

### Part 3: Manifestations of extremism

This section complements earlier discussions on the religion's historical and ideological relevance to contemporary violent extremism by examining the latter's various manifestations. It also revisits Islamic lexicology describing the various categories of extremism.<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgement is given to the existence of other precursors to violent extremist manifestations;<sup>2</sup> however, this section's major focus is on ideological drivers in view of the relative scarcity of data pertaining to this area of study amongst western academia today. This is especially valid when considering the subject from a Western, convert Muslim insider perspective.

Wiktorowicz discusses '*cognitive openings and religious seeking*' once an individual has experienced or become aware of adverse factors affecting either him/her or areas of the Muslim community. This newly discovered 'awareness' often leads to membership or affiliation with groups or causes considered to be active against such perceived 'oppression.'<sup>3</sup> Although Wiktorowicz limits the extent of his discussion to an individual merely *choosing* to join a radical group (which, in itself, cannot be deemed to be a direct manifestation of extremism,) he points to the fact that:

Participation [in a radical group] entails costs and risks, especially since the movement supports the use of violence and is highly contentious.<sup>4</sup>

The author suggests that it is necessary to first establish the extent of affiliation to a group or cause and what this entails by way of beliefs. Thereafter, the behavioural traits that manifest themselves as a result of such beliefs should be examined to determine whether these are symptomatic of violent extremist tendencies, or whether the characteristics displayed are attributable to what may be commonly considered to be idiosyncratic behaviour synonymous to the lexical definitions of extremist, (or excessive,) behavioural tendencies/traits. For example, an individual who decides to become reclusive in order to 'preserve' his religion may fall under the lexicological definition of '*al-Ghulu*' – excessiveness; however, the *degree* of this particular manifestation is not a sole predictor of violent extremism. Conversely, an individual who, after

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Section 1, page 3 of this section

<sup>2</sup> Elworthy, S & Rifkind, G: 'Making Terrorism History', Rider Studys 2006

<sup>3</sup> Wiktorowicz, Q: 'Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West', Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC. 2006, pp. 85-86

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.85

experiencing a '*cognitive opening*', legitimises violence against innocent civilians based upon misunderstood tenets of the religion, manifests '*al-Ghulu*' of a violent extremist predisposition. Al-Mutairi poses the question of whether violent religious extremism is an individual or group (collective) phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> His subsequent findings provide two distinctive definitions; namely, i. if the extremism emanates from a general, belief-related premise, it is to be considered a collective problem or phenomenon. In other words, it can affect and galvanize the masses. The second distinction relates to extremism manifesting itself on an individualistic '*deed-related*' basis. In this case the manifestation can be considered an isolated or personal phenomenon in the initial instance which only has resonance with the agent of such deeds/acts.<sup>6</sup> The above mentioned examples, propounded by the author, may serve as accurate illustrations of Al-Mutairi's distinctions, (i.e. the belief in legitimising violence against innocent civilians and the behavioural trait of reclusiveness.) Whilst keeping this in mind, reference must again be made to the origin of the type of religious extremism under examination today; Dhul Khuwaisarah and the Khawaarij, (discussed earlier in this section. The author suggested the existence of *belief-related* and *deed-related* manifestations of extremism in Dhul Khuwaisarah's *understanding (belief-related)* that a divinely guided Prophet could be unjust/oppressive to his followers. His harshness when addressing the Prophet also confirmed the *deed-related* or *behavioural* nature of his extremism in accordance with the lexicological definition of '*Al-Unf.*' Effectively, it is further suggested that, in the event of the first category of extremism being present in an individual, (namely, *belief-related* extremism), alongside a particular mosaic of traits from the second category (i.e. *deed-related* extremism), the resultant manifestation is highly likely to be one constituting a violent extremist predisposition. Further examination of this theoretical supposition will be made when examining data from the section on case studies.

Suffice it to refer at this stage to Hassan's illustration of ideology being a '*centre of gravity*' and a '*tool for rallying support*' reinforcing Al-Mutairi's assertion of belief-related extremism being a group/collective phenomenon and not an individualistic one.<sup>7</sup> As has been intimated above, various manifestations of *deed-related* extremism, in isolation, do not necessarily lead to violent extremist tendencies. That said, a brief discussion on a few relevant categories pertaining to *deed-related* extremism becomes necessary.

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<sup>5</sup> 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.131

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Hassan, M H B: 'Key Considerations in Counterideological Work against Terrorist Ideology,' Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006, 29:531-558

Remaining with Al-Mutairi's extensive research in this field, it is apparent he categorised deed-related manifestations of extremism in an attempt to highlight that not all behavioural traits prove a predilection of terrorism. He identifies at least thirty manifestations of extremism in the lives of contemporary Muslims which are connected to both belief-related and deed-related extremism.<sup>8</sup> To discuss each category at this stage would prove exhaustive; it will be sufficient therefore, to cite a few significant categories so as to illustrate the nature of these manifestations. The earlier example of reclusiveness or, seclusion, will be revisited to illustrate the degrees to which it can manifest itself. The religious terminology of reclusiveness or, seclusion, is called '*uzlah*' and the lexicological definition is isolation or 'retirement' from society.<sup>9</sup> There are differences of opinions amongst classical scholars regarding the merits of *uzlah*, with one position giving preference to interaction/participation in society as being the normative requirement of all citizens. The second opinion recommends *uzlah* in adverse circumstances when societies have become morally and spiritually bankrupt and an individual feels that his / her religious values and practice are under threat of being corrupted or eroded.<sup>10</sup> In fact, it becomes a praiseworthy deed and in itself, cannot be considered a manifestation of violent extremism unless its underlying foundation or *belief-related* premise is of a Muslim society being considered as one of major disbelief and, therefore, *jahiliyyah*. This was the belief encapsulated by Sayid Qutb as has been expounded upon earlier in this section and Mustafa Shukri, another proponent of violent extremism from Egypt.<sup>11</sup> Shukri had already adopted and propagated a *belief-related* extremism based upon his understanding of al-haakimiyyah. Aspects of *deed-related*, behavioural characteristics simply served as a personification of this belief. *Uzlah (seclusion)* was one of the characteristics he considered a natural consequence of residing in what he and his followers considered a society functioning according to the precepts of '*jahiliyyah*.'<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that only Qutb

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<sup>8</sup> 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.590-591.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp.526

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp.526-559

<sup>11</sup> "...Mustafa Ahmad Shukri... was born in Asyut in 1362 A.H. He was imprisoned in 1885 A.H., being accused of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood. He was released in 1391 A.H. In prison he established a group that spread greatly after his release from prison. Its name was Jamaah al-Muslimeen (the community of the Muslims). It is known by the name Jamaat al-Takfeer wa al-Hijra (the community of declaring other Muslims disbelievers and of emigration). He was executed by [the Egyptian government] in 1398 A.H." Cited from Muhammad Suroor ibn Naaif Zain al-Abideen; '*al-Hukum bi Ghair ma Anzalallah wa Ahl al-Ghulu*', pp.10, 304-306, cited by 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.21

<sup>12</sup> Mustafa, S: 'Kitaab al-Khilaafah,' vol.3, p.20 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, pp.590-591.

preceded Shukri in declaring Egypt to be a non-Muslim populated country; not even the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (to which Qutb subscribed), Hasan al-Banna, ventured into such unchartered domains by declaring takfeer upon a predominantly Muslim populated country.

Kepel notes:

Qutb's trans-historical use of the concept of jahiliyyah marks a notable departure in Muslim Brother dogma. Al-Banna, for example, never dreamed of accusing the Egyptian society...of being non-Islamic.<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion to this aspect of the discourse, the author considers it necessary to reiterate his summation that historical and ideological origins of violent extremism serve as important insights/markers of contemporary extremism and its counterparts. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that deed-related manifestations of extremism can be attributable to individuals who, whilst not inclined towards violent extremism, possess overzealousness/excessiveness in the practice of their religion. This can often be misconstrued as being characteristic or, part of the mosaic which contributes towards a violent extremist's profile. Such behavioural characteristics may fall into any of the lexicographical classifications of extremism given earlier. One of the purposes of the above discourse was to highlight the necessary prerequisites of *belief-related* extremism taking root *prior to* particular *deed-related* characteristics, and that the latter can serve as conclusive components, or drivers, towards violent extremist manifestations. Psychological, socioeconomic and religious drivers also form part of the more general mosaic that affect the *pace* of radicalisation towards extremism.<sup>14</sup> Many studies investigating fanaticism suggest that psychological imbalance is a recurring feature in a number of case studies.<sup>15</sup> Further studies even suggest the existence of a primal trait that enhances the development of fanaticism within an individual.<sup>16</sup> That said, the author would argue that these still serve as secondary factors to existing ideological/belief-related precursors and often run parallel to deed-related characteristics. Increasing academic research examining the effects of the ideological

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<sup>13</sup> Kepel, G: 'The Roots of Radicalism', Saqi, 2005, p.45

<sup>14</sup> Elworthy, S & Rifkind, G: 'Making Terrorism History', Rider, 2006, pp.43-46

<sup>15</sup> 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. 116-117

<sup>16</sup> Abdullah, M: 'al-Itijaahaat al-Taasabiyyah,' p.26 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, pp.590-591.

effectiveness of extremist propaganda support this above assertion, arguing the need to focus on and develop effective counter responses to the theological thread.<sup>17</sup> Hassan observes:

Many scholars and analysts have said that terrorism cannot be defeated either by military or law and order means only. It requires a multipronged and multifaceted approach, which includes strategies to eliminate the roots and causes of terrorism. One of the root causes...is the ideology that drives and motivates terrorists. Although it has been widely accepted that counterideology or ideological response to extremist groups' propaganda is an important part of counterterrorism strategy, up until now there is no single concrete and coherent doctrine or framework for conducting it.<sup>18</sup>

Boucek's observation's, while examining Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism strategy, is more optimistic in that he highlights the country's successful efforts and:

use of unconventional "soft" measures [that are] designed to combat the intellectual and ideological justifications for violent extremism. The primary objective...is to engage and combat an ideology that...is based on corrupted and deviant interpretations of Islam.<sup>19</sup>

### Section conclusions

The purpose of this section was to introduce a historical and ideological perspective to the subject of violent extremism whilst addressing, at the same time, language used to define this phenomenon. Furthermore, specific areas of ideological and behavioural tendencies attributable to violent extremism were highlighted in an attempt to place context around the succeeding sections that will look at particular individuals and movements who purportedly subscribe to extremist ideologies. The theoretical frameworks and data highlighted throughout this section, therefore, serve as an insight into the ideological and methodological dynamics applied amongst the Muslim community in Britain today. The author submits that, after examination and discussion of the various trends which actually define extremism, particular groups, such as the Salafis, are actually positioned closer to towards a more 'moderate perspective' ideologically. However, in some instances, like other significant movements in Britain today, behaviourally some aspects could, when considered from a mainstream societal perspective, be considered

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<sup>17</sup> Hassan, M H B: 'Key Considerations in Counterideological Work against Terrorist Ideology', Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Routledge Taylor Francis Group, 2006, 29: 531-558.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.531

<sup>19</sup> Bouerk, C: Saudi Arabia's "Soft" Counterterrorism Strategy: Prevention, Rehabilitation and Aftercare,' Carnegie Researchs, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Middle East Program, no.97, September 2008.

extreme. Further examination of the Salafist movement in Britain will serve to either validate or invalidate this particular observation. Additionally, the following section on Salafism will also examine the movement's ideological and methodological approach in light of what has preceded in order to determine the validity of current academic and journalistic discourse which asserts it to be a precursor or indeed, intrinsic component of the violent extremist psyche.