

Part 2: Ideological roots of extremism

2. Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)

Before examining the ideological root of extremism it is important to highlight the foundational belief and concept of 'Tawheed' – Islamic monotheism. In fact, the importance of elucidating upon ideology at this juncture cannot be understated. The ideological declaration/testimony of faith known as the '*Shahada*', upon which an individual either affirms or reaffirms his/her belief and adherence to Islam, is amongst the most significant foundations of the religion. This ideological affirmation¹ is the demarcation between '*Eeman*' (the true belief in the One True God – Allah) and '*Kufr*' (disbelief).² The monotheistic concept of worshipping God alone in Islam is commonly known as '*Tawheed*'. A misunderstanding of this concept of can and has led to many deviated groups emerging over the centuries shortly after the advent of Islam.³

The literal meaning of *Tawheed* is unification or 'asserting oneness' of something. It derives from the Arabic verb '*wahhada*' which itself means to unite, unify or consolidate.⁴ Philips expounds upon its meaning when referring to Islam by highlighting:

When the term Tawheed is used in reference to Allah, (i.e. Tawheedullah) it means the realizing and maintaining Allaah's unity in all of man's actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allaah is One, without partner in His dominion and His actions (Ruboobeeyah), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (Asma wa Sifaat), and One without rival in His divinity and in worship (Ulooheeyah/'Ebaddah).⁵

He goes on to explain that the term *Tawheed* is not actually mentioned specifically in the Qur'an or ahadeeth of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), however, reference is made in one particular narration to Yuwahhidoo Allah (the Oneness of Allah).⁶ In this particular narration the present tense of the verb, from where the verbal noun

¹ "I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Prophet Muhammad is His slave and Messenger."

² Philips, A A B: 'The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)' International Islamic Publishing House, 1997, p.iv.

³ Ibid, p.vi.

⁴ Cowan, J M: 'The Hans Weir Dictionary of Modern Arabic' Spoken Language Services Inc. New York 3rd Edition, 1976 p.1055.

⁵ Philips, A A B: 'The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)' International Islamic Publishing House, 1997, p.1

⁶ Ibid, p.1,2 citing hadeeth of Ibn 'Abbas when the Prophet sent one of his Companions, Mu'aadh ibn Jabal as a governor to Yemen in 9 AH (After the Hijrah), al-Bukhari, (Khan, M M); 'Sahih al-Bukhari'

Tawheed is derived, was used by the Prophet.⁷ Remaining with Philips discourse on Tawheed, it also becomes necessary to note that *Tawheed* became categorised, shortly after the Prophet's era into three categories, already alluded to above:

a. **Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah** (Maintaining the Unity of Lordship)

This category, in summary, encapsulates the fundamental concept that Allah alone is the cause and Originator of everything that exists and sustains and maintains creation without any dependency or subservience to it; He is the sole deity without any challenge to His sovereignty.⁸ Al Mutairi asserts that submission to Allah and acceptance of His Law is an essential component of the testimony of faith (Shahada). Under this category falls the pivotal and authoritative status of rulership, or Haakimiyyah as it is known Islamically:⁹

The Command is for none but Allah: He has commanded that you worship none but Him.¹⁰

b. **Tawheed al-Asma was-Sifaat** (Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Names and Attributes)

Philips further categorises this aspect of Tawheed into five subdivisions explaining the ideological nature of them. For example, he elucidates on the point of not likening Allah's Attributes to His creation, i.e. anthropomorphism, (linguistically known as 'Tamtheel' according to Islamic terminology.)¹¹

c. **Tawheed Ulooheeyah / Ebaadah** (Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Worship)¹²

This aspect of *tawheed* is what actually demarcates belief in Islam from disbelief; the first two categories, in themselves, are not sufficient to encapsulate the requirements of

(Arabic-English) vol.9 pp. 348-9 no. 469 and Muslim (Siddiq, A H): 'Sahih al-Muslim' (English translation), Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1987, vol.1, pp.14-15, no.27

⁷ Ibid, p.2

⁸ Philips, A A B: 'The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)' International Islamic Publishing House, 1997, pp. 5-10

⁹ 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, pp.104-105

¹⁰ The Qur'an, Surah (Section) Yusuf (12 verse, 40)

¹¹ Taimiyyah, I: 'Sharh Al-Aqeedat-il-Wasitiyah: Text on the Fundamental Beliefs of Islam and Rejection of False Concepts of its Opponents,' Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Dar-us-Salaam Publications, 1996, pp.32-33

¹² Ibid, p.2

tawheed in its entirety.¹³ This particular category focuses exclusively on the unity of Allah's worship.

Philips elaborates upon why it became necessary to categorise *tawheed in the aforementioned manner* after the Prophet's and many of his older companions' deaths. Whilst the foundations of the components of *tawheed* are all implied throughout the Qur'an and prophetic narrations and analytical approach became necessary after Islam had spread across various regions such as Persia, Byzantium and India. Islam absorbed the prevalent cultures of those regions as well as the remnants of its new converts' former beliefs, such as philosophical concepts that were contrary to the unitarian concept of *tawheed*.¹⁴ In addition to this, those unhappy with Islam's spread into new regions conspired to distort the tenets of the religion in order to repel its increasing number of adherents.¹⁵ Philips makes reference to Muslim historians' accounts when concepts of free will first emerged in the Muslim world. This philosophical concept diametrically opposes one of the fundamental ideological tenets relating to the Articles of Faith; namely, Divine Decree.¹⁶ The belief was further propagated by an Iraqi convert to Islam, called Sausan who had previously been a Christian. He later reverted to Christianity after influencing one of his students at that time, named Ma'bad ibn Khaalid al-Juhanee. This individual continued to propagate what was considered to be an alien concept until he was arrested and charged with heresy, resulting in his execution.¹⁷ It is interesting to note that some of the younger companions of the Prophet were alive during this period and advised the general populace against mixing with protagonists of free will.¹⁸

2.1. Ideological root of extremism part A: 'Al-Haakimiyyah' – ('Judgement is solely for Allah'); and its misapplication.

The emergence of this aspect of Tawheed as a distinct category was discussed when referring to the dissent of the Khawaarij. Its original categorisation under Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah (unity of Allah's Lordship) was also discussed. Discussion will now ensue around the reasons

¹³ Ibid, p.16

¹⁴ Ibid, pps2-5

¹⁵ Ibid, p.3

¹⁶ (Refer to page 8 of Section 3: British Muslims and Religious Conversion for a description on the fundamental beliefs of Islam.)

¹⁷ Philips, A A B: 'The Fundamentals of Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism)' International Islamic Publishing House, 1997, p.3 citing Hajar, I: "Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb' Hyderabad, 1325-7, vol.10, p.225

¹⁸ Ibid, (Those companions were Abdullah ibn Umar, son of the second caliph Umar ibn Al Khattab, and Abdullah ibn Abee Awfaa).

leading to its distinction from the other categories of Tawheed. Al-Mutairi, after highlighting the verses that refer to Al-Haakimiyyah as a legislative source, points to cultural and colonial invasions of the Muslim world, particularly during the period of the Ottoman Empire, as a contributory factor that led to distinguishing it as a separate category.¹⁹ His conclusions in this regard are not dissimilar to Philips observations, (illustrated above) as to the reasons for categorising Tawheed in the first place, after the spread of Islam to various regions and cultures throughout the world. Al-Mutairi describes the adverse effects of colonialism upon the Muslim world and opines that this contributed to the state of spiritual as well as economic decline of the Ottoman Empire.²⁰ This resulted in a number of scholars and activists, concerned by the continuing decay, to revive Muslim religiosity and propagate returning to the rule of law; Allah's Law in this instance. Their focus was, therefore, upon the Sharia as a distinction between newly introduced man-made laws. This, according to al-Mutairi led to the newly invented term, Al-Haakimiyyah.²¹ It is interesting to note al-Mutairi's observation here, as during the time of the Khawaarij, reference was made to ruling by the Sharia without it being categorised separately. This is, perhaps, due to Philips earlier observation that such categorisations were unnecessary immediately after the Prophet Muhammad's death in view of the preponderance of his companions alive at the time of the Khawaarij's emergence and, therefore, the memory and preservation of his (the Prophet's message). Significantly, this new categorisation and indeed, its being distinct the three existing categories began in the mid twentieth century. Advocates of Al-Haakimiyyah included Abul 'Alaa Maudoodi, who defined it to mean:

The supreme and absolute authority, as referred to in the terminology of today's political science.²²

Sayyid Qutb also supported this terminology by stating:

The haakimiyyah is for Allah and the right to have humans worship Him. The right to lay down these laws for them also belongs to Him.²³

¹⁹ 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.106

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid, pp.106-7

²² Maudoodi, A: 'Tadween al-Dustoor', from 'Majmooah Nadhariyyah al-Islaam wa Hadyihi', p.251 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.107.

²³ Qutb, S: 'Muqawwimaat al-Tasawur' p.177 and 'Muallim fi al-Tareeq' p.118 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.107.

Indeed, one of the leading protagonists to this understanding of haakimiyyah today is none other than Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the new leader of Al-Qa'eda following Osama bin Laden's capture and killing in May 2011. He was influenced by Qutb's vision of this concept, stating:

Qutb's call for faith in Allah's Oneness, for submission to His sole authority and sovereignty (hakimiyya), was the spark that enflamed the Islamic revolution against Islam's enemies throughout the world.²⁴

Al-Mutairi confirms the terminology of Al-Haakimiyyah as a new one when mentioning *'it as a newly coined term, as a result of translating some Western terms into Arabic.'*²⁵ However, despite this new introduction, he confirms that it is not in contradiction to the tenets of Tawheed and does in fact fall under the category of Tawheed Ulooheeyah (Unity of Allah's Worship) as opposed to Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah (Unity of Allah's Lordship).²⁶ In fact, there is no contradiction or inconsistency with Al-Haakimiyyah being placed under either of these existing categories of *tawheed*. Conflict arises when distinguishing it as a fourth and separate category altogether in an effort to politicise it as a distinct ideological component. Maududi introduced the notion of Al-Haakimiyyah when discussing Lordship ('Rabb', literally meaning 'Lord'). According to Kepel, Maududi provided a twofold meaning to lordship; both religious and political.²⁷ The political implications of Al-Haakimiyyah are, arguably, the cause of existing problems faced when combating violent extremist ideology today. In fact, it is worth noting Biddle's observation of ideology as the *'centre of gravity'* and a tool for rallying support.²⁸ Al-Mutairi, whilst acknowledging Al-Haakimiyyah as the major cause of extremism in contemporary times, suggests that the initial revival or 'philosophizing' about this aspect of *tahweed* was simply as a result of the crisis the Muslim world found itself facing due to various governments' adoption and implementation of colonial and, therefore, man-made, alien laws.²⁹ He states:

²⁴ al-Zawahiri, A; 'Knights under the Prophet's Banner', December 2001, cited in Keppel, G; 'The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West', The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004, p.79

²⁵ 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.108.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Kepel, G: 'The Roots Of Radical Islam' SAQI, 2005, p.49

²⁸ Biddle, S: 'War Aims and War Termination', in Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analyses, Colonel John R. Martin, ed. (Strategic Studies Insititute, U.S. Army War College, January 2002,) pp.7-8, cited in Hassan M H B; 'Key Considerations in Counterideological Work against Terrorist Ideology' Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 29:531-558, 2006, p.532, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

²⁹ 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.108

This haakimiyyah issue is the major ideological root for extremism in contemporary times. Indeed, ruling by other than what Allah revealed was the major grievance of the Islamic fronts and of those among them that went to extremes.³⁰

He goes on to explain that grievances were also associated with an incorrect understanding of the concept of haakimiyyah itself.³¹ Syed Qutb observed in his influential study, 'Signposts', considered by its adherents to be the 'theoretical tool' of analysis for combating the state of Egypt at that time:³²

Nowadays, the entire world lives in a state of jahiliyya³³ as far as the source from which it draws the rules of its mode of existence is concerned, a jahiliyya that is not changed one whit by material comfort and scientific inventions, no matter how remarkable. The principle on which it is based is opposition to God's rule over earth and to the major characteristic of the Divinity, namely, sovereignty (al-haakimiyya): instead it invests men with this, and makes some of them gods for the others.³⁴

In fact, Qutb's position so far as Muslim societies were concerned was explicit:

Any society that is not Muslim is jahilliyya...as is any society in which something other than God alone is worshipped...Thus, we must include in this category all the societies that now exist on earth!³⁵

To further emphasise his pronouncement of global takfeer on all Muslim societies, he declares:

The societies that proclaim themselves to be Muslim must also be placed in the category of jahiliyya...because in the course of their existence, they do not practise the worship ('ubudiyya) of God alone – although they have faith in Him – but bestow characteristics that belong exclusively to the Divinity upon other than His. From this they derive their organizations, laws, values, judgements, habits and traditions.³⁶

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Kepel, G: 'The Roots Of Radical Islam' SAQI, 2005, p.32

³³ "The term **jahiliyya** can be translated into English only through approximations and paraphrases. As it is used in 'Signposts', it is one of the axes of Syed Qutb's view of the world. Derived from the Arabic root meaning to be 'ignorant', this word is used by Muslims to designate the pre-Islamic society of the Arabian Peninsula. This society 'was ignorant' of God until Muhammad's mission. As the orientalist Goldziher has remarked, the concept of **jahiliyya** plays a part in Islamic tradition much akin to that of 'barbarism' in the Western tradition. 'Islamism or barbarism' would thus be the alternative posited by Qutb." Kepel, G: 'The Roots Of Radical Islam' SAQI, 2005, footnote, p.43

³⁴ Qutb, S: 'Ma'alim fi'l-Tariq (Signposts)' Dar al-Shourouk, Beirut-Cairo, 1980; edition of the World Islamic Union of Students, p.10

³⁵ Ibid, p.98

³⁶ Ibid, pp.98-101

Al-Mahmood concurs with al-Mutairi's view of the effects of haakimiyyah upon the Muslim world today and highlights that a correct understanding of it as a concept as well as its application are essential if the current dilemma is to be averted. Notably, both he and al-Mutairi make reference to what the author has termed, 'liberal extremism' in what they describe as the attempts of academics and scholars, at the other end of the violent extremist spectrum, to dispel haakimiyyah in its entirety, labeling it as an intrinsic component of extremism.³⁷ It is important to reiterate al-haakimiyyah is indeed an essential component that falls under established categories of *tawheed*; to deny this is considered tantamount to major disbelief in Islam which expels an individual from the religion itself. The ambit of discussion around this issue relates to the misapplication and misunderstanding of this particular concept/component which has contributed, ideologically, to the manifestations of violent extremism amongst the Muslim world. Al-Mutairi illustrates the importance of haakimiyyah upon Muslim lives when he states:

The statement that the haakimiyyah or rule is only for Allah does not mean that a special group of humans is to rule as if they were the shadow (vicegerent) of Allah upon earth. Nor does it mean that any group has earned a special right for divine rule. Instead, it is an obligation upon all Muslims...to rule by the law and authority of Allah and to make the divine law...supreme.³⁸

Al-Mahmood, in support of this observation, refers to Quranic injunctions and prophetic texts pointing to the obligation of judging by Allah's Laws. He also expounds upon the meaning of Quranic verses; namely, Surah (Section) al-Ma'idah [5:44, 45 and 47]³⁹, their meanings and context, so far as adherence to the Shari'ah is concerned as, indeed, these are other texts cited in support of the extremist perspective.⁴⁰ Before concluding on this section of the discourse, it is necessary to examine the causes behind misunderstanding, misapplication or, as the case may

³⁷ 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.111 and al-Mahmood, Dr. A R S: 'Man-Made Laws vs. Shari'ah: Ruling by Laws other than what Allah Revealed – Conditions and Rulings', International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh, 2003, p.355

³⁸ 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.109

³⁹ al-Mahmood, Dr. A R S: 'Man-Made Laws vs. Shari'ah: Ruling by Laws other than what Allah Revealed – Conditions and Rulings', International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh, 2003, pp.119-220.

⁴⁰ Dr. al-Mahmood's entire study ('Man-Made Laws vs. Shari'ah: Ruling by Laws other than what Allah Revealed – Conditions and Rulings', International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh, 2003,) is dedicated to this topic, which would be too exhaustive to reproduce in this research. Reference should, therefore, be made to his study which highlights other texts that are sighted in support of ruling by Allah's Law and the consequences of contravening them. He also highlights the specious arguments and claims of those using such texts to justify either of the two extremes discussed in this particular research, i.e. both liberal and violent extremist extremes.

be, distorting fundamental tenets of Islamic ideology. Examination will then enable a lucid discussion on the succeeding section, manifestations of extremism.

2.2. Ideological root of extremism part B: Flaws in the formulation of Ideology⁴¹

The author has chosen al-Mutairi's title in this instance as it encapsulates the ensuing examination and discussion. He suggests that flaws '*in the formulation of thoughts and ideology were a major cause of extremism.*'⁴² He then refers to scholastic concern over such flaws and the subsequent evolvment of methodological approaches to the derivation of Islamic legislature from religious sources. This methodological approach became known as '*Ilm Usool al-Fiqh*' or what can be translated to mean '*Islamic Legal Theory.*'⁴³ This approach comprised of two essential aspects, i. the sources of law and ii. the manner and methodology of derivation of laws from those sources. Al-Mutairi suggests that:

Most of the deviations that occurred in Muslim history, regardless of whether they be related to creed or law, have been as a result of a shortcoming related to one of those two matters [or aspects].⁴⁴

An additional observation made by the author is the extremist's almost exclusive reliance upon, and reference to, classical texts and scholars. Little or no reference is made to bona fide and reputed contemporary scholars or their works which often expounds upon classical texts. Any reference made by them in this regard is usually one of disparagement and / or belittlement, i.e. 'government stooges' or 'scholars for dollars' etc. The author suggests that such reliance and reference to classical/historical works etc. enables extremists and their protagonists to manipulate and distort texts, unchallenged by those who authored them. They subsequently purport their understanding and explanations of such works to equate or even supersede that of recognised scholars today. By assuming this stance, they effectively entrench their ideology with that of the Khawarij who also believed their understanding of Islam to be superior to that of Prophet Muhammad's companions.

⁴¹ 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.114

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.114-115