Religion and Identity

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7. Capturing Islam

Religion, Identity, and the Turn to Islamism

Simon A. Wood, University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Abstract

This essay explores the benefits and limitations of attempting to capture certain Muslim identities with the terms "fundamentalism" and "Islamism," commenting particularly on two recent anthologies on the topic. It finds that in both cases limitations outweigh benefits, arguing that discussions of Muslim identity are better served by leaving these terms out of the conversation. While the essay gives several reasons for this determination, two are prominent. First, the terms lack precision. Whereas this has long been a difficulty, the essay suggests that the scholarship examined has not resolved it, and the criticisms of the terms' critics remain unanswered. Second, if one asks the question "why should we use these terms?" there does not appear to be any compelling affirmative answer. We have at our disposal other terms that carry less problematical baggage and better serve analysis.

Keywords: Muslim identity, fundamentalism, fundamentalists, fundamentalism project, Islamism, Islamists, political Islam

Introduction

In the English-speaking world the theme of Muslim or Islamic identity and its relationships with non-Muslim identities has engaged scholars and other observers for several decades, and particularly since around 1980. Many have emphasized that, like all religions or religious communities, modern Islam is no monolith but rather integrates widely diverse identities. At the same time, that observation notwithstanding, much commentary produced on the topic has been viewed as implicitly, if not explicitly, conflating a certain Muslim identity – militant, incompatible with liberal values upheld in contemporary Western culture and often referred to as fundamentalist or Islamist – with Islam *per se*. Conversely, some observers have taken the alternative view that the most extreme, violent, and anti-Western identities adopted by Muslims and delineated with the vocabulary of Islam, are not, in fact, Islamic at all, or certainly not genuinely so. Such views were voiced in response to the Salman Rushdie Affair which began in 1988, the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the Jyllands-Posten Cartoon Controversy in 2005, and recently the opening of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York, the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in France.

The conversation here is ongoing, and there appears little immediate prospect for the emergence of a dominant view or synthesis. This essay is not a comprehensive study and does not stake out a definitive position on identity. Rather, it explores the benefits and limitations of attempting to capture a certain identity with the terms "fundamentalism/fundamentalist" and "Islamism/Islamist," finding that in both cases limitations outweigh benefits. In so doing, I refer particularly to the ideas on this topic set out in two anthologies published in 2010, *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, edited by Charles B. Strozier et al. and *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam*, edited by Richard Martin and Abbas Barzegar, where I comment mainly on the book's principal contributors, Donald K. Emmerson and Daniel M. Varisco. Contributors to *The Fundamentalist Mindset* advocate discussing Muslim and other identities in terms of fundamentalism, or a reworked version in the form of a "fundamentalist mindset." *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam* presents readers with arguments for and against using the term "Islamism/Islamist" to capture a certain Muslim identity. I take these books as signposts of recent discourse on fundamentalism and Islamism. On Islamism, I also comment on the views of Bassam Tibi, an authority on the topic who has engaged some of the theses set out in Martin and Barzegar's anthology.

The terms "fundamentalism" and "Islamism" are not fully equivalent or comparable. Fundamentalism is a comparative construct or umbrella term applied to many if not all religions, and occasionally to phenomena that are not religious at all. Islamism/Islamist, by contrast, is specific to one religion and, in my view, lacks analogs in other religions. It is far, far, less common to hear terms such as "Christianism" or "Hinduist." But it is nonetheless legitimate to see the terms fundamentalism and Islamism together: some authorities (e.g., Tibi) treat the two as synonymous; some (e.g., Emmerson) turn to Islamism because, amongst other reasons, they see it as an improvement over fundamentalism; and some (e.g., Varisco) flatly reject both terms. Whichever of these positions one takes, it is clear that discussing one term will likely entail discussing the other. At issue, then, is whether or not

these terms are precise and helpful, or whether Islamism as an alternative to fundamentalism offers any substantive improvement over it. In the following discussion, I will first explain that referring to some Muslims as fundamentalists or as having a fundamentalist mindset is not helpful, is imprecise, and raises more questions than it answers. Further, I do not find that the specific approach and examples set out in *The Fundamentalist Mindset* greatly advance a discussion that has been ongoing since around 1980. Indeed, to the extent that this volume is representative it seems that as the discourse has evolved since that time, the trend is a move away from rather than towards precision, or towards finding utility in embracing rather than resolving ambiguity. I find this development unhelpful. Second, I will suggest that while Islamism may be less problematical than fundamentalism and that the case for it is worth engaging, it too is a problematic term. I find no essential need fulfilled by referring to some Muslims as Islamists and that doing so brings no significant payoff. Islamism suffers from many of the problems afflicting fundamentalism, most pertinently its imprecision. It also, has the additional problem of singling out one religion in ways that do not seem warranted.

Fundamentalism, Fundamentalists, and Islam

The discourse on fundamentalism and how it is or is not related to Muslims and Islam is extensive. Hundreds of works have been written on the topic in a variety of disciplines. Beyond a very brief genealogy, this literature will not be reviewed here (see Wood and Watt: 1-7; Marranci: 1-77, particularly 26-50). Rather, the focus will be on one recent effort that builds upon the literature in relating fundamentalism to a certain identity, worldview, or mindset: the theses forwarded by Martin E. Marty and elaborated by Strozier et al. and Farhad Khosrokhavar. The introduction to Strozier et al. takes a cautious position with regard to whether or not there is something called "fundamentalism," or how, if there is such a thing, it may be defined. They find that there *is* something we may call a "fundamentalist mindset," one variety of which informs violence. While this mindset is most commonly associated with religious violence, it also informs phenomena having little if anything to do with religion, such as the French Revolution and Nazism. In the case of Islam, the fundamentalist mindset is seen to inform the identities of Muslims prone to violence, particularly those described as global jihadists. In what follows I will briefly contextualize and critique the claims of Strozier et al. I conclude that the notion of a fundamentalist mindset does little to help us understand certain religious and Muslim identities. If the notion of fundamentalism is problematic, I do not see this attempt at refining it through that of a fundamentalist mindset as an improvement. The criticisms of the many scholars who have rejected the notion of fundamentalism or its application to Islam remain as unanswered as ever. This critique sets the stage for the exploration of Islamism as a potential alternative.

Whence Islamic fundamentalism? While many features of fundamentalism both as signified (the ostensible phenomenon) and as signifier (the word labeling the ostensible phenomenon) are slippery and elusive, the chronologies of the word's origins and its application to Islam are clear and fairly well-known. In 1920 a Baptist Journalist, Curtis Lee Laws, coined the word *fundamentalists* when reporting on events at that year's Northern Baptist Convention, held in Buffalo, New York. "Fundamentalists" were those willing to battle to defend their religion's fundamentals – biblical inerrancy, Jesus' virgin birth,

millennial doctrines etc. – which were under attack from modernist or liberalizing trends originating in the late nineteenth century and gaining momentum in the early twentieth century. More than anything, fundamentalists were American Protestants who were gravely concerned with the tendency of the mainline denominations and their leaders to acquiesce to the dictates of the modernized sensibility. The movement of these American Protestants may be referred to as "historic fundamentalism," as distinct from the idea of "global fundamentalism" engaged by Strozier and others (see Wood and Watt: 1-3). The high point of American fundamentalism and references to it – rather than alternatives such as conservative, evangelical, or Bible-believing – was approximately the 1920s and 1930s. Through the 1940s to the 1960s, there was some decline in the role played by American fundamentalists, but in the 1970s fundamentalism was given new energy under leaders such as Jerry Falwell, who was proud to self-identify as a fundamentalist.

Importantly, through all of this period fundamentalism was almost entirely seen as a subset of Protestantism, not as a subset of Islam or any other religion. There are exceptions, however, including the work of H. A. R. Gibb (d. 1971), a leading British scholar of Islam, and two of his students who also became prominent scholars, Wilfred Cantwell Smith (d. 2000), and Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988). Gibb (116-23) discussed an Islamic version of fundamentalism in his now classic 1953 work on Islam, *Mohammedanism*. Smith would come to reject the idea of fundamentalism in Islam. Rahman, by contrast, drew on and reworked Gibb's ideas, and very briefly referred to fundamentalism in his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Islam* published in 1970 (and in more detail in a monograph published posthumously by Ebrahim Moosa, in 1999). Generally, from the 1920s through the 1970s scholars and others did not apply the notion of fundamentalism to the worldviews, identities, or actions of Muslims or other non-Christians; and it is worth emphasizing that Gibb saw fundamentalism in Islam as a progressive trend, as integral to progress rather than regress or decline (on these points, see Corbett). This is a quite different and even contrary notion to that which others would decades later apply to Islam, and which Strozier et al. draw upon in formulating and elaborating their thesis of a fundamentalist mindset. As for Rahman's 1970 essay, it sees fundamentalism in fairly narrow terms as a twentieth-century throwback to Wahhabism. With few exceptions aside, the major turn wherein fundamentalism came to be viewed as a feature not only of American Protestantism but of global religious culture in general occurred around the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. Marty, a distinguished academic at the University of Chicago who thirty years later would write the foreword to Strozier et al.'s *The Fundamentalist Mindset*, while not singularly responsible, is perhaps more identified with this turn than any other scholar of religion. In May, 1980, just months after the Iranian Revolution, Marty wrote a short but influential article in the *Saturday Review*, the emphases and tone of which can be seen as an early example of a move towards viewing a variety of phenomena through the lens of fundamentalism (on the importance of Marty's work, see Watt: 1-14).

A photo of a stern looking Ayatollah Khomeini is interposed with Marty's title and subtitle: "Fundamentalism Reborn: Faith and Fanaticism." The description in the text, "a scowling ayatollah," leaves no room for doubt about Khomeini's disposition. Marty's basic message is: that religion is back. That is, as Marty put it, most Americans in 1980 had been of the view that "in the modern world religion is of no account"; they were very wrong. The

prevailing sentiment in America and the rest of the developed world, and the dominant view in academic and policy circles, had generally aligned with the secularization theory: as societies develop they tend more and more to secularize. But for Marty, events in Iran demonstrated that religion was not only back, it was back in a particularly vengeful or fanatical form. The article's second page includes a photograph of a young girl wearing a chador raising a clenched fist with one hand and holding a picture of Khomeini with the other. If not outright violence, the image certainly conveys anger and aggression, a sense conveyed more explicitly in Marty's text by his references to the like of fanaticism, terror, and weaponry. Marty's discussion goes on to suggest that the rebirth of religious fanaticism is found not merely in Iran, but throughout the entire world in the form of global fundamentalism. The article's third page includes a photograph of Jerry Falwell. The pastor hardly looks as severe or threatening as the ayatollah. Yet Marty's implication, highlighted by Falwell's declaration that "the enemies are humanism, liberalism, and immorality," is that it was helpful to see the southern preacher's movement together with Khomeini's revolution and the growth of other assertive religious groups in such diverse places as India and Israel. For Marty, all of these groups represented a significant challenge to modernity, at least in the form of a worldview and society upholding the values of liberalism and humanism.

From this juncture Marty's interpretation looks ambitious, at least to this writer. Can it really make sense to compare a southern televangelist, an ascetic Shi'ite ayatollah and mystic who became a revolutionary, and "Hindu fanatics" opposed to the eating of beef? But if Marty's ideas were ambitious, they have been extremely successful. To be sure, many observers concluded that his comparisons simply did not hold water and that the only thing holding his examples together was their involvement with people who in some way took religion seriously – hardly a sufficient basis for the wide ranging theory Marty and others built upon it. If the only thing that one can point to as uniting Khomeini, Falwell, Hindu activists, and others is that they take religion seriously, one is not pointing to much. But very many other observers were persuaded. The idea of comparable religious fundamentalisms – global fundamentalism – was taken up and elaborated in hundreds of scholarly and non-scholarly works, most famously in the Chicago Project on fundamentalism (1991-95), edited by Marty and Appleby, who acknowledged the many scholars who contributed to the discussions leading to the project, including Fazlur Rahman (1991: xv). This enterprising project fleshed out the notion of fundamentalism over five heavy volumes, highlighting what, in the editors' view, was the comparability of different fundamentalisms through the rubric of a "family resemblance" or set of common characteristics. These include dualism, absolutism, millennialism, viewing religious texts as inerrant, and a selective approach to both tradition and modernity (see Almond, Sivan, and Appleby in Marty and Appleby 1995: 399-424). Many contributors to the project, however, also noted difficulties with the theory, or cases where it did not seem to fit very well. Over the last thirty-five or so years, and particularly since the publication of the Chicago Project, the discourse on fundamentalism has evolved considerably. This has sometimes involved a back-and-forth between those who have followed the line of thought advocated by Marty and others, and those who have rejected it, as seen in the Chicago Project's final installment, published in 2003, which condensed and updated its theses, and attempted to rebut some of the criticisms levied against them (see Almond et al.: 1-21). At the same time, some find that those who have

applied the approach advocated by Marty and Appleby have not engaged its critics in any meaningful way. The details of this discourse are beyond the scope of this essay and are summarized in other works (see Wood and Watt: 1-7, 253-57; Marranci). What is to be emphasized is that *The Fundamentalist Mindset* (Strozier et al.: 11) is a work with a specific ancestry. It is one of the latest installments in a discourse traceable to the work of Marty and his like-minded colleagues. The authors acknowledge and build upon Marty's most important claims and offer a list of the mindset's five common traits that, while not identical, closely resembles the traits of fundamentalism set out in the Chicago Project: dualism, paranoia, apocalypticism, charismatic leadership, and totalized conversion.

The Fundamentalist Mindset is specifically concerned with violence: the mindset predisposes some people who have it, but not all, to commit acts of violence. The book's cover image (blood on concrete) perhaps suggests a terrorist attack, one presumably informed or motivated by the fundamentalist mindset if not by fundamentalism. In introducing the notion of the mindset, Strozier et al. show some awareness that many observers have identified problems with the idea of fundamentalism, most pertinently the problem of defining it with any degree of precision. But instead of attempting to resolve this difficulty, they seek to embrace it. The question "what is fundamentalism?" is unanswered. They opt out of the task of defining it in any substantive way. By my reading the closest we come to a definition is the comment, drawing on Marty and his Chicago Project colleagues, that fundamentalism is "something important" that is not or is different from traditionalism, conservatism, or orthodoxy (Strozier et al.: 11). Beyond that, Strozier et al. note that fundamentalism has a "vague definition" (6), that most observers have skirted absolute definitions, and that it is a protean and elusive phenomenon. Additionally, Strozier et al. reprise the untestable claim of Marty, Appleby, and others that it is "too new historically" to have an agreed upon definition (11). They speak of the benefits of ambiguity, the dangers of more concrete descriptions or definitions – "a simple definition risks being simple minded" – and how, rather than aiming for a precision, we are better served by a "wider conceptual umbrella." In view of the amorphous nature of fundamentalism, and the word's pejorative connotations, the authors find it helpful to stress the notion of a fundamentalist mindset. Unlike the potentially corrosive labeling that discussions of fundamentalism involves, the authors suggest that the fundamentalist mindset is "a neutral descriptor" (6).

Beyond stressing the possible benefits of ambiguity, the introductory commentary largely repeats suggestions made previously by others. Readers who come to this book armed with skepticism about the concept of fundamentalism will be unlikely to find anything to allay it. Notwithstanding the specification or refinement of a fundamentalist mindset in the book's introduction, the contributing authors frequently refer to fundamentalists and fundamentalism in the chapters. Thus, critics of the concept of fundamentalism will, I think, find this book leading us further down blind alleys. The proposal to stretch a "conceptual umbrella" wider is not in itself unreasonable, but there surely has to be a limit, border, or demarcation of difference at some point; however wide an umbrella one has some things will fall under it and some will not. By my reading this book simply provides no limits or borders; we are left with very little idea of where the umbrella begins and where it ends. The idea of the fundamentalist mindset is applied broadly: to mainstream religions, to cults, to phenomena that are somewhat religious, and to phenomena having little if anything at all to

do with religion. To my mind this raises the question not so much of where the fundamentalist mindset could be observed as of where it could not be observed. One reviewer has noted that, as delineated in the book, there is no reason not to apply the fundamentalist mindset to Al Gore's environmental coalition. It could also be applied to the Tea Party (Galen: 239).

As with the hazy notion of the umbrella, there is no clear idea of where things begin and where they end, no identification of difference. If anything, the already generalized concept of fundamentalism here becomes even more generalized. If many of the cases discussed effectively concern a tendency towards violence that takes differing forms and may be observed in a great variety of situations and circumstances, it is not easy to see what the label "fundamentalist" with all of its baggage adds, how it captures anything distinctive or discrete, or how it is preferable to a word such as "extremist." Further, beyond the Islamic cases discussed below some of the books' other examples may not align well with the theories offered. For instance, as another reviewer has suggested, the worldviews of those who are apocalyptic or "endists" do not support the definitions offered in the book, while the descriptions of Branch Davidians may also not be very helpful; the Davidians were not dualistic in the manner that the theory of the fundamentalist mindset would suggest (Strozier et al.: 115).

The main discussion of Islam, Farhad Khosrokhavar's "The Psychology of the Global Jihadists," is found in Part IV of Strozier et al. This follows a laying out of the theoretical terrain in Parts I and II – the mindset's five traits – and its application to Christian and American examples in Part III. In Part IV Islam or Jihadism is seen together with Nazism, the French revolution, and the "Hinduness" movement in India as an instance of the fundamentalist mindset's global manifestations. The diversity of examples here recalls Marty's 1980 article, the Chicago Project, and numerous works influenced by them. Yet in the conception of Strozier et al., and as Marty stresses in the foreword, these are different examples of "one thing." Indeed, Marty finds that it is precisely because of this singular focus that the book works well. Marty, somewhat casually, compares "the fundamentalist mindset" to "revolution," recalling comparisons that he and others have made between fundamentalism on the one hand, and the like of capitalism, nationalism, and socialism on the other. (Almond et al.: 16-17). That is, for Marty, while revolution and fundamentalist mindset are very broad notions, they enable us to comprehend and explain diverse cases through a single theme: we may look at very different examples and yet see how they are substantively or ultimately comparable as revolutions, and likewise for examples of the fundamentalist mindset.

In my view the effort to discuss these different examples through a single theme is unsuccessful, and it is here that I find "the fundamentalist mindset" (or *The Fundamentalist Mindset*) failing to capture or illuminate a certain Muslim identity. Whereas Strozier and Terman distinguish the "neutral" label fundamentalist mindset from the potentially "corrosive" fundamentalism (6), Khosrokhavar frequently refers to fundamentalists and fundamentalism and does not refer to a fundamentalist mindset as such. He begins his discussion, helpfully, by referring not to "Islamic fundamentalism" but to "so-called Islamic fundamentalism" and "so-called Muslim fundamentalist groups," and goes on to delineate several important ways in which Islamic cases differ from Christian cases. The differences

are quite stunning and immediately raise the question of why, if they are so different, it is helpful or appropriate to use the same word to label them. So-called Islamic fundamentalism fuses religion and politics, Christian fundamentalism does not; so-called Islamic fundamentalism seeks to change the established political order by establishing a theocracy, Christian fundamentalism does not; so-called Muslim fundamentalists' target is the top of the social-political order, Christian fundamentalists' target is the bottom of the social-political order; so-called Islamic fundamentalism, in many of its forms, embraces violence, Christian fundamentalism, with very few exceptions, does not; so-called Islamic fundamentalism represents the worldview and agenda of the Muslim majority; Christian fundamentalism is a minority phenomenon. One has to ask: can the two really be different examples of what Strozier and Boyd (11) refer to as "something," and Marty refers to as "one thing" (xvii)?

As Khosrokhavar's discussion proceeds, the usage of terminology is by my reading somewhat unclear. Having highlighted differences and in his first two references to Islam spoken of *so-called* fundamentalism, Khosrokhavar dispenses with the distinctions he has carefully made between fundamentalism and so-called fundamentalism, or presses on as if they are unimportant, and does not address their implications. The question is raised but then left hanging as the remainder of the essay simply refers to fundamentalism. This is a little odd given that formulations such as "so-called fundamentalism" or "what has been called fundamentalism" have been used by critics who suggest that fundamentalism as a phenomenon or "something" or "one thing" *does not exist*, or that those who follow Marty's line of thought have unconvincingly superimposed homogeny on difference.[1] Khosrokhavar's discussion involves the idea of fundamentalism on the one hand and various Islamic cases on the other. Yet how the two are related does not appear to have been fully thought out. And it is often unclear what the Muslims Khosrokhavar focuses on have substantively in common with those examined in the other chapters, such the conservative American Christians that Lee Quinby discusses in the preceding chapter.

If the relationship between fundamentalism and Islam, or between Christian fundamentalists and so-called Muslim fundamentalists, is unclear, the relationships between the very diverse Muslims Khosrokhavar discusses are also often unclear. Having suggested, extremely speculatively in my view, that fundamentalists probably constitute the majority of Muslims residing in Muslim countries, Khosrokhavar divides them into two categories: ambiguously non-violent fundamentalists and violent "hyperfundamentalists." The former include groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood while the latter are subdivided into nationalists (Muslims involved in political struggles in Chechnya, Palestine, Kashmir, etc.) and transnationalists (al-Qaeda and other global jihadis). For nationalists, Khosrokhavar suggests, Islam is in effect another name for nationalism. This description seems workable, particularly in the Chechen and Palestinian cases, and it is unremarkable that Muslims who are nationalists would draw on the resources of Islamic tradition and precedent to motivate and mobilize against a non-Muslim other. If what is at issue is ultimately nationalism veneered with Islam, the religion simply providing legitimation, "Muslim nationalist" could

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[1] Scholars such as Watt and Marranci have argued that fundamentalism does not exist, or does not exist outside of the minds of those who write about it (see Marranci: 12, 48).

capture the identity of those involved in such struggles against what is regarded as illegitimate foreign occupation. But how do such struggles have anything to do with fundamentalism? How is it helpful to label their supporters fundamentalists? So-called Islamic fundamentalism, by definition, rejects nationalism, upholding a transnational Muslim ummah and rejecting the *shirk* or polytheism inhering in the nation-state (see Almond et al.: 25, 41). If the likes of Chechen and Palestinian nationalism are being discussed under the rubric of Islamic fundamentalism, we are, in effect, discussing "Islamic fundamentalist nationalism," a confounding if not oxymoronic notion. Far better, it seems to me, to leave fundamentalism out of the discussion altogether in such cases. If we want to retain the idea of fundamentalism here, we also have to explain how the turn to suicide attacks against Russian forces in Chechnya can be seen together with, for instance, the turn to me-centered, prosperity seeking worship in American evangelical churches referred to by Quinby (Strozier et al.: 121, 134). To be sure, those who utilize the notion of fundamentalism or a fundamentalist mindset could quickly object that such a comparison is simply facetious: clearly attending a prosperity seeking megachurch in suburban Texas is a different kind of action to launching a suicide attack against Russian forces in war-torn Chechnya. But it seems to me that one cannot have it both ways. It either makes sense to discuss these things within a single rubric – as examples of Strozier and Boyd's "something" or Marty's "one thing" – or it does not.

Explicating the fundamentalist identity as being fashioned in reaction to real or imaginary humiliations inflicted by the West on Islam and Muslims worldwide leads Khosrokhavar to address the thorny relationship of fundamentalism and secularism. He notes: "Fundamentalism is usually defined as a reaction against secularization. This definition is at best incomplete" (144).[2] Here again the question is raised of whether the author might be engaging a discourse or concept that does not work well for his examples. Discussing something called "Islamic fundamentalism" requires the disclaimer, first, that it is qualitatively a very different phenomenon to Christian fundamentalism and, second, that it does not align with the way fundamentalism is usually defined: neither the template nor the definition fit. Many critics of the concept of global or Islamic fundamentalism would, I think, be unsurprised that the definition does not align here because to critics the definition itself is weak. Whereas, as Khosrokhavar suggests, fundamentalism is defined as a reaction against secularization, that definition is "incomplete" because Islamic cases show it in important ways to be an effect of secularization and its political ramifications, and the ways in which they have diminished traditional Islamic cultures (which Khosrokhavar tends to refer to in the singular, i.e., culture rather than cultures).

As in much other writing about fundamentalism, the Muslims in Khosrokhavar's discussion therefore emerge as paradoxical or ironic figures. They are in a state of absolute war with secular Western culture, yet embrace an identity and worldview that is in many ways informed by it: jihadis tend to be modernized rather than traditionally minded Muslims.

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[2] Compare the definition offered by Almond, Appleby and Sivan, which some take as standard: "'Fundamentalism,' . . . refers to a discernible pattern of religious militance by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors" (17).

As Khosrokhavar puts it, secularization is the underpinning of jihadi fundamentalism. This plays out differently in Europe (where there is no domineering or colonizing alien other) and the Muslim majority world (where there is). But in both cases secularization's role both as fundamentalism's cause and as its enabler is key. This is seen in various ways. For instance, on fundamentalist resentment at humiliation and victimhood being made exhibitionist through global media, Khosrokhavar comments:

> A new lust for being important, a fascination with the "star system," become a new psychology of Westernized fetishism turned against the West by virtue of antagonistic Westernization. In this respect jihadism is not a clash of civilizations but an antagonistic Westernization, mostly within Western culture . . . or by those who have been deeply Westernized in their attitudes in the Muslim world (140-41).

A difficulty here is that it is not made clear how many or which people would actually subscribe to such fetishism, although Khosrokhavar ascribes it to an impressive array of Muslims. These include Europeans who are converts to radical Islam, or whose parents or grandparents immigrated from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, or Syria (it is unclear why these particular sources of Muslim immigrants are distinguished to the exclusion of others), as well as those living in the Muslim majority world. Are we, contra Christian fundamentalism, still speaking about the Muslim majority here, as suggested one paragraph earlier? At this juncture it seems to me that ideas about fundamentalism have yet to be fully thought out. The author suggests that most Muslims are fundamentalists *and* that fundamentalists are not merely Westernized, but deeply so. It seems unlikely, however, that most Muslims in the countries Khosrokhavar mentions (Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Morocco, etc.), or in the Muslim majority world generally, could be categorized as "deeply Westernized." The reader is left with conflicting suggestions as to which Muslims are the fundamentalists.

Khosrokhavar goes on to suggest that fundamentalist culture is more concerned with rancor towards the West than with Islam (143). This moves us still further away from the idea of fundamentalism as a religious phenomenon, as based upon an assertion or reassertion of religious fundamentals. Once again it raises the question of why, in view of this qualitative difference, it still makes sense to call what is being discussed "fundamentalism." Khosrokhavar's suggestion that so-called Muslim fundamentalists are in many ways creatures of modern secular culture is entirely reasonable. But I do not see that the often very generalized commentary here – for instance, on fundamentalism's absolutist and Manichaean character – greatly advances the discussion. The suggestion that fundamentalism is both a reaction to *and* a product of modern culture has a long history, while criticisms of that conception are not engaged. For instance, if so-called fundamentalists are shaped by or draw on both secular and Islamic cultures, how are they to be separated from other presumably non-fundamentalist Muslims of whom the same might be said? Unless Muslims generally tend to fundamentalism, what tools or criteria would enable us to separate so-called fundamentalists from those who are not? In the discussion here, which creates the impression that all manner of Muslim people in all manner of locations and situations are fundamentalists, I find little that would guide us on these matters. A very brief reference to reformism does not seem adequate (154).

In addition to these concerns, I do not see the notion of a fundamentalist mindset rather than simply fundamentalism offering much of a payoff. As noted, Strozier and Terman refer to the mindset as a "neutral" descriptor. Aside from the point that Khosrokhavar does not use the word mindset, it would not seem possible to regard the Muslims he discusses in any serious way as "neutral" figures (and probably likewise the frequently disagreeable conservative Christians depicted by Quinby in the preceding chapter). To the contrary, there is something clearly and explicitly wrong with these people. They are paranoid; their understanding of the world and of the Muslim experience in it is "sociologically wrong"; they project or imagine experiences of humiliation "without any concrete basis"; they suffer from imaginary hallucinations; "they misinterpret the most harmless remark as an insult, setting of a disproportionate aggressivity against the presumed culprit"; they are hyper-aggressive; they are deeply narcissistic; they choose the path of infamy or negative fame because they cannot achieve fame in a positive sense; and they are governed by a death instinct: "In this idealized, deeply narcissistic picture of the self, Muslims long for heroic death at the service of Islam" (145-47).

The fundamentalist mindset may take benevolent as well as malevolent forms, but if so there is little indication in the discussion of Islam. It seems to me that Khosrokhavar, along with the book's other authors who make reference to Islam, falls into replicating what many have found to be a problem with the idea of fundamentalism: that it effectively and even arbitrarily divides the religion into "good" Islam and "bad" Islam. In this conception "bad" Muslims are those whose beliefs and actions are disfavored by whoever designates them as fundamentalists, and conversely for the approved "good" Muslims. In its most simple iteration fundamentalists here are simply "people I don't like." And there are a great many reasons why Muslims might be disliked or disapproved of: because they undermine Western objectives in the Muslim majority world; because they are seen, correctly or incorrectly, as inimical to progress, secularization, or democracy; because they are socially or politically activist rather than quietist; and even simply because they show too much interest in matters of religion (in some iterations one finds the dubious notion that "good" Islam is the mystical, pacific Islam of Sufism, contra the "bad," legalistic Islam of fundamentalism).[3] The difficulty with the good/bad Islam approach is over-application with far too many people caught up in the "bad" category (on Sufism and fundamentalism, see Blankinship: 144-62, particularly 149; on the idea of "good" and "bad" Muslims, see also Mamdani). This could be the case with Khosrokhavar's discussion, which is almost entirely concerned with "bad" Muslims. Aside from a brief, unelaborated reference to reformism, there is little to be said about "good" Muslims. Put another way: unless we already know from elsewhere that in addition to "bad" Muslims there are also very many "good" Muslims in the world, we would be unlikely to glean that from the discussion here.

While Khosrokhavar's references to humiliation, paranoia, naivety, and so on at times describe specified categories of Muslims – e.g., Europeans who are second and third generation descendants of Muslim immigrants, and Muslims who are global jihadis – the discussion also includes very broad comments about Islamic culture generally. As Khosrokhavar's analysis progresses we find a wide variety of Muslims resident both in the

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[3] One difficulty with this notion is that Sufis are far from universally pacific.

West and in the Muslim majority world discussed and described in largely unqualified terms (I am not alone in finding that this book suffers from a sweeping or overly generalized treatment of its topics, or over-application of its theses; see Galen; Wessinger). We read, for instance, that a fundamentalist who joins a "peaceful fundamentalist group becomes more temperate" while one who joins a Jihadist group will come to adopt a posture of "all-out war with society." A few pages later: "many Muslims . . . found solace in the September 11 attacks," seeing bin Laden as a Robin Hood (145-46, 149). Such comments are not by my reading supported by sufficient specificity or evidence: what would a peaceful fundamentalist group look like? Further, we are not given any quantification of what "many Muslims" means here: are we speaking about hundreds, thousands, or millions? Whereas a notion such as the fundamentalist mindset might capture a certain Muslim identity too often, as in the reference to "many Muslims," the discussion leans towards characterizing Muslims in a generalized or vague manner.

The reference to reformism, the "bright side" counterpointing the "dark side of jihadism" (154-55), comes with only the briefest description of its separation of Islam and politics. But no sense is given of reformism's strength or prominence relative to fundamentalism or jihadism, while the claim that those described or describable as reformists separate Islam and politics is a questionable and extremely broad generalization. Beyond that, we are largely left with the impression that Muslims generally, or those involved in any form of activism – whether directed against racism, occupation, or autocracy – are fundamentalists, whether they be Muslim Europeans, Kashmiri or Chechen independence fighters, supporters of the ambiguously non-violent Muslim Brotherhood or openly violent groups such as the Algerian FIS, and transnational jihadists such as the members of al-Qaeda. The question raised by Khosrokhavar's analysis may not be "which Muslims are fundamentalists?" but rather "which are not?"[4] As Khosrokhavar offers his concluding reflections the already slippery definitions and categories are by my reading further confused. Having introduced jihadis as a subset of fundamentalists, in his conclusion Khosrokhavar treats the two as separate categories (140, 155). The reader is left uncertain as to whether fundamentalist and jihadi are different instances of one identity or whether they are two identities.

Altogether, I find that whereas concepts are often stretched or altered as they are applied to new and different examples, the approach taken in *The Fundamentalist Mindset* may be a stretch too far. I disagree with Marty, Strozier, and Boyd that this book captures an identity that we can realistically refer to as "one thing," or "something." A coherent idea of fundamentalism or a fundamentalist mindset or identity, it seems to me, is here as elusive as ever. I agree with the editors that simple or simple-minded definitions should be avoided. Yet here I find that we have neither a simple definition nor a workable definition. Thus, it may be time to dispense with the approach of continually attempting to rework a troubled notion. For some, Islamism proves a preferable alternative.

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[4] This feature – namely, descriptions of so-called Islam fundamentalism that seem extremely sweeping or generalized – is found in a great deal of writing on fundamentalism (see Choueiri; for a reading of Choueiri's interpretation of fundamentalism, see Blankinship: 146-49).

Islamism, Islamists, and Islam

The discourse on Islamism, Islam, and Muslims has a complex and quite different history than that on fundamentalism, but with one telling commonality: both grow dramatically from the 1980s onwards. Google books Ngram searches for "fundamentalism," "Islamic fundamentalism," and "Islamism" give useful snapshots that are indicative of the concepts' differing trajectories. Writing on fundamentalism of any kind, as noted, did not begin until 1920. Writing on Islamic fundamentalism specifically was almost (but not quite) (see Gibb; Rahman) nonexistent until around the late 1970s or early 1980s – Marty's seminal article was published in 1980 – at which time it took off emphatically. By contrast, the discourse on Islamism, key features of which have been cogently delineated by Varisco, would appear to be much older, dating to the eighteenth century. Frederick Arthur Neale's *Islamism: Its Rise and Its Progress*, for example, was printed in 1828 (Martin and Barzegar: 36).

But the impression that Islamism is a far older concept than fundamentalism may be misleading. Originally, as in Neale's book, "Islamism" conveyed what we today understand simply as Islam, being used instead of the word Islam. The term Islamism had come into being as an alternative to Mahomotanism, Mohammedanism, and Muhammadanism, which began to fall into disuse in the late nineteenth century. Terms derived from the name Mahomet, Mohammed, or Muhammad came to be viewed by many Western writers as unhelpful or misleading because they implied, or could imply, that Muslims worshiped Muhammad, or that Muhammad is to Muslims as Jesus Christ is to Christians. Yet the like of Mohammedanism did not entirely fall out of use and even today has some currency in popular usage. It retained sufficient currency for Gibb, who was certainly not unaware of its potential to mislead, to use it for the title of his 1953 book on Islam, the book in which he would make some of the earliest scholarly references to Islamic fundamentalism (Varisco: 36). Following a path previously traced by Mahomotanism, Mohammedanism, and Muhammadanism, Islamism as a term for what we now understand as Islam fell largely into disuse as writers turned to the straightforward approach of referring to *Islam*, a simple transliteration of the Arabic (الإسلام). By the early twentieth century it was rare for scholars to use the word Islamism to refer to what English speakers today know as Islam. The British Arabicist David Margoliouth (d. 1940) used the word in this way in a 1908 lecture, which may be among the last examples of such usage (Varisco: 157 n. 12). The rise in English language references to Islam quite closely aligns with the decline in references to Islamism. Notwithstanding the example of Gibb's book, by the 1950s and 1960s references to Islam far outnumber references to both Mohammedanism and Islamism.

But there is another chapter to the story. Beginning around 1970, and then from the 1980s onwards growing in popularity, some observers turned to using Islamism as a term referring not to Islam per se but to one trend within Islam.[5] For some, Islamism became a preferable alternative to fundamentalism (see Varisco: 33, 38-41; Mir-Hosseini and Trapper: 83; Lawrence: 93-94). The defining features of the Islamist trend and the question of

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[5] The first case of Islamism being used to describe a certain category of Muslims may have been Fazlur Rahman describing the like of Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) and Mawlana Mawdudi (d. 1979) as Islamists in 1970 (see Varisco: 36, 158 n. 15; Fradkin: 77; Lawrence: 93).

whether its existence, like that of global fundamentalism, has been projected more than identified, have been explored by numerous scholars in recent years, including the contributors to Martin's and Barzegar's volume. There is no straightforward answer to the question "what is Islamism?" And some dictionary definitions hardly clarify the matter. For instance, the *Collins English Dictionary* defines Islamism as "support of or advocacy for Islamic fundamentalism," awkwardly defining a vague term with another that is vaguer still. The *Random House Dictionary* gives the straightforward but now outdated definition that Islamism is Islam. Oxforddictionaries.com provides "militancy and fundamentalism." *Merriam-Webster* is more specific. It defines Islamism, first, as Islam and, second, as "a popular reform movement advocating the reordering of government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam" (see also Varisco: 35-36, 157 n. 10, 157 n. 11). The last of these definitions might form a starting point for a more detailed discussion, although "reform movement" certainly suggests an inflated degree of concreteness or unity. Islamism might, in theory, refer not to a specific movement, or set of movements, but capture a particular approach that some Muslims have taken towards harmonizing or not harmonizing the demands of tradition with the politics of life in the modern world. In this conception, the backdrop to Islamism would be feelings of failure or disappointment and a strongly felt need for change. Understood thus, Islamists would be those who have felt that modern states in the Muslim majority world have largely lacked a viable and just social-political order and that Muslims can and should draw upon the resources of Islam as they strive to create such order, and who are actively engaged along those lines (describing Islamists merely as those who believe that Islam has something pertinent to say about politics would assuredly have little utility, as that definition would apply to the overwhelming majority of Muslims, even many if not most secularist Muslims). Defined thus, contra the earlier and now discarded notion of Islamism as Islam, Islamism might be seen as a rubric that enables observers to capture and discuss the identities, beliefs, and actions of certain Muslims in distinction from others in a non-pejorative and reasonably precise manner. Broadly in this vein, some have further defined Islamism, as in Martin's and Barzegar's subtitle, as political Islam, albeit that *Islamism = political Islam* again brings a problem of defining one contested term through another contested term (see Rabasa: 112-13).

Yet the matter of whether or not such a theoretical concept of Islamism is viable, helpful, and practically applicable is not straightforward. Like fundamentalism, Islamism has been very controversial. On the one hand, it may have theoretical appeal, and some find it apposite and preferable to fundamentalism. On the other hand, some find that in its application it inevitably becomes far too broad or nebulous, and if in theory it is a non-pejorative descriptor, in practice it is not. This is illustrated, for instance, by a 2014 incident. April-June of that year saw a widely publicized controversy surrounding displays in the National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York City, which opened to the public May 21, 2014 (see Otterman 2014a, 2014b; Oh). The displays include a contentious 7-minute video, "The Rise of al-Qaeda," that discusses the 9/11 terrorists using such terminology as "Islamist" and "jihadism." Many experts on Islam, along with an interfaith panel advising the Museum, objected to such references, viewing them in extremely critical terms as generalized, haphazard, undefined, and decontextualized. A letter to the Museum's president signed by hundreds of academics, including John L. Esposito, Amir Hussein, Edward E.

Curtis IV, and many of North America's other leading authorities on Islam, requested (unsuccessfully) that the video be edited.[6] To these observers the difficulty was, first, the feeling that the Museum's representation of Islamism was excessively focused on violence. On this point the *New York Times* noted, "the first sentence visitors see when they enter describes the Sept. 11 attacks as the work of 'an Islamist extremist network'" (Otterman 2014b). And many directly objected to the Museum characterizing the nineteen 9/11 terrorists as Islamists. Peter B. Gudaitis, a member of the interfaith panel, commented: "We give Muslim extremists too much credit when we call them Islamic or Islamist . . . They are perverters of the faith, and to allow them to carry that mantle is exactly what they want" (Otterman 2014a). A second difficulty compounded the first: the generalized presentation of Islamism could leave visitors unfamiliar with Islam with the impression that the Museum's descriptions of Islamism applied to Islam and Muslims overall, not to an extreme and numerically marginal subgroup.

On the other side of the debate were the Museum's representatives and authorities such as Princeton University's Bernard Haykel. Museum representatives such as Joseph C. Daniels and Michael Frazier disagreed with the letter's signatories regarding the depictions of Islam and Muslims. To Frazier's understanding the displays showed al-Qaeda to be on the "far fringe" of Islam, while Daniels stressed how seriously the Museum had taken its obligation not to smear an entire religion. Carrying some weight was the opinion of Haykel, who one year later would feature very prominently in a debate on how to correctly label ISIS (in that case the word "Islamic" rather than "Islamist" was most at issue). Haykel vetted and later defended the Museum's film on 9/11. In his view, omitting terms such as Islamic and Islamist from discussions of 9/11 and al-Qaeda is problematic: "The critics who are going to say, 'Let's not talk about it as an Islamic or Islamist movement,' could end up not telling the story at all, or diluting it so much that you wonder where Al Qaeda comes from" (Otterman 2014a). For those on Haykel's side of the argument it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the 9/11 terrorists were Muslims whose beliefs and actions, however much they may be at odds with those of the Muslim majority, cannot be realistically separated from Islam and its core doctrines. The likes of al-Qaeda and ISIS are not merely drawing on Islam, but on some of its most foundational concepts, such as jihad. If we remove Islam, Islamic, and Islamist from the picture we miss a major part of the story.

Published four years earlier, Marty and Barzegar's *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam* seeks to contextualize and illuminate precisely the kinds of issues that the Museum controversy highlights. The controversy, revealing a conflation of Islamism with Islam, or of Islamists with Muslims, in some sense shows the discourse on Islamism having come full circle. It seems clear that for the term Islamism to be useful it would need to be dissociated from Islam as such, and from violence, as these inevitably bring a third association that the majority of observers wish to avoid, that of Islam with violence, or the notion that Islam's "inherent qualities" make Muslim people more prone to violence than other people (some find the Museum displays conveying just such a notion, which appears unsupported by the evidence when Muslims are viewed globally in comparison with non-Muslims). While

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[6] The letter is available online at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Y3yR8-LJxX5Aj7k5Jz7If1NDnxXEG2 nM9wI9tPiJdxo/viewform.

hypothetically possible, it is not at all clear that these dissociations can realistically be made in practice. Indeed, while Islamism = Islam has long been discarded by scholars, the Museum controversy revealed its existence in the popular mind: some members of the public are unaware that uncontextualized comments about Islamism found in museums or media references pertain to some Muslims only.[7] For many the Museum controversy indicates that to whatever extent Islamism could in theory be a non-pejorative and reasonably precise term, in practice this is simply not the case: it has been and remains indubitably and irredeemably associated with violence and terror. For such reasons it offers no substantive improvement on fundamentalism.

The contributors to *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam*, principally Emmerson and Varisco, have differing takes on whether or not these are, in fact, genuine or insurmountable problems. Emmerson finds that they are not. His first essay on "Inclusive Islamism: The Utility of Diversity" and second essay on "Broadening Representation" find that the terms Islamism and Islamist are helpful, critical, and constructive. Advocating a position broadly in line with Haykel's, he suggests that using these terms enables us to discuss Muslim peoples and their identities, beliefs, and actions without forsaking veracity or regard for those being discussed. He finds that speaking of Islamism enables *contextualization*, precisely what many find the 9/11 Museum displays lacking, while avoiding stigmatization, denial, and candor, all of which are problematical. Stigmatization – "Islam is a religion of war" – taints all Muslims through the actions of a few, representing the whole (Islam or all Muslims) with the part (violent Muslims). Denial – "Islam is a religion of peace" – stridently criticized by Haykel in his commentaries on 9/11 and ISIS, unrealistically avoids negotiating the hard truth that war and violence have been and remain part of the fabric of Muslim life. Candor – "in Muslim societies, freedom excludes the freedom to voluntarily leave Islam" – while less problematical than stigmatization and denial, risks needlessly offending or disregarding Muslim sensibilities in a way that contextualization – "only a very small minority of Muslims are violent" – avoids (20-25).

Taking what he thus sees as a contextualizing approach, Emmerson finds much to be gained by labeling some Muslims Islamists. Building on James Piscatori's definition of Islamists as those committed to *political* action in favor of Islamic agendas, he expands *political* to *public* enabling us to see a wide variety of actions that go beyond purely personal or religious matters, but which are not political, as Islamist. These public actions may be social, economic, cultural, or evangelical. In effect, Emmerson's discussion divides Muslims into three categories: (1) violent Islamist Muslims; (2) non-violent Islamist Muslims, who may be political, or public but non-political; (3) non-Islamist Muslims. By my reading this is the crux of Emmerson's thesis, and also the point at which it breaks down. The categorization does not seem very useful. As Emmerson notes and indeed emphasizes, those in category one are an extremely small minority (21). The third category is not defined clearly. It might include the most rigidly secularist Muslims and those who are utterly disengaged politically and publically. But the kinds of activities under Emmerson's discussion that qualify as Islamist

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[7] To whatever extent one might place stock in an unscientific sample, this would be indicated by comments made by some visitors to the 9/11 museum to the *New York Times* and the *Huffington Post* (see Otterman 2014a, 2014b; Oh).

are so varied and broad that many who might be referred to as secularist, traditionalist, or Sufi Muslims would, if one follows the line of thought, end up in category two as Islamists.

In other words, we have three categories: one that is extremely small; one that would or easily could include the majority of Muslims; and one that is not well defined. This does not seem to be a very useful kind of categorization. It would not be a great oversimplification of Emmerson's position to suggest that "any Muslim who does anything" is an Islamist, or more specifically, "any Muslim who, with or without also performing the pillars, does anything that *they regard as Islamic*" is an Islamist (voting, for instance, may be an Islamist act). Or, one might say, any Muslim who subscribes to an idea of religion other than the strictly privatized conception favored in the post-Enlightenment West is an Islamist. The problem here resembles one found with Khosrokhavar's discussion of fundamentalism: the question raised appears to be not so much "which Muslims are Islamists?" but "which are not?" Emmerson calls for Islamism with adjectives and diversity, but with so many adjectives and so much diversity we end up with little more precision than we have with fundamentalism. On this issue, Feisal Abdul Rauf notes in his reading of Emmerson's first essay that under his conception it is unclear whether in the Saudi Arabian context "Islamist" would label Osama bin Laden or the Saudi monarchy (117). In his second essay Emmerson replies that they are *both* Islamist. Bin Laden embodies insurgent Islamism or revolutionary Islamism, while the monarchy is a case of incumbent Islamism or ultra-conservative Islamism (140-41). To my mind this is not a convincing reply. Emmerson calls for adjectives, but there are too many of them, resulting in too much imprecision. Emmerson rigorously attempts to dissociate Islamism from violence, and suggests that in quantitative terms Muslim populations are no more associated with it than others (135-36). But the effort to isolate Islamism or dissociate it from Islam and Muslims generally is unsuccessful.

Counterpointing Emmerson, Varisco pulls no punches in a forceful critique of Islamism that is foregrounded by an equally forceful critique of fundamentalism. Varisco is extremely suspicious of some of the "*isms*" that have been applied to Islam: Mohammedanism, fundamentalism, and Islamism (and one could probably add Wahhabism to the list). For Varisco, what drives most people to use these terms, particularly Islamism and fundamentalism, is not an intention to identify, analyze, and comprehend, but rather to denigrate. That is, for Varisco most observers, and certainly most non-scholarly observers, use these terms to associate Islam and Muslims with violence. If Islamism is an alternative to fundamentalism it is no improvement because it represents a continuation of a discourse whose aim is to uniquely associate one religion with violence and not others. However much one may propose, as does Emmerson, that Islamism does not *need* to convey or connote violence, the point is moot because in practice it inevitably does so. The Museum controversy might support Varisco's suggestion here, while creating challenges for those advocating Emmerson's position. On this point one could go back and forth citing examples where Islamism is used to explicate violence versus cases where Islamism is used to explicate cases not involving violence. In his second essay, Emmerson provides a long list of instances where Islamism is discussed by academics as a phenomenon that is not particularly or distinctively associated with violence (144, 173-74 n. 18). It seems inarguable, however, that when one turns from scholarly to journalistic and popular usages of the term – that is, most usages of the term – the evidence is clear. It would, I think, be very difficult to review the

results of a Google or similar Internet search on the topic without inferring that Islamism is intimately connected with terror (Varisco: 34-35).[8]

If Varisco and other critics can make a strong case for why we should not use the term Islamism, I find that a more telling and straightforward argument can be made through asking not "why should we not use the term?" but "why should we use the term?" We have at our disposal a range of words that capture various trends and identities found amongst Muslims and non-Muslims, and which are preferable to the relative neologism of Islamism. The essential question here is why if one is discussing, for instance, Muslims who are terrorists or militants or exclusivist or separatists, one does not refer to them as such? What payoff comes from referring to such people as Islamists, using a neologism that brings complicating baggage and the disadvantage of singling out one religion and its adherents? On this point, Emmerson suggests that Islamism does not, in fact, single out Islam given the similar term "Christianism" (142, 170-71 n. 13). This does not seem persuasive, as the currencies of the two terms are nowhere near comparable. A Google book search produces nine times at many hits for Islamism as for Christianism, and over five hundred times as many hits for Islamist as for Hinduist. Further, the detonations of the terms are quite different. By my reading, the claim that "Islamism" singles out one religion has not been successfully rebutted. To be sure, some observers may find it appropriate to single out Islam as being more conducive to violence or militancy than other religions. But for those who do not take such a position the legitimacy of having a specific word to label militancy in Islam but not in other religions is not easily seen. Then, in cases where terror or militancy is not what is most at issue, terms such as reformism, renewal, and revival would serve better than Islamism. As Varisco has noted, these terms also bring some advantage in having indigenous equivalents in Muslim languages such as Arabic (for instance, reform is cognate to the Arabic *islah*, renewal to *tajdid*). The same cannot be said for Islamism/Islamists, whose modern Arabic equivalents are generally the English words rendered in Arabic: *islamiyyah* for Islamism, *islamiyyun/islamiyyin* for Islamists. In traditional usage *islamiyyah* is a simple feminine adjective meaning "Islamic," while in the title of Abu Hasan al-Ashari's (874-936) work, Maqalat al-Islamiyyin, the word is a synonym for Muslims (see Martin and Barzegar: 10-11; Fuller: 52; Jasser: 104; Fradkin: 77; contra Fradkin, see Varisco: 33, 129-30; contra Varisco, see Tibi 2013: 433, 445 n. 2). In sum, terms other than Islamism/Islamist better serve analysis.

Before concluding, I comment on the views of Bassam Tibi, a prolific and outspoken commentator on the topic. In a 2013 essay he directly takes issue with Varisco's views on Islamism. Tibi writes from the perspective of "enlightened Muslim thought," and situates himself in the tradition of Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), and 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq (d. 1966), who in 1925 famously or infamously argued for Islamic secularism. Tibi had collaborated with Marty and Appleby on the Chicago Project in the 1990s, writing on Sunni Arab fundamentalism, and his work on Islamism treats it synonymously with fundamentalism (1993). He offers a clear thesis. Islam is religion, whereas Islamism is ideology in the guise of religion. Islam is authentic and deserves respect. Islamism is

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[8] Varisco makes this point in his 2010 essay. A Google search conducted July, 2015, produces very similar results to those that Varisco described five years ago.

inauthentic and deserves critique. This is because rather than being continuous with Islamic tradition Islamism highjacks it, invents rather than appropriates it, or politicizes it in a historically unsupportable manner. Tibi defines Islamism as a commitment to "remaking the world" to create a unitary state that utterly disallows any ideological or political diversity, something Islam has never done (2013: 433). Tibi's views here might be seen together with the views of Rahman, who also wrote from a self-identifying Muslim perspective. As Rahman labeled his Muslim opponents fundamentalists, Tibi labels his opponents Islamists.

Tibi makes very clear that Islamism is dangerous, and that Islamists misrepresent Muslims and Islam. He laments a tendency especially amongst American specialists in Islamic studies to overlook this point, or to fail to disassociate Islamism from Islam. This reflects an ironic scholarly turn from Islamophobia to Islamophilia. That is, for Tibi the desire to avoid perpetuating the legacies of Orientalism and its Islamophobic tendencies – notably the creation of frequently negative images of Muslim identities counterpointing positive images of Occidental identities – has created an opposite problem of political correctness, or hesitancy to criticize Muslims in cases where, to Tibi's understanding, they very much merit criticism (2013: 443-44). Varisco's call to discontinue the term Islamism is for Tibi emblematic of the turn to Islamophilia, a turn that overcompensates for the often detrimental effects of Orientalist writing. Varisco and Tibi might be in agreement that "Islamism" implies a criticism. For Tibi criticism is not only apt but required: Islamists have a wrong-headed, contrived, and politicized understanding of Islam and religion that scholars should expose. Varisco does not suggest that scholars of Islam should never criticize their Muslim subjects, or deny or downplay Muslim involvement in violence. The implication of his discussion is that whereas one can certainly find Muslims whose actions merit criticism, when that is undertaken through the rubric of Islamism too many people, perhaps even the majority of Muslims, are swept up in the net. On this point the two scholars are in simple disagreement.

By my reading Tibi's thesis is insufficient. It rests on an unproblematized distinction between religion and ideology, or between religion and ideology masquerading as religion (and for that matter a distinction between religion and politics). If one subscribes to the idea that religion and ideology are discrete or easily separated categories the claims resting upon that might be persuasive. But it is unclear to me that we can neatly or easily separate religion, which, to say the least, is a notoriously slippery word, from ideology. Dictionary definitions, for instance, show a substantial overlap. For Tibi's suggestions to be helpful I find that more theorizing or defining of these categories is required. Similarly, one is uncertain that "inventing tradition" (what people who understand Islam incorrectly do) can be as neatly separated from "appropriating tradition" (what people who understand Islam correctly do) as Tibi's discussion implies. Another issue is quantitative. Tibi states in plain terms that Islamists are absolutely intolerant of difference of opinion, such that in their standard rhetoric they charge anyone who disagrees with them with *kufr*, disbelief, or not being a Muslim (2013: 434). But the discussion gives little sense how many people actually hold to such a notion. Does half the Muslim population of Egypt consider the other half to be *kafirun* or unbelievers? Or a much smaller number? If that is a criterion, what proportion of Muslims are Islamists? Finally, I do not see that Tibi has demonstrated that following Varisco's line of thought renders us unable to criticize Muslims (or anyone else) when that

seems apt. After all, if we dispense with Islamist we are hardly lacking in other terms of criticism.

Concluding Reflections

Those who advocate the terms fundamentalism, fundamentalist, Islamism, and Islamist sometimes respond to critics with comments in the vein of: if you would not call this fundamentalism or Islamism, what would you call it? Or: if you would not call these people Islamists, what would you call them? On the first question I have suggested that there is no "it" or "something" or "one thing" here, but rather a number of different "its" or "somethings" that it is unhelpful to sweep together with one word or concept. An instance of the second question is Emmerson's "If these political Muslims are not Islamist, what are they? Secularist?" (28). I note that we are not limited to two choices, Islamist or secularist. And I would again suggest that the question here is not "why should we not call these people Islamists?" but "why should we?" Scholars do not tend to refer to supporters of religious parties in Israel and India as Judaists and Hinduists, or supporters of Christian religious parties as Christianists. What reason do we have for taking one approach to the study of Muslims and Islam and a different approach for followers of other religions? I cannot think of a persuasive one.

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