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Ali Shariati and the Dialectics of Authenticity

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Abstract

The problem of authenticity is a central concern in existentialist philosophy, most predominately with Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and later on by Martin Heidegger, Theodor Adorno, and Erich Fromm. However, the problem of authenticity has been a problem since humans began to think about what it means to belong to a particular group and not another. The search for personal authenticity therefore can be understood as a basic component of what it means to be human, as it is among the most basic questions that we ask ourselves. Yet, the question of authenticity is not merely a personal issue, nor is it just an issue belonging to the “genuineness” of inanimate objects, artifacts, and the arts. It is also an issue of religion and religious communities. The problem of authenticity was not an alien question for the Iranian revolutionary and scholar ‘Ali Shariati, who, during a tumultuous period in Iran, sought to discover an Islam that he could accept as being authentic, being rooted in, and defined by, the first paradigm of Islam, the ummah (community) of Prophet Muhammad and the early Shi’a. In finding such an authentic form of Islam amidst the stale and bureaucratized religion of his day, he attempted to resurrect the geist of primordial Islam in his activism and intellectual life. In this essay, I will explore the nature of “authenticity” from the perspective of a variety of key philosophers, highlighting especially the dialectics of authenticity as it plays a role in the thought and politics of ‘Ali Shariati.

Key Words: Authenticity, Shariati, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche

What is Authenticity: Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche

Because of the inherent danger of classifying humans in a variety of conceptual categories, we must be eternally careful as not to dehumanize an individual or group. In acknowledging this danger, we must be clear as to what “authenticity” means. Thus, we must ask the following questions: Are we not authentic humans simply by existing as humans? What could possibility make an individual human, existing no differently from the rest of humanity, “inauthentic,” i.e. lacking authenticity? Are not human rights universally applied to human beings, regardless of their so-called “authenticity”? Even those humans who lack certain qualification of being “fully” human, i.e. cognition – because they’re in a persistent vegetative state for example, are still bearers of human rights, and are afforded the ethical consideration that comes with those rights. Furthermore, these rights are inalienable as long as the individual remains part of the species, which, in fact, they cannot escape. Thus, if authenticity has nothing really to do with the fact of existentially being human, what does it have to do with?

The question of authenticity has recently become acute in the modern world, wherein nations, cultures, races, etc., confront each other and amalgamate much more frequently due to globalization. It is not the case that multiculturalism (or “amorphous authenticity”) is a new phenomenon, as many in the West like to complain about; the Middle East for instance has displayed a relatively peaceful form of multiculturalism, especially regarding religious communities, since the advent of Islam. For most of Islamic history, religious minorities lived in relative peace long before the secular state forced religion into civil society. However, within the conditions of modernity, especially with the ramifications of Europe’s post-colonial inheritance, the problem of authenticity within the discussion of national identity has led to a recent resurgence of extreme right-wing nationalism in many countries (Anderson, 2018: 230-243). The problem stems from the perceived “inauthentic” living in the West, the former “Christendom,” whilst claiming full westernity. These nationalist groups believe that the inauthentic “others” cannot be absorbed within Western societies without the collapse of their civilizational authenticity. Muslims especially are seen as “invaders” who are inherently incongruent with Western norms, values, and culture. It is often pointed out that many Muslims don’t even try to adapt to Western culture, but rather cling to their home-culture and religion – thus marking them as “not belonging to” the secular-libertine and democratic geist of the capitalist European nations; they are perpetual guests in an alien culture. However, this group is not the real problem for the

nationalists; for their reluctance to adopt westernity is not denied by them, rather it is embraced. These groups, which usually adhere to a fundamentalist belief-attitudes, are self-identified “guests” in another’s land.

The real problem for nationalists are not the fundamentalists. Rather, it is those who wish to claim westernity while maintaining their Islamic culture, customs, and beliefs. Despite their desire to live harmoniously in the West, they are looked at with suspicion; their westernity appears incongruent, and thus “inauthentic.” Even if they are bearers of human rights, the rights of immigrants and refugees, or even the bearer of rights that come from naturalization, they are viewed by many as not belonging to, or not possessing, something “essential” to the *volksgemeinschaft* (people’s community) within which they live. Moreover, because of their pre-political foundations, especially race, culture, and religion, they constitutionally cannot be absorbed – as themselves – into the community of European peoples, without “diluting” what it means to be a part of that European community.

Authenticity in this sense is close to what Martin Heidegger dubbed “*eigentlichkeit*,” often translated as “ownedness.” In his book *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), Heidegger explains authenticity as a matter of *Dasein*, a notoriously difficult term to translate from the German but roughly meaning “something that can be of its own,” i.e. when something is-and-for-itself, and is identical with itself, it can be understood as being authentic (Heidegger, 2008). Philosophically, Heidegger used this term to describe *Dasein* in an existential sense, especially in relation to the individual. Yet politically, especially in the Weimar Republic of the 1930s, he used this term to describe the incongruent “inauthenticity” of the perpetual other in Europe: The Jews. Heidegger saw this alien presence as being the agents of a universalizing modernity – a modernity that was destructive to German society and German identity, as it undermined and corrupted the *deutsche geist* – the underlying spirit of what it means to be a German (Di Cesare, 2018). Jews, whether they were capitalist or communists, were therefore “inauthentic” (*uneigentlichkeit*), as their collective spirit, values of which inhabited the spirit of modernity, had an anonymous and anonymizing force. Being such, Heidegger found it irreconcilable with the particularity and essential components of German-ness. Thus, the identitarian politics of the Fascists, which perpetually reminded the Jews of their essential otherness, could not accommodate an alien and corrupting spirit within their society. Germany, especially German Universities, Heidegger thought, must be *Judenfrei* (Jew Free) if it was to purify the *deutsche geist* of the degenerative influences of Jewish modernity (Mitchell and Trawney, 2017).

Søren Kierkegaard, in his book *Fear and Trembling*, also posits an important reading of the concept of authenticity. Like Heidegger before him, Kierkegaard is critical of modernity and the effect it has on individuals. Because of “massification,” the anonymizing power of mass media, pop-culture, and by consequence the consumer society, modern peoples, especially in the nihilism of Western societies, fall into existential despair. As Marx said, the masses live alienated from others, from nature, from their labor, and ultimately from their species-being, as the domination of the modern society, especially under the conditions of capitalism, wherein all things are subject to the markets and market logic, the individual cannot become “what one is,” and the time, resources, and energy it takes to discover authenticity, or to create an authentic existence, are appropriated and malformed by the needs and dictates of capitalism. Thus, in these conditions, the “self” (or even Dasein) is starved of the possibility of being-of-and-for-itself; the individual merely exists as a placeholder in society; he is a cog in the machine.

Kierkegaard sees the problem of authenticity as being especially acute in matters of religion, especially his Protestant Faith, which had become a mirror image of Bourgeois society. As the Bourgeoisie began to define Western culture and society, after it had neutralized the monarchies of Europe, the churches of Europe, especially among the Protestants who allied themselves both politically and culturally with the Bourgeoisie, conformed to the society created by the new ruling class. The destruction of the prophetic negativity of Christianity, which had begun when the Roman Emperor Constantine’s legalized and elevated Christianity in the 4th century, was nearly complete. Christianity, was no longer identical with itself, i.e. it was no longer an embodiment of the recalcitrant, prophetic, transcendent, and emancipatory values, principles, and ideals as expressed by Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth. It was no longer the “longing for the totally other,” but was the sanctification of the wholly now. As such, it was a church irreconcilable with itself. Being so, it was inauthentic, and was not a vehicle for individuals to transcend the mundanity of the status quo and experience the divine, but rather was an impediment to such an experience. The overall domination of inauthentic religious institutions, plus the group-think of the mass media and culture, created an impenetrable cage from which the masses never seemed to escape. Even though the masses may experience themselves as being free, they are in fact fully determined by the contours of their “massifying” society. Breaking out of this condition is the first step towards authenticity, as authenticity for Kierkegaard involved facing the reality of such illusions, embracing the fear and trembling that comes with living

outside the comfortability and predictability of the inauthentic, and taking the “leap of faith” into the abyss of submitting oneself to something beyond one’s comprehension. For Kierkegaard, finding authentic faith outside the confines of the official church was a condition for becoming identical with oneself.

Friedrich Nietzsche, on the other hand, finds Kierkegaard’s “leap of faith” into authentic religion as an abandonment of true authenticity. The real mastery of oneself comes from a leap of faith out of the life-denying “slave” religion and into the “master morality” of being beyond good and evil (Nietzsche, 1954). Nietzsche’s answer is formal; he doesn’t proscribe a way of thinking that is based on his own, but rather demands that the individual think without the crutches of inherited beliefs, values, and ideals. Thus, he demands that the nihilistic society of the West actually muster the courage to abandon the residual values of Christianity, which it stubbornly holds onto. If it can no longer believe in God, Nietzsche asks, should it not also abandon the morality of the slaves’ God, lest it be inauthentic? (Nietzsche, 2008: 103) Authenticity, therefore for Nietzsche, requires the courage to live without such inherited morality, to rise above the anonymous “herd,” and to set for oneself a transcendent project beyond the confines of conventional morality.

Dialectical Authenticity

Now that we have a basic, but not exhaustive, understanding of the concept of authenticity, we may discuss authenticity as it relates to political and social movements.

Theodor W. Adorno famously wrote a critique of authenticity, especially the German existentialist form, in his 1964 book entitled, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit: Zur deutschen Ideologie* (Adorno, 2007). For Adorno, the reactionary abandonment of critical reason, which was advocated by existentialist thinkers in their pursuit to recover the meaningfulness of pre-modernity, perversely helped to perpetuate the domination of the status quo: the necrophilic society of instrumental reason, class domination, violence-causing identity thought, meaninglessness anesthetized by consumptiveness: the unjust and sick society, which neither possessed the inherently meaningfulness of the theologically-saturated pre-modern world nor the actualization of what was meant to replace pre-modernity: The progressive and emancipatory ideals of the Enlightenment. Here, I am in complete agreement with Adorno’s assessment of German existentialism, and his attempt to rescue subjectivity, but I see a limitation in his thinking as it pertains to analysis beyond

the confines of the West. Authenticity, as we'll see, can be a powerful tool for political, cultural, and economic emancipation when it is a weapon of those who are under the hegemonic domination of the inauthenticity via cultural globalization, or when inauthenticity is weaponized as a tool to undermine the capacity for a people to resist political and economic domination.

Like many philosophical concepts, when viewed from the position of positivist social sciences, only a single perspective shines through – only the most obvious, most apparent, most immediate understanding of the concept is made ready-at-hand for analysis. Additionally, when it is viewed merely from within the prism of the West, an occidental interpretation of authenticity often delivers a one-sided reading. The fundamental *dialectical* nature of a given concept can be made visible once it is moved to a different social, political, and cultural context; in this case, we want to move the concept of authenticity out of the Western capitalist world, and into the world of 'Ali Shariati, and the period of revolution within Iran. In doing so, we may discover a concept that shines brightly, not as a tool of domination, but rather a ready-at-hand concept for emancipatory thought and praxis.

The notion of authenticity posits itself as a standard, and as a standard it can either possess negative or positive traits. It has a dialectical nature. Specifically, within any given social, political, and/or religious context, it can either be affirming of the status-quo or it can deny the legitimacy and viability of the status quo. It can either point to the rightness of the world-as-it-is, or it can demand an alternative to the world-as-it-is. That which is authentic, no matter how we chose to define that authenticity within a particular context, serves as the grand inquisitor for that which purports to be authentic. The authentic has an authority over the *postulant-authentic* by the fact of it is already identical with itself, that it is being-in-and-for-itself. As such, authenticity has privilege over that which is merely asking (*postulare*) to be recognized as authentic, or even the inauthentic that merely appears as authentic: the illusion of authenticity. The inauthentic may appear authentic, and thus engender the rights of the authentic, but in fact, in its essence, it remains inauthentic despite its appearances. Fool's gold *appears* to be gold until its essential nature is examined, in this case its chemical components, against pure gold (and its components). The pure remains a standard by which all that claims to be gold is judged. Additionally, pure gold may have external blemishes; but at its essence, despite its appearances, it is still pure gold. Thus, *essence (geist)* is what is important for determining authenticity, not appearance.¹

The dialectical nature of authenticity comes into view when examined from the stand point of value. Is authenticity a positive and beneficial value, or is it a negative, deleterious, and destructive, value? For this, we have to examine a couple examples.

During the Third Reich, to be authentic was to embody the essence of the *deutsche geist* – those particular and necessary existential components of what it means to be German, i.e. pre-political foundations: language, race, shared history, religious traditions, and national culture. In the case of the Nazis, it also meant to be committed to a shared ideology: National Socialism (German Fascism). One could be fundamentally German without being a Nazi, but as such one would be incongruent with the prevailing *deutsche geist* of the Third Reich. As such, the German dissidents, such as the “Confessing Church” (*Bekennende Kirche*), and the White Rose (*die Weiße Rose*), and other dissidents, were the *German-not-Germans* of the age. They were wholly Germans in their pre-political foundations but not-of-Germany as its *geist* was so constituted during the Third Reich. Their theological and ethical commitment laid outside of the prevailing political-cultural ideology, making them incongruent with constitutional aspects of “Nazi” Germany. As such, they could not be fully integrated into the dominant zeitgeist, and thus remained on the margins.

The marginal otherness of the Third Reich’s dissidents was especially pronounced when they shared a common bond with the subordinate racial group, in this case the Jews, who embodied, it was argued, not only “biological inauthenticity,” but the *geist der moderne* (spirit of modernity): *degenerate internationalism*, manifested in capitalism, communism, and even Christianity – which itself transcended nations and tribes. Such a heterodox *geist* could not be tolerated amidst the palingenetic “purifying” fervor of the Nazis. Thus, those who found themselves to be *uneigentlichkeit* (inauthentic) – that which cannot be reconciled within the national identity – also found themselves the subject of eradication. Along with the racially inauthentic (and inferior) *untermenschen*, all anti-fascist dissident groups – the “ideologically inauthentic” – were subject to harassment, brutality, and murder, at the hands of a hegemonic ideology of “authenticity.” Since authenticity was purity, and purity was essential for identity, Theodor W. Adorno wrote in his *Negative Dialectics*, “Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death” (Adorno, 1999: 362).

On the other hand, the notion of authenticity can be a means for political and social emancipation, especially when a nation, culture, or religion is under the

domination of a foreign power. One of the most powerful ways a nation, empire, or culture dominates another, is through the destruction of the oppressed's identity, whether that identity is anchored in culture, religion, history, language, etc. When a strong "sense-of-self" is diminished or destroyed, so too is the victim's ability to resist their oppression, for they have no resources other than the oppressors' resources to guide their resistance, no autonomous standard by which they can critique the oppressor, no "place-to-go" (figuratively speaking) even if they did escape the oppressor, as the source of their authenticity has been annihilated. In other words, since an independent, or at least "native," sense-of-self has been eradicated, the individual becomes an amorphous object, intensely pliable and eager to adopt whatever scraps of identity the oppressor is prepared to impose upon him. From the long history of imperialism, we see that the identity given to the vanquished has always been one of submission, humiliation, and degradation, with the result that such abuse is internalized and therefore possessed by the victim themselves. Following psychological insights of Frantz Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks*, 'Ali Shariati often pointed out that self-abasement, or the punishing of oneself for the wretchedness of one's existence, was the most powerful tool imperialists, slaveholders, capitalists, etc., ever invented (Fanon, 1967). The ideological justifications and legitimations of the rulers, masters, and imperialists skillfully inculcated guilt and shame into the victims of their domination: the victims became their own abusers, and in doing so keep themselves under the heel of their oppressors. They feel responsible for their lowly state, as they were not of the rulers' culture, class, or civilization – the "master civilization." They had not attained the greatness of their masters. They didn't share his biological features. Their lowly state demonstrated they were the *untermenschen* of world history. Although they parrot some of their master's cultural norms, and even speak his language, they remained not only inauthentic, but not even capable of authenticity within their master's closed world of authenticity. Such was the fate of the victims of history.

The problem of authenticity reappeared in the mid-20th century works of Jalal Al-i Ahmad, the Iranian scholar, whose work on *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification), helped shed light on the cultural imperialism (that aided Western political and economic imperialism), which was taking place in Iran in the 1950s and 1960s (although it began long before that time) (Al-i Ahmad, 1984). Al-i Ahmad's central thesis was that Iran was losing its cultural identity as it blindly adopted, assimilated, and imitated Western cultural norms under the Pahlavi regime, all in the name of "modernization." Indeed, the hegemonic West became, to borrow a Shi'i phrase, the

civilizational *marja-i taqlīd* (source of imitation), over and above Iran's own cultural tradition and Shi'i heritage. In losing its own authenticity, it became a cheap copy of the West: a "fool's gold" culture. On the outside it appeared Western, but in its essence such westernity was a thin veneer camouflaging Iran's authentic cultural identity.

Al-i Ahmad specifically targeted the secular intellectuals of Iran for (1) abandoning wholesale Iranian and Shi'a history and culture, while (2) being incapable of offering an alternative form of modernity that retained a modicum of authenticity – a modernity rooted in Iran and Shi'i Islam. For the secular intellectuals, value came from the adoption of all things Western, whereas all things Iranian or Shi'i appeared "backwards," and thus impediments to "progress." The West became the standard of judgment in their eyes. Thus, perpetually being an imitator of another civilization, and not a producer of civilization, the secular intellectuals kept Iran in an inferior position vis-a-vis the West.

Thus, the recognition of the inherent destructiveness of the inauthentic, i.e. *gharbzadegi*, and how it aids the interests of hegemonic powers, as well as the ruling class of Iran that collaborated with the hegemonic powers, led Al-i Ahmad to call for a "return to authenticity": a return to Shi'i Islam, but not the Shi'i Islam of the clerics, who proved to be ineffective guardians of the Shi'i tradition. Rather, Al-i Ahmad's "return to authenticity" existed through the re-appropriation and reevaluation of all things native; this meant a return to a Shi'ism prior to the routinization of authority in the clerical hierarchy (Dabashi, 1989). Shariati will return to this theme in his attempt to revivify (*tajdīd*) Shi'i Islam outside of clerical authority.

Yet, it is difficult to create an alternative form of modernity, as the modern condition is so intertwined with Western norms, especially democracy, capitalism and the consumer society, coupled with instrumental rationality (*mechanosis* in Al-i Ahmad's words), secularity, and militarism. Bridging the gap between Shi'i Islam and that which was essential to modernity, while retaining an authenticity that is so often undermined by the very contours of modernity, was a challenge taken up by 'Ali Shariati, the more academically astute intellectual successor of Jalal Al-i Ahmad.

Ali Shariati and the Politics of Authenticity

Ali Shariati's exposure to both the Iranian-Shi'a tradition and culture, while it was in a period of trauma, as well European culture, which was at war with itself in the 1950s and 1960s – as the post-World War II generation struggled to define what modern Europe would be – allowed him to understand both societies from within their own intellectual, cultural, and religious heritages. In other words, Shariati had the benefit of experiencing both cultures in an authentic – yet disputed – state, (1) at home in Khorasan with his paternal family, most of whom were Shi'i scholars, and (2) in Europe during his educational years in Paris, wherein he studied with (or the books of) some of the most important leftist thinkers, who were attempting to radicalize the values of the Bourgeois revolution that the Bourgeoisie failed to actualize: *Liberté*, *Fraternité*, and *Égalité*. Such values themselves were rooted in the Christian tradition, and thus akin to Islam's moral values (Rahnema, 2000: 1-48, 88-130).

Upon Shariati's return to Iran in 1964, with his doctorate in hand, he was immediately arrested due to his anti-Shah activism in Europe (Byrd, 2011: 92-98; Shariati, 1979: 82-87). Keenly aware that *gharbzadegi* was the ideological outcome of Iran's submission to Western hegemony, especially the United States, he set out to undermine the ideology by bridging the gap between Shi'i Islam and the radical emancipatory philosophy he studied in Europe. For Shariati, Shi'i Islam had become routinized under the domination of the clerical class. In other words, it no longer expressed the spirit of the primordial community of Muhammad (*tawhīd* as belief and praxis), whilst retaining the authority of that community (Küng, 2007: 143-188). Its authority was not identical with the initial revolutionary religious geist that ultimately produced it. Shi'ism, under the "Safavid clerics," had become worldly, in the sense that it no longer defied the world-as-it-is, i.e. the unjust class-structured status quo, but rather affirmed it either (1) positively, by actively cooperating with the Pahlavi Regime and its Western allies, or (2) remaining "quiet" on matters of the state: clerical political quietism (Rahnema, 2008: 236-237). The traditional Shi'i idea that all political authority is *illegitimate*, but unfortunately *necessary* until the return of the Mahdi, was not satisfactory for Shariati, who believed that the clerics had abdicated their religious responsibility to resist the corruption of society via an inauthentic and un-Islamic "quietism," which only aided Iran's integration into the West's hegemony and Iranian society's blind imitation of the Western culture. Shariati, the "Islamic utopian," as Ali Rahnema calls him, thought it best to create an ideal society that the Mahdi could later

endorse, as opposed to waiting for him to return from his “occultation” (*ghayba*) and construct it (Rahnema, 2000). As such, he did not believe bourgeois stance that religion should be privatized, as it was in Western democracies. Nor did he believe that Western society was all-together translatable into the Iranian-Islamic context. Indeed, much of the West’s culture was not even desirable, especially its abandonment of religiously rooted morality, its metaphysical materialism, and its scientism. Thus, Shariati’s envisioned an Islamic society had to be equally (1) modern, i.e. conforming to the necessities of modernity, and (2) religiously authentic. In order to fulfill the second point, Iran had to return to the radicality of its roots: Shi’i Islam, which was itself rooted in *tawhīd*, the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad, the example of his primordial *ummah*, and the example of ‘Ali and Ḥussein, whose willingness for martyrdom became exemplars for Shi’i praxis. This return to religion would be defined by the spirit of Abu Dhār al-Ghifārī’s religious socialism (Shariati, 1986).

This social project involved a wholesale introspective return into the Shi’i religious tradition; it was an attempt to revive (*tajdīd*) those aspects of revolutionary Islam, which had once transformed the degenerate desert peoples of Arabia, but then had become dormant under the demands of the Iranian monarchical state, the “Safavid” clerical authority, and Western imperialism. Shariati did not see his project of returning to Shi’i Islam as being an exercise in *bid’a* (innovation); rather it was the reestablishment of authenticity in religion that would allow for the Iranian people to (1) understand the ideology of domination that was inherent with *gharbzadegi*, as it gave it a standard by which to judge the inauthenticity of “westoxification,” (2) understand that a better and more authentic society could be brought about by the struggle against such domination, and (3) that in order to bring about such a society, the inauthenticity of the *‘ulema* had to be challenged along with the Shah on the basis of Islam itself.² Islam had to return to itself by leaping out of its compromised and inauthentic “massified” form and into its “ownedness.”

Resurrecting and translating the *geist* of primordial Islam, as it was so constituted by Muhammad and his *ṣaḥābah* (companions), as well as the lives of ‘Ali ibn Abū Ṭālib, his son Ḥussein, and later Shi’i martyrs, into the modern world is fraught with difficulties. First, the *zeitgeist* of Prophet Muhammad’s era was radically different from the *geist* of the 20th century (and now 21st), and thus the appropriation of a way-of-being that was over a thousand years old could itself be considered *inauthentic*, as it does not derive from the contemporary, but is an attempt to replicate or mimic the matrix of values, principles, and ideals of another

time. Second, attempts to reconcile pre-modern religious beliefs and practices with secular – and “godless” – modernity, itself appears to be hopeless, as again, the *zeitgeists* (spirits of the ages) are *irreconcilable*. Third, being that much of modern society no longer believes in the pre-modern beliefs of religion, but rather have committed themselves to metaphysical positivism and scientism, wherein religious metaphysics are thoroughly suppressed, a “return” to religion may prove vacuous, inadequate, and/or simply impossible: a threshold that we cannot return to, as the *weltgeist* (world spirit) has long past such possibilities.

Despite these objections to the determinate negation (*aufhaben*) of the primordial *geist* of Islam and the early Shi’i community, ‘Ali Shariati nevertheless attempted to reconcile what he thought was the true Islamic spirit, the prophetic attempt to determinately negate the unjust status quo, with certain essential contours of modernity (instrumental reason and materialist metaphysics especially), in an attempt to construct a form of modernity that could accept Islam as an integral part of its structure. What was most important was that this form of modernity accepted the *prophetic* nature of primordial Islam without attempting to transform it into a political, economic, and cultural ideology which validates, justifies, and legitimates, the new, but still unjust, society. As a constitutional component within an Islamic modernity, Islam must remain the prophetic other – the perpetual grand inquisitor of society, especially of the powerful, the wealthy, and the religious, within such society. This primordial Islam, which Shariati seeks to recover, cannot be reconciled with the world-as-it-is. Nor can it become a reactionary ideology and fall into fundamentalist belief attitudes. Islam is the *guide* of the people, not the people’s *manager*. It is open to Western modernity, but not “intoxicated” by it. It seeks to achieve its place in the autonomous consciousness of humanity; it is not a heteronomic force acting *upon* humanity, but is rather actualized through humanity.

Shariati saw an example of this form of recalcitrant Islam in Abū Dhār al-Ghifārī, who was Islam’s first “god-worshipping socialist” (Rahnema, 2008: 213-214). Shariati believed that al-Ghifārī was an embodiment of authentic Islam put into practice after the death of the prophet, and thus a model for all subsequent Muslims. Unlike many of the later Muslims, who abandoned Islam’s prophetic nature, bringing worldliness into the religion, al-Ghifārī resisted the temptation to neuter Islam of its capacity to be *contra mundum* (against the world), with all its sins and shortcomings. Islam would remain the religion of the broken, the abused, the excluded, and the wretched: the religion of the marginalized and the victims of history. Anything outside of this *geist* would be inauthentic Islam, as the *geist* of

Islam in the 7th and 8th century was at war with the *weltanschauung* (worldview) and *zeitgeist* (spirit of the age) of *Jāhilīyah*, the “age of ignorance,” which only gave way to *al-Jāhilīyah al-Jadīd*, or “the new age of ignorance,” which has plagued the world since. This is precisely how Shariati could overcome the objection that translating the Islamic *geist* of the primordial *ummah* in modernity is inauthentic; he had to determinately negate (*aufhaben*) that former *geist*, leaving behind those aspects that could not be translated into the modern period while preserving, augmenting, and actualizing those elements that could still be rescued in the 20th century. In doing so, he revived Islam from within its own resources, thus escaping the possibility of an inauthentic appropriation of another’s culture, values, and worldviews, as other Western-oriented intellectuals in Iran had done. Although he was influenced by liberational thinkers of the West, such inspiration led him back to the sources of Islam, and the Islamic equivalent of such emancipatory thought, which, as stated earlier, had become dormant as the religion of Muhammad had become reconciled to the very world he sought to transform.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the problem of authenticity takes on both positive and negative characteristics depending on from what perspective one approaches it. From the perspective of the dominant group, inauthenticity can be a reason for the destruction of the non-identical, the non-conforming, the “other” of society. On the other hand, the return to authenticity can be an emancipatory act when under the domination of a heterodox force, such as an imperialist culture. For the Jews of Europe, their inauthenticity, their not-belonging to the European Christian *geist*, and later being the agent of an “inauthentic” modernity, led to their demise in the Shoah. Yet in Iran, under the Shah, wherein all things Western led to the demise of all things native, a revaluation of the Shi’i-Iranian tradition – the authentic – gave a people the capacity to emancipate their nation from a hegemonic imperialist power. ‘Ali Shariati, and the appropriation of his class-struggle-infused Islamic language and philosophy by the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979, helped recover the authentic spirit of revolution for Shi’i Islam, at least amongst the revolutionaries.

Note

1. This will be denied by those who claim that pre-political foundations are the essence of authenticity, i.e. those who believe in a *volksgemeinschaft* as being the only true way to organize an authentic society. Full membership in such a society is determined by race, ethnicity, language, shared history, etc. This is opposed to those who are open for a *willensgemeinschaft*, the “intentional” or “willed community,” which is rooted in the sentiment *E Pluribus Unum* (From the many, one).
2. Shariati did not advocate the removal or destruction of the ‘ulema; rather he urged that they also return to the radical authenticity of the early sources of Shi’i Islam.

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Shariati's Reading of Karl Marx

An Iranian Perspective

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Abstract

The story of Marxism in Iran is a very interesting phenomenon which has been debated from different vistas. For instance, Tudeh Party is a very significant discourse in Iran where one can find aspects of Marx and Marxism and more importantly the Soviet version of Marxism which attracted many strata of Iranian intelligentsia and intellectuals. The impact of Marxism was so widespread that the Iranian traditional scholars in Qom, Mashhad and even Najaf tried to engage with it due to the influence it exerted on all aspects of everyday life in Iran. We can mention one of the seminal intellectual efforts by Allama Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabaei and Ayatullah Morteza Muttahari which led to 5 volumes books on Philosophical Principles and Methodologies of Realism which is a respond to Marxism and the Left Hegelians from a neo-Sadraian perspective in Qom. But we have other engagements with Marxism and all its manifestations in Iran and one of the interesting academic interpretations of Marx is Ali Shariati's approach which has less been debated at the Global level. In this paper, I shall focus on his critical reading of Karl Marx. In other words, I would like to know whether there is a possibility of conceptualizing the Shariatian approach on Karl Marx and if such a possible reading is of any significance then what are its discursive components?

Keywords: Ali Shariati, Karl Marx, Tudeh Party, Marx-Weber, Gharbzadegi.

Introduction

In 1982 Hamid Algar published a book by Mizan Press in Berkeley by the title of *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies* (1979) and the book came to be known as Ali Shariati's approach to both Marxism and other western ideologies. However it should be noted that Ali Shariati did not write any book by this title in Persian. His collected works consist of 36 volumes but none of them is entitled as *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*. The title of this book demonstrates an aspiration of Algar as a convert European Muslim who tried to capture the spirit of revolution and revolutionaries who were in one way or another inspired by Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran. But this is not how Shariati understood Marx, Marxism or other western schools of thought. In other words, I think the book which was published under the name of Hamid Algar is more of an Algerian approach rather than a representation of Shariati's social theory. (Miri, 2017) This should be mentioned clearly as this book and the genre created by Algar in Europe and USA and afterwards even internalized by many scholars who came from the Islamicate societies have had a deep impact on Shariati studies in the context of social sciences and humanities. Another important issue which should be taken into consideration is that whether it is possible to talk about a Shariatian approach on Karl Marx. Did Shariati write any particular book on Karl Marx? In order to answer this question we should be reminded that most of works left by Shariati have been in oral fashion and only few books have been written in a book-format. Most of what we have today in terms of collected works have been classified and catalogued by his students and the Foundation of Shariati Studies in Tehran. In other words, today we have 36 volumes of collected works by Shariati which did not exist in this fashion during his lifetime and they have been edited and assembled posthumously and in these collected works we cannot find any book related specifically on Karl Marx or Marxism at large.

If Marx and Pope did not Exist

Karl Marx as a towering figure looms large in the work of Ali Shariati but he did not write any specific book on Marx as a social thinker and philosopher but this does not mean that Shariati could be understood without any systematic reference to Karl Marx. Of course, this is not to argue that Shariati is a Marxist as many have tried to suggest or demonstrate during these past five decades but a specter of Marx flies over the entire world of Shariati's ideas and thoughts. However, while he was alive a very small book or rather a pamphlet was published by the title of *If Marx*

and Pope did not Exist and this is the only book which I know of where Shariati mentions Marx in the title of his book. But it would be a grave mistake to limit Shariati's conception of Marx and Marxism and different schools of Marxism to this very little pamphlet as the Marx's ideas and insights run through Shariati's entire body of work. But it would be wrong to assume that Shariati is a Marxist in the ideological sense of the term as we see many studies which have been done on Shariati characterize him mistakenly as a Marxist/Islamist ideologue of Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. I think this characterization is entirely wrong as the literature which run based on this assumption has been inattentive to critical nuances which exist in Shariati's outlook on various issues of religion, society, knowledge, metaphysics, social theory, the role of reason and revelation in the constitution of self and society, sacred and secular as well as the question of authenticity and ideology. This is to argue that we can read Shariati in the orientalist manner conducted by John El. Esposito (Esposito, 1983), reconstruct him in the eurocentric fashion by Hamid Algar or study him in the reductionist style constructed by Asef Bayat (Bayat, 1990) where the latter reads Ali Shariati as an Islamic Marxist. But in my view, none of these interpretations neither do justice to Shariati nor capture the nub of Shariatian approach to Marx as he himself stated that his sociological methodology is based on what he termed in Persian as "Marx-Weberi". How should we translate this into English or German? Should we render this as Marxist-Weberian approach or a Weberian reading of Marx or a Marxist-Weberian understanding of the social life? I think all these are open to debate but very few have paid systematic attention to nuances in Shariati's discourse due to, at least, three abovementioned factors of Eurocentrism, Orientalism and Reductionism. Let me at the outset of my speech make my position clear that I am not here talking about Marx but I am trying to give a brief picture of Shariati's interpretation of Marx or what he reconstructed as Marx. Maybe what he has interpreted as Marx is not accurate for those who have another approach to Marx but I think it is permissible to speak of an Iranian perspective on Marx based on the Shariatian approach. This is what I am trying here to present before you. Moreover I should add that I am not going through all the collected works of Shariati here but I am focusing on the small book of his which is entitled as *If Marx and Pope did not Exist* and based on this pamphlet I draw a picture of the Shariatian reading of Marx. I would like to go to the point on Shariati's approach to Karl Marx by arguing that he was one of the first Iranian social theorists (Miri, 2017) who distinguished between Marx and Marxism. To say this today it is not a very novel position but we should bear in mind that during the Cold War in the 20th century and in the middle

of ideological battles which were waged by various proponents of global ideologies of East and West and their allies in Iran after the Fall of Mosaddegh on April 1953 and the heavy presence of the Communist Party of Tudeh in Iran which followed in an orthodox fashion the school of communism of the Soviet Leninist/Stalinist interpretation and their European communist brethren, it was indeed a unique move by Shariati who in his book *Worldview and Ideology* argued that

"... some of intellectuals who believe in Marxism ... they are very much similar to believers who adhere to Islam without having any accurate knowledge of Islam as a religion ... these two groups are very similar to each other In other words, it should be argued that most of intellectuals who have faith in Marxism ... do not know Marx's thought, ideas and body of knowledge. These believers assume that when you talk about ideology, it should be understood in terms of class relationship, i.e. ideology should be understood in relation to the concept of a class. But the matter of fact is that Karl Marx himself wrote a very important book on ideology where specific issues related to this notion had been discussed in depth ... the title of this book is German Ideology The very construction of this title shows that ideology is not particular to a specific class ... but ideology could be stretched to cover a national entity, a class, or even be related to a religious group or even humanity at large ..." (Shariati, CW: 23. 61).

In *If Pope and Marx did not Exist* Shariati argues that if both of them did not exist

"... then the philosophy of history and the egalitarian movements as well as anti-colonial and all forms of movements against class inequality ... and the move towards socialism as well as anti-capitalist forces ... which constitute the cornerstone of all progressive intellectuals around the globe ... they would have been designed and mobilized differently" (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

Shariati argues that Pope as a symbol of the clerical establishment has imprisoned the spiritual zeal of human being and Marx

"... as a Hegelian philosopher with atheistic inclinations ... and as a Jew who was the victim of racism and inhumane discrimination of the Church ... he came under the influence of labour movements in Europe, in particular, Germany, France and England ... and

ideologies such as socialism, communism and syndicalism ... had a great impact upon Marx ... and all these progressive ideologies were trying to redeem humanity from necrophilic forms of life ... and all these progressive movements were fighting against a form of capitalist system where the value of labour was replaced by the value of capital ..." (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

In other words, Shariati argues that Marx by equating the Pope and Jesus Christ, he has come up with a critical philosophy of history based on the idea of dialectical materialism which is conceptualized

"... as the determined historical transformations which are beyond the will of human actions ... and based on this fundamental logic he conceptualized all different kinds of wars, conflicts and clashes in various epochs and cultures as well as civilizations in terms of economic conflicts ... and by doing so, he has reduced the complexities of human history by interpreting all phenomena in terms of capitalism and the 19th century social relations in Europe ..." (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

Marx on Social Life and Diversities of Religious Forms

The concept of Eurocentrism was not very current during Shariati's era but there are ample references to this idea in his books. Of course, it is not a secret that Jala Ale Ahmad who was Shariati's contemporary coined the concept of *westoxification* which is the English translation of the Persian word of *Gharbzadegi*. It is argued by many critics that Garbzadegi is a pejorative Persian term variously translated as 'Westernized', 'Weststruckness', 'Westitis', 'Euromania', or 'Occidentosis'. Jala Ale Ahmad used this concept to refer to the loss of Iranian cultural identity through the adoption and imitation of Western models and Western criteria in politics, religion, education, the arts, and culture; through the transformation of Iran into a passive market for Western goods and a pawn in Western geopolitics and strategical equations. Needless to argue that Ale Ahmad's critics claimed that he took this idea of westoxification from Seyed Ahmad Fardid who was an Iranian philosopher at the University of Tehran with a Heideggerian inclination. Although Fardid himself claimed that Ale Ahmad distorted the meaning of the concept as Fardid did not employ the word in terms of political hegemony of modern Europe or West but he referred to the hegemony of Greek metaphysical form of conceptualizing existence.

(Abdolkarimi, 2015) However, what I wanted to state is that during Shariati's time there were heated debates on the role and position of the west among Iranian intellectuals but the concept of Eurocentrism as a social science category seems to be missing. Of course, one could ponder upon this question and ask why Iranian social scientists did not conceptualize their concerns in the parlance of social theory and sociological paradigms but this is not my concern here. In other words, Shariati does not employ the concept of Eurocentrism but he critiques the eurocentric inclinations in Marx's perspective. I think this is an important turning point as far as the Iranian perspective is concerned as here we see a social theorist who understands, in his own way, Karl Marx and his position in the modern social sciences but he does not repeat the European or American and even Russian interpretations of Marx. On the contrary, he attempts to conceptualize his own reading of Karl Marx and this is something which needs to be understood and reflected upon. But I do believe that this task cannot be done by eurocentric social theorists or orientalists who study the 'orient' as an object but this is a project which could be accomplished by social thinkers who see a relevance in Shariati's interpretation of the western sociological canon but not in terms of eurocentric parameters. This may not seem a valuable project when your intellectual point of departure is a eurocentric subjectivity but this is the starting point of any authentic thinking where the subject realizes her/his own position in the process of thinking. Now let me get back to Shariati's critique of Karl Marx. Shariati argues that by reducing the complexities of social life, Marx has been inattentive to the diversities of religious forms. In other words, in Shariatian approach to Marx's discourse on religion, we can discern a kind of critique that

"... Marx's conception of religion is based on a Christian form of organization of religion ... and in addition, it seems Marx has wrongly equated Pope with Jesus Christ ... while Pope resembles to the Roman Empire rather than Jesus of Nazareth" (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

Of course, Shariati argues that by Pope

"... I do not refer to the 19th century head of the Catholic Church but I refer to the clerical establishment which by monopolizing the religious authority in the course of human history, they have consolidated the unjust rule of the aristocracy over people ... But Marx seems to be inattentive to the essential difference between Jesus and Pope and forgets the fact that the Church is the prison of Jesus

not equal to the transcendent message of the Holy" (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

One could question, why did Shariati opt for such a critique of Marx and what are the theoretical foundations of the distinction between the historical religion and authentic religion in the Shariatian social theory? I think, Shariati is trying to argue that if Marx did choose materialism as the base of his socialism in Europe that was due to the conditions of European history which is intertwined with Christianity of Latin Lebenswelt. But we in the non-European world should realize that the historical forms of Christianity in Europe are different than the ways and the forms Islam and Shiism have developed in Iran and

"... as an intellectual we should not repeat what Marx has done in another context and it would be a grave mistake to think that his concepts and ideas are of universal significance In other words, if Marx's intellectual contributions are of any value ... that is his commitment to the social movement which he attempted to empower and by doing so emancipate them from the necrophilic capitalist relations which enchained workers under inhumane conditions ... but an Iranian intellectual needs to understand the position of religion in his own society ... and in relation to his own history and based on these studies and reflections form a conceptual framework which could empower the Iranian subject This is to argue that if intellectuals in Iran would repeat the religious criticism of Marx based on his materialism ... then they would deprive themselves of a force in the Iranian context which could be utilized in the uprising of the masses ..." (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

Of course, the history of revolution in Iran demonstrated the accuracy of Shariati's insight vis-à-vis communist ideologues of Tudeh Party who attempted to internalize the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx with a Leninist interpretation in Iran and that caused a huge distance between them and the masses but Shariati by understanding the nub of Marx's critique he distinguished between the particular and the general dimensions of Marxism in relation to religion. For Shariati, religion

"... is a special human faculty ... and an aspect of human consciousness ... it is related to existential self-consciousness in human self which could enable humanity to grow and self-actualize ... this should be separated from forms of suppressions which have been

at the disposal of oppressive regimes in the course of human history ..." (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

If we do not distinguish between religion as an existential form of self-consciousness and historical forms of religions then we should rest assured that true socialism cannot be realized without existential self-consciousness which in Shariati's conception is tantamount to religion *par excellence*. Why does Shariati argue in this fashion? Because

"... if people do not reach a certain form of moral/spiritual growth ... which could enable them to dispense with their own rights for the realization of equality ... i.e. a level of extra-material form of understanding devotion/sacrifice ... then it is impossible to build a just society. Because rights are never at equal level ... and materialism would willy-nilly result in individualism ..." (Shariati, CW: 22. Pp 223-233).

In other words, he argues that individualism would lead to a destructive atomism in society and this would not lead us to socialism and religion as an existential form of self-consciousness is the antidote to atomism of modern society.

Inverse Reading of Karl Marx

This is to argue that Shariati reads Marx inversely. What does it mean? What could an inverse reading of Marx in the Shariatian approach entail? Let me explain this in a Frommesque fashion. Erich Fromm introduces a non-Marxist interpretation of Karl Marx which is of great significance and this Frommesque reading of Marx in Iran due to the overwhelming hegemony of Tudeh Party has not taken any root in a serious fashion. In Fromm's view, Marx should be divided into two periods of the Young Marx and the Old Marx and for understanding the latter aspect of Marx we need to take into consideration the romantic and humanistic forms of Marx which expressed itself during the period of the Young Marx. But in Iran, whenever intellectuals talked of Marx, the Old Marx was the axis of debates and the other dimension of Marx was neglected due to the reliance of the Tudeh Party on the Leninism-Stalinism of the Soviet Politburo which made any autonomous reading of Marx almost impossible. But Shariati was aware of western readings of Marx and the existential as well as non-Marxist readings of Karl Marx where religion was not solely understood in terms of repression but the emancipative power of religion

counted as a special element in the constitution of self and society. In reverse reading of Karl Marx (similar to Fromm's approach to Marx), Shariati introduced a new vista in Iran which so far has not been taken seriously or even understood but this is what we need to do in academia, i.e. revisiting the Shariatian interpretation of Karl Marx. Of course, this needs a deep understanding of Shariati as a social theorist and a rounded view of Karl Marx as one of the towering figures of social theory. In other words, the question which should be raised is that whether a Shariatian reading of Karl Marx could be of any value in the context of global social theory and if the answer is affirmative then how this reading should be conducted and conceptualized. I attempted to shed some lights in this regard but I think we are at the outset of such an endeavor.

Conclusion

Very few sociologists and social scientists around the globe do believe that it is possible to talk of a Shariatian reading of Karl Marx as many think either Shariati was an anti-Marxist or a Muslim Marxist. I think both of these labels lack accuracy and preciseness in terms of theoretical understanding of both Marx and Shariati as the latter was neither a Marxist nor a Muslim Marxist but he had approached Karl Marx from his own point of departure. Yet Shariati's viewpoint has not been sufficiently studied and this is something I hope it could be realized by viewing him through non-Eurocentric vision of social theory and social sciences. To put it differently, we need to reorganize the boundaries of sociological canon and classics where we can see non-European and non-Eurocentric thinkers and social theorists in the pantheon of sociological temple.

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Islam as support and stigma for Muslim migrants and their children

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Abstract

Despite the reported benefits of religion for individuals, adhering to Islam can be a cause of stigma for Muslims living in Europe, North America and Australasia. This article discusses the tensions that occur where Muslims would normally turn to religion for support in both resettling and developing an indigenous Muslim identity in the next generation, but where belonging to that religion also stigmatises them. It asks: Why do Muslims still retain their Muslim identities in the face of prejudice and discrimination? How do Muslims cognitively adapt to the tension between Islam as a source of both support and stigma? Through qualitative analysis of a large survey (n=572) of Australian Muslim social attitudes conducted in 2007–2008, it found that an Islamic religious affiliation can provide emotional and instrumental support due to group membership and that Muslims are able to cognitively re-interpret and reframe the stigmatising narratives—individual success may vary depending on the quality and type of Islamic interpretations to which they have access.

Keywords: Muslim identity, stigma, social exclusion, Muslim Australians, reframing narratives

Introduction

One of the benefits of religion for many individuals is its positive effect on a variety of different measures of wellbeing (Ferraro and Albrecht-Jensen 1991; McCullough et al. 2000; Abu-Raiya and Pargament 2012). In a statistical analysis of data drawn from mostly US Christians, Ellison (1991) found positive connections between different religious variables and subjective wellbeing. He argues that it is not just the social support that religion offers as a coping mechanism, but that religious beliefs help individuals interpret the events in their lives and give them significance and meaning. However, as Friedman and Saroglou (2010) note in their social psychology-based research of Muslim and non-Muslim immigrants to Belgium, religion can also be a cause of stigma among minority groups, particularly immigrants settling in a new host culture where their religious identity is a stigmatised one.

This article will discuss the tensions that occur where Muslims would normally turn to religion for support in both resettling and developing an indigenous Muslim identity in the next generation, but where belonging to that religion also stigmatises them. I ask: Why do Muslims still retain their Muslim identities in the face of prejudice and discrimination? How do Muslims cognitively adapt to the tension between Islam as a source of both support and stigma? I will answer through qualitative analysis of responses to a large survey of Muslim social attitudes conducted in a Western country (Australia) in 2007 and 2008. I have used a cross-disciplinary approach, drawing on theories and findings from different branches of knowledge, particularly psychology, political science, sociology, and theology. This approach is not unusual in the field of religious studies, because religion touches on so many different domains of human experience. In the context of the current article, stigma has been extensively addressed in the field of psychology; social exclusion in political science, economics, and sociology; immigration in history, sociology, law and political science; and Islamic beliefs and practices in theology, history, law and more. As such, I have marked out the disciplinary background of the various theories and frameworks I have used as the basis for this article.

Background

Islam and Muslims in the West¹

The Muslim world is characterised by its diversity and Muslims living in the West share a wide range of ancestries, cultures, interpretative orientations, political

attitudes, classes, educational backgrounds and more. Furthermore, the context of each environment into which Muslim immigrants settle varies with some places being more welcoming and tolerant of diversity than others. Nevertheless, there are some discernible common themes that appear when studying the issue of Muslim settlement in the West. Of relevance to the current article, is the idea of Muslims as a ‘problem’ and anxiety over how best to contain the ‘contagion’ of terrorism. Sociologist Turner (2007) argues there are two basic models of managing Muslim settlement adopted by Western nations or advocated by Western political voices: 1) the liberal model of pushing Muslims into a ‘moderate’ mould so that they might more successfully assimilate, and 2) containing and constraining Muslims through surveillance, control, and even physical containment. These two models have emerged due to the perception of Muslims as a problem people and are periodically debated whenever a spectacle event involving Muslims occurs—such as the recent Manchester and London terrorist attacks—or Muslims are the subject of political dog-whistling² or blatant Islamophobic vitriol in the media.

Despite its history of British colonialism disenfranchising traditional Indigenous peoples, and the enactment of legislation to promote a White Australia policy in the twentieth-century, Australia has been relatively successful in building a religiously and culturally diverse society. Nevertheless, public acceptance of a migrating religion such as Islam is affected by faulty information as well as the level of visible difference implying distance between the host culture and migrating group (Bouma 1997). Thus, examining the experiences of Muslims in Australia as they settle and make Islam a permanent part of the Australian religious landscape can help illuminate how and why a stigmatising group identity is retained by, and even reinforced in, many of its members.

Muslims are seen as a problem group in Australia for a variety of reasons (e.g. Dunn 2001; Hage 2002; Kabir 2004; Poynting 2004; Yasmeen 2008; Pratt and Woodlock 2016) but these can be summarised as: the fear that Muslims will undercut and therefore ‘steal’ jobs and resources from Anglo-Australians; questioning Muslim loyalty to Australia, especially in the context of Australian involvement in overseas conflicts with Muslims; suspicion against Muslims when violent acts against Westerners and Western interests occur at Muslim hands; negative discourse from politicians and other high-profile public voices, promoting an Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric about Muslims; and media attention on the actions of controversial Australian Muslims who express values perceived as

antithetical to social cohesion. All of these reasons has led to ‘Muslim’ becoming a stigmatised identity.

Research Design, Data Gathering and Description

The data used in this article came from the Australian Research Council Linkage Project *Muslim Voices: Hopes & Aspirations of Australian Muslims* (headed by Professor Emeritus Gary D. Bouma and Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh) that I helped gather as part of my doctoral research (Woodlock 2015). Muslims living mostly in New South Wales and Victoria filled in a twenty-three page questionnaire of both open- and closed-ended questions covering topics to do with wellbeing and happiness; living in Australia; relationship with country of origin for immigrants; values and characteristics; relationships and leisure; religion and spirituality; work and employment; education; economics, as well as background demographic information.

Participants were sourced from a mixture of convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and peer nomination.³ Data collection took place during March 2007 through to May 2008 with 572 useable questionnaires returned. The Muslims who participated included men and women, Australian-born, migrants, refugees, those in their late-teens, young adults, mature adults, Sunnis, Shi‘is, Sufis, converts, the religious and those less-so. There were 318 females and 254 males; the median age for the response set was 30; 59.3% were Victorian residents whilst 40.7% were from New South Wales. The largest group (41.8%) were Australian born, however most were children of migrants with one or both parents born overseas—only 3.8% had two Australian-born parents. The top ancestries nominated by participants were Arab, Turkish and Asian. The questionnaires were nearly all completed in English with a small number completed in Arabic in Turkish. In summary, the data for this research comes from a large and heterogeneous response-set, with the limitation that the data collection method excluded those unable to read English; those under the age of 16; those Muslims who belonged to organisations that did not participate and who did not have access to the Internet or who did not frequent the online fora in which it was advertised; incarcerated Muslims; and those simply unwilling to participate.

Understanding Social Exclusion and Stigma

Researchers in the field of social psychology have theorised that human beings have a fundamental need to belong in groups; we need to form and maintain strong and stable relationships with others (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). We are social creatures and inclusion provides us vital physical and mental benefits. Leary (1990) describes a spectrum from maximal inclusion in which others seek out an individual through to maximal exclusion where an individual is cast out and ostracised. Consequently, because inclusion is important to us, much of our social behaviour is about choosing groups in which belonging is important to us, and signaling our desire and desireability to belong. Furthermore, even if we do not take advantage of inclusion in a group through any tangible markers, knowing that the support is there reduces psychological ill-health. Social cohesion—of concern to social economists as well as social psychologists and sociologists—describe it as occurring where we trust each other, share a common sense of identity or belonging, and manifest those feelings in tangible behaviours (Chan et al. 2006). Social inclusion is where there is acceptance of diversity and individuals can act on the knowledge they have access to common resources and opportunities (Oxoby 2009). Because of this, if we are socially excluded, we feel anxiety, jealousy, loneliness, depression and lowered self-esteem (Leary 1990).

Stigma occurs when an individual possesses an attribute—a character trait, physical attribute, or affiliation with a specific identity—that marks them as ‘spoiled’ to others (Goffman 1963). Kurzban and Leary (2001, 188) describe the process of stigmatisation as occurring ‘when an individual is negatively evaluated, be it conceptualized in terms of discrediting, negative attributions; perceived illegitimacy; or a devalued social identity’. The stigma mark can be visible or invisible, controllable or uncontrollable, linked to appearance, or to behaviour, or to group membership Major and O’Brien (2005). It can also be mistakenly applied, as is the case for Sikhs and Orthodox Christians sometimes wrongly targeted for being Muslims by racists and Islamophobes. In this case the stigma is real, and markers such as the turban, the long beard, complexion, the sub-continent ancestry or foreign-sounding name identify them as belonging to a devalued group incorrectly attributed to the victim by the perpetrator.

Stigma goes beyond mere negative evaluations when it becomes a group mechanism to exclude a subset of people from social interactions. ‘Personal rejections based on idiosyncratic preferences would not be considered

stigmatization' (188). Stigma results from a person's membership of a socially-devalued *group*. In their review of psychological theory and research on stigma as identity-threat, Major and O'Brien (2005, 395) point out that stigma is 'relationship- and context-specific'. That is, stigma does not reside in the person, but in the social context in which they are situated. It reflects a power differential between the stigmatised and those who would stigmatise them. The more visible the stigma mark, the greater the stigmatisation that results. History has also demonstrated that groups will enforce stigma marks on members of socially devalued groups to produce visibility such as the Star of David that Nazis forced Jews to wear. Kurzban and Leary (2001, 192), writing from the perspective of evolutionary psychology, argue that stigma is a cognitive adaption by human beings to avoid the 'pitfalls of sociality', serving three main purposes: 1) 'dyadic cooperation': to protect individuals and groups against poor partners in social exchanges 2) 'coalitional exploitation': to bolster the power and resources of one's own group by exploiting another one 3) 'parasite avoidance': protect against those likely to carry communicable pathogens. As such, stigma served a logical purpose in the evolutionary history of human society. However, given its application has often resulted in severe injustice and even genocide, we might do well to question its utility today.

Research has found that stigma can actually strengthen affiliation with the stigmatised identity, particularly when the prejudice and discrimination is more overt (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004; Major and O'Brien 2005; Derks, van Laar, and Ellemers 2007). Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey (1999, 251) wrote: 'When disadvantaged group members perceive themselves as being rejected in a variety of situations because of discrimination on the part of the dominant group, they feel both more hostility toward that outgroup, and they increasingly identify with their minority group'. However, this is only among individuals who already feel a strong sense of commitment to the group identity. For those with a low identity commitment, it appears more strategic for them to attempt to leave the stigmatised group, rejecting the stigmatised identity (Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 2002).

Stigma and Religiosity

There is evidence that experiences of social exclusion and stigma can heighten religiosity in those for whom religion is already important. In the field of social psychology, Aydin, Fischer and Frey (2010) conducted five studies to assess the

effects of social exclusion on religiousness in order to understand the underlying psychological processes. They demonstrated that exclusion led to heightened religiosity amongst Turkish Muslims in Germany compared with Muslims in Turkey. Furthermore, in four more studies with Christians in Germany they found that personal religiosity is used by socially excluded individuals as a successful coping method, bolstering their sense of self-esteem, and lessened their aggression. The limitation of this study was that the more interesting religion coping method findings were with German Christians whose social exclusion experiences would be for reasons other than their belonging to a socially-devalued religion. That is, the religion to which they turned as a coping mechanism, is not the cause of their stigma.

Indeed, Friedman and Saroglou (2010) in their Belgian study found an indirect association between religiosity and self-esteem and depressive symptoms through the intervening variables of perceived intolerance of religious beliefs and feelings of anger toward the host society. It was not the religious beliefs and membership in the group themselves that caused lowered wellbeing, but rather the stigmatised social context: 'it is the combination of deeply held beliefs and an intergroup context that is somewhat in opposition to these beliefs that is associated with negative psychological outcomes' (193). However, contradicting this, Jasperse, Ward and Jose (2012) did not find support for a link between perceived discrimination and lower psychological wellbeing in their psychology-based study of 153 Muslim women in New Zealand. The women's Muslim identity was strong and perceived religious discrimination relatively low, however visibility (through wearing hijab) was linked with greater perceived discrimination. Yet, wearing hijab was associated with greater life satisfaction and fewer symptoms of psychological distress. 'A strong sense of centrality, belongingness, and pride, as the psychological component of Muslim identity, seemed to exacerbate susceptibility to the detrimental consequences of perceived religious discrimination while Muslim practices, as the behavioural component of Muslim identity, appeared to buffer negative influences' (264). It may be there is a gender component here, as Rippey and Newman (2006), in their quantitative analysis of 152 White American and Arab Muslims, found a relationship to perceived religious discrimination and subclinical paranoia among Muslim American males.⁴

Islam as a Source of Stigma

Muslims in Western societies perceive that they experience higher levels of discrimination, prejudice and stigma than non-Muslims (e.g. HREOC 2004; Poynting and Mason 2007; Poynting and Noble 2011; Friedman and Saroglou 2010). There are a number of stereotypes that (particularly visible) Muslims face living in Western societies, including that they are inherently more religious; that they are potential fifth-columnists; that they avoid friendships with non-Muslims; and that Muslim men oppress women. These are all themes that arose in the responses given in the *Muslim Voices* questionnaire. The following represent how some of the participants experienced being stereotyped by the wider community:

My immediate family are not very religious, others in the family are more religious than others. Myself I am not a believer, but nevertheless I am still considered a Muslim by the family and outsiders, and subjected to what every other Muslim is experiencing. (M/Migrant/Lebanon-heritage/42yrs)

Ever since 9/11 everyone seems to think that Muslims are terrorists. Where I strongly believe that Muslims are anything but terrorist. We believe in peace and harmony. (F/Australian-born/Lebanese-heritage/22yrs)

People have stereotyped views of what Muslims are like and I don't look like what most people think are 'Muslims' so I often hear others (non-Muslims) say very very racist things about Muslims because they don't know I'm a Muslim. It really hurts. (F/Birthplace n.s./Sri-Lankan heritage/27yrs)

In this last response, the stigma she feels is still real, despite her membership in the stigmatised group (Muslims) being invisible to outsiders. Common to these responses is the disconnection between how the individuals perceive themselves and how outsiders perceive Muslims. This was a very strong theme that emerged repeatedly in the participants' responses. This distancing tactic is a coping mechanism, which allows them to protect their self-esteem (Major and O'Brien 2005). Sometimes racist Australians were blamed, sometimes ignorance on the part of non-Muslims, and sometimes blame was given to other Muslims who, from the perspective of the participant, did not live up to the teachings of Islam, bringing censure on Islam and Muslims. Compare this response on whether there has been an

increase or decrease in racism: ‘stereotyping is the issue due to bad publicity and lack of education’ (F/Migrant/Lebanese-born/19yrs) with ‘I think that if the moderate Muslims like us were given the chance to speak out there wouldn’t be any racism. People like Taj-Idin have caused this racism’ (F/Birthplace n.s./Lebanese-heritage/44yrs).⁵

Stigma Marks and Situational Cues

Because Muslim is a stigmatised identity, there are both ascribed and adopted stigma marks that identify (or as mentioned above, mis-identify) a person as following the religion of Islam. These include: skin colour; ancestry; Arabic and Asian names, particularly those with religious significance like ‘Muhammad’; Islamic dress i.e., enveloping, baggy clothing, keeping a long beard for men, and wearing headscarves or face-veils for women; engaging in religious practices publicly, such as praying; food choices, such as requesting or purchasing halal meat; as well as accent, habits of speech, and language, i.e. using Arabic religious phrases ‘*inshallah*’ (God-willing), ‘*alhamdulillah*’ (praise be to God) and the like. Not all Muslims possess all of these marks, and as mentioned in one of the responses quoted above, the stigma can be invisible.

In response to a question asking whether participants had perceived a rise or decline in extremism amongst Muslims, some were at pains to point out that these types of ordinary Islamic religious practices were unfortunately being perceived as extreme by some in both the Muslim and broader communities:

Non-Muslims mix up extremism with practising Muslims because they grow long beards or wear a hijab or wear ‘different’ clothing—this is described in the Koran. (F/Australian-born/Indonesian-heritage/33yrs)

I think that what people identify as being extremist has changed so some people may link this to being extremist i.e. people who are practising nowadays like wearing niqab,⁶ hijab, not shaking hands, beard etc. are identified as being extreme. So I don’t think there is necessarily a rise in extremism of the type that would endanger other people. (F/Migrant/Pakistani-heritage/25yrs)

The situational cues that may cause a Muslim to experience stigmatisation can vary greatly depending on their individual circumstances, and also the current

political climate. For example, having to reveal a Muslim name on a form or CV, such in this rather touchingly sad response:

I came from Jordan to Australia to improve my language and build a better life securing my future, 2004. I have finished my IT bachelor degree, the Department of Immigration in Sydney offered me the chance to become as skilled migrant because they need IT people to live and work in Australia, I found it a good chance for me to build my future here. Till now I could not find IT job due to I have no local experience and I guess my name is Abdallah is not beauty name to recruit, well that's fine but how can I get local experience while no one wants to give a chance, and I am not willing to change my name for that. A friend of mine who is from Syria and graduated with me, once he decided to change his name from Ali to Alex in his CV people and agencies started to respond to his application. He went for the interview he did not get any job so far, soon they know and see his outlook, they reject his application in a polite way. Am not trying to prove here that all Australians are racist but this is a real daily experience. I have many Australian friends and families, where I care for them so much. (M/Migrant/Jordanian-heritage/27yrs)

Other situational cues include going through airport security: 'Since 9/11 everyone thinks that Muslims are terrorists. We can see this in airports where they pull out Muslims to do extra screenings and checks' (F/Migrant/Sri-Lankan heritage/16yrs); working around religiously prohibited items or declining social engagements if alcohol is involved: 'Carrying prohibited (*haram*) stuff such as alcohol or wrong belief symbol. It was hard to explain that to the Manager and normally I lose job in my work' (M/Birthplace n.s./Jordanian-heritage/35yrs); wearing Islamic dress in public, or accompanying a hijab-wearing woman 'My wife takes hijab now and when we do go out people often make us feel uncomfortable just by looking at us. It is a stupid thing for them' (M/Migrant/Pakistani-heritage/28yrs); and exposure to media with negative stereotypes of Muslims: 'Racism and prejudice against Muslims are on the rise thanks to politicians and news media. Especially the Radio Talk show hosts' (M/Migrant/Bangladeshi-heritage/49yrs). This last situational cue can refer to both an individual Muslim's exposure to negative media, and also experiencing stigmatisation from others' exposure to negative media, as this participant's response shows: 'You find certain people changing their attitude (e.g. the way they greet you) if something against

Muslim has been said on TV or written on the newspaper' (F/Migrant/Egyptian-heritage/34yrs).

Responding to Stigma

Individuals vary in their response to stigma, and the effect on their wellbeing also varies depending on whether an individual feels they have the resources to cope with the challenge, or whether they lack them. Research demonstrates the 'tremendous variability across people, groups, and situations in response to stigma' (Major and O'Brien 2005, 412). Resources include the ability to limit exposure to the source of stigma, e.g. prejudiced people; developing a strong group-identity; and dispositional optimism.

As mentioned above, one of the features of stigma is that it can strengthen affiliation with a stigmatised identity where a strong connection already exists. By deepening one's connection to a stigmatised group, an individual can receive emotional and instrumental benefits; social validation for one's perceptions and a sense of belonging (Branscombe and Ellemers 1998; Major and O'Brien 2005). This was expressed by some participants in the current research.

The reason for Muslims coming back to their way of life is they feel being marginalised. When this happens you naturally go to group to be heard and that is your roots. (M/Migrant/Afghani-heritage/50yrs)

I think that Muslims have been portrayed as the different and socially isolated group in today's society that they have began to look inward. I think that Muslims are looking more at the Muslim identity as apposed to a racial identity. (F/Australian-born/Egyptian-heritage/31yrs)

After 9/11 attacks President Bush said either you are with us or against us. That made me think who is 'us'. I am not one of either of them. It made me think who am I? I used to drink, go clubbing and every thing that a normal Australian of my age at that time would be doing. But these attacks and President of America made me think where do I stand? That was a very tough realisation. I am not a terrorist I thought but who am I then? I knew I was born in a Muslim family but knew little or nothing about Islam. I started studying it with an open mind. Today after nearly 8 years I am proud to be a

*Muslim and could not have done better to find my true identity.
(M/Migrant/Pakistani-heritage/28yrs)*

However, as the next section will discuss, identifying more strongly as a Muslim, increasing one's religiosity, goes beyond group support.

Islam as a Source of Support

Aside from the sense of belonging and solidarity that comes from stronger group affiliation with others who share a similar stigmatising experience, religion—in this case Islam—offers a set of cognitive theological resources for reframing the experiences of prejudice and discrimination, and even Islamophobic hate attacks.⁷ Many Muslims believe that everything that happens is part of the plan of God for their lives, consequently experiencing discrimination is a test to stay true to Islam.

Allah is Powerful over all things, how can a Muslim be concerned when He is the provider of our sustenance? It is not proper conduct to fear the creation, in this case employers [in response to a question about concern with employment levels for Muslims]. (F/Australian-born/Turkish-heritage/21yrs)

*As Muslims are under threat of negative propaganda worldwide, so the defensive mechanism became activated to save our faith and dependance to the Almighty Allah become more and more stronger.
(M/Migrant/Bangladeshi-heritage/51yrs)*

When you are practicing you see things differently. That when a hardship comes that is just Allah testing us. To see how much we can handle. What got me into the religion is knowing that it is the right way to go. You feel complete. You feel like there are less things to worry about and are grateful for what you have. (F/Australian-born/Lebanese-heritage/22yrs)

Also, that there is a reward for suffering in the path of God. When asked about whether or not there was a rise in racism, one participant responded: 'Who cares? When you realise on the Judgment Day the great reward that you will get from racism, cheers' (M/Migrant/Tunisian-heritage/43yrs). Becoming more aware of Islamic teachings, allows some participants to reject the stigma as being misplaced. That is, the perception that Islam promotes violence and religious extremism is

rejected as being false. As such, the spoiling of the Muslim identity is rejected as being a case of mistaken ignorance of malevolent propoganda, rather than being internalised as true.

I believe the hatred towards Muslims is because of the wrong view on Islam and the influence of the latest events which has made people want to be closer and more understanding of their religion. (F/Migrant/Iraqi-heritage/40yrs)

After 9/11 people have started to become more informed about Islam so they can combat prejudices against Islam. ... As people are trying to show non-Muslims what true Islam is, by being moderate but religious at the same time. (F/Migrant/Pakistani-heritage/20yrs)

Muslims & non-Muslims have been searching for truth since all the terrorist attacks. When Muslims really know their religion they truly accept Islam like myself. True Islam is about peace & loving God. (F/Migrant/Turkish-heritage/37yrs)

Some Muslims feel they have been given the task of demonstrating to others how their stigmatising perception of Islam is wrong.

I am proud to be Australian and Muslim and its my job to show people the real Islam. The forgiveness, love, trust and caring. These are some of the simple basics of Islam. (F/Migrant/Iraqi-heritage/43yrs)

I think that with the increasing publicity of Muslims in the media particularly 9/11, it has been a wake up call to Muslims, to really educate themselves on what Islam teaches us, in order to be better able to answer the increasing amount of questions asked by non-Muslims. (F/Australian-born/Serbian-Albanian and Indian-heritage/22yrs)

Ultimately by reframing the stigma as belonging not to themselves but to the misunderstandings of others, as a test from God, and as something that will give them divine reward for enduring, Muslims are able to rehabilitate their spoiled identities and find in Islam a source of support.

Conclusion

Stigma is always context-specific where high-status group members stereotype, exclude, discriminate, and limit access to social resources to members of a socially-devalued group. Stigma places a psychological burden on individuals who experience it, particularly where they may feel they do not have the coping resources to deal adequately with the threat to their self-esteem. This then results in lowered psychological and physical wellbeing and has potential to push individuals into isolation and even marginalisation. There is conflicting evidence in the literature as to whether increased religiosity helps or hinders individuals in response to stigmatisation, with some research demonstrating the utility of religiosity as a coping mechanism, and other research finding that religiosity is indirectly related to lower psychological wellbeing where there is a perception of hostility towards the religion in question, and anger at the host society. This research has shown how Islam can act as both a source of stigma but also a support for some Muslims. This is based on both the emotional and instrumental support that group membership can bring, but also because Muslims are able to cognitively re-interpret and reframe the stigmatising narratives. The implication, however, is that it may well depend on the type of Islamic interpretations to which an individual has access.

Note

3. By 'West' or 'Western' I mean the nations of Western Europe and the former colonial settlements of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.
4. This is a political messaging technique in which a subtle message is communicated by a politician or public personality through meaningful code-words, phrasing or response-delays to send a xenophobic or racist message to a sub-group of voters or audience-members, whilst being able to plausibly deny the inherent xenophobia or racism to the generality of those outside the sub-group. It takes its name from high-frequency whistles used in training dogs, but which are outside the spectrum of human hearing (Poynting and Noble 2003).

5. As such, generalisability to the entire Muslim Australian population is not possible, however as I sought and obtained a large and diverse dataset, I can make suggestions for further quantitative research.
6. Although it is outside the scope of the current article, further research might illuminate whether this is because Muslim men and women face different stigmatising stereotypes. Muslim women are viewed as the victims of oppression who need saving, whilst Muslim men are seen as the oppressors, threatening to both 'their' women but also to the broader non-Muslim society as potential terrorists. Consequently, the discrimination Muslim men face may be of a qualitatively different nature than the discrimination women face.
7. Here the participant was referring to controversial Muslim leader Taj El-Din Hilaly, former imam of Sydney's Lakemba Mosque who was often featured in Australian media defending himself against charges of anti-Semitism; misogyny; and supporting some terrorist attacks.
8. Female face-veil.
9. This article is concerned with what Muslims believe Islam teaches them, rather than reifying Islam.

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Religion in the Poems of Nationalist Poets of the Constitutional Period in Iran

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Abstract

Religion as an element of nationalism plays a pivotal role in the unity and solidarity of a nation. For this reason, nationalist poets of the constitutional period utilize the religions of Islam and Zoroastrianism to unify the Iranians against despotism and colonialism. Aref, Eshqi, Bahar and Farrokhi are the most important poets of this period who make Zoroastrianism one of the elements of Iranian nationalism. Following the precedent of Akhundzadeh, Mirza Malkom Khan and Asadabadi, these poets criticize Islam and radical religious people; thus, Aref and Eshqi consider Islam as the cause of the Iranian nation's stagnation. Inspired by these intellectuals and influenced by the studies of orientalist about ancient Iran and the Zoroastrian religion, these nationalist poets admire this religion and even consider converting to it as the savior of the Iranian nation.

Key Words: Religion, Poem, Poet, Nationalism, Constitutional period

Introduction

The Constitutional Period of Iran plays a pivotal role in the history of Iranian literature; for this reason, it is often the focus of research by literary scholars. In this period, prose and poetry were influenced by the simple writing style of newspapers, political, social events and national movements. This means that, during this time,

Persian literature experienced a fundamental change both in content and appearance. In particular, the poems of this period inclined towards a bold nationalism which challenged previous religious concepts. Religion, and the poets' attitude towards religion, is the subject of this article. What role does religion play in literary nationalism in the Constitutional period? What are different trends towards religion in Iranian nationalist thought? I address these questions in this paper.

Nationalism and religion

The word nationalism is used for describing two phenomena:

- 1- The attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their identity as members of that nation.
- 2- The activities that members of a nation undertake in order to achieve self-government and independence (Miscevic 2014, 1).

In Smith's opinion, a "nation" may be considered to be "...a group of people who has common historical territory, myths, memories, culture, rules and customs" (Smith 1991, 14).

Many authors use nationalism and patriotism interchangeably. However, some authors have made distinction between them. In the 19th century, Lord Acton believed that nationality is "our connection with the race" that is "merely natural or physical," while patriotism is the awareness of our moral duties to the political community (Acton 1972, 163). Also, in George Orwell's opinion, nationalists want to acquire as much power and prestige as possible for their nation, in which they submerge their individuality. While nationalism is aggressive, patriotism is defensive. Orwell believed that patriotism is a devotion to a particular place and a way of life one thinks best, but has no wish to impose on others (Orwell 1968, 362).

According to Anderson, the nationalism that appears in the eighteenth century should not be considered as a political ideology but should be studied more from a cultural/historical perspective, considering the major cultural systems that preceded it. In his explorations of the concept of nationalism, Anderson examined the cultural roots of national identity in religion and other pre-modern forms of identity. In his view, the concept of nationalism that was emerging in novels and newspapers allowed people to begin considering themselves as a group despite not knowing each other personally (Anderson 1996, 10-16).

In the past, each religion and its sacred language united people and provided them with a collective identity. When in the sixteenth century the sacred Latin language began to ebb, societies that were formed because of this language disappeared (Fazeli 1995, 4). The diminishment of the “universal church” and Latin helped create space for new forms of national identity. The church’s language in Europe faded, the victim of the passage of time over the course of the medieval era, and, more directly, of the invention of printing press, which enabled the rapid production of many non-religious books. Ultimately this paved the way toward a new nationalism.

Concurrent with this, the growth of governments in Europe also played a pivotal role in the appearance of nationalism. These governments were independent from the church and ruled several regions and states under one monolithic system (Ibid, 5-6).

Anderson believes that African and Asian nationalist identities were born out of European nationalism. He feels colonialism produced three things which had a prominent role in the growth of nationalism in these areas: the census, the map, and museums. In censuses, Indians knew themselves as Indian, and Filipinos were known by the name that Spain chose for them, for example. Maps gave a lot of countries borders and identity. Some countries like Kuwait, Arabia and Iraq appeared for the first time in the maps prepared by European colonizers. Then, historical maps emerged; these maps tried to show people how their country's borders were in the past – they wanted to prove that the country had an ancient background. Museums likewise helped to establish a historical narrative that gave the new nations greater legitimacy. An important point here is that a common language does not necessarily create nations, rather a common history creates them (Anderson 1996, 163-187).

Nationalism in Iran has its own characteristics. According to Cottam, the first lighting of nationalism in modern Iran appeared when Naseroddin Shah granted a tobacco concession to the English Major Talbot. This concession, which was granted in the nineteenth century, led to the constitutional revolution, a revolution in which nationalism had a pivotal role (Cottam 1987, 14-15).

During the constitutional period nationalism emerged in Persian literature. National concepts were at the center of literary works and national literature soared. When contrasted with classical Persian literature, it is clear that these new works were guided by different objectives. Literature, which had focused on divine and religious concepts, now put the Iranian man at the center. The old religious themes

were omitted, faded out or replaced by new concepts. In this period, writers like Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh and Sadeq Hedayat, and the poets like Aref, Eshqi, Bahar, and Farrokhi became the leaders of literary nationalism in Iran.

Religion in the poems of Aref Qazvini

Aref considers composing national poems the main goal of his life. As a result of his work he is known as the national poet of Iran. He expresses freedom, the aspirations of the constitution, and release from the clutches of Russia and England in his poems.

Aref always criticized ignorance and religious superstitions. He did not have a good experience with Islam. He quarreled with the clergy and believed they made people mourn even at their weddings.

*“Whether in marriage or mourning
My affection is for Karbala”* (Aref-e Qazvini 2001, 44).

He also criticized women's hijab and expressed several times that the misery of Iranians began after the Arab invasion.

*“O moon! Leave the hijab, do not hide your face;
Do not listen to the speeches of disgraceful preachers”* (Ibid, 273).

*“Ever since the day the Arabs set foot in Iran
No good tidings have come to the land of the Sassanids”* (Ibid, 263).

In Aref's poems, Islam is replaced by Zoroastrianism because he believes the Iranian nation will be saved when they convert to this religion. In his opinion, a real Iranian patriot is someone who converts to the Zoroastrian religion.

*“If you like your country as I do,
You should worship your prophet
...
This fire will save your life
Life is hidden in this fire
If you take shelter under this fire,
You will see Iran as a garden like Khalil
Since the day this flame went out,*

The pot of nationalism has ceased to boil” (Ibid, 350).

In these couplets, Aref believes that Iranian nationalism and Zoroastrianism are correlated; he declares that after Islam, Iranian nationalism faded out.

He admires Azerbaijan as the cradle of Zoroaster and, in chauvinistic poems, invites Azeri people to leave the Turkish language which was imposed on them several centuries ago. He considers Turks as savage and bloodthirsty descendants of Genghis Khan.

*“Why shouldn't I smolder,
When Genghis's speech exists in Zoroaster's territory?
What fault had the language of Sa'di and Hafiz, that you
changed it to Turkish language? This language is lewd.
Leave it, because it is the Mogul and Tatar's language.
Remove it from your territory, because it is seditious” (Ibid, 325).*

The principle themes of Aref's poems are the Avesta, the fire-temple, Zoroastrianism, and the historical and mythological characters of ancient Iran. However, it should be mentioned that Aref's interest in the Zoroastrian religion and his invitation to join it may be considered more of an emotional act, as it seems from his biography and poems, he did not do scientific and practical research about Zoroastrianism. This is reflected in the words he uses about Zoroaster and his religion – they tend to be obvious signs like Avesta, the fire or the fire-temple. He never talks about Zoroastrianism's philosophy, commandments, worldview or the reasons leading to its removal from Iran. It is worth noting that Sepanlu says Aref's close ancestors were Zoroastrian and he was proud of this. He had decided to go to Rudbar for research about them, but it seems that he did not carry out this journey (Sepanlu 1990, 87). All the things that made Aref worship Zoroaster were bloodline and Iranian racism (Haeri 1993, 102). In other words, the nationality of Zoroaster encouraged Aref to invite people to his religion.

In all the poems of Aref, just one composition (*tasnif*) of his refers to the Islamic religion; this poem belongs to the period during which Aref was living in Istanbul, when he was influenced by the Ottoman Turks who emphasized the unity of the Islamic world against the West.

*“Blasphemy and religion fight each other;
The progress of blasphemy lies in our discord.
We have one Kaaba, one God and one holy book,*

Why do we have this discord?

Leave the challenge! We should unite; Mustafa's hand is out of the grave."

However, when he became disillusioned about the Turks' goals and saw their greed toward Azerbaijan, he composed numerous poems against them (Behruzi 1984, 448-450).

The concepts of Aref's early poems were romantic but with the start of the Constitutional period, political and social concepts appeared in his poems, so that he began to attack the government, hijab and Islam. Aref composed a lot of nationalistic poems in his life and is considered the pioneer of nationalist poets in Iran. paying attention to ancient Iran, Zoroastrianism, Anti-Tukism and Anti-Arabism are the most important characteristics of the nationalistic poems of Aref; so that sometimes he is considered a chauvinist poet.

The status of religion in the poems of Eshqi

Eshqi's main topics, like those of Aref, were the homeland and freedom, a goal that was not associated with deep political awareness. In his poems and poetic plays Eshqi groans about the waning of the fire-temple's flame after the Arab invasion. He longs for the glory of ancient Iran and speaks on behalf of the Sassanid princess:

"A princess of a realm that stretched from Bam to Qaf

Now rules over ruins- O stars, is it fair?

Alas, alas, the fire-temple's flame has gone cold.

The princess was stunned, and I as well

Stunned by this inscrutable story" (Mirzade Eshqi 1978, 216).

Women and their rights are one of the topics raised in the Constitutional period. Women were active in the Constitutional Revolution and played a pivotal role in taking sanctuary in Tehran in 1905-1906, the resistance of December 1911, and the Tabriz demonstration that led to the retention of the Constitution (Foran 2013, 275). During the Russian invasion in 1911, "Persian women performed the crowning act of the noble and patriotic part which thousands of their sex had been playing since Persia's risorgimento began" (Shuster 1912, 183). Also in those years, the Iskandari family founded a school for girls and a society for women. Conservative deputies took turns to denounce such organizations as atheistic and anti-Islamic. However, cautious liberals disagreed with them. They pleaded that women's organizations had existed throughout Islamic history (Abrahamian 1982, 93). In such a

background, women and their place and rights are one of subjects raised in Eshqi's poems.

In the Black Shroud play, Eshqi shows Iranian women while they are wearing the shroud; he bemoans the fate of the Iranians after the Arab invasion and criticizes the hijab.

"It has been one thousand and one hundred odd years

That I've felt this way in this garment

...

Every woman I saw there (Iran)

Was wearing a shroud while still alive

...

My words are in the hijab; however, they are anti-hijab

Hijab has countless harmful effects

...

Why is there shame? Women and men are equal

Why should women be ashamed of men?

What is this chador and unbecoming veil?

If it is not a shroud, tell me what this veil is

Down with everything and everyone that wants to put women in a grave

Religion or everyone else

It is enough to speak

...

When women wore the shroud

half of the Iranian nation died" (Mirzade Eshqi 1978, 215-219).

Eshqi's famous play – "The Resurrection of Iranian Kings" – presents these couplets on behalf of an Iranian princess:

"I wish that all these kings, because of Zoroaster who has a pure religion,

salute the previous religion and my leader."

Then Sassanid kings mourn in ancient Iranian customs; they worship Zoroaster's soul and want him to bring prosperity for a devastated Iran. Finally, when Zoroaster appears, he reminds them of the glory of the east and promises a good future for them (Ibid, 238-240).

Eshqi invokes Zoroaster several times in his poems and uses the title "*Shat*" for him. This word is used to show respect to those in higher positions. He blames Ottoman Turks who think Zoroaster belongs to them:

"It is not possible to steal Zoroaster, what benefit does this greed have?"

Just confine yourself to stealing hearts;

Today, you want to steal prophets

I should not be surprised if you decide to steal God" (Ibid, 374).

Eshqi is suspicious about lawmakers, especially the clergy. He criticizes them and mocks their turbans with scathing words (Ibid, 444). Generally, a positive attitude toward Islam is scarcely found in Eshqi's poems. He refers to it indirectly in only a few cases; for instance, in one case he criticizes a plot forwarded by a British Prime Minister to eliminate the Quran, and in another case he introduces himself as a religious advocate (Ibid, 344 & 442). Like Aref, he uses some concepts in his poems which did not exist in the classical poems; concepts like nation, women's rights, freedom, criticizing Islam and praising the Zoroastrian religion. Unlike many classical poets, who situated their poems in a relatively abstract world of convention and metaphor, Eshqi openly tied his poems with the social and political events of his day, so that his poems narrate the history of Iran in the Constitutional period.

Bahar's poems and his attitude toward religion

The most frequent concepts encountered in the poems of Bahar are society, freedom, law, homeland and the attempts of the Iranian nation to achieve these concepts.

Joining the constitutionalists had an important influence on Bahar's attitude toward religion. While religious concepts are bold in his first poems, they are influenced by nationalistic and liberal concepts after the constitutional revolution and fade away. Bahar's first poems are usually about praising Islam, its prophet and the Shia Imams.

The place of religion in Bahar's nationalistic poems can be studied in two sections, Iranian-Islamic nationalism and pre-Islamic nationalism.

Bahar presents a broader view towards religion, and it is here where his nationalism almost becomes an Iranian-Islamic nationalism. He knows the belief in Islam represents a redemptive path to oppose tyranny and colonialism.

"India, Turkey, Egypt and Iran

Tusan, Qas, Caucasus and Afghan

Have different identities but a common religion.

They own different bodies but a common soul.

They are followers of the Ahmad religion and the Quran" (Bahar 2008, 129).

Bahar has numerous poems in which he praises the Prophet of Islam; he relates the constitution to Islam and uses it to build unity in the Iranian nation against oppression. For example, he composed these couplets because of Mohammad Ali Shah's tyranny and his disagreement with the constitutionalists in the last years of his kingdom.

"The king calls himself Muslim and spills

The blood of innocent people.

O Muslims! This oppression is not fair.

God should help Iran" (Ibid, 125).

When Tsarist Russia intended to invade Tabriz in 1911, Bahar says:

"The cross has risen again in war against Islam;

The enemies of North and South have sounded in terrifying cry;

The soul of civilization says the verse of "who will help us?"

The religion of Mohammad is orphaned, Iran is alone." (Ibid, 208-209).

In another case he emphasizes the unity of religion and government on the occasion of the rise of Reza Shah and the destruction of the Qajar dynasty.

"The religion and the government are concordant; the nation without religion is wrong.

The unity of the religion and the government is the base of survival" (Ibid, 309).

These couplets make it clear that Bahar's turn toward Islam is usually on the occasion of historical crises and moments to help unite Muslims against tyranny and colonialism. For example, on the occasion of Russia's ultimatum, Bahar emphasizes Islam and the unity of Iranians.

Bahar criticizes people who designate conscience as their religion and considers religions the creators of civilization. He is dissatisfied with capitalism and the elimination of religion. He composes these couplets about cruel people:

*"If you ask him that what your creed is or what religion you have,
He says "my religion is my conscience", but the conscience and this
animal are so far from each other" (Ibid, 719 & 1174).*

However, it is worth noting that he also blasts radical religious people and lampoons their thoughts. He composes these couplets describing radical people who think everybody will be in the hell:

*"Everyone who believes in God -except for the Shia-
Will be in the hall of damnation on the day of judgment;
And of the Shia, too, anyone who put on a faux col [bowtie] and
became chic,
His silken body will burn in the fire of the hell" (Ibid, 140).*

The Zoroastrian religion also has a prominent place in Bahar's poems. Zoroastrians always admire him because of his valuable research contributions about the Pahlavi language and ancient Iran. Bahar versifies the advices of Azarpad Marespandan which he found in India. By studying these sources, which were written in the Pahlavi language, he composes some poems about the Zoroastrian religion and its principles (Ibid, 975-1006). His effort to know about ancient Iran is along efforts which were begun by the Western orientalist about two centuries ago. In this atmosphere Bahar travels to India and does valuable research about works which were written in the Pahlavi language.

In the beginning of a poem which is composed according to advices of Azarpad Marespandan Bahar says:

*"Zoroaster said in the Gathas
Turn your back on wily Satan
Lying is the fellow of Satan
It is associated with every badness*

...

You should have an athletic body and soul

To respect your country” (Ibid, 976).

It is worth mentioning that most of the poems of Bahar that praise the Zoroastrian religion were composed in the first Pahlavi period on the occasion of special events like the rise of Reza Shah or the thousandth anniversary of Ferdowsi’s birth. Reza Shah paid a lot of attention to ancient Iran and anything that was related to that period. He chose Pahlavi as his last name, founded the Museum of Ancient Iran and Iran’s Academy of Persian Language and Literature. He also asked foreign delegates to use the term Iran instead of Persia and ordered the restoration of ancient monuments.

In 1934, Reza Shah celebrated the thousandth anniversary of Ferdowsi’s birth and invited a lot of orientalist and literati including Bahar to this celebration. On the occasion of this anniversary, Bahar composed an ode (*qasideh*) which begins with this couplets:

“Whatever Cyrus, Dara and senior Zoroaster did

Was revived by the attempt of Zoroaster who performed a miracle

Whatever Zoroaster said in the Avesta

And whatever Ardashir Babakan and admirable Yazdgerd did

Zoroaster revived all of them in Dari words

This is a wonderful act and versified speech” (Ibid, 490-493).

Then he praises Reza Shah because he pays attention to Shahnameh and respects it.

Bahar, in another ode, which was composed on this occasion, shows his strong interest in the ancient orient and calls the Shahnameh the Iranian Quran and Ferdowsi the Iranian Prophet.

“The Shahnameh is without exaggeration the Iranians’ Quran

The place of Ferdowsi is the place of prophets” (Ibid, 495).

Influenced by the security that Reza Shah established, Bahar composes an ode that recounts historical events in Iran. In these couplets he mentions the Arab invasion bitterly.

“The other day, a flame from the desert spearmen

rose up in the hiding-place of the lions of the reed-bed

For two hundred years, the blood of innocent people was spilled”
(Ibid, 322).

In Bahar’s view, the Zoroastrian religion is a firm and political religion which represents Iranians well. He considers the Arab invasion as the destroyer of this religion and blames the Iranian followers of Mazdak because he believes that they sold Iran and Zoroastrian religion to the Arabs (Ibid, 724-725). He deems killing vermin (*khrafstar*) necessary under the guidance of the Mazdean religion (Ibid, 813). He sometimes wants help from Zoroaster to eliminate the devil and in the other cases talks about the sacredness of the Varahram fire. He met a Zoroastrian family, saw their customs for eating breakfast and then composed a poem about the Varahram fire.

*“The Vahran fire like the Azaran fire
Adorns the homeland and the house”* (Ibid, 439).

From his older poems, we can refer to an ode that was composed on the occasion of Mohammad Ali Shah’s attempt to return to Tehran and rule over Iran again. In this poem he tries to inflame the Iranians by mentioning their past glory and considers Islam to be the continuation of Zoroastrian religion.

*“Some days, Zoroastrian religion adorned Iran
And the other days, Islam did that”* (Ibid, 177).

Generally, Bahar reflects two trends of the Iranian intellectuals: on the one hand, those who consider Zoroastrianism one of the elements of Iranian nationalism, and on the other hand, intellectuals who emphasize Islam as the national religion of the Iranians and know it as one of the parts of Iranian nationalism.

Religion and its place in Farroki’s poems

It has said that Farroki was expelled from school for writing this poem:

*“Evil thoughts stole the people’s religion
All of them took their children to Christian school
Mercy! From this religion; mercy! From this Islam”* (Farroki Yazdi
1978, 13-14).

However, it is worth mentioning that religious concepts are not strongly emphasized in his poems. His attitude toward religion is like that of Bahar, making use of the Islamic interests of Iranians to oppose tyranny and colonialism. Farroki

connects Iranian nationality with Islam, expressed, for example, in the poem “Iran-Islam”, which says:

*“O! Iranian patriot who worships Islam
Beware! The homeland is perishing like Islam
Islam fell because of the enmity of untrue people
The oppression of cruel people hurt the heart of the prophet
...
The mosque should not become the church
The homeland should not become the home of Christians”* (Ibid, 191-192).

In other poems dealing with issues of British colonialism, he writes:

*“See the abjection of the Iranians within the borders of Iran
See the elimination of Islam throughout the Arab lands
See Muslim leaders
Who are the victims of Britain’s infringement”* (Ibid, 253).

In 1909, in a poem that caused his lips to be sewn by the ruler of Yazd, he mentions the glory of ancient Iran.

*“O! Insensitive people! Where is your patriotism?
The homeland perished; where is Islam?”* (Ibid, 187).

Like Bahar, he also in some poems makes use of ancient Iran and Zoroaster to incite Iranian patriotism; however, the number of these poems are much less than that of Bahar.

*“We punched the mouth of honest people
and intrigued against each other;
The reputation of Jamshid’s country was destroyed
Because we have a lot of hatred in Zoroaster’s territory”* (Ibid, 274).

However, like Bahar, he criticizes radical religious people.

*“When reactionary individuals became the toy of dirty tricks,
Freedom and reaction began to fight with each other
In the name of protecting Islam from blasphemy*

All of them were deceived because of their naivety” (Ibid, 226-227).

Criticizing Islam and religious radical people is a continuation of a way begun before the Constitutional Revolution by Akhundzadeh, Asadabadi and Malkom Khan. Akhundzadeh was one of the intellectuals who believed in religious reform and emphasized the separation of religion and state. Asadabadi was another intellectual who criticized Muslims. Abrahamian says that he attacked Muslims in India because they did not unite with the Hindus in a national struggle against despotism and colonialism. In Europe, in a dialogue with Orientalists, he said that Islam tried to remove science and was served in its design by political despotism. He believed that there is no agreement between all religions and philosophy. Also, Mirza Malkom Khan attacked religious authorities and criticized them for their ignorance, distrust of science, use of incomprehensible Arabic and resorting to esoteric mumbo-jumbo (Abrahamian 1982, 81-86).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Farrokhi's attitude towards religion is a smaller sample of that of Bahar. Connecting Iranian nationality with Islam, mentioning Zoroaster and praising him are some solutions which Farrokhi uses for the unity of Iranians. Comparing with the poems of other nationalist poets, anti-colonialism is bolder in Farrokhi's poems and mentioning Islam is usually in order to incite struggle against British and Russian colonialism.

Conclusion

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, nationalistic movements around the world, and the Orientalists' researches about ancient Iran, created a favorable environment for the growth of nationalism in Iran. This nationalism was bold in the literature of the Constitutional period and caused poets to pay attention to ancient Iran. These poets were interested in mentioning the Zoroastrian religion, which was associated with the glory of ancient Iran. The miserable situation of Iran and other Muslim countries, its comparison with the glorious period of ancient Iran, and the attempts of orientalist to study ancient Iran caused these poets to mention the Zoroastrian religion several times and to consider paying attention to this religion or returning to it as a redemptive path for Iranians. They even considered Zoroastrianism one of the elements of Iranian nationalism. Generally, we can identify two trends in Iranian nationalist thought in this period: the first trend is emphasizing the rebirth of the Zoroastrian religion because Islam is considered an Arab religion that entered Iran through invasion and destroyed Iranian (Zoroastrian) religion along with its ancient glory. In this opinion, the redemptive path for the Iranian nation is a return to their

roots and praising their ancestors' religion. However, in the second trend, in spite of admiring the Zoroastrian religion of Iranians' ancestors, Islam is emphasized as the national religion of the Iranians and they are called for unity through this religion, as it forms a redemptive solution against tyranny and colonialism. Attacking Islam and radical religious people was also bold in the poems of the Constitutional period; this way was started by the intellectuals like Akhundzadeh, Mirza Malkom Khan and Asadabadi, intellectuals who criticized the miserable situation of Iranian women, Islamic reactionary rules, and religious superstitions. They suggested religious reforms, and like Akhundzadeh, considered returning to the glory of ancient Iran the solution of Iran's current issues.

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ISIL and Its Impacts on Political Equations in the Middle East

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Abstract

The rise of ISIL in Syria and Iraq has made an impact on the political equations and power developments in the Middle East. This paper aims to touch upon three areas: a) to cast light on the changes that followed the formation of ISIL in the Middle East; b) to help understand the subsequent regional developments; and c) to provide an analytical framework that will allow for the prediction of future developments in the region. The paper is, therefore, principally driven by the question on the impact of ISIL on the Middle Eastern political equations. In order to address the question, ISIL and power development in the Middle East were taken to act as the constant and dependent variables respectively. Adopting a Neoclassical Realism perspective, the author argues that the presence of ISIL has had many serious consequences: more Russian presence in the Middle East; closer Russo-Iranian relations; intensification of islamophobia; burgeoning of independence movements among ethnic groups; weakening of the Resistance Front against the Zionist regime; increased schism; and adverse effects on economy and development.

Keywords: ISIL, Middle East, Syria, Iraq, war.

Introduction

The aggressions of the U.S. and allies on the Middle East over the past decade since 9/11 created a power vacuum which prepared the ground for the formation of extremist groups. In the meantime, such countries of the region as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other Arab countries strove to increase their clout in the Middle East by proselytizing Wahhabi Islam as a foil for the Axis of Resistance – with Iran in its vanguard – and thus began equipping the ISIL terrorist group. Whatever fate should be in store for ISIL, its emergence has impacted on the Middle East in certain ways. The question that should be posed here homes in on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of these impacts.

Given Iran’s geopolitical situatedness, understanding the state of affairs in the region can be worthwhile in considerations regarding the adoption of positions and strategies in line with the our national interests. Positing that ISIL is a terrorist group and that its doctrine by no means represents true Islam, the present article has investigated and addressed the questions heretofore raised. For so doing, the theoretical framework was first set. Then, the impact of ISIL on the increase in religious conflicts and violence in the Middle East was addressed. Taking the advent of ISIL as the root cause, the paper has concluded by attending to and reviewing the increase in sectarian conflicts; more assent between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Russia on regional issues; the weakening of the Islamic Resistance Front against the Zionist regime; and the extension of Islamophobia.

Theoretical framework

The theory underpinning this article is Neoclassical Realism. The appellation of this theory is premised on a) the acceptance of such principles as anarchy in international order and the importance of self-assistance and survival in such an order; and b) the fact that neoclassical realists have accepted some of the insights by classical Realism. That said, those issues as the level of analysis of international policy and the emphasis on anarchy are the distinguishing features of Neoclassical Realism from its classical counterpart; that is to say Neoclassicism in the level of analysis exceeds the wisdom level, which is the level of the national government in Classic Realism (Seif Zadeh, 2006, p. 58).

Also important in the analysis of a government's foreign policy is the level of analysis of units and actors as well as elements such as the government’s structure and the psychology of its elites. Put another way, decision makers’ opinions and

beliefs strongly affect the relationship between relative power and foreign policy (Rose, 1998, p. 152). This is a key area of difference between Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism: compared to Neorealism, a Neoclassical perspective can yield better results in the analysis of cases in which religious and ideological thoughts and beliefs of authorities sway their decisions. In fact, a Neoclassical lens gives a rather better picture when it comes to the thoughts, attitudes, and supervision of religious leadership, religious groups, and religious governments. This is because religious leaders base their political behavior upon their peculiar perception of religion.

Neoclassical Realists also explain how, in a multipolar system, each stakeholder power tries to shun an encounter with an emerging disruptive power that jeopardizes the order of the system, thus shirking from the costs of counterbalancing by passing on the responsibility to other powers (Taliaferro, 2009, p. 7). This is what is happening in the Middle East today with ISIL, Bashar al-Assad, the Iraqi government and still others. Proxy wars are as such the result of the great powers' avoidance of direct encounters and abdication of responsibility.

Through systemic and structural analysis, Neorealists have attempted to offer a realistic perspective in international politics. In an international anarchic environment, they believe, the effect of structure on the broker is somewhat immediate. Contrary to Neorealists, Neoclassical Realists hold that the effect is exerted on units through mediator variables. Hence, they analyze international politics by taking on an independent variable (i.e. relative power) and a series of mediator variables (e.g., government's structure, calculations of government leaders calculations about relative power) (Taliaferro, 2009, p. 7).

The tenets of Neoclassical Realism can be summarized as follows:

- 1- The emphasis is on power and politics is defined as permanent contention for assuming more power;
- 2- Negative or positive attitude towards anarchy can determine the nature anarchy and whether it is to lean towards war or peace;
- 3- Besides the systemic level of analysis of international structure, attention is paid to the psychology of the leaders, to their thoughts and beliefs, and to the state of structures and limitations inherent in political units;
- 4- There are two variables involved when analyzing international relations: a) an independent variable, i.e. relative power; and b) a mediator variable that

includes the internal structure of governments and the thoughts and feelings held by the leaders. Proponents of Neoclassical Realism believe that the structure affects the broker; not directly but via mediator variables; and

5- States' foremost concern is their security. Contrary to traditional Realists, Neoclassical Realists move on to believe that governments are also concerned about seizing more power and influence (Moshirzadeh, 2007, pp. 129-136).

Pressure on the Resistance Front

The first – and perhaps the most – important consequence of the so-called phenomenon of ISIL is its impact on the Resistance Front and, therefore, a likely power balance shift. According to the scholars in the realm of Neoclassical Realism, one of the characteristics of the actors in the international arena is, besides ensuring self-security, seizing more power. In fact, once they have ensured their survival, political units begin an influence-increasing exercise in the international sphere. Depending on the perception of the leadership about the situation in their periphery and the level of power they possess, states decide whether to move survival-wise or to go about gaining more influence.

Depending on the moderating role of the government and the impressions and perceptions held by major decision makers and the society on the one hand, and decision making based on an amalgam of power considerations and national interests on the other hand, the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy behavior would differ in line with tides of domestic and international conditions. That explains the Islamic Republic's adoption of a policy of expanding its regional influence amidst the developments in Iraq, Afghanistan and, recently, Syria (Firouz Abadi, 2011, pp. 286-290).

On similar lines, some of the countries of the region including Iran, Syria, Lebanon and – to a certain extent – post-Saddam Iraq are following an agenda of resistance against the sprawl of the Zionist regime and the USA in the Middle East and at the same time of liberating Palestine. These countries are collectively named as the Axis of Resistance. The Axis, of course, became more formal and more salient following the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 and after the establishment and consolidation of Hezbollah Resistance Force in Lebanon, which had in its agenda resistance against the regime's onslaught during the past years (www.usip.org).

Still another pressure on the Axis would be Wahhabism and Takfirism. The more Wahhabi and Takfiri groups in the Middle East increase in number and the more they obtain military power, the more challenges they create for the Axis of Resistance. As shown in Figure 1, Takfiri Salafism has seen an unprecedented increase since 2011 and this is the direst threat to the sustenance of the Resistance Front.

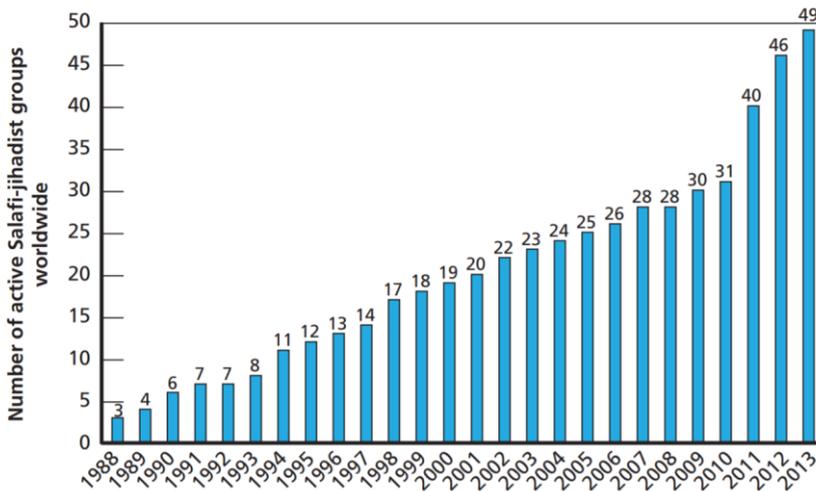


Figure 1 – The increasing trend in the formation of Takfiri groups (1988-2013)

(Source: Jones, Seth G. (2014), A persistent threat: The evolution of al-Qa’ida and other Salafi Jihadists, <http://www.rand.org/giving/contribute.html>)

The increase of Takfiri groups in number carries the following consequences for the Resistance Front:

Gap in the pro-Palestine front (Axis of Resistance)

The first and most important consequence of ISIL is the gap that opened up among ‘the Extensive Palestinian Support Front’, expected to have been orchestrated after the Islamic Awakening Movement. After Iran’s Islamic Revolution, a fundamental change in Iran’s foreign policy was its positioning on the issues of Palestine and the Zionist regime (Lashkari Tafreshi, 2016, p. 81) against which, thereafter, a regional

‘resistance belt’ known as the Axis of Resistance took shape. With this ‘resistance belt in place, the existence of an ISIL Takfiri current is an indication that Muslims’ intra-religious enemy overpowers their external enemy. This is a situation in which the West would take particular interest as far as the Muslim world is concerned. This can be seen in the way Takfiris categorize their enemies: ‘distant enemies’ and ‘immediate enemies’. Takfiris have introduced the Shiites and Non-Takfiri Sunnis to be their immediate enemies and have considered their first mission to be the elimination of these both denominations. With the formation of the Islamic Awakening Movement, the measures of Takfiri groups against their immediate enemies also intensified (Naserpour, 2015, pp. 5-10). This means that the Shiites and Sunnis who could otherwise unite in fight against the Zionist regime, are now, as a result of an internal war, divided and have forgotten their more important mission of fighting against the Muslim World’ s external enemy; and that is a huge gap.

Transforming Syria into a failed state; the weakening of Iraq’s sovereignty

The second consequence of the advent of ISIL is the transformation of Syria into a ‘failed state’. By definition, a failed state is one which is incapable of maintaining its security and addressing the needs of its people. A failed state frees up room for foreign interventionist actors as well as anti-government actors –be it religious fundamentalists, malcontent citizens, or still authoritarian opportunists– to take over the governmental system through violence (Naserpour, 2015, pp. 5-10). A most important aim of Takfiri groups is to put in place their own political system – the so-called ‘Islamic Emirates’. The establishment of such a political system necessitates the annihilation of current governments in the Middle East.

In Iraq, the situation is not as grave as it is in Syria. Yet, the weakening of the central government and its involvement in battle against terrorist groups have helped ethnic minorities, KRG, in particular, to gain in more power. The US-led Western powers also support the separation of Kurds and their pursuit of power. Adoption of such a position has clearly undermined the integrity of Iraq’ s sovereignty (Bolton, Jul 2016).

Break-up of the Middle East

When a people from within the World of Islam considers any other Muslim to be 'Kafir' (meaning unbeliever), they, in fact, take as foe all other Muslim countries. The more such a group gains power, the more the security and territorial integrity of other Muslim countries are endangered. If the situation prevails, the countries of the Middle East will involve in an erosive war against Takfiri and ethnic minority groups before they fragment into smaller countries. In so transpiring, the situation favors the safety and security of the Zionist regime since dealing with smaller countries with different positions is far easier than dealing with the larger and the more powerful. Many of the Middle Eastern countries share a similar make-up of ethnic minorities. As such, should partitioning begin in one of these countries like Iraq or Syria, the odds are that it may pervade other countries in the region, too. A case in point is the Kurds; they reside in four countries of Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran and have shared cultural, racial and language roots.

In broad terms, the break-up of Middle East as one of the impacts ISIL will leave has one major consequence: it constitutes a protective layer for the Zionist regime (Nejat, 2015, p. 109).

Closer Russo-Iranian relations

Iran and Russia follow the same agenda in the region: maintaining the territorial integrity of the countries in the region, averting the collapse of the governments of the states in question, and preventing their being partitioned. The formation and extension of terrorist groups in the region, notwithstanding, is counter to this common objective and has as such neared Iran and Russia. Furthermore, government collapses in the Middle East enabled the U.S. to expand its military presence in the region on the pretext of maintaining security in the sensitive region of the Middle East. Precisely that has become the second reason why Iran and Russia have come to be closer over the past few years. With the Libya experience in their repertoire, Iran and Russia have the shared concern that the practice be turned into an international trend (Kalji, 2011). That is why the two countries adopt a similar position on matters in the region. A telling example of this is the shared position Iran and Russia have adopted in the case of Syria.

Just as emphasis on military power is an important strategy in Realism, Russia presently considers it to be a viable option for the sustenance of the current situation in the Middle East. Neoclassical Realists, however, believe that anarchy – but not

war – is a constant phenomenon and that an international system is always in a state of anarchy. Hence, another structural variable, i.e. distribution of power amongst major countries in a system, need to be taken into account. From a Mearsheimer's point of view, this variable is classified into three forms of bipolar, balanced multipolar and unbalanced multipolar. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the international system has stood aloof from a bipolar system and has since been marching towards an unbalanced multipolar system. Unbalanced multipolar systems have the most tension-generating kind of power distribution generally because potential hegemonies tend to wage war against other powers in that same system. These wars always take long (Moshirzadeh, 2007, pp. 73-137).

With a shared foreign policy on ISIL, Iran and Russia have reached a peak in their relations. Tehran's granting the Russian Air Force access to Hamedan airbase in combat against ISIL is one instance of the two countries' heightened relations. This incident alone marks an unprecedented development in the relations between the countries in the years since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 (Litovkin, August, 2016).

An important area of common ground between Iran and Russia on the Middle Eastern status quo is the pursuit of a solution for the Syrian challenge. The policy of strengthening Syrian military positions is fully aligned with Iran's interests in reinforcing Syria to address the threats of the Zionist regime (Mansouri, 2013, pp. 175-195).

Media and the spread of Islamophobia in the Middle East

Media is one of the instruments that leaves its footprints on the psyche of the countries' leaders. Neoclassical Realists believe that the cognitive and emotional states of the leadership are among the elements that ought to be considered in the analysis of international issues. That is why despite the presence of ISIL in the Middle East, the U.S. decided to merely make do with the situation through inaction; because ISIL was moving in line with the interests of the U.S. and the Zionist regime. However, when ISIL committed the strategic mistake of broadcasting the footage of beheading a US reporter, the U.S. could no longer vindicate, for the public opinion and government officials who chastised US inaction, the presence of ISIL in the region.

The leaders of ISIL believe that the media battlefield has as significant a role in their success as the battlefield proper. The group's 'Al-Hayat' TV channel

produces and broadcasts programs various in range: from footages of the beheading of human beings to programs that egg on the youth to join the band (Bakhshi & Bahari, 2014, pp. 147-148).

True Islam and moderate Muslims are subject to discreditation and media attacks from two directions; on the one hand, the Western media take Islamic extremist groups as the benchmark to project to the world a distorted and violent image of what true Islam would be like; and on the other hand, Islamic groups supplement the work of the Western media by broadcasting and attributing violent and inhumane images to true Islam.

Advent of ISIL and increased sectarianism

As pointed earlier, one of the parameters that distinguishes the theory of Neoclassical Realism from other theories in the realm of Realism is the emphasis of the former on such sub-national and sub-governmental factors as political groups, religious sects, and ethnic communities. Thus, a next consequence ISIL has born will be discussed here: increased sectarianism and religious rivalry in the Middle East.

Sectarianism and strife are apt words to describe the present situation in the Middle East and in Muslim countries. Violence has engulfed such Muslim countries as Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan and animosity among various sects has obviously caused confrontation of one Muslim country against another worldwide. The Shia-Sunni conflict has occasioned murder and slaughter, brought about instability, civil war, and sectarian conflict and jeopardized peace and security in the Middle East and beyond (Mazaheri & Molayi, 2014).

Takfir is 'appearancist', meaning that their understanding of Quran and their interpretations thereof do not go beyond the appearance or form of Quranic narratives and verses. As such, Takfiri currents have emerged out of appearancist (or formal) currents. Takfir is a growing phenomenon that, if gone unchecked, will gain ground for expansion (Ozyurek, 2009, pp. 104- 110) which will in turn amass even more sectarian conflict.

One cannot simply ignore the role of ISIL's unbending ideology in its brutal acts of terrorism and violence. This ideology bears striking resemblance to the Wahhabi-Salafi readings of Islam, an offshoot of Islam born and bred in Saudi Arabia. Adherents of this school do not see either the Jews or Christians as their principal enemies; interestingly enough, they put in the frontline of their enemies

other Muslims that do not espouse their extremist thought. Meanwhile, the Shiites have always, and more than any other Muslim, been the subject of their enmity (Fulle, 2014:2017)

The beliefs held by the likes of ISIL are not only opposed to Shiite system of beliefs, but are largely opposed to those of the Sunnis, too, inasmuch as the Sunni and ISIL leaders have renounced one another and taken position and declared 'jihad' (i.e. struggle against unbelievers) the other side (Nejat, 2015, p. 116). In fact, these groups have caused the division of Sunnis as we see today.

On the whole, the tenets of Neoclassical Realism stipulate that one cannot duly explain the corollaries of the advent of ISIL in the region by mere reliance on concepts such as regional security or balance of power among regional governments. Rather, the social gap and the social stratification within the countries of the region, the dichotomy of Shiite and Sunni, and the different interpretations about each of these sects, along with such factors as governmental, political, and ideological structures of the countries in question, do play a crucial role in how events should be interpreted and how the future of the Middle East can be viewed.

Increased conflicts among the Middle Eastern powers

A fundamental question to be addressed in this section is the 'why' of the non-assemblage of any form of regional coalition against ISIL in the current state of affairs in the Middle East. In order to answer this question through the lens of Neoclassical Realism, the foreign policy of three regional powers (i.e. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey), whose probable interactions and cooperation can determine the geopolitical future of the Middle East, has been explored.

Reinforcement of ISIL bases in Iraq and Syria and the permeation of the influence of other opponent groups, from Islamists to Kurds, have resulted in a situation in the geopolitical sphere of the Middle East that disturbs the regional power balance. According to the Neoclassical theorist John Mearsheimer, countries will never allow their rivals to exercise hegemony. In the event where one side manages to attain a position of hegemony, the world power will act as a moderator to halt the trend. Based on the same premise, it can be said that ISIL has disturbed the power balance among the three major regional countries, i.e. Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. This disturbance can be witnessed by the geopolitical changes that have transpired in the region.

Another component of the Neoclassical Realism theory is the impact left by internal structures, internal constraints, and leaders' divergent viewpoints on a single matter. On this premise, the inception of ISIL has debilitated the central governments of Syria and Iraq over the past years, and this has in turn caused an increase in the number of sub-national, religious, and ethnic bases which affect the government officials' decision-making. Furthermore, with the intervention of international and regional countries in current developments, many have construed that the changes effected by these actors is but a a zero-sum game (Salehi & Moradi Niaz, 2015, pp. 115-116).

It should also be noted that Iraq, Syria, and the terrorist group of ISIL are sources of discord between Iran and Saudi Arabia as two key actors in the region. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran play a significant part in the region and are considered influential in terms of both 'geographical weight' and 'identity principles'. From a geographical standpoint, both countries concurrently affect security-political issues in the subsystems of the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, North Africa, and Egypt. In terms of identity, each of the two regional powers plays their part by associating their values and principles with regional issues and, more particularly, by orienting Shiite and Sunni ideological currents towards their own values and principles (Barzegar, 2013).

The following table briefly summarizes the Saudi-Iranian disagreements over regional equations.

Table 1 – Iran v. Saudi Arabia on recent Middle Eastern equations

Area of Contention	IRI	KSA
Syria	advocates Assad	opposes Assad; provides financial support to opponents
Iraq	favors Maliki's rise to power	provides financial support to and equips the opponents of the Shiite government
ISIL	strives to fight against it	supports it

In parallel with this change in the balance of regional powers and given the rift between world security order and Salafi order, a new perspective on the patterns of

regional order was gradually taking shape: Ikhwani (or literally ‘the Brotherhood’) order.

It is possible, within the framework of this very perspective, to analyze and explain the Turkish-Qatari regional game in the first decade of the 21st century, too. The approach was seemingly a representation of a system of Islamic democracy within the borders on the one hand, and on the other hand, the adoption of a foreign policy that avoided pugnacity and posed no bigger a security threat to the Zionist regime than merely a verbal menace.

It is also worth the note that despite the Saudi-Turkish shared aim of balancing Iran in the region, what has pitted the latter against the former over the issues of the Arab Spring and Syrian internal conflicts is their competition over the promotion of their own Islamic ideology in the current transition period (Niyakoubi, 2015, p. 167).

Before the insurrection in Syria, Turkey enjoyed good relations with the Assad government, Iran and Russia. However, witnessing Assad’s incapability to tackle ISIL, Turkey urged him to step aside. Subsequently, the dispute between Turkey, Iran, and Russia over Syria was sparked up and Turkey openly opposed ISIL by joining the ISIL opposition in the West (Cagaptay & Kendall, 2015).

Drawing upon Neoclassical Realism theory, this section elaborated the policies pursued by three regional powers, i.e. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, which they adopted after the rise of ISIL in order to achieve their foreign policy goals. The theory of power-balancing in Neorealism can explain why the Middle Eastern countries have failed to put together a coalition against ISIL: merely accounting for the role of relative power in the formation of coalitions would not suffice; unit level factors are of particular importance, too. Further, since each of the regional powers in the Middle East features a unique political and ideological system, the formation of a sustainable regional coalition could be far from expectation.

Migrant crisis; from the Middle East to the Middle East

One key difference between Neoclassicalism and Waltz theory is the level of analysis. Proponents of the Neoclassical school believe that Waltz has overlooked the internal structure of countries for the sake of a focus on the structure of the international order. Neoclassical Realists believe that besides system-level factors, other factors such as the attitudes and emotions of the leaders and the internal structure need be accounted for. They also believe that the influence of structure on

the broker is not direct; rather, this impact is sometimes reflected via mediator variables and intermediaries. They do not see political units as hollow billiard balls (Taliaferro, 2009, p. 7); the inner content is as important as the outer crust. The interesting relevant note here is that the countries of the region, especially Arab countries, are reluctant to admit Syrian migrants since the perception and mental image that the politicians of a country have of migrants determines whether or not they ought to be admitted.

The Syrian migration crisis in the Middle East is of paramount importance because of the contradiction that ethnic and religious heterogeneity and insecurity will generate. In the context of the developments that have been transpiring in the Middle East in recent years, ethnic and religious diversity and the outflow of Syrian and Iraqi migrants should be perceived as the gravest threat to the stability of the geography of the Middle Eastern countries as well as to the relations among them (www.gulfmigration.eu). Turkey and Lebanon, on the other hand, have thus far admitted the larger proportion of Syrian migrants among the Middle Eastern countries, but as such, they are faced with peculiar challenges and problems of their own.

Turkey houses various ethnicities like the Kurds. In Lebanon, the situation is somewhat different; from the vantage point of religious demography, Lebanon has three different populations – Shiite Muslims, Sunni Muslims and Christians. Nevertheless, with a share of 47% of the total population in Lebanon, the Shiites outnumber the other two populations. But then the Sunnis too make up 24% of the population as the second majority (www.theguardian.com). This balance can be simply upset if, for instance, a large number of Sunni Syrian migrants should be admitted into the country (www.bloomberg.com).

Table 2 shows the share of each Middle Eastern country in the admission of Syrian migrants.

Table 2 – Middle Eastern destination of Syrian migrants

Destination country	Number of Syrian migrants	Source
Turkey	2,724,937	(unhcr.org)
Lebanon	1,500,000	(unhcr.org)
Jordan	1,265,000	(jordantimes.com)
Saudi Arabia	420,000	(gulfmigration.eu)
Iraq	249,395	(data.unhcr.org)
United Arab Emirate	242,000	(uae-embassy.org)
Kuwait	1,500	(uae-embassy.org)
Egypt	117,702	(data.unhcr.org)
Qatar	40,000	(telegraph.co.uk)
Armenia	17,000	(un.am)

On the whole, the number of Syrian migrants admitted to the Middle Eastern countries was smaller than expected. Religious conflicts, fear of migrants' inciting ethnic groups, and the leadership's concerns about Syrian migrants as terrorist suicide bombers are but some of the reasons behind this smaller than expected number of migrations admitted to the Middle Eastern countries.

ISIL and the economy of the Middle East

Another important component of Neoclassical Realism theory is the importance it attaches to the countries' mobilization of their domestic capabilities in order for the attainment of their goals –economic development being but one. In this section, we are going to show how ISIL has challenged and disrupted economic development and commercial convergence and thus the process of power reproduction.

Economic, political, social, cultural and security challenges that are raised in ecological regions or even countries are largely affected by their locational situation and geographical conditions (Oveisi, 2016, p. 170). These challenges can even pave the way for the re-emergence of failed states in the region. Safety and security are the rudiments before a state can cater for the peace and security of its people (Shadmehri et al, 2016, p. 104). According to Iraqi officials, the government has allocated USD 420m to compensate war-related losses caused by ISIL, but even this

budget is not enough for restoring and reconstructing all parts of the country. According to the Iraqi government, in 2014 alone, the oil export cuts and the damage to Iraqi oil infrastructures incurred USD 18b in damages. Although Syria and Iraq remain the theatre of war against ISIL, the group's assaults on Tunisia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen have provoked economic crisis and kept foreign investments aloof. According to a World Bank report, the insecurity that prevails in Arab countries as a result of clashes with ISIL and their terrorist acts has caused the flight of foreign investments. The reduction of domestic production and the surge in unemployment have also weakened the economy of countries in question. The process of development in Syria has been lagged for at least 4 decades and yet 3 out of 4 people live in poverty (Gower & Podlodowski, 2016, p. 4).

Table 3 shows the effects of ISIL attacks on the Middle Eastern countries; Iraq and Syria have sustained the most damage.

Table 3 - Effects of war on the countries in the Middle East

	Syria	Iraq	Lebanon	Jordan	Egypt	Turkey
direct per capita effects of the war	-14.0	-16.1	-10.6	-1.4	-0.1	-0.5
output effects	-6.3	-12.6	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
capital destruction	-5.4	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
trade cost escalation	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
trade embargo on Syria	-15.4	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
labor force effect of refugees	-7.5	2.8	6.0	1.0	6.0	0.4
population effects of refugees	-20.8	-6.1	-16.4	-2.5	-16.4	-0.9

(Source: Lanchovichina & Livanic, 2015, p. 13)

Also shown in Table 3 is the direct per capita effects of the war on each country. As it can be seen, economic sanctions on Syria have placed the economic climate of this country under tremendous pressure. Iraq too is suffering – even more damage – due to the increased cost of trading activities. A considerable volume of investments in Syria has gone to ruins and goods production has been seriously marred in Iraq.

While an estimated 20 percent of Jordan's exports are transported to Iraq, the presence of ISIL on border crossings can lead to aggression since ISIL has already and openly threatened the Jordanian government. Such a threat can orient Jordan to choose to spend its revenues on its military forces in lieu of its infrastructures and developmental plans.

Figure 2 shows the trend of change in the GDP of Syria before and after the occupation of some parts of the country by terrorist groups. As the graph clearly shows, Syrian GDP has begun to drop in the aftermath of the country being severely afflicted by terrorism since their occupation of the vital veins of the country such as oil wells and refineries.

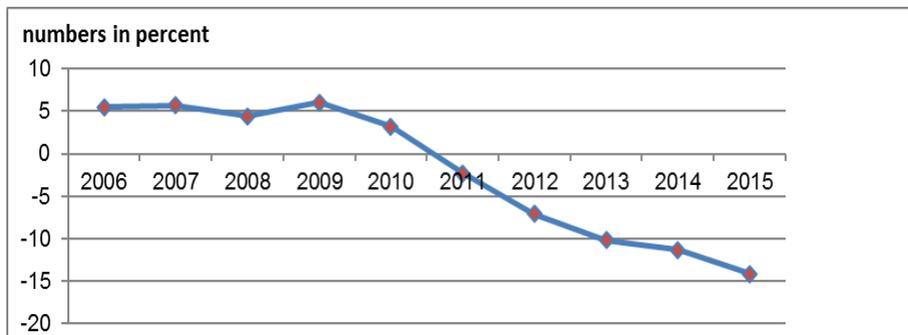


Figure 2 – Syria's gross domestic product (GDP) (2006-2015)

(Source: <https://www.quandl.com/collections/iraq-economy-data>)

On the whole, war and subsequently the looming of ISIL have imposed dreadful human, social and economic costs on the countries in the region and imperiled their economic future by disrupting the process of commercial convergence (Daragahi, December 18, 2014).

Conclusion

The present paper was an attempt to explain, through the lens of Neoclassical Realism, how ISIL impacts on the equations in the Middle East. One advantage of Neoclassical Realism is its applicability in the analysis of a country's foreign policy. Unlike Realism, Neorealism accounts for, besides structural analysis, the role of such other elements as the structure of governments and the leadership's perception of the international order. In the analysis of international politics, they

believe, one needs to adopt a comprehensive and systematic outlook on structural elements, but also on mental and non-structural factors like the perception of the leadership (Moshirzadeh, 2007; p. 129). The perception that leaders of a country have about ISIL and its consequences shapes how the country in question reacts to an issue. Saudi-led Arab countries were under the illusion that ISIL would act as their proxy and wrest control of the region, eliminating the influence of the Resistance Front –and therefore Iran. Notwithstanding, ISIL’s extremist behavior and the many crimes they perpetrated mobilized public opinion against them worldwide and changed the way Western politicians would otherwise perceive them. Due to public discontent, it was no longer advisable that the West and Arabs support ISIL in return for their favors. ISIL was the reason behind closer Russo-Iranian ties and Russia’s support for the Resistance Front. ISIL was also added pressure on the Resistance Front’s member states since the force that was once used to encounter the Zionist regime is now dwindling in fight against ISIL. Moreover, the emergence of ISIL put the countries of the region at the crossroads of choosing between supporting or resisting ISIL and this in turn intensified the dissensions amongst the countries of the region, particularly between Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkey, for instance, shifted its orientation multiple times to align with the policies of the West. When they did not receive the support they expected from the West, they tried to approximate themselves to Russia instead. Kurdish separatism too was encouraged by ISIL. Although Kurds reside in countries as far apart as Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, the power vacuum in Iraq and Syria made enough room for Kurds to seize power and this increased the odds that the likely country of Kurdistan be established. This went on inasmuch as Turkey was also afflicted before they strongly responded to the unrests in the south of the country. On balance, ISIL’s most remarkable impact on the Middle East is its adverse effect on development in the countries which have been trying to grow and prosper in recent years. The heavy cost of war could have been used to grow the economy, boom the industries, cut unemployment and alleviate poverty in the Middle Eastern countries. What we see today, however, is but a shrink in the financial resources of these countries and their lagging behind the process of economic and industrial development.

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Wasatiyya [Moderation]:

The Principle and Objective of the Shariah

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Abstract

This paper attempts to argue that the *Shariah*, the foundation of scheme of life, seems to be the most misunderstood concept of our time. The *Shariah* is confined to the domain of law in a rigid way and used out of context in an exclusivist manner. This has caused to generate numerous implications to thought and life. It is generally assumed that the violent extremism that we witness in many parts of the world is the result of this misrepresentation of the *Shariah*. The goal of this paper is to make a textual and contextual reading of the *Shariah's* principles scientifically, especially, the principle of the *wasatiyyah* as an objective of the *Shariah* [*Maqasid Shariah*]. This study is very important because it provides a correct view of the *Shariah* and the principle and objective of *wasatiyyah*. It will help to remove the misunderstandings surrounded around the *Shariah*. It will also facilitate to prevent the violent extremist and terrorist tendencies. This paper focuses on examining the principle of *wasatiyyah* as the objective based on the textual study of the Principle Sources – the Quran and *Sunnah* - and determines its

scope. The socio-ethical dimensions and the principle of *wasatiyya* as principles and objective of the *Shariah* in relation to extremist trends will be explored and analyzed in this paper. This paper will present the principle of *wasatiyya* as a solution for preventing the current extremist tendencies among Muslims. The methods used in this paper include descriptive and analytical approaches. Finally, based on the textual study in a changing context, this paper arguably concludes that the principle of the *wasatiyyah*, owing its significance in the *Shariah*, needs to be highlighted and acknowledged as a major principle of the *Shariah* which would be helpful to solve the societal problems of societies besides its significance in private life.

Key Words: Shariah, Wasatiyya, violent tendencies, extremism, contextual reading.

Introduction

Wassatiyya (*moderation*) one of the important principles and objectives of the *Shariah* has not been emphasized in the contemporary discourse for a long time. This negligence has resulted in the form of the rise of extremist tendencies among people. It is high time to bring back this principle and objective to its proper place in the scheme of the development of life and society. In fact, during early period of its development it was presented through the Quran and Sunnah as one of the very important principles for cultural and civilizational development. Its proper explanation and application will work as an effective method and mechanism to check the extremists' tendencies. The current scenario in the world demands a proper exposure of the concept of *wassatiyya*. Hence, this paper focuses on the elaboration of the *wassatiyya* as the principle and objective of the *Shariah*. In order to establish the validity and authenticity of our position we will first embark into the commandments of the Quran and Sunnah which will be followed by the analysis of the views of commentators of the Quran. In addition, the views of some scholars on this issue will also be referred and analysed.

Definition of the Concept of Wassatiyya

The Arabic term *wasatiyyah* is generally used to denote the moderation in the personal conduct as well as a collection of behavioural characteristics (Yaakub, 2016, pp. 67). It may be simply referred to as an attitude or position or stance that is contrary to the extremism and excessiveness' as Yaakub explained. The term *wasatiyyah* is a verbal noun of the original word *wasat*. Instead of assigning to a

single literal and unilateral meaning, many other synonymous meanings, as in the case of other words in the Arabic language, are also be credited to *wasatiyyah*. *Tawassut*, *I'tidal*, *tawazun* and *iqtisad* are translated as moderation, justice, balance and prudence respectively. (Kamali, *Middle...*, 2015, pp. 9) The opposite of *wasatiyyah* is *tatarruf*, which refers to inclination towards the peripheries which is simply translated in to “extremism” or “radicalism” in our time. (Kamali, *Middle...*, 2015, pp. 9).

The word developed from its simple meaning into a broad concept with multiple dimensions, basically stems from the Qur’anic designation of the Muslim community as *ummatan wasatan*. It has been translated as midmost community or justly balanced community. This community which maintain *wasatiyya* is considered the best community. The Qur’an says:

And thus we have made you a just community (or middle most community) that you will be witness over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. (The Qur’an, 2:143.)

As we mentioned before, the literal meaning of the word *wasat* can be translated into the three interrelated meanings; i.e. to be moderate; to be in the middle; and thirdly to be the best. As Yakub writes, it denotes that the taking the middle of the road, and positioning in the center of the circle. Its meaning also extends to a number of other alternatives such as the “best” and “strongest.” For example, the sun at noon (middle) represents its best performance as it emits its hottest temperature compared to morning and evening. Similarly, the youth signifies the peak and energetic period of manhood compared to the childhood and old age. (Kamali, *Middle...*, 2015, pp. 9). This is to say that, the term *wasat* represents the designation of the Muslim community, connotes the meaning of the best, strong, justly balanced community ever created by God. In the same vein, the *Asar* (afternoon) prayer is depicted as the best prayer in the Qur’an. God says;

Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before God in a devout (frame of mind). (The Qur’an, 2:238.)

This prayer occurs at late afternoon and it is the middle of the other four prayers. (Kamali, *Middle...*, 2015, pp. 9). Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) affirms that the term *wasat* is equivalent to *khiyÉr* (chosen, selected) and *Ñadl* (just) linguistically. (Anwar, 2015, 50). A Prophetic tradition which affirms the exact meaning of *wasatiyyah* is noteworthy in this regard. According to this narration, which is reported by Imam Ahmad on the authority of Abu Saeed al-Khudri, the Prophet (pbuh) himself clearly

stated that the *wasat* is to mean justice. Justice in literal sense is a middle-most position between two or more opposing sides, without inclining to or favouring any of the sides, and not swayed by emotions, biases or prejudice in making judgments, decisions or solving disputes. (Kamal Hassan, 2015, pp. 7). The meaning that the Prophet (pbuh) envisages in this tradition clearly represents a number of manifestations such as attitude, unbiased stance and character. One of the wise sayings of Arabs, as Kamal Hasan pointed out is that “the best of affairs is the middle and moderate position”. The Prophetic tradition which says; “Beware of excessiveness in religion, people before you have perished as a result of such excessiveness” (Qaradawi, 2006, pp. 9) is a clear warning not to be an extremist and urges his followers to stay in moderate and balanced position in the affairs of life and society.

During the time of Hajj (pilgrimage), the Prophet (pbuh) was heading to Muzdalifa. He halted on the way for a while and asked Ibn Abbas to collect some stones for him. Ibn Abbas took small stones instead of big ones. Upon seeing the small stones, the Messenger [pbuh] commented acknowledging Ibn Abbas’s deeds; (Yes with such, it is what I intended). Beware of excessiveness in religion.” (Ibn Majah, n.d., 1008). Emphasizing the same point, the Messenger of God [pbuh] has used to say; do not overly be strict with yourselves lest God be all the stricter with you. For you what remains (of those who have done so) in the hermitages and monasteries? (Ibn Majah, n.d., 1008) As God himself stated in the Qur’an; “But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them.” (The Qur’an, 57:27). All these textual references in the Qur’an and Sunnah clearly show the importance and significance of the *wasat* and its use as principle and objective of the *Shariah*. It is equally applicable and significant to individual and society. Before going to the detailed elaboration of the important dimensions of this concept, it would be better to have a cursory glance at certain aspects of this concept.

Wasatiyyah as a Balance: the Prophetic Approach

Keeping a balance and moderate approach in all walks of life is somehow part of disposing the higher ethical value of justice. In fact, moderation and balance are the sub themes originating from the fatherly principle of justice. They are deeply interconnected and interdependent altogether. Therefore, As Kamali pointed out, *wasatiyyah* and justice are inseparable in most of the cases. The absolute justice is a divine attribute cannot be equated to humans. The ideal or perfect justice is mirage.

(Khadduri, 1984, pp. 1). It is deemed impossible to be accomplished perfectly by people since it is transcendental and super natural. Therefore, we need to understand that the realization of the absolute justice would only be apprehended by the disposal of God on the Day of Judgment. This world is not deemed as an abode of such realization of ultimate justice. Similarly, the complete realization of *wasatiyyah* would not be sufficiently manifested in this world by people, though they are being instructed to do so. As in the case of imparting justice, we are ordained to be moderate and justly balanced beings as much as possible. The Qur'an emphatically calls people especially the Muslims to uphold justice through several statements but, people, by their innate nature, (The Qur'an, 4: 28) are not likely to carry out the herculean task of realizing the absolute justice. All the Prophets (pbut) sent by God had carried out the responsibility of imparting justice to their societies.

We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. (The Qur'an. 57: 25).

This instruction clearly identifies that in all revealed books the emphasis on balance and justice are included as the part of the mission of all the Prophets (pbut). This clearly indicates that it is a basic duty of people to maintain balance, justice and moderation between the extreme tendencies. People have always been tended naturally to incline towards something in excess or tended to be heedless and reckless in their life. Islam as the way of life, in fact, fulfils the role of balancing life with all of its affairs in its right proportion and right degree. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in one way, was correcting the innate human qualities in its right place and right degree. Once he openly proclaimed that his mission of Prophethood constitutes moulding and perfecting the human character. Imam Malik bin Anas reported a hadith; "I was sent to perfect the noblest morals." The *wasatiyyah* is primarily a noble character which was included in the Prophetic mission. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the exemplary manifestation of perfect human character. The manifestation of the model of universal and perfect man can be found in him. (Nasr, *Man...*, 1968, pp. 72). The Qur'an attests this claim by saying; "And indeed you are of a great moral character." (The Qur'an; 68: 4) Sayed Hossein Nasr describes the Prophet (pbuh) as "the universal man par excellence and also the quintessence of all that is positive in cosmic manifestation." The noble aspects of life have been clearly depicted in the Prophetic model. As an ethically approved scheme of life, the perfect model of the Prophet has to be

emulated by humanity. Worship, rituals, socio-political affairs, family and economic affairs all have been modelled through his life.

As part of this mission, the Prophet (pbuh) had to bring the exact proportion of balance among people with different habits and potentials. As a human being, each and every companion had inclined to one or another temperament. They had never been consistent in keeping a balance in their temperaments and skills. Unlike the Prophet (pbuh), their moral and personal qualities have not been proportionately conglomerated by the divine help. Whereas the excellence in governance and the quality of justice overwhelmed in Umar’s character which made him distinguished from others as a just ruler, it was the character of austerity and asceticism that made Abu Darr distinguished. Whereas Abu Bakr is the symbol of patience and determination, Usman was known for his modesty and humility. This shows that the human qualities among the companions had not been combined proportionally. Whereas some characters have been possessed by some companions, some other noble qualities have augmented in other companions. Therefore, they would not be considered as moderate and balanced in that sense. They had been in divergent levels in securing these noble characters and manners in their personalities. Their temperaments and characters vary significantly from person to person. But the balance lied in the Muslim society as a whole was dominant. The community in which different companions lived with different natures and qualities made them the community of justly balanced.

New Conceptualization of Wasatiyyah

Grounding on the textual premises of the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions, scholars have broadly developed the concept of *wasatiyyah* pertaining to various dimensions. From a narrow and literal meaning, the concept has momentarily been elaborated and interpreted multi-dimensionally according to the social changes and needs of time. It seems the contemporary scholars have much concern on the concept of moderation. They have interpreted the concept in such a way to meet the newly evolved challenges of alleged extremism and terrorism. Kamal Hasan, for example, argues that the *wasatiyya* encompasses three fundamental components namely justice, excellence and balance/moderation. Hashim Kamali defines the *wasatiyyah* as a “recommended posture that occurs to the people of sound nature and intellect, distinguished by its aversion to both extremism and manifest neglect.” Kamali envisages the moderation in a comprehensive way. He writes; “moderation

is a virtue that helps to develop social harmony and equilibrium in personal affairs within the family and society and the much wide spectrum of human relationships.”

Muhammad Asad also visualizes the moderation as a hallmark of the Muslim community and their scheme of life. (Asad, 1980, 30). The extreme approaches in religious affairs as well as mundane affairs deemed as blameworthy and therefore, they are to be avoided at any context. It means that the moderation has to do with all aspects of human life. The Qur’an exhorts the believers to bring this quality in all aspects of life. It does not encourage to place great emphasis either side of the life. According to him, moderation is a branch and subservient aspect of *tawhid* the Oneness of God. Referring to this aspect, he argues that the expression of a community of the middle towards the problem of man’s existence. To avoid conflict between spirit and the flesh the balanced approach and a moderate position is considered as praiseworthy. Islam gives the right way of balance and moderation through its teachings.

For Yusuf al-Qaradawi moderation, besides an ethical trait of an individual, is an alternative life approach for people at global level. The quality of moderation is required to be accepted as a scheme for life and society as explained by Islam. He sees the *wasatiyyah* as a viable and global alternative way of life. In order to save people from engendering hostility of extremism, moderation need to be restored at collective level. (Qaradawi, 2006, pp. xii). It is, therefore, not proper to confine the concept of *wasatiyyah* at individual level. According to Ahmad Yusuf, it is urgent to bring the idea in social level as well. For Wahbah al-Zuhayli, “*Wasatiyyah* is meant as keeping moderation and balance in belief, morality and character. Hence, it functions in the manner of treating others and in the applied systems of socio-ethical order and governance.” (Kamali, 2015, pp. 11). The above-mentioned scholars envisage *wasatiyyah* as a life scheme not only as an ethical value of an individual. It is a social requirement. In short, in the light of the above views one can see *wasatiyya* as a call for its collective application in all aspects of life of a community.

The Evolution of Wasatiyyah as a Higher Principle of the Shariah

From the above analysis, we would be able to conclude that the concept of *wasatiyyah* serves as an integral theme of the *Shariah* along with the other principles. The scholars who are specialized in the fields of *Shariah* and Islamic Law have acknowledged some major principles as the *maqasid al-Shariah*. *Wasatiyyah* is one of them. New conceptualization of *maqasid* has been

instrumental in proposing some major but new principles besides the old conception of five categorizations of *maqasid*. For example, the voices of preservation of justice and freedom of expression as the higher principle of the *Shariah* have recently been increased. In the past the principle of *wasatiyyah*, as an objective of the *Shariah*, did not gain the proper attention from the *maqasid* scholars. The early scholars did not categorically employ the concept of *wasatiyyah* as a higher objective of the *Shariah*. There is much scope for the interpretation of meaning of *maqasid*. The early scholars, especially those who were specialized in the *Shariah* and Islamic law, had extensively deliberated on the principle of *wasatiyyah*. They dealt the issue in detail with the various philosophical and methodological implications. Nevertheless, they did not expose *wasatiyya* as an objective of the *Shariah*. Among the classical scholars, al-Shatibi has contributed much in developing the concept into broader dimensions. The idea of *wasatiyyah* has been present throughout his book. It will be imperative to examine his scholarly views on *wasatiyyah* and their scope of conceiving the idea as a higher objective of the *Shariah*.

Although al-Shatibi confined himself in limiting the *maqasid* in five fundamentals, many of the other important subsidiary objectives have clearly been illustrated in his writings. He distinguishes *wasatiyyah* as one of the most distinctive characteristics of the *Shariah* since it keeps a moderate and middle way in legislating rules and imposing laws. When the laws are imposed as obligations, it proceeds and maintains the path of moderation and consummates fairness. (Attia, 2007, pp. 45). His view on *wasatiyyah* especially in legal matters is obvious. He writes;

It is a path which appropriates both extremes without inclining toward either of them, and which remains within the limits of human capacity, thereby causing us neither hardship nor harm. Indeed, the obligations entailed by the Law of Islam are founded upon an equilibrium which requires that every one of us progress toward perfect moderation.

Although he does not categorize *wasatiyyah* as an objective of the *Shariah*, he unequivocally located the concept at a higher place in the fold of *Shariah*. Al-Shatibi understands the *Shariah* as a middle path which is free from excessiveness and extremism. Al-Shatibi was treating the *Shariah* with a universal outlook. According to Wael B. Hallaq, al-Shatibi has attempted to demonstrate the true nature of the *Shariah* which draws a middle course between extreme and uncontrolled lenient attitudes guided by personal interests. (Hallaq, 2005, pp. 174).

That is why he states time and again throughout the book that the “*Shariah* represents nothing but a middle-of-the-road position between undue difficulty and extreme ease.” Although he presents the *Shariah* as a *wasatiyyah* scheme in his designation as a middle of the road position, but his presentation of *wasatiyyah* confines at individual level. Perhaps he may be the first scholar who made meticulous observation on the feature of *wasatiyyah* which is ingrained in the breadth and width of the *Shariah*.

Despite of a number of serious scholarly deliberations on moderation by the classical and contemporary scholars, Ibn Ashur alone, as far as the researcher knew, might be the one who presented moderation as a higher objective of the *Shariah*. He describes moderation with the Arabic word *samahah* (magnanimity) which means “standing midway between sternness (*tadyiq*) and (*tasahul*).” (Ibn Ashur, 2006, pp. 87). He explains the idea of *samaha* as the ideal of moderation, justice and temperance. Although he adduced the principle of *wasatiyyah* (he used the word *samahah* magnanimity in place of *wasatiyyah*) as a higher objective of the *Shariah*. However, he elaborated the concept very little.

In order to demonstrate the need to include *wasatiyya* as a higher principle and objective of the *Shariah*, we need to reflect upon some of the Qur’anic injunctions which are very much related to the wider scope of the *wasatiyya*. For this, the researcher employs an inductive method of reading and also analysis to highlight the wider scope of *wasatiyyah* as elaborated in the Qur’an as a higher and universal principle of the *Shariah*.

Wasatiyyah based Approach of the Shariah underlying in the Qur’anic Injunctions

Besides the other meanings such as moderation, middle and best, our discussion focuses on central meaning of *wasatiyyah* as balance. We can find out a *wasatiyyah* based approach, rightly balanced approach of the *Shariah* in matters of life. By *wasatiyyah* based approach, we mean a balanced and sophisticated approach based on the *Shariah* principles without leaning towards either side of trends in society. It is a right sort of approach dealing with any issues at hand. Besides the explicit and categorical statement of God in the Qur’an on *wasatiyyah*, the very concept is also implicitly underlying in the spirit of the *Shariah* itself. Many of the Qur’anic statements promote the idea without using the explicit and categorical textual expressions. The rulings and admonitions in the Qur’an also carry a right sort of balance and proportion in every aspects of life even the spiritual and devotional

affairs. A meticulous pondering and careful reading of the Qur'an enable us to find out the ideals of *wasatiyyah* available in various statements of the Quran. Without explicitly declaring, God chooses to convey the principle of *wasatiyyah* to the readers with clarity. Therefore, from the very outset, we need to analyse some Qur'anic statements in which the notion of *wasatiyyah* is included invisibly. From the different commands and admonitions of God, the cumulative meaning of *wasatiyyah* could be induced from the following statements of the Quran. The concept of *wasatiyyah* is packed with the spirit of all the rulings and teachings of the *Shariah*. The following exposition of the opening chapter of the Qur'an demonstrates the theme more clearly and role of Islam as middle and balanced way of human life.

The Wasatiyyah theme in Surat al-Fatiha

Among the *ayaths*, the employment of the theme *wasatiyyah* in *Surat al-Fatiha* can be read in between lines through inductive method. *Surat al-Fatiha*, the opening chapter is the most important chapter in the Qur'an which is ordained to be invoked by every Muslim as his basic invocation during his five times daily prayers. The prayers would not be completed unless the *Surat al-Fatiha* is being recited. The most important part in this prayer is to make supplication to God to make him steadfast on the right path and never to let him be corrupted and deviated into the paths of those who have incurred His wrath and those who have gone astray. The right path, in fact, we seek is the guidance for a middle way, far away from the two poles of either extremisms. A Muslim is ordained to invoke this prayer at least 17 times in a day, unquestionably indicates the importance of this prayer. God calls it *swirat al-mustaqim*, (straight path) which is in between the two extremes approaches taken by various major religions. A significant number of the Qur'anic exegesis are of the opinion that among the major religions Christianity and Judaism are included. The Qur'an urges Muslim community not to imitate the Christians who are extreme in their religion. God says:

Say: O people of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the even Way. (The Qur'an, 5:77.)

This warning constitutes all forms of belief, worship, rituals and transactions. Although both of the communities have kept high level of extremism and rejection in their religious affairs in general, the Christianity in particular, has gone,

according to the Quran, beyond all permissible limits of their religion. Due to their excessiveness in faith, they were particularly admonished in the Qur'an. "Do not exceed the limits of your religion." (The Qur'an, 4:171) Thus, they transgressed the permissible limits of religion by elevating the status of Isa (Jesus-pbuh) to the level of God and assumed him as son of God. The love of the so-called Christians to the Prophet Isa (Jesus-pbuh) crossed the limitation. As a result of their blind love, they ascribed divinity To Jesus which finally transformed as a weird argument of trinity of God. Foreseeing grave consequences of the extremism, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) strongly warned his followers never to exceed the limits of love to him. Excess of love is also a kind of extremism. Although the love to the Prophet (pbuh) is an essential component of faith, a Muslim is required to be vigilant not to reach his tremendous love in a state of assigning divinity for the Prophet (pbuh) as the Christianity did to Jesus. Here the Prophet (pbuh) put a limit even to one of the fundamental aspects of Islam such as love of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh).

Jews on the other hand, have exceeded in their religious teachings in many ways and reached into extremism by killing the Prophets (pbuh) who had been sent to them. In connection with Jews' approach, once the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said; if (in the first instance) they sacrificed any cow chosen by themselves, they would have fulfilled their duty; but they made it complicated for themselves, and so God made complicated for them." (Ibn Ashur, 2006, pp. 87) In short, the *Surat al-Fatiha* teaches Muslims to be consistent in the right path, keeping away from the deviated ways and distorted teachings of the two early communities for their excessiveness and extremism, by its frequent and incessant invocation during obligatory and optional prayers. The prayer is pivotal in the *Shariah*. Seeking the guidance of straight path not leaning towards either extreme ways becomes a major theme of the *Shariah*.

This first and most important chapter in the Qur'an serves as a beautiful manifestation of the concept of *wasatiyyah*, especially in the sense of balance and a middle way. On the one hand this opening chapter presents Islam as a middle or moderate way of life and mode of *ibadah* against Christianity and Judaism, and on the other hand, it exhorts to keep a right sort of balance in all walks of life of a Muslim. The idea of *wasatiyyah* is implicitly packed with the guidance, admonitions and teachings of the *Shariah*. Whereas it explicitly calls for the appreciation of the moral quality of *wasatiyyah* occasionally, it urges sometimes without explicit textual expressions.

Wasatiyyah based approaches of the Qur'an: Some other examples

In addition to the above, we can see some other statements in the Quran which implicitly emphasize the theme in different ways. An amazing pattern of balancing has been logically occupied in the style and choice of words in the Qur'an. The analysis of such few verses given below will be helpful to understand the argument more reasonably. God says;

And who, whenever they spend on others, are neither wasteful nor niggardly but [remember that] there is always a just mean between those [two extremes]. (The Qur'an. 25: 67)

And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependents], or even destitute. (The Qur'an, 17: 29).

In the first *ayah*, God illustrates the virtuous qualities of *Ibad al-Rahman*, obedient servants of God. Among these qualities, He Exalted enumerates the quality of moderation which is a clear illustration of moderation. It is said that keeping away from the two extremes positions in spending money is desirable. Both extreme points are blameworthy. Spending too much to a level of extravagancy and being stingy and ungenerous even for own needs are undesirable. The best position is being in between the two extremes. The *wasatiyyah* approach is exemplified here in an unusual way. In the same vein, the *surah al-Israh* also promotes the same message. The second *ayah* also deals with the same issue in different words.

Facilitating the things and letting people to have a sort of comfort is also a part of accepting a balanced and moderate position in the life. This is why God clearly explains that He does not want people be in difficulties and be burdened. God says; "God intends every facility for you and he intends not put you in hardship" (The Qur'an, 2: 185)

Another example of balancing approach of the Quran has been expressed through this *ayah*; "Grant us good in this world and good in the hereafter." (The Qur'an, 2:201) This admonition is a clear sign of keeping a balanced approach, neither inclining towards this world alone, nor the other world alone, but holding the two worlds together and equally. An interesting fact is that the Qur'an has kept a balancing even in the number of times both the words were used. Each word is used 115 times in the Quran. This *ayah* apparently leaves us with the Qur'anic

philosophy of *wasatiyyah* which is a right sort of equilibrium and balance in approaching the worldly life and the world to come.

In order to substantiate the above said Qur'anic statements, there are some prophetic traditions as well. It is reported on the authority of Anas bin Malik that the Prophet [pbuh] is reported to have said: "The best among you are not those who neglect this life for the life to come, nor those who neglect the life to come for the sake of this life. Rather each of them serves as a path leading to the other. Hence blame accrues when one exceeds the limits of need and those of sufficiency". (Suyuti, 2000, pp. 2;46). This hadith also implies the importance of keeping a balancing between worldly and heavenly life. The companions who learned and trained from the School of the Prophet [pbuh] have also upheld the theme in their life. For example, Ali bin Abu Talib is reported to have said these words; "Strive in your worldly affairs as if you will live forever, and strive in your affairs of the hereafter as if you will die tomorrow." (Kamali, *Religious...*, 2007). Working for this world and coming up with something fruitful in this world has never been considered derogatory rather it is actually viewed as a form of worship itself, by which a believer gains the reward from God. (Omer, 2017.). Here the equal footing is given to both this world and the hereafter.

Another example of a balance that we require to keep in our life is taught by the Prophet (pbuh). For which we need to invoke to God. Besides the Qur'anic supplication mentioned above, the Prophet (pbuh) taught us another invocation which also teaches us to pray for keeping us away from the two extreme situations. "O God! I seek refuge to Thee from poverty and from disbelief." (Al-Nasai, 2005, 103, Qaradawi, *Mushkilat*, 1997, pp. 14). The poverty is an extreme pathetic situation in the life, it is one of the extreme sufferings of material life. On the other hand, at the end of other side the Prophet (pbuh) taught us to be away from the situation of disbelief which brings man to the total failure and eternal disgrace.

Besides the above discussed instructions on moderation, the Qur'an appears to be accommodating a pattern of balancing in choosing some words and their contrasting words. If we look at the Qur'an, we can see a number of words and their antonyms that have been employed in the Qur'an in a symmetrical position. This is also a kind of a balanced approach of the Qur'an. It also denotes the Qur'anic literary style which retains a balancing in the employment of such words. It would be interesting to note the research done by Tariq al-Suwaydan which shows the Qur'anic juxtaposition of some words and their balance. (Al-Suwaydan, 2017).

Qur'anic Words	Meaning	No. of times	Total
Al-Dunya	This world	115	230
Al-Akhira	The hereafter	115	
Al-Mala'ikah	Angels	88	176
Al-Shayateen	Satan	88	
Al-Hayat	Life	145	290
Al-Maout	Death	145	
Al-Rajul	Man	24	48
Al-Mar'ha	Women	24	
	Hardship	114	228
	Patience	114	

Figure no 1.

The above figure shows how the Qur'an used some words and their equal proportion. The juxtaposition of the word *dunya*, this world and *akhira*, angels and satan, life and death, man and woman are the testimony for the numerical balancing of the Qur'an.

From the above analysis, we would be able to see all instructions related to all aspects of life, whether legal or ethical, social and spiritual, have been granted to the humanity which help people to maintain balance and order. All rulings and admonitions of the *Shariah* urge Muslims to be moderate and balanced. The spirit of *wasatiyyah* is ingrained in every breadth and width of the *Shariah*. It could be assumed that the *wasatiyyah*, is a middle station between two stations at opposing sides as Attia observed. It means that there are three situations or positions for all the issues even in religious affairs. It may be suffixed as negligence in pursuing what is of benefit. Secondly excess position or extreme level and the third position is middle and moderate station or stance.

Wasatiyyah to Counter the Challenges of Violence and Extremism

In the previous section, we discussed views of some scholars on the theme of *wasatiyya* and its orientation toward *maqasid*. But in order to establish the vitality of this theme some other aspects seem to be vital for analysis. The area we dealt with so far deals mainly with conceptual presentation of the principle of *wasatiyya*.

We also need to analyze its practical implications in society, especially in the multi-religious societies of our time. It is expected from the contemporary scholars to develop a strategy based on *wasatiyyah*. In addition to this, the study argues the *wasatiyyah* based approach is an essential tool to combat the extreme tendencies in societies. This approach has always been employed by the early scholars to address the challenges of social problems like extremism and intolerance.

Wasatiyyah Based Approaches of Various Muslim Scholars

Slipping from the middle position and balanced approach of the *Shariah* and inclining towards either of two extreme poles has always been witnessed as a social phenomenon in history. However, as God promised, the emergence of the reformers in the beginning of every century will always managed to correct such tendencies and to place back the *Shariah* in its right place. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had instantly corrected the tendencies of extremism and undue negligence among his companions in his life time which finally enabled them to be exemplified as the perfect model of a moderate and balanced society. However, after the demise of the Messenger (pbuh), the Muslim society had witnessed the tendency of deviation by losing the *wasatiyyah*, moderate state of affairs. God had promised that He would send reformers to renew His religion in every dawn of the century. Their renewal efforts and reform schemes, though heterogeneous, appear to be a kind of efforts of bringing back the *wasatiyyah*, balance and moderation in Muslim society. The reformers always had strived to renovate and renew this character in their respective times, in one way or another. They sought to bring a right sort of balance at socio-ethical levels. They had adopted a balance and moderation in approaching the *Shariah*. Although their contributions and efforts are varying from person to person, time to time, the overall efforts of each one have been instrumental to present the *Shariah* as a balanced scheme of life.

The Need of Prioritization and Balanced Approach in the Contemporary Societies

Giving utter importance to unnecessary issues and ignoring the crucial problems of society is truly an unbalanced approach and the disorder of the priorities. This tendency is just opposite of the Qur'anic concept of moderation. Here is the *wasatiyyah* approach which is becoming relevant in order to treat these social problems. Putting the things in their right position and right propositions or

approaching an issue in its right degree of concern is something which rightly be described as *wasatiyyah* approach which is part of *fiqh al-muwazanat*.

As part of worship and spiritual activities Muslims who live in multi-religious society should avoid to conduct big gatherings, most often for non-obligatory acts, as a public nuisance. They should not disrupt the peaceful and serene atmosphere of community. They should think how to maintain environmental purity and avoid noise pollution. Should they use huge sound system and loud speakers if they are not needed? The majority in society might not be the part of the event. If Muslims do so it will unwillingly force other communities to suffer. In several parts of India Muslims, though they are minority, use the loud speaker to make the *tarĒwĒĒ* prayer and non-obligatory offerings of prayer in high volume which affect the people of other faiths in many ways. Giving unnecessary importance to the trivial issues is kind of expression of extremism.

As far as the case of prayer, obligatory or *tarawih* during the Ramadan night, are concerned using the loudspeaker cannot be considered as a recommended practice. According to the *maqasid*, it never be considered under the category of necessity, but only an embellishment. At the expense of the embellishment, which is particularly concerned to Muslim community alone, the necessity or basic needs of all people, which is the freedom of their faith and freedom of their peaceful living is violated. The fundamental rights and freedom (*maqasid*) of other people should be taken into consideration in their right degree. The ignorance on the overall objectives of the *Shariah* and overlooking its outstanding principles seem to be instrumental for these extremist tendencies in multi-religious societies. In short, it would not be fair to bring hair splitting disputed issues of *fiqh* in to the multi-religious societies. The concern of the common people in such society is not the jurisprudential issues, especially the issues related to a particular religious group rather, the fundamental issues belong to their life and society would be their main concern. As al-Qaradawi pointed out, the emphasis should not be placed on minor or controversial issues, but on fundamentals. In multi-religious society the image of Islam should be highlighted with its fundamental principles of *iman* and higher principles and values by which people of other communities might be closer and less hostile to Islam. From the right and balanced priorities of Muslim communities, the people of other faith can easily convince that the *Shariah* is actually meant for the well-being and good for all.

Conclusion

From the above illustration, it is clear that keeping the moderation in all aspects of human life is an essential part of the *Shariah*. The principles of the *Shariah* are not for dealing with some aspects, but for all aspects of life. The moderation is recommended for life as a fundamental principle. The theme, therefore, elevates itself as a fundamental universal principle upheld by the *Shariah* which aims to bring benefits and welfare of humanity through the attainment of this objective. Since the overall objective of the *Shariah* is to bring good and benefits to humanity, deviating from the moderation by inclining either to negligence or to extremism, is considered as equal to bringing harm to society. In addition, the universality of moderation is justified as it is prescribed to observe at all occasions and situations and irrespective of time and space. In many places, we have seen the Qur'an directly and indirectly exhorts believers to apply this notion individually and collectively. Moreover, the title of *wasatiyyah* justly balanced is designated as the fundamental feature of Muslim community. All this indicates that the *wasatiyyah* could be enumerated as one of the higher objectives of the *Shariah*. As some of the principles of the *Shariah* like justice and freedom are conceived in later period as the higher objectives of the *Shariah*, the *wasatiyyah* could also be considered as a higher objective of the *Shariah*.

In short, the concept of *wasatiyyah*, from merely an ethical value which is most often confined at individual level, needs to be elevated to a broader perspective as the principle and objective of the *Shariah*. Such kind of presentation will enable people to view it as a major life scheme for Muslims as well non-Muslims at societal and global level. And it has to be practiced in all kinds of societies prevailing today irrespective of Muslim dominated or Muslim minority societies. It is, therefore, genuine to conclude that the moderation is the best and most suitable approach in the multi-religious society as well.

Note

1. The people the Prophet (pbuh) referred to here are Christians and Jews .
2. “ O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort [the truth], behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!” (4: 135), “O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do ”. (5:8)
3. In order to make understand what inductive method exactly is, Sherman Jackson elucidates the idea through an imaginary anecdote. To open the window, fetch a fan, turn off the lights and pour a glass of water are the four separate statements or commands. Imagine a man is coming to his house and delivers the abovementioned statements to his wife. She serves her husband according to his commands. At the same time, these scattered separate commands definitely transmit a cumulative meaning of “it’s hot” which is not really literally spoken by this man. Although the word ‘hot’ is not literally spelled out, the most powerful meaning he shared to his wife is the same. If she is able to understand the real meaning of his command, she can address the issue by various means.
4. In many parts of Kerala State.

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