to discount the role, impact, consequences and stigmergic effects of the actions of these actors in analysing the state of turmoil in the MENA region and specifically, in analysing the rise and development of IS?

Significantly, one must question why the nature of oppressive secularist regimes has not entered the framework of analysis with regards MMC considering that the dictatorial regimes that have controlled Syria and Iraq have been secularists regimes towing a pro-western capitalist agenda. These facts have been poignantly downplayed or discounted when projecting the nature of the conflict and unrest in these regions in relation to IS as an 'Islamic' problematic. *A zoom in only on Islam and Islamisists.* Is IS the only anatgoniser? The only violent actor? The only instigator? And what does one mean when one says an *Islamic* terrorist? When considered as a whole, consolidating all the images, linking all the scenes, act by act it gradually becomes clear that the secularist regimes in Iraq and Syria, their proxies and allies cannot be excluded from the title of villain. This is because this is how the people in the MENA see these power actors. They have denied the majority Muslim populations the right to decide their system of governance and their choice of leaders for more than 100 years. So it is commonly understood "in the Arab world, that Islam means democracy, and the West dictatorship."[168] For more than 100 years there has been no legitimate authority in the region. All the puppet rulers, installed, protected and supported by the devilfish have been acting upon the script written for them. Today it is common knowledge that "[t]he West has financed dictatorships in the Middle East and Arab World for more than a century."[169] There are also questions about the misunderstandings (intentional?) about Islam that surface in western debates and domestic politics, most significantly the idea that Islam is 'inherently political' or perhaps 'inherently violent' which ignores the connection between religious movements and the political context in the micro-environment in which they emerge. A cursory analysis of the context is sufficient to indicate the benefits and value of politicising religion as a means of challenging a status quo perceived as unjust. The effects of these unresolved perceptions have carried forward in the "dilemma of

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[167] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 111
[168] Taken from the title of A. Prado's article here http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/in-the-arab-world-islam-means-democracy-and-the-west-dictatorship.html
[169] A. Prado http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/in-the-arab-world-islam-means-democracy-and-the-west-dictatorship.html

geography" of the place called the Middle East with its "extreme historical memory" so that what needs to be understood is that the "wars that you hear about and these conflicts, they're really historical problems."[170] Not religious problems.

The division and polarisation of the Arab world which emerged from the First World War has been destructive. In Iraq and Syria as well as other countries, rulers have had no or very little legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of the citizens. From the legacy of the past, the dismemberment of *bilad-al-Sham* produced a "truncated postcolonial state" which had no "historical legitimacy" for the Syrian people[171] and likewise, for the Iraqis. In the case of Syria, the Syrians had opted to adopt local identities or "supra-state allegiances" linked to their memory, experience and knowledge of *bilad-al-Sham*, the Arab nation or the Muslim *Ummah* in order to affirm their identities.[172] These identities are not given; they have been formed in a violent process that is both exogenous and constitutive and IS is part of and from this community where its identity and that of the majority of its members are and have also been shaped through this violent process. Throughout these events, replays and flashbacks there are moments and episodes that have provided opportunities for IS to catapult and become prominent, but in recognising these stigmergic effects it is necessary to not take one's eye off the main stage. IS is but an understudy and the fact that it has gained so much traction must be questioned. So who is on the main stage and what/who is IS imitating?

2.2.3 Antagonisers and Occupiers: The creation of identities of resistance

The formations of the Iraqi and Syrian identities are intricately entwined with colonisation and the political processes that followed in the theatre of *bilad-al-Sham* thereafter. The nature of the resistance, the challenges to power and occupation and the fight against oppression are constitutive of these identities that have emerged in different episodes and moments, driven by different agendas, ideologies and motivations. Resistance is not uncommon, nor is it underscored as a defensive tool especially when the honour and belief of a people are threatened or violated. IS is but one such identity that has emerged, yet over the historical time of the region, there have been repeated challenges to the oppressive political regimes and systems of coloniality which are deeply rooted in the resource rich MMC countries. The legacy of colonisation has been about surveillance and repression, because

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[170] cfr.org "A Conversation With Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah" June 2015 https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-shaykh-abdallah-bin-bayyah
[171] Ibid 5
[172] Ibid 5-6

> [t]he colonial army subjugated the Arabo-Muslim worlds and imposed all forms of colonialism on their populations: military colonialism in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Iraq, and Libya; settlers' colonialism in Algeria and finally settlers' colonialism combined with an occupation in Palestine. The colonial power was the ally of conservative and reactionary groups in these societies. It attempted to undermine the process of modernization in the Arab world … [and] established *modern* states that don't bear any resemblance with modernity except for the intelligence services and the repressive forces.[173]

During the French occupation of Syria, resistance had been on-going. The deliberate tactics of sabotage employed by the French to economically stunt indigenous Syrian products and markets by flooding the country with cheap imports whilst taxing Syrian exports resulted in a seventy percent diminishing of Syria's gold reserves, massive unemployment, depreciation of the currency and a collapse in traditional skilled manufacturing. It is not that Muslims are backward and against progress. It is a fact that in Syria and Iraq, the populations were spiritually, economically, politically and creatively constrained and in many instances crippled. These are not a people or culture against progress or modernisation, rather they have been denied the opportunities to materialise their potentials.

This is evident from the devastating consequences for Syrian health care where infant mortality increased due to the reduction of the health care budget of the state and the execution of "crippling collective punishments" which had social ramifications. With these consequences there was a paired strategy of divide-and-rule, favour and punish which fermented increased sectarianism because the Alawi-dominated army, a product of the French process, began to dominate political power and political life.[174] The French had also created an independent state for the Alawites which was "protected by the mandate regime until 1941."[175] In modern day Syria, Assad's resort to collective punishment meant it was not possible to "avoid repression by keeping out of politics."[176] An Amnesty international report "Human Slaughterhouse: Mass hanging and extermination at Saydnaya prison" released in February 2017 found that approximately 13 000 people, mostly civilians have been hanged by the Assadist regime at the Saydnaya prison in a "policy of extermination" between 2011 and 2015. According to the report, prisoners had been raped and forced to rape each other. Significantly, the report stated that the aim of this "monstrous campaign" was authorised by senior officials of the Syrian government which included strategies to enhance the determined programmes of psychological and physical torture in order to annihilate any forms of dissent

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[173] A.el-Wahab el Missiri "Modernity and the smell of gunpowder" *al-Ahram* 2003 Translated by Yasser Munif http://decolonialtranslation.com/english/gunpowdermissiriENG.html
[174] Ibid 5-6
[175] Moubayed 2015 30
[176] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 83

amongst the Syrian people.[177] [Break the spirit of the rebellious dog]. Assad's violence, tactics and strategies of "collective punishment" reflect the colonial French and British. Many of IS members in Syria are a part of those who have been affected by Assad's policies.

The situation with regards illegitimate rulers and their tactics of control in Iraq was (and since the illegal US invasion and occupation is) similar. According to Cockburn, "Iraqi's are not naïve." From their experiences of their rulers "many recognise them as being self-serving, greedy, brutal and incompetent."[178] For many Iraqi's, the Iraqi government is viewed as an "institutionalized kleptocracy."[179]The widespread political repression, the descent into apocalyptic violence and corruption, fear and intimidation has been exacerbated by the facts that, as many Iraqi's have claimed, "UN sanctions destroyed Iraqi society in the 1990s and the Americans destroyed the state after 2003,"[180] a verification of the intent in Rice's "creative chaos" strategy. These tactics, forms of violence, incidences of collective punishment and policies of division have fuelled the anger and hatred of the people and created the space for all types and forms of resistance, where vengeance constitutes a valid category of this resistance – so that morality, ethics and justice is temporarily suspended. Again, significant numbers of IS fighters are those who have anger, hatred and a desire for revenge. Although not all support the violence or take up arms, there is a mutual and overwhelming animosity to the anti-freedoms and occupation, to the violence and coercion, and to the surveillance and exploitation. It is in the ability to read these situations, capitalise on these sentiments and respond to these needs that IS has proven effective.

According to IS's official magazine, *Dabiq*, the priority in establishing a Caliphate was to rid the Muslim lands of illegitimate and treacherous rulers who had ruled for decades using powerful intelligence and security agencies, crushing any opportunity or attempt for the surfacing of a Muslim political identity and for Muslim political agency.[181] This pronouncement by IS has been given credibility by the political statements of prominent leaders and also because of the continued repressive measures enforced by the state against very specific categories of the citizenry. Consider for instances that a prominent Sunni Muslim leader in the Iraqi province of Anbar, Abdul Maalik al-Saadi declared the 2014 parliamentary elections illegitimate, in spite of him being recognised as a man advocating

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[177] AlJazeera "Syria hanged 13,000 in Saydnaya prison: Amnesty" February 2017
http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/syria-hanged-13000-saydnaya-prison-amnesty-170207035230495.html
[178] P. Cockburn *The rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the new Sunni Revolution* 2014 66
[179] Ibid 66
[180] Ibid 68
[181] Dabiq Issue 1 37

"moderation."[182] On the other hand, the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) which committed crimes in Anbar, Diyali and Salahuddin, have been backed and supported by the Iraqi government. According to various international human rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch "summary killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and the destruction of homes" were documented as crimes committed by groups such as the Shia Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and the Hezbollah Brigades (Kata'ib Hezbollah) amongst others. The behaviour and actions of these groups, backed by the Iraqi government, and controlled by and through the US are not any different to IS;[183] but they serve to generate support for IS by groups or individuals who are targeted and harmed. For many, retribution can only be found in and through IS camps. Qureshi, Mafille and former Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg maintain that the justification and propaganda generated and spun in terms of the Iraqi war was

> born in the torture cells of the US-led 'war on terror'. In countries around the world, alliances with Arab dictatorships led to false confessions being used in order to justify an unlawful invasion.[184]

The unlawful invasion, in many ways has justified IS. The imposition of authoritarian dictatorships who manipulate "the cynicism and discontent of furious majorities,"[185] the lack of a social contract and legitimacy, the decline of politics, political participation and inclusion, the lack of democracy, the continued occupation of and coloniality in these lands have all combined and heightened the necessity to act. What that action is, how and where it manifests and is justified is as varied and ambiguous as there are motivations for the actions and reasons for claiming victimhood. But action had become necessary as the grievances flamed. IS saw the opportunity and seized it. IS was now cast as the main actor.

2.2.4 IS and the Paradigm Shift

In 2003, Baghdad which had been the centre of Islamic civilisation was occupied by the US. With the occupation, the political geography of Iraq changed. The reliance on sectarian militia to defend the capital because of the collapse of state security forces and the disintegration of the national army has been catastrophic. The occupation is on-going and the US has been instrumental and active in every aspect of the war and the internal conflict inside

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[182] Cockburn 2014 75

[183] HRW "Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation. Unpunished Killings, Torture Put Civilians in Harm's Way July 2016 https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation

[184] A. Qureshi, A. Mafille & M. Begg "The Iraq war was born and raised in torture" July 2016 http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/iraq-war-was-born-and-raised-torture-1531773609

[185] P.Mishra "Welcome to the age of anger" December 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/08/welcome-age-anger-brexit-trump

Iraq and Syria either directly or indirectly, often in co-ordination and complicity with proxy entities. According to Basheer Nafi, the "war against IS in Iraq is, in essence, an American war and the Iraqis, as an army, as militias and as Kurds, are nothing but tools in this battle."[186] In issue 12 of *Dabiq*, John Cantlie's article, *Paradigm Shift* is published, which confirms the presence and viciousness of the militia and the dismantled Iraqi security cluster. Cantlie states that

> [t]he Iraqi army, according to MIT University's Barry Posen, no longer exists as a meaningful fighting force. In Iraq they have been largely superseded by the Popular Mobilization Units (*al-Hashd ash-Sha'bī*), a Shia militia of up to 100,000 men with weapons supplied by Iran. They led the assault on Tikrit in April and have been largely responsible for many of the atrocities subsequently reported in Sunni regions.[187]

These atrocities and the dead bodies of Sunni victims found dumped under the blanket of the night compounded by the attack on Sunni villages from Amerli which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians have increased the hatred towards the government, motivating youngsters to join IS.[188] Additionally, the massacre of Sunni's in what is known as the Barwana massacre,[189] the host of anti-Sunni policies and political and economic marginalisation of Sunnis since the fall of Saddam, are all factors that have driven the counterrevolution and contributed to the dismantling of the national cultural and social fabric of Iraqi society. Yassin-Kassab states that the effect of the Shia military has been to destroy the possibility of long-term reconciliation between once communal societies because of the "Iranian state's undue influence on Iraq's military and political life [which] has helped strangle both communal coexistence and the possibility of democracy."[190]

These atrocities, events, episodes and policies have resulted in the rise in violence. It is thus no coincidence that the first narrative of al Qaeda in explaining itself was related to the issue of international interference in the Middle East[191]and by association the illegitimate rulers that are given sanctity by these interventionist states. The atrocities committed by the Iraqi state as a result are largely ignored or side-lined. In an opinion piece published by Al-Jazeera, June 2017, Abdulrazaq vividly described the horrific scenes;

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[186] Nafi 2016
[187] Dabiq Issue 1, Safar 1437 48
[188] Cockburn 2014 xviii-20
[189] J. Arraf "Iraq PM orders urgent probe into military 'massacre'" January 2015
http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/01/iraq-pm-orders-urgent-probe-military-massacre-150129132719377.html
[190] R. Yassin-Kassab "Iran no friend of Syrians nor defender of Shia" February 2016
https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/2/14/iran-no-friend-of-syrians-nor-defender-of-shia
[191] W. Khanfar Introductory address at "(Re)assessing the Islamic State group and its futures" Conference hosted by AMEC 23 August 2016 Premier Hotel Pretoria

> Blindfolded, tied up men with dislocated shoulders dangling painfully from ceilings. Teenage boys, hands tied behind their backs screaming for mercy, only for a soldier to execute them in cold blood. Ashen-faced women clutching onto their terrified children after they had just been raped. These are just some of the scenes taking place in Iraq. The most frightening thing about these horrific acts is that their perpetrators are not fighters from the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS), but in fact government troops and police units.[192]

Reports from inside Mosul, June 2017 reveal that the crimes committed by Iraqi soldiers are "so heinous that even ISIL would 'stand aloof' from perpetrating;" yet despite the evidences the US-led anti-ISIL coalition has remained largely silent on the abuses. In March 2017, the US admitted to killing 105 civilians in an airstrike on Mosul,[193] 35 civilians including women and children in an airstrike on Syria in May 2017[194] and in the period between 23 April to 23 May, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the US and its coalition have killed 225 civilians including women and children in airstrikes in Syria.[195] After the Manchester bombings, the Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn linked the attacks to "interventionism and empire," and western wars of aggression. The 2017 briefing paper by Ahmed and Curtis concludes that Anglo-American policies in the MENA have fuelled instability and the "rise of violent jihadism." Ahmed and Curtis argue that the illegal intervention and occupation by the US and UK resulted in the extensive destruction of existing state infrastructure which resulted in power vacuums and "fuelled an Islamist insurgency which incubated al Qaeda in Iraq and culminated in the emergence of ISIS."[196] Corbyn's statement included clarity on the British government's complicity, its intelligence and security services awareness of the link between the wars that the British government has supported, such as the Nato intervention in Libya, and "terrorism here at home."[197] Significantly, the Labour Party leader did not depoliticise the bombings. Corbyn's mindful introspection as opposed to the general rhetoric of western leaders served to expose the operational double-standard in the actions of western governments because in 2011, "the U.S. and U.K. governments encouraged foreign fighters to travel to… [Libya] to help fight" whilst the British intelligence supported the *Islamist militancy* and worked with the al Qaeda-

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[192] T. Abdulrazaq "Iraq deserves heroes, but only has monsters
The atrocities committed by the Iraqi army in the battle of Mosul is well documented, but the world stays silent." June 2017 http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/06/iraq-deserves-heroes-monsters-170601083337240.html
[193] Ibid
[194] Associated Press "U.S.-led airstrikes in eastern Syria kill at least 35 civilians, activists say" May 2017 http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-airstrikes-civilian-deaths-20170526-story.html
[195] B. McKernan "Past month 'deadliest on record' for Syrian civilians killed in US-led air strikes" May 2017 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-war-us-air-strikes-civilian-death-toll-deadliest-on-record-isis-donald-trump-a7751911.html
[196] Curtis & Ahmed June 2017
[197] B. Norton & M. Blumenthal "Jeremy Corbyn Dares to Speak Truth About the 'War on Terror'—and British Voters Are Responding" May 2017 http://www.alternet.org/grayzone-project/jeremy-corbyn-war-terror

affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in an effort to bring regime change in Libya.[198]

Pause. Stop. Rewind. Replay.

Another account of regime change.

Likewise, the US and its allies partnered with different groups as and when it suited them. The term al Qaeda has been "applied flexibly when identifying an enemy."[199] Webb makes a similar point, stating that the "terror watch list in the U.S. has long been both secretive and controversial – as 'reasonable suspicion' is enough to label any individual a 'terrorist.'" The US names one group as 'terrorists' today but considers them 'moderate' tomorrow depending on the context and allegiances.[200] Significantly, al Qaeda has always been "an idea rather than an organisation" and was only named al Qaeda after 9/11.[201] Prior to this naming, many *jihadi* groups existed, but the 'bogeyman' provided the US with an excuse to destroy and disunite Iraq and further destabilise the region. al Qaeda became the main villain, a symbol of anti-American evil, but this attention abruptly shifted to IS in 2014. When the attacks on the US and British troops escalated in Iraq between 2003 and 2004, the war propaganda machines needed to defend their claim that al Qaeda was a national threat and a new version had to be spun. This was done by stating that the attacks against the foreign invading army came from al Qaeda when it was known that most of the violence came from Baathist and nationalist groups inside Iraq.[202] It was necessary to keep spinning the narrative of the Muslim enemy, the religious heretics. The foreign invaders could not say it was the Baathists who are known to be non-religious, mostly secular, nor could they name the nationalists who had little religious identity. It could not be made known that there was opposition to the foreign invaders from within the Iraqi people – the story that had to be told was that the opposition came from *Islam*. These versions were needed to supplement the lies of WMDs and to convince the American and British publics that the 'bad Muslims' were part of Saddam's cast.[203] The name al Qaeda was thus used as the theatrical image of the 'bogeyman', of the *Islamic villain* and it served the interests of the US and allied governments to consider it as having a "command-and-control" structure like a mini-

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[198] Ibid
[199] Cockburn 2014 54-55
[200] W. Webb "What's in a Name? U.S. Takes Syria's Al-Qaeda Off Terror Watchlists" May 2017 http://www.globalresearch.ca/whats-in-a-name-u-s-takes-syrias-al-qaeda-off-terror-watchlists/5591567
[201] Cockburn 2014 54-55
[202] Ibid 53
[203] Ibid 53

pentagon,[204] which was conveniently 'understood' to be all of Iraq and all of Afghanistan in order to justify attacking the entire homeland of the other. However, when compared to IS, the reverse applies. Printed in *Dabiq*, issue 12, IS maintains that the refusal by the US and other western states and their allies to admit to the reality of the structure and system of the 'state' that has developed under IS control, is because

> [p]eople understand the words 'terrorists' or 'jihadists' and will largely support any military action against them. But it loses its urgency when you're fighting soldiers from a state. It just doesn't conjure up the same images of extremely imminent danger for a politician's speechwriter.[205]

Thus, the double-standard in naming a conflict and conflict actors, in identifying life and according it value and the misuse of terms and terminology in a theatre of gangsters suggests that unless the storyline is interrogated, it is possible that the plot will be lost in translation. On the one hand the groups are terrorists, on the other, how else to explain but by a question mark (?). According to a former high ranking Pentagon intelligence officer "the United States directly aided the foot soldiers of Ayman al-Zawahiri (current leader of al Qaeda) beginning in at least 2012 in Syria."[206] These twists in the storyline indicate that often the narrative of the beginning of the various uprisings and revolts is overshadowed or obscured by determined efforts to advocate for a predetermined consensus.

In this scenario, the imposed consensus had been that the cause of the revolt was religious/sectarian animosity or antagonisms and that western intervention was a 'justified response' to secure stability, global security and entrench democracy. The aim is to defer attention or questions from the real protagonists of the violence, which in many cases is the state. More pertinently, there is an effort to eschew the correct understanding of Islam's cohesiveness with the principles of democracy and the fact that Islamist movements and political parties are advocating for democratic governance as a tool to counter the corrupt tyrannical rulers that have maintained control over the political systems in their lands; tyrannies funded and supported by the West. For many Islamicate[207] parties, the teachings of Hasan al Banna the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt remain relevant and ideal. "Islamicate" is a term coined by the historian Marshall Hodgson regarding that which "would refer not directly to the religion, Islam itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even

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[204] Ibid 53
[205] Dabiq Issue 12
[206] B. Hoff "Former DIA Chief Michael Flynn Says Rise of Islamic State was "a willful decision" and Defends Accuracy of 2012 Memo" August 2015 https://levantreport.com/2015/08/06/former-dia-chief-michael-flynn-says-rise-of-islamic-state-was-a-willful-decision-and-defends-accuracy-of-2012-memo/
[207] See M.Hodgson *The venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization. Volume 1 The Classical Age of Islam* University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1974

when found among non-Muslims." Banna stated that the "basis of political organization founded in parliamentary representation does not contradict the fundamentals that Islam has established for the organization of power."[208] Prominent leaders such as Rachid al-Ghannouchi, founder and historic leader of the Tunisian En-Nahda party has stated that within the Islamic system is a more "fertile framework" for democracy to be substantively realised because,

> an Islamic system based on the will of the majority, free elections, free press, protection of minorities, equality of secular and religious parties, and the full realization of the rights of women in all areas, from participating in elections, freedom of dress, the right to divorce, to the right to be head of state… [allows for] Islam… to provide an ethical system. [209]

Thus, in examining the language of the conflict, the contexts that are referred to, the actors and ideologies where the camera zooms in, it is curious to see how the terms are inverted to the point of "passing as absolutists the opposition who are demanding democracy ... and as salvation of the same dictators that suppress civil liberties."[210] So that what is presented is an inversion of many realities, of a world turned upside down, mainly "from the perspective of the interests of large financial corporations of the West."[211] There is almost always a cost-benefit framework in these situations that simply cannot be excluded. Consider for instance that in December 2012, the protests held by Sunnis in Iraq were largely non-violent and peaceful. The massacre of approximately fifty protestors at the peace camp at Hawijah in April 2013 by members of the Iraqi army, catapulted the on-going civil protest into armed resistance[212] yet the realities and contexts that spurred the violence and jolted a non-violent protest into an armed resistance is rarely explained. Similarly, as the foreign interventionist coalition has struggled to locate specific IS targets, dropping bombs on large swathes of civilian infrastructure increasing civilian deaths "Syrians on the receiving end" will not discern the British warplanes from the Russian bombers so that "[t]his is likely to generate support for Isis, or at least create indifference among local people."[213] It is not about support for the religious ideology of IS, but about support for an entity that can take retribution – an

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[208] Prado http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/in-the-arab-world-islam-means-democracy-and-the-west-dictatorship.html
[209] Prado http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/in-the-arab-world-islam-means-democracy-and-the-west-dictatorship.html
[210] Ibid
[211] Ibid
[212] Cockburn 2014 47
[213] TheGuardian "Syria airstrikes: everything you need to know" December 2015
https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/dec/01/syria-airstrikes-everything-you-need-to-know

entity that can inflict harm. But in this instance, the religious and not the political is politicised.

Significantly, the tactic of a dual narrative maintains the extent to which the role of IS, its rise and development is understood. On the home front, from the perspective of the dictators, IS is positioned as the entity that would challenge material benefits because of its religious ideology if its power is consolidated. On the international front, IS is positioned by the western role players and their proxies as the 'religious heretic,' the manifestation of a barbaric Islam that resents the 'progress' and 'modern' influence of the West in MMC. IS actions are seen to affirm the clash of civilisations thesis, and must be dealt with, to maintain western superiority and hegemony. From the IS perspective on the local level, its retaliation is against an unjust order, and its justification for its responses, retaliations and transgressions are carefully contextualised through many explanations. These include the fundamentalist readings of the scripture as one tactic and as a means of adding value to its claim when talking to a particular Muslim audience. It does not mean that these readings constitute the ethical underpinnings of the IS retaliation. As for the IS response to its global interventionist audience, its response is clear. Get out of our land, or face the consequences. Finally, on the international front, the dominant perspective that has prevailed has been the western narrative and the clash of civilisation postulations, where Islam as embodied by IS is the manifestation of everything evil. With regards the non-combatants on the domestic front, in Syria and Iraq, many individuals have gradually bought into Assad and Maliki's propaganda (which honed in on group fear). This propaganda played on the fear of losing privileges. Ultimately, what mattered for those who stood back, stood silent or became complicit with the repressive regimes and their allies was based on a material calculation, not because of a fear of losing their religion or places of worship. Is this a paradigm shift – from religion to materiality? Or is it a shift from a shunning of struggle to a consolidation of the material? For IS, the only choice on offer was an all-out attack or forever be beholden and "submissive to the dictates of Western financial markets and the International Monetary Fund."[214]

2.2.5 The Kingdom of Silence, the Massacres and the rise of al-Baghdadi

For Muslims, religion and places of worship are synonymous with Syria and Iraq and both Syria and Iraq have birthed and buried Islamic legacies, culture and heritage. The historic and civilisational value of the cities now embroiled in conflict and violence cannot and must not

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[214] Prado http://www.decolonialtranslation.com/english/in-the-arab-world-islam-means-democracy-and-the-west-dictatorship.html

be negated, obscured or overlooked. Damascus and Aleppo are considered the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, they are also economic centres, and Syria was the site of the first agricultural revolution.[215] Syria was known as the "kingdom of silence," but in 2011, the muffled voices of millions whose thoughts and political agency had stirred in the hearts of brave young youths "burst into speech," and shattered the silence. It was a collective speech of a Syrian people, a civil activism and a call for political freedoms. It was not a speech motivated, driven or indoctrinated by religious rhetoric or dogma. It was a similar call to that of the Druze and peasants of Ghouta who rebelled against the French occupation between 1925 and 1927, under the sectarian slogan, "Religion is for God and the Homeland for All."[216] In return, the French bombarded and burned the Ghouta villages and a residential quarter of Old Damascus; just as Assad has burned and destroyed these areas since 2011. The Old residential quarter was rebuilt after the French left and re-named '*Hareeqa*' (Fire), and this same site became the scene for the first Damascene mass protest of 2011.[217] The Assad regime's response to the non-violent protest was the release of a "baptism of horror" from which there was no turning back.[218]

Under Bashar Al-Assad, the primary means of social control has been through the prison and security apparatus, and torturers have acted with impunity, protected by Legal Decree No.14. This decree gave protection to all security officers for "crimes committed in an official capacity" and by 2008, Bashar extended this law to protect all members of the security and police force.[219] According to Monzer al- Sallal, "we used to laugh at the regime propaganda about *Salafist* gangs and Islamic emirates. Then the regime created the conditions to make it happen."[220] As the Syrian people encountered wave upon wave of extreme brutality, repression, violence and trauma at the hands of Assad and his proxies (Iran and Hezbollah and later Russia), in a religious society like Syria, religious emotions became enflamed and "religious references were reinforced."[221] Iran and Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict gave the conflict a Sunni-Shia flavour which had been deliberately orchestrated since the US occupation of Iraq. With the Assadist agenda of divide-and-rule through exploiting group fear in an already schizophrenic environment, the burning of the land registry in Homs and the occupation of Sunni homes by Alawi's created panic in Sunnis who feared that the

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[215] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 1
[216] Ibid 6
[217] Ibid 6
[218] Ibid viii-ix
[219] Ibid 23
[220] Ibid 108
[221] Ibid 109

"Alawi tranny and ethnic cleansing" being witnessed could be linked to "Shia regional expansionalism."[222] Religion was to be exploited by power and would also flare up to become the site of resistance to power. From within the displaced, the denigraded, the dehumanised there were those who wanted to take back, hit back – do something. Religion, in this context was a valuable currency to control and manipulate, and IS leaders did not waste the opportunity.

As protestors faced bullets, humiliation, pain and torture, and ordinary Syrians, young and old stood in death's presence, the splintered nation began converging on subnational identities as the slogan "*Yaa Allah Malna Ghairak Ya Allah*" (O God, we have nothing but You) became the rallying call of fighters.[223] As one protestor aptly said, "[i]n the Syrian context, radicalisation is better named traumatisation,"[224] based on the experiences of detained individuals who were "forced to swear that there was no god but Bashaar." Symbols of the Sunni religion were attacked and destroyed daily, traumatising those breaking their fast by saying "[w]e want to make them eat death, [w]e want to make them break their fast with death," traumatising even those saying their prayers.[225]

Similarly, in scripting the new Iraqi state, the US appointed head of the Provisional Authority of Iraq, Paul Bremer, deployed a divide-and-rule strategy based on fostering sectarian identities as a primary marker for political organisation and participation, the consequences of which continue to reverberate throughout Iraq and the region.[226] Since the US's war in Afghanistan and its illegal invasion of Iraq, both the US and Britain have instituted brutal 'police state' measures including imprisonment without trial, rendition and torture mostly against individuals identified as Muslims. This kind of racial profiling, humiliation, coercive and excessive manifestations of different forms of violence has fuelled hatred and anger. When considered in the light of the massacre of civilians in the Baghdad majority Shia suburb of Shu'ale (2003) where US fighter jets punctured the bodies of mostly women and children with slivers of metal, amputating limbs and heads, it is not difficult to understand why. As the violence and aggression has escalated in accounts such as the Sha'ab highway massacre where "at least twenty-one Iraqi civilians were killed or burned to death by two

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[222] Ibid 112-113
[223] Ibid 109
[224] Ibid 109
[225] Ibid 109
[226] N. Al-Tikriti "US Policy and the Creation of a Sectarian Iraq" July 2008 http://www.mei.edu/content/us-policy-and-creation-sectarian-iraq

missiles fired by an American jet,"[227] the shooting of "unarmed men in the back outside their homes" by US snipers in Falluja (2004),[228] the Haditha (2004), Mahmudiya (2005) and Nisour Square Massacres (2007) and the killings of civilians by US armed forces and private security companies operating inside Iraq[229] the anger and hatred has intensified. This is not unexpected, nor can it be said that it is from religion – it is about raw human emotion, and madness and it is becoming necessary to re-examine the "theatre of political absurdism," because "'[e]nlightenment humanism and rationalism' can no longer adequately 'explain the world we're living in.'"[230] Fyodor Dostoevsky interrogated the notion of the irrational and together with contemporaries writing in the 1860s considered that "rational thinking does not decisively influence human behaviour."[231] The resultant anarchy and chaos in conjunction with a power vacuum, failed systems of governance, disintegration of law and order, and the reignited sectarian policies of Bremer and Maliki, has sparked resentment and the desire for revenge. Is it any wonder then that the conditions inside Iraq and Syria were ripe for birthing IS? According to Moubayed, both in Iraq and Syria, a leadership vacuum left Sunnis in these countries feeling "weak, leaderless, victimised and abandoned."[232] IS itself, was aware of this reality. Cantlie's article posted in *Dabiq* alluded to the leadership crisis by stating that

> …the Gulf states all around are in turmoil…broken by religious differences and fractured by ancient tribal feuds. The "Middle East … is broken, angry and so dysfunctional that it's in a class all by itself, giving new meaning to the word 'hopeless,'" wrote scholar Aaron David Miller in Foreign Policy on 11th September. "It is so torn apart and riven with sectarian, political, and religious hatreds and confrontations that it seems beyond the capacity of any external party to remedy." It's precisely for reasons like this that the Islamic State has arisen so fast and in such a short space of time. There is only one sect here, Sunni Islam, and the Caliph can only be from one tribe, Quraysh. Here in the Caliphate, there is no room for pluralism.[233]

It is thus, this vacuum, this void and this dysfunctionality that gave prominence to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and IS. al-Baghdadi was born in the Iraqi city of Samarra in 1971, a city which boasts the proud tradition of housing the "seat of power", the Caliphate of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutassim from 836-892.[234] For al-Baghdadi, the fabled virtues of the Caliphate were "carved into [his] collective consciousness", and he aspired to return Iraq and Samarra to this glory. But the IS leader grew up heavily indoctrinated by Saddam's Baath ideology, and

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[227] R. Fisk "Another day in the Bloody Death of Iraq 2003" in *Tell me no Lies* (ed) J. Pilger 2004 566-568
[228] J. Wilding "Eyewitness in Falluja" in *Tell me no Lies* (ed) J. Pilger 2004 580-582
[229] Ibid
[230] P.Mishra "Welcome to the age of anger" December 2016
https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/08/welcome-age-anger-brexit-trump
[231] Ibid
[232] Moubayed 2015 20
[233] Dabiq Issue 12 47
[234] Ibid 98

would daily attend a military drill chanting slogans such as "Long live the Leader Saddam." There was no religious sentiment in this adoration and allegiance, nor any deep commitment to Islamic values, but blind support of a dictator nurtured through indoctrination of Baathist ideology. Iraqi's and al-Baghdadi in particular, grew up being surrounded by "Saddam Hussein's cult of personality." The effects of the schooling continued into his (al-Baghdadi's) adult life to the extent that "students in al-Raqqa and Mosul [had] to swear by his name and call out for his long life," when he became the leader of IS.[235] al-Baghdadi did not have to be a member of the clergy to gain prominence, because the space for contestation over a 'gutsy' Sunni leader was open, for as long as "mainstream Sunnis were leaderless."[236] Cockburn states, "ISIS is the child of war[237]... [and their] uprising has been turned into a full counterrevolution that aims to take back power over all Iraq"[238] and in spite of its brutality it has brought a certain amount of dignity and "victory" to the persecuted, dehumanised and crushed Sunni Muslim populations in Iraq and Syria.[239]

According to Yassin Swehat, "*Daesh* (IS) is the revolution within al Qaeda" and it is the price that is being paid for the defeat of al Qaeda in Iraq, by the "tribal-based and American backed Sahwa militias."[240] More pertinently, it can also be said that IS is the symptom of the effects of illegitimate rule and of state collapse both in Syria and Iraq. IS first emerged in 2006 when the Sunni insurgency and *jihadism* inside Iraq was on a rapid decline, and by the time the US soldiers 'left' in 2011, it had become a negligible political actor. When al-Baghdadi became the leader of ISI in 2006, very little attention was directed towards him or the group. Considering the almost complete disintegration of his group, the chaos and the sectarian onslaught, al-Baghdadi had to rebuild, and this demanded attracting new recruits. He drew fighters - Baathists from Saddam's army, and although these individuals were mostly seen as "secular Sunnis" they were willing to conform to the external dictates of religiosity (growing of beards and taking on an Islamic character) in order to "blend in with al-Baghdadi's forces."[241] These Baathists had an axe to grind with the Americans and the new Iraqi puppet regime. Revenge is a powerful tool for the disgruntled and dissatisfied. It is a weapon which provides the vanquished with a motivation for extracting the price for humiliation. These individuals had been discharged without benefits from the Iraqi army

[235] Ibid 98
[236] Ibid 21
[237] Cockburn 2014 8
[238] Ibid 32
[239] Ibid 39
[240] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 128
[241] Moubayed 2015 104

under the process of de-Baathification.[242] Additionally, some of these military personnel had been imprisoned by the US forces and others had been "humiliated by the post-Saddam rulers of Iraq." al-Baghdadi's recruitment drive presented as an ideal opportunity to satisfy the "vengeance in their hearts" but also to help with their "empty pockets."[243] However, the opportunity to join and be part of the resistance had greater meaning than the two benefits listed. For these Baathists, fighting with ISI presented as an opportunity to restore their dignity and honour because they could now "confront two old enemies at once" – the US military which had invaded and destroyed Iraq in 1991 and again in 2003, this time illegally occupying their country, and the new Iraqi government which they considered illegitimate, ascending to power based on the "backs of American tanks."[244]

Many other individuals who have joined ISI did not endorse ISI's strategies or ideologies, but were determined to fight the invading US army and the Iranians who contributed to the harm and the deteriorating status of the Sunni community in Iraq, post-Saddam Hussein. These injuries were dealt greater insult by the feelings of abandonment and persecution they experienced when Prime Minister Maliki "systematically punished the entire Sunni community, blaming them collectively for having produced Saddam Hussein," and turned a blind eye to the Shia death squads that were wreaking mayhem in their communities.[245] By 2011, the Baathists represented *nearly a third of ISI's top twenty five commanders*, effectively revamping IS. Although al-Baghdadi found the Baathist officers very un-Islamic, their lack of religiosity did not matter as their experience, their contacts and their wealth was what he needed more.[246] IS has been described as a secular Baathist renaissance project[247] where many of its members are identified as secularists[248] having served in Saddam's Baath Party and Fedayeen Saddam paramilitary force.[249]

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[242] De-Baathification was a policy instituted in Iraq after the 2003 invasion under the auspices of Paul Bremer and led by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Essentially the entire military, security and civil service was disbanded. CPA Order Number 1 , banned the Ba'ath party, a process known as de-Baathification; and CPA Order Number 2 dismantled the Iraqi army.

[243] Moubayed 2015 104

[244] Ibid 104

[245] Ibid 106

[246] Ibid 107

[247] Oborne July 2017

[248] S. Stewart "How the Baath Party influences Islamic State" August 2015 Stratfor Global Intelligence S. Stewart "How the Baath Party influences Islamic State" August 2015 Stratfor Global Intelligence https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/how-baath-party-influences-islamic-state

[249] J. Hall "Saddam Hussein's revenge from beyond the grave: How ISIS's land grab across the Middle East is being orchestrated by former Iraqi dictator's generals" April 2015 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3028529/Saddam-Hussein-s-revenge-grave-ISIS-s-land-grab-Middle-East-orchestrated-former-Iraqi-dictator-s-generals.html

This then constitutes the foundations of IS, the group that declared the Caliphate, where religious zeal, devotion and spirituality were not the criteria for enrolment, enlistment or participation. In this instance it was based on wealth, skill and expertise to get a job done because that was what was needed. It was not because religion demanded it. This combination of fighters and commanders produced what Moubayed calls a "vengeful militarism" with "unabated fanaticism" and points directly to the irony of the claim that the core that holds IS is religious fundamentalism.[250] From al-Baghdadi to the top commanders, religion and religious knowledge was never a priority. Power and revenge was. According to Qureshi, Mafille and Begg,

> If we ever want to understand the excesses of IS, we need to acknowledge where it was forged, through torture and arbitrary detention in places like Abu Ghraib. Prisoner mistreatment was also widely reported at Camp Bucca, the US military prison in southern Iraq. Seventeen of these prisoners went on to lead IS. Among them was a man called Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[251]

According to the Chilcot Report, Blair had been cautioned about the consequences of going to war. The broader threat from Islamist terrorists would increase in the event of war, reflecting intensified anti-US/anti-Western sentiment in the Muslim world, including Muslim communities in the West, a caution now affirmed by Corbyn.

From the foregoing, it can be argued that the origin of this phenomenon called IS needs the lens to widen to capture the context of the conflict, the imbrications of power, the upheaval in the fabric of these societies and the denigration of the dignity and human psyche of the people in these lands. The audience needs to see the unleashing of catastrophe upon catastrophe, and the discrimination, torture and imprisonment that has plagued Iraq and Syria from as early as 1916. A critical component of this dehumanising and upheaval involves the sexual exploitation of women in these societies which according to Said was a "western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,"[252]a vermin learnt and replicated by Iraqi and Assadist soldiers, militia groups and IS. A madness repeating itself - of pause, rewind and replay. These brutalities have been executed by Iraqi soldiers in the battle to retake Mosul since October 2016, whilst the traces from countless cruelties like the Yusufiya, Haditha and Saydnaya rapes and the rapes in Abu Ghraib linger on in an unresolved, on-going embitterment and humiliation. These serve as reminders that violence ultimately begets violence, and in the words of Robert Fisk, "Counterbalancing cruelty is no

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[250] Moubayed 2015 107-109

[251] A. Qureshi, A. Mafille & M. Begg "The Iraq war was born and raised in torture" July 2016
http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/iraq-war-was-born-and-raised-torture-1531773609

[252] E. Said *Orientalism* 2003 4

response, of course. Just a reminder. As long as we bomb the Middle East instead of seeking justice there, we too will be attacked."[253]

On that note, let me affirm that IS was not born in a day. It has been spawned by coloniality, imbricated in indoctrination, torture and subjugation and violently ejected after a protracted, painful labour into a zone of perpetual conflict.

2.3 Historical flashback: Violent inseminations and stigmergy

I strongly believe that until the lessons of the past are fully absorbed, the tyranny of the present cannot be amended, which means that the horrors of the future become inevitable.

Mohamad Ballan[254]

As discussed, the western, colonial and imperial influence in Iraq and Syria began with the Sykes-Picot-Sazonov Agreement. The division of the Middle-East was accorded to the Entente Powers carving up the Arabs into British and French zones[255] whilst the British, using the Balfour Declaration, granted a section of a land that did not belong to them, the land of Palestine, to Zionism. The Sykes-Picot agreement was implemented by western, colonial, foreign powers against the "clearly formulated wishes of the people of the region."[256] It can be said therefore that the First World War agreements were designed by European colonial and imperial powers, (now maintained through coloniality) as a commercial, territorial and subject formation enterprise, to destroy the right to self-autonomy and choice of the Arabs from the onset. From the onset, the European-Imperial role, the projects of colonialism and enterprise have been at the core of the current conflicts, of destabilisation, violence and politics in the Middle-East. The Middle-East was made to 'appear' as a region relative to Europe, its structural features, power relations and political makeup intricately embroiled and entwined in the tentacles of the devilfish to the extent that there could can be no understanding of the present, without an interrogation of the past - the "twentieth-century bout of imperialist map-making and sectarian engineering."[257] This agreement, later known as the Sykes-Picot agreement effectively carved up and allocated Lebanon and most of Syria to France, whilst what is known as modern-day Iraq (Basra,

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[253] R. Fisk "We must look to the past, not Isis, for the true meaning of Islam" May 2017
http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/manchester-attack-muslim-islam-true-meaning-a7754901.html
[254] M. Ballan "The Destruction of Hispano-Islamic Civilization: Recollections, Reflections, and Significance" January 2014
https://ballandalus.wordpress.com/2014/01/01/the-destruction-of-hispano-islamic-civilization-recollections-reflections-and-significance-2/
[255] M. E. Sørli, N. P. Gleditsch & H. Strand "Why Is There So Much Conflict in the Middle East?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2005 141
[256] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 4
[257] Ibid 5

Mosul, and Baghdad) and the remaining portions of Syria went to Britain.[258] But these divisions, these arbitrary carvings have always been contested – violently. Yusuf al-Azmeh[259] refused to accept the French mandate and opted to take up arms against the French rather than to be controlled by a foreign power. The French warplanes massacred approximately 2000 of al-Azmeh's army at Maysaloon. Again, the demand for autonomy by a people rejecting foreign interference, control and occupation was met with violence.

Thus, 1920, a year known as the year of San Remo, because of the French occupation of Syria and the British occupation of Iraq was declared by the Arabs as "*aam al-nakba*" or the Year of the Catastrophe.[260] The former core areas of the Ottoman Empire became the state of Turkey resulting in the loss of markets, water supplies and hinterlands for key Syrian cities, whilst the Armenian provinces were given to Russia. France was given control of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, while Britain was in charge of Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and southern Yemen.[261] The plan to dismantle and divide Syria further continued under the French as they tried to create an Alawite state in the mountainous areas around Lattakia and a "Druze state based on Sweida in the south." In addition, "'autonomous' puppet governments were set up in Aleppo and Damascus."[262] The Treaty of Sevres signed on the 20th April 1920 in San Remo, Italy, made Britain the *de facto* colonial occupier of Iraq. Iraq was a melting pot of different tribes and ethnicities and the Kurds occupied the greater part of Mosul. The Arabs became embittered by the imposition of these mini-states, and the dismemberment of "*bilad al-sham*[263]" produced a "primal trauma" that has been etched into their psyche ever since, passed down from generation to generation, where the wounds have continuously been scratched open, prodded and left to fester. There has been little opportunity for healing, for memory to embrace the pain and indignity, and for communities to overcome. Kurdish majority areas were to be granted a form of semi-autonomous statehood. But the British never granted the Kurds their independence because Churchill wanted to maintain control of the oil-rich northern areas so that the British continued to govern the Kurds throughout the colonial occupation of Iraq.[264] By May 1920, the Sunni and Shi'a populations organised mass demonstrations in Baghdad to denounce the League of Nations mandate and called for British

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[258] D. Fromkin *A Peace to End all Peace* 1989 188-219
[259] Was the Syrian Minister of War and Chief of Staff from 1918-1920 and refused to give the French occupation of Syria any legitimacy.
[260] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 5
[261] Sørli, Gleditsch & Strand 146
[262] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 5
[263] Ibid 5
[264] P. Sluglett *Britain in Iraq, Contriving King and Country* 2007 13; C. Tripp *A history of Iraq: Second Edition* 2000 41

withdrawal from their territories. This led to the revolt of the Iraqi peoples in June 1920. By July the protest had spread to most of the mid-Euphrates area and by August, the protestors had formed the provisional Arab-government. An influx of British soldiers, increased air support and with the assistance of certain cities that did not join the revolt,[265] the uprising was crushed by October. During this campaign the British used excessive force and a campaign of *shock and awe* that included mustard gas, firebombs, armoured vehicles and air-attacks. Significantly, Bashar al-Assad used *shock and a*we when he unleashed the sarin gas and excessive military force on the population of Ghouta. These tactics by the British were intentionally chosen to force obedience and the collection of taxes from the subjects. Assad followed the same path - forced obedience, subjugation and non-alliance with the resistance. The excessive violent military engagement inside Iraq was praised by colonial administrator Gertrude Bell as an indication of the "power of the imperial military enterprise,"[266] adding that "the RAF has done wonders bombing insurgent villages."[267] At the end of the campaign, the entire country was again under British rule. If the British had learnt anything from the revolt, it was the simple fact that direct rule had not worked and a more representative system of rule was needed. To this effect, the old administrative processes of the Ottoman Empire were resurrected where most of the administrative and military positions were filled by Sunni Arabs. Although a new government had been formed by November, Churchill felt that Iraq should be controlled by a "puppet" leader, one who responded to Britain's demands but who also satisfied the Arab populace. He called a meeting with the main decision-makers of the British empire in Cairo in March 1921. Britain had made similar calls by 1956, regarding the leadership of Syria. The 1921 meeting was to be dubbed the "Cairo Conference" and it was here that Faisal the son of Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Makkah was nominated as the preferred choice for the throne of Iraq.[268] Faisal was preferred because he had sided with the British during the First World War and was instrumental in orchestrating the revolt against the Ottomans. Furthermore, he had been residing in England after he had been expelled from Damascus and deposed of his Kingship by the French in August 1920, when he had led the Syrian forces in a battle against the French. The French

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[265] Tripp 41

[266] Global Policy Forum "British colonialism and repression in Iraq" https://www.globalpolicy.org/iraq-conflict-the-historical-background-/british-colonialism-and-repression-in-iraq.html

[267] G. bell "Excerpts from the letters of Gertrude Bell" (1924) https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/169/36378.html

[268] C. Catherwood *Churchill's Folly* 2004 109

had been given colonial authority and a mandate to rule over Syria at the San Remo Conference in 1920.[269]

Faisal was driven by Arab nationalism and independence, not religious vigour, and he accepted the throne of Iraq from the British. His motivation had not been religious. Significantly, Faisal had accepted that Kingship be 'conferred' on him. It was not a legitimate, people-driven placement. It was something that had to be given, but at what cost? Faisal would face huge challenges in balancing imperial demands and control with Arab aspirations for real independence. Additionally, the British used Faisal's desire to be King to curb and control his brother Abdullah who had begun to amass an army in Trans-Jordan in order to retake Syria from the French. The threat proved successful. Faisal convinced his brother to withdraw and as compensation, the British awarded Abdullah kingship of Trans-Jordan, effectively dividing Transjordan into two separate lands, Palestine and Jordan, which together with the Balfour declaration, set the stage for the occupation of Palestine by the Zionist forces.[270] From this it is apparent that tribal and familial loyalties have determined and consolidated leadership positions in this region. The occupation of Palestine would result in the creation of millions of refugees and stateless peoples and a protracted conflict in the Middle-East that would ensnare all surrounding Arab states from the time of the partition till now; whether military, political, diplomatic or economic. This action further fuelled a rising anti-west sentiment among ordinary Arab citizens who were fully aware of the negotiated political deals their leaders had acquiesced to and the resultant costs to the human dignity of the people on the streets. These political sentiments translated into a growing under-ground resistance which would surface continuously, in the Middle-East as *Islamists* and Resistance Movements sought to turn the tide of the continued imperial invasions of their lands. This is stigmergy.

The British's reneging on the creation of an autonomous state for the Kurds also manifested with serious consequences.[271] The British chose to include the oil rich Kurdish areas into the boundaries of modern day Iraq rather than to give the Kurds their own semi-autonomous state indicative of a foreign policy that intended to forever exploit and control Iraq's oil resources. As a result, the Kurdish experience inside Iraq has been a tumultuous and unpleasant one, where Kurds have faced excessive human right's violations. The Kurds did not accept their inclusion into the Arab state which was imposed upon them by colonialism, and the negative

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[269] Ibid 130-133
[270] Ibid 140-141
[271] S. Reeva & E.H.Tejirian eds. *The Creation of Iraq* 2004 102 & C Catherwood 136

political encounters and excessive feelings of alienation they have endured under the Iraqi monarchy and the Baath party rule. The Kurds have made consistent demands for autonomy. In the contemporary context, the Kurds of Syria participated in the Damascus Spring by creating their own forums but later collaborated with Assad in what has been described as a "ruthless pragmatism," securing weapons, drawing power from Assad and acting as *shabeeha* in the Kurdish areas.[272] Significantly, the *shabeeha* who operated in Homs, Hama and Lattakia were exclusively Shia and Alawi.[273] By working with Assad, the Kurds managed to stave off bombardment of Kurdish areas whilst the opposition's inability to offer guarantees of future Kurdish autonomy has resulted in a strong suspicion of the Arab opposition. This suspicion spectacularly translated into a significant clash with *Islamist* forces, specifically IS at Kobani.[274]

Significantly, definitions are not considered when mentioning the concept 'Baath.' Baathism, is understood to be a twentieth century attempt at identity/ideology/meaning that arose in response to the collapse of traditional religion. It functioned to "channel religious energies to political ends," and took nationalism to "absurd extremes."[275] Baathism was founded by a Damascene Christian,[276] and focused on the inclusive nature of Arab nationalism, whilst opposing feudalism and oligarchies. However, the Baath party under Hafez Assad's control built an absolutist regime focusing on an Alawi/military-Sunni/business ruling class to coalesce.[277] Assad's party became ruthless. Although refashioned as a mass party it was controlled and manipulated from the top and it dominated Syrian political engagement and access till 2011.[278] The regime's abiding interest was self-preservation and developed what came to be known as a "security bargain", where Syrians were allowed to live in relative peace as long as they did not get involved in politics.[279] But citizenship, justice and injustice, growth and development and participation in the polity are in most instances inseparable from politics. Between 1962 and 1982, coercion and suppression escalated, culminating in the Hama massacre where more than 20 000 Syrians were killed, much of the Old City was destroyed and tales of rape and torture wove traumatic nightmares of horrors into the memories of residents. The state had become fascist in every sense of the word, and

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[272] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 88
[273] Ibid 112
[274] Ibid 89
[275] Ibid 9
[276] Ibid 9
[277] Ibid 11-12
[278] Ibid 12
[279] Ibid 13

maintained a state of emergency since the 1963 Baathist coup. The Law of Associations (1958) did not allow for the formation of civil society organisations without explicit governmental permission. Surveillance and spying together with the appearance of the secret police increased, loyalty demanded absolute devotion to the state, and beneath the pretence of democracy, diversity, stability and plurality, laid the co-option of the elite and civil society whilst all organised political opposition had been crushed. Syria was a one-party state controlled ruthlessly by one man – Hafez Assad.[280] On the 17th July 2000, the dictatorship of the Baath Party transferred smoothly from father to son, from Hafez to Bashar, giving Hafez the opportunity to rule another eleven years from the grave.[281]

At the time of the invasion of Iraq during the Gulf War (2003), the Kurdish areas became a "de facto zone of autonomy protected by international force."[282] The Kurdish demands for autonomy also posed a threat to "pan-Arabism", an Arab ideology that was transnational in character and focused on the unitary nature of the Arab world. Arab unity was considered an "ideological bulwark against imperialism" which was now threatened by the dismembering of Iraqi-Arab power through various processes which included the establishment of semi-autonomous Kurdish regions in northern Iraq; Turkey's increased engagement with Kurdish leaders which has been considered by the Arabs as a dangerous phase of "neo-Ottomanism" and, the control of Iraq by the Shiite majority who have not shared in this primarily Sunni vision.[283]

For the general Arab population, Arab unity was key to overcoming the continued external domination that has plagued their societies, their identities and their resources – which occurred through the Ottoman occupation and western colonialism and then again through western interventionism. The fact that Arab oil has been dominated by western capital and dictated to by the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and western markets suggests a loss of sovereignty for most oil producing Arab states. This is because possession of the commodity has not yielded the right to dispense of it in the manner that they, the Arab (people)/states, see fit.[284] Many critics might claim that harping on the past is unhelpful, but it is the past that provides the context animating the traces and episodes that have remained unresolved. It represents a definite link to the present day conflicts. The past is the site of stigmergic reactions. It is also ironic that those who prefer to have the past deferred, cry foul

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[280] Ibid 15
[281] Ibid 15
[282] G.E. Fuller "The Fate of the Kurds" *Foreign Affairs* (Spring, 1993) 72(2) 112-113
[283] Ibid 118
[284] Ibid 118-119

when ancient relics are destroyed. In this regard it is necessary to be prudent of the realities of the past that shape both the present and the future, as Magobe Ramose states, "[h]istory is the repository of memory necessary for the construction of an ever changing present and the projection of a better future."[285] It is also from these episodes of the past, from the repository of memories and from the inability to construct a viable present that IS has been birthed and nurtured. These realities are consolidated in the French President's declarations after the July 2016 "truck-driver" attack in Nice. According to Hollande "We will continue striking those who attack us on our own soil," a declaration which made direct reference to France's complicity in the air strikes in Syria against IS,[286] whilst confirming that at the highest level it is understood and known that the violence of IS is blowback, and not religiously inspired acts of aggression. It is a case of walking on moving sands.

2.4 Ideology and Influence

> We do not understand the movement [i.e., the Islamic State], and until we do, we are not going to defeat it." Of the group's ideology he said: "We have not defeated the idea. We do not even understand the idea.

> Major General Michael K. Nagata, U.S. Central Command, December 2014

It is thus necessary to go to the past to understand the present, to read the past to decipher the present and to contemplate the spaces of the past to make sense of the voracity of the violence in the present. Notably, the diversity within IS reflects a multitude of opinions, ideas, motivations, beliefs and imaginings about what the group is, what it should do and what each person's role in the group means. Individual members are driven by different meanings and perspectives, whilst most of the fighters are not knowledgeable of the so-called *Salafi-Jihadist* ideology of IS. There is also little evidence to affirm that this ideology is in fact the foundational marker that underwrites all of IS's actions if one considers all the different articulations from the canvas of participants inside IS. It is true that IS has some kind of ideology which is linked to its political strategy, but I would question whether the *Salafi-Jihadist* ideology is the driving *motivation* for the group's actions. It is reasonable to advocate based on the effect and understanding of stigmergy that the rise and resultant responses from IS were inevitable once the US and its foreign allies invaded Iraq again, and that the ideology simply served as a justification to seek legitimacy from the vulnerable and

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[285] M. Ramose "Transforming education in South Africa: paradigm shift or change?" *South African Journal of Higher Education* 17(3) 2003 137-143

[286] N. Ahmed "Here's why France is on the frontline of the war with Islamic State #NiceAttack" July 2016 http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/nice-attacks-2054902305

desperate. Essentially, in the MENA, 'jihad' can be a selling point to draw sympathy and legitimacy for both the state and those opposing the state.[287]

Furthermore, it can also be advocated that the ideology of IS linked to the literal interpretations of the works of the Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) and then later to *Wahhabism* does not constitute what is referred to as the fundamental component or motivation for their actions and violence based on the realities of the context of the conflict and instability in the MENA as explained in chapter one and in the foregoing accounts given thus far. Although IS is labelled as *Jihadi-Salafi* both these terms suffer from a paucity of clear definitions, indicating an analytical terra incognita and when used without definitional and theoretical clarity serve a very specific function – to delegitimise a political opponent or in this instance, a people and their belief system.

It is evident that there are other driving motivations for their actions and violence. It is also evident that naming IS as *Salafi-Jihadists* or *Jihadi* extremists is problematic because despite the proliferation of the term *Salafi Jihadism* in discourses on radical Islamism, there remains an analytical terra incognita in respect of a politically substantial or even a very specific definition of the term. Whilst being labelled as *Salafi*, IS constitutes a politically heterogeneous group and although the term can have operational value when contextualised and defined in a situation where there are different political actors, it is problematic to suggest that all actors branded as *Salafi* in a context specific moment can be considered to be constituted of or from a single transnational *Salafi* movement. Yet the ideology of IS is prominently referred to in the spectacle of the theatrical performances and thus warrants some interrogation.

2.4.1 Encrypting the treasures of the Ummah[288]

All terrorist violence, 'Islamic' or otherwise, is unjustifiable, unforgivable, cowardly, and contemptible. But just because we condemn does not mean we should not strive to comprehend. We need to keep asking, 'why?

Jason Burke, Al Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam 2004

What are the teachings of ibn Taymiyya, and Abdul-Wahhab and how are these relevant in relation to IS? Is IS a *Salafi-Jihadi* phenomenon and if yes, what does that mean? Aspects of

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[287] J. L. Esposito "Terrorism and the rise of Political Islam" in *The Roots of Terrorism* L. Richardson (ed) 2006

[288] I have chosen this term to indicate a subtle obfuscation, that of what the scholars have actually said as opposed to what is rigorously punted as being "what they have said." There is a form of encryption in the mainstream media and western hegemonic discourses that ignores the factually correct with regards the fatwas and scholarly contributions of Muslim scholars.

Taymiyya's teachings are referred to in *Dabiq*, Issue 14 which poignantly animates the concept of stigmergy and the impact of history. In *Dabiq*, the author states that a relevant message for Muslims today is to remember "…the importance of deriving lessons from the events that afflicted the believers before us, and the necessity of comparing our situation with theirs."[289] Essentially, IS calls for a reflection and a recalling of the memory of the past in conjunction with the reality of the present. Thus, the events of the past are intricately linked to the experiences of the present. The matter at hand for IS fighters, and which constitutes the emphasis on ideology for others, lies in an examination of the response. Yet significantly, the response is triggered by the perceived need to defend against harm. Having grown up in Mamluk Damascus, ibn Taymiyya was affected by the accounts of human suffering that the people in Baghdad endured at the hands of the Mongols. He described these calamities as the result of a social and moral decay amongst Muslims. In advocating for justice and a return to Islamic values, morals and ethics, ibn Taymiyya advocated for a holy jihad and the creation of an Islamic state ruled by a Caliph who followed the guidance of the Quran.[290] Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah makes a very important comment about ibn Taymiyya's *fatwa[291]* on jihad which was broadcast during a live interview. The speaking out of the Shaykh on this matter warrants attention because of his knowledge in all the schools of Islamic jurisprudence and other subjects including syntax, language, and rhetoric and Quranic exegesis. According to bin Bayyah, the *fatwa* used by al Qaeda and other violent extremists that is attributed to ibn Tayymiya, known as the Mardin Fatwa, is incorrectly interpreted because the printed copies in Egypt and Riyadh had a misprint in them.[292] The wording of the text and the matter of the misprint was verified by reading the original hand written manuscript which had been preserved in one of the libraries in Syria. Shaykh bin Bayyah maintains that what has been attributed to ibn Taymiyya as justification for the violence is an erroneous attribution.[293] Nafi supports bin Bayyah stating that ibn Taymiyya's fatwa on making jihad against the Tartars because they had been attacking the Mamluk state which was protecting the Caliphate was

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[289] Dabiq Issue 14

[290] Moubayed 2015 7

[291] A fatwa is a religious edict or "Islamic legal pronouncement, issued by an expert in religious law (mufti), pertaining to a specific issue, usually at the request of an individual or judge to resolve an issue where Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), is unclear…a fatwā is not binding…[and is] rendered in accordance with fixed precedents from the sources of Islamic law. For more information on fatwas see M.S. Kabbani http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/44-what-is-a-fatwa.html & M. Fuber August 2012 http://seekershub.org/blog/2012/08/what-is-a-fatwa-who-can-give-one-by-sheikh-musa-furber-washington-post/

[292] Shaykh A. al-Turayr " The Mardin Conference: Understanding Ibn Taymiyyah's Fatwa" June 2010 https://muslimmatters.org/2010/06/29/the-mardin-conference-%E2%80%93-a-detailed-account/

[293] Amal Press "Countering Violent Extremism Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah with Shaykh Hamza Yusuf" June 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tKLtNzkPBI see from 18min to 24min

over-extended and misinterpreted. It was over-extended in scope and interpreted as the obligation of every Muslim to take up arms against the governments in the MMC.[294]

In this regard, if one is to consider the logic and the reflections in the context of his writings, it can be assumed that when Taymiyya referenced the guidance of the Quran as a mechanism and standard for the Caliph, he must have intended that the Caliph, in addressing the prevailing conditions would seek the path to peace and a harmonious social order from within the guidelines of the Quran which are well grounded on the foundational principles of justice. For to be Caliph in the first instance would be to recognise the responsibility of serving both God and *all* those in your jurisdiction with absolute justice, because leadership in Islam is about serving, which should be grounded in humility and generosity. The Caliphate would thus embody a system of justice and good governance grounded in Islamic ethics and values. It would be, and should be, free from moral decay, corruption, oppression, injustice and personal ambition. This is because the notion of human suffering and the circumstances and conditions that created that suffering was central to Taymiyya's reflection and thus any action that (re)produced the 'harm' or suffering that he reflected on could not be what he envisaged to be the just solution he sought. In other words, by referencing the Quran as the guiding principle, Taymiyya was clearly indicating that two wrongs did not make a right. This is because the principle in adjudicating a wrong or injustice as authenticated by the understanding and traditional practise of the jurisprudential and theological scholars of Islam and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), is a process of justice where forgiveness is preferred.[295] The emphasis is on "'foregoing retribution' to end the cycle of violence" because Islamic law prioritises "restorative over redistributive justice."[296] Furthermore, the Quran repeatedly warns Muslims to neither transgress the limits of God nor oppress the people. Taymiyya's foundation and guidance was the Quran, not revenge, not power, not personal ambition, not authority. Although Taymiyya was correct in advocating that the Caliph should follow the guidance of the Quran, perhaps his referencing of the Quran *only* was problematic, specifically for novices in Islamic jurisprudence and hermeneutics. Without referencing the traditions of the prophet of Islam and the pious predecessors, such as the Rightly Guided Caliphs and their actions, behaviours and responses in similar situations, as well as the knowledge and jurisprudence that had already been developed after the death of

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[294] Nafi 2017 180

[295] C. Bennett "Retribution in Islam (Qur'an 2:178): Fact and Fiction in Victorian Literature" *Victorian Review* 37(2) 2011 13
[296] Ibid 13

the prophet of Islam, simply following the Quran literally without understanding the Quran would allow for individual interpretation that could transgress the essence and spirit of the scripture and foundational premise of justice embedded therein. Ultimately, what one reads into something might not necessarily be what is intended if the context is not fully known. For this reason the concept of *ijmaa* or consensus on an issue is a principle that grants legitimacy to a verdict or fatwa when there is doubt on a matter. From within the scholastic tradition of Islam, the majority of the Sunni scholars approach the interpretation of the Quran very carefully, making every effort to incorporate into their analysis the vast body of knowledge, shared opinions and interpretations that exist from across the spectrum, before coming to any conclusions. Furthermore, the fatwas of scholars are not binding and can be challenged and Taymiyya's views have been criticised and challenged.[297]

Furthermore, the leaders of IS have been described as ideologically driven and have been associated with that movement of political Islam linked to *Jihadi-Salafism* or *Jihadism*,[298]but Hegghammer maintains that the concepts are more theological than political and therefore are limited when analysing Islamist militancy.[299] According to Hegghammer, claiming that *Jihadi Salfism* can be understood as having three "politically substantial characteristics" which include being more "extremist and intransigent than other groups", that they ascribe to and extract from "*Salafi* or *Wahhabbi* religious tradition and discourse*"* and that they are considered more "internationalist and anti-Western" when compared to other groups is problematic. This is because of the difficulty in operationalising the "notion of radicalism and intransigence," the difficulty with reconciling the operational dichotomy between Sayyid Qutb's pragmatic *ikhwaani* ideology and the so-called *Salafism* of groups such as al Qaeda, who are considered to have 'borrowed' from other Muslim scholars such as al-Faraj[300]

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[297] Ibid 2015 8

[298] Jihadi Salafism is not monolithic. Different jihadists approach jihad differently, depending on their mentors, leaders or individual understandings and belief systems. Jihadi-Salafis and the non-violent quietist Salafis derive religious rulings from the same sacred texts and classical Muslim scholars yet arrive at totally contradictory and irreconcilable interpretations. Salafism is that sect considered as adopting a puritannical approach to Islamic doctrine and practise. There is also contestation about the term Salafis where some see it as a descriptive label whilst others who name themselves, use it normatively. It connotes a level of doctrinal purity thus imbues both religious and political legitimacy on those who brand themselves with it. Jihādī-Salafism is a theological descriptor for a distinct form of Salafism and is defined by Petter Nesser as "the ideology of al-Qaida and likeminded movements, mixing Wahhabi-inspired Sunni fundamentalism (Salafism) with a revolutionary program of overthrowing unjust and un-Islamic regimes in the Muslim world, as well as irredentism aiming at expelling non-Muslim military presence and influences from Muslim lands." P. Nesser "Abū Qatāda and Palestine" *Welt des Islams* 53 2013 417

In contemporary academic and media discourses on "radical Islamism" the meaning of the term jihadi is closely associated with "militant Islamist," yet the term is rarely, if ever applied to Shia militias or even Hezbollah.

[299] T. Hegghammer "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism" in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement R*. Meijer (ed) London: Hurst 2009 256

[300] Mohammad 'Abdus Salaam Faraj was born in Egypt in 1952, author of the book *The Absent Obligation*. He was sentenced to death by Hosni Mubarak in 1982.Faraj applied ibn Taymiyya's fatwa on the Tartars to contemporary times

without reflecting any *Salafi* orientation.[301] Accordingly therefore, naming an entity *Jihadi-Salafi* offers little information about who is the considered enemy or where and how the fight will take place.[302] A more expedient but also accurate exercise in intellectual venture would be to identify descriptors that correlate with the key aspects of the behaviour displayed and the discourse disseminated by militant (Islamicate[303]) groups.[304] An obvious benefit would be that a group identified as one that follows the global *Jihadist* trajectory and rationales is more likely to identify and attack western targets. Although groups may shift identity and rationale, this preference-based approach facilitates for analysing the shifts and changes and is thus more useful than the application of theological concepts and terms. It allows for nuanced analysis on the different roots and causes of the militancy and violence, allows for a deeper consideration of structural factors on militancy and it also allows for comparing between the "political core of the activism of Islamist groups…with other non-Islamist forms of political violence."[305] Of the limitations and criticisms levelled at this framework, the most relevant for this study would be the claim that the rationale-based approach which follows a political approach does not account for the theological influence or effect of "militant Islamist ideology." Hegghammer counters the critique by stating that the preference-based approach should not be likened to the structural-functionalist perspective. In this regards there is a difference between identifying an espoused political view and claiming that the causes of violence are exclusively limited to that view. Ideology matters, but it is not the "same as theology"[306] and thus Islamic or I would prefer to say Islamicate ideology which contains both "theological and political dimensions" should be equally considered.[307] This has been a necessary exercise to highlight the hybridity of trying to label and analyse a dynamic, fluid and complex entity such as IS. It also clarifies the assertion that the link between religion and politics is fluid, dynamic and complex and that "highlighting the politics" does not

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and he also believed that it was more important to fight the "near enemy." Faraj made it apparent that colonialism (and coloniality) was possible only through elite/bourgeoisie collusion with these foreign powers. See B.M. Nafi *The Islamists: A contextual history of Political Islam* 2017 181

[301] Hegghammer 2009 254-256

[302] Ibid 2009 256-257

[303] Islamicate as expounded by Hodgson was to encompass the vastness of trying to define what is Islam, as it was more than religion. He coined the term Islami*cate* where the "*ate*" referred to the "social and cultural palette that emerged from Islamic rule, encompassing and influencing non-Muslims as well as Muslims. Islamicate, with the –ate tacked on to the end, adds oddity and resonance to what becomes the heritage of Islam for world civilization. See: B.B.Lawrence "Genius Denied and Reclaimed: A 40-Year Retrospect on Marshall G.S. Hodgson's The Venture of Islam – By Bruce B. Lawrence" November 2014 http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/retrospect-hodgson-venture-islam/

[304] Hegghammer 2009 261

[305] Hegghammer 2009 262

[306] Ibid 2009 263-264

[307] Ibid 2009 263-264

necessarily entail "ignoring the religion."[308] But in an instance where the predominance of a particular approach for instance, the highlighting of religion at the expense of an analysis of the politics occurs, such contributions are problematic.

During the late decades of the twentieth century, the ideology of groups that took up arms in their resistance struggles in MMC against existing regimes perceived as authoritarian and illegitimate had also been attributed to the influence of Sayyid Qutb who belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt.[309] Linking Qutb to the *jihadi* groups is primarily to advance the claim that Islam is at odds with western progress and modernisation and I interrogate this assumption in chapter four. To corroborate, Hegehammer demonstrates that to claim that *Salafi-Jihadists* are "internationalist and anti-Western" is also problematic. Most of the fundamental players and thinkers known *as Jihadi Salafis* have not prioritised the West in their struggle, focusing instead on the 'near enemy' – in the "revolutionary struggle against the local regime,"[310] whilst many of the fighters who participated in Bosnia, Chechnya or Afghanistan never "explicitly targeted Westerners."[311] Thus, to have significant clarity and an informed understanding of an IS type entity, it would be prudent to utilise "preference-based terms" that function as analytical categories to identify the political preferences and political behaviour of militant groups. However, if one is to recall the agenda of othering and the possible intent behind the urgency to push forward the claim of the clash of civilisations, then switching from a religious to a political identification can be problematic for those who profit from war. Irrespective of their complaints and postulations, the theorising needs to be done.

Thus, when considering the limitations of the concepts and the vagueness of the definitions associated with them whilst acknowledging the power in language to control specific perspectives, the use of *Salafi-Jihadism*, an Arabic term to describe IS should be intellectually intriguing and a problematic acceptance for the discerning academic; bearing in mind that the purpose of a definition is not developed to prove the truth of a word/concept, its function is to describe a phenomenon as accurately and adequately as possible. Furthermore, in complicated and complex political situations, the definition given to a word, and the actors most affected by these definitions find themselves trapped within a language that itself manifests as a political tool. Hegghammer has advocated a particular framework for analysing the political behaviour of Islamist actors to achieve short or mid-term political aims

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[308] Ibid 2009 263-264
[309] M. Bazzizi "The roots of ISIS theology" November 2015 http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-roots-of-isis-theology
[310] Hegghammer 2009 254-256
[311] Ibid 2009 255-256

and is based on a preference based approach that explains the main reasons that can be identified to explain why Islamists will act violently. These include the state-oriented, nation-oriented, *Umma*-oriented, morality-oriented and sectarian rationales, which when combined can be very dynamic.[312] The focus of a state-oriented action by Islamist actors is to "change the social and political organisation of the state," whilst the nation-oriented rationale is the desire to return sovereignty to Muslim lands dominated and/or occupied by non-Muslims. By referencing the *Ummah*-oriented approach, the emphasis is on the protection of the Islamic nation specifically from perceived non-Muslim threats and has been likened to a form of pan-Islamism described as either "soft" or "extreme." In recalling ibn Taymiyya's reflections of the state of the Muslims in Baghdad, the reasoning and motivation represents a desire for Muslims to change their "social conduct in a more literalist and conservative direction" which imbues a logic of pietism and purification of the soul; though it can be expressed in a violent form through vigilantism also referred to as *hisba*. ibn Taymiyya's reflections and writings can be understood to have demanded more than individual contemplation (pacifism) and moral upliftment and therefore suggests that the rationales can intersect or overlap. But, despite the overlap of the agendas and rationales it can be argued that at any given moment there is a dominance of one rationales over the remaining four in the ideology of the actor, which can be discerned from the "*behaviour* and *discourse*." [313] Hegghammer is cognisant of the complication in "reading" an actor's behaviour because of the possibility of a "double symbolic significance" perceived in the target. To overcome this limitation, it is necessary to also critically analyse the speaking from within – to read and consider what the actors themselves are saying.[314] This has been a determined aspect of this theorising from the onset, and *Dabiq*, the magazine published by IS in English has provided these reference points. Ultimately, the dominant rationales functions to direct the strategy and tactic, identify immediate threats, list immediate priorities (e.g. attack the Iraqi army and Shia militia first or the Saudi regime?). Finally, the rationales of a sectarian-oriented action signifies the desire to curtail the control, influence, potential and power of an opposing or competing sect, whether Shia or Sunni and this can be moderately or extremely executed.[315] Having considered the political and the rationales, it is necessary to know turn to the religious, to shift the lens from the political and to consider the different explanations for IS's adoption of a *Wahhabist* approach. Considering the association of IS with *Wahhabism* it is necessary to

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[312] Ibid 2009 257-259
[313] Ibid 2009 259-260
[314] Ibid 2009 259-260
[315] Ibid 2009 257-258

critically consider what *Wahhabism* means, its link with Islam and to then consider how this lodging of an ideology from an historical occurrence of exploitation and power has gained currency in the theatres of Syria and Iraq through the spectacle of IS.

The violent aspects of *jihadism* associated with IS and other groups such as al Qaeda have essentially developed over the last two decades where the works of ibn Taymiyya and the *Wahhabi* tradition are considered as providing the ideological backbone for these 'types of Jihadis.'[316]A point of note, ideology is not the same as theology. It incorporates both aspects related to the political and the religious. During this time period, the more pragmatic stance of the Muslim Brotherhood had been side-lined and their approach earned them the label of "traitors" against Islam.[317] Significantly, in the last few decades, the geo-politics of the MMC in which these branches of 'violent' *jihadism* have (re)emerged has also changed violently. Thus, the rise of 'violent' ideology is parallel and consequential to the rise of 'violent' politics, again highlighting the hybrid nature of such conflicts.

2.4.2 An Unholy Alliance?

The extent of this hybridity becomes apparent in the language of groups such as al Qaeda where the initial calls referenced a "defensive jihad."[318] Significantly, this call only emerged after the escalation of foreign interventions into Muslim lands. An examination of the language and terms used reflected a second very significant component of the rationales of these groups and how they perceived the foreign interventions and invasions. According to research done by Bunzel, these groups perceived MMC as being 'under attack' where the attack is staged on two fronts. The first attack is from, "secular 'apostate' rulers" who represent the national elite of these lands and are considered puppets of the devilfish, and the second attack is from, "their (the secular puppet ruler's) Western 'crusader' backers."[319] There is a very specific articulation and recognition of the 'enemy' (secular rulers/western backers), and the agenda of the enemy (crusader). Considering the history of these regions, the unresolved memories of traumatic violence and subjugation, specifically in the MENA, the identification of the enemy and its agenda is neither a haphazard identification nor an exaggeration. It is from the lived experience of a history and present that is never ending. ibn Khaldun, the 14th century polymath also argued that "history was about social organization

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[316] C. Bunzel "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State" March 2015
https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-ideology-of-the-Islamic-State-1.pdf
[317] Ibid
[318] Ibid
[319] Ibid

and civilizational patterns, and that *religion mattered less* [my emphasis] for its heroes than for the patterns of social exchange they promoted."[320] A history recorded, allows for memory and for developing patterns of closure, whilst an unrecorded history (Iraq and Syria) or a history that is unresolved leaves trace elements, does not have the space for healing and closure and in these instances, *the curtain keeps lifting*. Considering the actual geo-political context, the (re)emergence of violent rulers, foreign interventions and coloniality and the subsequent response - a (re)emergence of *jihadism*, this time with what is labelled as a 'violent' ideology derived from *Wahhabism*, it is necessary at this point to trace the occurrence and development of *Wahhabism* and Wahhabi thought from within the re-emerging and recurring violent political contexts. To place *Wahhabism* simply within a religious ambit would be short-sighted as the nature of these occurrences (IS and other rebellion groups) are consolidated under multiple rationales – political, religious, structural and social.

The very rigid and austere adoption of doctrinal teachings associated with Abu Mus'ab az-Zarqawi, (founder of al Qaeda in Iraq), and other prominent IS leaders and spokespeople, such as al-Baghdadi are attributed to interpretations taken from texts specifically from within the *Wahhabi* tradition. According to my understanding, *Wahhabism*, is today considered as a sect sprouted in Islam in the eighteenth century from the teachings of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab. By the late eighteenth century, *Wahhabism* became aligned with the al-Saud tribe of the Arabian Peninsula.[321] Historical detail about the sect indicates that it espoused extremely radical, exclusionist and puritanical teachings which it attributed to Islam though they were far removed from the understanding, lived experiences, behaviours, and actions of the majority of Muslims of that time - and still are. Significantly, many of the actions of IS today, such as the destruction of tombs, shrines and historical sites replicates the *Wahhabi* jihad of the eighteenth century, but also European style atrocities in colonised MMC. As Robert Fisk states, "[h]ypocrisy was a theme of Arabian as well as European history"[322] because purist *Wahhabi* violence in the eighteenth century, foreign state interventionist violence (illegal invasion of Iraq), Maliki's violence, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's

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[320] B.B.Lawrence "Genius Denied and Reclaimed: A 40-Year Retrospect on Marshall G.S. Hodgson's The Venture of Islam – By Bruce B. Lawrence" November 2014 http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/retrospect-hodgson-venture-islam/
[321] Ibid
[322] R. Fisk "Saudi Arabia's history of hypocrisy we choose to ignore" January 2015 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabias-history-of-hypocrisy-we-choose-to-ignore-9978493.html It is significant that Fisk mentions Arab and not Muslim or Islamic history.

violence[323] and Assad's violence on Sunni populations and finally, IS's violence (when it was ISI) were (and have largely) still been ignored in favour of the material benefits of control over the resources of these countries and the contractors that benefitted from the conflict.[324] Although there are conflicting arguments about the conflict in Syria in relation to material benefits, pipelines and gas,[325] declassified CIA documents from the 1980s reveal the willingness of the US to start wars in Syria over pipelines.[326] Thus history tells many tales, but also hides many, and in the case of European atrocities in confrontation with Islam and Muslims, there is a silent attempt at erasure of the effect of the war and the excessive violence unleashed on Muslim populations by their colonisers, violence which today is attributed only to IS and projected as if only committed by Muslims. In this regard, Fisk refers to the violence of the British against Sunni Muslims in India who "were being asked to choose between pure Islam and Queen Victoria."[327]

 In finger pointing at IS and essentially, Islam for everything that is wrong in the MENA regions as well as the West, history is being erased; just as it has been conveniently forgotten that the modern day IS ideology is in fact an imitation of the behaviour of the Christians in Andalus, where "mass baptisms" occurred in a single day in Granada in December 1499,

> during which over 6000 men, women, and children were forcibly Christianized, under the ever-watchful eye of the Inquisition, and the simultaneous burning of a staggering 500,000-1,000,000 books—the entire library of al-Andalus, including countless religious texts, works of poetry, and philosophy–by Archbishop Jimenez de Cisneros in the Plaza Bib-Rambla in Granada.[328]

These actions were a violation of the terms of the peaceful 1492 surrender to the Catholic monarchs and were "unprecedented in the 800-year long relationship between Islam and Christianity in Spain."[329] The tit-for-tat behaviours, the mimicry of violence and the contextual development and occurrences of these violent forms reflect the reality of a historical-political-epistemological (genocidal?) episode as a result of the western, imperial

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[323] Al-Abadi's violence, and the violence sanctioned by Maliki is linked with the violence of the US. This is the operationalization of the devilfish's continuous control. In trying to retake Mosul and Fallujah, Al-Abadi and the US military command allowed Shia militia from the Badr Brigades and Hezbollah Brigades, to enter Fallujah and commit serious crimes which have not been investigated and for which there have been no consequences. See: HRW "Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation. Unpunished Killings, Torture Put Civilians in Harm's Way" July 2016
 https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation
[324] Fisk 2015
[325] P.Cochrane "The 'Pipelineistan' conspiracy: The war in Syria has never been about gas" May 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/essays/pipelineistan-conspiracy-why-war-syria-was-never-about-gas-144022537
[326] CIA "Bringing real muscle to bear against Syria:14 September 1983"
https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88B00443R001404090133-0.pdf
[327] Fisk 2015
[328] Ballan 2014
[329] Ballan 2014

and colonial control of MMC that has effectively churned a triggering effect and spawned an illegitimate and renegade 'crusader.' To describe IS as a crusader is not descriptively incorrect as the greatest number of its victims are Muslims and the destruction it has visited upon Muslim sites, heritage, social and cultural traditions and epistemology is no different to the effects of the crusaders and the harms visited on the Muslim victims of the crusades. This effect actually animates the way in which the Manichaean binaries have been inverted yet the logic and structure – the actual stage and all its props, have remained the same. I say inverted because in this instance, although the tactics are the same, the perpetrator is an entity that defines itself as Muslim.

Thus, according to Ballan, the destruction of mosques to "rubble" and the burning of Qurans in a "bonfire" by Jimenez de Cisneros in 1499, affected a profound change in many Moriscos who were largely tolerant and "aware of communal differences and respectful of otherness, into messianic, iconoclasts, who became inimical to anything non-Muslim (especially Christian)." These aggressions against Muslims and Islamic symbols and structures led them to conclude that "only an aggressive response would be able to stem the tide of the violent Christianization campaigns, which resulted in the 1568 uprising."[330] This logic of violence as a retributive tactic is identical to az-Zarqawi's reasoning when he said that "[t]he spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify... until it burns the *crusader* [my emphasis] armies in Dābiq."[331] In calling to mind the realities of the 21st Century conflict in MMC, specifically Iraq and Syria, and the 1568 rebellion, Ballan maintains that the 1568 rebellion in Valencia's Serra d'Espada did not represent

> some irrational Muslim contempt or innate hatred for Christianity but a reaction to decades of oppression. A close reading of the history of the Moriscos in the sixteenth century may lead one to conclude that it is not surprising to learn that the Muslims reacted the way they did after enduring so many years of forced assimilation, suppression of identity, and dis-empowerment.[332]

In response to the above quote, I ask, "Is it not surprising then to learn that the Muslims in Iraq and Syria (including IS and other opposition groups) have reacted the way they have after enduring "decades of oppression?" The problem with IS is that it has also targeted Muslims in the process, but is that response any different to what the *Wahhabi jihadists* did in the eighteenth century in order to consolidate their particularistic vision which they had claimed was a universal expression of the 'true' and 'authentic' Islam? Significantly,

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[330] Ibid 2014
[331] Dabiq Issue 5
[332] Ballan 2014

Wahhabism and the violent *jihadism* attributed to it today, was vehemently opposed, both by Muslims within its own locality and by the Ottoman rulers.[333] *Rewind. Replay.* As the curtain lifts and the storyline unfolds, we realise that it is the same play, just different actors and newer costumes – better lighting (symbolises the advanced technology and weaponry). The fact is that most of the other rebellion groups (some have even been branded as terrorists by the US)[334] and the sentiment from the *Ummah* reflects a rejection of the actions of IS in the contemporary context,[335] just as *Wahhabism* was rejected in the eighteenth century.

Wahhabism was successfully crushed repeatedly, first by the Ottoman Sultanate in 1812, then by the Egyptians in 1815 and then again in 1818, by the Ottomans when they "captured and destroyed the *Wahhabi* capital of Dariyah. The first Saudi state was no more."[336] Of the *Wahhabis* who remained, many withdrew into the desert and remained in incubation for most of the nineteenth century but were given a lifeline when King Abd-al Aziz (the first monarch and founder of Saudi Arabia) forged alliances with the British and Americans. These two powers were the main actors in the invasion of Iraq (2003) receiving financial and logistical support from Saudi Arabia. It is thus no coincidence that the residue of elements from a Saudi Arabia constituted in a betrayal of the *Ummah*,[337] the forging of a religio-political alliance to ideologically justify the creation of the new state, and an alliance of war mongers (Britain and America) constitute some of the "gangsters" responsible for the destruction of Islamic heritage sites and libraries and for killing in-numerous Muslims. Significantly, Saudi Arabia is described by Steve Coll as "the only modern nation-state created by jihad."[338] Thus, unholy-alliances to justify violence, usurpation and killing are a trademark of Abd-al-Aziz. King Abd-al-Aziz was also known as ibn Saud, and for him, the ideology and teachings advocated by *Wahhabism* presented as a perfect ruse to overturn Arab tradition and convention; it was an opportunity to seize power. Under ibn Saud, *Wahhabism* was coveted during its incubation and rise to prominence in the new Saudi state not for its teachings of

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[333] A. Crooke June 2016 "You Can't Understand ISIS If You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html

[334] W. Webb "What's in a Name? U.S. Takes Syria's Al-Qaeda Off Terror Watchlists" May 2017 http://www.globalresearch.ca/whats-in-a-name-u-s-takes-syrias-al-qaeda-off-terror-watchlists/5591567

[335] See also the comment in P. Howes article, "It's Definitive: White Supremacist Terrorism Is A Far Greater, Far Deadlier Threat Than ISIS" about the rejection by Muslims generally, of IS and other violent radicals. June 2017 http://www.inquisitr.com/opinion/4287131/its-definitive-white-supremacist-terrorism-is-a-far-greater-far-deadlier-threat-than-isis/

[336] Crooke June 2016

[337] Abd-al-Aziz's alliance with the British, his selling of Saudi oil fields to the Americans and his war against the Ikhwan in the 1929 Battle of Sabilla

[338] M. Fisher "9 questions about Saudi Arabia you were too embarrassed to ask" January 2015 https://www.vox.com/2015/1/26/7877619/saudi-arabia-questions

Islam, but as a political tool for exploitation, power and control, cloaked in religious rhetoric.[339] This is where we must again ask, "How does violence change religion?"

From the above, it can be asserted that what happened in the Arabian dessert was a classic subversion of religion to justify injustice, oppression and illegitimate political rule. *Wahhabi* ideology, not Islam, was identified as a powerful currency for consolidating power and legitimising the illegitimate. It was to justify the theft of Arab lands under the political control of one clan, the al-Saud family. *Wahhabi* ideology is being used by IS for the same type of branding in claiming the Caliphate. As a point of departure, where the ideologies of opposition groups may be aligned with IS, the fight with IS is about a "battle over the spoils" which projects the strengths of each group,[340] thereby affecting their branding. *Wahhabis*m as a sect grew unfettered in Saudi Arabia where it propagated the idea that its brand of Islam was the 'one and only true' Islam. To claim this privilege, the *Wahhabis* had to centre themselves and their interpretation of Islam as universal and decentre all other Islamicate epistemologies. When you decentre everything else, and make yourself the centre, the superior, the authentic, you control the rules of the game, or in the case of *Wahhabism*, the rules of the religion. But "[p]ower and humiliation are the cause and effect of human behaviour"[341] and the result is almost always catastrophic. In the case of IS, the rhetoric has been about addressing the sense of degradation and humiliation felt by the people in the MENA as a result of the effects and consequences of coloniality. IS has appealed to disaffected Muslims by referencing their notions of honour and dignity. This is about control and power. This has been the strategy of modernity/coloniality in terms of western/Eurocentric knowledge and superiority. This is also a strategy of *Wahhabism* which has perpetuated what began with the colonial, epistemological project initiated by western modernity on Islamic cultures, artefacts, heritage and knowledge in the destruction of Al-Andulus

> …January 2nd 1492. It was the day that marked the beginning of a process which gradually obliterated the Islamic and Jewish aspects of Iberian civilization, destroying its unique character and transforming Hispania into a land where religious intolerance held sway.[342]

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[339] According to Crooke, 2016, by the 1930s "Wahhabism was forcefully changed from a movement of revolutionary jihad and theological *takfiri* purification, to a movement of conservative social, political, theological, and religious *da'wa* (Islamic call) and to justifying the institution that upholds loyalty to the royal Saudi family and the King's absolute power." However, it should be noted that *takfirism* is not a distinct ideological doctrine or movement, there are no collections of texts that define '*takfiri*' ideology - rather it is a label that has been pinned on certain jihadist groups.

[340] Cockburn 2014 51

[341] D. Tripathi *Imperial Designs: War, Humiliation & the Making of History* 2013 54

[342] Ballan 2014

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that the conflict in the MENA, the rise of IS and other groups who take on distinctively Islamicate identities can again be explained by referencing stigmergy. This is because once again, the same exploitative, interventionist, imperialist and foreign forces had imposed themselves in MMC where the trauma of an unresolved past and of a recurring nightmare had not yet been healed nor counselled, as is corroborated by the below comment when reflecting the tragedy of the Moriscos in

> [t]he deportations and massacres of the Native Americans during the westward expansion of the American frontier, the deadly "Turkification" campaign that killed up to a million Armenians in 1915-1916, the mass transfer of Turkish Christians to Greece and Greek Muslims to Turkey that followed the Greco-Turkish war in 1923, the Nazi Holocaust, the brutal population exchanges of Muslims and Hindus in 1947, the Palestinian exodus in 1948, and the civil wars of the former Yugoslavia–*all these events were anticipated in the great purge that took place in Spain between 1609 and 1614* [my emphasis]. If the expectations and assumptions that led to the expulsions were specific to their time, the tragedy of the Moriscos was part of a recurring dynamic that has been repeated in many other contexts, in which a powerful majority seeks to remake or define its own identity through the physical elimination or removal of supposedly incompatible minorities whose presence is imagined as potentially defiling or corrupting.[343]

The defiling presence and the incorrigible odour of invaders and puppets represent the recurring dynamic of a context not so long ago, of a need to purge spaces and to eliminate. In conquering the territories of Al-Andalus, the invading Catholic armies dispossessed the local peoples, took over their properties and re-populated the spaces with Christians coming from other territories. Assad and the Iranians have been doing the same in Qusayr, Syria. After the burning of the Homs land registry, and the recapture of Qusayr, Alawi families were invited to occupy and claim for themselves homes that belonged to Sunni families.[344] Iraqi Shia militia have been doing the same and worse in provinces such as Rawashid, Diyala and Balad.[345]

Pause. Stop. Rewind. Replay.

The new proto-state that would emerge from the ashes of Al-Andalus, under the control of the Catholic monarchs, representing what Grosfoguel calls "Christendom" would eradicate all tolerance for religious diversity, pursue the destruction of memories, diverse identities and ethnicities, and begin the process of reshaping the human who was to be administered in one territory, with an ideological allegiance to one nation, one identity, one people.[346] For IS (and

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[343] Ibid
[344] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 112; Also note that the backlash of the occupation of the family homes of Sunnis from Qusayr by Shia's resulted in the massacre of 60 Shia (mostly) civilians, at Hatla in Deir ez-Zor on the 11th June 2013.
[345] Associated Press "Iraqi Shia Militias Fighting ISIS Are Kicking Sunnis Out Of Their Homes" Januray 2015 http://www.businessinsider.com/iraqi-shia-militias-fighting-isis-are-kicking-sunnis-out-of-their-homes-2015-1
[346] Grosfoguel Granada Summer School Week 1 2016

the *Wahhabi* sect), it is, "One Ruler, One Authority, One Mosque."[347] The conquest of Al-Andalus under the claim of "purity of blood" (are you purely Christian?)[348] and the exploits of IS (*Wahhabi* ideology), based on the claim of "purity of religion"[349] have not manifested bereft of consequences and impact. This impact is felt through stigmergy, brought into clarity by Ballan when he concludes that,

> no matter how respectable a state may appear to the outside world, no matter how often it may convince itself of the legitimacy of its own oppression, if the root cause of a grievance is left unresolved, it will grow into vengeance, which is nourished by the blood of tyranny, and–in turn–is only satiated by the blood of the tyrant and his supporters. There are many cases where this holds true in the modern world…Syria being only the latest example.[350]

Grosfoguel further links between empire and religion stating that the subversion of the theology of Christianity into the ideology of the Roman Empire resulted in the formation of Christendom, which created a structure of power that was obscurantism.[351] What all of this reveals is a pattern, a reference to a trace that is left and which is later picked up and reignited. It is not a far-fetched weave of victim narratives, but of a continuity of persecution where Muslim individuals from Granada to Guantanamo were and still are being randomly incarcerated, persecuted and tortured simply because they are Muslim. It is a continuity of the history of dehumanisation and control of the space, bodies and belief of the Muslim subject, which is regulated all the way to the present. In a never ending cycle of a nightmarish history for the Arab Muslim, and other 'collateral damage Muslim ethnicities' this control exists and perpetuates from Abu Ghraib, Bagram Airbase and Guantanamo Bay when it comes to the subject of Muslims. Drawing from the above parallels, I ask, is IS, a reflection of western epistemological fraud (*Wahhabi* Islam as the only 'universal' Islam, western knowledge as the only 'universal' knowledge) and its destructive processes, learned through the violence of colonialism/coloniality? A question worth contemplating, because it would be arrogance to claim that one's state and beliefs carry a global truth for the rest of humanity.

2. 5 Lure of IS for foreign fighters

In contemplating global truths and the globe, we enact for ourselves images of distant lands and inter-connected communities. These communities are linked through technology and travel. Tourism is a fetish of the restless and seeking new adventures in foreign lands is often

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[347]Crooke 2016; According to Crooke, 2016, with the discovery and material benefits of oil, the Saudis decided to "'Wahhabise' Islam, thereby reducing the 'multitude of voices within the religion' to a 'single creed.'" A replication of the one nation, one, state, one identity philosophy and a direct contrast to what Al-Andalus embodied.
[348] Grosfoguel Granada Summer School Week 1 2016
[349] Ibid
[350] Ballan 2014
[351] Grosfoguel Granada Summer School 2016

touted as something to be desired. Ironically, for many individuals, travelling to Syria and Iraq to join the opposition fighters was and still is (although the persistent aerial assaults on IS has prompted a decline in interest) something to be 'desired.' But it may also be a duty. In a space and time where modernisation and globalisation have undermined communal ties and a sense of belonging, individuals who feel isolated and alienated are easy targets for recruiters, "who speak to their fears" and offer them "money, adventure and redemption." [352]

In the territory between the Tigris River and the Mediterranean coast, there has developed a new kind of tourism– *jihadi* tourism. With this tourism, the landscape of many Syrian towns has transformed through a "colourful assortment of foreign languages." This vibrancy and diversity can be seen and heard on the streets under rebel control. There are elderly parents, families with children and young women in tow, drawn not by the violence of IS but by the vision and hope it offers. Many of the foreigners who have travelled to these lands are not fighters, and most of the foreigners from western Europe who arrived in Syria from as early as 2011 only learnt how to use a weapon when they settled in 'liberated' territories. There is a utopian narrative instilled in IS's propaganda, "of belonging and sanctuary, of new beginnings and state-building" countering the predominant narrative of the western media which "purveys the pornography of violence, deliberately targeting Western audiences and sensibilities."[353] This is not only a tale of two cities, but of two tales for one actor.

2.5.1 Identifying the foreign fighter

Various reports indicate that between 2011 and 2016, approximately 42 000 foreign fighters from about 86 countries have travelled to the Middle East to join various *jihadist* groups. Included in this number are an estimated 5000 westerners and 7000 North Africans,[354] what can be considered as a significant mobilisation on a globalised level. However, after forty months of fighting, it is apparent that these numbers are grossly exaggerated and can be contested. Based on interviews with locals in the various spaces that IS was known to have inhabited or controlled, all of these participants questioned "the veracity of official numbers."[355] Significantly, none of the European fighters had ever met any of the "legendary figures in global jihad." Significantly, all have been stereotyped into a single category, as

[352] F.Strazzari "Foreign fighters as a challenge for international relations theory" in *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond* A.de. Guttry (eds). 2016 54

[353] A.N.Awan "ISIS and Its Impact on Radicalization in the West" *Policy Brief 6* Centre for Global Policy March 2017 5

[354] M. Ennaji "Integrating radical fighters who return home isn't easy, but can be done" May 2017 http://theconversation.com/integrating-radical-fighters-who-return-home-isnt-easy-but-can-be-done-77201

[355] H. Hassan "ISIL and the numbers game: what exactly is the size of its army?" October 2017 https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/isil-and-the-numbers-game-what-exactly-is-the-size-of-its-army-1.670132

either "foreign jihadis" or "foreign fighters."[356] Notably, not *all* foreign fighters have joined IS, nor are they *all* driven by zealous religious ideology. But, the narrative implies this. Countering the narrative is the Wiki-leaks revelations which released the profiles of more than four thousand IS militants, effectively dismissing the "right wing reactionary, critiques of 'jihadist' terrorism," mocking those who claimed that "jihadist' terrorism" is the result of a literal interpretation of Islamic scripture where the Quran is a "ready-made instruction manual" that promotes and advocates violent extremism.[357] Many of the fighters admitted that their Islamic knowledge was very basic and one of the fighters, a 24-year-old individual from Turkey listed his profession as that of a drug and hashish dealer, which contradicts the claims that IS fighters are "fanatical purists" grounded in Islamic doctrine.[358] For the "Muslim reformers," those who support the clash of civilisations theory, and the idea of violence as being inherent to Islam, the Wiki-leaks revelations presented as a conundrum because they were and still are, unable to explain how it is that "70 percent of those joining ISIS have only a 'basic' understanding of Islam. They are [also] unable to explain the radicalisation paths" which have been attributed to the Paris attackers and Brussels bombers,[359] an occurrence more easily understood from the concept of stigmergy rather than from an assertion of religious violence.

Many of the foreign fighters are well educated, but mostly unemployed. Many have become radicalised, not by Islam, but by a "cocktail of terrestrial realities - racism, social migration, deprivations, political impotency…crisis of identity, joblessness, alienation, harassment by law enforcement and confrontations with racism." Many of these individuals hold legitimate socio-economic and political grievances. Many are also second generation MENA immigrants, and in places like Belgium, they "were told by Belgium they didn't belong" there.[360] It is in this cocktail of short stories and pure drama that IS has had to weave a tale that would give it front-page headlines. It had to stage a master-piece, a block-buster that guaranteed attention, would overshadow the daily reportage and would succeed in luring the curious and the disheartened to its pages. For al-Baghdadi and the cast, the power of IS would lie in its expertise, bravado and potential to lure recruits who would supplement the supply of

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[356] Moubayed 2015 154-159

[357] C.J.Werleman "How leaked ISIS documents make a joke of the Muslim reformers" April 2016 http://ahtribune.com/religion/852-leaked-isis-documents.html

[358] L. Dearden "Isis documents leak reveals profile of average militant as young, well-educated but with only 'basic' knowledge of Islamic law" April 2016 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-documents-leak-reveals-profile-of-average-militant-as-young-well-educated-but-with-only-basic-a6995111.html

[359] Werleman 2016

[360] Ibid

bodies –the human capital required. To achieve these objectives elaborate propaganda machinations were developed which appealed to the circumstances of the most vulnerable by capitalising on their pain. IS recruiters have been described as "cultural entrepreneurs" honing in on the anxieties of vulnerable individuals convincing them that "their personal malaise is rooted in a European continent that hates them."[361] Considering the extent of Islamophobia on the continent, it has been a rather simple task.

2.5.2 Religion and the foreign fighter

> *Islam is a comprehensive system… the religion that contains within it government… If you are told that you are political, answer that Islam admits no such distinction. If you are accused of being revolutionaries, say "we are voices for right and for peace…If you rise against us or stand in the path of our message, then we are permitted by God to defend ourselves against your injustice…*

> *Imam Hasan al-Banna[362]*

According to Werleman, religion and religious ideology are not the essential markers that draw recruits to IS.[363] Critics of Werleman's analysis state that despite the lack of a depth of *Shari* knowledge (Islamic jurisprudence), there is still the matter of faith, so "we should not discount the role that faith plays in motivating the decisions of ISIS recruits."[364] Strazzari maintains that "considering ideology does not necessarily mean delving into theological arguments," rather it is the ability to capture the potential and mobilising power of "fear, injustice and altruism."[365] I would agree that faith may certainly have some role to play, specifically in relation to the *Ummah* and the plight of Muslims, but I would attribute this to theodicy[366] rather than theology and challenge the claim that religious ideology is the driving motivation that overwhelmingly informs their actions. Furthermore, the 2017 UN study on foreign fighters in Syria indicated that many of the fighters "saw their religion in terms of justice and injustice rather than in terms of piety and spirituality."[367]

As for Strazzari's claim, if ideology is about capturing the "mobilising power of 'fear, injustice and altruism'" then attributing the resultant effects of that mobilising ideology to a

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[361] Ibid

[362] S. Qutb 2006 188

[363] Werleman April 2016

[364] A. Lebovich "How 'religious' are ISIS fighters? The relationship between religious literacy and religious motivation" April 2016 from *Brookings's Rethinking Political Islam project* https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-religious-are-isis-fighters-the-relationship-between-religious-literacy-and-religious-motivation/

[365] Strazzari 2016 55

[366] Theodicy is a term that was coined by Gottfried Leibniz in 1710 in his work Théodicée, which is about justifying God. It seeks to understand the most fundamental question about human existence; "how does one make sense of a world which was created by God who is good, yet there is evil in the world?" Theodicy: An overview http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/theodicy.htm

[367] L. Dearden "Isis: UN study finds foreign fighters in Syria 'lack basic understanding of Islam'" August 2017 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/isis-islamic-state-foreign-fighters-syria-recruits-lack-basic-understanding-of-islam-radicalisation-a7877706.html?amp

particular theology would be incorrect and dangerous because the foundations of many of the foreign fighters' belief systems and the extent of their Islamic knowledge are relatively insipid. What is significant here is the fact that these fighters are often referred to as Islamist terrorists which *implies* a very radical and deep theological understanding and commitment to Islamic doctrine. Islamist defined, refers to "individuals, groups, organisations and parties that see in Islam a guiding political doctrine that justifies and motivates collective action on behalf of that doctrine."[368] Islamists are those Muslims who feel compelled to act socially and politically *as a response* to their *interpretation* of the religious doctrine. But, if the recruits are not familiar with the theology, the religious doctrine or the jurisprudence, how can "religious doctrine" be the primary motivator? More pertinently, why are the 'foreign fighters' called *Islamist terrorists*?

Significantly, most of the research on foreign fighters indicates that experiences of political, social, cultural and economic alienation are possible factors that serve as a motivation for western Muslims to join IS but may not be the only reasons. A report by the Middle East Eye revealed that the majority of the foreign fighters come from the MENA region, with the third and fourth largest contingencies coming from western Europe and the former Soviet Republics.[369]According to journalist Felix Allen, young Muslims are becoming radicalised because of racial tensions in communities with high unemployment levels.[370] Benmelech and Klor claim that the "number of ISIS fighters is positively correlated with a country's GDP per capita and its Human Development Index (HDI)."[371] From their research they found that most of the western recruits were from countries that had high levels of economic development, well developed political institutions and low income inequality.[372] These fighters provided the human capital that IS needed but there is also the claim that after 'visiting' Syria, they returned radicalised, recruiting extensive networks to perpetrate terrorist attacks at home. Benmelech and Klor refer to The Guardian article of November 2015[373] to substantiate their claim. The article mentions that Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who was the alleged

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[368] M. Hafez *Why Muslims Rebel* 2003 4-5
[369] MiddleEastEye "Foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq" 2014
http://www.middleeasteye.net/multimedia/infographics/foreign-fighters-syria-and-iraq-692785419
[370] F. Allen "EPICENTRE OF TERROR : Why is France the target of so many terrorist atrocities?" July 2016
https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1449033/why-is-france-the-target-of-so-many-terrorist-atrocities/
[371] E. Benmelech & E.F. Klor "What explains the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS?" National Bureau of Economic Research
http://www.nber.org/papers/w22190
[372] Ibid
[373] J. Halliday & J. Bucks "Abdelhamid Abaaoud: What we know about the Paris attacks 'Mastermind.'" November 2015
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/abdelhamid-abaaoud-suspected-mastermind-of-paris-terror-attacks

leader of the Paris attacks, was radicalised in Syria.[374] According to Abaaoud's sister, "neither of the brothers showed a zealous interest in religion before leaving for Syria. 'They did not even go to the mosque,' she said."[375] From their analysis then, the radicalisation only happens after travelling to Syria and joining IS or other fighter groups. The question then is, "What motivates them to go in the first place if it is not religion?"

Abaaoud was a Belgian-Moroccan who was reported to have had many altercations with the law, got drunk, had a criminal history and spent time in prison. Not a religious person by any far stretch of the imagination. After his second visit to Syria in January 2014, he is reported to have switched allegiances and by March 2014, he had joined IS. It is around this time that he posted on his Facebook page the following message,

> "It's not fun seeing blood spilled, but it gives me pleasure from time to time to see blood of the disbelievers run because *we grew up* [my emphasis] watching the blood of Muslims being spilled in the whole world on TV."[376]

 Likewise, Allen's news report on the reasons for the different attacks in France mentioned that witnesses at the Bataclan theatre massacre heard the gunmen shouting: "This is because of all the harm done by Hollande to Muslims all over the world;"[377] an obvious declaration of revenge. Similarly, Abaaoud's justification for his actions in Paris was recorded in his interview with *Dabiq*, which was "to "terrorise the crusaders waging war against the Muslims." Abaaoud's statement is a clear articulation of revenge of "the blood of Muslims being spilled." His referencing of "crusader" is also a recognition of George Bush's agenda after the 9/11 attacks[378] and a recollection of all the trauma and violence associated with this word. These are all tracing elements - unresolved, that have lingered in the environment, waiting to be ignited. There is no reference here of hatred of western values or democracy, or of a command by God to kill these "unbelievers." Just a simple reference – "we grew up" seeing Muslims being killed. Furthermore, his comment "we grew up…in the whole world on TV" is overlooked. A critical analysis of this reference would indicate that Abaaoud's mental state had been affected from a young age by what he perceived as the wanton killing of Muslims, which could not be justified. If faith is to be included in the equation because of his referencing 'Muslims', then the impact of theodicy comes into play here. The effect of that perception combined with the fact that he was a social misfit in Belgium could have

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[374] Ibid

[375] Ibid

[376] G. van Vlierden "Profile: Paris attack ringleader Abdelhamid Abaaoud" December 2015
https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/profile-paris-attack-ringleader-abdelhamid-abaaoud

[377] Allen 2016

[378] P. Ford "Europe cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists" September 2001
http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p12s2-woeu.html

prompted him to align with the only identity that responded to his growing anger and questions about the value of Muslim lives. It was not Islam that made him go to Syria to join the opposition fighters, and take up arms, but his own inner questionings about the "blood of Muslims being spilled…on TV" and his desire, possibly, to do something about it.

It was about questions of justice, ethics, morality and human dignity. The trace elements were already in the environment as can be gathered from his words, "we grew up watching" and it was a watching that continued unresolved. At this point, I would suggest that the awareness of the reality of that "watching" had escalated. There can be very little doubt that the TV images which showed the lifeless, mutilated bodies of children, women and the old, of destroyed infrastructure and besieged populations had an impact on him, and many others like him. For many, these images are like flashbacks or like *rewind/replay*. The difference is, not everyone gets up to do something about it. This understanding is endorsed in the comment by Bowen, quoted in Allen's news report as stating that,

> Unlike other European colonial powers, the French never really left their former colonies, continuing to intervene economically and militarily to defend France's national interests in Africa and the Near East. Resentment at French racism, at the series of largely symbolic measures taken against Muslims, such as the 2010 ban on wearing face-veils in public, add to this anger, and lead some towards fighting.[379]

From research done by Guy Van Vlierden, Abaaoud's associate Bilal Hadfi, also identified as a Belgian national and linked to the Paris attacks, posted what he felt about the killing of civilian Muslims by foreign troops on his Facebook page in July 2015. Hadfi wrote,

> [t]hose dogs attack our civilians in ar-Raqqah, al-Bab, Damascus, Baghdad, Fallujah, and so on. Work within their communities of pigs, so that they never feel safe anymore, even not in their dreams.[380]

In his statement, Hadfi referenced the foreign invading armies and their allies (in Iraq and Syria) and his words are poisoned with anger , hatred and a desire for revenge. Again, there is no reference to western civilisation or western values and progress, no mention of the evils of democracy or infidels, no mention of God's command; his referencing of these communities as "dogs" and "pigs" is based on what he perceives as their wanton killing of innocents. It is a matter of *do to them, what they are doing to us*. At this point, I deem it necessary to state that the inclusion of "Allahu-Akbar," "God-willing," "by Allah's strength," "I ask Allah to accept," and "blessed with martyrdom" in the articulation of fighters, supplements Lebovich's argument that faith plays a part in the decision making of IS recruits, but that it should be noted that there is a difference between faith and ideology, there is a difference

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[379] Allen 2016
[380] van Vlierden December 2015

between faith and doctrine and there is a difference between faith in actions and religious doctrine directing actions. It is possible that the link to faith in the articulation of an action is a platitude or attempt at inner peace in a schizophrenic and abnormal environment infused with grossly abhorrent actions from all actors to the extent that Blair had been cautioned about the consequences of a war on Iraq, the unleashing of terror that would ensue and the fact that the

> broader threat from Islamist terrorists [would] also increase in the event of war, reflecting intensified anti-US/anti-Western sentiment in the Muslim world, including among Muslim communities in the West.[381]

Contextualising these aspects does not in any way imply that I am condoning the behaviour and decisions, however, as stated previously, the truth needs to be tortured in the violent theatre of language, propaganda and the art of war-making. War making is an art – and there are multiple realities, multiple truths and multiple scenarios in the development of that canvas. IS's vengeful behaviour, and the brutal theatrics reflect the mirror image of US atrocities as early as 2004 in Iraq. The Haditha civilian massacre committed by US forces in occupied Iraq was triggered by the "death of their comrade in the roadside bombing." According to an official account, the soldier's death

> evoked in our Marines a rage so uncontainable that they took revenge on the hapless villagers caught in the crossfire between occupiers and insurgents. As detailed by several witnesses, the American 'liberators' entered the homes of Iraqi civilians and summarily executed them, without reason or provocation, out of sheer bloodlust. It was, in effect, the equivalent of a Mafia hit, carried out in order to terrorize the locals.[382]

If the death of a friend evoked "a rage so uncontainable that they took revenge on… civilians and summarily executed them, without reason or provocation, out of sheer bloodlust," what then is the state of those whose innocent loved ones are bombed by foreign invaders or brutally massacred under the pretext of mistaken identity or ruses of WMDs? Is such an emotion justified only for white life? Is it possible then to acknowledge that Hadfi, Abaaoud and all the other named and unnamed fighters who have stated or not stated their reasons, motivations and claims for joining IS and other opposition groups have the same kind of bonding, or maybe even stronger, with their families, friends, colleagues and *Ummah*, as that of the US marines? And if that is possible, is it not possible to understand their rage and anger, as has been described in relation to the actions of the US forces in Haditha? Was it US patriotism, nationalism and ideology ingrained, instilled and indoctrinated in these soldiers that drove the reaction or was the first response revenge? In the case of many IS and

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D. Bloom "Chilcot Inquiry final report: Summary of 13 key points raised against Tony Blair over the Iraq War" July 2016 http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/chilcot-inquiry-final-report-summary-8362981
Raimondo 2006

opposition fighters who lack nationalist, patriotic and even deep seated religious beliefs, is it correct to claim that the first reaction is *because of a violent religious ideology*? Is revenge not a more plausible and probable explanation?

2.5.3 Theorising the foreign fighter

Hegghammer defines foreign fighters as fighters who have joined the insurgency and operate within the confines of that insurgency. They are non-citizens of the conflict state. He further states that they are unpaid and do not have any kinship ties to any of the "warring-factions," thus distinguishing between *jihadi* tourism, foreign fighters and mercenaries. Hegghammer contends that "economic predictors," "objective grievances related to the political and material repercussion of the conflict" and "material selective incentives" are insufficient markers for identifying why an individual would want to "fight someone else's war,"[383] – "a molecular civil war."[384] However, he concludes that there are multiple variables that influence individual recruitment and that "Islamism is not politically heterogeneous" because of the fact that there have always been *Islamist* actors and these actors have employed different tactics in opposition to local regimes and occupation forces.[385] In analysing the rise of Muslim foreign fighters in the "Muslim world"[386] it is claimed that a "new sub current of Islamism - pan Islamism" has contributed to the rise of foreign recruitment.[387] This "sub-current" relates to disenfranchised elite who have been seeking political relevance, are mostly "based in the Hijaz region of Saudi Arabia" and have been actively recruiting and building networks of fighters since the 1970s based on an idea of "inter-Muslim solidarity."[388] This is supported by Yasien Mohamed's research which reveals that during the 1960s, when many ruling elite grabbed onto the band wagon of nationalism, Qutb "rejected the nationalist goals and reactivated Islam as the political standard for Muslim behaviour," because he saw "Islam as a political movement."[389] According to Hegghammer the transnationalisation of jihad occurs as a result of elite competition, where foreign fighters volunteer in the different entities largely due to deep seated feelings of subjective grievance which he advocates could include aspects of nationhood or "nonmaterial selective incentives (ideology or a belief)."[390]

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[383] T. Hegghammer "The rise of Muslim foreign fighters" *International Security* 35(3) 2010 63-64
[384] Strazzari 2016 60 – This term was coined by Hans Magnus Enzensberger because foreign fighters were not being called to join highly organised armies of industrial powers but loose, randomly scattered, often unstructured organisations
[385] Ibid 54-56
[386] A term I disagree with as there is no 'Muslim world', but there are Muslim majority countries
[387] Strazzari 2016 56
[388] Ibid 56-58
[389] Y. Mohammed "Muslim Fundamentalism: the Case of Sayyid Qutb" *Scriptura 99* 2008 380
[390] Hegghammer 2010 57, 63-64

For purposes of rigour, I would also add justice (perceived), as a nonmaterial selective incentive. According to Hegghammer, a crucial aspect of neglect in the analysis on foreign fighters by those who have linked foreign fighter involvement to ideology has been the failure to ask, "if foreign fighter activism is facilitated by belief in the duty of intra-Muslim solidarity action, how does one explain the near absence of long-distance foreign fighters before 1980?"[391]

To explain this dilemma, he maintains that there are six possible explanations for this phenomenon, based on conflict structure, insurgent profile, government obstruction, communications technology, evolution of Islam and the emergence of a new ideological movement. Under conflict structure Hegghammer states that foreign fighters choose the type of conflicts they participate in e.g. "blatant foreign invasions" and are more prone to respond to very "severe" and "bloody" conflicts, which were more common after 1980. Additionally, foreign fighters perceive "invasions of independent countries" as "more dramatic acts of aggression" and this possibly serves as an incentive for participation. Foreign interventions and invasions relate to the political status of the area in which the conflict occurs, and this also influences recruitment. Linked to the insurgent's profile is identification with conflicts that exhibit specific qualities e.g. an Islamist ideology, resources and/or pre-existing links (e.g. studying with mujahideen leaders) to conflict communities. This may also facilitate foreign fighter recruitment. With regards government obstruction, he maintains that when governments turn a blind eye or allow for "friction-free recruitment" and "passive state support" (e.g. during the Afghan jihad) as opposed to government obstruction (e.g. in terms of recruitment for Palestine), foreign fighter mobilisations increase. The availability of communications technology, new media, communications, publishing of propaganda material and declining transportation costs post 1980 is another explanation for greater foreign fighter involvement in global Muslim conflicts. In assessing the evolution of Islam and the *Islamist* movements as a possible motivator for facilitating foreign fighter mobilisations, Hegghammer concludes that this variable, in conjunction with the other four, cannot "fully account for the chronological variations" that have been observed in foreign fighter mobilisations.[392]The sixth explanation considers the emergence of "a new ideological movement" which declared that the *Ummah* was facing an "existential external threat" and by using different materials which showed women being raped, images of an occupied territory, desecration of mosques etc. as evidence of their claim, this movement has been able to draw

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[391] Ibid 64
[392] Ibid 68-71

substantial foreign recruits. The movement advocated that Muslims must fight back because "Islamic law commands it" and that it was the only choice available because diplomatic solutions were unlikely to succeed.[393]

According to Heggehammer, there seems to be the development of a distinctive foreign fighter ideology which emerged around 1980 that called for all Muslim men to join the jihad "in defense of Muslim territory." Furthermore, there seems to be some measure of difference between foreign fighter doctrine and jihad doctrines, based on a comparison of existing literature from prominent foreign fighter ideologues. Hegghammer concludes that foreign fighter doctrine focused on the "outside enemy," allowed for actions that would divest the power of the state from prohibiting individuals from going abroad "for war," and challenged the notion that jihad could only be undertaken with permission from relevant authorities (private such as parents, public such as the political authority) in the case of an outside invasion into Muslim territories.[394] In order to explain the ideology of the "first movers," those who join the foreign conflict, Hegghammer identifies significant issues; the first being a disconnect between foreign fighter ideology and the ideologies of their so-called "ancestors, such as Qutbism and *Wahhabism*." Secondly, he states that there is evidence of the development of a pan-Islamist movement brought about by "elite competition and outbidding" which sought to raise awareness about Muslim political agency, self-worth and co-operation between Muslims worldwide. Their focus was to increase awareness of Muslim global affairs, encourage unity amongst Muslims and re-ignite the reality of outside threats. The language and propaganda was "alarmist, self-victimising, conspirational and xenophobic."[395] In conclusion, Hegghammer states that although transnational militancy is driven by ideology, the ideology of the foreign fighters that developed from the 1970s which he describes as "extreme pan-Islamism" was more similar to "nationalisms" than "utopian religious constructions."[396]

Essentially, Hegghammer confirms that foreign fighter recruitment does not rely on religious ideology nor theological arguments but more on "people's sense of solidarity and altruism." These have been generated through "victimhood" narratives based on the manifestation of significant western policies in the last two decades which have spiked transnational militancy in an environment where Muslims were aligning themselves with the realities of Muslim

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[393] Ibid 71-77
[394] Ibid 75-77
[395] Ibid 77-83
[396] Ibid 89

political agency whilst becoming attuned to the nature and harm of these policies. European "settings for war crimes like…Srebrenica (Bosnia) and Grozny (Chechnya)" have further consolidated the notion of "pan-Islamist victimism."[397] Significantly, this again points to stigmergy. The fact is that trace elements are left in the environment (global persecution of Muslims, invasions of Muslim territories etc.) by certain actions and these stimulate the performance of the next action (development of pan- Islamist ideology), in most cases by individuals or groups who identify with the effect of these traces and actions. The random occurrence of al Qaeda and IS cells over different territories and in different spaces of violence can be theorised using stigmergic collaboration to explain how the collaborative process functions. Stigmergic collaboration is about a method of communication "in which individuals communicate with one another by modifying their local environment" and is used to explain "how disparate, distributed, *ad hoc* contributions" could lead to the emergence of large collaborative enterprises[398] which is of particular importance for theorising the role of foreign fighters in IS. However, this is but one possible explanation in a plethora of theories being advocated, and is certainly not exhaustive on and of its own.

Finally, in noting Hegghammer's contribution to the discussion on foreign fighter recruitment, I refer to one particular issue that is insufficiently explained in his paper. This refers to the claim that the role of foreign fighters cannot be underscored because they "promote sectarian violence and indiscriminate tactics."[399] This narrative suggests that foreign fighters are part of and responsible for promoting sectarian violence but it does not make mention of the foreign fighters that are assisting the illegitimate regimes and the US troops. As explained extensively above and with corroborating evidence, the sectarian conflict in Iraq and Syria was carefully orchestrated and manipulated by the illegitimate regimes ruling in these countries and by policies instituted from the days of colonialism, by the French in Syria and by the British and (later) by the Americans in Iraq. It also does not explain the reality and impact of foreign fighters acting as militia and *shabeeha* for the state security apparatus and the resultant impact of these fighters in conflict zones. These militia have largely been responsible for igniting sectarian conflict and heightening group fear and animosity in Syria and Iraq. Foreign fighters from Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah in Lebanon, have assisted and joined the Assadist and Maliki regimes, yet little mention is

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[397] Strazzari 2016 59
[398] M. Elliott "Stigmergic Collaboration: The Evolution of Group Work" May 2006 http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0605/03-elliott.php
[399] Ibid 53

made of this fact. These foreign fighters act as active components in the state security apparatus and are major contributors to the phenomenon of sectarian conflict; this is a pertinent fact which should not to be deflected through casual or cursory comment of foreign fighters as only those persons associated with IS.

Strazzari highlights this by stating that in cases where there are "unmarked military presence[s]" and or "volunteers flocking to frontlines, whose presence is logistically and politically facilitated by State action," then the presence of these entities represents "nothing but a State-sponsored push towards a proxy war."[400] Thus it cannot be ignored that states are implicated in the theatrics of war where the stage is set for foreign fighter participation. In episodes of institutional fragility, disintegration of order and the inability to deal with national issues, hybrid spaces begin to exist and are inhabited by foreign fighters, "where different logics compete, overlap and often connive – and where the foundations of State legitimacy are questioned."[401] It is in these hybrid spaces where consolidation of regional orders and an ideology that has shifted beyond the relevance of the nation state is manifested that sovereignty becomes contested. It is here, in these contestations for sovereignty from non-state actors that the alarm bells are sounded and where fear is enacted.

Despite the fear that returning combatants will carry out attacks on their home soil, empirical evidence has indicated that a very small percentage of foreign fighters actually get involved in terrorist activities upon returning home.[402] The reasons for joining IS are as diverse as their origins, backgrounds, ages and socio-economic conditions, and in most instances vary from case to case. Additionally, the motivations of those who go to fight in Syria are described as being "a noble and altruistic gesture aimed at saving innocent women and children."[403] However, problematically Vidino adds that "most foreign fighters who join *jihadist* groups are driven by a deep hatred for Alawites and Shias," yet a significant amount of studies have indicated findings to the contrary. Foreign fighters are either novices at religion and/or have exhibited very little religiosity. Analysis of their motivations for travelling to foreign lands to fight, in this case Syria, revealed a critical view of the foreign "crusader" invasions and the innocent killings of civilians. Sectarianism was and has not been a primary motivator. It is possible that once embroiled in battle and when having to deal with the brutality of the Assadist regime and the different Shia militia in Iraq and Syria, that sectarian hatred was

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[400] Ibid 56
[401] Ibid 61
[402] L.Vidino "European foreign fighters in Syria: dynamics and responses" *European View* 13 2014 218-220
[403] Ibid 218-222

nurtured. But to claim that foreign fighters are driven by hatred of different conflicting sects is highly unlikely. Additionally, Vidino's claims that most foreign fighters are "enthusiastic about the idea of establishing an Islamic state, governed by a strict interpretation of the *Shariah*," are also misleading.

From the Wikileaks revelations and the study by Hegghammer, religiosity and religious ideology was not what motivated the recruits. If they did not know about *Shariah*, how is it then that they would be motivated to be governed by it? Additionally, in considering all the numbers, IS fighters do not constitute the majority of fighters in the conflict if the comparison is being made numerically and for statistical justification. Furthermore, the vast majority of fighters, both local and foreigners, have opposed IS. Many foreign fighters have joined other opposition rebel groups,[404] and still others have returned home. IS's propaganda is however, powerful and far reaching like that of the illegitimate states and foreign invaders it is fighting; and it has imitated them brilliantly in the art of exaggerating. As Strazzari states, "the Caliphate has to perpetuate its aura of an ever expanding force, taking care to foster its appeal among potential new recruits and new group pledges of loyalty."[405]

In considering all of the theories put forward, it is evident that no single factor can be isolated as a motivation for foreign fighter recruitment in IS. Besides serving as a possible motivation to join IS, the effect of the subjugation and perceptions of ontological security have also yielded other more disastrous effects that have manifested in the existence, being and indignity suffered by historically colonised people. These effects are examples of Hegghammer's postulation about the pan-Islamist movement. This manifestation is further visible in the form of latent violence and rebellion (the effect of stigmergy) which needs theorising in the context of IS and foreign fighters. According to Galtung, latent violence manifests when situations are unstable, where the "level of actual realisation is not sufficiently protected against deterioration by upholding mechanisms."[406] Viewed in another way, the latent violence can also be understood using stigmergy. Accordingly therefore, "[s]tigmergy is the action based twin of an idea based system."[407] Violence and the acting out of violence are conceivable within this twin based system. Fanon refers to the effect of this ontological insecurity stating that, "Threatened in his affectivity, Threatened in his social activity, Threatened in his belonging to the polis (*la cité*), the North African brings together

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[404] Strazzari 2016 51; Strazzai quotes Malet who maintains that one third of the fighters in Jabhat al-Nusra are foreigners.
[405] Ibid 51
[406] Galtung 1969 172
[407] Marsh 2013 52-55

all the conditions that make a man ill."[408] What is happening in the MENA killing fields is certainly not normal. It is a manifestation of a pervasive illness- a psychosis, "an age of anger."[409] The conflict seems endemic and uncontrollable and it is almost as if we "cannot understand this crisis because our dominant intellectual concepts and categories seem unable to process an explosion of uncontrolled forces."[410] These uncontrolled forces come together through the stigmergic process. What is significant about stigmergy, stigmergic collaboration and the role of foreign fighters in IS, specifically those who operate on foreign soil (i.e. not Iraq/Syria) is that individuals are in control over their own actions and do not need "group permission to tell them what system to work on or what part to contribute."[411] Stigmergy supplements the discussions on the impact of theodicy in relation to IS especially where the point of toleration had been surpassed which ensured that the idea (freedom, liberty, political agency) would not be suppressed, giving rise to action in lieu of that idea.[412] Thus, when the idea is no longer suppressed, when actors have the courage to raise and unlock their voices the resultant action would be a direct confrontation with the perceived sense of injustice, and in many ways can also be understood in terms of exiting what Fanon refers to as the 'zone of nonbeing.' What this idea is or was, will depend on that particular moment, episode, event, context, experience, perception, belief and interpretation. There is no one single story, no one single explanation. There is no one single narrative to claim or advocate. More significantly, the idea as understood by the protagonist, the fighter, will persist for as long as inequality or injustice perpetuates and that is why, in respect of the MENA, it is unlikely that bombing a region will end the conflict, because ideas cannot be eradicated by contemptuously engaging in the wholesale killing of innocent victims.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a brief historical-structural background of the developments inside Iraq and Syria that laid the foundation for the theatre of war and the spectacle of violence that has ensued in these areas and in the MENA in general. It is evident from the outset that the relationship between politics and religion is a complex one and that the occurrence and persistence of these developments, combined with the effects, consequences and results of the

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[408] These findings of Fanon's were published in an essay for Esprit in 1953; See BlackEducator "Frantz Fanon: Writings on Alienation and Freedom- His Uncollected Writings Where Life Is Seized" January 2017
http://blackeducator.blogspot.co.za/2017/01/frantz-fanon-writings-on-alienation-and.html
[409] P. Mishra "Welcome to the age of anger" December 2016
https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/08/welcome-age-anger-brexit-trump
[410] Ibid
[411] Marsh 55
[412] Ibid 56

Realpolitik that is in many ways still playing out, has spurred the development and rise of IS and its lure for foreign fighters. In the MENA there is an on-going history, one that repeats itself, and with each rise of the curtain there is some new main actor in the cast and a host of guest actors, or some new technological developments inserted into the scene whilst the storyline has stayed the same. By considering this one constant, the *Shami* theatre, I then evaluated the possibility of attributing IS's violence only to its ideology and to claims that its violence is motivated by religious doctrine. To reach this conclusion one would have to exclude the impact, effect and consequences of the constant – of those factors that have given rise to the various conflict ridden scenarios and gangsterism in the *Shami* theatre. By allowing for the speaking from within, of the voice of IS as identified in *Dabiq*, and of the different voices from within the Muslim *Ummah* that collectively give meaning to what Islam is, it became apparent that such a simplistic reduction was not only flawed logically and theoretically but that to claim such a hypothesis was to fabricate the facts. From the dissection of the works of ibn Taymiyya contextually and logically and through the interrogation of *Wahhabism* as a political movement cloaked in religious rhetoric it became apparent that the ideology of IS although extracted from the literal interpretations of *Wahhabism* does not constitute what is referred to as the fundamental component or motivation for their actions. It is evident that there are other driving motivations for their actions and violence. It is also evident that naming IS as *Salafi-Jihadists* or *Jihadi extremists* is problematic because despite the proliferation of the term *Salafi Jihadism* in discourses on radical Islamism, there remains an analytical terra incognita in respect of a politically substantial or even a very specific definition of the term. Whilst being labelled as *Salafi*, IS constitutes a politically heterogeneous group and although the term can have operational value when contextualised and defined in a situation where there are different political actors, it is problematic to suggest that all actors branded as *Salafi* in a context specific moment can be considered to be constituted of or from a single transnational *Salafi* movement. Hegghammer maintains that the concepts are more theological than political and therefore are limited when analysing Islamist militancy. Thus, when considering the limitations of the concepts and the vagueness of the definitions associated with them whilst acknowledging the power in language to control specific perspectives the use of *Salafi-Jihadism*, an Arabic term to describe IS should be intellectually intriguing and a problematic acceptance for the discerning academic, bearing in mind that the purpose of a definition is not developed to prove the truth of a word/concept. Its function is to describe a phenomenon as accurately and adequately as possible. Furthermore, it can be reasonably argued that IS is a revolutionary or

resistance movement, despite being branded as terrorists. Following from this assumption, it is logical to further assume that IS has political preferences. To ignore this fact and to focus only on its theological orientations in order to explain or elaborate substantively on and about IS would in my opinion constitute unethical research and analysis aimed at advancing a particular agenda or couching a particular bias.

Chapter two thus introduced new templates for understanding and refuting the claim that IS's ideology, claimed to be deeply rooted in religious doctrine and literalist readings of the scripture is the driving factor in its rise, development the lure for foreign fighters. The Wiki-Leaks revelations that examined the profiles of approximately four thousand IS foreign fighters provided significant information about the nature, qualifications and religious knowledge of these fighters; information that refutes the claim that the violence of IS is solely embedded in religious ideology. Considering that there are many theories that have been advanced in order to explain the rise and development of IS and its lure for foreign fighters, I have illustrated that all of these theories, when combined, can in some way add meaning to and can be understood in relation to stigmergy. This is because in different places, in different contexts and under different circumstances, there are different yet very specific variables that promote conflict and violence. IS is a diverse phenomenon containing different role players and actors who come together with different motivations and triggers for participating in or joining IS. Congregating under a single banner does not necessarily imply "unity of ideology" or absolute consensus with group think; especially not under the abnormal and schizophrenic conditions under which these individuals operate. Thus, stigmergy allows for every plausible trace to be considered and links the different variables that exist as puzzle pieces. By interlocking the different pieces, the picture becomes clearer. No event is left unnoticed or accorded any less importance, because each event has a different value, meaning and relevance for each affected person. By aggregating the different traces in the environment, the research shifts from myopic and compartmentalised analysis to an analysis that is inclusive and realistic. The intention with this approach is to avoid the pitfalls of an analysis that conforms to pre-determined outcomes. Chapter three carries forward this momentum in that the violence of IS is theorised by shifting the lens from the compartments which zoom in on only one factor, to satisfy the ethical requirements of a comprehensive and thorough research. It thus moves from a myopic or close up screen shot to a more inclusive analysis and considers the various possibilities that exist to explain the violence of IS.

Chapter 3: The violence of IS

We are in a logic of simulation which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons…Likewise; it is no longer a question of the ideology of power, but of the scenario of power…Throughout all this one is dependent on the analytical conception whose vanishing point is the horizon between reality and meaning.

Jean Baudrillard [413]

This chapter is a critical analysis of the conceptual history of the violence of IS by interrogating the violence as a concrete social action undertaken in the pursuit of certain interests. It considered the role of agency, because "religion" as an actor, does not have agency - and a consideration of destructive and disruptive operations of state power. It is necessary to state here that throughout this elaborate enactment of the theatre of violence, actors consistently re-allign themselves and establish new allegiances. No single actor in this conflict has maintained loyalty to their allies.

The introduction and chapter two analysed, explained and considered the Realpolitik, historical and geo-political factors that contributed to the rise and development of IS. The method and narrative in understanding IS in the *Shami* theatre was also conceptualised and various theoretical possibilities were advocated in an attempt to explain the lure of IS for foreign fighters. Stigmergy as a theoretical concept was applied to explain the link between the past and the present and between different triggers in different places amongst different groups. From the diverse plausible possibilities advanced, the plethora of explanations offered, it is evident that the complexity of IS, its rise, its presence, its role, its agenda and its methods cannot be simplistically confined to an explanation of religious terrorism. This is because there is rarely a single issue that causes a conflict. The conflict in Iraq and Syria is not any different. There are a multitude of factors that have contributed to and caused the conflict as discussed in the foregoing chapter. The eclectic concept[414] holds that conflict and the ensuing violence is the product of many factors including power relations, economic imperialism, cultural, historical, political, social, and ethnic tensions. In terms of stigmergy, each of these issues, if unresolved will leave a trace element that is or can be picked up at any time that a breaking point is reached. Significantly, each factor or episode leaves its own trace at different times, in different places and with different impact. According to eclectic theory and stigmergy, it would be prudent to consider all the different variables in order to achieve a meaningful theorisation and analysis.

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[413] J. Baudrillard *Selected Writings* M. Poster (ed) 2001 178
[414] Analytic eclecticism allows for multiple levels of analysis and aims to bridge the gap between theoretical debates and the demands for policy relevance and practicality by including various social phenomena in the framework of analysis instead of being bound to scholarly conventions which are informed by paradigmatic assumptions.

3.1 Introduction

In this regard, the purpose of this chapter is to consider all these variables and to analyse their impact and effect in relation to the violence of IS. As stressed before, the violence of IS needs to be contextualised. Although the violence of IS has commonly been referred to (sometimes through innuendo) as a religiously inspired violence, the various templates discussed in this chapter point to alternate variables as motivations for the violence; whilst religion, a valuable currency in the region, is often used as a justification. The invoking of religion has offered a conceptual language that has consolidated discussions around a cultural 'return' to the true *Islamic* self, whilst presenting to those who were anxious 'to do something' an active political agenda of insurrection. Significantly, most of the violence is targeted at co-religionists, not westerners. There are thus many lenses that can be used to analyse the violence of IS, however, the analyses needs to shift from a concentration on the politics of religion only to the politics of violence, the violence in politics and also to the politics and violence of the state. Significantly, the state is largely overlooked or under-researched in assessing the conflict in the MENA, specifically with regards IS. The states in Iraq and Syria manifested as authoritarian states after independence and IS together with the continued uprisings and revolt in this region has reflected the emergence of new identities that pose as powerful challenges to the regimes. It should be noted also that in Iraq and Syria, the regimes have been very strong whilst the state has been weak. In both these states, the regimes have played with religion and it has come back to haunt them. The regime's response to the call for good governance and ending corruption has in fact re-enacted perhaps even more harshly the environment that reconstituted the launching ground for the latest conflicts. If anything, the focus on the security paradigm and securitisation of the state has animated the reality that there existed and still exists an intense political atmosphere of polarisation. In this regard I would like to stress once again that the conflict in Iraq brings into sharp focus the clash between the rights of the citizen and the power of the state and this clash does not occur in a political vacuum. To understand and evaluate the violence of IS, there must be nuance and contextualisation.

3.1.1 Conceptualising the violence of IS

> We've shot an amazing number of people and killed a number and, to my knowledge, none has proven to have been a real threat to the force.

Peculiarly, studies and scholarly contributions on Islamic-labelled insurgent, terrorist or revolutionary groups constitute comments *about* these groups, pre-defined as *Islamist* which immediately ensconces the discourse within a very specific framework. What is needed is an analysis of "the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks"[416] in order to give it credibility. Although the discussions may seem robust and critically engaged, they are already limited by the parameters circumscribed. Thus, what may seem as thorough and critical research is in fact a very controlled analysis. In this regard, the theory on IS and *Islamic-led* movements as well as what has been termed as *Islamic* militancy is largely located in the global North, whilst the subjects of the study are located in the global South. Groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, al Qaeda, al-Shabab, Boko-Haram and IS, in spite of how they have been framed or labelled, have all materialised in response to particular episodes and contextual framings within their localities that have motivated their actions from within their own perspectives. Of significance then is the fact that when most research on these groups are conducted, the emphasis is usually on the justification that they (these groups) articulate for their actions whilst the motivations for the actions, the actual triggers, or geo-politics are accorded little relevance. This process, this system of choosing what gets included and what gets excluded determines the human experiences being examined and the conclusions drawn. Furthermore, these perspectives and internal assessments of the contexts cannot only be explained by employing the knowledge-perspective and paradigms of the global North.

Thus, one needs to consider various approaches. For instance, in the case of Iraq and Syria, the Arab state has created classes because many state personnel and politicians are extensively involved in private business, spreading their influence wide and deep in order to ensure that the creation of new wealth is contained within a very specific, identified group of persons. The role and impact of global capitalism which is intricately tied to the extraction of resources, control of waterways and geo-strategic locations has exacerbated this process of exploitation and the excessive levels of corruption in Iraqi and Syrian society. The incentive structures for state personnel has fused at the level of capital and not labour. These elite have effectively mimicked the colonial rule and systems and have offered little if anything new in

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[415] Cited in: Justin Elliott, "Gen. McChrystal: We've Shot 'An Amazing Number Of People' Who Were Not Threats," *Talking Points Memo (TPM)* April 2 2010
[416] Grosfoguel 2007 213

terms of governance, political, economic and social transformation. In this regard, Hafez claims that the resurfacing of Islamism has posed a threat to elites in the political process.[417]

A second approach to understanding the violence of IS lies in the possibility that the violence employed is simply a strategy or tactic. Violence, in this instance is considered as a necessary strategy for survival, where survival is already contested. As Frederick Douglass has stated, "[p]ower concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."[418] The post-colonial state in Iraq and Syria is not indigenous and does not enjoy any legitimacy. Furthermore the very problematic support that has been and still is being given to very problematic regimes in order to solidify imperial interests of extraction and control constitutes a core factor in the conflict and the identification of the state as an illegitimate entity. The response from IS and other fighter groups has been a clear refusal to submit to the power of foreign invaders and illegitimate rulers. IS and all the other resistance groups inside Syria today have refused to submit to the "business as usual" path, a refusal of the social death existence where sovereignty and 'being' is contested. What is curious and worth considering is the way in which the behaviour of IS mirrors those of the occupation forces and "coalition of the killing."[419] For instance, the killing of children has not been limited to the US or to the West. During the siege of Deraa in April 2011, Hamza al-Khateeb was arrested by Assad's Air Force Intelligence in its "shock and awe" campaign, and twenty six days later his mutilated body was returned to his parents. Hamza's penis had been severed, there was evidence of broken bones and cigarette burns on his body and identifiable gun- shot wounds. Hamza was just 13 years old.[420] This escalated the protests, Syrians were shocked at Assad's brutality towards the young children, but they were certainly not awed, and June the 3rd was "dubbed 'Friday of the Children.'"[421] The result of this violence from the state shifted the response, psyche and mentality of the average Syrian from a belief in non-violent protest to an understanding of the reality of state violence and repression and the need to defend themselves. This can be captured in the comment made by a young Damascene who said in reference to Bashar Al-Assad, "Everytime he kills someone, everytime he tortures, he creates ten more men determined to destroy him."[422]

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[417] Hafez 2003 3

[418] Frederick Douglas quotes https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/18943.Frederick_Douglass

[419] Coalition of the killing is a term coined by Phyllis Bennis 2014 http://www.progressive.org/news/2014/09/187851/six-steps-short-war-beat-isis

[420] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 49

[421] Ibid 49

[422] Ibid 49

From my research it became evident that for the activist and fighter, this shift in mind-set and mentality has been linked to a cold reality and learning about tactics of survival. This is evident from their witnessing of the violent onslaught from the states in response to the non-violent protests and the resultant life-lessons taken. In a patrimonial regime such as Syria, "[t]he allegiance to the state leader displayed by the…military-sectarian complex" resulted in the hard-hitting reality that the head (Assad) and the body (military/security complex) did not hesitate to go to war against the majority of their own citizens.[423] According to the Marxist, Gilbert Achcar,

> …a mass uprising, however big, stands little chance of peacefully overturning a patrimonial regime that is protected by a praetorian guard with tribal, sectarian or regional loyalties. To overthrow such a government, an armed confrontation is required.[424]

In this case, for the masses that stood together, when faced with the violence of the "praetorian guard," a choice had to be made, specifically after the Clock Tower Massacre. The reality of the failures and consequences of a non-violent political protest when pitted against a violent state was witnessed on the 19th April 2011, during the Clock Tower Massacre in Homs, which had been the centre of anti-regime protests. In the face of a large build-up of military vehicles and warning shots, the protestors gathered peacefully and non-violently chanting "*Selmiyyeh, Selmiyyeh*" and notably, their anti-sectarian slogan, "One, One One, the Syrian People are One" in the square. At around 2am on the 19th April, the sit-in was violently assaulted and the Syrian regime's weapons were unleashed on a nonviolent, peaceful, civil protest, to the extent that the smell of death was discernible five kilometres away in the suburb of Al-Wa'er. Bodies littered the ground of the square.[425] This was the outcome of a non-violent protest, the outcome from a sit in at the Clock Tower Square in Homs. Undoubtedly, the stigmergic reverberations penetrated far and wide, deep and surreal, so much so that the Clock Tower Massacre would be remembered as a "terrifying, terrible and a transformative moment" signifying the "death of peaceful protest as a realistic strategy."[426] The specific context and details of these instances of violence are necessary to this study because they allow for a close examination of all the interacting factors. I use this style throughout to highlight the complexities and nuances that exist when theorising the violence of IS.

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[423] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 81
[424] G. Achcar The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising 2013 141
[425] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 43-44
[426] Ibid 82

In postulating the different scenarios, there remains one scenario that warrants a mention though I have not addressed it further as it has been confined to the theatre of musings and conspiracy. However, in acknowledging the reality of economic and financial warfare and the accompanying violence embedded in the protection of these systems I believe that a significant indicator in attempting to settle the curiosity of the question "Why the specific interest only with IS?" over other resistance groups, could possibly be explained by IS's declaration of a financial war on the US through its (IS's) introduction of the gold dinar as a currency to be used in the payment for oil.[427] IS has invoked questions about the real value of paper money that has no gold reserve backing, and whose value is based only on derivatives and swaps.[428] IS's focus on the global banking system, currency exchange and trade is closely linked to theories around Gadhafi's fall from grace and the sudden desire for a regime change in Libya by western powers under the guise of responsibility to protect (R2P) and humanitarian intervention.[429] As Africa's largest oil producer, Libya is believed to have in excess of 150tons of gold reserves and Gadhafi had indicated a move to demand payment for oil not in dollars but, "in gold-backed 'dinars.'" Gadhafi was pushing Arab and African governments to join his initiative. Gadhafi's plan had the "potential to bring down the dollar and the world monetary system" to the extent that French President Nicolas Sarkozy referred to Gadhafi's call (and in reference, to Libya) as a "'threat' to the financial security of the world. The "Insiders" were apparently panicking over Gadhafi's plan."[430] Thus, according to some analysts, Gadhafi's "single African currency made from gold, a true sharing of the wealth" hastened, "his immediate dismissal" and the need to orchestrate alternative smokescreens to remove him from power.[431]

Pause. Review. Replay.

According to many other analysts, regime change in Iraq under the guise of WMD's by the US was determined when Saddam Hussein announced that Iraqi oil would be traded in euros, not dollars. The result of that announcement was the imposition of sanctions on Iraq followed

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[427] According to Moubayed, by late 2014 IS had announced that it intended to "mint its own reservoir of gold, silver and copper, issuing coins…" Moubayed 2015 146

[428] L. Daftari "ISIS introduces 'Golden Dinar' currency, Hopes it will collapse US dollar" July 2016 http://www.foreigndesknews.com/world/middle-east/isis-introduces-golden-dinar-currency-hopes-will-collapse-u-s-dollar/

[429] A. Newman "Gadhafi's Gold-money Plan Would Have Devastated Dollar" November 2011 http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/4630-gadhafi-s-gold-money-plan-would-have-devastated-dollar

[430] Ibid

[431] A. Wile "Gaddafi Planned Gold Dinar, Now Under Attack" May 2011 http://www.thedailybell.com/editorials/anthony-wile-gaddafi-planned-gold-dinar-now-under-attack/

by the US invasion. "Coincidence? Hussein's idea would have strengthened the euro, but Gaddafi's idea would have strengthened all of Africa" which threatened the power elites controlling the world banks.[432] From Saddam to Gadhafi to IS, excessive force, violence and intervention have been justified under politically correct terms such as R2P, humanitarian intervention and democracy but when the economic trail is followed, the story of the gold dinar and the challenge to the world monetary system is analysed, the dots join to tell another, not an altogether, implausible story.

Finally, in theorising the violence of IS it needs to be acknowledged that IS has killed civilians, but the figures pale in comparison when compared to the number of deaths and the extent of the destruction from the Syrian regime and the coalition of the killing. To be clear, this does not in any way make irrelevant those deaths, it is a contextualisation of the process in which the narrative is controlled. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) of the 203 097 civilian deaths recorded from March 2011 until November 2016, IS has been responsible for 1.48% (2998) of the deaths. The Syrian regime is still the biggest perpetrator, responsible for 92.92% (188 729) deaths whilst the armed opposition factions have killed 1.81% (3668) civilians. Russian forces are listed as the third major perpetrator having killed 1.75% (3558) civilians thus far. It is not conceivable, by any stretch of the imagination to believe that IS can surpass these numbers anytime soon in spite of being touted as the 'major' aggressor in the conflict, a claim that has justified foreign intervention and a toleration of Assad. According to Fadel Abdul Ghani, chairman of SNHR,

> [t[he report notes that even though ISIS, the self-proclaimed Islamic Caliphate, emerged on 9 April 2013, Russian forces, who claimed that they came to fight ISIS, have killed more Syrian civilians than ISIS itself where 3558 civilians were killed by Russian forces compared to the 2998 civilians killed at the hands of ISIS. Furthermore, civilian casualties who were killed at the hands of the international coalition forces, amounted to 669 civilians according to the report, exceeded the number of victims who were killed by Fateh Al Sham Front who killed 372 civilians.[433]

Likewise, in Iraq, according to Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR)[434], the body count of civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan after ten years of the War on Terror revealed very disturbing data, and though horrendous enough on their own, have been presented by the

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[432] Wile 2011

[433] SNHR "The Six Main Parties that Kill Civilians in Syria and the Death Toll Percentage Distribution among them" November 2016 http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/11/14/29132/

[434] The PSR report includes a comparison, explanation and critique of all the main reports 'documenting body counts' in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan since the War on Terror. It is a far more comprehensive analysis than any of the other reports and highlights the gaps, bias and flaws in the various reports and offers possible motivations for these discrepancies. See also: http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/unworthy-victims-western-wars-have-killed-four-million-muslims-1990-39149394

western media as "tolerable."[435] The PSR report has criticised the factual misrepresentation and inherent gaps in the IBC data and compared these data to various other reports including those released by Lancet, and a report published in the journal PLOS Medicine. Significantly, the theatre of war has given different 'performances' and narrations about responsibility, accountability, cause and motivation, but PSR maintains that

> [s]ince the assault on Iraq unequivocally constituted an aggression in violation of international law, the US and its allies are also responsible for all its *consequences* [my italics]. But in western discourse, soon after the start of the war its illegal character ceased to be discussed.[436]

This goes straight to the questions on ethics and the suspension of ethics, to the claims of "just war vs. unjust war" and to the language and definitions that label certain groups as terrorist organisations and others as resistance fighters. Furthermore, the consequences of claiming a just war and of spreading western values to preserve western civilisation from the savages warrants an analysis into this subject. What we have here- as seen in chapter four, is the advocacy of mass violence against racialised populations, all in the name of defending liberal values. Yet ironically, liberalism has had a problem of only seeing the violence of the racialised others, while its own violence is hidden from view. Combining the various reports, PSR has determined that the "number of casualties may thus have exceeded one million already by mid – 2007" whilst approximately between "250,000 and one million persons are presumed missing in Iraq." According to the US NGO Just Foreign Policy the number of Iraqis killed up to September 2011 can be estimated to be 1.46 million.[437] However, Nagi, in presenting a paper to the Association of Genocide Scholars estimates from the research and analyses he has conducted that "in Iraq alone, the US-led war from 1991 to 2003 killed 1.9 million Iraqis; then from 2003 onwards around 1 million: totalling just under 3 million Iraqis dead over two decades."[438] These deaths are directly attributable to the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. Nafeez Ahmed states that the war on Iraq began in 1991 and not in 2003 as is often presented and "[u]ndisputed UN figures show that 1.7 million Iraqi civilians died due to the West's brutal sanctions regime, half of whom were children."[439] From the above statistics, the US and its allies make IS look like apprentices.

Furthermore, a cursory examination of the brutal acts of violence that have been committed in the Middle-East in recent years clearly indicates that there is an imbalance in the call for

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[435] psr.org "Casualty Figures after 10 Years of the 'War on Terror' Iraq Afghanistan Pakistan" 2015 http://www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/body-count.pdf 20
[436] ibid 28
[437] Ibid 29-30
[438] N. Ahmed "Unworthy victims: Western wars have killed four million Muslims since 1990" April 2015 http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/unworthy-victims-western-wars-have-killed-four-million-muslims-1990-39149394
[439] Ibid

human rights and justice by western powers, depending on the perceived victims and the perceived perpetrators. In 2016 alone, the US dropped an estimated 26,171 bombs on mostly MMC. This means that 72 bombs were dropped on civilians and combatants every day. When broken down further it translates into "three bombs every hour, 24 hours a day."[440] Thus, violence has been the preferred means of engagement for all the western role players and their Arab/Persian counterparts who participated whether overtly or covertly in the conflicts in Iraq, and Syria. Additionally, it appears there is a tolerance amongst western powers for Muslim-on-Muslim violence (violence perpetrated by the regimes in Syria under Assad and Egypt under Sisi against their own populations, and the violence of Iraqi officials on the Sunni Muslim population inside Iraq) and for white supremacist states' whose violence on Muslim/Arab populations is glossed over through calls for reports and commissions of enquiry. In this regard Israel's aggressive and violent actions against the besieged population during the War on Gaza* in 2014 and the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 must also be considered.[441] Thus, when the driving agenda is power and supremacist values underwritten by the exploitation of capitalism, the priority will be the continuation of conflict. In light of these statistics and these facts, I have to ask, "Why the obsession with IS?"

Talha Abdulrazaq, asked a similar question in a Facebook post of the Middle East Monitor on the 12th February 2015. According to Abdulrazaq

> [e]very single day we hear about the brutality and savagery of ISIS. When will we hear about the brutality and savagery of the United States, the Iraqi government they back, the Iranian backed Shia militias and terrorist organisations, and Yazidi militias who violate Sunni women?[442]

In an article entitled, "*No one intervened when Iraq burnt*", Abdulrazaq comments on the language used to describe the burning of the Jordanian pilot by IS fighters as "savage acts" by stating that those who have been monitoring the situation inside Iraq over the past thirteen years

> will be acutely aware of such barbarism existing for a very long time…[committed by] the 'others' – the perpetrators the world decides to ignore…[of the] use of fire or chemicals to burn victims…by Iranian-sponsored Shia death squads (now given uniforms and called the Iraqi security services)…[and

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[440] M. Benjamin "America dropped 26,171 bombs in 2016. What a bloody end to Obama's reign" January 2017 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/09/america-dropped-26171-bombs-2016-obama-legacy

* Technically, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not a religious conflict, it is just masqueraded as such, but the connection with the argument is that 'Oriental/Arab' life is considered dispensable in comparison to 'white/European' life – to which category the Israeli's belong or even choose to claim for themselves

[441] E. MacAskill & J. Borger "Iraq war was illegal and breached UN charter ,says Annan" 16 September 2004 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq

[442] MiddleEastMonitor February 2015 https://m.facebook.com/middleeastmonitor/posts/10153089917561926

the use of] white phosphorus [by the Americans] on the densely populated Iraqi city of Fallujah in the Anbar province.[443]

Abdulrazaq details different types of violence unleashed on the Sunni Iraqi population including the "smashing of skulls with cement blocks", the public display of the body of Sunni civilians "by hanging them from lamp posts in Baquba," the horrific burning of civilians in Fallujah which included the use of radioactive munitions in Iraq by the invading US forces. These atrocities have exceeded the harm that became apparent after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and includes the "incident of burning, savage murder and rape by US forces, this time in Yusufiya in March 2006." The detail of these horrific crimes received far less attention, explanation, analysis and discussion than IS's burning of the Jordanian pilot yet, as Abdulrazaq explains,

> Paul Cortez, James Barker, Jesse Spielman, Brian Howard and Steven Green, all of the US Army…gang-raped 14-year-old Abeer Qassim Al-Janabi as they murdered her parents and younger sister in another room, and then the soldier who had just murdered her family proceeded to rape her again, her family's blood still fresh on his hands, before shooting her in the head. They then set her body alight, and torched their house. Remember her name and that of her family. Remember that Iraq needs justice, and that the rapists of Iraq are still at large, and still dictating morality to us to this day.[444]

Abdulrazaq's comment again raises the questions of ethics and morality in the claim of fighting a "just war" and stresses a reality that is significantly overlooked – "Iraq needs justice." In the Syrian context, the same can be said, especially in instances where a largely conservative and traditional society has experienced the impact and apocalyptic consequences of rape, to the extent that

> the threat of sexual violence in particular pushed people towards arms…[r]ape is something that will outrage the people…[but] by December 2011 rape had become a standard practise not only in prisons but by the army as well…[soldiers went] into homes and start[ed] raping women in front of their fathers, brothers and husbands.[445]

This context, these facts and these consequences are pertinent to the rise and development of IS and the violence it manifests specifically if one is to remember that Saddam and by association, the Iraqi people had *nothing* to do with 9/11. Iraq did not have and still does not have any WMDs and it is an established fact today that the US fabricated intelligence on Iraq together with the British and other allies and then invaded the country based on this fabrication. According to Gordon Brown, ex-prime minister of the UK, the "US defence department knew that Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction…[and] that

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[443] T. Abdulrazaq "No one intervened when Iraq burned" February 2015 https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150211-no-one-intervened-when-iraq-burned/
[444] Ibid
[445] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 79

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there was a 'rush to war' in March 2003."[446] As you watch the theatre where the wars are being staged, be mindful of *truths* that have so quickly vanished from the mainframe, be courageous enough to stop and ask, "Why then the obsession with and focus only on IS?" Is it possible, as Abdulrazaq asks, that the reluctance to humanise the suffering and trauma of the Sunni Iraqi would mean admitting that the invasion of Iraq was about regime change in Iraq for financial gain and not about WMDs? Is it possible that it was about national, specifically economic interests and later described as "the experiment of the exportation of democracy" (when the truth about the fabricated WMDs started to surface) demanding a "look into the crimes of those who brought Iraq its Frankenstein monster of a state and governance system – the United States of America and its allies?"[447]

3.2 Templates of violence

For the purpose of this chapter, the violence of IS is analysed using different templates. The three core templates include an analysis of violence in language, violence as a strategy and tactic and IS's use of violence as a response to geo-politics. This last template draws considerably on the impact and effect of stigmergy. The first template on violence and language is linked to the third template because ultimately how a concept, phenomenon or entity is defined and understood by the mechanisms and medium of language facilitates how one responds to that concept, phenomenon or entity. For instance, the violence of IS is usually presented as 'wanton' or 'barbaric' and linked to Islam. IS is always attacking, not responding. The western powers and their surrogate Arab regimes are always responding, not attacking. Thus projection and perception both operate as tools of violence and are also used to justify violence. Furthermore, the indiscriminate use of violence by the dominant power actors has been exercised with impunity and the reality of their aggression and brutality has been couched in a language of victimhood where subsequent responses are contextualised in terms of that framing.[448] For purposes of clarity, template one is a discussion on violence and

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[446] M. Savage "Gordon Brown says Pentagon misled UK over case for Iraq invasion" November 2017 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/05/iraq-weapons-mass-destruction-america-misled-britain-gordon-brown
[447] Abdulrazaq 2015
[448] This idea has been repeated by social media users, see Norton's tweet "Sophisticated propaganda—note how the use of passive voice implies the US is the reluctant victim, not the aggressor" 24 June 2017 https://twitter.com/BenjaminNorton/status/878398352399978497 The lack of trust of the mainstream media to cover the stories objectively can be appreciated from the in-numerous examples of biased and embedded journalism that tipped the lies and propaganda of the US and its allies from the time that the war drums had been sounded against Iraq. In this regard, Karin Voltmer states that "[t]he coverage of the U.S. media before and during the Iraq War is a recent example of the failure of the press to act as a watchdog and to question the credibility of the government's version of the events." K. Voltmer "The media, government accountability, and citizen engagement" https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/WorldBankReport/Chapter%206%20Voltmer.pdf & M. Wells in

how language is used to generate a particular narrative of the violence of IS. I also analyse how language specifically operates in this instance to advance Manichaean arguments. Oversimplification of events, details and occurrences can cast a discourse or description into black and white, into a struggle between good and evil. The greatest propaganda successes are those which have the "essential ingredients of an atrocity story,"[449] and which shock the domestic constituency into acquiescence whilst not being immediately refutable. This is made apparent in the analysis of specific words and the definitions implied in these words.

The violent counter of IS and the rise and development of IS is undoubtedly linked to a struggle and contestation with the state and its proxies and template two considers the choices IS has made in dealing with the violence of the state. Considering that the number of Arab/Muslim deaths have soared in the last decade, the push-back from IS and other fighter groups can be interpreted as being a clear refusal to surrender to the status quo. Most significantly, their violent response can be interpreted as a refusal to adopt the pacifist or non-violent approach in the face of excessive state violence. It can also be considered as a push back against the violence of US foreign policies and the violent interventions of the coalition of the killing. In this regard, template two considers IS animation of the struggle to survive and the cost of retaliating against those who dehumanise their existence and invalidate their deaths. Within the third core template or mainframe are linked templates that give alternate meanings to the various possible reasons for the violence of IS. Included under this third template is an analysis of how the justification for violence acts as an instrument to open up the space for politics based on Hafez's political systems theory. I then consider mythic/vertical and divine/horizontal violence as these concepts are constitutive of the role of power and the consequence of oppression and exploitation in producing violence. For IS, there has to be a challenge to the excess of state power/violence (mythic violence) and this response can only be violence. It is about violence countering violence. Mythic violence is violence that is constitutive of power and usually manifests as an illegal support of state power. When this violence manifests, different individuals, groups and populations react differently, depending on their capacity, capability and organisation. Violence escalates when power is lost[450] and though "violence can destroy power; it can never become a substitute for

TheGuardian "Embedded reporters 'sanitised' Iraq war" November 2003
https://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/nov/06/broadcasting.Iraqandthemedia
[449] Cockburn 2014 121
[450] T. Cambanis "ISIS was a symptom. State collapse is the disease" July 2017
https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/07/14/isis-was-symptom-state-collapse-disease/9s1UfPUigAeAyLYwQUKAlO/story.html

it."[451] The increase in violent extremism also materialises when a weak or corrupt state fails to provide security and is "too incoherent to explain why terrorist attacks are merely a crime, rather than an existential threat."[452] Thus, although there may be two stories, there is usually only one narrative. Cambanis argues against simplistic claims and obsessions about

> extremist jihadi messaging…sectarian conflict…disparate coalitions…[which] are not, contrary to popular belief, the most important engines of ISIS. No, the most critical factor feeding jihadi movements is the collapse of effective central governments — a trend in which the West, especially the United States, has been complicit.[453]

These are all important theoretical footprints in the analysis of the violence of IS because as political analyst Ben Norton notes, "History takes no prisoners. It shows, with absolute lucidity, that the Islamic terrorism ravaging the world today was borne out of the western foreign policy of yesteryear."[454] Although I disagree with Norton's use of the term *Islamic terrorism* as an explanation for the violence of IS[455], largely because it conveys the fallacious meaning that 'Islam' provokes 'terrorism;' the central emphasis on historical and political factors in the creation of IS and its violence is what is to be noted. Thus the different templates attempt to bring these core aspects to the fore. In the third template I also consider William Cavanaugh's assessment of religious violence in the context of the narrative that the violence of IS is *Islamic* by unpacking Canavaugh's argument about the "myth" amongst liberals, conservatives, religious believers and nonbelievers that religion essentially fosters divisiveness and violence and thus needs to be contained by the democratic state.

Chapter four, following the arguments in this chapter also includes a critical discourse analysis, it considers the choice of words, the meaning intended and the narrative perpetuated. Here I highlight comments and phrases from contemporary scholars, policy makers and powerful politicians. Chapter four is also a critical analysis of the violence in the language and in the recounting of history in the development of the Muslim other. Language is used as a tool to justify violent military action against IS and large civilian Muslim populations and this language needs to be examined when theorising the violence of IS

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[451] K. Breen "Violence and power: A critique of Hannah Arendt on the 'political'" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 33(3) 2007 7-8

[452] Cambanis July 2017

[453] Cambanis July 2017

[454] B. Norton "We created Islamic terrorism: Those blaming Islam for ISIS would have supported Osama bin Laden in the '80s" November 2015 http://www.salon.com/2015/11/17/we_created_islamic_extremism_those_blaming_islam_for_isis_would_have_supported_osama_bin_laden_in_the_80s/ & Norton's referencing of this response as "Foreign Policy Blowback" 01 June 2017 in his tweet "Foreign Policy Blowback — excellent @DeadPundits interview with @MaxBlumenthal on Manchester attack and Western wars" https://twitter.com/benjaminnorton/status/870359444848353281

[455] I disagree because it contributes to the Orientalist narrative and the clash of civilisations thesis which oversimplifies the analysis by instituting Manichaean binaries, giving credence to very faulty premises in the process.

because it is intricately tied with Islamophobia and the ideology of orientalism which has perpetuated the notion of the Muslim other and the clash of civilisations thesis. Often, complicated and complex occurrences are contained within a particular definition given to a word, and the actors most affected by these definitions find themselves trapped within a language that itself manifests as a political tool so that "language can work as a tool of re-oppression against the oppressed."[456] Within orientalism and specifically in the clash of civilisations thesis is a dominant western narrative that views Islam as an existential threat; thus the way in which the language is used, manipulated and projected functions to affirm this claim. However, it would be prudent to acknowledge that often the language itself is manipulated; it is violent in and of itself; thus "[l]anguage should be tortured to tell the truth."[457] It is these constellations that contribute to the understanding of IS because ultimately IS is constituted of humans and all human behaviour, including violence has a context.

These different manifestations of violence have initiated violent responses from IS. Ultimately, it should be remembered that when the bombs fall, they do not discriminate between civilians and militants. The violence of IS, I would contend, in many instances, is a response to the narrative of orientalism and to IS's understanding today that "[t]o be American is to be at war,"[458] with Islam and Muslims. Huntington specifically argued for the adoption of a posture that treated Islam as the enemy. In this regard, the call to war is sounded by the US, asserting that "we should limit its military threat, maintain our own military superiority over it, and 'exploit the interior differences and conflicts among Confucian and Islamic states.'"[459] *Pause. Stop. Rewind. Replay*. A repetition of Lord Curzon? The US policy in Iraq after the illegal invasion has served as an "instructive case" for Huntington's prescription to "exploit the interior differences and conflicts among Islamic states."[460] The basis for these three core templates is to consider the consequences of viewing a culture and a religion as a threat, and to answer these questions in relation to IS, "Why are these groups of actors so violent?" and "What is the role of religion in violence?" When one can understand these templates and how they function to produce, re-produce and solicit

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[456] T. Shine "Lens of blackness: An anthro-political perspective" *The Journal of Pan African Studies 6 (2)* July 2013
[457] Ibid 4
[458] T. Cambanis "We are the war on terror, and the war on terror is us" March 2017
https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/03/23/how-imported-war-terror/IuIks5w7AzJjmNvac8LY2O/story.html?p1=Article_Related_Box_Article
[459] E. Qureshi & M.A Sells "Constructing the Muslim Enemy" in *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy* 2003 2003 13
[460] Ibid 13

violence then we have the start of a meaningful analysis that is inclusive of the political and not only the religious in theorising the violence of IS.

In this regard it has been necessary to conceptualise IS and the violence it manifests beyond the process of drawing parallels or instituting binaries, because when narratives are devised "about the expressions and expressive intentions of dramatic players" without using analytical tools and concepts, historical structures are usually misconstrued and the questions posed deflect us from very important facts and considerations.[461] But how does one understand the concept or the context of IS – a contemporary discourse that is historically defined and one that constitutes events? Significantly, much of the discourse around IS is shaped, developed, advocated, contemplated, mediated, channelled and challenged through the media. Foreign policy, contemporary discourses and responses to IS are carefully managed through two very particular structures – through the mouth of the gun or through the mouth of the news anchor person. For Jean Baudrillard,[462] the media's effect on human relations constituted a "central mode of social control and integration in a consumer society."[463] This is where we are – somewhere between control and integration. In theorising the violence of IS it is necessary to break free, to think freely, to analyse critically.

The story of IS, the story of the war on IS and the violence it portrays is a story told by the media, through the media and through symbols and images generated by the media. It is a story *not* of a "people" but an other, not of actors who speak and think but only of actors who *behave*. It is a story of a conflict that is only really understood, seen, described and experienced through the media and through language. It is through the solicitation of the media story and the language deployed that we are assimilated into the war. It is through the "multiplied object/sign values disseminated by the media" that the war on IS is invested with meaning whilst many are oblivious to the power-relations that saturate the contexts.[464] The war on IS is the site of the *Shami* theatre where there are contestations about the "technologically mediated social contact."[465] Thus communication is received through a technical medium, war is generated and maintained through a technical instrument, the discourse on war is sanitised by the technicality of the weapons of militarisation and destruction and the effects of war are analysed based on technical precision and accuracy in

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[461] T. Asad "The idea of an anthropology of Islam" *Occassional Paper Series Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies* 1986 7-9
[462] I want to acknowledge Kamraan Ahmed and Patrick Casey for introducing me to Baudrillard's ideas during a lunch conversation in Cordoba which was part of the Granada Summer School 2016.
[463] W. Pawlett *Jean Baudrillard* 2007 24
[464] Ibid
[465] Ibid 24-25

'locating and removing targets.' Not humans. In this regard, "contemporary culture and society have come to the point in which the real has disappeared and is replaced by models 'more real than the real.'"[466] This is what Baudrillard calls "hyperreality- the pathos of a society gone beyond alienation."[467] After all, large populations have been coerced more by propaganda than by armies where meaning is established through "difference and signification" and through a proliferation of signs and images where reality is slowly reduced into appearance and into a spectacle.[468] It is the spectacle of the theatre and from within this theatre different acts emerge. So this is where we are, moving from act to act - curtain fall, curtain rise.

Same theatre. Same script. New actors. Improved theatrics.

We are in the theatre of war and violence, in the consumption of war and violence amidst a multitude of signs with sign-value where different groups (IS and the rest) using difference and signification seek to enact themselves in a context of exchanges and relationships in which each is embroiled in the hyperreal.[469] It is here, in the medium of the message, in the technical soul of the media that the real is carved up and cut out into signs which affect perception and social relations. The signs link people together in a form of symbolic exchange based on differentiation and signification, and the medium "imposes a certain way of seeing the world." For Baudrillard, the media is "anti-mediatory" because although there may be interaction, exchanges and responses, these are all drawn from a predefined range or code, where "human interaction is essentially replaced by simulatory interactivity."[470] This idea is reinforced by Noam Chomsky when he said that,

> The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum—even encourage the more critical and dissident views. That gives people the sense that there's free thinking going on, while all the time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate.[471]

The spectacle of theatre – now starring IS - is also in this space of simulatory interactivity. Essentially, human interaction lulls in cognitive ease.

Although Baudrillard's theory does not constitute a framework of analysis for this chapter, his ideas contribute to enhancing the nuances at play in setting the scene for theorising IS and

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[466] D.Y. Mendoza "Commodity, sign, and spectacle: Retracing Baudrillard's hyperreality" *Kritike* 4(2) 2010 45
[467] Ibid 46
[468] Pawlett 2007 24-27
[469] Hyperreality-is a type of social reality in which a reality is created or simulated from models and where the division between reality and imaginary disappears.
[470] Pawlett 2017 25-27
[471] Noam Chomsky quotes http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/6597774-the-smart-way-to-keep-people-passive-and-obedient-is

the violence it manifests. Significantly, most understandings, perceptions and even academic analysis may well be a simulation of the encoded message from within the signs and the utility of the sign-value. Language, like media is rooted in signs, the signified and the signifier and it is in these domains that I attempt to theorise the violence of IS. The extent and nature of the violence of IS involves a plethora of issues and begins with the way in which this violence is conceptualised.

3.3 What is violence?

> *It is the obligation of every person who claims to oppose oppression to resist the oppressor by every means at his or her disposal. Not to engage in physical resistance, armed resistance to oppression, is to serve the interests of the oppressor; no more, no less. There are no exceptions to the rule, no easy out...*

> *Assata Shakur, 1984[472]*

Violence and the defining of violence have been contested for centuries, mainly because violence involves and refers to different conditions, actions and processes. The consequences of violence may be immediate, short-term or long-term and may be contextualised within an interpersonal framing or as the result of an inherent social condition. What is peculiar about the way in which violence is defined and which aspects of the definition of violence are included or excluded will determine the human experiences being examined and the conclusions drawn. This is evident in the way in which the Paris attacks of November 2015 have been framed. The language around the Paris attacks is laced with references to traditions and beliefs nurtured and sedimented from the past. From a Europe that considered itself a victim. It is a narrative of obscurantism.[473] A concern when discussing violence is the ability to name and detect violence beyond physical violence, and to [re] consider hounding only on what is deemed the root causes of nihilistic violence. This requires decentring the focus on subjective violence.[474] Subjective violence is violence that is not anonymous; it incorporates the physical, physiological experience of "violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent."[475] There is an action being done and an identifiable doer of that action. This is the most prevalent form of violence in different discourses, analysis and media sound bites and is usually, the only *type* of violence referred to in relation to IS. In contrast, the invisible

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[472] AZQuotes http://www.azquotes.com/quote/864778
[473] Obscurantism is "the practise of deliberately preventing the facts or full details of something from becoming known," it is "a policy of withholding knowledge from the general public." Merriam-Webster Dictionary
[474] Zizek *Violence* 2008 3-4
[475] Ibid 1

systemic violence is barely considered; what is noticed as violence is a disturbance of the established order. Both systemic and symbolic violence constitute varieties of objective violence. Subjective violence is usually a response to objective violence, which means that it is important to recognise the different forms of violence; because even at the zero-level, of the 'normal state' the reality is that violence exists.

Violence is far more pervasive and invasive than most of us care to admit or acknowledge, and it underlies many cherished ideals and institutions. For instance, in order to establish and sustain the free market, and the "smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" what is needed is a substantial amount of violence.[476] The impact of coloniality/modernity and world capitalism in its global dimension has interrupted the normal functioning, organisation and life of many people in many countries and analysis of these forms of violence are rarely considered when commenting on what are named as acts of terrorism. This is of particular importance in relation to the manifestation of violence in the oil rich MENA regions. In considering subjective violence, there manifests an aspect of the violence that is not easily conceptualised; what has been identified as subjective violence at its irrational purest.[477] Here the violence is an example of a *form of communication*, what Arendt refers to as 'the arm of the impotent,'[478] because

> [w]hat is most difficult to accept is precisely the riots' meaninglessness: more than a form of protest, they are what Lacan called a *passage à l'acte*[479]– an impulsive movement into action which cannot be translated into speech or thought, and which carries with it an intolerable weight of frustration. This bears witness not only to the impotence of the perpetrators, but, even more, to the lack of what Fredric Jameson has called 'cognitive mapping', an inability to locate the experience of their situation within a meaningful whole.[480]

Harleen. K. Gambhir, mentions in *Backgrounder-Dabiq: The strategic messaging of the Islamic State*, that "Dabiq demonstrates that ISIS is not a shadowy terrorist cell… [it] is testing out the best ways to get the world's attention."[481] *Dabiq*, thus represents the irrepressible urge to speak - to communicate, and is a legacy that will in all probability outlast the theatre and the spectacle of violence. Thus violence is a form of communication. The liberal counter argument to a violent communication is to suggest a non-violent protest,

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[476] Ibid 2

[477] H. van der Linden "On the Violence of Systemic Violence: A Critique of Slavoj Žižek" *Radical Philosophy Review* 15(1) 2012 5

[478] M. Canovan *Hannah Arendt: A reinterpretation of her political thought* 1992 208-210

[479] *passage à l'acte* is a form of acting out

[480] LSE "Against the Double Blackmail: refugees, terror and other troubles with the neighbours" Podcast with Professor Zizek April 2016 http://www.lse.ac.uk/Events/2016/04/20160420t1830vOT/Against-the-Double-Blackmail

[481] H.K. Gambhir "Backgrounder - Dabiq: The strategic messaging of the Islamic State" 2014 2 http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/dabiq-strategic-messaging-islamic-state

which, from a resistant position is defeatist because the liberal argument is also a tool of oppression - of power - in that it traps the protestor/resistor in two ways. Firstly, it traps the activists in a system of oppression/exploitation and secondly it seeks to dictate how they should and can respond to that entrapment.

Violence as a response to the different forms and types of violence that exist can be either subjective or structural and is located in the neo-colonial and imperial structures (referred to as forms of coloniality[482]) which have dominated and suppressed the populations inside Iraq and Syria. Bashar Al-Assad's collusion with the US-led war on terror has been an extension of the war at home through his excessively repressive policies and security measures in a society that has grown and become more complex and connected since the time of Hafez al-Assad's coup. Syrians have since, also identified with other Arabs and other Muslim struggles and oppression. In the contemporary context, many Syrian youth have known only Bashar Al-Assad and life under his security regime, which led to them exhibiting discontent with traditional political ideologies. The youth of Syria began expressing political agency and started to agitate for a political opening. The ideologies of nationalism, socialism and Islamism had grown from the anti-colonial struggle but did little to liberate the populations and improve their lives. For IS, "[n]ationalism, patriotism, tribalism, and revolutionism were never the driving forces" because nationalism instituted borders, divided the Muslims lands and was the rallying call of illegitimate Arab rulers.[483] Such discourses have only facilitated the transfer of power from "colonial masters to local elites"[484] and extended the nature and function of violence as an instrument of domination. Thus, where nationalism and patriotism are the rallying call for war from the European surrogates and the imperial/colonial forces, for IS an obvious strategy would be religion.

Nation states have always 'regulated' violence; they are not against violence or against eliminating violence. After all, violent action is a normal part of the force of history. According to Philip Kennicott the brutal killings and beheadings broadcasted by IS "do more to transport us back to our civilization's roots than offer anything new."[485] Kennicott reiterates the understanding that violence has always been used, by states and the West, confirming the reality that IS "is not innovative in its depredations. Its thugs simply reach

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[482] Coloniality refers to the process and forms of continued colonial domination of entities even after the colonial administration has left and is considered the most widespread form of domination in the world today.
[483] Dabiq Issue 8 1436 Jumada Al-Akhirah
[484] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 29
[485] T. McCoy & A. Taylor "Islamic State says immolation was justified; experts on Islam say no" February 2015 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/04/the-chilling-reason-the-islamic-state-burned-a-jordanian-pilot-alive/?utm_term=.85f56552cfa0

into the museum of human-made misery and pull out something at once horribly familiar, and terribly alien."[486] The main concern it seems, is with the public expression of the violence by IS and the *choice of the subjects* on whom the violence has been unleashed, whilst, the reality of modernity as a historical episode entwined with coloniality and imperial domination remains largely obscure. A considerable aspect of this domination includes the sale of arms to these illegitimate regimes in the Middle-East whilst being silent on the human rights' abuses, the criminalising of free expression under "anti-terrorism laws," the bombing of schools, hospitals and wedding halls and the failure to implement substantive democratic practises.[487] Additionally, the US stated in May 2017 that it could not "'afford' to condition its relationship with foreign governments on human rights" indicating that it would promote its national interests through arms sales whilst turning a blind eye to the fact that these sales embolden the Arab regimes to carry out human rights abuses with impunity.[488]

Although the colonisation of Iraq and Syria is often alluded to, the impact of colonisation and coloniality, the subsequent division of these spaces and the actual division of peoples culturally in the rise and development of IS has not been consolidated under one focused study. Furthermore, little attention has been given to the impact of coloniality on the minds, psyche and development of these populations. Thus, it can be said that there exists a multiplicity of violence. These different types and forms of violence can manifest differently as physical, psychological and structural violence. Included in these forms of violence are spaces of violence, e.g. the Green zone in Iraq versus Fallujah or Mosul, or Deraa and Aleppo vs. Damascus in Syria. As argued in chapter one, my main interest around IS is not about the violence *per se*. This is because violence has been the preferred means of engagement for all the actors who have participated whether overtly or covertly in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. Kennicott's quote above of "reaching into the museums of human-made misery" supports this argument. What is more salient to this study and to the theorising is to re-direct the questions and the framing of the questions. What is relevant at this point is an internalising of the fact that there is violence but that that violence exists in the context of an Iraq and Syria where the US and its allies have violated the sovereignty of these nations. The US and its allies have

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[486] Ibid

[487] B. Mikail "Francois Hollande and the Middle East: The controversial legacy of a 'normal' president" June 2017 http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/fran-ois-hollande-and-middle-east-controversial-legacy-normal-president-1987348979

[488] K. Bogos "Arms sales for blind eyes: Thank Obama and Trump for repression in the Gulf" May 2017 http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/blame-obama-and-trump-increased-repression-gcc-925173567

participated illegitimately in lands they had no authority to be in and IS was formed in the context of this violence. It was *responding to* an illegal imposition. As Ron Paul[489] states,

> …the Pentagon has forgotten one thing: it has no authority to be in Syria…! Neither the US Congress nor the UN Security Council has authorized a US military presence inside Syria.[490]

So in redirecting and reframing the questions, I ask if the violence which has been generated by colonial injustice, and sustained in 'independent' Iraq and Syria through coloniality and imperial exploits is a significant factor in the violence of IS? It is no longer about why Muslims or Islam are violent but how Muslims in resource rich Muslim lands have been subject to an on-going violence from coloniality, the refusal of the devilfish to let go of its clawing grasp and imperial exploits and the resultant consequences of this violence.

According to Juan Cole, the violence of coloniality and the US's brutal War of aggression on the Iraqi people has initiated a form of anti-colonial struggle once again; a reaction to the "history of colonial shaping of the lives of local people," a shaping that the colonised considered detrimental to their aspirations for sovereignty and which constituted a harm to their dignity.[491] Based on the concept of stigmergy[492] it is possible that the recurrence of violence and conflict in the MENA region occurs each time actors encounter specific trace elements that determine the necessity to act, which, according to Richman also translates into acts of terror on foreign soil. Thus,

> [t]he terrorist incidents in the West…demonstrate the asymmetrical nature of what's going on between the United States and its targets in the Muslim world… 'We' are at war with them. They are not at war with us.[493]

The violence experienced, prompts a form of violence in return. Violence is thus a tool of communication used to modify their (IS's) environment and how they (these actors) perceive their spaces. This is evident in the case of the January 2011 uprisings in Syria. It started as a revolution from below when Hassan Ali Akleh self-emolliated in protest against the regime, mirroring the actions of the Tunisian, Mohammed Bouazizi. His action ignited a range of protests and mass revolts against state repression, elite corruption, political exclusion, inequality and poverty, in many cities across the world, uniting people in spite of class,

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[489] Ron Paul is the Chairman and Founder of the Ron Paul Institute for and Peace and Prosperity which is committed to the development of a peaceful US foreign policy and the protection of civil liberties at home.

[490] R. Paul "Why Are We Attacking the Syrians Who Are Fighting ISIS?" June 2017 http://www.ronpaulinstitute.org/archives/featured-articles/2017/june/12/why-are-we-attacking-the-syrians-who-are-fighting-isis/ & regarding Iraq, see TheGuardian "Iraq war was illegal and breached UN charter, says Annan" September 2004 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq

[491] J. Cole "Terror and geopolitics: Manchester 2017 and 1996" May 2017 http://www.herald.co.zw/terror-and-geopolitics-manchester-2017-and-1996/

[492] H. Marsh *Binding Chaos* Stigmergy "maintains that the "trace left in the environment by an action stimulates the performance of a next action, by the same or a different agent."

[493] S. Richman "Asymmetrical War Against the Muslim World" December 2015 https://c4ss.org/content/42393

gender and religious divides.[494] It was not religion that sparked the protests or revolts and in spite of differences in religion, protestors bandied together, and communicated. Religion was understood to be a form of political ethics rooted in the collective consciousness and social responsibility of the masses. In essence, the actions, the context, the desperation, the frustration and the restlessness provided a language that resonated with the revolutionary masses, especially amongst the disenfranchised youth.

There are many types of violence and these definitions "include the most significant varieties, yet [should be] specific enough to serve as a basis for concrete action"[495] requiring attention to problems that are on the "political, intellectual [and] scientific agenda."[496] Considering Galtung's explanation of violence as a visible action with a "clear subject-object relation" which can also be incorporated into the structure where the condition of structural violence can be referred to as "social injustice"[497] what is significant is the fact that structural violence has the ability to threaten people into subjugation.[498] The Syrian protestors recognised these different types of violence, of the consistent effort to coerce the majority of the Syrian people into subordination and silence and they decided to give voice to it. As stated by Ziad Homsi, "[w]e didn't ask for unrealistic things. We wanted a prisoner release, a repeal of the emergency law, a new party's law, and so on."[499] Syrians wanted the space to breathe. But the existing frameworks, those that contained the structural violence were bound to spiral out of control in a situation where people refused to be subordinated any longer, where power was contested. In many instances the state rules by fear, in spite of its power. In the Syrian and Iraqi context, this has largely been the norm. Having noted the fact that violence manifests in different forms with different effects, outcomes and consequences, it is significant that "…studies that address Islamist violence remain at the level of description," necessitating that "the validity of socioeconomic and psychological explanations of Islamist rebellions…be challenged on both empirical and theoretical grounds."[500] However, I do believe that socioeconomic and psychological explanations must not be excluded in any final analysis as they certainly have an impact especially if the consequences and experiences are traumatic or devastating which, if unresolved can leave trace elements that may ignite a response. It should also be clear at this point that contradictions exist in the claims that the

[494] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 36
[495] Galtung 1969 168
[496] Ibid 168
[497] Ibid 170-171
[498] Ibid 172
[499] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 37
[500] Hafez 2003 9

motivation of and for the violence of IS has been primarily religious, because violence is also a form of political behaviour.

Considering then that there are different types and forms of violence, that violence is invasive and pervasive and that the conditions on the ground in Iraq and Syria have prepared the ground for the violence, it would be prudent to consider the various justifications and motivations advanced for the use of violence. IS has had a long, painful and strangled labour, and its response to its pain, its fight for presence and existence and its desire for power comes from more than a single currency. In this regard, the first template on IS's violence is explored in relation to the violence in the language, whilst the second template considers the competing narratives of violence as a tactic.

3.3.1 Template One: Violence and Language

> *Political authoritarianism is terrified of the power of the word that has become flesh. It loves the word that has been dislodged from flesh. The challenge for the intellectual is to make words become flesh, to make them breathe distinctly. Theory must always return to the earth to get recharged. For the word that breathes life is still needed to challenge the one that carries death and devastation. Works of imagination and critical theories can only weaken themselves by pulling back from that challenge.*

> *(Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o)*[501]

Considering the fact that IS is in a struggle and contestation for relevance, legitimacy and acceptance, it can be argued that IS is of and by itself a contested entity. Residing within the ambit of this contested entity is an entire discourse that has come to define the Muslim other. Violence, when associated with or described in relation to IS is usually linked with terrorism and with religious doctrine. The zooming in on the violence of IS is a zooming in on subjective violence and on the non-Muslim victims of IS's violence. IS's other victims – specifically, the Muslim victims, are neither counted nor recognised. Thus violence is only subjective violence and victims are only non-Muslim. But the reality is far greater than this, the story more intricate, the plot more complex. Yet despite the complexity of the entity IS and their action, in the theatre of war, there seems to be a blending of narratives to juggle the identity of the Joker. This blending includes an extensive conflation which blurs the divide between Islam, Muslims and IS so much so that when IS is mentioned the red flags generated by association point to Islam and Muslims. The images, meanings, concepts and thoughts conflated with IS include religion, Islam, violence, Islamic terrorism, barbaric, *Shariah* and

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[501] J. Myers "he Enduring Rhythm of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o" March 2016
https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2016/03/30/the-enduring-rhythm-of-ngugi-wa-thiongo/

Caliphate among others. What is of importance within this conflation is the attribution of the violence of IS to Islam *per se*. Thus if one is to theorise and conceptualise the violence of IS, it becomes necessary to define, understand and conceptualise key words and meanings in relation to IS as they have come to be understood. Significantly, if one is to understand IS by placing it only in a particular social context, then the way in which that social context is understood will affect the way in which IS is understood. The medium for these different levels of comprehension is in most instances language.

According to Hatem Bazian, "language is the vehicle that contains the set of meanings for the authentic self. If language is decentred, then the authentic self is decentred."[502] It is through language that entities are born into the imagination, placed in a social context and accorded meaning. Thus language and how it is used in analysing IS and its violence is instrumental in theorising IS and its violence. But language is neither neutral nor depoliticised. Language is highly coercive and by simply manipulating the sentence construction or word order, it is possible to render a completely different reading and meaning to what is actually the reality, to the extent that a person can be manipulated into agreeing with an idea they would normally reject. Thus, the question of definition is a powerful question because those who control the definition often control the responses to the definition; and by controlling the words, it is possible to control a person's thoughts. Essentially, it is through definitions and the categories they provide that we derive meaning. Added to this is the agency of language. Definition and language are co-related. Although different concepts, when used in specific ways, both serve power, because both a word's meaning and the definition ascribed to it usually accrues through patterns of use. Often the terms we use are deeply contested.

In attempting to expound a critical discourse analysis of a narrative of this kind, one cannot focus on Manichaean or binary explanations that seek to affirm/deny so-called universal truths. These have inherent limitations. The scholarship on violence and conflict emphasises different variables that function at different levels to initiate a push-back which occurs

> [w]here justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.[503]

Thus, at this intersection of a "justice denied" the questioning deepens. The question is no longer "why are Muslims so violent?" The question for me now is "why has this specific group of *persons* resorted to violence?" Thus, being weary about language is to be assiduous;

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[502] H.Bazian Critical Muslim Studies Summer School Granada 25 May 2016
[503] Frederick Douglas quotes https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/18943.Frederick_Douglass

the manner in which the language has been used and the manner in which the questions are constructed around and about IS deems this study necessary for the purpose of conceptual clarity and theoretical rigour. This idea is supplemented in the work of Peter Gelderloos, which considers the impact and consequence of language as a tool of power so that,

> [w]e might say that the purpose of a conversation is to persuade and be persuaded, while the purpose of a debate is to win, and thus silence your opponent. One of the first steps to success in any debate is to control the terminology to give oneself the advantage and put one's opponents at a disadvantage.[504]

Arendt maintains that conceptual clarity is indicative of a form of watchful thinking; and "deafness to linguistic meanings" can result in "blindness to the realities they correspond to."[505] Thus different words refer to different aspects of a phenomenon and if used interchangeably and synonymously without clarification, may result in the erasure of that difference. Without understanding and knowing what is violence, how it operates and how it differs from power, means that it is unlikely that we can begin a real conversation about the violence of IS; because as Arendt maintains, "we have ceased to live in a common world where the words we have in common possess an unquestionable meaningfulness."[506]

Ordinary language, which constitutes the site for political analysis and the material from which agendas are developed and set, provides the tools to analyse what words are not only thought to mean, but what they have come to mean.[507] A substantive example to illustrate this is the manner in which the *Islamic* credentials of IS have been regularly interrogated and alluded to.[508] According to Khanani, an ordinary language approach is to "explore *how* the individuals in IS and the group as a whole use the word 'Islam'"[509] and to thereafter consider how analysts use the word Islam. This approach allows for a more useful analysis of IS and its relationship with Islam. It also contributes to a better understanding of the relationship of the analyst with Islam and on a broader scale, of an understanding of Islam in relation to Christianity. In this way Islam has been made the object of the analysis "rather than a static entity that undergirds an ethical critique."[510] Thus the way in which the language around IS in the *Shami* theatre is used opens up the possibility for an interesting interrogation of the motivations for its violence because such tactics usually intend to hide or deflect from other

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[504] P. Gelderloos *How Non-Violence protects the State* 2007 2

[505] H. Arendt *Crises of the Republic* 1972 142

[506] H. Arendt *Between past and future. Six [Eight] exercises in political thought* 1983 95

[507] Khanani 2015 16-17

[508] See: The Atlantic article by G. Wood- "What ISIS really wants?" 2015 http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/ & NewStatesman article by M. Hasan – "How Islamic is Islamic State?" 2015 http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2015/03/mehdi-hasan-how-islamic-islamic-state & The Nation article by J. Cole – "How 'Islamic' is Islamic State?" 2015 http://www.thenation.com/article/how-islamic-islamic-state/

[509] Khanani 2015 17

[510] Ibid 17

occurrences or truths. Furthermore, there is a common sense understanding that when such conflations are advanced and repeated in a constructed, but contested narrative, there can only be one of two possible explanations. These include the service of power, or a deep seated ignorance. That is why Zizek argues that there is violence in language because language involves forms of patronising and domination.[511]

Zizek further maintains that language is never at the level of equality between those engaging as there is no mirror communication. Simply put, the dialogue is always presupposed by the theme of the hegemonic or dominant narrative.[512] It is how the language is employed, what words are chosen and narrated that give meaning to the event or association; this because language determines the global horizon of how individuals experience and interact with reality. It is within these constellations and theatres of written and spoken spectacle that we need to interrogate an understanding of IS and the violence it manifests. However, language itself is often manipulated; it is violent in and of itself, so much so that "[l]anguage should be tortured to tell the truth."[513] In a context of tortured bodies and tortured psyches, perhaps the requirement to torture language to get to the truth becomes all the more meaningful. But it is also here, in this interrogation that we may encounter meandering slopes and weakness because even the one interrogating is not entirely free or separate from the context.

Many definitions suffer from value bias, and although a definition is not developed to prove the truth of a word/concept, its function is to describe a phenomenon as accurately and adequately as possible. When one is concerned with conceptual problems it is necessary to consider the consequences of and the implications for analysis as a result of an indiscriminate usage of the concept. The IS phenomenon, and by association, Islam and Muslims have been hurled into these theatrical swirls of language that manifest an indiscriminate usage of concepts. Consider for instance the words *Islamism* and *Islamist*. Peter Mandaville, states that in decentring the West, different voices have 'been allowed' into the discourse, of which Islam is one such voice. However, this moment of allowing "fails to give adequate attention to competing discourses within Islam as to what Islamism should be,"[514] often referring to Islamism as a monolith of reaction. This confers with Khaled Beydoun's report that the mainstream western media analysis and debate relating to Muslims usually involves "predominantly white men weighing in on an issue that targets Muslims, with Muslims again

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[511] S. Zizek "Language, violence and non-violence" *International Journal of Zizek S*tudies 2(3) 2008 2
[512] Ibid 2-4
[513] Ibid 4
[514] P. Mandaville *Transnational Muslim politics: Reimagining the Ummah* 2001 54

watching from the sidelines."[515] Often these explanations are offered or presented without questioning or hesitation, "driven by the belief that Islam itself is an area of intellectual or professional expertise that non-Muslim white men are more adept to speak on than Muslims themselves."[516] Research has shown[517] that when audiences are exposed to specific news bites and tit bits of information during a breaking news coverage, these details are more likely to persist in their understanding of the story even if later bulletins affirm the contestation of certain facts in the breaking news coverage. Thus it is not coincidental nor objective, the way in which news stories are framed in relation to violent incidences involving perpetrators who claim to be or are identified as being Muslim. The same approach is applied in any or all news stories and reports about IS with the intentional rigor to always conflate IS with Islam and Muslims. This is violence.

Susan Buck-Morss states that Islamism is the "politicisation of Islam in a post-colonial context"[518] - thus Islamism is not terrorism, whilst Salman Sayyid, argues that Islamism questions the grammar and context of Kemalism as a political ideology. For Sayyid, Islamism emerged in the context of Kemalism. Thus Islamism is not trans-historical. Islamism cannot be identified as a continuity; in essence Kemalism took the orientalist understanding of Islam and internalised it. It is in this context that we have the emergence of what Sayyid calls "Muslimness;" the emergence of a Muslim political subjectivity that would have political efficacy.[519] Hafez, defines 'Islamist' as "individuals, groups, organisations and parties that see in Islam a guiding political doctrine that justifies and motivates collective action on behalf of that doctrine."[520] Accordingly therefore, Islamists are those Muslims who feel compelled to act socially and politically *as a response* to their interpretation of the religious

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[515] K. Beydoun "Why can't Muslims talk about the Muslim ban on US TV? US cable news media's coverage of Trump's 'Muslim ban' featured predominantly white men instead of Muslims." February 2017 http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/muslims-talk-muslim-ban-tv-170213090653137.html

[516] Ibid 7

[517] S. A. Mcclennen "We mourn Manchester, but not Kabul: How biased coverage of terrorist attacks drives us apart" June 2017 http://www.salon.com/2017/06/03/we-mourn-manchester-but-not-kabul-how-biased-coverage-of-terrorist-attacks-drives-us-apart/ ; E. Kearns *et al* "Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention Than Others?" March 2017https://poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=44600500706912511612209702309412009312105408806800205607703009908712311708806708411003001211606100906205210201111808700009909103903900101104606711501512606708907207703303901509400010300109406612609809309408709411009711912409500501108502309101900607 8104&EXT=pdf; B. Kentish "Terror attacks receive five times more media coverage if perpetrator is Muslim, study finds" July 2017 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world-0/terror-attacks-media-coverage-muslim-islamist-white-racism-islamophobia-study-georgia-state-a7820726.html; M. Stone "Snake and Stranger: Media coverage of Muslims and Refugee Policy"June 2017 https://shorensteincenter.org/media-coverage-muslims-refugee-policy/; D. Mcnew "When Is It 'Terrorism'? How The Media Cover Attacks By Muslim Perpetrators" June 2017 https://www.npr.org/2017/06/19/532963059/when-is-it-terrorism-how-the-media-covers-attacks-by-muslim-perpetrators

[518] S. Buck-Morss *Thinking past terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the left* 2006 2

[519] S. Sayyid Critical Muslim Studies Summer School Granada 25 May 2016

[520] Hafez 2003 4-5

doctrine. Islamists are concerned with structural changes in the political system and they focus on those key principles that maintain the monopoly on legitimate violence. They also address those challenges and rules that determine to whom power may be devolved. Essentially, Islamists are concerned with the project of state formation and state capture. By definition, Islamists are not terrorists. From these examples it is obvious that there are challenges in writing about or using words and terms that are not adequately and correctly defined. In this regard, Khanani looks at how language is incorporated in the analyses of the MENA in order to perpetuate or advocate for an already, particularised meaning. These viewpoints and attempts at critical discourse analysis stimulate debate about the challenges in unravelling conceptual confusion. Khanani further highlights how the term Islamist can be presented as "a neutral, reasonable concept" but closer examination of the word in different writings expose "troubling undertones and assumptions"[521] whereby Islamist actually "harkens upon classical orientalist tropes and normative commitments."[522] In this instance, language is a facilitating instrument for a domination that has been and still is, taking place and when considered in the context of the geo-politics of the MENA and the resurgence of Islamophobia there is little doubt that the language around and about IS and its violence which obscures all other violence and generally the Muslim victims facilitates for the domination of the Muslim other. This domination is a form of violence and it needs to be remembered that almost always, violence begets violence when instances of injustice are perceived and become intolerable. When considered in tandem with the extent of the harm experienced by the people in this region as detailed in chapter two, it can be reasonably argued that the violence of IS is a response to this domination.

Furthermore, Khanani's statement is an observation of the occurrence of Islamophobia which unfolded in the various scenes in the war on terror, also known as the Global Dirty War. The concept of Islamophobia is central to the way in which Islam, Muslims and by association, IS are considered, discussed and responded to and constitutes another template for explaining the violence of IS. These explanations are important and relevant as they raise the question of the notion of Muslims as subalterns which is examined in closer detail in chapter four. From the Runnymede Report on Islamophobia, it is evident that there has been a racialisation (where race is the product of the process of racialisation) of Muslims in the contemporary context, and the "hostility to Islam" is translated "into a hostility against those described as

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[521] Khanani 2015 16
[522] Ibid 18

Muslims."[523] By using IS as a representation of Islam and Muslims, this hostility has been aggravated and it has had a boomerang effect because in certain instances it has contributed to what scholars claim to be a sense of isolation, anger, animosity and alienation among Muslims in the West, fuelling the call for foreign fighters to join the Caliphate. According to Sayyid, in defining and explaining Islamophobia, the Runnymede Report produced an "impoverished concept, uncertain and unclear about what work it was being asked to do."[524] What is certain however is that the term is contested and politically loaded, and in order to understand the term, one must understand what it does and how it does it. Essentially, Sayyid is calling for an interrogation of the language and an examination of how the language 'performs.' In this regard, Sayyid explains,

> Islamophobia needs to be understood as an undermining of the ability of Muslims as Muslims, to project themselves into the future. The manner in which Islamophobia is expressed and made manifest are diverse. This makes it difficult to say that Islamophobia has one specific feature that is hidden behind all its various occurrences. There is no essence to Islamophobia; instead there is a series of overlapping elements that constitute a coherence based around a notion of what Wittgenstein described as a family resemblance.[525]

Of relevance to this discussion, is the "fifth cluster of Islamophobia"[526] which refers to the pervasive and continuous referencing of Muslims and Islam disparagingly in the public domain. What is dangerous about this form of Islamophobia is that it can become the common sense understanding of gullible and uncritical persons. It is also the kind of Islamophobia circulated by think tanks and policy institutes such as the Clarion Project and it can form the basis for state interventions and regulations. In discussing the Paris attacks of November 2015 in chapter four, Prime Minister Cameron's public comments are examined precisely within this context of Islamophobia as "a form of racialised governmentality…a language game directed at the undermining of a distinct Muslim identity."[527] Yet this language, this governmentality and these referencing agendas in the specific context of the *Shami* theatre where surrogate leaders and devilfish control, dominate, subjugate and eradicate are contributing factors in what has perhaps not only prompted the violence of IS but fuelled it as well, both through recruits and through emotion. In this regard it is not difficult to reasonably claim that the violence of IS is in part a response to the violence of Islamophobia and the othering of Muslims to justify their non- or seminal existence. The language in Islamophobia has nurtured a particular response to attacks of the Muslim

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[523] S. Sayyid "A measure of Islamophobia" *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 2(1) 2014 13
[524] Sayyid 2014 13
[525] Ibid 14
[526] Ibid 16
[527] Ibid 19

homeland and it is a language that IS directly contests when it asserts the dignity and honour of the Muslim subject. Thus, when situated in the template of Islamophobia the violence of IS can be understood as a stigmergic process to the violence of colonialism, coloniality and dehumanisation. This is further analysed, amongst others, through the thought of Maldonado-Torres in his exploration of the links between empire, race and religion.[528]

When one is cognisant of this fifth cluster of Islamophobia and the violence inherent in it, the general rhetoric opens up possibilities for analysis because both an appeal to the common sense public opinion and the implementation of policy decisions act in concert, linking the identity of IS with "Muslimness," and conflating *all* Muslims with IS which has resulted in a form of collective punishment (violence) against all Muslims. In the US, this rhetoric has moulded the mind-set of the American public so that the "public accepts and ignores routine massacres" usually from airstrikes and drone attacks, readily buying into the official reports that "accidents were honest mistakes or not directly America's fault or the victims were sympathetic to American enemies, if not actually guilty of anything."[529] To be sympathetic towards those who challenge US brutality is to be susceptible to extra-judicial killing without due process, because sympathy is a crime if not directed towards the West and the US in particular.[530] Here I refer to the murder of US citizen Anwar al Awlaki, his teenager son and his eight year old daughter with no real outcry of condemnation from the so-called "civilised" world. In the UK, in 2015 Cameron publicly announced the British government's drone execution against two of its citizens, Reyaad Khan and Ruhul Amin in Syria. When Rights Watch US questioned the British government on its role as "judge, jury and executioner," requesting the "disclosure of the legal basis for targeting British citizens abroad," the UK government refused to provide the evidence or offer an explanation of the legal advice they had procured.[531] In almost every instance there is a pronouncement of "just war" without an interrogation of the ethical value and legitimacy of that pronouncement. This collective punishment, and killing without due process has prompted a form of retaliation from IS. It has also facilitated for a reinvigoration of recruits or individuals to act in other spaces

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[528] See Chapter 4

[529] T. Cambanis "We are the war on terror, and the war on terror is us" March 2017
https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/03/23/how-imported-war-terror/IuIks5w7AzJjmNvac8LY2O/story.html?p1=Article_Related_Box_Article

[530] M.Ratner "Anwar al-Awlaki's extrajudicial murder" September 2011
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/sep/30/anwar-awlaki-extrajudicial-murder & G. Greenwald "Obama Killed a 16-Year-Old American in Yemen. Trump Just Killed His 8-Year-Old Sister" January 2017
https://theintercept.com/2017/01/30/obama-killed-a-16-year-old-american-in-yemen-trump-just-killed-his-8-year-old-sister/

[531] MiddleEastMonitor "British nationals should be killed in Syria, says UK minister" October 2017
https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171023-british-nationals-should-be-killed-in-syria-says-uk-minister/

according to the mandate of IS in order to exact revenge for these extra-judicial killings. For IS, this is the only way to settle the score with a nation and government that "simply [has] no domestic political cost for accidentally bombing a hospital in Afghanistan, or killing 10 children in Yemen, or the deaths of dozens of civilians in Syria, Iraq…"[532]

The testimonies and thoughts written on social media platforms from the foreign fighters as detailed in chapter two confirm this. The violence of IS initially, and by initially I mean from the time of the invasion and occupation of Iraq, was a retaliatory violence. It was the occupation itself that radicalised the various insurgency groups and pulled the al Qaeda wing of insurgents in Iraq (AQI) into its "vortex."[533] Over time and as contexts became more entwined, this has changed to some extent, but ultimately, the majority of IS's victims are Muslim – not westerners. The Global Dirty War has been a means of disciplining the Muslim political subjectivity and "re-suturing" the gap between so-called universal values and norms and western values and norms.[534] Additionally, the war on terror became a soapbox for staging Islamophobia as a global phenomenon, a means of policing the borders between Europeaness and non-Europeaness and the denial of Muslim political agency[535] where Muslim (like the Black person) was referenced as "a symbolic category denoting radical dispensability, suspicion, violence, and hate."[536] By centering IS in the image and thought (previously al Qaeda) as the epitome of *everything Islam and Muslim* through the tactic of conflating the contested, constructed narratives, the resultant justification to hate, to use violence and to dispense of the Muslim other is granted legitimacy and mutely challenged. The Global Dirty War is thus a site of violence against "Muslimness" and Islam, where the construction of IS as *Islamist terrorists* serves to validate this violence. But it is this geo-political context, this Global Dirty War and these framing narratives that have birthed IS, the violence of IS and the language that has developed in relation to IS, Islam and Muslims, all of which contribute to further manifestations of violence. In this instance, language, in the form of hegemonic discourse framed and named the violence whilst ignoring the precursor to the violence. This then facilitated various responses of violence against a collective - the *Ummah* - and against innocents whose victimhood and suffering has not been acknowledged. As a

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[532] T. Cambanis "We are the war on terror, and the war on terror is us" March 2017
https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/03/23/how-imported-war-terror/IuIks5w7AzJjmNvac8LY2O/story.html?p1=Article_Related_Box_Article

[533] N. Ahmed "After Mosul: The coming break-up of Iraq and end of the Middle East" March 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/essays/after-mosul-coming-break-iraq-and-end-middle-east-1887306183

[534] Sayyid Summer School Granada 26 May 2016

[535] Ibid

[536] N. Maldonado-Torres "AAR Centennial Roundtable: Religion, Conquest, and Race in the Foundations of the Modern/ Colonial World" *Journal of the American Academy of Religio*n 82(3) 2014 657

result of these actions and attacks, IS and other fighter groups responded; despite their differing perspectives and motivations. Not because Islam said so. Each chose to respond in a particular way. Each centred themselves as agents of change.

3.3.2 Template Two: Violence as tactic

> *All of us are in this together and there is a shared history more significant than the differences and conflicts that separate us; the individual matters in a pragmatic, economic context; all human action is historically contingent, subject to an ebb and flow that can only be understood retrospectively and with constant self-criticism; and finally, the individual counts not just as contingent subject but also as empowered agent of change.*
>
> *Huricihan Islamoglu, reflecting on Marshall G.S. Hodgson at World Council of Middle East Studies Conference in 2014[537]*

The fragmentation of the MENA region after the US-led invasions in 1990 and 2003, the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, and the violent turn in the Syrian, Egyptian, Libyan and Yemenese revolutions has contributed to the MENA region undergoing a whirlwind state of radicalisation. These developments in the *Shami* theatre, a stage of on-going conflict have produced multiple traumas and horrific wounds and are like playgrounds for those experimenting with orgies of power. The development of a pan-Islamist identity as identified by Hegghammer (chapter two) based on elite competition and outbidding has manifested in the revolt against the illegitimacy of the surrogate rulers in these regions. As a result the *Shami* theatre has become a site for unmitigated levels of violence. Of the many variables that contribute to conflict and violence the geo-political context is key to understanding and analysing the violence. This includes the violence of state instruments inside Iraq and Syria, the violence of the US-led coalition of the killing, the violence of coloniality[538] and the relationship between religion and violence located in empire and race as a precursor to violence will be considered in this template on violence as a tactic.

Considering that Arab/Muslim deaths from innumerable foreign invasions and interventions, sanctions, coloniality and oppressive rulers have soared in the last decade, the push-back from IS and other fighter groups can be interpreted as that action which suggests a refusal to submit to the status quo. Most significantly, it is a refusal to adopt the pacifist approach. The violent responses can certainly be considered as a push back against the violence of the US

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[537] Lawrence 2014

[538] Coloniality refers to the long-standing patterns of power that result from colonialism, preserving the culture, power relations and production of knowledge beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Coloniality functions through four avenues - power, knowledge, being and nature (Datsille, N.P., & Gatsheni-Ndlovu, S. 2013. "Power, Knowledge and Being: Decolonial Combative discourse as a survival kit for Pan-Africanists in the 21st century" *Alternation* 20 (1) 105-134.

and its coalition. In the Shawwal issue of Dabiq, *A call to hijrah*, a reflection of these realities is captured in the foreword that stated that,

> The US had killed women, children, and the elderly, during its direct occupation of Iraq prior to its withdrawal. There are countless accounts of American soldiers executing families and raping women under the sanctity of the US military and Blackwater. Muslim families were killed under the broad definition of "collateral damage," which the US grants itself alone the right to apply. Therefore, if a mujāhid kills a single man with a knife, it is the barbaric killing of the "innocent." However, if Americans kill thousands of Muslim families all over the world by pressing missile fire buttons, it is merely "collateral damage"…[539]

The above comment in *Dabiq* reflects the hypocrisy and double standards prevalent in the international system and the imbalance attributed to the value of white lives vs. Muslim lives. It also provides a clear lens with which to grasp the layered struggle plaguing the potential to exist. By this comment, IS animates the struggle to survive and highlights he cost of retaliating against those who dehumanise their existence and invalidate their deaths. In living, they are backward – barbaric, in death their lives are referred to as collateral damage. This is the fog of war in the theatre of the obscure. However, Arab pride and dignity, honour and self-respect, revenge and justice have irked on thousands of individuals to stand up and resist. The fact that the numbers have soared into the thousands lays claim to the magnitude of the harm and the extent of the enmity. For some IS presents as the ideal opportunity to extract revenge, for others IS is a nemesis. For those embroiled in the conflict and for those drawn in through the callous nature of violent conflict, whether as foot soldiers, mercenaries or organised structures, once the violence hits home, resignation and dispassion are not an option. When dealing with extreme atrocities, it is plausible to imagine that revenge and retribution feature high in the motivation for taking up arms. Template two considers this mind-set and motivation, this choice. It is a theoretical consideration of real choices made by real people. Despite what one may think of IS or the other opposition fighters, despite the labels and the imagery, the bottom line is still this – they are all humans trapped in a very particular and very cruel context. And they make choices in those contexts.

3.3.2.1 Countering pacifism, bearing arms

Considering that all the opposition groups in Syria and Iraq have taken up arms at some point in the conflict, it would be prudent to ask "Why?" Why not stay on the path of pacifism and peace, organise marches and engage in non-violent protest? This tactic characterised the Syrian uprisings from the onset and featured also as the primary tactic in the Sunni Iraqi protests in almost all initial attempts at demanding a voice and a space at the table in the

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[539] Dabiq Issue 3, Shawwal 1435 *"A Call to Hijrah"* 3

American manufactured 'Iraqi-democratic' process? So why did the non-state actors take up arms?

In commenting about the nature and benefit (or lack thereof) of pacifism, Ward Churchill, states that "[p]acifism possesses a sublime arrogance in its implicit assumption that its adherents can somehow dictate the terms of struggle in any contest with the state."[540] The violent counter of IS and the rise and development of IS are undoubtedly linked to and perhaps a direct result of a struggle and contestation with the state and its proxies – both in Iraq and Syria. Considering that the response from the Syrian and Iraqi regimes, their proxies and their foreign allies have been exceptionally violent to the non-violent protests, it is feasible to advance the theoretical premise that the use of violence by IS is a tactic, and not merely an ideological projection or a religious response. To understand this claim, consider again the above quote from *Dabiq* and the fact that IS leaders, many of whom are seasoned military professionals and trained soldiers know that in advocating for pacifism or non-violence in the face of brutal, systemic and subjective violence they are only advancing their own deaths. This is based on an obvious calculation that the violent responses have been planned at the highest level of the state in conjunction with technologically sophisticated and superior allies of the state who are all determined to maintain the status quo.[541] The only options available to these resistance/fighter groups therefore are to resist and possibly survive, whilst *kicking some ass* or resist and die. For many, the choice would be clear - better to die trying then die hopelessly. For these persons it is about giving meaning to their deaths. A second option would be to hang back, to hide and hope for life knowing full well that the chances of survival are slim because of the nature of the warfare, the use of drones and the aerial strikes which do not discriminate civilian from combatant. The second option is to follow the pacifist, non-action approach. By spelling out these options, this approach shifts the focus from violence as a principle within the realm of morality to violence as a tactic for survival against genocidal intentions.

In responding to the "Why?" question asked above, I would like to *replay* chapter two, and the different instances of extreme violence unleashed by Assad, Maliki, Al-Abadi and the US-led coalition of the killing. It is about a violence that has been described as genocidal. Undoubtedly, the "first to throw a match into the tinderbox of extremism was the US",[542]

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[540] W. Churchill *Pacifism as pathology: Reflections on the role of armed struggle in North America* 1998 3
[541] Ibid 7
[542] T. Abdulrazaq "Atrocities from Iraq to Syria will herald IS 2.0" October 2016
https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/10/24/atrocities-from-iraq-to-syria-will-herald-is-2-0

whilst the rabid sectarianism of Maliki and the unspeakable torment and torture committed by Assad, as verified by Human Rights Watch from the more than 50 000 photographs smuggled out of detention centres in Syria,[543] spurred further extremism. The Amnesty report of February 2017 mentioned in chapter two also makes reference to the extermination and genocidal policies of the Assadist regime at Saydnaya prison. In the face of these torments and torture, "[i]s it too hard to imagine that those survivors will not want vengeance to fill the gaping chasm left by the absence of justice?"[544] According to Cockburn, the growing persecution, alienation and aggression against the Sunnis in Iraq, and the demonising and belittling of the Sunni Arabs who have been subject to increased central government crackdowns has mutated the popular movement into an armed struggle. Although IS may not be the 'popular movement' it has gained support and where it has been able to inflict harm on those considered as the enemies and oppressors of the Sunni population, it has even achieved some semblance of legitimacy. In the face of a violent contestation with the state, "many Sunni Arabs have concluded that their only realistic option is a violent conflict increasingly framed in confessional terms."[545]

This is the crux – the "ah-ha" moment. Essentially, the analysis and discussion has been rooted in the realm of morality, which spotlights on Islam, framed by very specific questions that ask "Why is Islam so violent?" or "What type of Islam is IS practising?" or "How can a religion claiming peace be so violent?" and/or "Why do Muslims hate the West?" When faced with these questions, and the barrage of 'morality' questions that follow, we become stuck in an Islam-violence-morality monologue which serves as a perfect decoy for depoliticising the political. However, when the violence of IS is located within the context of strategy there is a zooming in on the political which brings the realisation that IS could be using violence as a tactic. This is not impossible to imagine. Circumstances, actions and events on the ground confirm that resorting to violence is a strategy, because initially, although the Iraqi Sunni population had been resentful of the Shia-Kurdish domination of Iraq since 2003, they had in fact resigned themselves into acceptance of the new reality.[546] However, brutal government counteroffensives, the detaining and torture of Sunni men, the random shelling of Falluja and Ramadi combined with the harvest of corruption and

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[543] A. Merelli & L. Mrie "Thousands of photos offer evidence of murder by the Syrian government—but we've ignored them" January 2016 https://qz.com/591315/its-time-to-be-shocked-and-outraged-about-these-torture-pictures-out-of-syria/

[544] T. Abdulrazaq "Atrocities from Iraq to Syria will herald IS 2.0" October 2016 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/10/24/atrocities-from-iraq-to-syria-will-herald-is-2-0

[545] Cockburn 2014 69

[546] Atran 2015 69

the desperation of many, propelled many individuals directly into groups such as IS in order to exact retribution.[547] The destruction and devastation, the atrocities and the violence in the conflict to retake Mosul will certainly breed new and greater animosity. The violence, though largely muted in the mainstream media is captured in video footage on social media platforms which show "civilians' heads and knees being smashed with hammers, and yet others … 'the lucky victims' - those simply shot in the head at point-blank range." These are atrocities committed by the state, its allies and its militia in the name of fighting terrorism, a project initiated by the US. This will spawn (from stigmergy) a new generation of radicalised fighters who will initiate a "genesis of more extreme terror."[548] This genesis of terror is sedimented in trauma and excruciating, unhealed pain. Accordingly therefore, "the greatest of all motivators for the armed struggle were traumatisation and the thirst for vengeance,"[549] and although many of these individuals may not have joined IS, the sentiment of those who did join, was not very different. Is it surprising to understand that individuals such as Shaykh Abū Talhah 'Abdur-Ra'ūf Khādim alKhurāsānī also known as Mullā Khādim who was captured by the US in Afghanistan and imprisoned in Guantanamo for six and a half years in brutal conditions and thereafter handed over to the Afghans for further incarceration would decide to join IS? By 2016, Obama finally admitted that IS

> evolved as an 'unintended consequence' of the unlawful invasion…[and that] the birthing pains of this war came through torture, and the barbarity of those acts set a standard for the way in which this conflict would be fought.[550]

The reference to torture hearkens back to the control and regulation of the Muslim subject, from Granada to Guantanamo[551] where

> torture technologies and surveillance [have been]normalized and extended beyond 'international law' limits. The La Toca La Tortura Del Agua (Cloth or Water Torture) is the precursor to Water Boarding and other expanded torture technologies uniquely suited for the Muslim subject. In which way are Muslims different that they require the "civilized world" to come up with "new" or to re-introduce technologies from the Inquisition to get Islam's DNA violent marker out of them?[552]

For the political prisoners, the unfortunate bystanders, those who have had to deal with the violence of the unlawful invasion and for IS and other opposition fighter groups, the "torture technologies and surveillance" have been the strategies of a civilised world, one that profited from war. In that frame, the only viable response is a tit-for-tat reaction. From the torture

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[547] Ibid 72-74
[548] T. Abdulrazaq October 2016
[549] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 79
[550] A. Qureshi, A. Mafille & M. Begg "The Iraq war was born and raised in torture" July 2016
http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/iraq-war-was-born-and-raised-torture-1531773609
[551] See Chapter 2
[552] H. Bazian "From Granada to Guantanamo: The Torturing of the Muslim Subject" July 2017
http://www.hatembazian.com/content/from-granada-to-guantanamo-the-torturing-of-the-muslim-subject/

cells to armed struggle, research conducted has shown that many of the political prisoners had had little or no experience of political engagement or political agency but, after being tortured in prison, they picked up arms claiming personal reasons for the shift in mind-set which included the fact that their homes had been burnt and that their family members had been murdered.[553] Straddling these scars and open wounds, it should be noted that nothing better prepares young men for the taking up of arms, the conviction to exact revenge and engage in brutal killing than hatred for their torturers.

In this climate of violence, nonviolence meant weakness and death. Most of the fighters acknowledged having seen death and massacres as they initially protested peacefully. The only way to respond had to be through the creation of "savage chaos" especially when there existed a disproportionate use of force against fighter groups and civilian populations. The tactic would be "vexation and exhaustion."[554] Militarisation had become inevitable as people recognised the limits of civil disobedience and the realisation soon dawned that it was not possible to topple the regime by peaceful means.[555] It is very possible to believe that IS is aware of the historical facts and the consequences if populations to do not push back or defend themselves in the face of continuing repression and political suppression. In issue 3 of Dabiq, IS states, "while genocide is committed by the Maliki, Asadi, and Israeli forces against the Muslims via systematic massacres, chemical warfare, rape, and starvation by siege, Obama watches with euphoria."[556] These displays of violence have not been lost on a population and people traumatised for decades. It must also be remembered that the vast majority of fighters in IS are locals of Syria and Iraq. The militarisation and choice to employ violence is further linked to the fact that different opposition groups including IS noted the lack of an international response after Assad's "massacres and ethnic cleansings" and the chemical weapon's attack of the Ghouta suburb in Damascus in August 2013. At the same time, Sisi's rise to power in Egypt around July 2013 and the wholesale attack on Muslim Brotherhood supporters went largely uncondemned and continued unfettered, which "proved the supremacy of violence over electoral politics."[557] The lesson most strongly realised, perhaps ironically, is taken from studies on the Holocaust. According to Bruno Bettelheim, a former concentration camp inmate who analysed the role of passivity and nonviolence in the

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[553] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 80

[554] R. Manne "The mind of the Islamic State: An ideology of savagery" June 2016
https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2016/june/1464703200/robert-manne/mind-islamic-state

[555] Ibid 80

[556] Dabiq Issue 3 Shawaal 1435 35

[557] Ibid 122

Holocaust, the desire for "business as usual" aggravated and escalated the assault on the Jews when no resistance or violent push back was encountered. The failure to resist was the signifier that "in the deepest sense, the walk to the gas chamber was only the last consequence of the philosophy of business as usual."[558]

According to Bettelheim "the Jewish experience reveals with stark clarity the basic illogic at the very core of pacifist conceptions of morality and political action;" the function of which is to try and reduce the choice to binaries of "good vs. evil" in an effort to create the impression that social conflict is a "morality play."[559] According to IS, pacifism would mean surrender to the colonial project and a continuation of the status quo established by the Sykes-Picot agreement. It is a process of continuation that has become untenable and demands radical action. That IS has opted for violence over pacifism is indicative of its 'acting' like a state, but more specifically, that IS is imitating the colonialists and the imperialists that have held its region to ransom. Although IS has made and continues to make scriptural references when propagandising itself, there is no doubt that these references are simply the most potent currency employable in the region at present. Of significance is the fact that although religion is used as a justification for the violence, and resonates with arguments on morality, the decision to employ violence over pacifism is based on a pragmatic power and conflict logic – violence is a tactic to instil fear and to bolster the image of IS as a powerful, co-ordinated and organised military unit. These images affect different audiences differently. Image and perception is crucial to IS's strategy for legitimacy, serving to portray it as the flag bearer of an 'authentic' Islam, essential to IS's growth and survival, especially in its lure of new foreign recruits. It is also essential for IS's redeeming and liberatory image which posits IS as the saviour of the people from the oppression and exploitation of puppet regimes, the dehumanisation from western foreign control and the saviour from secular regimes that threaten Islamic identity and belief systems. For IS and other opposition fighters, participation in the conflict is thus a struggle for liberation from actors and entities which are threatening them, their identities, belief systems, way of life and their livelihoods.

Certainly, in the trauma of savage repression from the regimes in Syria and Iraq and the failure of non-religious affiliated or 'quietist Islam' groups to liberate the Sunni populations from the collective punishment and violence, the religious rhetoric has benefitted IS greatly

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[558] Churchill 1998 5-6
[559] Ibid 8

and has attracted foot soldiers in spite of the fact that the majority of Sunni Syrians and Iraqis do not support or endorse IS's tactics. It is more surprising because many foot soldiers are aware that IS is pursuing its own interests and grab for power despite its propaganda. IS's attacks on Alawis, Shia identified 'enemy' targets (which also included civilians), state-sponsored armed gangs and *shabeeha* militia has succeeded in augmenting the rhetoric because from the perspective of the traumatised, they see IS as the entity that is actually doing something. In Issue 1, Ramadan 1435 of Dabiq, IS states,

> Then the events of Sham began to unfold and the Islamic State quickly got involved, answering the cries of the weak and oppressed Muslims by sending a mission from Iraq to activate its units in Sham and later make the announcement of its official expansion.[560]

IS extensively details the regime's (Iraq and Syria) brutal assaults on civilians in different towns and cities and cites the numbers of women and children killed by categorically referencing the different weapons used by the various military divisions. It is clear to IS and those reading its publications, that the only response applicable and appropriate is a violent, military response. Considering these events, the mind-set of IS and the emotions of the victims, the attacks and assault on Mosul, the collective punishments meted out against 170 families "alleged" to be related to IS members and the abuse committed by Iraqi security forces,[561] IS's rhetoric whether initially endorsed or not will have greater relevance in the making of IS 2.0.[562] Abdulrazaq affirms this in writing for AlAraby, predicting that

> [j]ust as IS was a more extreme, mutated version of al Qaeda born out of the brutality of the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq invasion, I predict a far worse monster emerging out of the current war.[563]

The fight for Mosul in the traumatised psyche of those who have lost everything, material and personal, will not be over till justice is found. The violence of IS is paralleled on many occasions or even outdone by the violence of the coalition of the killing and the state security instruments in Iraq and Syria. Considering that there has been such a determined effort to question the notions of morality in the violence of IS and its religion, it is curious that in the fight to retake Mosul which began towards the end of 2016, the tactic of the repressive state and its allies has been anything but moral as is confirmed in the testimony of an Iraqi soldier, fighting in Mosul, when he said, "'We killed them all,' he says quietly. 'Daesh, men, women

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[560] Dabiq Issue 1 41

[561] MiddleEastEye "Iraq accused of collective punishment of IS militants' families" July 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-accused-collective-punishment-militants-families-1870912162

[562] T. Abdulrazaq "Atrocities from Iraq to Syria will herald IS 2.0" October 2016
https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/10/24/atrocities-from-iraq-to-syria-will-herald-is-2-0

[563] Ibid

and children. We killed everyone.'"[564] In this regard, I want to briefly expand here on the argument that "nonviolence is statist."[565] According to Gelderloos,

> The strategies of nonviolence cannot defeat the state – they tend to reflect a lack of understanding of the very nature of the state. The power of the state is self-perpetuating; it will defeat liberation movements with any means at its disposal. If attempts to overthrow such a power structure survive the first stages of repression, the elite will turn the conflict into a military one, and people using nonviolent tactics cannot defeat a military. Pacifism cannot defend itself against uncompromising extermination.[566]

This was a reality that the Syrian resistance had to face up to and which IS has been asserting. The facts on the ground were and are clear, the regime and its allies had more sophisticated and advanced weapons than any of the opposition and it was prepared to "slaughter civilians and destroy urban infrastructure on a grand scale."[567] It is necessary to recall this theoretical perspective because it is relevant and part of the mind-set of IS fighters, many of whom are seasoned resistance fighters and military personnel, familiar with statecraft and the methods and manners of contemporary conflict, invasion and foreign interventions.

According to Gelderloos, any struggle against oppression usually involves a struggle against/conflict with the state which has a monopoly on violence and assumes the role of the "legitimate purveyor of violent force within their territory."[568] Although pacifist and nonviolent social movements may have revolutionary goals, states usually respond to these movements as "potential" whilst militant groups are considered as "actual threats" who can challenge the "distribution of power in society."[569] IS and the other resistance/opposition groups are challenging the distribution of power in the region. Gelderloos maintains that the origin of nonviolence is the state and he basis this conclusion on the actions of the Pentagon and its discriminate use of pacifism in Iraq. According to Gelderloos, two years after the Iraqi invasion, the US military used the Iraqi media to disseminate false stories about different factions inside Iraq. They also created the Arab-language channel Al-Hurriyah encouraging locals through an 'Iraqi-type approach and authenticity' to reject "militant resistance and manipulate Iraqis into diplomatic forms of opposition that would be easier to co-opt and control."[570] The notion of nonviolence was the lesson given to the "conquered population" through a power structure that did not hesitate to use violence and which claimed the

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[564] MEE "Mosul's bloodbath: 'We killed everyone - IS, men, women, children'" July 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/mosuls-final-bloodbath-we-killed-everyone-men-women-children-1721780413
[565] Gelderloos 2007 45
[566] Ibid 75
[567] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 90-91
[568] Gelderloos 2007 45
[569] Ibid 46
[570] Ibid 50

monopoly on the right to use violence. This action, the consequence of which is rarely exposed, is powerfully captured by Gelderloos;

> It is the acceptance by the disempowered, of the statist belief that the masses must be stripped of their natural abilities for direct action, including the propensities for self-defence and the use of force, or they will descend into chaos, into a cycle of violence, into hurting and oppressing one another. Thus is government safety, and slavery freedom. Only a people trained to accept being ruled by a violent power structure can really question someone's right and need to forcefully defend herself against oppression.[571]

Essentially, what is being demanded is an acceptance of the violence of the state and an acceptance of "learned helplessness," like the trained dog that is beaten. For this type of dog, it is better to resign itself in submissiveness rather than to fight back, it lowers its tail and "signifies his harmlessness, resigning himself to the beatings in the hope that they stop."[572] This is the good Muslim. In addition, Gelderloos, states that advocating for strategies of non-violence are

> implicit and explicit connections to white people's manipulations of the struggles of people of color. Its methods are wrapped in authoritarian dynamics, and its results are harnessed to meet government objectives over popular objectives. It masks and even encourages patriarchal assumptions and power dynamics.[573]

I would deem it appropriate to reflect on Fanon at this point. In describing the origins and function of nonviolence Fanon writes, "The colonialist bourgeoisie introduces that new idea which is in proper parlance a creation of the colonial situation: nonviolence."[574]

Thus, IS's responses in dealing with these authoritarian dynamics is a blatant refusal to learned submissiveness. It can be plausibly argued that its motivations to use violence are about a chosen strategy. Furthermore, the extent of the persecutions as poignantly captured in a tweet by Michael.P. Pregent, signals a potential festering wound that will in all probability signal the rise of IS 2.0. In response to the US and Iraqi claim about the 'liberation' of Mosul, July 2017 Pregent tweeted, "Mosul: The Campaign to date focused on taking territory away from ISIS – The Campaign in the end took territory away from Sunnis."[575] Besides the atrocities, humiliation, pain and suffering, the added injustice of territory occupied and stolen will linger and fester, surfacing as a nightmare, demanding retaliation after retaliation, until the land is restored. From Palestine to Qusayr in Syria and Rawashid in Iraq, referencing the Crusader-Zionist enemies is effective,[576] because of the occupation of the Palestinian lands

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[571] Ibid 50
[572] Ibid 50-51
[573] Ibid 2
[574] F. Fanon *Wretched of the Earth* 61
[575] M.P. Pregent https://twitter.com/MPPregent/status/884249837163560960 10 July 2017
[576] S. Atran "Mindless terrorists? The truth about Isis is much worse" November 2015
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/15/terrorists-isis

by the Zionists. It is also common knowledge amongst the fighters that the regimes in Baghdad and Damascus would not be able to turn a blind eye to the policy of changing the demographics on the ground (populating Sunni areas and homes with Shias, like how the Zionists have populated Palestinian areas and homes with Jews imported from Europe) without the support of western foreign allies.

These policies and strategies constitute an injustice that resides in an oppressive foundation - the legacy of injustice and betrayal of the *Ummah* in the partition of Palestine. For the Sunni Iraqi or Syrian, the occupation of land will not be tolerated. Attached to Pregent's tweet is a photograph with scribbled details of the duplicity in the strategy to retake Mosul and a final comment which states, "[t]his is how you defeat Sunni morale, not how you defeat ISIS."[577]The crackdowns and hypocritical applications of morality are likely to spawn IS 2.0; even where individuals do not agree with IS's tactics and strategies. IS has the potential and excuse to regroup, and whilst the Sunni morale is crushed, the urge and desire for revenge and retaliation will be uncontained. From the ashes of the operations in Mosul and Raqqa, it is evident that although the US-Syrian-alligned forces destroyed IS in Raqqa during October 2017, the result is actually an "end of one type of ISIL and the beginning of a new one… from a quasi-state into an insurgency… now primarily… based in rural and desert areas."[578] These episodes will at some point contribute to the rise of IS 2.0 unless an amicable and just political solution is achieved. The sectarian cleansing, the occupation of Sunni homes and the Iraqi Shia militia strategies of demographic change have planted the seeds for future conflict, just as the "dark shadows of brute authoritarianism" which "resembled the ghosts of the 1982 Hamah massacres [announced] the inevitability of a Syrian Arab Spring."[579] From these dark shadows of state violence, massacre, torture and collective punishment, IS 2.0 is neither unimaginable nor unlikely and "[o]nly those out of touch with the reality in the region would treat the defeat of ISIL today as anything other than impermanent."[580] Will the Joker return in a sequel to IS 1.0?

From these grave concerns and very harrowing probabilities comes the realisation that the violence will keep manifesting. In this regard, the second template was to shift the question from "Why are Islam and its adherents (IS) so violent?" to the political location of the

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[577] Ibid

[578] H. Hassan "Raqqa: Only those who are out of touch would say ISIL has been vanquished" October 2017 https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/raqqa-only-those-who-are-out-of-touch-would-say-isil-has-been-vanquished-1.668248

[579] Z. Stanizai "Understanding Syria: How a Cold Front Chilled the Damascus Spring" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zaman-stanizai/understanding-syria-how-a_b_3500457.html

[580] Hassan October 2017

violence as a strategy, a choice and a tactic. This is a shift from the realm of the morality play to the realm of the political presenting a screenshot of more than just religion and the 'barbarian Muslims.' It has allowed for the inclusion and analysis of other actors, specifically, the role of the state. To expand this discussion, I consider the role of the state and its excesses of violence from Hafez's perspective.

3.3.3 Template Three (1): Violence and political systems

When we revolt it's not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe.

Frantz Fanon[581]

Hafez analyses the responses and tactics of Islamist rebel groups from a political process perspective, asserting that the resurfacing of Islamism has posed a threat to elites in the political process.[582] According to Arendt, all politics manifests at some point as a struggle for power, where violence is "nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power."[583] Arendt admits that there is a conflation between violence and power and that violence manifests in this way. She may not have approved of the conflation, but is prudent to recognise its reality. John Stuart Mill, in speaking about power, maintains that the "first lesson of civilisation [is] that of obedience";[584] this notion of obedience manifests as obedience to the law instead of men, giving legitimation to authority that upholds the law. When political institutions which are manifestations and outcomes of power, fail to uphold the law, they begin to unravel, because the people no longer consider them legitimate.[585] Political loss of power motivates leaders to substitute violence for power thereby formenting terror and the formation of a system of government where violence replaces power and is used to maintain control of the population. Nation states have always regulated violence; they are not against violence or against eliminating violence. The main concern in the case of IS is with IS's public expression of violence. I am of the opinion, based on the notions of western superiority, that the concern is a concern of arrogance, a case of '*how dare this understudy, this Joker do what it wants and to whom it wants!*' Although the presumption may not be 'academic,' it certainly does not mean that the reality of the expression 'does not exist.' This form of violence has been legitimised, justified and perpetuated in the region since

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[581] Good reads https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/648760-when-we-revolt-it-s-not-for-a-particular-culture-we
[582] Hafez 2003 3
[583] H. Arendt "A special supplement: Reflections on violence" February 1969
http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1969/02/27/a-special-supplement-reflections-on-violence/
[584] Ibid
[585] Ibid

'independence,' embodied in a savage history and horrific presence in Arab states where elites who tow the imperial line are rewarded with power and position. Thus, for many citizens and subjects living under these puppet regimes and dictatorships, political agency and legitimacy lies in the society and not the state.

This has been the case in both Iraq and Syria. Violence has been the preferred means of engagement for European role players in the Middle East and in MMC since the infamous 1923 brag point by Lord Curzon that celebrated the destruction of the Ottoman Sultanate *"its moral strength, the Caliphate and Islam."*[586] As stated in chapter two, Curzon's emphasis was on destroying Islamic unity so that "there will never arise again unity for the Muslims, whether it is intellectual or cultural unity."[587] The Americans share the same agenda based on the claim that neo-conservative strategists had resolved prior to 9/11 to direct US imperial power in a *concerted effort to break-up the Middle East*.[588] Since 1916 till now, the legacy of the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate resides in a toxic approach used by the colonial and imperial powers to ensure the division and polarisation of the Arab world. It has been more than 100 years with no legitimate authority in the region. Arab leaders - puppet dictators and surrogates have been acting upon the script written for them, denying the citizens a substantive democracy and facilitating for the continued occupation of these lands through the processes of coloniality. These dictators reinforce existing notions of oriental despotism. This is the centre-periphery reality, in which the elite and their foreign masters represent the devilfish whilst the periphery constitutes those who resist. These mechanisms of violence and exploitation have all contributed to an escalation in conflict and violence. Furthermore, the support given to or the silence exhibited by the Arab/Persian leaders to the US and Russian-led operations, whether overtly or covertly, in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria have fuelled anger and animosity towards the ruling elite. The leadership (Arab/Persian) represent the privileged group within the colonial and imperial hierarchy. By western standards, these elite and their patrons represent the image of the 'good/moderate' Muslims, individuals who are subservient to supremacist and imperial dictates. Yet the same moderates can be labelled as 'dangerous' if they demand sovereignty and independence, challenging the dictates of the hegemon. This was the case with Saddam Hussein and Libya's Gadhafi. After all, these leaders existed, were recognised and included, because such a presence had been conferred

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[586] A. Kareem "European colonialists conspired to destroy the Khilafah state" 2007 http://www.khilafah.com/european-colonialists-conspired-to-destroy-the-khilafah-state/
[587] Ibid 2007
[588] Ahmed 2017

upon them, not because they were considered equal or because they had legitimacy. The same applies to all of the current leaders in the Gulf. Thus, in power and the manifestation or lack of power lies a nuanced conceptual relationship to the question of violence – whether it is revolutionary, rebellious or insurrectionary.

Considering the dangers and harm in taking on the state, the Syrian opposition which had constituted civil society organisations made every effort to establish dialogue with the regime, demanding change peacefully even though they were aware of the brutal tactics of the regime, its responses to non-violent protests and the consequences of challenging its authoritarian power. This is because history had left them a valuable lesson in the effects of the "frost-bitten" Damascus Spring when Syrians pursued the opportunity for open dialogue and demands for reform during the period 2000-2002. According to Stanizai, the Syrian crises can only be understood through its "historically entrenched unique political culture."[589] Of note, Stanizai did not attribute the crisis to religious fundamentalism. The Damascus Spring, "frost bitten in a lingering hibernation"[590] could well have provided the stigmergic effect for what followed later, as the activists of the past "now joined by a new generation of bloggers, activists and revolutionaries…helped carry the voice of the uprising to those who were willing to listen in 2011."[591] The Damascus Spring could well have been a precursor for the Syrian Revolution. But in spite of a clear articulation of demands, of a call for non-violence and substantive democracy where equality, good governance and plurality were prioritised, the 'moderates' were violently reminded of their limitations. Stanizai claims that Assad's rejection of the non-violent calls and his retaliation with extreme, brute force lies in an analysis of the "collective psyche and group dynamics" that prevailed in Syria.[592] In majoritarian polities, the minority group prioritises group safety and survival, which explained Assad's "unwavering determination … to retain political power for his Alawite sectarian minority."[593] It was not because of the threat of 'Muslim terrorists.' In situations of extreme political repression where there are also questions about the legitimacy of the government, it is likely that the stigmergic effect of such repression and perceived injustice will have repercussions. This is heightened when there are unresolved conflicts and lingering

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[589] Z. Stanizai "Understanding Syria: How a Cold Front Chilled the Damascus Spring"
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zaman-stanizai/understanding-syria-how-a_b_3500457.html
[590] Ibid
[591] R. Allaf "There is a clear alternative to Assad. To say otherwise is nonsense #SyriaWar" May 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/syrian-opposition-has-always-been-clear-1124183845
[592] Z. Stanizai "Understanding Syria: How a Cold Front Chilled the Damascus Spring"
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zaman-stanizai/understanding-syria-how-a_b_3500457.html
[593] Ibid

political tensions with historical roots. Of the repercussions in the Syrian and Iraqi context has been the rise of IS and its affinity for and choice of violence as a tactic.

According to Hafez, environments of conflictual political architecture have to be considered, because socioeconomic and psychosocial factors alone are insufficient for explaining the shift in approach (or tactic) to violence by groups that are labelled as 'Islamist.' Thus, the political environment influences the choice of strategy that groups will opt for; it also structures the opportunities and constraints that groups face.[594] In the case of IS, the political environment has been exceptionally repressive, suppressive and violent, where both the regimes in Syria and Iraq together with their proxies and allies have not hesitated to militarise extensively and enforce collective punishment on the civilian population. Furthermore, these regimes have exhibited an unwillingness to be inclusive, to support a fair and just political outcome and adhere to the demands for the transition of political power. As far as IS is concerned, the intentional targeting of what it calls the "Sunni triangle" by the "crusaders" and its surrogates in Muslim lands demanded that IS take up arms and inflict "*nikayah*" (this is to impose harm, injury and death upon the enemy) in order to ensure that the Sunni triangle remains in instability and that the (crusader imposed) status quo is not returned.[595] A 100 years of *status quo* social death was not to be tolerated any longer. There had to be a break from the past and the present (the status quo), largely manufactured and orchestrated by the crusaders because it was a past that played into their present and marked their future. There had to be a new leadership, new rules, new governance or permanent instability and conflict. For IS, it seems, the crusader narrative is not simply a repetition of Bush's rhetoric but of a real and continued persecution which linked the political and military presence of the West in the Middle East. More specifically it linked the political and military presence of the West in MMC "with the historical Crusades in which a divided Western Europe launched a series of invasions and occupations against the Levant."[596] In the understanding of IS and the traces left in the environment, this divided Europe has not ceased its attacks, invasions and occupation. To break the status quo, IS had to be creative, innovative and adaptive in order to respond to the colonial and imperial powers through a new humanism that they could sell to the constituency they needed in order to garner support and legitimacy. A humanism cloaked in religious rhetoric. The language of "crusades" conjured the military and political presence of

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[594] Hafez 2003 20
[595] Dabiq Issue 1 37
[596] C. Winter "Medium" November 2015 https://medium.com/@ripples/the-13th-century-scholar-roger-bacon-once-lamented-the-crusades-saying-that-those-who-survive-ab7cb3341e1e

an unresolved past and its recurring nightmare. All of these discourses have currency in Muslim lands and at a time of heightened violence and conflict, the lesser evil is a logical choice. Although "crusader" has religious connotations also, in the context of *Dabiq* Issue 1, it is also a very clear reference to a political and military presence. There is little doubt that when education systems are controlled and corrupted, when the rights of civil society are chained and limited and when the public space is controlled and constrained for political participation and expression, the religious institutions and mosques, especially in MMC gain prominence. The rhetoric that is disseminated from these institutions in most instances, manifests as a response to what they perceive as a threat to or attack on their identity and their survival. It can be plausibly argued that at this point, power matters and religion is shaped, twisted or distorted to support a particular power agenda. Religion, has currency, it can be used to *purchase* power. Thus to animate one factor (religion) whilst excluding the obvious (political and military) would be careless and agenda driven.

In the midst of this violence, of a confrontation with the state and its political repression is another dynamic that has been unfolding, that of the violence against civilians by resistance/rebellion/terrorist groups. Considering the above issues and circumstances, Hafez analyses the justification for violence by rebellion and terrorist groups against civilians when these groups in fact oppose state violence against civilians. He uses three frames to examine this violence which includes the ethical justification for violence, advantageous comparison and the displacement of responsibility.[597] These frames refer to the formation of exclusive organisations and anti-system frames which ultimately lead to mass violence. It is Hafez's use of the term "anti-system" that necessitates greater clarification in the absence of a clear definition by the author. I believe the term anti-system violence can be linked with Fanon's perspective on decolonial violence. Although much can be implied by the term, the definition is not altogether explicit and if one is to consider the term implicitly, it can be inferred that the "anti-system frames" proposed by Hafez are in fact decolonial responses or decolonial frames. Consider for example that Hafez explains that the perpetrators of mass violence undergo a "progression of radicalisation" which is linked to the political process.[598] What are the factors, circumstances, and processes that contribute to this process of radicalisation and is religion the only source of radicalisation as is often insinuated? This is particularly prominent in the claim that IS is violent because its members are *Muslims* who follow an

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[597] Hafez 2003 157-159
[598] M. Hafez "From marginalisation to massacres" in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* Q. Wiktorowicz (ed) 2004

inherently violent religion. Certainly, religion can be manipulated, changed, interpreted dogmatically and exploited by power, just as any other tool/idea that has currency for a cause or case. This is because the association with that particular item bears relevance and significance at that moment and can serve as a site of resistance to power by providing justifications for what would normally be considered unacceptable behaviour. Furthermore, it is necessary to move away from the "false binary of 'secular' dictatorships versus Islamism," because the importance, right and value of religion in the public space only "came in the age of the security state."[599] As a result, people's association with religion, their searching for religion, turning to religion and their intentional oblivion towards the manipulation of religious rhetoric by individuals who identified themselves as vanguards against oppressors, surfaced as a result of the security state.[600] An example of such a manipulation would be found in the example of a justification provided by the Iraqi incarnation of al-Qaida, known as ISI for the attacking of civilians. ISI fighters had witnessed and experienced a systematic unravelling of political exclusion, isolation, violence and the massacres of Sunni populations by Shia militias sanctioned by the state and from the state itself. These acts of violence constituted part of the sectarian divide and flare up proposed and planned by the US after its illegal invasion of Iraq. According to ISI Iraq's Shia Muslim civilians were thus considered legitimate targets in the prevailing conflict because they gave legitimacy to an illegitimate and oppressive regime. Furthermore, because of certain theological differences ISI now considered all of the Shias as being out of the fold of Islam, a practise and claim deemed of and by itself as un-Islamic, incorrect and unethical by the majority of Sunni scholars.

Initially, ISI received support for this call, but gradually, the Sunni population of Iraq rejected the justifications advanced and refused to support the attack on Shia civilians knowing that the justifications advanced in the name of religion were incorrect.[601] These actions were politically motivated revenge attacks and exemplary of greed for power and control that had been cloaked in religious rhetoric at a time when the people were smothered in fear and had sought refuge in religion and comfort in societal associations. The people were looking for some cushion, some sanity, some understanding. In the case of Syria, the same prevailed. IS fighters fought for control over the administration of Manbij with the Islamic Front. Manbij, is in the north-east of Aleppo. The key issue that drove the struggle between the two groups

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[599] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 116
[600] Ibid 116
[601] T.J. Raphael "Meet the man who spent 10 days with ISIS and lived to tell about it" April 2016
https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-04-09/meet-man-who-spent-10-days-isis-and-lived-tell-about-it

was over bread and although IS won, the people in Manbij did not recognise IS's leadership, they did not appreciate its mismanagement of the grain and they were resentful of IS's policies into their private lives. For the people of Manbij, IS replicated the corrupt, authoritative, repressive regime that they were revolting against.[602]

Pause. Stop. Reflect. *Rewind. Replay.* This was a double trauma.

IS had also begun to represent an interpretation of Islam and *takfir* (excommunicating) that they did not recognise nor accept. Although the people revolted against IS and liberated the city, in June 2014 after IS's victories in Iraq, IS returned to Manbij and took control over the city and the population were once again silenced by fear.[603] These are all actions and tactics against civilians and to theorise this violence, to understand why IS has been killing civilians, Hafez states that "patterns of anticivilian violence are often a product of anticivilian ideological frames that develop *under conditions of repression* (my emphasis) and within the context of exclusive mobilization structures."[604] Under conditions of repression, groups under threat look for justifications and reasons to attack all those whom they have identified as belonging to the 'enemy group,' irrespective of their lack of militarisation or that they may be innocent civilians. In the case of the top leadership in IS, the crusader armies and the Shia elite were responsible for stripping them of their power and position because of the de-Baathification policies and the Shia occupation of Sunni villages, homes and businesses previously held by IS members or Sunni structures. For IS, this suggests a complicity with the policies of sectarian cleansing. By association then, Shia civilians are no longer considered as 'non-threats' but as legitimate targets. The Sunni victims of IS are likewise tainted by a logic that describes all entities or groups as threats if they challenge the power, authority, actions, strategy and or scriptural interpretations of IS. In the case of the Sunni victims of IS specifically, the description of these persons as legitimate targets is almost always justified only on the basis of their 'unbelief'[605] in order to delegitimise the opposition. This unbelief is conferred on the Sunni victim by IS and so the entire process – the logic and the action is fundamentally problematic and flawed from conception.

For IS, any challenge or criticisms of their interpretation of the scriptures is considered unbelief. A challenge to IS power by Sunni Muslims is best responded to in a manner that

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[602] Yassin-Kassab & Al-Shami 2016 134-136
[603] Ibid 136
[604] Hafez 2003 155-156
[605] T. Hegghammer "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism" in Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement R. Meijer (ed) London: Hurst 2009 246-247

casts doubt on their (the opposition's) "Muslimness." In this regard, clinging to the notion of legitimacy and moral authority is essential for IS, making it necessary to push the claim of 'their Islam' as being the only 'authentic Islam,' and of their interpretations of the scripture as being the only authentic interpretations. This again resembles or imitates the logic of the western Enlightenment – of a particularistic knowledge projected as *universal*. Thus, when IS kills or harms Sunni Muslim civilians, just as their *Wahhabbi* predecessors did in Arabia, these killings represent the residue of elements from a Saudi Arabia constituted in a betrayal of the *Ummah* and the forging of a religio-political alliance to ideologically justify the creation of a new Middle-East. A Middle-East which would be totally fragmented and divided. A geo-political space where, as Curzon had desired "there will never arise again unity for the Muslims, whether it is intellectual or cultural unity."

Those who have lost power and position in society have little to lose by calling out injustices and structural inequalities. But they have much to gain by disrupting the status quo. Although IS may claim to represent an 'authentic' pre-colonial Islam, the very lens through which they view Islam has been tainted by colonialism. The language and descriptions, the history and feelings of how they understand their past has first been theorised by the orientalists and IS is responding to these narratives, these accusations, these projections and these frameworks from within the colonial mind-set. It is an inversion of the victim narrative, yet at the same time reflects an adoption of the master's logic. Considering all of IS's projections and perspectives of those it deems as legitimate targets, Hafez asserts that anticivilian violence is the result of a moral disengagement that occurs due to the development of anti-system ideological frames when political repression exacerbates; a process that denies groups and individuals the right to participate in politics.[606] If IS was deeply religious, there would not exist the possibility for a "moral disengagement" because Islam, as understood by the *Ummah*, is rooted in ethics, morality and justice. To be a flag bearer of Islam is to be grounded in ethics, morality and justice.

But this moral disengagement and the extent of the political repression has exacerbated, to the extent that the killing of civilians has not been limited to IS. In fact, as new evidence and testimonies will surface in the years to come, it will become glaringly apparent that the Iraqi and Syrian state regimes and their coalition of the killing have killed far more civilians than IS so that when one speaks of the violence of IS it will be asked in return "What violence?" In the final battle for Mosul in 2017, an Iraqi army major told the Middle East Eye "[t]here

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[606] Hafez 2003 155-158

are many civilians among the bodies…After liberation was announced, the order was given to kill anything or anyone that moved."[607] When the legitimacy of the state disintegrates, when governance fails, when repression becomes intolerable and when there is no law and order violence becomes permissible. In this instance IS has functioned as a "repository as well as a generator of rage,"[608] and based on the massacres at Mosul, Homs, Raqqa and other cities, this repository of rage will rise as IS 2.0. The manifestation of this repository and generator of rage can be gauged by evaluating the tit-for-tat responses from various IS commands who have capitalised on the heightened sense of fear that exists amongst the people and which they have been able to generate and the power they have been able to project. The violence employed is reasoned by these fighters who have already been placed in a theatre of schizophrenia as follows, *If our families/fighters/groups/identities/ethnicities are considered collateral damage or unfortunate deaths in their animosity to and conflict against us, then likewise; we will show no restraint and everyone is fair game*. Consider in this regard also, as a basis for comparison, Cameron's comments and responses discussed in chapter four after the Paris attacks. Thus, the anticivilian ideological frames allow for "moral disengagement," legitimating violence against civilians[609] in the logic of the colonial frames described by Maldonado-Torres as the suspension of ethics and the naturalisation of war.[610] IS has simply imitated the barbarity and actions of the West in MMC.

Furthermore, the effect of this moral disengagement is witnessed first-hand in IS controlled territories where IS has unleashed violence against civilians in a tit-for-tat strategy, not on the basis of religious injunction but where the choice of the victim is justified by various logics including a logic applied to religious texts. However, it is apparent that often and more noticeably, the motivation for the response, the attacks and the violence is generated by the need for revenge, power and the desire to reclaim an identity, status, position and state that IS believes belongs to them. In this pursuit, ethics is suspended and chaos and fear reigns. Tristan Dunning likewise concludes that "[t]here are a variety of other more mundane reasons at play aside from supposed religious dogma."[611]

And from these mundane reasons there comes the realisation that all human behaviour, including violence has a context. Machiavelli, Hobbes and Weber all agreed that political

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[607] MEE "Mosul's bloodbath: 'We killed everyone - IS, men, women, children'" July 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/mosuls-final-bloodbath-we-killed-everyone-men-women-children-1721780413
[608] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 138
[609] Hafez 2003 155
[610] Nelson Maldonado-Torres Granada Summer School Week Two 2016
[611] T. Dunning "Blaming religion for Middle East violence ignores nuance and absolves governments of their responsibility" July 2017 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/7/21/deconstructing-the-idea-of-foreign-fighters-in-syria

power is about domination and can only be achieved through violence.[612] Arendt maintains that in the "contest of violence against violence the superiority of the government has always been absolute", yet in spite of the superiority of the weapons of a state over rebel groups, the superiority of the state exists only as long as commands are obeyed and the structure of the government is intact.[613] Where there is no respect for authority and where the structure of the state is in chaos, the superiority of the state disintegrates as has been evident in the disintegration of the Iraqi army when IS took Mosul in June 2014[614] and the fact that as of May 2017, IS was still afflicting "massive force attrition" on Iraqi soldiers in the operation to take back Mosul which started in October 2016.[615]

From the research conducted and the scores of hours spent on viewing and reading online material it became evident to me that the overwhelming message from the IS camp or those sympathetic to it was that the only language with which to deal with the repressive, illegal state, its foreign allies and militia was through the use of violence. The comments, speeches, propaganda are at times overwhelmingly overshadowed with emotion and grief and the pain of the participants in the video footage is expressed through seeking solace in expressing their belief in a Just God, in clinging to the hope of martyrdom and in praying for victory. But the *stand out* message from all these videos, newsletters and sound-bites is that 'they will not stand back and submit.' The fighters make it clear, they will take revenge, there will be blood and they will exact retribution.[616]

In interrogating all the scenarios, emotions, double standards, hypocrisies and verdicts it must be asked if it is plausible to state that regimes who act with impunity to unleash brutality on a civilian, sovereign population based on *lies*[617] (US's claims of WMD in Iraq) in order to fulfil the demands of Empire or economic imperialism should expect that there will be

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[612] Frazer & K. Hutchings 2008 91-92

[613] Arendt 1969

[614] P. Cockburn *The rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the new Sunni revolution* 2015 13-17

[615] T. Abdulrazaq "Why can't Iraq keep a date with ISIS?" May 2017 http://www.thearabweekly.com/Opinion/8437/Why-can%E2%80%99t-Iraq-keep-a-date-with-ISIS%3F

[616] See M. Hashem May 2017 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/manchester-explosion-latest-isis-islamic-state-news-updates-who-responsible-a7750501.html; V. Walt November 2015 http://time.com/4112884/paris-attacks-isis-isil-france-francois-hollande/; A. Ahmed 2014 https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2iymuj; G. Davies October 2017 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4944646/ISIS-release-new-video-bragging-Vegas-shooting-REVENGE.html ; J. Moore & M.Khan August 2014 http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/iraq-muslim-jihadis-vow-take-revenge-us-infidels-isis-bombing-campaign-1460411; J. Dean & S. Evan May 2017 http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/why-isis-hate-you-reasons-8533563; Dabiq Issue 14 https://clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf

[617] I use the word *lies* because it has been verified through various reports that the evidence presented at the UN and the claims made to justify the invasion of Iraq was fabricated. A euphemism for lies would thus be a fabrication. I do not engage in euphemisms. See j. Schwarz's "Lie After Lie After Lie: What Colin Powell Knew Ten Years Ago Today and What He Said" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-schwarz/colin-powell-wmd-iraq-war_b_2624620.html May 2013 and A. Rawnsley's "Ten things that Chilcot's verdict reveals about Tony Blair and the Iraq war" https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/09/ten-things-chilcot-reveals-about-tony-blair-and-iraq July 2016

consequences? Blair's push to go to war in Iraq was "an act of military aggression on a false pretext - [which] has long been regarded as illegal." A false-pretext in simple language is a distortion. When you distort something, you obscure or hide something else. According to the Chilcot Report, there was insufficient evidence that Saddam Hussein posed an immediate threat to the national security of any western country and that Blair "'obscured' the nature of the threat by using the phrase WMD continually without explaining exactly what that meant." Furthermore, Blair had stated that "[i]t would be excellent to get rid of Saddam" and to do that "there needed to be a clever strategy for doing this... An extremely clever plan would be required."[618]Essentially, what was needed was a very grand lie.

These demands of the Empire are almost always driven by the greed for profits at any cost, justifying the aggression and exploitation by claiming a threat to the national interest and safety of citizens. If that does not work, then the justification touted is about instituting the 'civilised action' of democracy because of being *obliged* (by who?) to implement democracy to 'a people without democracy.' Most astute political analysts acknowledge that often claims of implementing democracy are usually a front for regime change. US presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders affirmed the impact of regime change, of "unilateralism, the belief that we can simply overthrow governments that we don't want," and in touching on Afghanistan admitted that it was "one of the great foreign policy blunders in the history of this country"[619] Consider also Paul Bonicelli's comment, that "[t]he Bush administration sought regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan first and foremost for national security reasons."[620] Thus the moral high ground adopted by hegemonic states is questionable, spurring questions on international law such as "is it legal/justified for one nation to invade another sovereign state without any provocation (Iraq 2003) but based primarily on national interests?" And is it legal and justified to continue to destroy infrastructure, plunder resources, kill hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians then commit acts of torture and brutality with the altruistic claim of seeking to establish a democracy which it (the invading nation) will nonetheless control from outside? Is this not in fact a contested or controlled sovereignty? Is it moral and ethical to attribute the necessity to invade and attack these lands based on the fabrications and distortions of a narrative that calls for the protection of western values against barbaric,

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[618] D. Bloom "Chilcot Inquiry final report: Summary of 13 key points raised against Tony Blair over the Iraq War" July 2016 http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/chilcot-inquiry-final-report-summary-8362981

[619] M. Hasan "Bernie Sanders to Democrats: This is what a radical foreign policy looks like" September 2017 https://theintercept.com/2017/09/22/bernie-sanders-interview-foreign-policy/

[620] P. Bonicelli "A Brief History of the 'Democracy Through Regime Change' Policy That Never Was (Part 1)" May 2015 http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/26/a-brief-history-of-the-democracy-through-regime-change-policy-that-never-was-part-1/

regressive cultures and religions that 'hate our freedoms?' Is it moral and ethical to propagate and promote this type of hate and fear of innocent people, their beliefs and their traditions based on lies?

In response to all of these strategies and narratives, IS has initiated a speaking from within, claiming indirectly through their publications that their voices must be heard in response to this violence against them and their own. IS's speaking in *Dabiq* is a means of communication to affirm their existence as equal beings worthy of justice and dignity, not as collateral damage or disposable life in the quest for oil. It is a war-cry for the realisation of the existence of the self. But it is also a cry fraught with ethical contradictions that need to be unpacked. Fanon articulates this phenomenon in stating that "violence is not a simple act of will."[621] Here Fanon refers to the context in which the violence occurs and the agents that create the conditions for this violence. After all, colonialism, as Fanon explains "is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties,"[622] colonialism is "…violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence."[623] Although Iraq and Syria are no longer colonies of the British and French respectively, what is intended here with regards Fanon's assessment of colonialism is the nature of the violence embedded in colonialism and thus through transference, in coloniality. In response to this violence and the dehumanising effect of coloniality, the IS leader declares in *Dabiq*, "…you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership."[624] This is in response to the abject sense of humiliation and degradation that the people in these locations have felt and lived, and is further articulated,

> The time has come for those generations that were drowning in oceans of disgrace, being nursed on the milk of humiliation, and being ruled by the vilest of all people, after their long slumber in the darkness of neglect – the time has come for them to rise.[625]

In essence, the above indicates a disjuncture between the language of violence as defined and understood by the other - IS, and those who respond to the demands of Empire and coloniality. Strictly speaking, all groups fighting the oppressive regimes in Iraq and Syria ascribe to similar understandings about their autonomy, sovereignty and sense of being, although not all share the vision of a Caliphate; but the western mainstream media and western government's focus, comment and narrative is built *only* around IS. This alone should make any enquiring mind curious.

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[621] Fanon 1963 50
[622] Ibid 48
[623] Ibid 48
[624] Dabiq "Glad tidings for the Muslim Ummah" Issue 1 Ramadan 1435 7
[625] Dabiq "A new era has arrived" Issue 1 Ramadan 1435 9

Violence is therefore a tactic, a choice to achieve these goals as it produces the same outcome and consequences that they (IS) are made to endure. It is a tit-for-tat retaliation. Although religion as an expression of faith factors into the recruitment of fighters, support for and justification of the group's actions, religion alone is not the single most dominant motivation for the violence. There are other reasons such as revenge and political domination which in the form of modern colonialism would "create disastrous people, modern monsters."[626] To throw a spoke in the wheel, if "[t]he source of morals in a corrupt and lawless country is religion,"[627] does it mean that religion is absent when morals are suspended and disengaged? If that is the case, then in the context of IS, it is clear that theorising the violence should now move to another realm altogether – one where the 'religion smokescreen' is dismissed and the analyses is concentrated by examining the colonial tactic of a suspension of ethics and the naturalisation of war. This scenario necessitates the creation of the other, the monster. In invoking monsters, there is still the creation of binary categories, of good and bad, of civilised and barbaric of sacrosanct and evil, and it is here, in the category of mythic violence that IS once again responds with vengeance.

3.3.4 Template Three (2): Challenging mythic violence - Beyond the Manichaean

Significantly, Benjamin maintains that a cause becomes violent when "when it bears on moral issues" where the scope of these issues is defined by law and justice.[628] From this alone it becomes apparent that all is not that simple, especially when the law and justice exist in an international framework that is already compromised to favour one set of lives over the other. In that instance, the morality of an issue and those invoking the moral high ground will be contested. Benjamin raises a further critical point which I believe is crucial to the conflict in Syria and Iraq and of relevance to all the role players and actors using violence in the *Shami* theatre. Essentially he asks if violence as a "principle" can be described as a "moral means" to what the users of violence might claim are "just ends?"[629] Considering that there are two or maybe three sides to a conflict, different parties carrying different motivations and with different reasons, the question then becomes, "Which party's 'just claim' is in fact just?" This dilemma is playing out in the *Shami* theatre where all of the state actors are claiming a moral high ground and lobbying on issues of "just ends" such as establishing democracy, destroying

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[626] Gordon 2007 10
[627] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 116
[628] W. Benjamin "Critique of Violence" *Reflections* 277
http://english.columbia.edu/files/english/content/Critique_of_Violence.pdf
[629] Ibid 277

Islamic terrorism and embattling the barbarians in the clash of civilisations. The arguments and justifications advanced with regards the violence they have employed (irrespective that it is grossly disproportionate) is that they are fighting a "war" and they are fighting "terror." In this regard, affirming what I stated in the foregoing discussion that states have no problem with violence per se, Benjamin states that in most instances, violence will be justified if it is believed to be used in the pursuit of a "just ends" whilst I add another component, that irrespective of the debates on the morality or ethics of the violence, the bottom line is that the violence is being unleashed by those who have the monopoly on violence.

The questions around what is just and who determines what is just, what is lawful or just violence and what is unlawful or unjust violence have been interrogated by both Asad[630] and Benjamin.[631] These discourses question the nature and use of language as a tool of power, domination and subjugation. If one simply interrogates the language and the words used in the Paris attacks and all similar "terrorist" attacks perpetrated by identified *Muslim* persons, then it is plainly obvious that anything Muslim/Islam related in a context of conflict with westerners would be immediately labelled as unjust and illegitimate. The language confers the judgement and outlines the force of law to be implemented. There are no excuses, no elaborate examinations of mental illness, depression, lone wolf tactics, troubled childhood or alienation symptoms. These acts are purely and simply categorised as terrorism and illegitimate violence. On the discussion about just war/unjust violence Asad unpacks the contradictions between war as "civilised violence" and terrorism as "barbaric violence" and the liberal justification for state violence as a moral argument.[632] Asad questions the liberal justification and states that,

> …'just war' claims to follow clear legal and moral rules but belligerent nations do not agree on how these are to be applied in concrete cases; it seeks to humanize war but accommodates the massive killing of civilians and it cannot hold powerful states accountable for atrocities; it refuses the terror threatened by insurgents but accepts the terror of a nuclear option by the state. Although theorists seek to present liberalism as consistent, unified and universal, and polemicists seek to separate it clearly from doctrines and attitudes that are illiberal, the ways in which self-styled liberals deal with questions of military violence are not so easily classifiable.[633]

Asad interrogates the willingness of western states to *kill some* in order to save others and relates this to the notion of a "political theology" and the "socialisation of atrocities." He does this because since the late 19th century when liberalism was coined it "…advocated civic

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[630] Asad 2010 3

[631] M. Abbott "The Creature Before the Law: Notes on Walter Benjamin's Critique of Violence" *COLLOQUY Text Theory Critique* 16 82 2008

[632] Asad 2010 3

[633] Ibid 18-20

republicanism at home and colonial rule abroad—that is, when it identified itself closely with imperial projects."[634] From this double standard we identify the distinction made in the literature between legitimate and illegitimate violence where the former is socially sanctioned whilst the latter goes against laws and accepted norms of society. But how is it that a society can sanction the killing of innocents, millions of miles away from the homeland, as an 'accepted norm' on the assumption/claim that someone/some groups in those places *may attack them*? How is it possible, plausible, logical that the *retaliatory violence* of those attacked based by foreign invaders on a logic of pre-emption is considered illegitimate/ unjust? From this imbalance there is the understanding that law on and of its own cannot be just. To highlight the argument, consider how both apartheid and slavery which were given legal social sanction were not considered 'violent' or that the exploitation and plunder of people's land and labour was also not considered violent. This animates the hypocrisy, the contradiction and moral failure in the law and in assessing the value of human life. It also points to a hypocrisy in identifying perpetrators of violence. The fact that certain western states such as the US can attack, accuse and threaten "others for their (real or imputed) transgressions," whilst it continues with "its own apparatus of mass destruction" with little legal or moral constraint and where "aerial terrorism" is normalised as a mode of techno-war "that reduces civilians to dispensable objects" affirms these dualities and bias.[635]

Derrida also considers the challenge in differentiating between the force of law (where law itself is violent) claimed as "just" by an actor and violence that is considered "unjust." Essentially, the language of justice served and law presents as a problematic if one is to consider the organisation of power in the international system, the existence of a hierarchy in the placement of value to different lives and the operation of those who have a monopoly on violence. With this in mind, how does one then distinguish between a force that is claimed as just and therefore legitimate in opposition to what is pronounced upon as unjust, and thus illegitimate?[636] The dilemma surfaces- whose violence is just and whose violence is unjust?[637] These dualities and biases are not lost on IS, its foot soldiers and the other resistance groups fighting the oppressive regimes who abuse state power; where the excesses of state power (mythic violence) has embroiled the populations in a vicious conflict in Iraq

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[634] Ibid 18-20
[635] C. Boggs "Imperialism and the Logic Of Mass Destruction" May 2017
https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/05/04/imperialism-and-the-logic-of-mass-destruction/
[636] J. Derrida "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (eds) Cornell, D & Rosenfeld, M 1993 6
[637] Ibid 6

and Syria. Considering that the invocation of a moral justification for or against the use of violence has been played by all the actors in this conflict, the violence must be critiqued on the basis of its link to law and to human rights in the framework of an ethical life in the state; ironically in this instance ethics has been suspended and war naturalised. One should also consider the kind of questions that need to be asked in a context where the central organizing narrative of concepts such as law, justice, and sovereign authority are unhinged. When this happens, what type of politics are we left with? And whose definition of justice, just and unjust, legitimate and illegitimate gains prominence? The victorious narrative is the one constituted by the powerful and mythic violence is violence that is constitutive of power, exerted on behalf of God (or the state, in the modern context); but it is not divine violence.

According to Benjamin, mythic violence is linked to law-making and underwrites state power. Benjamin's work on violence encapsulates a fundamental thinking, that all law, whether "law-making or law preserving" is violent.[638] Mythic violence is thus about "power making" what Zizek refers to as a law-founding, state violence and an "obscene and illegal support of power."[639] The only way to break the cycle of violence encapsulated in mythic violence and to attain justice is through the destruction of the law in principle, what Benjamin deems as "obligatory"[640] and this is possible through divine violence. Every exercise of power, irrespective of its democratic legitimacy, contains some excess, some unspoken threat of the ability to utilise this excess. When this violence manifests, different individuals, groups and populations react differently, depending on their capacity, capability and organisation. According to Bulhan, "violence is any relation, process or condition, by which an individual or a group violates the physical, social and/or psychological integrity of another person or group."[641] Violence thus "inhibits human growth, negates inherent potential, limits productive living and causes death."[642] These are the conditions of the Syrian and Iraqi people, as a result first of state sanctioned violence (mythic violence) and foreign interventionist violence, then later, an exacerbation of violence from within the resisting groups. Cockburn maintains that the "degenerate state of the Syrian revolution stems from the country's deep political, religious, and economic divisions" since prior to 2011, which have been exploited, exacerbated and stoked by foreign intervention.[643]

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[638] Ibid 277
[639] Zizek 2009 485
[640] Benjamin 277
[641] H.A. Bulhan 1985 135
[642] Ibid 135
[643] Cockburn 2014 83

Thus, IS's challenge to the excess of state power (the mythic violence of the state) and the moral claim of a just violence by the US-led and US-controlled Iraqi state against the Iraqi population, and of the Sunni Muslims in particular, is to respond to this violence with a moral claim and just violence claim of their own. It is a response to the moral bankruptcy of the coalition of the killing in Abu Ghraib, Baghram and other security institutions, events and episodes.[644] This response also applies as a tit-for-tat enactment against the Syrian state's disproportionate use of force and violence against its own subjects. These multiple violences, and the impact thereof manifest in IS's perspectives and understandings, it informs their behaviour and responses because for them, the violence they engage in is "the counter-violence [what IS describes as divine violence but what can be understood as mythic violence] to the excess of violence that pertains to state power" which falls outside the realm of morality. For IS and the various resistant groups inside Iraq and Syria they are all engaged in divine violence. Consider the following from the IS magazine Dabiq, issue 7

> In burning the crusader pilot alive and burying him under a pile of debris, the Islamic State carried out a just form of retaliation for his involvement in the crusader bombing campaign which continues to result in the killing of countless Muslims who, as a result of these airstrikes, are burned alive and buried under mountains of debris.[645]

Although significant attention has been given to the theological justification generously proffered by IS for the above *crime*, the competing and alternate voices in Islam are muffled or denied entry into what is a very controlled narrative. With regards the burning of the pilot, Muslim scholars have not hesitated to make their views known. According to Hassan Hassan, IS refers to "'mumathala' (reciprocity)" when referencing enemy combatants, and "[i]t relies on genuine but isolated incidents in Islamic history."[646] This echoes IS's own logic, and not the collective appreciation of context and texts by Muslim scholars in general; and is deducible from the foregoing extract in Dabiq, issue 7. Iyad Madani, claims that the burning act violated the rules of war and prisoners as has been established by Islamic jurisprudence. Madani further attributed the actions of IS to "intellectual decay" and the "political fragmentation and the abuse of Islam" in the MENA.[647] Thus, it can be claimed that violence and the trauma of violence distorts religion. I say this because this mentality and these justifications have only surfaced after the Iraqi invasion and although aspects of the

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[644] T. Mbeki "The Libyan Tragedy: Power in the Contemporary Geo-Political Setting" September 2016
http://www.mbeki.org/2016/11/19/the-libyan-tragedy-power-in-the-contemporary-geo-political-setting/

[645] Dabiq Issue 7 "From hypocrisy to apostasy: The extinction of the grayzone" 1436 Rabbi-ul-Akhir

[646] T. McCoy & A. Taylor "Islamic State says immolation was justified; experts on Islam say no" February 2015
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/04/the-chilling-reason-the-islamic-state-burned-a-jordanian-pilot-alive/?utm_term=.85f56552cfa0

[647] CBS "Jordanian pilot's "obscene" burning death by ISIS sparks outrage in Mideast" February 2015
http://www.cbsnews.com/news/jordanian-pilots-obscene-burning-death-by-isis-sparks-outrage-in-mideast/

behaviour are sedimented in the actions of the *Wahhabist jihadis*, in both instances, the common denominator is personal ambition, the desire for power and the consolidation of control. There is clearly an incongruence between the rhetoric advanced by IS and the Muslim public in general, as lamented on by Al Qaeda's Ayman al Zawahiri when he said that "…we should realize the extent of the gap in understanding between the jihad movement and the common people."[648]

What is lost in translation (perhaps intentionally, not because it is unclear) is the logic of IS in explaining its actions. IS is about retribution. Retribution drives the action, whilst religion is twisted to justify the action. However, although IS has gone this route it should be noted that in the case of the Syrian uprisings, the International Crisis Group (ICG), admitted that although there was an "Islamist undercurrent to the uprising" the religious element was not the "*main motivation for the peaceful protests that were mutating into military conflict.*"[649] Staged from within the alternate templates, it is evident that the *motivation* (which is different from justification), is driven by a desire for retribution and the need to 'right a wrong' done to themselves (IS). IS's violence is a violence of retribution and about the retaking of power. Zizek expounds on a very important aspect of violence which states that it is necessary to

> distinguish as clearly as possible between two types of violence; radical emancipatory violence against the ex-oppressors and the violence which serves the continuation and/or establishment of hierarchical relations of exploitation and domination.[650]

This distinction is important because it calls to attention the operational ideology which functions to replace 'one being' *the oppressor*, with another oppressor, and does not function to reinvest or reclaim the humanity of the oppressed. In this instance also ethics and morality are suspended. The humanity of the oppressed is clearly not on the agenda, because to have a shared humanity, would necessitate a radical change with existing social-political conditions. What it is, is the replacing of agents of a hierarchal order with 'other' agents. Essentially, the structure stays the same, there is just a rotation in the cast. This is tolerable because it does not mitigate nor confront the structure that created and sustained the hierarchal order of power, suppression and dehumanisation. These realities are the lived experiences of most colonised peoples and peoples living under coloniality today.

The mythic violence described by Zizek is similar to what has been defined as vertical violence which emanates from the top to the bottom in "the struggle for power, property,

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[648] A. N. Awan "ISIS and Its Impact on Radicalization in the West" Policy Brief 6 Centre for Global Policy March 2017 4
[649] Cockburn 2014 84
[650] S. Zizek *In Defense of Lost Causes* 2009 471

security and 'justice'" and is usually sanctioned as legitimate as opposed to the violence which moves from the bottom to the top (similar to divine violence) and which is considered illegitimate.[651] Divine violence, is considered as an *apriori* justifiable response by oppressed people to an excess of violence and is the violence which usually comes from those oppressed people who are constitutive outside the capitalist system. Divine violence should thus "be conceived as divine in the precise sense of the old Latin motto *vox populi, vox dei*"[652] and should not be understood as "'we are doing it as mere instruments of the People's Will,' but as the heroic assumption of the solitude of sovereign decision…" Divine violence for IS, is thus "the counter-violence to the excess of violence that pertains to state power"[653] and according to IS and the various resistant groups inside Iraq and Syria, they are all engaged in divine violence. Not terrorism. In the context of the political factors related to the conflict in Syria and Iraq and in the context of the history and the geo-political/strategic nature of the conflict it can be contended that the template for theorising the violence of IS as "the counter-violence to the excess of violence that pertains to state power" cannot be excluded. This logic is also applicable to the context of the impact, consequences and costs of the excessively violent and disproportionate use of force and violence from the foreign invasions and interventions. This includes the impact of the illegal US-led invasion of Iraq and the Russian-led aerial assaults on Syria both of which are protecting proxy regimes in power.

Within the concepts of mythic/vertical violence and divine/bottom-up violence exists another form of violence what Bulhan describes as horizontal violence. Usually, victims and survivors traumatised and afflicted by vertical violence run the risk of venting "their anger and frustration through horizontal violence, victimising themselves, their relatives and their peers."[654] This form of violence is an alternate template as proposed by Hafez and already discussed in his description of anticivilian violence. Bulhan's conceptualisation of horizontal violence is significant in that IS has unleashed a significant amount of violence on its own – on Muslims, and fellow nationals. Various US government reports and independent research findings conducted since 2011 found that "Muslims suffered between 82 and 97% of terrorism-related fatalities over the past five years," and that "between 2004 and 2013 about half of all terrorist attacks, and 60% of fatalities due to terrorist attacks, took place in Iraq,

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[651] Bulhan 1985 134
[652] *vox populi, vox dei*- the voice of the people is the voice of God
[653] Zizek 2009 483
[654] Bulhan 1985 134

Afghanistan and Pakistan.," whilst in 2015, "nearly three quarters of all deaths from terrorist attacks occurred in five countries — Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria."[655] These are all MMC countries – which means that the victims were in all probability mostly Muslim. The fact that most of these categories of people have suffered in some form or another either from the violence of the Saddam regime or the violence of the coalition of the killing or the violence from the militia groups, did not prevent IS from "victimising themselves, their relatives and their peers." Such an outcome needs significantly more consideration and analysis in my opinion as it is symptomatic of a continuation of the violence of the master perpetrated on its behalf by the 'Joker' it (the master) has created. But we cannot escape the master's narrative. It is perhaps the most trumped narrative when theorising the violence of IS and it hones in on religion – on Islam, as the motivation for the violence of IS.

Having shifted the lens from morality to tactic, from the contestation between definitions of just/legitimate and unjust/illegitimate violence, from the retribution in mythic/divine violence and from the explanation of horizontal violence as another possible explanation for IS's violence on Muslim civilians, I now turn to the grand narrative. This is the master's narrative, of religious violence and I consider it in relation to the counter narrative – that of the myth of religious violence.

3.3.5 Template Three (3): IS and the myth of religious violence

In the context of IS, certainly religion and an appeal to religion is a form of currency. It has significant sign-value and exchange value and is a viable means of exploiting the gullible, disenfranchised, traumatised, dehumanised and alienated masses that live the drama that has been chosen for them. The empirical evidence for this can be taken from the example of Harasta which needed funding and when "they saw they could receive money, they changed their names, their appearance, their symbols and speech." Religious names and identities had financial value and currency from influential political backers and thus the brigade named "the Martyr Meshaal Temmo" became "the Mujahid Osama bin Laden."[656]

According to William Cavanaugh, there is an almost unshakeable belief amongst liberals, conservatives, religious believers and nonbelievers that religion essentially fosters divisiveness and violence and thus needs to be contained by the democratic state.[657] For this

[655] S. A. Mcclennen "We mourn Manchester, but not Kabul: How biased coverage of terrorist attacks drives us apart" June 2017 http://www.salon.com/2017/06/03/we-mourn-manchester-but-not-kabul-how-biased-coverage-of-terrorist-attacks-drives-us-apart/
[656] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 122
[657] W. T. Cavanaugh *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular ideology and the roots of modern conflict* 2009 3

reason, it has been argued that a liberal democracy needs to be instituted in the Middle East in order to contain the inherent violence of Islam and those Muslim groups who seek to institute Shariah law. *Pause*. A liberal democracy needs to be instituted in those places that certain western states decide need a regime change, in order to facilitate western interests. This is a more appropriate and correct statement. After all, according to the advocates of democratic change in Muslim countries, incorporating religion into political life is 'uncivilised' and can only breed violence, because religion, and in this case, Islam as identified and conflated with IS, is essentially violent. Cavanaugh does not deny that religion is used to justify violence, but challenges the claim that religion is a "transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life, essentially distinct from 'secular' features such as politics and economics." He further challenges the claim that religion has a "dangerous inclination to promote violence."[658] One cannot but recall Dunning's words – of such a claim as nestling in a "lazy, generalised and ahistorical analyses," that absolves "a variety of governments in the Middle East and elsewhere of their responsibility."[659]

Yet, advocates of the 'religion as dangerous and being inclined to promote violence' claim are of the opinion that religion must be contained through restricting its access to public power. In this regard they promote the idea that the secular state is a neutral entity that is necessary to guard against the "inherent dangers of religion."[660] In his analysis, Cavanaugh argues that 'secular' ideologies and institutions can be just as violent as those labelled 'religious'; he begins his analysis by unpacking the construction of the categories 'religion' and 'secular' both of which have been invented in the modern west within the colonial context in response to specific hierarchies of power.[661] A central argument in the book is the idea that both religious and secular violence are the result of configurations of power where western societies promote the idea of religion as a transhistorical and transcultural concept that is inherently violent, thus legitimating a foundational myth of the secular liberal nation-state. By advocating and entrenching the myth of religious violence, the myth allows for the construction and marginalisation of a *religious other*, in this case IS and Muslims in general– who are described as fanatical, radical, violent beings as opposed to the peace-loving liberal secular subject. This is enunciated and animated in some detail in the language employed by

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[658] Ibid 3

[659] T. Dunning "Blaming religion for Middle East violence ignores nuance and absolves governments of their responsibility" July 2017 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/7/21/deconstructing-the-idea-of-foreign-fighters-in-syria

[660] Cavanaugh 2009 3

[661] Ibid 3

western leaders and the actions taken by them after the Paris bombings; discussed in chapter four.

Advancing the myth of religious violence is to advance the goals of power and is thus used in domestic and foreign policy to marginalise and dehumanise specific peoples and to portray the violence of the secular state as a justified intervention in order to protect western civilisation and the secular subject. This has surfaced repeatedly in discussions, debates and briefings about the illegal Iraqi invasion, the attack on all the Afghani people in search of Osama bin Laden and in the collective punishment of Syrians in what is now clearly a proxy war and weapons testing ground, in the land of the other. These justifications in the context of dehumanisation underwrite

> "the nation-state's monopoly on its citizens' willingness to sacrifice and kill. In foreign policy, the myth of religious violence serves to cast non-secular social orders, especially Muslim societies, in the role of *villain* [my emphasis]."[662]

The scenes play out again and again. These are societies and peoples portrayed as medieval, barbaric and uncivilised because they include religious organisation in their ordinary and political lives. As a result, Muslims are portrayed as being "…irrational and fanatical. *Our* violence, being secular, is rational, peace-making, and sometimes regrettably necessary to contain *their* violence. We find ourselves obliged to bomb them into liberal democracy."[663] Yet citizens in these MMC have legitimate aspirations, they want more say in their governance and political organisation but these aspirations are not recognised because *they*, these Muslims, are not recognised. The change in the discourse after the illegal invasion of Iraq from WMDs to promote democracy is a case in point. To further consolidate this argument Cavanaugh states:

> Certain types of practices and institutions are condemned, while others—nationalism, for example—are ignored. Why? My hypothesis is that religion and- violence arguments serve a particular need for their consumers in the West.[664]

How can one deny that war in the contemporary context and profiting from war is about consumption? Accordingly therefore, the myth of religious violence which is largely a colonial project – a project of profit and gain and expansion, an Enlightenment narrative which now serves to perpetuate the abhorrence of dying in the name of religion, but glorifies the valour and bravery of dying for the nation-state. This is often reiterated and exhibited in belittling individuals such as those resistance fighters in Afghanistan who challenged the American invasion of their homeland. The Afghani fighter was the *Islamic terrorist*, the

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[662] Ibid 4
[663] Ibid 4
[664] Cavanaugh 2009 4

American soldier who urinated on Afghani corpses and copies of the Quran[665] whilst using rifles engraved with passages from the Bible during his stay of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan was a hero.[666] The Muslim is the enemy, an irrational, fanatical, violent other, because he refuses to separate religion from politics, legitimating violent coercion against himself and his homeland.[667] Cavanaugh ultimately challenges the "political conditions" that contribute to the construction of the category of religion and he uses the term "myth" not because religious violence does not exist, but rather that it occurs as an exaggerative term. This serves to highlight the hegemonic influence of the claim of the inherent nature of religious violence to the exclusion of other forms of violence in western societies.[668] Thus the use of language is significant in expounding on language as a tool of power and for Cavanaugh the fact that the status of this myth has developed to the extent that the marginalisation of the other has escalated, begs some serious interventions. The use of the word "myth" further points to the need for a rigorous examination of the terminology and the associated meanings detailed from Linda Zerilli's comments about what she calls "a mythology." Zerilli advocates that,

> A mythology cannot be defeated in the sense that one wins over one's opponent through the rigor of logic or the force of evidence; a mythology cannot be defeated through arguments that would reveal it as groundless belief. . . . A mythology is utterly groundless, hence stable. What characterizes a mythology is not so much its crude or naïve character—mythologies can be extremely complex and sophisticated— but, rather, its capacity to elude our practices of verification and refutation.[669]

These comments supplement Grosfoguel's analysis of Christendom and obscurantism. Considering the above, it would be prudent to avoid falling into the trap of obscurantism in one's analysis; hence it is necessary to examine the paradoxes and nuances contained in the information disseminated by, and about IS, to decipher the language, the terminology and the myths. The logic and reason behind such an approach is that political contexts and conditions have also germinated the 'religion' of IS, influencing its tactics, approach and use of violence. The gradual increase in different types of violence together with the enforcing of collective punishment on the Syrian populations has manifested a deep seated trauma with disastrous consequences. This violence was internalised when the *shabeeha* boldly wrote on the walls of the cities they entered and devastated, "Either Assad or We'll Burn the

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[665] P. Stewart & D. Alexander "Soldiers Who Urinated On Corpses, Burned Qurans Will Not Be Criminally Prosecuted" HuffPost Religion August 2012 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/27/no-criminal-prosecution-f_n_1834643.html

[666] S. Gaskell "Michigan weapons company Trijicon takes flak over soldiers' rifle scopes branded with Bible verses" January 2010 http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/michigan-weapons-company-trijicon-takes-flak-soldiers-rifle-scopes-branded-bible-verses-article-1.458908

[667] Cavanaugh 2009 5

[668] Ibid 6

[669] Ibid 6

Country,"[670]. Syrians have been burning – from the *shabeeha*, to white phosphorous to sarin gas.[671] The increase in the bombing and shelling of the neighbourhoods creating "death zones", the policies of "starve or surrender," the shelling of "bakeries, schools, hospitals and market places," and the widespread terror and fear made it impossible for the opposition coalition to "establish a presence on the burning ground"[672] allowing for a power vacuum. When combined with the terror that ordinary people faced this toxic combination provided the ideal opportunity for IS to assert itself. In this nightmare of horrors, it was not religion but violence, political violence that opened up the battle-field for fanatics from all sides. As Blair stated in his resignation speech in 2007,

> Removing Saddam and his sons from power, as with removing the Taliban, was over with relative ease, **but the blowback since**, from global terrorism and those elements that support it, has been fierce and unrelenting and costly.[673]

But it was also symptomatic of a deadly trauma and melancholia that had been brewing in those who had stared death in the face, over and over again. The stench of death, the taste of death, the burning pungent fumes of death that had touched loved ones, extended families, innocent children was a memory etched indelibly into the frames of consciousness of many fighters, breeding extremism and hatred.

These conditions and contexts are oftentimes conveniently excluded in the lazy analyses referenced by Dunning and what Paul Craig Roberts calls the "presstitutes."[674] Conventional wisdom and oft repeated phrases about Islam and extremism or Islam and terrorism seem to suggest that the political violence of IS is the result of a violence advocated in the Quran. Consider for instance the comment made by Graeme Wood. According to Wood, "[t]he religion preached by its most ardent followers derives from coherent and even learned interpretations of Islam."[675] Consider the comment made by journalist-turned terrorism expert, Peter Bergen on the CNN website in February 2015 that "Isis may be a perversion of

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[670] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 106
[671] See the comment, "The Syrian American Medical Society…has documented at least 175 cases of chemical attacks since the beginning of the war in 2011" in P. Gupta "Khan Sheikhoun attack survivors recall horror" May 2017 http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/khan-sheikhoun-attack-survivors-recall-horror-170503130351120.html
[672] Ibid 104-106
[673] D. Morrison & P. Osborne "Proving the link between British foreign policy and domestic terrorism" July 2015 http://www.middleeasteye.net/essays/proving-link-between-british-foreign-policy-and-domestic-terrorism-516596279
[674] P.C. Roberts "There is no freedom without truth" IPE Paul Craig Roberts February 2016 http://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2016/02/02/there-is-no-freedom-without-truth-paul-craig-roberts/
[675] G. Wood "What ISIS really wants" The Atlantic March 2015 http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/

Islam, but Islamic it is."[676] Bergen is an 'expert' on what *Islam* is and what constitutes that which is *Islamic*, I would presume.

Popularised articles and news reports continue providing explanations about and on IS using religious based topics such as the rise of *Wahhabism* in Saudi Arabia or the notion of apocalyptic references in the Islamic texts.[677] These catchy phrases endorse the myth of religious violence that Cavanaugh refers to, slanting the real question of responsibility and accountability and are strongly challenged by Mehdi Hasan. Hasan refers to the works of American social anthropologist, Lee Ross who in 1977 coined the term "fundamental attribution error" and declared that "[o]ur exploration of the intuitive psychologist's shortcomings must start with his general tendency to overestimate the importance of personal or dispositional factors relative to environmental influences." According to Ross, this referred to placing excessive emphasis on internal motivations regarding the behaviours of others without being cognisant of the relevant external factors.[678] Sageman's analysis and arguments support this interpretation and approach. According to Sageman IS members share a "sense of emotional and moral outrage" when they see the slaughter of Muslims, most of whom are innocent civilians, often written off as 'collateral damage or disposable life.' Sageman thus establishes that IS is using "…religion to advance a political vision, rather than using politics to advance a religious vision."[679] A very critical and crucial difference when theorising the rise and development of IS and its violence.

After all, even the devil can quote scripture, and IS is using the dominant social medium of its society. This tactic, of linking religion and religious texts to its behaviour and responses is employed to give IS legitimacy, and Islam, the marker of identity, is used as the justification. Thus political violence contributes to or gives rise to a violent *reading* of the Quran; it is not that the Quran is inherently violent in its message. Sageman thus maintains that the conflict and retaliation is not about "religion, it's about identity . . . You identify with the victims, [with] the guys being killed by your enemies."[680] From Sageman's analysis it is evident that religion is neither the inherent driver of the violence nor the motivator of the violence and the retaliation; actually, religion is a "vehicle for outrage" and a "marker of identity."[681] In 2008, the *Guardian* newspaper revealed information from a classified MI5 briefing note on

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[676] Hasan 2015
[677] See Wood's article 2015 "What ISIS really wants"
[678] Hasan 2015
[679] Ibid
[680] Ibid
[681] Ibid

radicalisation that concluded that many of the individuals who have joined terrorist organisations are "religious novices" and individuals who do not practise their faith devoutly and consistently. In his July 2017 news report, Dunning affirms the same, stating that many of IS fighters "possess criminal backgrounds and exhibit, at best, a tenuous grasp of the faith's core precepts."[682] This confirms the information from the WikiLeaks revelations referred to in the previous chapter. The most potent piece of information from the M15 classified document however, rests with the conclusion – that of the fact that "[a] well-established religious identity actually protects against violent radicalisation."[683] If an *established religious identity protects against violent radicalisation* as documented and concluded by MI5, it would be plausible to claim that religion, in this case Islam, actually serves as a shield *against* violence and radicalisation rather than as an initiator of violence.

From these varying realities, I acknowledge Cavanaugh's challenge regarding the myth of religious violence supported by Sageman's analysis when he says that,

> we have to locate terrorism and extremism in local conflicts rather than in grand or sweeping ideological narratives – the grievances and the anger come first, he argues, followed by the convenient and self-serving ideological justifications.[684]

From the above I assert that it can then be reasonably argued that the extremism of IS can be located first in the conflict in Iraq and Syria and that it is from this geo-political context that its violence must be theorised. This rationale is supported by the respected and renowned Islamic scholar, Abdul Hakim Murad, who stated that to understand IS one must go back to the roots and the causes that gave rise to this phenomenon – the 2003 occupation of Iraq. Murad maintains that Iraqis have always been mosque-goers but the extremist and ideological interpretations that fostered the attitudes adopted by IS, was neither a *modus operandi* nor a "coherent" part of the "learned interpretations of Islam" prevalent in the understanding or practise of most Iraqis or Syrians as suggested by Wood above. To know the people, their culture, their history, their practises and their beliefs is intricate to a reasoned and comprehensive analysis of the violence, the conflict and IS. Even more pertinently, what is referred to as *Salafist extremism* was neither a feature nor an occurrence in Syria or Iraq prior to the invasion and occupation.[685] Murad further concludes,

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[682] T. Dunning "Blaming religion for Middle East violence ignores nuance and absolves governments of their responsibility" July 2017 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/7/21/deconstructing-the-idea-of-foreign-fighters-in-syria
[683] Hasan 2015
[684] Ibid
[685] Ibid

[a]ngry men, often having suffered in US detention, have reached for the narrowest and most violent interpretation of their religion they can find. This is a psychological reaction, not a faithful adherence to classical Muslim norms of jurisprudence.[686]

Supporting this interpretation and explanation, is the insights offered by French journalist Didier François, who had been held captive by IS in Syria for ten months before being released in April 2014. In an interview with Christiane Amanpour, François offers that the justification for fighting and killing that surfaced in the conversations held between himself and IS fighters was

"…not a religious discussion. It was a political discussion…It was more hammering what they were believing than teaching us about the Quran. Because it has nothing to do with the Quran."[687]

These voices, experts and lived accounts cannot be excluded in an analysis of IS and its violence, because exclusion implies an obvious selective censorship. However, the exclusion of specifically Muslim voices is heightening and according to Beydoun,

Participating in the exclusion of Muslim voices feeds into the process of dehumanising Muslims and rendering them incapable of speaking for themselves. It also deepens widely held stereotypes about Muslims as foreign, violent and subversive…[688]

This is a strategy employed by the proponents of the master's narrative that support the idea of Islam as being inherently violent. It is thus advocated that Islamic doctrine drives the actions of IS. By excluding Muslim voices, the loudest voice is the voice that feeds the propaganda and the single story narrative of 'Muslim barbarians.' This is tantamount to obscurantism. It is about continuing the narrative from Christendom, re-telling a single fabricated story - a claim of a clash of civilisations and the threat of Islam to western civilisation as a whole. The intent, I would argue is to promote the idea that despite the peaceful actions and beliefs of the majority of its almost two billion adherents, Islam is an inherently violent religion and thus groups such as IS and al Qaeda are violent 'Islamic' extremists − where the violence stems from the religion and represents a clash with the progress and achievements of western civilisation. Islam and Muslims are envious of the West's 'success.' According to Emran Qureshi and Michael A. Sells in *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, the proclamation of a civilisational conflict projects a very specific intent because it comprises a

…double function similar to that found within declarations of war. As a description, a declaration of war announces the objective reality that a state of hostility exists between two nation states. As a performance, it ushers in a state of formal hostility that entails certain ineluctable consequences.[689]

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[686] Ibid
[687] Ibid
[688] Beydoun 2017

Although the influence of writers who advocate the clash of civilisations might not have the "formal performative effect of a declaration of war," the warning implicit in the meaning of the thesis is that an "entire civilization and religion is, by definition, 'our' enemy" and when based on the logic of "pre-emptive defence" employed by states,[690] and then combined in a toxic mix with a corrupt foreign policy, such as that of the US in contemporary times, it serves as a justification to "raise a call to arms"[691] with disastrous consequences.

In this regard, the writing and its narrative is slanted to create a single story, a one-sided approach to understanding and commenting on IS. Although there may be many stories and many reports, there is only one narrative and it is about a very determined strategy to depoliticise the political. It is about using an approach that dehumanises the majority of ordinary, peace-loving, non-violent Muslims through the language of depersonalisation to continue the project of ontological suspension, whereby ethics is suspended and war is naturalised.[692] It also projects through the use of a pacifist voice when reporting or relaying about US actions and interventions, the reluctant victimhood of the US and its allies. This is affirmed by Cambanis, in detailing the nature of American society that has "confused self-defence with an impulse to kill 'every possible threat;'" a society that

> embraces war without end [and] eventually stops recognizing that its initial adrenaline response is abnormal. Fear becomes the baseline. The mirage of zero-risk and the cult of war we embraced to find it have systematically warped our politics and society.[693]

At this point I would like to stress on the continued use of specific sterile terms to depict or identify non-White, non-Christian civilian victims of conflict and violence as 'collateral damage' or 'unintended consequences' from 'precision bombings' that are aimed at 'precision targets.' These are hard, sterile words disseminating a visual imagery of objects, not humans. But the reality lies hidden in a construction of the Muslim other which, as Qureshi and Sells argue, is a construction that has dehumanised Iraqis and Muslims capitalising on the building of anti-Muslim sentiment since the Iran hostage incident. Thus even when the bombs were dropped on Iraq they "were made into little Saddams…[and]

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[689] Qureshi & Sells 2003 1-2

[690] Human Rights Commission "Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston" May 2010 http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/14session/A.HRC.14.24.Add6.pdf 15

[691] Qureshi & Sells 2003 2

[692] N. Maldonado-Torres Class lecture Summer School Granada 2 June 2016

[693] T. Cambanis "We are the war on terror, and the war on terror is us" March 2017 https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/03/23/how-imported-war-terror/IuIks5w7AzJjmNvac8LY2O/story.html?p1=Article_Related_Box_Article

covered with messages 'for Saddam,' though it was clear that those bombs were landing on just about anyone in Iraq."[694] The tools of propaganda and the weapon of language have been skilfully manipulated to orchestrate a powerful message "a typically orientalist picture of Iraqis as degenerate, primitive and untrustworthy, yet cunning and vicious."[695] The violence of the western state (its allies and proxies) is justified as a rational, desirable, national project to bring 'liberation' and 'democracy' to Muslim populations oppressed by savage Muslim men. This national project is being used to legitimate full-scale attacks and onslaughts on innocent civilian populations because as Madeleine Albright said, when questioned about the deaths of more than 50 000 children as a result of the unjustifiable aggression on the Iraqi people, "we think the price is worth it."[696]

What happens in this single story then is the fact that the focus falls on the process and not on the perpetrators or the suffering and pain of the victims. It absolves western and Arab governments from responsibility and accountability. By depersonalising the process of killing humans, there is very little to answer for and no fear of accountability. Ironically, the only time these victims are 'humanised' is when the perpetrator of the crime is IS so that the language is used to show a people, a collective whole, or a particular faith, as one thing or one representation. This one thing which is manifested and repeated then becomes that representation in the mind of the vulnerable and gullible. As Heather Marsh states,

> [t]hose not swayed solely by personalities are coerced by events, selected by media and others in power to create an emotional response which will steer public opinion in the direction they wish. For those few who look beyond personalities and events, messages can be easily co-opted by isolating certain ideas out of context. Particularly any idea which challenges deeply held convictions and would require concentrated thought is easily deflected by distracting noise and triggering fear responses.[697]

Despite the distracting noise and triggering fear responses that will label me as an IS supporter or sympathiser, I have found it necessary to animate and expose this single story, in which power makes this single story the definitive story of the person/ faith. Having cemented its bias, the single story perpetuates stereotypes, an incomplete story of the person/thing (obscurantism), and in this way the essence and identity of the person/thing is dispossessed and the one story becomes the only story. The effect of this exercise of power in the creation of the single story is that it robs people of their dignity and their humanity. It further robs the vulnerable and gullible of the opportunity to establish the truth; because the

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[694] Ibid 15
[695] B. Isakhan "Oppression and resistance in Post-colonial Iraq" in *Democracy in Iraq: History, Politics, Discourse* 2012 98
[696] Democracy Now "Democracy Now! Confronts Madeleine Albright on the Iraq Sanctions: Was It Worth the Price?" July 2004 http://www.democracynow.org/2004/7/30/democracy_now_confronts_madeline_albright_on
[697] H. Marsh "Free will and seductive coercion" April 2014 https://georgiebc.wordpress.com/2014/04/22/free-will-and-seductive-coercion/

truth will bring a demand for accountability and a demand for justice. After all, prejudice is immune to evidence. This then is Baudrillard's hyper-reality.

When the myth becomes a reality, and the stereotype gains precedence over the whole, it is but a matter of time before those who have been so labelled will defend themselves in the terms of reference developed by others to define them. Certainly, the labelling and the language inform the identity. The Muslim colonised intellectual's failure to achieve recognition is rooted in the language and systems of thought through which the Muslim understands the world. Fanon explains this in terms of a sense of inferiority and cultural epistemicide, stating that

> all [tout] colonized people — that is to say, all people within whom an inferiority complex has given birth due to the burial of a local cultural originality — find themselves face to face [se situe vis- à-v is] with the language of the civilizing nation, that is to say the culture of the metropole.[698]

And it is in this language that there exists an on-going contestation between Muslim scholars with regards the need to address circumstances of oppression and exploitation and the relationship between ethical transformation and violent social change. This is an aspect that Karen Armstrong comments on in her writings on Islam and the important debates within the Islamic scholarly tradition; specifically on the concept of Islamic law and jihad. Armstrong refers to the development of *Shariah* law as "a principled alternative to the aristocratic rule of agrarian society, since it refused to accept a hereditary class system…" and in this regard "the *Shariah* was a constant witness to the Islamic ideal of equality…."[699] There is also a very holistic and contextual essence to the *Shariah* as explained by bin Bayyah, when he says that the "sharia is …not these blind commands. It always looks at the conditions that people are in… [and] has always acknowledged that times change, conditions change and also categories change."[700]

Armstrong further adds that Al-Shafi'[701] developed the classical doctrine of jihad in which he stated that the "goal of jihad was not to convert the subject population" and that the mission

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[698] A. Davari "Shari'ati and Fanon: Political Ethics of Insurrectionary Violence" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34(1) 2014 89

[699] K. Armstrong *Fields of Blood* 2014 178

[700] cfr.org "A Conversation With Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah" June 2015 https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-shaykh-abdallah-bin-bayyah

[701] Imam Al-Shafi was a prominent Imam and Muslim jurist in the second Century who was a descendant from the Hashimi family of the Quraysh tribe, the same tribe from which the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was descended. Al-Shafi was considered as a revivalist as he developed the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence which was entitled *"usul-al-fiqh."* Imam Al-Shafi wrote his seminal work, *Al-Risala* in an effort to reconcile between the two prevailing but competing Islamic philosophies during the 700s and early 800s about how Islamic law, today known as *shariah*, should be derived. A very important contribution of this work is that Al-Shafi wanted to provide a reasonable and rational approach to deriving Islamic law; he thus incorporated four main sources 1) The Quran 2) The Sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad 3)

of Islam was to establish social justice and equity according to Quranic principles. This approach, logic and thinking has continued till today into the works and teachings of great Muslim scholars including Shaykh bin Bayyah who maintains that "the jihad, the environment that it arose in and the fact that it was really an attempt at getting to peace in violent circumstances." Bin Bayyah demands that individuals and Muslim scholars interrogate the intent behind jihad whilst asking "And so, what does it mean today? Was it founded upon a call to peace or a call to war?"[702] Al-Shafi also ruled against the militant scholars who claimed that jihad was obligatory on *all* Muslims, [703] a narrative which has surfaced in the rhetoric of IS calling it an obligation for all Muslim men to fight against the crusaders in defence of Muslim territories and lives. But, Al-Shafi's ruling was a respected interpretation, he had pondered the questions of *shura* (consultation and discussion) and had stressed on *ijma* (consensus or view of the majority) in the development of his principles of jurisprudence.

Considering that John Stuart Mill stated that "democracy was by discussion" the principles of *ijma* and *shura* in the Islamic jurisprudence are both democratic.[704] The prophet Muhammad (pbuh), in establishing the Madinan state strove to build a society wherein free men and women prioritised values such as justice, equality, peace and brotherhood. The constitution of Madina was also essentially pluralistic and it recognised the religious diversity of the city.[705] Additionally, there are varied and multiple readings and interpretations of the core Islamic texts and Islamic thought that point to the realisation that Islam constitutes a plethora of multiplicity and diversity in its practise and understanding. However, if *shura* and *ijma* form the stepping stones of Islamic law, the question that begs attention is, "What is the *majority opinion of Muslim scholars* today with regards IS and the violence it employs as a counter narrative to the single story?" Approximately 70 000 religious scholars linked with a religious festival in Ajmer in the north western state of Rajasthan in December 2015 issued a religious edict (fatwa) against IS, the Taliban, al Qaeda and other terror groups stating that they were "not Islamic organisation[s]" and that they represented a threat to humanity. An additional 1.5 million patrons who visited the festivities signed a petition against terror

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Consensus among the Muslim community 4) Analogical deduction which is known in Arabic as *Qiyas*. This framework has been accepted by all subsequent scholars of Islamic law.

[702] cfr.org "A Conversation With Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah" June 2015 https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-shaykh-abdallah-bin-bayyah

[703] Armstrong 2014 179

[704] Z. Sardar "Travesty; The very idea of an 'Islamic state' – so dear to some Muslims – is totally, un-Islamic" *New Internationalist* 2009 15

[705] Ibid 15

attacks.[706]According to Mufti Mohammed Saleem Noori, one of the clerics who signed the fatwa, it was necessary that media groups stopped referring to these groups as 'Islamic.'[707] In September 2014, a group of 126 Muslim scholars addressed an open letter to "fighters and followers" of IS and the self-declared ruler and Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[708] The letter sought to refute on a point by point basis using traditional texts, IS's references to the Islamic texts as justification for its actions. Three points that were enumerated need mentioning. The first is that "[i]t is forbidden in Islam to ignore the reality of contemporary times when deriving legal rulings; secondly, [i]t is forbidden in Islam to kill the innocent; and thirdly, [i]t is forbidden in Islam to kill emissaries, ambassadors, and diplomats; hence it is forbidden to kill journalists and aid workers."[709]

These preserves of knowledge and information are crucial to the understanding of the violence of IS, because the past, the teachings of the prominent scholars of the past and the epistemology of Islamic teachings and law have a determined impact on the reality of the present. The value of this reality is eloquently portrayed in the image of the Sankofa bird, which is derived from the Akan people of West Africa. In the Akan language, the essence and meaning of the Sankofa is expressed as "*se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenki*" which when translated literally means, "it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot."[710] The message of the Sankofa then is that it is necessary to reach back to one's roots, to gather the best of that which one's past had to teach, to revive, reclaim, preserve that which has been "lost, forgotten, forgone or been stripped of" and only then can one move forward seeking to reach one's potential in the past and the future.[711] This association of past with future is a very important link in understanding the actions of IS that reflects a challenge to the single-story interpretation which has presented Islam as the only violent religion. It is thus a story which must be re-visited and perhaps, more pertinently, re-told. For many of the IS fighters, and for those who travelled to the Caliphate in search of that new hope, identity and belonging and the promise of a common humanity, there was a determined effort to offload the shackles of the past and the tentacles of control. To live, to be human, to be Muslim and be a part of the *Ummah* it was necessary to eradicate the bondage endemic to the historical

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[706] C. Mortimer "70,000 Indian Muslim clerics issue fatwa against Isis, the Taliban, al-Qaeda and other terror groups" Independent December 2015 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/70000-indian-muslim-clerics-issue-fatwa-against-isis-the-taliban-al-qaida-and-other-terror-groups-a6768191.html

[707] Ibid

[708] L. Markoe "Muslim Scholars Release Open Letter To Islamic State Meticulously Blasting Its Ideology" September 2014 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/24/muslim-scholars-islamic-state_n_5878038.html

[709] Ibid

[710] The meaning of the symbolism of the Sankofa bird http://www.duboislc.net/SankofaMeaning.html

[711] Ibid

realm. It was necessary to forge a new and radical present. Remembering the factual past was necessary, but contingent to this remembering there emerged a new language – one that spoke about existing in the present. All of this has meaning when one is cognisant of the fact that IS has not operated nor existed in a vacuum.

In responding to phenomenon such as IS, violence is a tool employed against violence, yet one is legitimised and justified, whilst the other is deemed *Islamist terrorism*. Here, one must again question the audacity of the question. It is not about *why* one is just and the other is not, rather it should be that we ask "*How* is it that the justification of one form of violence is projected as 'just' (what are the processes, the tools) and is thus legitimated, whilst the other form/or the response is projected as 'unjust' and thus illegitimate? And whose claim of 'just' violence is amplified and why? These questions are not simply about contradictions, they highlight moral failures, the reality that the question of legitimacy is relative depending on power structures and one's geo-political location. It also reveals the frailty of the idea of the nation-state where very often "violence is the foundation of legitimacy."[712]

Significantly the issue of agency is also often overlooked in the analysis of the role of religion in conflict and violent situations. Religion of its own does not possess agency – it cannot 'do' or 'not do' anything; it is the adherents of the faith who choose to interpret the religious texts in specific ways to produce specific outcomes. The force to act is manifested in the external actions of the adherents of that faith. Thus, it would be disingenuous to claim a universal explanation for the link between religion and conflict. What is needed is a pronged analysis of the specific cultural and political contexts in which the conflict has manifested; including historical developments and the political, economic, cultural and social circumstances that have contributed to or resulted in the conflict through which these circumstances have been interpreted in religious terms by any of the conflicting parties. This kind of analysis includes the contextual and historical factors that have contributed to the framing of the situation as conflict of/over/between religions. This allows for a reframing – for the opportunity to ask my own questions, not to simply respond to another's questioning. In this regard, the question I propose is, "how and why [do] people in certain situations, contexts and times respond to both religion and conflict in the ways that they do?" Ultimately, what these questions and this analysis should do is to make us aware of the reality that many of these instances of violence are not "about mankind's macabre ability to invent new forms of murder; it's about reanimating our oldest, and collectively shared, habits of

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[712] Bulhan 1985 135

barbarism."[713] IS has learnt, observed, imitated and inflicted. Considering the onslaught on Muslims worldwide and Sunni Muslims in particular, in Iraq and Syria, IS's actions and agenda are undoubtedly puzzling. If one does a cost benefit analysis, you have to ask, who benefits from IS?

The lights dime, the actors scuffle off the stage and new props are added. The show is not over.

3.4 Conclusion

Chapter three was a critical analysis of the conceptual history of the violence of IS by interrogating the violence as a concrete action undertaken in the pursuit of certain interests. It considered the role of agency, because "religion" as an actor, does not have agency - and the destructive and disruptive operations of state power. It is necessary to state here that throughout this elaborate enactment of the theatre of violence, actors consistently re-alligned themselves and established new allegiances. No single actor in this conflict has maintained loyalty to their allies. There are pacts between IS, the US, the different Iraqi regimes and Assad. It is not a single pact. And it is not between all simultaneously. For instance, the Assadist regime had formed a pact with IS for months and attacked all the areas in and around Raqqa, including the Syrian opposition groups. On the other hand, the coalition of regimes and foreign forces (this includes the US), simultaneously targeted Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham, killing dozens of innocent civilians including women and children yet both these organisations were fighting IS. In other words, the US coalition did Assad a favour. There should be no confusion into believing that the US is an 'ethical' actor and that because it is leading the coalition against Assad it has not aligned with Assad on certain occasions. The situation on the ground has been fluid, and coalitions and allegiances have morphed into what each actor considers strategic for itself at that moment. These realities cannot be overlooked. In the case of IS, Assad, Iraq and the US, the consequences of the shifting alliances/allegiances has had very obvious outcomes – the deaths of mostly Muslims, the destruction of Islamicate infrastructure and knowledge and an attack on Islam and the Islamicate. Animating the different pacts or alliances, does not suggest that IS is a Western invention – but it has certainly served specific western interests. This can be clearly understood if one ask, "Who benefits from IS?" It is not Islam and it is not the Muslims.

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[713] T. McCoy & A. Taylor "Islamic State says immolation was justified; experts on Islam say no" February 2015 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/04/the-chilling-reason-the-islamic-state-burned-a-jordanian-pilot-alive/?utm_term=.85f56552cfa0

The rise of IS, its development and violence has occurred in the context of the state and state violence. It manifests as a two-faced persona, a Janus-face in this context. On the one hand, when trying to consolidate power, attract foot soldiers and gain legitimacy it uses the language of its distorted manipulations and interpretations of Islam, to justify its actions. But what must be considered in the analysis is that a justification is not the same as a motivation for the violence. In this instance, religion is a currency to attract the hopeless, the helpless and the largely ignorant desperate victims of the conflict. In this instance also, IS uses very appealing language- as that of saviour, bestower of dignity, challenger of the humiliated, avenger of the rapists, restorer of the faith etc. On the other hand, despite claiming to be the saviour and protector of Islam and Muslims, IS has killed more Muslims than Muslims, it has destroyed Islamicate heritage and knowledge and it has fuelled Islamophobic violence against Muslims worldwide. IS and its actions have also been rejected by the majority Sunni Muslim scholars and Muslims generally. To cite IS's 'reliance' on Islam in the form of Wahhabism as the main factor in its violence is to ignore what IS fighters themselves say on different platforms and to ignore that IS is not a monolithic body. Additionally, placing Wahhabism simply within a religious ambit would be short-sighted as IS and other rebellion groups are consolidated under multiple rationales – political, religious, structural and social. It also ignores the reality that this interpretation by IS, one that is not endorsed by or subscribed to by the *Ummah* in general, is now presented as Islam, whilst the authority on Islam i.e the general common sense understanding of the *Ummah*, is referenced as not knowing what Islam is. Thirdly, it is to ignore the fact that Wahhabism is a political ideology and it constitutes a minority of followers using religion as a tool. Although the violence of IS has commonly been referred to as a 'religiously inspired violence,' usually presented as 'wanton, barbaric' and linked to Islam, academic research, historical narratives and opinion pieces by respected academics and professionals suggested that the analyses needed to shift from a concentration only on the politics of religion to the politics of violence and the politics of the state. This shift necessitated also the consideration of emotional factors when there is violence and pointed to the discovery that in academia and the security sector, emotion, especially the emotion of the *other* has yet to be considered seriously, let alone considered at all.

The violence of IS was analysed using different templates where specific attention was directed to three core templates. These included violence in language, violence as a strategy and tactic and IS's use of violence as a response to geo-politics where the central emphasis on

historical and political factors in the creation of IS and its violence was considered. The basis for these three core templates was to consider the consequences of viewing a culture and a religion as a threat, and to answer specific questions in relation to IS. By applying these different templates and then considering how they function to produce, re-produce and solicit violence it was possible to consider the political and not only the religious in theorising the violence of IS. The chapter began with a discussion on violence and how language is used to generate a particular narrative of the violence of IS. The story of IS has largely been narrated by the media. Thus it is not coincidental the way in which news stories are framed in relation to violent incidences involving perpetrators who claim to be or are identified as Muslim. Similar approaches are applied in most news stories and reports about IS with the careful persistence to always conflate IS with Islam and Muslims.

Essentially, the extent and nature of the violence of IS included many factors. The first of these related to the way in which violence was conceptualised. A concern with discussing or analysing violence has been related to the ability to name and detect violence beyond physical violence and to recognise that violence as a response to the different forms and types of violence that exist can be either subjective or structural. By using IS as a representation of Islam and Muslims to generate a hostility to Islam and Muslims in general, this hostility has led to aggravated effects and it has had a boomerang effect. In certain instances it has contributed to what scholars claim to be a sense of isolation, anger, animosity and alienation among Muslims in the West, fuelling the call for foreign fighters to join the Caliphate. But more worryingly is the matter of linking the identity of IS with *Muslimness*, conflating all Muslims with IS which has resulted in a form of collective punishment (violence) against all Muslims. IS has made it evident that in dealing with extreme atrocities, revenge and retribution feature high in the motivation for taking up arms. Furthermore, the violent counter of IS and the rise and development of IS is linked to the struggle and contestation with the state and its proxies – both in Iraq and Syria. Considering that the response from the Syrian and Iraqi regimes, their proxies and their foreign allies have been exceptionally violent from the outset, the use of violence by IS as a tactic was advanced and explained. Although IS has been significantly defeated at the time of writing these conclusions, the dark shadows of state violence, massacre, torture and collective punishment, make it necessary to state that IS 2.0 is not unimaginable nor unlikely. Increasingly it has become evident that the growing persecution of the Sunni Arabs who have been subject to increased central government crackdowns mutated the popular movement into an armed struggle and should this continue,

it is likely that the resistance will continue. Although IS was not what could be described as the 'popular movement' it gained support and where it was able to inflict harm on those considered as the enemies and oppressors of the Sunni population, it achieved a semblance of legitimacy.

IS's challenge to the excess of state power (mythic violence) as manifested in the US-led and US-controlled Iraqi state which perpetrated gross violent acts against the Iraqi population, and of the Sunni Muslims in particular, was to respond with violence. Thus, the violence of IS could be considered by considering the effect of situations of extreme political repression where there are also questions about the legitimacy of the government. It was also advanced that the stigmergic effect of such repression and perceived injustice would eventually have repercussions which are heightened when there are unresolved conflicts and lingering political tensions with historical roots. Having shifted the lens from morality to tactic, from legitimate/just to illegitimate/unjust violence in the discussion on mythic/divine violence related to the excess of state violence and from the explanation of horizontal violence as a possible explanation for IS's violence on Muslim civilians the chapter then focused on the template of the myth of religious violence.

Advancing the myth of religious violence served to advance the goals of those with and desirous of power which have been used in domestic and foreign policy to marginalise and dehumanise Muslims and to portray the violence of the secular state as a justified intervention in order to protect western civilisation and the secular subject. The practical application of this myth and its link to distorted images of Islam and Muslims will become apparent in chapter four in the discussion on race, religion and empire. A take home message about the myth of religious violence is that it has largely been a colonial project which served to perpetuate the abhorrence of dying in the name of religion, whilst glorifying the valour and bravery of dying for the nation-state. If there is a particular affinity to endorse the choice of violence by IS as that of religion only, then the varied effects and impact of the Sykes-Picot agreement, the devastating consequences of US foreign intervention and meddling in the MENA and in Iraq and Syria in particular, the destruction of the Iraqi state and the creation of a power vacuum that fostered the birth of AQI and the orchestration of secular violence and division as an on-going project from the time of Lord Curzon's promulgations all fall to the way side, with the focus being only on religion. It is also to ignore the known facts that almost a third of IS commanders are former Baathist soldiers and that IS is a secular Baathist

renaissance project. In terms of academic integrity, this would be unacceptable and ethically repulsive knowing that there are multiple triggers to the conflict and the violence.

Ultimately it should be noted that in the case of IS, the political environment has been exceptionally repressive, suppressive and violent, where both the regimes in Syria and Iraq together with their proxies and allies have not hesitated to militarise extensively and enforce collective punishment on the civilian population. Chapter three thus highlighted how violence becomes reciprocal, how it is a tactic and choice in responding to different forms of aggression as a result of othering and how the language around IS has been constructed to constitute a particular (questionable?) reality that then determined how IS is dealt with. Although IS may claim to represent an 'authentic' pre-colonial Islam, the very lens through which they view Islam has been tainted by colonialism. The language and descriptions, the history and feelings of how they understand their past has been moulded from within the colonial mind-set. It is an inversion of the victim-saviour narrative, yet at the same time reflects an adoption of the master's logic which manifests in the critical discourse analysis of the Paris attacks in chapter four. Although IS claims to be the victim, and believes itself to be the saviour of Muslims, iterating the West's attack on Islam and Muslims, IS has killed more Muslims than non-Muslims/westerners in its conflict with the western regimes that are interfering in its region. IS has also imitated the tactics of brutality, exclusion, torture and singularity of identity that it criticises the West for. This is the double-mask, the theatre of deception - one face crying victim, the other, projecting exactly as its oppressor. Thus, chapter three sets the stage for unpacking the language of violence and othering that is examined in chapter four. It is between these two chapters that one can connect the way in which the language about IS and its violence has been used to construct a particular *theatrical image* that is then imposed upon the audience through what can be recognised as a forced consensus operative and employed in the mainstream western media. It is in chapter four that one begins to understand how the operative language 'allows' the western regimes to invade the homeland of the other through the claim of just war and the saviour ideals of protecting a progressive and civilised West and its system of democracy.

Chapter 4: The Master's Logic: A critical discourse analysis of the Paris attacks of November 2015

...but the work of man is only just beginning and it remains to man to conquer all the violence entrenched in the recesses of his passion

And no race possesses the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of force, and there is a place for all at the rendez-vous of victory

Aimé Césaire[714]

In chapter three I focused on a number of possible explanations for the violence of IS. These included the templates on Islamophobia, colonialism, colonial violence, coloniality, tactic, language and the myth of religious violence as factors that have contributed not only to the violence of IS but to its rise and development as well. These templates have now been integrated into this chapter in a more practical sense, through a critical discourse analysis of the Paris attacks of November 2015, focusing on Cameron's words as exemplary of hegemonic Western discourse and the political projects of the ruling elite, in order to animate the role and effect of language, of history and of memory in determining how concepts, entities and even traditions have come to be understood over time. It is contextually specific and relates to the Muslim other as represented by IS which is then transferred to Islam and Muslims, and it is here that one understands the impact of not noticing race in international relations and the extent and effect of white supremacy in the history of the field of international relations.[715] It also traces how the distortions that created a *doshmani*[716] between Islam and the West has continued since the 16th Century to justify attacks, foreign interventions and invasions on Muslim homelands - in this instance as a 'response' to the violence of IS. This is an interwoven story; of an entity called IS that includes an attack on Islam and Muslims. There is no separation, because it seems that this is what has been intended. This claim will be brought to light in what follows with regards the dehumanisation of Muslims, the call for collective apologies, the manifesting of Muslim civilian deaths as unworthy victims, all in the fight against IS.

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four is an interrogation of the question: "Is the violence of IS a response to modernity/coloniality and/or the result of a clash with western values and ideals only?" To answer these questions, I look at the Paris attacks of November 2015 and from the events,

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[714] S. Chopra "Aimé Césaire's Immortal, Eminently Quotable Line" https://samirchopra.com/tag/aime-cesaire/
[715] D. Kumar "Islamophobia and Empire: An Intermestic Approach to the Study of Anti-Muslim Racism" in *What is Islamophobia? Racism, Social Movements and the State* N. Massoumi, T. Mills & D. Miller (eds). 2017 64
[716] Doshmani is an animosity

conversations, language and responses that manifested around this event, I trace the development of this claim of IS's clash with and animosity to the West. This is done through considering the West's relationship with Islam, because the common sense understanding that has come to pass when advocating that IS is at a clash with western civilisation, actually means that Islam is at a clash with the West and western civilisation. There exists an undeniable conflation between IS and Islam in the manner in which this subject is broached. This again hearkens to the discussions in the foregoing chapter about how terms and concepts are used without any conceptual clarity and meanings are then inferred. It goes further, poignantly highlighting Arendt when she said that conceptual clarity is indicative of a form of watchful thinking; where deafness to linguistic meanings can result in blindness to the realities they correspond to.

A secondary aspect of the claim of a clash with the West is the linking of IS's ideology to certain "radical"[717] Muslim scholars who are touted as having radicalised IS and other groups through their work. In this regard, I examine the scholarly contributions of two of these scholars to determine the radical claim and to assess if what they have written has contributed to a clash with the West because of its (the West's) progress and values or if their arguments are a response to modernity. This section is introduced in this chapter because the labelling of IS and Muslims and the blaming of the scholars featured extensively after the Paris attacks when analysing the Paris attackers. Although I have already considered ibn Tamiya and *Wahhabism* in chapter two under the discussion on IS's ideology, it was necessary to include Qutb and Abdu in this chapter specifically to answer the questions on IS's hatred of western progress and values and IS's (and by default Islam's) response to modernity. It is here that I need to take pause. When western values are invoked, one must ask, "What are these values and for who are they?" Furthermore, when Angela Merkel spoke of "the right of each individual to pursue happiness and of living together in respect and tolerance"[718] did this include the right of Muslims in the MENA because these are rights they have been protesting for, yet have been denied because of the western imposed script that functions through coloniality in their countries. So, when values and freedoms are spoken off, are they particularistic? This question is also raised in the discussions that follow. This chapter thus brings together the various theories, arguments and analysis offered in chapters two and three

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[717] This term is problematic as it signifies different things for different people and more importantly does not necessarily imply a negative trait. In certain instances being "radical" can be positive and can contribute to a desired outcome. "Radical" can be progressive, reforming or far-reaching. It does not necessarily have to be violent or forceful.

[718] M. Eddy "Merkel tells Germans, Freedom is Stronger than Terror" https://www.nytimes.com/live/paris-attacks-live-updates/merkel/ November 2015

by centering these discussions around one episode of IS's violence, that of the Paris attacks. The focus here is on the meta-context, where the violence of IS is contextualised in this single moment amidst the noise of the mainstream media and the propaganda arms of both IS and the different states. By following this approach, I am questioning the validity of imposing dominant texts or readings on a particular phenomenon where the "persuasive power of a particular reading"[719] is advanced as the only or absolute reading.

This chapter also interrogates the western story or 'response.' By focusing on the word 'response' I intended for a camera zoom out, to bring into sharp focus the pervasive violence of coloniality which together with the violent political repression of the surrogate leaders in most of the Arab states have been instrumental in denying Muslim political agency thus facilitating for IS. In almost every instance of reportage, including the Paris attacks, the narrative implies that IS 'has attacked,' that 'IS has unleashed terrible violence' – nowhere does the potential exist to suggest that IS has attacked *in response to* or that IS was birthed because of… It is about blaming one side, one world – whilst claiming victimhood for the self. Essentially, the single story unwaveringly suggests that IS was violently *offensive* because Islam is violent and at a clash with western values and freedoms and so a response (defence) was necessary in order to protect the western world and its civilisation. This already sets the scene for two separate worlds, for binary analysis and for division. Us vs. Them. This was certainly the single story from western leaders after the Paris attacks of November 2015.

This is the theatre, the exhibition of the spectacle, wherein the lights have been dimmed and the outlines of many characters have become fuzzy. It is from these shadowy borders and from the rare moments when bursts of light appear to illuminate the entire stage that I now weave together another story. This is the second story and it exists to re-tell a narrative that has been unfolding for hundreds of years. For this (re)telling, attention to the detail in the history of this region and specific historical circumstances are important. It is necessary to repeat that from my research it has become apparent that due to the conceptual haze that has been allowed to develop on this subject, so much so that there is an assumption that IS and Islam are one and the same, this section responds to the various questions on IS by including Islam as a separate entity into the analysis. It thus brings together the discussions on IS and Islam vs. modernity, foreign fighters and western freedoms, and IS and Islam in the clash of civilisations thesis amidst the nuances and complexities operational in this event. In

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[719] S. Sayyid " The dynamics of a postcolonial war" *Defence Studies* 13(3) 2013 279

considering the various reports and comments, policy statements of public-officials and the commentaries of journalists, the focus of this chapter is to interrogate that dominant reading or persuasive language that claims that Muslims and IS 'hate the West and its freedoms' as opposed to the understanding that IS and other fighter groups hate the West because of *what they are doing to 'us/Muslims.'*

4.2 Opening Scene: Cameron's flashbacks and fantasies

The only certainty about wars is the way they start; no one knows how they end. As the Syrian tragedy approximates those of 'the good war' in Afghanistan or 'the bad war' in Iraq, then the Syrian conflict must of necessity be 'the ugly war.'

Zaman Stanizai[720]

In this section I begin with an analysis of Cameron's words after the Paris attacks in order to unpack Zizek's argument about violence in language based on the understanding that language involves forms of patronising and domination. In this scene we are dealing with "*the good, the bad and the ugly*" though it is almost impossible to say with certainty which actor fills which role absolutely. On the 13th of November 2015, Paris was attacked by gunmen and suicide bombers who claimed to be acting on behalf of IS. It was announced that 130 people were killed and that 368 persons were injured. As soon as the attacks became known, European leaders rallied to their propaganda platforms, condemned the attacks by *Islamist/Islamic terrorists*, and pledged their allegiance and support to France. Of course, this was signatory of old allegiances and power plays, of a "Britain and France, two nations whose ancient empires carved up the Levant between them, cannot keep out of it. They see national interest and danger where none exists."[721] Yet in spite of the obvious non-danger from the people in these regions, the collective people of the Levant are still portrayed in villainous terms because of the actions of certain individuals who claim to be aligned with IS. One must ask, "Why?"

Of significance, are the terms, *Islamist/Islamic terrorists*.[722] The language conjured in responding to the IS 'inspired' attack and the resultant narrative disseminated by the

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[720] Z. Stanizai "Understanding Syria: How a Cold Front Chilled the Damascus Spring"
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zaman-stanizai/understanding-syria-how-a_b_3500457.html
[721] Ibid
[722] See Fox News "The Latest: Trump blames 'Islamic terrorist' in Paris attack" February 2017
http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/02/03/latest-trump-blames-islamic-terrorist-in-paris-attack.html &Firstpost "Nice Attack: Islamist terror, wilful denial and the rise of right-wing forces" which states, " "France as a whole is under the threat of Islamist terrorism."http://www.firstpost.com/world/nice-attack-islamic-terror-wilful-denial-and-rise-of-right-wing-forces-2895420.html & R. Barkan "NYC Congressman: Paris Attacks Show 'Islamic Terrorism' Threatens 'Free People'" November 2015 http://observer.com/2015/11/nyc-congressman-paris-attacks-show-islamic-terrorism-threatens-free-

European leaders and mainstream media is what warrants special attention to this incident, because, as mentioned in the foregoing, it is about the single-story. The focus of the western reportage was to stress that the *Islamist terrorists* were engaged in an "attack on *all* of humanity" and that they were against the "universal values" that "we all" (Europeans) share. Additionally, the language was replete with expressions of victimhood, and innuendos of the manifestation of a clash of civilisations by referencing phrases and words such as, "victims", "solidarity with the French", "attack on the liberties the Continent represents", "murderers who hate this life of freedom" and "the right of each individual to pursue happiness and of living together in respect and tolerance."[723] The British Prime Minister, David Cameron haughtily stated, "[t]hey attack us because of *who we are*, *not because of what we do*" and called on MPs to support his bid to bomb "woman-*raping*, *Muslim-murdering*, *Medieval* monsters" (my emphasis).[724] It is here that we see how the dialogue is always presupposed by the theme of the hegemonic or dominant narrative. All of these words focused on producing very specific meanings to justify violence or possible military attacks against IS (and dense Muslim populations), in *response* to the violence of IS. These words also reinvigorated a particular idea – a belief generated centuries ago of "medieval" Muslims and the evil inherent in them. These words served as theatrics, to direct the discourse into the manufactured consensus of a clash of civilisations. But did the IS inspired cells attack Paris because they felt like attacking some foreigners in some foreign land - "for the hell of it?" or because "Islam told them to do so?" or because they were "envious of the West's progress?"

With those questions in mind, let's bring Cameron's words back into focus. His words echo anti-Islam, Islamophobic and orientalist tropes which depict Islam as "a religion of violence and lust—aggressive jihad in this world, and sensual pleasure promised in the next world."[725] Cameron's comment achieves another more nuanced objective. By naming and shaming the monster instantly within a very particular framework, and by stressing the desire to punish the oriental Joker, both Cameron and the press were able to evoke "an imperialist and indeed

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people/ & TheEconomist "Terror attacks" January 2015 which stated in this article, "EUROPE has suffered many Islamist terrorist attacks in recent years…" http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/01/daily-chart-8
[723] K.de Vries "Barack Obama calls Paris massacre outrageous" 14 November 2015 http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/13/politics/paris-terror-attacks-obama/ ; K. Gander "Paris attacks: David Cameron 'shocked' after 100 people killed in French capital" 14 November 2015 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/paris-attacks-david-cameron-shocked-by-violence-in-french-capital-a6734276.html ; M. Eddy "Paris Attacks: The Violence, Its Victims and How the Investigation Unfolded" 14 November 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/live/paris-attacks-live-updates/merkel/
[724] K. Schofield "David Cameron: We must bomb the 'Medieval monsters' of Isil" 2 December 2015 https://www.politicshome.com/foreign-and-defence/articles/story/david-cameron-we-must-bomb-medieval-monsters-isil
[725] D.J. Vitkus "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Europe" in Western views of Islam in medieval and early modern Europe D.R Blanks & M. Frassetto [eds] 1999 217

racist ideology of relations between nations, which contributes to the continuity of imperialist and neo-colonialist relations in practice."[726] In other words, Cameron's words set the scene for more incursions into the homeland of the Muslim other, on the basis that he had the power and authority to do so. This link between race, religion and empire is explored theoretically in the next section. It traces the historical development of the Muslim other, the distortion of narratives about Islam and Muslims that continued into the grand tale of the Orient, the resultant dehumanisation of Muslims, the attacks on *bilad al-Sham* and the response from IS and the foreign fighters in Paris. Cameron's choice of words are also linked to the concerted effort to distort and deflect pertinent facts, the most lucid being the fact that the British and its allies had bombed Iraq into oblivion, and that they had justified this bombing, based on a lie. The eschewing of these facts and the focusing instead on religion in the violence of IS in the Paris attacks was poignantly crafted in this context to continue the single story narrative. It also served a second very powerful agenda -that of absolving many of the "governments in the Middle East and elsewhere of their responsibility."[727]

It was to absolve Britain from this responsibility. It was to absolve the US, France and those in the coalition of the killing from this responsibility despite the fact that the "American project in Iraq was founded on self-deception."[728] However, the war on Iraq, Afghanistan and now in Syria is more than self-deception. It is about an "'indiscriminate'" savagery which "has been planned, deliberate, and systematic."[729] And it is in the height of this savagery that a savage (IS) from amongst the savages was unleashed. The savagery and self-deception as mentioned above has been reproduced in multiple ways. The most pertinent being the fabrication of evidence to justify the invasion of Iraq. Qureshi, Mafille and ex-Guantanamo Bay detainee, Moazzam Begg maintain that the Chilcot report in its final analysis should have recognised that the case for war against Iraq was made from confessions extracted from torture and that the occurrence of violence and excess from IS, functions in a context under which torture was normalised.[730] This is linked to the fact that Blair was warned about the likely mayhem that would ensue in a post-invasion Iraq,[731] whilst in 2002, US Secretary of

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[726] J. E Richardson (*Mis)Representing Islam: The racism and rhetoric of British broadsheet newspapers* 2004 163

[727] T. Dunning "Blaming religion for Middle East violence ignores nuance and absolves governments of their responsibility" July 2017 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/7/21/deconstructing-the-idea-of-foreign-fighters-in-syria

[728] M.C. Behrent "Mugged by Reality – Again: The Iraq War as Philosophy of History" *la vie des idees.*fr 5

[729] C. Boggs "Imperialism and the Logic Of Mass Destruction" May 2017 https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/05/04/imperialism-and-the-logic-of-mass-destruction/

[730] . Qureshi, A. Mafille & M. Begg "The Iraq war was born and raised in torture" July 2016 http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/iraq-war-was-born-and-raised-torture-1531773609

[731] Ibid

State, Colin Powell "predicted 'a terrible bloodletting of revenge after Saddam goes.'"[732] Additionally, the British had been complicit in the lies spun by the US to justify the war against Iraq, a war which subsequently birthed IS. This is evident from the Meguerba case which yielded intelligence from torture and where the 'fabricated' piece of evidence was then used to consolidate Britain's support for the US to invade Iraq. It was well documented that the information from this case was gleaned through a false confession, nonetheless, it was "sent to the US to buff up their case for the Iraq war."[733] A war which Britain not only supported but lobbied for as well. A war which birthed IS; and of the consequences of that birthing have been the Paris and Manchester attacks.

As author Sheldon Richman, states,

> one has to work hard to make a mystery of anti-American (and anti-Western) terrorism emanating from the Middle East. It takes prodigious effort to maintain an air of innocence about San Bernardino and Paris, because no one who claims to be informed can plead ignorance of the long history of U.S. and Western imperialism in the Muslim world… the U.S. government's systematic support of compliant autocratic and corrupt Arab monarchies and dictatorships, its empowering of Iraqi Shi'ite Muslims, and its unconditional backing of Israel's brutal anti-Palestinian policies.[734]

Additionally, what has been particularly disturbing to the coalition of savages is that this savage became a renegade. IS forced a change in the script for which it seems none of the regular savages in the theatre were prepared, but it also reinforced aspects of the script in many other ways. That is the first unsettling. The second is to deal with the narratives and those power agendas that they conceal. For instance, in relation to the Iraq invasion there is another sinister reality that is well known but not so openly discussed. Steve Richards states that Blair's decision to invade Iraq was not only about lies. Asking the question, "Why did Tony Blair go to war in Iraq?" has been the wrong question. The questions should rather focus on a consideration of the political. What Blair had to decide on was "should I support President Bush who has decided he wants to remove Saddam Hussein"[735] from power? From the outset, the intention to attack Iraq was regime change, masqueraded through a grand narrative – a lie about WMDs and barbaric *Islamist terrorists*. A grand narrative of religious hatred used as a smokescreen for economic gain. And it was about regime change for the benefit of western interests, not for the benefit of the people of Iraq. What is more disturbing is the nonchalant tone in which the lives of Iraqis were considered in favour of western

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[732] TheGuardian "Chilcot report: key points from the Iraq inquiry" July 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/06/iraq-inquiry-key-points-from-the-chilcot-report

[733] Qureshi July 2016

[734] S. Richman "Why Do They Hate Us? It's No Mystery" December 2015 https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/12/09/why-do-they-hate-us-its-no-mystery/

[735] S. Richards "Why did Tony Blair go to war in Iraq? That's not even the right question" July 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/05/tony-blair-iraq-war-chilcot

interests and allies, recognisable in Blair's letters to Bush which stated, "that the removal of Saddam Hussein would 'free up the region'[for what exactly?] even if Iraqis may '*feel ambivalent about being invaded*' [my emphasis]*."*[736] Thus, in immersing himself with fantasies of western grandeur and flashbacks of medieval Muslims, what Cameron did not comprehend, or rather, refused to comprehend, was that the neurosis and trauma that developed in the region as a result of the invasion, based on a lie, a lie that destroyed countless lives and infrastructure ignited a hatred, anger and desire for revenge in many IS fighters and others who associated or identified with the suffering of the Iraqis. These facts, these sinister, ulterior motives and these lies have not been lost on the victims of the Anglo-Saxon murderers. The victims-cum-fighters-cum-savages have articulated it poignantly when James Foley, the American journalist was killed by IS fighters. IS's response was that he "knew that Americans were not welcome in Muslim lands because of their government's shameless and lengthy record of aggression against Muslims."[737] Foley's death was revenge for Muslim lives. IS had determined to resort to tit-for-tat attacks. Attacks on foreign soil were not to be ruled out.

But in Cameron's perilous understanding, the fact that foreign interventions, invasions, occupation, coloniality, torture and violent harm on entire populations had resulted in a 'response of violence' from IS's foreign recruits was incomprehensible. Significantly, Bernie Sanders affirms that "we [the US] cannot continue with simply using military as a means of addressing foreign policy issues."[738] That these individuals wanted revenge as was already predicted by the West's own analysts, was an analysis that could not be entertained; because it would mean asking, "Revenge for what?" Cameron's claim that "[t]hey attack us because of who we are, not because of what we do," contradicts IS's justifications and motivations for the Paris attacks. In *Dabiq*, issue 12, in the foreword and in the discussion on IS military operations, the following is written,

> The eight knights brought Paris down on its knees, after years of French conceit in the face of Islam… and [IS will] retaliate with fire and bloodshed **in revenge for** … the multitudes killed and injured in crusader airstrikes in the lands of the Muslims.[739]

It is thus not difficult or implausible to appreciate that "IS markets itself as fighting against tyranny, foreign occupation, imperialism and injustice."[740] Ethically, the analysis on IS and

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[736] TheGuardian July 2016
[737] Dabiq Issue 3 Shawaal 1435 37
[738] M. Hasan "Bernie Sanders to Democrats: This is what a radical foreign policy looks like" September 2017
https://theintercept.com/2017/09/22/bernie-sanders-interview-foreign-policy/
[739] Dabiq Issue 12 Safar 1437 28;47

the Paris bombings cannot be reduced to single truths and claims, validations and absolute facts without the "precincts of the contexts or situations or paradigms or communities that give them their local and changeable shape."[741]

As the *curtain draws* on this opening scene, we see the pompous pretensions of aggressive western states unleashing violence on the homeland of the other, and then blaming the other for getting angry and seeking revenge. We see the swift retaliation, in a tit-for-tat move. We see the thick moving of the finger of reprimand from western leaders and surrogates saying "How dare you attack us?" whilst the Joker points back and says "How dare you kill us?" We see the victims, ungodly figures, buried beneath piles of rubble, bodies of the other who were at the wrong place at the wrong time. And we see the savages, those who refuse to die. As the stage is hurriedly cleared, the foul stench of death and lies remain. But a grand effort is made to gloss over with a new, more modern setting. The pompous leaders now have branded suits and sport designer cufflinks, the savage with his black flag and turban is a contrast to what the directors affirm are glaring opposites. One is coherent, masterful and articulate, whilst the one considered as the other, incoherent in his foreign tongue and savage aggression. One, modern and progressive, the other, old-fashioned and unpalatable. But, the Manichaean picture is disturbed by a nagging, shrill voice which jerks the mind to the present, to a question that must be asked, "What has generated this antagonism between the West and Islam?"

4.3 Scene two: IS on the stage: between Islam and the West

Every major political disaster spawns its own philosophy of history

Michael. C. Behrent[742]

This section develops the interrogation of the *scene* above, where the language of Cameron advocated for violence against the Muslim other whilst pretending ignorance at the cost of regime change in the *House of Horrors* – in the land of the Joker, *bilad-al-Sham*. Thus for Cameron, IS deserved to be punished…irrespective the harm that the coalition of the killing had and would continue to visit on the people of Iraq. The "just war" morality, an example of "western values" thus became the site of contention in the Paris attacks as both sides vied for control of the narrative.

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[740] T. Dunning "Blaming religion for Middle East violence ignores nuance and absolves governments of their responsibility" July 2017 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/7/21/deconstructing-the-idea-of-foreign-fighters-in-syria

[741] Sayyid 2013 279

[742] Behrent "Mugged by Reality – Again: The Iraq War as Philosophy of History"

4.3.1 IS in the Game of Thrones

Oh, tell me who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal interests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else?

F.Dostoevsky quoted in The Long Read, Mishra's The Age of Anger[743]

From the above it is evident that there has been a central idea dominating the present discourse on IS (and the previous discourse on al-Qaeda) in light of the Paris attacks. It is driven by an egoistic idea of a superior, more modern West and a barbaric, savage and old-fashioned Islam that simply hates the West and its freedoms. Simple enough. Thus, in this *game of thrones[744]* the framing of IS and by association, Islam as barbaric and the Muslim as Medieval-monsters has been prioritised. It is from this language that we see a history that manufactured the clash of civilisations single-story, projecting animosity onto the Muslim other. It is from this projection, these distortions that we are faced with the deaths of millions of Muslims – deaths that IS has invoked and sought to avenge. It is also from this projection, that we have the delusional claim that the Paris attacks were not because of what the West has done (based on lies and corrupt foreign policies) in MMC but because IS and by default Muslims, hate western progress. Yet this "progress" signifies death, destruction and mayhem, dehumanising the resident of the Orient and perpetuating the idea of animosity.

It is in this *game of thrones*, a bizarre setting in an even more bizarre killing field called *bilad-al-Sham* that I now journey into a questioning of western values – of "just war," of ethics, of ontology, of race, of progress and of humanity. It is necessary to examine these western values and their essence, against the backdrop of Cameron's words, "Muslim-murdering, Medieval monsters," that describe IS, and by association - Muslims, as inherently evil and violent. Cameron's words are by no means arbitrary, nor are they random. They have been carefully selected and timeously articulated to continue the race-religion-empire entanglement that worked to dehumanise Muslims and which is now being used once again. In this frame of thought and consideration we must ask "Why? Who benefits from an "Islamic bogeyman," an entity that gives currency to dehumanise a people, conveniently appears at timeous instances and through its actions opens the way for foreign interventions and incursions into the homeland of the other? Isn't peace a more favoured value of the 'civilised' world" As the pendulum swings between the fabrications and distortions of the

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[743] Mishra 2016
[744] The game of thrones metaphor (not capitals G) is a reference to the fight for power and domination, a fight not about religion but about domination.

past and the lies of the present, lies of WMDs and oppressed Muslim women, of the need to democratise an uncivilised people and to protect western freedoms - images of the Muslim other keep recurring. It is here that I take pause once again. This is because it is necessary to explain my approach. One might well ask, what is the purpose of this discussion, this analysis of race, religion and empire, of theology and theodicy to the Paris attacks and IS? I would argue that to understand IS's violence and attacks, this time on western targets in a foreign land requires an examination of the meta-context that birthed IS. As stressed previously, violence is not random and it needs to be contextualised. This approach also serves to answer another more significant question- one that I posed in chapter three. Considering that of the civilian deaths recorded from March 2011 until November 2016, IS has been responsible for 1.48% (2998) of the deaths, why the obsession with IS *and not* the greatest perpetrator, or those actors responsible for the 98.52% of the deaths? Surely the primary focus should be on the aggressor that has the monopoly on deaths and is most active in the killing fields?

So how does this deflection occur and why? From the 16th century onwards, western modernity[745] has been operating within the boundaries of the modern colonial ontology where discourses on humanity and in this instance on Islam and Muslims have become sedimented in the belief of Europeans which originated from a Christian myth in the Old Testament about Ham, the son of Noah. It is claimed that Ham "who was cursed for beholding the nakedness of his father was the original progenitor of the black races."[746] The dark-skinned Moors and Moorish Muslims of Africa, in relation to this myth were seen as a sign of in-born evil.[747] This inherent evil, attributed to the dark-skinned peoples and Muslims is the same logic applied to the narrative of today in the justifications motivated by western states for their foreign incursions into MMC, for their determined focus only on IS (where IS is the talking point in the Syrian and Iraqi conflict) and for their justifications in attacking IS whilst killing excessive numbers of civilians. Take for instance the facts from Airwars. According to Airwars, the Trump administration killed 2200 civilians between January and July 2017 in Iraq and Syria and though "Britain, France, Australia, and Belgium" were active in the coalition of the killing, "unlike the U.S. they each deny civilian casualties."[748] These murders with impunity are linked to power plays, the scramble for resources and dominance and the

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[745] Western modernity is understood fundamentally as the pursuit of progress and perfection. It does not account for the exploitation and harm that accompanied this pursuit, referred to as the underside or dark side of western modernity. See W.D. Mignolo *The Darker Side of western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* 2011 2-3

[746] Vitkus 1999 223-225

[747] Vitkus 1999 223-225

[748] S. Oakford "Trump's Air War Has Already Killed More Than 2,000 Civilians" July 2017 http://www.thedailybeast.com/president-trumps-air-war-kills-12-civilians-per-day

desire for empire. In considering the persuasive power of a particular reading it is evident that power plays a foundational role in the formation of reality, especially by a "practitioner of statecraft."[749]

It is this logic that manifested when Cameron described IS as medieval-monsters. It is the same, oversimplified, distorted and inverted story - that violence and evil is inherent to Islam and Muslims, thus Islam and Muslims are dangerous for western ways of living and for the continuation of western civilisation. With this understanding it is automatically assumed that the evil of IS's actions, because IS is constituted of individuals who identify themselves as Muslims, is as a result of the evil inherent in Islam. However, there is no contextualisation of IS's evil – of its response and its motivations. Essentially, the story begins in the context of an evil religion, wherein the present episode of violence (Paris attacks) is located and wherein the debate is contained in the delineated frame that attributes all the evil to *Islamic terrorists*. From the grand-theatre come the moral postulations in support of military interventions posed as R2P or the instituting of democracy; western values that describe the saviour's role in a *just war*. At this point in the argument it is not difficult to understand the propaganda - when faced with such an evil (IS and Islam), the only solution that would eradicate the vermin would be a military solution, despite the known cost to human lives. With such logic, there can be no accountability for the lies of invasion and massacre, both in the gangster's club and on the home-front. This narrative has been successful and will continue to dominate, with a twist, for as long as there is an *Islamic bogeyman* one who can be fronted as the embodiment of the 'evil' that needs to be violently dealt with. It is presented as a threat to western values and freedoms; not as an opposition to western violence and exploitation. IS must thus be eliminated at all costs. Yet those costs have consequences as was evident in Paris and Manchester and other European and Arab cities. What is curious about this bogeyman, the twist in the story, is that despite claiming to avenge Muslim dignity, honour and loss of land, IS has in fact killed more Muslims than westerners. In reality, IS has, in many ways imitated the master's logic, not Islam's ethos. This calls into question the basis for IS's actions, motivations and responses.

Thus, the focus only on IS with little retaliation or analysis of those responsible for the 98.52% of the deaths is another masquerade to hide systems of power, domination and exploitation that birthed IS and projected them into the territory of their creators. It is not about Islam's violence or hatred for western progress, it is not about IS's obsession with

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[749] Sayyid 2013 280

western freedoms. It is about western regimes and the wanton killing and exploitation of people in MMCs. It is about unseating IS affiliates from power. From this ruse another narrative has developed. It is a narrative that Europeans have internalised. It is what I call a grand narrative, one that was developed and accepted at the time of the African kidnappings and subsequent slavery of Africans in the Americas. It is the narrative of "just war" and it was used by Cameron after the Paris attacks to support the calls by British MP's to bomb Syria.[750]

4.3.1.1 IS in the "just war" narrative

The narrative of just war developed when the Portuguese legitimated the capture and slavery of Moor/Muslims justifying these actions on a "conflictive history between Christendom and the Muslims"[751] based on distorted images of Islam and Muslims as barbaric and evil. As Ali Shariati maintained,

> As long as they [Westerners] are, in their words, human [insān] and we are natives [bumi], any kind of humanist partnership with them [Westerners] is a form of violence against our existence, and we must separate ourselves and stay away from them. Because in this exchange, their relationship with us is one of colonizer and colonized. . . . This is not a relationship. This is enmity [doshmani].[752]

Many western regimes and their proxies, have today continued these distorted images, lies (WMDs for instance) to justify attacks on MMC fronting Huntington's call for a posture that treated *Islam* as the enemy. According to Qureshi, Mafille and Begg, Colin Powell's presentation and case for war against Iraq was "'a manipulation,' since in his view there was never a link between al Qaeda and Saddam."[753] A manipulation is equivalent to a distortion. It is continuing on the path of obscurantism. In other words, a lie had to be invented, or the truth had to be distorted in order to capitalise on human suffering and exploitation. This is violence, and the nature of the relationship between Christendom (power) and Muslims (the other) has been perpetuated through the violence of lies. In this regard, the categorisation of the Muslim other by the Portuguese slave traders and colonial rulers legitimised what they considered as just war and the right to enslave the Muslims and the Moors.[754] Maldonado-Torres refers to this logic as the suspension of ethics and the naturalisation of war which originates from an ontological suspension.[755] There can be little doubt that the Muslim

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[750] T. Ross & B. Farmer "Paris attacks: Fresh calls to bomb Islamic State in Syria" November 2015 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11995744/Paris-attacks-Fresh-calls-to-bomb-Islamic-State-in-Syria.html
[751] Maldonado-Torres 2014 654-660
[752] Davari 2014 92
[753] A. Qureshi, A. Mafille & M. Begg "July 2016
[754] Maldonado-Torres 2014 654
[755] Lecture on Ethics delivered by Nelson Maldonado-Torres Granada Summer School Week Two 2016

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subject of today is facing a crisis of ontological suspension. Ethics has been suspended in the context of the Muslim subject and war has certainly been naturalised. This is supported by Ahmed's reference to Muslims being treated as "unworthy victims" where western wars have "killed four million Muslims since 1990"[756] and where Muslim deaths at the hands of IS were not recognised yet Paris and "white lives" were globally dramatised. When examined from within the mind-set of IS as can be gleaned from the explanations given in *Dabiq,* IS explains its behaviour in Paris as a strategy of revenge and a plan to "terrorise the crusaders waging war against the Muslims" which would be achieved when IS became a "global player" by reaching a "critical mass."[757] That would include extending its reach into western cities.

This metaphor of reaching is functional in all aspects of this theatre, and more often than not implies an over-reaching. What we see is an over-reach of a tradition, of its ambiguities and lies that emerged in the 16th century, and which continues till today with the specific intent to continue the process of dehumanisation of the Muslim other because it serves the agenda of national interest and economic benefit carefully crafted into an argument of just war. Syed Mustafa Ali acknowledges the entanglement of the relationship between race and religion in the decolonial scholarship literature on the racial constitution of the modern world that emerged during the long 16th century; however he is of the opinion that it needs further engagement.[758] This is because Maldonado-Torres's concession that,

> [t]he expansionist view of a holistic and systemic Christendom that we see in the eleventh and twelfth centuries cannot be properly understood without reference to the first two Crusades (the first from 1095 to 1099, the second from 1146 to 1149) and the struggle against imperial Muslim power,

indicates a "rupture of the theological-racial episteme which existed previously in the medieval era."[759] The replacement of the theological-racial episteme by an "anthropological/racial episteme,"[760] which Maldonado-Torres considers as a "rupture" is challenged by Ali. According to Ali, the use of the word "rupture" is problematic as it denotes a "break with the past" whilst Ali motivates "for continuity through change based on the phenomenon of historical sedimentation of structural relations."[761] Essentially, what Ali suggests is that old values/ideas/ideologies/beliefs that grounded discriminatory behaviour and othering persisted in what was to be the core of new ideas and beliefs. Thus, what

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[756] Ahmed April 2016
[757] Dabiq Issue 5 Remaining and Expanding Muharram 1436 36
[758] S.M. Ali "Islam between Inclusion and Exclusion: A Decolonial Frame Problem" (draft copy) 2016 9-10
[759] Maldonado-Torres 2014 643
[760] Ali 2016 9
[761] Ibid 9

undergirds the "Big Bang of Race" is the "Big Bang of Religion."[762]The ontological framing of the modern world[763] is thus constitutive of remnants of an old enmity, a "doshmani"[764] "…where the image of the Muslim alone was integral to the articulation of power in the Christian West."[765] European unity was manufactured through the formation of a "collective identity" which was envisioned in relation to Muslims as the enemy. This particular formation has surfaced since 9/11 and in particular in the Paris attacks and the grand displays of "arm-in-arm" parades. In essence, "European identity was formed not by Islam but, predominantly, in the relationship … to Islam."[766] According to Vitkus, "the creation of the distorted image of Islam was largely a response to the cultural superiority of the Muslims, especially those of al-Andalus"[767] yet the projection today is of an "uncivilised Islam" and a "barbaric" people. Considering the tradition of distortions, of fake news and the constructing of enmity, I would say that the European 'civilised, progressive identity' of today is formed and projected once again in relationship to a narrative which purports a backward Islam and barbaric Muslims in order to advance and realise very specific agendas. Thus, the historical sedimentation of anti-Islamism prior to the long 16th century constitutes the basis for an alternate and possible framing of the role and impact of the West in MMCs. It is also useful in informing debates about the tactics, motivations and choices of IS, specifically in instances of extreme aggression. It further affirms the inextricable link between race and religion and the "discursive emergent construction of 'race.'"[768]

It is my understanding that the creation of the *Islamic bogeymen* based on the distorted constructions as mentioned above, and the arming of Jokers who fight against surrogate leaders and foreigners provides validation to the claim that *Islamist terrorists* are anti-western and constitute an enemy that needs to be dealt with decisively. I base this also on the logic of pre-emption that has been incorporated into the US military doctrine. It also serves to justify the right of western states to orchestrate military action in the homeland of the other where "the modern liberal democratic West presents itself as secular/political and rational in contrast to a religious and irrational 'Muslim' – rather, Islamicate – world."[769] This

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[762] Ibid 12-13
[763] Ibid 10
[764]See footnote 689 Shariati's comment
[765] T. Mastnak "Book review of John. V. Tolan, Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination" *Speculum* 79(2) 2004 571
[766] S.M. Ali "Orientalism and/as information: the indifference that makes a difference" 2015 http://oro.open.ac.uk/43593/1/IS4IS%20Abstract%20-%20Syed%20Mustafa%20Ali.pdf
[767] Vitkus 1999 208-210
[768] Ali 2016 10
[769] Ibid 11

antagonistic essence is reproduced continuously within changing political, social and economic contexts. The inherent, systemic antagonisms and violence in the pre-modern/pre-colonial era generated a profound imprint in the "sedimentation of anti-Islamism in a European identity that informed and inflected the onset of systemic racialization."[770] Thus, the re-moulding of 'religion' as a category during the long 16th century incorporates a "legacy system" found in the historical attitude, memory and framing of anti-Islamism from the pre-colonial period. It is a lingering in the European identity and political imagination,[771] and the discursive narratives of what constituted humanity. It is an identity and narrative that has gained prominence of late. Its relevance and impact in the current context cannot be discarded nor overlooked. Bouharoun's analysis summarises these realities. Accordingly he states,

> IS is not a spectre that has come to haunt us from a distant past; rather, the roots of its apocalyptic theatre of violence run deep into modern soil. That this dystopian modernity can be expressed through the distorted imagery of yesteryear, who denies it? It is not the first time nor the last that past legends are summoned back to legitimise a modern venture and reassure those who undertake it.[772]

The race-religion framing, entanglement and the violent binary hierarchy of what constitutes humanity are issues of relevance in the analysis of the Paris attacks precisely because of the manner in which the victims of Paris are considered, as opposed to the "unworthy Muslim/Arab victims" and because it gives context to the words that IS uses to explain its rationales. A failure to consider these historical antagonisms and the manipulation of language in the words chosen by Cameron and his colleagues would be equivalent to a lazy, generalised and ahistorical analyses. Likewise, to claim that traditions are essentially homogenous is for intellectual palatability because "widespread homogeneity" is not a function of tradition but rather the "development and control of communication techniques that are part of modern industrial societies."[773] I think it is prudent at this point to recall the comment by Mandaville discussed in chapter three which refers the different voices which have 'been allowed' into the discourse on decentering the West, of which Islam is one such voice. However, Mandaville astutely notes that this moment of 'allowing' gives very little attention to the discourses within Islam. There is thus an "ahistorical essentialization" of

[770] Ibid 13
[771] Ibid 13-15
[772] J. Bouharoun "IS comes from modern reality, not seventh-century theology" August 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/does-not-come-7th-century-theology-modern-reality-606767635
[773] T. Asad "The idea of an anthropology of Islam" *Occassional Paper Series Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies* 1986 7-9
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Islam, purporting that Islam is an "empty category lacking any universally identifiable content"[774] which constitutes another aspect of the distortions.

Overall, just as the cultural superiority of the Muslims had to be dealt with and was inverted to become a narrative of Islam and Muslims as a backward and barbaric people; a clear example of the manifestation of obscurantism[775] as mentioned by Grosfoguel, this same tactic has been applied by western governments in defining IS and in justifying their responses to IS. These inversions are identifiable in Cameron's words, which go further, to project the role of the western actors not as *gangsterism* but as a manifestation of the saviour.[776] IS's response, is the mirror-opposite, it is about saving the heritage, legacy and dignity of Muslims from the violence of the crusaders and about re-asserting the humanity of Muslims. In *Dabiq*, issue 8, IS states,

> Let the world know that we are living today in a new era. Whoever was heedless must now be alert. Whoever was sleeping must now awaken. Whoever was shocked and startled must comprehend. The Muslims today have a loud, thundering statement, and possess heavy boots. They have a statement that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism…[777]

Thus, in reminding the world that a new era has dawned, IS is calling into check those mechanisms

and power structures that have facilitated for the status quo in the *Shami* theatre and it is doing

this with a threat of violence. It is a radical voice. This is one of the faces, the part that projects to

those in its region from whom it seeks legitimacy. In calling for the world to comprehend, IS is

calling for accountability but also stressing that Muslim lives will no longer submit to the "business

as usual" path. There will be resistance. All of these approaches draw upon sensitivities and

vulnerabilities. They make sense to those hearing them, because this is how they (the majority

of the victims of the coalition of the killing) feel. IS is articulating the mood. In referencing terrorism,

IS informs western states that those perpetrating acts of terror on foreign soil are individuals who

 have returned to "… Europe to avenge the Muslims of Iraq and Sham for the constant bombing by

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[774] M.H. Fadel "The Priority of the Political: Politics Determines the Possibilities of Islam" The second essay in a forum on Shahab Ahmed's What is Islam? August 2016 http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/priority-political-politics-determines-possibilities-islam-mohammad-h-fadel/

[775] Obscurantism is "the practise of deliberately preventing the facts or full details of something from becoming known," it is "a policy of withholding knowledge from the general public." Merriam-Webster Dictionary

[776] See S.A. Mcclennen "We mourn Manchester, but not Kabul: How biased coverage of terrorist attacks drives us apart" June 2017 http://www.salon.com/2017/06/03/we-mourn-manchester-but-not-kabul-how-biased-coverage-of-terrorist-attacks-drives-us-apart/ where she states, "It is not surprising that the media painted a portrait of Afghanistan post-9/11 that justified the U.S. invasion and depicted the United States as a savior rather than an invader of the country."

[777] Dabiq Issue 8 1436 Jumada Al-Akhirah

crusader warplanes."[778] Thus, despite Cameron's claim that they hate us because "of who we are, not because of what we do" the comment from the other side of the divide is more in the line of "we hate them for who they are – war-mongers, racists, exploiters, usurpers, and yes we hate what they do just as much!"

4.3.2 IS and religious manipulation

> *Come, comrades, the European game is finally over, we must look for something else.*
>
> *Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth*
>
> *Beravim rofaghā! Dāstān- i Orupā barāyeh hamisheh pāyān yāfteh ast. Bāyad dāstāneh digari jost.*
> *(Come, comrades! The story of Europe has forever come to an end. We must find a different story.)*
> *Frantz Fanon, Duzakhiyan- i Ru- ye Zamin, translated by Ali Shari'ati[779]*

In this section I consider the radical voice of IS, its boldness in affirming that it would attack foreign lands and the power of politics to change religion. This is of particular importance because of the religious framing of the attacks and because it enables an analyses of the actions and behaviours of the individuals who were foreign fighters, who returned and master-minded the Paris attacks. Why did they choose Paris? It also raises an important aspect of research that is not given much attention – that of the impact and effect of emotion in main stream political theory. I begin with a critical interrogation of the "religiosity" of the Paris attackers, of Islam's 'violence and evil' by considering the source of the radicalisation and the motivations for the crimes.

4.3.2.1 Theodicy vs. Theology

In returning to Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the alleged leader of the Paris attacks, an individual who had many altercations with the law, got drunk, had a criminal history and spent time in prison, actions which refute any significant religiosity, how is it that the Paris attacks was labelled as an *Islamic* terrorist attack?[780] Once again, the way in which the language is used, manipulated and projected functions to affirm the evil of Islam and Muslims through distortions and fabrications by bandying obscure religious terms as currency. I say obscure because the literature suggests that many of the most prolific non-Muslim think tanks, media and politicians who use the term *Salafi, Islamist, Islamism, Islamic*, Sunni, Shia etc. rarely have any real conceptual clarity with regards the definition and precise meaning of these terms. There is also very little logical coherence in their pronouncements. For instance, US

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[778] Counter Extremism Project https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/najim-laachraoui
[779] Davari 2014
[780] TROP https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/europe-attacks.aspx

journalist Jeff Stein concluded a series of interviews with counterterrorism, law and intelligence officials and members of Congress which included a very simple and basic question that hit directly at the heart of the narrative on sectarianism and the *Shami* theatre of war. When asked if they knew the difference between Sunni and Shia, the answers reflected a theatre of comedies and ranged from "no, I don't know," "one's in one location anothers in another location," Iran and Hezbollah are Sunni and the explanation that the "Sunni are more radical than the Shia."[781] Stein's comment on the results speaks volumes. He simply said, "most American officials I've interviewed don't have a clue…How can they do their job without knowing the basics?"[782] This claim is further substantiated in chapter two. From the above, it is clear that there needs to be a more serious evaluation of the comments and claims about what constitutes *Islamic terror attacks* and "What is religious violence?" For instance, alternate questions could be, "To what extent does violence or power politics change religion?" or "How do emotions contribute to participation in violent insurgencies?"

In trying to understand and make sense of IS, a phenomenon or entity that has harmed more Muslims than non-Muslims, more Muslims in the MENA than persons in the West, Ziyad Meral, offers an analysis of theodicy versus theology contributing an additional dimension to this analysis and perhaps throwing some light on the logic of IS.[783] This is particularly meaningful in the analysis of the Paris attacks when considered in tandem to the testimonies of the foreign fighters. It also corroborates the comments of those IS fighters who unambiguously articulated their motivations for revenge, the desire to cause harm and inflict pain equivalent to the suffering they were enduring. It is this realisation that has prompted the many questions about the motivation of IS to choose violence and to dare to ask, without pause or separation, if the violence of the coalition of the killing is any less violent. What are the people feeling - those who have endured continuous bombing, sanctions, violence, occupation, physical, mental and bodily invasion and now coloniality? This is significant because both the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria during the 1990s and IS refer to these realities. Osama bin Laden has also drawn on this narrative in an effort to clarify or justify violence against civilians by asking "[w]ho said that our children and civilians are not

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[781] J. Stein "Can you tell a Sunni from a Shiite?" October 2006 http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/17/opinion/17stein.html
[782] Stein October 2006
[783] Z. Meral "The question of theodicy and jihad" February 2015 http://warontherocks.com/2015/02/the-question-of-theodicy-and-jihad/?singlepage=10

innocent and that shedding their blood is justified?"[784] One cannot deny the depth of emotion in this statement.

Has there been an enquiry into the emotional, psychological and mental state of being of those who have witnessed these abuses and atrocities? From the literature it is apparent that there is a gap in considering the impact and effect of emotion in mainstream political theory with very little research being conducted into emotional factors. In this regard there needs to be a bolstering of our emotional intelligence. With the new slant in academia directing research more to a quantitative analysis, the pre-occupation with data and metrics, it seems that even academics are forgetting or neglecting to consider those issues that may be difficult to measure or perhaps impossible to correlate with statistical models. This is problematic because human beings (and yes even IS fighters are humans) are emotional beings. But it is also problematic because the theatre in which we are viewing this conflict is a theatre of emotion where collective sentiments guide and misguide politics (*and the audience*). Furthermore, because this conflict is mediated and managed through the media these sentiments are amplified and polarised rapidly through social media. The fact that the feelings and perceptions of the Muslim other has been underestimated or even intentionally ignored is one of the biggest intellectual challenges for scholars researching the rise of violence and violent conflict in the MENA. This is in fact linked to the dehumanisation of the Muslim other and the Muslim victim. Yet our political systems are replete with emotions and this emotional functionality has been exploited by leaders, activists, fighters and politicians.

These emotions are not altogether uncommon, nor unreal, because in this chaos, there is an "irruption of the irrational," a proliferation of what Nietzsche called "ressentiment" – "a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts."[785] It is perhaps also another example of *a passage à l'acte,* a form of acting out, discussed in chapter three. It is in this chaos that rational political explanations are failing, where "[w]ell-worn pairs of rhetorical opposites, often corresponding to the bitter divisions in our societies" are touted to eschew real human emotion and the many factors (such as losing honour, dignity) and "complex drives" present in human lives,[786] in order to drastically oversimplify complex occurrences. Reducing the Paris attacks to acts of *Islamic terror is* an oversimplification of the events, the details and the occurrences in order to cast the discourse

[784] Hafez 2003 189
[785] P. Mishra "Welcome to the age of anger" December 2016
https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/08/welcome-age-anger-brexit-trump
[786] Ibid

into black and white, into a struggle between good (West) and evil (Islam). This notion of "ressentiment" is relevant to the Paris attacks because it brings home the impact and anger at the differing worldviews of a Muslim person's humanity and a non-recognition of their lives in death because they are 'unworthy victims.' And it is these aspects of (non)existence that IS and the citizens of the non-western world bring to the fore in their retaliations to the 'fear-factor, sob-story' of western leaders and their hand-holding[787] parade in Paris. The "arm-in arm" parade animated the hyperreal,[788] a classic demonstration of the "*Emperor wears no clothes*" in the West.

Returning to the discussion on theodicy, the essential component of theodicy is that it seeks to understand the most fundamental question about human existence; "how does one make sense of a world which was created by God who is good, yet there is evil in the world?"[789] The essence of this question focuses on the grappling between a good God and the existence of evil, "thus human life sometimes feels out of control and full of injustice"?[790] Meral argues that a significant factor in analysing and theorising the ideology of groups like IS should not centre on the theological justification for their acts of violence but should instead consider their theodicy.[791] This is an effective approach considering that in chapter two the testimonies, comments and thoughts of various individuals confirmed that they joined IS first and foremost in relation to what they perceived as an injustice to them, their families, communities, societies or to the *Ummah* in general. The Paris attackers also admitted similar views. Furthermore, their participation in acts of violence was also discussed in relation to faith versus knowledge about Islamic doctrine. Constituted in the meaning of theodicy is the fact that people make sense of their spaces and their sense of belonging and measure of safety known as ontological security.

Religion and belief and religion and faith, can play an important role in the subject's desire for belonging and identity. When the subject experiences insecurity, or when their sense of ontological security is disturbed or threatened, individuals and groups often turn to religion to re-harmonise or to find solutions. Religion is thus linked to security, stability and identity. It

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[787] I. Melander, S. de La Hamaide & J. Ponthus January 2015 (?) "French, foreign leaders walk arm-in-arm as millions protest Paris attacks" http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-shooting-idUSKBN0KK05S20150111

[788] A Google search of the Paris attacks November 2015 correctly dates the event as Nov 2015, yet news reports of the arm-in-arm walk of the world leaders after the attacks all show January 2015. How is it possible that the walk is dated for a time before the attacks? See the images in the tweet I posted https://twitter.com/QIsmail/status/893060840785678336 on the 3rd of August 2017 with the lead line "So If the Paris attacks took place Nov 2015 how is it that all news showing solidarity walk of leaders in Paris as Jan 2015?" This is the hyperreal.

[789] Theodicy: An overview http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/theodicy.htm

[790] Meral 2015

[791] Ibid

provides markers and anchor points to link the past, present and future. And it is within the rich narratives, symbols and practises of religion that subjects bond and begin to develop shared identities.[792] Awan's policy brief highlights the "toxic mix of increasing xenophobia and Islamophobia, alienation and cultural dislocation, socio-economic marginalization and political disenfranchisement," felt by these individuals which provided fertile ground for extremist narratives to take root. But it must be noted that for these narratives to have impact and efficacy, *they must resonate with the subject on a personal level* as was the case with Abaaoud.

It is here that stigmergy as discussed in chapter one can be identified. In order to make sense of their spaces, their history, their past, their reality, their lived experiences and even their perceptions and understanding of what is happening to them and to their community the 'idea' or effect that has been generated in Iraq and Syria, which germinated perhaps in Afghanistan, Tunisia, Algeria and the Balkans now progresses to action. As noted, "[s]tigmergy is the action based twin of an idea based system."[793] Violence and the acting out of violence in the context of the foreign fighter on 'home' soil, is conceivable within this twin based system. What is significant about stigmergy and the role of foreign fighters in IS, specifically those who operate on foreign soil is that these individuals are and have been in control over their own actions and did/do not necessarily need nor seek out permission from the parent organisation in planning their operations or choosing targets. In many instances it has become clear that foreign based attacks are perpetrated by those who identify with IS, and are not necessarily 'card-carrying members' of the entity. This was certainly true of Abaaoud. The desire to act stems from experiences/feelings of injustice which could no longer be tolerated. Dunning affirms this, stating that western governments are complicit in spurring "disaffected youth to join the battle against 'such evil'"[794] – where evil, in my opinion is an adjective conditionally applied to that target (the enemy) which is the flavour of the month. Basically, depending on who you are and where you are situated, evil will regularly have a new meaning.

From the research[795] generated it is also clear that many of these fighters are considered to be "underachieving young men" who are searching for a sense of meaning and to "recast" in their "own eyes as the community's champion through what is perceived as heroic

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[792] S.H. Oppong "Religion and Identity" *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 3(6) 2013 13-14
[793] Marsh 2013 52-55
[794] T. Dunning "Blaming religion for Middle East violence ignores nuance and absolves governments of their responsibility" July 2017 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/7/21/deconstructing-the-idea-of-foreign-fighters-in-syria
[795] See Dunning, Heggehammer, Vidino, Awan and Werleman

sacrifice."[796] Abaaoud's criminal record and lack of achievements affirms this research. For many of these fighter recruits their participation in an event that seeks to extract justice is about reclaiming their agency and purpose and it affirms their self-esteem and manhood.[797] On the basis of stigmergy, the desire to respond could not be suppressed. In this case, the idea as understood by the protagonists, or the IS fighters is/was about what they perceived as injustices committed by western powers vying for the material wealth and resources of Muslim lands which has visited extreme injustices on innocent people in these lands. Returning to both Abaaoud and Hadfi, their own explanations for the Paris attacks affirms a hatred for a west that was killing innocent Muslims and civilians. From accounts of early Islamic history it is evident that "ideas cannot gain traction unless they find a grip in contemporary social [and political] reality."[798] Thus, for many of those for whom the extremist narrative resonated on a personal level, the only possible response to an unachievable political resolution had been to pick up arms and avenge these deaths. For IS, this has meant the targeting of the surrogate rulers and their accomplices first, the near enemy, whilst the attacks on foreign lands, the far enemy, has been orchestrated mostly through stigmergic collaboration. IS has been most active in Iraq and Syria, whilst lone-wolf cells and IS identifying copy-cats have staged attacks on foreign soil. The motivation for these attacks is from theodicy, not theology. Although closely linked, to claim that an act is motivated by theology is very different to when an act is motivated by theodicy. Theology implies knowledge and understanding, theodicy is about individual interpretations and questions that stem from various life experiences and social constructs.

In this instance, revenge is all they have to offer when crippled with a sense of helplessness. Yet revenge in the Islamic Jurisprudence, is not allowed, justice must take its course. Knowledge of Islam would then guide one's actions. There is also a sense of solace in faux religious identities. This is an inevitable consequence of deep seated trauma, anger, torture and frustration. Trauma confronts these actors with the fragility of their existence and the possibility of an immediate death. It is the shattering of their assumptive world. Thus, for Meral, IS's theological answer to the question "Why is there so much suffering and evil in the world?" directs the academic and analyst to filter through the obfuscation between the theological justifications made by certain radical groups for the use of violence by

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[796] Dunning July 2017

[797] A.N. Awan "ISIS and Its Impact on Radicalization in the West" Policy Brief 6 Centre for Global Policy March 2017

[798] J. Bouharoun "IS comes from modern reality, not seventh-century theology" August 2017
http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/does-not-come-7th-century-theology-modern-reality-606767635

interrogating the reasons for the appeal that these groups present to individuals as well as the reasons for the emergence and deployment of violence.[799] In this way it can be presumed that the instrumental role of religion in the mental and emotional lives of its adherents, according to Meral is to be found in theodicy.

From the attacks in Paris, Brussels, Belgium and Manchester it is apparent that what has been overlooked is the nature of the oppression in these particular societies or localities that breeds violence. What is also overlooked is that which is brought into existence by violence and then sustained by violence. This form of violence gradually infiltrates the social order and everyday living of the people, to the extent that it may even become "integral to institutional as well as interpersonal reality. It even invades the deeper recesses of the individual psyche, permeating fantasies and dreams."[800] In the case of traumatised individuals, these fantasies and dreams are often defined as coping mechanisms, but they can also produce violent outbursts. When the different contexts and manifestations of violence are side-lined, we run the risk of viewing violence too narrowly. This is a central argument of militant activists who have been working at weakening the hegemonic template on violence offered through Manichaean discourses, based on morality and of pacifism (good) vs. violence (evil). Rather, what is advocated is that when studying violence it is prudent to consider the diversity of tactics which are considered in order to achieve liberation from oppressive systems. IS has made similar assertions. By confining the discussion to explanations based on binaries, such limitations entrench state power. Significantly, in relation to IS and the world's Muslims, these binaries posit the notion of a "good Muslim"[801] vs. "bad Muslim"[802] as has been extensively discussed by Mamdani in *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*.

4.3.2.2 Good Muslim vs. Bad IS

According to Mamdani, the "religious experience" has been turned into a "political category" and a fixation with "cultural outcomes" which serve to depoliticise historical and political contexts.[803] In a post 9/11 context, Muslims have been considered as pre-modern, living their

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[799] Meral 2015

[800] H.A. Bulhan *Frantz Fanon and the psychology of oppression* 1985 131

[801] A good Muslim as I understand it is essentially not a Muslim who is righteous or one who manifest good character and harmonious living, but one who is docile, servile, conforming, non-questioning of and non-rebellious to authority/oppression/subjugation.

[802] A bad Muslim is essentially as I understand it, one who rejects Western authority, puppet and illegitimate regimes and leadership, occupation and foreign intervention, political control and state violence, rejection of an Islamic identity and Islamic values and retaliates.

[803] M. Mamdani "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism" American Anthropologist 104(3) 2002 766-770

culture as a destiny and it can be assumed that this is exactly what Cameron tried to present in his speech after the Paris attacks – well Cameron and all the hand-holding European leaders who acted out the political grandstanding of ancient empires. Mamdani states that there is a double speak from positions of power located in the West and "good" and "bad" Muslims are political adjectives, where the distinction of good and bad Muslims is based not on their cultural orientation but on their political behaviour.[804] It is thus possible that the means (violence) to the ends (liberation) may become subverted and reproduces alternate oppressive systems and this raises the ethical dilemma posited by Derrida. The mobilisations of Muslims in the name of Islam in recent times has manifested as challenges and contestations to the current world order on the geo-political, philosophical, cultural and epistemological level and on a level where the Muslim identity is repelled for trying to assert itself in a domain where there is no "epistemological or political space for it."[805] Furthermore, collective memories about groups' past conflicts informs the narrative construction of the group's identity and this is becoming evident in the willingness to associate with a globalised Muslim subjectivity that has begun to transcend the "Westphalian template" and challenge the "recycling of conventional narratives about Islam"[806] that have been circulating since the colonial project.

Significantly, IS's ascribing to *Wahhabist* ideas, ideas which were birthed and nurtured in the hot desert sun during the scramble for power and personal accolade, for kingship and control of the Arab fiefdoms is an ascribing to the dark side of modernity. In subscribing to the kind of progress imbued in western modernity which comes at the expense of inheritance, a disregard for history and the pursuance of transgression, IS in fact replicates the destructiveness of western modernity. IS has contributed to a perversion of the ethos and essence of Islam because of its refusal to engage with the traditional scholarly sources and the legacy of knowledge and verdicts left by these scholars in their in-numerous written works. Through the re-centering of specific interpretations as the only authentic interpretation; and in instances where Islamic centres of knowledge and knowledge itself has been destroyed, curiously in this case both by IS and the West, IS has claimed a monopoly on what it terms is the 'authentic' Islam. Much like the non-Muslim white, male experts that are called upon to 'expertly' pronounce on Islam and Muslims by the US mainstream media, without affording any voice to Muslims themselves. The *Wahhabi* sect although claiming a universal truth-

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[804] Ibid 766-770
[805] Ibid 8
[806] Ibid 8-10

approach to Islam (much like Eurocentric knowledge claims), is in fact very particularistic. This particularistic approach, framed as a universal understanding of Islam constitutes a part of the *Wahhabi* agenda and although constituting a minority perspective in the consortium of world Muslims, the *Wahhabi* perspective has been elevated by very particular actors to a status of majority – as the only true and authentic interpretation. What must also be noted from the immediate is that the radical readings of the Quran when referenced as 'justifications for IS's actions or violence' are to be understood as *radical readings* and different from an inherent *radical command* that informs one's actions. It is a reading which I believe has been formed and shaped largely through the lived experiences of the protagonists. As a result there needs to be an awareness of the distinction between theology and theodicy where theology is not the same as theodicy.

Despite the reference to religious scripts, the roots of IS's "apocalyptic theatre of violence run[s] deep into modern soil."[807] Similarly, from the research done by Behrent it has been established that the framing of the declaration of war against Iraq in terms of a "dominant national priority" as "the Americanization of the apocalypse"[808] repeats the parallel themes prevalent in IS and in western discourse. This allows for recalling the metaphor of over-reaching through which we become unbalanced by our transgressions[809] whilst corroborating Lewis who argues that the secular nature of the post-Enlightenment West is the basis of western civilisation's superiority over Islam which has remained trapped in "medieval fanaticism."[810] If one has to consider Gray's comment that the Iraq war was the "most significant political disaster of our time," whilst referencing Christianity's teaching of "human salvation," and "the final apocalyptic struggle" against evil, conflict and misery and the claim that "[w]hat is unique to the modern West is the formative role of the faith that violence can save the world"[811] we see the similarities between the western discourse and IS. Had I simply removed the word "Christianity" and "the West" and replaced it with "IS," the fit would be perfect.

Same theatre, same script, different actors.

IS has replicated the ideas of western modernity, of exploitation, of apartness, of transgression and of a mocking of what can be learnt from the knowledge based past. The

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[807] Behrent 2007 4-5
[808] Ibid 4-5
[809] P. King The Antimodern Condition: An Argument against progress 2014 3-5
[810] Qureshi & Sells 2003 7
[811] Ibid 2-3

past, after all, is old-fashioned, nothing can be taken from it. Like the West and western modernity, IS has engaged in epistemicide, advancing the epistemicide of Islamic knowledges initiated by the colonial onslaughts, because, for IS, and the colonial masters, the end justifies the means, power must be retained and the tactic is simple, "if you don't like the message, shoot the messenger." For the colonialists this tactic has been particularly useful where Muslim scholars are 'accused' of radicalising Muslims into extremist behaviour that is then defined as *Islamic terror attacks*. Of these messengers al-Banna and Qutb are ostracised. In identifying the decay in Egyptian society, al-Banna recognised the epistemicide of Islamic knowledge as a result of the foreign endeavours on Muslim lands which led to the infiltration of alien ideas and culture that was contrary to the ethos of Islamic belief. He thus called for an alternative to the prevailing systems in place in MMC in order to end all forms of western political domination.[812] For speaking out about these harms, of the corruption of the Muslim governments and western systems, for demanding accountability from leaders who have forgotten Islamic practise, ethics, morality and ethos and for naming the moral decay in western society, both these scholars' works have been unjustly and oftentimes falsely represented.[813]

Considering that the theological motivations of the Paris attackers have been substantially contested, and that there has been no real explanation of what exactly is an *Islamic terror act* other than the assumption that it is religiously motivated because the attacker is Muslim or articulates a few Arabic phrases at the time of the act of aggression, the next aspect of analysis includes the work and writings of Qutb and Abduh to determine their responses to western progress and modernity and if they advocated *violence against civilians*. I have specifically highlighted civilians because this is how the morality and ethics of determining

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[812] Qutb 2006 188

[813] Consider for instance Asma Afsaruddin's comment in "Orientalists, Militants, and the Meanings of Jihad" in *Renovatio* April 2017 https://renovatio.zaytuna.edu/article/orientalists-militants-and-the-meanings-of-jihad where she says, "the radical twentieth-century Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb maintains that the objective of Islam is to win over all humanity to the worship of the one God; whoever resists this hegemonic mission of Islam, as conceived by Qutb, must be ruthlessly fought until death or capitulation." When read as it is, it seems as if Qutb is advocating for the random killing of anyone who is not Muslim, yet in *Milestones* Qutb is meticulous and thorough in setting out his reasoning so that it is impossible to say "Qutb said" without going through his reasoning, his proofs, his arguments, his analysis of the context, and his explanation for his reasoning. Throughout the text there are specific reminders, that Islam does not "use compulsion for changing the ideas of people" (pg.65) and that there are provisions and rulings which legally define the relationship of the Muslim community with other groups" (pg.66); that Islam is a practical movement which progresses in stages and this includes detailed explanations of Jihad and the progression of Jihad (pg.65). Qutb was clear about why Jihad existed stating that "[t]he reason for Jihad exists in the nature of its message and in the actual conditions it finds in human societies, and not merely in the necessity for defence." pg.82. In explaining against who Jihad is waged, Qutb said, "It [Islam] does not attack individuals nor does it force them to accept its beliefs; *it attacks institutions and traditions* (pg.85). Another significant comment in the chapter on Jihad refers to the discrepancy between Jihad and modern warfare (pg. 66). Thus to say Qutb is "radical" without defining *radical* is problematic as "radical" is a contested concept. Secondly, it is not possible to give meaning to that comment without contextualising Qutb's entire discussion on Jihad and the conditions he attaches to Jihad.

an act of aggression, such as the Paris attacks, as either just/legitimate or unjust/illegitimate should be evaluated.

4.3.2.3 Don't like the message? Shoot the messenger

Having considered the distinctions between theology and theodicy, I want to ask, "If it is not the religion, is it the scholars of the religion?" Although IS calls on past memories and events, the reference to history is selective and it has limited its expression of that past and the resultant projection into the future based on an ideology (mostly *Wahhabist* practise) that is particularistic, thus exclusionary. Western interpretations and writings of history are to a large extent also selective accounts, because as is commonly understood, the one who controls a space and all that it encompasses, controls what is said about it. In this projecting forwards at the expense of one's own inheritance, IS has certainly become unbalanced in its transgressions. But instead of considering IS's actions in light of its adoption of the processes and systems of modernity, critique is levelled at specific traditional Muslim scholars, in a way blaming them for inciting the violence that IS manifests. Roxanne. L. Euben makes a comparison of the thought of two influential Muslim scholars, the first, a prominent nineteenth century Islamic "modernist", Egyptian thinker Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and the second, the influential twentieth century Islamic thinker Qutb (d.1966) and his critique of modernity. In considering the appeal for the claim that Islamic fundamentalist thought is premodern, (by positioning Islam "as an archaism resistant to the forces of progress"), antimodern or even postmodern Euben maintains that these assertions are made on the premise that "fundamentalism and modernity are incommensurable."[814] The study is based against a backdrop of western experiences of what it means to be modern and it also considers an evaluation of modernity. Thus, the claim of incommensurability between political Islam and western modernity exacerbates the determined depiction of Islam and the agency of Islamists as a serious threat. The lack of a proper understanding of Islam's relationship with modernity and more specifically, how different Muslim actors (political) and scholars (from the theological tradition) interacted with modernity has contributed to these exacerbations and tensions. More importantly, it promotes the idea that western modernity is/was something to aspire to, intentionally deflecting from the transgressions and exploitation inherent in the project of modernity.

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[814] R.L. Euben "Premodern, Antimodern or Postmodern? Islamic and Western Critiques of Modernity" *The Review of Politics* (59)3 *Non-Western Political Thought* 1997 430-431

Significantly, this was not missed by Abduh. Abduh, a well-known modernist amongst Muslim academics and scholars considered the problem of modernity as a rising tension between western power, the decline of the *Ummah* and the threat to Islam that modernity posed because of the ideology of secularisation. He maintained that rationalism was consistent with Islamic thought but that Muslims should refrain from a blind acceptance of western conceptions of modernity which displaced the authority of God and privileged the secular. Thus adapting to modernity did not require westernisation, rather the realisation that

> the use of reason in interpreting the Qur'an initiates not the marginalization of Islam but an indigenous path to modernity that will free Muslims from blind imitation both to western models of secular society and tradition-bound views of Islam.[815]

Reason was thus the use of critical judgement as a means of attaining faith, and should not be posed "in opposition to faith in divine truths."[816] This demanded an awareness of the limits of reason and the understanding that "imperatives of reason must be in conformity with Islamic law, its exercise guided by the aim of maintaining rather than undermining faith."[817] This statement is especially of importance when analysing the reasoning and behaviour of IS. Islamic law (*Shariah*) is not only about 'punishment' or *hudud* as is mistakenly portrayed. The literal meaning of the Arabic word *Shariah* is 'the way to water.' Water is a dynamic and essential source and component of life. It has no substitute, it is life giving, it is in constant movement and represents renewal and growth. Essentially, the fundamental principles of the *Shariah* are the preservation of life, intellect, progeny, property and religion. Ultimately it is about the responsibility, maintenance, protection and promotion of life.[818] From the exorbitant amounts of condemnations that have been recorded in response to the violence of IS, it is logical to assert that the imperatives of reason as employed by IS are not in conformity with the understanding of the *Ummah* at this time, nor does it correspond to Islamic law because in all instances, IS's actions have undermined not only the faith but Muslims as well. In considering Qutb's work it is significant that he recognised the need for *ijtihad* (independent interpretation and not just *a blind following* of texts/scriptures).[819] This point is of significance when discussing the ideology of IS which is described as 'fundamentalist' and ascribed in part to Qutb. Qutb has been cited as someone who inspired

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[815] Ibid 438-440
[816] Ibid 440-442
[817] Ibid 441
[818] Maqaasid Word Press April 2007 http://maqasid.wordpress.com/2007/04/05/the-objectives-of-islamic-law-sheikh-salman-al-oadah-2/
[819] Qutb 2006 96

militant leaders, such as Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.[820] Although considered as the "father of present-day Islamic resistance throughout the Middle-East"[821] what is lost in translation is the fact that in advocating for a militant response to what he identified as oppression and exploitation, Qutb was specifically directing his comment at corrupt systems of government and not innocent civilians[822] and therefore Hegghammer's preference-based rationales approach is far more elucidate. Ideally, this could be categorised as a state-oriented Islamism where the desire is to change the social and political organisation of the state. The violent manifestation of state-oriented Islamism is socio-revolutionary activism which focuses on unseating Muslim rulers perceived as illegitimate.[823]

Furthermore, his call for militant activism was against those regimes that obstructed the development of a just and free society within the tradition of Islamic beliefs.[824] His call for offensive jihad was not focused on the "expansion of territory or defending of its borders," but against all systems of "anti-God or anti-shari'ah governments."[825] However, his call was not "coercive in its goal" and espoused the possibility and potential for peace, freedom, liberty and an acceptance that "there is no compulsion in religion."[826] Qutb did not believe in a theocracy,[827] he was critical of the traditional scholars, and advocated for a system of government ruled by the principle of *tawhid*.[828] His political and social activism and nationalist leanings had been nurtured under his father's care who had actively participated with the Wafd-led party, in the 1919 popular revolution in Egypt against the British. Qutb's father was a leading figure in the Egyptian National Party, and his political and social activism and critical comment against the ruling establishment's neglect of the Egyptian masses was nurtured in his father's home. As early as 1952 he criticised the education system in Egypt and called for reforms as well as an overhaul of the curricula.[829] Coming from an educated family, Qutb's shift to Islamism reflects the pan-Islamism, elite competition and outbidding discussed by Hegghammer in his theorisations in chapter two. Hegghammer

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[820] M. Bazzizi "The Roots of ISIS theology" November 2015 http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-roots-of-isis-theology
[821] Y. Mohammed "Muslim Fundamentalism: the Case of Sayyid Qutb" *Scriptura 99* 2008 383
[822] Mohammed 383
[823] T. Hegghammer "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism" in Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement R. Meijer (ed) London: Hurst 2009 257-258
[824] Ibid 383
[825] Ibid 383-385
[826] Ibid 385
[827] Qutb 2006 68
[828] Ibid 386, the concept of "tawhid" is as understood and explained by Shariati, which reflected an "egalitarian and classless society" which negates political, racial, economic, nationalist and even territorial contradictions. See S. Hunter *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity* 2009 53
[829] I.O. Uthman "From Social Justice to Islamic Revivalism: An interrogation of Sayyid Qutb's Discourse" *Global Journal of Human Social Science* 12(11) 2012 93-97

maintains that pan-Islamism developed because of disenfranchised elite who had been seeking political relevance. Certainly Qutb was outspoken about the nationalist elite who were monopolising the national income and acted as 'stooges' for western imperialist regimes who he believed were plundering the resources of his country. Significantly, to address this malaise, and the problematic of an education system that devalued the essential identity and belief of his people Qutb called for a change in the political structures and system, to incorporate Islamic law that promoted *al-amr bi al-maruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining what is right and forbidding what is bad). He believed that this system would suffice as a system of "checks and balances" to lift the people out of the "socio-economic, political and spiritual logjams" whilst allowing non-Muslims to incorporate a system of law developed from within their traditions.[830] What he offered was an appreciation of all of humanity "as a society" and as "an organic entity."[831] Qutb maintained that "social justice cannot occur if the material conditions of the people are not improved;" this became obvious after dissecting the condition of his society.[832]

He thus displayed his antagonism to western governments, nationalist elite and their systems of rule in political, moral and intellectual terms. This manifested as a "critique of western immorality, secular modernity and Muslim hypocrisy,"[833] and he called for "the liberation of the poor and the labourers from exploitation from colonialism and feudalism."[834] Essentially, what Qutb offered is a critique of modernity, what he considered as political corruption in the western regimes and their eastern counterparts as symptomatic of a deeper crisis; that of a crisis of values and morality in the modern world,[835] although he was not against modernising and said "we should not neglect material progress."[836] It was a critique of western powers and their proxies based on the foundations that underpinned the modern western rationalist epistemology. Qutb's, criticism of sovereignty entailed a rejection of secularism and a rebuttal of modern western rationalist epistemology, a "rationalist epistemology that justifies secularist power."[837] For Qutb, this rationalisation dictated not only how we came to know the world but what constituted 'legitimate knowledge'- a centred theory of knowledge that has over time legitimated the domination of Europeans over nature and those defined as the

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[830]Ibid 99

[831] Ibid 99

[832] Mohammed 2008 381

[833] Ibid 381

[834] Mohammed 2008 381

[835] Euben 441-443

[836] Qutb 2006 24

[837] Ibid 443-444

other.[838]   Qutb further rejected the argument that the "privatization of religion makes the public space morally neutral…" because, "this simply replaces God's morality with secularist morality—or what he often calls ersatz religion."[839] In challenging the rationalist epistemology of the West, Qutb was focused on the centering of a particularistic frame - a western rationalist *epistemology* - that was advanced as 'universal' but which essentially eroded very specific structures of thought, knowledge, culture, faith, tradition and the real-life living experiences of people who were non-Christian and non-white. This reason or rationality became the "method and justification for the completeness of human knowledge" and defined "what is worth knowing in terms of what is knowable to human beings."[840] Since it was a knowledge focused on consumption and worldly phenomena only, ignoring the unseen and the source of the truth it had to be rejected. Qutb further maintained that the usurpation of God's authority threatened the meaning of human existence and in the "Islamic world at least, military defeats, political disunity, corruption and poverty are the concrete results"[841] of this system. Thus Qutb's rejection of western modernity essentially was a rejection of the "moral, philosophical and epistemological bankruptcy of the modern West and its drive to destroy Islamic imperatives."[842]   Neither Abduh nor Qutb challenged nor negated scientific thought or technology, technical and applied knowledge and they did not oppose or condemn modernisation and improvement as it was necessary for the growth, development and survival of communities. I think that Hodgson's remarks about Islamicate civilisation as the centre of modern history deserves entry at this junction. According to Lawrence,

> Among all world historians of the 20th and now 21st century, only Hodgson has accented Islamicate civilization as itself the locus of modern history: without developments in Islamdom (the counterpart to Christendom in historical reckoning), the so-called rise of the West would never have happened.[843]

Considering Hodgson's claim and the foregoing, there are two further important revelations from this analysis that are of significance in the discourse on IS. The first is that Qutb also rejected Islamic modernism because it involved a process of justifying Islam and acquiescing to the terms of the debate as laid out by western power structures, something IS is imitating to the letter. Secondly, Qutb's critique of modernity, western rational epistemology, Islamic modernism and Abduh's over emphasis on rational thought within Islam highlights key

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[838] Ibid 444-445
[839] Ibid 444
[840] Ibid 444-445
[841] Ibid 445
[842] Ibid 446
[843] Lawrence 2014

Islamic experiences of and an engagement with modernity. The inherited legacy of colonialism, imperialism and now coloniality have come to frame non-western experiences of the contemporary world "because [although] modernity is global, so is fundamentalism."[844] Qutb's critique of modernity as a "condition of crisis, decay, and loss"[845] reflects the kinds of criticisms in academic scholarship on contemporary western critiques of modernity and modern rationalism in particular. This indicates that radically different voices from within the West are questioning the legacy of post-Enlightenment rationalism, characterized by ambivalences toward modernity. According to Euben then, considering these parallel dialogues and criticisms of modernity from within Islam and the West, this process "undermines the opposition between Islam and the West" and the "explanations of Islamic fundamentalism that portray the current purchase of Islamist ideas as the resistance of a static and essentially premodern Islamic essence to the imperatives of modernity."[846] In conclusion, Euben maintains that Qutb's critique of modernity is part of an ongoing critique wherein westerners are also participants, one of whom was Hodgson when he "correct[ed] the fallacy that the defining arc of global civilization is centered in the West."[847]

Furthermore, referring to Islamic fundamentalist political thought, such as that espoused by Qutb, as antimodern is presumptuous unless western scholars are "willing to call all critiques of modernity antimodern."[848] Qutb spoke and wrote from within the lived and embodied experience of difference in his time and space. The effort to understand his writings and teachings as insurgent political thought demands a new set of conceptual premises. To understand Qutb then is to recognise that his political thought was premised upon the rejection of the universalism of a Eurocentric liberalism and its resultant characterization of non- normative subjects as different, or barbaric. Qutb's critique of modernity and western rational epistemological thought can be threatening to the claim of 'universality' and western notions of superiority because it was underpinned by the ethics of and within Islam. Although Qutb's book *Milestone*s makes uncompromising statements he never explicitly advocated for *takfir* although Nafi states that the logic contained therein legitimated it.[849] Muhammad Qutb, Sayyid Qutb's brother however challenges the distortions on his brother's legacy stating publicly that, "there is nothing in his writings that contradicts the ideas of the martyr Imam

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[844] Euben 431
[845] Euben 429-436
[846] Ibid 432-436
[847] Lawrence 2014
[848] Ibid 436
[849] Nafi 2017 108-109

Hasan al-Banna, in particular al-Banna's comment "…it is not permitted to excommunicate a Muslim…"[850] The only violence that he actually permitted was for members of his group to take up arms in self- defence if the state apparatus became violent,[851] and nowhere did he advocate for or explicitly allow for the killing of civilians.

Finally, let us consider Grosfoguel's argument that the claim of a clash of or between civilisations is a myth.[852] Grosfoguel maintains that from the moment of European colonial expansion the world has been left with one planetary system which has destroyed all other social/civil/political systems.[853] Thus the only system that has remained and perpetuated itself is what is known today as 'western civilisation.' Lawrence's exposition presents the reality of Islam within the structures and system of western civilisation because

> …there is only world civilization and Islam is a part of it, not apart from it. Islamicate tradition encompasses but also projects all the elements of Islamic thought that came from pre-Islamic resources — Persian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, by language; Magian, Jewish, and Christian by religion; Byzantine, Sassanian, Mongol by imperial domains. Islam — or, more accurately, Islamicate civilization — in turn, becomes part and parcel of the emergent West in developments that unfolded after 1800. [854]

These unsettling and conflicting narratives from Muslims and westerners are stirrings from *within* western civilisation and the on-going projects of modernity and coloniality, belying claims of a coherent west; because even individuals like Abduh, Qutb and Maududi articulate from a geo-political colonial framework in response to the limits of modern western epistemology and thought. In returning to the above comment, of an inversion of realities, that of saviour vs. savage, gangster vs. knight in the psyche and imagining of elite-based regimes and systems of power as opposed to the realities and understandings of the revolutionaries in Syria, it is unsurprising that the first revolutionary movement that issued a political declaration on the 12th of June 2011 stated that the "revolution's first goal was *regime change*, and they thus called for a national conference for transition to a democratic and pluralistic state within six months."[855] Why would they call for a transition to democracy if Assad's Syria was already democratic? It was a call for the removal of the *saviour*, the removal of the *knight*. Significantly, Qutb also believed that a corrupt and immoral political system could only be corrected through regime change.[856] This vision is a vision that is

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[850] J. Calvert *Sayyid Qutb and the origins of radical Islamism* 2013 279
[851] Nafi 2017 108-109
[852] R. Grosfoguel Granada Summer School 2016 Day 1
[853] Ibid
[854] Lawrence 2014
[855] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 59
[856] Mohammed 2008 382

shared by all the activists and opposition groups, including IS. It is a political vision of emancipation, not a religious vision of eternal bliss, martyrdom and virgin maidens.

What is significant is the fact that none of the actors are apologetic about the call for regime change, and none of them use euphemisms. All are consolidated on the idea that the only way to achieve political, social, economic and spiritual liberation is through regime change. Thus, the end goal is a better society – a just society, irrespective of what or how the new political system may look; whether secular democratic or democratic but grounded in Islamic law. On the contrary, western nation states have a collective history and a running record of instituting regime changes in countries not amenable to western dictates. These changes are often perilous to the local populations and defy the very notion of substantive democracy. From Latin America to Africa to the MENA, there are ample examples. The only difference is that these western states refer to their actions in saviour or euphemistic terminology to defend their lies. This is driven by the language that perpetuates their single story, from the invoking of crisis memory and not a comprehensive analysis of all the factors that influence the political landscape. This tactic allows for deflection and an absolving of responsibility. They are 'rescuing' oppressed women, 'uplifting' undemocratic societies steeped in religious traditions, 'promoting' development, preventing a humanitarian crisis or simply acting within the R2P mandate, very often, unilaterally and without UN approval or legitimation.

In the final inflection in this scene, of blaming theology and ignoring theodicy, of accusing scholars whilst disregarding the message and of claiming incompatibility between civilisations for the Paris attacks, I have to ask, "If neither the theology nor the scholars can be substantively fingered, why is IS violent and why did a lone cell attack Paris?" Certainly *Wahhabism* as a sect, not Islam, can be considered, but in the Paris attacks and the motivations and reasons advanced by the attackers, there is overwhelming evidence of a desire for revenge. Of the factors that have contributed to the resistance, Qutb's critique of corrupt puppet rulers and imperial regimes which have undermined the sovereignty of the people and their economic emancipation is valid and needed. It is my contention that the "shoot the messenger because you do not like the message" tactic has been adopted (by those who, as Decastri observed exhibit a "total ignorance of [the] religion"[857]) because Qutb offered a critique of modernity that was scathing in terms of the political corruption in the western regimes and their eastern counterparts which he identified as being symptomatic of a

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[857] A. Kareem "European colonialists conspired to destroy the Khilafah state" 2007 http://www.khilafah.com/european-colonialists-conspired-to-destroy-the-khilafah-state/

deeper crises, that of a crises of values and morality in the modern world. This is a valid and legitimate critique and has resonated with those opposing the Syrian and Iraqi regimes and the foreign interventions, the result of which has been the uprisings against these provocateurs of violence. Thus the only response to the violence experienced would be more violence. The choices made by IS and other opposition groups have been realised differently at times, at times they have coincided and at times they have mimicked the actions of their oppressors. Each has articulated their justifications from within their own frames of reference and to their own constituencies. However, one thing is absolutely clear, the call to arms and responding with violence was not from an inherent discourse or theological doctrine inside Islam, in spite of what the 'pundits' may say. IS has acted from an internal moulding- that of the violence of its oppressors. The 2017 UN study of foreign fighters in Syria affirmed that many of the foreign fighters who were attracted to the war zone were influenced not because of Islamic injunctions but because of a lack of meaning in their lives. These fighters were "novices" when it came to Islam and many of them exhibited a sense of political, social and economic isolation.[858]

Essentially most of the conflicts in the world today are narrated in terms of religion in order to substantiate the claim that conflict and violence are inherent to religion; the Paris attacks were no different. Yet realistically, conflict and state failure are hardly ever *only and primarily* about religion and the competition between different theological and doctrinal beliefs. Significantly, different social and historical processes have contributed to the configuration of circumstances where religion came to take on a new world affording a new salience for many people. In the midst of these challenges and new developments there is also competition for power, the question of legitimacy and influence over the identity, the future management and capture of the nation-state. It is in this theatre of spectacle that religion can emerge as an important player but it is crucial to understand that in order to manage and respond to the conflict, what is needed is more than a crisis memory. However, the mainstream discourse on the Paris attacks has remained trapped in this stance.

For IS, these attacks have functioned as outlets of pain where rage has been brewing and where there have been calls for revenge. It no longer mattered who the victims were, as long as they could inflict harm and cause pain to balance the harm and pain they were feeling. From a theological point of view, the choice of targets would have mattered. In these silos of

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[858] L. Dearden "Isis: UN study finds foreign fighters in Syria 'lack basic understanding of Islam'" August 2017 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/isis-islamic-state-foreign-fighters-syria-recruits-lack-basic-understanding-of-islam-radicalisation-a7877706.html?amp

anger and trauma, new identities have been shaped. These are those who choose not to lie down and die.

4.3.3 IS and the zone of nonbeing

> *From the depths of a dead society — the cemetery and sewage of history — suddenly movement and life were created. . . . It made all of the intellectuals who had lost hope hopeful . . . that it is possible for such a great miracle to appear in their societies . . . [that it is possible] to bring about a human society. A human that consists, according to Frantz Fanon, of a new race, a new skin, a new way of thinking.*
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> *Arash Davari 2014*[859]

Considering that which has been presented thus far - the plausible, the possible and the confusing, the Paris attacks, and the 'new language' on the war on terror have presented at a time of an epochally transforming world that does not fit neatly into frameworks and paradigms developed in disciplines such as defence studies, security studies and military history. A recurring theme of the "neo-conservative cabal around the Bush presidency" can be identified.[860] This theme surfaced in the war on terror rhetoric and asked the question of Muslims, "Why do they hate us?" But a simple reading of history beginning with the fall of Al-Andalus tells another tale – one that openly exposes the double standards and hypocrisy in a West that prioritises white Christian life. Although, not dared to be articulated openly, the rise of right wing fascist movements and the ascendancy of Trump to the presidency have unmasked these hidden antagonisms. It is thus not a question of why do these Muslims hate us, but rather a simple articulation – we (the occident/West) hate them. As Count Henri Decastri, a French author wrote in his book *Islam* in 1896:

> I cannot imagine what the Muslims would say if they heard the tales of the mediaeval ages and understood what the Christian orators used to say in their hymns; all our hymns even those which emerged before the 12th century emanated from one concept which was the cause of the crusades, these hymns were filled with hatred towards the Muslims due to the total ignorance of their religion. As a result of those hymns and songs, hatred against that religion became fixed in people's minds, and the erroneous ideas deeply rooted, some of which are still carried nowadays. Everyone used to regard the Muslims as polytheists, disbelievers, idol worshippers and apostates.[861]

In flipping the story-line, IS has brought these issues to the fore, necessitating the examination of the history of the Muslim other, of "just war" in relation to slavery and of Christendom's *doshmani* to Islam which has been advanced through IS. Yet a cursory glance of the common understandings of ordinary people when IS is mentioned will reveal none of these under-currents. The war on terror fashioned and captured the discourse on terrorism and

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[859] Davari 2014
[860] Sayyid 2013 278
[861] Kareem 2007

"just war" in the international order where ethics has been displaced/suspended to the extent that the enemy(Muslim) is seen as the "incarnation of evil or irrationality and is thus beyond the bounds of the properly human."[862] But this is not a new discourse as I have already explained in terms of the antagonism that sprouted towards Islam and Muslims from the 16th century onwards. It also reflects the shift from a perspective of human to non-human as previously discussed in the section on the link between empire, race and religion.

With colonialism, empire and racism different forms of exploitation and harm surfaced, resulting in the destruction of both the ethical and the social, preventing an ethical intervention into colonialism (and coloniality).[863] If ethics is suspended, the options to intervene and break down the system are varied and violence is possible. More importantly, if an ethical intervention is prevented, then how can one overcome the violence, except through violence? I would add also that coloniality destroys not only the ethical and social but the moral fibre of the society because of the internal dynamic where the "comprador bourgeoisie" serve "as conveyor belts of the exploitation of the Third World by the West,"[864] a serious impediment in the struggle for democracy, freedom and equality in the MENA. It is an issue that has been raised consistently in the messaging and rhetoric of all opposition fighter groups and resistance in Syria and Iraq. For the foreign fighters and those who joined IS, Cameron's outcry and Islamophobic rhetoric in response to IS's attacks in Paris points to the double standards in the international system in defining white life as opposed to all other life. For anyone who followed the Paris attacks, the manner in which the same story was told differently, depending on the locus of enunciation was nothing short of mind boggling. Firstly, from the zone of being, the humanity of the victims in Paris was elevated to that of worthy victims and their deaths were accorded significant status. The names of the victims were announced and the emotion and grief of their loved ones were widely broadcasted. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the victims in Baghdad, Ankara and Beirut, all considered as persons in the zone of nonbeing were merely glossed over as collateral damage or disposable life. Accordingly therefore, within this global hierarchy, which is politically reinvigorated and regenerated by a western-centric world system, humans are organised as those who are above the line and thus have a socially recognised humanity, whilst those below the line are considered as sub-human or non-human. In the Paris attacks, the white

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[862] Sayyid 2013 289
[863] D. Cornell & S. Seely *The Spirit of Revolution* (manuscript copy) 2016 146
[864] S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni "Whither Dependency Theory?"
https://developingeconomics.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/chapter-4-whither-dependency-theory.pdf

European lives were clearly demarcated as those with a socially recognisable humanity, whilst the victims of IS's attacks in non-European spaces were not conferred with any recognition. In this regard, those below the line have a negated or 'questionable' humanity.[865] Grosfoguel maintains that this definition highlights the diversity of conceptualising racism in different forms that safeguard against reductionist explanations; and when examining the different colonial histories it is possible to identify the power hierarchies that categorise the notion of the superior/inferior along the line of the human using various racial markers.

Accordingly therefore, racism can be marked by colour, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious identity; thus colour is not the only marker and it must be recognised that different regions of the world have different markers of racism.[866] For Grosfoguel the "Muslim religious identity constitutes today one of the most prominent markers of inferiority below the line of the human." [867]He acknowledges the interaction and complexity of colour and religious racism in this region, but highlights the fact that the Muslim body exists in the inferior side of the line, thus in the zone of nonbeing. Besides the Muslim, any person outside of a European/ Anglo-Saxon identity is considered as an 'unworthy victim.' Those bodies which are racialised in superior terms exist in the superior side of the line, and exist in the zone of being. It is thus a life of racial privilege.[868]

Secondly, IS's attack on Paris was labelled as an *Islamic terror attack* because the consensus that had been manufactured insisted that Muslims hate western freedoms and liberties, reigniting the notion of a backward civilisation and religion envious of western progress and achievement.[869] In contrast, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from lies and plunder by a nation and its allies that called themselves civilised, gave IS enough ammunition to unmask the 'reality' of what it meant when western values, progress and achievement was invoked. If anything, the Paris attacks generated a feverish interrogation into white supremacy, coloniality, the failings in the human rights system and into the bias of the mainstream western media. Thirdly, the Paris attacks continued with the distortions that

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[865] R. Grosfoguel "What is racism? Zone of Being and Zone of Non-Being in the work of Frantz Fanon and Boaventura De Sousa Santos" paper supplied by author
[866] Ibid
[867] Ibid
[868] Ibid
[869] C. Aydin "The Politics of Conceptualizing Islam and the West" *Ethics & International Affairs* 18(3) 2004 89-91 and see also A.M. Agathangelou "Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11" *International Studies Quarterly* 2004 48 522- where the author refers to a speech by George .W. Bush 20/09/01 "*They hate what we see right here in this chamber, a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other*."

emanated from Christendom, distortions that described Islam as violent and its adherents as barbaric, evil and rapists. The dark and evil imagery brought to life the narrative of the dark-skinned African Moor, and the robed Turk - depicting the "external difference of the Islamic Other…as embodiments of evil."[870]

To come back to the question of "Why do they hate us?" as was oft repeated throughout the weeks in analysis upon analysis, George Bush's simplistic response warrants attention here. In a speech given shortly after 9/11, Bush stated,

> They hate what we see right here in this chamber, a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.[871]

In almost every issue of *Dabiq* IS explores the hypocrisy in these articulations so that it would seem as if Bush and IS were referring to totally different people and totally different spaces. For IS and the victims of the invasions and subsequent violence, democracy in the MENA meant western intervention and the imposition of leaders considered suitable to western interests; the problematic of self-appointed leaders existed because they were all given support by western powers; and when Muslims in the MENA called for the right to exercise and implement their religion – freedom of religion, into their political and social lives, the result was excessive state repression with international, western support. This is IS's response to Cameron's remarks of "[t]hey attack us because of who we are, not because of what we do."

One subject of analysis. Two narratives.

Both Bush and Cameron exhibited and I would add continue to exhibit a profound ignorance and arrogance, traits that have manifested in the foreign policies of both countries. Considering Count Decastri's observations as early as 1896, "these hymns were filled with hatred towards the Muslims due to the total ignorance of their religion"[872] it is plausible to argue that in this day and age, that ignorance is now a manufactured ignorance. Manufactured ignorance is a tactic to avoid accountability or introspection and I am of the understanding that it is the result of advice taken from individuals in the US administration's close circle, individuals such as Bernard Lewis who claimed that the essence of the revolts by Muslims against the West was driven by a violent intolerance inscribed within the origins of

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[870] Vitkus 1999 225

[871] G. W. Bush "George W. Bush on Protecting Religious Freedom Against Terrorists in Address to Joint Session of Congress" September 2001 https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/george-w-bush-on-protecting-religious-freedom-against-terrorists-in-address-to-joint-session-of-congress

[872] Kareem 2007

Islam.[873]Lewis maintains that the action of groups such as IS are not because of their particular interpretations or reading of the texts, but is the result of ascribing to the only *correct* interpretation. Lewis assumes for himself the title of an absolute authority on Islam, because he believes that he can authoritatively claim what is and what is not the correct interpretation, whilst excluding from his analysis salient aspects of western, Christian tradition such as the reality that

> the destruction of the African civilizations in South Africa, the taking of the land, and the placing of the remnant populations in shrinking reservations and ultimately state apartheid were carried out with Bibles open, by Christians executing what they viewed as their divinely ordained right and duty.[874]

For Lewis, to take by force, is a right of the white Christian male. However, for anyone else to do the same, such actions are evil and barbaric, nurtured in a moribund tradition or civilisation.[875] In this regard, Lewis makes some startling claims, of which the following three are relevant to the Paris attacks and the West's hounding focus on IS. Firstly, that Muslims initially rejected modernity because of its Christian essence, but then later began to emulate it as a 'survival mechanism' against the "expansion of western modernity"[876] an argument strongly opposed by Muslim scholars such as Abduh and Qutb who rejected western modernity because of the transgressions and exploitation inherent in the project of modernity. Thus Muslims rejected modernity because it was an unjust and exploitative project, not because of its Christian essence. Secondly, that Muslims have turned against the West because of the fact that Muslims have hopelessly failed to "harmonise" between Islam and modernity (bearing in mind that modernity is viewed only in a positive light), resulting in increased discontent with the Christian west. This claim has been made despite the fact that the Ottoman and other Muslim leaders had determined to "join the Eurocentric international society and accepted the universal claims of modern civilization in Europe" irrespective of the fact that Europe's identity was predominantly Christian.[877] Thirdly, Lewis claims that Muslims blame the West for all their failures because of Christian victories after the fall of Andalus and the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate.[878] The ignorance in this statement is enormous – from Taymiyya, to Qutb to Abduh and all others, it is obvious that all of these scholars called to account the individual Muslim subject and their failings, to adhere to just systems implicit in the teachings of Islam. The external influences and the embodiment of

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[873] Aydin 2004 89
[874] Qureshi & Sells 2003 8
[875] Aydin 2004 89
[876] Ibid 89
[877] Ibid 90
[878] Ibid 90

western systems that were problematic and harmful were secondary to what is considered an accountability of the self. It should be noted that both Huntington[879] and Lewis[880] have been considered as 'intellectual mentors' to senior politicians on US policy in the Middle East. A foreign policy which I believe is bankrupt and corrupt. These politicians have made the case for war in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. Aydin describes Lewis's tone as that which

> …lends itself to the current penchant for 'imperial hubris.' Lewis's image of a decaying Islamic civilization perhaps implies that Western public opinion need not take seriously any criticism of its policies and ideas by Muslims. Moreover, it becomes the West's burden to impose the right medicine, 'capitalism, modernity and democracy,' to this moribund civilization, perhaps even by military force if Muslims resist.[881]

In this way, the Eurocentric discourse not only affirms its superiority but justifies it, to the extent that the liberal justification for just war reflects the hypocrisy in the international system discussed by Asad, surfacing the questions about the humanity of Muslims, about Islamophobia and the consequences of that narrative. These justifications for war by the US and imperial/colonial nations allied in the war on terror, glossed over by elaborate rhetoric of decaying Islamic peoples are actual manifestations of imperial war making. And perhaps one can reasonably argue – of the desire to naturalise war which has been "seized upon and exploited by unscrupulous individuals in both politics and the media – amongst others - to further their own agendas by ratcheting up anti-Muslim sentiment." [882] Boggs, accordingly maintains that the US is "operating within an historical pattern of imperial war making for which rules of engagement matter little, if at all. There is no deviation from the norm."[883]In other words, the US profits from war. And when profits are calculated, all else is suspended. Specifically, ethics.

The question of humanity and the 'bestowing of an acknowledgement' of humanity are central to the question of violence simply because those at the fringes of politics understand violence whilst elites exploit violence to subsume dissent and forge specific political projects. The actions of elites may also subsume humanity and in many instances the acts of violence they employ may subsume existence. This relates to the discourse on the humanity, dignity and existence of the other or the nonbeing. The role of the elites in the dehumanisation

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[879] The Guardian "Samuel Huntington" January 2009 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/01/obituary-samuel-huntington & The Harvard Gazette "Samuel Huntington, 81, political scientist, scholar" February 2009 http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2009/02/samuel-huntington-81-political-scientist-scholar/
[880] P. Waldman "A Historian's Take on Islam steers US in Terrorism Fight" *Wall Street Journal* 2004 A1
[881] Aydin 2004 91
[882] T. Dunning "Blaming religion for Middle East violence ignores nuance and absolves governments of their responsibility" July 2017 https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/7/21/deconstructing-the-idea-of-foreign-fighters-in-syria
[883] C. Boggs "Imperialism and the Logic Of Mass Destruction" May 2017 https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/05/04/imperialism-and-the-logic-of-mass-destruction/

process of individuals, groups or entire ethnicities cannot be excluded from IS's interpretation of how it perceives its near and far enemies. The right to bear arms, to inflict harm and to retaliate are responses to these perceptions and felt experiences and it is for this reason that I have argued for an inclusion of the study of emotion in political theory. The language of dehumanisation conjures images and collective memories of the body that is denied a presence and when exterminated or brutally harmed, is codified as 'collateral damage,' 'disposable life' or that which is 'dispensable.' Essentially, it is an unworthy victim. Acknowledging that the body is a victim would mean that the perpetrator must be held accountable. But how can there be any accountability if there is 'no victim?' There is no victim because as the language suggests, there is only a problematic in terms of incidental deaths, which represent humanity denied.[884] It is a life denied, where the status of victim is not even imagined.[885] IS has not once been acknowledged with victimhood, yet a majority of its foot soldiers are individuals who have been affected by the excesses of state violence.

In this regard, in this quandary of competing narratives, Asad highlights the need for academics, scholars and activists to problematise the dominant discourse in the difference between war as "civilised violence" and terrorism as "barbaric violence" and the liberal justification for state violence as a moral argument,[886] because ultimately it guides as to 'who gets away with the narrative' and which persons are considered as unworthy victims. Within this discourse, the "erosion of the category of 'freedom fighter'" and the profuse proliferation of the language and grammar of the 'war on terror' has sought to legitimise the claim that any armed resistance against a state can be declared as a terrorist act rather than an act of resistance.[887] The state's response then, despite its excess is moral, the retaliatory forces and civil disobedience are "terrorist" acts. The liberal discourse in 2015/2016 is a *rewind and replay/a returning* to the French claims when they colonised Algeria[888], where the French believed that the "nation had a duty to export the values of her political system, culture, expertise and patronage."[889] It is rather curious then that IS advocates a similar ideal.

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[884] T. Assad "Thinking about terrorism and just war" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23(1) 2010 13-14
[885] This idea has been extensively played out since 9/11 when G.W. Bush promoted the idea that only the Americans killed were victims, the innocent victims of American bombings were not afforded the same status. This trajectory has since developed and has been sanitised into categories of 'collateral damage' which remove the human element from the discussion, negating the humanity of the dead. See A.M. Agathangelou "Power, Borders, Security, Wealth: Lessons of Violence and Desire from September 11" *International Studies Quarterly* 2004 48 522
[886] Assad 2010 3
[887] Sayyid 2013 283
[888] The French began their occupation of Algiers in 1830
[889] R. Martin "An Analysis Of The Use Of Rape As A Weapon Of War With Specific Reference To The Algerian War Of Independence 1954 – 1962" 11

Within this discourse of humanity, nonbeing and the other lies another, very well hidden discourse that seldom emerges. This is concerned with the question of race and racism in the international world system and the hierarchical structures of power. Within international relations the nonbeing is usually not considered, as this category falls within the discourse on race and racism. However, there is a growing consensus that in order to give meaning to territorially anchored struggles, culturally specific social constructions of race should be considered in order to understand the impact of ideological and structural forces that frame international responses. According to Vitalis in Harrison, "international relations are driven by a longstanding unspoken 'norm against noticing' race."[890] This norm of not noticing race has been succinctly captured in the events that encapsulate the Paris attacks and the global responses to it and is particularly relevant considering the connection between religion, race and empire as already discussed. Thus, the norm of not noticing race projects the absent humanity of those that live in the peripheries, in social exclusion. It constitutes a 'humanity which can be rectified', granted meaning and position, a presence and recognition, if the European construct of Muslim/Islam is willing to assimilate and surrender its identity to conform to European[891] dictates. IS has rejected this form of assimilation and instead calls for a re-awakening of the Muslim identity, as distinct from what they observe to be an immoral west.[892] IS makes reference to this when it speaks about unsettling the grayzone,[893] a space in which it is generating hostility between domestic Muslims and the broader society in which they coexist.[894] The attack on the grayzone inverts the Manichaean binary that IS has found itself trapped in. For IS, it is a choice between Islam and the Caliphate as opposed to the crusader coalition. This is because for the West, inclusion, acceptance, recognition and opportunity are all conditional.

All in all, the 'winning' single-story that emerged after the Paris attacks was a narrative of 'evil Islam' vs. 'good West' (for IS it was sacred Islam vs. evil West) and the need for a

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https://www.academia.edu/4313839/An_Analysis_Of_The_Use_Of_Rape_As_A_Weapon_Of_War_With_Specific_Reference_To_The_Algerian_War_Of_Independence_1954_-_1962

[890] F. V. Harrison "Global Apartheid, Foreign Policy, and Human Rights" (2002) Race and globalisation

[891] The term European is being used as opposed to the West, because European carries with it all the realities of a past and present of occupation, slavery, colonialism, epistemicide, modernity, Enlightenment and coloniality of all European and settler states thus associated. This includes North America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

[892] In Dabiq Issue 3 Shawwal 1435, they have stated "The modern day slavery of employment, work hours, wages, etc., is one that leaves the Muslim in a constant feeling of subjugation to a kāfir master. He does not live the might and honor that every Muslim should live and experience." 29

[893] Dabiq Issue 7 Rabi' Al-Akhir 1436 54. According to IS "The grayzone – for these leaders – was a place to continue existing as independent parties and thereby preserve their own power." It is a space where partisan interests are preserved. The grayzone also represents a space where there is coexistence, however IS sees the 'coexistence' as artificial because the Muslim is defined according to the global hierarchy of power and is not accepted but assimilated into European spaces.

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distinction between the 'good Muslim' and the 'bad Muslim.' In the clash of civilisations, this is an assertion of western superiority and western cultural prominence. Its meaning and functionality bore out in different scenarios such as the comment by Jean-Pierre Chevenement, a French government representative who said that Muslims should be "discreet" (or non-visible?) after the controversy that was sparked by the Burkini ban.[895] These attitudes from political representatives question the reality of liberalism to tolerate difference and accommodate plurality as demonstrated by Tariq Ramadan's comment - "normalise our presence without trivialising it."[896] Also of note was the demand for a collective apology by Muslims for the actions of IS because essentially, in the common sense understanding and the projection of the mainstream western media, being Muslim is equivalent to being IS. Arendt describes this demand for "confessions of collective guilt" as a "safeguard against the discovery of the actual culprits."[897] Arendt maintains that if one was to inquire into the triggers that transform the "*engagés* into the *enragés*, it is not injustice that ranks first but hypocrisy."[898] All of these discourses, attitudes, comments and statements are a necessary precursor to understanding the nature and purpose of the Paris attacks, because as Cambanis states,

> [i]n its futile effort to hold onto its colony in Algeria, France rallied anti-Islamic sentiment and pioneered indiscriminate counterinsurgency; as a result, to this day in France, religious freedom and suspects' legal rights still suffer.[899]

In returning to the question, "Why Paris?" Herein lies part of the answer. The rest is understood from stigmergy and stigmergic collaboration.

The attacks on Paris animate the existence of the zone of being and the zone of nonbeing and of the orientalist tropes and Islamophobic deceptions that have signalled Christendom's *doshmani* with the Muslim identity. It is a *doshmani* that IS internalised and then projected. For IS, it is an opportunity to redeem dishonour.

4.3.4 IS and the weapon of war

There is no freedom in silence

Steve Bantu Biko[900]

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[895] M. Bondok "Twitter users take down French politician who told Muslims to be 'discreet'" August 2016 http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/discreet-muslims-french-twitter-responds-best-way-Jean-Pierre-Chevenement-Islamophobia-islam-muslims-177059137

[896] T. Ramadan *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* 2004

[897] H. Arendt "A special supplement: Reflections on violence" February 1969 http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1969/02/27/a-special-supplement-reflections-on-violence/

[898] Ibid

[899] T. Cambanis "We are the war on terror, and the war on terror is us" March 2017 https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/03/23/how-imported-war-terror/IuIks5w7AzJjmNvac8LY2O/story.html?p1=Article_Related_Box_Article

As stated previously, words and language are not neutral. Words and language can be politically loaded. Cameron's reference to "women-raping" and "Medieval" is not coincidental. Considering the notions of western superiority and excellence juxtaposed with oppressed Muslim women and aggressive Muslim men, Cameron's words sought to conjure the harem narrative, the oppression of women in the East and the idea that Muslim men as represented by IS are savages in their treatment of women. It is not about the sexual savagery of foreign troops, rather the intent was to incorporate the vulnerability of women and the aggression of Muslim men, specifically of IS men, in order to justify that everything possible had to be done to protect and save 'the women.' Yet, the raping of women is a practise of almost all colonial, imperial and occupying forces as a weapon of war and has been used extensively in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan by the coalition of the killing. It cannot be attributed solely to Muslim rebels belonging to IS as suggested by Cameron although that is what has been intended. The narrative that has been set-up is once again Manichaean - Europeans good, Islam/Muslims bad. For IS, the "women-rapists" are those in the coalition of the killing, those who have brought dishonour to Iraqis and Syrians. The rape literature can be analysed using many frameworks ranging from psychoanalysis to post-colonial feminism. Its historical roots and the sedimentation of this theory within the racist discourse however cannot be ignored. In contemporary times, "particular forms of feminism have, for instance, been mobilised to legitimate catastrophic American military aggression in the Middle East, the oppression of Palestinians and escalating racism in France."[901] Reflecting on Derrida's ethics, specifically on the force of law and justice it becomes clear that almost every aspect of a struggle that demands an ethical response in relation to Muslim/black lives is tampered with. Though this may not be news to some, it is disconcerting that the extent of the problem has become so widespread, infiltrating even the academia.[902]

In writing on the colonial wars and the resultant mental disorders that manifested, Fanon recalls the psychological trauma of an Algerian whose wife had been raped by a French soldier.[903] This history of abuse and dishonour is not something that has vanished, nor has it been forgotten. It constitutes the trace elements that are lingering and is a powerful antagonism for revenge, whether in the immediate or later. The context of Algeria in relation

[900] S. Dlakavu "The meaning of freedom: Speaking truth to power" November 2014
https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2014-11-24-the-meaning-of-freedom-speaking-truth-to-power/
[901] V. Jagarnath "Vashna Jagarnath responds to Rebecca Davis on white feminism" The Daily Vox
https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/vashna-jagarnath-response-rebecca-davis-white-feminism/
[902] D. Golden "The science of spying: how the CIA secretly recruits academics" October 2017
https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/oct/10/the-science-of-spying-how-the-cia-secretly-recruits-academics
[903] Fanon 1963 92

to Paris was also invoked in the foregoing discussion and will surface again towards the concluding parts of this section. This is because Algeria and Paris are linked through stigmergy and for as long as the wounds remain unhealed, the possibility for action (resistance) continues to exist. According to UNICEF, more than 20 000 Muslim women and girls were raped in Bosnia. The report also indicates that during World War 2 women had been abducted, imprisoned and raped by occupying forces.[904] This is not without consequences. An Al-Jazeera report on 30th of April 2015 stated that France was investigating allegations of sexual abuse by its soldiers against children in the Central African Republic.[905] On the 21st of December 2010, the MailOnline ran the story of Steven Green, a former American101st Airborne soldier who admitted that he and his friends gang raped a 14 year old Iraqi girl, then murdered her and her family because "he didn't think of Iraqi civilians as *humans*" (my emphasis), in what has become known as the Mahmudiyah rape and killings.[906] On the 27th of November 2015, Samuel Oakford, reported that a Birmingham-based firm, Public Interest Lawyers had submitted documents to the International Criminal Court alleging that "[h]ours-long beatings, stabbings, *repeated sexual assault* (my emphasis) and music as torture: [were] just some of the abuses inflicted upon Iraqi people by British soldiers during their occupation of Iraq."[907] Again, it would be naïve to believe that in a nation with a history of resistance that these repulsive crimes would be without consequences. Investigative journalist Seymour Hersch spoke about a video that was recorded at Abu Ghraib in Iraq which reveals evidence of rape and torture on women and boys in the prison. According to Hersch

> …The women[inside Abu Ghraib] were passing messages out saying 'Please come and kill me, because of what's happened' and basically what happened is that those women who were arrested with young boys, children in cases that have been recorded. The boys were sodomized with the cameras rolling. And the worst above all of that is the soundtrack of the boys shrieking that your government has. They are in total terror. It's going to come out.[908]

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[904] UNICEF "Sexual violence as a weapon of war" http://www.unicef.org/sowc96pk/sexviol.htm see also R. Martin "An Analysis Of The Use Of Rape As A Weapon Of War With Specific Reference To The Algerian War Of Independence 1954 – 1962" 7
https://www.academia.edu/4313839/An_Analysis_Of_The_Use_Of_Rape_As_A_Weapon_Of_War_With_Specific_Referen ce_To_The_Algerian_War_Of_Independence_1954_-_1962

[905] AlJazeera "French soldiers accused of raping CAR" children April 2015 http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/french-soldiers-accused-raping-car-children-150430031734446.html

[906] Mail Foreign Service "'I didn't think of Iraqis as humans,' says US soldier who raped 14-year-old girl before killing her and her family" December 2010 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1340207/I-didnt-think-Iraqis-humans-says-U-S-soldier-raped-14-year-old-girl-killing-her-family.html

[907] S. Oakford "Did British Soldiers Carry Out Summary Executions and Rape Civilians in Iraq?" November 2015 https://news.vice.com/article/did-british-soldiers-carry-out-summary-executions-and-rape-civilians-in-iraq

[908] VNN "US soldiers raped Iraqi boys in front of mothers" December 2014
http://www.veteransnewsnow.com/2014/12/29/us-soldiers-raped-iraqi-boys-in-front-of-mothers/ For further information on the male rape in the Iraq war see: M. Danner (2004) *Torture and Truth* New York: NYRB Collections

Hersh further added that the evidence that had been gathered about abuse, rape and torture by American soldiers in Iraq was slowly being uncovered and that he had collected personal stories and accounts of soldiers who witnessed the horrific events, of individuals who wrote letters of complaint to the highest command; ultimately the complaints were covered up.[909] A March 2017 report by the London School of Economics' Centre for Women, Peace and Security indicated that Syrian regime soldiers engaged in rape which was "premeditated" and that the Syrian government forces used sexual violence as a tool of fear and terror since the beginning of the revolution.[910]

From the discussion on violence and Fanon's writings, it is apparent that violence is structurally present and in many instances can only be defeated through structural transformation.[911] In a colonial Manichaean order, where the female other is considered nothing, a non-entity, "[h]aving "sex" with a black woman is, for the white man, merely playing with monsters, and thus, … an expression of the embrace of the death drive…"[912] These obsessions are echoed by IS in their perceptions of the white/Christian/Yazidi woman and thus legitimate the understanding that "tinkering with the death-drive" is redeemable because the other (and in the case of IS, the western/ non-Muslim woman) "has no status as human in the colonized relation, so the hope is that he can pull back from the precipice of total self-annihilation."[913] A classic example of the suspension of ethics. Just as the white man projects the sense of 'nothing' onto the body of the female other, IS mimics that projection onto the body of the western female, now considered within this inverted Manichaean frame as an other. The link between the sexual imagery and the other is a link that Fanon has acknowledged by showing that "colonialism is intimately tied into the erotic fantasies the white man has of black men and women—fantasies that have been tragically enacted on their bodies and at the deepest levels of their psyches."[914] It is a perpetuation of the "non-existence" – the dehumanisation of the black person. In this instance, it is as Cornell concludes in her analysis of Gordon's *What Fanon Said* that "blacks are forced into a condition of anonymity simply by the projected meanings of their skin color." Blackness thus confines the black person to exist as "…a monster." [915] The same meaning can be inferred

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[909] Ibid

[910] C. Hoyle "Sexual violence a tool of terror in Syria's war" May 2017
https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2017/5/4/Sexual-violence-a-tool-of-terror-in-Syrias-war

[911] E. Frazer & K. Hutchings "On politics and violence: Arendt contra Fanon" *Contemporary Political Theory* 7 2008 95-96

[912] Cornell & Seely & Seely 2016 152

[913] Ibid 150

[914] Ibid 153

[915] D. Cornell in L.R. Gordon *What Fanon Said* 2015 143

today for the Muslim, described by Cameron as "monsters" and in the dehumanisation of Muslims by the Iraqi soldier when he said that *he didn't think of Iraqi civilians as humans*.

There is thus a collapsing of the female Muslim identity with that of the Muslim male, so that any action against her- an innocent victim and non-combatant can be justified. A suspension of ethics once again. This merging of the two sexualities, or the "loss of sexual difference is part of the obliteration of the uniqueness of the experience of the women of color"[916] so that from Cameron's narrative and the single-story, these (Muslim) women's experiences are obliterated and only the white/Christian woman's victimhood is expressed and acknowledged. This is another aspect of the dehumanisation of the civilians in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan and can be evaluated in the context of the Mahmudiyah rape and killings, the rapes in Abu Ghraib and the rape of Algerian Muslim women who became "rape targets in which the French soldiers 'simultaneously subject[ed] Algerian women to brutal sexual violence.'"[917] When this is done, when these episodes of violence are aggregated it is curious, that the only focus on these repulsive acts, is on the actions of IS. This questioning is not to negate the criminal behaviour of IS but to show how words contain images that confine our abilities to critically question. So I must ask, "Why?" I am not advocating a deflection or denial of IS's actions. Nor am I offering IS any justifications. Instead what I am seeking is a comprehensive analysis of how IS mirrors the actions of those who it deems are its enemies. With this in mind it is necessary to call into account the totality of these experiences by not limiting them to a singular "IS experience."

Thus, in voting to bomb Syria because of the Paris attacks, together with the other Imperial and colonial powers, viz. Russia, the US, France and Germany (who had agreed to provide "reconnaissance planes, a frigate and mid-air fuelling capacity"),[918] Cameron did what was expected and what it (the UK) has always done. It forged ahead with a political project that would exploit violence to append collective identities and exclude any opportunity for political dialogue. Returning to the savage-victim-saviour metaphor,[919] the language employed by Cameron effectively reproduces the rationality for war and more violence. It is where the western national identity is portrayed as "innocent, victimized, virtuous, moral, and

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[916] Ibid 144

[917] R. Martin "An Analysis Of The Use Of Rape As A Weapon Of War With Specific Reference To The Algerian War Of Independence 1954 – 1962" 12 https://www.academia.edu/4313839/An_Analysis_Of_The_Use_Of_Rape_As_A_Weapon_Of_War_With_Specific_Referen ce_To_The_Algerian_War_Of_Independence_1954_-_1962

[918] J.D. Stuster "Germany to Contribute Forces to Islamic State Coalition" 4 December 2015 http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/04/germany-to-contribute-forces-to-islamic-state-coalition/

[919] M Mutua "Savages, victims and saviors: The metaphor of human rights" (2001) 42 Harvard International Law Journal 201 204

rational; the enemy Other, as demonic, murderous, and radically barbaric…" concluding "that militarization must be globalized as the only moral imperative to achieving national security, couched as taking care of one's own."[920] The British government's actions have been summarised by Binoy Kampmark when he said, "the instinct to be violent in anticipation of more violence, triumphed and … Britain has signalled that it will, foolishly, continue that western tendency to interfere in zones its imperial ambitions have long *traumatised*. It is a *trauma* that will make a *revisit*" [921] (my emphasis).

Consider then in this regard Cameron's words in the context of a history of colonial and imperial leaders who generated and utilised these scripts with a specific intent - words through which the projects of orientalism and the clash of civilisations thesis were given validation. So why would Cameron specifically choose these words in this context when the West, as he claims is synonymous for 'justice?' The essence of the discourse and the choice of words is to garner support for the "collective good" and "the justice" of western civilisation as opposed to the "barbaric Muslims"; in this way violence and desire become intertwined where "[v]iolence assures elite control along the three axes of power: class-race-gender. Desire motivates it."[922] IS challenges this narrative. In fact, for IS and groups like al Qaeda, this narrative is about compelling Muslim audiences to "view contemporary conflicts through the prism of a wider historical global attack on Islam and Muslims by a belligerent 'Zionist-Crusader Alliance.'"[923] IS offers the opportunity to inflict harm on the enemy in response to the harm that Muslims and the *Ummah* are experiencing.[924] IS's response is coherent and consistent. In terms of functionality, the western discourse normalises the violence of western states on non-western states and maintains the hierarchical structures of power which are desired by the elite. These in turn strengthen the concept of "borders of the mind" which are fuelled by words such as "Muslim raping" and "Medieval-monsters"; justifying the attacks on the homeland of the other to maintain hegemony whilst nurturing the desire for national security and stability through transnational violence.[925] This hearkens to

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[920] Agathangelou 2004 521

[921] B. Kampmark "Fake 'Just Wars': Britain's Parliament Vote to Bomb Syria" 4 December 2015
http://www.globalresearch.ca/fake-just-wars-britains-parliament-vote-to-bomb-syria/5493387

[922] Agathangelou 2004 519

[923] A. Hoskins *Radicalisation and the Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New MediaEcology* 2011 26

[924] A.N. Awan "ISIS and Its Impact on Radicalization in the West" Policy Brief 6 Centre for Global Policy March 2017

[925] Ibid 519-520

Cambanis's quote referenced in chapter three, of a society that embraces war and the cult of war, ruled by fear, and existing in a space where society and politics becomes warped.[926]

4.3.5 Violence and the Scales of Justice

In the space where society and politics become warped we find chaos and mayhem. In Syria and Iraq, there is a vortex of violence drawing in different actors with different agendas. It is an amalgamation of madness and trauma. Some of this madness and trauma was felt in Paris, yet the overwhelming burden and impact of the violence of IS is felt by the people in these two cities. This section brings all these elements together by taking the discussion back to Syria and Iraq and then linking up with Paris in the final assessment. It also focuses to a large extent on the greatest perpetrators of violence in the conflict thus far – the Syrian and Iraqi states in order to establish the basis for an obsession with and a concentrated focus on IS despite the existence of more vicious and dangerous actors.

For the longest time there has been a critical disjuncture between what is told about Muslims and Islam and what Islam actually means or for that matter, what Islam is understood to be. In the process, there has been violence and suffering. Yet strangely there is an almost unbelievable ignorance as to the consequence of that suffering. Any suffering, any trauma if left untreated is bound to yield some coping mechanism – good or bad. Anything is possible. A glaring neglect of this trauma also comes from ignoring the reality that the individuals affected have become deeply unstable and are continuously shaped, moulded and coaxed in the shifting sands of social, cultural and political factors. These individuals have not only become vulnerable to propaganda, they are also emotionally fragile. Similarly, in *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon highlighted the collective suffering of a people and the violence they experienced and were born into, in reference to the French occupation of Algeria. For Fanon the impact of this suffering serves as a trigger to unleashing the potential for unmitigated violence maintaining that imperialism inhibits the potential to achieve a true liberation of mankind. In this period of colonisation /coloniality there develops a "mental pathology" that is the product of oppression,[927] what he describes as the infliction of a trauma. In writing about colonialism (and by default coloniality) Fanon comments that colonialism "is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties,"[928] it is

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[926] T. Cambanis "We are the war on terror, and the war on terror is us" March 2017 https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/03/23/how-imported-war-terror/luIks5w7AzJjmNvac8LY2O/story.html?p1=Article_Related_Box_Article
[927] F. Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 1963 200
[928] Ibid 48

"…violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence."[929]

In her reflections on violence, Arendt notes that violence usually results in more violence and opens up the space for politics to be corrupted, reducing the opportunities for political engagement and the functioning of politics.[930] For Arendt, the greatest danger with violence is that violence is determined by "… means and ends, whose chief characteristic, if applied to human affairs, has always been that the end is in danger of being overwhelmed by the means…"[931] and the fact that there is a "massive intrusion of criminal violence in politics."[932] However, Arendt acknowledges that world politics has undergone huge changes and challenges and thus it is not only extremists who glorify violence.[933] What Arendt fails to reference in her *Reflections on Violence* are the victims of colonial repression, occupation and exploitation, focusing instead only on the World Wars and the Holocaust as her points of reference, as can be inferred from this supplement. These non-European victims have been born into, grown up in, socialised in and exist in conditions of extreme violence, brutality, systematic, systemic and structural conditions that dehumanise and subjugate them. The victims of state sponsored terrorism and aggression are specifically dehumanised through oft repeated phrases or through insistently conjured images and concepts that reduce their existence to the meanings contained in the language. In return, the tools of language are utilised to tie the victims to particular images or events that will influence the way in which they are perceived, which ultimately gives credibility and legitimacy to the justifications advanced for attacking them. But for these non-western, non-white victims, their memories are in-tact; their lived experiences real and harrowing. When there is no official history at present, as has happened in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, the memory remains "raw and undigested" and in time becomes woven into political discourse, collective memory, lived experiences and practise.[934] Considering these raw undigested memories, Fanon speaks of a "triggering factor"[935] and although different for each traumatised individual, its existence cannot be silenced or erased. The triggering factor is likened to stigmergy. The IS fighters and the lone wolf cells repeatedly make reference to these collective memories and the trauma they share.

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[929] Ibid 48
[930] Ibid 100
[931] Arendt 1969
[932] Ibid
[933] Ibid
[934] K.M. Fierke "Memory and Violence in Israel/Palestine" *Human Rights and Human Welfare* 8 2008 37-38
[935] Cornell & Seely 2016 161 quoted term is from The Wretched of the Earth 2004 199

When considering the concept of stigmergy, Fanon's case study of the two young Algerian boys who murder their French friend is relevant. The boys decide to murder their innocent friend after hearing about the Rivet massacre in which forty innocent Algerian men were murdered during the middle of the night. These men had been dragged out of bed and were murdered by the French soldiers in front of their wives and children. In response to Fanon's questioning about the "why" they would want to kill when "this killing" was being done by adults, the boys replied, "[b]ut they kill children too."[936] The act of killing stems from a sense of nothingness, of being nothing, of living in nothing, of being told that you are nothing.[937] The boys live, exist, function and imagine in a space of violence which affirms for them that they are nothing and unlikely to attain anything (manhood).These are the experiences of hundreds of thousands of men living and having lived (as young boys) the occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq, the repression in Syria and the War in the Balkans. These are the experiences of hundreds of thousands more who re-live the trauma and torture of the French and British colonisation (and coloniality) in North Africa and Syria and in Iraq respectively. It is about the experiences of countless more who live in the zone of nonbeing in France, Britain, US and other Anglo-Saxon cities. The US-French alliance has given support to repressive regimes in the MENA whilst in France itself, an Amnesty report found that Muslims were disproportionately targeted, subjected to state abuse and searched. Mosques have been shut down and the French government has "trampled on the rights of hundreds of men, women and children, leaving them traumatised and stigmatised."[938] How will these experiences, memories, trauma and psychosis be accounted for? Can there be a grieving? Does there exist the right to claim the pain of that trauma, that psychosis, that violence? Could it be that these experiences become what Fanon describes as melancholia?

When people are not given protection under conditions of anarchy, there develops a sense of betrayal and humiliation; traumatic memory when formed plays a role in the reproduction of conflict.[939] Fanon writes about melancholia which is a form of suffering that is experienced due to a loss, but which is different from bereavement. Subjects experiencing melancholia have what is described as a "continued presence of that which has been lost."[940] In an interview with Medyan Dairieh who was embedded with IS for three weeks in June 2014, one of the fighters stated

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[936] Ibid 201
[937] Cornell & Seely seminar series presentation at University of Pretoria, Law Auditorium Room 1-54 July 2016
[938] Ahmed July 2016
[939] Fierke 2008 39
[940] Gordon 2007 11

> …and we are going to invade you as you invaded us, we will capture your women as you captured our women and we will orphan your children as you orphaned our children… .[941]

The fighter then broke down crying. These comments, emotions and revenge filled utterances are not empty rhetoric. They carry deep within them personal tragedy and extreme pain, a pain and tragedy that is glossed over in western media coverage to delete the human face of the victims. In 2012, a US sergeant killed sixteen civilians in Panjwai Afghanistan, nine of his victims were children. The sergeant gathered the bodies, including the bodies of four young girls who were under six years of age, and then burnt them. According to Mcclennen "the bodies were counted but the stories of the lives lost were ignored."[942] As Samar Yazbek stated, "[t]his is where extremism comes from – from violence and brutality. I am sorry, but anybody who has had ten of their children die is going to become an extremist."[943]

With reference to the foregoing, Arendt's glance in terms of the victims of violence is still Eurocentric, whilst Fanon glances from the vantage point of the subject of violence - the colonised, the revolutionary, the oppressed and the occupied. Arendt's failure to recognise the victims of colonialism and slavery is symptomatic of two central issues that Fanon discusses and which is essential to theorising the violence of IS away from the binaries of Islam evil, secular West good. Firstly, the non-recognition of the humanity of the colonised and the violence unleashed on them indicates the suspension of ethics. If ethical engagement is thwarted, then all else becomes permissible.[944] Nowhere is this truer than in the creation of terms such as 'collateral damage' and 'disposable life' to refer to Muslim/black victims of European/imperial bombing campaigns, occupation and drone strikes. Consider for instance that on 22 May 2017 suicide bombings in Manchester killed 23, whilst on the 29th May twin bombings in Baghdad killed 22 and left more than a 100 persons injured. Then on the 31st May, a suicide bombing in Kabul killed 90 persons and more than 400 were injured. In all of these instances the stories were covered in the media, but the way in which each story was covered was radically different. The Manchester coverage was given a human face, the children were named and described yet the children killed in the Baghdad bombings received

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[941] M. Dairieh "My journey inside the Islamic State" July 2015 https://news.vice.com/article/my-journey-inside-the-islamic-state

[942] S.A. Mcclennen "We mourn Manchester, but not Kabul: How biased coverage of terrorist attacks drives us apart" June 2017 http://www.salon.com/2017/06/03/we-mourn-manchester-but-not-kabul-how-biased-coverage-of-terrorist-attacks-drives-us-apart/

[943] Yassin-Kassab & Al- Shami 2016 111

[944] L. Gordon "Through the hellish zone of nonbeing" *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of self-knowledge* V 2007 11

"none of the personal-interest features" afforded to the Manchester bombings.[945] Likewise the attacks on Kabul were covered by sterile, cold language and the victims were described as those who "just were not lucky."[946] Their lives were not a 'tragic loss.' These slants, manipulation, language plays and deletion of the human face and humanity of the Muslim victims must be interrogated in the coverage of the radical behaviour of foreign troops in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq in relation to the burning of copies of the Quran[947] and the urinating on corpses of the Taliban.[948] According to Richman,

> *What turns an angry and anguished Muslim into someone willing to kill Americans indiscriminately?*(my emphasis) That's a hard question to answer completely. But when violence such as that inflicted by the United States drives a Muslim to the most "radical" form of the faith in search of revenge, the explanation is far more political than religious. If terrorism were happening during peacetime, that might tell another story. But it is not.[949]

In these instances, victims enter what Abdul Jan-Mohamed calls "death-bound subjectivity"[950] where individuals are faced with real death as a tenable reality of the system that victimises them whilst experiencing social death because they exist in the same system that considers their lives less valuable than others. Ultimately inferring that 'they' (the victims) are not really 'people' after all,[951] projecting an illusion that these lives are not grievable. Fanon identified this as being in the zone of nonbeing. Knowing that these victims exist, is it at all possible that IS soldiers and lone cells in foreign cities who now claim affiliation to IS are also the traumatised victims of European/imperial/foreign interventions and violence that have produced the kind of melancholia that Fanon describes?

All these incidences point to one single reality – that the coverage of terrorist attacks is hugely biased and serves to heighten public vulnerability and sensitivity to white, western victims. When the victims are Muslim, the sense of personal tragedy and human loss is almost absent. As a result, the rage is sparked by the "semblance of rationality, rather than

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[945] S. A. Mcclennen "We mourn Manchester, but not Kabul: How biased coverage of terrorist attacks drives us apart" June 2017 http://www.salon.com/2017/06/03/we-mourn-manchester-but-not-kabul-how-biased-coverage-of-terrorist-attacks-drives-us-apart/

[946] Ibid

[947] H. Henderson "US troops 'burned 100 copies of the Koran in Afghanistan'" August 2012 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9502439/US-troops-burned-100-copies-of-the-Koran-in-Afghanistan.html

[948] D. Tripathi "Burning the Quran; Urinating On Dead Bodies" March 2012 http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/03/05/burning-the-quran-urinating-on-dead-bodies/

[949] S. Richman "Why Do They Hate Us? It's No Mystery" December 2015 https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/12/09/why-do-they-hate-us-its-no-mystery/

[950] Gordon 2007 11

[951] Ibid 11

the interests behind it"[952] as individuals began to unmask the hypocrisy. To acknowledge the victims would mean that they, the victims in Beirut, Baghdad and Ankara were a "people hidden in plain sight", a people who "did not exist" and had now appeared,[953] and thus to acknowledge them would be to un-suspend the ethical. If this happens, it would be impossible to write away their humanity. Indian blogger Karuna Ezara Parikh expressed these emotions in a poem that went viral:

> It's not Paris we should pray for, it is the world. It is a world in which Beirut; reeling from bombings … is not covered in the press. A world in which a bomb goes off at a funeral in Baghdad and not one person's status update says 'Baghdad' because not one white person died in that fire…[954]

Conditions of appearance or non-appearance are crucial to the lived-realities of colonised subjects. This is what was exposed after the Paris attacks as social media comments and blog posts flared with accusations of the double-standards and hypocrisy of European leaders who failed to recognise or even acknowledge the victims of IS attacks in Beirut a day earlier, or the victims in Baghdad a few days prior or the victims in Ankara on the 10th of October 2015. Arendt also wrote about tearing the "mask of hypocrisy from the face of the enemy" and "to provoke action even at the risk of annihilation."[955] According to Arendt, this violence is not rational.[956] Fanon's writings concur with this. Fanon speaks of the actions of individuals who manifest violence as a response to the brutality they have endured and stating that random violence is not normal.[957] IS's violence, just like the violence of the coalition of the killing is not rational – nor can it be justified.

When IS beheaded the Europeans, it essentially crossed the divide between non-existence and existence. To do this, it had to be violent. The provoking of action at the risk of annihilation was to call IS's existence into being. It was about stepping violently out of the zone of nonbeing and of confronting the question of "How can I be?" When agents of IS attacked Paris, they brought the victims of Beirut, Baghdad and Ankara out of the zone of nonbeing - again, violently. It was only violence that could produce this appearance and negate the reality of the uniqueness of their experiences. But it was also a tit-for-tat response, a mimicry of the violence into which they had been schooled. It was an adoption and inversion of the

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[952] Arendt 1969
[953] Gordon 2007 7
[954] M. Jansen "Double standard in responses to terrorist attacks is condemned" November 2015 http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/double-standard-in-responses-to-terrorist-attacks-is-condemned-1.2432422
[955] Arendt 1969
[956] Arendt 1969
[957] Fanon 1963 50

justifications of that violence. A violence that they had been forced into accepting. Thus, in the final analysis, in spite of Arendt's criticisms of Fanon, Arendt concurred with him, admitting that under certain circumstances only violence "can set the scales of justice right again."[958] Although Arendt noted that violence can never be legitimate, she appreciated the reality that sometimes violence may be justified and that it may be the correct response to extreme injustice, victimisation of the innocent or to open up the space for politics.[959] However, the violence of IS, the violence of the different regimes and the violence from foreign intervention cannot be justified when that violence is in itself, an act of injustice.

4.4 Conclusion

Ultimately, it should be noted that the Paris attacks resulted from a multitude of contributing and extremely provocative reasons. From this realisation it is necessary to stress that limiting the discussion on IS and its attacks on foreign soil to a monologue about religion or demanding a theological reform of Islam to more 'liberal traditions,' or to claim that the genesis of IS is to be found in theology is disingenuous. Widening the lens of analysis is by no means an attempt at denying religious ideology. There is an element of religious ideology certainly, but it cannot be divorced from its social and political context. What it does is to animate the role and impact of human action. In addition it should be noted that IS has experienced a form of regional decentralisation. The core group has essentially focused on establishing and maintaining territory in Iraq and Syria and consolidating the authority of the Caliphate in the midst of a power vacuum which occurred after the dismantling of the secular Baathist Iraqi state, the military surges, the instigation of sectarian conflict and the destruction of the cohesive fabric of Iraqi society. IS gained prominence in a situation of decay and it is this reality that constitutes its bedrock. Regional affiliates who have been given broad directives to participate in operations in identified target areas, acted in Paris in response to their realities of foreign interventions, humanity, and freedom denied, melancholia and trauma; irrespective of whether they experience these realities as episodes of coloniality, or as a recollection from traumatised memories or military incursions. It can also be explained using stigmergy.

As noted by Fanon, political domination in the form of modern colonialism[960] creates disastrous people, modern monsters. This is because domination depends on violence and

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[958] Arendt 1969
[959] Frazer & Hutchings 102
[960] Modern colonialism would today be understood as coloniality

violence creates trauma. Undoubtedly, this is the reality in relation to IS. Syrian activists have long documented that IS had little popular support inside Syria but that it was being tolerated largely because of "trauma." This trauma is the result of Assad's "scorched earth" policy that had brewed immense anger and hatred which has been channelled through IS, where IS serves as a conduit for and a generator of rage. The Paris attacks calls to the fore the notion of the humanity of all people, not only white people. It has challenged the liberal notions of equality and freedom, because the practise of universal humanism manifests as a priority of and for the homeland. Arab lives and especially Muslim lives do not matter. Fanon is clear. Although he detests violence, he notes that because the system of colonialism, and by default I include the system of coloniality has been so violent, the only instrument to challenge this violence is violence. Arendt acknowledges that violence is sometimes necessary to rectify an extreme injustice or to open up the space for politics. This is the consolidation of the theorising. All the templates examined thus far ultimately lead to the reality and realisation that the violence of IS is motivated by revenge, the greed for power and control which manifests as the dark side of modernity. Religion is the currency invoked to draw supporters, sympathy and recognition, and to seek legitimacy. The use of Islamicate language serves to express IS's aims and justify its actions. But religion, specifically Islam does not constitute the motivation for the violence.

In the final curtain let us return to the image of Paris. For the people in Paris, the 13th of November 2015, the full colour HD picture, will be etched in their memories; for IS fighters and subjugated populations in many resource rich MMC, Paris the 17th of October 1961 (the black and white frozen portrait) is still being remembered, when "…200 people were killed…reports of demonstrators clubbed, beaten, strangled and pushed into the Seine, of dead Algerians piled like cordwood. The French government covered up the massacre for years,"[961] as a means of shoring up white domination in numerical terms whilst legitimating it in political terms. It is perhaps at this point, collecting all these thoughts that one can identify the operational possibility of stigmergy in the Paris attacks, the choice of violence by IS and its foreign cells and one can also understand why this violence will not cease. More importantly, it clarifies the disjuncture between what is told and what is happening and of the possibility, the almost inevitable possibility of IS 2.0.

Curtain fall. Curtain Rise. Next Act!

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[961] J. Jackson "A Missed Chance to Connect Paris Massacres, Past and Present" December 2015 http://fair.org/home/a-missed-chance-to-connect-paris-massacres-past-and-present/

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Key findings

In this section the key findings of the study are discussed.

5.1.1 The *Shami* theatre and the theatrical language

This study considered those factors that contributed to the rise and development of IS, the growing support it receives from foreign fighters and conceptual history of the violence of IS. It further interrogated the notion of the claim that the violence of IS is a response to modernity/coloniality and/or the result of a clash with western values and ideals only. It expanded on the developments in the *Sham*i theatre and the use of language in the conflict. In order to address the objectives above as outlined in chapter one, the study included an assessment and contemplation of the the occurrence of theatre images, deflections and conflations in describing and naming the conflict, episodes of the conflict and the actors in the conflict. A comparison of the violence of the Joker to the violence of the main actors revealed that the use of violence by IS in Iraq and Syria was by no means a new occurrence. The sectarian divide and the false-flag operations that had been orchestrated in Iraq and Syria due to the protests and the confrontation with what the people saw as illegitimate regimes had simply been an imitation of the blame tactics that the British had utilised during their colonisation of Iraq. This tactic re-directed the attention from the geo-political and imperial dynamics of the conflict as well as the reality of imposed rulers, to an elaborate focus on the clash of Islam with western values. This story was told and reinforced through the stature of the new bogeyman on the scene, the Joker, IS. IS has been no different in its actions, rhetoric and use of violence from those it claimed were its 'near' and 'far' enemies. To establish complete control and legitimate that ownership of power, IS declared itself a Caliphate. Significantly, the language of the Caliphate had not existed before the invasion of Iraq in any of the other al Qaeda narratives and more pertinently, IS had not existed before the occupation. Although IS claimed that the Caliphate would restore honour to the Muslims in the region and free them from the oppressive rulers (the near enemy) and the harm of the crusaders (the far enemy), the declaration of the Caliphate divided the Muslims further and has resulted in more harm to ordinary Muslims because of the negative effect of Islamophobic attacks on Muslims as a result of IS and the single-story mediated in its name. Furthermore, most of IS's victims are Muslims. The destruction of Iraqi society and of the Iraqi state, created a power vacuum inside Iraq that allowed for all sorts of antagonisms and

agendas to play out in this space and consolidated Rice's "creative chaos" strategy. Furthermore, the reliance on sectarian militia to defend the capital because of the collapse of state security forces and the disintegration of the national army has been catastrophic. The occupation is on-going and the US has been instrumental and active in every aspect of the war and the internal conflict inside Iraq and Syria either directly or indirectly, often in co-ordination and complicity with proxy entities. In this regard, the illegal occupation of Iraq serves in the mind-set of IS affiliates as a justification for IS.

5.1.2 Understanding IS – its rise and development

IS is the symptom of the effects of an unresolved exploited past, illegitimate rule and of state collapse both in Syria and Iraq. IS first emerged in 2006 when al-Baghdadi became the leader of ISI, but by 2011, it had become a negligible political actor. In order to rebuild ISI al-Baghdadi drew Baathists fighters from Saddam's army who had a grudge with the Americans and the new Iraqi puppet regime. By 2011, the Baathists represented nearly a third of ISI's top twenty five commanders. The Baathist officers were known to be "un-Islamic", but their lack of religiosity did not matter. They had been discharged without benefits from the Iraqi army under the process of de-Baathification and by joining ISI they could restore their dignity and honour. Of importance to Baghdadi at that time and in that context was their experience, their contacts and their wealth was what he needed more. Essentially, the group that declared the Caliphate had not prioritised nor initiated any engagement with religious doctrine. Religious zeal, devotion and spirituality were not the criteria for enrolment, enlistment or participation. Enrolment was priority based. In this instance wealth, skill and expertise to get a job done was what was needed. This combination of fighters and commanders exhibited a "vengeful militarism" with "unabated fanaticism" negating the claim that IS was founded on the basis of religious fundamentalism. From al-Baghdadi to the top commanders, religion and religious knowledge was never a priority. Power and revenge was.

5.1.3 Understanding the impact of scholars on IS
The link between religion and politics is fluid, dynamic and complex and "highlighting the politics" does not necessarily entail "ignoring the religion." There is a difference between identifying an espoused political or religious view and claiming that the causes of violence are exclusively limited to that view or ideology. The violent aspects of *jihadism* associated with IS and other groups such as al Qaeda which have been linked to ibn Taymiyya and Qutb have been refuted in my analysis. Specifically because if these groups are "religious" and steeped in Islam, then they would know what the different scholars say about harm to

innocents, civilians and infrastructure and what the majority opinion is about this issue. They would know that the fatwa attributed to ibn Taymiyya that is being touted as a validation for certain harms is incorrect and they would know that both ibn Taymiyya and Qutb gave detailed, progressive and comprehensive suggestions on how to deal with corrupt and oppressive regimes, a dysfunctional society and spiritual decline. Most importantly, they would know without doubt, that Qutb did not pronounce on *takfir*, that he did not advocate violence except for self-defence and against very specific targets and they would also know that the foundation for all responses as outlined by Qutb began with the inner jihad, the spiritual and moral cleansing of the self, so that justice would be attained. If they knew this, they would have not abused the heritage of the scholars to justify murder, they would have exercised restraint and followed the rules of Jihad as set out by the prophet (pbuh), they would have been careful about their targets and on pronouncing *takfir*. Considering that none of this happened, one must ask, "Why are these groups and persons labelled as *Islamist*?" and "Why are their responses labelled as *Islamist terror attacks*?" This is more curious considering the leadership composition of IS where a third of the top twenty five commanders constituted Baathists. Would it not be just - more accurate to perhaps call them by the distortion – for instance as misled-Qutbists, or confused Taymiyyists? Simply put, why not refer to the attacks as attacks by *Wahhabists* and Baathists? Why, name it as *Islamist* attacks? Ideology matters, but it is not the "same as theology." It incorporates both aspects related to the political and the religious and this blend is apparent in the IS leader al-Baghdadi who grew up heavily indoctrinated by Saddam's Baath ideology. To brand an entire religion and all its adherents as subscribing to violence based on a small group's confusion/distortion of one or two scholars' writings, ignoring all the other voices inside Islam to the contrary is not only problematic but sinister and evil.

Furthermore, IS has called for a reflection and a recalling of the memory of the past in conjunction with the reality of the present, of a focus on geo-politics; not particularly of a reflection on Islamic doctrine or theology –but for a reflection on events and occurrences and what they (IS) deem as the "Islamic" response. Thus, the events of the past are intricately linked to the experiences of the present and this is a fact that cannot be ignored. Contained in these experiences is the desperation to defend against harm, which is lodged in perceptions and emotions. It is not about ideology and religion. Also, as stated previously, congregating under a single banner does not necessarily imply that there exists a "unity" in the ideology of

the fighters or that there occurs an absolute consensus with group think; especially not under the abnormal and schizophrenic conditions under which these individuals operate.

Additionally, placing *Wahhabism* simply within a religious ambit would be short-sighted as the nature of these occurrences (IS and other rebellion groups) are consolidated under multiple rationales – political, religious, structural and social. The rise of IS, its development and violence occurs in the context of the state and state violence. It manifests as a two-faced persona in this context. On the one hand, when trying to consolidate power, attract foot soldiers and gain legitimacy it uses the language of its distorted manipulations and interpretations of Islam, to justify its actions. But what must be considered in the analysis is that a justification is not the same as a motivation for the violence. In this instance, religion is a currency to attract the hopeless, the helpless and the largely ignorant but desperate victims of the conflict. In this instance also, IS uses very appealing language- as that of saviour, bestower of dignity, challenger of the humiliation, avenger of the rapists, restorer of the faith etc. On the other hand, despite claiming to be the saviour and protector of Islam and Muslims, IS has killed more Muslims than non-Muslims, it has destroyed Islamicate heritage and knowledge and it has fuelled Islamophobic violence against Muslims worldwide. IS and its actions have also been rejected by the majority Sunni Muslim scholars and Muslims generally. This can be seen from the petitions, outright condemnations, open letters and endless public discourses on the entity. To cite IS's 'reliance' on Islam in the form of Wahhabism as the main factor in its violence is to ignore what IS fighters themselves say on different platforms. It also ignores the reality that this interpretation by IS, one that is not endorsed by or subscribed to by the *Ummah* in general, is now presented as Islam whilst the what I would venture as the 'authority' on Islam – that which would be the general common sense understanding of the Ummah – is referenced as not knowing what Islam is. Thirdly, it is to ignore the fact that Wahhabism is a political ideology that uses religion as a tool and that Wahhabism is the only ideology to forge a "modern-state" through the process of what it calls "jihad." This led to the birth of Saudi Arabia, which led to the selling of Saudi oil fields to the Americans, and to a war against the Ikhwan – the betrayal of the Ummah in the Battle of Sabilla.

What is striking is the fact that the geo-politics of the MMC in which entities such as IS has (re)emerged has changed violently in the last few decades. The rise of what has been described as a violent ideology is parallel and consequential to the rise of violent politics, again highlighting the hybrid nature of such conflicts. Significantly, many of the actions of IS

today, such as the destruction of tombs, shrines and historical sites replicates the *Wahhabi* jihad of the eighteenth century but also that of the "history in the museum of violence" of the West's colonial incursions in MMC and again in the very recent history of the US's invasion and occupation of Iraq. Finally, it should be stressed that all the scholars, Abduh, Qutb, Banna and Maududi have articulated from a geo-political colonial framework in response to the limits of modern western epistemology and thought. There is no clash of civilisations here, just a clash inside of western civilisation. In the final analysis it would be prudent to recall Sageman's analysis of IS as an entity that is using religion to advance a political vision. It is thus necessary to be weary of falling into the shortcomings of "fundamental attribution error" in an analysis of IS.

5.1.4 Understanding IS's lure for foreign fighters

From the extensive analysis and research done on foreign fighters the overwhelming evidence suggests that most of the foreign fighters are novices in their religion and that they are motivated by a multitude of varying reasons to travel to Syria and Iraq and join IS or the opposition fighters. Many of the fighters admitted that their Islamic knowledge was very basic. The reality is this – an analysis of the conflict and the role of the fighters reveals a world full of unprecedented challenges and emotional backlash. Notably, not all foreign fighters have joined IS, nor are they all driven by zealous religious ideology and very importantly, it is becoming evident that the numbers advocated by "officials" are substantially inflated. These have significant implications for policy and for trumping up support and mobilisation from other states and for attempting to garner legitimacy for a global campaign against Islamist terrorists. Religion and religious ideology are not the essential markers that draw recruits to IS and most of the research on foreign fighters indicates that experiences of political, social, cultural and economic alienation are possible factors that serve as a motivation for western Muslims to join IS but may not be the only reasons. Although faith plays a part in the decision making of IS recruits, it should be noted that there is a difference between faith and ideology, there is a difference between faith and doctrine and there is a difference between faith in actions and religious doctrine directing actions. It is possible that the link to 'faith' in the articulation of an action is a platitude or attempt at 'inner peace,' in a schizophrenic and abnormal environment infused with grossly abhorrent actions from all actors. Furthermore, foreign fighter recruitment does not rely on religious ideology nor theological arguments but more on "people's sense of solidarity and altruism." These have been generated through "victimhood" narratives based on the

manifestation of significant western policies in the last two decades which have spiked transnational militancy. Despite the fear that returning combatants will carry out attacks on their home soil, empirical evidence has indicated that a very small percentage of foreign fighters actually get involved in terrorist activities upon returning home. In the context of foreign fighters, most studies have not explained the reality and impact of foreign fighters acting as militia and *shabeeha* for the state security apparatus. These militia have largely been responsible for igniting sectarian conflict and heightening group fear and animosity in Syria and Iraq. Foreign fighters from Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah in Lebanon, have assisted and joined the Assadist and Maliki regimes, yet little mention is made of this fact.

5.1.5 Understanding the violence of IS
Although the violence of IS has commonly been referred to as a religiously inspired violence, presented as 'wanton, barbaric' and linked to Islam it became evident that the study of the violence of IS needed to shift from the politics of religion to that of the politics of violence and the violence of the state. This shift necessitated a consideration of emotional factors and pointed to the discovery that in academia and the security sector, emotion, especially the emotion of the *other* has yet to be considered seriously, let alone be considered at all. Although research has been done in what is known as affect theory, the body of this work remains grounded in disciplines other than international relations and political theory. In the midst of this quandary and chaos, of high-speed emotions and images is a struggle for stability and feel good spaces, for the familiar and for simplicity. It is at this point in the drama, at this crossroad that the demagogue enters the scene. Demagogues understand how collective sentiments work and play into the fear of unfamiliarity and the tiredness of chaos. From this we get a lulling of words that reiterate the notions of safety in sameness, of belonging in our different tribes or sects inspiring movements through their dislike of plurality and multiplicity. *Pause. Stop. Rewind. Replay.* This is the narrative of "purification of blood" vs. "purification of religion" and of "one Ruler, one Authority, one Mosque." There is an intolerance of ambiguity, the withering of nuances and the clash between binary oppositions. In this negation of plurality and multiplicity is a denial of the right to be complex and to acknowledge that these complexities exist in all societies. It is about advocating for the single story. What we see in the midst of the chaos and violence is a re-asserting of tribal identities and affiliations which shrinks hearts and minds so that the audience becomes numb or oblivious to the suffering of the *other*. Singular identities are an illusion yet praised in the

demagogue's narrative. Hafez Assad used the same logic. Dissecting the heterogeneity and diversity of the Syrian population to promote singular identities and polarise the groups. In the West there is the constant harping – are you American or Muslim? Are you British or Muslim? Are you European or Muslim? But the power of emotions and the complexity of individuals cannot be negated, and like most other fluid and dynamic encounters, emotions reach a threshold, a tipping point. It is at this point that people get tired of feeling afraid, of being abused, of being oppressed, of being dehumanised and exploited and hard choices are made. These choices represent to some extent the fluidity of life.

The stigmergic response is closely tied to emotions. Based on the concept of stigmergy, it is at this point that the unresolved traces left in the environment ignite a response, a recurrence of violence which is used as a tool of communication used by actors to modify their environment and how they (these actors) perceive their spaces. In this instance, revenge is all they have to offer when crippled with a sense of helplessness where the various actors are drawn into a vortex of violence and confrontation. There is also a sense of solace in faux religious identities. This is an inevitable consequence of deep seated trauma, anger, torture and frustration. Trauma confronts these actors with the fragility of their existence and the possibility of an immediate death. It is the shattering of their assumptive world. Pointing again to the fact that emotion and perception in mainstream political theory have been largely understudied and under researched yet they have very powerful impacts and consequences. The story of IS, the story of the war on IS and the violence it portrays has been a story told by the media, and it has contributed to a sense of isolation, anger, animosity and alienation among Muslims in the West, fuelling the call for foreign fighters to join the Caliphate. But more worryingly is the matter of linking the identity of IS with "Muslimness," conflating all Muslims with IS which has resulted in a form of collective punishment (violence) against all Muslims. The myth of religious violence has served to advance the goals of power which have been used in domestic and foreign policy to marginalise and dehumanise Muslims and to portray the violence of the secular state as a justified intervention in order to protect western civilisation and the secular subject. Essentially, the propagation of the myth of religious violence which has been a component of the colonial project that has divided peoples and societies into superior and inferior categories has served to perpetuate the abhorrence of dying in the name of religion, whilst glorifying the valour and bravery of dying for the nation-state. This serves to absolve many of the governments in the Middle East and elsewhere of their responsibility in contributing to that violence.

Although IS was not what could be described as the 'popular movement' it gained support and where it was able to inflict harm on those considered as the enemies and oppressors of the Sunni population, it achieved a semblance of legitimacy. Circumstances, actions and events on the ground confirmed that IS's resort to violence in many instances was a strategy. For IS and those reading its publications, the only response applicable and appropriate was a violent, military response. IS's challenge to the excess of state power (mythic violence) as manifested in the US-led and US-controlled Iraqi state which perpetrated gross violent acts against the Iraqi population and Sunni Muslims in particular, and which robbed Iraqi's in Saddam's civil and military service of their livelihoods, was to respond with violence. According to IS, the intentional targeting of what it calls the "Sunni triangle" by the "crusaders" and its surrogates in Muslim lands demanded that it take up arms and inflict "*nikayah*" in order to ensure that the Sunni triangle remains in instability and that the (crusader imposed) status quo is not returned. Various justifications for violence have been used but in all instances, the violence is a reflection of the strong sense of polarisation that has existed in both the Iraqi and Syrian societies. The frustration from the continued repression and constraints on their political horizons has led to the supporters of violence legitimising their struggle through any means available.

5.1.6 Understanding the landscape of IS in the clash for civilisations theatre

The rise of IS in the first hundred days of the summer of 2014 marked a change in the way in which the theatre of war had been scripted. IS's declaration of the Caliphate was significant because it signalled the intentional cancellation of the artificial borders set by the Sykes-Picot Agreement since 1916 which had shaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle-East. IS's declaration was an anti-imperial declaration and a declaration of contestation for the interpretation of the script and the right to not only retell the story on its terms, but the right to own the story and the theatre. Within this theatre are binary images – a dual set that represents different realities. These sets, placed side by side point to divisions that have been created both of liquid and stable spaces and of a dualistic world where the focus has largely been on binary categorisations that posit the roots of the anger of contemporary Muslim societies in historic reaction, that between the modern (West) and medieval (Islam). But there has been a change – a drastic change. From this we see that history does not necessarily move forward, sometimes it moves in circles and for the people of *bilad-al-Sham* it is a matter of being trapped in the nightmare of the past. Obama refers to IS as the Middle-East's "Joker," an actor that has disturbed the balance in what he terms as a "power-sharing arrangement"

between gangsters. It is noteworthy that Obama has recognised that sovereignty is contested and that the independent choice of the people has not been "allowed" despite the repeated calls by the citizens themselves for uncontrolled democracies and a shift from procedural to substantive democratic practise. What the media story did was to direct the lead-line to the actions of the Joker, it was not about a people reacting to decades of oppression against a dictator supported by foreign western, imperial powers. And it certainly was not about a people who despite their diversity were united in their call for a free democratic society. IS was named as the main villain. This is what was seen, shown and paraded, leaving little opportunity to interrogate this status. By naming IS as the "destabiliser" in the region, the automatic response to that naming was to generate a very specific, framed question, "Why is IS attacking westerners, foreigners and minorities?" The structuring of the 'why' question in my opinion was carefully located in a theological framing that discussed IS only within the parameters of this framing. This was possible by the zoom in, by focusing only the small number of non-Muslims targeted by IS, whilst ignoring IS's main victims – the Muslims. Curiously, in spite of being named as the Joker, the destabilising entity, IS has been playing by the same rules, using the same tactics of those who devised the plot, choreographed the action and directed the development of the Middle-Eastern theatre. IS does not represent the majority of the resistance and although well-organised and technologically efficient, its religious rhetoric has not served as a magnet for legitimation because the struggle was not defined in religious terms from the outset and also because most Muslims do not subscribe to the *takfiri* logic and to wanton violence against civilians, even in conflict situations.

5.1.7 Understanding IS in the final curtain

The fact that the feelings and perceptions of the Muslim other has been underestimated or even intentionally ignored is one of the biggest intellectual challenges for scholars researching the rise of violence and violent conflict in the MENA. This is in fact linked to the dehumanisation of the Muslim other and the Muslim victim. Yet our political systems are replete with emotions and this emotional functionality has been exploited by leaders, activists, fighters and politicians as was evident from Cameron's speech and the comments made by many other politicians and leaders. The most telling of these emotional ploys has been the manner in which the argument for the invasion of Iraq was made. The resultant war, invasion and occupation birthed IS; and of the consequences of that birthing have been the Paris and Manchester attacks. Hidden in these emotional word plays are considerations of the political – of national and western interests, of regime change, of the West's superiority. The

grand story of Islam's confrontation with western progress and modernity, of hating us (the West) because "of who we are, not because of what we do" has been repeatedly thwarted by IS in *Dabiq*. Significantly, IS's ascribing to *Wahhabist* ideas, ideas which were birthed and nurtured in the hot desert sun during the scramble for power and personal accolade, for kingship and control of the Arab fiefdoms is an ascribing to the dark side of modernity. In subscribing to the kind of progress imbued in western modernity which comes at the expense of inheritance, a disregard for history and the pursuance of transgression, IS in fact replicates the destructiveness of western modernity.

Between the fabrications and distortions of the past and the lies of the present, images of the Muslim other keep recurring where the evil of IS's actions, is attributed to an evil inherent in Islam. Yet IS has, in so many ways imitated the master's logic, not Islam's ethos. This calls into question the basis for IS's actions, motivations and responses. It is my understanding that the creation of the *Islamic bogeymen* based on the distorted constructions as mentioned in the foregoing chapters, whilst arming the same *Islamic bogeymen* to fight against surrogate leaders and foreigners serves to affirm the Muslim as an enemy. IS has imitated the destructive actions and epistemology of the western states and puppet regimes it wishes to oust and replace. IS has not evolved in its essence to bring forth the new humanity that is envisioned as a solution to the crisis that western modernity has elicited. Ironically, IS has acted from the mind-set shaped by its oppressors. Thus the only response to the violence experienced would be more violence. IS has functioned as a repository as well as a generator of rage. Although IS has been significantly defeated, the dark shadows of state violence, massacre, torture and collective punishment make it necessary to state that IS 2.0 is not unimaginable nor unlikely. From these dark shadows of state violence, massacre, torture and collective punishment is the worrying concern of the return of the Joker, IS 2.0. In terms of functionality, the western discourse has normalised the violence of western states on non-western states and it has maintained the hierarchical structures of power justifying the attacks on the homeland of the other to maintain hegemony whilst nurturing the desire for national security and stability through transnational violence. The battle for hegemony includes ideological domination, control of language and propaganda. Specifically, with regards this work, there has been a struggle to claim with certainty that IS is representative of Islam or that IS is a monolithic body, yet it is apparent that different fighters have joined the entity for different reasons as I outline in the thesis and it should be noted that congregating under a single banner does not necessarily imply a unity or consensus with the ideology or with group

think; especially not under the abnormal and schizophrenic conditions under which these individuals operate. What I had to be weary of was the reality that knowledge production is tied to imperial contexts and thus, within this form of ideological domination is the creation of 'common sense' explanations and sound-bites for making sense of specific events that eschew those events' political meanings (rooted in empire, racism and resistance) and instead explain them as the outcome of a reified 'Muslimness' or religious violence. This form of ideological displacement of political antagonisms onto the plane of culture, serves a specific purpose, that of obscuring the role of the state and its coalition of the killing in formenting the IS phenomenon. From the decolonial perspective, race marks and orders the modern nation-state; and Muslim is both a religious category and racial concept. Thus Muslims are inserted in a racialised social structure, thus the link between race, religion and empire constituted a very prominent aspect of this theorisation because while racist ideologies develop in particular contexts, they can and often do build upon the repository of past modes of racialisation. Thus, by situating IS in the process and context of racial formation, this thesis used the zoom out lens to understand both the continuities with the past and the structuring reality of the present. A re-orienting of the thesis included focusing not on Muslim identities or culture but on those institutions and policies that target, impact, or wage war upon MMC and the resultant consequences thereof. In paying attention to the violence of IS and the problem of IS it was necessary to consider all of these institutions, states, agendas and interests. The first part of the theorisation thus constituted a constructive engagement with that which places the infrastructure of subordination in perspective. In the final curtain IS and those powers unleashing violence on the largely Sunni Syrian and Iraqi populations have been targeting a very specific enemy, with the aim to completely destroy it – they are attacking Islam. The narrative, the tactics, the behaviour, the propaganda, the on-going epistemicide and the pacts between Assad, the US, and IS all point to this. And attacking Islam includes attacking the inheritors of Islam.

5.2 Areas for further research

From the research it became evident that state repression has led to resistance and that resistance has resulted in excessive amounts of violence. What was evident from the beginning of the research was that there existed a politics of scapegoating which served multiple interests, and there was also a significant amount of manipulation in the language to ensure a forced consensus of IS as religious extremists espousing the theology and violence of a "violent" religion – further, of a clash between Islam and western values. The study of

this violence, constituted a double critique – one of the state, its allies and proxies and the other of IS. From the study it became apparent that there were huge gaps in terms of conceptual clarity when naming and defining actors. What is thus needed for future research is more substantive analyses of IS in this complex and layered conflict of words and language. This requires that when future research is done, it will consider IS as a political actor and not simply as a 'religious' actor. Language and definition are important to peace and mediation. I believe that by shifting the discourse from a focus on binaries, we can start to create possibilities for accommodation and compromise. The absolutist descriptions of IS as evil without any reference to the evil of the regimes, their allies and proxies is creating a very tight noose for the development of frameworks that can be implemented in order to reach a consensus for the ending of the conflict. Hence, any new research that offers the possibility of IS as a political actor whilst considering its operational strategy and its role in the international system will offer significantly different perspectives and solutions compared to the massively aggressive and militarised solutions of today. What is further needed is a deep interrogation of the claims attributed to IS, of for instance questioning how is IS going to entrench a "one ruler, one mosque, one authority" system? What would this entail? What would happen if individuals invoked the *Islamic* principle of "there is no compulsion in religion"? How would IS regulate and control all of its territory across borders with a diverse constellation of peoples, faiths and ethnicities? In calling for the re-introduction of the gold dinar as a form of currency how would IS respond to the international banking system and states that would not make this switch yet controlled the global financial system? How would IS practically implement its opposition to those who did not agree with its theological interpretations once it had control? Would it engage in wholesale genocide of all opposing peoples and is this even possible? Would it settle down and act as a state, marginalising communities and re-introducing patronage networks for those who towed the line? How would the Baathists leaders establish themselves in this state system considering their obsession with power and the reclaiming of that power? Would there be an accommodation with the self-proclaimed Caliph? And what about succession? These questions are all related to Walt's analysis of IS's possible openness to a "truce with western nations."

Considering the reality that should IS re-group and resurface, it has to be accommodated in a system of states, in a system of international law and co-operation. These questions are important because they demand thorough interrogations of jargon and rhetoric and once the answers materialise it would offer a more comprehensive picture of this on-going conflict, the

real motivations of the actors and the possible scenarios that are likely to unfold. There needs to be a broader consensus in envisaging how exceptionally violent and opposing foes that use Islam as a tool or tactic in their conflict can be reconciled through Islamic principles of justice and ethics. This is the calling card because it is the currency employed and extensively used to try and gain legitimacy. However, these aspects of peace and reconciliation can only be suggested once it is possible to recognise all parties and once it is possible to bring all parties together. But, bringing groups together demands a more nuanced measure of language, a language that is not exclusionary, derogatory nor isolationist and that is why it is important that further research on IS includes a significant amount of analysis on how the language operates to create almost irreconcilable fissures. The language also needs to be deconstructed to challenge how politicians and key role players are using names and the naming of entities in a conflict to confer legitimacy on their chosen actor. For instance how state B postulates that actor A or regime X is now acceptable because the alternative C is much worse. Who decides this? How is it decided? Who has the authority to make such assessments and on what basis are these conclusions imposed? Another aspect for consideration is to question the official accounts of the numbers – of foreign fighters and of IS as a whole. Inflated numbers skew the realities and downplay the local context. It can also lead to other states being drawn into a conflict that in reality could be averted through tougher and more determined efforts to secure a political solution. It is necessary to avoid the consequences of the fabrications and lies that drove the 'rush to war' in Iraq in the first place. States have to be weary.

Secondly, more work needs to be done in considering the parallel narratives of IS and the state. IS does not operate in a vacuum, but in the theatre of the state and it is here in this contestation with the state that various grades of violence manifest. I would suggest that all future research of IS or any other entities in a contestation with the state/regime are duly examined not by the language of religion but by the nature of the space and the politics of the state in which they exist. This includes doing research on regime power, examining the institutions the regime is made of and analysing the extent of autonomy of each institution. Included in this analysis should be an evaluation of the military and the security apparatus of the state, the extent of their involvement in the economy, their role in the development of the state and the creation of an environment of well-being for citizens. This includes an analysis of the political economy of the conflict areas, an interrogation of the source of the state's revenue and more research is needed in terms of the impact of interest based issues in stirring

conflict and exacerbating violence in Iraq and Syria. Each research must be specific, not generalised, and it must use very specific instances of conflict and violence in conjunction with all the above questions. What I am effectively calling for is a type of ama-Bhungane[962] investigative approach that can unearth the complexities of the deep state.

A third aspect of interrogation for further research is to consider the tactics of the state in Iraq and Syria in using heterogeneity to create a repressive environment and foster division that reduce the potential for collective action. Simply describing the conflict as a sectarian conflict is not enough nor helpful, there needs to be a more arduous examination of the pre and post-conflict society to analyse the levels of integration, co-existence and tolerance that existed (pre-war/conflict), how and why it existed and what led to the divisive "conflict present." This must then be examined in conjunction with the "post-IS" society to determine how these cities and societies are reasserting themselves. When this is done, it will be possible to get a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the sectarian element in the conflict and what it has meant to ordinary, non-combatant, non-affiliated citizens. These are after all, the most affected and most vulnerable cohort in the conflict. The role of the state and the support it receives from external players is very important to each specific and separate conflict in these regions because the MENA region is the only region that can be described regionally as a space where oppressive regimes have consistently received support from super-powers which has facilitated for the continuation of the status quo.

Thirdly, to consolidate an analysis of an actor simply from its propaganda is intellectual laziness because the desire to act does not occur in a vacuum and the levels of extreme violence that have manifested, demand more than just a resignation of the violence to "scriptural injunctions." As academics we have to ensure that we offer a more balanced research, knowing full well that there is no real claim to objectivity, but there can be a determined effort to comprehensiveness. What is needed is an intellectual revolution in this age of anger, of emotional and political revolt, so that the 'difficult to count' is counted to avoid the critique that we have too little intellect in matters of the soul. There thus needs to be an innovative approach to factoring in the impact of emotion and feelings in conflict areas and the resultant impact thereof especially when individuals struggle to find closure, justice or healing. Modern history has advanced significant instances of evidence for the persistent

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[962] Ama-Bhungane is an investigative journalism unit, a non-profit entity that functions to promote an environment of accountability, transparency and just democracy. The information gathered and exposed allows citizens and law makers to make informed decisions. In this regard, the information removes the smoke-screens and this is what is needed for research on conflict, on IS especially, in Iraq and Syria.

power of unreason where feelings, perceptions, emotions and moods change the world by turning into potent political forces. In this regard more research is needed on the emotional and cognitive gaps that exist when analysing the response of persons/groups in situations of conflict and the triggers or responses that emotions produce. Considering that the Muslims in the MENA have largely been treated as "nonbeings" the voice, the response, the emotion and the subjectivity of these "nonbeings" has to be given consideration through a research that does not speak on behalf of them, but rather one that allows for them to speak of and for themselves. It is thus impossible to understand the current upsurge of anti-western sentiment in the MENA and from IS without factoring in the role played by humiliation.

These approaches would then help to shift the narrative of the "woman-raping, Muslim-murdering, Medieval monsters" to a balanced evaluation and analysis of the ramifications of war, occupation, a hyper-militarised society and its impact on the disempowerment of women, of the macro-environment of oppression and the use of rape as a weapon of oppression, fear, intimidation and subjugation. To shift the lens thus, would allow for any future discourses an opportunity to bring the humanity and the victimhood of the general population of Muslims into focus. As it stands, Muslim lives have no value, warrant no sympathy and demand no airtime or sound-bites. These are lives that are trivialised or obscured, yet they constitute the greatest number of victims in this region and in this schizophrenic theatre. If we are to properly understand IS and the situations of injustice and conflict that have manifested as a result of its rise and role in the MENA, then it is incumbent on all future research to look at and analyse the meta-context and not just the micro-environment. Essentially, we need to acknowledge that what counts is not only what can be counted, because what cannot be counted – subjective emotions – are paramount to a clear reading of the script.

In all of these considerations, there is a legacy of words that sums up the theatre of *bilad-al-Sham,* as the curtain rises once again…

> "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts…" [963]

> *Camera Roll…Flashforward…*I.S. 2.0

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[963] W. Shakespeare *As You Like It* Act 2 Scene 7 6

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