

From the Heart of the Syrian Crisis

**A Report on
Islamic Discourse
Between a Culture of War
and the Establishment of
a Culture of Peace**

Research Coordinator
Sheikh Muhammad Abu Zeid

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Note: This report presents the conclusion of a preliminary study aimed at shedding light on the role of Sunni Muslim religious discourse in the Syrian crisis and understanding how to assess this discourse and turn it into a tool to end violence and build peace. As such, the ideas in the report are presented as they were expressed by their holders without modification. The report, therefore, does not represent any official intellectual, religious or political position, nor does it represent the position of the Adyan foundation or its partners towards the subject or the Syrian crisis. The following report is simply designed to be a tool for those seeking to understand the relationship between Islamic religious discourse and violence and is meant to contribute to the building of peace and stability in Syria. It is, therefore, a cognitive resource aimed at promoting the possibilities of peace within the framework of Adyan Foundation's "Syria Solidarity Project" created to "Build Resilience and Reconciliation through Peace Education". The original text of the report is in Arabic.

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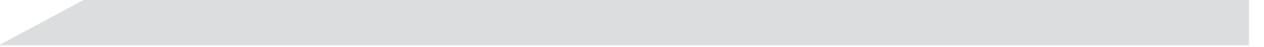


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General Introduction

So that religious discourse might be part of the solution and not the problem: vision and scope

The idea of this project began as a response to the events of the last four years in Syria⁽¹⁾, driven in large part by media accounts about persons being tortured to death and then having their bodies mutilated in cold blood in the worst zones of the conflict. These accounts became a terror that people saw with their own eyes as many websites and news channels showed audiovisual images documenting these crimes that are condemned both by man-made laws and by spiritual teachings. News channels and websites as well as other media and communication means continue to broadcast - almost daily - these atrocities which shock humanity.

It is obvious that religious discourse has become one of the main tools driving these actions, and through the use of every communication means available, including conventional means, such as preaching in the mosque and journals, as well as new means, including websites, social media, satellite television, this discourse has had a maximum impact on the mobilization of combatants taking part in these events.

From the heart of the Syrian crisis, and based on the information available on the media we outlined a number of points that became the basis for this project:

First: History is full of wars and battles and revolutions and what is common to all of them - regardless of their duration - is that sooner or later they all end.

Second: The culture that is prevalent after such wars and battles and revolutions remains a culture of war with all of its death, destruction and chaos.

Third: When wars, battles and revolutions come to an end, the culture that needs to be put in place is a post-war culture characterized by tolerance, the mending of wounds, construction and reform.

Fourth: Just as a culture of war requires time, effort and promotion to become the characteristic of a society undergoing revolution and war, it is only to be expected that a culture of peace in a post-war era would require an even longer time and greater efforts and more promotion to become the characteristic of a society that has been forced by the power of life to save what has survived and build what has fallen apart.

⁽¹⁾ Both Arab and non-Arab satellite TV channels began busily broadcasting news regarding action in Syria beginning in March, 2011, following the death of a child, Hamza Al Khatib.

Fifth: On the one hand, a culture of war is simple, superficial and instinctive by nature, which makes it easy to spread in atmospheres of fear and disruption which provoke a survival instinct. Its tools and mechanisms are also primitive and thus easy to master. By contrast, a culture of peace in a post-war period faces major challenges. It is well known that the construction of culture is by nature rational, progressive and based on values; its tools and mechanisms are scientific, ethical and technical and require more time to be assimilated in theory and mastered in practice.

On the other hand, a culture of peace and construction in a post-war era can spread among people whose minds and way of thinking have been contaminated by the culture of war; it is a great challenge to replace what exists and is familiar, justified and practiced with something new that might be unfamiliar, suspicious or even rejected.

Sixth: If we agree with the above, then it is only reasonable that we begin preparing for a post-war atmosphere at this very moment in order to spread the seeds for a culture of peace and construction, so that when we hear a war declared over, we will have a generation already ready that is aware of the requirements for the new era ahead.

Seventh: Entering into an era of peace with a generation whose mind and conscience were filled with a culture of war will continue to be held prisoner of that war which is deeply rooted in its mind and conscience. This generation cannot grasp these changes. They are likely to generate more wars without sparing a pretext, argument or reason to restart them.

Eighth: If religious discourse has had a major part and obvious impact on the promotion of a culture of war by invoking the verses of Jihad and its associated hadith, then this requires us to detect and analyze this discourse and its tools and its impact.

Ninth: Along with the previous point, there is a need to reformulate religious discourse in a way that explains Jihad in its broader and more comprehensive sense which could promote a culture of peace for a post-war era based on values that include supreme religious values.

Tenth: Building on the two previous points, this effort is meant to make religion and its teachings and impact a part of the solution and not the problem.

Accordingly and within the framework of these guidelines, this study aims at presenting a brief historical exposé of the Jihadist situation in Syria, both past and present, in order to understand its roots and branches so that we might detect the source of religious mobilization and frustration that we hear today and recognize its path and context. We can then work to understand its background and principles, as well as get to know its goals and ambitions.

This study attempts to point the way towards an alternative religious discourse that builds for a post war era, so that religious discourse might become a tool to build, reform and protect, not a tool to provoke and mobilize for war and conflict. In other words: so that religious discourse might be part of the solution and not the problem.

This was the report's theoretical aim. On a scientific level, the study and its conclusions and recommendations are intended for use in a practical and empirical way as its content presents the raw material of sermons, teachings and training on all levels. The report also aims to spread a positive discourse that sets a basis for a post-war culture.

It is our hope that this modest effort might be a reason to stop the bloodshed, save people's lives and protect their dear possessions.

Chapter One

The Jihadist Mind in Syria Between the Past and the Present

Introduction

The second decade of the twenty first century witnessed the start of the Arab spring revolutions and it was quickly said that they were imported revolutions manipulated by the invisible arms of the great powers! As soon as this feeble spring reached Syria it led to a fierce war that destroyed everything, including all values and ethics, and left the situation to the hands of human monsters who violate everything.

Shocked by the terrifying monstrosity of these belligerent acts which were unknown to Syrian society, the Syrian consciousness became embroiled in a crisis of conscience. Instead of renouncing these acts, however, attempts were made to justify them by casting blame on others and making claims that they were perpetrated by groups of combatants pouring in from Arab and non-Arab countries, some of whom supported the regime (Iranians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Russians and others) and others who opposed it (Yemenis, Saudis, Libyans, Tunisians, Lebanese, Chechens, Europeans and others).

While this theory might be appealing, the proof of reality is that the non-Syrian combatants make up only a small minority of fighters compared to the numbers of Syrians. Furthermore, both recent and ancient history testify that a culture of war and revolution have also been a part of the Syrian consciousness, as it will be illustrated in this chapter.

1) The ancient roots of the Jihadist mind in Syria

It is possible that the short time span of individual memory has led us to think that the widespread Jihadist discourse in contemporary Syria is a new discourse generated by the current crisis. However, research on the legacy of scholarship from the Syrian Levant show that this part of the world has been the center of violent conflict throughout its long history. Thus, scholars from Syria who were born in that land and lived on it have approached the issue of Jihad in a comprehensive fashion in many of their written works.

The following list highlights a few of those scholars and draws attention to their scientific works and religious discourse as well as their approach to the issue of Jihad.

a) Two References from the time of the Mamluks

1- Sheikh al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah⁽¹⁾

Sheikh Al Islam “Ibn Taymiyyah”, may God have mercy on him, wrote many books tackling a wide range of issues: as it is well known, the style of the author tended to be encyclopedic and investigative. However, when it comes to the topic of Jihad and the use of religious discourse to promote it, we can notice that Ibn Taymiyyah did not dedicate any independent scholarly volume to the topic; instead, he only approached the topic in a cursory fashion in the context of some of his writings and letters.

⁽¹⁾ Ahmad Ibn Abdel Halim Ibn Abdel Salam Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abi Qasem Al Khodr Al Numeiri Al Harrani Al Dimachki Al Hanbali, Abu El Abbas, Taqieddine Ibn Taymiyyah (661 - 728 AH = 1263 - 1328 AD): Imam, Sheikh Al-Islam. He was born in Harran, his father took him to Damascus where worked hard and became famous. He was requested to go to Egypt due to a Fatwa he issued. When he went, a group of people became angry with him and he was imprisoned, and then transferred to Alexandria. After he was released, he travelled to Damascus in 712 AH where he was arrested in 720 and then released and then imprisoned again. He died while being detained in a fortress in Damascus and all of Damascus participated in his funeral. He conducted extensive research in the art of wisdom and called for reform in religion. An important reference on religious interpretation, he was eloquent, and expressed himself similarly in writing and discourse. He debated with the leading scientists of his day, gaining knowledge and excelling in both science and religious interpretation. From his works: *Iqtida' Al Sirat Al Mustaqim fi Mokhalafat Ashab Al Jahim* (اقتضاء الصراط المستقيم في مخالفة أصحاب الجحيم), *Al Iman* (الإيمان), *Al Jawab Al Sahih Li Man Baddal Din Al Masih* (الجواب الصحيح لمن بدل دين المسيح), *Al Akida Al Wasitiya* (العقيدة الواسطية), *Al Siyasa Al Char'ia* (منهاج السنة), *al Fatawa* (الفتاوى), *Al Jam' Bayn Al Nakl Wal'akl* (الجمع بين النقل والعقل), *Minhaj al Sunna* (منهاج السنة), *Al Sarem al Masloul Ala Chatem Al Rasoul* (الصارم المسلول على شاتم الرسول), *Raf' Al Malam An Al A'ima Al 'Ilam* (رفع الملام عن الأئمة الاعلام), *Al Tawasol Wal Wasila* (التوسل والوسيلة). Cf. Al Zarkali, Kheireddine, *Al A'lam* (الأعلام), Dar al Ilm Lilmaalayin, fifteenth edition, Beirut 2002, volume 1, p. 144.

And yet most of the supporters of modern Jihadist literature link their ideas and methodology to the “Ibn Taymiyyah” school; their literature is inspired from his books, biography, positions and invasions.

It is well known that the historians who constructed the biography of “Ibn Taymiyyah” made sure to present his figure as a rider who fought with the sword and to highlight what we know he did say and write about Jihad. In one example, the author of *Al A'lam Al Aliya Fi Manakeb Ibn Taymiyyah* (الأعلام العلية في مناقب ابن تيمية) wrote: “he was, may Allah be pleased with him, one of the most courageous persons, with the strongest heart. I have never seen anyone more determined, or more dedicated to fighting the enemy. He used to fight for Allah with his heart, tongue and hand. He did not fear the blame of anyone for the sake of Allah... whenever he joined the camp of Muslims in a fight, he would be the protector and the glue pulling everyone together. If he saw anyone showing signs of panic or softness or cowardice, he would encourage, strengthen and comfort him and promise him victory, triumph and conquest. He would tell him about the importance of Jihad and Jihadists, and how Allah gives them serenity. If he was riding a horse, he pierced through the enemy as the bravest of men, and the steadiest of riders, and say glory hurts the enemy much more than death, and he would deal with them as a man that does not fear death. It has been said that he was seen during the siege of Acre doing brave things that cannot be described”(1).

As for Ibn Taymiyyah’s concept of Jihad - as documented by his biographies - we can trace two important aspects:

First: There is Ibn Taymiyyah’s confrontation with the Tatar whose hordes had invaded many Islamic lands at the time. Ibn Taymiyyah helped the Muslim fighters to block some of those attacks. At the same time he also took positions of courage, strength and determination in his daring dialogue with some of the Tatar leaders to whom he reached out so as to ensure an end to the war and bloodshed and to prevent further destruction(2).

Second: There is Ibn Taymiyyah’s standoff with groups of offenders as the name of “Ibn Taymiyyah” is linked to his clear and strict positions towards those groups that were considered infidels and lost. His famous Fatwa against the “Nusayris” is possibly the main source for these positions as the following text was mentioned in the Fatwas: “he was asked, May Allah have mercy on him, about a group in the country going by the Nusayri belief... should we fight them and kill their fighters? Is it allowed to get to their offspring and moneys or not?

(1) Al Bazar, *Siraj Al Din Omar Bin Ali Bin Mousa, Al A'lam Al Aliya Fi Manakeb Ibn Taymiyyah* (الأعلام العلية في مناقب ابن تيمية), enquiry: Zuhair Chawich, Islamic Office, third edition, Beirut 1400 AH, p. 67-68.

(2) Ibn Taymiyyah, Taqieddine Abu El Abbas Ahmad Bin Abdel Halim Al Harrani, *Majmou' Al Fatawa* (مجموع الفتاوى), inquiry: Anwar Baz and Amer Al Jazzar, Dar Al Wafa', third edition, 1426 AH - 2005 AD, volume 28, p. 533.

He answered: Praise be to Allah. Those should be fought against as long as they are reluctant to adopt the rules of Islam, the Nusayris are part of the most disbelievers... they are apostates of the worst type: their fighters are to be killed and their money to be taken... as for the one that adopts Islam on the surface but is a disbeliever on the inside, he is the hypocrite that doctors call "zindiq": doctors agree that he is to be killed even if he repents... as for those who are inviting people to their loss, their harm will not stop until they are killed as well, if he shows repentance and if he is not judged similar to those misleading people as Muslims killed Gilan Al Kadari and Al Ja'd Bin Dirham and similar persons. This charlatan is to be killed absolutely. Allah knows better⁽¹⁾.

These positions of Ibn Taymiyyah regarding groups of offenders are not simply a theoretical position that has no chance at practical implementation. On the contrary, these Fatwas were implemented by Ibn Taymiyyah himself during his personal participation in the invasion of some Shiites strongholds in Jerd Kesrwan as 'Ibn Kathir' mentions in the book *Al bidaya Wal Nihaya*: "on Friday the twentieth the representative of the sultanate Jamaledine Akouch Al Afram, along with the army of Damascus, went to the mountains of Kesrwan, Sheikh Taqieddine Ibn Taymiyyah arrived with a large number of volunteers and Hawarnas to fight the people of that area due to their corrupt intentions and beliefs and their infidelity and loss and due to what they had done to the combatants when the Tatar won them over and ran as they crossed their country, as they jumped on them and pillaged them and took their weapons and horses and killed many of them, so when they reached their country their leaders came to Sheikh Taqieddine Ibn Taymiyyah and he called them to repent and showed many of them the right path and achieved much good and a great victory against those corrupters; they committed to giving back the funds they had taken from the army. He decided they were to pay a lot of funds, their lands and villages were downsized; until then they had not obeyed the soldiers nor abided by the rulings of the group, they didn't adopt the creed of justice, nor prohibited what Allah and his messenger prohibited; the representative of the sultanate returned on Sunday, the thirteenth of Dhu al-Qa'dah, and people welcomed him with candles on the way to Baalbeck in the middle of the day"⁽²⁾.

Given that Ibn Kathir documented this event, Ibn Kadama Al Makdessi mentioned in his book *Al Okoud Al Douriya* (العقود الدرية) the words that Ibn Taymiyyah stated after this invasion in which he describes the Shiites from Kesrwan and those who agree with them as a "damned sect", as he said: "they [i.e. the Shiites from Kesrwan] and all the followers of this damned

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 533.

⁽²⁾ Abou el Fida' Ibn Kathir Al Qurachi then Dimachki, *Al bidaya Wal Nihaya* (البداية والنهاية), inquiry: Ahmad Abou Melhem et al, Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, first edition, Beirut 1985, volume 14 p.13.

sect like the people of Jezzine and its surroundings and Jebel Amel and its environs“(1).

Many illicit actions were also linked to them as he said: “they commit wrongdoings that can only be counted by the Lord of the worshipers. They blocked roads and frightened the inhabitants in the worst way known to thieves... they trapped good Muslim men and either killed them or robbed them, and only a few escaped them by their cunning...”(2).

He also mentions the corruption in their implementation of religion as he says: “they are those who pray and fast the least, we did not find in their mountain one Quran or amongst them a reader of the Quran, instead they have their own beliefs that violate the kitab and the Sunnah... those have violated the laws of Allah's messenger and the Sunnah, they are worse than the Tatar but the latter are in greater numbers and stronger which stresses more their evil... amongst them there are many that do not acknowledge prayer nor fast nor perform the Hajj nor Umrah, they do not consider the dead, blood and pork Haram, they also do not believe in heaven and hell”(3).

Ibn Taymiyyah then reaches a comprehensive, strict decision where he states that: “Ismailis and Nusayris and Hakmis and Bataninans are... infidels, more so than Jews and Christians with the consensus of Muslims”(4).

The scholar cannot deny the case for Jihadism represented by Ibn Taymiyyah in his actions and words, nor can he deny its obvious impact on the modern Salafist Jihadist situation which represents, however, little more than an echo of Ibn Taymiyyah and his opinions, Fatwas and positions.

Yet a careful understanding of the above mentioned texts shows that while light has been shed on Ibn Taymiyyah as a fighter, shadows have simultaneously been cast on Ibn Taymiyyah as a man of dialogue who looks into the face of war for a space of dialogue, hoping that his words might offer a convincing reason to spare people the hardship of war. The proof of this can be found in his dialogue with the Tatar Sultan Mahmoud Kazan who was seduced by the “Georgian king” to invade Damascus. The words of Ibn Taymiyyah, however, and his dialogue with Kazan gave security to the people of Damascus and they avoided a war and all of its hardship. The author of *Al A'lam Al Aliya* writes: “the Sheikh [Ibn Taymiyyah] started talking to him [i.e. the Sultan Mahmoud Kazan] first about reversing his opinion about the invasion of the Georgian king against the Muslims, he guaranteed that he would provide him money and told him that it is forbidden to kill Muslims and reminded him and exhorted him,

(1) Ibn Kadama Al Makdessi, *Al A'lam Al Aliya Fi Manakeb Ibn Taymiyyah* (الأعلام العليّة في مناقب ابن تيمية), p. 179 and following.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.

and the king responded that he would obey, thus Muslim lives were spared and their offspring and women were preserved“(1).

There is no mention in the biography, therefore, of Ibn Taymiyyah as a teacher and a preacher who thinks that preaching and guiding those who have violated the faith - even if he considers them as the worst of infidels - is better than their killing and displacement. But this is what Ibn Taymiyyah detailed in his letter to Sultan Naser Mohammed Bin Klawoun following the invasion of the Shiite stronghold in Kesrwan, as he said: “the establishment of Muslim rituals such as Friday prayer and reading the Quran as well as relating the Hadith of the prophet within the villages of those people is in the best Islamic interest and is the best Jihad for Allah.”(2)

This is what was meant by Ibn Kathir above when he wrote: “he got them to repent and showed many of them the right path which led to much good...”(3)

2- Ibn Al Nahas Al Dimachki(4)

The book *Machare' Al Achwak Ila Masare' Al Ochak wa Mouthir Al Gharam Ila Dar Esalam* (مشارع الأشواق إلى مصارع العشاق ومثير الغرام إلى دار السلام) by the author Ibn Al Nahass, may God's mercy be upon him, is one of the most valuable books on the provisions and benefits of Jihad from within the Islamic library.

Ibn Al Nahass Al Dimachki - the author of the book - lived in his city of Damascus until the beginning of the fifteenth century AD.(5) He witnessed

(1) Al Bazar, Siraj Al Din Omar Bin Ali Bin Mousa, *Al A'lam Al Aliya Fi Manakeb Ibn Taymiyyah* (الأعلام العلية في مناقب ابن تيمية), p. 69.

(2) Ibn Qudaamah al-Maqdisi, Abu Abdullah Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Abdul Hadi, *Al Okoud Al Douriya Min Manakeb Sheikh El Islam Ahmad Bin Taymiyyah*, p. 209.

(3) Abou el Fida' Ibn Kathir Al Qurachi then Dimachki, *Al bidaya Wal Nihaya* (البداية والنهاية), inquiry: Ahmad Abou Melhem et al, Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, first edition, Beirut 1985, volume 14 p.13.

(4) Ahmad Bin Ibrahim Bin Mohammad, Abou Zakaria, Muhieddine Al Dimachki then Al Domiyati, known as Ibn Al Nahass (? - 814 AH - ? - 1411 AD): Jihadist, from the Ash-Shafi'i jurists. Born in Damascus, he moved under Tamerlane to Egypt, and lived at Al Manzila where he continued Jihad (in Damietta) and was killed as a martyr in a battle with the west. He fell (as per Ibn Hajar) next to Al Tina to the east of the lake of Al Manzila and was buried in Damietta. He is the author of many books including *Machare' Al Achwak Ila Masare' Al Ochak wa Mouthir Al Gharam Ila Dar Esalam* (مشارع الأشواق إلى مصارع العشاق ومثير الغرام إلى دار السلام) about Jihad and Jihadists, including the large tome, *Charh Al Makamat Al Haririya* (شرح المقامات الحريرية), *Tanbih Al Ghafilin An A'mal Al Jahilin Wa Tahzir Al Salikin Min A'pal Al Halikin* (تنبيه الغافلين عن أعمال الجاهلين، وتحذير السالكين من أفعال الهالكين). Refer to: Al Zarkali, Keireddine, *Al A'lam* (الأعلام), p. 87.

(5) Damascus at the time of Ibn El Nahass was part of the Mamluk state in Egypt, whose rule lasted for over two and a half centuries from 1250AD to 1517AD, when their army was defeated under the leadership of Qansouh Ghouri against the Ottoman army in the battle of Marj Dabeq, north of Aleppo. Cf: Hitti, Philip et al, *Tarikh Al Arab* (تاريخ العرب), Ghandour for printing publication and distribution, ninth edition, Beirut, 1994, p. 745-749 and p.796-797.

the invasion of Tamerlane⁽¹⁾ and his army of the Levant and their destruction of Aleppo, Hama, Damascus⁽²⁾ and other cities that became: “ruins, with no money, no men, no homes, no animals, those who remained there, soldiers and inhabitants began gathering and going out to the Egyptian land”⁽³⁾.

Following Tamerlane’s invasion, Ibn El Nahass was forced to immigrate to Egypt, where he first lived in “Al Manzila” and then went to “Damietta” where he remained until his death in 1411 AD during a confrontation with the crusaders⁽⁴⁾.

We know all of this because Ibn El Nahass, this scholar from Damascus, bequeathed to the Muslim world an Encyclopedic volume on: “the merits of Jihad, of exhorting it, the rewards that Allah has prepared for the people, and the beauty of returning to him, and what is saved for the worshipers, the saints and martyrs, and the dignity that he promises them in his paradise”⁽⁵⁾. In his book, Ibn El Nahass gathered what had been scattered in the books before him regarding Jihad and fighting according to the Islamic guidelines. This book still represents a source of precious ammunition that no scholar in the field of Jihad can neglect.

b) A Reference from the Time of the Ottomans

After the Sultan Selim the First defeated the Mamluk army during the battle of Marj Dabiq north of Aleppo, he continued his advance towards Damascus to conquer it on September 26, 1516, and thereafter Damascus became one of the favorite cities of Bani Uthman who gave it the title “Sham Sherif”⁽⁶⁾.

Under the Ottoman rule the scientific life in Damascus prospered and became - for consecutive centuries - home to a number of strong scientists that produced valuable books.

⁽¹⁾ Tamerlane (1336 - 1405 AD): was a strong military leader, and conducted aggressive expansion campaigns that caused the death of thousands of civilians and the seizure of complete communities, he was the first of the Timurid dynasty (1370 -1405 AD) in mid-Asia, whose reign lasted until 1506AD. “Lame” means “crippled” since he was injured during one of his battles. Tamer in Uzbek means “iron”. Idem, p. 793.

⁽²⁾ Ibid, p. 793-794.

⁽³⁾ Ibn El Nahass, Ahmad Bin Ibrahim Bin Mohammad El Dimachki, *Machare' Al Achwak Ila Masare' Al Ochak wa Mouthir Al Gharam Ila Dar Esalam* (مشارع الأشواق إلى مصارع العشاق ومثير الغرام إلى دار السلام) (about Jihad and Jihadists), Dar Al Bachaer AL Islamiya, third edition, Beirut 2002, p. 11.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid, p. 11. Ibn El Nahass died during a minor crusader campaigns in Egypt.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid, p. 72.

⁽⁶⁾ Hitti, Philip et al, *Tarikh Al Arab* (تاريخ العرب), see previous reference, p. 795-797.

1- Imam Ibn Abdin Al Hanafi

The book *Rad Al Mohtar Ala Dar Al Mokhtar* (رد المحتار على الدر المختار) famous for its “annotations of Ibn Abdin” and other supplements, is the work of two major Hanafi jurists, i.e. Imam Mohammed Amin Bin Abdin,⁽¹⁾ may Allah's mercy be upon his soul, who passed away before completing this precious encyclopedia of Fikh, and his son, Mohammed Alaa'eddine⁽²⁾, who eventually completed it.

As is the case with any encyclopedic volume, the book includes various matters related to the Fikh and other relevant topics. In his annotations, Ibn Abdin mentions the topic of Jihad and its relevant jurisdiction, as he could not - knowing that he was the last scholar of the Hanafi current - but report on what the Imams of the current thought about the legitimacy of Jihad and fighting in Islam, within the conditions, restrictions and ethics as stated in the book.

It is most likely that Ibn Abdin wrote on the topic of Jihad in his annotations around the year 1248 AH i.e. 1833 AD, as Ibn Abdin states: “from this stems the ruling of the Fatwa of the year one thousand two hundred forty eight, close to the time when I wrote this part”⁽³⁾.

To further fill out our story, the writings of Ibn Abdin about Jihad and its jurisdiction in Islamic Fikh coincided with a series of violent wars between the Ottoman state and its European enemies, the majority of those wars did not end in favor of the Ottomans and they had a major role in the depletion of the empire and loss of many territories under their rule⁽⁴⁾.

The approach of Ibn Abdin in his annotations can be characterized by the fact that it was not revolutionary or impulsive or affected by current events, but it is written in a scientific, sober manner that reflects the objectivity of the

⁽¹⁾ Mohammed Amin Bin Omar Bin Abdel Aziz Abdin Al Dimachki (1198-1252AH = 1784-1836AD): was a jurist of the Levant and Imam of Hanafism at the time. He was born and died in Damascus. He wrote *Rad Al Mohtar Ala Dar Al Mokhtar* (رد المحتار على الدر المختار) in five volumes, which is famous for the annotations of Ibn Abdin, *Rafe' Al Anzar Amma Awradahou Al Halabi Ala Al Dar Al Mokhtar* (رفع الأنظار عما أورده الحلبي على الدر المختار) two volumes, *Al Okoud Al Douriya Fi Tankih Al Fatawi Al Hamidiya* (العقود الدرية في تنقيح الفتاوي الحامدية) codes. Cf: Al Zarkali, Kheireddine, *Al A'lam* (الأعلام), previous reference, p. 42.

⁽²⁾ Mohammed Alaa'eddine Bin Mohammed Amin Bin Omar Bin Abdel Aziz Abdin Al Hussein Al Dimachki (1244-1306AH - 1828-1889AD): was a Hanafi jurist, from the Damascus Oulemas. He held many positions in the judiciary. He travelled to Astana, and was one of the members of the board editing the (Majala), he was also head of the judiciary in Tripoli of the Levant for 1292-1295AH. He was appointed the second president of the Council of Knowledge in Damascus, where he passed away. He completed his father's annotation on *Dar Al Mokhtar* (الدر المختار) about the Hanafi doctrine, and wrote *Miraj Al Najah Charh Nour al Idah* (معراج النجاح شرح نور الإيضاح), *Al Hadiya Al Ilaiya* (الهدية العلائية). Previous reference, volume 6, p. 270.

⁽³⁾ Ibn Abdin, Mohammed Amin Bin Omar, *Rad Al Mohtar Ala Dar Al Mokhtar Charh Tanwir Al Absar* (رد المحتار على الدر المختار شرح تنوير الأبصار), Dar Al Fikr for printing and publishing, Beirut, 2000AD, part 4, p. 204.

⁽⁴⁾ Hitti, Philip et al, *Tarikh Al Arab* (تاريخ العرب), see previous reference, p. 812-814.

conventional jurist and his discipline and respect for the school he belongs to, without forcing connections to the events taking place in his era.

As an example of the theoretical approach of Ibn Abdin that is removed from his reality: he mentions a number of strict sentences regarding the Christians referring to “provisions of Dhimmis” known to all the previous jurists⁽¹⁾, at a time when the Ottoman state was giving the Christians privileges and guarantees.

Other examples include what Ibn Abdin mentioned about the “Druze”, “Christians” and “Ismailis” as well as the relevant Fikh provisions, as he says: “it was related from the Oulemas of all four currents that it was not legitimate for them to live in lands of Islam through paying a Jiziyah or anything else, it is not halal to marry them nor eat their slaughtered animals⁽²⁾. It is known that during this era the Ottoman state gave the elite of those people lands and empowered them.

Ibn Abdin was even strict with some Muslim groups as he writes in his annotations: “a request from the followers of Abdel Wahad who are Kharijites in our times... in our times the followers of Abdel Wahab who left Nejed and beat the Haramain, who are Hanbalis, but they thought that only they were Muslims and that those who went against their belief were polytheists, thus they killed the Sunni and their Oulemas, until Allah broke their might and disrupted their country and gave victory to the Muslim army in the year one thousand two hundred and thirty three [i.e. 1818AD]”⁽³⁾.

We can conclude that the sobriety of Ibn Abdin and his objective style of research did not prevent him from being very strict in his judgments, be it with non-Muslims or Muslims who went against his beliefs!

⁽¹⁾ Ibn abdin, *Rad Al Mokhtar...*, Op.Cit., part 4, p. 202 and following.

⁽²⁾ Ibid, part 4, p. 244.

⁽³⁾ Ibid, part 4, p. 204.

2) The recent roots of the Jihadist mind in Syria

Introduction

The Ottoman state was harshly defeated at the end of World War I. The links between the countries that were part of its Empire were broken, and the people of Syria quickly found themselves living under the French mandate. Soon afterwards the urge to fight the occupiers and liberate the territory boiled over.

Once again the Muslim Oulemas had a role to play in this confrontation; the Jihadist religious discourse was one of the main tools used for recruitment and mobilization. The following introduces several Syrian Oulemas who are famous for fighting the French occupation of Syria at the beginning of the twentieth century.

a) Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam⁽¹⁾

Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam belonged to a respected family known in the area of Jableh around Latakia on the Syrian coast. As an Azhar Oulema, he was given the chance to teach and preach, and thus he was able to influence those around him. Al-Qassam witnessed the occupation of the Syrian coast by the French, and he was so moved by his religious vigor that he sold his house, used the money to buy some modest military equipment, and he declared Jihad, along with a number of his students and supporters. When his margin of maneuver became limited he moved to Damascus and then to Palestine, to lead a revolution in the 1930s against the British and he died a martyr during the battle of Yo'bud in 1935AD. Al-Qassam could be considered an example of a Jihadist coming from Syria in order to pursue Jihad in Palestine; this scenario

⁽¹⁾ Mohammed Izz al-Din Abd al-Qadar al-Qassam (1300-1354AH = 1882-1935AD): was a mujahid, from a respected family in Jableh (Latakia), and he studied at Al Azhar in Egypt. He worked in his country, teaching and preaching until the French occupied the Syrian coast at the end of World War I (1918), after which rebelled with a group of his students and followers. The French tracked him, thus he went to Damascus, following Faisal's rule. He left Damascus after the French took a hold of it in 1920, and he lived afterwards in Haifa (Palestine) where he became the Imam of the Istiqlal mosque and its preacher as well as the president of the Muslim Youth Association. He worked with Sheikh Mohammed Kamel al-Kassab on a book "*Al Naqd wal Bayan*" (النقد والبيان). As the Zionist danger increased, Palestine rebelled against the British, who were then its rulers (in 1934), the heroism of al-Qassam was revealed in the battles he led during this revolution, and was buried at the village of (al-Sheikh) close to Haifa. Review: Al Zarkali, Kheireddine, *Al A'lam* (الأعلام), Op.Cit., volume 6, p. 267.

will be repeated with Mustapha al-Sibai and his brothers in the 1940s as we will see later⁽¹⁾.

b) Sheikh Mohammed bin Yousef Badr al-Din al-Hasani⁽²⁾

During the third decade of the twentieth century, the world witnessed the fall of the Ottoman Empire which was officially disbanded in 1924, and which was followed by the occupation of Ottoman territories by allied powers, including the countries of the Levant. This difficult situation moved many to resist this occupation, in the Levant, Sheikh Mohammed bin Yousef Badr al-Din al-Hasani started calling for the resistance of the French occupation. Sheikh Ali Tantawi mentions this and says: "I would like to offer the readers a page from the past of Sheikh Badr al-Din, his journey in 1924AD with Sheikh Ali Dekker and Sheikh Hashem al-Khatib, from Damascus to Douma to Nebek and then Homs and Hama and Aleppo. During this journey, they toured the "Syrian" Levant countries and as soon as they arrived in a new village or county every inhabitant went out to greet them with songs and parades. Afterwards, they would follow them to the mosque where they would speak and lecture and inspire the people, raising the Islamic dignity in people, and calling for Jihad for the greatness of the word Allah. The journey was the first and direct factor for the start of the Syrian revolution against France, it lasted over two years beginning in 1925AD, and its heroism amazed the entire world. The revolution began in Ghouta as we know - as we saw it with our own eyes - before it spread to the mountain Houran, it began with student protests of the students for the motive of Jihad... among those who took the streets and performed amazing deeds, was the martyr and hero Hassan al-Kharrat, who was a night guard, and led groups of mujahidin and stood with them in the face of France, back in the days when France was the most powerful state after WWI, but he defeated France and took Damascus in three days... there were no Frenchman left in the country"⁽³⁾.

I am convinced that during this time the first priority was to stand up to the French occupiers regardless of the intellectual and philosophical basis of

⁽¹⁾ Izz al-Din al-Qassam is still a major symbol of the Jihad in Palestine, to a point that the Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas" named its military wing "Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades".

⁽²⁾ Mohammed bin Yousef bin Abdel Rahman bin Abdel Wahab bin Abdallah bin Abdel Malak bin Abdel Ghani al Moghrabi al Marakechi al Bibaani, Badr al-Din al-Hasani (1267-1354AH = 1851-1935AD). He was born in Damascus, memorized both Sahih with all their parts and about 20 thousand verse from the various fields, he dedicated his life to worship and teaching. He avidly fasted from the world, and gained importance with the rulers and the Levant people, to a point where some persons from the public in Damascus, when the oppression of the Turks increased during WWI, offered him the Caliphate and joined him in revolution. Cf: Al Zarkali, Kheireddine, *Al A'lam* (الأعلام), Op.Cit., volume 7, p. 157.

⁽³⁾ Al-Naser, Mohammed Hamed, *Oulema el Sham fi Al Karn Al Echrin* (علماء الشام في القرن العشرين), Dar Al Ma'ali, first edition, Amman, 2003, p. 22.

this resistance, and there was overlap from a religious or national or patriotic standpoint. At that time, there was no further detailing or distinction of these standpoints contrary to what happened in the 1960s, as we will later see.

c) Dr. Mustafa Al-Sibai⁽¹⁾

Mustafa Al-Sibai is considered to be one of the most important Islamic Syrian figures of the twentieth century and the bridge that brought the call of the "Muslim Brotherhood" from Egypt to the Levant. In the early 1930s, Al-Sibai left his country of Syria for Egypt in order to complete his college education at Al Azhar. At this time he got in touch with Sheikh Hassan Al Banna and became a member of the "Muslim Brotherhood" in 1933⁽²⁾.

After he completed his higher education at Al Azhar, Al-Sibai went back to Syria with a PhD and the ideology of the "Muslim Brotherhood", and later went to work on establishing a Syrian brotherhood-like organization, whose members presented themselves to the Syrian⁽³⁾ society as: "an Islamic Arab group that aims at unifying the Umma and preserving its creed, and building its system according to Islam, and powerfully launching it to perform its universal and eternal message, and freeing the Arab and Islamic countries from foreign colonization and influence"⁽⁴⁾.

In 1945, Al Sibai and his brothers experienced military confrontations against the French occupant in Homs and its surroundings⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Mustafa Bin Hussni Al-Sibai (Abou Hassan) (1333-1384AH - 1915-1967AD): an Islamic Oulema, mujahid, preacher and writer. Born in Homs (Syria) he received his education there and at Al-Azhar. He was arrested by the English in Egypt and Palestine for six months, but was then passed on to the French who imprisoned him in Lebanon for 30 months. He got his start at the head of a brigade of (Muslim Brothers) in the defense of Jerusalem (1948). He received his degree (of PhD in Islamic law and history) from al-Azhar (in 1949) and settled in Damascus as a professor of law (1950), and then general supervisor of the association of the Muslim Brotherhood, and dean of the Sharia faculty (1955). He also went on journeys. He started the magazine *Hadarat al-Islam* (حضارة الإسلام) that is still published. He became hemiplegic (1957). He published 21 books and papers of his own, including *Al Sunnah Wa Makanatouha fi al Tachri' al Islami* (شرح قانون اشتراكية الإسلام), *Charh Qanoun al Ahwal Al Chakhsiya* (السنة ومكانتها في التشريع الإسلامي), *Al Din wal Dawla fi al Islam* (الدين والدولة في الإسلام), *Al Mar'a Bayna al Fikh wal Qanoun* (المرأة بين الفقه والأحوال الشخصية), *Manhajouna fi al Islah* (منهجنا في الإصلاح). He died in Damascus. Cf: Al Zarkali, Kheireddine, *Al A'lam* (الأعلام), Op.Cit., volume 7, p. 231.

⁽²⁾ Hawa, Said, *Hazihi Tajroubati wa Chahadati* (هذه تجربتي وهذه شهادتي), Dar Amman, second edition, Beirut-Amman, 1988, p. 42.

⁽³⁾ Al-Sibai, Mohammed Mustafa, *Mustafa al Sibaibi aklam Mohibih* (مصطفى السباعي بأقلام محبيه), Dar al Warrak, first edition, Beirut, 2000, p. 132. also: Saad Eddine, Nadia, *Al Harakat Al Diniya Al Siasiya* (الحركات الدينية السياسية), Al Jazeera center for research and Dar Al Arabiyah lil Oloum, first edition 2012, p. 359.

⁽⁴⁾ Saad Eddine, Nadia, *Al Harakat Al Diniya Al Siasiya* (الحركات الدينية السياسية), Op.Cit., p. 359

⁽⁵⁾ Al Sibai, *Mustafa al Sibaibi aklam Mohibih* (مصطفى السباعي بأقلام محبيه), Op.Cit., p. 130.

In 1948, Al Sibai - as the general leader of the Brotherhood in Syria - led the Syrian "Muslim Brotherhood" brigades that became involved in Jihad activities on Palestinian soil against English and the Zionist groups⁽¹⁾.

In 1952, Al Sibai offered to send Syrian Jihadists from the "Brotherhood" to support the Egyptian brothers in their military confrontation against the British military bases at the Suez Canal⁽²⁾.

In 1956, Al Sibai again offered to send Syrian Jihadists from the "Brotherhood" to support the Egyptians against the tripartite attacks on Egypt⁽³⁾.

Al Sibai also became involved in political activities in his country of Syria: he was a candidate for parliamentary elections and was elected as an MP for Damascus, and was offered a ministerial position that he rejected⁽⁴⁾.

Al Sibai received attention as a scholar through his work as a professor at the University of Damascus, and through his establishment of a faculty of Sharia faculty of which he became its first dean in 1955⁽⁵⁾.

Al Sibai also proved his place as a writer and a journalist as he published many scholarly books, and he was the chief editor of a number of Islamic journals, including "Al Manar", "Al Chihab", "Al Mouslimoun", and "Hadarat al Islam"⁽⁶⁾.

The Islamic experience of Dr. Mustafa Al Sibai was a milestone that deserves telling in detail. Through him, Jihadism went from being the enthusiasm of a few people motivated by religious feelings, to an organized movement including training and arming to face the French occupants in Syria, or to lead Jihadist groups to defend Palestine or Egypt whenever needed.

Al Sibai's ability to wage Jihad should also be noted, as he was a combatant on the battle field⁽⁷⁾. He was also an MP and a brilliant politician, a professor of science and research and a dean, a writer, and a scholar. He also played a part for the public good through his support of trade unions and civil society organizations.

During the Sibai era - particularly in the 1950s - we can see the beginning of a distinction in military and resistance efforts, between a sacred Jihad

⁽¹⁾ Ibid, p. 134-135. Also: Hawa, Said, *Hazihi Tajroubati wa Chahadati* (هذه تجربتي وهذه شهادتي), Op.Cit., p. 42.

⁽²⁾ Al Sibai, *Mustafa al Sibaibi aklam Mohibih* (مصطفى السباعي بأقلام محبيه), Op.Cit., p. 139.

⁽³⁾ Ibid, p.139.

⁽⁴⁾ Al Sibai, *Mustafa al Sibaibi aklam Mohibih* (مصطفى السباعي بأقلام محبيه), Op.Cit., p. 126.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid, p.124.

⁽⁶⁾ Ibid, p.136-138.

⁽⁷⁾ Dr. Mustafa Al Sibai wrote a book entitled: *Nizam al Silm wal Harb fil Islam* (نظام السلم والحرب في الإسلام) where he explains some of the provisions of Jihad and Sharia politics

based on a purely religious understanding as opposed to an effort to simply confront an occupier regardless of the intellectual standpoint or religious belief in such a confrontation.

d) Sheikh Marwan Hadid⁽¹⁾

If Dr Mustafa Al Sibai was the spiritual father of the Syrian Society of the Muslim Brothers, and one of the main founders of political Islam in his country of Syria, Sheikh Marwan Hadid is the real spiritual father of Syrian Jihadists, and one of the most prominent leaders of armed action against the Syrian Baath regime.

Although Sheikh Marwan Hadid took part in the conflicts with Zionists in Palestine after the 1967 war, he gained his Jihadist reputation through a series of attacks he led with his supporters against the Baath regime in Syria during the 1960s and 1970s. His biographer considered that his participation in the Palestinian war was “only an important occasion to mobilize many young people to participate in the fighting and receive weapons training. He, himself, trained a good number of fighters who took part in Jihadist operations, and who would later form the nucleus of militant Jihad against the apostate regime in Syria”⁽²⁾.

He made prominent and repeated Jihadist tours all across Syria against the Syrian regime. As his biography says: “After the 1963 coup which brought the Baath party to power, the mysterious elements [i.e. Nusayris] dominating this atheist party began tightening their grip on the reins of power behind the scenes without unveiling their hateful face. He [Marwan Hadid] then felt the danger that lied behind this atheist party; he started calling and warning people, showing them, thanks to his fine sense and transparency, that those people must not be allowed to continue doing what they did, and that they have their sponsors. Thus, it

⁽¹⁾ Quoting the Arabic Wikipedia: Marwan Bin Khalid Hadid (1353-1396 H = 1934-1976), was an Islamic preacher, a Mujahid, an orator and a poet. He came from a well-known wealthy family in Syria. He was born in Hama where he studied and then moved to the faculty of agriculture at Ain Shams University in Egypt where he graduated in 1964. He then joined the philosophy department of the faculty of arts at Damascus University and earned a BA in 1970. During his stay in Egypt, he met Sayed Qutb and was influenced by his ideas. When he left Egypt in 1964, he found Syria under the rule of the Baath party, which came to power after the 1963 coup. Marwan Hadid considered the rule of the Baaths as a threat to the country, so he started warning people of this threat, until he was arrested with a number of his companions and were sentenced to death, after a series of incidents and confrontations. The verdict was subsequently overturned and the detainees were released. In 1966, he was arrested again with a large number of brothers and scholars, and then released during the 1967 war. After the 1967 defeat, he took part in Jihadist operations against Israel. As of 1973, he began operating underground and led armed operations against the ruling regime, as a reaction to the declaration by the Baath party of a new constitution abolishing article one, which defines Islam as the State religion. He was arrested in 1975 and remained in prison so until he died in 1976. <http://ar.wikipedia.org/>

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

would be necessary to confront them immediately before being able to rule. Otherwise, their danger will spread and their grip will strengthen. Then, they will violate sanctuaries and sanctities, and nothing will work with them thereafter. He held meetings at his place and small mosque in Baroudia quarter, delivered lectures at mosques, unveiled the intents and plans of Baathists, and inflamed the enthusiasm of youth feeding it with his spirit that despised tyrants and only feared Allah, and loved to die as much as others loved to live".⁽¹⁾

This paragraph refers to the main battle that Sheikh Marwan Hadid led against the Baath ruling regime, known as Hama revolution in 1964. The military confrontation between Islamists and the regime was an unequal footing, due to their lack of weapons and equipment. As a result, more than fifty people were martyred, in addition to a number of the regime's soldiers. Marwan Hadid and some of his companions were arrested and sentenced to death. The verdict was then abolished and the detainees were released⁽²⁾.

The hostility felt by Sheikh Marwan Hadid towards the Baath regime and the Alawite sect to which it belonged stems from two reasons:

First: On account of jurisprudential reasoning based on Fatwas included in the books of religious scholars in the past and present about the Alawite sect.

Second: On account of an intellectual reason based on Islamic governance theory, which was much talked about in the 1950s and 1960s. Sayyid Qutb, whom Hadid met and whose ideas influenced him, was one of its main theorists. One of the pillars of this thought was to excommunicate any ruler who does not rule according to what Allah has revealed: "Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are wrong-doers"⁽³⁾.

The ruling regime's position only aggravated the situation and led Sheikh Marwan Hadid and his companions to revolt.

His series of battles with the regime began as a public reaction driven by religious fervor. As his biographer notes: "Marwan did not hide. He did not work behind the scenes, but was clear in his approach, movement, belief, and the way he resisted the regime"⁽⁴⁾.

His actions developed as of 1973 and transformed into a secret, organized military operation, which resulted in the formation of what was later known as the "Fighting Vanguard" (Attali'a el-Moukatillah). On this, his biographer

⁽¹⁾ Ibid

⁽²⁾ Hawa Said, *Hazihi Tajroubati wa Chahadati* (هذه تجربتي وهذه شهادتي), Op.Cit., p. 72-80.

⁽³⁾ Al-Ma'idah (5): 44.

⁽⁴⁾ Quoting: <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>

writes: "Allah's will was that Marwan would disappear after that period [1973], and work secretly to prepare for the day when he would militarily face the transgressing regime. Allah's will was that he would live in Damascus and not in Hama. He moved from one house to another for almost two and a half years. The Nusayri regime used all its power, tricks, and spies to discover his place in order to arrest and kill him"⁽¹⁾.

Although Sheikh Marwan Hadid was finally arrested in 1975, and then died in prison in 1976⁽²⁾, his Jihadist legacy in confronting the regime remained alive through a series of battles that lasted until 1982. The most important one took place after his death when the "Fighting Vanguard" led its largest attack on June 16th, 1979, which targeted the Artillery School in Aleppo and in which 32 Alawi cadets were killed. Then Syrian interior minister, Adnan al-Dabbagh accused the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and not the "Fighting Vanguard" of this attack in an official statement issued on June 22nd, 1979⁽³⁾.

Said Hawa evaluates that period by writing that: "the Islamic armed action was ostensibly a reaction to a series of measures taken by the regime; however, in essence, the Syrian people began feeling that religion, freedom, and bread were all lacking. This, coupled with an imbalance of policies and practices, only aggravated the situation, as it was clear that it would have been possible to satisfy the people with some prudence. Therefore, everything was going wrong and this resulted in a favorable climate for confrontation"⁽⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Ibid.

⁽²⁾ Hawa Said, *Hazihi Tajroubati wa Chahadati* (هذه تجربتي وهذه شهادتي), Op.Cit., p. 130-131.

⁽³⁾ "Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, the Fighting Vanguard, and the authority", seen on: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=131579>.

⁽⁴⁾ Hawa Said, *Hazihi Tajroubati wa Chahadati* (هذه تجربتي وهذه شهادتي), Op.Cit., p. 134-135.

e) Sheikh Muhammad Surour Zein el Abidin⁽¹⁾

A very different Muslim Brotherhood character distinguished the Jihadist thinking preached by Sheikh Muhammad Surur in Syria. Regardless of the acceptance or adoption of his views by the leaders of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, the Syrian regime accused them of being behind the violent acts in Syria, which were intellectually linked to a theory of Islamic governance as advocated by Sayyid Qutb. Although many prominent Salafi scholars were in Syria at that time, including Sheikh Nasiruddin al-Albani, the Salafi scholars differed from the Muslim Brothers by distancing themselves from political action and contenting themselves with military service. Therefore, in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, there was no mention of Jihadist Salafism in Syria, and the only headlines were about the Muslim Brothers' violence and extremism.

In the 1990s, however, the term "Jihadist Salafism" became quite common, in addition to the term "Surouri Salafism" as a movement of "Political Salafism" inspired by the views of Sayyid Qutb on Islamic governance, loyalty and enmity. The Syrian Sheikh Muhammad Surour Zein el Abidin was considered the spiritual father of the followers of this Salafi movement.

As for the emergence of the term "Al Surouriya", Sheikh Muhammad Surour says: "I was plagued by this name unwillingly, and it was the Muslim Brothers who gave me this title, at a time I was still one of the Muslim Brothers in Damascus. There was a dispute between one of them and I. He was talking to a friend who

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad Surur bin Nayif Zain al-Abidin (1357 H ... = 1938): A Syrian Author, researcher, and Islamic thinker, born in Hauran in 1938. He was introduced to the Muslim Brotherhood through Sheikh Mohammad el Sabbagh who used to frequent the mosques in Huaran. He then joined the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1953. He worked as an instructor in many Syrian schools. In the mid-1960s, and due to the restrictions imposed by the Syrian regime on the Muslim Brotherhood, he moved to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where he stayed in Hail first, then spent five years in Qassim where he taught mathematics at the scientific institute in Buraidah. He left to Kuwait where he stayed for nine years (1975-1984), then went back to Saudi Arabia to teach at the scientific institute of Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University. Sheikh Muhammad Surur was known for his revolutionary views influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab on the one hand, and Sayed Qutb on the other. This resulted in Al Sururiya, a revolutionary Salafi school named after him. During the first and second Gulf War, he opposed the Saudi policy, and was subjected to pressure, leading eventually to his expulsion in 1991. Sheikh Muhammad Surur stayed in Kuwait for a while before moving to the United Kingdom where he established along with Sheikh Mohammad el Abda and others the "Muslim Forum" which issues Al Bayan magazine, one of the most popular magazines in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, in addition to Muslim communities in western countries. He also established the "Center of Sunnah Studies", and launched from there Al Sunnah magazine – prohibited from publication in most of the Arab countries – which gained major importance after the second Gulf War in 1991, in terms of the formulation of the political position of his partisans and followers in KSA specifically. In 2004, he left the UK for Jordan, where he currently lives and works as a writer and author. Some of his books include: Studies about the life of the Prophet (دراسات في السيرة النبوية), Method of the Prophets in the call to God (منهج الأنبياء في الدعوة إلى الله), The reality about Hezbollah's victory (وجاء دور المجوس), And the role of the Magi came (حقيقة انتصار حزب الله), Shiites in Lebanon: Amal movement as an example (الشيعية في لبنان.. حركة أمل أملاً نموذجاً), Ruling by other than what Allah has revealed (سلسلة الحكم بغير ما أنزل الله) (2 volumes). See Al Hayat newspaper, issue dated October 30, 2013; alarabiya.net: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2004/10/27/7492.html>, dated Wednesday 13 Ramadan 1425 H – October 27, 2004; and <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

described him as Surouri. He said so out of anger, and he used the term as a joke. This happened around 1969.

I then heard this term in a camp for universities in 1974. In such occasions, Brothers from Arab countries used to meet with each other. One of the brothers said: Is there any Surouri among us? It was the first time I hear such a thing. The brothers feared of having any Surouri among them.

After the Gulf war and calling western countries to take part to it, a group of "Mutasallifin"⁽¹⁾ kept and repeated this term, as a way to offend all the followers of this movement"⁽²⁾.

Sheikh Muhammad Surour clarifies the details of what happened after the Gulf War and how his public positions put him and the "Surouri Salafism" – inspired by his ideas - under the spotlight. His school is clearly different from the traditional Salafism of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He says: "This war put a line between two eras in one Gulf state: the pre-war era, i.e. that of the founding father and the brothers, characterized by cooperation and coordination with scholars, preachers, and Islamic groups. The post-war era was based on the principle of "with and against", and those who are "with" only lie and praise their lords all the time. However, cooperation with them was tainted by suspicion and the possibility of failure at any time.

On the other hand, they allied with seculars and entrusted them some governance affairs and all media affairs. They also used them as experts and advisors, and gave them full freedom. Seculars profaned sanctities, and dirtily attacked scholars, preachers, and Islamic institutions."

In addition, he says about the "with" party: "They graduated in their majority from Sharia institutes, and some of them hold PhDs and teach at universities, but neither they did respect the rules of the education they received, nor imitate the Prophet in his behavior and morals. They did not imitate the companions and followers; thus, their education became a pretext against them. They were like reservists who are called for duty when there is a need for them, and then laid off when they perform their role... Since the second Gulf War in 1991, to this day, scholars, preachers, and Islamic groups became the target of security services.

I was one of the most prominent figures they badly targeted in their writings, speeches, and reports. They considered me a symbol of a movement they called "Al Surouriya", may Allah make every Muslim and me happy in the World and the Hereafter. They filled thousands of pages to talk about the most important rogue and misleading groups – in their opinion – nowadays, which

⁽¹⁾ Sheikh Muhammad Surour means the two Salafi sheikhs Mohammed Aman el Jamii and Rabih ben Hadi el Mudkhali, and all those who supported them among traditional Salafi sheikhs known for their support to the Saudi policy that Sheikh Muhammad Surour opposed.

⁽²⁾ Al Hayat newspaper, issue dated October 30, 2013.

are 'Polarism, Brotherhood, and Surouriya', in addition to other groups. This 'Surouriya' they claimed means one thing for me: commitment to the doctrine and ways of the ancestors and their followers to the Day of Judgment"⁽¹⁾.

Although the term "Al Surouriya" is neither scientific, nor objective, and in spite of the fact that Sheikh Mohammed Surour denies the label, and considers it an insulting title used to insult him as well as his ideas that have been adopted by Muslim youth in many countries, he does not deny that his views represent a "revolutionary Salafi phenomenon", quite different from traditional Salafism.

During his stay in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, this Syrian Sheikh – a Salafist who began as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood – was able to propose a view that combined the Salafism of Ibn Taymiyyah with the revolutionary ideas of Sayyid Qutb: "he took from Ibn Taymiyyah his strict Salafi positions against Sunna violators and the other sects like Shiites. The Surouri School took from Ibn Taymiyyah the doctrinal content, and from Sayyid Qutb his revolutionary call, and thus believed fully in his ideas about governance and the ignorance of the society"⁽²⁾.

Sheikh Mohammed Surour acknowledged this by saying: "it is true that there is a movement that combines political brotherhood with an attention to the issues of doctrine and morals. This movement exists, but has no name. It is an organization, a movement... In fact, I was never a cadre, but was not a nobody either. I was a founder here and there. Allah gave me capabilities, but titles never interested me. I saw that most conflicts revolve around power. That is why I distanced myself from power. You could say that I am an influential member in this movement, with no organizational role"⁽³⁾.

The opponents of Sheikh Mohammad Surour claim that his "extremist" views contributed to the rise of "Jihadist Salafism", as he was responsible for the political dimension of the Salafist school of thought. In addition, some of the most prominent Salafi leaders like Abu Mohammed al Makdessi⁽⁴⁾ was inspired by the ideas of his teacher Sheikh Mohammad Surour. The evidence, however, seems to confirm that the "Surouri" school is somewhere in the middle between Jihadist Salafism on the one hand, and scientific Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other. It intersects with Jihadist Salafism

⁽¹⁾ Sheikh Muhammad Surour Zein el Abidin, article entitled "Refuting the suspicions of wrongdoers" (دحض شبهات المبطلين), published on his website on 24/06/2012. See <http://www.surour.net>

⁽²⁾ "Surouri Salafism, combining the schools of thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and the polarized movement of the Muslim Brothers" (السلفية السورورية، مزج بين فكر "ابن تيمية" وحركة "الإخوان" القطبية), published on 04/12/2014, on <http://www.islamist-movements.com/12175>

⁽³⁾ Al Hayat newspaper, issue dated October 30, 2013.

⁽⁴⁾ One of the most prominent theorists of Jihadist Salafism. Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper in an issue number 9178 dated 14/01/2004 talked about Abu Mohammed al Makdessi in an article entitled: "Violent sheikhs are numerous, but Abu Mohammed al Makdessi is the most prominent among them" (شيوخ العنف). كثيرون، ويبقى أبو محمد المقدسي الأهم).

in combining the revolutionary ideas of Sayyid Qutb with the Salafism of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Abdel Wahab. Sheikh Mohammad Surour also adopts the same views of the different Salafi movements, in many positions and ideas, like his position about democracy, human rights, the concept of the state, and the ruler and the ruled⁽¹⁾.

Sheikh Mohammad Surour dispelled any doubt with certainty, when he disowned two main Salafi groups: the extremists who use violence in the name of Jihad⁽²⁾, and sultan followers, people of idleness and deferral⁽³⁾.

Sheikh Mohammad Surour says: "Dear brothers, hear it very clearly... I will never adopt the views of those extremists or the people of idleness and deferral. I followed up on them for forty years now and knew their deviations. Then I saw how they became more extremist until this day. So I warn you against what they do, and the way they give evidence from their deviations, and this is exploited by our enemies to tarnish the image of Jihad, the same as it is exploited by tyrants in our countries"⁽⁴⁾.

In his denunciation of the extremists of "Jihadist Salafism", Sheikh Mohammad Surour clearly adds: "our last misfortune is those people who speak our language, repeat our slogans, and tickle the emotions of deluded young people by their Jihadist discourse... This gang and their preachers would have never emerged in the absence of extremist groups and views that go against the beliefs of the Sunna. They adopted their views to distinguish themselves from others; then, time passed while we were facing one extremist group, we the people of Sunna have our way, and they have another way. Then, some developments pushed those people out of their community to join another one, which is more extremist. Their original community began raising slogans with some moderate traits, so our good brothers forgot its extremism, and then this extremism resulted in more extremism, and we don't know now how things will develop?!"⁽⁵⁾

In conclusion, any reasonable scholar must acknowledge the substantial differentiation between "Surouri Salafism" named after Sheikh Mohammad Surour, and Jihadist Salafism. Even so, the evidence shows that the views of

(1) "Surouri Salafism, combining the schools of thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and the polarized movement of Muslim brothers (الإخوان القطبية) وحركة "ابن تيمية" وحرية "الإخوان" القطبية), published on 04/12/2014, on <http://www.islamist-movements.com/12175>

(2) Those who belong to Jihadi Salafism.

(3) They are described by their opponents as Sultan people, and some of them are called the Mudakhila, after the Salafi sheikh Rabih ben Hadi al Mudkhali, and the Jamiya, after the Salafi sheikh Mohammed Aman Jami.

(4) Sheikh Muhammad Surour Zein el Abidin, introduction of his book entitled: The Islamic State between illusion and reality (الدولة الإسلامية بين الوهم والحقيقة), published on his website on 15/02/2014. See <http://www.surour.net>

(5) Ibid.

Sheikh Mohammad Surour were in one way or another the bridge that brought young Islamic individuals, preachers, and activists in Saudi Arabia and a number of other Arab and Islamic countries, from traditional Salafism to Jihadist Salafism. Abu Mohammed al Makdessi is a vivid example of this reality.

f) Abu Musab al-Suri⁽¹⁾

“Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir”, Omar Abd al-Kakim”, and other real or false names all refer to the same person, namely Abu Musab al-Suri, nicknamed “The shrewd Jihadist Thinker” by his supporters.

He did not gain his reputation among Jihadists out of nowhere. He followed Sheikh Marwan Hadid’s school of thought, and joined the “Fighting Vanguard” that he founded in 1980, and he was one of its military cadres during the Hama uprising against the Syrian regime in 1982⁽²⁾.

However, the main factor contributing to his reputation were his Jihadist books, including his book entitled *The Global Islamic Resistance Call (Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah)*, through which he wanted to establish “an integrated approach and an intellectually and politically legitimate identity to be a reference among Jihad and resistance leaders and followers, a constitution controlling their movement, and a common ground between the different Jihad and resistance factions that are growing in this generous nation, which remains a Jihadist community confirming that “it is the best nation ever to be brought forth for people”⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Abu Musab al-Suri (1378 H = 1958 ...), born Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir bin Hussein bin el sheikh Ahmad al Muzayyak al Jakiri al Rifai, is, according to <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>, an Islamic preacher, mujahid, writer and lecturer. His family is known as “Sit Mariam”, named after the “Mariam” family. He was born in Aleppo and attended four years of university studies there at the University of Aleppo's Department of mechanical engineering. He joined the “Vanguard Fighters” organization founded by Sheikh Marwan Hadid in Syria. He attended a number of military courses, specialized in explosives engineering, guerrilla warfare, and special operations, and worked as a trainer at the bases of the military organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. During the fighting in Hama, he was designated in the higher military command and assistant to the head of the northwestern region. He left the Muslim Brotherhood organization, in protest against joining the “National Alliance” with secular and communist parties and the Iraqi Baath, for doctrinal reasons, and in protest against their corruption and mismanagement. He held them responsible for the destruction of Hama and the failure of the Jihadist revolution. He tried with no success along with Sheikh Adnan Akleh to rebuild the “Vanguard Fighters” in Syria. He joined al-Qaeda at its beginning, and studied Sharia books during the Afghani Jihad, focusing on the legacy of Salafi scholars and the books of Najd imams... He read the books of Sayed Qutb and Abdullah Azzam. He opened al-Ghuraba Camp, which was destroyed after 9/11. He also founded “al-Ghuraba Center for Islamic Studies and Media”, and issued the *Qadaya el Zahirin aan ilhak* (قضايا الظاهرين على الحق) magazine. After the collapse of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, he retired and devoted himself to research and writing. He resumed his field activity when the US Department of State issued a search and seizure warrant against him, and allocated a financial reward to arrest him.

⁽²⁾ Abd al-Kakim, Omar (Abu Musab al-Suri), *Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* (دعوة المقاومة الإسلامية العالمية), first edition, 2007, unknown publication place, p. 537.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 31.

Abu Musab al-Suri considers that his writings are not abstract theories, but the result of his practical Jihadist experience: "I have summarized my twenty-five-year experience in following up on the Islamic awakening and working in the Jihadist movement during the internal and external crises it went through... During the period between 1980 and 2004, I worked on the ground in different aspects of activity, and contributed to its intellectual, literary, military, political, and security dimensions, in many places and causes"⁽¹⁾.

He adds that the motivation that brought him to write was the following: "Due to the martyrdom of leaderships and cadres who were raised and methodologically formed for a long time, the majority of resistance and Jihad groups will keep lacking a legitimate and intellectual, political, and educational methodology to be adopted as a reference, a method to form its new cadres, a constitution to be consulted in case of difference, and a fixed identity which presents itself to friends and enemies alike. That is why I wrote my book to:

- Summarize the basics of political and intellectual methodology that the Jihadist movement learned since its creation and throughout its long history;
- Include the history of Jihadist experiences and lessons learned, to be leveraged by future Jihadist generations, knowing that these came after a hectic journey in which many people sacrificed their lives;
- Summarize the path of conflict between Muslims and Romans over the centuries, especially the modern Romans – Americans and Europeans – and their plot over the last two centuries to lead Muslims astray from their religion, and the reasons for their strength and victory;
- Provide an intellectual platform for Jihadists to understand the current conflict and its roots, and how their enemies conduct it.
- Provide a guide for Jihadists and resisters of the best ways to resist against campaigns of invasion, according to my studies and views, and my experience and tracking;
- Guide the Jihadists through a comprehensive educational methodology to be determined and perseverant, accepted by Allah in the hereafter, and victorious and successful in this world"⁽²⁾.

Abu Musab al-Suri attached special importance to the Syrian Jihadist experience, namely in his book *The Global Islamic Resistance Call (Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah)*⁽³⁾, as well as his, *Islamic Jihadist Revolution in Syria, Sufferings and Hopes (Atthawra al-Islamiya al-Jihadiyya fi*

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 9.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 29.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 536-537.

Surya, Alam wa amal), written between 1985 and 1987, and printed in Peshawar in late 1990, in addition to a letter entitled "Observations on the Jihadist experience in Syria", which is a summary of the book⁽¹⁾.

The reason that his writings are valuable is that they provide a chronicle of the events between 1965 and 1983, under the title "The Jihadist experience in Syria" or "The Islamic Jihadist revolution in Syria". His writings describe the events, draw out the reasons leading up to them and analyze their results in light of the current state of affairs.

Although the analysis of Abu Musab al-Suri is accurate, profound, and wide-reaching, it also harshly criticizes those he considered to be responsible for the failure of the revolution. His works go farther than that and he draws lessons from this experience to make suggestions about the best and most effective methods and strategies on the ground to ensure the success of such revolutions⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ The electronic version of the book: The Islamic Jihadist revolution in Syria, sufferings and hopes (الثورة الإسلامية الجهادية في سوريا، آلام وآمال), is published on <http://benbadis.orgm>, and the electronic version of the book Observations on the Jihadist experience in Syria (ملاحظات حول التجربة الجهادية في سوريا), published on <http://www.tawhed.ws>

⁽²⁾ Among the issues that has drawn attention is what Abu Musab al-Suri mentions in his writings about the role of Iraq at the time of Saddam Hussein, Jordan at the time of King Hussein, and a number of other Arab countries in supporting the revolution in Syria, by sheltering, training, and arming the Islamists involved in the confrontation with the Al Assad regime, knowing that this support was not out of conviction for the revolution and its goals, but was a reaction to the Syrian regime's support for the Iranian regime of Khomeini. The same is happening today. Refer to: Abd al-Kakim, Omar (Abu Musab al-Suri), The Islamic Jihadist Revolution in Syria, Sufferings and Hopes (الثورة الإسلامية الجهادية في سوريا، آلام وآمال), and the electronic version of the book, Observations on the Jihadist Experience in Syria (ملاحظات حول التجربة الجهادية في سوريا), by the same author.

3) Syrian Jihadists: experience and lessons learned

a) Syrian Jihadists between Syria and Afghanistan

Abu Musab al-Suri tackles the phenomenon of Jihadists in Arab countries – Syria above all today – by saying: “The belief of many that today’s militant Jihadism in Arab and Muslim countries is a result Arabs’ participation in the Afghani Jihad is wrong. The total opposite is true... The modern Jihadist movement is the fruit of the Islamic awakening of the early 1930s. Their separation took place in the early 1960s, when many Jihadist groups appeared, i.e. twenty years before the Afghani Jihad. As a matter of fact, the leaders, cadres, symbols, and commanders of Arab Jihad in Afghanistan were the remnants, cadres, symbols, and sheikhs of the Arab Jihadist movement”⁽¹⁾.

When it comes to the reasons and motives that led them to go to Afghanistan, he says: “The main goal of the majority of Jihadist entities, organizations, and cadres was training, organization, gathering cadres, recruitment, public relations, fund raising, etc. to serve their cause in their countries and to overthrow their governments of apostasy, and establish Islamic governments ruling according to Sharia law”⁽²⁾.

Abu Musab al-Suri uses himself as an example, writing: “Even for me personally, the goal that took me to Afghanistan was to rebuild a Jihadist organization to continue the Jihadist project in Syria (1945-1982)”⁽³⁾.

It is important to note that Abu Musab al-Suri mentions two Jihadist figures, namely, Osama Bin Laden and Abu Khaled al-Suri. He speaks about the role of Osama Bin Laden in the Syrian events of the early 1980s: “Sheikh Osama Bin Laden supported Jihad in Syria in the early 1980s, before leaving to Afghanistan.”⁽⁴⁾ He also praises his brother, friend, and companion Mujahid Sheikh Abu Khaled al-Suri and says about him: “May Allah protect him and keep him and all those who are like him for our nation”⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Abd al-Kakim, Omar (Abu Musab al-Suri), *Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* (دعوة المقاومة الإسلامية العالمية), previous reference, p. 509.

⁽²⁾ Ibid, p. 511.

⁽³⁾ Ibid, p. 511.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid, p. 509.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid, p. 12.

Recently, the media broadcast a speech by Al-Qaeda leader Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri, in which he mentioned “Sheikh Abu Khaled al-Suri” whom he described as saying: “He is one of the best Mujahidin I have ever met”. He introduced him as “our representative in Al-Sham” to decide on any difference in the interpretation of provisions, and in case of violations, he tasked him to “establish an Islamic court to decide”⁽¹⁾ On 24/02/2014, media reported news about the assassination of Abou Khaled al-Suri. It was said that the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) assassinated him because he opposed its practices, especially because of disputes between ISIS and other Jihadist factions and organizations.⁽²⁾

In light of the above, it turns out that Afghanistan is not the country of origin for Arab Jihadism – Syrian Jihadism before all – rather, it was a temporary station and shelter for it.

Therefore, it was not Al-Qaeda which produced Jihadism, but attracted people to it, supported its efforts, and activated its role on theoretical or practical levels.

Moreover, Osama Bin Laden had a long time relationship with Syrian Jihadists dating back to the 1980s, which became stronger in the mid-1980s, and then reemerged when al-Zawahiri designated Abu Khaled al-Suri his representative in Syria to rule over disputes among Jihadists.

b) Afghanistan, a step forward

Although Abu Musab al-Suri confirms that Jihadism in Syria – and the rest of Arab countries – is local and not imported – either from Afghanistan, or from any other place – he acknowledges that the Afghani experience took Jihadism a step forward.

To illustrate this, Abu Musab al-Suri describes modern Jihadism and says it was first an integral part of the modern Islamic awakening between 1930 and 1960. Then, it began to differentiate itself intellectually and methodologically beginning in the 1960s, inspired by the writings of Sayyid Qutb, whom Abu Musab al-Suri considers the pioneer of modern Jihadist thinking. Between 1965 and 1982, Jihadism turned from theories and ideas into actual Jihadist action, with Sheikh Marwan Hadid and his followers. Then, it entered a new phase in the Afghanistan Mountains in the late 1980s and the early 1990s⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Al Jazeera channel broadcasted the speech of Ayman al-Zawahiri on 06/06/2013. However, the text quoted above was published on <http://www.syriatruth.org>

⁽²⁾ See <http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/132991>

⁽³⁾ Abd al-Kakim, Omar (Abu Musab al-Suri), *Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* (دعوة المقاومة الإسلامية العالمية), previous reference, p. 500-501.

In clearer terms, Abu Musab al-Suri lists the evolutionary phases of Jihadism as follows:

- 1- The phase of Islamic awareness and the emergence of Islamic awakening in general; Jihad was then an integral part of the religious fervor that developed alongside liberal nationalism (1930-1960);
- 2- The phase of intellectual separation of Jihadism inspired by the writings of Sayyid Qutbb on governance, loyalty and enmity, and the truth of monotheism. These writings and ideas became the intellectual and methodological basis of Jihadist movement (1960-1965);
- 3- The phase of transformation from intellectual Jihad to practical Jihad and military confrontation with ruling regimes. This began with Sheikh Marwan Hadid in Syria, and his followers in many Arab countries (1965-1982);
- 4- The Afghanistan experience which took Jihadism to a new stage, that of globalized Jihad, which became a global phenomenon all over the world (1990-...).

Abu Musab el-Suri says about this last phase: "The biggest gain of Jihadism in this phase was the intellectual globalization of the Jihadist movement, the exchange of ideas and experiences, communication between the cadres from different countries, and their spread all over the world"⁽¹⁾.

During this phase, many writings tackled globalized Jihadism, including the volume of Abu Musab el-Suri entitled *The Global Islamic Resistance Call (Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah)*.

In this context, it is worth noting the following:

First: Jihadism is not limited worldwide to military actions here and there, but an ideology and a methodology that started with Sayyid Qutb and his followers, and continued to take shape with Said Hawa and followers, and is still carried on by Abu Musab el-Suri and followers.

Second: The rapid progress of media over the last two decades eased the spread of Jihadist ideology and action in an unprecedented way. The world can now follow up on Jihadism audio-visually, creating more influence and interaction with Jihadism, and attracting supporters and opponents.

Third: Jihadist writings resulted in intense hostility towards all what goes against the Islamic ideology adopted by Jihadists, whether those are Muslims or non-Muslims. This hostility translated into their writings and Fatwas on the one hand, and military actions in the form of fighting and bombings on the other hand. Here, a question arises: is this hostility religious or political in its reality and essence?

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 511.

c) The perplexing reality: Jihad between Sharia and political considerations

In 1950, during what was known as the “Battle of the Constitution”, Dr Mustapha al-Sibai made a famous statement which had “the biggest impact in attracting popular support to his position”⁽¹⁾. This statement was a reply to religious and political figures and the scholarly and cultural elite who rejected the adoption of Islam as the state religion in Syrian constitution⁽²⁾. Al-Sibai gave many explanations and justifications trying to convince the rejectionists. He addressed every category to dispel their fears, confirming that Islam as the State religion complies with both nationalist principles and domestic policy⁽³⁾. Al-Sibai spoke about Syria as a pluralist country, on the level of religions and sects⁽⁴⁾.

In the 1980s, Sheikh Said Hawa devoted a chapter to this issue in his memoirs⁽⁵⁾ entitled “Syria’s demography”. He said, “Sunnis in Syria represent 73% of the population, and the remaining 27% are Christians, Nusayris, Druze, Ismailis, and Devil worshippers”⁽⁶⁾.

In the 1980s, Mohammed ben Abdel Ghani al Nawawi wrote a book entitled The Islamic View of the Arab Israeli Conflict (Ru’ya Islamiya fi siraa alarabi al israili)⁽⁷⁾. In the first part entitled “the plot of sectarian emirates”, he writes much about the Druze, Christians, Nusayris, and Kurds as a thorn in the side of the nation, and a factor aiding the success of the Zionist project, by helping to fragment the nation and transform it into sectarian statelets.

Abu Musab al-Suri also wrote book entitled Sunnis in Syria in the face of Nusayris, Crusaders, and Jews”⁽⁸⁾ (Ahl el Sunnah fi al-Sham fi muwajahat al Nusayriya wa salibiya wal yahud). He concludes by saying: “From Kabul, from the foothills of Hindu Kush, while we are camping in this great place to defend the religion of Allah and His Sharia and ourselves against the new world order, and while we live in this alienation that took us to the eastern countries of Islam, I would like to say:

⁽¹⁾ Al-Sibai, Mohammed Mustafa, *Mustafa al Sibaibi aklam Mohibih* (مصطفى السباعي بأقلام محبيه), p.386.

⁽²⁾ Ibid p. 386.

⁽³⁾ Ibid p. 388-390.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid p. 388.

⁽⁵⁾ Sheikh Said Hawa Published his memories under the title: This is my experience and this is my testimony, Dar Amman, 1987.

⁽⁶⁾ Ibid p. 96.

⁽⁷⁾ This book was published in 1983 without mentioning any piece of information about its publisher or the place of publishing. Most probably, the author used an alias to avoid the oppression of the Syrian regime.

⁽⁸⁾ The electronic version of this book is published on a number of Jihadist websites, including: <http://www.tawhed>

Allah knows that the most important for me after believing in Him is Jihad against Alawite Nusayris, Jews, and Crusaders who desecrated the holy soil of Al-Sham.”

All the above writings touched on pluralism in Syria. Among those mentioned were “Satan worshipers”⁽¹⁾, i.e. the Yazidis. This religion differs from Monotheistic religions. The strange thing is that the intellectual differentiation of Islamic scholars, and the Jihadist military differentiation of Islamic Jihadists, do not mention this sect.

The question is: why is this sect ignored? The answer is simply because it is a minority that has no impact on public life.

Other questions must be raised: is this hostility towards Nusayris, Druze, and Christians fundamentally religious or political in nature?

It is clear that that the fever of politics and power struggle is the main reason fuelling this hostility and conflict, for the Yazidis’ beliefs are very far from those of Islam, but as they were absent from politics, and were not involved in this race for power, nobody cared about them.

To confirm this view, we can return to al Nawawi’s book *The Islamic view of the Arab Israeli conflict (Ru’ya Islamiya fi siraa alarabi al israili)*, and note that the author targets all sects in general, but only focuses on those figures who played a political role in the successive stages of Syrian modern history. There is for example a complete chapter on the “Nusayri sect”, and another one on “Al Assad family”.

⁽¹⁾ Yazidis are a religious Kurdish group who live in Iraq and Syria. Their central figures in their story are Ad+ ibn Musfir al-Umaw+ and Melek Taus who represent the personality of devil for Islamists according to Islam. That is why Islamists consider Yazidis to be Devil worshipers. The occupation of vast areas in northern Iraq and Shingal by ISIS resulted in the death of hundreds of Yazidis and the displacement of thousands of them from their towns and villages. See: <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Chapter Two

Jihad in Syria Between Evaluating the Jihadi Experience and Directing its Discourse

Introduction

As an accumulative result of successive Jihadi experiences and discourses over many centuries and decades, the era of the 1990s represents an important stage of both maturity and proliferation of this thought and its application towards a globalized Jihadi state. Moreover, Islamic communities began to witness the emergence of an increased number of Jihadi cases, consisting of individuals, small groups with small numbers or arms and influence or even bigger, more organized and more influential groups characterized by networks of relationships.

With the surge of explosions and military operations that Jihadists variously carried across the world, from Africa, to Asia, Europe and America, including an important number within Arab states themselves, and as Jihadi discourses were broadcasted via satellite channels and popular modern mass media, it appeared that the Jihadi state was in the process of gaining some level of support and sympathy, which, to say the least, justified the search of many members of miserable Muslim communities to find a way out of this.

Reactions against this Jihadi state began to emerge as did many publications, Fatwas and studies that refuted this school of Jihadi thought, and its principles and methods. Some argued that this reaction lacked credibility, as it was demanded by the ruling regimes whose interests were corrupt and whose prestige was shaken as a result of the Jihadi state and its actions. Others argued that this reaction was normal and that it was initiated by loyal and honest scholars who could not but react against the intellectual, methodological and applied deviations that stigmatized these Jihadi cases. In any case, whether it represents a coopted or authentic reaction, the opposition to Jihadi thought and action only intensified throughout the 1990s and afterwards. Even as these scholarly efforts evaluated the thought and methodology of the Jihadists in the 1990s and afterwards, as many activists, scholars and jurists who did not belong to the Jihadi state advocated⁽¹⁾, this same era also witnessed other efforts made by Jihadists themselves who purportedly reflected on and evaluated their own Jihadi experience.

It is ironic to note that one of the most prominent among these is “Abu Musab Al-Suri” mentioned earlier. As much as he praised the Jihadi experiences, he also put them under scrutiny and criticism.

⁽¹⁾ Special mention could have been made of Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti and Dr. Muhammad Kher Haykal for two reasons: the first because they are both Syrians and our topic deals with the Jihadi thought in Syria, and the second because this brief research is not aimed at fact-finding and assimilation. If any, the book *Fiqh Al-Jihad* (Jurisprudence of Jihad) by Dr. Youssef Al-Qaradawi, in the series of *Al-Muraja'at* (The reviews) by Abdul-Salam Faraj and the writings of the Counselor Faysal Mawlawi on terrorism, as well as other scholarly publications draw a clear image on the reaction to what the Jihadi state turned into, both in thought and practice.

1- An inside evaluation of the Jihadi experience: Abu Musab Al-Suri

Abu Musab Al-Suri wrote two books on the Jihadi experience in Syria, and they are: *Ath-Thawra Al-Islamiyyah Al-Jihadiyyah fi Sourya: 'Amal wa 'Alam* (The Jihadi Islamic Revolution in Syria: Hopes and Pains) and *Mulahathat Hawla At-Tajrubah Al-Jihadiyyah fi Sourya* (Comments on the Jihadi experience in Syria). He also has a testimony on the Jihadi experience in Algeria in a book entitled *Mukhtasar Shahadati 'ala Al-Jihad Fi Al-Jaza'ir 1989-1996* (A Summary of my Testimony on Jihad in Algeria 1989-1996). Moreover, Abu Musab Al-Suri included in his book *Da'wat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyyah Al-'Alamiyyah* (The international Islamic Resistance Call) a chapter entitled: "Masar At-Tayyar Al-Jihadiy wa Tajariboh 1960-2001" (The course of the Jihadi current and its Experiences 1960-2001), in which he displayed the most prominent Jihadi experiences that had a role and activity in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The author ended his abridged presentation of each of these experiences with a conclusion of several lines in which he mentions his remarks and criticisms related to them. The author also included a subsequent chapter under the title "Hasad At-Tayyar Al-Jihadiy fi Arba'een 'Aman" (The Harvest of the Jihadi Current in the last Forty Years), in which he included a comprehensive and general evaluation of the Jihadi state as a whole, and he mentioned in the introduction of this chapter the following: "I present this chapter of my book as a contribution from the heart of the Jihadi current to evaluate this reality and its crises, in search of a solution"⁽¹⁾.

Between its lengthy detailed criticism and its abridged summarized criticism, the importance of Abu Musab Al-Suri's words derive from two things:

The first is that this man witnessed several Jihadi experiences up-close, and he was an active participant in several others. Therefore, his words are based on real facts, personal experiences and practical engagements.

The second is that Al-Suri did not abandon his Jihadi way of thought; on the contrary he continued to believe in it, call for it, theorize about it, develop it and spread it throughout the world. As such, he is considered different from the Egyptian Abdul-Salam Faraj, author of the "Al-Muraja'at" (The reviews), and other Jihadists who, in one way or another, abandoned Jihadi thought.

Abu Musab Al-Suri made a multitude of comments on Jihadi experiences. We have chosen only a few below which get at the heart of his thought,

⁽¹⁾ Abdul-Hakim, Omar (Abu Musab Al-Suri), *Da'wat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyyah Al-'Alamiyyah*, Op. cit., p. 596.

methodology, behavior and vision. These include:

- a- Jurisprudential chaos and the infiltration of Takfiri thoughts into the methodologies of some Jihadists:** Abu Musab Al-Suri admits that the ranks of Jihadists “lack any important religious scholars well-versed in knowledge or even of average knowledge except in rare cases... What made matters even worse is that the Jihadists are mostly zealous revolutionaries seeking to defend the religion of Allah”. This paved the way “to ferocious hurricanes of jurisprudential chaos in some cases that led to the emergence of intense and extreme Fatwas and opinions, be they wrong or right, which were generally formulated. This took part in tearing down a barrier, the presence of which was extremely important, between Jihadi thought and Takfiri thought”⁽¹⁾.
- b- Belittling the nation and in general being fanatic about the limited “Salafi” state:** Abu Musab Al-Suri says: “The main thing is that we are concerned, as Jihadists, with containing the nation and the majority of its people, and guiding them to carry out the duty of Jihad... It is known that those who are committed to their religion in this Nation, as well as its scholars, revival circles and religiously committed individuals do not follow the Salafi trend in their majority... However, some Jihadists and leaders of the religious students or their followers have dragged the Jihadists into a fight with these circles... and this played a huge role in lessening the popularity of the Jihadi current”⁽²⁾. He goes on to say: “One of the odd features of what I am mentioning in this context is that one of the Salafi Jihadists told me one day: Jihad should carry the Salafi banner... If we do accept non-Salafis among us, it would only be out of the need for them, and they are never meant to be leaders. Rather, we lead them like cows to perform the duty of Jihad”⁽³⁾.
- c- Small number and limitedness of the Jihadi propositions:** Abu Musab Al-Suri says: “Compared to the contemporary schools of Islamic awakening and considering their comprehensive publications... we find that the publications of the Jihadi current are small in number and offer one-sided propositions only... The production is minimal and almost nothing in many movements... and it is restricted to the issues of Sovereignty of God, the principle of the rules of allegiance, dissociation [from disbelief] and doctrines. There is not much creativity in their publications, and they are mostly repeated and redundant...”⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ Abdul-Hakim, Omar (Abu Musab Al-Suri), *Da'wat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyyah Al-'Alamiyyah*, Op. cit., p. 610-611.

⁽²⁾ Ibid. p. 611

⁽³⁾ Ibid. p. 612.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid. p. 613.

- d- Low educational level:** Abu Musab Al-Suri says: “The flow of many young individuals from the communities of ordinary common Muslims loaded with emotions, zealotry and devotion, yet lacking juristic knowledge, religious commitment and knowledge in the principles of Islamic morals and dealings, even at the level of acts of worship... all that led to an atmosphere among the Jihadists characterized by cruelty, disaffection and mercilessness... the prevalent conduct was closer to fanaticism than to the conduct of a fit Mujahid who has been well brought up with good knowledge, morals, worship and behavior”⁽¹⁾.
- e- The Jihadists’ lack of any jurisprudence reality:** Unlike a number of Islamic parties and groups “that developed in the fields of knowledge and the recognition of reality... the Jihadist school has been characterized by a low cognitive level, civilizational awareness and recognition of reality”⁽²⁾.
- f- The weakness of the institutional structure of the Jihadi current and the narrow sphere of Ash-Shoura (Consultation):** This led to “a catastrophic result manifested in weakness at the level of managing the battle and a failure to determine the ways of confrontation and to create harmony between intellectual methodology and the work of the military, politics and media. The impact of reality was absent when issuing judgments and taking crucial military and political decisions”⁽³⁾.
- g- The persistence of confrontation with ruling regimes:** This was originally initiated in an attempt to provoke the ruling regimes, but it was then adopted as a methodological Jihadi principle, and a result of the Jihadists’ literal understanding of Allah’s saying: “O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you”⁽⁴⁾.
- h- The inability to determine a juridical and dynamic conception of a number of main principles:** at the forefront of which is the concept of Al-Jama’ah Al-Mujahidah (the group performing Jihad), the concept of Al-Imarah (Emirate) and Ash-Shoura (consultation) and the concept of allegiance, pledging to listen and obey...”⁽⁵⁾
- i- An endemic absence of the elites:** The successive setbacks that befell the Jihadi current fed into an endemic absence of elites who were qualified

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 614.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 615.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 615.

⁽⁴⁾ At-Tawba (9):123. Review: Abdul-Hakim, Omar (Abu Musab Al-Suri), *Da'wat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyyah Al-'Alamiyyah*, Op. cit., p. 615.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 616. I said: The matter is even more dangerous, for the contemporary theorizers of Jihadi thought highlight jurisprudential terms that are related to Jihad and fighting which were established and used in previous eras, and then try to project them on our contemporary reality without investigating how much they can apply to this reality vis-à-vis the radical changes that the Islamic nation had witnessed over successive centuries.

to lead and guide, leaving leadership responsibilities to their unqualified successors. Abu Musab Al-Suri highlights some the weaknesses leading to this recurring problem:

- 1- A general lack of knowledge coupled with the prevalence of the phenomenon among young Muftis.
- 2- The low educational, worship, behavioral and moral levels manifested by many young men who embarked on Jihad.
- 3- The prevalence of ignorance in general at all levels of knowledge, and, in particular, an ignorance of political, security and scholarly realities.
- 4- The emergence of the phenomenon of exaggeration and extremism as trademarks of religiosity.
- 5- The absence of any constructive self-criticism, and decrease concurrent decline in any ability to reform these defects within Jihadi communities.
- 6- The prevalence of the phenomenon of “each Mujahid on his own” who have no sect, no group, no Emir, no methodology and no constraints... Each Mujahid himself represents an uncontrollable rebellion who has no one to turn to.
- 7- Working in favor of others in matters where international and regional interests intersect.
- 8- The inability to build their own project⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Cf. Ibid. p. 622-623.

2- Jurists of reformation and guidance

At a time when Iraq was plunged in explosions and military operations led by the Jihadi movement in Iraq under the leadership of “Abu Mis’ab Az-Zarqawi”, and at a time when Lebanon was experiencing similar, albeit more limited cases, Syria was closed tightly shut under an iron grip, in which the ruling regime had mastered the ability to circumvent and isolate Jihadi cases, to the extent that the Syrian Jihadists had failed to create or complete any military confrontations with the regime. This absence of Jihadi action was the most prominent characteristic of Syria in the 1990s and 2000s⁽¹⁾.

At that time, however, Syria was experiencing another kind of confrontation, one that saw the creation of an authentic, scholarly, intellectual movement dedicated to Jihad in all of its doctrinal and jurisprudential dimensions.

Perhaps the motivation for this confrontation sprang from the desire of the ruling Baath regime to marginalize the Jihadi state and prevent it from spreading in Syria, or perhaps it was the scholarly and objective work of those concerned individuals who rejected the Jihadists’ extremism of thought and their violent methods. In either case, the result was the same, for a number of scholars began to write books and other publications in order to respond to the Jihadists. Two of the most prominent figures in this scholarly confrontation in Syria include: Dr. Muhammad Sa’id Ramadan Al-Bouti and Dr. Muhammad Kher Haykal.

⁽¹⁾ A certain paradox caught the attention of some observers. In the 1990s and afterwards, Syria did not experience any Jihadi action by any Jihadi group, at a time when Lebanon, which was politically and militarily under direct Syrian influence, was witnessing the emergence and growth of a number of Jihadi groups who carried out a number of military operations, and they engaged in a bitter armed struggle with the Lebanese State, including Ad-Dinniyye Group, the network of the 13, Jund Ash-Sham and Fath Al-Islam, as well as several other less influential groups. Moreover, the Syrian regime embraced the leadership of the Hamas movement and the Islamic Jihad Movement in the Syrian capital, Damascus. Followers considered that it was likely that the Syrian regime was playing the card of the Islamists, and even the Jihadists among themselves, in order to attain political gains that would strengthen their influence, and some went even so far as to consider that the Fath Al-Islam organization was created in Syria. See the review: Tahhan, Ahmad, *Al-Harakat Al-Islamiyyah Bayna Al-Fitna Wal-Jihad*, Al-Ma’rifah Publishing House, first edition, Beirut 2007, p. 167-473, and: Itani, Fida, *Al-Jihadiyyoon fi Lubnan Min Quwwat Al-Fajr Ila Fath Al-Islam*, As-Saqi Publishing House, first edition, Beirut, 2008, p. 131-191.

a- Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Al-Bouti⁽¹⁾

Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti is considered to be one of the most famous contemporary scholars in Syria, and perhaps even the most famous among them. At a time when his academic efforts, scholarly contributions and intellectual writings managed to project his thought to Islamic and cultural elites, the Arab media outlets that used to broadcast his religious lectures and intellectual discussions broadcast his voice and thought to all sectors of the community, thus, increasing his popularity.

Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti experienced the events that rocked his country, Syria, in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of the clashes between the regime and the "Vanguard Fighters". He realized that the globalized Jihadi state was instilling fear and committing murders in all the continents of the world and had put governments under distress. In response, he wanted to approach this phenomenon from his scholarly and intellectual position, and the result was his book *Jihad in Islam, how do we understand it? How do we practice it? (Al-Jihad fi Al-Islam, Kayfa Nafhamoho? Wa Kayfa Nomarisoho?)*, whose first edition was published in 1993.

In this book, Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti concludes that Jihad is legitimate and he justifies this legitimacy through a rational and textual proof which shines in all of his erudite scholarly approach. The book, therefore, could be thought of as representing a new contribution in our series of books that establish the legitimacy of Jihad and armed military action as a means to serve and defend Islam. But the new and bold thing that this book presents is that it enabled a reconsideration of how Jihadists – and the Islamists generally following them – understand Jihad at a theoretical level. Practically speaking, however, the author also wanted to pave the way for reconsidering how the Jihadists – as well as the Islamists typically behind them – carry out explosions and military confrontations with the regime and ruler, and how much they conform to the legitimate practice of Jihad.

In the light of this, it was but natural that Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti would speak at length about the sovereignty of God, the Fatwas that

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti (1929-2013): An intellectual, author and university professor renowned in the Islamic world. He was born in the village of Jilka in the northeast of Syria, which is currently within Turkish borders. He moved with his parents to Damascus at the age of four. He received his education in Damascus, and in 1953, he joined Al-Azhar University. He was appointed a lecturer in the Faculty of Ash-Shariah in Damascus University in 1960. He obtained his Ph.D. from Al-Azhar in 1965, after which he was appointed as a teacher in the Faculty of Ash-Shariah in Damascus University, and later he was promoted to the position of dean and chair of the Doctrines and Religions Department. He published a number of valuable books, some of which were translated into Arabic, German and English. He was recently killed by an explosion that targeted his mosque while he was giving his usual lessons, and the opposition and the regime accused each other of preparing for this explosion. From the cover of the book *Al-Jihad fi Al-Islam, Kayfa Nafhamoho? Wa Kayfa Nomarisoho? (Jihad in Islam, how do we understand it? How do we practice it?)*.

accuse rulers and regimes of disbelief if they do not apply Islamic law as their ruling system and which legitimize revolt and rebellion against them. Al-Bouti made every effort to present, explain and discuss these titles in his book which takes up about a third of the text⁽¹⁾. This is not surprising, as Al-Bouti himself said in the introduction of his book: "The rulings of Jihad are plenty... however, I will only touch upon the ones that are debatable and controversial, due to the fact that the reality of many Muslims or Islamists is connected to them, or the ones that are molded in the mentalities of many Muslims and even non-Muslims"⁽²⁾.

He posed the question: "To revolt against a ruler: is it tyranny, or armed robbery or Jihad?" as the title of one of the chapters of his book, and he entitles the following chapter with another question: "Is it revolting against the ruler? Or revolting against the principles of Islam?" And he concludes with an answer whereby he refutes the actions of the Jihadists, declaring that Jihad has nothing to do with such actions, going so far as to deem such actions are volt against the general principles of Islam.

Despite the popularity of Al-Bouti in the media, his high academic status and his firm footing in the intellectual and jurisprudential scholarship, and despite the fact that he marshalled tens of rational and textual proofs in support of his view, this book was not enough to prevent the Jihadi state, and perhaps the Jihadists did not even bother to read correspond to it, as they had already prejudged Al-Bouti and this prejudice was enough for them to belittle his achievements. In their view, Al-Bouti is an Ash'ari and a Sufi who was brought up by the Al-Assad regime. What made matters worse is that Al-Bouti quoted President Hafez Al-Assad in his book.⁽³⁾ This was enough to condemn the book and its author, as a mere attempt to domesticate Islam and marginalize the Jihadi state through the arms of the thought and jurisprudence formulated by the scholars [who work for] the rulers!

Therefore, regardless of the objective value of Al-Bouti's book, the author and his book were unable to change, modify or have any influence on the Jihadi state.

⁽¹⁾ In addition to the different discussions here and there in the book, we find that the pages from 147 to 222 are dedicated and focused on a discussion of these topics.

⁽²⁾ Al-Bouti, Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan, *Al-Jihad fi Al-Islam, Kayfa Nafhamoho? Wa Kayfa Nomarisoho?*, Dar Al-Fikr Publishing House, second edition, Damascus, 1997, p. 18.

⁽³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

b- Dr. Muhammad Kher Haykal⁽¹⁾

Dr. Muhammad Kher Haykal's book, entitled: Jihad and Warfare in Legal Policy⁽²⁾ (Al-Jihad Wal Qital fil Siyasa Ash-Shar'iyyah) is one of the most comprehensive volumes dealing with the jurisprudence of Jihad and its related rulings. The book is the thesis that he submitted for his PhD degree, and it is 2000 pages long and includes a wide range of subjects and rulings related to Jihad, warfare and legal policies. The author deftly managed the entries of his encyclopedic publication, organizing and presenting them in a very skillful and contemporary manner, which led his doctoral committee to grant him his degree with honors, In their final decision they wrote: "Had there been a higher degree than distinction, he would have received it".⁽³⁾

As for the motivation behind choosing this topic for research, Dr. Haykal includes five motives, and we are concerned here with the fourth motive about which the author said: "One of the motives behind choosing Jihad as the topic of my research is that the life of the Muslims in the past, as in the present, included forms of warfare, some of which were legitimate while others were not, so what types of warfare can be deemed as Jihad? And what among these types of warfare cannot be labeled as Jihad, whether that war was legitimate or not?

Moreover, several armed movements and organizations that operate under the label of Jihad for the cause of Allah in order to achieve many different goals were prevalent in the Islamic world. In the light of such prevalent reality, objective Islamic standards needed to be outlined in order to determine the truth of Jihad or legitimate warfare so as to be able to distinguish between these movements and organizations and judge them by evaluating which ones could be supported or joined and which ones ought to be named and confronted?⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad Kher Haykal (1941-) was born in Damascus. He received his secondary certificate in Ash-Shariah studies in Damascus in 1961. He obtained the BA in Ash-Shariah from the Faculty of Ash-Shariah and Law in Al-Azhar University, Cairo, in 1968. He also obtained a diploma in Interpretation and Quranic Sciences from the Faculty of the Principles of Religion in Al-Azhar University in 1969. He became the Imam and lecturer of Ar-Rifa'i Mosque in Al-Maydan, Damascus, after his father for ten years. He became a lecturer in Arabic and religious sciences in Damascus, and then in Ar-Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 1967 and 1984. He obtained his Ph.D. in Islamic Studies through his thesis Al-Jihad Wal Qital fil Siyasa Ash-Shar'iyyah (Jihad and warfare in legal policy) from Imam Al-Ouza'i Faculty, Beirut, in 1992. He was assigned by Omdurman Islamic University in Damascus to teach the subject of Interpretation in the Faculty of the Principles of Religion and the subject of the Jurisprudence of the Book and the Sunnah and the Analogous Family Jurisprudence in the department of higher studies in 1993. See the summary from the website: <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

⁽²⁾ Dr. Muhammad Kher Haykal finished his research for a Ph.D. degree, which he presented in 1992, and the first edition was published soon afterwards.

⁽³⁾ The author included the final decision of the committee at the beginning of his said book, and we quoted this phrase literally.

⁽⁴⁾ Haykal, Muhammad Kher, Al-Jihad Wal Qital fil Siyasa Ash-Shar'iyyah, Al-Bayariq Publishing House, second edition, Beirut, 1996.

It is clear from the words of the scholar that he has a strong feeling that the Jihadi movements suffered from a crisis of standards, and that this crisis could not but create confusion in terms of choices, interpretations of rulings (Ijtihadat) and practices. Such a state of confusion compelled whoever supported or engaged in such movements to slow down and seek to distinguish between the different movements and judge each of them objectively, so as to tell the good from the bad and the worthy from the unworthy among them.

The author included in his book an extensive study titled: "War against the deviation of the ruler"⁽¹⁾, and another entitled: "War to establish an Islamic state"⁽²⁾ and another entitled: "War for the sake of the unity of the Islamic countries"⁽³⁾. All these topics are related to the principles and bases that have preoccupied contemporary Jihadi thought.

As for the practical details pertaining to performance and everyday Jihadi activity, the book includes a number of topics, some of which include: "Mutilating the enemies' corpses"⁽⁴⁾, "Taking civilians as human shields"⁽⁵⁾, "Using weapons that damage civilians"⁽⁶⁾, "Kidnapping the enemy's natives"⁽⁷⁾ and "Martyrdom, or suicide operations"⁽⁸⁾.

In this context, it is worth noting that the author made an important effort to investigate the texts, narrations and sayings, and then put forward what he concludes to be the closest to the text and spirit of Islamic legislation. However, this effort was not destined to be fruitful given its absence of any clear, disciplined jurisprudential methodology by the Jihadists. The practices they became involved in were the subject of a media debate that engrossed public opinion due to the fact that they contradicted the humanistic slogans that the entire world commends. It was also the subject of a scholarly debate that preoccupied Islamic jurists and researchers as they tried to determine whether such practices were legitimate or not, knowing that many Jihadist leaders themselves declared that they had nothing to do with such practices, as will be demonstrated further on.⁽⁹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 113-139.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 285-321.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 323-356.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 1299-1310.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 1327-1338.

⁽⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 1343-1361.

⁽⁷⁾ Ibid., p. 1381-1397.

⁽⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 1399-1408.

⁽⁹⁾ Abu Musab Al-Suri severely criticized the Jihadi experience in Algeria in particular, not to mention his other criticisms of a number of Jihadi experiences, which will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

It is true that the scholar followed an adopted jurisprudential methodology in terms of presenting sayings, narrations and proofs, and then choosing the most likely from among them, but his preference and that of any scholar who agrees with him would not have bound any of the Jihadists, “for they are men and we are men!” Therefore, the Jihadists would likely go in an opposite direction to that taken by the scholar and whoever agrees with him, appealing to the saying of one of their Imams or the opinion of a Mujtahid (one who derives rulings).

It goes without saying that Jihadists will always maintain a feeling of self-confidence and question the credibility of those who disagree with them. It is also true that they do not abide by any clear jurisprudential or legislative methodology in their interpretation of texts and that they pick and choose certain sayings over others, which allows them refute any scholarly efforts in advance.

3- An example of the contemporary evaluation: The Scholar, MP Muhammad Habash

As an analysis and critique of Islamic religious discourse, which in the context of the Syrian crisis and its aftermath has become a tool for inciting violence and murder under the pretense of establishing the Islamic Caliphate and imposing Shariah law, Dr. Muhammad Habash⁽¹⁾ wrote a text, entitled “But where did ISIS come from?”⁽²⁾ In this text, Habash admitted that the ongoing events in Syria and Iraq, as well as states, were but the natural consequence of the Islamic discourse that prevailed over the last century and that was saturated with a sanctity that was based on the Holy Book (the Quran) and the Sunnah and which flourished with a sense of zealotry and eagerness to re-establish an Islamic caliphate based on the concept of the sovereignty of Allah and of His Messenger.

Muhammad Habash says: “All the institutes of scholarship and strategic studies were shocked after ISIS succeeded within one week to ferociously invade the country of Iraq and impose the establishment of a new state in the region that is geographically bigger than what is left of Syria and Iraq and bigger than Kurdistan which has been forcibly kept within the geography of Syria and Iraq.

Personally, I disagree with most of the political analyses which consider that the Islamic Caliphate as declared by Al-Baghdadi is but a temporary phase and that in a matter of days or weeks it will end, as soon as the American or the aid of NATO arrives. Rather believe that this eccentric entity, represented by this new State, reflects the image of a new reality in the region, and it will grow stronger and more influential in the days to come.”

Habash asks: “but where did ISIS come from?”

The answer provided by the regime is that it is the international Takfiri terrorism, which is part of a universal conspiracy against Syria, and which is [funded by] dissolute money and petrodollars, typical accusations which have been used against any member of the opposition, from Gandhi and to ISIS and everything between.

The answer given by the opposition is that ISIS is the reserve stock that was made in the cellars of the intelligence agencies and that it is made of a Safavi Iranian-Assadi-Maliki fuel which all the enemies of the Syrian revolution took part in creating.”

⁽¹⁾ Dr. Muhammad Habash, a Syrian religious scholar and leader of the opposition, and a Member of the Syrian Parliament.

⁽²⁾ Summarized from the website: <http://all4syria.info/Archive/155408>

He adds: “personally, I am not convinced with either of these readings, and I do not believe that anyone with self-respect could see the matter with such naivety. I believe that ISIS is the last step in a chain of inevitably ascending dialectics emanating from the acts of oppression that the people suffered under their tyrannical regimes, and mixed with the eager wishes longing for a just world which we portrayed in our desperate religious discourse under the title of the caliphate, in a never-ending impulsive method, presenting it as the sacred rule that was rendered infallible by the Quranic texts, supported by the noble Sunnah and committed to the logic of the sovereignty of Allah and His Messenger.

The sacred caliphate and the sacred Germanic Empire are but one story. The latter was a metaphysical title used to prevent accountability and liability in order to justify the conducts, whims and crimes of the rulers, thus making the people await the secrets and surprises of the emperors without making any actual changes on the ground. As such, the followers would turn into pious people while the rebels would turn into hypocrites; a conduct that sentences creativity to death by hanging and re-produces the human utopia in mentality of the herd.

We did not talk about the caliphate as a measured political project that could be right or wrong, rather we talked about it as the symbol of a sacred unity, for the sake of which any renunciation of the values and principles is acceptable just to preserve it.

Where did ISIS come from? It is simply the result of the enthusiastic discourse delivered from our platforms nonstop since a hundred years ago, when we preached about the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate and how the whole world had conspired against us and the necessity to establish a new caliphate on every land.

We did not regard the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate as a natural course of history or as part of the reasonable logic that Allah supports the disbelieving state if it is just and dooms the unjust state if it is Muslim; a logic which every rational person in the world believes in. [We also overlooked the fact] that the Ottoman caliphate that was internationally dubbed as the sick man had turned into a chattel transferred from one nation to another with no real movement on the ground for several decades before Ataturk came and put it to sleep.

The inflammatory discourse that prevailed for several decades tried to explain the fall of the Caliphate by use of a blind metaphysical language that accused the entire world of sinning for it did not defend the fragile waning entity, which was corrupted by the Sultan’s Harem and his manifestations of corruption, oppression, luxury and dissoluteness. It assumed that the entire world had conspired against the Caliphate simply because it hates Islam and Muslims. No one said that the Caliphate per se is neither mentioned in the Quran nor in the Sunnah and that it is merely a political invention used to run

people's affairs and fulfill their needs in accordance with what is made feasible by the matters of religion and life.

ISIS did not come out of nowhere; it is the natural result of our culture and backward discourse. Appealing to the caliphate was always the best way to justify our defeats, disappointments, losses and failure to keep up with other nations. The concept of the caliphate and the memory of Constantinople and imperial order was used to create a craving desire to return to the past, and the successive disappointments from the secular system encouraged the people to long for a caliphate state that would fill the land with justice after having been filled with oppression and tyranny.

In one of the most brutal and bloody Hadith of the Ottoman Sultanate, it was said that as soon as the Sultan is installed in his position, he would kill all his brothers, and just yesterday I was listening to a professor who has a Ph.D. in Islamic Shariah on a Qatar satellite channel, and I heard him confirm that when Muhammad Al-Fatih assumed the position of the Sultan, he killed all his brothers without exception. What is surprising is not the act of narrating a story that can be refuted, but the fact that the man was talking enthusiastically about the wisdom and awareness of the Sultan and his altruistic attitude whereby he preferred the interest of the nation and the stability of the state over his family's rights and very own brothers! He simply considered that brutal and savage killing as a form of patriotic dedication and devotion to the caliphate, the state and the people!

We offer all kinds of justifications for the caliphs in order to maintain the bright image of the caliphate. Some have even described Al-Hajjaj, the most infamous murderer in the Umayyad era, as the flaming sword of justice and the Imam who was falsely accused, as Mahmoud Ziyadah and Ahmad Tammam have done, even though Omar Bin Abdul-Aziz has written: "O Banu Umayyah, if all nations were to weigh together their sins, and we came with Al-Hajjaj only, the balance would tilt to your part".

When Fayrouz sings about the glories of the Umayyad Caliphate:

[They are] Umayyads, if you try to provoke them, they will annex the entire world to Hisham's garden.

It is useful to recall that Hisham Bin Abdul-Malik, who ruled for twenty years, commenced his horrifying rule by crucifying Zaid Bin Ali Bin Al-Hussein, the grandson of Imam Al-Hussein, in Koufa, naked, and he did not leave him there for a day or two like ISIS is doing, but for seventeen months. And according to Ibn Habban, the author of *As-Sunan*, Zaid Bin Ali remained crucified for ten years until the Umayyad State collapsed and the Abbasids took over the reign.

We are in need of a revolution in the Muslim mentality that retrieves the authentic Islamic values of freedom, justice, dignity and humanity, surpasses the sacred logic of the caliphate system and power and reconsiders it as simply

a pattern of political rule to be judged positively or negatively in accordance with the justice and good that it brings to the people.

ISIS, which does not have any unifying nationalistic Arab vision, shattered the boundaries decided by the Sykes-Picot [Agreement] that the Arab Baath regime strictly maintained for fifty consecutive years. And although the Arab Baath regime ruled Iraq and Syria and shared the same ideology, political project and literature, let alone the nationalistic leadership, it applied the Sykes-Picot [Agreement] to the very end, so much so that it even built barracks and barriers, planted mines and imposed visas, and, for more than twenty years, the Syrian regime issued valid visa stamps to citizens from every country of the world except for Iraq”.

Beyond the detailed analysis, reasoning and conclusions that Dr. Muhammad Habash’s text provides, and regardless of the extent of agreement or disagreement about its content, the main idea we should focus on in this report is Dr. Habash’s admittance that religious discourse is responsible for today’s violent reality, without exempting the other factors of their responsibilities. Such an admission calls for a serious and radical revision of the Islamic religious discourse, as well as its methods, connotations, and the messages it contains, if we are to restore this discourse to the authentic values of Islam, including freedom, justice, dignity and humanity.

Conclusions

To conclude this chapter, and build on our earlier presentation of the roots of Jihadi thought in Syria and its various experiences and in order to reread the chapter in the light of these experiences, and from the new jurisprudential approaches they provide, we can make of the following conclusions:

- 1- Jihadi culture was never absent from the Syrian mindset, neither in the past nor in the present time, rather it has always been present between the conscience and subconscious. It can be said that every time Syria experienced a crisis, it would stir what was stagnant and remind everyone of the forgotten rulings and ideas of Jihad.
- 2- A culture of exclusion which remembers only the most extreme Fatwas against non-Muslims, in general, and which does not even spare dissenting Muslims, in particular, is a culture that is inherent in the Syrian awareness, as manifested by the textual facts that relied on by Imam Ibn Abideen in the past, and the propositions of Marwan Hadeed and Abu Musab Al-Suri in the present. While this culture is somehow held in check by the united goal of ousting the ruling regime, it is apt to spiral out of control after the war ends. Then, one of the repercussions of such culture will be clash and dissension between the different Syrian parties; a rivalry that will be nurtured by a race to reap the fruits and spoils of the revolution. It is likely that the Afghani model, where comrades-in-arms became rivals over power and influence, will be repeated.
- 3- The Jihadi state that overwhelmed the world starting from the late 1980s, and whose cells still are still in possession of the states in the east and the west at the time of writing is not the product of the Afghani Jihad, nor a branch of it, but rather something that stands on its own and whose origin can be traced back to the two decades before the Soviet forces occupied Afghanistan and the subsequent Jihadi state in Afghanistan. The Jihadi state evolved in the 1960s under the oppression that Islamists underwent by the ruling regime in Egypt, which led to evolutions on the discussions of the sovereignty of God in Egypt, and Syria was one of the first to be influenced by these discussions. According to Abu Musab Al-Suri: "I believe that from there, from Egypt and the Levant, was the beginning... the dynamic thought of the Jihadi current... it blew in the direction of the Arab and Islamic world mainly from Egypt and the Levant"⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Abdul-Hakim, Omar (Abu Musab Al-Suri), *Da'wat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyyah Al-'Alamiyyah*, Op. cit., p. 502.

- 4- With regard to the Jihadi state, the era of the Afghani Jihad was merely an assembly point, a bridge that pushed forward, through the globalization of the Jihadi thought, and unleashed the struggle between the Jihadists and their opponents, extending the battle to the entire world, after having been limited to the recognized borders of every region that witnesses a Jihadi activity by one organization or another, knowing that some Syrians played a role in this development.
- 5- What many followers and observers have inferred about the Syrian reality, namely that it was isolated from the Jihadi state and was only infiltrated recently, thereby taking that reality hostage and dominating its revolution against the regime, is not accurate in light of the experiences and writings we have presented. It is more likely that what we are witnessing today is a repetition of the Jihadi experience which was launched by Sheikh Marwan Al-Hadeed in response to the Baath regime in the late 1960s. That experience remained active until the early 1980s, even if we recognize that there are many disagreements within it over the proper scope of military action, its courses, circumstances and the local and regional influences on its ongoing events.
- 6- Although most Islamists, including some Jihadists, denounce some Jihadi actions as anomalies⁽¹⁾ and consider them as not belonging to Islam in general and to the Jihadi state in particular, this denouncement does not in any way guarantee that the vast groups of the Syrian youth who are eager for Jihad against the ruling regime would not be swept away by its tide, thus turning from a revolutionary or Jihadi state into an anomalous Takfiri state. The reason is that the limits between the ordinary state of religiosity that the Syrian people enjoy, firstly, and the state of the Islamic movement that was absent from the Syrian scene for a few decades, secondly, and the state of the Jihadists that have become part of the Syrian scene, thirdly, these limits are fragile and they facilitate changes in positions, thoughts and inclinations.
- 7- Considering that it is unanimously agreed upon that Jihad in the way of Allah is legitimate and that it is the summit of Islam⁽²⁾, then no one can deny it, but the main question remains: Is the Jihad we are witnessing a legitimate one? What is the line drawn between Jihad and bloody violence? How can we understand Jihad and practice it in its wide positive context which considers the acts of war as part of it, after which comes other elements that are of no less importance? These questions are urgent and finding their answers is necessary, considering that the Jihadists themselves talk

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 478-479

⁽²⁾ It is narrated in a Hadith: "The summit of Islam is Jihad in the way of Allah that none but the best attain", by *At-Tabari in Al-Mujam Al-Kabeer*, "and that its peak is Jihad in the way of Allah", by Ahmad in his *Musnad*.

about inconsistent cases that marred their experience and distorted the concept of Jihad and the image of Islam, not to mention as well as spilling innocent blood and destroying the country's infrastructure.

- 8- The experience of Dr. Mustapha As-Siba'i is considered a pioneering experience that is worth more profound reflection and expansion. He is known for his determination to adopt military action and Jihad only against the foreign occupiers. He was one of those extremely keen to keep the ongoing struggle in Syria in the face of the leftist, nationalistic and secular forces and parties on a purely political and intellectual level.
- 9- In spite of what the last decades have witnessed in its level of valuable jurisprudential writings that authenticate Jihad and its rulings in an attempt to straighten any deviation and prevent any overstepping, which have become a trait that accompanies the Jihadi movements... Despite all that, these writings have remained within a framework of intellectual, jurisprudential and doctrinal approaches mostly presented by individuals who do not belong to Jihadi circles. This psychological, methodological and practical gap renders these approaches a mere ineffective idealistic theorization [process], which transforms the dialogue between the advocates of these approaches and the Jihadists into some sort of a dialogue of the deaf.

I believe that shedding light on the writings of Jihadists, and particularly those that include an honest self-criticism and an aware revision of the Jihadi experience, and then presenting it, clarifying its features and revealing its substance leaves a positive impact on the youth who are eager for Jihad, considering that these corrections and revisions are made by the people whom they trust and welcome.

Chapter Three

**Jihad by Non-Violence
Jawdat Sa'id: a Model to Follow**

Introduction

The previous pages have outlined an abundance of information on a number of Syrian authors who, through their academic work and publications, consider the issue of armed violence to be justified as a religiously legitimate form of “Jihad”. This might suggest that the religious environment in Syria is, itself, apt to violence; a situation proven by the flow of these writings.

It goes without saying that Syria enjoys confessional, sectarian, nationalistic and intellectual diversity, which renders it impossible that its environment is one solely of a violent Jihadi religious environment, as some might think. A little research reveals a prominent Syrian figure who is renowned for adopting “non-violence” as a tool for change, namely, Jawdat Sa’id⁽¹⁾, a Syrian scholar, writer and intellectual who dedicated years of his life to advocate the necessity of eliminating the violence that ravaged Islamic communities, so much so that some said about him: “He knows nothing of Islam, except the problem of violence!”⁽²⁾ And some even nicknamed him: “The Gandhi of the Arab world”.

In reality, through his writings, lectures and lessons, Jawdat Sa’id continually insisted on calling for change and rising against armed violence that was religiously legitimated and justified under the name of “Jihad” and replacing it with a peaceful, civilized alternative based on dialogue, science and rationality.

In 1966, Jawdat Sa’id published his first book, and the most important of his works: *Math’hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal, Mushkilat Al-’Unf Fil ’Ilm Al-Islamiy* (The doctrine of the first son of Adam, or the problem of violence in the Islamic action), in which he elaborated on his theory of “non-violence” as a means for change.

⁽¹⁾ Jawdat Sa’id (1931-): Jawdat Bin a'id Bin Muhammad is a Syrian intellectual and writer of Circassian origins. He was born in the Bi'r 'Ajam village in the Syrian Golan in 1931 and completed his elementary education in Quneitra city. He traveled to Egypt in 1946, where he completed his secondary education, and then he enrolled in the Faculty of Arabic Language and obtained an MA in Arabic language. During his stay in Egypt, he met the Algerian thinker, Malik Bennabi, who tutored him. He was also influenced by the Pakistani thinker, Muhammad Iqbal, and his intellectual project is considered an extension to theirs. Jawdat Sa’id was renowned for adopting the concept of non-violence and he was called by some The Gandhi of the Arab world. His first book, which he wrote in the early 1960s, was: *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal, Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, in which he discusses the concept of non-violence and its close relation to Islam. Some of his other publications are: *Al-Islam wal Gharb wal dimocratiyyah* (Islam and the West and democracy), *Ad-Deen Wal-Qanoon, ro'yah Qur'aniyyah* (Religion and the law, a Quranic vision), *Fiqdan At-Tawazon Al-Ijtima'i* (The loss of social balance), *Al-Insan kollan wa hina Yakoono 'adlan* (Man as a whole and when he is justice), *Al-Ummah, Ad-Deen, Ad-Dawla* (Nation, religion and the state). Source: Group of authors, *Ulama' Mukarramoon*, Jawdat Sa’id, Dar Al-Fikr, first edition, Damascus, 2006, p. 17-26. Also see: <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>.

⁽²⁾ Sa’id, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Dar Al-Fikr, first edition, Damascus, 1996, p. 160.

1- The historical and religious context of Jawdat Sa'id's thought

A review of the historical context and circumstances that prevailed in the Arab world, and particularly in Egypt and Syria, during the 1950s and 1960s reveals the motives that drove Jawdat Sa'id to publish his book *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal*, *Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, and a series of books thereafter in which he made every effort to consecrate his ideas and adopt "non-violence" as a tool for change⁽¹⁾.

The era of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed a notable increase in armed Islamic violence in Egypt, Syria and other regions of the Arab world. In Egypt, Sayyid Qutb's ideas on the sovereignty of God were popular among the Islamists, some of whom became involved in armed acts of violence against governments, thus, creating a devastating, bloody struggle between Islamists and state governments that lasted for several long decades!

In Syria, in 1964, the so-called Hama revolution broke out, which resulted in bloody confrontations between the ruling regime and the Islamists. Eventually, the regime's war machine obliterated the Islamists who had revolted against it, turning them into fugitives, prisoners and martyrs!

A religious and doctrinal dimension was ascribed to the struggle in both Syria and Egypt, based on the concepts of "sovereignty of God", "loyalty" and "dissociation [from disbelief]" that "Sayyid Qutb", along with the Islamist thinkers who agreed with him in that era, had theorized. Moreover, the armed violence practiced by some Islamists against the governments in Egypt and Syria was justified as being legitimate "Jihad" in Islam.

Jawdat Sa'id witnessed these events and experienced their repercussions during his time in Egypt in the late 1950s and then, after his return home, in Syria in the 1960s⁽²⁾. Moreover, he was not far from the waves of armed violence moving between the different regions of the world and justified in the name of religion. About that, "Jawdat Sa'id" says: "The disease of violence is not restricted to the youth only, although they are the ones more

⁽¹⁾ Among the books Jawdat Sa'id published and in which he elaborated on his intellectual project: *Al-Hiwar sabeel at-ta'ayosh* (Dialogue as a means of coexistence), *Kon Ka Ibn Adam* (Be like the son of Adam), *La Ikraha Fil Deen* (There is no compulsion in religion), *Iqra'Wa Rabboka Al-Akram* (Read, and thy Lord is the Most Bounteous), *Al-Insan kollan wa 'adlan* (Man as a whole and as justice), *Hatta Yughayyiroo ma bi anfusihom* (until they change their own condition), *Al-'amal Qodrah wa iradah* (Work, an ability and a will), *Fiqdan At-Tawazon Al-Ijtima'i* (Loosing social balance) and *Mafhoom At-Taghyeer* (The concept of change).

⁽²⁾ It is paradoxical that Marwan Hadeed returned from Egypt influenced by Sayyid Qutb carrying with him the seeds of the Jihadi thought, whereas Jawdat Sa'id returned from Egypt influenced by Malik Bennabi carrying with him the seeds of non-violence.

susceptible to carry it. The entire world is inflicted with this germ: the left-wing and the right-wing alike, and even the hidden corners of Sufism harbor the genes that carry these cultural legacies... we carry the germ of the failed son of Adam whose method for solving the problem is embodied in his saying to his fellow brother: 'I shall kill you'"⁽¹⁾.

As a human being living in this world, and as a Muslim belonging to the Muslim masses who make up one fifth of humanity, Jawdat Sa'id saw that he was directly concerned with the problem of violence that has a negative influence on the Muslim communities, and the entire world, because the problem of the Islamic world concerns one fifth of humanity⁽²⁾, firstly and directly, and the entire world, secondly and consequently⁽³⁾.

Jawdat Sa'id bases his propositions on the premise that it is the prevalent, dire straits of reality which Islamic communities suffer that drove some to resort to violence against the state in the hopes of making a change for the better, but they did so to no avail. In a best case scenario, these efforts of violent change led to the ousting of a certain regime or the killing of a certain leader! Jawdat Sa'id says: "We have tried to change things through violence, for we have always fought leaders, governments and families, and we abolished them from existence..."⁽⁴⁾ But these efforts marked with violence did not achieve the aspired positive change. On the contrary, they only complicated things and forced the Islamic world into vicious circles of violence that leaves nothing behind.

In contrast, and according to Jawdat Sa'id, the experiences of contemporary nations⁽⁵⁾ – with Europe at its forefront – constituted a landmark that calls for reflection and a following of their example⁽⁶⁾. He cites the European experience, saying: "European peoples were engaged, during the last four centuries, in several desperate religious and confessional wars. Each of them sought to deplete the other till the end. They waged regional and international wars. But afterwards, they learned [harsh] lessons from the prices they paid, and they have now embarked on a pioneer process in the world... after the experiences they went through, and having paid heavy prices and resulted in hundreds of millions of victims... unity shall now prevail without anyone losing anything"⁽⁷⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Dar Al-Fikr, fifth edition, Damascus, 1993, p. 236.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 67

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 69

⁽⁴⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 58.

⁽⁵⁾ Jawdat Sa'id cites the experiences of Germany, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States of America. However, in the examples he cites, he mostly focuses on the experience of Europe after World War II. Review: Ibid., p. 54-55.

⁽⁶⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 23.

⁽⁷⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 48.

Jawdat Sa'id believes that the Europeans had learned their lesson and that they came to realize that the wars waged by their powerful leaders, such as Napoleon, Hitler and others had only led to destruction instead of achieving the positive change that they aspired to. Therefore, "the Europeans no longer waited for 'Hitler' or 'Napoleon'... rather, the peoples and the large and small states rose together and cooperated under a law based on equality and justice, and they embarked on the establishment of a calm and balanced unity, without anyone losing money, land or leadership, and with slow and careful steps... This is happening before us, so we ought to learn a lesson from it"⁽¹⁾.

Jawdat Sa'id also declares that the experience of European unity which took place through a peaceful and rational manner and was based on knowledge, awareness and values produced a huge leap for humanity, of which he says: "European unity and the joint European market constitute a huge and new event in the history of humanity... in which the human value had developed until man became respectful and his blood became sacred and ought not be spilled"⁽²⁾.

As a Muslim scholar, it is not enough for Jawdat Sa'id to rely on his readings and contemplations about the European experience or other contemporary experiences to document his invitation and to support his project. Rather, he also refers to the lives of the prophets, peace be upon them, and reviews the ways in which they supported their task of preaching to the people and changing the realities of their communities, and he concludes that all the prophets⁽³⁾ were committed to peaceful methods in order to achieve positive change in their communities... Moreover, the life path of the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, followed the same path, for "the reality of the Prophetic biography is large and it reflects the commitment of the Messenger, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, to Jihad, in the sense that his call to the way of his Lord was limited to wisdom, goodly exhortation, and disputations in the best manner, until he assumed power having attained the people's satisfaction and conviction"⁽⁴⁾.

Jawdat Sa'id also sees that good governance, which Muslims are trying to achieve and live under, ever since the era of prophethood, cannot be based on compulsion, for then it would not be good governance, but rather a form of misguidance and tyranny that Islam rejects. Concerning this, he says: "Do you know that just as there is no compulsion in Islam as a religion, there is no compulsion in it as a judgment? And that good governance can only be achieved by people's consent and not compulsion? And that what comes by compulsion is nothing but misguidance and tyranny?"⁽⁵⁾

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 60.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 59.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 94.

⁽⁴⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 41.

⁽⁵⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 159-160.

2- Non-violence, a methodology

Jawdat Sa'íd believed that adopting the method of "non-violence" which can be practically transmitted through one's upbringing and education and other positive acts is the best way to affect change. In contrast, adopting violence as a means for change, even if this violence is justified with religious arguments, will only lead to a negative impact that will further complicate the world's problems, and will: "result in bloody miseries, materialistic losses and unforgettable grudges"⁽¹⁾. This would impede the process of progress and advancement and constitute a barrier that prevents any change for the better. Jawdat Sa'íd reaffirms this idea, saying: "If man exerts enough effort in planting and providing continuous care, then reaping the fruits needs neither an overwhelming revolution nor a normal one, for the result shall come naturally, but the overwhelming revolutions by which the people try, through violence, to reap the fruits before they ripen shall continue to carry the burden of unripe fruits"⁽²⁾.

It is worth mentioning that this call for peaceful change and the necessity of committing to "non-violence" as a tool for change which Jawdat Sa'íd had advocated since his early youth did not represent only scattered intellectual ideas or dispersed thoughts introduced by the author in a few of his writings. Neither did they represent some idealistic, youthful surge of zealotry which he simply included in his first publication. This was not that case. This call represents the very heart of Jawdat Sa'íd's thought, his lifetime project and his ultimate concern over the decades of his long life. As he says: "Should we change our situation by force? I have thought about this for forty years and I have found that there is no room in Islam for establishing governance with violence or coups... this is the methodology of all the prophets"⁽³⁾.

To briefly present this methodology of "non-violence", in what follows we present its most important elements under three sections: features, traits, and proof.

a- The features of the call to "non-violence"

The most important features of the call for change through "non-violence"

⁽¹⁾ Sa'íd, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 55.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 138

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 94.

advocated by Jawdat Sa'id can be outlined as follows:⁽¹⁾

- 1- Not getting involved in acts of killing or calls for killing.
- 2- Not imposing any opinion by force on others, and not conceding any opinion out of fear of this force.
- 3- Willingly bearing pain for the sake of your principle, and not imposing your principle on others by inflicting pain.
- 4- Dedicating oneself to the cause of guiding and directing the others [on the right path].
- 5- Making people understand more clearly what holding on to one's principles means.

b- The traits of the call to "non-violence"

Jawdat Sa'id then lists nine traits that characterize the methodology of non-violence, and they are as follows:⁽²⁾

- 1- Creating a favorable atmosphere for understanding, thinking and exchanging advice and guidance.
- 2- One individual can make this effort as an example for all the people to see, just as the prophets did before with their peoples.
- 3- If this effort entails the good, then it shall be reflected on everyone, while if it entails harm, then the individual or individuals who made this effort shall bear it alone, while the rest of society will be kept safe from it.
- 4- This methodology is characterized by clarity, honesty and transparency, something which brings about a feeling of having a strong footing.
- 5- Eliminating fear from imprisonment.
- 6- Eliminating fear from ordeals and misery.
- 7- Stripping one's opponents and adversaries of the arguments and pretexts they use to persecute peacemakers.
- 8- Identifying righteous models to join the ranks of the just.
- 9- Awakenning the spirit of Ijtihad and renewal and avoiding conventional imitation and dependency.

⁽¹⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al 'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 93-94, summarized.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 185-194, summarized.

c- Proof of the call to “non-violence”

There are many textual and rational proofs that Jawdat Sa’id refers to which advocate for his call, authenticate his methodology and support all of his beliefs.

• Textual proof

1- Verses from the Holy Quran

- a- As Allah says: “But recite unto them with truth the tale of the two sons of Adam, how they offered each a sacrifice, and it was accepted from the one of them and it was not accepted from the other. (The one) said: I will surely kill thee. (The other) answered: Allah accepts only from those who ward off (evil)”⁽¹⁾.
- b- As Allah says: “Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way”⁽²⁾.
- c- As Allah says: “Repel evil with that which is better. We are Best Aware of that which they allege”⁽³⁾.
- d- As Allah says: “Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate”⁽⁴⁾.

2- Hadith of the Prophet

- a- “There would soon be turmoil. Behold! There would be turmoil in which the one who would be seated would be better than the one who would stand and the one who would stand would be better than the one who would run. Behold! When the turmoil comes or it appears, the one who has camels should stick to his camels and he who has sheep or goats should stick to his sheep and goats and he who has land should stick to the land. Then a man asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is your opinion about one who has neither camels nor sheep nor land?’ Thereupon, he said: ‘He should take hold of his sword and beat its edge with the help of stone and then try to find a way of escape. O Allah, I have conveyed (Thy Message); O Allah, I have conveyed (Thy Message); O Allah, I have conveyed (Thy Message)’. Then, a man asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is your opinion if I am drawn to one of the parties in spite of myself, or in one of the groups and made to march and a man strikes with his sword or there comes an arrow and kills me?’

⁽¹⁾ Al-Ma’idah (5): 27-29.

⁽²⁾ An-Nahl (16): 125.

⁽³⁾ Al-Mu’minooh (23): 96.

⁽⁴⁾ Fussilat (41): 34.

Thereupon, the Prophet said: 'He will bear the punishment of his sin and that of yours and he would be one amongst the denizens of Hell'".

b- "Before the Last Hour there will be commotions like pieces of a dark night in which a man will be a believer in the morning and an infidel in the evening, or a believer in the evening and infidel in the morning. He who sits during them will be better than he who gets up and he who walks during them is better than he who runs. So break your bows, cut your bowstrings and strike your swords on stones. If people then come in to one of you, let him be like the better of Adam's two sons"⁽¹⁾.

• Rational proof

Jawdat Sa'id sets out from the fact that the experiences of armed violence as a means for change have forced everyone, whether rebels or the regime, into vicious circles of infighting, turning the sequence of violent actions and violent reactions between both sides into a cause for inflicting severe harm on both of them. Therefore, the only way out of this circle is by breaking this sequence of violent actions and reactions, which can only be achieved by adopting "non-violence".

Jawdat Sa'id demonstrates the features of this idea of his by saying: "This is the Sunnah that the first Islamic society was established on – meaning the method of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, whereby he prevented violence before he even nonviolently assumed power – this method is what breaks the sequence of mistakes, by not justifying a mistake by another one... Therefore, to step out of this maze, we ought to go back to understanding the real reason why the Quran forbids violence, as Allah says: "Withhold your hands and establish worship"^{(2) (3)}.

Among the rational proof that Jawdat Sa'id also relies on is that the issue of faith and embracing religion is one of the greatest issues that Islam was concerned with. Even so, the true religion entreated to guide people through [true] belief, conviction and dialogue, and not through coercion and compulsion. Therefore, it stands to reason that the issue of governance and the transformation of reality, which is undoubtedly of a lesser importance than the issue of faith, should be addressed through conviction and dialogue as well, and not through coercion and compulsion. As Jawdat Sa'id says: "Do you know that just as there is no compulsion in Islam as a religion, there is no compulsion in it as a judgment? And that good governance can only be achieved by people's consent and not compulsion?"⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ The Musnad of Ahmad (19730), Abu Dawood (4259), Ibn Majah (3961) and Ibn Habban (5962).

⁽²⁾ An-Nisa' (4): 77.

⁽³⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 58.

⁽⁴⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 159-160.

3- Between the methodology of non-violence and the legitimacy of Jihad in Islam

a- Legitimate “Jihad” or forbidden “revolt”

Preachers from different Islamic movements and schools of thought – in both the past and present and across the world – have adopted the option of violence and resorted to armed force as a justified means for change, by claiming that their practices are a form of “Jihad” which is legitimized by Islam and that it is the only way to deter tyrant rulers and awaken the nation and rescue it from its troubled reality. Jawdat Sa’id, however, rejected this approach, considering that it is not a legitimate form of “Jihad”, but rather a forbidden form of “revolt”⁽¹⁾, as it entails a denial of the axioms of Islam and of human values. As he says: “This feeling that a position of power cannot be assumed except by force represents an exclusion of both the Islamic and humanist ideal.”⁽²⁾

Jawdat Sa’id presents his alternative proposition by citing the tradition: “The best warfare (Jihad) in the path of Allah is (to speak) a word of justice to an oppressive ruler”⁽³⁾. He comments on this tradition by saying: “The Messenger of Allah, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, did not say: he who goes to him carrying a sword or an arrow with the aim of killing or assassinating him, rather, he went to him without covering his chest to speak a word of truth, and if this leads to martyrdom... this is what we should do.”⁽⁴⁾

Jawdat Sa’id confirms that a methodology of violence which adopts armed revolt does not belong to the essence and Message of Islam, and that it only gained popularity as a result of with a selective reading of the Islamic texts, for “certain things were excluded, hidden or shifted, while others were brought out... to formulate this method of thinking.”⁽⁵⁾

This selectivity resulted in “a misunderstanding in the Islamic world and the mixing between the impure [i.e. the forbidden revolt] and the sacred [i.e. the legitimate Jihad], and the miseries it caused, and what it is still causing and what will continue to be caused by this mixing between ‘the Jihad of the

⁽¹⁾ Jawdat Sa’id describes this revolt as the Jihad of the Kharijites, accusing whoever practices or adopts it of being a Kharijite who adopts the Kharijites sect, whether he intends so or not.

⁽²⁾ Sa’id, Jawdat, *Math’hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-Unf Fil ‘Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 32.

⁽³⁾ Reported by At-Tarmathi, under no. 2174.

⁽⁴⁾ Sa’id, Jawdat, *Math’hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-Unf Fil ‘Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 178.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 32.

Kharijites' and the 'Jihad' that Islam brought along"⁽¹⁾.

This misunderstanding of the reality of Islam infected the Muslim mind with intellectual germs that caused much harm in the souls of Muslims movements, for he says: "The tragic wars that the Muslims waged against each other are but the result of intellectual germs carried in our souls."⁽²⁾ And due to this intellectual, cultural and behavioral contamination, some started – in the name of religion – to find pleasure in devising wars and in the miseries and pains of others.

Jawdat Sa'id also considers that those "who believe in the permissibility or obligation of attaining power through violence"⁽³⁾, leading them to abandon peaceful methods and replace them with violent methods that they adopt as a tool for change, "are the Kharijites in Islam, and the Muslims, whether they know it or not, have turned into the Kharijites' sect, except for those whom your Lord has mercy on."⁽⁴⁾

As such, Jawdat Sa'id confirms that the only way to get rid of the ordeals and pains which have resulted from the adoption of a methodology of violence and have promoted a culture of killing is by creating a real change in the souls of Muslims and by reminding them of the essence of Islam as a religion that rejects violence and adopts positive, peaceful methods for change. He says: "Our situation will not change unless we change our own conditions... thus, brotherhood, cooperation and happiness will take the place of pain, blood and war"⁽⁵⁾.

b- Non-violence and the misconception of denying "Jihad"

In light of this, opponents hastened to defame Jawdat Sa'id by accusing him of denying the Jihad that Islam legitimizes according to proven texts. This led him to defend his idea and methodology, saying: "Someone might say: Where do you stand (insinuating how far you are) from the verses on Jihad and fighting in the Quran? Do you want to abrogate the verses on fighting in the Quran? And I instantly respond: I do not intend to abrogate the Book or revoke the verses on Jihad and fighting, God forbid"⁽⁶⁾. He also says: "We do not prohibit fighting in the absolute sense... rather, we consider that Jihad was legitimized in the

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 56.

⁽²⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 46.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 159-160.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 159-160.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 46.

⁽⁶⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 95.

past and is still legitimized [in certain conditions]; however, Muslims ought to know when they are allowed to carry out Allah's limits (punishments)"⁽¹⁾.

To make a balance between his call for "non-violence" and a recognition of the legitimacy of Jihad and warfare in Islam, Jawdat explains the content of his idea by explaining that it is based on a distinction between the recommended "Jihad" that the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, and his companions practiced, on the one hand, and the abominable "revolt" that the Kharijites practiced. To simplify the distinction and clarify the main difference between "Jihad" and "revolt", Jawdat Sa'id tries to articulate an objective, standard base that lays the foundation for this distinction. He says: "What is the rule that distinguishes between Jihad and revolt in Islam?... This question should be the focal point, meaning that it should be the ultimate concern until it is answered... and considering that this subject has not been discussed at all in the Islamic culture, it ought to be brought up once again with urgency and full awareness and alert".⁽²⁾ He goes on to say: "This question is not an evil [act] or an innovation, even if the Muslims, both the Sunnis and the Shiites, did not deliberate on it head-on and clearly"⁽³⁾.

c-"Jihad": Definition, timing, and goal

After raising this issue, Jawdat Sa'id sets off to differentiate between the two, so he says: "Revolt is the use of force and violence to take over governance, while Jihad is the use of force after assuming governance with the consent of the people to prevent compulsion in religion, if such prevention could not be done without fighting."⁽⁴⁾ What follows is that: even during "The Meccan Era" that witnessed injustice, oppression and persecution, the Prophet, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, and the Muslims had to endure their scourges and miseries.

However, they faced their adversities and hardships through peaceful methods and upheld their commitment to preaching, education and building a good community; this is the method of "non-violence" that the reformers should adopt in the face of tyrants, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers. Jawdat Sa'id says: "I have thought about this issue for forty years only to conclude that, in Islam, governance cannot be reached by violence or by coups, and the best proof is that the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, has endured with patience and

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 101.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 32-33.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 38.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 41.

prevented his companions from replying with aggression. He did not establish good governance at first, rather, he established a good community, a good nation and a good individual... until he eventually established a society that produces its own rulers"⁽¹⁾. It is worth noting that Quraish tried to lure the Prophet with authority and power, for: "The Quraishites came to the Prophet, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, and offered him to rule, but he rejected this kind of rule that comes in this way, and he embarked on building up individuals with firm faith, after which they can establish the system that shall govern them"⁽²⁾.

Thus, Muslims were able, in "the Medina Era", to build a good community characterized by the virtues, values and principles of Islam, and they agreed to refer to the Shariah for rules, out of true conviction and satisfaction. This engendered a good individual and a good community, which, in its turn, produced a good power. Only then, this good power eventually becomes concerned with defending the good society, as well as its doctrines, values and principles... by legitimate means among which are Jihad and war – that are to be resorted to only when all other methods fail. Therefore, "Jihad", according to Jawdat Sa'id, is a tool in the hands of a good authority that uses it to defend faith-related and humanistic gains, which characterize the good community in the face of those who want to compel people to apostasy and keep them away from their religion. And this can only be done on the basis of two fundamental conditions: "on the condition that the Mujahid had assumed sovereignty of God with the people's consent and conviction and on the condition that the one against whom Jihad is directed compels people to follow a certain religion or tries to derail them from their religion."⁽³⁾

Consequently, Jawdat Sa'id considers that "if the two conditions are met, then Jihad is deemed permissible or obligatory, and if one of the two conditions is not met, then it will no longer be a form of Jihad"⁽⁴⁾, turning it into an armed revolt and violent heresy.

d- Denouncing revolt that is forbidden

As for that form of revolt which is forbidden, according to Jawdat Sa'id, it occurs when individuals or groups living in a community without good governance, begin to use violence and weapons against the authorities and the people, under the pretense of practicing "Jihad" to guide the people and force

⁽¹⁾ Sa'id, *Jawdat, At-Taghyeer Mafhoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 94.

⁽²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁽³⁾ Sa'id, *Jawdat, Math'hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-'Unf Fil 'Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 43.

⁽⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

them to embrace religion and its rulings. Jawdat Sa'id says: "The meeting of some individuals to issue death sentences in an immature society [in the sense that it had not become a society of good governance] is not Jihad, and such people are not qualified to implement the limits of Allah."⁽¹⁾

Jawdat Sa'id emphasizes the necessity of rejecting this form of revolt and criticizing such rebellions, regardless of their claim that they are practicing Jihad and their exaggeration in showing off the features of their religiosity. They are individuals whose religiosity or exaggeration in worship will do them no good, as according to the Hadith by the Prophet: "There will arise from my Ummah a people who would recite the Quran, and your recital would seem insignificant as compared with their recital, your prayer as compared with their prayer, and your fast as compared with their fast. They will recite the Quran thinking that it supports them, whereas it is an evidence against them. Their prayer does not get beyond their collar bone; they will veer through Islam just as the arrow passes through its prey."⁽²⁾

As an act of self-criticism and recognition of mistakes, Jawdat Sa'id is not ashamed to admit that when we, as Muslims, adopt violence through words or actions, then this means: "that we are all Kharijites... Some of us are Kharijites who sit and do nothing, while others are practical Kharijites who practice the Jihad of the Kharijites"⁽³⁾. He also believes that: "the mainstream current and majority of the Islamic street have become like the Kharijites' sect in their relationship with the rulers... The rulers of the Muslim world have been sentenced to death in person or in absentia, leaving only volunteers to perform the execution... The enmity between us and the rulers became irreparable with no chance to build bridges of understanding, for we no longer feel that they belong to us... All those who become rulers feel that the peoples are their enemies, and each party wards off the other."⁽⁴⁾ He also believes that those who harbor ill-intentions towards the Islamic nation employ this idea to fuel conflict and use it as a way to weaken the nation from the inside to ensure that it becomes dependent and submissive. Jawdat Sa'id says: "This is the great resource [provided] to our enemies who defeat us by creating fear and intimidation between the rulers and the people, by provoking the people by the actions of bad rulers; this is the resource on the basis of which we get colonized."⁽⁵⁾

⁽¹⁾ Ibid., p. 157.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 33.

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 34.

⁽⁴⁾ Sa'id, Jawdat, *At-Taghyeer Mafoomoho wa Tara'iqoho*, Op. cit., p. 89.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 90.

Conclusion

“Non-violence”: the balance of theory and practice

Jawdat Sa’id’s call to “non-violence” as a positive and legitimate Islamic means to change the situation of Islamic nations for the better, without paying a high financial and human cost for it, is a distinct call amid the waves of Jihadi violence that have been justified in the name of religion and that our Arab and Islamic world has witnessed over consecutive eras and decades.

Perhaps Jawdat Sa’id has taken his own unique path during the last five decades! And perhaps his call was considered by some as an idealistic and theoretical proposition that was far from reality and its complications! While others might have considered it as an extraordinary call that rejects Jihad and its legitimacy. Jawdat Sa’id himself discussed these misconceptions and responded to each of them at length⁽¹⁾.

Despite all of this, of the greatest weakness in the call of Jawdat Sa’id is that it lacks any practical model which could confirm that it is not just a theoretically acceptable and credible alternative, but that it is also realistically useful... That said, it is clear that in the last four decades of the twentieth century there was no promising practical model that could support the usefulness of the call for change through “non-violence”.

And perhaps this point of weakness drove Jawdat Sa’id to ask himself: “Have I succeeded in diagnosing the disease? And in putting my hand on the cause of the illness? And in presenting an idea that I kept thinking about for three decades? Or am I still treading on a dead-end trail?!”⁽²⁾

The beginning of the twenty-first century, however, brought glad tidings that warmed the cockles of Jawdat Sa’id’s heart who glimpsed in the experience of “the Justice and Development Party” in Turkey⁽³⁾ some of the features of his call. He also saw that the Turkish presidential elections constituted a historic event at the level of the Islamic world and a practical model that proves the usefulness of his call. In an audio recording that dates back to 14/09/2007, Jawdat Sa’id praises how the Turkish Islamists were engaged in the public life in apparent peacefulness and how they entered politics in a calm and poised manner and succeeded in the presidential elections. As such, their peaceful

⁽¹⁾ Sa’id, Jawdat, *Math’hab Ibn Adam Al-Awwal: Mushkilat Al-’Unf Fil ’Ilm Al-Islamiy*, Op. cit., p. 155-181.

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 28-29.

⁽³⁾ In August, 2007 the winner of the presidential elections in Turkey were held on, was Abdullah Gül, the leader of the Islamic Justice and Development Party, and he is the one Jawdat Sa’id refers to in the audio recording saying And as I was writing these lines in mid-August 2014, there came the media outlets celebrating the victory of Recep Tayyip Erdoan in the Turkish presidential elections to become the second Islamic President who rules Turkey.

democracy represented a civilized means that enabled them to assume power without any violence or loss of life or money.⁽¹⁾

Moreover, perhaps the experience of “Mahathir Mohamad” in Malaysia, the An-Nahda Party in Tunisia, the initiative to end armed violence in Algeria following the era of the 1990s, the change of heart of Abboud Az-Zumar, the scientific Salafi trend, and other Sufi Societies might further confirm non-violence as a peaceful method to reach power.

Perhaps this experience could succeed in ending the vicious cycle of continuous violence and break the chain of violent actions and reactions, thus consecrating the importance of Jawdat Sa’id’s thought and his call to “non-violence” as the first step in the journey to end the cycle of death, destruction and displacement.

That said, the uniqueness that characterizes Jawdat Sa’id’s call also renders it outside the reach of understanding of everyday, religiously committed people. Therefore, to ensure the success of this call, it needs to be supported, strengthened and accompanied by an authentic religious discourse that preaches the necessity of ending the vicious circle of violence, creating the foundations for a stage of peace and stability and urging a replacement of a culture that kills itself with a culture that revives itself, a culture of destruction with a culture of construction.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMaySq8EFsY&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Chapter Four

Syria in the Spiral of Violence and the Challenges of Religious Discourse

Introduction

In his book titled *Al-Tatarruf Khubzon `Alamiyy* (Extremism as Daily Bread), Dr. Rashed Al-Mubarak argues that “extremism is the most important subject nowadays as the whole world is busy talking about it, fighting against it, tracking it and searching for its motives.”⁽¹⁾ He goes on to say: “Extremism is a rogue phenomenon among peoples, societies and the followers of rites and religions⁽²⁾... It is not unique to any one people or group of humans, nor is it unique to the followers of any particular religion or political or social doctrine.”⁽³⁾ Dr. Rashed Al-Mubarak concludes that “extremists of various rites and religions are few in numbers and represent only a low proportion compared to the overarching majority of individuals within peoples and societies. However, their impact and threat... is greater than the number of individuals who compose this phenomenon.”⁽⁴⁾

Muslim intellectuals and authors, like Dr. Rashed Al-Mubarak, have tried to emphasize that the phenomenon of extremism, terror and violence is a common occurrence rather than being exclusive to Islamists. Yet the media continue to link political Islam to these phenomena.

Now that Syria is at the forefront of the news scene, the fighting between the parties in the Syrian conflict has become the preoccupation of the whole world, which is cautiously observing the course of events and the excessive violence in which the belligerents are involved. Jihadists, however, have once again dominated the overall picture as light is cast on the explosions, confrontations and executions that bear their marks.

This chapter is an attempt to track the course of events in Syria since the crisis started. Its purpose is to condemn the crimes committed in Syria in all their manifestations regardless of the perpetrators' identities. We focus on the Jihadists as they characteristically use both religious discourse to ignite their war as well as bloody violence, which they wrap in a cloak of sainthood. In fact, they take so much pride in it that this bloody violence, which is rooted in a religious basis of Jihad legitimacy and bolstered by interpretations and Fatwas that are exclusive to the Jihadists, and has become a popular lifestyle with its own supporters, fanatic defenders and apologists. These people are ever ready to provide it with justifications even when images are too ugly for any sane person to accept. This focus on Jihadists certainly does not exonerate or excuse others, for each vicious aggression must be condemned regardless of its source.

⁽¹⁾ Mubarak, Dr. Rashed, *Al-Tatarruf Khubzon `Alamiyy*, Dar Al-Qalam, Damascus, 1st edition 2006, p. 9.

⁽²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁽³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁽⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

1) The road towards the Syrian crisis

a) Bouazizi, the spark that set fire to the Arab Spring revolutions

With everyone's attention elsewhere and the heads of oppressive Arab regimes indulging in a prosperity gained from the pain inflicted upon their oppressed and persecuted peoples and their bloated states undermined by long decades of corruption, the stunning news came from the most unexpected of places, from the green Tunisia.

It was there, in Tunisia, that municipal authorities in the town of Sidi Bouzid confiscated the vegetable cart of a street vendor named Tareq Al-Tayyib Mohamed Bouazizi. In a spontaneous overflow of emotion, Bouazizi protested the confiscation. The policewoman, Fadia Al-Hamdi, first hit him with her truncheon before slapping him in front of witnesses and saying in French "dégage," which means "go away."

Bouazizi thought he lived in a country that valued basic human rights, including his right to make a living and support himself. He also thought his was a country that attached some weight to human dignity and freedom to object to oppression. He objected in a civilized manner and filed a complaint against Fadia Hamdi, but the authorities refused to receive the complaint, let alone to look into it. Bouazizi thus set himself on fire in front of the provincial headquarters of Sidi Bouzid on Friday December 17th, 2010 and died 18 days later of severe burns⁽¹⁾.

Oppression turned Bouazizi's body into a rolling fireball, which grew progressively and ignited revolutions across the Arab world, starting with Tunisia and moving on to Egypt, Libya, Yemen and, eventually, to Syria.

b) The Syrian scene and the atmosphere of the waning Arab Spring

While the world was following the echoes of the Arab revolutions, Syria – without prior warning – took its turn as a new stage for this spontaneous, unorganized and ideologized popular movement.

⁽¹⁾ Summarized from: <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>.

Press reports have it that policemen took to beating the son of a shop owner in the Harika area of Damascus on Thursday February 17th, 2011. This stoked the anger of the people in the marketplace as they began to gather and chant slogans, such as “the Syrian people shall not be humiliated.” About 1,500 people took part in the protest, as a result of which the Syrian minister of the Interior came to talk to the protesters. He inquired about their demands and promised to launch an investigation into the young man’s beating before the protest came to an end.⁽¹⁾

Protests resumed on February 27th, 2011 when the Syrian security forces arrested some teenagers for writing anti-regime slogans on the walls of their school in the governorate of Daraa under the influence of the wave of Arab revolutions. The teenagers were tortured and a state of violent effervescence spread throughout the governorate of Daraa.

As a result of these children’s arrest, massive manifestations were organized in the southern Syrian governorate of Daraa on March 18th, 2011 in which hundreds of people took part to protest the arrests, repression and corruption and to denounce some state officials, including [Daraa Political Security Chief] Atef Najib who refused the Daraa people’s demands to have their sons released.

Security services countered these manifestations using live ammunition. Four people were killed and several others were wounded in the process. Protests were reportedly organized on that same day in other Syrian regions. According to opposition activists, a group of “thugs” roamed the streets of the town of Daraa on March 20th and fired randomly at the residents, sparking terror in the region. Another person was killed and a hundred were wounded on that day when a new manifestation in which 10,000 people took part was disbanded in the city.

The regime and its security services countered the broadening protest movements and peaceful protests with violence and firepower. The Syrian media sought, at the time, to justify this violent repression of the popular movement by portraying it as a conspiracy against Syria and as being far more than spontaneous and improvised protests. The media asserted that armed groups were behind this movement and were attempting to bring down the Syrian regime in its capacity as a cornerstone of the axis confronting colonialist projects in the Arab region.

There was a rapid and remarkable upsurge of violence in the regime’s repression of Syrian protesters. For instance, the press reported that the Syrian army besieged and invaded Homs on May 9th, 2011 in parallel to military operations in the Homs countryside where Tal Kalakh, Rastan and Talbiseh were successively besieged. On June 3rd, 2011, security forces opened fire in what became known as the Hama massacre and city residents responded by declaring a general strike. On June 4th, 2011, the army entered Idlib and

⁽¹⁾ Summarized from http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/timeline_of_the_Syrian_protests_for_2011.

besieged Jisr al-Shughour before storming Maarat al-Numan on June 10th, 2011. Following the discovery of a mass grave containing the bodies of 120 Syrian conscripts in Jisr al-Shughour, the government said that the conscripts “were killed by armed gangs,” whereas the opposition claimed they “were about to declare their dissent.”

c) The Syrian revolution: From peacefulness to militarization

The start of the protest movement in Syria coincided with the regime talking about armed groups, which were threatening security and which were being fought by its security tools. Syrian activists asserted, however, that the protests were peaceful and that there were no armed groups. The issue stirred much debate and controversy until the facts changed a few months after the protests started.

As a reaction to the excessive violence used by the regime against civilians, Lt Col Hussein Harmoush announced his defection from the Syrian army in early June 2011 and established the Free Officers Movement, the Syrian opposition’s first military organization. A second organization known as the Free Syrian Army came to light on June 29th, 2011 under the leadership of the dissident Col Riad al-Assaad.⁽¹⁾

The end of 2011 saw the emergence of Jabhat al-Nusra Li Ahl al-Sham (the Support Front for the People of the Levant), an organization affiliated to the Jihadist Salafist ideology. Its first statement, issued on January 24th, 2012, called on the Syrian people to declare Jihad and bear arms against the Syrian regime.

The Ahrar al-Sham Battalions, the Tawhid Brigade and the Haq Brigade⁽²⁾ successively emerged until the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) came to the light in April 2013.

Some say that the Syrian revolution changed from a mere peaceful protest into a military confrontation as a reaction to the regime’s violence against the protesters, while others argue it was a natural transformation of the revolutionary movement due to regime intransigence. By contrast, the regime and its media apparatus insist that it has all been a conspiracy aimed, right from the start, at undermining the regime and bringing down Syria and its axis of resistance against international conspiracies.

Regardless of the above, many military formations of various loyalties and

⁽¹⁾ Summarized from http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/the_Syrian_crisis.

⁽²⁾ For more information on these military formations and others, refer to: <http://www.assakina.com/center/parties/18883.html#ixzz2msAxP2Zd>

ideological backgrounds continued to emerge and the link between most of them is almost only their opposition and their drive to topple the regime.

d) The spread of a culture of killing, abuse and destruction

The Syrian revolution was, right from the start, a peaceful popular movement calling, through protests, to fight against oppression, to release prisoners and to initiate general reforms in the country. The aim of their demands was later pushed higher, going so far as to call for an overthrow of the regime, when the protesters had lost hope of a rapid and serious response by the regime to their demands.

A few months were thus enough to turn this movement into an armed military revolution fighting a war against the regime and its military apparatus and the various states and organizations supporting it. The armed groups fighting under the revolutionary banner also had multiple leaders, principles and countries them and they, too, were waging armed clashes and confrontations among one another at any moment that their interests intertwined and the cards were reshuffled. And so Syria was caught in a whirlpool of violence, killing, destruction and pain.

There is something that distinguishes each revolution in the waning Arab Spring states. In the case of the Syrian revolution, it is those scenes that have rocked the world: Scenes of violence that has nothing to do with monotheistic teachings and the most basic of human values, scenes of killing, slaughtering and the desecration of corpses, scenes of crimes against people, trees and stones which did not spare any old person, woman or child. As one follower of the revolution puts it, "The detailed Syrian picture relayed by foreign news agencies to the whole world portrays us – as Arabs and Muslims – as stone-hearted, merciless and totally inhumane butchers with slaughter and bloodshed as our sole concerns".

Syrian soldiers are shown slowly stabbing a man in the back dozens of times until he draws his last breath. An opposition leader kills a soldier, cuts his body into pieces, rips his heart out and takes a bite out of it in front of the camera. A boy no more than 10 years old shears off a prisoner's head. No matter how brutal the regime becomes at killing women and children and destroying homes over their owners' heads, its deeds cannot – and should not – justify the desecration of victims' bodies by the other party amidst shouts of joy and Allahu Akbar.

Those behind such practices are wholly unrelated to Islam, Arabic culture and human values. They brag about their brutality, document it on video and post it on YouTube for the whole world to see in order to spread terror, fear and hatred.

This groundless, brutal violence is unrestricted by any constraints in Islam or Jihadist jurisprudence, which enshrines the values of pardon and mercy and bans the chopping down of trees, let alone bodies.

“This is not the Syria we know, the haven of safety and coexistence that welcomed the oppressed and those fleeing for their lives and honor throughout the centuries. We cannot fathom how Syrians, who carry in their genes thousands of years of civilization, can undertake such actions, regardless of the side to which they belong in this bloody tragedy”⁽¹⁾.

Surprised as the world was by these scenes, it was most surprised by:

First: The perpetrators bragging about their deeds, documenting them on video and disseminating them on the internet.

Second: The existence of a broad receiving audience promoting such scenes on their social media pages, collecting comments from followers with few condemnations and much praise, support, glorification and encouragement.

One observer of this phenomenon explains: “Hearts being eaten, people slaughtered using knives, bodies chopped, desecrated and burned, torture to death and field executions are the headlines of thousands of videos in Syria to which people are exposed on social networks. Sometimes, readers even find them against their will on their social media pages. What prompts anyone to commit such violations before filming and loading them for millions of people around the world to see? More importantly, why do receivers watch, save and forward them to their friends? It is noticeable how the current generation is unperturbed by the excessive violence, bloodshed, killing and desecration of dead bodies”⁽²⁾.

The writer sums up some experts’ opinion on this new, reprehensible and denounced phenomenon, summarizing the opinion of Cairo University sociologist Saeed al-Masri as follows: “The loading of scenes on social media is not necessarily an individual act by people who sympathize with the Syrian cause seeking to get these scenes out to the world and attract its attention to the ongoing events in the country. Indeed, this is an organized effort on the internet with parties rather than individuals behind it. The loading of videos by any of the two parties to the conflict is not unrelated to political aims; rather, it is part of the battle... in order to scare the other party and send out a message whereby one can settle the conflict in one’s favor”⁽³⁾.

He also quoted al-Azhar University psychology professor Mohammed al-Mahdi as saying: “The perpetrator of excessive violence lives in an atmosphere

⁽¹⁾ Abdel Bari Atwan, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, article published on the website of the National Coordination Body: <http://syrianncb.org/2013/05>

⁽²⁾ Ahmad al-Seba'i, *Aljazeera.net*, article published on: <http://www.inewsarabia.com/3/>

⁽³⁾ *Ibid.*

and circumstances where 'instinctive violence' frees itself from its many 'legal, security, moral, religious and social constraints.' Human beings thus become a tool driven by the inclination to violence... The ongoing war in Syria has created an atmosphere suitable for the emergence of brutal instinctive violence, as people continuously see their families and friends being killed, assaulted and tortured, their bodies desecrated and their homes brought down upon their heads. This violence turns, here, into a wish for revenge and acquires a moral dimension, as it is transformed into some kind of resistance, self-defense and defense of one's honor and land"⁽¹⁾.

Everyone, without exception, has been caught in this quagmire of violence and killing, but the two main stars behind these deplorable acts are the regime services and Islamist Jihadists. The media, however, has focused on the Jihadists more than the others, transforming them deservedly into the undisputed stars of these cruel and bloody scenes. This leads us to talk again about the Jihadists.

⁽¹⁾ Ibid.

2) Syria and the “New Jihadists”

a) The reasons underlying the Jihadists’ rapid ascent

There are many active military formations in Syria with various nationalist, secular and Islamic ideological backgrounds. However, being the most prominent of these formations, the Jihadists have come under the spotlight and are now TV stars that make the headlines of news bulletins and reports. The secret underlying the Jihadists’ fast emergence and their rise to prominence in Syria is due to several factors, including:

- 1) The Jihadist movement has chosen to move between the global hotspots of the Islamic world from Afghanistan to Bosnia and Herzegovina to Chechnya to Iraq. The rebellion in Syria is, therefore, yet another stage on these Jihadists’ path.
- 2) Once the Jihadists gained a foothold in Iraq, as of 2006,⁽¹⁾ this country, which is Syria’s geographical neighbor, began attracting Jihadists from Syria and other Arab and non-Arab countries. Iraq thus became an incubator providing Jihadism with the fertile ground needed for its growth. These Jihadists soon found it easy to infiltrate into the Syrian hinterland and take advantage of the chaos resulting from the weak security at the Syrian border.
- 3) If we go back to what we mentioned in Chapter one, the Syrian people is evidently no stranger to Jihadist inclinations. Some Syrians were even prominent Jihadist theorists and others were high-profile military cadres and leaders within the Jihadist movement. This contributed to the rapid rise of figures, such as Zahran Alloush, Hassane Abboud, Issa al-Sheikh and other Jihadist commanders in Syria⁽²⁾, not to mention the Nusra Front leader Abu Mohammad al-Golani.⁽³⁾
- 4) According to some reports, the Syrian regime – in turn – facilitated the Jihadists’ rise to prominence on the Syrian stage by releasing some of their iconic, imprisoned figures⁽⁴⁾ with the aim of using their deplorable

⁽¹⁾ The history of ISIS foundation, taken from: <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>

⁽²⁾ For more information on these Jihadists and the military formations they lead, refer to: <http://shamtimes.net/archives/4329>

⁽³⁾ Refer to: <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>

⁽⁴⁾ Refer to: <http://shamtimes.net>

practices to brighten its own image as a moderate regime that is protecting the world from the terror wielded by takfiri Jihadists.

b) Syria and the challenge of “New Jihadists”

Every time the Syrian revolution makes the headlines of news bulletins and reports, Jihadists in general – and the Nusra Front and ISIS in particular – take the lion’s share of the discourse, as they have become the greatest attraction and source of controversy. This leads to a rightful question on the reason why Jihadists have come under the spotlight more than any other party and turned into the main preoccupation of Syrian news followers. Meanwhile, other parties involved in such acts have evaded responsibility and been exclusively labeled as rogue individual acts.

1) The Jihadists’ history of violence: Lt Col Hussein Harmoush’s defection from the Syrian army and his formation of the Free Officers Movement as the Syrian opposition’s first military organization, followed by Col Riad al-Assad’s defection and formation of the Free Syrian Army, both preceded the emergence of Jihadist organizations. Nevertheless, the two aforementioned organizations and other similar military organizations and formations that emerged during the Syrian crisis do not have an established history of their own. Indeed, they were born out of the crisis and their mention does not conjure up any relevant mental images. The picture is totally different in the Jihadists’ case. Despite the belated emergence of the Nusra Front, ISIS and other similar Jihadist organizations, they came under observers’ focus due to the Jihadists’ history of violence, the raw images of slayings and beheadings and the accompanying media commotion over the past decades, knowing that no mental distinction is made between these old organizations and their more recent siblings.

2) International versus local: The military formations active on the Syrian field are, in general, indigenous to Syria and abide by a Syrian framework par excellence. Their theses revolve around the pluralistic and nationalistic sphere to which the Syrian people and their whole world around them are familiar with. As of the 1990s, the Jihadists entered the era of “globalizing the Jihadist state” and developed their own organizational, intellectual and doctrinal ramifications, influence and communication beyond the Syrian border as they started to have supporters and partisans all over the world. As a result, the aim of Syrian Jihadists has become to establish an Islamic state and attract Jihadists from around the world to accelerate its emergence and consolidate its existence. It is no secret that this is a much higher aim than the one set by the Syrian rebels themselves, starting

with their call for reforms and leading to the call to overthrow the current regime in order to establish a pluralistic, democratic one.

3) The non-Syrian Jihadists: Extending the point above, the “globalization of the Jihadist state” has encouraged all Jihadists from Arab and non-Arab countries to come to Syria in order to take part in military operations alongside their Syrian counterparts. As part of the reports on this presence according to some sources, the number of armed foreigners in Syria is estimated at about 17,000 ‘non-Syrian foreign fighters.’ The greatest group of Arabs is composed of Saudi nationals whereas the greatest group of non-Arabs is formed of Chechens.⁽¹⁾ The fact that thousands of Arab and non-Arab Jihadists have joined the Syrian revolution and are fighting alongside Syrian Jihadists has granted some of them influence, power and local judicial and administrative duties in some regions that have come under Jihadist control. This has given rise to the question of how much Syrian society will accept to be controlled by non-Syrians, as this coincides with foreign customs and systems being imposed on the Syrian people.

4) Jihadists and the glorification of violence and killing: As we have already mentioned, everyone in Syria has been caught in the quagmire of violence and all hands have been stained by bloodshed, as everyone has been persistently involved in explosions and destruction. In the midst of confrontations in which all military formations are involved, Jihadists have succeeded perhaps more than others, as they are fearless in clashes, highly courageous and steadfast. Yet instead of acting as a reason for praise, these qualities have become a source of condemnation as Jihadists boast about their violence and killing, promoting the most horrendous of scenes and presenting them in a template of glorification to the cheers of Allahu Akbar. These practices have thus been enshrined as a pattern, a lifestyle and a cultural identity. It is worth noting that some among the Jihadists themselves find it hard to accept these actions and this holds true for both Islamists and non-Islamists who take part in – or sympathize with – the Syrian revolution and, beyond them, for the whole world.

c) The characteristics of a Jihadist personality

In his book titled *Al-Tatarruf Khubzon `Alamiyy* (Extremism as Daily Bread), Dr. Rashed Al-Mubarak defines the characteristics of an extremist’s personality,

⁽¹⁾The real count of these Jihadists is inaccurate since they form mobile groups and since these estimates are not published by neutral sources.

which “evidently include irritability and emotional outbursts. An extremist quickly gets tense, is often gullible and easily convinced and steered towards a particular purpose, especially if the saying or steering is done by someone whose honesty is trusted or whose behavior is admired. The more trusting and believing the extremist is, the less able s/he is to challenge ideas and stances, and scrutinize doctrines and beliefs.

Analysis, justification and balance are not part of an extremist’s nature. An extremist is so biased and overly loyal to a particular ideology, doctrine or belief that they cannot submit it to analysis or accountability, as they believe that their understanding and stance is unmistakably right and true while there is no right attached to the other side’s claims. If the extremist has a religious or sectarian upbringing, this adds in an aura of sainthood whereby any criticism leveled at them is an act of the devil or dictated by fantasy... And should they ever submit themselves to an examination of conscience, they often train their mind to bear false witness to their bias without feeling the slightest tinge of arbitrariness or irrationality. Therefore, an extremist does not know any hindrances to their intended actions. This does not mean that an extremist is evil by nature. Rather, they are often guided by motives they believe are sacred or noble.”⁽¹⁾

Based on the above and on the observation of the Jihadist-dominated Syrian scene, we can record the following traits that characterize Jihadists individually and collectively:

1) The claim of idealism: Jihadists and their supporters portray anyone who professes this thinking under an idealistic image based on the claim that this person has left the world and its temptations and come to the stages of Jihad to sacrifice their soul and have their blood shed while fighting and through confrontations in order to please God and support His religion and law.⁽²⁾ This, however, is in blatant contradiction of Allah’s saying, “Therefore ascribe not purity unto yourselves. He is Best Aware of him who wardeth off (evil)”⁽³⁾ and Prophet Mohammad’s, peace be upon him,) saying: Don’t hold yourself to be pious. It is God alone who knows the people of piety among you”⁽⁴⁾.

2) The illusion of purity: For all their violence and cruelty, the Jihadists’

⁽¹⁾ Mubarak, Dr. Rashed, Al-Tatarruf Khubzon `Alamiyy, Op. cit., p. 18-19.

⁽²⁾ Pro-Jihadist websites have taken to posting the pictures of Jihadists fallen during the confrontations in Syria. These are unknown people with no known history, stature, merit or honorable military achievements in battle. Still, they are praised, lauded and presented to the public opinion as national heroes.

⁽³⁾ An-Najm (53):32.

⁽⁴⁾ [Muslim].

actions are portrayed to as holy Jihad and flawless acts of heroism⁽¹⁾. Yet some heralds of the Jihadist ideology now acknowledge that many of these behaviors are illegitimate. Much research and scholarship has been published which condemns the kidnappings, killings, desecrations and destruction in which Jihadist groups are involved⁽²⁾.

- 3) The prevailing spirit of revenge:** An inclination to revenge clearly dominates how Jihadists treat those whom they capture and who do not share their opinions. One merely has to be an Alawi, Shiite or even Sunni with suspected pro-regime leanings to be forced to carry the brunt of the regime's crimes and punished in the harshest and cruelest of manners even though such behavior contradicts Allah's saying "Every man is a pledge for that which he hath earned"⁽³⁾ and "nor doth any laden bear another's load"⁽⁴⁾.
- 4) Shallowness:** The Jihadists have been unable to put forth any cultural vision or project for the renaissance of post-war Syria. Their notion of Jihad is limited to killing and destruction. Therefore, their theses only mention governance, opposition to ruling regimes and mobilization to fight them. In doing so, they fail to shed any light on the social, economic and behavioral problems resulting from the hostilities, each of which constitutes a sizeable challenge of its own. It is a well-known fact that disregarding these problems and failing to come up in advance with a plan to curb and address them leads to the downfall of the most stable and coherent of states, let alone states facing imbalance and insecurity due to wars.
- 5) The logic of exclusion:** Syria is a pluralistic country on the religious, sectarian, national, racial, linguistic, intellectual and political levels. This pluralism and diversity call upon the Syrians to accept one another and to preserve this characteristic feature of their country and to exploit it as a factor of civilizational wealth, which is manifested in its monuments, language, history, religion and culture. Yet the option of preserving Syria's pluralism and diversity will face a tremendous challenge given the Jihadists' influence and clout. Accordingly, will the Jihadists accept this pluralism? Will they succeed in managing it? Will they exploit this civilizational wealth? These are rightful and pressing questions emanating

⁽¹⁾ Some websites have published a video of a Jihadist firing a heavy anti-aircraft weapon at the head of a chained person located a few meters away from the source of fire. The man's head was instantly blown to pieces and this act of heroism received comments of praise! This goes without mentioning the numerous videos of field executions, which are welcomed and praised by viewers.

⁽²⁾ Dr. Hassan Abu Ghida has written a valuable book titled *Qadaya Fiqhiya fil 'Alaqat Al-Dawliya* (Issues of Doctrine in International Relations), which contains five studies on the plundering of fighters' money, the killing of Muslims by shielded fighters and the killing of civilians by fighters.

⁽³⁾ At-Tûr (52): 21.

⁽⁴⁾ Al-An`âm (6):164.

from the Jihadists' obtuse and shallow vision of the shape and structure of society and of the state's identity and project. Observers of Jihadist behavior know quite well that they already have a hard time accepting those who profess the same doctrines and their companions of arms who belong to other competing Jihadist factions. How then can these Jihadists accept those Syrians who profess different doctrines and methods and who differ from them in almost everything?

d) Syria in the eyes of Jihadists

As we have previously mentioned, Syria is one of the few Arab states that are characterized by national diversity (Arabs, Kurds, Syrians and Armenians) as well as religious diversity (Muslims and Christians of various sects and confessions). It is also home to the vestiges of successive civilizations and archaeological, religious and cultural monuments linked to various confessions, sects and nationalities. This is the true Syria, which has embraced all this diversity throughout many centuries and eras.

Against a backdrop of the ongoing war in Syria, observers exploring the reasons underlying this revolution, first and foremost, point to the single party's authoritarian grip on power, its epitomizing the state, society and culture through its cadres and iconic figures, and its reliance on a security system that has sought to exclude its foes through repression and the use of force.

As we are still nowadays in the throes of this Jihadist-dominated war, one cannot but wonder about the future of Syria as seen by the Jihadists. It does not take much scrutiny to realize that the future Syria as seen by the Jihadists is an Islamic state ruled by the Islamic Sharia.

The fact that the discourse on Islam as a civilizational framework has involved both Muslims and non-Muslims under the banner of respecting the religious freedom and cultural specificity of all confessions, sects and nationalities that lived under the umbrella of the Islamic Caliphate over successive centuries, leaves room for contemplation. Islamist intellectuals still put forward advanced theories underlining their visions of the Islamic state for which they strive and the situation of its non-Muslim residents in an attempt to avoid the mistakes committed during the historical experience of the Islamic state and its flawed relation with the non-Muslims residing within its boundaries.

Nevertheless, there is a drastic difference whether in theory or in practice between the Jihadists and the theories proposed by pioneering modern Islamist intellectuals. The few months that have followed the Jihadists' rise and their acquisition of power in some Syrian regions have shown a terrifying image. Indeed, the Islamic Sharia has been reduced to the delineation of boundaries

with no concrete constraints or criteria, which they implement and by which they rule. The call for Allah through dialogue and reasoning in the better way has been replaced by repression, restrictions of freedom and even liquidation, knowing that such practices are targeting Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

All of the above has put Syria, with its national, religious and cultural diversity, in the hot seat, thus giving rise to rightful questions about the usefulness of replacing one repressive unilateral regime with another, which may prove even more unilateral and repressive.

3) Religious discourse confronted with the results of violence and the challenges of peace-building

a) Destruction and the post-war culture of violence

200,000 people have fallen so far in the ongoing war in Syria and this goes without mentioning the ensuing pain-laden reality of families with no men no provide for them, households with no women to take care of them, orphans threatened by an unknown fate, and the tens of thousands of people forcibly disappeared or detained. There is also no ignoring the displaced, the number of whom has exceeded 6 million, i.e. about one million households displaced within the Syrian territory. This is added to the approximately 3 million refugees in neighboring countries, the brain drain and the emigration of capital owners, of highly-competent individuals, etc.

The ongoing war in Syria has indeed destroyed the whole state infrastructure and the Syrian national economy has incurred well-known dramatic losses, in addition to the economic losses resulting from cuts in power, frozen production and the deteriorating exchange rate of the Syrian currency.

Experts assert that bringing Syria back to normalcy will require immense efforts and years of work, which must first tend to people and stone before moving on to build the economy. In doing so, they cite some studies as estimating the cost of reconstruction and support to development in Syria at no less than \$200 billion with numbers climbing even higher if organized terror and the string of methodical destruction and vandalism do not come to an end⁽¹⁾.

In addition to the aforementioned scale of destruction at the very heart of Syria's social, economic and architectural structure, cultural destruction is yet another form of destruction, one which cannot be quantified or explained. The shelling and scenes of destruction, killing and bloodshed have caused the public to develop a wartime culture, one that is based on an instinct of survival and control and far removed from any reason, science or values. This culture relishes, glorifies and promotes killing, abuse, destruction and hatred.

This culture, which is growing in the consciousness and unconsciousness of individuals and groups alike, makes it extremely difficult for them to enter the post-war era. The longer the crisis, the more entrenched this culture is, as

⁽¹⁾ Summarized from the Al-Alam website: <http://www.alalam.ir/news/1450008>

it becomes part and parcel with those whose consciousness and thinking it has dominated while anything else is labeled as strange, censured and perhaps even odd. Those who are imprisoned by this culture will focus their efforts on ensuring the sustainability of the war to which they have grown accustomed even if it means reigniting it anytime it is about to wane merely because they have grown so used to it that they repudiate the atmosphere of peace.

b) Islam and the challenges of ending the war

The facts outlined above give a preliminary indication of the scope of the challenge to which Syrians will be confronted as soon as the current fighting stops.

On that day, Syrians will be faced with the tremendous destruction that has befallen their country and will be confronted with the challenge represented by an expensive reconstruction, one which is made even harder by the fact that large swathes of people are bankrupt while whole production sectors have come to a halt. On that day, the greatest of challenges will reside in financing the reconstruction and the specters of indebtedness and its related dependence which will hover above the Syrian state. Urgent needs will emerge then, such as providing shelter to those whose homes have been destroyed or providing the most basic necessities of life to those whose properties were looted or destroyed.

In addition to this material and financial level, a key challenge will emerge on the humanitarian level with the complicated social cases resulting from the war. The thousands of martyrs have left behind orphans and widows in a state of destitution due to the absence of a provider. Those wounded and disabled during the war will be confronted with the challenges of treatment, rehabilitation and integration, not to mention the psychological cases tormented by the war and its aftermath.

Displacement and sectarian sorting have given rise to the need for organizing a process of reconciliation, return and stability. Following this war-imposed sorting, Syrian reason and consciousness will once again be confronted with the challenge of accepting the other, living together and cooperating in order to build the Syria of tomorrow.

Based on all these challenges, the wandering Jihadist experiences in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Iraq, Somalia and other countries, and the statements of Jihadist theorists themselves, Jihadism was evidently unable to come up with a vision for the post-war era. This inability may have been grounded in some imbalance inherent within Jihadism as such, or may be due to the fact that Jihadism is faced with animosity, tracked and

besieged. Nevertheless, this does not deny the fact that Jihadists are unable to confront any of the aforementioned challenges.

These facts act as a prelude for something dangerous, as religious concepts are being used as a reason to further complicate the crisis by exploiting the religious discourse for mobilization, exacerbating confrontations and triggering killings. Will the Jihadists with their narrow-minded conception of Jihad succeed in bringing up religious concepts in order to use them as a reason to resolve the crisis?

c) Questions addressed to the religious discourse between war and peace

This section provides ideas and resources for the religious discourse, which is seeking to take on the moral and humanitarian responsibility for ending the war, building peace and reconstructing Syria both on a human and architectural level. The following ideas can, accordingly, be exploited to reconsider, assess and redirect this discourse through sermons, speeches and general religious orientations. These ideas can also act as an intellectual foundation to organize sessions attended by youths, especially those who are attracted by the discourse on violence, who have a potential to drift towards stoking the conflict, hatred and grudges, and who need to be protected and provided with spiritual and cultural immunity against the absurdity of violence.

There is a pressing need to analyze the discourse that uses religion in order to legitimize and sell the culture of violence, war and fighting. Yet there is an even more pressing need to come up with an alternative religious discourse that lays the foundations of a culture of peace and construction, using methods that compete with those of the other party. The following is merely a sample of the ideas and resources, which can be developed and exploited using various methods in the fields of education and formation.

• Initial and preliminary discussion

1) What is at the origin of life? Peace or war?

The Holy Quran reads Our Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire⁽¹⁾ and him verily we shall quicken with good life.⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Al-Baqarah (2): 201.

⁽²⁾ An-Nahl (16): 97.

Needless to say, God evidently wants humanity to live a good life on this earth, and this happens only through a life of peace and security.

Suffice it for us that God has stated in the Holy Quran that the grace of security is one of the greatest of God's graces to human beings as proven by His saying: hath made them safe from fear.⁽¹⁾

Suffice it for us, as well, that the prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, has said: You will not enter Jannah until you believe, and you shall not believe until you love one another. May I inform you of something, if you do, you love each other. Promote greeting amongst you (by saying As-salamu 'alaikum to one another).⁽²⁾

The promotion of greeting should not be a merely repetitive word, as it is rather the practical result of the meanings embodied in this word.

2) Religious discourse between construction and destruction

Amidst the numerous acts of destruction and the flurry of their heralds and the pretexts invoked to justify them, the most dangerous of all remains their religious justification. In fact, the use of religious pretexts to justify acts of destruction gives the impression that religion is a destructive tool whereas religion, in reality, commands to build the earth and put its riches to good use, as stated in the Holy Quran: He brought you forth from the earth and hath made you husband it.⁽³⁾

Islam has had recourse to Jihad in its broad meaning, which encompasses among other things education, development and construction, to build an advanced, enlightened and prosperous nation. Some, however, have restricted the meanings of Jihad to war and destruction, and have used it to justify the destruction of societies and states, wasting riches and constituents and undermining state infrastructure under the pretext that this amounts to defiance of the enemy. This constitutes a blatant disregard of the religious constraint, whereby military operations are bound by strict moral constraints.

Suffice it for us that Rashid Caliph Abu Bakr As-Siddiq gave the Mujahideen the following recommendation: "I hereby recommend you ten words you are to keep. Do not kill an old man, a woman, or a child. Do not destroy a house, do not injure date palms and do not cut down fruit trees. Do not slaughter any sheep or cows or camels except for food."⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ Quraysh (106): 4.

⁽²⁾ [Muslim].

⁽³⁾ Hûd (11): 61.

⁽⁴⁾ Kanz Al-`Umml (Treasure of the Doers of Good Deeds) under no. 14171.

3) Jihad and the real Mujahid

Is Jihad a bygone obligation? Or is it a truth with bygone or absent meanings and purposes? Who is the real Mujahid and the real hero? What is the difference between the killer and the fighter, or between the Mujahid and the terrorist?

Jihad is a great deed with great meanings and many domains. True Jihad means construction, establishment and building. One would be mistaken to limit the term 'Jihad' to fighting, even if fighting has become a postulate inherent to it.

One of the plagues that have come to afflict the Islamic nation is that the term Jihad has been reduced to a slogan, its many meanings have been ignored and confined exclusively to fighting. This fighting takes a random aspect that is not subjected to the system of values, constraints and ideals set by the True Religion. Some Jihadist leaders and iconic figures, such as Abi Mosab al-Souri and others, have offered an objective criticism of the Jihadist experience, highlighting the violations, transgressions and murders perpetrated in the name of Jihad. Therefore, Jihad is no longer an absent obligation as was prevalent in the literature of one Jihadist group during the 1960s. Rather, it has become a slogan and term, the truth, meanings and purposes of which have been rendered absent. The fighter turned into a killer and the Mujahid into a criminal or bandit. Jihad turned from a liberating, constructive and pioneering project into a devastating and ruthless tool of subversion and destruction. And this is wholly unrelated to the religion of God.

The post-war religious discourse should redefine Jihad in its broad meaning, and should get definitely involved in its reconstruction, development, education and health. This is the true Jihad, the burden and consequences of which should be shouldered by everyone in order to allow Syrian society to recover.

4) Islam between a culture of pardon and a culture of revenge

When wars rage on, they burn everything and everyone in their path. However, nations, civilizations and people have discovered that, though they rage on, wars will subside sooner or later. Yet what about the fire raging in the hearts and minds of war victims who have lost a dear one or who have been physically (with a leg or hand amputated) or materially (with the loss of a home, job, etc.) harmed?

In the post-war era, everyone will be confronted with a major challenge as they stand at the crossroads between the road to revenge and the road to forgiveness and pardon. Both choices are available, but revenge will have

war victims track those whom they think have caused their woes, pain and compulsion. Under the pretext of retribution and reprisals, these victims will transform unknowingly into tormentors who cause others even more woes, pain and compulsion. A spiral of violence would be born anew through revenge and counter-revenge, as killing, displacement and destruction go on indefinitely.

By contrast, the second choice entails challenging oneself and one's instincts and tendencies. This calls, in short, on those who have been harmed during the war to choose forgiveness and pardon in order to focus on saving what can be saved and pursuing healing, reunion and reconstruction before resuming the normal courses of their lives.

This will be no easy choice. Yet counselors, preachers and educators have to highlight to people the values of forgiveness, pardon and repaying evil with good. These are the teachings of the Lord and this is the Sunnah of prophets. Suffice it for us that we read the following religious texts, which confirm these meanings:

Yûsuf pardoned his brothers who once tried to kill him. He said: "Have no fear this day! May Allah forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy."⁽¹⁾

The Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, pardoned his people who had most harmed him and quoted this earlier verse, repeating to his people on the day of the conquest what Yûsuf had told his brothers.

Some might say that one should pardon only when one can and that the oppressed should settle their battle against the oppressor and get a firm grip on them before granting them pardon and forgiveness.

This vision is wholly rejected. Indeed, some prophets have pardoned and forgiven even though they were weak, in pain and broken. Abdullah bin Massud said: "As if I saw the Prophet, peace be upon him, talking about one of the prophets whose nation had beaten him and caused him to bleed, while he was cleaning the blood off his face and saying, O Allah! Forgive my nation, for they have no knowledge."

Furthermore, the data proves that no party can settle the confrontation against the other and that postponing pardon and forgiveness until victory is achieved and the oppressed gets the better of the oppressor entails, given the prevailing facts and evidence, prolonging the war and perpetuating the cycle of violence and tragedies.

Pardon and forgiveness are the choice that is likely to cut short the hit-and-run series and end the ongoing cycle of violence. This option is backed by many religious texts that urge to pardon, forgive and repay evil with good.

⁽¹⁾ Yûsuf (12): 92.

These include:

The need to repay evil with good: "Repel the evil deed with one which is better"⁽¹⁾.

The need to spread the value of doing good: "and do good. Lo! Allah loveth the beneficent"⁽²⁾.

The need not to hold anyone responsible for a sin they did not commit: "No laden soul will bear another's load"⁽³⁾.

The need to show justice and equity, even with violators: "and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly"⁽⁴⁾.

The need to be gentle and soft to overcome crises and adversity as mentioned in the following Hadith:

"When Allah intends good for a people, He gives them forbearance"⁽⁵⁾.

"He who is deprived of forbearance and gentleness is, in fact, deprived of all good"⁽⁶⁾.

The texts and ideas presented above are the core of a religious discourse which scholars, preachers and educators can develop, consolidate and spread in people's minds so that the values and teachings of the True Religion would provide the best help to overcome the calamity of war and its effects. Jawdat Sa'id's call, examined above, is certainly a cornerstone of this effort. And Allah is the source of strength.

⁽¹⁾ Fussilat (41): 34.

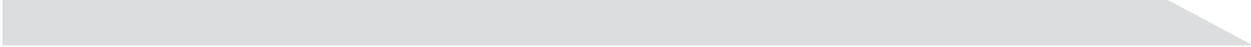
⁽²⁾ Al-Baqarah (2):195.

⁽³⁾ Az-Zumar (39): 7.

⁽⁴⁾ Al-Mâ'idah (5): 8.

⁽⁵⁾ [Ahmad].

⁽⁶⁾ [Muslim].



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This study presents a brief historical exposé of the Jihadist situation in Syria, both past and present, in order to understand its roots and branches so that we might detect the source of religious mobilization and frustration that we hear today and recognize its path and context. We can then work to understand its background and principles as well as get to know its goals and ambitions.

This study attempts to point the way towards an alternative religious discourse that builds for a post war era, so that religious discourse might become a tool to build, reform and protect, not a tool to provoke and mobilize for war and conflict. In other words: so that religious discourse might be part of the solution and not the problem.

This was the report's theoretical aim. On a scientific level, the study and its conclusions and recommendations are intended for use in a practical and empirical way as its content presents the raw material of sermons, teachings and training on all levels. The report also aims to spread a positive discourse that sets a basis for a post-war culture.

It is our hope that this modest effort might be a reason to stop the bloodshed, save people's lives and protect their dear possessions.

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