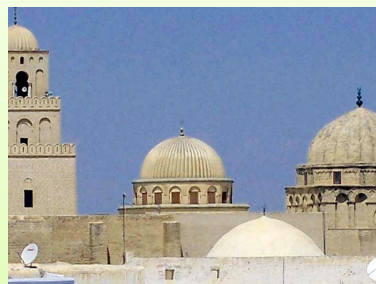


L7 - MUSLIM POLITICS

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L7 MUSLIM POLITICS

Islam and Politics in the Modern World:
towards Contemporary Islamic 'Theology'

2

usuliyya

Within specific, Arabic-Islamic contexts there is no immediate equivalent term for 'fundamentalism', although the term '*usuliyya*' has been coined (from *usul* - fundamentals, roots, principles)

3

Key Issues

- Defining 'reform', 'fundamentalism', 'Islamism' – and their Arabic/Islamic equivalents (if any?)
- Models of Fundamentalism: enlightened, militant, technologist (*after Bassam Tibi*)
- Relationships between religion and politics

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Key Issues

“Fundamentalism seemed an appropriate subject of an interdisciplinary public policy study in part because it inspires the effort to create structures and institutions comprehending every aspect of human existence.”

Marty & Appleby, *Fundamentalism Observed*

5

Sayyid Qutb

“Islamist political discourse is loath to specify the political system that the Islamic state would create and invigilate. It normally rests content with emphasizing the uniqueness of this society, it being one where God is the sole legislator. Beyond the legal order which re-enacts the primitivist utopia, nothing remains but a savage vitalism: the social order with ‘emerge vitally’ from doctrine, and doctrine becomes ‘the actual and active reality of the group.’”

6

Gellner

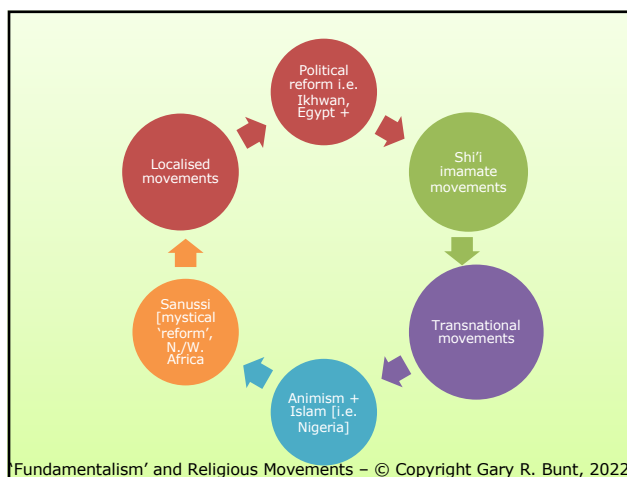
Fundamentalisms may need ‘intermediaries’ to approach all powerful deities, the intermediaries Gellner described as “a hierarchical, specialized class of religious personnel.” Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*

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Fundamentalisms

- John O. Voll describes fundamentalism as a “complex cluster of movements”
- “Islamic fundamentalism, then, will have to denote the reaffirmation of foundational principles and the effort to reshape society in terms of those reaffirmed fundamentals. This involves, in the words of Muslims who have described Islamic fundamentalism, the effort ‘to call Muslims back to the path of Islam,’ ‘an assertive surge of Islamic feeling’ which pervades the Islamic world, and ‘the reliance of Islamic fundamental principles to meet the needs and challenges of contemporary times.’”

8



9

ikhwan al-muslimiyya

"... [Hasan] al-Banna defined the [Muslim Brotherhood] movement as 'a Salafiyya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organization, an athletic group, a cultural-education union, an economic company, and a social idea.'" Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*

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'Tajdid' in one Muslim context is not necessarily received warmly in other contexts. Esposito cites the example of the aftermath of the 1979 Revolution in Iran, which resulted in:

Shi'a riots in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province;

the seizure of the Grand mosque in Mecca by Iranian sympathisers (1979);

the execution of Shi'a cleric Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr in Iraq (1980);

a failed coup in Bahrain (1981).

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Yvonne Haddad

"Ideal time is past time, and the duty of the Muslim is to avoid new ideas, customs or interpretations since they are simply innovations which act as barriers and impediments to the realization of ideal society."

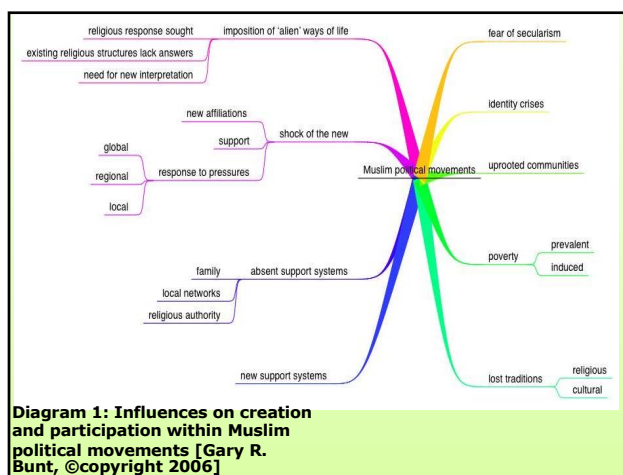
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"... Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)." Qur'an 13:12 (A)

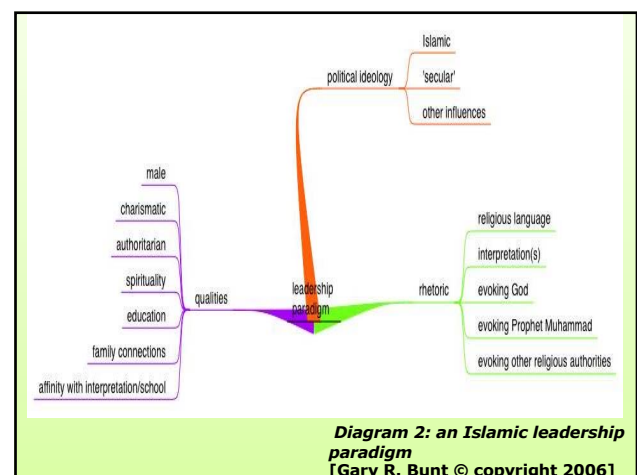
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This is indicative of the need for human endeavour, and responsibility of an Islamic society for forward thinking (*islah*) and 'reform' (*tajdid*, in the sense of renewal and revival).

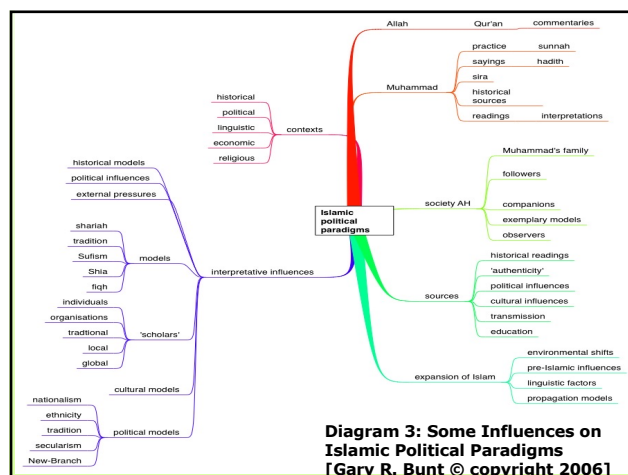
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'Reform' and Interpretation in Islamic Contexts

- **Abu Hamid Muhammad at-Tusi al-Ghazali (1058-1111)**
- Born Tabarân-Tûs (N. Iran), worked in Baghdad (court of caliph and Sultan); saw incompatibility with religious life, so travelled and taught - Damascus, Jerusalem – set up Sufi school in Tûs
- al-Ghazali is perceived as a *mujaddid*, who promoted the application of *ijtihad* by properly qualified jurists, whilst condemning *taqlid*, defined as 'blind adherence' to the Qur'an in this context.
- al-Ghazali emphasised the application of *shari'ah* as a way of life, in works on *kalam*, *fiqh*, *falasfa*, and Sufism. He advocated the pragmatic interpretation of Islam, stressing the Qur'an and Hadith, rather than 'non-Muslim' sciences.

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al-Ghazali had studied Ash'arite philosophy, and in *Nasihat al-muluk* (*Mirror for Princes*) constructed a model of the qualities he perceived a Caliph or other worldly ruler should possess:

"The quality which kings most need is correct religion, because monarchy and religion are like brothers. (The King) needs it equally whether he is healthy or sick. He must be diligent in matters of religion, performing the duties at the proper times, avoiding eccentricity and (heretical) innovation, and shunning unjust and immoral actions. If he hears that any person in his territory is suspect as regards religion, he must summon him and interrogate him until he repents, or else punish him or exile him from the territory; in this way the kingdom will be purged of eccentrics and (heretical) innovators, and Islam will be strong."

Rulers could make decisions on religious matters (there being theoretically no division between religion and the state). Rulers did not have to be *mujtahids*, but would consult the *'ulama*. al-Ghazali determined that a ruler should be adult, male, sane, a Qurayshite descendant with *najdah* (military prowess), *kifayah* (administrative competence), *wara'* (piety) and *'ilm* (knowledge) of Islam

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Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (661-728 AH/1263-1328CE)

- born in Harran, Syria, the son of a *madrasah* teacher - whom he eventually succeeded.
- In 1258, five years before Ibn Taymiyya was born, the Mughals had occupied Baghdad, a traditional centre of learning as well as the 'Abbasid capital. This event, the virtual conclusion of six hundred years of the 'Abbasid caliphate, was seen as catastrophic by inhabitants of nearby Syria, who themselves were threatened by the Mughals.
- The work of Ibn Taymiyya stresses the need for a *jihad* against these alien forces, which to him were analogous to the forces of *kufir* and the *shaitan*. He personally participated in battles against the Mughals, and also against Shi'ia he accused of aiding the enemy. An 'Abbasid caliphate continued in Cairo, maintained by Mamluk sultans, but was not generally recognized.

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Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (661-728 AH/1263-1328CE)

Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325-1351) of Delhi drew on Ibn Taymiyya's work; implemented *shari'ah* law, promoting *usul* principles such as obligatory prayers and observation of *sawm*; he refused to divide religious and political obligations, whilst recognising the *khilafa*, to whom he gave allegiance (to the Abbasid caliphate in Cairo). Muhammad bin Tughluq emphasised the importance of *Hadith*, and the role of *ijtihad* in dealing with new problems and situations .

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Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (661-728 AH/1263-1328CE)

- Although Ibn Taymiyya's was not the only voice seeking a re-evaluation of Islamic practice centred on Qur'an and Hadith, his influence pervades many subsequent interpretations of Islam.
- For example, the Ottoman Empire, the Hijaz, the Maghreb, Egypt, South Asia, and South East Asia have all been permeated with Ibn Taymiyya's thought.
- In contemporary Muslim societies, Ibn Taymiyya is seen as a focal point in the struggle for a pragmatic understanding of Islam in the face of purportedly hostile influences.
- Ibn Taymiyya's work has been reappraised by many subsequent reformers, and reform-centred movements, and has informed political processes ('positively' and 'negatively').

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Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762)

- Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762), from Delhi, was educated in Islamic sciences, and sought to build new foundations in *fiqh* in response to what he saw as dangers to Islam.
- He was a *hajji*, and studied in Mecca. He had been initiated into a Sufi order, and succeeded his father in heading a *madrassah*.
- Shah Wali Allah wrote on the differences between *al-madhabib al-fiqhiyya*, and on the characteristics of *ijtihad*.

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Shah Wali Allah

- Like Ibn Taymiyya, Shah Wali Allah feared foreign invaders, and felt that his interpretation of Islamic life was threatened by 'un-orthodox behaviour', such as particular forms of Sufism, and the influence of philosophy (*falsafa*).
- Although approving of many of Ibn Taymiyya's views, Shah Wali Allah disagreed with his attacks on Muhri al-Din Ibn 'Arabi (1160-1240), understandable given Shah Wali Allah's own Sufi practices.

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Shah Wali Allah

- Shah Wali Allah strongly believed in literal interpretation of the Qur'an as the basis for understanding Islam.
- Although a scholar himself, he did not believe that to reach a comprehension of the Qur'an a detailed metaphysical or intellectual approach was necessary.
- Through reading, reciting and hearing the Qur'an, the truth should be made plain to anybody.
- Knowledge was not the domain of scholars alone.
- Shah Wali Allah's Sufi background again proves influential, emphatic in its assertion of the Qur'an's Divine nature.
- Shah Wali Allah indicated that Muhammad's *practice* was often corrected or completed by God.
- In a valuation of different works on *hadith*, Shah Wali Allah believed the *Muwatta'* of Malik Ibn Anas to be superior, together with the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari and Muslim

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Shah Wali Allah

When examining *tajdid*, it is useful to précis the points made on this issue by Shah Wali Allah:

- Teachings should be placed in their historical setting
- people have different angles of looking at things
- different phraseologies cause incongruities
- balance is sought between extreme points of view
- ritual varieties should be tolerated.

This demonstrates the variety of approaches in reassessment of Islam, especially ideals of tolerance and the understanding that diversity should be accepted. .

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Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92)

- Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92) came from a family of jurists in Najd, and spent time in al-Basra, Baghdad and Isfahan.
- He met *hadith* experts on *haji*, which developed his interest in the Islamic sciences of interpretation.
- Within the diverse and insecure tribal fractures of Arabia, al-Wahhab believed that a common understanding and application of orthodox Islam would promote political and religious unity.
- Particularly relevant was Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of Ibn Hanbal, centred on strict interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith.
- Unlike Ibn Taymiyya, al-Wahhab held less sympathy for Sufis.

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Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab

- Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab experienced practical application of his work, through an alliance with Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud of Dir'iyya which commenced in 1745.
- By Ibn Wahhab's death, the Saudis controlled Najd, and were threatening the Hijaz.
- In 1803, the Sa'ud's supporters had seized Mecca from the Ottomans, reducing the Ottoman Empire's status as religious protector of Islam (as well as damaging the Ottomans strategically and financially).
- Through the intervention of Muhammad Ali, Mecca was restored to the Ottomans in 1813 - and the last Saudi stronghold was overcome five years later.
- The fortunes of the Sa'ud family revived in 1924, and by 1926 'Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud was proclaimed King.

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Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab

- al-Wahhab was confronted with 'foreign' domination (in the form of the Ottoman Turks) and an erosion of what was perceived as orthodox Islamic values through syncretism and innovation.
- The lack of unity might have been determined as a punishment from God, for failure to adhere to the principles of Islam.
- al-Wahhab and his followers - the *muwahhidun* - were critical of saint-cults and pilgrimages to tombs. These included the tombs of Muhammad, members of his family, and the Companions.
- Sufism was linked with the development of these practices.

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Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab

- al-Wahhab promoted 'strict monotheism', especially the *kitab al-Tawhid* with its principles of *da'wa*, 'patience' to stop persecution, the practicalities of Islam, and the science for understanding God and Islam.
- The diversity in Islam - which the *muwahhidun* indicated were caused by *kalam*, *shirk*, *sufism*, and absence of *taudid* within the 'ummah - are themes which have common currency in some reform-centred movements today.
- The ultimate creation of a state based on an interpretation of *shari'ah* was critical: Muslims who saw similar situations in their own contexts would act upon the interpretation of al-Wahhab, stimulated by Ibn Taymiyya and others.

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Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab

- Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's influence was significant, not just in Arabia, but because his ideas were and have been transmitted via connection with the physical focus or *qutb* of Islam: the *ka'bah*. *Hajjis* and other visitors to Mecca were exposed to his theories, which were circulated, (re-)interpreted and applied throughout the Islamic world.
- The presence of diverse communities in Mecca - centred on attendance at *hajj* and *madrasahs* for the attainment of *ijaza* - meant that influential individuals were themselves affected by al-Wahhab's interpretation of Islam.

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- The effects can be seen in many examples, including the Deoband School in India, al-Shawkani in Yemen, the Muhammadiyyah movement in Indonesia, and the development of Syrian and Egyptian schools of 'reform'.
- The prestige of Mecca in the Islamic world, and the Sa'ud family as its custodians, has continued to promote Wahhabi to this day - even though the Sa'ud family itself has come into criticism by other groups of 'reformers' of Islam, for example through their spending programmes of 'petrodollars'.

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