
Islam and the West: Interplay with Modernity

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Abstract: *Modernity and globalisation have claimed ownership of civilization for many years and this continues into the 21st Century. This ownership has led to the human security of the non-western 'Other' being supremely challenged and at times impoverished. The postmodern/post-structural school of thought postulates that when the One rules so completely, it severely limits expression by the Other, and consequently, the Other will eventually exact a terrible reprisal. We argue that the terroristic challenge becomes more comprehensible when seen in this light. We ask, if terrorism is immoral and it is, then is not the order based on neoliberal globalisation that provoked it also immoral?*

This paper explores the interplay of Modernity between Islam and the West today and addresses issues such as why Muslim men and male youth from the West support a terror organisation like the new Islamic Caliphate showing how a global phenomenon is being acted out locally. The paper also discusses counter-movements to radicalization along with how Muslim-Western dialogue can be realized.

Keywords: *Modernity, Globalisation, Islamisation, Caliphate, Terrorism, Dialogue*

1. Introduction

We take for granted the way we live in the West as being the most desirable way of living with our consumer society on tap, steeped in our entrenched individualism and at the centre of the world stage. This is erroneous. It is very much a product of our Enlightenment thinking. Rather than an articulated set of beliefs, the Enlightenment makes a break with the past. According to Borradori (2003, p. 14), this break becomes available only ‘on the basis of the individual’s independence in the face of authority’. This independence marks what modernity is about. Thus modernity uses values such as freedom of thought and individualism for the benefit of society but also to shape the competitive and often destructive nature of the society in which we live.

This paper is about ongoing conflict between Islam and the West and its interplay with modernity. Its objective is to highlight how the expansion of ISIS (specifically in the context of drawing support and recruits from around the world) could be explained in the context of modernity’s problematic implications for West/Islam relations. We use a postmodern/post-structural lens to interrogate this conflict. We begin by examining 9/11 from the perspectives of Baudrillard and Derrida. We introduce the term “globalisation” and we are faced with the idea that while terrorism is obviously immoral, and as a response to globalisation it is still immoral, but then realize that globalisation itself has an immoral dimension. Ziauddin Sardar’s contribution to the debate, that modernity has been “stripped naked of its pretensions” is considered, and then we see Islam as a world-view become a visible reality (see Sardar 2003, p. 183-185; Lessem and Schieffer 2010, pp. 284-286). Changes affecting Islam and the West are then discussed in the context of globalisation and neo-liberalization of the world system. These changes encompass various aspects: The change from the Bush Administration to the Obama administration, the proliferation of Islamist groups in Africa and the Middle East and the rise of Islamic State (IS). Having created this

backdrop, we go on to ask: why do young Western people, Muslim men predominantly, leave safe havens in thriving western countries to join IS in particular? We are going to proceed with our investigation by examining the following. We find there are three contributing factors or a combination there of that compels these young men to act as they do. 1) They are following the strict, literal word from Islamic sources – in other words they are compelled by their religious faith alone and nothing else. 2) They are hoping that the promise of the socio-economic system in the new Caliphate state will provide them with a better material future perhaps because it will be a theocracy that they expect will be more honest than the neoliberal system they are dealing with now. 3) It is a worthy cause for young men to fight for – a male challenge – like an initiation to become part of a new world. This involves a belief in the Islamic revolution, not unlike those who idealised Che Guevara or Fidel Castro in a bid for world liberation in the 1960s. These phenomena give rise to what appear to be local conflicts involving tribal Sunni groups within a region encompassing Syria, Iraq and an emerging Kurdistan but as Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013, p.770) note, the local can be augmented by the national and international. In these instances this appears to be the case. The individual starts by contemplating action alone but is followed up through jihadist networks, networks that use very persuasive means to convert. Thus, it is often much less local than at first thought and calls for agencies to address “constant social negotiation between localised and non-localised ideas” (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013, p. 770).

The paper finally considers the prospects of peaceful coexistence between Islam and the West being built on the foundations of how ‘mainstream’ Muslims are responding to increased terroristic activity across the world today. While it appears there is quiet inaction in this respect, we argue, closer examination reveals that Muslims are indeed articulating their disagreement against terrorist attacks. The need for continued dialogue between Islam and the West is also addressed in the paper. This avenue of nonviolent communication for peace raises hopes

that relations between Islam and the West will not be inevitably and enduringly hostile.

2. Birth of Modernity and its link to IS

Religious authorities in medieval times believed there were intrinsic beliefs such as belief in God and the soul that were *a priori* truths, that is, they did not need proving. The Enlightenment brought with it a questioning of *a priori* religious truths. One of the first modern philosophers of reason was Rene Descartes, who is often called the father of modern philosophy. Descartes discarded all necessary *a priori* beliefs in God and replaced them with his famous principle “I think therefore I am” or “*Cogito ergo sum*” (Latin) or “*Je pense donc je suis*” (French) as the First Principle of Philosophy (Descartes, (1641) (2003), p. 23). This was a very radical departure from earlier times and from which he derived other proofs such as the existence of God. However, it denied the teachings of the Church and leaned toward the individual in developing a philosophy of life. It also denied God as first principle – God did not come first but observation and reason were foremost. The fact that his very first principle of philosophy was based on human perception was completely revolutionary and could be thought of as marking the transition from a medieval to a modern epoch.

Hence today there is great stress on individualism in Western society and it is seen in such aspects as neo-liberal capitalism and globalisation, which are central components of modernity. What is crucial to our argument though is that IS in many ways is connected to the dynamics of modernity. In the following way it is obvious that IS seeks to reinstate God as First Principle. The New Caliphate is imagined and accepted in the eyes of its followers as a forward looking theocracy that brings God back into the present and future; in returning God, it is flying in the face of the European Enlightenment.

2.1 Where Globalisation Leads

Joseph Stiglitz, renowned economist and a supporter of globalisation, defines globalisation as “the closer integration of the

countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge and (to a lesser extent) people across borders” (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 9). This is a very optimistic definition of globalisation. Among other things, Nassar (2005, pp. 4-5) sees globalisation in terms of interdependence. Our world has become seamless and indivisible despite national borders. The world is so interconnected that the livelihood of one depends upon the contribution of many others. The principle downside of globalisation is that its cornerstone is based on the neoliberal ideology of unrestrained economic growth through “free” markets and we believe this benefits corporate power over the needs of people (See Chomsky, 1999). The “Market” has taken on God-like qualities; it has become almost a deity.

We choose to examine globalisation through a postmodern/post-structuralist lens.¹ Here we consider the notion of the reverence given to the Market and how this eclipses the value of all diversity. Through the expansion of Western markets and the exporting of Western values, globalisation promotes itself as a movement that creates a kind of *unified* world. Aspiration toward such uniformity, with one political and economic form, is modern in conception, “modern” being a derivative of the word “modernity”. The European Enlightenment ushered in the idea of Modernity bringing with it such values as justice, liberty and reason. However, Michel Foucault, French historian and philosopher associated with the structuralist and post-structuralist movements, proposed that concomitant with these well-known Enlightenment values, a new form of power began to spread through society and this new form of power worked at the *micro-level*, as a set of forces that determined how people behaved in their daily lives (Foucault, 1991, 200-208). Disciplinary forces acted to isolate what was not normal and set it apart for marginalisation or disposal (Foucault, 1991, 235-236). Therefore what was normal became identified and reinforced increasingly with what was

¹ We will use this lens throughout the paper.

taking place in the globalising world. Celebrating the benefits of the unified world may be in the interests of corporate entities but it is to the detriment of the majority. Jacques Derrida, also a major figure associated with postmodern and post-structuralist philosophy, says of globalisation, “the disparities between human societies, the social and economic inequalities, have probably never been greater and more spectacular . . . in the history of humanity” (Derrida as interviewed by Borradori (2003, p.121). Therefore, if we take Derrida at his word, the claim that globalisation is creating an environment where all people can share in the accumulation of global wealth is false.

September 11, 2001 was a defining moment in the history of the world. The attacks that were perpetrated on the US by al-Qaeda radicals were a strike against the prevalent myth of modernity and globalisation. As well as damage to the Pentagon, the twin towers of the World Trade Center collapsed. Many people died in these strikes and this is tragic. However, Jean Baudrillard, a postmodernist and post-structuralist, astutely observes that while the material object was destroyed, it was the *symbolic object* that was targeted (Baudrillard, 2003, 44). We are not here to champion Baudrillard’s theory as an absolute truth, but to use it to explore the possibility of the symbolic nature of the events. Please see Merrin (2005) and Genosko (2006) who further interpret this vision of Baudrillard’s 9/11. Baudrillard (2003, p. 47) pursues the theme of the symbol to the end:

The towers, for their part, have disappeared. But they have left us the symbol of their disappearance, their disappearance as symbol. They, which were the symbol of omnipotence, have become, by their absence, the symbol of the possible disappearance of that omnipotence – which is perhaps an even more potent symbol.

(Baudrillard, 2003, p.47)

The world system, that which the Twin Towers embodied, was targeted by terrorists and in the aftermath of the attacks the disappearance of the towers suggested that modernity and globalisation were themselves compromised.

Baudrillard (2003, p. 12) claims that terrorism is immoral, the symbolic challenge to the global world order, as the overwhelming response to globalisation is immoral but he also stresses that globalisation is immoral. When global power dominates to the extent where modernity and globalisation severely restrict alternative forms of thinking, the idea of the terroristic challenge then becomes more comprehensible. The global system itself creates the circumstances for this ruthless retribution. By completely defining how life is to be lived and laying down rules for everyone, neoliberalism as the dominant world system compels the Other to attempt to change those rules or at least act against it with much displeasure.

2.2 Who is the most terrorist?

In the preceding decade there have been some significant changes; political administrations have changed, notably the US Administration changed from the Bush Administration to the Obama Administration, Islamic Fundamentalism struck out with new militant organizations; Al Shabaab, Boko Haram and ISIS or ISIL or simply IS which at present command much influence among Sunni Muslim followers, resulting in more and more young men leaving their homes to join such militant groups. In fact one could ask: why are so many young people born and bred in “free” countries like Australia choosing to go and fight for these groups far from their homes? How do they see it as a better alternative to their prospects here? How have these realities affected relations between Islam and the West and if so, what are the deeper implications of this. These questions will be addressed in the body of this paper.

Akbar Ahmed claimed that “the 21st century will be the century of Islam” (Ahmed 2003, p. 7). He attributes this claim to the repercussions of 9/11 and the greatest of paradoxes that arise because this act of radical Islam, which conceives itself as a religion of peace, is now connected to “murder and mayhem” (Ahmed 2003, p. 7). It appears to be the case that radical Islam opposes not only other world religions, but it confronts

many other states as well in the process, e.g. Judaism in the Middle East, Christianity in the Balkans, Chechnya, and Sudan, and Hinduism in South Asia to name but a few confrontations (Ahmed 2003, pp. 7-8).

However, although this is crudely put, it is useful to ask the question Giovanna Borradori asked Jacques Derrida in an interview (2003). The question posed was: “Who is the most terrorist?” Derrida replied that the people involved in such activities respond thus: “I am resorting to terrorism as a last resort, because the other is more terrorist than I am” (Borradori 2003, p. 107). In this way, while most people conceive that either individuals or groups are the perpetrators of terrorism, such dynamics pave the way for state terrorism. Therefore, wealthy nations and colonial and imperial powers with globalised economies, mostly by forming alliances, fall into this category. It is, in fact, often the call of the powerful to name the terrorist by pointing to the Other, and placing blame outside.

2.3 Islam: a Worldview

Let us use our postmodern/post-structuralist lens referred to earlier and enquire what Ziauddin Sardar, cultural and futures critic says of Islam and modernity. This is important because Sardar specialises in the future of Islam and is conversant with attitudes to modernity. The significance of Islam for Sardar is that it provides direction for humankind (Sohail Inayatullah and Gail Boxwell, 2003, p. 5):

It is a worldview, a vision of a just and equitable society and civilisation, a holistic culture, an invitation to thought for discovering the way out of the current crisis of modernity and postmodernity.

Sardar, always on the side of the marginalised and oppressed, says “Modernity has been stripped naked of its pretensions” (Sardar, 2003, p. 184). He claims deconstructionists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have revealed the poverty that modernity embraces. To Sardar, the world of materialism and consumerism is all but finished (Sardar, 2003, p. 184). This is quite a claim to place on modernity, which is

largely supporting the Western order. Modernity might be under attack and rightly so but the fight for another world order has not been won just yet. However, we point out there is an opportunity here for a new beginning. Can this herald a new beginning for Islam? Could this be the beginning of Ahmed's century of Islam? Unfortunately, this would require a much more critical spirit than is evident in the Muslim world today (See Sardar, 2013, p.1). This point will be touched on again later on in the paper. Global changes have inhibited this possibility and hence it becomes necessary to examine these changes cautiously. We will start by considering the turnover of US presidential administrations from the Bush to the Obama administration and follow this up with examining new radical voices claiming identity with Islam.

3. Changes affecting Islam and the West

3.1 The Bush Administration

President Bush's administration distinguished itself from previous administrations in how he approached the world. After the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, Bush declared a global War on Terrorism and in October 2001 ordered an invasion of Afghanistan to defeat the Taliban. His aims also included destroying al-Qaeda and capturing Osama bin Laden. Saikal (2003, p.10) notes that "a mindset took shape" like in the Cold War of the 1950s. "It divided the world's state actors into good and evil" (Saikal, 2003,p.10). This gave them only two choices: "you are either with us or against us" (GW Bush cited in Saikal, 2003, p.10). This grossly simplified the complex fundamentalist equations. Bush claimed, "We are fighting on behalf of the civilized world" (Frum and Perle, 2003, p.273). In March 2003, Bush received a mandate from the US Congress to lead an invasion of Iraq, asserting that Iraq was in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1441 which offered Iraq, under Saddam Hussein a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations. In his rethinking of the American world approach he embraced former untouchables such as the right to pre-emptive strikes, regime change and democracy in the Middle East.

However, he did nothing to foster dialogue and understanding with the Islamic World. Nevertheless he generously opted to talk about the enemy as “Evildoers” or “Extremists” because he claimed that “Radical Islam is not Islam” (Lake 2015, p. 2). It is not clear, however, if this was a principle of political correctness or concern for Muslim feelings. Even if it was concern for Muslim feelings, it must be said that even though Bush embraced a wider view of the world, it was not a more enlightened one. Bush did not pursue the non-militaristic imperative; as can be seen from his undertakings, they did not foster peace and they exacerbated relations between Islam and the West despite his benign attitude to Muslims in general.

3.2 The Obama Administration

Skelly (2010, p. 2) relates that during Obama’s presidential campaign, Obama announced that he would “talk to Iran” in contrast to the Bush Administration and he has favoured this type of engagement while he has been in office. This policy was no doubt greatly responsible for the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to this man in October 2009 for promoting understanding among peoples. Like Bush, Obama also claims that “Radical Islam is not Islam” (Lake 2015, p. 2). Mandeville (2015, p. 1) concedes that this intention is good. President Obama doesn’t want to mix Islamist Terrorists with the wider community of Muslims. He is trying to prevent the latter from feeling ostracized and there is a real need for Muslims to live in harmony with non-Muslims. However Obama repeatedly faces obstacles in his pursuit of the Good. Mandeville (2015, p. 2) goes on to say that Obama nevertheless does a disservice because this practice of isolating Islamist Terrorists from the wider community of Muslims deprives the Muslim community of its responsibility to fight against a Radical Islam. This is a contentious point.

There are many aspects to Obama’s foreign policy but pertinent to our argument here, a setback according to Kagan (Parshley 2012, p. 2) has been Obama’s failure to work out an agreement with Iraq to maintain a US troop presence beyond the end of 2011. Iraq unravelling into sectarian warfare could pull other regional powers into the conflict such

as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Parshley 2012, p. 3). However, by pursuing the non-militaristic imperative, by withdrawing troops from Iraq early, in the long run has he contributed to a greater violence in the proliferation of Islamist groups as far away as Africa and the Middle East? This would appear to be the case. In contrast, however, Heather Hulbert, executive director of the US National Security Network, sees the winding down of the Bush Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as positives as well as the making of counterterrorism quieter and more successful (Parshley 2012, p. 10). It appears that Obama has been striving for the peaceful alternative in pursuing a noncombatant imperative as far as a president can do this. In 2010 Obama rejected the Bush Doctrine that placed the War on Terror at the centre of American Foreign Policy. Obama replaced it with a softer approach stressing “new partnerships and multilateral diplomacy” (Harnden, 2010, p. 1). He further added that long-term security would not come from the ability to instil fear in other peoples but “through a capacity to speak to their hopes” (Harnden, 2010, p. 2). Softer though it may seem, Obama is not blind to the “twisted ideologies” that the terrorist groups use to incite violence urging community activists, religious leaders and law enforcement officials that there is a need to find new ways to “amplify the voices of peace and tolerance and inclusion” all the while claiming, “We are not at war with Islam; we are at war with people who have perverted Islam” (Davis, 2015, p. 1).

The changeover of president is a modern institution. The USA, arguably the most powerful country in the world attends to its domestic business with justice and law – modern values conducted by a modern (global) state. The state of Islam on the other hand is fragmented. Modernity and globalisation have circumscribed the Islamic world. The terroristic challenge we are experiencing from various Islamist groups becomes more understandable when we take into account the past domination of global power that the people of Islam have sustained. The challenges IS is currently extending in Iraq and Syria could be interpreted as a form of retribution that is fierce, brutal and unyielding.

Both Bush and Obama are modern players but Obama is very much more sensitive to the plight of Islam and the intractable nature of its internal problems. However, despite these problems, liberal-progressive Islamic groups have managed to mushroom in some nations. For example, Indonesia, since the fall of President Suharto in May 1998 is a case in point (Suratno, 2011), as is Turkey (Barton, 2005). The flowering of Islam though is restricted and hindered from developing by preoccupation with the proliferation of radical Islam. This is becoming an increasingly severe problem. Islam's gathering resurgence that once promised an Islamic Renaissance (Iribarnegaray and Jenkins, 2013) is being curtailed and the potential of dialogue with the West stymied.

3.3 The proliferation of Islamist groups - examples in Africa and the Middle East

The Arab Spring revealed how the reality of Middle Eastern countries is what led to decisively shaping Islamic radicalization. Some specific examples will show how this reality unfolded.

Al-Shabaab is an Islamist terrorist group based in Somalia. It has pledged allegiance to militant Islamist organisation al-Qaeda and consequently has Wahhabi roots. Its income is based on proceeds from the ivory trade. While the foot soldiers are primarily concerned with nationalist and clan related affairs, the organisation's top leaders are committed to the global jihad (BBC News Africa, 2014).

Boko Haram, under Muslim cleric Mohammed Yusuf, built a religious complex and an Islamic school in Nigeria in 2002. However Boko Haram was not only interested in education, its political goal was to create an Islamic state and the school became a recruiting ground for jihadists. Mohammed Yusuf was killed by Nigeria's security force and a new leader, Abubakar Shekau stepped up its insurgency. In 2013 the US designated it a terrorist organisation amid fears that it intended waging a global jihad (Clothia, 2015, 1-6).

ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) or ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) or simply IS (Islamic State) emerged as the most

terrifying and brutal jihadist group. (One could say however that it has some good competition in the previous two groups discussed.) It is alarming to note that such extreme Islamist groups have emerged in many places in recent years. It must be seen that ISIS is not just a jihadist group, however, “it is a revolutionary movement” (Goldstone, 2014, p. 2). It seeks to destroy governments and has claimed a new regime (the Islamic Caliphate). This ideal of the Caliphate, the militants value as the most socially just of all political configurations. Goldstone (2014, p. 2) emphasizes that the goal of forming the Islamic Caliphate should not be underestimated; it was conservatives and moderates who dismissed the Bolsheviks in Russia as being irrelevant, yet the communist state that was ultimately created lasted nearly a century.

These examples are different from most radical fundamentalist groups in that they have been all trying in some way to create the Islamic Caliphate, none more so than IS. IS in its way is enigmatic in that its chosen name is an acronym, a far cry from the Islamic names usually given to radical groups. However, Lock (2015, p. 1) informs us that the original name for the group in Arabic was Al-Dawla Al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham. The first three words translate to the Islamic State of Iraq while “al-Sham” refers to Syria or an undefined region around Syria. Acronym usage has caused surprise amongst some onlookers who believe it is not an Islamic way of behavior and question the authenticity of the Islamist group. We think the authenticity of the group is well established through its actions. Islamic State seized Mosul, in Iraq, last June, and already rules an area larger than the United Kingdom. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been its leader since May 2010. On July 5 of last year, he used the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul to deliver a Ramadan sermon as the first caliph in generations. This virtually elevated his position from hunted guerrilla to leader of all Muslims. Jihadists came from around the world. The influx was unparalleled and still continues today (Wood, 2015, para. 3; Carter & Alkshali, 2014, para, 4).

3.4 IS and the Islamic Caliphate

The Ottoman Empire was the last caliphate. It reached its peak in the 16th century and then experienced a continuing decay. Finally, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, abolished it in 1924. However, many supporters of the Islamic State, do not acknowledge the Turkish caliphate as authentic, because it didn't fully impose Islamic law, which allows slavery and requires measures such as stoning and amputations as part of its civic laws. In addition its caliphs were not descended from the tribe of the Prophet, the Quraysh (Wood, 2015, para. 36). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is Qurayshi (Wood, 2015, para. 40).

It is interesting to compare bin Laden's organisation with al Baghdadi's. Bin Laden viewed his terrorism as a prologue to a caliphate but he did not expect to see it in his lifetime. His specific goal was to transform the struggle between Muslims and the United States and hopes in the Muslim world into a war between Islam and the West, or at least to create the impression for many millions of people that this was the case (Weisbrot, 2011, para. 3). Looking at the situation today we can see that he had considerable success in this goal. His organization was very flexible, operating as a geographically diffuse network of autonomous cells. This organizational set-up made fighting him very challenging and frustrating for Western governments. In contrast, the Islamic State requires land to be legitimate, and a top-down arrangement to rule it. IS bureaucracy is divided into civil and military arms, and its land into provinces (Wood, 2015, para. 6).

As Wood (2015, para. 1) says, "the Islamic State is no mere collection of psychopaths". It fits the profile of a religious group with prudently constructed beliefs. It considers itself to be a key instrument of the coming apocalypse. For Wood, the reality is that the Islamic State is Islamic. However, it will not take its place with resignation in the New World Order. It has attracted people of various persuasions, drawn largely from the estranged populations of the Middle East and Europe. But the religion preached by its most ardent followers derives from clear and even knowledgeable interpretations of Islam. With the caliphate in place, offensive jihad becomes a requirement of Muslims according to

Islamic law if one interprets that law in a literal fashion; the waging of war to develop the caliphate is a crucial duty of the caliph. Therein lies the key to addressing the Islamic State's influence over its adherents at one level: overpower it by military means and subjugate the parts of Syria and Iraq now under caliphate rule. It is not known at this stage how one can peacefully approach the Caliphate. While Al Qaeda is inextinguishable because it can survive by going underground, the Islamic State cannot do this. If it loses its territory in Syria and Iraq, it will no longer be a caliphate. As Wood (2015, para. 70) and Forsyth (2015, para. 4) inform us, Caliphates cannot exist as underground movements, because territorial authority is a requirement: take away its command of territory, and all those oaths of allegiance are no longer binding. Addressing IS at another level involves drawing away its clientele, if that is possible.

4. IS and its new recruit

Australian and European youth seem to be drawn to IS, lured by the falsehood of "a noble battle against an oppressive enemy" (Brandis cited in Kimmorley, 2014, para. 1). This is an interesting yet common approach. Brandis goes on to say that youth are simply taking part in "acts of thoughtless violence" (Brandis cited in Kimmorley, 2014, para. 3). We find this attitude has limited merit and is superficial. Why youth join IS to participate in its rituals runs deeper than mere thoughtless violence.

Becoming radicalised is a complex phenomenon with various factors playing a part. As a starting point, we will say that devotees may be following what they think the Qur'an is demanding from them and for them it is a strict adherence to Islamic Law. Of course this begs the question of interpretation and what is badly needed in this situation is for male and female potential recruits to have engagement with local agencies so they are not interpreting scriptures alone. Local legitimacy according to Richmond (2013, p.279) is required because individualistic understandings must give way to the communal and act as a safety net. However, recruitment is primarily a male phenomenon rather than a

female one. We realise there have been female revolutionaries and that history tends to gloss over their contribution. In addition, there have been examples of young teenage girls found making their way to ISIS² so we cannot over-simplify the sex variable.

Interestingly, it is not just the ideological message carried in the extreme form of Islam itself that attracts followers. Mironova, Mrie and Whitt (2014, p. 22) found that most fighters joined ISIS, besides political reasons, for “comfort” value in that they found from experience that the Islamist group takes the best care of their fighters in such aspects as caring for the wounded and supporting them in battle. Moreover, we postulate they may perceive the new Caliphate state as being a fairer system than an order based on neoliberalism with its strong ties to individualistic competition. They may be viewing the credentials of a theocracy as a more honest political set-up, which could deliver more equitable outcomes for all than the neoliberal state. It is understandable that the concept of a theocracy can be appealing to many people who would like to see drastic social changes and reforms made to align laws with religious beliefs. However, a major disadvantage of this is that theocratic governments tend to be authoritarian and intolerant of other belief systems. Thus it’s likely that recruits only see the possibility of a government based on Islamic law ending corruption and injustice they have experienced under secular regimes and doubtful that they see its detractions. Here education on the home front is necessary and essential to dispel myths that prospective recruits have harboured and also to listen to their grievances. In this case education could be viewed as a local infrastructure for peace – a local attempt to create peace where the situation otherwise may impact in other regions and create conflict (Richmond, 2013, p.271).

The final contributing factor that compels young men to take up the cause is what psychologist Mark Van Vugt calls the “male warrior effect” which is a powerful urge for male teenagers and young men to

² Authorities determined that three girls, ages 15 and 16, took a flight to Istanbul from Gatwick and then took a car more than 800 miles across Turkey to the Syrian border. After reaching Syria, they reputedly traveled to Raqqa to ‘join a camp for sharia’ (Mosendz, 2015, Para. 2)

seek out anything to do with warfare (Van Vugt. 2014, para 4). Van Vugt (2014, para. 4) claims warrior psychology is probably deeply ingrained in male biology. The process of radicalisation is not a quick fix; it takes time. It is a mixture of influence and persuasion leading to a complete change in how the world is seen and interpreted. Radicalisation can affirm a young man's masculinity and refashion his identity. It's a challenge. It's cool. It's exciting and adventurous. It quells feelings of alienation and inadequacy (Lakhani, 2014, para. 2 & 3). Also attractive is the sense of brotherhood and belonging to IS confers. Fighting alongside one's "brothers" is a deep bonding experience that is not unlike Australian mateship. This is passionately acclaimed in the following quotation by a soldier who served in Iraq: "The bonds of friendship and brotherhood with those who serve are greater than almost any known in the human experience (Padre Steve, 2009, Para. 10)". This is quite an impressive claim. The question is how to address such a powerful agent? Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013, p. 771) contend that localism embraces conflict transformation, which "drills down" to address the education systems that underpin conflict. This process is required to get to the heart of the conflict in this matter of warrior psychology. It may not be an intractable issue but it is extremely potent which localism may help avert.

So what is it about our own society that makes ISIS look like Nirvana to certain young men and what is it in our society that can explain these circumstances? Could it possibly be the honesty and the promise of an organisational setup where the system promises to allow and encourage and apply laws that enable people to live by God's good book - under God's laws - not the corrupt *laissez faire* system of a dishonest secular neoliberalism (Harvey 2007) that does not look after everyone fairly? We must return to considerations of modernity. Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian author, Islamic theorist and key instigator of Islamist ideology claims, "The era of the Western system has come to an end primarily because it has lost those life-giving values that enabled it to be the leader of mankind" (Qutb, 1990, p. 6). Qutb is actually saying that modernity is finished. We however think there is still purchase in modernity. There is still much value that the Enlightenment can offer. In this we agree with Derrida. Like Derrida we do not want to completely reject modernity

but accept it with reservation and wariness acknowledging the limitations of Enlightenment ideals and ever conscious of the potential of the danger of marginalising peripheral societies. It is a story of the desire of the peoples of the Earth for inclusion.

Jessica Stern, a leading expert in terrorism, speaks about terrorism generally, not specifically about IS. Stern (2003, p. 283) speaks of those who “feel left behind by modernity”, that “the engine of modernity” is “stealing the identity of the oppressed”. She claims that the relationship of radical militants in the Arab and Islamic world with modernism is contradictory: while they feel threatened by it there is also a feeling of being left behind. Through her words, she questions the modern order but is ambivalent as to why young men turning to terrorism should feel that they have been humiliated. She offers an explanation that the reason young men may feel humiliated is that terrorist leaders tell them that international institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations are imposing capitalism and secular ideas on them aiming to destroy traditional values (Stern, 2003 p. 283). Going deeper still, Stern claims that the “antiglobalists” do not hesitate to fight their enemies with resilient networks and hi-technology weapons, the fruits of modernity (Stern, 2003, p. 283). All forms of terroristic expression are a rebellion against modernity, even if they are not as exacting as that which was perpetrated by bin Laden. Indeed, modernity has brought with it many bad things as well as much that is good. The fact is that it may indeed be true with respect to what the terrorist leaders are saying about the IMF and the World Bank. They *are* destroying traditional values. Not only this, the social-economic and political system we are living under is an unbounded capitalism, which has not brought about an equitable distribution of wealth, particularly in many non-Western countries. Disaffected Muslim youth may be convinced of a corrupt neoliberalism that is going against the “Word of God” and that they are convinced of this in the Mosque Schools – the Madrasses and through their own experience of living in a world of growing Islamophobia but also for many other youth including non-Muslims who join – it may well be the new cause, the new critical perspective, the new Marxism if you like by adopting a theocratic solution. The West needs to change its politics if it wants to save the civilising values that the Enlightenment brought forth.

First and foremost, the fact that we need a just economic order is paramount. Politically taming this beast requires a devotion and commitment to peace and justice on the part of the West and also a decoupling of democratic governance from corporate business enterprise.

We would like to extrapolate further from Stern's ideas. We now proceed in an attempt to understand in more depth why young men and women submit to this calling to radicalise and engage with an Islamic Caliphate, rejecting modernity as a favourable solution for their collective futures as they embark on this dangerous quest. A report from the United Nations of October 2014 claimed recruits were coming from 80 countries and numbered approximately 15,000; this amounts to movement of people on an "unprecedented scale" (Lane, 2014, para. 1). This has included at least 90 citizens from Australia (Lambert, 2015, para. 1). Is it possible that to the new recruits, particularly those coming from other countries, this is a new radicalism that promises to create a more honest world in a new Islamic Caliphate, one where modernity is not the governing principle? We think it is possible that the driver to support such a terror organisation can be related to Western globalisation, discussed previously in the paper, and in turn underpinned or supported by debased ideals of capitalism and governments that embrace corrupt ways of doing business and conducting life, ways that deviate enormously from Islam. Postmodern/post-structuralist theory as outlined previously would support this. See, for example, Boradori (2003, pp. 121-123); Sardar(2003, pp. 257, 268) and Corey (2004). In line with this theory, it must be remembered that the global system itself creates the circumstances for the terroristic reprisals. So we postulate that an outcome of this is that people fighting to create a new Caliphate see the so called "free" world as corrupt and the spread of economic globalisation via neoliberalism as the wrong path that they prefer to reject: The supporters of globalisation and neoliberalism are seen to be forming defensive alliances to protect their business interests and corrupt a way of life, which "purist" Islamists find revolting and degenerate, even uncivilised.

There is a concentration of terrorist groups across much of the world today. Obama appears much more allied to the Islamic world than was

the Bush Administration, so why do we find a greater proliferation of Islamist militant groups than in the days of the Bush Administration? Clearly, Obama is struggling with a problem others have created. Let us go back to our postmodern/post-structuralist lens and remember that the terroristic challenge becomes more comprehensible with the global system restricting alternative forms of thinking through modernity and globalisation. The global system itself thus creates circumstances for this brutal reprisal (Baudrillard, 2003, p12). This is indeed a big monster to fight.

4.1 Islamisation

With the increase in reprisals, Islamists are settling in many areas and living under the legal system of Sharia law. For a moment let us consider established countries and see what has happened in these cases where there has been a large population of Islamist people. Consider Pakistan. When it separated from India in 1947 it proclaimed itself a secular state. The Islamists gradually exerted their influence and in 1988 Pakistan became a Sharia law country. Bangladesh got its independence in 1971 and now there is a possible likelihood that Sharia law will ultimately be implemented here too. Similar tendencies are in place in other large Islamic countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Nigeria. Thus there is a statistical trend toward Islamisation, meaning the establishment of a legal system based on Sharia law. This dynamic is bolstered by successful militant groups such as IS settling in one area, imposing Sharia law and influencing other militant groups to do likewise.

How are these reprisals affecting non-Muslims? To non-Muslims this can be overwhelming. Groups such as IS raging across the cradle of civilisation laying waste to some of humanity's most cherished possessions in the form of artefacts and landmarks is very challenging. This is anathema to the human mind. It is a destruction of the modern world. Thus we have the brutal reprisal highlighting the interplay with modernity. With so much rebellion, how can there be peace? This question highlights the relationship between Islamists and moderate Muslims. However, we do not want to use the term "moderate" because it is a label conveying "tepidness". Instead we will use "mainstream" when we articulate this idea in our arguments henceforth.

4.2 The potential of mainstream Islam

As we well know, there is much violence in the news these days that implicates Islamist groups. Sohaib Sultan, Imam and Muslim Life Coordinator at Princeton, has some interesting perspectives on this. Sultan (2014, para. 4) claims the attitude of mainstream Islam has led to quietism in the face of “intolerable crimes” as extremists are left holding the bag of political Islam. The call of “Where are the “moderate Muslims”” is frequently raised whenever people who claim the mantle of Islam perpetrate an act of extreme violence. Sultan (2014, para. 4) claims the mainstream have lost the capacity among the masses to lead a movement for change. He claims what is required is not moderate Islam but a “counter-Islamic movement” that is rooted in radical love, a radical love that is truly just, a radical love that puts reconciliation over revenge and peace over power (Sultan, 2014, para. 7). This would go a long way in showing the Islamic militants that there is another way of acting in this fragmented world. As an example of this bid to find more peaceful means, the small, ancient religion of Zoroastrianism is being revived in northern Iraq among Kurdish communities as a reaction to extremist Islam. It is one of the smallest and oldest religions in the world (Latif, 2015, para.1). The question is, are Muslims in the mainstream as ineffective, as self-serving, as passionless, as Sultan has depicted? Ali Mamouri argues that terrorist operations perpetrated by radical Islamic groups around the world and in the Middle East have actually seen the rise of a more moderate brand of Islam amongst those associated with the mainstream religion (Mamouri, 2015).

Mamouri (2015, para. 1) claims it is Muslims, of *all* sects, who have suffered due to the actions of extremist groups. A 2012 US National Counterterrorism Center report revealed: “In cases where the religious affiliation of terrorism casualties could be determined, Muslims suffered between 82 and 97% of terrorism-related fatalities over the past five years.” Mamouri (2015, para. 1) claims that such violence has the unintended result of creating solidarity between Muslims and non-Muslim minorities as well as Westerners who become targets. Mamouri argues further that the militant actions of IS and its counterparts have

essentially brought Muslims together and increased their integrity as a group (Mamouri, 2015, para. 1).

The recent killing of a number of journalists at the Charlie Hebdo newspaper offices in Paris ultimately turned out as an affirmation of the lucidity and unity with which mainstream Muslims responded to this tragedy. Different responses came from different parts of the world. Overall, despite the many Islamic objections to the Charlie Hebdo caricatures of Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim world largely responded by denouncing the terrorist act, not the cartoons. For example, Egypt's Al-Azhar fully condemned the terrorist incident. Tehran's substitute Friday prayer leader Ahmad Khatami condemned the attack. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry issued a statement fully denouncing the terrorist act and asserting, "Iraq stands at the forefront of countries supporting France and all the states affected by terrorism" (Mamouri, 2015, paras. 7, 9, 10).

Katie Halper, filmmaker, voices what many mainstream Muslims are likely to think: Every time an extremist who is Muslim commits an act of terrorism, people ask where are the mainstream voices condemning the violence. She listed 45 examples of Muslim outrage about the Charlie Hebdo attack that Fox News missed. These are of course too numerous to list here so we will just list one. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association:

The sanctity of human life is central to our faith. That lives could be taken in this manner for any cause is appalling and unjustifiable.

(Halper, 2015, para. 12)

It is encouraging that this was written by a youth organisation. There is hope for the future when young people show appreciation for the sanctity of human life. Sultan's claim that mainstream Muslims have lost the capacity to lead a movement is both serious and disturbing. Mamouri and Halper have shown that there is potential for confidence in the ability of mainstream Muslims to articulate against acts of terror committed by militant Muslims. Mamouri (2015, para. 12) goes so far as to state that "the presence of a strong moderate movement in the Islamic world with attitudes very different from that of militant Islam has become increasingly apparent". This is also seen, for example, in the rise of female activists seeking women's rights through academic approaches. Orakzai (2014, p. 44) writes of this from a hermeneutic-relativist

approach calling for an interpretation of text through cultural understanding and context. She writes of scholars such as Azzizah al Hibri who contends that in order to gain empowerment as a right, women must build a solid Muslim feminist jurisprudential basis, a basis that Islam demands for them in today's world (al Hibri cited in Orakzai (2014, p. 44). Seventh century Arabia provided the present form of interpretation. The interpretation given by these reformist scholars are depicting the cultural context within the 21st century. This strong moderate movement is an example of *Ijtihad*, or Muslim independent reasoning which is inimical to extremism or fundamentalism. The potential of mainstream Islam to articulate and contest the savagery of militant Islam shows that management of the intrinsic hostility between Western and Islamic civilizations is not impossible and is not inevitable.

More evidence of emergent space for the critical spirit of Islam is the quarterly publication *Critical Muslim* launched by Ziauddin Sardar. It aims to tackle the culture of blindly following what is entrenched in Muslim thought today and to address authoritarian outlooks. It embraces "the plurality of contemporary Islam in all its mindboggling complexity" (Sardar, 2013, p. 3). It means to seriously question traditional concepts and realign thinking for the 21st century.

4.3 Muslim-Western Dialogue

It is very important that people see the limitations of modernity on both sides of this divide and it is important also that these limitations are acknowledged and discussed. That is precisely why dialogue between Islam and the West is so crucial. One barrier that besets dialogue is that Islam is too often conceived as a single monolithic block. This does not make for effective dialogue. There are layers to Muslim society, e.g. the masses level, the middle class level and the intellectual level. A problem is how the intricate work of entering into dialogues can disseminate through these various layers.

An interesting fact is that Muslim intellectuals of the old generation did not construct their world systems exclusively on the basis of the Islamic worldview. An important factor was a degree of dependence on Western modernity (Elmessiri, 1997, para. 10). This statement does sound strange but Western modernity, as we know, underpinned a civilisation that achieved centrality through its economic and military achievements. Western modernity put forward its own view as if it were the view of all human beings in all communities everywhere in the world and as something to which all human beings must aspire. It commanded attention. It set a standard. It was to be noticed and incorporated into the design of the intellectual systems of Islam. Elmessiri (1997, para 10.) notes that consequently the issue was how to reconcile Islam with Western modernity. This was the core of Muhammad Abudh's project (See, for example, (Baraz 2010) and Yusuf 2012), which predominated until the mid-1960s.

However, as time passes dynamics change. Elmessiri (1997, para. 12) reports that the bearers of the new Islamic discourse do not have the same attraction to Western modernity. The spell has been broken as can be expected and Western modernity has to withstand a radical critique. Islam is no longer fascinated by it. It is realised that Western modernity has landed humankind in a kind of "dead-end" (Elmessiri, 1997, para 12.) As has been reported in this paper, religious fundamentalism has emerged as one reaction to Western modernity gone awry and this is apparent through actions of groups such as IS today. Elmessiri (1997, para.12), speaking of course from an Islamic viewpoint claims that current trends show an "increasing if implicit realization that Western modernity strips man of his specificity and subverts his human essence". But Western Modernity can't be taken out of everything, it is far too potent a force: accordingly Elmessiri (1997, para 24.) believes that the bearers of the new Islamic discourse are making a determined effort to discover new middle analytical categories that distinguish the Islamic discourse from the discourse of Western modernity, categorised as it is by a feverish alternation between two conflicting poles. Generally speaking, there is a trying effort to create a human space that effaces the materialistic extremes of Western modernity.

The framework for the Muslim-Western relationship is exemplified in the proceedings of the conference “Who Speaks for Islam? Who speaks for the West” organised by New York University’s Dialogues: Islamic World–U.S.–The West along with the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations Malaysia, which was held on February 10–11, 2006. The Muslim and Western worlds face different challenges. For Muslims, the present challenge was found to be threefold. First, it concerns the interpretation of religious texts and their democratisation. The “gates of *ijtihad*” (independent reasoning) must be reopened. This is a principle of Muslim scriptures themselves. Second, there is call for Muslims to rekindle their intellectual curiosity. Third, encourage empowerment of Muslim civil societies to challenge governments to live up to the standards of Islam. All of these three items are demonstrated beautifully in Sarder’s *Critical Muslim*. The goal here is to rethink Islam and apply a 21st century interpretation on what it means to be Muslim. The challenge was similarly found to be threefold for the West. First, the question of double standards toward the Muslim world must be addressed with a view to ensuring equal treatment for Muslims. Second, the Western world must surrender its claims to ownership of “civilisation” in general and science and technology in particular. Too often in the West, others’ contributions toward global progress are not acknowledged. The West must create space for participation by the rest of the world and Muslims in particular. Third, no values are absolute. However, the West and the entire world might benefit from stating a broadly shared set of values of which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights might be considered an incipient example. These challenges have been chosen in summary of conference proceedings and underscored for both sides to work on communication with one another (Bugaje, U 2006).

As can be seen from the above, dialogue is essential if the Muslim-Western Relationship is to flourish. At the moment it is atrophying. Most concerning to the conference findings listed above is the Western World’s ownership of “civilisation”. Western modernity is by no means dead; it is very much alive and kicking. It is necessary that people living

in the West become acquainted with the false claims and naive demands of modernity if we are going to let other people have a rightful share to this earth. This may indeed have a salutary impact upon the proliferation of radical elements.

5. Conclusion

We have used postmodernist and post-structuralist theory in our paper, which are intellectual movements that call into question the dominant discourse of modernity. We have used these movements as a lens through which to view globalisation, and neoliberalism as its vehicle, and the radicalisation of aspiring and entrenched Islamic militants in the organisation of Islamic State (IS). We agree with Baudrillard (2003: 12) that when modernity and globalisation severely restrict alternative forms of thinking, to which the whole world, including the Islamic world has been subjected, the question of why there is a terroristic challenge becomes clearer and the idea more lucid. However, when the retribution comes, like it has to tribal Sunnis in localities within Syria and Iraq, as well as elsewhere around the globe, it is ruthless and brutal. Obama's talks mentioning "new partnerships and multilateral diplomacy" (Harnden 2010, p.1) (although they clearly weren't meant for radical Islam) are no match for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Caliphate, where there exists a commitment to slavery, beheadings, and the persecution of children. However, will al-Baghdadi's attempts to forcefully and brutally homogenize the region into a one-dimensional Sunni state through a calculated process of ironing out the wrinkles of tribal variance in the name of unification, which he then sanctions through his interpretations of the Quran and proceeds to declare the pure form of Islam fail? We could compare his efforts to Hitler, Pol Pot or even Stalin (see Iribarnegaray and Jenkins, 2013) all of whom set out to accomplish something similar in advancing their own unique brands of radicalism, at the time. Only time will tell whether Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's brutal homogenizing efforts will unify Sunnis or not, as we hesitate to speculate.

The number of young men leaving Western countries including Australia to join the Caliphate endeavor is significant. The phenomenon is indeed bewildering. However, there are probably a variety of reasons for it - including the warrior male biological effect, disenchantment with the superficiality of Western life, the feeling of being left behind by modernity and concomitant with this, thinking there is meaning in what the Caliphate can offer that modernity cannot. Obviously, more research is needed to delve deeper into why this phenomenon is occurring. In the meantime, Australia can look forward to losing more of its youth to this cruel cause, which is an unfortunate reality or expectation. We suggest a peace education program could be developed to address the underlying issues in a dialogic fashion among youth at home.

The Muslim-Western Relationship can indeed be improved. Perhaps the greatest obstacle holding this back is two-fold: Western Modernity's unfair bid to claim civilization as its own and Islam's withholding of the gates of Ijtihad, the promise of an intellectual challenge against radical Islamisation. How can there be effective dialogue when the West still wants to be the centre of everything and Islam denies critical, reflective thought that might promote it to further immersing itself in issues arising from radical Islam? It is necessary for these two protagonists to move on these issues for the safety of the world as the interplay of modernity between Islam and the West threatens civilization and forms a sense of insecurity for our collective future.

In conclusion, there is a growing need to address the issues among youth in our own countries rather than use aircraft to bomb the militants or stop at diplomacy and forming military alliances to contain them. It is possible to address the contradictions of modernity and the dishonesty of the neoliberal system through transformative peace education and intellectual argument. What is necessary is that we work to change the socio-political-economic reality of a dishonest modernity driven by an alliance between corporate business and political elites. The 'local turn' is useful in working towards meaningful engagement with youth to address concerns where they occur.

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