Contemporary Extremism in Islam: A British Context

Part 1: Historical and Ideological origins of violent extremism in Islam

There is a need to further develop academic discourse around what actually constitutes extremism in Islam in view of the government's continuing conflation of non-extremist entities with either violent or non-violent extremism. The government appears to have relied upon evidence and advice which apparently lacks sufficient academic rigour upon which to develop a tailored but comprehensive policy that effectively addresses the phenomenon of religious extremism. That is not all. They have failed to identify alternative entities to address the vacuum that has been created by withdrawing funding from groups established to have been successful in countering violent radicalisation in the UK.[1]

In the event, this particular study will explore ideological orientations of Islam that have been attributed to violent extremism in the contemporary era. This will inform the research conducted in this study as to whether patterns and/or characteristics emerge to form a mosaic that is peculiar only to violent extremism purportedly committed in the name of Islam. The rationale for focusing on this area is that a preponderance of academic literature merely acknowledges historical and ideological delineations of extremism in relation to the contemporary phenomenon; however, they fail to address the significance and indeed, proliferation of these influences among extremist circles today. The author intends to argue that, to ignore these influences which are considered significant indicators to the emergence of divergent movements within Islamic history and indeed, how they were countered societally, is to overlook potential remedies to a phenomenon considered new in the Western world, yet ancient from an Eastern perspective. Presumptions that former Arab/Muslim experiences are either alien to that of Western authors' encounters with contemporary violent extremism indicates academic snobbery which only serves to perpetuate the existing rictus between grassroot practitioners, who possess the requisite knowledge and expertise in addressing violent extremism today and statutory bodies, the latter of whom are transient to research findings that accord with their established perceptions of the problem. This study also seeks to illustrate the extent of the Muslim practitioner experience and in doing so, emphasise the importance of understanding

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[1] Refer to Home Office Prevent Strategy: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/prevent/prevent-strategy/

contemporary violent extremism in context of historical and ideological delineations. A critical examination of the question regarding susceptibility to or, as the case may be, effectiveness in countering violent extremism becomes easier to address once the above mentioned considerations have been discussed.[2]

1. Reclaiming the language: Defining the correct Islamic terminology

David Cameron's Munich speech in February 2011 introduced new terminology relating to Muslim groups that had been recipients of government funding under the previous Labour government. He based the rationale for distancing the new coalition government from such groups on advice received that the latter were more a part of the problem than the solution. The newer phrase 'non-violent extremism' was borne as a result.[3] His speech, and subsequently the revised Prevent Strategy, failed to identify groups or entities considered under this new terminology.[4] Instead, reference was made to social values that were to provide the benchmark against which extremism (as it related specifically to Muslims) would be measured.

In light of this relatively recent development and continuing misrepresentation or use of Islamic terminology it is imperative, at this juncture, to address some of these errors. Terminology that refers to Jihad and *Jihadis*[5] as violent extremist concepts are yet more examples of often misunderstood and misused phraseology that serve to exacerbate the existing debate about what actually constitutes extremism, violent or otherwise. In fact, as this study aims to highlight,

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[2] Reference can be made in this instance to my first study: 'Extremists in Our Midst: Confronting Terror', Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, in which this question is first raised.

[3] New Statesman: 'Full transcript, David Cameron Speech on Multiculturalism and Islamic Extremism', 5th February 2011: http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology

[4] Ibid and Home Office Prevent Strategy: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/prevent/prevent-strategy/

[5] It is important to note the negative reference to Jihad is acknowledged by some authors. The CTC's observations go some way to explaining why this noble Islamic term is cited to designate violent extreme movements: *"We recognise that the use of "Jihadi"…is controversial. Some analysts feel that it cedes too much to militant Salafis to ratify their use of the term – they call their movement al-haraka al-jihadiyya ("the Jihadi Movement") – since jihad has positive connotations in Islam. However, we have opted to use it for the following reasons. First, it has wide currency in the Western counterterrorism community. Second, the proposed alternatives are either too imprecise or polemically charged to be analytically useful. Third, "Jihadism" indicates the centrality of religious warfare in militant Salafi worldview. Fourth, using the label makes Jihadis accountable for giving the term a bad name and for not living up to the high standard of conduct associated with Jihad. Finally, the term is used in Arab media and was coined by a devout Saudi Muslim who is hostile to the ideology, so it is not a Western neologism."* McCants W, Brachman, J and Felter, J: 'Militant Ideology Atlas' Executive Report, November 2006, p.5 Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy.

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some of the most effective counter-terrorist arguments and strategies come from groups that have been incorrectly conflated with violent extremism.[6] Indeed, the:

> lazy parlance in which the words 'extremist' and 'radical' have become interchangeable has meant that any Muslim expressing anything other than unremitting support for the government is under suspicion.[7]

Increasing acknowledgement is being given to the fact that academic and political debate is in need of examining and redefining some of the terminology now being attributed to describing radicalisation and extremism. The conclusive seminar report of a conference hosted by Aberystwyth University in October 2007 highlighted the following consensus reached by the attendees, namely:

> The current language and discourse surrounding the term 'radicalisation' is highly problematic, in large part because; i. it assumes simplistic and mono-causal explanations for political violence based on notions of brainwashing, extremist 'infection' or radicalisation 'pathways' or 'escalators', ii. it constructs everyday Muslim practices, Islamically-inspired political activism and the broader Muslim community as inherently 'suspect', iii. it restricts the scope of legitimate debate about foreign policy and divisive political domestic issues; and iv. it is highly counter-productive, inconsistent and highly negative in terms of government goals of preventing further terrorist violence. [8]

This section will also examine the emergence of violent extremism from a historical perspective as a means of comparison with its contemporary counterpart today. Whilst discussing *forms* of religious extremism later in the study, specific focus will also be given to the emergence of ideological extremism and the subsequent manifestations that emanate from this particular understanding of Islam, i.e. takfeerism (excommunication of Muslims from Islam etc.) Salafism (Salafiyah) will be examined in light of these observations in order to determine whether it is in fact an ideology and/or movement that serve as a precursor to violent extremism. Particular attention will be paid to areas of ideological and methodological (practical) divergence between

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[6] Lambert, R. 'Salafi and Islamist Londoners: Stigmatised minority faith communities countering al-Qaida' Crime Law Soc. Change (2008) 50:73-89

[7] Briggs, R. Fieschi, C. Lownsbrough, H: 'Bringing it Home: Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism,' DEMOS, 2006, pp.41-42.

[8] Seminar Report, Aberystwyth University, Department of Politics, Centre For The Study of 'Radicalisation' & Contemporary Political Violence: 'The Politics Of Radicalisation: Reclaiming The Debate And Reclaiming The Language' p.1, 18th October 2007.

Salafism and Takfeerism. Wiktorowicz's[9] typology of Salafis will finally be reviewed against the conclusions drawn from this section.

1.1 Categorisation of Islamic terminology on extremism.

Introducing and describing Islamic legislative terms is important at this particular stage in order to enable the identification and subsequently, contextual examination of the various forms of extremism that are to be discussed in this section. The potential for misunderstanding the religious terminology used throughout the study is then, hopefully, diminished. Al-Mutairi, in his comprehensive discourse on religious extremism, categorises extremism according to Islamic Legislative lexicology.[10] He makes an important observation which should not be ignored by western academics and practitioners alike who have often attempted to develop theories around this subject (religious extremism in Islam) from an isolated platform away from Muslim scholarly and historical input. He asserts that Shariah (Islamic Legislative) expressions and terminology are essential if one is to understand violent extremism and terrorism enacted in the name of Islam.[11] Despite religious extremism not being a new phenomenon in the Arab and Muslim world, as will be seen when discussing the historical roots of ideological extremism, western academia has either largely ignored or indeed, failed to reference the readily accessible array of experience, knowledge and expertise in this area. Al-Mutairi supports his observation regarding the Shariah's importance by citing the famous Muslim classical scholar and jurist, Shaykhul Islam, Ibn Taimiyyah: 'Knowing Arabic…helps in understanding the meaning…Similarly, understanding the manner in which the words express their meanings [is also very helpful and important]. Most of the misguidance of the heretics was due to this reason. They interpreted…words according to what they claimed such words indicated, while in reality, the matter was not so.'[12]

1.1.2. Categories of extremism (Lexical meanings)

i. **Al-Ghulu (Extremism).** This can also be described as excessiveness, i.e. a person going beyond the limits in any given matter. Shaykh Salih Ali-Shaykh

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[9] Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism' Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 29: 207- 239, 2006

[10] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001,

[11] Ibid, pps.56-63

[12] Ibid, p.60 citing Taimiyyah, I: 'Al-Fataawa' vol.7, p.115

explains 'Extremism means to go beyond the permissible limits in any issue. So, anyone who goes beyond the limits of the Sunnah, he is guilty of extremism.'[13]

Lane defines this term as: 'He, or it, exceeded the proper due or common limit; was excessive, immoderate, or beyond measure…He acted or behaved, with forced hardness, or strictness, or rigor, in religion, so that he exceeded the proper, due or common limit.'[14]

Another definition suggests 'Extremism in the religion is going beyond the limits Allah established, expanding on the domains of the religion and that are demarcated by those limits.'[15]

ii.   **Al-Tatarruf (Radicalism).** Linguistically, the Arabic derivation of the word refers primarily to boundaries or parameters that are established or set, i.e. *'the utmost edge or limit of something or 'he went beyond the limits of justice and was not moderate.'*[16] Its legislative connotation refers to someone who pushes these boundaries but does *not* exceed *them.*

iii.   **Al-Tanatta' (exhorbitance or extravagance).** This category is clear and refers to exhorbitance etc. whether it emanate from speech or action.

iv.   **Al-Tashaddud (strength, rigidity and inflexibility).** This type of extremism relates to overcoming or overpowering something / someone by being forceful and inflexible. The prophetic narration confirms this in the following explanation:

> No one overburdens himself in the religion except that it overcomes him (and he will not be able to continue in that manner).[17]

v.   **Al-Unf (harshness, sternness or meanness).** As in the case of Al-Tanatta (iii) the meaning of this is clear.

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[13] Ali-Shaykh, S A A: 'The Fitnah of the Khawarij', p.10   http://www.answering-extremism.com/trans-pub/ae_sas_3.pdf

[14] Lane, E: 'Arabic-English Lexicon' The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, England, 1984, vol.2, p.2287

[15] Al-Meedani, A R; 'Basaair li-l-Muslim al Musaair, p.228 cited in Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.150.

[16] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.65

[17] Al-Bukhari, M I: 'Al-Jaami al-Saheeh' Daar Ihyaa al-Turaath al-Arabi, Beirut

Al-Mutairi's conclusive summary of these terms highlight the similarities between the linguistic definitions of at least two of the words (Al-Ghulu and Al-Tatarruf), while at the same time explaining the particular differences in their meanings to be ones of generality, i.e. Al-Tatarruf (reaching an extreme or limit of something as has been described above), and specificity, i.e. Al-Ghulu. The remaining categories are simply manifestations or 'expressions' of Al-Ghulu, this being the most serious and severe classification of extremism in this instance:

> The extremist is characterized by taking to his religion in a very strict and severe manner (Al-Tashaddud). He is also characterized, in his relations with others, by harshness and incivility, (Al-Unf). He is also characterized by going deeply and beyond the needed limit when it comes to actions of the religion. All of these words, save Al-Tatarruf, have been mentioned in the texts of the Sharee'ah. [18]

Al-Mutairi then discusses religious tenets that expound upon the moderate and balanced methodology of Islam, providing Quranic references and prophetic exhortations.[19]

1.2. Islamic Fundamentalism

Usage of this term, especially in its connection with Islam, has risen sharply following the events of September 11th. According to Lawrence, the coining of this particular term originated from H. A. R. Gibb, a prominent Orientalist, in his study initially entitled 'Mohammedanism' (later to be retitled 'Islam')[20]. Ruthven illustrates the semantic shift in focus of the term 'fundamentalism' as it relates to extremism, sectarianism, doctrinarism and ideological purism today.[21] In view of the ambit of this subject, focus is invariably upon '*Islamic*' Fundamentalism. Oliveti, while acknowledging the usage of the term in its generality, also observes the other, more specific, connotation applied when referring to Islam:

> the term 'fundamentalism' as applied to politicized, militant and iconoclastic religion is a misnomer, because Islam as such, and in fact all authentic religions, are fundamentalist in that they pertain to the fundamentals of life and of existence…Nevertheless, the

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[18] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.67
[19] Ibid, pps. 67-74
[20] Lawrence, B: 'Defenders of God', San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.
[21] Ibid, p. 22

current meaning of the term is clear enough, as are its connotations of militancy, of being highly politicized and of its being something new and antithetical to the orthodox religion.[22]

He goes on to describe the root of Islamic fundamentalism stemming from the twentieth century amongst three distinctive movements; two being Sunni and one Shi'a (Wahhabism/Salafism, the Muslim Brotherhood [Ikhwan al Muslimeen] and 'Revolutionary Shi'ism').[23] Unfortunately, as is the case with a few literary works that have apparent biases from the outset, Oliveti's observations throughout are either inadequately researched and/or contradictory. The reason for this can be witnessed in the above reference to 'Wahhabism/Salafism' emerging as an Islamic Fundamentalist movement in the twentieth century whilst, discussing 'The Rise of Wahhabism' in the eighteenth century two pages later. Either Islamic Fundamentalism or, more specifically 'Wahabbism', emanated with its alleged founder, Muhammad Abdul Wahhab in the eighteenth century or the twentieth century; it cannot be both. Oliveti, in his attempt to depict Salafism as an extremist movement then endeavours to show it to be both an old and new phenomena at the same time.[24] Connations between fundamentalism and extremism relating to Islam can further be seen in Boukhars' observations about the type of military training received by mujahedeen following the Six Day War of 1967. He refers to such training '*in its most fundamentalist and reactionary manifestations,*'[25] suggesting the resultant effect to be one of extremism.[26]

Dr. Dekmejian, in his study of extremist tendencies among Muslims, provides 'Indices of Islamic Fundamentalism' in which he provides verbal and behavioural descriptors of individuals who, according to his analysis, move towards fundamentalism. In his description of '*passive*' and '*activist*' fundamentalism he refers to characteristics that are actually common to the vast majority of practicing Muslims today. For example, he refers to regular Mosque attendance, observance of the five obligatory prayers and, specifically for women, the wearing of 'distinctive' clothing as amongst the characteristics of Islamic fundamentalism. The indices list a number of other normative practices that typify the Muslim character; however, the same

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[22] Oliveti, V: 'Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences', Amadeus Studys, 2001, pps. 14,15

[23] Ibid, p.15

[24] Ibid, pp.14-20

[25] Boukhars, A: 'The Challenge of Terrorism and Religious Extremism in Jordan' Strategic Insights, Volume V, Issue 4 (April 2006), pps1-2

[26] It is important to note that the extremism alluded to by Boukhars here, i.e. actual military engagement with a perceived enemy is not, in every instance, to be considered as terrorism; indeed, military excursions are to be viewed on an individual basis to establish if they can be warranted as Jihad by renowned scholars.

extreme/fundamentalist inferences are applied.[27] Al-Mutairi critiques Dekmeijan's study, expounding upon the commonality of the characteristics described and the context in which they are practicable.[28] He goes on to identify what he observes as Western perceptions of 'Islamic fundamentalism / extremism' by referring to Pipes' categorisation of Muslims into three distinctive groups; i. Secularists, ii. Reformists and, iii. Fundamentalists.[29] Pipes' analysis of the third group is that they believe in the obligation of completely applying the Shari'ah when, in reality, all Muslims believe this and endeavour to apply as much of it as is practicable in their daily lives. Connotations and direct inferences referring to 'Islamic' fundamentalism as equating to extremism or terrorism can, perhaps, be accurately countered in Esposito's observation that:

> This phenomenon which we call Islamic fundamentalism must not be understood in terms of terrorism. It is far from that.[30]

Al-Mutairi highlights the important fact that Western reference to 'Islamic fundamentalism' emanates from a preconceived notion related to earlier Christian fundamentalism '*whose adherents are described as being irrational and bigoted.*'[31] His conclusion points to the negative attribution of fundamentalism and, by extension, extremism on 'practicing' Muslims and the fact that this has emanated from an altogether different religion and indeed, period in history.[32] In support of this, Cable also asserts that the term used, i.e. fundamentalism, was transferred to the Muslim world as "intellectual tools" and was previously formulated to explain phenomena specific to Catholic and Protestant history. His conclusion of this discussion is definitive in that he and his research team did *'not find any justification for this type of transfer'* (i.e. from its usage and negative connotations in Christianity to Islam.)[33] That said, Ruthven suggests that the "*F-word*" as he refers to it, has long since been removed from its original Protestant coupling and concludes it can no longer be confined to its original context.[34] He asserts that, if restricted to its original meaning or, coupling (i.e. Christian fundamentalism), the same should be done to terms like 'nationalism' and 'secularization' which also appeared around the same time, prior to

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[27] Dekmejian, H. R: 'Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World', Syracruse, New York: Syracruse University Press, 1985, pps.54-55

[28] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, pps. 177-182

[29] Pipes, D cited in 'Islam and Congress', Al-Mujtama, no. 942, p.41

[30] Esposito, J cited in 'Islam and Congress', Al-Mujtama, no. 919, p.44

[31] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, pps. 171-182.

[32] Ibid

[33] Cable, G:'Al-Nabi wa al-Firoon', pp.231-232

[34] Ruthven, M: 'Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction', Oxford University Press, 2007 p.5

their prefixing to political movements or processes in the post-Enlightenment era.[35] In his conclusions on this far reaching subject, he reflects upon the paradox which currently exists between fundamentalism and postmodernism. He observes the relationship as being paradoxical, *'because far from rejecting absolute ways of speaking truth, fundamentalisms exemplify them.'*[36] Postmodernism, on the other hand, as a concept, represents ambiguity which *'reflects the confusion and uncertainty inherent in contemporary life.'*[37] Ruthven observes the resultant '*compliment*' afforded to religion as a result of postmodernism is '*back-handed and treacherous'* due to the conflicting ideals.[38] His observation necessitates a more detailed and insightful view of Islamic history insofar as it relates to the origins of extremism and this is what shall be examined in the next section.

1.3   Historical emergence of extremism in Islam

1.3.1   Dhul-Khuwaisarah

The earliest indicator of violent extremism in Islam was related to both ideological and behavioural traits identified by Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). Al-Mutairi's research on the causes of extremism identifies two forms that accord with the above mentioned observation; however, he asserts the origin of extremism, in this regard, is related specifically to only one of the forms; namely, belief related extremism.[39] A more detailed examination of his findings shall be made later in the section when discussing manifestations of extremist ideology and whether any single behavioural traits, by themselves, cause individuals to adopt a violent extremist ideology and practice. It is important to state, however, that the account shortly to be described, and the Prophet Muhammad's (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) identification of the case study and his progeny/followers, was as a result of divinely inspired revelation which is attributable only to Prophets and Messengers assigned by Allah. This is absolute so far as religious tenets amongst the Abrahamic faiths are concerned, particularly Islam and, therefore, discussion around intrinsic or spiritual insights are limited due to the difficulty in applying these to conventional, empirical research methods. Ruthven, rather frankly, addresses this absolute by stating:

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid, p.122

[37] Haynes, J: 'Religion, Secularization, and Politics: A Postmodern Conspectus', Third World Quarterly, 18(4), 1997

[38] Ruthven, M: 'Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction', Oxford University Press, 2007 p.122

[39] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, Section 2, pps.95-98.

Theologically, fundamentalists must reject choice because they know there is only one truth that has been revealed to them by the supraempirical spiritual entity most of them call God.[40]

If, in this instance, connotations of the term fundamentalists refer to adherence to the basic ideological tenets, or 'pillars' of Islam, then he is, to an extent, correct in his assertion insofar as they form the foundations of the religion. However, caution must be exercised in the generality of his observation regarding the rejection of choice as this in fact contradicts an unequivocal teaching of the Quran which generally censures compulsion in religion.[41] Censure surrounds distortion and rejection of established ideological foundations once an individual has *chosen* to convert/begin practicing the religion.

During the era of Prophet Muhammad, he experienced a significantly definitive confrontation with one of the later converts, named Dhul-Khuwaisarah. This individual challenged Muhammad over his choice of distribution regarding war booty obtained after one of the battles. Dhul-Khuwaisarah harshly rebuked Muhammad stating that he should be just and fair in his distribution. This was a direct inference that a degree of injustice and indeed, favouritism was being metered out by Muhammad. Umar ibn Al-Khattab, one of Muhammad's closest companions understood the implications of this inference and as a result was prepared to physically attack Dhul-Khuwaisrah. He was, however, censured from doing so due to Muhammad's prophetic insight into what was to be expected from Dhul-Khuwaisarah and his progeny:

> There will appear from this man's progeny people who recite the Quran but it will not penetrate beyond their throats… [in another narration]: …who one of you [i.e. the Prophet's companions] would belittle his own prayer when compared with theirs and his fasting compared to theirs…but they will pass through the religion just as an arrow might pass through a target. They will slaughter the people of Islam and invite the idol worshipping people. [42]

This refers to their declaration of takfeer upon the Muslims, thereby legitimising the latters' killing.[43] From the above mentioned account, the characteristic trait of harshness was witnessed in Dhul-Khuwaisarah's behaviour. Such behaviour falls into the category of extremism,

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[40] Ruthven, M: 'Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction', Oxford University Press, 2007 p.123
[41] The Qur'an Section 2 [Surah Al Baqarah] verse 256
[42] Bukhari: 'Sahih Al Buhkari' Hadeeth nos. 3610, 6163 and 6933 & Muslim: 'Sahih Muslim' Hadeeth no. 1064
[43] Ibid

described at the beginning of this section as *Al-Unf*. Although Al-Mutairi considers the above account to have highlighted belief related extremism, he does mention the fact that behavioural or deed related extremism is a characteristic that can and will occur amongst individuals in any given time and place.[44] Al-Mutairi's observation that the above account illustrates belief related extremism is supported by Shaykh Salih Ali-Shaykh who points to ignorance and a lack of correctly contextualised religious knowledge of Islam, its principles etc. as being a primary cause of extremism.[45] The author accords with this position so far as the belief related driver, in this instance, is concerned but suggests that harshness, under the legislatively and lexicological definition, also exists in this narration. Upon identifying the initial historical proponent of violent extremism amongst the Muslim world today, focus shall now be shifted to historical events succeeding this account and not long after Prophet Muhammad's death.

1.3.2 The Khawaarij

At this juncture it is necessary to establish the relationship between Dhul-Khawaisarah and the group that became known as the Schismatics or 'seceders' (Khawaarij). This group, as will shortly be seen, dissented and broke into a separate faction from the main body of Muslims at that time. An immediate parallel can be drawn between this group and Dhul Khuwaisarah's belief and understanding of the religion. Furthermore, behavioural similarities with Dhul Khuwaisarah also become apparent when comparing their reactions to the successors of the Prophet. The emergence of the Khawaarij exacerbated an already sensitive affair, i.e. the murder of the third Caliph, Uthmaan ibn Al-Affan, over which the main community had already divided and fought each other. It is important to note that such a division had never occurred since the advent of Islam under the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him).

The Khawaarij resembled Dhul-Khuwaisarah in their disregard and disrespect for leadership and seniority borne out of ignorance and misunderstanding of the religion. They openly challenged those whose religious experience, understanding and authority was superior to theirs.[46] They, as Bonney observes:

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[44] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, Section 2, p.96

[45] Ali-Shaykh, S A A: 'A Warning Against Extremism' UK, Jamiah Media, 2008, p. 20-21

[46] The Qur'an: Surah al Baqarah (2:137): "*So if they believe in the like of that which you (Prophet Muhammad and his companions) believe, then they are rightly guided; but if they turn away, then they are only in opposition."* Surah Ali Imran (3:110):"*You are the best peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Islamic monotheism and all that is good, and forbid polytheism and all that is evil, and you believe in Allah."* Surah an-Nisaa (4:115): *"And whoever contradicts and opposes the*

took a diametrically opposed view. Instead of accepting the rule of the caliph, just or unjust, they took to heart the Qur'anic injunction to command the right and forbid the wrong. *[47]*

His observation is further supported by Ali-Shaykh in his definition of the Khawaarij at any given time and place:

> The Khawaarij are any people who renounce obedience to and oppose the legitimate leadership.[48]

1.3.3 Confrontation with the Khawaarij

Dhul Khuwaisarah's and the Khawaarijs' beliefs and deed related characteristics of extremism, arguably provide a platform from which a comparison can be made with contemporary violent extremism. Al-Mutairi poses the question of contemporary extremists examining the Khawaarij and other historical extremist groups, and points to research findings that are, in fact, inconclusive at this stage.[49] He makes reference to research that arrives at the conclusion of contemporary extremists deriving their ideological impetus and actions from the Khawaarij.[50] He highlights the connection made between the Khawaarij's and contemporary extremists' understanding and application of '*Al-Haakimiyyah*,' (judgement belonging solely to Allah).[51] The subject of '*Al-Haakimiyyah*' shall be elaborated upon in the succeeding section. Contrastingly, other authors hold the opinion that historical origins of extremism have no bearing or influence on contemporary extremist thought and that it is merely a type of "*strange coincidence*" that parallels actually exist between the two.[52]

After examining the two positions, the author suggests they are not, in their entirety, mutually exclusive, especially in view of the evidence extrapolated from al-Mutairi's research. His examination of one of the contemporary extremist groups of the 1960's in Egypt; namely,

Messenger, Muhammad after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows a path other than the believer's way, We shall leave him in the path that he has chosen."

[47] Bonney, R: 'Jihad: From Qur'an to bin Laden' Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, p.55

[48] Taymiyyah, I, cited by Ali-Shaykh, S A A: 'The Fitnah of the Khawaarij' www.answering-extremism.com p.13

[49] Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.100

[50] Al-Majd, A K: 'Hawaar la Muwaajahah,' p.67 cited in Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.100

[51] Ibid, p.100

[52] Ibid, p. 8

Mustafa Shukri's '*Takfeer wal Hijrah*', illustrated that, in its earliest stages, the extremist tendencies of the group had no correlation with any historical bases whatsoever. This was established after observing the following:

i.   When this phenomenon (of violent extremism amongst the group) first surfaced, access to literature or sources expounding the beliefs of previous deviant sects was impossible. This was due to group members being incarcerated and restricted from all religious literature, including the Qur'an. The manifestation of the group's extremist beliefs was '*the child of prison cells'* and what they concluded *'was the result of their own thinking based on what they had memorized'* of religious sources (the Qur'an and prophetic discourse);[53]

ii.   The extremism emanated following discussions regarding recent (contemporary) issues that had arisen. The resultant extremist tendencies were, therefore, a '*child of the circumstances*';

iii. Most members of the group were ignorant of the Islamic sciences and, finally, but most importantly;

iv.   Once some members became aware of the historical origins of violent extremism and, particularly the Khawaarij, they eschewed such thought upon realising their ideas were rooted in a flawed extremist foundation.[54]

Al-Mutairi's conclusion suggests the influence of historical or '*ancient*' sects upon contemporary extremists occurring at a later, as opposed to earlier, stage of their development.[55] Cesari's examination of contemporary fundamentalist movements questions:

> whether [their] interpretations of Islam, based on anachronistic and ahistorical readings of scripture, have a necessary correlation with the violence and development of Jihadi movements, particularly among young Muslims in the West.[56]

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[53] Al-Samuraa'ee, N: 'al-Takfeer: *Judhooruhu, Asbaabuhu wa Mabruraatuhu,*' p.8 cited in Al- Mutairi, Dr. A R M L: 'Religious Extremism in the Lives of Contemporary Muslims' translated by Zarabozo, J M M, Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 2001, p.101
[54] Ibid, p.102
[55] Ibid, p.103
[56] Cesari, J: 'Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism', Section 8, p102, Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe, Ashgate Publishing Ltd. Edited by Coolsaet, R. 2008

The author suggests that, irrespective of the *stage* of such influence or whether contemporary extremists familiarise themselves with the historical origins/ancient sects etc, clear correlations exist between the two periods, providing an insight of how to effectively address the phenomenon today.